

## REFORM WITHOUT REVOLUTION: *DISCRETIO* AS THE LEGACY OF THE CARTHUSIANS

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In this paper I wish to suggest that the much touted and, recently, much more decried slogan, *Cartusia nunquam reformata quia nunquam deformata* is not a form of triumphalism or naive idolization of the Carthusians and hence need not be abandoned, because the "never deformed" clause really ought to be defined as "muddling through, via *discretio* at properly discerned moments, rather than maintaining a spotless and unsullied history. The simple ability to recognize honestly one's strengths and weaknesses, is one important aspect of *discretio*, as I have set forth in some detail elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> In claiming *discretio* as the key to Carthusian history, I am not so much arguing that *discretio* is unique to the Carthusians, which would be absurd, but that the Carthusians held on to it when the culture in general abandoned it at the time of the Protestant Reformation and early modern period. Moreover, I am suggesting that sober *discretio* is the key to any tradition maintaining itself over long centuries.

Elsewhere I have briefly hinted at parallels between the Carthusians and the Amish, that is, between the Carthusians and the descendants of Swiss Anabaptists who emigrated from the Emmental via Alsace to Pennsylvania in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries<sup>2</sup> and who live a nineteenth-century way of life in the computer age.<sup>3</sup> Both are commonly represented as utterly unchanging. Both remain hidden (and thus fascinating) to outsiders,<sup>4</sup> which means that their processes for evaluating innovations also remain largely hidden. When confronted with an innovation the Amish elders retreat behind closed doors, consulting each other informally or in infrequent but crucial formal councils, paralleling the Carthusian general chapter, *diffinitorium*, and visitation system.<sup>5</sup> The results are communicated in-house only, not broadcast to the outside

world.<sup>6</sup> A potential innovation (tractors, automobiles, rubber tires on tractors, organized missionary or caritative work, Sunday schools) is shrewdly analyzed for its probable impact on the community's distant-yet-not-utterly-removed relation with the outside world and a decision reached for the entire community, which has agreed in advance to accept the decision.<sup>7</sup> In practice this has led to the Amish rejecting electricity and telephones wired into their homes but accepting the use of public pay telephones and employing gasoline-powered generators to run farm machinery; rejecting ownership of automobiles but hiring "English" neighbors to drive them to town or half-way across the country; seeing themselves as burdened under the gaze of gawking tourists come to observe their "quaint" way of life yet earning a living by selling handmade furniture, quilts, and other crafts to them. To outsiders this looks like a hypo-critical (note the kinship with *dia-krisis*, *discretio*) compromise with the outside world from which they claim to wish to be separated. It is actually a shrewd negotiating of a discernible median path.<sup>8</sup> And this discernment is the key to their ability to maintain today a way of life<sup>9</sup> remarkably consistent with their original way of life.<sup>10</sup>

But what do I mean by *discretio*<sup>11</sup> in the Carthusian tradition? I have in mind acute empirical observation and analysis of the problem at hand (clinical psychological-

<sup>6</sup> Compare the Carthusian *ordinationes*, created as a record of General Chapter meetings but disseminated only for use within the houses of the Order, with the minutes of the Amish minutes council meetings of the middle nineteenth century studied by Paton Yoder in *Tradition and Transition*.

<sup>7</sup> Amish do lose many members unwilling to abide by such decisions, but such hemorrhaging of membership is not nearly so extensive as to threaten to bleed them to death. Contrary to repeated dire predictions that they would disappear, they have grown and thrived in numbers over the last century, since they became clearly distinct from the mainstream Mennonites. Those who leave usually join their Mennonite cousins of one sort or another, though a range of groups between Mennonites and Amish has also emerged: e.g. the Beachy Amish, "New Amish" Amish Brotherhood, King Amish, Fellowship Amish, Conservative Amish Mennonite etc. See *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, ed. Cornelius J. Dyck and Dennis D. Martin (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1990), p. 200, 20-22.

<sup>8</sup> Kraybill, *Riddle*, esp. 235-60; Roy C. Buck, "Boundary Maintenance Revisited: Tourist Experience in an Old Order Amish Community," *Rural Sociology*, 43 (1978), 221-34.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, selling crafts to tourists permits them at least partially to turn an odious development into something serving their needs, since they can produce the items at home on a small scale, employing family members, rather than going to work in factories. Since World War II, the shift to huge agribusinesses dominating the farming economy in the United States, combined with suburban sprawl has driven land prices beyond the reach of many Amish families seeking to establish their children on farmland. Some alternative way of earning a living was essential; the tourist-craft trade suits them admirably. See Kraybill, *Riddle*.

<sup>10</sup> They have thus discovered a true dynamic equivalence approach, which allows for interesting comparison with International Commission on English in the Liturgy's (representing modern professional liturgists) inept employing of "dynamic equivalence" principles of translation to transform the Catholic liturgy into vernacular banality (see note 62 below). The Chartreuse liqueur may represent a similar shrewd negotiation of the path from medieval general pharmacology and extensive agriculture carried on by surrogates (lay brothers, tenants, employees) to a modern commercial venture that could be carried on in much the same arms-length way yet bring a satisfactory return.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Dingjan, *Discretio: Les origines patristiques et monastiques de la doctrine sur la prudence chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), has covered much of the material, beginning with John Cassian and continuing through Gregory the Great, Benedict and the early Middle Ages. Note that Peter Brown thinks the culmination of the Desert Fathers on *discretio* came not with Cassian but with Dorotheus of Gaza and Climacus. See Peter R. L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures in the History of Religions, 13 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 232-33. See also Martin, *Fifteenth-Century*, 113-34, 259-62.

<sup>1</sup> Dennis D. Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf*, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 49 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), esp. 137-39, 259-62.

<sup>2</sup> The Amish are named for Jakob Ammann, an elder in the Swiss exile community in Alsace in the 1690s, whose adherents broke with the main body of Swiss Brethren over the question of extremely strict church discipline. Ammann and his followers favored the complete shunning of the person under discipline. This meant that family members could not even eat at the same table with the offender. They began emigrating via the Rhine River and the Netherlands to Pennsylvania in the 1740s and 1750s and from Pennsylvania spread westward to Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, with colonies established in recent years in Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Wisconsin and elsewhere. In Europe they settled in Bavaria in the early nineteenth century; direct immigration to Ontario (Canada), Pennsylvania, and points west continued during the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> *Fifteenth-Century*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> For the fascination exerted on outsiders by the Carthusians, see my "The Honeymoon Was Over: Carthusians between Aristocracy and Bourgeoisie," in *Die Kartäuser und ihre Welt: Kontakte und gegenseitige Einflüsse*, vol. 1, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 62.1 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1993, 66-99, at 89-90; for the Amish, see John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 3rd edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1980); Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> See Paton Yoder, *Tradition and Transition: Amish Mennonites and the Old Order Amish, 1800-1900*, *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History*, 31 (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1991).

