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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

THE COVENANTED PILGRIM: THE BIBLICAL ROOTS OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH-CHRISTIAN STUDIES IN FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF JEWISH-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

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> SOUTH ORANGE, NJ MA'Y2004

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Introduction	3
Chapter 1. Foundations for the Themes of Covenant and Pilgrim	8
a. The New Covenant (b'rit hadassah)	14
b Definition of Covenant	15
c. Israel's Pilgrimage	17
d Definition of Pilgrim(age)	21
Chapter 2. Biblical Covenant and Pilgrimages	24
a. Covenant with Noah	24
b. Covenant with Abraham	25
c. Covenant with Israel	27
d. The Sinai Covenant	27
i.) Sinai Treaty Formulary	29
e. The Wilderness Experience	31
f. The Life of the Covenanted People	33
i.) Leadership	33
ii.) Feasts and Sabbatical Law	35
iii) "Covenant community" within the Covenant community	36
g. Second Temple Period	37
i.) Jewish Roots of Evangelical Poverty	38
1.) Poverty: Prophets and Psalms	40
ii.) The Essenes (Qumran Community)	44
Chapter 3. The New Testament: The New Covenant	52
a. Teachings of Jesus Christ	54
i.) The Synoptic Gospels	54
ii.) Gospel of John	57
b. Jesus Christ The New Covenant	59
i.) The People of the New Testament	60
ii.) Mystical Body of Christ	61
iii.) The Christian Community	63
iv.) Varied Roles of Servant Leadership	64
Chapter 4. Christian Covenant Response: Marriage	71
а Marriage	71
b. Married life: Covenant Dimension	72
c. Marriage: Imitation of Christ (Eph. 5:21-34)	77

Chapter 5 Christian Covenant Response: Covenanted Pilgrim (Consecrated Life)	80
a.) The Great Pilgrimage	84
i.) Jerusalem Temple (Background)	84
ii.) Call of the Disciples	87
iii.) Commission	90
vi.) On the "Road"	94
b.) The Covenanted Pilgrim	98
i.) Rites of Initiation	98
1.) Separation	98
2.) Liminal Period	99
3.) Re-aggregation	106
Chapter 6 The Evangelical Counsels	107
a. Background	107
b. Religious vows: The Life of Jesus Christ	108
c. Evangelical counsels for all Christians	109
d Evangelical counsels: Consecrated Life	113
Conclusion	117
Appendix	120
Bibliography	121

Introduction

In Sacred Scripture pilgrimage is tied to the covenant. For covenant renewal took place in the annual pilgrimage events. A project such as this on Christian life as a pilgrimage may seem pedestrian but the degree of intensity in that experience offers a unique interpretation. So when the Church attributes the term "pilgrim" to itself, it reaffirms the believer's commitment to follow Jesus. But within this larger covenant community, there exist smaller communities, married couples and dedicated persons both witness to their fidelity to the covenant entered into by baptism. The latter voluntarily choose the vowed life (Consecrated Life) and by their consecrated state, they vow to keep the covenant alive in their way of living. It is this group that our thesis addresses.

Though literature on the Biblical roots of the Consecrated Life abounds, an issues such as covenant and pilgrim, the intrinsic response that relates to the vowed life within the Biblical covenantal framework, is yet to be fully explored; hence our decision to explore the concept of covenant and pilgrim(age)...

The Church Fathers at the end of the Second Vatican Council decreed on the contemporary renewal of the religious life:

- a.) Constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life, and to
- b.) The primitive inspiration of the institute, and
- c.) Their adaption to the changed conditions of our times.

There is no gainsaying that for a vibrant religious life all three elements must be pursued with equal zeal. But for the purpose of this thesis, attention is drawn to a small aspect of "the constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life." This

means exploring the biblical covenant-pilgrimage phenomenon in the life of the consecrated person specifically following Jesus on the Road.

The rationale for this study is to provide an added scriptural source for the enrichment of the vowed life in Nigeria. My personal experience as Formator and in leadership positions within the community of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus reinforced my understanding of the need for a strong biblically based orientation to the religious life.

The sheer magnitude in numbers of the emerging African Church beclouds the struggles and difficulties inherent in the communities of faith. Unlike the Western Church, which has enjoyed the benefits of the Judaeo-Christian principles for over two millennia, the African Church is in an embryonic stage; indeed the Church in my native Eastern Nigeria (Igboland) is barely in its second century (less than 120 years).

Unfortunately, the Islamic conquest of the areas inhabited by the vibrant North African Church that was synonymous with the Golden Age of the Fathers almost obliterated Christianity from the continent. Since the 7th century, Christianity has been the underdog in Africa but God used the Western colonization process to rekindle the light of Christ in many African countries. This light was almost extinguished in Eastern Nigeria during the untoward episode of the Nigeria civil war (1966-1970). This episode robbed many Nigerian Christians of the opportunity of "honing" the faith that the missionaries had brought. In terms of communication, the Christian faith of times past, the principles which applied in the early centuries of Christianity, may prove more effective since also the society is being transformed into a literate culture. In my professional life, contact with the mainstream community in Nigerian reveals a yearning

desire for the possession of a deeper knowledge of the faith (biblical roots) in order to witness fully to Christ in society. Since candidates for the religious life are drawn from this same population the quality of formation for the full participation in the covenant becomes pertinent.

Thus we consider these questions germane to our consideration:

- la. What constitutes a covenant?
- 1b. In what sense are people said to be covenanted?
- 2a. What is the covenant response?
- 2b. What makes the vowed person a covenanted-pilgrim?

Responses to these questions are expounded in the six chapters of this work. Our approach will be based on the careful assessment of religious experiences within the biblically oriented community of faith. In the regard, the phenomenological method is implored.

Chapter One covers the foundations for the theme of covenant and pilgrim(age). Chapter Two explores the notion biblical covenant and pilgrimages, the People of God in the Hebrew Scriptures and their covenantal relationship with him who, because he loves them, brings them forth from servitude to service. Thus we transit into Chapter Three with the concept of "New Covenant," in the New Testament, which Jesus Christ instituted by his death on the Cross-and his being raised from the dead. In this dispensation, baptism into Christ's death guarantees membership in the New Covenant, hence in the "New People of God". We begin to see the covenant response in the following of Christ, pilgrimage as it is in the married life in Chapter Four; this same ascending response too is shown in Chapter Five with the vowed life, the vocation of the

vowed person viewed in its eschatological context, promoting God's covenant of love in creation. Chapter Six surveys the Evangelical counsels in the life of Jesus, every Christian and the "professionally" religious.

We would be feigning ignorance if mention were not made of the fallout that accompanied the close of the Second Vatican Council in terms a mass exodus of vowed persons from their communities. Repercussions of the debacle have changed the face of Religious communities in many countries. Not only are the ones who remained passing on, but fewer and fewer persons are embracing the vowed life, a situation which puts the entire institution in jeopardy. It is highly probable that perhaps the outcome of events after the Second Vatican Council would have been different had the formation of vowed persons been more biblically oriented. As the dust settles in the West, the new Churches of Africa and Asia have the lessons of the older Church as a guide in forming a people for the Lord.

Following the recommendations of the Fathers of the Council, our thesis goes back to basics, in an attempt to contribute to the deepening and finer understanding of the commitment to the vowed life in the "New Church" of Nigeria. For want of new initiatives, Community Leaders clutch on to Laws (Constitutions) as a way of "animating" members, apparently not recognizing the fact that the law was never intended to be a burden to the members. Rather, it was a grateful response for the covenant God made with them (Catechism of the Catholic Church# 450). Therefore, the whole notion of covenant sometimes becomes lost on the establishment in favor of what is to be done. Vocation to the vowed life is primarily "to be" a sign for the people. It is

in the "being" that the "doing" comes to life through ministry, thus gracing the call: "follow me".

Chapter 1 Foundations for the Themes of Covenant and Pilgrim

The concept of covenant is deeply imbedded in the Jewish and Christian traditions because it imparts on God-human relationship, so also the idea of pilgrimage; together they form the core of both religions. At once, both concepts suggest a call and response event. God initiates the covenant and the individual responds. As in the case of Abram, his response to God's call led him forth from his kinfolks for he "went as the Lord directed him" (Gen. 12:4).

Covenant expresses God's love forhumankind. Because God desires to restore the human race to its original state, he offers his covenant of love.

"God wishes to lead all men to life of communion with Himself. It is this idea, fundamental to the doctrine of salvation, which the theme of the covenant expresses. In the Old Testament, it dominates all religious thoughts, but it deepen with the passing of time. In the New Testament it acquires an unparalleled fullness, for henceforth it has as its content the total mystery of Jesus Christ."

The centrality of the covenant concept is captured in the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew term b'rit, covenant by diatheke, which means both covenant and testament (or will) in Greek. Covenant is so important in the Scriptures that in the form testament it has provided for Christians the title for the books of the Bible, but it is an idea that requires a probing.² However, the word itself evokes relationship (in Latin convenire means "come together"). Two or more parties come together for a purpose, which implies relation as the core of covenant. In the Scriptures, covenant refers, above

Lean Giblet and Pierre Grelot, Covenant, Leon-Dufour, X, (ed) Dictionary of Biblical Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977) 93

² A classic summary of scholarship on treaty and covenant is offered by G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," Interpretater's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) Volume 1 p. 714 - 723. This is critiqued and developed by McCarthy D. J., Old Testament Covenant, A Survey of Current Opinions (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1977) 1

all, to a relationship between God and humankind as portrayed in the story of the Hebrew people. It is a bond, which guarantees that human beings would never again be alone or in isolation. Hence the affirmation of the reciprocal nature of the bilateral covenant: "I will be your God, you shall be my people." In this sense, then, covenant becomes a solemn promise made binding by an oath recognized by the parties as expressing a commitment. In some respects, a covenant involves obligations, whether it is unilateral or bilateral. Scholars use evidence of international political treaties of the Ancient Near East, particularly those of the Hittite kings, to illustrate a background for the biblical notion of covenant. In both Sumerian and Akkadian sources there were already well-formed patterns of regulations of international affairs usually associated with the subjugation of a people defeated in war, mainly treaties between sovereigns and vassals.³ Based on the group of treaties from the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C., Hillers summarizes Viktor Korosec's classic juristic analysis of their form and intention thus:

(1) the preamble; (2) the historical prologue; (3) the stipulations; (4) provisions for deposit of the text and for public reading; (5) a list of the divine witnesses to the treaty; (6) blessings and curses.⁴

To this is added the Ratification and Formal ceremony as found in Exodus 24:3-8.

The proclamation of the covenant with the obligation of the people and the blood ritual at meal seals the treaty.⁵ Baltzer writes that this schema can be found, with minor variations, in all the treaties.

It remains so constant that, if a treaty is preserved only in fragments, they can be arranged in order with a high degree

³ McCarthy D. J., 10

⁴ Hillers, Delbert R., Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: John Hopkins Paperback edition, 1969) 29

⁵ Baltzer, Klaus, The Covenant Formulary (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). 30

of assurance. The structural regularity, however, does not go hand in hand with uniformity in detail. The treaties give the impression of having been reworked in each case to conform to the special situation of which they were framed. Despite the formalism to be expected in a legal document, they exhibit striking variations in the use of literary and especially stylistic resources. We may conclude that the technique of composing such treaties was already highly developed in the chancelleries of the Hittite court.⁶

This treaty formulary will be applied to the Sinai covenant in the next chapter and applied to a modern day vow formulary in Chapter 5.

In the biblical sense, covenants are said to be "cut" (karat). Though the most familiar term in English is the verb "make", it does not alter its meaning. This Hebrew term karat accentuates the cultic nature of covenant and at once confirms the obligations made as absolutely binding and inviolable. Cutting into pieces the sacrificial animals portends an oath, suggesting that the one who makes the offering be so treated if he does not keep his side of the covenant (Jer. 34:18). Almost any action recognized by both parties to a covenant as such might serve to make a promise one which could not, on pain of catastrophe, be violated.

The Hebrew Scriptures alone gives a surprising number of such forms, from the purely verbal oaths of ISam. 3:17; 25:34 to the symbolic actions of Gen. 15; Jer. 24; the covenant meals of Gen 26:30 (where the oath-taking is distinguished from the feast, however); 31:54; the "covenant of salt" (Num. 18:19); and the ritual of Exod. 24:5-8, which is preceded by the words: "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do."

Moses concludes the Sinai covenant celebration thus: "He took the blood and

⁶Baltzer .. 10

⁷ Mendenhall, G. E. "Covenant" Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) Volume 1 720

sprinkled it on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his." (Ex. 24:8). Finally, a memorial is set up as a witness to the event (Gen. 21:33; 31:48). This and many other rituals such as a kiss, a gift, handshake, and meal, to mention but a few, symbolize covenant rituals.

In the Ancient Near East, covenants are made in almost all matters that affect human relationships. Peace covenants are made with other "nations"; there is covenant between blood relatives, that of marriage and of friendship. Generally, the seriousness of the matter involved determines what ritual is operational. Even though each party to a covenant should be aware of his obligation, this is not always the case. In the relationship between Jonathan and David, for example, there do not seem to be any kind of obligation on either partner. It was pure benevolence. A real soul relationship existed between them:

And Jonathan entered into a bond with David, because he loved him as himself. Jonathan divested himself of the mantle he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his military dress, and his sword, his bow and his belt (1 Sam 18:4).8

The most recognizable personal covenant is that of marriage. As a bond of unity, the two individuals entering into a marriage relationship become one. From this the prophets derived the fundamental idea of God's marriage to Israel. Israel becomes God's bride, and God takes care of Israel as a bridegroom would. The prophet Hosea expressed the depth of this relationship. Jeremiah (chapter 2) expressed this chaste and ardent love of the nuptial order. Isaiah (chapter 5) sings of the "dialogue between the Beloved and

⁸Bouwmeester, W., The Bible on the Covenant, (Wisconsin: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1966) 14

His vineyard" and God's readiness for a relationship with Israel in the text: "As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you" (Is. 62:5). The imagery of God's marriage to Israel was much perceived like all marriages in the Ancient Near East:

The groom had to buy his bride (Ex. 22:16; Deut. 22:29). He was engaged to her (Gen. 24:49ff.). She became his property. The husband could do with her as he wished: he was her Baal, her lord. She is placed at the husband's disposal; she is meant for man and therefore her function is to surrender herself completely to him, to obey him absolutely. She is not allowed to have anyone beside him; the man is a jealous partner. 10

This depiction of Israel as the spouse, and God as the bridegroom made the covenant relationship appear as an encounter of love (Ez 16:6-14), the attentive and gratuitous love of God, calling in return for a love, which will translate itself into obedience. William Moran points out that the omnipresent Deuteronomic word "love" ('ahab) is borrowed directly from the treaty tradition. He contends that its meaning in Deuteronomy is not unlike that of the 'love" which the vassal owed his overlord. That is, he was called upon to be faithful, and to dedicate himself totally to the service of his overlord. The vassal's love is essentially obedience and fidelity; it is a love which could be and was commanded. Such is the background in which henceforth heightened the fundamental expression of the bilateral covenant: "You are my people and I am your God." Here again Israel's love for God should show itself naturally in obedience. In this respect, the people are forced to make a decision, which is for them a choice between life and death (Deut. 30:15ff.). This too is a result of the covenant into which they have

⁹Neher, André The Prophetic Existence translated by William Wolf (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1969) 247

Bouwmeester, 34

"see also Bossman, "Paul's Mediterranean Gospel: Faith, Hope, Love" Biblical Theological Bulletin 25
(1995) 71-78

entered.¹² Moran's argument delineate the love expressed in Deuteronomy as a consolidating factor that enabled Israel secure its political future, at least for a time.

Much rested on Israel's fidelity to her One Spouse-God. Chastisement followed acts of infidelity. According to Ezekiel God withdrew his Presence from their midst (Ez. 8:6; 10:18-23) because of their transgression. Consequently, the Temple was destroyed and Israel carried off to exile. Since God cannot withdraw his words, his covenant remained unchanged but Israel would have to renew herself to reenter the covenant. Hence the concept of the New Covenant emerges: "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31ff; see 33:20ff.). Hosea had anticipated this call under the aspect of a new betrothal, which would bring love, justice, fidelity, knowledge of God to the bride, and which would re-establish peace between man and the rest of creation (Ho. 2:20:24).13 For Ezekiel this new dispensation harks back to the original covenant: "You will be my people and I will be your God" (Ez. 36:28; 37:27). In Isaiah's Message of Consolation, this eschatological covenant again assumes the traits of the wedding of God and the New Jerusalem (Is. 54). The mysterious Servant whom God set up as the "covenant of the people and the light of the nations" is the one who made the covenant (Is. 42:6; 49:6ff.). Thus the plan of the covenant, Which dominates all biblical history, will find its culmination at the end of time. Revealed in an imperfect way in the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, it will finally materialize in perfect forms, at once interior and

¹³Jean Giblet and Pierre Grelot, Covenant in Leon-Dufour, 96

¹² Jean Gilbert and Pierre Grelot, Covenant, Léon-Dufour X., (ed) Dictionary of Biblical Theology, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977) 95

universal, by the mediation of the Servant of Yahweh 14. According to the New Testament writers, this mediation, turned toward the future, ushers in the New Covenant.

The New Covenant (b'rit hadassah)

In times of oppression, faithful Jews were exhorted to prepare for God's action to rescue them. For some groups the "New Covenant" theme in Jeremiah was integral to this message. Thus the Qumran and related texts include a description of the community as: "the people of the New Covenant in the land of Damascus."

During his public ministry Jesus claimed to be the way to God because of his unique intimacy with the Father, a claim supported by the Resurrection and Pentecost event, which confirmed Jesus as the Wisdom of God fulfilling the Law and the Prophets. Thus for the Christians, he became the New Covenant. Of unique importance, then, is the synoptic pericope of the Last Supper, with the phrase "Blood of the covenant" (Mk. 14:24; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20). The sacrifice of the covenant, which is for the redemption of many, is reminiscent of the Sinai even; here it is connected with the Paschal lamb (the blood that is placed on the door post as a sign for deliverance from death.) At the meal they express release from ownership by the human power (the king of Egypt) to ownership by the power of God who delivered them to be his servants: servitude to service. Thus for Christians, Jesus became the mediator of the covenant that Isaiah's message of Consolation had suggested. Herein too Christian faith sees that Jeremiah's (and Ezekiel's) "new covenant" is fulfilled through the blood of Jesus; human hearts will then be changed and the Spirit of God will be given. And because this act will henceforth be rendered present in ritual gesture, which Jesus commanded to "do again in memory of me," it is by the Eucharistic participation, accomplished by faith, that the faithful will be

¹⁴ Jean Giblet and Pierre Grelot, Covenant in Léon-Dufour, 96

united most intimately to the mystery of the new covenant and that they will benefit by its graces.¹⁵

This sketch of themes related to covenant is by no means exhaustive. For the purpose of this study, we would at this point formally define covenant and continue with a discussion of the biblical pilgrim(age) theme.

Definition of Covenant

The Berith, then, is that cultic act whereby obligations or agreements of whatever sort were solemnly made absolutely binding and inviolable. Its content and therefore its meaning derive solely from the nature of the obligation; depending on what these are; it can mean covenant, agreement, treaty solemn assurance, obligation, and oath.¹⁶

B'rit is sealing the relationship between two parties, denoting obligation and commitment, assurance through the oath and agreement in sharing (or imitating God).

Unlike the idea of covenant, not many studies have been made on pilgrims in biblical times. We would therefore, resort to the text of Scripture itself in the development of this idea.

