

The Life and Thought of Charles de Foucauld:
A Christian Eremitical Vocation to Islam and His Contribution to the
Understanding of Muslim-Christian Relations within the Catholic Tradition

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Abstract

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916) was a Catholic hermit who lived and died in French Algeria. On the frontlines of Muslim-Christian relations in North Africa, first as a soldier and then as a priest and hermit, he represents a significant figure in our understanding of the history of relations between Islam and the Catholic Church in the twentieth century. Foucauld had a calling to be a witness for Jesus Christ to the Muslim people of North Africa. He was able to articulate this private mission and his formal vocation to monastic life by retrieving the eremitical tradition of the Catholic Church.

Shaped by the anti-clerical culture of the Third Republic, as a young man Foucauld was an avowed atheist. His interaction with the Muslims of North Africa was transformative. After his conversion to Catholicism, these experiences allowed him to understand the Incarnation as an inclusive gift that made all men brothers in God's family. His awareness of this mystery and his understanding of abjection and poverty, led him to see in the life of the Muslims of North Africa the "last place" of Jesus. Foucauld was called to orient his life towards them, to continually convert by seeing Jesus in the face of Muslims.

Foucauld's extreme ascetic devotions, including his desire to become "hidden" amongst the poor, were given spiritual meaning by his understanding of the eremitic tradition. His imitation of Christ called him to "sanctify souls" by carrying Jesus to the Other. These two apparently contradictory impulses – to hide himself, yet to carry Christ to others – formed the essence of the tension in Foucauld's vocational life. Yet eremiticism was not a hindrance to his mission but facilitated it. Through eremiticism's ability to both create the space for, and initiate cultural formation, Foucauld was able to interact with the Muslims of the region and to oppose the dominant French culture.

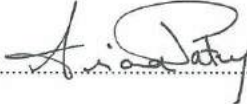
Foucauld's legacy to Muslim-Christian relations was given theological expression in the work of his disciple, Louis Massignon. Massignon's life and thought expressed the eremitic versatility of Foucauld's spirituality. Foucauld's ecclesial legacy is embodied in his diverse spiritual family and those, such as Thomas Merton, who were inspired by him. This legacy has been at the forefront of the Church's renewal in the twentieth century.

Considering the life, vocation, and legacy of Charles de Foucauld, this thesis seeks to reconcile his mission and his eremiticism. Far from invalidating his eremitic spirituality, Foucauld's relationship with the Muslims, is the rich fulfilment of a life of solitude with God. Foucauld's modern application of eremitic principles reveals the depth and versatility of this living tradition.

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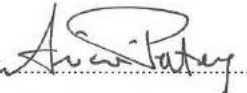
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Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Abstract	2
Declarations	3
Introduction	5
Section One: Life	
Chapter One: France and Identity	11
Chapter Two: Islam and Identity	44
Chapter Three: Continual Conversion	82
Section Two: Vocation	
Chapter Four: Asceticism and Eremiticism	139
Chapter Five: Hermit and Community	170
Chapter Six: Eremiticism and Culture	208
Section Three: Legacy	
Chapter Seven: A Theological Legacy: Louis Massignon	239
Chapter Eight: An Ecclesial Legacy	278
Conclusion	316
Bibliography	320

Introduction

Charles de Foucauld was born in Strasbourg, France in 1858. Orphaned at six years of age, he and his younger sister were raised by their grandfather. Foucauld¹ went on to become an officer in the French army, and it was in this capacity that he was sent to Algeria in 1881. Having lost his faith in his teens he was in continuous trouble both at school and in the army. On a military expedition in southern Algeria he finally proved himself to his peers and, although he left the army, went on to achieve distinction through his exploration of Morocco in 1883-4.² Moved by his experiences he began to question his lack of faith and at the age of twenty-eight converted to the Catholic Church.

From his conversion until 1910, Foucauld was guided by the spiritual direction of abbé Henri Huvelin (1838-1910),³ the respected priest of Église Saint-Augustine, who influenced men such as Maurice Blondel, Fredrich von Hugel and Émile Littré.⁴ Confirmed in a desire to imitate Jesus in the “last place”,⁵ after a

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, when I refer to Charles de Foucauld by his last name I will drop the aristocratic particle ‘de’. Foucauld dropped the particle himself for the majority of his life, for many years he did not use his family name at all, but was instead addressed as “Father” or “Brother”. For a full discussion of the variety of sobriquets Foucauld assumed during his life see Philip Hillyer, *Charles de Foucauld* (Collegeville: 1990), 142-144.

² Charles de Foucauld, *Reconnaissance au Maroc (1883-1884)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998).

³ Charles de Foucauld, *Père de Foucauld, abbé Huvelin: correspondance inédite*, ed. Jean François Six (Tournai: Desclée, 1957).

⁴ Lucienne Portier, *Un précurseur: l’abbé Huvelin*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1979.

⁵ “You gave me too those words in a sermon of Father Huvelin’s which are now so indelibly engraved on my soul: ‘May you so truly have taken the lowest place, that no one will ever be able to take it from you’”, Charles de Foucauld, *The Spiritual*

pilgrimage to the Palestine and the holy sites, Foucauld joined the Trappist Order.⁶ After seven years at their house in Syria, Foucauld left the order and attached himself to the Poor Clares in Nazareth as a workman and a hermit. Under the guidance of Huvelin and the Mother Superior of the Poor Clares⁷ he was persuaded to join the priesthood. In 1901 he returned to North Africa “to sanctify the infidel populations by bringing into their midst Jesus present in the most Blessed Sacrament”.⁸ He established a fraternity, “zawiya”,⁹ at Béni Abbès where he offered hospitality and charity to the local Muslims and Jews, and to the French soldiers in the nearby garrison. In 1905 he established a second fraternity at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria, where he dedicated his life to fostering a friendship with the nomadic Tuareg; to this end he compiled a dictionary of the local language and a collection of poetry.¹⁰ On December 1, 1916 Foucauld was shot by bandits and killed at the age of

Autobiography of Charles de Foucauld, ed. Jean François Six, trans. J. Holland Smith (Ijamsville, Maryland: The Word Among Us Press, 2003), 17.

⁶ David N. Bell, *Understanding Rancé: The Spirituality of the Abbot of La Trappe in Context* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2005); A. J. Krailsheimer, *Rancé and the Trappist Legacy* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1985).

⁷ R.P. Chaleur, *Charles de Foucauld et Mère Saint Michel* (Paris: Ed. St. Paul, 1946).

⁸ Letter of Foucauld to Mgr. Bazin, 22 August 1901. Quoted in René Bazin, *Charles de Foucauld: Hermit and African Explorer*, 2nd Edition, trans. Peter Keelan (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1943), 145.

⁹ Ian Latham, “Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916): Silent witness for Jesus ‘in the face of Islam,’” in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue: Studies in Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality*, eds. Anthony O’Mahony and Peter Bowe (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2006), 47-70, 53.

¹⁰ Charles de Foucauld, *Dictionnaire touareg-française: dialecte de l’Ahaggar* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale de France, 1951); idem, *Textes touaregs en prose* (Algiers: Basset, 1922).

fifty-eight.¹¹ As we approach the hundredth anniversary of his death, it is apropos to reinvestigate the example in life and legacy that Foucauld has left to the Church.

The last decade has provided a new hermeneutic to evaluate Foucauld. In his relationship with the Muslims of North Africa Foucauld was a pioneer of Christian-Muslim relations in the twentieth century. While the nature of Foucauld's relationship with non-Christians has not been without critique and criticism,¹² his commitment to brotherhood and equality,¹³ unique "inculturation",¹⁴ and interfaith prayer¹⁵ provides us with a picture of someone passionate about investigating the parameters of interfaith connections. Foucauld was not a theologian and his understanding and engagement with Islam as a religious tradition was cursory and unimaginative, but he was a man who learned by experience. His opinions about an appropriate Christian response to Muslims have had considerable impact on Christian-Muslim relations. In the twenty-first century, the example of Foucauld's response to the Muslims with whom he lived has a new resonance. His "universal brotherhood" and call to love, which he lived out amongst Muslims, was highlighted

¹¹ Antoine Chatelard, *La mort de Charles de Foucauld* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

¹² Ali Merad, *Christian Hermit in an Islamic World*, trans. Zoe Hersov (New York: Paulist Press, 1999); Jean-Marie Muller, *Charles de Foucauld, frère universel ou moine-soldat?* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002); For an overview of the early debates surrounding this topic, see Jacques Keryell, "Louis Massignon et l'Association Charles de Foucauld," in *Louis Massignon au coeur de notre temps*, ed. Jacques Keryell (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 173-193.

¹³ Latham, "Silent Witness," 54-55.

¹⁴ Ibid, 54.

¹⁵ Bazin, 282.

in Benedict XVI's beatification message¹⁶ in 2005, four years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the start of the "war on terror".

Foucauld's beatification has also brought to the fore questions about his vocation.¹⁷ During his life Foucauld worked, unsuccessfully, to establish three monastic congregations and dedicated the last years of his life to the establishment of a confraternity for clergy, religious, and lay people.¹⁸ His death, without an established congregation or association to codify his legacy, created a vacuum in which different legacies were able to flourish. There are nineteen different organizations under the banner of the Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld Association: ten religious congregations and nine associations of spiritual life.¹⁹ Foucauld's beatification has prompted discussion concerning the manifestation of his spirituality within the vocational traditions of the Church, therefore calling into question the legitimacy of a plurality of legacies.

Towards the end of his life, Foucauld wrote: "[h]umans do not choose their vocation: a vocation is a call".²⁰ He had been called to be a Christian witness to the Muslims of North Africa.²¹ Therefore, the tension in the life and legacy of Charles de

¹⁶ Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Pilgrims at the End of the Beatification Mass (13 November 2005).

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/november/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051113_beatifications_en.html

¹⁷ Jean-François Six, "Les Postérités Foucauld" *Revue des sciences religieuses* 4 (2008): 465-482, 471.

¹⁸ Maurice Bouvier, introduction to *Règlements et Directoire* by Charles de Foucauld (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1995), 13-21.

¹⁹ Brother Charles de Foucauld Lay Fraternity, "The Little Guide: a practical guide to fraternity living and spirituality" (Germany, 2006), 17-25.

²⁰ "Les humains n'ont pas à <<choisir>> leur vocation: la vocation était un <<appel>>", Charles de Foucauld, *Directoire* (Paris, 1961), 50.

²¹ Letter to abbé Caron 8 April 1905, Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 137-8.

Foucauld is at the confluence of these two issues. Foucauld's relationship with the Muslims in Morocco was an influential element in his conversion process. How he chose to respond to Muslims in his post-conversion life determined his vocation. Foucauld's relationship with Islam has not been explored in regards to how it fundamentally shaped his understanding of Christianity, and his Christian response to Muslims. Despite Foucauld's unique experiences outside the bounds of traditional Catholicism, this did not affect his devotion to the Church and her authority.²² One factor that has not been given adequate attention in Foucauldian scholarship is the retrieval in the last century of the vocation of the hermit, culminating in its addition to the 1983 Code of Canon Law.²³ The purpose of this thesis is to explore the connection between Foucauld's experience with Muslims and his retrieval of the ancient Christian tradition of eremiticism.

The thesis has been divided into three sections corresponding to the Life, Vocation, and Legacy of Charles de Foucauld. Although the biographical details of Foucauld's life have been explored in greater detail than this thesis seeks to emulate, the first section explores the three forces that influenced the spiritual and vocational trajectory of Foucauld. Chapter One provides an overview of Foucauld's life prior to his conversion. It investigates the influence of the cultural and political milieu of nineteenth century France. Chapter Two presents an analysis of Foucauld's conversion. It explores Foucauld's early interaction with Islam and Muslims and posits how this relationship influenced his nascent belief in God. Chapter Three

²² Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 99-101.

²³ Code of Canon Law, c. 603, in *The Code of Canon Law: a Text and Commentary*, eds. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green and Donald E. Heintchel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 467.

reevaluates the relationships established in the first two chapters in light of Foucauld's Catholic conversion. It highlights the mystery of the Incarnation as the foundation of Foucauld's spirituality, influenced by his exposure to Muslims and, later, directing his response to them in love.

The second section, comprised of Chapters Four, Five and Six, considers Foucauld's vocation within the Church in light of his exposure to the early Christian eremitical tradition. Chapter Four postulates that Foucauld's retrieval of the eremitic tradition gave meaning to his attraction towards experiences and acts of asceticism that were inherently isolating. Chapter Five explores the question of being a hermit within the context of action or community. It asserts that Foucauld's mission to the Muslims of North Africa, rather than invalidating the eremitic qualities of his spirituality, was instead enhanced and facilitated by his eremitic vocation. Chapter Six explores Foucauld's engagement with the lay community in France within the context of eremiticism. His attempts to challenge and reform France's response to the colonies were rooted in his eremitic experience.

In the final section, this thesis explores the ways in which Foucauld's reinterpretation of a forgotten tradition has influenced the theology and ecclesiology of the Church. Foucauld's formative and pivotal relationship with Louis Massignon is the subject of Chapter Seven. Foucauld's eremitical spirituality influenced, and was expanded upon, by Massignon as a way forward in Christian-Muslim relations. Chapter Eight surveys the ecclesial legacy of Foucauld. The Foucauldian spiritual family, and Foucauld's influence on notable Catholics, is explored within the context of the renewal of the Church in the twentieth century.

Chapter One: France and Identity

Introduction

Charles de Foucauld was born on September 15, 1858 in the house on place de Broglie where Rouget de Lisle first sang the “Marseillaise”.²⁴ Much like his hometown, this piece of musical history has been used by a number of authors to demonstrate Foucauld’s French credentials. The fact that the vast majority of Foucauld’s writings are available in French, in several editions,²⁵ while little more than “selections” have been translated into other languages (despite the existence of 19 different religious fraternities worldwide dedicated to a Foucauldian vision) is eloquent witness to the proprietary nature of France’s relationship with Charles de Foucauld. The idea of Foucauld as a Frenchman is often associated with Foucauld not as a figure of universal significance but with a historiography that identifies him as belonging to France, to colonialism, to militarism, and to the nineteenth century.²⁶ His global reach is related to his spiritual work, and the emphasis in such spiritual

²⁴ Lancelot C. Sheppard, *Charles de Foucauld* (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds Ltd, 1958), 11; Hugues Didier, *Petite vie de Charles de Foucauld*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2005), 13.

²⁵ See, for example, the Nouvelle Cité collection, several volumes of which are in their second edition.

²⁶ See Bazin; E-F Gautier, *Trois Héros. Figures de conquêtes coloniales* (Paris: Payot, 1931); Sheppard; John Gibbons, “The Very Noble The Viscount Charles de Foucauld,” in *Great Catholics*, ed. Claude Williamson (London: Nicholson & Watson Limited, 1938), 468-478; Sheppard. Most of the books relating to Foucauld’s French identity were written in the early half of the 20th century. For a discussion of the early controversy surrounding this designation see Keryell, “I’Association,” 187-188.

guidebooks is on the universalism of his appeal and application of his spirituality.²⁷

One of the founders of the Order of the Little Brothers of Jesus, René Voillaume, explained “searching his life for something other than the love of Jesus and fidelity to some grand insights, is to run the risk, perhaps, of fruitless discussions and distraction from his spiritual message”.²⁸ This approach presents problems for anyone interested in a scholarly engagement with Foucauld, or even, as Jean-François Six has argued, a spiritual one.²⁹

In reality it is Foucauld’s French identity that allows him to become a relevant blueprint for Catholic response to Islam. Looking at the situation thematically, rather than nationalistically,³⁰ Foucauld and his contemporaries³⁰ grew up in a society vocally opposed to the religion. Through colonialism and the shifting of borders, the nature of what it meant to be a Frenchman was questioned.³¹ Through expansionism these young people were exposed to Islam and a culture that put a high

²⁷ The spirituality of Foucauld has been emphasized since the founding of the congregations of Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus in the 1930s in books such as *The Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, Cry the Gospel With Your Life* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books Inc., 1981; Carlo Carretto, *The Desert Journal*, trans. Alison Swaisland Bucci (London: HarperCollins, 1992). Voillaume wrote several popular works in the 1950s, such as *Seeds of the Desert: The Legacy of Charles de Foucauld*, trans. Willard Hill (London: Burns & Oates, 1955); idem, *In the Midst of Men*, trans. Willard Hill (Tenbury Wells Worcs.: Fowler Wright Books Ltd., 1966).

²⁸ “[c]hercher dans sa vie autre chose que l’amour de Jésus et la fidélité à quelques grandes intuitions, c’est s’exposer, peut-être, à de vaines discussions et à se distraire de l’essentiel de son message” Quoted in Michael Nurdin, “Le Père de Foucauld et Jésus,” *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* (2005): 372.

²⁹ Six, “Postérités,” 465-482.

³⁰ Such as Ernest Psichari, see Alec G. Hargreaves, *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction* (London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1981); Wallace Fowlie, *Ernest Psichari, A Study in Religious Conversion* (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd. 1939); Louis Massignon, see

³¹ Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity 1900-1945* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1992).

value on piety. The parallels between the Third Republic and modern Europe and North America are readily apparent. As Hugues Didier, who is the leading modern scholar situating Foucauld in his historical circumstances,³² has demonstrated, it is necessary to have a view of Foucauld that encompasses his contemporaries in order to understand where he both agrees with and differs from the status quo.³³ Moreover, a total separation of spiritual life from material circumstances is not necessarily helpful to further understanding. The twentieth century hermit and monastic commentator, Thomas Merton, has argued that a monastic life is frequently misunderstood because it is removed from its cultural context and therefore it becomes divorced from its purpose and meaning.³⁴ For the purposes of this thesis, it is also necessary to have an understanding of the cultural forces at work when Foucauld first encountered Islam. Foucauld would spend the majority of his life in Muslim dominated countries: Syria, Palestine, Morocco, and Algeria³⁵; but he was raised as a Frenchman in France during a time of great contradictions and upheavals. How Foucauld experienced the complexities of life in 19th century France is the subject of this chapter.

Birth and Family

³² Hugues Didier, "Charles de Foucauld et Algerie" *Courrier de la Fraternité séculière Charles de Foucauld*, no. 131 (2007-8): 35-47; idem, "Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld," *ARAM* 20 (2008): 337-353; idem, *vie*.

³³ Didier, "Algerie," 42-47.

³⁴ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 132.

³⁵ In the case of Syria, it was his exclusion from the experiences of the people and his position of European protection within the monastery, that helped inspire him to leave the Trappists, Bazin 97. Although Algeria was technically under French control during Foucauld's life, Islam was the majority religion. Foucauld chose to immerse himself in the life of Algerian Muslims rather than, for example, take up position as the priest to a French garrison, Hillyer, 136.

Charles Eugene de Foucauld was the second son of François-Édouard de Foucauld and Élisabeth de Morlet. Their first child, also a son named Charles, born two years before Foucauld, died in infancy.³⁶ The marriage of François-Édouard and Élisabeth in 1855 provides an interesting framework to keep in mind during a study of their son and his relationship with France. Édouard was a descendent of the aristocratic de Foucaulds of Périgord. The Revolution had stripped his branch of the family of most of its money, if not its title, and they had relocated to Alsace. Édouard worked for the civil service as Deputy-Inspector for the local department of Forests and Waterways. His decision to marry at the age of thirty-five was a wise financial decision. He had been a poorly paid civil servant with a penchant for wild behaviour when he married into the de Morlet family.³⁷ One of Élisabeth's ancestors had made his fortune in the Revolution³⁸ and her father was a distinguished military colonel who had managed Strasbourg's fortifications.³⁹ As Didier has noted, "Charles de Foucauld was therefore in the confluence of two traditions, both French, one of royalty and nobility, the other republican".⁴⁰

Foucauld's earliest memories of his childhood in Strasbourg⁴¹ are of the religious rituals that he practiced with his mother:

³⁶ Jean-Jacques Antier, *Charles de Foucauld*, trans. Julia Shirek Smith (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 22.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid; Didier, "Algerie" 40; Didier, *vie*, 14.

³⁹ Antier, 24.

⁴⁰ "Charles de Foucauld se trouvait donc au confluent de deux traditions, l'une et l'autre bien française, l'une royale et nobiliaire, l'autre républicaine" Didier, "Algerie", 40.

⁴¹ Strasbourg was a historically Protestant city. Despite its annexation by France in 1681 the repressive anti-Protestant edicts of Nantes and Fontainebleu (1598 and 1685) were never implemented. This meant that the Catholic minority of the city

...the true piety of my upbringing! The visits to churches, the flowers laid at the foot of the cross, the Christian crib, the month of Mary, the little altar in my room that stayed there as long as I had a room of my own there, even outliving my faith.⁴²

From babyhood I was surrounded by so many graces, son of a holy mother, who taught me to know you, to love you and to pray to you as soon as I could babble.⁴³

His father is conspicuously absent from any of these remembrances, and while his grandfather, with whom he lived for most of his youth, was a practicing Catholic,⁴⁴ Foucauld's spiritual life was dominated by his female family members.⁴⁵ The religion in which Foucauld was raised, and later lived, was going through many changes in the nineteenth century. One of these changes, along with a general decline in religious devotion, was the loss of men from the congregation. In 1864 Paris parishes reported that out of the 13 000 people who took Easter communion, only 25

shaped itself in opposition to Protestantism. During the Revolution many churches were destroyed. By the middle of the 19th century, Strasbourg had one of the most conservatively Catholic communities in France, in that it retained conservative Catholic beliefs that were being lost in the rest of France but it still retained good relations with the Lutherans of the city. K. McQuillan. *Culture, Religion and Demographic Behaviour* (Liverpool University Press, 1999).

⁴² Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 10

⁴³ Annie of Jesus, *Charles de Foucauld, In the Footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Little Sisters of Jesus (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 15.

⁴⁴ Jean-François Six, *Charles de Foucauld autrement* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2008), 9.