spiritual observation in the case of the original masters of *discretio*, the Desert Fathers) combined with a divine gift. It represents the collective wisdom of the community and the tradition applied to individuals and individual cases. It is an art, not merely a science; a skill learned by long practice, an ability to do something well, rather than mere knowledge of something, though it requires and yields knowledge.<sup>12</sup> It is fundamentally aesthetic.<sup>13</sup> As with all sapiential skills, it is learned by patterning experience, from the outside in,<sup>14</sup> through an external cultivation and training<sup>15</sup> that is nonetheless built on careful rational-intellectual analysis. As practiced by the earliest monks, it was an exegesis of the "movements of the heart" and of the strategies and snares that the Devil stimulated within it," an exegesis of the alphabet of the heart, to quote Peter Brown.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Note the discussion of art and science in Robert D. Anderson, "Medieval Speculative Grammar: A Study of the Modistae" (PhD dissertation, Medieval Institute, Univ. of Notre Dame, 1989), pp. 40-44, referring to Boethius of Dacia: "... it seems that by calling grammar an art classical authors meant at a minimum that it is a special skill thanks to which we enjoy a certain practical good when we have learned to make something well—in this case, good writing and speech." On the other hand, science produces knowledge, which means that "it produces in us a rooted and well-founded conviction that we really know something. Less conviction will do in art where what works is what counts. In art we may have strong opinions confirmed perhaps by years of practical success, but that does not cause us to know." Art, of course, also produces knowledge, "strong opinions confirmed by years of practical success." This is exactly the sort of knowledge acquired in monastic *discretio*, thus a hermeneutic of *discretio* thus unifies knowledge and art. "The opposition outlined between science and art is precisely what led thinkers in antiquity to say grammar is an art and not a science."

<sup>13</sup> Tracing the origins of the Desert Fathers' *discretio* to Clement of Alexandria's modification of the Stoic notion of *apatheia*, Peter Brown comments, "Clement's language, like that of his pagan contemporaries, was consciously aesthetic. The sage was an artist, working with loving care on mind and body. To 'form' a life, in Clement's circles, involved no harsh buffeting of the body. It was, rather, a process as meticulous, as exacting, and as loving as was the attention that a literary man (such as Clement himself) must give to the right placing of every word, to the correct tone and balance of every phrase .... Clement had little doubt that this was an exacting process. But it was very definitely not a process that demanded the repression of feeling. Passions were not what we tend to call feelings: they were, rather, complexes which hindered the true expression of feelings. Clement's most tender images of the Christian life were images of unswerving, eager activity set loose to love and serve the Lord. ... What Clement envisioned, in the ideal of *apatheia*, was a state of final serenity of purpose." Indeed, Clement, citing Heraclitus, Clement could compare this in *Paedagogus*, 1.45.22.1 to a sharing "huge good nature of an Olympian Zeus, playing merrily within a beautiful universe .... Clement's serene Christian sage was to be no recluse. He was an active teacher, even an 'administrator'. His 'sport' was the care of souls, even the government of the church. Like Moses, the sage bore a 'kingly' soul." Peter R. L. Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 130-31.

<sup>14</sup> "No longer was the ascetic formed, as had been the case in pagan circles, by the unceasing vigilance of his mind alone. The rhythms of the body, and with the body, his concrete social relations, determined the life of the monk: his continued economic dependence on the settled world for food, the hard school of day-to-day collaboration with his fellow-ascetics in shared rhythms of labor, and mutual exhortation in the monasteries slowly changed his personality. The material conditions of the monk's life were held capable of altering the consciousness itself. Of all the lessons of the desert to a late antique thinker, what was the most 'truly astonishing' was 'that the immortal spirit can be purified and refined by clay.'" [John Climacus, *Ladder*, 14; PG 88:868C]. Brown, *Body and Society*, pp. 236-39.

<sup>15</sup> Note Hugh of Balma on habituation and routine as the key to discernment, which is the seventh and final industry by which one reaches wisdom in *Viae Sion*, Unitive Way, par. 81, ed. Francis Ruello and Jeanne Barbet as *Théologie mystique*, Sources Chrétiennes, 409 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 128, 130; English translation by Dennis D. Martin in *Carthusian Spirituality: The Writings of Hugh of Balma and Guigo de Ponte*, Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1997), pp. 140-41.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, p. 228.

*Discretio* is the consummate requirement for leadership, for leadership requires that one know when to play which role: the role of stern disciplinarian, or of tender and encouraging father, or of the community's representative in solemn worship and ceremonial.<sup>17</sup> It is the practical application of the double-commandment of love of God and neighbor to specific situations, it is the *ordo caritatis*.<sup>18</sup> *Discretio* is, finally, a fundamental spiritual soberness, a sober assessment of whatever situation has presented itself, in order to gain clarity about how to respond to it.

*Discretio* is far more central than might at first glance appear, for it often lurks behind a cluster of other words. For example, though the word itself rarely appears in Guigo's *Consuetudines*, Maurice Laporte treats it at length in his introduction under "equilibrium," "balance," "wisdom," and "spiritual soberness."<sup>19</sup> In short, *discretio* means not merely recognizing the ambiguities one faces and accepting the difficulty of deciding a matter, but actually making and carrying out the decision. The task becomes ever more difficult. The more one advances in the spiritual life, the more one needs discretion, because the Devil tempts such a person more cunningly, as Nicholas Kempf points out in the first chapter of his manual on *discretio*.

Kempf's comment sheds light on one additional introductory matter. Much of what I have described so far closely resembles the ancient Greek virtue of practical wisdom, or *phronēsis*,<sup>20</sup> so closely that some might ask if it really differs. It does. Since Christians are engaged in warfare against the Devil, Christian *discretio* differs from classical wisdom above all in its dependence on an infused gift from the Holy Spirit. Hence Kempf insists that, although everyone needs discretion, monastics need it maximally.

<sup>17</sup> See the summary of writings on leadership by the former Carthusian, Johannes Rode and by the Carthusian Heinrich Egher von Kalkar in Fifteenth-Century, pp. 131-32, 121-22, the latter based on Heinrich Rütting, *Der Kartäuser Heinrich Egher von Kalkar, 1328-1408*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 18; Studien zur Germania Sacra, 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), pp. 237-49, 147-171.

<sup>18</sup> A. Gordon Mursell, *The Theology of the Carthusian Life in the Writings of St. Bruno and Guigo I*, Analecta Cartusiana, 127 (Salzburg, 1988), 145-46, 151-56, citing Guigo I's *Meditatio* no. 390 (*Les Méditations, Sources Chrétiennes*, 308 [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1983], pp. 253-54; English translation by A. Gordon Mursell, *The Meditations of Guigo I*, Cistercian Studies series, 155 [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995], pp. 161-62) and John of Portes's letter to Stephen (*Lettres des premiers Chartreux*, vol. 2, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 274 [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1980], p. 120).

<sup>19</sup> [Maurice Laporte], introduction to Guigues Ier, *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, Sources Chrétiennes, 313 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), 41-44.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion of ancient Greek virtues in *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, 1981), 149-55: The virtues are those qualities that enable an individual to achieve eudaimonia; the lack of which will frustrate movement toward that telos; the immediate outcome of the exercise of a virtue is a choice that issues in right action (149) and to act virtuously is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues (149). Yet virtuous acting is not merely being well-trained, since a well-trained soldier may do what courage would demand in a particular setting, but not because he is courageous, rather because he is well-trained or afraid of punishment. Choices thus require judgment, above all *phronēsis*, an intellectual virtue. But the application of *phronēsis* can involve what to Christian minds would constitute sin: Odysseus as grandson of Hermes (son of Autochlos), is the quintessential liar, yet he does so with equipoise and equilibrium, he has enough discernment of this sort to carry it all off. In other words, the Greek hero is one who employed skilled cunning leading to success. One might also compare Cicero, *De Officiis*, Bk 1, translated as *On Duties*, ed. M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1991) with Ambrose's, *De officiis ministrorum* (PL 16:25-194), a precursor of Gregory the Great's classic *Pastoral Rule*. This classical, pagan approach to practical wisdom resurfaces in the Renaissance. See Susan Snyder, "The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18-59, 34-44.