The relationship of man to God in both the Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament is generally existentialized in a particular historical site, and the religious pilgrim wishes to realize anew, for himself and in his own time, the truths of faith commemorated in a specific place.¹⁷ So we see biblical writers comparing life on earth to a journey or a walk as expressed in Jacob's remark to Pharaoh: "The years I have lived as wayfarer amount to a hundred and thirty. Few and hard have been these years of my life,

¹⁵ Léon-Dufour 97

¹⁶ Raltzer 3

¹⁷ Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage translated and annotated by George E. Gingras, Ph. D. Catholic University of America, Washington D. C. in Ancient Christian Writers no. 38 (New York: Newman Press, 1970) 18

and they do not compare with the years my ancestors lived as wayfarers" (Gen 47:9). Many speak of pilgrimage as a goal towards which they are moving or striving. This involves a sense of commitment to a purpose. The pilgrim enacts an experience, which signifies outwardly the sacred meaning of life, growth and transformation. But is in the human experience to orient one's life around what is believed to be good, beautiful, true and sacred. In quest of this, people must travel, taking to the road to discover those special places that speak to their deepest needs and provide meaning and power in their lives. The seeker is impelled to leave home and familiar surroundings behind on a journey to a sacred center "out there." But pilgrimage is also a journey "in there," a spiritual interior quest within the heart of those who feel that something is lacking in their lives — a sense of mystery and wonder, power, health, meaning, and connection with others. The phenomenon of pilgrimage involves a Sabbatical lifestyle (see Chapter 2, e, ii). The small covenant communities lived it and so did Jesus and his disciples.

Most important, pilgrimage implies an upward movement: "Come let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the House of the God of Jacob" (Is. 2:3a). Psalm 15 makes clear who shall abide in the Lord's tent, who may dwell on his holy mountain:

Whoever walks without blame,
doing what is right,
speaking truth from the heart;
Who does not slander a neighbor,
does no harm to another,
never defames a friend;
Who disdains the wicked,
but honors those who fear the Lord;
Who keeps an oath despite the cost,
lends no money at interest,
accepts no bribes against the innocent.

¹⁸ Frizzell L., Pilgrimage: a Study of the Biblical Experience, Jeevadhara, (1982) 71

Whoever acts like this shall never be shaken.

The Psalmist expresses both the purity to be possessed by those who approach the abode of the Lord and at the same time indicates transformation on the road to God.

Thus this examination of conscience in itself does produce some forces in the pilgrim that activate events and produces transformation in their lives. Hence the last sentence of the Psalm confirms the resultant effect of conversion.

Abram may well be regarded as the first pilgrim in Scripture in departing from his home to enter the land of promise, but in the sense that pilgrimage is an "inward" journey, Noah qualifies as the primary pilgrim for his covenant response was expressed after the Ark episode. Abram was no more truly the father of the faithful than as the pattern of a pilgrim. He was a stranger on arriving to the Promised Land according to the passage, "... the land of Canaan, and the land in which they were living as aliens" (Ex. 6:4). Abraham's alienation from the gods of his forefathers led him to behold the glory of God (Gen. 12:7).

Israel's Pilgrimages

For the ancient Israelite peasant community, life was bound to the agricultural year. Since agriculture sustained the community's life in very intimate ways, the only relief from working the land was when the harvest was brought home. Harvest time became an opportunity to rejoice and to celebrate. As the law required, celebration is held in the local sanctuary three times a year corresponding to the three agricultural harvests:

"Three times a year you shall celebrate a pilgrim feast to me. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread... You shall keep the feast of the grain harvest... and the finally, the

feast at the fruit harvest at the end of the year when you gather in the produce from the field" (Ex 23:14-16). Why must these feasts be kept? Why three times a year? These have to do with remembrance, "lest they forget the marvels the Lord" (Deut 26:4-10). Elkanah and his family fulfilled this obligation at their local shrine at Shiloh: "This man regularly went on pilgrimage from his city to worship the Lord of hosts and to sacrifice to him at Shiloh" (I Sam. 1:3). The people went up other shrines such as: Shechem (Jos. 24:25), Bethel (Gen. 35:3), Beersheba (Amos. 5:5), Ophra (Jg. 6:24), Zorah (Jg. 13:19ff.), Mizpha (I Sam. 7:5f.), Gilgal (ISam. 11:15), Gibeon (IKg. 3:4), and Dan(IKg. 12:29) to fulfill the obligations.

Later in Israel's history, after King David's establishment of Jerusalem, the practice of three yearly pilgrimages was focused on the Temple built by Solomon. The reform of Josiah, however, abolished all local sanctuaries and fixed Jerusalem as the place for the celebration of the Pasch (2 Kg 23:2; 2 Ch. 35) and the two other feasts, of the Weeks and of the Tents (Dt 16:1-17).¹⁹

Remembering is a recurring theme in the Scriptures. Jacob's family pilgrimage to Bethel and subsequent erection of an altar there is in remembrance of God's saving act when he was fleeing from his brother Esau (Gen. 35:1-7). God's remembrance produced the Exodus event "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob" and freed the Israelites from bondage. For this reason, God is to be "remembered throughout all generations" (Ex. 3:16). Therefore the institution of the Passover became a memorial, least they forget their God, and his mighty deeds. In instituting the Holy Eucharist, at the Last Supper, Jesus instructed his disciples: "Do this in remembrance of

George Augustin, Pilgrimage, in Léon-Dufour 431

me" (Mt.26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:15-20). It is this sense of history that combines with inner need to experience the holy that compel the individual to undertake a journey of faith: pilgrimage. Israel's annual journeys to the holy shrine provided a striking expression for the eschatological hope: the Day of salvation is seen in terms of a pilgrimage, as the assembly of the people and of the pagans at last reunited (Is. 2:2-5; 60; 66:18-21; Mi 7:12; Ze 14:16-19; Tb 13:11).²⁰

The "Psalms of ascent" (120-134) reflects the prayers and mood of pilgrims. Psalm 122 typifies the faith; joy, adoration and attachment pilgrims have to the Lord's sanctuary:

I rejoice when they said to me. Let us go to the house of the Lord. And now our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city. walled round about. Here the tribes have come. The tribes of the Lord. As it was decreed for Israel. to give thanks to the name of the Lord Here are the thrones of justice. the thrones of the house of David. For the peace of Jerusalem pray: May those who love you prosper! May peace be within your ramparts. prosperity within your towers. For family and friends I say, May peace be yours For the house of the Lord, our God, I pray May blessing be yours.

The immediate setting of this Psalm appears to be the pilgrims' arrival, as indicated by the statement, "Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem." The pilgrims have only just arrived and so are marveling at their initial glimpses of the city where the

²⁰ George Augustin, Pilgrimage, in Léon-Dufour 431

Presence of the LORD resided. God had revealed that his peculiar dwelling on earth was, for that time at least, on Mount Zion in the Holy Temple. For that time in the wider flow of salvation history Israel was the target of the covenant - a covenant whose promises finally extended to all the nations of the earth. The covenant was in bloom there, replete with the global salvation it portended. The Psalmist marveled over the architecture of the place, walls, citadels, and closely compacted structure of the city. Special note is given to the halls of justice in Jerusalem as the place from which wise decisions for God's people are issued. Because of all this, the Psalm concludes with prayer for peace. "Pray for the peace (shalom) of Jerusalem." And since Jerusalem is the sphere of God's reign, that leadership also exercises itself in shalom. Although the Psalmist's words appear to focus on Jerusalem itself, the implications of a prayer for shalom extend beyond those walls and towers to encompass the whole world. A call to pray for peace should lead to the exercise of peace. "For the sake of the house of the Lord, I will seek your good; For the sake of my relatives and friends, I will say, Peace be within you." This articulates the aspirations that the pilgrim brought to the place of worship and also the blessings he carried back home at the end of the divine encounter. Pilgrimage then refreshed and energized because it is sustained by an intimate knowledge of the ways that lead to the Divine Presence. Little wonder than "Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem," (Lk.2: 43) after his Bar Mitzvah at the end of his family pilgrimage.

Jesus of Nazareth, who came to bring to fulfillment the Law and the Prophets, brought a new meaning to the notion of pilgrimage to a designated sanctuary. This is indicated in the perspective of the Fourth Gospel. "Believe me, woman the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (Jn.

4:22). John depicted that Jesus, being vested in the religion of his ancestors, faithfully observed the entire cycle of pilgrimage feasts throughout his ministry (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 7:14; 10:22ff; 12:12). His disciples did the same, even after the crucifixion (Act 20:16; 24:11). In identifying himself with the Temple (In 2:21), Jesus fulfills the Jerusalem Temple, that symbol of God's presence in Judaism. The symbolic nature of the Jerusalem Temple, as for all other major shrines in the ancient world, depended upon a series of features that. taken together, established the sacred precincts as being located at the cosmic center of the universe, at the place where God's control over the universe is affected. Jesus' claim was fulfilled in his exaltation and glorification. His glorified body, the New Temple, becomes the center of Worship for his followers and no longer any location on earth (Jn. 2:19-21; 4:21-23). "From now on it is the life of the people of God themselves that is regarded as the real eschatological pilgrimage (2 Cor. 5:6ff; Heb. 13:14). This pilgrimage is also an Exodus under the leadership of the Lord Jesus (Act. 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:10); as its goal it has spiritual realities: the mountain of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly of the first-born whose names are written in the heavens (Heb. 12:22ff) and a temple that is the 'the Lord God almighty and the Lamb' (Apoc. 21:22-26).21

Definition of pilgrim(age)

A pilgrim is one who makes a journey of remembrance as part of a community to a place consecrated by some manifestation of divine or by the activity of some great religious figure. The purpose is to discover that which speaks to their deepest needs and provide meaning and power to their lives. In the Hebrew tradition of Exodus 34:23, three times a year all your males should appear before the Lord in his appointed place in

²¹ George, Augustin, op. cit 431-432

addition to this agreement for men, the women and children are referred to appear at the Temple in Deutero no my 31:12, 13. The purpose is to enjoy the experience of God's awe in their life thus pilgrimage is departure from secular life to enter the holy.

The word pilgrimage is derived from the Latin term *peregrinus* "stranger." It describes a person who travels to a foreign place in quest for some religious experience. Hence pilgrimage is an encounter with God in the context of worship.²² In this sense, all people belonging to a worshiping community are pilgrims. Usually the visit to the holy place, which is the objective of the pilgrimage, is prepared for by rites of purification and is concluded by an assembly, making the faithful aware of the religious community of which they are part.²³

In his seminal work, Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Victor Turner identifies pilgrimage phenomenon as a rite of passage, a liminal process. He defines liminality as:

"the state and process of mid-transition in a rite of passage. During the liminal period, the characteristics of the liminars are ambiguous, for they pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. Liminars are betwixt and between. The liminars are stripped of status and authority, removed from a social structure maintained and sanctioned by power and force, and leveled to a homogenous social state through discipline and ordeal. Their secular powerless may be compensated for by a sacred power... Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, or communitas; ... In this no-place, and no-time that resists classification, the major classifications and categories of culture emerge with the integuments of myth, symbol, and ritual."

George, Augustin, ibid 430
 George, Augustin, ibid 430

²⁴ Turner, Victor, Images and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) 249-250

Turner demonstrates that the rite of passage is marked by three phases: separation, limen or margin, and aggregation. Turner's insight will provide the basis for our analysis in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2 Biblical Covenant and Pilgrim (age)

"I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations." (Isaiah 42:6)

Isaiah describes God's purpose in calling the Hebrews out of Egypt is to be found in these words of the prophet Isaiah, "covenant of the people, a light for the nations" (Is. 42:6). Israel's vocation therefore is to be "the light of the World" (see Mt. 5:14). This is the meaning of the being a "Chosen People," destined to play a role in the salvation of the human race. Isaiah's prophecy began unfolding from the biblical account of the dawn of creation.

Scripture's first revelation of the relationship between covenant and community is in the story of creation, particularly in the creation of the human being. God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Because human life develops within the context of community, the person's full response to life can only be realized within that same context. Therefore in his desire for relationship with humans, God kept company with Adam and Eve as one would with friends, for God visits them in "the cool of the evening" (Gen. 3:8). In creating humans and giving them a special place in the design of creation is in itself an act of God's love. The human response was an act that would further enrich his being for he was to "cultivate and care for" the garden in which he has been settled (Gen. 2:15). Later the Psalmist would respond by raising the cup of salvation, and calling on the Lord's name (Ps 116:13).

a.) Covenant with Noah

Scripture makes an explicit introduction of the notion of covenant in the antediluvian era when God covenanted with Noah: "Everything on earth will perish. But

with you I will establish my covenant" (Gen. 6:17-18). God's covenant with Noah and Abraham after him did not have all the complexity of the Sinai covenant. In the case of Noah, it was simply a unilateral promise.²⁵

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and will every living creature that was with you: all the birds and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth." God added: "This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings. As the bow appears in the clouds. I will see it and recall the everlasting covenant that I have established between God all living beings -- all mortal creature that are on earth. God told Noah: "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all mortal creatures that are on earth." (Gen. 9:8-17)

b.) Covenant with Abraham

In Abraham, God initiated yet another covenant. Abram is called and sent away²⁶ "from the land of your kinsfolk and your father's house to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Age is a significant factor in this call. Why did God call the 75-year old Abram, literally uprooting and transplanting him? While Psalm 90:10 suggests that life's work is done at 70 God makes bold to initiate "an everlasting covenant" with one who is considered done with life. Indubitably, this has palpable implications on covenant and

²⁵ Hillers, 101

²⁶ Neher, André translated by William Wolf, The Prophetic Existence A New Analysis of the Prophets of the Old Testament (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1969) 180

pilgrimage but its investigation is not for this present work. Notice that Abram left his native Haran with his wife, Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all his possessions (Gen. 12:5), indicating the family or community feature of covenant. In the early days of Israel before the monarchy, the covenant was something in which every family had participated, if only in liturgical repetition.²⁷

The faith that constituents covenant's foundation is clearly manifest in Abram's response. Abram, landless and with only what was essential for sustenance, took to the road as a pilgrim to his promised inheritance. Stephen Doyle writes thus:

The community of the Old Testament, by their very reporting of Abraham's vocation, showed their recognition that faith and life in covenant presuppose a spirit and actuality of poverty, at least in its beginnings. Abraham had to give up country, home and family, in order to become a pilgrim believer.²⁸

As Abram's relationship with God deepened, formalization of the covenant became imperative. Hence the pact of the pieces (Gen. 15:7-18) followed by Abram's total surrender of himself in the act of circumcision (Gen. 17:2-5, 10-11). Abraham's circumcision began the equivalent of a spousal relationship to God. Herein is the genesis of the prophets' presentation of the covenant between God and Israel as a marriage. Isaiah vividly described it thus:

"For he who has become your husband is your Maker; his name is the Lord of hosts; Your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, called God of all the earth... My love shall never leave you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you." (Is. 54:5, 10)

²⁷ Hillers 101

²⁸ Doyle, Stephen C, Covenant Renewal In Religious Life (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975) 63

c.) Covenant with Israel

Details of the covenant continue to unfold in the lives of the Patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob, even through the 430 years of slavery in Egypt. The Exodus event was the beginning of a major breakthrough in the permanent establishment of the covenant relationship: God freed Israel from bondage without any merit of their own, a gratuitous act of God. God's saving act, which was accomplished at the crossing of the Reed Sea, marked the covenant. "For love of your fathers he chose their descendants and personally led you out of Egypt by his great power" (Deut. 4:37). Zachary recalled the saving act thus: "To show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant and of the cath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that, rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Ltk. 1:72-75). Freedom offered the choice of service, as imitators of him who saves them (Ex.34:6-7).

With "faith in God and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31) Israel finally left Egypt.

They began their long pilgrimage to the land God covenanted with the patriarch Abraham for his offspring, "It is to your descendants that I will give this land" (Gen 12:7). Sinai was a necessary stop in the pilgrimage route for it provided the needed rites of purification before entering the Promised Land.

d.) Sinai Covenant

The principles of Israel's faith journey, which began on the night of the Passover was to be codified in a formal ceremony on Mount Sinai. Israel's election is only one aspect of the relationship. How to respond to the newly acquired freedom is the point of Sinai. What happened in Sinai, as some tend to conclude is not only the covenant; God

showed Israel how to respond to his love. This is his purpose of giving the Law, epitomized in the Ten Commandments. Neher suggests that the Hebrews could not think of covenant without its being accompanied by the revelation of a divine will. Thus the Law becomes a response to God's saving act initiated as foundation for the covenant. The commandment to love God (Deut 6:5) calls for total loyalty and devotion.

Everything centers on the divine call, around the clarification of the divine will:²⁹

"Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation; This is what you must tell the Israelites" (Ex 19:3-6).

Israel's guaranteed freedom in the land about to be possessed was dependent on their fidelity to the terms of the covenant:

"If you live in accordance with my precepts and are careful to observe my commandments, I will give you rain in due season, so that the land will bear its crops, and the trees their fruit; your threshing will last till vintage time, and your vintage till the time for sowing, and you will have food to eat in abundance, so that you may dwell securely in the land. I will establish peace in the land, that you may lie down to rest without anxiety." (Lev. 26:3-6)

Some scholars have noted that the intensity of the Sinai covenant is a religious expression of human striving for freedom from an oppressive external control and exploitation. In it the aspirations of the human heart for self-expression are manifest. To achieve this feat was possible only under one condition. That condition is Israel's

²⁹ Neher, Andre The Prophet Existence Translated by William Wolf (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1969) 121-122

subjugation to a divine being: God. With a written Law in place, Israel is said to have been liberated effectively from "slavery." The covenant has transferred suzerainty from a human emperor to the supreme deity; this is not "only a religious revolution but also a protest against the feudalistic imperialism of the time." The pattern of the Sinai covenant conveys this reality.

i.) Sinai Treat Formulary

A covenant has many ramifications. Signs, symbols, rituals, and sacrifices surround it. The treaty formulary discussed Chapter 1 may be applied as follows:³¹

- 1. Preamble: This included the name, title of the king, and the message to the vassal. In Exodus 19:5, we read, "I, the Lord, am your God. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all the peoples."
- 2. Review: The historical relationship between the king and vassal was evaluated.
 God says to Moses tell the Israelites: "You have seen for yourself how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagle's wings and brought you here to myself." (Ex. 19:4)
- 3. Stipulations presented: Particular points were stressed.

The Ten Commandments, the matter of the treaty, are delivered (Ex. 20:2-17). It is backed by a postscript, "Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that you may, according to his word, prosper, and may enter in and possess the good land which the Lord promised on oath to your fathers..." (Deut. 6:18) and a challenge: "Carry out carefully every work

See Mendenhall, 714-715

³¹ See Mendenhall, 714-715

of the law. For this is no trivial matter for you; rather it means your very life since it is by this means that you are to enjoy a long life on the land."

(Deut. 32:46-47).

4. Deposition of Document: The document was deposited in the sanctuary of the vassal with requirement of public reading.

"... When all Israel goes to appear before the Lord, your God, in the place which he choose, you shall read the law aloud in the presence of all Israel" (Deut. 31:11). When Moses has finished writing out on a scroll the words of the law in their entirety, he gave the Levites who carry the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord this order: "Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, your God, that there it may be a witness against you." (Deut. 31:24-25) The Law is to be read for the purpose of instruction, "Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates." (Deut. 6:6-9)

5. Witness to the treaty

Moses called on "heaven and earth today to Witness" (Deut 30:19) to the covenant between the community of Israel and God.

6. Blessings and curses

Fidelity to the covenant was rewarded thus: "May you be blessed in the city, and blessed in the country! Blessed be the fruit of your womb, the

produce of your soil and the offspring of your livestock, the issue of your herds and the young of your flock! Blessed be your grain bin and your kneading bow!! May you be blessed in your coming in, and blessed in your going out! (Deut. 28:3-6). The curses are the exact opposite of the blessings.