⁴⁵ This would prove true to his post-conversion life. Although he had several notable male friends upon whom he relied on for spiritual discourse such as abbé Huvelin, Louis Massignon and Père Guérin, Foucauld relied on the spiritual guidance of his cousin Marie de Bondy, see *Lettres à Mme de Bondy* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966.), the Mother Superior of the Little Clares in Nazareth, see R.P. Chaleur, *Charles de Foucauld et Mère Saint Michel* (Paris: Ed. St. Paul, 1946), Saint Teresa of Avila, see Hillyer, 47-63 and Jean-François Six, *Itinéraire Spirituel de Charles de Foucauld* (Paris: Éditions du Seul, 1958), and Mary Magdalene see, René Pottier, *Charles de Foucauld et Marie de Magdala* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1950).

were men.⁴⁶ The vast majority of Frenchmen were *conformists saisoners*, that is to say, that they took part in the sacraments of baptism and marriage and had a religious burial. During the Third Republic, when Foucauld was reaching adolescence, some men even refused to take part in these staples of religious life.⁴⁷ The reasons for this decline are multifaceted and debated but include issues of sexual morality,⁴⁸ confession,⁴⁹ and education.⁵⁰ The lack of public male devotion in nineteenth century France served as a marked contrast to the visible piety of Muslim men in Islamic countries.

The result of France's waning piety and the feminization of religion was that old models of religiosity were no longer accessible and new models of religiosity were developed. Those concepts that dominate Foucauldian spirituality, love, asceticism, and universalism, have their roots in the shifts imposed by the feminization of Catholicism in France. One of the biggest changes in French spirituality was the slow evolution in the later half of the century from a God of fear and discipline to a God of love. The Tridentine Catholicism of eighteenth century France placed a heavy importance on the renunciation of the world which manifested

⁴⁶ Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 181.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 163.

⁴⁸ Gibson, 185-186, 245; Bonnie T. Smith, *Ladies of Leisure: the Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); J. Stengers, "Les pratiques anticonceptionnelles dans le mariage au XIXe siècle: problèmes humains et attitudes religieuses," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 2 (1971): 403-81; Theodore Zeldin, "The Conflicts in Moralities", in *Conflicts in French Society*, ed. Theodore Zeldin (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 13-50.

⁴⁹ Gibson, 247; Zeldin "Conflicts".

⁵⁰ Robert Anderson, "The Conflict in Education", in *Conflicts in French Society*, ed. Theodore Zeldin (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), pp. 51-93; Gibson, 184

itself in a strict and unyielding emphasis on morality. This bled over into the nineteenth century. Ralph Gibson has described how,

French Catholicism in the nineteenth century dwelt on the moral aspects of the Christian message, almost reducing faith to a series of moral interdicts, often of a petty kind. Christians must ever struggle against their evil passions, was the message... It was a religion where conformity with a rigid moral code mattered more than the transforming experience of the love of God.⁵¹

Yet as the Church was rocked by the Revolution and the changes it brought with it (lack of attendance, anticlericalism, etc.), the Church slowly began to accommodate a vision of the Divine that was more hopeful and inclusive.⁵² The greatest proponents and adherents of the movement were ascetics. Harkening back to the earliest days of the Christian ascetic movement, which viewed asceticism and suffering as a means to unite with a loving God and participate in his atoning death,⁵³ men such as Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, who had reestablished the Dominicans in France, and Emmanuel d'Alzon, founder of the Assumptionist Order, began to preach the transformational experience of the love between God and man.⁵⁴ In an 1872 letter to a young girl, the blind prelate Monseigneur Ségur wrote "Sadness is always bad, even the sadness of contrition is worth nothing, if it is not sweetened and wholly transformed by the confidence of love".⁵⁵ This concept was of particular

⁵¹ Gibson, 243. See also E. Germain, *Parler du salut? Aux origines d'une mentalité religieuse. La catéchèse du salut dans le France de la Restauration* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1967).

⁵² G. Cholvy, " 'Du dieu terrible au dieu d'amour': une évolution dans la sensibilité religieuse au XIXe siècle", *Revue Catholique Internationale*, 11, no. 3 (1989): 118-126.

⁵³ See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁵⁴ Gibson, 253.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

interest to believing women who offered up their suffering for their disbelieving husbands, sons, and fathers, and indeed, for their nation which had repudiated her role as Daughter of the Church.⁵⁶

Related to this new God of love, French Catholicism also experienced a shift to universalism. Concerned for the souls of Frenchmen, many of whom were their husbands and sons, the female dominated faithful became devoted to mystical experiences surrounding the Sacred Heart of Jesus⁵⁷ and Marian visitations,⁵⁸ which stressed the idea of suffering for the sins of others. As these powerful movements came under clerical control and were regulated, they transformed what would have been local events into national causes.⁵⁹ The best example of this is the visitation at Lourdes. Possibly the best known Marian visitation, in 1858, the year Foucauld was born, the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous. At Lourdes Mary became universal. While she still retained her thaumaturgical powers, Mary became a

⁵⁶ Richard D. E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood. Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ The Sacred Heart movement began and was transmitted by the visions of women religious and the convents, eventually turning into a national devotion that built the Sacré-Coeur basilica on Montmartre. Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Gibson, 146-148.

⁵⁹ These national causes had international significance as France had Muslim colonies. This understanding of Mary as intercessor for sinners before God would take on importance in relations between Muslims and Christians, especially after the realization that Mary was present in the Qur'an. At the 90th General Congregation of the Council Fathers, Sept. 1964, provided material content for *Nostra Aetate*. One of the Council Fathers reasoned "if heavenly dialogue has already begun between Mary and the Muslims, why should we not declare that we desire with them in earthly dialogue". A. Undsworth, "Louis Massignon, the Holy See and the Ecclesial Transition From 'Immortale Dei' to 'Nostra Aetate': A Brief History of the Development of Catholic Church Teaching on Muslims and the Religion of Islam From 1883 to 1965", *ARAM* 20 (2008): 314-315.

loving intercessor between man and God.⁶⁰ Theology also advanced the idea of an inclusive, loving God. The idea of damnation was softened. The concepts of limbo and baptism by desire were introduced. Even purgatory declined in significance in the later half of the century. Hell became less about fire and brimstone and the punishment of being withheld from God was deemed severe enough. There was even some suggestion that Hell would not be eternal.⁶¹

The loving introduction to a Catholicism in transition that Foucauld received from his mother was cut short. After his paternal grandfather died in 1863, his father went into a depression. Édouard moved out of the family home and lived with his sister in Paris for almost a year. On March 13, 1864, Foucauld's mother had a miscarriage and died from the complications.⁶² In August, his father died as well. It has been reported that he killed himself.⁶³ Within a month of being relocated to their paternal grandmother's care, Charles and his younger sister Marie, born in 1861, witnessed their grandmother's death from a heart attack as they were taking their morning walk.⁶⁴ At the age of six, Foucauld had inherited the title of Viscount de Foucauld de Pontbriand, and had lost four of his closest family members.

Foucauld and Marie came under the care of their mother's father and step-mother. Colonel de Morlet was sixty-eight years old when he was made guardian of

⁶⁰ Gibson, 255; Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).

⁶¹ Gibson 253-4.

⁶² Michel Carrouges, *Charles de Foucauld: Explorateur Mystique* (Paris: Eds. Du Cerf, 1954), 14.

⁶³ Marion Mill Preminger, *The Sands of Tamanrasset* (London: Peter Davies, 1961), 25; although it is unclear whether he actually committed suicide, he did spend time in the hospital for mental illness, Six, *autrement*, 7, 9.

⁶⁴ Antier, 23-4.

his grandchildren, and had been retired for almost ten years from his position as an engineer for the French army. An intellectual man, his two passions (history and patriotism) coincided in his membership with the Société Strasbourgeoise pour la conservation des monuments historiques d'Alsace.⁶⁵ Foucauld was very close to his grandfather, with whom he shared a love of reading. He would later write: "I admired his high intelligence, and his inexhaustible affection had enfolded my youth and childhood in an atmosphere of love."⁶⁶ Devastated by the loss of his daughter, and aware of Foucauld's trauma, de Morlet was very attentive; he was known to often remark that, "When he cries he reminds me of my daughter".⁶⁷ This fondness frequently led to indulgence. When Foucauld reached his teenage years and started to cause trouble, other members of the family were quick to blame de Morlet for being too lenient with Foucauld. At the height of the family's irritation with Foucauld in 1883, his trustee Georges de Latouche (de Morlet's brother-in-law) wrote, "His kindness was only equaled by his excessive weakness. Under less senile direction, this amazingly gifted boy, with his superior intelligence and heart of gold, could have become a remarkable man."⁶⁸

On July 19 1870 France declared war on Prussia. Foucauld was twelve at the time, living in the contested region of Alsace with his extremely patriotic, ex-military grandfather. He was fascinated and excited by what was going on around

⁶⁵ Sheppard, 13.

⁶⁶ "Mon grand-père don't j'admirais la belle intelligence, don't la tendresse infinie entourait mon enfance et ma jeunesse d'une atmosphère d'amour don't je sens toujours avec émotion la chaleur" quoted in Six, *autrement*, 8; English translation, Annie of Jesus, 17.

⁶⁷ Bazin, 4.

⁶⁸ Antier, 27.

him. He wrote to his cousin “At last Grandpapa will probably see his fortifications used for something. As for me, I too would like to kill Prussians.”⁶⁹ Whatever de Morlet’s pride over his fortifications, if they were going to be tested his family was not going to be around to see it. He moved them to Rennes in Brittany and, as the Germans continued to advance, Foucauld and his family retreated to Switzerland. When the war ended,⁷⁰ six months later, his childhood home was under the control of the Germans. After the war 12.5% of Alsace’s population relocated to France.⁷¹ In October 1871 Foucauld was one of the many refugee children who started school at the local Lycée in Nancy under the watchful eye of German soldiers, who would not leave Nancy⁷² until 1873.⁷³ While Foucauld never recorded his thoughts regarding constant upheaval that marked his early years, Philip Hillyer has suggested that these events helped Foucauld develop his tendency towards isolation, both socially, by only maintaining a few intimate friendships, and eremitically.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ The end of the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent collapse of the Second Empire, had ramifications for Algeria as well. In 1871 the Muslim population mounted an insurrection. Napoleon III and his people in Algiers had one the trust of the Arab chiefs and with the threat of ‘settler rule’ being enacted as replacement, the local population rebelled. The French response was intended to “terrorize the natives into submission.” Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*, trans. Michael Brett (London: Hurst & Company, 1991), 47-52.

⁷¹ Zeldedn, II, 77. The government of France tested its new policy of rural settlement in Algeria on the refugees from Alsace-Lorraine. They were offered 100 000ha of land in exchange for obligatory residence. Most, like Colonel de Morlet, declined and those who accepted did not stay. It cost France 6 500 francs per family and of the 1183 families who settled only 387 stayed.

⁷² The founder of the White Fathers, Cardinal Lavigerie, was Bishop of Nancy (1863-1867) until his appointment to Algiers. F. Renault, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie: 1825-1892 L’Église, l’Afrique et la France* (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

⁷³ Didier, *vie*, 17.

⁷⁴ Hillyer, 13.

The possibility of a war with Prussia, and the potentially devastating ramifications of a defeat, had been discussed in France since 1868.⁷⁵ It did not, as Ernest Renan had supposed, “mean the end of France”⁷⁶ but it did cause France to reexamine itself and attempt to become something new. The Franco-Prussian war was a defeat of an entire nation, not merely of a regime. The failure of Napoleon III had been repeated for the Government of National Defense, and the war had culminated in the bloody civil battle of the Paris Commune.⁷⁷ On the day Alsace-Lorraine was ceded, March 1 1871, Victor Hugo gave his final speech to the National Assembly in which he outlined France’s future:

From tomorrow onward, France will have but one thought: to gather her strength; instruct her children in righteous anger; forge canons and citizens so that the people and the army will be one; enlist science in the service of war; learn from the Prussian model as Rome did from Carthage; construct defenses; modernize. In a word, the nation will once more become the mighty France of the spirit and the sword.⁷⁸

This renewal of France began in the schools where his grandfather’s lessons in patriotism would be reinforced in Foucauld’s classroom.

Like others of his generation, Foucauld was shaped by the defeat of the French, and in particular the loss of his homeland.⁷⁹ Forty-four years later, during the

⁷⁵ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, trans. Jefferson Chase (London: Granta Books, 2004), 104.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 110.

⁷⁷ Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 4.

⁷⁸ Schivelbusch, 127.

⁷⁹ Didier, *vie*, 17.

early years of the First World War, Foucauld wrote to his childhood friend, a fellow refugee living in Nancy.⁸⁰

May we soon rejoice in a full victory, our French Alsace returned, and see a solid peace established for a long time making the world safe from German invasion and barbarism⁸¹

Militarism, and the idea of *revanche* was glue that allowed the Third Republic to form in the first few months following the defeat.⁸² The new president of the Republic was Marshal MacMahon, the commander of the Army of Châlons at Sedan. The army was seen, despite its failure against the Prussians, as a source of stability.⁸³ The need to produce more men of this caliber was a national obsession, and the desire to follow the Prussian model of universal conscription led to a pressure in the schools to turn boys into men. At the start of Foucauld's first term at the lycée in Nancy, the school received credit to purchase 30 wooden guns, to teach the children how to become soldiers.⁸⁴ A heavy emphasis was also placed on physical education and health.⁸⁵ The school children of Nancy were also involved in non-military efforts. Without any help from the professors, they began a pledge drive to acquire the 5 billion francs needed to pay off France's war indemnity, as set out by the

⁸⁰ Antier, 28-29; Six, *autrement*, 11-14 ; Charles de Foucauld, *Lettres à un ami de lycée (1874-1915)* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1982).

⁸¹ "Puissions-nous bientôt nous réjouir de la pleine victoire, rentrer dans notre Alsace redevenue française, et voir établie une paix solide mettant pour longtemps le monde à l'abri de l'invasion et de la barbarie allemandes..." Letter to Tourdes (LGT) 15 July 1915; Foucauld, *lycee*, 183.

⁸² Schivelbusch, 128.

⁸³ Varley, 25.

⁸⁴ Foucauld, *lycée*, 13.

⁸⁵ Anderson, 77. For more information on the school programs and the role of militarism in society see Schivelbusch, 167-176; David B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1967).

Treaty of Frankfurt. They raised 2, 750, 000 francs and sent out a call to the other secondary schools in France to do the same.⁸⁶

Loss of Faith

The year 1874 was a turning point for Foucauld. Just two years after his first communion, he began to lose his faith in God. Some biographers point out that his maternal figure and cousin, with whom he had spent so much time after the death of his parents, Marie Moitessier, married Olivier de Bondy in April of that year and that Charles, presumably out of jealousy, did not attend.⁸⁷ Foucauld himself locates its loss in the secular nature of his schooling and his exploration of atheist scholarship.⁸⁸ As already discussed, Foucauld's experience was not uncommon, especially among young men. First communion usually occurred in France when a boy was between the ages of twelve and fourteen, Foucauld was fourteen when he took his first communion in April 1872,⁸⁹ and, as one priest put it, there was a common pattern: "eight days after its partial abandonment, a month after, total".⁹⁰ The Revolution had decisively destroyed the old culture habits of France that decreed that everybody went to church on Sunday and partook of the Sacraments at least once a year.⁹¹ Although the Franco-Prussian war had seen a rise in religious enthusiasm, it quickly waned with the help of a rumor that the curés had been in league with the Prussians,

⁸⁶ Foucauld, *lycée*, 11.

⁸⁷ Antier, 31-2; Hillyer, 13; Leptit, 13.

⁸⁸ Bazin, 5-6.

⁸⁹ Didier, *vie*, 18.

⁹⁰ Gibson, 190.

⁹¹ The Revolution had decimated the clergy and had also guaranteed that at least one generation had been without regular church attendance. See Gibson, 30-51.

and by the middle of the 1870s religious practice was on the decline in France in the face of an anticlerical offensive.⁹²

School, while only reinforcing the patriotism of Foucauld's home life by grouping him with other children in the same position⁹³ and systematically structuring the patriotism of the age through group activities and patriotic literature,⁹⁴ gave the young Foucauld a new perspective on religion. In his lycée, the focus was on science and rationalism, often presented as a contrast to religious belief. In 1850 the loi Falloux had been passed, giving the Catholics the right for private education. The law galvanized the non-Catholic lycées into a process of reform. One of the motives behind the law had been a concern over the standard of teaching available in French schools. This concern, and reforms to strengthen subjects such as science and philosophy, only increased after the defeat in 1871.⁹⁵

The teachers at the lycée in Nancy had impeccable Republican credentials. The professeur principal of the third year class, Jules-Yves-Antoine Duvaux, was a well-known politician with an anticlerical stance on the Conseil municipal de Nancy.

⁹² Gibson, 230-1.

⁹³ Foucauld's friendship with Gabriel Tourdes began at the lycée and continued his entire life. When WWI began, Foucauld spoke with Tourdes about returning to Strasbourg: "Si comme je l'espère fermement nous sommes vainqueurs, nous irons ensemble, n'est-ce pas revoir Strasbourg redevenu français? Je compte sur toi pour ce pèlerinage" (LGT) November 25, 1914; Foucauld, *lycée*, 181.

⁹⁴ Foucauld, an avid reader, particularly enjoyed the Chanson de Roland (Foucauld, *lycée*, 22). The Song of Roland became important patriotic literature in post-war France, embodying as it does, the idea of defeat as victory, see Schivelbusch, 142-147. It also gives a portrayal of the "Saracens". It was likely written in the twelfth century, during the Crusader period, and describes Muslims as idolaters who worship a Trinity composed of Tervagen, Mahomet and Apollo. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 61, 63, and 71; John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 105-134.

⁹⁵ Anderson, 53-4; Schivelbusch, 167-176

In 1882 he succeeded Jules Ferry as the minister de l'Instruction publique.⁹⁶ The head of the second class was a member of l'Académie Stanislas and an officer of l'Instruction publique.⁹⁷ Foucauld was taught by intelligent men who he continued to respect in his years of piety, despite their anticlerical positions:

I had no bad master; all, on the contrary, were full of reverence; but even those are harmful, because they are neutral, and youth needs to be educated not by neutrals but by men of faith and sanctity, learned in religion, knowing how to give reasons for their beliefs and inspiring young men with a firm confidence in the truth of their Faith.⁹⁸

Foucauld blamed his loss of faith not so much on his professors, but on the philosophy he was exposed to, the reading “which gave me a taste for study, but did me the harm of which you know”.⁹⁹

The debate over teaching approaches to the subject of philosophy had been swirling for many years by the time Foucauld entered his rhetoric class in his last year at the lycée. A good education had long meant a strong grounding in the classics, and this went undisputed in both the Catholic and Republican schools. The issue was how much weight, especially in moral matters, to give philosophy. In 1851-52, the debate had gotten so heated that the Papacy had to intervene.¹⁰⁰ The year previous, Abbé Gaume had published *Le ver rongeur des sociétés modernes, ou le paganisme dans l'éducation*. In it he outlined how pagan philosophers were the source of all the problems of modernity. He argued that they had not been taught during the Middle Ages and that their introduction to the intelligentsia during the

⁹⁶ Foucauld, *lycée*, 11-12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

⁹⁸ Letter to Raymond de Blic, March 5, 1901; Bazin, 5.

⁹⁹ Bazin, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, 82.

Renaissance had resulted in Protestantism, rationalism, materialism, and ultimately, the French Revolution.¹⁰¹ This was acknowledged by the lycées and in the year before the war, the teachers had refused to implement a reform of the classics, knowing it would only drive away Catholic families.¹⁰² Despite this concern, the lycées taught their students that philosophy had both intellectual and moral benefits. The debate about the compatibility between philosophy and Catholicism continued into the twentieth century.¹⁰³

Yet Foucauld was seemingly not without recourse to investigate religious matters. As biographer Jean-Jacques Antier points out, from September 1874, Foucauld attended a Jesuit school. Were they not “men of faith and sanctity, learned in religion”?¹⁰⁴ In preparation for a career in the military Colonel de Morlet sent Foucauld to a Jesuit boarding school after he graduated from the lycée. The École de Saint-Geneviève in Paris, popularly known as the Rue des Postes, was one of the

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 82.

¹⁰² Ibid, 54.

¹⁰³ Early biographers, such as Bazin were probably influenced in their hysterical attitude towards Foucauld’s early philosophical leanings by the Modernist Crisis of the late 19th and early 20th century. It was a time when philosophers used rationalism and the influence of philosophers such as Kant to try to understand religion. This led to the belief, among others, that religion is primarily a matter of irrational emotions. It was condemned by the Church. A. Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France* (Herder: Nelson, 1961). Writing at the height of the Modernist Crisis might explain Foucauld reliance on philosophy as the sole cause of his loss of faith rather than meditating on other possible causes, such as the loss of his parents and grandparents, and his experience of war. More recent scholarship has tended to see Foucauld’s early love of philosophy, especially of Stoicism, as influencing his affinity for asceticism in his religious life. P. France, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 137

¹⁰⁴ Antier, 33.

best schools in the country, founded by the Jesuits after the loi Falloux.¹⁰⁵ Its reputation was so impeccable that it even had students from republican families, one father remarking that he cared “no more about the religious and political question, where the Jesuit fathers are concerned, than he would have thought about the orthodoxy of his dentist in case of toothache”.¹⁰⁶ Despite this attitude from certain of the parents, the Rue des Postes was a rigorously Catholic school, especially after the war, galvanized by the idea that Catholicism was the way towards national strength and unity. Nor were the Jesuits Foucauld’s first introduction to formal Catholic education. In preparation for his first communion he would have received at least 5-8 months of catechism instruction, admittedly interrupted by the war, and further catechism classes were given in all the schools until 1882.¹⁰⁷ Yet, by Foucauld’s second year in Paris “[o]f faith, not a trace remained in my soul”.¹⁰⁸

One of the problems was with the nature of the religious education on offer. René Rémond has noted that anticlerical ideologies “certainly affected intellectuals more than the mass of the population”.¹⁰⁹ This could only have been aided by the lack of coherent intellectual rebuttal or engagement with the anti-Catholic forces on the part of the French Church. Catechism classes were in a very poor state. Each diocese had its own catechism book, all with essentially the same format. The children were taught a series of questions and answers which they were expected to

¹⁰⁵ Maurice Gontard, “Les Jésuits et l’enseignement secondaire en France de la Restauration à la loi Falloux”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 25 (1984): 109-124.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, 80.