For, precisely because the Devil “cannot draw them into open evil, he instead tempts and attacks them all the more forcefully, astutely, and cunningly under the guise of virtue by means of indiscretion. Because they focus so intently on acquiring virtues, they lack all the more the virtue of discretion.”<sup>21</sup>

Now, *discretio* is certainly not central for Carthusians alone. As we have already seen, it was central to the Desert tradition, as transmitted to the West via John Cassian,<sup>22</sup> but also through the Latin translations of John Climacus and the collections of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. From these sources it figures prominently in the Benedictine tradition<sup>23</sup> and Gregory the Great’s *Pastoral Rule*, which became the manual on pastoral leadership. *Discretio* figures prominently in both monastic<sup>24</sup> and secular priestly<sup>25</sup> circles throughout the Middle Ages.

Indeed, far from being limited to the Carthusians, according to Arno Borst, “*Ausgleich* and “measuredness” were also key elements in the *mentalité* of the medieval lower nobility (from whose ranks many patrons of the early Carthusians came), only to disappear as the later medieval nobility developed a more erudite and highly articulated way of training their sons and as a fanaticism of power replaced the spiritual discipline that once kept alive the knightly ideal of measuredness.”<sup>26</sup>

Yet, as important as *discretio* was to all segments of medieval society, I believe it was particularly crucial for Carthusians, and, as it has ceased to be a central skill in the modern world, constitutes a Carthusian legacy to us all. Why do I make this claim?

(1) *Discretio* is the key to the departure from Reims by Bruno, who was, according to the earliest Carthusian chronicle, “a most saintly man, and gifted with twin sciences, namely outstanding in divine eloquence as much as in ciceronian human eloquence; shining with discretion, devotion, and excellent character of life.”<sup>27</sup> The spiritual gift of *discretio* also figured in his and his companions’ reception by Hugh of Grenoble who, aided by a vision, perceived “them to have been called by God and led by the Spirit of God to Hugh, and led to the place already pointed out by the angels, he had no doubt that the words of God in the Gospel applied to them: ‘Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father’ [Mt 18:10].”<sup>28</sup>

(2) Moreover, if, as Bruno Rieder has argued, Guigo I’s *Meditationes* are his musings on the challenges presented by the prior’s office,<sup>29</sup> then *discretio* offers the key to this fascinating work—but under the label *utilitas* rather than *discretio*. Rieder has shown that, for Guigo, *utilitas* is the key to understanding mediation, avoiding false polarizations, and achieving a proper application of general rules.<sup>30</sup> Discovering the *utilitas* of anything is necessarily relational, since something will always only be useful for someone because it requires belief in a cosmic order to make sense<sup>31</sup>: created in the image of God, our ultimate *utilitas* is worship and service of God. *Discretio* is the means to discover this, above all to discover this in ways that might at first seem counterintuitive, e.g., sitting patiently in one’s cell.<sup>32</sup>

For Nicholas Kempf, *discretio* is the key to all action, for it not only distinguishes true from false virtues but distinguishes spirit, soul, and marrow (Heb 4:12), where the marrow refers to the principal intention, or the *affectio* out of which the intent proceeds, a principal intent that is more intimate to the person than his own mind because of the way that God penetrates everything He has made.<sup>33</sup> For Kempf, mystical union simply proceeds out of the clarifying of this intent.

(3) *Discretio* proves to be central in the life of contemplation. Referring to the second stage of divinely infused contemplation, Guigo de Ponte notes how hidden intuition helps discern between the human and the divine, between pure, full light and total darkness.<sup>34</sup> In each of the twelve steps of the contemplative life one

<sup>27</sup> Chronicle *Laudemus* as quoted in Heinrich von Kalkar, *Ortus et decursus*, ed. Hendrina G. C. Vermeer (Wageningen: H. Veenman en Zonen, 1929), reprinted in *Die Geschichte des Kartäuserordens*, vol. 2, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 125.2 (Salzburg, 1992), pp. 1-153, at p. 99. Cf. my discussion of *discretio* in Bruno’s decision in *Fifteenth-Century*, pp. 263-271.

<sup>28</sup> Heinrich von Kalkar, *Ortus et decursus*, ed. Vermeer (1929), pp. 92-93.

<sup>29</sup> Rieder, *Deus locum*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>30</sup> Rieder, pp. 105-29.

<sup>31</sup> Rieder, p. 105.

<sup>32</sup> Rieder, 128-29, 191-236.

<sup>33</sup> Kempf, *De ostensione*, ch. 31 (Graz Universitätsbibliothek cod. 262, fol. 24r, 6 - 24v, 11).

<sup>34</sup> *Traité sur la Contemplation*, III.7, ed. Philippe DuPont, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 72 (Salzburg, 1985) p. 300; English translation in *Carthusian Spirituality*, p. 227.

<sup>21</sup> Kempf, *De discretione*, ch. 1; Bernhard Pez, *Bibliotheca ascetica antiquo-nova*, vol. 9 (Regensburg: Johann Conrad Pez, 1726; reprinted Farnborough, Hampshire: Gregg Press, 1967), pp. 382-83.

<sup>22</sup> See his first two *Conferences*, ed. E. Pichery, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 42 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955), pp. 78-137; English translation by Colm Luibheid as John Cassian, *Conferences*, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1995), pp. 37-80; cf. trans. by Boniface Ramsay in *Ancient Christian Writers*, 57 (New York: Paulist Press, 1997); see also the discussion in Martin, *Fifteenth-Century*, 113-18.

<sup>23</sup> Whereas Benedict’s rule uses *discretio* three times and *discernere* five times, the *Rule of the Master* uses *discernere* only twice and *discretio* not at all, yet the latter work is three times longer. Yet the concept is more central than indicated by comparing word-concordances. Related to *discretio* in the *Regula Benedicti* is a cluster of terms: *considerare*, *cogitare*, *providere*, *temperare*, *mensurate facere*. The use of *considerare* and *consideratio* is especially remarkable, for whereas uses *consideratio* five times and *considerare* nine times, the Master uses the noun only once and the verb nineteen times (but always in the sense of to look at, to observe, to confirm. For Benedict, however, *consideratio* and *considerare* are used in the sense of to discern, reflect, judge, weigh, take account of. See Eloi Dekkers, “‘Discretio’ chez saint Benoît et saint Grégoire,” *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, 46 (19184), 79-88, at 80-81. See also Dingjan, *Discretio*, and Aquinata Böckmann, “Discretio im Sinne der Regel Benedikts und ihrer Tradition,” *Erbe und Auftrag*, 52 (1976), 362-73.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Aelred, *Speculum caritatis*, III.XVIII-XX.41-48, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, vol. 1: *Opera Ascetica*, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 125-28; English translation by Elizabeth Connor, *Mirror of Charity*, *Cistercian Fathers Series*, 17 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), for an extended discussion of *affectus* and discretion.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Robert Holcott on the *sal discretionis* in his *Super libros sapientiae* (Hagenau, 1494, reprinted Frankfurt a. M.: Minerva, 1974), capitulum IV, lectio XLVI.