7. Ratification and formal ceremony

The Lord summoned Moses, Aaron and his sons together with the seventy elders and the people to a formal celebration of the covenant. In this gathering, Moses repeated all the words and ordinances of the Lord, the people "answered with one voice" to do everything the Lord required of them. Then they "offered holocausts and sacrifice young bulls as peace offering. Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls, the other half was splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant he read it aloud to the people, who answered, 'All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do,' Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his'" (Ex. 24:3-8).

e.) The Wilderness Experience

Israel's vocation to be "light to the nations" is realized in leaving behind the pains and pleasures of Egypt. Also this involved following the God whose name "I AM" was revealed to Moses. Scripture records it that it took forty years to reach the Promised Land. "For forty years I led you in the wilderness" (Deut. 29:4). Forty is a significant number in the Bible and Judaism. Jewish mysticism attributes the number 40 to the period of gestation. Evidence abounds in Scriptures (both Testaments) that a 40-day/year

period was indeed a time of mystical experience. For example, Israel spent forty years wandering in the desert before entering the Promised Land. Before he began his public ministry, the Spirit led Jesus into the desert, he "fasted for forty days and forty nights" (Mt. 4:1-2; Mk 1:3; Lk.4: 2). Notice the desert motive. Another crucial 40-day period for Luke was between the Resurrection event and the Ascension when Jesus "presented himself alive" to the disciples "by many proofs after he had suffered" (Acts 1:3). So Israel's desert encounter was perhaps the key to her deep religious experience. The move from the religious milieu of the land (Egypt) of their captivity to the land of freedom required purification, a new mindset, which Sinai provided.

Because this journey back to the Promised Land may be viewed as a pilgrimage, a certain kind of relationship had to be formed in order to establish the manner in which the promised inheritance is to be enjoyed. Primarily, Moses and his collaborators brought the tribes together as a single community. The leaders exploited all intricacies of building community for the benefit of this newly formed relationship. Moses, for example, appointed seventy elders to assist in adjudicating justice (mispat) for the people. Being thus purified by the wilderness experience, Israel was ready to encounter the "I AM."

Worthy of the note is the people's preparations preceding the Theophany (Ex. 19:10-15).

Israel's history as a nation (goy) began with the Great Theophany on Mount Sinai.

Unlike the covenant with Abraham, which was unilateral and with just one individual,

God's covenant with Israel on Sinai involves the entire community: "You will be to

be...a holy nation (goy)" (Ex. 19:5). Both parties to the covenant share certain rights,

duties and responsibilities. Such conditionality is seen in the statement: "If you hearken

to my voice and keep my covenant... you shall be my special possession... you shall be to

me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5). Israel's realization of her full identity could only be in the people's acceptance of the covenant in a community context. This reality would occur if only they "arc to be," while God does the "doing."

Certain aspects of the life in the land are worthy of discussion such as leadership,

Feasts and Sabbaticals and small covenant communities, and Second Temple Period. The

Essenes, that is, the people considered by most scholars to be associated with the Dead

Seas Scrolls, would be discussed in detail under the Second Temple Period.

f.) The Life of the Covenanted People

i.) Leadership

From an outsider's perspective, life within the covenant community seemed to involve a labyrinthine relationship. But in actual fact, life was unsophisticated. The basic pattern of life in the Hebrew community was not so different from that of their neighbors; it centered on a clan. Extended family units made up and sustained the clan. Leadership resided on the most senior, capable man in the clan, and all the institutions arose from this basic family pattern. There was a real and fundamental equality between the members of the family. As power was not concentrated on any one individual or on institutions, the judges, priests, prophets, kings exercised authority at different times and at various levels within the community. No one was above the law. Not even the king. For example, Nathan confronted king David after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and later killed her husband Uriah, the Hittite (2 Sam. 12:5-6). Nathan came to David and told him a story about the rich man who had taken his poor neighbor's only

³² Rhymer, Joseph, The Covenant and the Kingdom, (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Press, 1968) p. 27

ewe and served it to guests because he was too tightfisted to part with one from his flock. Observe that a ewe, not a ram, was taken and killed, which made the crime more intolerable. For an agricultural community, ewes help to sustain life because of their economic value through reproduction. David in a rage condemned to death the man who did such thing. Nathan replied, "You are the man" (2 Sam. 12:7). As though a veil was lifted off his eyes, David suddenly saw the full extent of his crime. All he could say was "I have sinned against the Lord." Elijah likewise defied King Ahab for the murder of Naboth and taking over his piece of land: "The Lord says: After murdering, do you also take possession..." (1 Kgs. 21:19-27). Kings reigned over the land but the prophet provided the control needed to safeguard the covenant.

Nathan who successfully rebuked David, was the first of great line of men who were prepared to withstand the king and, if necessary, the whole of the religious establishment, when they departed from the principles of the covenant. Elijah and Elisha belong to this tradition, and then the succession men whose teaching has been preserved in their writings or the records of their teaching: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zepheniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel. These prophets were essentially men who examined their own times and their own society, who saw things from God's point of view and brought the covenant experience to bear on their situation, so that, through them, there was a steadily expanding exploration of the implications of the covenant.³³

It is significant to note that this form of checks and balances continued into the apostolic era. Paul, "the least of the apostles" but because he was filled with the Spirit, confronted one of the "acknowledged pillars" of the Church, Peter, over his seeming hypocrisy in Jewish-Gentile relations,

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned: for until certain

³³ Rhymer, 139

people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy" (Gal. 2:11-13).

This example of admonition between colleagues follows the biblical tradition of fellowship.³⁴

ii.) Feasts and Sabbatical Law

Celebration is a mark of a settled life, which is not necessarily localized but can be interpreted as a spiritual phenomenon. Israel employed Feasts or "appointed times" to celebrate remembrance of God's great acts of salvation. These holy convocations (feasts) were utilized as time of meeting between God and man for worship. Israel's seven principal feasts are timed according to cycles of seven with its climax on the seventh day. As the seventh day was observed, so were the seventh month and the seventh year, and the fiftieth year (seventh eye le of seven years). Fidelity to the covenant required a constant evaluation; hence the weekly renewal of the covenant is one of the reasons for the Sabbath observation. This day of rest on a regular basis provides the community and its members with a perspective on the use of time and talents. Moreover, the commandments imposed the obligation on an owner to allow like rest for his slaves, workers and beasts of burden.

A basic principle in Deuteronomy legislation is "there should be no one of you in need" (Deut. 15:4), because the land is God's gift to the entire people. The laws governing the Sabbatical Year (Deut. 15) and the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25) were intended to

³⁴ Asher Finkel (Professor and Chair Department of Jewish Christian Studies), in discussion with the author, April 29, 2004

guard this equality. Sabbath and Jubilee time is offered in the Scripture as utopian time. Sabbath time is entering into God's time whereby humans enjoy the Divine Presence.

Biblical eschatological thought sees in the account of the Jubilee how the history of humanity unfolds by God's intent. Human events remain punctual and segmented in time of experience, but they can produce special meaning when expressed in the great sweep of Jubilees. Developments and consequences can manifest either catastrophe or the golden age, but the divine intent can only be understood by the continuum of time, representing millennium of God's time.³⁵

In this reality, one even loses his sense of mortality during Sabbatical time.

Accordingly, this time spells liberation. Hebrew slaves were set free and debts are forgiven (Deut. 15:7-18). Even the land observed the Sabbath:

When you enter the land that I am giving you, let the land, too, keep a Sabbath for the Lord. For six years you may sow your field, and for six years prune your vineyard, gathering in their produce. But during the seventh year the land shall have a complete rest, a Sabbath for the Lord, when you neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. (Lev. 25:2-5)

The rhythm of seven applied not only to the week with a day of rest for all, but also to the use of the land. Every seventh year the fields were to lie fallow, and all the people were to have equal access to any produce that might spring up.

iii.) "Covenant communities" within the Covenant community

Prophetic voices, forceful as they were, were not alone in safeguarding the covenant. There were small covenant communities within the larger covenant. Community whose members dedicated themselves chiefly for the purpose of maintaining.

³⁵ Finkel, Asher, Millennium, Jubilee and Human History Under God, Memorial Volume for Otto Michel "Ich bin ein Hebrier" (ed) H. Linder, (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003) 315-316

the covenant. Adherents clung tenaciously to the covenant tradition of the ancestors. These were witness communities, who served as "conscience" of the people in matters pertaining to the covenant. Such communities were the Rechabites (Jer. 35), the Nazirites (Amos 2:11), the 'sons' of the prophets, (2 Kgs. 2:3; Is. 8:16), and later the Essenes, who are said to include members of the Qumran community, those associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Worthy of note is the community of the Essenes. The life of this ancient community provides useful background to the understanding of some elements of Institutional Religious Life today, particularly in the area pertaining to the use and administration of temporal goods.

Thus far, the concept of the people of the covenant has been limited only to God and the people of Israel. This was to change with the Babylonian exile. Israel's converts in the land of their captivity that desired to return to the land of Judah with the returnees brought a new dimension to the People of the covenant. Would they participate fully or remain outside the covenant posed a dilemma. The prophetic voice of the school of Isaiah in the message that "Lord's House is open to all," clarified the issue: "The foreigner will join them and attach himself to the House of the Jacob" (Is. 56:6). Isaiah envisioned the fruits of this expanded notion of the covenant as a harbinger for an era of peace. When all peoples seek the bounds of covenant with God, "They will say: Come let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the House of the God of Jacob, that be may instruct us in his ways and we may walk in his paths" (Is. 2:3a).

g.) Second Temple Period

From the ashes of the ruins of Jerusalem rose the hope of a new temple and a new Jerusalem. This expectation was accentuated by Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant:

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to the greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)

According to the prophet, the old covenant is a thing of the past. But still, God himself will initiate this new covenant just like the former one: "I will be their God, and they will be my people."

It is to this new covenant that the Essenes addressed themselves. They saw themselves as the community of Israel in the wilderness, as "those who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus." The covenantal life of the Essenes cannot fully be explored fully in this work. We would, however, concern ourselves with the Essenic concept of wealth how it impacts on the consecrated life. A brief survey of the Judaic roots of poverty to is employed to further elucidate the point.

i.) Jewish Roots of Evangelical Poverty

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term poverty have a variety of shades of meaning, each shade relating to a particular aspect of the concept. In general, however, poverty denotes (i.) a lack of economic resource and material goods, and (ii.) political and legal powerlessness and oppression. Neither a social class nor a political party in ancient Israel, the poor constituted a diverse body of social actors: small farmers, day

laborers, construction workers, beggars, debt slaves, and village dwellers. 37 Poverty was considered a scandal in biblical times; to be poor was considered by many to be caused by an act of divine retribution. Riches, on the other hand, meant an affirmation of one's worthiness, a reward for humility and the fear of the Lord (cf. Ps. 1:3: 112:1, 3). During the late Second Temple Period, a Jewish sect called the Essenes (probably exemplified by the Qumran community), in response to the religious crisis of the time, introduced another level of meaning to poverty: a voluntary renunciation of wealth for a spiritual purpose. In his teaching, Jesus challenged his followers to renounce wealth for the Kingdom of God. Jesus' teaching on the attitude towards worldly goods became a binding force in the early Christian community (Acts 2:44). Convinced that possessions have power to dominate the mind and entice it away from God, founders of religious institutes in the first centuries of Christianity made the renunciation of property (a vow of Poverty) the first of the canonical requirements for those seeking this particular way of life. There are two other vows: Chastity in celibacy, which enables religious to choose to share love and friendship with all of God's people rather than making a commitment only to one person, and Obedience, which means that the religious will listen to God's will as it is made known to them through prayer and the leaders of the community, so as to serve the needs of all through the charism, or ministry of the community.

Long before the Christian era, there were already Jewish men and women (Essenes) living an ascetic live, in voluntary poverty, chastity, and obedience in "monastic" settings in the Judean desert, awaiting the Messiah-King.

36 Hillers 170

³⁷ Pleins, David J., Poor, Poverty, The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 5, O-Sh, (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 403-413

In seeking to explore the Judaic roots of evangelical poverty, a brief survey of "poverty" in the Hebrew Scripture would suffice to substantiate this theme.

Poverty: Prophets and Psalms

There are a number of Hebrew words representing different degrees of poverty; these are: 'ebyon, dal, mahsor, misken, ras, 'ani, 'anawim. Our discussion would focus only on four of these words: the 'ebyon, dal, 'ani, and the anawim...

a.) 'Ebyon: Giving up possession.

The 'ebyon are the economically distressed members of society. They are at the very bottom of the socio-economic ladder. 'Ebyonim are constantly hungry, a person with no mean and economically exploited by the large landowners and the ruling class of society. The prophet Amos captures their plight thus: "We will buy the lowly man for silver, and the poor man for a pair of sandals" (Amos 8:7). Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel deplored the situation of the 'ebyonim with harsh words for those who perpetuate their plight. God's closeness to the 'ebyonim reverberated in Psalm 40:18 thus: "Though I am afflicted and poor, the Lord keeps me in mind."

b.) Dal: A person who had means but lost it.

The poor, weak, inferior and lacking are categorized as "dal". The term refers to the beleaguered peasant farmer. Dalim were exploited and oppressed by the wealthy who also deny them justice in matters of law (Is. 26:2; Amos 2:7; Ps. 82:3). The Psalmist calls blessings on those who are compassionate to the dal, "Happy those concerned for the lowly and poor" (Ps. 41:2). In the prophecy of Jeremiah they are presented as property-less members of society, having neither vineyards nor fields. When Israel was carried off into captivity to Babylon, the dalim were left behind: "But the poor who had

no property were left in the land of Judah" (Jer. 39:10). The liberation of the dal was the desire of the Prophets, a desire, Which perhaps came to pass during the Babylonian conquest. During this time Nebuzaradan gave "some of the poor who had no property" vineyards and farms (Jer. 39:8-10).

c.) 'Ani: the afflicted.

'Ani is the most commonly used word for the poor in the Hebrew Bible. The 'ani opts for a life of sharing and accepts a life of the poor due to meekness. Like other categories of the poor, the 'ani is economically oppressed, does not get justice, and is victimized. The prophetic teaching of social justice is in defense of the 'ani. These prophets, the conscience of Israel, worked to preserve the Mosaic heritage; we might call them revolutionaries because of their vociferous attacks against the established order. They continually reinforced the Jewish covenantal obligation to assist the poor and they decried the institutional forms that privileged a small elite and disenfranchised the poor. For example, Hosea criticized those who subordinated justice to profit and who oppressed the poor and warned that God would punish this disregard of righteous dealings with others. This refrain is repeated throughout the writings of the prophets. Shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, a disciple of Isaiah warned,

The Lord enters into judgment with his people's elders and princes: It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the loot wrested from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, and grinding down the poor when they look to you? (Is. 4:14-15)

Amos, writing about 760 B.C., was among the earliest prophets who preached a message of social justice. Micah echoes First Isaiah's condemnation of the economic elite's disregard for social justice:

They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and they take them; they cheat the owner of his house, a man of his inheritance... you who tear their skin from them, and their flesh from them, and break their bones. They eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from them, and break their bones. They chop them into pieces like flesh in a kettle, and like meat in a caldron (Micah 2:2; 3:1b-3).

Because of the burden of their state of life, the word 'ani is most often found in the Psalms of Lament. The Psalmist utilizes the term 'ani when characterizing God's relation to the poor, "the needy will never be forgotten, nor will the hope of the afflicted ever fade" (Ps. 9:19). The 'ani is clearly addressed due to their acceptance of a life style altruistic living: "Happy are the poor in Spirit" (Mt 5:4)

A political movement of the pious poor of the LORD: `anawim

Biblical scholars have taken much interest in the discussion of the 'anawim.

Though not the most common word for the poor in the Hebrew Bible, 'anawim stands out as a merger between poverty and piety, possibly a political movement among the pious poor (the remnant- status the Essenes claimed for themselves). In this sense, we find some degree of voluntary acceptance of poverty in the 'anawim. The prophet Zephaniah sees the 'anawim as those who follow God's law and who seek 'anawa, a word that in this context appears to mean humility. Exhorting the people to poverty of spirit, he says, "Seek the Lord, all you humble ('anawim) of the earth, who have observed his law, seek justice, seek humility" (Zeph. 2:3). Righteousness and humility will characterize the

LORD's holy remnant. Zephaniah goes on to say how the LORD will purify his people, leaving the humble and lowly:

For then will I remove from your midst the proud braggarts, and you shall no longer exalt yourself on my holy mountain. But I will leave as remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord: the remnant of Israel. They shall do no wrong and speak no lies; nor shall there be found in their mouths a deceitful tongue. (Zeph. 3:11-13)

Isaiah reshaped the prophetic notion of the "oppressed poor" to apply its images to the sufferings, and yearning for liberation of the exiles in Babylon. From these exiles, God would fashion for himself a holy remnant through which He would carry out his purpose of salvation. The kingdom of the future, the holy remnant, figuratively grows from the stump that remains from the felling of the present kingdom. "On that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no more lean upon him who struck them; But they will lean upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return" (Is. 10:20-21). God's mindfulness of the anawim reverberates in many Psalms: "You listen, O Lord, to the need of the poor; you encourage them and hear their prayers" (Ps. 10:7).

For the Israelite, "wealth is one of the clearest proofs that the just man is rewarded in this world; he who fears the LORD prospers in the land of the living and enjoys long life, security, light, blessing, peace, salvation." Poverty could never be considered a normal state; yet, Essenes voluntarily embraced poverty, renounced wealth, to devote themselves to a life of perfection in community in preparation for the coming of the Messiah-King. The apocalyptic nature of the Essenic community evokes the sense of

³⁸ Gelin, Albert, The Poor of Yahweh, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1964) 23

people on pilgrimage and as such faith and life in covenant assume a spirit and actuality of poverty.

ii.) The Essenes (Qumran community)

The meaning of the word "Essene" is not known but judging from their way of life, some historians believe that it most likely means "doers of the Torah" for they observed the law in its strictest form. They may be identified with the Hasidim (devout ones (Pietists) The Essenic religious movement probably originated during the Hasmonean dynasty (about 160 B.C.) and ended with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as a protest against the non-Zadokite descendant High Priesthood controlling the Jerusalem Temple. The Essenic view of the world and their theology was a kind of apocalypticism, millenarianism (chiliasm), a rigorously eschatological interpretation of life and history. They would "inherit" the earth/land in the apocalyptic age.

Philo of Alexandria, who wrote in the first decades of the Christian era, gives the earliest outsider's account of the Essenes thus:

"Palestinian Syria, too, has not been unproductive of moral excellence, a land occupied by no negligible portion of the populous Jewish nation; Some among them, more than four thousand in number, are called Essenes. Their name in my opinion, though the form of the Greek is imprecise, is derived from the work Holiness, since they have become in the highest degree servants of God, not by sacrificing animals but by deeming it right to render their minds holy. To begin with, these people live in villages and avoid the cities because of the inveterate lawlessness of their inhabitants, for they know that association with them would result in an incurable attack on their souls, like a disease that come from a noxious atmosphere. 41

Vanderkam, James C., An Introduction to Early Judaism, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001) 191
 A. Finkel, personal communication, April 29, 2004

⁴¹ Philo of Alexandria, The Contemplative Life, the Giants, and Selections, The Classics of Western Spirituality, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981) 247

Philo goes on to describe the Essenes study of ethics, piety, holiness, justice and sacred law. Study of the community rule was paramount to attaining the end of their life, which is: love of God, love of virtue and members of the covenant community. Great emphasis was placed on care of the aged, the infirm, and the young. Common life was strong in this close-knit community whose spirit of fellowship beggars description.

Recent archaeological finds provide more evidence on the Essenes and tend to support accounts of writers such as Philo. There are suggestions of two branches of Essenes; one branch married and raised families and the other branch were celibates. The Serek ha-Yahad or Rule of the Community describes most of the communal activities carried out by members of the covenant community. It is observed that much emphasis was placed on the issue of wealth even though members voluntarily offered up their property.

Essenes encouraged voluntary "poverty" for three reasons: i.) Covenant fidelity, ii.) sacrificial offering and iii.) communal unity in the Holy Spirit.