¹⁰⁷ The ideal study for first communion was 2 years, although children usually got no more than a year, frequently less. Gibson, 166.

¹⁰⁸ Bazin, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Gibson, 238.

learn by memory.¹¹⁰ Having studied French catechisms covering the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Elisabeth Germain has concluded that:

Faith and the sacraments are no longer understood as the basis and the source of moral life, but as duties to be carried out, as truths that we must believe, and as a means to help us fulfill these moral obligations.¹¹¹

Even the Jesuits were unprepared for a philosophical investigation of religious belief.

As Robert Anderson explains:

Catholic philosophy in France at this time was in a rather confused state. The old *philosophie de Lyon*, a mixture of Cartesian rationalism and scholasticism, had long held sway in the seminaries. It was now discredited intellectually, but its eventual successor, neo-thomism, began to establish itself in France only in the sixties. It took some time for current debates to be reflected in the teaching of the schools, and it seems unlikely that they were much influenced in this period either by neo-thomism or by the attempts of Gratry and others to work out new compromises between faith and reason. The pronouncements of Catholic teachers suggest that in practice the philosophy of the classroom was largely a matter of teaching accepted truths dogmatically and in conventional form...Its purpose was more pastoral than intellectual: to strengthen the pupil's faith and to prepare him to defend it against criticism.¹¹²

More than merely lacking faith, Foucauld was miserable at Rues des Postes.

Years later he would write to Marie de Bondy: "You know what I think of the boarding-school; good for many, it was detestable to me."¹¹³ He was very homesick.

He wrote to his grandfather "nearly every other day, sometimes letters forty pages long, to ask him to bring me back to Nancy".¹¹⁴ This homesickness could have been

¹¹⁰ Gibson, 166-167.

¹¹¹ Germain, *Parler du salut?*, 295; idem, "A travers les catechisms des 150 dernières années" in *Recherches et Débats*, 71 (1971), 107-131.

¹¹² Anderson, 84.

¹¹³ Bazin, 7.

¹¹⁴ Bazin, 6.

aggravated by the communal nature of the school. The teachers lived with the boys and were very involved in their moral lives. The Catholic community had only grown in faith, in spite of, and perhaps because of the attacks against it. While the number of people who went to Easter communion fell, the number of people who took frequent communion grew. Vocations reached a peak. French Catholic culture was undergoing a process of “ghettoization” and its schools were an important part of its network.¹¹⁵ Removed from his faith, Foucauld may have felt alienated by the atmosphere.

Always a good student who enjoyed reading, he graduated from his lycée in Nancy “above average” despite missing numerous days for illness,¹¹⁶ in Paris he stopped trying. As he described it: “in the month of February, I had not, I believe, yet cut the pages of Euclid which I ought to have studied every day since November”¹¹⁷. Far from investigating matters of religion, he could not even work up an interest in his favorite subject. In letters to friends he frequently referred to his boredom and complete lack of interest in what was going on around him.¹¹⁸ He put on weight, despite the strict diet, and started misbehaving. He would later remark “it was as if I had gone mad”.¹¹⁹ He would continue to exhibit erratic and self-destructive behaviour intermittently for the next six years.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Gibson, 231.

¹¹⁶ Antier, 32.

¹¹⁷ Bazin, 6.

¹¹⁸ LGT, 1874-5: Foucauld, *lycée*, 49-60.

¹¹⁹ Leptit, 14.

¹²⁰ From a psychological perspective, Foucauld was probably suffering from clinical depression. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders describes a depressive episode as at least two weeks of a depressed mood, or irritability in children and adolescents, and the presence of at least four symptoms of depression.

In March of 1876 he was expelled from school for “[l]aziness and disobedience”¹²¹. This caused a great deal of grief within the family as Foucauld was expected to write his entrance examinations for the Saint-Cyr military academy in June. He had already disappointed his grandfather by refusing to attend the École Polytech – the military engineering school and de Morlet’s alma mater - that was much more academically rigorous. Finally returned to Nancy, Foucauld applied himself to schoolwork with the assistance of a personal tutor. He passed the examinations for entrance to the Saint-Cyr military academy¹²² and placed 82nd out of 412 applicants.¹²³

Saint-Cyr was not an end to his problems. In the beginning he was almost turned away for “premature obesity”. They needed to make him a special uniform because none of the ones in stock would fit him.¹²⁴ It also became clear that he did not have an affinity for all things military. Like many young boys of his generation, he was interested in bearing arms for his country. It was, however, a wish born out of

The symptoms of depression include changes in appetite or weight, decreased energy, feelings of worthlessness and difficulty thinking and concentrating. It must be accompanied by the impairment of occupational functioning, such as problems with schoolwork and middle night insomnia. Children and adolescents who are in a depressive episode are often considered “spoiled” and it can manifest itself in separation anxiety. Exacerbated by grief and a genetic history of depression, episodes can last months and even years with periods of relief in between. *DMS-IV-TR*, 349-352 and 373. This is fairly accurate description of Foucauld’s behaviour in his youth. When he was particularly unhappy, he would compare himself to his father who had committed suicide. Leptit, 17.

¹²¹ Antier, 35.

¹²² École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr was founded in 1803 by Napoleon Bonaparte. The school’s motto is “ls s'instruisent pour vaincre.”

¹²³ Antier, 36.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

patriotism and a desire for *revanche*.¹²⁵ At Saint- Cyr, he quickly learned that he did not have a love for the military. He wrote to his school friend Gabriel Toudres that it was “[s]o depressing to be able to read only ‘theory’ and revolting works on fortification, artillery, and so on. It all has a touch of the barbaric.”¹²⁶ Despite these setbacks Foucauld finished the year in first class and managed to avoid wasting his very large allowance.¹²⁷

Unfortunately his grandfather was in increasingly ill health, a fact that did not escape Foucauld on his summer holidays and again at Christmas. In January 1878 he wrote: “[i]t is indeed good to be free and at peace, but it is hard to be alone. And yet, unavoidably, that is what I am condemned to.”¹²⁸ Colonel de Morlet died on February 3, 1878. Two days later Foucauld wrote, “In a single stroke my family has been taken from me, and my home, and my peace, and the carefree life that was so sweet. Never again shall I find all that.”¹²⁹ Grief-stricken, he ignored his schoolwork and got into trouble frequently. In his second year at Saint-Cyr he spent forty-five days being punished and forty-seven days in confinement. He dropped from his above average ranking of 143rd to 333rd out of 386 students.¹³⁰ He had already

¹²⁵ Foucauld, *lycée*, 27; Didier, *vie*, 23.

¹²⁶ “C’est bien triste de ne plus pouvoir lire comme autrefois, et de n’avoir pour se récréer que la théorie et d’infâmes ouvrages de fortification, artillerie, etc. Tout cela sent la barbarie,” LGT, January 1878; Foucauld, *lycée*, 69

¹²⁷ Sheppard, 19.

¹²⁸ “c’est bien bon d’être libre et tranquille: mais c’est dur d’être seul; et c’est pourtant à cela que je suis nécessairement condamné.” LGT January 1878; Foucauld, *lycée*, 70.

¹²⁹ “Moi, il n’en est pas de même; on m’enlève du même coup ma famille, mon chez moi, ma tranquillité, et cette insouciance qui était si douce. Et tout cela, je ne le retrouverai plus jamais.”, LGT, 5 February, 1878; Foucauld, *lycée*, 73.

¹³⁰ Antier, 47.

decided to go to the cavalry school in his third year and was only able to do so because of his marks in his first year.

He had spent the summer of 1878 with his cousins, the Moitessiers, and they hardly recognized him. He was extremely moody and spent all of his time either hunting, sleeping, or eating. They also had no opportunity to curb his behaviour because a month before he started school he came of age and inherited money from his parents and his grandfather. He had been receiving a monthly pension since he had first begun at Saint-Cyr so, in keeping with the behaviours of the time, when he came of age Foucauld was given access to a fortune.¹³¹ The money and property equaled 391 800 francs, around £900 000 today, and produced an annual income of £41 000.¹³² Foucauld soon cut off almost all communication with his family.¹³³ Graduating 87th out of 88, Foucauld's final report said "Conduct below average; scientific knowledge, none. Below average in his entire course of study. Social graces, none".¹³⁴

Garrisoned with the Fourth Hussars at Pont à Monsson he had the freedom to behave extravagantly. He would spend huge amounts of money on entertainment but it never gave him any pleasure. Foucauld felt "dumb and depressed during so-called celebrations: I organized them, but when the time came I let them pass over me, dumb, uninterested, and infinitely bored"¹³⁵. He was also preoccupied with feelings

¹³¹ Didier, *vie*, 21.

¹³² Antier, 48.

¹³³ Annie of Jesus, 18; Letter to Henri Duveyrier (LHD) February 21, 1892; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 309.

¹³⁴ Annie of Jesus, 50.

¹³⁵ Charles Leptit, *Two Dancers in the Desert*, trans John Griffiths (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates Ltd., 1983), 17.

of his own worthlessness. He would often say: “I am a man without a future”¹³⁶ Foucauld would later thank God for his pervasive sadness: “You, Lord, allowed me to feel a painful emptiness, a sadness...It returned each evening when I found myself alone in my flat”.¹³⁷ He knew that his behaviour was wrong, which prevented him from enjoying it: “I did evil, but I never approved of it or loved it”.¹³⁸

Military Life

In December 1880 word came that the Fourth Hussars were to be sent to Algeria.¹³⁹ This news activated Foucauld’s dormant enthusiasm. He had always been fascinated with Algeria, having received some of his best marks in the study of Algerian history,¹⁴⁰ and here was his opportunity to experience it. The move to Algeria was very positive for him, mentally. He began studying the people and the language immediately after his arrival. For the first time in over a year he was interested in something.

Unfortunately, Foucauld had sabotaged his Algerian experience before he even left France. In 1880, he had been punished three times for associating with his mistress, Marie Cardinal, known as Mimi. His superior officer had directly ordered him not to take her to Algeria. Hating being told what to do, he promptly sent her on ahead of him. Somewhere along the way it was presumed that she was the

¹³⁶ Ibid, 16.

¹³⁷ Leptit, 17; Annie of Jesus, 18.

¹³⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 11.

¹³⁹ The Algeria that Foucauld was assigned to had already become “a small French Republic.” The military rule of previous years had been essentially undone in 1880 and the vast majority of the population was under civil authority. Colonization was well underway: land was “obtained” from the Muslim locals and given to French immigrants. The interests of the settlers were at the forefront and needed to be protected. Ageron, 53-58.

¹⁴⁰ Fergus Fleming, *The Sword and the Cross* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 21.

Vicountess de Foucauld. The other army wives were furious and put pressure on their husbands to take action. Foucauld was ordered to send her back to France.

Buoyed by the popular support of the other officers he refused. On March 20, 1881 he was removed from active duty for insubordination and sent back to France.¹⁴¹

He had been vacationing at Evian with Mimi for over a month when he received a letter from a friend informing him that the Fourth Hussars were being called up to fight the insurgent Bou Amama. The next day Foucauld was before the general of the Fourth Army Corps begging to be reinstated. He was even willing to take a lower position if he could only be sent back to North Africa. Things had not been going well for him in France. Despite his protestations to the contrary¹⁴², he was probably getting depressed and bored again. He had also just gotten word that his access to money was going to be restricted. His family had been horrified by his irresponsibility and was going to court in Nancy to have him placed under the control of a guardian.¹⁴³

Bou Amama was a religious leader from Morocco who was violently opposed to French imperial expansion in North Africa. When the head of the Arab Bureau at Géryville was assassinated in April 1881 it sparked a general uprising among the southern tribes¹⁴⁴ who took Bou Amama as their leader.¹⁴⁵ Crushing this uprising

¹⁴¹ Antier, 54-55.

¹⁴² Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 23

¹⁴³ Antier, 56.

¹⁴⁴ The Bou Amama uprising in the southern Oranais was nothing like the great armed revolts of previous years. Essentially a series of raids, Bou Amama was quickly suppressed. The consequences of the revolt were that the French were able to confiscate more land and it helped create a peace with Ouled Sidi Cheikh, the leader of a brotherhood that had been causing trouble for the French since 1864. Aegron, 36 and 53.

was seen in the national press as a step towards the creation of a great colonial empire. It was presented as an opportunity to recover “national pride after the great humiliation”, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.¹⁴⁶ Such an opportunity would have appealed to Foucauld’s patriotism and personal experiences. He wrote to his friend Gabriel Tourdes after the fact, “an expedition of this kind is too rare a pleasure to let pass without trying to enjoy it.”¹⁴⁷

Algeria had always been fascinating to Foucauld. In his first year at Rue des Postes he participated in a congrès de géographie, the subject of which was the Sahara desert.¹⁴⁸ Algerian history was always one of the few subjects, aside from the study of the classics, in which he excelled at school. This sustained interest, as well as his excitement at the prospect of being posted there, were likely tied up both in his patriotic fervour and his love for Alsace. The need for French expansion, particularly in North Africa, was an important element in the national vision of France, especially after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

France had invaded Algeria in 1830. In the following years, the country began a process of colonization based on settlement and thousands of Frenchmen moved to this new France to start a life. The situation has been compared to the European version of the American wild west.¹⁴⁹ Under the Second Empire, Algeria

¹⁴⁵ Ross E. Dunn, *Resistance in the Desert* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 141.

¹⁴⁶ Sheppard, 25.

¹⁴⁷ “une expedition de ce genre est un plaisir trop rare pour le laisser passer sans tâcher d’en jouir” Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 23.

¹⁴⁸ Foucauld, *lycée*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Raymond F. Betts “The French Colonial Frontier” in *From the Ancien Régime to the Popular Front*. Edited Charles K. Warner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, 127-143

remained under military rule, a situation that prevented the kind of accelerated expansion that the settlers wanted.¹⁵⁰ As war with Prussia began to look like inevitability, several nationalists began to look towards Algeria as a possible solution to the looming problem. Henri Verne wrote in 1869:

Once this beautiful country has been settled, cultivated and made economically useful, we will have made a much more important contribution to regaining our hegemony than by annexing the Rhineland and Belgium, which could only be accomplished with a bloody and ruinous war.¹⁵¹

Verne was echoing sentiments published in the popular *La France nouvelle*, published in 1868, and written by Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol. It described Algeria as the only answer in the face of war with Prussia, where both victory and defeat would mean an unstable position within Europe: “Eighty to one hundred million Frenchmen on both sides of the Mediterranean would shore up France’s economic and cultural position in Europe”.¹⁵²

During the war, and just a month into the term of the Government of National Defense, the Third Republic passed the Crémieux decree, which granted the Jews of Algeria full citizenship.¹⁵³ The same was not offered to the Muslim population, but instead laws were enacted “eliminating influence Muslim elites had garnered, suspending the protection of tribal landholdings, expanding the territory under direct French administration, dismantling the conseils généraux, and instating a special

¹⁵⁰ Bertrand Taithe, *Citizenship and Wars, France in Turmoil 1870-1871* (London: Routledge, 2001), 83-90; Paul A. Silverstien, *Algeria in France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 42.

¹⁵¹ Schievlbusch, 177.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 104.

¹⁵³ Taithe, 88.

‘Arab tax’ (impôt arabe) on Muslim subjects”.¹⁵⁴ These moves, coupled with the agricultural crisis of the 1860s, led to an insurrection against the French in 1870-1.¹⁵⁵

The insurrection gave the Third Republic the opportunity to promote the assimilation policies that they wanted. Although the bloody handling of the insurrection originally only added to the army’s damaged reputation in the wake of war,¹⁵⁶ it soon got swept up into the national mythologizing of France’s defeat. The National Assembly enquiry, which had been established to investigate the actions of the Government of National Defense during the war, included the Algerian uprising within its remit “thus ensuring that events in Algeria would be viewed through the same political lens as the war and communes of 1871”.¹⁵⁷

Revanche rhetoric began to be used in regards to colonial politics.¹⁵⁸ Algeria came to represent the lost provinces both literally and figuratively. When Alsace and Lorraine were ceded in 1871, Charles Lavignerie, the founder of the White Fathers, extended an invitation to all the refugees to resettle in “la France Africaine” “a home no less French than the one you have lost. It awaits you, and its love is as great as your misfortune”.¹⁵⁹ A variety of societies were founded to help the displaced resettle, and the Société de Protection des Alsaciens et Lorrains Demeurés Français was founded in 1872 to facilitate their settlement in the colonies.¹⁶⁰ By 1880, the

¹⁵⁴ Silverstein, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Taithe, 88; Valery 97-100.

¹⁵⁶ Valery, 97.

¹⁵⁷ Valery, 100.

¹⁵⁸ Schievlbusch, 186.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 183.

¹⁶⁰ Frederic H. Seager. “The Alsace-Lorraine Question in France, 1871-1914” in *From the Ancien Régime to the Popular Front*, ed.Charles K. Warner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 115.

Third Republic had compensated for the loss by assimilating Algeria as three legislative departments, thereby expanding France's territory fourfold.¹⁶¹ Many of the refugees felt an affinity for, and gratitude towards the colonies. The Algerian *trailleur*, a light infantry composed of colonial subjects, had fought in the Franco-Prussian war.¹⁶² The "Turcos", as they were popularly known, were frequently depicted in French art of the post-war era as fighting for their motherland. Hansi's *Mon village* specifically depicts Alsatian children paying homage to a fallen Turco.¹⁶³

Within this context it is easy to understand Foucauld's excitement at the prospect of taking part in such an expedition, and the vigor and dedication with which he applied himself when given the renewed opportunity. Allowed to rejoin his regiment on their campaign into Southern Algeria, he flourished. His fellow officer and lifelong friend, Henri Laperrine wrote:

In the midst of the dangers and privations of the expeditionary columns, this literary *viveur* showed himself to be a soldier and a leader, gaily enduring the hardest trials, constantly exposing himself to danger, devoting all his time to his men.¹⁶⁴

Under the hot sun, forced into physical exercise, high on the adrenaline caused by danger and finally given a purpose, the man without a future found meaning in his life.

René Bazin described this as the moment when "[t]he thought of sacrifice had come home to his soul".¹⁶⁵ The idea of sacrifice in the national context was an

¹⁶¹ Silverstein, 44.

¹⁶² Taithe, 84.

¹⁶³ Valery, 101-102.

¹⁶⁴ Bazin, 11.

important meeting point between republican and Catholic France. Despite the rhetoric surrounding the divide between the republican and Catholic camps of France during the Third Republic, culturally the breach was, in many cases one of outside appearance. For example, Theodore Zeldin has investigated how the morality of both groups, in particular sexual morality, was essentially the same.¹⁶⁶ He described it as “the survival of traditional practices in nominally new institutions”.¹⁶⁷ There were republicans who were Catholics and supported republican ideals, such as Foucauld and other missionaries in the late nineteenth century,¹⁶⁸ and there were men who, while not Catholic themselves, identified Catholicism as an integral part of the French nation. Two examples would be the novelist Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) and Charles Maurras (1868-1952), who ran the newspaper *Revue de l'Action Française*. Barrès saw Catholicism as the faith of France, and he loved it because it was part of his nation’s tradition. Maurras, however, saw Catholicism as the practical corollary to the nationalist monarch that he envisioned.¹⁶⁹

A number of people, such as Madame d’Agoult¹⁷⁰ and Georges Goyau saw French Catholicism as part of the national “subconscious” that “still survives in the

¹⁶⁵ Bazin, 10.

¹⁶⁶ Zeldin, “Moralities”, 13-50.

¹⁶⁷ Theodore Zeldin, “Were there Two Frances?” in *Conflicts in French Society*, ed. Theodore Zeldin (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 9; Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁶⁸ J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Also Foucauld’s grandfather, Six, *Autrement*, 7, 9; Didier, “Algerie,” 40.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914*. London: Constable, 1966, 16, 290-1.

¹⁷⁰ Zeldin, “Frances,” 10

souls of France.¹⁷¹ Nowhere has this reality been closer to the surface than with the idealization of national sacrifice. Within France, the concept of sacrifice for God and for the nation had been joined in the national consciousness for 200 years. As early as 1691 Jesus was presented to the people of France as the theological and political ideal of the “good citizen”.¹⁷² This was a concept reinforced in different terminology by the Third Republic. While the cult of the War Dead is a well-known image of the First World War, after the Franco-Prussian war another cult was formed, although on a slightly smaller scale. The cult of the dead of the Franco-Prussian war resonated with both Catholics and Republicans through the use of the rituals and language of Christianity.¹⁷³ Both French Catholicism, with the overseas missions,¹⁷⁴ and republicanism, the ideal being military service, saw the perfect participant in the life of the community as someone who strived for “total annihilating surrender of the self”.¹⁷⁵

In the army Foucauld slowly began to annihilate the selfishness and vanity of his former self. Much like a monk, he began to strip away the extraneous aspects of life that prevent self-knowledge and love of God. Foucauld also made the comparison of his military life with a monastery. Of his soldiers who were with him in the South Oranis, he wrote “half the men in my platoon would have made excellent monks”.¹⁷⁶ His six months of action had revitalized him. Foucauld knew

¹⁷¹ Strenski, 5.

¹⁷² Ibid, 28.

¹⁷³ Valery, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Becoming a martyr while on a mission became idealized during the late 19th century within the Catholic community, Daughton, 46-51.