<sup>26</sup> Arno Borst, “Das Rittertum im Hochmittelalter: Idee und Wirklichkeit,” *Saeculum*, 10 (1959), 213-31, reprinted in *Das Rittertum im Mittelalter*, ed. Arno Borst, *Wege der Forschung*, 349 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 212-46, argues that knighthood flourished only briefly in the epoch between *Adelswürde* und *Staatsmacht*, between 1100 and 1250, only as long as the knightly ideal was compatible with and bound up with the social reality of the lower nobility. It flourished in the period between the limitation of (higher) nobles’ power and the uprooting of that power by kings, princes, and burghers, in the short span between brutality and spirituality. For that is when knighthood had its role of providing *Ausgleich* and *Übergang*, when its ideal was indeed exactly that of measuredness.

must "discern through spiritual experience what one reads."<sup>35</sup> The anagogical leap itself is dependent on having gained discretion:

"She is now able to turn easily from one manner [of ascent] to the other [i.e., one is anagogical, by renunciation, the other by affirmation, speculative]. Even though, as it seems, intellectual rapture cannot occur without affective rapture, nor affective rapture without an element of intellectual rapture, when she ascends in the aforementioned manner, the godly spirit has learned to discern between the two and to exercise and maintain each according to its characteristics. To be affected toward God is the same as to enjoy God in his presence."<sup>36</sup>

*Discretio* is a combination of knowledge and skill, of knowledge and practice. Thus, in the mystical ascent, for Hugh of Balma as well as Nicholas Kempf, the mystical ascent begins in purgation, moves through knowledge and surges up into the famous totally affective anagogical ascent,<sup>37</sup> yet yields a higher knowledge<sup>38</sup>—what Kempf calls the *scientia sanctorum*.<sup>39</sup>

Bruno Rieder has illustrated well how Guigo I moves from discerning *utilitas* to contemplation: because the *utile* is closely bound up with the *rectum* and *bonum* and because God is the supreme instance of the *utilitas* principle, that is, God is the one who wants nothing other than the salvation, well-being, *Heil* of others, for God, no conflict can exist between self-interest and the common good. One ought not say that a *utilitas* exists for God, rather, that God is the highest *utilitas*. Hence, *utilitas* really means the true love and worship of God. It comes by grace, not by one's own effort. For Guigo mysticism is not some rarified deification or bright vision but rather it is to be what God intended one to be, namely, to love, to enter into the *perichorêsis* of the inner life of the Trinitarian relations. Contemplation is simply to abide in love, in the words of John's Gospel.<sup>40</sup>

- (4) *Discretio* is the key for Carthusians when deciding whether to become active in the world or not. I have dealt with this at length in my book on Nicholas Kempf.<sup>41</sup> Here I may simply note that Sigrun Haude, in an article in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, would not have needed to be surprised at the shift from "contemplative silence" to activist reform on the part of the Cologne Carthusians had she been more familiar with the Carthusian understanding of *discretio*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Contemplation*, I.8, AC 72, p. 146; *Carthusian Spirituality*, p. 191.

<sup>36</sup> *Contemplation*, I.7, AC 72, pp. 124, 126; *Carthusian Spirituality*, p. 185-86.

<sup>37</sup> *Viae Sion*, Difficult Question, par. 46; SC edition, pp. 226, 228; *Carthusian Spirituality*, p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228. Cf. *Unitive Way*, par. 31, 84-85, 88, 89, 95, 99, 105 (CWS translation, p. 119, 142-44, 147, 149, 151).

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Kempf, *Tractatus de mystica theologia*, IV.7; V.1; III.7, ed. Karl Jellouschek, Jeanne Barbet, Francis Ruello, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 9 (Salzburg, 1973), pp. 282-83, 356-57, 206.

<sup>40</sup> Rieder, pp. 123-27.; cf. *Meditatio*, no. 371; SC edition, p. 242; English translation by Mursell, *Meditations*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>41</sup> *Fifteenth-Century*, ch. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Sigrun Haude, "The Silent Monks Speak up: The Changing Identity of the Carthusians in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 86 (1995), 124-140, esp. pp. 132-39. This article seems to represent a sort of footnote to her dissertation at the University of Arizona on the Anabaptist reign of terror in Münster.

- (5) *Discretio* is the key to the Carthusian process of reform over many centuries, a process of deliberate reform rather than revolution. Where other religious orders found themselves making sharp shifts constitutionally (e.g., the formation of congregations by the once autonomous Benedictines, beginning with the late medieval Bursfeld or Santa Justina reforms and leading to the modern Benedictine congregation system) or, at least, with a distinct lack of *discretio* (e.g., the reform of La Trappe among the Cistercians,<sup>43</sup> with whose founder, Jean de Rancé, the Carthusian Prior General, Innocent Le Masson, tangled over the nature of good monastic observance<sup>44</sup>), the Carthusian approach, like that of the Amish, was to move slowly and cautiously, changing as little as possible, despite outside pressure. Certainly significant change and evolution took place during the first two centuries of Carthusian life, part of the normal growing process of a new order.<sup>45</sup> But after the *Statuta Antiqua* absorbed and replaced the *Consuetudines Guigonis* in the middle of the thirteenth century as the definitive legislation (1259-1271), changes were relatively limited in scope. The *Statuta Nova* (1368) were essentially appendices to the thirteenth-century legislation at the appropriate places. The sixteenth-century *Tertio Compilatio* made such minimal changes as to permit them to be clustered into thirteen short chapters.

When the universal church entered into a period of consolidation and reform in the mid-sixteenth century the Carthusians, obedient to the decisions of the Council of Trent, undertook another reconfiguration of the order's legislation. The first part of the *Statutes* was printed separately as an *Ordinarium* containing liturgical legislation for daily office (*Breviarium*, 1587, 1643, 1879<sup>46</sup>), with a separate missal (1562, 1603, 1679, 1713<sup>47</sup>), while the second and third parts

<sup>43</sup> Louis Lekai underscores the lack of discretion on the part of Augustin de Lestrage (1754-1827) at Valsainte: his "regulations ... were beyond normal human endurance and incompatible with genuine Cistercian traditions," leading to a schism between those who returned to the observance of Abbot Rancé and a distinction between the "New Reform" and the "Old Reform." Perhaps the roots of the immoderation of the post-Vatican II Trappist reform lie in lack of *discretio* during the nineteenth-century "reform," indeed, to the "innovations" and immoderation even of the emerging "Strict Observance" of the seventeenth century, which, rather than reforming the "common observance," had resulted in schism, including even factionalism within the Strict Observance during the seventeenth. In fairness, however, one must admit that anyone less full of zeal than de Lestrage would never have survived the rigors of the years spent dodging Napoleon across all of Europe as far as Russia and even across the Atlantic. One suspects that Lekai, writing in the immediate aftermath of the Second Vatican Council in which the past was frequently portrayed as narrow and excessively ascetic and penitential, might have unwittingly exaggerated the failings of his Trappist cousins in the area of *discretio*. See Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State U. Press, 1977), pp. 138-152, 181-186.

<sup>44</sup> On Le Masson, see the discussion of his *Disciplina*, below.