1.) Covenant fudelity:

Wealth as a demonstration of covenant fidelity has throughout the biblical period been claimed by the prophets for the sake of justice and by the priests for the sake of atonement, sanctification, and blessing. Hence initiates' bequest of wealth to the community is presented as a demonstration of covenant fidelity inspired by Deuteronomy 6:5, "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength." That this wealth be managed according to God's counsel becomes the goal of the offering. Murphy further comments thus:

The fundamental act of the voluntary donor is to bring his knowledge, strength, and wealth into the community of God in order to conform these gifts more closely to God's statutes, ways, and counsel—that is, to God's covenant. Similarly, the symbols of commitment that the unworthy initiate is forbidden from introducing into the community in 1QS III 2-3 are his knowledge, strength, and wealth. Not surprisingly, this recollection to the covenant is couched in terms derived from the written covenant, particularly from Deuteronomy. This is visible in the particular offerings listed and in the larger literal context.⁴²

Their entry into the covenant was celebrated on the Feast of Weeks, the time when God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai was commemorated 43

2.) Sacrificial Offering

This idea is drawn from the Exodus account of the people's voluntary offering for the erection of the Lord's sanctuary, "From every man, you shall accept the contribution his heart prompts him to give me" (Ex. 25:2). In keeping with the covenant theme of the Essenes, we see the marked commitment to community with the transfer of possessions from the donor's private reserves to a communal pool. Herein too is the depiction of the disposition of material goods as a voluntary act, thus highlighting the willful adherence of participants. The goal of the sacrificial offering is to build a "Tent" for God, — create an atmosphere for the Presence of God among the people. In essence, Moses made the people build the Qahal (Ekklesia), the Church, the people of God with God dwelling among them. "Behold God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them

Asher Finkel (Professor and Chair, Department of Jewish-Christian Studies), in discussion with author, April 29, 2004

⁴² Murphy, Catherine M., Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community, (Boston: Brill, 2002) 120

and they will be his people and God Himself will always be with them [as their God]" (Rev. 21:3).

3) Communal unity in the Holy Spirit

Murphy observed that the third rationale for the practice of shared property is that it helps to forge the single entity, the *yahad*, in which the Holy Spirit lives. In this respect, the common possession functioned in a manner similar to communal worship. This included Torah study, and meals, insofar as these symbolize and create the single organism oriented toward God's will.⁴⁴

A strict initiation procedure was enforced; applicants could become full-fledged members of the covenant community only after completing a mandatory probationary period. Another writer from antiquity, Pliny the Elder, was fascinated by the lives of this extraordinary sect; he writes thus

"On the west side of the Dead Sea... is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all other tribes in the whole world, as it has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm trees for company.⁴⁵

The Essenes possessed a hierarchy. Priests were in ranks. The priestly Meshiah would be the chief priest in the final days. Ordinary priests were called "sons of Aaron," and there was another group of functionaries below these ranks, the Levites. In theological matters the authority of the priests seems to have been absolute.

Similar to the Essenes were the Therapeutae of Egyptian Judaism, another "Order" of ascetic contemplatives living hermetic lives in the Egyptian desert. Unlike the Essenes, though, this group is scantily documented. Extant documents on the

⁴⁴ Murphy 153

⁴⁵ Pliny the Elder, Natural History, Vol. 2, translated by H. Rackhan, Loeb Classical Library 1969, 5.73

Therapeutae are from the writing of Philo of Alexandria who identified them as philosophers, men and women, living intellectual lifestyle and gifted with the art of healing-Therapeutrides. Of them, Philo asked, "Who among those who profess piety may properly be compared with these?" Their goal may well have been to overcome the snares of sense-perception and bear spiritual fruit, which they believed was only possible through complete renunciation of all the body's desires. The elder women had a special status within the community by being mothers to the junior members of the group. The seemly 'superior' position of the women Therapuetae troubled Philo because for him, "it is natural and good that women should be women and men should be men, and therefore that the former should be in a subordinate position to the latter." Philo's best way to deal with this phenomenon was to regard these women as women with 'masculinized minds.' As with the Essenes, for Therapeutae detachment from created things gave credence to their pursuit of holiness,

So when they have given up possession of their property, with nothing further to entice them, they flee without turning to look back, abandoning brothers, children, wives, parents, numerous kin, dear companions, the fatherland in which they were born and reared, since the familiar has a great power to attraction and is the most powerful of baits ... but because they know that intercourse with persons of dissimilar character is unprofitable and in jurious. 18

The frequency with which the ancient sages addressed issues connected with wealth and financial dealings demonstrate the significance of poverty in the religious life of the people. For a person aspiring to some form of religious commitment, it was crucial

48 Philo, 45

⁴⁶ Philo, 42

Taylor, Joan E., Virgin Mothers: Philo on the Women Therapeutae," Journal for Study of Pseudepigrapha 12.1 (2001) 37

to have a proper understanding of these matters. Thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, many details of the lives of the Essenes are now known. Among the usual wisdom topics covered in their writings, wealth, poverty, and financial matters stand out as exceptionally prominent. The fact that wealth includes primarily one's produce rather than one's immovable assets requires a reconceptualization of the contribution of wealth to the community, to "love the Lord with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5). The contribution made upon initiation is not only a one-time donation of property, but also and more importantly a one-time commitment of everything that one might acquire and produce, The commitment made upon entry is thus not only a contribution of physical assets but also a productive capacity, which would naturally require an annual renewal of commitment tied to the agricultural cycle.⁴⁹ Scholars identify financial matters in several of the larger fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Words having to do with riches and poverty are scattered throughout even the Very small fragments.⁵⁰ Convinced of their 'anawim status, Essenes left no stone unturned in communicating to the members of the covenant community the age old wisdom pertaining to money matters. Thus approaching God as poor and humble servants ('anawim) was the essence of their commitment to poverty. Common ownership of property was a condition sine qua non with being an Essene. The Rule of the Community, gives a detailed description of attention given to property of candidates who joined the Yahad:

And if it be his destiny, according to the judgment of the Priests and the multitude of the men of their Covenant, to enter the company of the Community, his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation who shall register it to his account and shall

49 Murphy, 159

⁵⁰Benjamin G. Wright III, Lehigh University 'The Categories of Rich and Poor in the Qumran Sepiential Literature' http://orion.mscc.huji.ac.il/orion/symposiums.6th/wrightFullPaper.htm

not spend it for the Congregation.... But when the second year has passed, he shall be examined, and if it be his destiny, according to the judgment of the Congregation, to enter the Community, then he shall be inscribed among his brethren in the order of his rank for the Law and for justice, and for pure Meal; his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgment to the community.⁵¹

Flavius Josephus wrote about them in The Jewish War thus:

Riches they despise, and their community of goods is truly admirable; you will not find one among them distinguished by greater opulence than another. They have a law that new members on admission to the sect shall confiscate their property to the order, with the result that you will nowhere see either abject poverty or inordinate wealth; the individual's possessions join the common stock and all like brothers, enjoy a single patrimony.⁵²

Thus the renunciation practiced in the community was in consonance with their apocalyptic spirituality for, in the immediate expectation of the final days, great possessions, status, and power became meaningless.

The Essene voluntary dispossession of wealth apart from its spiritual values served other purposes, it not only helped the community to "accumulate wealth" in order to take care of its members, it also served as a means of sparing other members of the community the humiliation of poverty. Already, the sage captured this feeling in the Book of Proverbs: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest, being full, I deny you, saying, who is the Lord? Or, being in want, I steal and profane the name of my God" (Pr. 30:8-9). The community did not only take care of its own it also engaged itself in deeds of kindness to non-members as well. They used their wealth to help the poor and for the education of young children entrusted to their care. Regardless of their vow of poverty

Vermes, Geza The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, (New York: Penguin Books, 1987)
 Josephus, Jewish War, Translated by H. Thackeray and R. Marcus, Loeb Classical Library 1988,2.122

on earth, the Essenes shared grandiose visions of their rewards of wealth and power in the apocalyptic era.

However, the "apocalypse" did not come; the Essenes and their fellow Jews suffered untold humiliation and defeat in the war with the Romans (A.D. 66 - 70). The Essene community at Qumran and elsewhere was destroyed and the sect became obliterated in Judaism; nevertheless, their legacy lived on for their tradition was established and with it a new way of life: Christianity, which some scholars believe is an expression of Essenism which succeeded—more or less.

Essenism is nowhere more manifest in the New Testament than in the Gospel of John. The Evangelist's style and spirituality is highly suggestive of the fact that the Essenic-Qumran spirituality was very common during the period during which this Gospel was composed. There is no evidence linking John the Evangelist directly with the Dead Sea Scrolls; rather there is possibility of indirect acquaintance with a type of thought and expression current at Qumran. Some evidence of this is seen in Jesus' teaching, for the 'Word-made-flesh' spoke the language of his time.⁵³

⁵³Brown, Raymond E., An Introduction to the New Testament, (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 373

Chapter3 The New Testament, The New Covenant

Prophets like Jeremiah foretold of the day when the Lord will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer. 31:31). The prophecy goes on to reveal that, unlike the former covenant which was written on stone tables, this would be personalized. The new dispensation would resemble a re-creation. For the Creator himself will implant his "words deep within" the "minds" and will "write it on" the hearts of the re-created, thus will enable people to triumph over the evil inclination. The parallel with Abraham's circumcision cannot be ignored. Did Paul and the Judaizers overlook this point in their battle over circumcision? In other words, this new covenant will be rooted in intimacy, intimate knowledge (da 'at). According to the Hebrew Bible, this personal experience of intimacy with God is so profound that the marriage relationship is its best analogue in the human sphere. This knowledge does not cancel the Law but effects righteousness with law, mingled with love, compassion and faithfulness (see Hos 2:22)⁵⁴.

The prophets expanded the notion of the covenant. Isaiah saw non-Jews as participants (Is. 56:3-7). Likewise Zechariah was explicit; foreigners would be integrated into God's people. This understanding becomes the basis of hope expressed in the teaching. "Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you..." (Zech 2:15; 8:20-23; 9:1; 14:16-21). Like the Qumran community, the disciples of Jesus recognized that the twelve tribes, (even though

⁵⁴ Asher Finkel (Professor and Chair, Department of Jewish-Christian Studies), in discussion with author, April 29, 2004

the ten Northern tribes had long been deported and lost), were represented symbolically by their leaders (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29-30) in the new covenant, with hope for the return.⁵⁵

Jesus by his invitation exhorted: "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11: 29). He gradually prepared his followers for the ultimate reception of the New Covenant he himself was to institute by his death and resurrection.

The unfolding of the new covenant resembles the former. God's *Hesed* which was progressively revealed in the lives of the patriarchs climaxed in the Exodus event. The gradual revelation is seen in God's conversation with Moses: "I am the God of your father... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" (Ex.3: 6). Note the personal character of revelation. He is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as some conglomerate but as individual persons.

Because human learning begins with sense knowledge, Jesus began to be understood when people could see, touch, in short, sense his ministry. Understanding produced faith. It is the understanding that drew followers to him. Jesus' attempt to impart his relationship with his Father to his disciples dominated his entire teaching. The evangelists encapsulated this in the only recorded prayer Jesus taught his disciples "The Lord's Prayer" (Our Father). With large strokes, we will paint the covenant seeds in the teaching of Jesus.

⁵⁵ Frizzell, L. E., Temple and Community: Foundations for Johannine Spirituality, R. A. Herrera (ed), Mystics of the Book. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 192

a.) Covenant: Teaching of Jesus

i.) The Synoptics

The Synoptics depict the new covenant as the Kingdom of God (Mt.4:17; Mk.1:15; Lk. 4:43). In other places it is called "Eternal Life." Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God is synonymous with the imitation of God (Ex. 34:6-7). Imbedded in his parables and teachings are the seeds of this kingdom.

Matthew summarized Jesus' "seeds of the covenant" in the Beatitudes and provides a reflection on them in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. For Matthew, then intimacy with God should lead to perfection: "So be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48).

It is remarkable that Mark devoted one third of his narrative to the last week of Jesus' life. For him, intimate knowledge of God is achieved through suffering (Mk.8:34-37). This was the only way Jesus could inaugurate the new covenant. Mark's carefully crafted "Son of Man" saying points to the union with God through redemptive suffering (Mk. 8:31; 9:31; 10:45; 13:26-27). The event of Jesus' death and resurrection brings the new birth, the new covenant.

Hesed (loving kindness) and compassion constitute Luke's covenant theme: "Be ye merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). For the sake of brevity, we would explore one instance that produces a backdrop of meaning by inference. And that is the poignantly expressed story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37).

"But who is my neighbor?" The question emanating from the scribe seeking an understanding of Jesus' teaching on the "the Greatest Commandment" provided the opportunity for evaluation of the covenant relationship in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus

19:18. Jesus drew his audience into the experience of this parable through the four ways in which a person becomes intimate with God: transpersonal, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and sub-personal relationships. ⁵⁶

Similar to most profound teachings, Jesus situated the scene of this story on the road; a setting lending itself to liminal occurrence. The direction of the flow of traffic is from Jerusalem to Jericho. By this we can infer that the characters in the story are returning to their homes from worship in the Temple. Having come in contact with God's Presence in the Temple, they are imbued with the transpersonal experience, an experience that calls forth the order of being (Lev. 19:2). Since God can neither be seen or touched in himself, it is how one relates to another human being created in God's image (Gen.1:26) that determines the relationship between him and God. Presumably, the characters in the story were Jerusalem pilgrims returning home to share with family and friends the fruit of their God-encounter. But akin to other God-encounters, the validity of their Temple experience was tested. The incident of the man who fell among the robbers laying half death on the lonely dangerous pilgrim route provided the criteria for evaluation. The first question that comes to mind is how the pilgrims see the highway victim. This is a challenge of interpersonal relation to be determined by love commandment which in effect is the lesson Jesus sought to communicate.

In responding to the scribe's question "But who is my neighbor?" Jesus employs the use of transpersonal laws to break barriers in the interpersonal relationship—"love your neighbor as yourself." Nowhere else did Israel learn this lesson than in their

⁵⁶ Finkel, A. The Other and the Stranger in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition Service International De Documentation Judéo-Chrétienne (SIDIC) 25 (No. 3 – 1995) 3

nomadic existence in the desert; the experience gave the tribe a concrete realization of the solidarity that should underlie life in society.

Individuals are expected to be concerned about their own selves: the intrapersonal relationship. A fundamental constituent in covenantal relationship is a strong
sense of self. Ancient biblical people rooted self-esteem in the realization that the human
being is "little less than God, crowned with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:6). Human beings
respond to this free gift of God by reflecting his image relationships, "But who is my
neighbor?" If this is so, it becomes an anathema for one person to pit the self against
another, "You shall not take vengeance or bare any grudge against the children of your
own people, but shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Notice that this Law
took effect when the clan of Israel settled as "goy", a nation, after the Sinai experience. In
this sense covenant becomes a stabilizing factor. For this reason, each person is
challenged to fidelity to the covenant not just for one's own sake but also for the sake of
one's neighbor and the stranger.

The biblical tradition recognizes that all creation is a gift of God: "Let them have dominion over the fish of the seas ... and all the creatures that crawl on the ground" (Gen.1: 26). These gifts are used for the enhancement of human life and are not to be abused. Thus both the interpersonal and sub-personal relationship are determined by the imperative of human compassion and love. ⁵⁷ Hence the Good Samaritan "poured oil and wine over" the wounds of the victim, "lifted him up on his own animal" and took him to an inn and cared for him (Lk. 10:34).

The parable presents four groups of persons in Jewish life (Ps. 118:1-4): The kohen (priest), the Levite, the Israelite, and the Proselyte (Samaritan). Though the

Israelite is not specifically mentioned in the story, it can be inferred that he passed that same route because he too goes to worship in the Temple. 58 Why the Priest and Levite "passed by the opposite side" was obvious. They must maintain ritual purity in order to be fit for the performance of religious functions. Touching a corpse would defile them: they did not know that this victim was not dead! This adds another dimension to the story. Though the story is silent on the ethnic identity of the victim, it has long been presumed that he was Jewish because of the Samaritan in the parable (see Jn.4: 9). So the Samaritan, someone outside the covenant, showed total love to the unfortunate traveler: He touched him, poured oil on the wound, took him to the inn, cared for him and paid for his expenses. In what other manner could intimacy be expressed? Nothing short of selfgiving in faithfulness can equal an act of love freely given. In proving himself a true pilgrim, the Samaritan's transpersonal-interpersonal experience fully manifested in the act of love determined how one inherits eternal life. Thus saving human life is the highest form of worshipping God, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27).

ii.) Gospel of John

Though not explicitly stated, the covenant theme in the Fourth Gospel is implicit in the Sabbath and annual pilgrimage feasts associated with covenant renewal (Ex. 23:14-17). Following this understanding from the French scholar, Andre Feuillet, Frizzell in Temple and Community notes that,

Feuillet offers a very important insight when he posits that the reciprocal formula of the covenant is the background for the Johannine clauses of mutual exchange between God and the faithful As we note, "I will be your God and you

⁵⁷ Finkel, Asher, op. cit 3

⁵⁸ Finkel, Asher op. cit 7

shall be my people" is found in the promises of Jeremiah (31:31-34) and Ezekiel (36:22-30), upon which the Qumran and New Testament theology of a new covenant draws. ⁵⁹

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel proclaim that God's new bestowal of life will be accomplished by the forgiveness of sin, an aspect of the pilgrimage experience. To be capable of responding to the Torah and its commandments from interior personal conviction the burden of the believer's previous sins must be removed. "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn.1:29). John's designation of Jesus as Lamb of God, hints at the covenant experience in the reciprocal formula, "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Scholars point out that the Johannine covenant theme begins in the Eucharistic discourse (Jn. 6:56), continues in the Good Shepherd's declaration of mutual knowledge (Jn. 10:14-15) and dominates the account of the Last Supper (Jn. 14-17). The importance of the covenant and Jeremiah's prophecy in this Gospel is part of the heritage the Jewish Scriptures gave to the early Church, rooted in the vision of Jesus himself. Jesus' teaching regarding both the ingathering of God's people and the inclusion of Samaritans and Gentiles in the new covenant can be traced from John's prologue (Jn. 1:1-18) to the commission of Peter to nurture sheep and lambs of Christ's name (Jn. 21:15-17). 60 Clearly, Zechariah's theme of a covenant open to the nations is reflected in the ingathering pericopes: "the fields are ripe for the harvest..." (Jn. 4:35-37); in "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also must I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one Shepherd" (Jn. 10:16), and "not only for the nation, but also to gather together the dispersed children of God" (Jn. 11:51-52).

⁵⁹ Frizzell 187

⁶⁰ Frizzell, L. E., Catholic Advocate, April 2, 2003 (Archdiocese of Newark, NJ USA)

b.) Jesus Christ: The New Covenant

If covenant is defined as a divinely instituted relationship between God and His people, then in Christian faith the Annunciation, the moment God entered into the human race and took on our human nature, marks the beginning of the unfolding of a dimension of the new covenant. By this act, Mary of Nazareth became the dwelling place of God. Little wonder then that spiritual writers attribute to Mary the title: Ark of the Covenant. For through her, the eternal "Word became flesh." Mary borethe Son of the Father, whose saving act, manifested in love for humankind was accomplished by his death and resurrection. Thus was humankind reconciled to God.

Christian tradition cites the crucifixion as the beginning of the new covenant;

Christ's death broke the power of evil; his offering of himself fulfills that which the first covenant portends. Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection mediates the new covenant, to which the Message of Consolation alludes in Isaiah 42:6 "and set you as a covenant of the people." In placing the death of Jesus at the time the paschal lambs were being slaughtered in the temple, John sees Christ becoming the true Paschal Lamb. 61 But the "blood of the covenant" recalls also that the covenant of Sinai has been concluded in blood (Ex. 24:8): for the sacrifice of animals was fulfilled by a new sacrifice, the blood of which would efficaciously achieve a definitive union between God and men. Thus for Christians who wrote the New Testament books the promise of the "new covenant" announced by Jeremiah and Ezekiel was fulfilled: through the blood of Jesus, human hearts will then be changed and the Spirit of God will be given. The death of Christ, at once sacrifice of Passover, sacrifice of the covenant, and atoning sacrifice, will lead to their fulfillment of the figures of the Hebrew Scriptures. Henceforth this act will be

rendered present in a ritual gesture of the Last Supper (Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22: 15-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25), which Jesus commanded to "do again in memory of him." Thus in participating in the Holy Eucharist believers become united most intimately to the mystery of the new covenant.

i.) The People of the New Covenant

On Mount Sinai the entire people of Israel were constituted into the people of God. As a whole, the whole assembly of Israel promised fidelity to the terms of the covenant. By contrast, the new experience of salvation demands a personal choice of adults because faith is a question of personal commitment. This is why initiation into the new covenant is accomplished through faith and baptism. Mark says, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Jesus Christ came to give life to all humanity by grafting wild branches onto the natural olive tree (Rm. 11:17). By dying with Christ then and rising with him in baptism the believer is formed into his likeness (Rom. 6:4). Thus one "puts on" Christ.