¹⁷⁵ Strenski, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Fleming, 43.

that garrison life would not include any of the things he had learned to love about being an active soldier, such as the responsibility, the self-denial, and the hard work. When the campaign was over he requested leave from the army to undertake an exploration “to the East”. When the army refused, he resigned again. Years later he would compare his decision to leave the army with his decision to enter the monastery:

I left [the army] for the same reason that I entered [the monastery] – for the same motives – not because of inconstancy, but because of my constancy to search for an ideal, which I had hoped to find there, but did not.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

During the nineteenth century France was a country at war within itself. The Revolution had rent deep scars within society that flared up during times of crisis, such as the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, and impacted the life of Charles de Foucauld. James McMillan has called it a French *Kulturrekampf*; there were two Frances existing in the same country, but subscribing to different values.¹⁷⁸ While Foucauld, and his maternal grandfather Colonel Morlet,¹⁷⁹ demonstrate the existence of Catholic republicans, the main division in French society was between republicans and conservative Catholics. Foucauld responded to these crises, as did many men of this time, by rejecting his Catholic upbringing:

¹⁷⁷ “Je l’ai quittée parce que j’y suis entré – pour les memes motifs – non par inconstance, mais par constance à chercher un ideal que j’espérais y trouver, que je n’y ai pas trouvé” quoted in Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 27.

¹⁷⁸ James McMillan, “‘Priest Hits Girl’: On the Front Line in the ‘War of Two Frances,’” in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77-79.

¹⁷⁹ Six, *autrement*, 7, 9.

For twelve years I lived without any faith: nothing seemed to me sufficiently proven: the equal faith with which people follow such different religions seemed to me the condemnation of them all; less than any, the religion of my childhood seemed to me admissible, with its 1=3, that I couldn't bring myself to consider.¹⁸⁰

No longer Catholic, Foucauld threw himself into the recovery of his nation's pride through military action. Nothing about his experiences to this point are divergent from most colonial narratives of the time. It is in Morocco that he came up against Islam, which called into question his assumptions as a Frenchman and an atheist.

Although Foucauld is best known for his deep religiosity, the roots of this development are present in his atheistic youth. Despite his rejection of religion he still had a basic education in Catholicism, especially in the moral ideals that were both the catechism of the Church and the backbone of French society. Furthermore, he had been raised in a society with a deep appreciation of asceticism: suffering with purpose, whether religious or national. The French culture of the nineteenth century placed a heavy emphasis on sacrifice but also on universalism: whether through the creeping inclusivism of the Marian visitations, or the expansion of the empire. Foucauld would expand upon these ideas of inclusion within the society of the Church and of France, in his ascetic spirituality.

¹⁸⁰ “La foi égale avec laquelle on suit des religions si diverses me semblait la condamnation de toutes; moins qu'aucune, celle de mon enfance me semblait admissible avec son 1=3 que je ne pouvais me résoudre à poser” 14 August 1901; Charles de Foucauld, *Charles de Foucauld: Lettres à Henry de Castries* (Paris: Grasset, 1938), *Castries*, 94.

Chapter Two: Islam and Identity

Introduction

In post-Revolutionary France, a priest bemoaned the state of the Church in that country saying it was “difficult to bring back to religious ideas young minds of 15 or 16 like ours, after they had been as it were saturated with the Voltairean philosophy so fashionable.”¹⁸¹ The supposed great return of the upper-middle class men to religion in the late nineteenth century was a myth, the numbers do not support a large movement, but it is true that after 1885 there were a number of visible male conversions, among whom Foucauld can be counted.¹⁸² The difficulties of French society, drenched in anti-clericalism, had to be overcome by these men to allow them to reestablish, or establish for the first time as an adult, a religious life. Richard Burton, in his analysis of male conversion stories of the later nineteenth century, has noted that

Parisians of the 1880s and beyond lived out their lives in an effectively desacralized urban environment, one bereft of its earlier spiritual density and increasingly limited to a monosemantic dimension of being. Accordingly, those in quest of the sacred – either, like Huysmans, of the traditional Catholic sacred or, like the Surrealists, of some immanent, modern expression of *das ganz Andere* (wholly other) – had to go farther afield, into the outer arrondissements or even beyond,

¹⁸¹ Gibson, 228.

¹⁸² Richard Burton, *Blood in the City: Violence and Revelation in Paris, 1789-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 266. A list of famous French converts: Paul Claudel [1886 - 1890], Charles de Foucauld [1886], J. K. Huysmans [1892], Francis Jammes [1905], Raïssa and Jacques Maritain [1906], Charles Péguy [1907], Jacques Rivière [1913], Ernest Psichari [1913], Gabriel Frizeau [1904], Louis Massignon [1908].

or, alternatively, into the hidden recesses that survived in the city center, to locate it...¹⁸³

For Foucauld, his interaction with Islam in North Africa allowed him to overcome the constraints of French society and to connect with the sacred, and it is from this point that he begins his transition from fashionable atheist to the individual beatified by the Church in 2005.

Foucauld's conversion began during his exploration of Morocco, when he first made intimate contact with Islam in 1882, culminating in his receiving the sacraments of confession and Eucharist in October 1886. Foucauld described a conversion that occurred in stages. The first, to use Foucauld's own terminology, was a "clearing away" of old debris in preparation for new growth;¹⁸⁴ this process of preparation began in North Africa. This is an especially important aspect of his conversion as it determined the trajectory of his later life, and the nature of his future interaction with Islam. The second stage was one of silent sanctification. It is at this point that Foucauld rejects a conversion to Islam but rather develops his conversion into a reconversion to Catholicism. The reasons for this rejection will be discussed in this chapter.

Preparation

¹⁸³ Ibid, 271

¹⁸⁴ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 13. He would also use the same words to describe his missionary work, Six, "Postérités", 473-4. It is possible that Foucauld considers Islam to be *praepratio evangelica*.

Foucauld wrote that he began looking for an “ideal” when he resigned from the army.¹⁸⁵ The first place he searched for this “ideal” was Morocco. In a period of transition, he was open to new concepts and the experiences he had there would change him forever. In Morocco he would live in poverty and be dependant on others for hospitality. Hiding his true identity, he would be in fear for his life on multiple occasions.¹⁸⁶ It was also in Morocco that he came into intimate contact with Islam, a relationship that would influence his spirituality forever. Foucauld would spend the rest of his life trying to recapture what he found in Morocco. During his time with the Trappists, his ordination, and even his years in Tamanrasset, Foucauld would try to maintain a connection with his Moroccan experience.¹⁸⁷

He had resigned from the army in January 1882.¹⁸⁸ By February the plans he had made with his friend had fallen through. By March he had decided to venture into Morocco and began a year long preparation for the expedition.¹⁸⁹ He moved to Algiers where he lived as a student, under the tight financial control of his family.¹⁹⁰ While there he met the librarian, an Irishman named Oscar MacCarthy.¹⁹¹ An explorer in his youth, MacCarthy had an unfulfilled dream to explore Southern

¹⁸⁵ “Je l’ai quittée parce que j’y suis entré – pour les memes motifs – non par inconstance, mais par constance à chercher un ideal que j’espérais y trouver, que je n’y ai pas trouvé” quoted in Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 27.

¹⁸⁶ Antier, 79, 81; Bazin, 52, 58-59.

¹⁸⁷ “Vous espérez que j’ai assez de pauvreté. Non; nous sommes pauvres pour des riches, mais pas pauvres comme l’était Notre-Seigneur, pas pauvres comme je l’étais au Maroc” Letter to Abbé Huvelin (LAH), 5 November 1890, Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 5

¹⁸⁸ LGT 18 February 1882, Foucauld, *lycée*, 118.

¹⁸⁹ Bazin, 12-15.

¹⁹⁰ Antier, 62.

¹⁹¹ Sanford Harold Bederman, *Oscar MacCarthy, Charles de Foucauld and the Geographic Exploration of North Africa* (Atlanta: Georgia State University Press, 1983).

Morocco and was more than happy to facilitate Foucauld's plans.¹⁹² Morocco in the late nineteenth century was a country in crisis. European influence in the seaports and the French occupation of Algeria had helped to create rampant inflation, the destruction of traditional industries, and a worsening of the gap between the rich and poor.¹⁹³ The northern half of the country was under the centralized control of the Sultan, but beyond the Atlas Mountains his claim was limited to Commander of the Faithful and the true caliph of all Muslims.¹⁹⁴ Southern Morocco was uncharted territory; the only European in recent memory to visit the area had not returned. Germany was also interested in Morocco, and the language of *revanche* was used within France to provoke a sense of urgency surrounding the matter.¹⁹⁵ Foucauld had been part of the 1881 incursion by the French into the southeast. The French army wanted to see more and so did he.¹⁹⁶

Rightly concerned about French expansionism, Morocco restricted European movement within the country. The only Christians who could enter Morocco were representatives of the European powers and they had to keep to the monitored roadways.¹⁹⁷ Foucauld was not interested in taking the frequently traveled routes; he wanted to map the unknown Morocco. To do that, he would need to travel in

¹⁹² Bazin, 12-15.

¹⁹³ R. E. Dunn, 41-42.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 46.

¹⁹⁵ Schivelbusch, 188.

¹⁹⁶ The French military had been interested in Morocco since their fighting with the marabout Abd el-Kader had included Moroccan troops and the governor-general of Algeria called for "a great invasion of Africa" in 1841. The military expedition Foucauld had taken part in had just secured France more land along the Algeria-Morocco border. Ageron, *Modern Algeria*.

¹⁹⁷ Bazin, 13.

disguise.¹⁹⁸ It was decided that he would go disguised as a Russian Jew, Rabbi Joseph Aleman, who was collecting alms for the Jews of Jerusalem.¹⁹⁹ Rabbi Mardochee Abi Serour accompanied him as a guide.²⁰⁰ As a Jew, Foucauld would have restricted contact with the ruling Muslims, decreasing the danger, and acknowledging that he was a foreigner would explain his accent, the scientific equipment he was carrying so that he could accurately map the country, and any unusual behaviour.

Henri Duveyrier,²⁰¹ a former explorer of Southern Algeria and friend of Foucauld, said that Foucauld had lived in Morocco as if he had “made a vow of

¹⁹⁸ The practice of assuming disguise to facilitate movement was not uncommon in Morocco. Jews making pilgrimages to the tomb of a saint often disguised as Muslims to aid travel, H. Zafrani, *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco* (New York: Sephardic House, 2005), 15. There is also an Islamic connection to the use of a disguise. *Taqiyya* (dissimulation) is a Qur’anic (3/28(27)) dispensation to conceal one’s personal beliefs in the face of adversity. While it is mostly understood to be a practice of Shi’i Islam, modern Imami scholar, Muhammad Husayn Al Kashif al-Gita (1877-1954) claimed it was not specific to Shi’ism but dictated by reason, citing a person’s “innate need to defend himself”. E. Kohlberg, “Some Imami-shi’i Views on Taqiyya,” *Journal of American Oriental Society* 95, no. 3 (July-Sept 1995): 395-402

¹⁹⁹ The alms-collector rabbi had been a fixture in Moroccan Jewish society for over 1000 years. They were held in the highest esteem because they represented the Holy Land and because they were often thought to work miracles. As a disguise it would have provided Foucauld with free shelter as they were warmly welcomed everywhere and alms-collectors often traveled in groups of two: one Ashkenazi and one Sephardic. Zafrani, 22-23.

²⁰⁰ Mardochee was an experienced traveler having traveled through Palestine, Syria, France and all over North Africa. He had worked with some of the most famous figures in French colonialism, including Henri Duveyrier (1840-1892) explorer and Tuareg specialist and later friend of Foucauld, Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894) developer of the Suez Canal, Paul-Xavier Flatters (1832-1881) explorer and colonel whose party was killed by the Tuareg, and Oscar Lenz (1848-1925) who crossed from Morocco to Timbuktu. See the biography of Mardochee, Jacob Oliel, *De Jérusalem à Tombouctou* (Paris: Éditions Olbia, 1998).

²⁰¹ Dominique Casajus, *Henri Duveyrier: un saint simonien au desert* (Paris: Ibis, 2007).

poverty and destitution, and more than kept it”.²⁰² Living as a Jew in Morocco was a completely new experience for Foucauld. He had dealt with army rations before, and he had been on a restricted allowance from his family for a year, but he had never been truly poor. The Jews of Morocco were dhimma (singular, dhimmi), non-Muslim subjects of the Muslim state who in exchange for the right to practice their religion were expected to pay an extra tax.²⁰³ In Morocco, this also included a series of restrictions on the Jewish population who remained in poverty and who had a troubled history of persecutions and expulsions. As a Jew, Foucauld walked everywhere in bare feet²⁰⁴ and became dependant on local hospitality for food and shelter. By the end of the year he had lost forty-five pounds of his previously healthy weight.²⁰⁵

The reversal in fortune was not merely financial. For the first time in his life he was not a member of the elite, but was instead a second-class citizen. The history of persecution of Jews in Morocco was particularly violent, with at least one massacre in the previous fifty years.²⁰⁶ The change was immediate from the moment Foucauld put on his disguise. Before he left Algeria he came in contact with officers that he knew:

The officers filed off, heedless or contemptuous; one

²⁰² Annie of Jesus, 21.

²⁰³ H. Z. (J. W.) Hirschberg, *A History of Jews in North Africa*, vol. II, ed. and trans. E. Bashan and R. Attal (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981); Zafrani, *Two Thousand Years of Jewish Life in Morocco*.

²⁰⁴ Jews were not allowed to wear shoes. Under Suliaman (1795-1822) it was decreed that shoes were permitted in Fez but the popular reaction amongst the Muslims of Fez was so violent that the Jews asked the Sultan to repeal the edict. Hirschberg, 301.

²⁰⁵ Antier, 81.

²⁰⁶ Hirschberg, 301.

of them, with a sneer, remarked to his comrades, that that little squatting Jew, eating olives, looked like a monkey. None recognized him.²⁰⁷

Foucauld became immune to this treatment. He wrote that "...to walk barefooted in the towns, and sometimes in the gardens, to receive insults and stones was nothing".²⁰⁸ He even began to appreciate it. When he finally exited Morocco after a year, he refused to reveal his identity right away. He continued on in his filthy clothing looking for a place to stay at a poor inn. Only when he was unable to find any accommodations at all was he forced to reveal himself to be the Viscount de Foucauld.²⁰⁹

When traveling in the more centralized northern area of the country they would stay in inns or with acquaintances of Mardochee. Once south of Fez, however, they would spend their nights outside or, if they were near a village, they would ask for shelter from the local people. They often spent the night in synagogues or in the houses of pious Jews. If this was not possible, they stayed with a Muslim family. In exchange, Foucauld would offer a small gift like sugar or tea. Foucauld was very impressed with the hospitality that was offered. In one Jewish home the hosts washed his feet.²¹⁰ On more than one occasion Muslims he did not know saved his life.²¹¹ In at least one circumstance he was completely defenseless, as he did not carry any weapons.²¹² Without hope of survival, he was saved by a Muslim and, as it

²⁰⁷ Bazin, 18.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 35.

²⁰⁹ Antier, 81.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 81.

²¹¹ Ibid, 48.

²¹² Didier, *vie*, 52; Antier, 79.

was years later at Tamanrasset,²¹³ this act of compassion became the basis for friendship and cultural exchange.²¹⁴

Islam

In his monograph on Foucauld, unique as an analysis because the author approaches Foucauld not just from the position of a scholar but also as a Muslim, Ali Merad asks “Would this extraordinary vocation have been possible without the first rush of emotion experienced by the young officer de Foucauld in contact with Islam?”²¹⁵ That Islam profoundly shaped the course of Foucauld’s life is certainly the argument of this thesis, but to understand his vocation, it is necessary to unpack, as much as possible, this “rush of emotion”. What were his experiences with Islam, and how did they affect him? How did this interaction affect his identity as a secular Frenchman, and how did this French identity determine how he related to Islam?

In 1901, just as he was preparing to return to North Africa and begin his vocation to its people, Foucauld began a correspondence with Henry de Castries, an officer of native affairs in Algeria and Morocco and the author of several books on the subject.²¹⁶ During that summer of mediation, reflection, and preparation at the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dames des Neiges high in the mountains, Foucauld

²¹³ “Instead of being self-sufficient, he becomes, of necessity, the one who receives. The friendship is growing because it has become reciprocal.” Latham, “Silent Witness,” 57.

²¹⁴ His friendship with marabout Ben Daoud and his son Sidi Omar, and grandson Edris, Foucauld, *Reconnaissance*, 259-67; Letter to Henry Castries (LHC), 14 January 1905, Charles de Foucauld, *Charles de Foucauld: Lettres à Henry de Castries* (Paris: Grasset, 1938), 161-167; Bazin, 43-50; Antier, 75; In 1905 he received a letter from Edris sent via the French consul in Casablanca, reproduced Foucauld, *Castries*, 164-165.

²¹⁵ Merad, 44.

²¹⁶ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 313; Henry de Castries, *Agents et voyageurs français au maroc* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911); *L’Islam, Impressions et études* (Paris, 1896).

wrote de Castries several successive letters recounting his first impressions of Islam. Most of Foucauld's best known statements about Islam are found in these few letters.

Foucauld famously described his initial reaction to Islam: "l'islam a produit en moi un profond bouleversement".²¹⁷ When this quotation has been translated into English the word "bouleversement" has been interpreted in a number of different ways.²¹⁸ It comes from the root word *bouleverser*, which has several negative connotations: "to upset (greatly)", or "to distress". It also can be translated as "to turn upside down". Foucauld described his interaction with Islam in words that indicate it was not necessarily a pleasant experience. Islam created in Foucauld feelings of unhappiness and anxiety, while causing him to shift and move - to be turned upside down. This was not an unusual response amongst the French in North Africa. Studies of Orientalist literature have traditionally seen colonialist response as one of mastery over the Other. Lisa Lowe, however, has discussed how Orientalist texts served as a way for the colonialist to express the conflicts of their own identity.²¹⁹ In her discussion of the body and national identity in nineteenth century French travelers, Victoria Thompson has shown how that disorientation often manifested itself in a challenge to emotions and to the body. One of her case studies

²¹⁷ LHC 8 July 1901, Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

²¹⁸ "a profound effect" Leptit, 21; "a very deep impression" Annie of Jesus, 22; "overturning" Latham, "Silent Witness," 48-9; "a profound disruption" J. J. H. Rossetti, "Christian Marabout, Soldier Monk: Charles de Foucauld between the French and the Tuareg" *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 4 (2008): 381-396, 389.

²¹⁹ Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: British and French Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

described a feeling of dizziness, brought on by exposure to the new environment, while another described “a sort of vertigo”.²²⁰

Thompson argues that this physical loss of control is “linked to a sense of uncertainty” concerning identity. She compares the response of French travelers with those of British travelers who do not feel a similar sense of unease. Algeria, Thompson argues, was a place of uncertainty with regards to French identity. While it was supposed to be French, and was presented to the public as French, in reality its relationship with France was unclear and changed considerably in the nineteenth century.²²¹ France’s relationship with its colonies was fraught with contradictions.²²² It “challenged the French visitor, calling into question his sense of direction and ability to make sense of and navigate foreign territory”.²²³ French identity was in a state of disarray, on the verge of continually being reinvented. As Hugues Didier has described it, “[d]uring the so called Belle Époque, the French were continuously on the brink of civil, ideological, religious, and political conflict”.²²⁴

Islam created within Foucauld a great emotional distress. Unlike other travelers, Foucauld was not so much threatened by his identity as a colonialist. With a patriotism born in war and life as a refugee, and an alliance with the colonial government based in his military service Foucauld, while disagreeing with certain

²²⁰ Victoria Thompson, “ ‘I Went Pale With Pleasure’ The Body, Sexuality, and National Identity among French Travelers to Algiers in the Nineteenth Century”, in *Algeria and France 1800-2000*, ed. Patricia M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 24.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 31.

²²² Didier, *vie*, 43.

²²³ *Ibid*, 24.

²²⁴ Didier, “Massignon,” 337.

manners of execution,²²⁵ did not question France's role as colonial master. Islam, however, was a direct hit to the weakest element of Foucauld's identity: his religion. As discussed in the previous chapter, France's Third Republic was hostile to traditional expressions of its national religion. For many of the men of Foucauld's generation religion was something that had been left in the nursery. When these men went to the colonial outposts, Islam often created in them a similar experience.

Another colonial officer, General Niéger, wrote:

...you rarely meet a man, even a skeptic, among those who have lived for some time on close term with the Muslims, whose emotions, and sometimes reason, have not been affected by the outward signs of their simple, profound faith, the spiritual strength given them by an unfaltering religious fatalism, and their religious discipline. The influence of Islam on even the steeliest of characters is the more powerful when exerted in favorable surroundings, in regions similar to those where it began.²²⁶

While Islam caused Foucauld to lose his footing, it also attracted him. He said that it "is extremely seductive: I was seduced to excess".²²⁷ What was the nature of this seduction? What was Foucauld attracted to in Islam? Foucauld was attracted to exactly that which was missing from French society: piety, or at least, a respect for piety. Hugues Didier has argued that Foucauld experienced "Islam *as an art*, as a religion that was founded on and merged with an aestheticism".²²⁸ Islam merged

²²⁵ Didier, "Algerie," 42-47; On the issue of slavery see Annie of Jesus, 53-60.

²²⁶ Merad, 46-7.

²²⁷ "L'islamisme est extrêmement séduisant: il m'a séduit à l'excès." LHC, 15 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90.

²²⁸ Didier, "Massignon," 347.

with the North African landscape in Foucauld's mind and the beauty they produced together seduced him.²²⁹

To say that Foucauld's understanding, or rather appreciation, of Islam did not go much beyond the outer appearances has merit. It is certainly worth questioning just how much Foucauld understood about Islam. Unlike his friend Massignon, he was neither a scholar by training nor by desire. He studied Islam and Arabic attentively in preparation for his exploratory adventures when he left the army, informing his friend that he spent all of his free time studying the language.²³⁰ He studied first under Léon Griguer, the interpreter for the Tribunal civil de Mascara,²³¹ and then with his "bon thaleb", Sidi ben Said, who also taught him Berber and Hebrew in preparation for his explorations.²³² These studies, however, were with a specific goal in mind. Jean-François Six has described the Moroccan expedition as "un acte militaire".²³³ Like the soldier he was trained to be, Foucauld was merely doing the necessary reconnaissance work.