<sup>45</sup> The *Statuta Jancelini* (1222) and the *De reformatione* of Prior Bernard (1248) deal entirely with ad hoc changes growing out of several generations of *praxis*. See James Hogg, *The Statuta Jancelini* (1222) and the *De Reformatione of Prior Bernard* (1248), *Analecta Cartusiana*, 65 (Salzburg, 1978). Hogg refers to "essential changes" ("*wesentliche Abänderungen*" under Priors Jancelin and Bernard (1222, 1248): three days of fasting on bread and water per week reduced to one day, monks no longer prepared their food for themselves in their cells. See "Kartäuser," in *Theologisches Realenzklopädie*, vol 17 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), pp. 666-673, at 668.

<sup>46</sup> For a photostatic reprint of the 1879 reprint see *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertio Compilatio*, Documents, vol. 21-25: *Breviarium Sacri Ordinis Cartusienensis, Pars I-V*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.21-25 (Salzburg, 1993).

became the "Statutes," the *Nova Collectio Statutorum* (1582, 1681, 1688 [with papal approval], 1736, 1879).<sup>47</sup> Here we have a real reconfiguring and reintegrating of all the previous legislation, but still largely limited to its form rather than its contents. The contents remained in essential continuity with the past; such changes as were required by the Council of Trent were minimal and unnecessary changes were avoided. That is the epitome of *discretio*. The seventeenth century merely witnessed the reprinting, with minor emendations, of this late sixteenth-century legislation. Dom Innocent Le Masson's late seventeenth-century synopsis of what had remained the same and what had changed and his consideration of the specific characteristics that enabled the Carthusians to preserve their original observance with which he concluded his *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusienensis* (1687, 1703, 1894)<sup>48</sup> would well repay close study. Here we can merely summarize his conclusions briefly: genuine rather than feigned *caritas*<sup>49</sup> in the tenacious adherence to the form of life laid down in

the statutes, particularly as regards owning property and interaction with guests and outside business, always accompanied by *discretio*, had permitted the retention of the original observance even as it was modified to suit the requirements of each new era. Le Masson symbolized this even in the form he chose for his *Disciplina*: reprinting the original text of Guigo's *Consuetudines*, the *Statuta Antiqua*, and the *Nova Collectio*, with his own chapter-by-chapter commentary.<sup>51</sup>

The same pattern repeated itself in the twentieth century: only when the universal Church revised her universal legislation (1917 *Code of Canon Law*) or pastoral vision (Vatican II), including that pertaining to religious orders, did the Carthusians revise their legislation for the first time in nearly three centuries.<sup>52</sup> Yet even here, both for the universal Church and the order of the Chartreuse, one would be better advised to refer to "recompilation" (the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*) and "development" (Vatican II) rather than to "change." The revision following upon the 1917 Code was very minor, since the 1917 Code collected and ordered the existing legislation of the Church rather than innovating. The separate house for the lay brethren, abolished in the seventeenth century, meant that the chapter of the statutes regarding the brother's kitchen could be omitted. References to journeys on horseback could be eliminated—truly earthshaking legislative reforms.<sup>53</sup>

The late-twentieth-century reforms, responding to Vatican II and the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, culminating in the combined liturgical and non-liturgical legislation in the 1991 *Statuta Ordinis Cartusienensis*,<sup>54</sup> were more extensive, but particularly in comparison to what was going on elsewhere, inside and outside the Church, the Carthusian revisions were, as Hansjakob Becker points out, modest, sober, discerning.<sup>55</sup> The non-liturgical legislation is completely

<sup>47</sup> The text of the Carthusian Missal has not been included in the documents series of *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio*, though Dom Emmanuel Cluzet's detailed studies of the origins of the Carthusian Missal in relation to those of the Cluniacs, Cistercians, the canons of Saint-Ruf, and the dioceses surrounding the Grande Chartreuse was published as *Particularités du Missel Cartusien: Contribution à l'étude des origines du missel cartusien*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.26-31 (Salzburg, 1994). Notable are Dom Cluzet's comments at the end of his first volume, asking if it would not be appropriate for a Carthusian *aggiornamento* ("qui chez nous tout particulièrement veu être un ressourcement") to restore to the Carthusian Mass the "cachet" which it had in the first Carthusian period, with moments of "quies" "here or there" where one had added prayers in the thirteenth century, appealing to eleventh-century Cluniac usage as additional authority.

<sup>48</sup> The *Nova Collectio* was first published under Bernard II Carasse (prior of the Grande Chartreuse, 1566-1586), reissued with slight revisions 1681 under Dom Innocent Masson, with some corrections of his idiosyncracies in the 1688 edition). In lieu of Professor Hogg's promised study of the evolution of the order's legislation, see his introduction to *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio, Documents*, vol. 5: *Nova Collectio Statutorum Ordinis Cartusienensis: Editio Secunda 1681, Pars Secunda*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.5 (Salzburg, 1992), pp. iii-viii, based on the unpublished researches of Irénée Jaricot, "Essai sur l'Histoire de nos Coutumes Chartreuses" (cited by Hogg, p. iii). See also Hubert Elie, *Les Éditions des Statuts de l'Ordre des Chartreux* (Lausanne: F. Rouge, 1943). AC 99.5-6 contains the rarer 1681 edition of the *Nova Collectio*, rather than the 1688 edition, from which Dom Le Masson's unauthorized additions had been expunged. The latter (1688) edition is the one that was reprinted in 1736 and 1879, remaining valid in the order until the next round of reforms were stimulated by the 1917 *Codex Iuris Canonici* of Benedict XV.

<sup>49</sup> See *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio, Documents*, vol. 18-20: *Disciplina Ordinis Cartusienensis Innocent Le Masson, Liber Primus, Liber Secundus, Liber Tertius*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.18-20 (Salzburg, 1993), book III (AC 99.20), pp. 547-556, 557-596. Note also his comments about *discretio* as the "herald" and "advocate" of "all our opera," whether in solitude in the cell or in spiritual or corporal works, the indispensable aid to progress toward union of the soul with God, which is the proper scope and goal of "our Carthusian vocation" (p. ix). Coming as they do from one often accused of some degree of deficiency in *discretio*, these words are particularly noteworthy. See Jacques P. Martin, *Le Louis XIV des Chartreux: Dom Innocent Le Masson* (Paris: TÊQUIL, 1975), which originated in a 1936 Gregorian University dissertation, and Augustin Devaux, "Innocent Le Masson," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 9 (1976), 572-83.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 6:6. In keeping with a long tradition, Le Masson cautions against the danger that strict asceticism might lead to pride and arrogance (*Disciplina*, p. 558). His cautions are fully consistent with Nicholas Kempf's treatise *De discretione*, though Le Masson cites Francis de Sales instead of Kempf's contemporary authority, Heinrich of Langenstein. See Martin, *Fifteenth-Century*, pp. 122-131.

<sup>51</sup> The *Consuetudines* with Le Masson's commentary were reprinted in PL 153:631-760.

<sup>52</sup> The Statutes were revised, 1922-1924, with minimal changes. See *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio, Documents*, vol. 8-9: *Statuta Ordinis Cartusienensis (1926), Pars Prima and Pars Secunda*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.8-9 (Salzburg, 1992). The Statutes are now so firmly detached from the liturgical *Ordinarium* that the Pars Prima of the 1926 statutes is what had been the Pars Secunda of the *Statuta Antiqua, Statuta Nova, Tertia Compilatio*, and *Nova Collectio*. The revised *Ordinarium* was then published in 1930, new edition, 1932. See *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio, Documents*, vol. 10-11: *Ordinarium Cartusiense (1232)*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.10-11 (Salzburg, 1992). Again, the revisions were very minor.