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29)

Baptism transforms one from alienated creature to a child of God, from distance to unity. Thus the sacrament qualifies the believer to participate in the functions of Jesus' Messiahship: Priest, Prophet and King. Through the instrumentality of baptism a believer is empowered to act in the name of Jesus Christ (Mk. 16:17). Reception of the Holy

Bouwmeester, 102

Spirit at Confirmation perfects the baptismal grace making one "more rooted deeply in Christ." This sacrament further "strengthen our bond with the Church, associates us more closely with her mission, and helps us bear witness to the Christian faith in words accompanied by deeds."63 As a "soldier" of Christ, the believer is prepared to defend the Christian faith at all cost, not excluding having his life "poured as a libation." We begin to get a sense of relatedness of all the baptized. St. Paul calls this reality the "Body of Christ." Baptism admits one into this Body of Christ. "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into the one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Baptism brings about a transformation that empowers, causing one to move from "death to life". Recognizing this newness of life, believers call themselves brothers and sisters because what distinguishes them from others is Christ himself whom they have "put on" like a garment in baptism and in whom they are now living (Gal 3:27-29). Could this be the reason Paul, when using the phrase "body of Christ," always speaks collectively of the communion with God as opposed to that of an individual person?

ii.) The Mystical Body of Christ

Paul's use of the imagery of the body to describe the reality of the Christian community in its relation to members and to Christ may have come from two sources; first, his personal experience of Jesus on the Damascus soad. These words "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5) probably revealed to Paul that his many victims were but one: the one Lord Jesus Christ. The second source may have been borrowed from the political imagery of his times. Ordinary citizens in the Greco-Roman world were

⁶² Jean Giblet and Pierre Grelot, Ibid 97

⁶³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, (New York: Doubleday, 1995) Part Two, Section V #1316

happy knowing that they were important to the state and that their contribution to the maintenance of the city-state was significant. Perhaps this cultural understanding predisposed Paul's new converts for incorporation into the Christian community: "As the body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many are one body, so also Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). Paul likened Christ to the human head. For as the human body brings into unity all its members under the head so also so in Christ. Christ's many members are brought into unity through Baptism and so "we are all one body in Christ"; with Christ Jesus himself as the Head (Col. 2:19). This notion of the unity of Christians is connected deeply with the Paschal mystery, which is the foundation for Baptism. The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of unity, the unity of all who allow themselves to be touched by Jesus, who gave his earthly body "for the many." Every Eucharistic banquet reminds the Church that it is only in this Body that believers will find real life, eternal life for when they partake, they enter into union-intimacy with God. Those who take part in this Supper constitute one body as symbolized by the one loaf, which binds them together in a way that should overcome any differences. This is because.

To sit at table together in the fullest sense of the word, where mind and heart are involved, crystallizes and shows externally what in reality exists within: they are in harmony and attuned to one another.⁶⁴

Notice that Christians do not simply become unified by common belief, for example, in Jesus giving his life for them. Rather, they become "the body of Christ" because they are baptized into one body. Faith therefore, becomes a new way of being with others in a community.

⁶⁴ Bouwmeester 15

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith, because as many as of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Gal. 3:26-29)

Paul's choice of words "in Christ," "put on Christ," "belong to Christ," and the most dramatic phrase, "you are one in Christ Jesus," clearly expresses the radical difference between the authentic and inauthentic modes of being. Unity is the central element "you are all one," and not "you are in fellowship". Every celebration of the Lord's Supper grants Christians the quality of the one people of God and at the same time obliges them to live the oneness of Jew and Greek, slave and free, man and woman, realistically repeatedly, to be and to become the "body of Christ" until he comes. In cultural circumstances that glorify individualism such as there appear to be in our times, this unity may be construed in terms coordination and cooperation. But the unity of the Christian community is not merely on a functional level as the next section seeks to elucidate.

iii.) The Christian Community

The formal contact between the physical body and the community of the Body of Christ is at the level of the unity of being, "because the loaf of bread is one; we though many, are one body for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10: 17). We are one in Christ and because we have been baptized into Christ's death, we are united to the head, and it is the head that adds strength and holds the whole body together, with all its joints and sinews — and this is the only way in which it can reach its full growth in God (Col. 2: 19). No part of this body can produce a life of its own if it is severed from the rest of the body, even though it may still remain what it is, an amputated arm or leg, but the fact is that it is a dead limb (Jn. 15: 1-8). One member is useless alone. It follows then that an

authentic existence is an existence of each part within a whole. The reciprocal creativity of love creates a life in which the members of a Christian community share their lives together and in this process renew the community, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). It becomes obvious then that members do not possess anything. They simply participate. Christians need each other in the same way that the arm needs the body; the complete mark of genuineness demands that we belong to one another. It is this reciprocal relationship and influence that give meaning to the Christian community; we can therefore say that the Body of Christ, the Church forms one living being, an organic whole.

The full manifestation of the "organic whole" expresses itself in the sharing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11: 1-3), given to the Messiah. In so doing, members simultaneously enrich one another and the "whole organism," thus satisfying the Servant Leadership role.

iv.) Varied Roles of Servant Leadership

As head of the body, the Church, Christ's headship is certainly not authoritarian power (Jn. 13:12-15); rather, it is a life-giving leadership, "he rules by filling his body with his own spirit" (Eph. 1:23). Thus as head, Jesus is the savior of the body, leading the flock to good pastures (Jn. 10:16). In this way, He gave the apostles the mission of leadership to "feed my flock," a mission which they exercise as his ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus' servant leadership role was unmistakably revealed when he washed his disciples' feet Observe that like a servant, Jesus, "rose from supper and took offhis outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his

waist..." (Jn. 13: 1-20) Leadership of service is life in the new covenant. Washing the pilgrim feet of weary fellow travelers is the grateful response of being called out of servitude. This is the teaching we have received, that has been handed down to us (1 Cor. 9:14; 15:3).

Community leadership as an action of the Holy Spirit was abundantly evident in the primitive Church, first in the filling of Judas' position and in the admission of Saul of Tarsus into the Church. The outcome of the events confirms the influence of the Holy Spirit (Act 1:15-26). Given the credentials of two nominees, the result would not have been otherwise. For both men had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry up until the day Jesus was taken up to heaven but one of the men seem to have greater influence given the multiple names he possessed: Joseph, Justus, Barsabbas. Probably if the decision were left to the apostles themselves, they may have chosen the latter. Samuel was plagued with the same dilemma at the anointing of David, son of Jesse. He was told with regard to an older brother: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature" (1Sam. 16:7). But they allowed the Holy Spirit to guide them rather than popular choice. The second example is the reception of Paul into the college of Apostles (Gal. 2: 18-24). By all accounts, Paul should not be designated an apostle, given the history of his persecution of the Church. Perhaps he could have been given a marginal role after his admission. Here again the Church leaders, prompted by the Holy Spirit, recognized the sound example of Paul's witnessing to the Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as enough credentials to gain him a place in their ranks.

Paul envisaged the diversity of gifts as a scattering from one luminous source within the divine unity:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone." (1Cor 12:4-6)

Essentially, the dynamics of co-existence (gifts, service, workings), of one human person with the other is a creation of the Spirit, the Lord and God the Father. Here the Trinitarian emphasis reiterates the fundamental characteristic of the spiritual gifts as diversity in unity. "For the Father is Father not with respect to himself but to the Son, the Son is Son not to himself but in relation to the Father; and likewise the Holy Spirit is not referred to himself but is related to the Father and the Son, in as much as he is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son." A community that expects its members to think and act alike axiomatically has lost a sense of the Presence of the Trinity. Paradoxically, diversity engenders unity. The life of interdependence into which baptism draws the Christian was manifest in the baptismal formula (Mt. 28: 19-20). So if the new birth is through the Trinity, the new life will be modeled also on the Trinity. Hence the variety:

If the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', 'would that mean that it was not a part of the body'? If the whole body were just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it were just one ear, how would you smell anything? ...(1 Cor. 12:16-27)

Celebration of contribution of each individual, as the text suggests, manifests the beauty of the body; for though no one individual part has a separate existence, nevertheless, each part can be considered separately, "but each of you is a different part of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). By the same token, if one member is attacked, the whole body is burt (Acts. 9:5) and the life of the body is aggrieved. And honoring one part of the body brings honor to the rest. For this reason, the parts are to "have the same concern for one

another." A very human illustration is found in family life. A parent is as proud of the achievement of a child as it was his own achievement, sometimes even more so.

All spiritual gifts are bestowed for service and for leadership within the community. An individual charism is not a personal treasure to be kept and enjoyed alone; it is given for the benefit of the community. Just as the legs respond when the physical body needs to move from one point to another, the one who is so endowed with a particular kind of gift puts it at the service of the community as needs arise. Every charism must have life in the covenant community as its foundation, a life, which implies building up and serving the community.

Because of the variety of services to be rendered, God made it such that:

Some people God has designated in the Church to be, first apostles, second prophets; third teachers, then, mighty deeds, then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues... (1 Cor. 12:27-28)

This list is by no means exhaustive, for gifts are tailored to the needs of the community. The theme expands further in Romans to include, "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them..." (Rom. 12:6-8) To the Church in Ephesus: "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift..." (Eph. 4: 1-16). In the same vein, the apostle Peter urged Christians" As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace..." (1 Peter 4:10-11) Spiritual gifts are not mere human attainments, though they might make use of natural endowments. Those without the more showy gifts must not be depressed or discontent; the most richly endowed are useless except as parts of the

⁶⁵ Neumer, J., Dupuis, J., The Eleventh Council of Toledo Symbol of Faith (675) The Christian Faith in the Documents of the Catholic Church, (New York: Alba House, 2001) 149

community. Equally needed are the plainer gifts which must not be despised either. No individuals can claim for themselves the gifts they possess: "Who confers distinction upon you? What do you possess that you have received?" (1 Cor. 4.7). Charismata are never to make one superior but rather the servant of the community. They never create elite-groups. On the contrary, a charism usually causes fear and trembling in the endowed, as we see Moses' struggle with his call to leadership in Exodus 3 and 4. God so designed each of the gifts for its own peculiar use and it produces its own peculiar result in the evangelization, edification, and administration of the Christian community. Thus God uses the life of each member as an instrument for his own working. It is only by God working through us that our spiritual results can be attainable. Unfortunately in our times we are witnessing the abuse of charismata for selfaggrandizement. In some Christian settings, this becomes more the rule than the exception, blurring the servant-leader focus of Christian living. Positions of leadership have come to be looked upon as prizes. Service to the community is being turned into social climbing above it. Samuel's description of how the kings would act (1Sam 8) is an all too accurate picture of what happened when people, given the charism of being the superior of community, took it to mean that they were superior to the community. 66

In all this, however, we know that these gifts are ephemeral. Only one gift is enduring, the one the Christian "strive eagerly for": Agape (love). The Greek word agape indicates the highest form of love, with a sacrificial dimension. Hence the Apostle calls it the greatest gift.

⁶⁶ Doyle 14

The Greatest Gift Agape (love)

Love as a theme related to the covenant is presented in various shades in the Synoptic Gospels but John's reflection crystallized at great depth the Master's teaching:

I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another (Jn. 13:34:35).

Requirement for discipleship hinges on the requirement of love for another. Love is the crux of life in Christ, for without it, there would be no community, no covenant. Christ is God's self-gift to humankind; Jesus shares this same "self-giving" love with the Father (Jn. 15:9). God sends himself by sending Christ, "From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:16-17)

This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn.15:12-13)

Historically however, Paul had grappled with these facts before the gospels were written. His writing on "selfless giving," Agape to his Corinthian Christians resonates a sense of shalom, completeness; each body part so completely in love with the other and with the body as a whole; an uninterrupted screne flow of love energy that never ceases. Such love is impossible for us, and we would not have even known of it, had we not first experienced it: "God's love was revealed in our midst ... if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (1Jn. 4:9-11). Because God is love, it is eternal, "In short, there are three things that last: faith hope and love; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13) The supremacy of love lies not only in its usefulness but also in its divine quality.

The enduring love urged upon the members of the Body of Christ is the imitation of God (Ex. 34:6-7) after the manner revealed by Jesus Christ. For Paul, a life devoid of love is moribund (1 Cor. 13:1-3) because God is absent. Because God is love no words can effectively explicate it (Song 8:7); to define is to demonstrate full understanding but love is the same mystery that God is. Overwhelmed by this thought, Paul burst into song:

Love is patient and kind. It is never jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interest, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things. Loveneverfails..."(1 Cor.13:4-8)

Agape originates from the individual and flows into the community; for it is a distinctive capacity of self-giving in imitation of Christ who revealed the authentic mode of human existence by emptying himself (Phil. 2:7). Any other apostolate, goal or rule that claims to bring people together without love is simply a counterfeit of Christian community. Hence Christian living becomes a pointer to the eschaton, the life of the world to come where 'I shall know fully as I am fully known'(1 Cor. 13:12). This knowledge is based on the experience of intimacy with God, as Paul is drawing on the biblical concept of da'at (knowledge).

CHAPTER4 Christian Covenant Response: Marriage

God's revelation of himself to individual persons, which in Scripture began with Abraham, continues in the life of each person. Abraham entered into more than one covenant with God before he was deemed fit to assume the role as "father of the nations" (Gen. 12:2; 17;4). Every adult Christian who through baptism enters into the covenantal community, responds to yet another covenant. Like Abraham, the relationship with God does not end with only one encounter. Generally, two forms of vocation are open to the adult Christian, one of which he may choose: Marriage or the Consecrated Life.

a.) Marriage

The word marriage suggests the one-flesh nuptial union, which became a model for the relationship between God and his people: "I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your God" (Ex. 6:7). From this God-Israel marriage relationship springs the Jewish-Christian marriage tradition. The union of man and woman responds to the mandate to be fertile (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:23-24). Hence the married response becomes fruitful through procreation. Of course, fruitfulness in this term is defined in terms of siring progeny, an argument with which many moderns would tend to differ because fertility for them have wider implications than siring progeny. Hosea portrays Israel as bride in covenant relationship with God, "she shall call me 'My husband,'...I will espouse you to me forever" (Hos. 2:18, 21). Jeremiah's Israel calls God, "the bridegroom of my youth..." (Jer. 3:1-5). In Ezekiel, God marries Israel by "spread the corner of my cloak over you to cover your nakedness" (Ez. 16:8). The "bridegroom who exults over his bride" (Is. 61:10; 62:5), expresses God's joy over Israel. Apart from their symbolic use of nuptial metaphor, three of the prophets integrated their own marriage

experiences into their message. Hosea experienced difficult marriage with his wife Gomer (Hos 1-3); Isaiah fathered two children by his wife who is simply referred to as "the prophetess" (Is. 8:3) and finally Ezekiel lost his wife who is referred to as "the desire of your eye" (Ez. 24:16). Worthy of note is the case of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah provides the only illustration in the Hebrew Scripture of a divine call to celibacy: "Do not marry any woman; you shall not have sons and daughters in this place" (Jer. 16:2).

Though the reference to God as "jealous" (Ex.20:5) over Israel clearly defines a marriage relationship, it is the prophets who conceive the idea of God as the husband of Israel in their attempt to portray graphically God's covenant election of Israel.

The double imagery of covenant and spouse appears again in the New Testament, with new emphasis on Jesus Christ fulfilling both roles: Bridegroom and Mediator of the New Covenant. John the Baptist described himself in relation to Jesus' mission as "friend of the Bridegroom" (Jn. 3:29). Faced with the issue of fasting, Jesus unequivocally asserted his position as bridegroom:

Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away form them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mk 2:19-20)

The people of God of the new covenant, like Israel of old, become espoused to Jesus who, to redeem them from the slavery of sin, gave up his life on the Cross which led to his subsequent exaltation.

b.) Married life: Covenant dimension

Marriage, the union of man and woman as husband and wife draws from the biblical tradition:

"... God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." (Gen. 1:26-28)

Some scholars contend that this account attributed to marriage is more concerned about fertility than with marriage. For them, marriage means more than "fertility". It is the loving interchange of husband and wife. Scripture points out that the first command given to man and woman, as couple, is "be fertile and multiply" (Gen. 1:28), therefore, a marriage relationship between man and woman should be oriented toward procreation but also include mutual benefits for the spouses.

Song of Songs presents marriage in a different light. Though often interpreted as an allegory, this poem provides the milieu for the celebration of human love. Here the young bride and groom passionately delight in their reciprocal love; a suggestion that perhaps procreation is not the only important end of marriage.

The account of the primal marriage is "that a man leaves his father and mother and ding to his wife. And the two of them become one body" (Gen. 2:24-25). The key words "leave" and "cling" enforce the idea of marriage as covenant – meaning "bond, fetter," indicating a binding relationship. In God's design, man being alone is inadequate regarding the goodness of his nature so a suitable partner was provided for him. Thus the completion of the human personality occurs when a man and woman live for each other, and function together as one unit, each performing his or her unique task. In effect both man and woman form a polarity; neither is inferior or superior to the other. The relationship of one to the other is much more than a commitment. It is a total knowledge

⁶7 Meiselman, Moshe, Jewish Woman in Jewish Law, (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc. 1978) 10

of one, of the other fashioning oneness (Gen.2: 24), which is not just in a sexual union, but also in lives united and shared. Hence marriage becomes a covenant (b'rith)- an agreement which formed a relationship which is equal in binding force to a blood relationship.

The most profound type of covenant, aside from that which exists between God and his people, is that covenant between spouses. For unlike the former, the latter recognizes the equality of the spouses and their capacity to enter into an agreement, which demands the gift of the whole person, one to another. Unfortunately, male-female complementarity seems to define equality.⁶⁸ In mere materialistic terms, superiority is conferred on the partner whose economic returns are higher. In most cases, historically, domestic work and the duration of childbearing diminish women's competitiveness. placing her in a subordinate position. But the biblical sense of equality lies in the reality of creation itself: He made them "male and female." Consequently, the act of marriage makes the two one, nothing more, nothing less. Thus the focal point of the spousal covenant is the creation of the most intimate communion of life, which is achieved through a special kind of love: conjugal love. In fidelity spouses bind themselves to a conjugal relationship, interpersonal friendship, with spiritual and material support. Children, the fruit of the conjugal relationship, further renew and strengthen the covenantal relationship of spouses and lay the obligation on them to provide for the offspring. As sacrament therefore, marriage is seen as an action of the Church by which the spouses, in view of their baptismal commitment, express their willingness to enter into a new dimension of relationship with the Church.

⁶⁸David Bossman (Professor, Department of Jewish-Christian Studies) in discussion with author, April 29, 2004

In the 1983 Code for the Roman rite of the Catholic Church, Canon 1055 states in part,

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. This covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Although there is no scriptural evidence of direct institution by Christ, the sacramentality of marriage is grounded in his saving mission.