A servant of Oscar MacCarthy, the librarian of the national library in Alger and the president of the Société de Géographie d'Alger²³⁴ who helped Foucauld prepare for his Moroccan expedition, recounted that: "Each time I came I found him almost always in precisely the same attitude, sitting on the ground in a *gandourah*,

²²⁹ Didier, *vie*, 55-58.

²³⁰ "j'étudie l'arabe pendant absolument tout le temps que j'ai de libre..."; "j'étudie du matin au soir et je ne m'aperçois pas que j'apprenne (sic) rein". LGT, 18 February 1882 and 13 December 1882, Foucauld, *lycée*, 118 and 123.

²³¹ LGT, 18 February 1882, Foucauld, *lycée*, 120

²³² Louis Kergoat, "Charles de Foucauld et l'Islam" (PhD diss. Sorbonne, 1980), 27.

²³³ Jean-François Six, *L'Aventure de l'amour de Dieu* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 20.

²³⁴ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 315.

Arab fashion, reading the Koran [sic]”.²³⁵ Louis Kergoat has pointed out that the servant, a girl named Eugenie Buffet, spoke in 1930, by which time Foucauld was already famous, almost 40 years after the fact, and that she had no knowledge of Arabic. As far as she knew, argues Kergoat, he could have been reading any Arabic manuscript.²³⁶ There is no way to confirm the specifics of Buffet’s story, but we do know from Foucauld’s own writings that he had enough knowledge of the Qur’an to want to include some of its passages in his prayers.²³⁷ He also studied Islam after Morocco. He needed to prepare his books on his exploration, although Foucauld also considered this part of his religious development. As he describes his time of intellectual preparation in Paris to a friend years later, “I started to study Islam, then the Bible”.²³⁸

Despite this reading and possible instruction, there is no doubt that Foucauld’s relationship with Islam was one based on lived experience. Foucauld admitted as much in a letter to Henry de Castries, requesting a copy of the latter’s book, *L’Islam*,²³⁹ to assist him in “learning to know the Muslims better, whom I love from the bottom of my heart, it will make me better able to be of good for them, which is my greatest desire [...] I shall read it with the greatest care.”²⁴⁰ Another

²³⁵ Fleming, 47.

²³⁶ Kergoat, 26.

²³⁷ “Je me suis mis à étudier l’Islam, puis la Bible, et la grace de Dieu agissant, la foi de mon enfance s’est trouvée affermie et renouvelée” LHC 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Casteries*, 92.

²³⁸ LHC, July 8, 1901; 86.

²³⁹ Henry de Castries, *L’Islam. Impressions et études*. Second Edition, Paris: 1896.

²⁴⁰ “en m’apprenant à mieux connaître les Musulmans que j’aime de tout mon Coeur, il me rendra plus capable de leur faire du bien, ce qui est mon ardent désir: je serai donc très heureux et reconnaissant que vous me l’envoyiez et je le lirai avec le plus grand soin” Ibid, 87.

point demonstrating his lack of scholarly research was his understanding of zawiyas.²⁴¹ An institution established by marabouts,²⁴² a zawiya had a number of functions. Originally they were hostels for passersby and visitors, but as the role of the marabout evolved from a hermit to a teacher and leader, the role of his home did as well. They acted as mosques, headquarters for the religious brotherhoods, schools, sanctuaries, pilgrimage sites, and centres for arbitration and political action.²⁴³ Most importantly the zawiya was the outward manifestation of the marabout's religious life and could therefore differ depending on the marabout. In Morocco, Foucauld visited twenty-four zawiya.²⁴⁴ Due to his own experiences, he attributed them with a disproportionate influence that has been criticized by other scholars.²⁴⁵

Regardless of his knowledge, or lack thereof, about Islam, Foucauld was not merely seduced by an image, or a geographic experience. For many philosophers of asceticism, sensory beauty is the first necessary approach to a relationship with the object. Immanuel Kant argued that susceptibility to beauty implies a susceptibility to

²⁴¹ Literally 'niche' or 'corner', Michael Brett "Islam in North Africa," in *The World's Religions*, ed. P. Clarke, et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), 23-47, 32. They were considered neutral territory, Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 226.

²⁴² "pivotal figures in the whole of the tribal community, mediating in disputes and controlling the flow of knowledge, providing sanctuary and protection for traders from outside the tribal area, organizing religious festivals and the election of chiefs, and dispensing blessings and magic. They are not themselves political leaders, but their prestige affects political decisions" Gellner, 226. The French transliteration of the word "murabit", a holy man. Brett, 33; R. E. Dunn, 42. For a discussion of the evolution of the role of the marabout, see Brett, "Islam," 27-36.

²⁴³ Brett, "Islam," 32-35.

²⁴⁴ Kergoat, 38.

²⁴⁵ Abdallah Laroui, *Les origines sociales et culturelles du nationalisme marocain (1830-1912)* (Paris: La Découverte, 1977), 133; Kergoat, 30.

moral ideas.²⁴⁶ Foucauld was not just seduced by the image, but by that to which the image directed his mind; “[he] does not remain insensible to these beauties [...] but he is still the esthete pagan who opens, little by little, to deeper thoughts”.²⁴⁷ In religion, a symbol is often used to draw the mind to the place it needs to be. A statue is not a saint, but it draws the mind to the saint. Foucauld explained the “sight of this faith, of those souls living in the continual presence of God, made me see something greater and more real than worldly occupations, *ad majora nati sumus*”²⁴⁸ Foucauld was not merely seduced by the image, but by that at which the image hinted.

Foucauld used similar language, “séduisent extrêmement”²⁴⁹, when he discussed the landscape of the desert with Castries in a previous letter. To Foucauld the desert was also more than just geography. The desert is sacred space. The desert is the traditional location for religious experiences. The desert and desert mountains are used in the Bible as “powerful symbols of the experience exacted by God of those who seek him.”²⁵⁰ Not merely representing barren existence before the light of God, the desert has also represented an important site of meeting between God and Man. A friend of Foucauld’s, General Niéger, relates the religious element to the

²⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, vol. II, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 115-17 and 221-5.

²⁴⁷ “[il] ne reste pas insensible à ces beautés, il leur consacre un page admirable, mais il est encore en esthete païen qui s’ouvre, peu à peu, à despensées plus profondes” René Pottier, *La Vocation saharienne du père de Foucauld* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1939), 48.

²⁴⁸ “la vue de cette foi, de ces âmes vivant dans la continuelle presence de Dieu, m’a fait entrevoir quelque chose de plus grand et de plus vrai que les occupations mondaines: <<ad majora nati <<sumus>>...” LHC July 8, 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

²⁴⁹ LHC July 8, 1901; Ibid, 88.

²⁵⁰ Andrew Louth, *The Wilderness of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 2003), 1.

desert: “the influence of Islam on even the steeliest of characters is all the more powerful when exerted in favorable surroundings...It acts by itself, through the setting, and also geographically, if I can put it that way.”²⁵¹

Just as the sight of men praying directed his thoughts to God, the geography of North Africa also made him think about things greater than himself, and these thoughts were aligned with Islam. In *Reconnaissance au Maroc* he wrote:

In this profound peace, amongst this enchanting nature,
I gained my first shelter in the Sahara. The contemplation
during such nights leads one to understand the Arab belief
in a mysterious night, Leïla al Kedar, when the sky opens,
angels descend to the earth, the water in the sea turns fresh
and all that is inanimate in nature bows down to its
creator..²⁵²

Living in his zawiya in the oasis of Beni Abbès six years later, he wrote to Henry de Castries, “getting lost in this beautiful skyline of the Sahara, makes one think of the infinity of God – who is the greatest = Allah Akbar”²⁵³ Foucauld was not just thinking about the view. The view made him think about God, just as Islam made him think about God, even though he did not yet believe. Islam and the desert opened a to door to his relationship with God. The validity of the experience was not

²⁵¹ Merad, 47.

²⁵² “En ce calme profond, au milieu de cette nature féerique, j’atteins mon premier gîte au Sahara. On comprend, dans le recueillement de nuits semblables cette croyance des Arabes à une nuit mystérieuse, Leïla al Kedar, dans laquelle le ciel s’entrouvre, les anges descendent sur la terre, les eaux de la mer deviennent douces, et tout ce qu’il y a d’inanimé dans la nature s’incline pour adorer son Créateur” Foucauld, *Reconnaissance*, 162; *Six, Itinéraire*, 45, ft. 8.

²⁵³ “...au delà de ce paisible et frais tableau on a les horizons presque immenses de la Hamada se perdant dans ce beau ciel du Sahara qui fait penser à l’infini et à Dieu – qui est plus grand = Allah Akbar “ LHC, November 29, 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 112.

nullified by his conversion. Christianity adds the framework from which Foucauld is able to understand the experience:

One must pass through the desert and spend some time there in order to receive the grace of God; it is there that one empties oneself, that one drives away from oneself everything which is not God and that one empties completely the house of one's soul in order to leave all of it to God alone...The Israelites went through the desert; Moses lived in it before receiving his mission; St. Paul, St. John Chrysostom also prepared themselves in the Desert...It is a time of grace, a period through which every soul wanting to bear fruit must necessarily pass. It needs this silence, this withdrawal, this oblivion of all created things amidst which God established his reign and moulds the interior spirit in it...Go further... look at St John the Baptist, look at Our Lord. Our Lord did not need it but he wanted to set the example for us... Later, the soul bears fruit in the exact measure by which the inner life has been formed.²⁵⁴

The desert was, and remained for Foucauld, a sacred space – the exact opposite of desacrilized Paris.²⁵⁵

In many ways the Moroccan experiences foreshadowed, or perhaps determined, Foucauld's conversion. In Morocco Foucauld experienced the grandness, the transcendence of God, but the immanence of God also began to be felt. Jean-François Six describes the experience of confronting Islam for both Foucauld and his friend Louis Massignon:

²⁵⁴ Peter France, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 148-9

²⁵⁵ "Parisians of the 1880s and beyond lived out their lives in an effectively desacralized urban environment, one bereft of its earlier spiritual density and increasingly limited to a monosemantic dimension of being. Accordingly, those in quest of the sacred – either, like Huysmans, of the traditional Catholic sacred or, like the Surrealists, of some immanent, modern expression of *das ganz Andere* (wholly other) – had to go farther afield, into the outer arrondissements or even beyond, or, alternatively, into the hidden recesses that survived in the city center, to locate it..." Burton, *Blood*, 271.

confronted with the true desert, that is to say, the Other, with its sovereignty impossible to overcome, the Other who is different, of another culture and resisting, the Other who is also always God (even more Other), the God who is not the divine, in whom the believer feels absorbed as if they were a grain of sand in the desert, but the one who confronts you like Jacob crossing the Jabbok. In front of this Other, Foucauld and Massignon, despite immense strength of will, are bowed.²⁵⁶

Six describes a God who is everywhere, surrounds him, but also one that literally confronts him. Morocco was the beginning of the struggle within Foucauld to be caught by God, and to allow himself to recognize God confronting him all the time, in every way.

Why, then, did Foucauld not convert to Islam? His very good friend Laperrine told General Nieger that “returning from Morocco, he wanted to become a Muslim”.²⁵⁷ During a retreat in November 1897, the first year in his life as a hermit after leaving the Trappist Order, Foucauld wrote about “[w]ords spoken during travel, suggesting that I am Muslim”.²⁵⁸ While he may have internalized North African Islamic spirituality, and he may have *wanted* to become a Muslim, the reality

²⁵⁶ “...mis en face du desert véritable, c’est-à-dire de l’Autre, avec sa souveraineté impossible à vaincre, l’Autre qui est le différent, celui d’une autre culture et qui résiste, l’Autre qui est aussi le Dieu toujours – plus – Autre, le Dieu qui n’est pas le divin dans lequel on se croit absorbé comme un grain de sable parmi les grains de sable du desert, mais celui qui vous affronte comme Jacob au gué du Yabbok. Ainsi mis en face de l’Autre, Foucauld et Massignon, malgré leur immense volonté de puissance, se sont inclinés” Six, *l’amour*, 12.

²⁵⁷ “En rentrant du Maroc, il a voulu se faire musulman” Six, *Itinéraire*, 44.

²⁵⁸ “Paroles prononcées en voyage, laissant croire que j’étais musulman” November 8, 1897, Meditation de Nazareth; Six, *Itinéraire*, 44.

is that he did not. When Foucauld left Morocco, “I was not better than some previous years, and my first stay in Algiers had been full of evil”.²⁵⁹

To convert is to accept God into one’s life. It is an action that involves two movements, one spiritual and one worldly, although it is difficult to separate the two as they are connected and one determines the other. Conversion is the orientation of the mind and spirit towards God, and the deconstruction and then reconstruction of identity that this movement of the spirit necessitates. It is accepting God’s presence and reordering life, relationships, time, priorities, etc., to accommodate and advance this new reality. To convert “is to change one’s world, to voluntarily shift the basic presuppositions upon which both self and others are understood.”²⁶⁰

From an anthropological viewpoint, religious conversion is linked to notions of identity and community.²⁶¹ Guisepe Giordan explains that “[c]hange in the personal biographic route and social and cultural change are very closely interwoven when we speak of conversion: values, speech, norms, behaviors, beliefs, lifestyles, relations, interests – everything becomes open to potential debate when the

²⁵⁹ “je ne valais pas mieux que quelques années avant et mon premier séjour à Alger n’avait été plein de mal” Père de Boissieu, *Le Père de Foucauld* (Paris: Librairie Cadémique Perrin Éditeur, 1945), 26.

²⁶⁰ “Preface”, in *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, eds. Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), xi.

²⁶¹ Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier, eds., *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003); Massimo Leone, *Religious Conversion and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004); Arvind Sharma and Kathleen M. Dugan, eds., *A Dome of Many Colors* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999); Guisepe Giordan, ed., *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

individual decides to convert”.²⁶² Merad understands Foucauld’s relationship with Islam as having undergone “an evolution from the curiosity mixed with sympathy of his youth, to the lack of understanding, indeed calm, unwavering rejection of his maturity”.²⁶³ He identifies this evolution as stemming from Foucauld’s decision not to convert to Islam, which Merad sees as influenced by the Orientalist intellectual climate in France.²⁶⁴ It is the opinion of this thesis that Foucauld did not need to be “talked out” of converting to Islam, that the reasons both for why he did not convert and why Islam had such a profound effect on him can be traced to his own experiences.

Conversion is a crisis of identity. It is not necessarily a loss of core beliefs. If anything it is an attempt to rediscover, or to identify for the first time, those principles which make an individual who they are. Giordan argues that “one’s identity does not dissolve but is redefined, is modified...It is a new light that illuminates a previously existing reality in a new way”.²⁶⁵ So conversion is a shifting of perception but not necessarily a loss of the markers that made the individual what they were before the conversion. This shift occurs within the individual’s understanding of himself and of the society with which he is a member. A conversion involves society not only because people define themselves in relation to

²⁶² Guiseppe Giordan, “Introduction: The Varieties of Conversion Experience” in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, ed. Guiseppe Giordan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1-10, 1.

²⁶³ Merad, 48.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 48-57.

²⁶⁵ Giordan, 1.

each other²⁶⁶, but in the case of Foucauld it is important to understand that societies and cultures frequently identify themselves with a religion. This became especially apparent in the 19th century with the rise of nation states. The Western European form of secular nationalism is:

a system that fostered privatization of religion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time...it also includes other 'ethnonationalism', European and non-European, often based on language, public religion, or both... When these two forms of nationalism meet, the demands of the homogenizing nation-state either from secularism or for religious conformity can precipitate conflict.

Massimo Leone, having studied the language of conversion narratives has identified a "crisis of self" that afflicts the convert during their conversion. Converts experience a loss of personal identity and do not yet know how to organize the different religious concepts that they have been privy to. The convert also suffers from a loss of social identity. Conversion involves a changing of social allegiances.²⁶⁷ Leone describes how "[t]he loss of social identity is epitomized by the accusation of treason, which is often moved against converted people by the members of the religious (or irreligious) groups to which they formerly belonged".²⁶⁸ These issues of social belonging could become literal accusations of treason when the identity of the nation state is bound up with religious orientation.

The previous chapter discussed the bedraggled relationship between Catholicism and France in the nineteenth century. Despite all of this, the secular

²⁶⁶ Julia Ching, "Living in Two Worlds: A Personal Appraisal" in *A Dome of Many Colors*, eds. Arvind Sharma and Kathleen M. Dugan (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 8.

²⁶⁷ Leone, 53.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 52.

language of the nation was written in the script of Catholicism.²⁶⁹ One of the major conflicts in the attempted integration of Algeria into France was the problem of Islam. Under the Second Empire, France governed Algeria by indirect military rule. The people of Algeria were formal political subjects, represented by conseils généraux composed of their own elite, although they were excluded from full citizenship “unless they abandoned their religious ‘personal status’ (statut personnel) and accepted the French civil code concerning marriage and property”.²⁷⁰ When the Third Republic instituted a civilian regime of direct rule they eroded the influence of the native population by eliminating the conseils généraux, retracting their protection of tribal landholdings, and imposing an “Arab tax” on the Muslims.²⁷¹

The treatment of Islam by France was certainly based on a relationship of power. The French considered their ideology, whether secular or Catholic, to be superior to Islam. These power dynamics would have been influential in Foucauld’s decision not to convert to Islam. Conversion, “[t]hrough not simply a colonization...does require significant flux and also, perhaps, a real perception of unequal degrees of power attached to different forms of knowledge”.²⁷² As Merad demonstrates in his book, the information available to Foucauld in his study of Islam

²⁶⁹ Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914* (London: Constable, 1966), 288-291. Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice*; Zeldin, “Frances,” 9-10.

²⁷⁰ Silverstein, 42.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁷² Diane Austin-Broos, “The Anthropology of Conversion: An Introduction,” in *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, eds. Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier. (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003). 1-14, 7.

was written with a colonial French bias. Ernest Renan,²⁷³ a French philosopher and Orientalist known for his study of Semitic languages and public debate with Islamic scholar Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,²⁷⁴ wrote “[a]nyone with any knowledge of our time clearly perceives the present inferiority of Muslim countries, the decadence of states governed by Islam, and the intellectual incompetence of races that derive their culture and education exclusively from this religion”.²⁷⁵ The lack of progress, in national terms, was understood by many to be a failing of the religion.²⁷⁶ In terms of success, the countries of North Africa and the Middle East were under subjugation proclaiming Islam a religion doomed to failure. France, successful as the conqueror, was seen as demonstrably superior. For patriotic Foucauld to align himself with a system of beliefs inferior to all things French would have been unthinkable. French Catholicism, on the other hand, considered love of France to be a religious duty.²⁷⁷

Under the Second Empire both the Muslims and the Jews were considered non-citizens. In October 1870 the Third Republic granted full citizenship to the Jews

²⁷³ Renan’s opinion of Islam was thinking of Catholicism and religion in general when he engaged with Islam. The publication in 1863 of his *Vie de Jésus*, a historical approach to the life of Jesus, was considered a crisis point for French Catholicism, see Fredrick Brown, *For the Soul of France* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 14-17 and Gibson, 85-86. Renan’s rejection of the supernatural and belief in the dominant position of reason in human action was used in his debates against both Catholicism and Islam. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121.

²⁷⁴ For an overview of Renan’s Paris debate with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani see Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 120-123.

²⁷⁵ Merad, 51.

²⁷⁶ Said, 105, 134-5, and 231-234. Some Muslims, while certainly not in agreement with the tone of these arguments, also associated the occupation of their countries with the decline of Islam. The leading Islamic reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad ‘Abduh, and Rashid Rida, tried to renew and reform Islam as a way to combat colonialism. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 103-160 and 222-244.

²⁷⁷ Didier, “Massignon,” 342.

of Algeria, but not to the Muslims. The practical reason for this was the hope that by making the Jews of Algeria French citizens there would be more indigenous Algerians in the army as military service was only open to French citizens.²⁷⁸ There was a cultural-religious reason for excluding the Muslims from French citizenship as well. The whole situation was not unlike the current debate within France concerning the veil. There was serious concern that Islam, and the culture and laws that it brought with it, was incompatible with French society. The *Traité élémentaire de législation algérienne*, published in 1903, states “[i]n the Mahometian civilization, religion and law are two intimately confused for the juridical condition of Muslims to be identical to that of Frenchmen or Europeans”.²⁷⁹ The debate was not merely about whether someone was of a different country, or race, or even religion (Judaism was sufficiently acceptable to allow citizenship and Catholicism was tolerated). It involved a concern about values and whether the values that made a person Muslim were compatible with being French. In 1891 the French government debated naturalizing the Muslims. One senator, M. Sabatier, opposed the reform on the grounds that “Coranic” values such as feudal land tenure and polygamy “escape French laws, not to mention French morality”.²⁸⁰ As Ralph Gibson has noted, “Catholicism in nineteenth-century France was thus marked by what seems to us an obsessive concern with morality”.²⁸¹

That Foucauld was aware of these French concerns is not debatable. He had his best marks in the study of Algeria while he was at school, he was part of the

²⁷⁸ Silverstein, 43.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in Silverstien, 51.

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Silverstien, 51.