<sup>53</sup> The examples are those pointed out by James Hogg in his introduction to AC 99.8, pp. v-vi.

<sup>54</sup> See *The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the Consuetudines Guigonis to the Tertia Compilatio, Documents*, vol. 12-13: *Statuta Ordinis Cartusienensis 1991*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 99.12-13 (Salzburg, 1992); vol. 14: *Statuta Renovata Ordinis Cartusienensis, mense decembris 1969*, (1992); vol. 15: *Statuta Renovata Ordinis Cartusienensis, Libr 1-4, 1971* (1992), vol. 16: *Statuta Renovata Ordinis Cartusienensis Libri 5-8, ad mentem Capituli Generalis anni 1973 emendati* (1993); vol. 17: *Statuta Ordinis Cartusienensis, Projet de mars 1987* (1993).

<sup>55</sup> Hansjakob Becker, "Gottesdienst und geistliches Leben: 25 Jahre Liturgiereform in der Kartause," in *Die Kartause: Liturgisches Erbe und konziliare Reform: Untersuchungen und Dokumente*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 116.5 (Salzburg, 1990), pp. 7-19, e.g., "Es gilt die Maxime: so römisch wie nötig, so kartusienisch wie möglich." (p. 9), summarizing the more nuanced statement from the General Chapter in 1967 given on p. 9, n. 10. Note that the reference to the "Roman" is to the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, not to work of the post-conciliar commission's implementation of the Council's decree on the renewal of the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

regrouped under new clusters of topics and the lay brethren are more completely integrated within the structure of the collection, but the actual content of the legislation remains in remarkable continuity with the ancient statutes.<sup>54</sup>

In this light, a careful comparison of the process undertaken by the Trappists after Vatican II, the reform commission charged with revising the Roman liturgy, and the Carthusian reforms<sup>57</sup> would make a good *Doktorarbeit*.

Of course, to analyze fully the post-Vatican II Carthusian reform vis-à-vis the Trappists, one would need to study the particulars of life in Carthusian houses, not just the formal documents. This is difficult if not impossible to do, compared to studying the once-cloistered Trappists, whose "Centering Prayer"<sup>58</sup> and

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With regard to the Mass, Becker points out that the Carthusians retained the older Gospel pericopes, but used the opportunity to create an improved liturgy of the Word. He points out that the Church's general revision of the Lectionary, introducing a *lectio continua* for the Epistle and a set of Old Testament readings linked to the Gospel readings (plus in some countries, responsorial Psalm-texts extending the Psalm-phrases of the traditional graduals), while well-intended, failed to achieve very much, at least in Germany, since as of his writing in 1987 few parishes were using all three readings and many substituted a (often poorly chosen) song for the Psalm (p. 17). From the present author's experience in the 1990s, much the same could be said for parishes in the United States, since, precisely because all three readings plus the responsorial-Psalm are regularly employed, the overall effect is cognitive overload and few parishioners retain anything close to an overview of the Sunday's *lectiones*.

Becker notes (p. 13) that retaining the pre-Vatican II Gospel pericopes would not have been possible in a parish setting but was possible in the cloister. This author's parish, since John Paul II's *Ecclesia Dei* permission for widespread celebration of the Tridentine Rite, offers Masses following the new lectionary calendar alongside Tridentine Masses following the pre-Tridentine calendar, without confusing anyone.

<sup>54</sup> Dom Maurice Laporte's summary in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, 21 (Paris: Letouzy et ané, 1987), s.v. *Grande Chartreuse*, cols. 1088-1107, at 1102-1103, is helpful: the order set as its goals (1) to remove what had fallen into desuetude; (2) to place in clear light and maintain faithfully the spirit of the founders and to their specific intentions, inserting, for instance, quotations from Bruno and Guigo I into the statutes themselves; (3) to incorporate the ecclesiastical and theological perspectives of Vatican II, particularly the role of religious orders within the mystical body of Christ, but to do so in such a way that the distinctive Carthusian liturgy retained its integrity as a liturgy suited to contemplative eremites.

<sup>57</sup> Becker, "Gottesdienst," p. 18, cites the summary of the Carthusian reform by the prior of the Charterhouse of Pleterje in 1987: "Die Erneuerung der Liturgie orientierte sich, ohne dem Historizismus zu verfallen, an den Grundsätzen der Anfänge [des Ordens]: Die biblischen und patristischen Lesungen wurden erweitert. Die neuen Offizien und Messen sind ohne Ausnahme aus dem Reichtum der bestehenden Kartäuserliturgie gewonnen worden. ... Das Kernstück der Reform bildet das Offizium und die sechs Messen zu Ehren heiliger Mönche, die einen Schnitt durch die monastische Theologie geben. Ebenso sind die neuen Ferialorationen der kleinen Horen eine Synthese monastischer und betender Theologie. Bei der Auswahl der Choralstücke schaute man streng auf die Qualität der Kompositionen und bevorzugte Stücke mit österlichem Charakter. Letztgenannte Einzelheit spricht uns besonders an, weil wir unser monastisches Leben als österliche Existenz erleben."

<sup>58</sup> See Thomas Keating, OCSO, *Centering Prayer: A Basic Guide to Christian Meditation* (Amity, N.Y.: Amity House, 1986), a set of audiocassette tapes, *Journey to the Center* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), and Thomas Keating, M. Basil Pennington, and Thomas E. Clarke, *Finding Grace at the Center* (Still River, Mass.: St. Bede Publications, 1978). Basil Pennington, OCSO, has been perhaps the leading voice in this apostolate. See, for instance, "Thomas Merton and Centering Prayer," *Review for Religious*, 45.1 (Jan.-Feb., 1986), 119-129. For a critique of "centering prayer" see Christopher Noble, "Christian Contemplation and Centering Prayer," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, 94.6 (March 1994), 24-32, 45-46.

publishing apostolates<sup>59</sup> are readily accessible. But even this situation underscores my point: the Carthusians have maintained tight claustration, rightly making it difficult, though not impossible, even for those enamored of them, to know just how much has changed in the wake of the application of the revised statutes. The fact that the Trappists make it so easy to find out what they are doing places Carthusian *discretio* in high relief.

That the present prior of the Grande Chartreuse has recently undertaken to ask the houses of the order to aid the planned new history of the Carthusian Order indicates a definite development, but that such histories of the order have been planned on several occasions over the past few centuries and that even now the plans are structured in such a way as to keep the order at a carefully chosen arms-length distance from the project while still encouraging it to proceed all represent a good example of the sort of discretion I have in mind. This is exactly what Guigo I was doing when he inserted an explanation, based on "sober discretion, for why the Chartreuse could not provide for the horses of guests: no, we will not completely rule out receiving guests, but we cannot make it easy for them to come."<sup>60</sup> As Le Masson pointed out,<sup>61</sup> carefully chosen and delimited interaction with outsiders, including even the most favorably disposed academics, has always been an important factor in maintaining the original Carthusian *propositum*.