Similar to other covenantal relationships, marriage is presided by a protocol of events such as catechesis and betrothal. And since it is through Christian marriage which families come into existence is an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church, optimal attention is given in its formation and sustenance. As an institution that incorporates various elements: spiritual, social, psychological, economic and biological, proper care is given to the preparation of persons who desire to embrace marriage. Thus Pope Leo XIII wrote:

Let special care be taken that the people be well instructed in the precepts of Christian wisdom, so that they may always remember that marriage was not instituted by the will of man, but from the very beginning, by the authority and command of God; that it does not admit of plurality of wives or husbands; that Christ, the Author of the New Covenant, raised it from a rite of nature to be a sacrament, and gave to His Church legislative and judicial power with regard to the bond of union. On this point the very greatest care must be taken to instruct them, lest their minds should be led into error by the unsound conclusions of adversaries who desire that the Church should be deprived of that power. 69

⁶⁹ Leo XII, Encyclical, Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae, 10 February 1880, ASS 12, 385-402. English translation from The Papal Encyclicals: 1878-1903, Claudia Carlen, Ed. McGrath, 1981) 38

In Judaism, the marriage relationship is the paradigm of hesed. Marriage is crucial to the stability of the covenant. For Malachi (2:14-15), the connection between covenant keeping with the LORD and covenant keeping with a mate was obviously based on the familial nature of covenant (Jer. 2:1-3; 31:32; Ezek. 16:6f; Hos 2:1-19). Micah not only condemned divorce, he also disapproved of marriage to foreign women because of the consequent contamination of Israel's religion. Solomon's tragedy was not unconnected with his love for "many foreign women" so Israel were warned that they would "turn your hearts to their gods" (1Kgs. 11:1-3). Sadly, outside marriages precipitated idolatry that weakened the covenant bond and exposed ancient Israel to plunder by neighbors.

In marriage one is continually required to focus on another and to be sensitive to the other's needs, as one would be to one's own. The Jewish practice raises marriage above all its elements, however, by consecrating the marital bond on the spiritual foundation of *kiddushin*, thereby allowing holiness to permeate all aspects of the married relationship. Other fine points concerning the *kinyan issur* and *kinyan mamon* as well as the *Ketubah*, serve to reinforce and stabilize the marriage institution.

As in the Jewish tradition, Christians recognize the family as the basic unit of Christian life. The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, likens the Christian family to a domestic Church for it constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion. The manner in which love is expressed and shared in the family brings and affinity of feelings, affections and interest arising above all from the partners' respect for one another. This life of relationship

⁷⁰ Kaufman, Michael, The Woman in Jewish Law and Tradition, (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995)111

within the family constitutes the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. Sharing the unique giftedness of each member elucidates Paul's metaphor of interdependence of the organic body. Alas, the concept of organic unity has lost its original meaning for many in modern times; in American culture children are encouraged to be independent and self-reliant, just as their parents consider it a virtue to be obliged to no one. Frank Sinatra's famous song, "I did it my way" touches a deep chord with many. It articulates what the vast majority believes, namely, that the lack of ties and responsibilities is the key to freedom. Regrettably the contemporary hero is the one who has the courage to go it alone!

c.) Marriage: Imitation of Christ. (Eph. 5:21-33)

The early Church's understanding of marriage was not much different from that of its Judaic roots. But unlike the Jewish traditions, where the covenantal relationship of woman depends on a man (father, husband), baptism brings Christian men and women into a covenantal relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. The primitive Church capitalized on a biblical tradition, which found in marriage a symbolic expression of God's covenantal union with his people (Is. 54:5; Jer. 2:22; Hos. 1:2-9). Evidently, one of the subjects that the early Christians desired further instruction on was the subject of marriage. Paul grappled with this issue at length in the 7th chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians. But in Ephesians, he considers the purpose of marriage and compares Christian marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church — a covenantal relationship. Thus Paul's application of Jesus' teaching (Mt. 5:32; 19:3-9; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18) reveals Ephesians 5:21-33 as a significant New Testament statement concerning the place of marriage in God's design.

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savor of the body... This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband (Eph. 5:21-31).

What is at stake here is relationship and not the literalist view on subordination of the wife. A loving happy family that promotes the ideals of the Christian life exemplifies the message Paul teaches out of reverence for Christ, "be subordinate to one another." Matthew's use of wedding feasts to symbolize the significance of Jesus' mission (Mt. 15:1-12; 22:1-4) expresses a significant image of the kingdom of God. These reinforced Jesus' teaching on marriage (Mt. 19:1-12) that man and woman was created for each other; the intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator is rooted in their irrevocable personal consent. So this b'rith does not cease even if one or both parties withdraw the consent to the covenant.

The Catholic faith teaches that the Christian family springs from marriage, which is an image and a sharing in the partnership of love between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21f)

Marriage is an institution confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other; for the good of the partners, for the children and for society this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. For God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view: all of these have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and the eternal destiny of every member of the family, on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family and of the whole human

The Code of Canon Law, a Text and Commentary, "Canon 1055," (New York: Paulist Press, 1983)

race. Endorsed by mutual fidelity and, above all, consecrated by Christ's sacrament, this love abides faithfully in mind and body in prosperity and adversity and hence excludes both adultery and divorce.⁷²

⁷² Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975) 950-951

Chapter 5 Christian Response: Covenanted Pilgrim

In virtually every age, certain persons have been driven by the desire to take the "road less traveled." These may not form the larger groups of highly accomplished people of the outside world whose deeds are held in higher esteem. There was no dearth of such persons in the ancient world; Philo found them among the Persians and the Indians:

Among the Persians there is a class of the Magi, who investigate the workings of nature in order to discover the truth, and silently, through exceptionally clear visions, receive and transmit the revelation of divine virtues. In India there is the order of the Gymnosophists, who cultivate ethical as well as physical philosophy and make the whole of their lives an exhibition of virtue.⁷³

The profundity of these experiences touches on the human quest to give meaning to life. There is no gainsaying that traces of these characteristics are found in most modern religions.

In the Christian tradition Religious Life (the Consecrated Life) is said to have originated from the East during the first centuries of these Christianity. But recent archaeological discoveries particularly that of the Qumran community, seem to suggest even earlier roots. There is ample evidence in biblical and extra biblical materials that confirms some form of monastic life style in ancient Judaism. Chief among these are the Essenes whose standard protocol is said to have influence on Christian monasticism.

These Sages and Hasidim were identical, according to Baer, with the Essenes, as we know to us from works of

⁷³ Philo of Alexandria 249

Philo and Josephus. They are even to be regarded as the prototype of the later Christian monks.⁷⁴

Worthy of note is the *Manual of Discipline* or *Community Rule* whose objective continues in present day Constitutions of Religious communities. Philo's description of the Essenes' spirituality appears as though it might be from a 20th century Formation Program Handbook:

"They are trained in piety, holiness, justice, domestic and civic conduct, knowledge of what is truly good, evil, or indifferent, how to choose what they ought, and avoid the opposite, employing as their three definitive criteria love of God, love of virtue, love of men."⁷⁵

What can we say about common life, asceticism, renunciation, practice of poverty, and works of mercy found in this covenant community? The Essene idea of covenant involves obligations on the part of those within it, another point is that the covenant must be renewed periodically. Essentially, their new covenant is a renewal of the old which is celebrated yearly during the Feast of Weeks,

Catholic tradition teaches that the consecrated life is derived from the mystery of the Church of which the teaching and example Christ provides the foundation. Though Jesus enjoins the practice of the counsels (chaste self-dedication to God, poverty, obedience) on all who follow him, persons called to the consecrated life, like members of the "small covenant community," choose to live the counsels in a more strict sense.

Members of this community live within institutes canonically erected by the Church.

This form of life is "distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public

75 Philo of Alexandria 250

⁷⁴ Urbach, Ephraim, E., The Sages, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975) 12

profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ in the Church." As a gift of love which the Church received from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Religious Life which involves the consecration of the whole persons,

manifests in the Church a wonderful marriage brought about by God, a sign of the future age. Thus religious bring to perfection their full gift as a sacrifice offered to God by which their whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in love 77

Formed to signify the very charity of God in the language of the times, love therefore becomes the primary vocation of all who espouse this way of life. Elucidation of the word "love" will not be exposed here in any elaborate form. But a brief comment on the word "love" would suffice. Of all the varied shades of meaning, the term "love" has acquired particularly in recent times, these still bold true:

The Greeks distinguished three levels of love: agape, phile and eros. Eros, from which 'erotic' is derived, describes a love of selfishness in terms of search for goods or the passion of a man for a woman. The love of friendship is phile; it describes a reciprocal love with exchange and sharing for mutual benefits. Agape is a love of concern and devotion without counting the cost or thinking of reward. Agape is self-giving; it is God-love, the same kind of love with which God loves us. The vocation of love springs up from the realization of the agape-love one shares with the divine.

Consequently, one is moved to respond in no other manner than in the self-same agape as the apostle John articulates thus:

77 The Code of Canon Law 507 section 1

⁷⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, (New York: Doubleday, 1995) Section 925

No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us (1 Jn 4:12).

Certain vocations come naturally, though discernment is needed; the vocation to the vowed life certainly necessitates meticulous sensitivity given the fact that one is not only going to do that which is asked of all Christian, but do them with "an undivided attention" (see 1 Cor 7: 32-35) in their becoming "salt to the earth" (Mt. 5:13), "light to the world" (Mt 5:14) and leaven (Mt. 13:33). How is one prepared for living the covenantal relationship? The work of Victor Turner will provide the guide in exploring the implications of pilgrimage for understanding the movement of the covenanted people to their goal. However, to enable us enter into covenant-pilgrimage dimensions of the religious life, we would first explore the like relationship in the life of Jesus and his disciples, by means of the synoptic pilgrimage pericope.

Marriage is as much a pilgrimage as the vowed life, neither is superior to the other; rather the two vocations complement each other. As always, God takes the initiative to invite individuals to a closer union with Himself and the free will response to do so makes this a bilateral covenant. Jesus' call and the response of the Twelve exemplified this relationship. It is on this basis he could form his covenant-pilgrim community, a group not uncommon in Israel's history. Thus situated, journeying with Jesus acquires a new meaning, that of a Sabbatical period.

Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the foundation of orthodox Christianity, "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that anyone who believes in him may not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn. 1:16). To believe in Jesus, to follow in his footsteps, leads the believer back to God, the ultimate goal. Thus the human journey

back to God becomes the centrality of Jesus' life and mission. The basis of this journey for Jesus and his fellow Jews is found in the Jerusalem Temple.

a.) The Great Pilgrimage

i.) Jerusalem Temple (background)

The capacity of the Temple to play an important role in the national and international life of the imperial kingdom of Solomon lay in its conceptualization as a divine dwelling place on earth. Although the God of Israel was viewed as transcendent. and God's presence was hardly restricted to a designated place or places, the need for the assurance of divine availability led the Israelites, like virtually all other peoples, to establish locales in which access to the transcendent deity could be secured. The presence of God in the Jerusalem Temple became for the Jews something both symbolic and real. The symbolic nature of the Jerusalem Temple, as for all major shrines in the ancient world, depended upon a series of features that, taken together, established the sacred precinct as being located at the cosmic center of the universe, at the place where God's control over the universe is effected. When the royal capital is brought into this sphere of divine activity through the construction of a temple, the regime acquires the might involved in the heavenly arena. A series of visual symbols, rooted in the mythic consciousness of the Israelites and their neighbors, provided the affective power of this notion of cosmic center. One has only to look at the poetic celebration of Zion in psalmody and prophecy to understand the depth of Israel's consciousness in the Jerusalem Temple. The sacredness of the Temple is perhaps better understood in its connection with Mount Zion, the cosmic mountain: "Yes, the Lord has chosen Zion, desired it for a dwelling" (Ps. 132:13). The temple building on a mountain and a

platform, replicated the heavenly mountain of the LORD (Ps. 48: 1-4) and also his earlier manifestation at Sinai. Adorned with symbols constitutive of the cosmic order, the architecture heightened the notion of the Temple as cosmic center. 78

Psalm 15 celebrates both the purity to be possessed by those who approach the Temple and at the same time intensifies the sense of divine nearness. Every category of structure, furniture, ritual, and human attendants is arrayed in a continuum, from the profane territory outside the sacred precinct to the somewhat holy and pure character of the courtyard. The innermost room was the essence of holiness and thus off-limits to all but the High Priest, only once a year and only after he attained an exceptional state of purity (at least during the Second Temple times). This carefully arranged gradation involve a consciousness that the closer one gets to the inner sanctum, the nearer one is to the perfection of the divine presence. Even if an ordinary individual can never approach the holiest place, the existence of the concentric circles, as it were, of increasing holiness signifies that the Holiest One of all could be found at the sacred center. That innermost human desire to be in the presence of the Holy becomes the inspiration for pilgrimages. As a people covenanted with God, Israel's pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem became a requirement as spelt out in biblical law (Ex. 23:17; 34:21; Deut 16:16).

The Temple was the centerpiece of Jewish life. In many ways Judaism in the Second Temple period was heir of the preexilic religion of the Kingdom of Judah. The Temple was rebuilt: sacrifices were offered; hymns of psalms were sung; the main pilgrimage feasts were celebrated. Eventually meeting for prayer, devout reading, meditation, and instruction in places known, as synagogues also became an important

⁷⁸ Carol Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem," Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 6, Si-Z (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 359

factor of Jewish life. The figure of the prophets became much less common; and Judaism took on a particular religious coloration from Ezra's proclamation of the Law (Neh. 1:1-9:37). Certainly, from that period obedience to the Law of Moses (the Torah) became more and more a paramount obligation of the Jews as a corollary of accepting the One God.

Luke records that Jesus experienced pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem in the company of his family: "Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom" (Lk. 2: 41-42). According to Jewish custom, a boy at twelve is of age and is admitted to Bar mitzvah; thus he becomes obligated to keep all the positive commandments. Perhaps Luke' account of this particular event was to stress Jesus' initiation into this tradition.

The evangelists portray Jesus as an itinerant. What else could be the case if he is "the way?" "Way" connotes route, a road, technique or "know how" and Jesus showed himself to be all of these. It is this "Way" that defined Jesus' mission, as we shall see later. Unlike John who presented Jesus as having made three trips to Jerusalem, the synoptic Gospels describe a one-time journey, a decision rooted in their different theologies. Each evangelist's records of the Jesus pilgrimage has a unique theological, teaching, though all are in agreement as to purpose. For the purpose of this study, our point of reference would be the synoptic pilgrimage pericopes.

Generally, pilgrimages are made in groups. People approach God as community, praying "Our Father" (Mt 6:9). In keeping with precepts, Jesus recruited followers hence the call of the disciples with whom he began the Great Pilgrimage, to which we now turn.

⁷⁹ Carol Meyers 359

ii.) The Call of the Disciples

The socio-political scene in first century Palestine was tense. Roman occupation forces imposed untold hardships on the people; not a few were taxed out of their homes and lands for the maintenance of the foreign forces. Jews' endurance of these harsh conditions reached breaking points at different times triggering revolts. The people eagerly looked forward to a messiah who would free them from the yoke of the Romans. It is against this background that Jesus began his ministry. After a few excursions on his own, he began recruiting disciples from his native Galilee. Scripture tells us that Jesus first called Simon and his brother Andrew; then, he called the Zebedee brothers, James and John (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk.I: 16-20; Lk. 5:1-11). Each set of brothers followed without hesitation. They left behind trade and means of livelihood to follow Jesus. James' and John's response was dramatic; they abandoned their father at sea and left the family business: "So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men" (Mkl:20)! What could cause this radical renunciation? The answer may not be quite obvious but it is evident that these men have been touched by something greater than themselves, something they had no control over, something urging them to go beyond time and space, to reach for the divine. Another disciple whose call was specially recorded was Levi (Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27). Levi, like the first four called before him, was also actively engaged when Jesus came calling. Levi was a government official, a customs agent. Thus he was a supporter of the Romans, and hated and despised by his fellow Jews, yet when Jesus called, him, he did not tarry, he "got up and followed him." That was not the end of the story. Levi invited Jesus and his fellow pilgrims into his house and gave them a meal: "he was at table in his house" (Mk. 2:15). Probably, this

was Levi's going away party, an occasion for him to repair broken relationships and perhaps rendered account of his customs collections before beginning his pilgrimage. But the magnitude of the Jesus' mission to the twelve tribes of Israel Was more than five men could handle. All Israel was to benefit from the manifold gift of God, which is in Jesus the Christ. Every tribe in Israel must be represented in this new dispensation, so Jesus called the twelve apostles symbolizing the twelve tribes and sent them out on mission (Mt. 10:6; 15:24; Mk. 13:16-19a; Lk. 22:30). For Matthew, the Jews have a prior call and a peculiar responsibility to be the "light to the nations." Could this then be the reason why Jesus tells his hearers that he "was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:6)? Those called were to undergo certain rituals for it was not enough to leave all and follow Jesus. Notice that some name changes took place. Simon was given a new name. and thereby a new identity "Simon ... whom he named Peter" (Mk. 3: 16; Lk. 6: 14a). Change of name in the biblical tradition is significant. We see this in the story of the Patriarchs: Abram becoming Abraham (Gen. 17:5). After Jacob's experience with the divine, he received a new name, Israel, probably meaning one who struggles with God (Gen. 32:29). Matthew's account of Simon's new name: Peter, (Mt.16:17-18; Lk, 6:14) indicates his new mission to be the leader of the Twelve

Jesus' little covenant community followed him (in Whole and in part) to the end of his life in Jerusalem. The Gospels did not conceal the fact that women and children were members of this community. Evidently, the miracle of the loaves and fish recognized it:

"Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children" (Mt. 14:21; 15: 38). Women also were permanent members of Jesus' company:

"Accompanying him were the Twelve and Some Women ... Mary, called Magdalene, from

whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources" (Lk. 8:1-3). They came in families: the sons of Zebedee had their mother in the community so also was Jesus' own mother, Mary. They accompanied from the beginning (Galilee) to the end of His earthly ministry (Jerusalem) "ministering to him" (Mt. 12:46-50; 27:55; Mk. 3:31-35;15:41; Lk. 8:19-21; 23: 27-28). These and many nameless women followed him even to Golgotha: "... his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women, who has followed him from Galilee and saw these events" (Lk. 23:49). Faithfully, these Galilean women ministered to Jesus beyond His earthly life, they continued their service to His grave: they "returned and prepared spices and perfumed oil to anoint his body" (Lk. 23: 55-56a). "They rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Lk. 23:56b); this is a confirmation that Jesus' followers understood that he did not come to destroy the Law and the Commandment but to fulfill them. It was still "some women from the group" who were the first to report the Resurrection to the rest of Jesus' followers (Mt. 28:5; Mk. 16: 1-7; Lk. 24:1-11, 22-24). That women bearing witness in Judaism indicated the transformation of life accomplished by Jesus.

Friendship was a quality of the covenant community. Jesus demonstrate this in his relationships as can be inferred from the exchange that took place in his favorite resting place, Bethany. The two sisters, Martha and Mary, and indeed their entire family provided him hospitality. He was their friend. Their familiarity with him is displayed when Martha chided him for Mary's uncooperative attitude in domestic duties (Lk. 10:38-42). Lazarus' subsequent death and being raised depicted the depth of love and generosity in this relationship, for "Jesus wept" at the death of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35).

Exploring first century Galilee from our vantage point, it may not seem odd that women should be involved in such venture as traveling with Jesus throughout the countryside, and into the towns and villages of Galilee and Samaria and even to Jerusalem. But this was revolutionary and for some could cause a scandal at the time. Public affairs were the domain of men; Jewish women were forbidden to speak to any man in public, their travels were restricted to such conventional purposes as visiting family and attending certain religious feasts. One week every month (during her menses) the woman was considered unclean, and anything she touched during that time, including food and other persons, was considered contaminated. In a nutshell, the respectable Jewish woman was kept confined at home, hidden from view. What a scandal the presence of these women disciples must have caused! The notion of God's Kingdom, where there is "neither male nor female" was lost on the onlookers. Jewish pilgrimage setting allowed for families to travel, women and children separately from groups of men; however, they accompanied the males to the Temple site (Deut. 31:12).