²⁸¹ Gibson, 244.

military colonizing force when he was in the army, he was working in Morocco to try and discover the temperament of the people for French rule, and in his vocational life he worked to make the Muslims French. Like France, Foucauld was concerned about morality, and the compatibility of the values of Islamic life, as he knew it, with the beliefs that were at the core of his identity. Foucauld's decision not to become Muslim was not merely a question about God but a question about values. That Foucauld was able to make the distinction between the reality of Muslim piety and the elements of Islam that he disagreed with is one of the things that makes him a modern character. As he told de Castries, "the truths which can remain in the middle of errors are good, and remain capable of producing great and good truths, which happens for Islam"²⁸²

Foucauld would come to describe Islam as "too material".²⁸³ He thought that Islam's inability to detach itself from the material world would prevent Muslims from being truly moral, and consequently prevent them from loving God to the fullest.²⁸⁴ For Foucauld, the proof of Christianity's superiority was in its insistence on chastity and poverty, without which "love and adoration remain, always very imperfect; because when they love passionately they separate from all that creates distance".²⁸⁵

²⁸² "les vérités qui peuvent subsister au milieu des erreurs soient un bien, et restent capables de produire des grands et vrais biens, ce qui arrive pour l'Islam" LHC 15 July 15 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90.

²⁸³ Flemming, 60.

²⁸⁴ Bazin, 65; LHC July, 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90-91.

²⁸⁵ "l'amour et l'adoration restent, toujours très-imparfaits; car quand on aime passionnément, on se sépare de tout ce qui peut distraire *ne fût-ce qu'une minute* de l'être aimé, et on se jette et se perd totalement en lui" LHC 15 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 91.

His complaints about Islam's materialism were based on things he saw in Morocco not on the writings of Renan.²⁸⁶ Foucauld's experience of Moroccan Islam, which on the one hand drew him closer to God and led him to respect Muslim piety, also laid the foundation for his rejection of Islam. In *Reconnaissance au Maroc* he described the moral state of the Moroccan people:

Almost everywhere extreme avarice reigns with its companions, greed and lying in all its forms. In general, brigandage, armed robbery, are considered to be honorable actions. Morals are dissolute.²⁸⁷

Even though he had met, befriended, and respected several marabouts he had also seen that role abused:

Morocco, with the exception of cities and some isolated districts, is very ignorant. Almost everywhere is superstition and they accord a respect and a confidence in local marabouts whose influence extends a considerable distance.²⁸⁸

He noted the poverty of the country, and noted the disparity between the houses of the marabouts and the shelters of the poor.²⁸⁹

Even those marabouts he respected did not follow his moral code. They all had multiple wives and large families. They even practiced slavery. One of his marabout supporters informed Foucauld that he had "at least thirty children, as many

²⁸⁶ Merad discusses the variety of negative French opinions about Islam in the nineteenth century, Merad, 49-54.

²⁸⁷ "Presque partout règnent une cupidité extrême et, comme compagnons, le vol et le mensonge sous toutes leurs formes. En général, le brigandage, l'attaque à main armée, sont considérés comme des actions honorables. Les mœurs sont dissolues" Foucauld, *Reconnaissance*, 135-136.

²⁸⁸ "Le Maroc, à l'exception des villes et de quelques districts isolés, est très ignorant. Presque partout, on est superstitieux et on accorde un respect et une confiance sans bornes à des marabouts locaux dont l'influence s'étend à une distance variable" Foucauld, *Reconnaissance*, 137.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

from his wives as from his slaves”.²⁹⁰ His good friend, Sidi Edris, offered Foucauld a slave girl of his own.²⁹¹ Jean-François Six has identified the sexual morality of Islam as the major stumbling block for Foucauld in his relations with Islam.²⁹² Hugues Didier has suggested that it was the treatment of women in Morocco and Algeria that did not appeal to him, especially in light of his relationship with his cousin Marie de Bondy.²⁹³ This seems unlikely. Neither the Catholic Church nor the Third Republic had a liberal understanding of women’s rights. Both emphasized the mastery of men over women.²⁹⁴ On the other hand, sexual morality and chastity, even (or especially) in marriage was heavily emphasized.²⁹⁵ His concerns probably had more to do with his burgeoning chastity.

In his meditations on his conversion Foucauld recounts the importance of his chastity, which he had maintained “[b]y force of events”.²⁹⁶ He understood his chastity to be the work of God, and essential to his conversion: “the devil is too much the master of an unchaste soul to let truth enter into it”.²⁹⁷ Islam showed him God, but Foucauld did not want to worship Him as the Muslims did.²⁹⁸

To describe Foucauld’s experience with Morocco - his privations, the geography, and Islam – as mystical would not be inappropriate. According to Michel de Certeau the mystic is the person who has recognized the missing part of reality;

²⁹⁰ “il a, me dit-on, au moins trente enfants, tant de ses femmes que de ses esclaves” Ibid, 90.

²⁹¹ Bazin, 46-7.

²⁹² Six, *Itinéraire*, 47.

²⁹³ Didier, “Algerie,” 42.

²⁹⁴ Zeldin, “Moralities,” 44.

²⁹⁵ And the source of many problems for the Church, Gibson, 188.

²⁹⁶ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 13.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Six, *Itinéraire*, 47.

what de Certeau identifies as God. De Certeau describes that lost reality as a country which the mystics long for as a kind of nostalgia for what is not present.²⁹⁹ For much of Foucauld's spiritual life, he would identify a feeling of longing and homesickness with the country of Morocco and he would strive to achieve both a literal return to the country and a mystical Moroccan spirituality. For the rest of his life he would try and live as if he was still in Morocco. When he returned to Paris, he rented an apartment where, "he was installed like an Arab, without a bed, he slept on a mat in a burnous – and worked in a gandourah".³⁰⁰ He converted to Catholicism while living his private life in a Morocco of his own making. As Réne Poitier described it:

...in reality he did not leave the desert. To persuade himself of this, every Saharan has to only return to himself, at the bottom of his heart he will always find the nostalgia of the light, the vastness, the silence and the impetuous winds..³⁰¹

The multi-stepped process of conversion as described by Massimo Leone, begins with a "destabilization of self". This occurs "when the system of religious (or irreligious) ideas of a person is shaken by an encounter with a spiritual message which speaks a different language".³⁰² Despite the fact that Foucauld did not become Muslim, the encounter with Islam must be considered as part of his conversion process. As Thompson's study indicated, encounters between the French and North

²⁹⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.

³⁰⁰ "il s'installe à l'arabe, sans lit-il couche en burnous sur le tapis – et travaille en gandourah" Six, *Itinéraire*, 42.

³⁰¹ "...en réalité, il n'a pas quitté le desert. Pour s'en convaincre, chaque Saharien n'a qu'à rentrer en soi-même, au fond du coeur, il trouvera toujours la nostalgie de la lumière, de l'immensité, du silence et des grands vents impétueux" Poitier, *Sahara*, 59.

³⁰² Leone, 1.

Africa often created a physical response to the stimulæ. These responses, such as vertigo and dizziness are types of motion sickness. Anthropologists often describe conversion as a movement, a journey. Danièle Herrieu-Léger has compared conversion to the physical passage of pilgrimage. The pilgrim's devotion is described by Herrieu-Léger as voluntary, individualistic and mobile, whereas the average practitioner is defined by obligatory, communal, fixed devotion.³⁰³ The concept of conversion as a pilgrimage is especially applicable to Foucauld who embarked on a literal journey to Morocco that brought him closer to God. Foucauld himself compared his preparation for his conversion to Catholicism with his preparation for his Moroccan expedition, a twinning of concepts that both links his conversion with Morocco and his conversion with a journey.³⁰⁴

The end of the journey is home.³⁰⁵ Individuals recognize, and are drawn to, those things that are already known.³⁰⁶ One of Catholicism's most famous

³⁰³ William H. Swatos Jr. "Pilgrimage and Conversion" in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, edited by Guisepee Giordan, Leiden: Brill, 2009.

³⁰⁴ "je me dis que le mieux était de prendre les leçons de religion catholique, comme j'avais pris des leçons d'arabe; comme j'avais cherché un bon thaleb pour m'en enseigner l'arabe, je cherchai un prêtre instruit pour me donner des renseignements sur la religion catholique" LHC 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 96.

³⁰⁵ This idea of conversion as a return to self is understood in Islam as *fitra*. "According to the Quran, the original state in which humans are created by God...the commonly accepted meaning of the word derives from the traditions of Muhammad according to which God creates children according to *fitra*, and their parents make them Jews or Christians. As such, every child is born a Muslim." *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 87; Tim Winter "Abraham from a Muslim Perspective" in *Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conversation*, eds. Norman Solomon, Richard Harries and Tim Winter (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 28-35; Yasien Mohamed, *Fitrah: the Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta-Ha, 2006).

³⁰⁶ Rebecca Sachs Norris, "Converting to What? Embodied Culture and the Adoption of New Beliefs" in *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, eds. Andrew Buckser

conversions, that of Augustine of Hippo, is read as being a return to the truth that his soul already knew, a coming home.³⁰⁷ In interviewing converts Rebecca Sachs Norris has come to the conclusion that “although a convert experiences conversion as a reorientation to a new religious belief system, the conversion occurs primarily because it corresponds with the converts preexisting ideas or feelings about truth or meaning”.³⁰⁸ As a Frenchman, Foucauld could never feel at home with the values of Islam as he understood them. As his time in Morocco continued, and he was influenced more and more by the silences of the desert and the piety of the Muslims, he also became aware of a disparity of values, and Foucauld’s mind turned to home. In a letter to his sister written from the French Consulate in Mogador on January 28, 1884, about halfway through his journey, Foucauld wrote:

From the moral point of view, it is very sad; always alone, never a friend, never a Christian to speak to... If you knew how much I am thinking of you, of our happy days of the past with grandfather, and of those we spent together with my aunt; and how all these thoughts absorb one when one is as isolated as I have been. It is, above all, Christmas and New Year’s Day which seemed to me so sad. I remembered grandfather and the Christmas-tree, and all the good times of our childhood.³⁰⁹

Returning to Paris in 1886 after two years exploring Morocco and the Algerian Sahara, Foucauld began the second stage in his conversion. For Foucauld, the journey of conversion was “not a quest for utopia but rather for habitus”.³¹⁰

Silent Sanctification

and Stephen D. Glazier (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 171-181, 172.

³⁰⁷ Leone, 83.

³⁰⁸ Sachs Norris, 171.

³⁰⁹ Bazin, 54.

³¹⁰ Austin-Broos, 2.

Foucauld's conversion was not the conversion of the unbaptized. St. Ambrose described the Church as having two conversions: "there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance".³¹¹ Foucauld's conversion was about the recognition of his own sin, and more importantly, the recognition of God's love. Catechism teaches, "conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a 'contrite heart', drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first".³¹² Indeed "[i]t is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him".³¹³ Islam had given Foucauld a hint of God, a vague, imperfect appreciation of God's transcendence. His explorations into the desert began a struggle within Foucauld to identify what was happening to him, a struggle to accept God's love.

The time that Foucauld spent wandering between France and Algeria, after he exited Morocco, was a troubling one for him. The explorer of the Tuareg, Henri Duveyrier, whom Foucauld was introduced to through his relationship with Oscar MacCarthy, wrote: "I feel a very real affection for M. de Foucauld...his is a most distinguished nature, and I very much fear that he is a man attacked by a fatal malady or very gravely injured in his affections".³¹⁴ A series of events, a failed engagement, his official decommissioning from military service, and work on his book led him back to his family. He would later thank God for having "unloosed all those good

³¹¹ Leone, 41.

³¹² Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1428.

³¹³ Ibid, 1432.

³¹⁴ Fleming, 60-61.

ties that would have prevented me from returning to the bosom of my family...which would have prevented me from one day living for you alone”³¹⁵

One of the defining characteristics of Foucauld’s life as an atheist was his alienation from his family. In his first writings about his conversion, a letter to his friend Henri Duveyrier, Foucauld began by outlining his relationship with his family. In retrospect, Foucauld recognized the intimate connection between his relationship with his family and his relationship with God.³¹⁶ He lost his faith while he was attending boarding school in Paris (and riddled with homesickness) when he was fifteen. His grandfather and primary caregiver died the same year that Foucauld reached the age of maturity, gaining access to his inheritance and allowing him to live financially independent from his family. His military service kept him away from Paris, and then took him to North Africa. His exploration of Morocco and then of the Algerian Sahara kept him even from contact by post. Even his engagement with Mademoiselle Titre, a Protestant convert to Catholicism, in 1885 was a break with his family.³¹⁷

Foucauld’s engagement to the daughter of Commander Titre, a friend of Oscar MacCarthy, was more than just a romance before he became a well known celibate. It was a turning point in his life. Foucauld’s family did not support the relationship. Foucauld had been living in Algiers, organizing his notes, when he met Marie-Marguerite, and he informed his family of his decision to marry when he

³¹⁵ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 12.

³¹⁶ LHD 21 February 1892; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 307.

³¹⁷ “je vis à peine ma famille de 1878 à 1886 et le peu qu’ils savout de ma vie surtout dans la première période de ce temps, ne peut leur faire que le la peine” LHD 21 February 1892; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 309.

visited Paris for his sister's wedding.³¹⁸ They had a variety of objections to the marriage. There was the issue of religion; Marie-Marguerite was a convert to Catholicism herself, but the rest of her family was Protestant. There were also monetary and class issues. The Titres were not rich and as Foucauld had squandered away his fortune, the family expected him to marry money.³¹⁹ Foucauld was devastated but he agreed to dissolve the relationship. This was Foucauld's first major personal decision in his post-Moroccan life. Conversion is the opportunity to make conscious decisions about identity. Foucauld chose his family for the first time since he had lost his faith, and in choosing them, he took an important step towards choosing God.

Religion was entwined in the fabric of his family. Foucauld's earliest memories of his childhood were of the religious rituals that he practiced with his mother:

the true piety of my upbringing! The visits to churches, the flowers laid at the foot of the cross, the Christian crib, the month of Mary, the little altar in my room that stayed there as long as I had a room of my own there, even outliving my faith.³²⁰

The return to his family was an emotional homecoming. By his own admission he had caused them considerable pain over the years, but they welcomed him back as if he had never been gone and when he moved to Paris in 1886 he became a regular visitor at his aunt's home:

I found at my aunt's home the same reception as if I had never left or caused worry to those who love me. In this home which

³¹⁸ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 33.

³¹⁹ Antier, 84.

³²⁰ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 10.

became mine, although I lived in another house, I found an example of all the virtues joined with the highest intelligence and religious convictions..³²¹

While living in Paris, he began to study Catholicism, fascinated that a religion he had always seen as insensible, fanciful, and irrational, could be so important to the people he loved. He began to read Bossuet's *Élévations sur les mysteries* which he had been given as a youth by his cousin Marie. As he studied Catholicism as he would any other academic subject, he came to the conclusion that it might be sensible, yet he still did not have faith.³²² Bossuet's book discusses how the individual's relationship with God can only be based on love: "Let us form in ourselves the Holy Trinity, unity with God, knowledge of God, love for God. And since our knowledge, which for now is imperfect and obscure, will depart, and since the love in us is the sole thing that will never depart, let us love, let us love, let us love".³²³

Foucauld would later come to believe that God was calling to him through his family, and as Foucauld loved his family he would come to love God. God worked through his family via their silent presence. Years later Foucauld became fascinated by the Mystery of the Visitation. While she was pregnant with Jesus, Mary visited Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, and Jesus blessed them all with his presence. In a meditation written in 1899 Foucauld wrote an exhortation to silent

³²¹ Mais je trouvai chez ma tante le même accueil que si je n'avais jamais quitté le foyer et jamais donné de souci à ceux qui m'aiment. dans cet intérieur qui devint aussitôt le mien bien que j'habitasse une autre maison je trouvai l'exemple de toutes les vertus joint à la vue de hautes intelligences et de convictions religieuses profondes" LHD 21 February, 1892; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 309.

³²² Ibid, 310.

³²³ Antier, 94.

sanctification: “Take to them the Gospel, but preach it by example rather than by word, rather by living it than preaching it; sanctify the world, all you devout souls, hidden and silent”.³²⁴ Foucauld’s family silently sanctified him by their own holiness, preparing him to accept God. His cousin Marie, whom Didier has called, “le miroir feminine de ses aspirations spirituelles”,³²⁵ especially worked to make him holy:

A noble soul supported you – by its silence, its gentleness, its goodness and perfection. It let itself be seen; it was good and it spread its seductive perfume around itself, but it never intruded itself.³²⁶

Not only did the family make him respect Catholicism again but their holiness inspired something similar in himself:

Among them I lived in such an atmosphere of virtue that my life visibly became what it had been: spring was giving life back to the earth after winter, and this gentle sun made my longing for good grow, together with distaste for evil, the impossibility of falling back into certain faults, and a search for goodness.³²⁷

Foucauld surrounded himself with opportunities to know God. He lived in his flat as if he were still in Morocco, poor and alone. He regularly visited his family and was influenced by their virtue. Yet Foucauld also began to expose himself to God’s presence in the Sacraments. He lived not two hundred metres from the Church of Saint-Augustin³²⁸ and he began to visit churches at odd times, both alone and with

³²⁴ Charles de Foucauld, *Meditations of a Hermit*, trans. Charlotte Balfour (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), 98-99.

³²⁵ Didier, *vie*, 74.

³²⁶ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 15.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

³²⁸ Six, *Itinéraire*, 42.

Marie,³²⁹ exposing himself to the sanctifying power of the Eucharist.³³⁰ From a Catholic perspective, Foucauld's halting conversion is a matter of grace. Morocco, Algeria, his sacrifice and sufferings had prepared Foucauld for the possibility of God, but while Foucauld was able to acknowledge this, he was not yet capable/willing/able to respond. In 1878, abbé Huvelin, the man who would later become Foucauld's spiritual director, spoke about the subject of conversion at a conference. He said:

Suffering alone does not bring about conversion. The work of grace is needed [...] Satiety is also preparation for conversion, but it is not the mysterious blow which brings the tree down on the side of God; in conversion there is something divine, impossible to explain..³³¹

God offered him grace through Islam, through the desert, through circumstances, through his family - clearing away the brush. He could not find the strength to have faith, to make the acknowledgement of God's grace and to receive it and so he prayed: "My God, if you exist, let *me* know *you*."³³²

The final moments of Foucauld's conversion are all about his acceptance, his *submission* to the will of God. Foucauld believed that God gave him the interior graces necessary to finally come to this submission. It is God who brings him to the Church, who puts Foucauld under the direction of abbé Huvelin who, in turn, directs

³²⁹ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 37.

³³⁰ Maurice Bouvier, *Le Christ de Charles de Foucauld* (Paris, Desclée, 2004); Hubert D'hammonville, "L'euchariste dans la vie de Charles de Foucauld," *Collectanea cisterciensia* 67, no. 4 (2005), 259-265; Nurdin, 365-376.

³³¹ "La souffrance seule n'amène pas la conversion. Il faut le travail de la grace (...) La satiété est aussi une préparation à la conversion, mais ce n'est pas encore là ce coup mystérieux qui fait tomber l'arbre du côté de Dieu; il y a dans une conversion quelque chose de divin, d'impossible à expliquer" quoted in Six, *Itinéraire*, 43-44, ft. 1.

³³² Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 15. Italics mine.

Foucauld to confession and then communion. Of these events Foucauld wrote: “All these things were your work, O God – the work of you alone”.³³³ “Islam” means to submit, and “Muslim” translates into “one who submits”. While Foucauld did not, as was once his intention, convert to Islam, in his act of conversion he became “one who submits”.

Conclusion

In her biography of Charles de Foucauld, Little Sister Annie of Jesus remarked,

it is perhaps fortunate that Charles lost his Christian faith in adolescence. By rediscovering it through the living example of his Muslim hosts (in Morocco especially), he was not tempted to despise the profound value of their religion, or its providential role in God’s plan.³³⁴

His upbringing and experiences in France had made him an atheist. It was his removal from France, from the trappings of a society hostile to religious expression, that Foucauld was able to open himself to the possibility of the sacred. When he returned to France, he chose to sustain that removal, immersing himself in Moroccan culture in his home, giving himself the space to reinvent his religious identity.

Foucauld’s conversion based on the work of God, the love of family, and finally a personal “submission” to God, would become the framework for his understanding of conversion. Islam had an essential role to play. His flirtation with conversion to Islam became preparation for a full conversion. In a way, Foucauld underwent two conversions, the first to the God of Islam – a God of belief – and then to Christ, through a personal revelation of love. Both of these elements were

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Annie of Jesus, 9.

instrumental in how Foucauld understood Islam in his later life, and his vocation towards it.

Chapter Three: Continual Conversion

Introduction

France in the nineteenth century was in a state of cultural disarray. Since 1792 the country had experienced Revolution and counter-revolution, seen three Republics, two Empires, a constitutional monarchy, lost two wars, and vacillated between officially loving and hating Catholicism. The politics of Foucauld's early teen years epitomized the instability of the century with its war, change in government, and violence perpetrated against its own citizens in the Paris Communes. Added to this internal volatility was the pressure to colonize. As the country acquired its North African colonies, an unstable and indecisive France was pitted up against powerful political and religious empires. While Europe was losing its religion, in the colonies of the nineteenth century Islam was experiencing a revival.³³⁵ It was the sight "of those souls living in the continual presence of God" that turned his mind to something other than "worldly occupations".³³⁶

The decision to convert "hallmarks the existence of a crisis".³³⁷ Religion provides an opportunity to give meaning to the uncontrollable. This is especially applicable to the modern world where:

Religion provides a global symbolization of their uneasiness
to scattered men, who are all separated from each other as

³³⁵ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³³⁶ LHC 8 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

³³⁷ Patrick Michel, "Elements for a Semiotics of 'conversion'", in *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism*, ed. Guisepe Giordan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 73-89, 82.

their common references are broken and they react to the pressure of a foreign culture without order, without common courses of action, and without any means to compensate for the anomie and disintegration...Religious language opens on to a disarray... an exit...³³⁸

Foucauld's decision to convert represents a decision for stability in the midst of chaos. It also presented him with the opportunity to define himself. Just as France had been changing Foucauld had too. The fat, incompetent teenager had been transformed into a successful, respected man. Searching for an ideal,³³⁹ a way to order his life, Foucauld looked first to the army, then to geographic exploration. When confronted with a strong religious identity he discovered that "religious conversion is a remarkably efficient modality of construction of self in a world where the fluidity of plural identities is dominant, where the mechanisms of meaning are fluctuating and where no core principle organizes the individual and social experience anymore".³⁴⁰

The decision to convert does not erase the dichotomies of experience and beliefs that make up an individual. As Massimo Leone has identified a crisis of self as a marker of conversion, he has also described a "restabilization of self" that the convert must experience to move forward. This is not necessarily simple. Frequently "the converted people do not know how to coherently organize the different (and often opposite) religious (and non-religious) ideas which they have received from the encounter with the Christian message or which they have developed as a

³³⁸ Michel de Certeau, *L'Absent de l'Histoire*. Quoted in Michel "Elements", 80.