As we now survey the ruins of the liturgy created by dynamic equivalency "translations" and the considerable loss of Catholic identity in most Western European and North American parishes, parishes which, in North America at least, are in many aspects virtually indistinguishable from Methodist or Presbyterian congregations,<sup>62</sup> the wisdom of Carthusian soberness stands out.

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<sup>59</sup> Inspired by the popularity of the life and writings of Thomas Merton and the monastic revival in Trappist houses that resulted from his autobiography, a number of Trappists, perhaps most notably Basil Pennington, were influential, working with lay scholars, in establishing the highly successful Cistercian Fathers and Cistercian Studies series, making the writings of the Cistercians available in English. The publishing work is carried on by the Cistercian Institute, an academic institute at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, though Cistercians of the Strict Observance and Common Observance have participated in significant numbers in sessions organized by the Cistercian Institute at the annual medieval studies congress. Trappists regularly participate in a variety of other academic and churchly venues, requiring a level of travel outside the monastery that would be unthinkable for Carthusians (and would have been unthinkable to Trappists in the mid-1950s). Pennington's early historical studies of Cistercian history and spirituality were largely conventional; his later work, e.g., *Thomas Merton, Brother Monk: The Quest for True Freedom* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) reflects his order's much more active role in the world. One might profitably contrast Merton's journal of his early years at Gethsemani Abbey, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), with his mid-1960s writings and with works about him by Pennington and others to gain a sense of the degree of change in four decades.

<sup>60</sup> *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, Sources Chrétiennes, 313 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984), ch. XVIII.1, p. 204.

<sup>61</sup> *Disciplina*, 557, 575-583.

<sup>62</sup> It must be emphasized that the disaster in English-speaking areas results primarily from the adaptations permitted by national episcopal conferences, not from the Latin *Novus Ordo* itself. The conferences permitted additional alternative prayers, leading to variety in liturgical practice that rivals that of Presbyterians or Methodists and they approved English translations that effectively created a national liturgy no longer fully conformed to the Roman liturgy, thereby de facto destroying the universality of the Roman Rite. In other words, the International Committee on English in the Liturgy

But, my listeners are undoubtedly asking, what you mean by *discretio* is little more than a common-sense approach to change and continuity. That I even have to emphasize the centrality of *discretio* is a testimony to how characteristic revolutionary change has been for the Modern Project.<sup>63</sup> I have written about the difference between reform and revolution at length elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> Here I can only outline some major elements.

If John Cassian and Gregory the Great understood *discretio* as an art rather than science, then the shift from a grammar-, literary-, person-based scholarship<sup>65</sup> to an exaggeratedly logic-based scholasticism, a shift that only fully takes place in the fourteenth century, is significant.<sup>66</sup> The parallel development in political institutions comes only in the modern era, when, completely disenchanting by abuses of power by absolutist kings, the bearers of the bourgeois revolutions abandoned faith in personal rule in order to create written constitutions. In between lies the Protestant Reformation which, similarly disillusioned by abuses of power on the part of bishops, popes, and abbots, abandoned a living, organic, personal-yet-ecclesial government for a government of the Church *scriptura sola*. Both written constitutions and sacred Scripture, of course, require interpretation. This need has, in the twentieth century, brought back oligarchic personal rule in the western so-called democracies. For instance, court decisions rather than legislation passed by elected assemblies now drive social and political change in North Atlantic "democracies." Similarly, the Protestant reformers, disenchanting with personal government by bishops, handed over responsibility for interpreting Scripture to scholarly experts in Greek and Hebrew, effectively, to university professors of theology. When the universities secularized during the so-called "Enlightenment," Scripture study was reduced essentially to modern, i.e., historicist, method. At the other end of the spectrum, a highly idiosyncratic and personal anti-intellectual interpretation of Scripture dominated the Evangelical Protestants who arose in response to the secularization of university Protestant theology. This, in turn, has led to a plethora of splintered denominations and sects. In short, giving up on an *abusus non tollit usus* principle of reform of ecclesial episcopal government led to either elitist university theologian oligarchy or idiosyncratic and non-ecclesial personal government by theologically illiterate laymen (and, increasingly, an oligarchy of theologically illiterate laywomen).

We can see a fundamental mistrust, indeed rejection, of the principle of personal discretion in Martin Luther, who sees the very principle of discretion as leading

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achieved the same end as did Thomas Cranmer in the sixteenth century, but in banal rather than exquisite vernacular dress.

<sup>63</sup> See Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1993).

<sup>64</sup> "Nothing New Under the Sun: Mennonites and History," *Conrad Grebel Review* 5 (Winter, 1987) 1-27, with responses pp. 147-53, 260-62.

<sup>65</sup> See Robert D. Anderson, "Medieval Speculative Grammar" cited in note 12 above. The beginning of the shift comes with the speculative grammarians of the twelfth century, though it does not really come to dominate the intellectual scene until the fourteenth century.

<sup>66</sup> To the discussion of the work of Jean Leclercq and Marie-Dominique Chenu in Martin, *Fifteenth-Century*, pp. 47-54, should be added Dirk Wasserman, *Dionysius der Kartäuser: Einführung in Werk und Gedankenwelt*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 133 (Salzburg, 1996), citing additional literature, including Ulrich Köpf and Alf Härdelin.

to abuse. Referring to advice he received from his fellow Augustinians at Erfurt about his spiritual *Anfechtungen*, Luther said:

"Ah! (they say) what are you worrying about? It isn't necessary: you have only to be humble and patient. Do you think that God requires such strict conduct from you? He knows all your imaginings and he is good. One groan will please him. Do you think that nobody can be saved unless he behaves so strictly? Where would all the others be, then, in whom you see no such violence? Perish the thought that they should all be lost! It really is necessary to observe 'discretion,' etc. And so gradually the unhappy soul forgets the fear of the Lord, and that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence."<sup>67</sup>

The move from reform as seeking to distinguish abuse from proper use toward blanket condemnations of existing structures may be seen at every turn in the transitional century of the modern era, the sixteenth. In place of the classic Catholic understanding of sin as effacing but not destroying the image of God and free choice in man, both Calvin and Luther, in somewhat different ways, assert a complete destruction of free will, the destruction of the image of God in man, "total depravity" of human nature, and a deterministic view of predestination.

In contrast, the Carthusian Georg Carpentarius exemplified Carthusian *discretio* even in his reaction to Luther: he greeted Luther's appearance on the public stage initially with joy, and he continued to recognize much that was good in Luther's writings, but he could not approve of Luther's extension and development of his teaching in opposition to the recognized leadership of the church. In December 1522 Adam Petri printed Luther's New Testament translation and gave the Basel Carthusians several copies. They set one aside for the lay brothers. Written on its first page is a comment by Carpentarius to the effect that the translation undoubtedly contains much of Luther's teaching, but little of it is offensive (*ärgerlich*), moreover, each person must read these things with discretion and not build upon anything other than what the common Christian Church teaches and holds. After Froben and Petri gave the Carthusians a copy of Luther's commentary on Galatians, the very work in which Luther expressed his exasperation with monastic discretion, Carpentarius wrote: "At the time [this was written] Luther had not been condemned, but was condemned about two years later, after he had persisted in his vehemence [*protervitas*] in writings that contained both good and bad. And thus he deserved to be condemned equally with the others. Thus this