To be in the company of Jesus is not a blissful escape from the realities of life. Rather the contrary may be the case, for he says that whoever wishes to come after him must renounce himself, take up his cross and follow in his footsteps (Mt. 10:38; 16:24; Mk. 8:24; 10:21; Lk. 9:23; 14:27). The spiritual need of Israel was paramount for Jesus, in order to meet this need, people must minister to them. For the reason, He recruited followers. It is because of this then he commissioned the Twelve.

iii.) Commission

The Twelve, having witnessed Jesus' miraculous works, and hearing his doctrine concerning the Kingdom; learning how to pray and to live, were ready to embark of the

mission. This bold venture was not without some trepidation and a fear for this mission of the Twelve was Jesus' own mission. To them he passed on his authority: "He gave them authority over all demons and to cure every disease and illness, to proclaim the kingdom of God' (Mt. 10:1-16; Mk. 16:13-19; Lk. 9:1-5; 10:1-11). Directives given for this first mission were not meant to become universal rules, for Jesus afterwards varied them. However, their spirit is an admonition to all who are tempted to forget the real meaning of their mission and think of the personal advantages, which it may offer. Thus commissioned and endowed, the Twelve should have felt the greatness of the message they conveyed. Jesus was specific in his commission; to go to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt. 10:6). Their native province of Galilee was their starting point (Mt. 9:35; Mk.6:6, 36; Lk. 8:1; 13:22). Preparing the Galileans first for the "kingdom" became necessary for what lies ahead, for the pilgrims would eventually return home. Galilee eventually would become the launching pad for "the good news" as recorded by Matthew 28:7 and Mark 16:7. For Luke, the disciples began their ministry from the Temple city: Jerusalem (Lk. 24:47).

That each might sustain the wisdom and courage of his companion Jesus sent them out two by two. Notice that when Paul and Barnabas, whose first journey was together, could no longer agree, each of them took a new companion and departed (Act.15: 37-40). Peter and John together visited converts in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17). Even in a dissimilar circumstance, the discouraged disciples (imbued the value of companionship) left as a pair for Emmaus (Lk. 24:13). He sent them out in pairs so that each becomes a "sacrament" to the other. This special presence of one human being to the other vouches for the common worship of two or three, for two can give testimony

(Mt. 18:20). Distraction was forestalled by the prohibition from wandering into other territories, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town" (Mt. 10:5); they needed to maintain the purity demands of their journey. Another reason for the prohibition could be that these fledgling disciples needed further spiritual fortification to enable them confront the world beyond Judaism. The encounter with the Holy would do that, hence the pilgrimage to the Temple. The Evangelists wrote that Jesus instructed the Twelve to take no provisions of any description (Mt. 9:9-14; Mk. 6:8-11; Lk. 9:4), Naturally, lugging possessions can be a burden for a traveler. They must learn to depend on the hospitality of others in terms of material goods. Poverty in fact and in deed was an absolute condition. We might be inclined to believe that the Twelve were dressed alike. They and their master would have worn white garbs. Could this be the reason why Judas needed to point Jesus out to those who arrested Him by a kiss (Mt. 26:48-49; Mk. 14:44-45; Lk. 22:47)? Earlier, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructed the disciples on confidence in God: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on," (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-32). Certainly, the multiplication of the loaves confirmed this teaching. In the Eucharistic discussion, Jesus further expands the notion of "food" when he teaches that He is the "Bread of Life" (Jn. 6:22-71). The whole notion of the Eucharist as the center of worship of Catholic Christians is built on this groundwork. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we abide in him, and he in us. Total dependence on Divine Providence then was to be the key to the success of this mission.

It was a precarious situation to depend on the hospitality of strangers in first century Galilee and Judea. Firstly, the hardship imposed by the Roman occupation army

and secondly, the problem of bandits in the rural areas might have infringed on the people's spirit of hospitality. Yet the Jewish spirit is not undaunted by these shortcomings. In Judaism, hospitality motif is centered in Abraham (Gen 18:3; 19:2-3). It was Abraham and Sarah who welcomed the three heavenly visitors to their tent and received from them the promise of Isaac's birth (Gen. 18:1-15). Thus in showing hospitality, Abraham and Sarah revealed themselves as the perfect hosts; not by chance were they regarded as the prototype of all believers, as well as a model of virtue full of humanity and grace. 80 Israel's experience of slavery in Egypt and their nomadic experience imprinted in them the virtue of hospitality. This is clearly stated in the Law of Moses in which hospitality is seen as a commandment. For the Israelites, hospitality is to imitate God who "loves the so journer, giving them food and clothing" (Dt.10:18-19; Lev. 19:34). The understanding was that because God was Israel's host (Ps. 39:12; Lev. 25:23), they believed that they must play host to others who were without a home of their own. Behind the great importance attached to openness towards guests was a hope shared by many first-century Jews that God would act as bountiful host at the end of time by entertaining Israel at the endless feast (Amos 13:15, Joel 3:8). In the expansive vision of Isaiah this blessed meal would include "all people" (Is. 25:6-8). This knowledge was not lost on Jesus and his followers. A faith grounded in Divine Providence was the bedrock of this pilgrim community.

Preparation for the Holy encounter involved both spiritual and temporal measures.

Purity Laws had to be observed. And that meant sexual relations were forbidden (Ex. 19:15; Mt. 19:12). If sexual relations were forbidden temporarily for the men of Israel during their encounter with the Lord on Mt. Sinai, how true would that be for men and

⁸⁰ Brown Raymond, An Introduction to the New Testament, (New York: Doubleday, 1996) 75

women who are on the pilgrimage? The High Priest was held to the highest degree of purity during his Temple service. Uriah the Hittite, we would say, became a martyr of purity for disobeying King David refusing to defile himself while still in the Lord's service (2 Sam. 11:11). It became pertinent then for Jesus and his followers to exercise the virtue of chastity as they make their pilgrimage to the Temple. The Twelve guarded against defilement by actively seeking out lodging conducive to their way for life: "Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it and stay there until you leave"; remain in one place, and not "wandering from house to house."

Victor Turner sees the Road as an area of liminality, a concept we will explore later in this essay; meanwhile, let us walk the Road with Jesus.

iv.) On The Road -Pilgrimage

Becoming away of his mission, Jesus sets off, going "from one town to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (Mt.10:11; Mk. 8:27; Lk. 8:1). In the process, he recruited disciples with whom he formed pilgrim-community. "Walking ahead of them," he led his band of followers towards the Holy City. The Gospels noted that Jesus did not have the "blessing" of his family in this ministry. Embarrassed by his itinerant lifestyle they "set out to seize him" (Mt. 12:46-49; Mk.3:21; Lk. 8:19-21). But Jesus was not deterred by their actions for his sense of whohe was becoming and his mission: bringing about the Kingdom of God was stronger than any human ties; thus He "resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:5).

Contained from the distractions of friends and family as it were, with attention focused on the eminent divine encounter in the Temple, Jesus began to introduce his followers to the mystery of God. The tranquility of the road lent itself to the purpose of

the teaching: the Kingdom of Heaven through prayer, trust, justice, mercy, honesty and cost of the cost of discipleship. Chilton in his book, *Rabbi Jesus*, describes vividly Jesus' mystical experience and the introduction of same to his disciples. ⁸¹ As they approached the end of the journey, Jesus promised his followers everything that they may have left behind to follow him, even members of their own family, will be restored in this age and that eternal life is the promise of the age to come (Lk. 18:28-30). Yet in the interim, innocent people, even God's prophets, must die in Jerusalem (Lk. 18:31-34; 19:28ff). ⁸²

Undoubtedly, Jesus' pilgrim band attracted followers as the journey approached Jerusalem. But not all who desired to follow Jesus or who were invited to follow joined the pilgrim community. One of such persons was the man who met Jesus on the way and offered to follow him wherever Jesus might go. Jesus corrected his naïve idea of what is required of being his follower. Every creature in the sky or on the earth has a home, but Jesus, the Son of Man, did not even have a place to lay his head at night. The would-be disciple went away (cf. Mt.8:19-20; Lk. 9:57-58). Probably the "glamour" of what he perceived about Jesus from the outside did not fit with the reality of what he heard. His expectations were unrealistic.

Jesus encountered yet another would-be disciple. Unlike the first encounter, this man did not volunteer to follow Jesus, but rather is invited to follow. And unlike the naïve enthusiasm of the first man, this man expressed reluctance to become one of Jesus' disciples, saying that he first had to go away and bury his father. Jesus replied to this man's more reluctant attitude, beginning with a metaphorical admonition, "Let the dead people bury their own dead." This was a rather shocking response. Burying the dead is

⁸¹ Chikon, Bruce, Rabbi Jesus, (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 174-196

the greatest act of mercy in Judaism; and the perfection of the commandment is a proper burial given to one's parents. Jesus minced no words in letting his disciples know that loyalty to him takes precedence over the most fundamental responsibilities to one's own family. Though this second man could not follow, Jesus did not dismiss him. He was charged to go preach, "When you do go away, you must proclaim the kingdom of God." He was to spread the message of his brief encounter with the "road."

Jesus encountered a third and final would-be follower. Like the first one, this man volunteered to follow Jesus, but like the second, he wished to delay his departure until he could make arrangements for those in his family. As was the case with the first two men, Jesus responded to this third would-be disciple with a metaphorical admonition, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:61-62).

Certainly Jesus' pilgrim community was attractive to persons from all walks of life, including the rich and poor alike, another indication that the Kingdom of God is for all peoples (Is. 2:2-5; 25:6-8). The synoptic account of Jesus' encounter with the rich young man(Mt. 19-16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:18-23) epitomized the ingenuous pilgrim on the quest for eternal life. Earnestness was the characteristic of this rich young man as shown in his questions: "What must I do to possess eternal life?" and his response, "I have done all these." His attention was first directed to God and His commandments after which the invitation to "follow me" was made. Jesus' call emphasizes that the invitee response be total: "Go sell all that you possess," because being "on the road," implies being absolutely dependent on Providence. But the rich

⁸² Beyond the Q Impasse, (ed) A. J. McNicol, D. L. Dungan, and D. B. Peabody, (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1966) 151-158

young man was sorry he could not be a follower of Christ upon easier terms, so he decided otherwise. The episode became a powerful means to communicate the enormous power of possessions to the disciples (Mt. 5:32; 6:24; 19:2; Lk. 16:13; 19:23-26).

It is evident that the experience of the road has been valuable to the disciples; they have learnt how to pray, have known hunger, thirst, powerlessness, longing and hardships; thus being purified, they were ready for the encounter with the Holy.

Jerusalem was not taken by storm on the arrival of the pilgrims but there was enough evidence for the people of the city to know that something uncommon was abroad. Jesus' activities in Jerusalem and the Passover events belong to a different pericope, and so will not be discussed. It would suffice to say that the pilgrims sensed the Presence of the Holy in the Jerusalem. How did we know this? Luke's account of the account of the trial of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin provides an answer: thus, "Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, they were amazed and they recognized them as companions of Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The disciples' transpersonal experience propelled them forth to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:19-20; Lk. 24:48). This they did.

Clearly, the disciples' lives were altered by their Road experience. Being with Jesus "from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us" (Acts 1:22) oriented them towards God's Kingdom. Saint Paul would have that same experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). The Ethiopian eunuch's encounter with Philip on the "desert route" (Acts 8:26) is another example of what the road represents. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the road was a place of revelation as seen in the lives of the

Patriarchs. Israel's Great Theophany (on Mount Sinai), occurred on the road to the Promised Land, and was the culmination of revelations in the Torah.

The Christian's pilgrimage ends when faith becomes vision (1 Cor. 13:12); and hope is fulfilled in eternal life. Love, which is God himself, endures forever (1 Cor. 13:7). It is this happy ending, which impels Christian to daily "take up their cross" and "come after" Jesus who leads them into the Lord's Sabbath.

b.) The Covenanted pilgrim

Having explored Jesus' pilgrimage and its implications we now employ the insights of Victor Turner to further expound our thesis relating to the Religious Life. To become a full-fledged member in certain cultures, religion or organizations, an individual must undergo a right of passage. For example, baptism, confirmation and the Holy Eucharist are the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church. A Catholic who has not received these three sacraments cannot claim to be fully initiated. Turner identified three-stage process in the rite of passage: Separation, limen, aggregation.

i) Rites of Initiation

1.) Separation

Like the disciples of Jesus, the candidates seeking to enter the vowed life can respond to Jesus' invitation, "follow me" and leave home. They become separated from their family and friends and detached from social structure and cultural conditions. We have already demonstrated how the small covenant communities in ancient Israel and indeed Jesus and his disciples were set apart (Lk. 9:62). The separation or apartness creates an ambiance that lends a sense of mystery, an experience of holiness (qdsh).

Jeremiah was so favored even while yet unborn, "Before I formed you in the womb I

knew you, before you were born I dedicated you" (Jer. 1:5). Scripture is not unambiguous on the prophet's struggle with the *limen*. In his confusion, and weakness, he prayed and even questioned God's justice (Jer. 20:7ff). Rejection was his lot yet the words God placed in his mouth (Jer. 1:9-11) consumed the rest of his life. And the whole purpose of the Exodus was it not for holiness? Was not God's separating the children of Israel from the Egyptians and subsequently leading them out into the wilderness for the purpose of initiation into the divine milieu? Landless, with their few possessions on their backs, the Israelites acquired a new status, that of 'anawim. This concept took on a new meaning with the exile. Thereafter 'anawim came to represent the remnant, the poor and lowly, those whose poverty led them to real faith, forming them as community within a community, "But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who will take refuge in the name of the Lord..." (Zeph. 3:12 ff). The absolute abandonment of the 'anawim to divine Providence drew them to him who is the fountain of life (Jn 10:10).

Reminiscent of setting off on a typical pilgrimage, a candidate does formally take leave of family and friends (see Mk. 2:15). Because of the communal benefits of pilgrimages, pilgrims leave with the blessings of their community. The first covenant community enjoyed same privileges (Ex. 12:35-36); though not recorded, Abram and family may not have left Haran without a farewell (Gen. 12:1). The sense of nothingness, which the road inspires, heightens the pilgrims longing to complete the process. So he begins undoubtedly the most difficult part of the initiation process, the *liminal* period.

2.) Liminal period

What can best describe the *liminal* phase is ambiguity. The *liminars* in this new or rather strange environment with few or none of the attributes of the past or future state

become utterly confused, being "betwixt and between" all familiar lines of classification. Fraught with uncertainties, danger, isolation, and suffering, the journey can easily be terminated at this point. And this has happened for some. Possibly those disciples who discontinued the journey with Jesus could not go beyond this stage (Jn. 6:67). Formation proper takes place during this period in Religious communities. They are brought to the road, as it were, secluded in a sacralized enclosure, clearly set apart from the rest of the community. They are given new identities: the name "novice," an nomenclature designed to enable the bearer let go of the past and focus on the future, and also a religious garb, a sign of their pilgrim status. In pursuit of contemporary relevance and failing to recognize the covenanted-pilgrim status of the vowed life, the symbolism of the religious garb is interpreted by some in this way:

To read the signs of the times, is to do more than the founders did in their own times. It is to recognize that communities, as well as the Church and world that they were founded to serve, have grown and progressed from the age in which the founders so well recognized the signs of their own times, It is a refusal to be custodians of anachronistic customs and costumes under guise of fidelity to the past.⁸³

Scripture insinuates that Jesus and his disciples dressed alike in the garb of spiritual travelers. Evidently, the symbolism of the religious garb is lost on many. Such rejection of tradition has contributed in no small way to the problems affecting institutional vowed communities today.

The *liminars* are introduced to the "kingdom of God" as embodied in the spirit, charism, tradition, beliefs and regulations of the community in which they are becoming

¹³ Doyle xiv

members. The main curriculum is the study of the evangelical counsels of which hesed the essence of Love is the main focus. To Love runs through the three precepts:

Poverty—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." (Deut. 6:5) Celibate chastity- "You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul" (Deut. 6:5) Obedience—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your strength." (Deut. 6:5)

A fuller discussion of the vows will be offered in the next chapter.

By this teaching, the *liminar* insight into the vocation intensifies. It is requisite that they realize ritual purity is sine qua non in the covenantal relationship (Ex. 20:5). Candidates are exposed to the ministry of their Order and other such practices relevant to the initiation process.

Turner defines communitas, to be "a relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups situations, and circumstances." This is the bond among the liminal subjects. We agree with Turner that communitas is a liminal phenomenon, which combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity, and comradeship, in effect, it produces the spirit of the 'anawim, concretizing for the candidates, their remnant status. Elitism may creep in where agape is not the focal point. In contrast to the strictly hierarchical Essene covenant community, communitas characterized the new covenant community of the New Testament. Master and disciples bonded so well that Peter could remonstrate with Jesus (Mt:16:23; Mk. 8:33).

However, the period never actually ends in the spiritual order, for covenant renewals take place during the *liminal* period. But for beginners, it is the formalization of the end of the *liminal* period that confers membership into the new covenant community at the service of the Church. At the end of the initial formation which lasts for a period of

two to three years, candidates make temporary vows. The period of temporary vows may last for six to nine years at the end of which perpetual vows are made. Perpetual profession confers full membership into the community. The community element is strong in biblical covenant themes, Hillers writes," God's covenant was, of course, not with the head of the Israelite state, nor was it possible as far as we can tell for one tribal leader to commit a whole tribe. The sacred pact was concluded with individual families, and it remained the responsibility of each father to acquaint his children with its provisions."

We will briefly sketch the ritual ceremony associated with initiation rites into the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus. We could follow the Sinai treaty-formulary described in chapter 2 without considering a direct link between the two, but rather the continuity of the biblical tradition led to this model. A portion of the vow formulary is reproduced in the appendix:

- a. Preamble: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- b. Review: Moved by your limitless love of me.
- c. Points emphasized: I (name) vow forever, to your Divine Majesty, simply perpetual vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in community according to the constitutions of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus
- d. Deposit: A copy of the vow formulary is given to the candidate; another is placed in the candidate's file and a third is kept in the community archives.
- e. Witness: The Blessed Virgin Mary, all the Saints, members of the Community, the Bishop, clergy, other religious, families and friends.

⁸⁴ Turner 250

⁸⁵ Hillers 63

- f. Blessings and curses: I pray that as you have given me the desire to make this sacrifice, you will give me through the grace of your Son Jesus won for me the strength and constancy to fulfill it generously to the hour of my death.
- g. Ratification: The Eucharistic sacrifice is celebrated of which candidates are full participants. The Body and Blood of Christ received at Holy Communion seals the pact. The symbols of profession, the crucifix and the ring, may be likened to the covenant memorial (monument).

Initiation ceremony (Vow Ceremony)

During the liminal period, candidates experience the God of love who calls the anawim into a new mode of being. In accordance with biblical initiation rites, seven days preceding the covenant formalization (vow-day) are spent in spiritual retreat, a purification rite. On the eighth day, the initiation takes place (Lev. 9:1). Canon 654 prescribes that members of a Religious institute make a public profession of vows: accordingly, invitations are extended to families and friends who come as witnesses to the covenant solemnization. Within the context of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. candidates are invited to declare their intentions. After some call-response formalizations, each candidate approaches the altar and makes her vows, read out loud in the hearing of all present. After which the Superior, accepts the vows in the name of the Church. The candidate then takes the document to the altar where she signs in the presence of two witnesses. These witnesses also sign the same document before the Mass continues. The initiates' full participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which the Body and Blood of Christ is consumed, completely ratifies the ceremony. Communion portends an oath. It carries with it the same implications as the covenant of the pieces. Of this Paul warns "anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). At the end of this ritual, the candidate becomes incorporated into the covenant community of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus. Even though the vows are made personally and they bind the individual who makes them, these same vows can only be realized within a community context, "vow forever...in community." Subsequently, celebrations take place in families.

Covenant renewal for the community is an annual event. It is still in the context of Eucharistic celebration but is not celebrated as elaborately as the premier event. This too is preceded by a period of purification (a retreat) during which the ritual subjects evaluate the quality of their commitment according to the terms of the covenant. The vow formulary is re-read; the community rule (constitutions) is studied and explained.