³³⁹ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 27.

³⁴⁰ Danièle Herrieu-Léger, quoted in Michel "Elements", 76.

consequence of this encounter”.³⁴¹ After a conversion the individual must recreate themselves, using the tools from their past. This means that Foucauld had the opportunity to unify the opposing elements of his experience in his new life. Foucauld entered this new period of his life with gusto, to varying degrees of success. Many Foucauld scholars have noted the dichotomies within Foucauld on issues of colonialism³⁴² and nationalism and have charted his ability (or inability) to justify his religious universalism with his patriotism, or his life as a religious with his secularism.³⁴³ However Foucauld did not only have to reconcile his French background with his Catholicism. Foucauld’s conversion included a third point that needed to be accepted into his new identity: Islam.

For the thirty years following Foucauld’s conversion until his death at the age of fifty-eight, Foucauld would struggle with synthesizing the three elements that had dominated his life: Catholicism, France and Islam. To speak of the “contradictions” of Foucauld’s life or vision, is essentially to critique his ability to rationalize these frequently opposing forces. While the result was sometimes contradictory, it was his ability to live at the centre of these three concepts, and the bravery with which he allowed them to influence each other, that make him both a unique character and one with much to say about navigating the pluralities of the modern age.

The Incarnation

Foucauld’s spirituality, his missionary work, and his own conversion are all based on his understanding of the Incarnation. The mystery of God made Man is the

³⁴¹ Leone, 79.

³⁴² See, Muller; Didier, “Algerie”.

³⁴³ J-F Six, Chatelard.

foundation upon which his life post-conversion is based. Foucauld uses the words “God” and “Jesus” interchangeably.³⁴⁴ It was a belief in Jesus as God and man, an acceptance of the unknowable Trinity that had always caused him so much confusion when he had struggled with his faith,³⁴⁵ and which changed him from a potential deist or Muslim to a Christian. It was the example of a suffering Jesus that became the paradigm for all others and especially for Islam and its prophet.³⁴⁶ And it was the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist that made him a Catholic.

The physical reality of the Incarnation, through the Eucharist, was the transformative moment in his conversion. God is not merely transcendent and removed from humanity to be observed only in His greatest works of nature, in the enormity of the desert or the horizon, but He is also present, real in the sacrifice on the cross, eternally celebrated in the Mass. Foucauld’s first willing encounter with Jesus was on the morning of his conversion when, under the orders of Abbé Huvelin, he took communion. This prompted his transformation, and after that he attended

³⁴⁴ Nurdin, 365 and 367.

³⁴⁵ “La foi égale avec laquelle on suit des religions si diverses me semblait la condamnation de toutes; moins qu’aucune, celle de mon enfance me semblait admissible avec son 1=3 que je ne pouvais me résoudre à poser” 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 94.

³⁴⁶ “Nous avons pour divin modèle Notre Seigneur JÉSUS, pauvre, chaste, ne résistant pas au mal et souffrant tout, paisible, pardonnant et bénissant. L’Islam prend pour exemple Mahomet, s’enrichissant, ne dédaignant pas les plaisirs des sens, faisant la guerre: de ces deux sources si opposées, quels courants opposés doivent naître.” LCH 15 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90-91.

Mass daily.³⁴⁷ For the rest of his life, Foucauld would see the Eucharist as the best way to be close to God³⁴⁸:

You are my Lord Jesus, in the holy Eucharist! You are here, to a meter of me, in the tabernacle! ... You were not closer to the holy Virgin during the nine months she carried you in her breast than when you are to me when you are on my tongue in communion! You were not nearer to the holy Virgin and Saint Joseph in the cave in Bethlehem, in the house of Nazareth, in the flight to Egypt, during all the moments of this divine family, than you are to me at this moment, and often, in the tabernacle!³⁴⁹

It is typical of Foucauldian spirituality to emphasize the marriage of a tangible reality with a mystical experience: the immanent with the transcendent in a mirror of his own conversion experience, which began with the transcendent (a gift from Islam) and ended with the immanent in the form of the Living Christ. He did it by ordering the days of the year to a schedule of Jesus' life,³⁵⁰ by matching his travels throughout the Sahara with the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt,³⁵¹ and, of course, in the daily sacrifice of the Mass.

³⁴⁷ Foucauld *Autobiography*, 16; 8 November 1898; "la communion devenant Presque quotidienne... le désir de la vie religieuse naissant, s'affermissant..." Foucauld, *Dernière*, 119.

³⁴⁸ April 1890 at Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur: "Holy Communion is my great support, my all. I dare not ask for it every day: my unworthiness is infinite." Bazin, 87.

³⁴⁹ "Vous êtes, mon Seigneur Jésus, dans la sainte Eucharistie! Vous êtes là, à un mètre de moi, dans ce tabernacle!... Vous n'étiez pas plus près de la sainte Vierge pendant les neuf mois qu'elle vous porta dans son sein que vous ne l'êtes de moi quand vous venez sur ma langue dans la communion! Vous n'étiez pas plus près de la sainte Vierge et de saint Joseph dans la grotte de Bethléem, dans la maison de Nazareth, dans la fuite en Égypte, pendant tous les instants de cette divine vie de famille, que vous ne l'êtes de moi en ce moment, et si, si souvent, dans ce tabernacle!" 7 November 1897; Charles de Foucauld, *La Dernière Place* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 2002), 91.

³⁵⁰ Bouvier, 81-87.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, 147-149; Hillyer, 130-131.

While the Eucharist was always an opportunity to be near to God it was also the transformative expression of God's love for man:

by it you make it so that 'it is not we who live in us, but Jesus who lives in us.' This is the perfect love that you establish in our hearts by the Holy Eucharist. By giving it, 'you love us to excess' the most incomprehensible, most superhuman, the most divine, but because you continue with all your words, all your examples, that is to say the establishment in our hearts the love of God above all ... how wonderful you reach 'this' by the Holy Eucharist, since by it, as you say here, 'it is not we who live, it is Jesus who lives in us'? 'We live by Jesus as he lives by his Father'!³⁵²

This is an acknowledgement of Foucauld's own transformation. Much as Jesus was present in the Eucharist and in the love of Foucauld's family, leading him to God, Jesus is eternally living in man and in the Eucharist, to lead humanity from the most intimate and physical experience upwards to the full transcendence of God.

The Physical Reality of God

For Foucauld, Jesus is always present on earth by the celebration of the Mass and the preservation of the Eucharist. That is the gift of the Church to the world.³⁵³

Foucauld's spirituality is steeped in the idea that God is *physically* present for humanity. This sense that came with his conversion experience in 1886 was reinforced in the following years when Foucauld's understanding of Christ's

³⁵² "Avec quelle joie vous nous *établissez* dans *l'amour divin* par la *sainte Eucharistie*, puisque par elle vous faites que 'ce n'est plus nous qui vivons en nous, mais Jésus qui vit en nous'. C'est *l'amour parfait* que vous établissez dans nos coeurs par la *sainte Euchariste*. En nous la donnant, 'vous nous aimez jusqu'à l'excès le plus incomprehensible, le plus surhumain, le plus divin, mais encore parce que vous poursuivez par toutes vos paroles, tous vos exemples, c'est-à-dire *l'établissement dans nos coeurs de l'amour de Dieu par dessus tout*... Combien merveilleusement vous atteignez 'cette fin' par la sainte Eucharistie, puisque par elle, comme vous nous le dites ici, 'ce n'est plus nous qui vivons, c'est Jésus qui vit en nous'? 'Nous vivons par Jésus comme il vit par son Père'" quoted in Nurdin, 370.

³⁵³ Bouvier, 87

humanity was influenced by his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Although Foucauld describes his experience with the Eucharist as a totalizing experience,³⁵⁴ he also acknowledged that his spiritual life in the years immediately following his conversion was confused:

In the beginning faith had many obstacles to overcome; I who had doubted so much, I did not believe everything in a day. Sometimes the miracles of the Gospel seemed unbelievable to me, sometimes I wanted to mix passages from the Koran [sic] in my prayers. But God's grace and the counsel of my confessor dispersed the clouds.³⁵⁵

Foucauld's first inclination was to incorporate the expressions of devotion that had introduced him to religion into his new life of faith. The struggles that Foucauld went through to stabilize his identity, both in relation to God and to the world, concerned his spiritual director.

Abbé Huvelin set a course of reading for Foucauld and watched him carefully. Huvelin supported the family in their suggestion of marriage³⁵⁶ and convinced Foucauld to finish his books.³⁵⁷ *Itinéraires au Maroc* and *Reconnaissance au Maroc* were published in the winter of 1887-1888 to critical acclaim. This time in his life reveals an uncertainty about his future that his later statements with regards to his religious vocation do not address. Writing to a friend in the Spring of 1887, Foucauld discussed the possibility of returning to his geographic work:

My income is enough for these unusual expenses [relating to

³⁵⁴ "Aussitôt que je crus qu'il y avait un Dieu, je compris que je ne pouvais faire autrement que de ne vivre que pour Lui: ma vocation religieuse date de la même heure que ma foi" LHC, 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 96-7.

³⁵⁵ Michel Carrouges, *Soldier of the Spirit*, trans. Marie-Christine Hellin (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1956), 87.

³⁵⁶ Antier, 104.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 104; Bouvier, 19.

the publication of his books], but only just; also, since my return from Morocco, I have borrowed nothing whatever, but I have saved nothing. I desire to get rid of my legal guardian, whom I have had now for seven years. With this guardianship going on, I cannot think of any other journeys, and as my book is coming out, it is time to consider fresh expeditions.³⁵⁸

The problem of trying to reconcile his old life with his new spirituality, and moving forward, took a toll on Foucauld and worried his friends. His friend Henri Duveyrier, a fellow explorer, wrote to the secretary of the geographical society:

I feel a sincere affection for Monsieur Foucauld. He is a rare person and, I fear, a man either stricken with an irreversible illness or else suffering a profound emotional disturbance. He deserves to be treated with consideration.³⁵⁹

Having completed all of his practical reading, published his books, finished his last training session as a reservist in the army, Huvelin suggested that Foucauld go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to relearn Christianity in a practical way.³⁶⁰

The idea of sacred space, what historical geographer J. K. Wright called geopiety,³⁶¹ was something that Foucauld had first been introduced to in his exploration of Morocco. Although the desert and the landscape did not have the same invested meaning as ideas of sacred space have in Christianity – that is to say, that events of Divine importance, generally the life of Christ or miracles, had taken place there, transforming the land into sacred space³⁶² – Foucauld, and other

³⁵⁸ Letter to a friend 9 April, 1887; quoted in Bazin, 72.

³⁵⁹ Letter of February 1888; quoted in Antier, 104.

³⁶⁰ Antier, 107; Bazin 73-4; Six, *Itinéraire*, 81; “Je l’ai fait malgré moi, par pure obeissance à M. l’Abbé.” Letter to Marie de Bondy (LMB) 5 July 1901; Charles de Foucauld, *Lettres à Mme de Bondy* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), 84.

³⁶¹ Andrew Jotischky, *The Perfection of Solitude* (University Park: Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 5.

³⁶² Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 62.

explorers felt an emotional connection to the desert. A friend of Foucauld's, General Niéger, described the religious element of the desert: "the influence of Islam on even the steeliest of characters is all the more powerful when exerted in favorable surroundings...It acts by itself, through the setting, and also geographically, if I can put it that way."³⁶³

For Christianity the idea of sacred space, although a part of Christian spirituality since the second century,³⁶⁴ has always been contested. Pagans were criticized because they associated the divine with particular places.³⁶⁵ For Christianity the idea that union with God is about meditation, prayer, and Eucharistic devotion, which can, theoretically, be undertaken in any place³⁶⁶ has always been at odds with the idea that Jesus had been a real person and

the chief events in Christ's life had taken place in [Jerusalem] and its environs. From the very beginning Christian belief was oriented to these events, to what *happened* to Jesus [...] Events take place in space as well as in time, and these events, what later tradition called the sacred mysteries, took place *in Jerusalem*, or directly outside the city.³⁶⁷

The colonialist expansion into the Levant in the nineteenth century supported a reinvigorated devotion to sacred spaces. European interest in colonial power in the region intermingled with religious matters. As Dominique Trimbur explains, "this movement involved a close and ambiguous intertwining of political and religious concerns: all the players presented themselves in religious garb, and each

³⁶³ Merad, 47.

³⁶⁴ Wilken, 63.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 91.

³⁶⁶ Jotischky, 3-12.

³⁶⁷ Wilken, 62.

denomination marched under the banners of a country or group of countries.”³⁶⁸

European pressure ensured that the Tanzimat reforms provided equality of rights for non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.³⁶⁹ The European powers, competing for influence in Jerusalem, appointed consuls and members of the clergy to look after their specific interests.³⁷⁰ Within twenty years, all the major European nations, and the Americans, had permanent consular representation in Jerusalem. The French established their consulate in 1843 and as a pretext for greater control in the region claimed protective rights over the Roman Catholic community, institution, and holy places in the Ottoman Empire and in 1847 convinced the pope to reestablish the Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem.³⁷¹ The French consolidated their position in 1878, and were officially recognized as the ‘protector’ of the Roman Catholic Church in Palestine in the Berlin Agreement.³⁷² The rights of travelers to enter the country only improved after the Crimean War as the Ottoman dependence on Europe grew.³⁷³ Pilgrimage to the Holy Land was encouraged in France, as it symbolized the

³⁶⁸ Dominique Trimbur, “A French Presence in Palestine” *Bulletin du CRFJ*, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 117-140, 118.

³⁶⁹ Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983), 111. The two decrees that affected the status of non-Muslims were the *Hatt-I Sharif* (1839) and *Islahat Fermani* (1856). Intended to promote the idea of a unified Ottoman identity, the decrees were not pleasing to either Muslims nor non-Muslims. See, James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 81-82

³⁷⁰ Ben-Arieh, 111; David Kushner, “The ‘Foreign Relations’ of the Governors of Jerusalem Toward the End of the Ottoman Period” in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. David Kushner (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 309-319.

³⁷¹ Ben-Arieh, 113; Thomas Stransky, “Origins of Western Christian Mission in Jerusalem and the Holy Land” in *Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World 1800 – 1948*, eds. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (London: Praeger, 1997), 137 – 154, 139.

³⁷² Ben-Arieh, 117.

³⁷³ *Ibid*, 159.

country's involvement in Palestine at a time when European rivalry in the region was at a peak.³⁷⁴

The idea of a 'historical Jesus', inflamed in France by Ernest Renan's 1863 *Vie de Jésus* which had sold 100 000 copies in two years,³⁷⁵ was no less inspiring for believers than it was for non-believers. The proliferation of Biblical archeology was of great interest to Christians: atheist archeologist Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches* created considerable controversy about the location of the holy sites, in particular the authenticity of the site of the Holy Sepulcher, and contributed greatly to tensions between Protestants and Catholics.³⁷⁶ As devotional author, Abbé Fouard explained it:

...the Divinity of the Christ is the object of eternal contemplation, and as in every age His Humanity appears under new features, so it will always demand a different portraiture...Just now it would seem that everything is ripe for such a restoration of the past. Never has the East been better known...At the same time learned achievements in Chronology, based upon astronomical calculations, have established the dates for us, even to the month and the day. Who does not see the advantages offered by such vast stores of knowledge?³⁷⁷

The idea of pilgrimage and devotion to the physicality of the scriptures was married to the new science with a bit more difficulty than to biblical criticism, but with equal potency. The humanity of Jesus could have just as much importance for Christians as

³⁷⁴ Trimbur, 121.

³⁷⁵ Brown, 14-16.

³⁷⁶ Ben-Arieh, 133.

³⁷⁷ Preface to Constant Fouard *The Christ The Son of God*, 5th edition, trans. George F. X. Griffith, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), ix and xvi.

it could for atheists. Foucauld was fascinated by these discussions, first as an explorer and then as a pilgrim himself.³⁷⁸

In May of 1887, Foucauld wrote his editor M. Challamel and requested several volumes of devotional literature. Included in his list was Abbé Fouard's *Vie de Jésus*.³⁷⁹ The Catholic public viewed Fouard's popular book, as the Archbishop of Rouen wrote in his review, as uniting "the consultations of piety with the explanations of true science on the text of Scripture."³⁸⁰ Having been on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land himself, Fouard's book included a "Map of Judea in the time of Our Lord Jesus Christ" and descriptions of the countryside³⁸¹ intended to describe what Christ would have seen. Fouard felt that to experience Palestine of the nineteenth century was to be able to experience the Palestine of Jesus:

On every hand we have seen the same world which met the eyes of Jesus, - the cities...the troops of dogs overrunning the deserted streets...the pomp and ceremony of the marriage-feasts, the banqueting hall, with the wedding-guests reclining on purple and fine linen... In the Gospels all these pictures are indicated in a line, by a single stroke; it is only when viewed under the Eastern sky that they regain their fresh colors, in their clear native atmosphere.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ The newest discoveries in Biblical archeology, and their devotional applications, were of interest to Foucauld for the rest of his life. In his hermitage in Tamanrasset, Foucauld had copies of V. G. Roux's *La religion primitive d'Israël* (1872), P. Lagrange's *Étude sur les religions sémitiques* (1905), F. Vigouroux's *La Bible et les découvertes modernes en Palestine, en Égypte et en Assyrie* (1881) and *Le nouveau testament et les découvertes archéologiques modernes* (1890), Alfred Weber's *Le Saint Évangile de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, ou les quatre Évangiles en un seul* (1913). Bernard Jacqueline, "Introduction" in Foucauld, *Lecture du Saint Évangile St Matthieu* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1989), iv.

³⁷⁹ Bouvier, 98; later translated to English and published under the title *The Christ The Son of God*.

³⁸⁰ Fouard, v.

³⁸¹ For the description of Nazareth see Fouard, Vol I, 79-80.

³⁸² Fouard, xvii.

Foucauld enthusiastically embraced the experience of, as Origen put it, tracing “the foot steps of Jesus”.³⁸³ It enabled him to witness “Jesus who lived in this village ‘this God who lived amongst men’.”³⁸⁴

The Imitation of Jesus

The pilgrimage, however, was not merely about witness. It was also about imitation. Pilgrimage can be a mystical experience. Louis Massignon, who described Foucauld as a perpetual pilgrim, felt that Foucauld’s pilgrimage to the Holy Land was a transformational experience that marked his soul, a mark as real as the tattoos obtained by Coptic pilgrims when they leave Jerusalem.³⁸⁵ The pilgrimage to the Holy Land was Foucauld’s first experience of the power of imitation.³⁸⁶ To visit the holy land was not simply to see “historical sites that invoked a memory of the past.

³⁸³ quoted in Wilken, 108.

³⁸⁴ “Jésus qui habité ce village ‘ce Dieu qui a marché au milieu des homes. Il le rencontre à la fontaine, avec Marie; il voit en regardant les artisans travailler” Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 42-3.

³⁸⁵ “Le jeune converti, dès qu’il fut arrivé en Terre Sainte, ressentit ce meme amour simple ‘qui courbait les pèlerins russes en débarquant d’Odessa, et qui fait que le Chrétien copte se tatoue une croix au poignet quand il repart de Jérusalem. Ces coeurs simples ignorant la haute intellectualité ‘philosophique’ qui enseigne une technique chrétienne de la méditation: estimant qu’il est inutile, pour la composition de lieu, de se figurer qu’on veut s’y transporter en chair et en os et qu’il suffit d’une méditation abstraite assemblant des concepts sans avoir besoin de se lever de son fauteuil. (...) Pensons, en face de cela, au geste de Foucauld, inscrivant sur le petit carnet personnel qu’il emportait contre son coeur en pèlerinage, et c’était un pèlerin perpetual, un ‘frère universel’: ‘touché la Pierre de tel out el lieu Saint’, où, difficilement et péniblement, il s’en était allé s’agenouiller, cognant son front dur sur la dale bénite qu’il avait baisée.” Louis Massignon, quoted in Six, *Itinéraire*, 82.

³⁸⁶ “It’s still Christmastide; in body I’m at Nazareth (...) but in mind I’ve been at Bethlehem for a month, and it’s from there, beside the crib, between Mary and Joseph, that I’m writing this letter.” Letter to Father Jerome 8 January 1898; quoted in A Little Brother, *Silent Pilgrimage to God*, trans. Jeremy Moiser (London: Darlington, Longman and Todd, 1974), 32.

Seeing was more than seeing, it was a metaphor for participation.”³⁸⁷ Foucauld wrote to his friend Father Jerome, describing his pilgrimage:

Having spent Christmas 1888 at Bethlehem, having attended Midnight Mass and received holy Communion in the holy cave, about two or three days later I returned to Jerusalem. I had experienced the sweetness of prayer in this cave which had echoed the voice of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I was so close to them it was indescribable.³⁸⁸

Bouvier describes how this experience became “permanent, because until the end of his life he will desire only one thing: to put his footsteps in the footsteps of Jesus, allowed in some way to take Him by the hand and walk with Him, in a companionship which included the wish to imitate Him even in suffering.”³⁸⁹

Influenced by his own conversion, Foucauld writes confidently about Christ’s loving presence in his life even when he was unaware, and had turned his back on God:

You gave me the ill-defined unrest that marks an unquiet conscience which, though it may be wholly asleep, is not completely dead...It was undoubtedly a gift from you, O God. How far off I was in my doubting! How good you are! While through this device of your love you were preventing my soul from being unredeemably overwhelmed, you were also protecting my body: if I had died then I should have gone to hell...O God, how firmly you have kept your hand on

³⁸⁷ Wilken, 116.