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<sup>67</sup> *Dictata super Psalterium*, Ps. 99 (LXX), in *Weimar Ausgabe*, vol. 3, p. 447, lines 30-34, translated by E. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London, 1953) 102-20 at 115 as quoted in David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, pp. 7-8. Compare this with Luther's own description of what was happening in his commentary on Galatians: "I tried to live according to the Rule with all diligence, and I used to be contrite, to confess and number off my sins, and often repeated my confession, and sedulously performed my allotted penance. And yet my conscience could never give me certainty, but I always doubted and said, 'You did not perform that correctly. You were not contrite enough. You left that out of your confession.' The more I tried to remedy an uncertain, weak and afflicted conscience with the traditions of men, the more each day found it more uncertain, weaker, more troubled." *In Epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas commentarius*, ch. 5.3 in WA vol. 40.II.15.15, translated by Rupp *ibid.* p. 104, repeated Steinmetz p. 2.

commentary is read with judgment [i.e., with discretion, with critical evaluation] or even is neglected."<sup>68</sup>

When Carpentarius reported in his chronicle on the fact that the authorities in Zürich had had all their church plate melted down with the proceeds designated for the town poor,<sup>69</sup> he commented that "the intent, it would seem on its face is not to be disapproved of, but it remains to be seen what effects will come of it. ... I cannot make any judgment on these things; if they have done good, it will become apparent. They will have to stand or fall before their own lord."<sup>70</sup>

A full exploration of these matters exceeds the confines of the present paper. However, one can suggest that abandoning *discretio*, above all abandoning the principle that *abusus non tollit usus*, lies at the heart of all these developments. Properly angry at ecclesiastical or political abuses, instead of seeking to reform existing institutions, the entire history of the early modern and modern eras reveals again and again a condemnation of the abusive institution as utterly apostate and hence irreformable. This inevitably led to revolutionary change. Precisely this the Carthusians avoided, even when much of the rest of the Catholic Church in Western Europe and North America abandoned, in the name of a putative "Spirit" of Vatican II and without attention to the letter of Vatican II, the principle and practice of *discretio*.

<sup>68</sup> "Qui quidem tunc temporis non fuit condemnatus, sed pene post duos annos, dum autor in protervitate sua persistens, etiam bona simul cum malis, que scripserat, et ipse pariter cum eis condemnari meruerunt. Ideoque commentarius iste legatur cum iudicio vel potius negligatur." *Narratio rerum, quae reformationis tempore Basileae et in circumjacentibus regionibus gestae sunt, auctore frater Georgio Carpentarii de Brugg, Cartusienis, 1518 (1499)-1528*, in *Basler Chroniken*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Vischer and Alfred Stern, with assistance from Moriz Heyne; published by the Historische Gesellschaft in Basel (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1872), 378-425, at 369-70.

<sup>69</sup> With hindsight it is now clear that this was part of a Europe-wide phenomenon of wresting control of welfare and caritative service from the Church and placing it in the hands of temporal governments, one of the final stages in the centuries-old struggle between the spiritual and temporal powers.

<sup>70</sup> "Intentio quidem, ut apparet, in speciem non usquequaque improbabilis, sed effectus inde secutus quid fructus boni pariturus sit . . . , omnibus constare potest. Ideoque mihi super his nihil iudicandum arbitror. Si bonum fecerunt, viderint ipsi. Suo domino stant aut cadunt." When Thomas Brun left the Order and the Catholic faith in 1526, he expressed the hope "Deus ignoscat illis, quicquid in illum et nos peccaverunt!" *Ibid.*

## DER MYTHOS DER KARTÄUSER

Beobachtungen zum Bild der Kartäuser in der öffentlichen und literarischen Vorstellung  
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### 1. Der Spielfilm «Broken Silence» - ein Mythos für das ausgehende 20. Jh.?

Vermutlich haben einige von Ihnen den Film «Broken Silence» im Kino selber gesehen. 1996 war dieser Spielfilm mit einem Kartäusermönch als merkwürdig unzeitgemässer Hauptfigur bei der Filmkritik und auf Filmfestivals, aber auch in den Kinos erstaunlich erfolgreich, ja wurde fast zu einer Art Kultfilm.<sup>1</sup> Was steckt hinter diesem Erfolg - mal abgesehen davon, dass der Film gut gemacht ist, Spannung und Unterhaltung bietet und auch schauspielerisch hervorragend besetzt ist?

Ich denke, der Film berührt die Zuschauer, weil er trotz seiner Exotik Sehnsüchte des heutigen Menschen Bild, Erzählung werden lässt. Ich nehme an, Sie haben den Beginn des Films noch im Auge und im Ohr: Eine Off-Stimme im Märchentone entführt den Zuschauer in ein unberührtes, stilles Tal, zum Refugium eines einsamen Kartäuserklosters, wo die Zeit seit jeher stillzustehen scheint. Eine Oase der Ewigkeit. Kein Wort zunächst von den Wechselbällen in der Geschichte der Schweizer Kartause La Valsainte, um die es sich handelt. Als gäbe es keine Kugelschreiber, keine Schreibmaschinen, schon gar keine Computer, lässt eine Mönchshand, untermalt von gregorianischem Gesang, eine Schreibfeder übers Pergament gleiten. Und dann der Held, der Kartäusermönch Fried Adelphi: eine Art reiner Tor, der sich nach fünfundzwanzig Jahren in der Kartause nicht zurechtfindet in der Welt des Geldes und der Kreditkarten, dessen einzige Sünde darin besteht, das geheimnisvolle Gesetz des «ewigen Schweigens» gebrochen zu haben, das hier ins Mythische übersteigert wird. Denn jeder von ihnen, der schon einmal eine noch bewohnte Kartause besucht hat, weiss, dass weder in der Theorie noch in der Praxis ein solch absolutes Schweigegebot herrscht, welches minimalste menschliche Kommunikation verbietet. Ja sogar im Beichtstuhl bekommt der Mönch vom Priester den Vorwurf zu hören, er breche mit dieser Beichte sein Schweigegebäude.

Der Film erzählt also den Mythos eines aus der «Welt» völlig ausgegrenzten Bereichs, erzählt damit im ursprünglichen Sinn von einem heiligen Ort, von einem noch nicht profanierten Paradies. Sie erinnern sich vielleicht auch noch an den einst erfolgreichen Buchtitel «Das weisse Paradies» über das Leben der Kartäuser in La Valsainte.<sup>2</sup> Und dieser Eindruck des Überzeitlichen und Überörtlichen - was ja wesentlich zu einem Mythos gehört - wird im Film noch betont durch die Spiegelung in der fernöstlichen Szenerie (Indien und Indonesien), durch die der Kartäusermönch geführt wird.

Moderne Mythen werden nicht mehr am Herdfeuer, sondern in Filmen erzählt.<sup>3</sup> Dabei ist mir durchaus klar, dass der klassisch religionswissenschaftliche Begriff des Mythos auf diese modernen Mythen nicht tel quel übertragbar ist. Gleichwohl lassen sich

<sup>1</sup> Regie: Wolfgang Panzer. Der Film erhielt mehrere internationale Filmpreise.

<sup>2</sup> Peter van der Meer de Walcheren. *Das weisse Paradies*, München 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. zu den modernen Formen des Mythos Roland Barthes, *Mythen des Alltags*, Frankfurt a.M., 19. Aufl., 1998 (edition suhrkamp 92).