Covenant renewal is a community exercise and can make sense in no other context. However, this community is dissimilar to the small covenant communities in the Hebrew Scriptures in that our unity is derived from Jesus Christ, not in keeping of the law. Neither the observance of the constitutions nor ministry can enliven or sustain covenant community. Only Jesus who brings the community together to be with him can keep it united (Jn. 15:9). Unfortunately, not all who enter into this covenant remain in it for life. People withdraw or are asked to leave for various reasons. One may ask the criteria of judgment for the Religious life, how does one discern a vocation? It is impossible to tell, vocation is a mystery; maybe we could find some answer in Paul's writing:

Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for

nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:26-30)

In the covenant relationship the heart of the matter is the pattern of divine initiative and free human response. The mystery deepens when we think of the possibility of Jesus forming communitas with characters such as the jealous Zebedee brothers, turncoat Judas Iscariot, the impetuous Simon Peter, the skeptical Thomas and the others. Even the women who were in his company did not descend from a monolithic stock. There were wealthy ladies who provided for him out our their own resources, (Lk. 8:3) so also those from who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities (Lk. 8:2), among others.

3.) Re-aggregation

With full integration into the covenant community, the pilgrim is ready for the final stage of the *liminal* process: re-aggregation. The pilgrim, like the disciples who were imbued with the vector of transpersonal experience, is launches into ministry. An acute awareness of her special call implies a more radical way of expressing her baptismal giftedness: sharing in the functions of Christ, priest, prophet and king. As priest, her life will have a mediating effect on others, she leads in caring for the poor and thus becomes a witness to the presence of God in the world. Abraham's male descendants carry in their bodies the sign of the covenant of circumcision; the covenanted-pilgrim carries with her a sign already prefigured in Jeremiah (Jer. 16:2), and preached by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. She is totally consumed by doing the will of the Father (Mt. 7:21). Hardships, trials and physical difficulties in this "settled" stage makes failure a real possibility. It is not uncommon that trials are generated from within the

community itself. Paul believed that no matter how they differed on the means, a community would not be polarized if they actively and with love shared the same goal or vision. That would be the sign of their maturity. Without that they would be children. united or divided only by the games they played. 86 But the lessons instilled on the road. daily renewal of covenant in sacrifice and prayer, penance, absolute trust in Divine Providence, and God's hesed, sustain the pilgrim.

For the Religious, the *liminal* state is never over, though perpetual vows may give a semblance of a "stable state." Her new status imposes the rights and obligations of a clearly defined structural type, and she is expected to behave in accordance with the customary norms and ethical standards appropriate to her new rank.⁸⁷ Undeniably, there accrue to the covenanted-pilgrim a heightened respect and moral standing among the pious in the local community. In many parts of the world, some people are disproportionately generous to Religious simply because of what they are. They see them as genuine pilgrims, members of covenanted community who arouse in them the experience of divine consciousness. The more traditional the Religious is in appearance, the greater the favor. These rewards tend to fall within the orbit of communitas rather than social structure, and make the pilgrim a primus inter pares, not a person of a higher rank. Sharing her only possession: her humanity, she and the community renew each other. A double renewal takes place, she renews the community and the community renews her; perchance this is an aspect of what is meant to "renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30).

⁸⁶ Doyle, 131-132 ⁸⁷ Turner, 2

Turner, 15

Chapter6 The Evangelical Counsels

a.) Background

The preceding chapters, examined the origins of the consecrated life as rooted in the covenant theme; a communion with God, which our primal parents enjoyed in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8). This divine communion extended to Noah continued until God established an everlasting covenant (b'rit olam) with Abraham. Individuals and groups seek various ways of maintaining this communion and some do so through making vows (neder). In making a vow, a person devoutly dedicates himself to God or promises him some good work. Normally, a vow is made for a specific reason. For example, Jacob vowed to serve God if his journey was successful (Gen. 28:20-22), for victory in battle, when Jephthah, the Gileadite chieftain vowed to sacrifice the first thing that comes out of his house to meet him (Jg. 11: 29-31), and Hannah vowed to give back to the LORD the son she is asking of him (1Sam. 1:11). To make a vow is a very grave matter, Ecclesiastes cautioned, "you had better not make a vow then make it and not fulfill it' (Eccl. 5:4). The prophet Isaiah spoke about fulfilling yows: "They shall know the Lord in that day, they shall offer sacrifices and oblations, and fulfill the vows they make to the Lord" (Is. 19:21). This idea is echoed in the prayer of Jonah: "But I with resounding praise will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay" (Jon. 2:10). The Acts of the Apostles shows St. Paul was concerned to fulfill the vows he had made (Acts 18:18; 21:23-24).

There was no community of vowed persons in ancient Israel, individuals made private vows and lived within their communities. Vowed community began with the idea of the People of the New Covenant (claimed by the Essenes). Hillers' points out that the

Essene covenant rested on an oath by each member of the community, an idea that is fundamental to most Old Testament uses of the term thus:

By a solemn oath I have undertaken not to sin against thee and not to do anything evil in thy sight. So also I have brought all men of my council into a community (1QH xiv 17-18). 89

b.) Religious Vows: The Life of Christ

Jesus inaugurated the evangelical counsels, which he lived in his human nature, as man. Jesus was a poor man. He was familiar with the life of the 'anawim. Born in a stable in Bethlehem (Ik. 2:7), he grew up in the modest family of Mary and Joseph (Mt. 13:55), lived a lowly life in Nazareth (Jn. 1:46) and tramped all over Galilee in his public life (Mt. 8:20). Jesus' poverty is manifest in the "scandal of the Incarnation" God became man, "Though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself..." (Phil. 2:6-7) In his mission, he expresses the oneness between him and the Father as "the Father and I are one." From this relationship comes Jesus' gentle self-mastery expressed in his invitation, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28), signifying an overflow of love for all peoples. His freedom to 'drink the cup' of suffering is grounded in the truth of the relationship between him and God the Father. Thus entering the Father's mind or rather doing the Father's will, which is, reconciling humanity to God, Jesus gave himself.

c.) Evangelical Counsels for all Christians

The Gospel is about the life in the Kingdom of God: Love. Hence Christians' code, 'Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your

strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself' (Lk. 10:27 based on Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18). Jesus enjoined this two-fold precept on his followers when he said, "So be perfect [in love] just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2). The invitation to a life of love is at the same time an invitation to take up the Evangelical Counsels (Temperance [Chastity], Poverty, Obedience) as he who is the "Way" showed in the Gospel. Some consider these precepts unattainable but the Christians' daily struggle in the imitation of God in family, neighborhood, government, and work place attests to its attainment. Paul's letters unmistakably shows the difficulties inherent in this precept and how the early Christian community struggled with it. How best to imitate God is a perennial issue. Thomas Merton offers some answers when he articulates the questions and tensions in contemporary spirituality as "how to relate and balance the life of prayer and action, how to reconcile care for nature and use of modern technology, how to foster personal relationships that lead to God, how to balance the desire for freedom with the demands of authority, how to enter into fruitful dialogue with other religious traditions, and finally, how to relate contemplation and the quest for justice." These burning issues compel Christians to re-examine their baptismal commitment with a view of a more spiritual integration of their Christian lives.

"You shall be my people and I will be your God" (Ez. 11:20). Being thus covenanted, they respond by living "according to my statutes, and observe and carry out my ordinance" (Ez. 11:20). To remain in the covenant, Israel was obligated to:

Be careful, therefore to do as the Lord your God, has commanded you, not turning aside to the right or to the left, but following exactly the way prescribed for you by the

⁸⁹ Hillers. 176

⁹⁰ Becik, James J., "A Contemporary Spirituality," (ed) Michael Downey, The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993) 220

Lord your God that you may live and prosper, and may have long life in the land which you are to occupy (Deut 5:32-33).

Analogous to the Israelites of old, Christians are expected to keep their part of the agreement for the covenantal relationship to continue. Jesus tells us that to remain in the covenant is to "remain in my love" (Jn. 15:9). It become obvious then that the only way to remain in God's love is to keep his commandments. "If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love" (Jn. 15:10). A teaching he crowns with the challenge "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you" (Jn. 15:12).

Jesus situates the teaching of Temperance (Chastity) in the context of marriage. Fidelity in marriage is absolute and marriage indissoluble. For Jesus, divorce is not permitted, even for the "hardness of hearts". This is because from the beginning it was not so, the Creator "made them male and female" and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Mt.19:5 see Gen. 2:24). If staying in marriage for life was a problem to some, Jesus' teaching on celibacy must have shocked many:

Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it (Mt 19:1-12).

Jesus did not have a different standard of perfection for the Twelve or the Seventy-two, or the multitude that thronged around him. Each of his followers is held to the same standard: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect".

The Gospel story of the rich young man is of particular interest in the discussion on the Counsels. The rich young man presented himself to Jesus as desirous of gaining eternal life, Jesus reminded him of the necessity of keeping the commandments, "you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 19:16-19). Notice that these commandments belong to the interpersonal relationship. This means that love of God is possible only within the context of love of neighbor. There is no place for self-love in this sphere. Love of neighbor is the standard by which each person would be judged, "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:31-46). Returning to the rich young man, his adherence to the Law and fidelity to the commandments are sufficient for entry into eternal life but more was required to be perfect. To abnegate himself was the decisive factor (Mt. 19:22) and that is, to love God with his entire "mammon" (see Deut. 6:5 in Aramaic).

Voluntary poverty, like celibate chastity, is attainable by every Christian whether rich or poor. How possible is it for the poor of this world to commit to voluntary poverty?

A hidden drama at the Temple shows how, with the example of the poor widow's mite.

He sad down opposite the treasure and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins, which is a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood (Mk.12: 41-44).

Jesus' commendation of the poor widow is a recommendation to his followers of the detachment, the self-emptying that is required to enter into eternal life.

The teaching on detachment (see Mt.19:23-24; Mk. 4:19; Lk.12:16-21; 16:19-31; 21:1) is poignantly displayed in the Beatitudes. Here the invitation to self-emptying comes with a promise: entering the Reign of God, "Blessed are [the] poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:1). Thus those who follow God's Law, the humble of the land (anawim) are already living the reality of the Kingdom. Evangelical Counsels for all the baptized was stressed again in by Second Vatican Council "by reminding laypersons of their importance and dignity, their call to holiness, their essential role in the Church, and their task of humanizing the world."

Obedience (ob-audire) is related to listening. In listening to God and to each other, Christians are able to discern the will for God for themselves and for the good of their community. Obedience is not necessarily an "action" counsel, that is, what do I do? How should I do it? Rather, it seeks to ask the question, what is the community saying? How can we achieve it? Obedience is not possible without understanding what is being said. Understanding can only take place when one actually listens. Jesus listened to God the Father in prayer; he listened to the people, to his disciples, and to the signs of the time. When pressed into service, He said, "my hour has not yet come" (Jn. 2:4) and again "my appointed time draws near" (Mt. 26:18) when the time came to act. That the Christian listens to the message of Christ as proclaimed in the gospel is the only way to understand and live practical Christianity: "Every one who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock" (Mt. 7:24). Karl

⁹¹ Becik, 215

Rahner called this incarnational spirituality (drawing on the meaning of the title, emanu el—God with us); this recognizes the importance of finding and serving God in all aspects of human existence, even the most ordinary and routine, for holiness is found in ordinary things, in things that are done time and again. In other words, the sharp dichotomy between the sacred and the secular no longer holds. By the same token, the current cult of the extraordinary, which emphasizes striking and esoteric religious experiences, such as speaking in tongues and private revelations, becomes an oddity. Rahner stressed that every legitimate human effort can bring us closer to the Gracious Mystery and help spread the Reign of God. Thus the challenge is to be alert for the clues to the Lord's presence in our daily lives. "We must be watchful", Rahner says, "so that we do not miss the often ambiguous intimations that God is at work in ordinary experience," such as feeding the birds. "22

d.) Evangelical Counsels: Consecrated Life

The vowed pilgrim in a covenanted community is permanently in the *liminal* period. To "leave everything" and follow Jesus Christ on the road produces an experience that finds description only in an eschatological context. Because how can a full grown human being not be concerned about progeny, food, clothing and shelter?

Where does she derive the joy of life? Perhaps the answer lies in Paul's "single-minded devotion" (1Cor 7:32) to the Jesus Christ. It is only under this condition that the counsels take on a deeper meaning.

Religious vows, like the vows of marriage, are taken as a means to a greater end: give a public witness to Christ by imitating him in his poverty, chastity, and obedience in community sharing the public works of the Church. Belonging to a covenanted-pilgrim

⁹² Becik, 215

community allows the religious to engage the world in a special way and minister to a wider variety of people in freedom. The Church recognizes an exemplary value in practice of the counsels:

"Mother Church rejoices that she has within herself many men and women who pursue the Savior's self-emptying more closely and show it forth more clearly by undertaking poverty with the freedom of the children of God, and renouncing their own will: they submit themselves to man for the sake of God, thus going beyond what is of precept in the matter of perfection, so as to conform themselves more fully to the obedient of Christ." (Can. 654)

The vow of celibate chastity

Though a positive virtue in Christianity, many religions find celibate chastity unacceptable. It can be tolerated for the old but not for the young persons as in the Christian faith. Jesus presented celibate Chastity in the context of marriage:

Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by other; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it (Mt 19:12).

Because it involves the totality of one's being, genuine self-knowledge is central to commitment to the vow of chastity for unless one comes to a realistic understanding of oneself, a profound respect for the self and others would be flawed. Chastity is a basic Christian virtue, a gift of the Holy Spirit, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). Spiritual writers describe the vow of chastity as a sharing of friendship and the special family spirit and spirituality of the community. Positively presented, the life-giving element of chastity beclouds the "don't" that have beleaguered it over the centuries. Feiss writes of this same union in the married life:

"...their life is a sacrament, holy to the Church because of what it teaches about faithfulness and steadfastness and compassion and holy hilarity and tenderness and hospitality and the sanctity of everyday things. Their marriage is a continual conversion to their life together, to listening to one another, to caring for one another and others." "93"

Essentially, chastity is rooted in faith in God; of which the pilgrim character of the consecrated life makes an absolute condition.

The Vow of Poverty (Stewardship)

Poverty is one of the most, if not the most detestable states in life. More than half the world's population is afflicted with the worst kind of material poverty. But the poverty of the counsel is of a different kind - that which the Son of God assumed "For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). The primary inspiration of Christian voluntary poverty has been the example and teaching of Christ and the example of the early Christians of the Acts of the Apostles, a remnant of the Essenic practice. Because poverty involves profound respect for created order, to do with things in the proper manner, the word stewardship becomes more appropriate, "There was no needy person among them" (Acts 4:34). Material resources "were distributed according to need" so nothing were wasted. Poverty is a discipline that prevents one from assigning salvific value to persons, places, or material possessions. With its inherent detachment the covenanted-pilgrim acquires a full sense of dependence on Divine Providence. For the one who has unlimited needs, avarice is insatiable; the one who needs only what is sufficient is seldom in need. Exhorting Religious to voluntary Poverty, the Institute for the Consecrated Life in the document Vita Consecrata (82)

⁹³ Feiss Hugh, Essential Monastic Wisdom, (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1999) 84

states, "the option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ."

Where voluntary poverty is deficient, the vows become service to self. In their personal lives some Religious may face the temptation of being drawn into the logic of a consumer society and feeling unperturbed in their comfort zones. They may be content to have escaped from a personal background of economic misery or deprivation, and so be reluctant to actually choose voluntary poverty as a value. Incontrovertibly, this group of persons has created for themselves a golden calf and as such operates outside of the covenanted community.

The Vow of Obedience (Mission)

The basic assumption is that a person taking the vow of obedience in a particular community is already committed to its goals. Where the goal is not clearly delineated and the vision blurred, obedience becomes an issue. Why should this be so? Of all the three vows of Religion, Obedience is the most interpersonal. Obedience is related to listening (audire), listening to God and to each other to discover what is true and what is good and what is to be done. Mary of Nazareth's fiat was in recognition of God's eternal plan for the salvation of the human race. Its spontaneity lays in the Messanic expectation of the time, of which Mary was not unaware. Jesus in his human nature listened in prayer for God's will: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). An essential part of listening is humility; Christ "humbled himself becoming obedient to death" (Phil. 2:8). Obedience therefore is not merely about doing what one is told to do. Thomas Merton contends, "monastic obedience exists not to make yes-men and efficient bureaucrats who can be used in institutional politics, but to liberate the hearts and minds into the lucid and terrible

darkness of contemplation that no tongue can explain and no rationalization can account for." Hence obedience is never juridical or judgmental neither is it hierarchical nor it is militaristic; one enters into it voluntarily. Without this, obedience would continue to feature as the most difficult of the counsels. Regrettably, religion is used by some to manipulation and dehumanizes others. Particularly in communities where the leader assumes the role of the community, obedience becomes service to the leader. Jesus absolutely condemn such practice,

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served by to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mt 20:25-28; Mk 10:42-45)

Not only were the ambitious Zebedee sons enlightened, the envious eleven too learnt a lesson in humility. Humility eliminates envy and rejoices in the gift of others because it recognizes the fundamental oneness of all in their humanity and in Christ. Thus only a biblical and theological based approach to the vow of obedience can engender growth of members and their contribution within the covenant community because of their faith component. Ultimately, it is through the Holy Spirit that God's will will be accomplished in the community the Lord of the harvest brings together for a specific mission.

Conclusion

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus announces his ministry (quoting Isaiah 61) thus: "The

⁹⁴ Van Eaes, Bernard OHO "Thomas Merton and the Shakers" http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org/shaker.htm

Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor ... to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Implicit herein is the message of covenant restoration, a Sabbatical life style that is synonymous with shalom. Shalom is the principal word used to express the idea of peace in the Hebrew Scripture. The core meaning of the word is "to be hale, whole and complete" Shalom, is not simply a negative, the absence of conflict. It is a positive notion, a notion with its own content. Among the Semites and their neighbors, when one wishes another shalom, he does not mean that he wishes for the other person only the absence of evil things, he wishes for him also the presence of good things. The early Christian Fathers wrote copiously on this subject, Saint Gregory of Nyssa states of peace: "Surely it is nothing else but a loving disposition towards one's neighbor." To be well, means to be "whole, to be complete," to have physical and spiritual resources sufficient to one's needs. The relationship guaranteed by a covenant is commonly designated by the word shim, covenant of peace b'rit shalom.

The concept of peace in Hebrew thought has two dimensions. As a divine gift "descending" from God, peace (shalom) is related closely to the concept of salvation.

This should be experienced now, and especially in eternal communion with God. Every gift demands a response hence the "ascending" response is the challenge for everyone within the covenant to be a peacemaker.

Jesus "Year of the Lord," (shalom), is an invitation to enter into God's Reign. He makes this the central message of the Beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they

97 Anchor Bible Dictionary, 206

Healey Joseph, Peace, Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 5, O-Sh (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 206
 Nyssa, St. Gregory, The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes, Ancient Christian Writer, (Maryland: The Newman Press, no 181946) 159

shall be called sons of God' (Mt. 5:9). In other words, one who makes peace bears the family likeness of The Heavenly Father. Hence "be you perfect as your heavenly Father," rests on peaceful existence. For St. Augustine, "Perfection, lies in peace, the children of God are peaceful for the reason that no resistance to God is present."

Through Jesus, God's peace descended on the Church for he made peace by interposing himself between the warring parties with his own blood (cf. Col. 1:20). By so doing, he atoned for the sins of the people thus he became "our peace" (Eph. 2:14). On this peace hinges the vocation of the covenanted-Pilgrim. The eschatological thrust of the covenant community calls for the response to actively take up the challenge to make peace among all nations.

⁹⁸ René Coste, "Paix messianique et paix humaine" Nouvelle Revue Théologique 95 (1973) translated by L. Frizzell, 662

Appendix

Perpetual Vow Formulary: Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus⁹⁹

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almighty and Everlasting God, moved by your limitless love of me to give you in return my love and service, totally and without reserve; in the presence of my sisters and in your hands, Sister—, Superior General of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus. I (name) vow forever, to your divine Majesty, simply perpetual vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in community; according to the constitutions and directory of the Congregation of the handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus.

I ask you in your goodness as my Father, to accept my offering. And, conscious of my human frailty, I pray that as you have given me the desire to make this sacrifice, you will give me through the grace your Son Jesus Christ won for me, the strength and constancy to fulfill it generously to the hour of my death. Amen

⁹⁹ Constitutions of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, (1983)

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