³⁸⁸ “Après avoir passé la Noël de 1888 à Bethléem, avoir entendu la mess de minuit et reçu la sainte Communion dans la sainte grotte, au bout de deux ou trois jours, je suis retourné à Jérusalem. La douceur que j’avais éprouvée à peier dans cette grotte qui avait résonné des voix de Jésus, de Marie, de Joseph et où j’étais si près d’eux, avait été indicible” Letter to pere Jerome 21 december 1896; Bouvier, 198; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 42.

³⁸⁹ “sera d’ailleurs permanent, car jusqu’à la fin de sa vie il ne désirera qu’une chose: mettre ses pas dans ceux Jésus, se laisser en quelque sorte prendre par la main et marcher avec lui, dans un compagnonnage qui comporte le désir de l’imiter jusque dans ses souffrances” Bouvier, 54.

me, and how little I have felt it!³⁹⁰

Foucauld comes to understand his conversion as an awakening to the efforts of God's love throughout the entirety of his life. Foucauld responded to this outpouring of love, with his own love for God. He understood the best manifestation of this love to be imitation:

Love imitates, love wants to resemble the Beloved. It seeks to draw souls together in one movement, to unite every moment of being in an identical type of life.³⁹¹

And so he decided to become a monk: "As soon as I believed there was a God, I knew that I could do nothing than to live for him alone. My religious vocation dates from the same hour as my faith."³⁹² Indeed, from the first days of his conversion, Foucauld had started giving away his possessions and stopped his scientific work.³⁹³

Returning from his pilgrimage, Foucauld was certain of his call to imitate Christ, which he interpreted as a vocation to the monastic way of life.³⁹⁴ All that was needed was for him to choose an order. Foucauld spent the nine months following his pilgrimage visiting monasteries. He decided on the Trappist Order, and entered the monastery of Notre-Dame-Des-Nieges on January 16, 1890. The Trappists were a

³⁹⁰ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 12; "Vous me donniez cette inquietude vague d'une conscience mauvaise, qui toute endormie qu'elle est n'est pas tout à fait morte et cela suffisait pour me mettre dans un malaise qui empoisonnait ma vie...mon Dieu...c'était un don de vous...Comme j'étais loin de m'en douter! Que vous êtes bon! Et en même temps que vous empêchiez mon âme par ces inventions de votre amour irrémédiablement, vous gardiez mon corps: car si j'étais mort alors, j'aurais été en enfer...Oh! mon Dieu comme vous aviez la main sur moi, et comme je la sentais peu!" 8 November 1898; Foucauld, *Dernière*, 113-114.

³⁹¹ Letter to Louis de Foucauld 12 April 1897; quoted in Cathy Wright, "Nazareth as a Model for Mission in the Life of Charles de Foucauld," *Mission Studies* 19, no. 1-37 (2002): 36-52, 40.

³⁹² LHC, 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 96-97.

³⁹³ Antier, 103-104.

³⁹⁴ Preminger, 93; Antier, 106.

congregation of the Cistercians who had restored the originally French order after the Revolution. Trying to atone for the sins of Revolution they introduced mortifications that “reached the limit of human endurance.”³⁹⁵ Initially attracted to their poverty,³⁹⁶ once within the community Foucauld was unhappy with their ascetic life. He had strict guidelines about imitating Jesus that had been formed by his time in Morocco and the Holy Land, and he only remained with the Trappists for seven years, receiving his dispensation from the Order in January 1897.

Foucauld’s understanding of the Incarnation, married with his own experiences of poverty, developed into a theology of strict asceticism. Foucauld desired an imitation of Jesus in his life at Nazareth, when Jesus lived entirely hidden amongst humanity, before his mission was publicly proclaimed. Popular since the seventeenth century, traditionally a vocation to the Hidden Life of Jesus at Nazareth is an imitation that can vary with vocation but espouses the ideals of obedience, obscurity, work and contemplation.³⁹⁷ For Foucauld, the main characteristic was a totalizing experience of the Incarnation, of God’s descent into a poor human existence, which, as other scholars have noted, was not an accurate depiction of historical reality.³⁹⁸ For example, the life of a carpenter in Nazareth would not have

³⁹⁵ Lekai, 180-181. ³⁹⁵ Common concept, in Catholic French culture of the nineteenth century, especially after the Franco-Prussian War. The Assumptionists, for example, created the league of Notre-Dame-du-Salut whose mission was to save the soul of France by prayer, See Brown, 32. Many of the missions for the re-christianization of France began in the post-Revolutionary period and centered around devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus which by the late nineteenth century had become shorthand for the rechristianization movement, Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

³⁹⁶ Six, *Itinéraire*, 80.

³⁹⁷ Hillyer, 78.

³⁹⁸ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 43; Bouvier, 173.

been, as Foucauld described Jesus' life, "the hardest and most despised life that there has ever been."³⁹⁹ This concept of poverty is, as Chatelard, Bouvier⁴⁰⁰ and Dominique Salin⁴⁰¹ have suggested, directly connected to Foucauld's understanding of abjection and a rejection of his pre-conversion lifestyle. Foucauld's understanding of abjection was based on abjection as rejection. His spiritual director's saying that "Jesus has so taken the last place that no one else has ever been able to wrest it from him" influenced Foucauld.⁴⁰² God accepts rejection from humanity in the life of Jesus, but the very Incarnation is an act of abjection: "Jesus is 'abject' because it is through him that God *descends* to his creature of dust and mud."⁴⁰³

You descended [...] yes, always descending, descending from heaven to be made man, descending to the level of the last man, a poor laborer, descended to the last degree of the poorest workers, by being born in a cave, a stable...⁴⁰⁴

If the Incarnation is the "mystery of love and humility"⁴⁰⁵ and it is Foucauld's wish to imitate Jesus in all things, then Foucauld himself must descend.

³⁹⁹ Hillyer, 36.

⁴⁰⁰ Bouvier, 173 "Ne serait-ce pas là une exagération de la part de quelqu'un qui, en raison de sa fortune familiale, aurait pu vivre sans travailler, et qui n'avait pas une grande estime pour le travail manuel, considéré comme un abaissement et réservé aux domestiques, aux serviteurs? La conversion n'a pas change sa mentalité sur ce point, et c'est à la lumière de son expérience personnelle et de la culture de son milieu, qu'il pense l'existence de Jésus travailleur à Nazareth."

⁴⁰¹ Dominique Salin, "D'Ignace de Loyola à Charles de Foucauld" in *Christus*, no. 200 (October 2003): 475.

⁴⁰² Antier, 105.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 113.

⁴⁰⁴ "Vous êtes descendu [...] oui, descendu toujours, descendu du ciel pour vous faire homme, descendu au rang du dernier des hommes, d'un pauvre ouvrier, descendu au dernier degré parmi les plus pauvres ouvriers en naissant dans une grotte, une étable..." quoted in Bouvier, 164.

⁴⁰⁵ "l'Incarnation, mystère d'amour et mystère d'humilité" quoted in Nurdin, 368.

In his decision to choose the Hidden Life of Nazareth, Foucauld understood this time in Jesus' life, before his active ministry to be not a prelude, but a fulfilment of God's salvation in the Incarnation. From the moment of his Incarnation in Mary's womb, Jesus was the fulfilment of his mission. Jesus always embodied the redemption of the Passion in all his acts. Nazareth was not merely a prelude to his preaching but a total fulfilment of his redemptive role.⁴⁰⁶ At Nazareth Jesus blessed the state of poverty by becoming Incarnate amongst the poor; he sanctified the poor, just as his Incarnation in man elevates the human state.⁴⁰⁷ Jesus did not sanctify one state of poverty, but all states of poverty for all time. Jesus is *always* in the last place, and anyone who loves him is asked to join him there:

My Lord Jesus, how quickly he makes himself poor who, loving you with all his heart, will not permit himself to be richer than his Beloved. My Lord Jesus, how quickly he becomes poor who, remembering that whatever is done for one of your little ones is done for you and whatever is not done for them is not done for you relieves all the sufferers who come to his gate... 'The servant is not above his master,' neither is the bride rich while the Bridegroom is poor – especially when he is

⁴⁰⁶ Bouvier, 154-156.

⁴⁰⁷ 11 November 1897 "Vous avez choisi pour parents de pauvres ouvriers... Vous êtes né dans une grotte servant d'étable... vous avez été <<pauvre et dans les travaux dès votre enfance>>... vos premiers adorateurs ont été des bergers... à votre présentation au temple et à la Purification de votre Mère on a offert le don des Pauvres... vous avez vécu trente ans pauvre ouvrier dans ce Nazareth que j'ai le bonheur de fouler, où j'ai la joie indicible, profonde, inexprimable, la béatitude de ramasser du fumier... puis pendant votre vie publique vous avez vécu d'aumônes au milieu des pauvres pécheurs que vous aviez pris pour compagnons, <<sans une Pierre pour poser la tête>>; en ce temps-là, avez-vous dit à sainte Thérèse <<bien souvent vous avez dormi au serein faute de trouver un toit où arbitrer>>... sur le calvaire vous avez été dépouillé de vos vêtements, votre seule possession et des soldats les ont joués entre eux... Vous êtes mort nu, et vous avez été enseveli par aumône par des étrangers. <<Bien-heureux les pauvres! Avez-vous dit...>>" Foucauld, *Dernière*, 188-9; English translation Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 63.

voluntarily poor, and perfect as well.⁴⁰⁸

On his pilgrimage to the Holy Land Foucauld had seen Jesus by watching the poor carpenters in Nazareth.⁴⁰⁹ Foucauld felt that if Jesus is always with the poor, then he *can* be seen in the poverty of a nineteenth century Nazarene workman, whether the experience of a nineteenth century carpenter is the historical equivalent of Jesus or not. The poverty of Jesus was also encompassed in Foucauld's own experiences with the poor in Morocco. Morocco continued to be a benchmark by which he judged poverty, and when the Trappists instituted a change in diet and lifestyle in 1892⁴¹⁰ Foucauld wrote to Huvelin:

You hope that I have enough poverty. No. We are poor as compared with the rich, but not as poor as our Lord was poor, nor as I was in Morocco.⁴¹¹

Foucauld embraced poverty wholeheartedly as an imitation of Jesus.

Foucauld originally thought that his life with the Trappists would be an imitation of Jesus in his poverty and he joined them because "I cannot endure to lead a life other than His, an easy and honoured life when his was the hardest and most

⁴⁰⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 63-4.

⁴⁰⁹ "Jésus qui habité ce village 'ce Dieu qui a marché au milieu des homes. Il le rencontre à la fontaine, avec Marie; il voit en regardant les artisans travailler" Chatelard 42-3.

⁴¹⁰ In the autumn of 1892 the general chapter of the Cistercians voted for a unification of the Cistercian and Trappist congregations. Practically, it involved a change in diet and behaviour within the Trappist Order, for example, butter and oil was added to their diet and fasting was now forbidden after noon. Antier, 128-9

⁴¹¹ "Vous espérez que j'ai assez de pauvreté. Non; nous sommes pauvres pour des riches, mais pas pauvres comme l'était Notre-Seigneur, pas pauvres comme je l'étais au Maroc" LAH, 5 November 1890, Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 5; Annie of Jesus, 36, Purcell, 15.

despised life that there has ever been”.⁴¹² He expected the life he led with the Trappists to be as hard as possible and had made provisions to ensure that it was the case. Foucauld had made arrangements with the novice-master at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges that, after he had completed his novitiate in France, he would be transferred to the much poorer sister house of Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur in Akbès, Syria.⁴¹³

Foucauld’s time with the order began positively. Although he missed his family, he found great solace in the life of the Order:

From the first day I have led the regular life...and how goes my soul? Less badly than I expected: the good God let me find unexpected consolation in solitude and silence. I am constantly, absolutely constantly, with Him, and with

⁴¹² Hillyer, 36; “Pourquoi suis-je entré à la Trappe? Voilà ce que votre chère amitié me demande. Par amour, par pur amour. [...] j’aime Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ, bien que d’un coeur qui voudrait aimer plus et mieux; mais enfin je L’aime, et je ne puis supporter de mener une vie autre que la Sienne, une vie douce et honorée quand la Sienne a été la plus dure et la plus dédaignée qui fût jamais, je ne veux pas traverser la vie en première classe pendant que Celui que j’aie l’a traversée dans la dernière. [...] Le plus grand sacrifice pour moi, si grand que tous les autres n’existent pas auprès de lui et deviennent un néant, c’est la separation pour jamais d’une famille adorée et d’amis très peu nombreux mais auxquels mon coeur est attaché de toutes ses forces: ces amis si chers sont au nombre de quatre cinq, vous êtes un des premiers d’entre eux: c’est vous dire combine il me coûte de penser que je ne vous verrai plus [...] L’amour de Dieu, l’amour des hommes, c’est toute ma vie, ce sera toute ma vie, je l’espère.” LHD 24 April 1890, quoted in Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 57-8.

⁴¹³ Foucauld, *Inner Search*, 11; Bazin 83. Lifestyle of the Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur as described by René Bazin: “An impoverished abbey, founded in 1882 as a refuge in the mountains by the Traoousts of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, in case they happened to have to leave France...The monastery was built in haste... A fence limits and protects it against prowlers, but it is made of dry thorn and stakes. No church is to be seen...The entrance gate of the Sheikhlé Trappe opens on to a farmyard...stone having been reserved for the chapel, the chapter-hall and the stables, the rest were built with cob-walls and roofed with boards or thatch. The apperance had none of the beautiful order that the word ‘monastery’ conveys to us...in summer the monks slept in a loft over the stables, the worn and badly joined lath floor of which let through the noise and odor of the animals. In the winter they had as their dormitory another loft...the snow covered the sheet-iron roof which was very near their moss-stuffed mattresses.” Bazin, 84-6.

those whom I love. This continual life with all that is dear to me in heaven and on earth, without filling the void, has afforded me consolation, but, indeed, God has Himself upheld me during these first days...⁴¹⁴

His ceremony of religious profession on February 2, 1892, filled him a feeling of belonging completely to God and a desire to expand this relationship in silence. It was a feeling he had never experienced “except just a little on my return from Jerusalem.”⁴¹⁵ Yet, from the beginning he had issues with the obedience demanded of him as a member of the community: “The origins of this dryness [of spirit] is almost always in the slackness with which I resist temptations, especially temptations against obedience of spirit...I do not accept gladly enough the manual labours assigned to me...”⁴¹⁶

In the autumn of 1892 the general chapter of the Cistercians voted for a unification of the two congregations.⁴¹⁷ Practically, it involved a change in diet and lifestyle; for example, butter and oil was added to their diet and fasting was now forbidden after noon.⁴¹⁸ This change, which seemed so different from his life in Morocco, compounded issues that he had already been experiencing with the Order. Foucauld initially thrived in the order, and his dedication and humility greatly impressed the superiors.⁴¹⁹ Plans were made for his advancement.⁴²⁰ The abbot of

⁴¹⁴ January 26, 1890, Bazin, 80.

⁴¹⁵ Bazin, 90-1; Six, *Itinéraire*, 126; LMD 2 February, 1892 “Je suis dans un état que je n’ai jamais éprouvé, si ce n’est un peu à mon retour de Jérusalem...C’est un besoin de recueillement de silence, d’être aux pieds du bon Dieu et de le regarder Presque en silence.” Foucauld, *Marie de Bondy*, 38.

⁴¹⁶ Whit-Sunday 1890, Bazin, 82.

⁴¹⁷ Antier, 128.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

⁴¹⁹ Dom Martin, Abbot of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges: “Our Brother Marie-Albéric appears like an angel amidst us, he wants nothing but wings”; Father Dom

Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur wrote Foucauld's sister confiding his desire for Foucauld to begin theological studies in preparation for an eventual ordination to the priesthood. The Dom acknowledged that he expected resistance from Foucauld: "I shall have to maintain a serious struggle against his humility".⁴²¹ Although he had not yet been approached, Foucauld expected something of the sort. It was the antithesis of how he had understood his vocation to the Life of Nazareth, and, consequently, his vocation to the Trappists. In a letter to Abbé Huvelin he declared,

If they speak to me of studies, I shall show that I have a great liking for being neck-deep in wheat and wood, and a strong repugnance for everything that would take me away from the *lowest place* which I came to find, from the abjection in which I desire to be buried ever deeper and deeper, following our Lord's example, and then, after all, I shall obey.⁴²²

The order arranged for him to receive religious instruction from another monk, who had been a professor of theology in France. Foucauld was not distressed by the idea of studying theology in and of itself, rather his concern was that such education would lead him farther from his goal of hidden poverty:

these studies...have not the same value as the practice of poverty, abjection, mortification, and finally the imitation of our Lord which manual labour provides.⁴²³

Polycarpe, novice-master and former Abbot of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges: "...in his long life, he has not yet met with a soul so entirely given to God." Bazin, 91. Dom Louis de Gonzague, Abbot of Stauëli in a letter to Marie de Blic October 1896, "For almost seven years I have seen him a Trappist, and faithful to all his religious duties, and I was wont to look upon him as a real saint; it is also the impression that he has left here amongst a community of eight hundred after a month's short stay." Bazin, 107, ft. 2.

⁴²⁰ 22 August 1892: "It appears, that over a year ago, it was arranged that he [the Lazarite Father Superior of Akbes and former professor of theology at Montpellier] should teach me theology.", Bazin, 92.

⁴²¹ Letter from Dom Louis de Gonzague to Marie de Blic 4 February, 1892, Bazin, 91.

⁴²² Ibid, 92.

Foucauld was very worried:

I did not hide that this new vocation has no attraction for me. They replied that it had been decided: I stopped insisting. I may need your support. It is a very grave moment, for I am entering that critical period when many vocations are shipwrecked.⁴²⁴

When he first entered the order he was very impressed with the “vast difference that there is between the perfect life, the life of the Gospel, and the lives men live in the real world.”⁴²⁵ The longer he was with the Trappists, however, the more he realized that to be removed from the world was not merely to be removed from its decadence but that the enclosure also filtered out suffering. Two events in particular highlighted this for Foucauld. The first was a series of cholera epidemics that swept through the area.⁴²⁶ The monks spent much of their time caring for the sick. On one occasion Foucauld was sent to care for the patient who lived a few miles away. He was shocked by the true poverty of their lifestyle and burst into tears. He felt a deep shame that he would be going home to the comparative luxury of the monastery.⁴²⁷

The second event was the massacre of Armenians in 1896. The Christians of Armenia had demanded independence from Sultan Abdul Hamid II. In response, the

⁴²³ May 21, 1893, Bazin, 92-3.

⁴²⁴ Antier, 127.

⁴²⁵ Hillyer, 35.

⁴²⁶ Cholera was a common problem in the poor communities of the region. There had been a cholera outbreak within the first six months of his time in Syria: “Le choléra se repand dans la region d’Akbès, Il y a meme un cas au monastère...” LMB 1 November 1890; Foucauld, *Marie de Bondy*, 32.

⁴²⁷ Preminger, 108; “Il y a huitaine de jours on m’a envoyé prier un peu près d’un pauvre indigene catholique mort dans le hameau voisin: quelle difference entre cette maison et nos habitations! Je soupier après Nazareth...” LMB 10 April 1894; Foucauld, *Marie de Bondy*, 52.

Sultan set out on violent reprisals.⁴²⁸ The Christians in the surrounding villages were massacred, but the monastery survived because it was composed of foreign nationals who were under the protection of their consuls. Foucauld described the events:

Around us there were horrors, a number of massacres, burnings and lootings. Many of the Christians were really martyrs, for they had died voluntarily, without defending themselves, rather than deny their faith...Europeans are protected by the Turkish Government...It is miserable to be in such favour with those who slaughter our brethren.⁴²⁹

Foucauld deeply regretted that he had not been able to take a more active role. He thought, perhaps for the first time, about the positive aspects of becoming a priest. Being a priest would have enabled him to be out amongst the people in their time of need.⁴³⁰ Huvelin kept urging him to cultivate annihilation of the self,⁴³¹ but Foucauld had been denied the martyrdom that would have been the most perfect fulfilment of this ideal. Anotine Chatelard has asserted that it was this experience that convinced Foucauld of martyrdom as the pinnacle of self-annihilation.⁴³²

⁴²⁸ Foucauld experienced the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896. Estimates of the dead range from 80, 000 to 300, 000. Trying to protect the Ottoman Empire from Western powers, Hamid II reinstated the policy of Pan-Islamism and viewed the Christian communities as a point of entry for European governments. See, Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 40-50.

⁴²⁹ Bazin, 97.

⁴³⁰ Antier, 137; Bazin, 108; Letter to Father Jerome 24 January 1897: "Once, I regretted not receiving it, regretted not to be clothed in that sacred character; it was at the height of the Armenian persecutions...I should have wished to be a priest, to know the language of the poor persecuted Christians, and to be able to go from village to village to encourage them to die for their God...I was not worthy of it..."

⁴³¹ January 29 1894, Letter from Abbé Huvelin to Foucauld "Go on with your theological studies, at least up to the diaconate; cultivate the interior virtues, and above all self-annihilation...for the rest we shall see later on." Bazin, 95-6.

⁴³² Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 89.

In September 1893 he wrote to Huvelin that, “Since there does not exist here the meeting of souls I have always sought, or anything that resembles it, or anything that replaces it, must I not try to create it?”⁴³³ It was at this time that he first presented the idea of starting his own community. He wanted an order with no hierarchy, accepting no money, living solely on their own work and giving to others constantly.⁴³⁴ Foucauld would not receive a response from Huvelin for almost six months. When he did respond it was with an order for Foucauld to forget the idea of founding a new order and to stay with the Trappists.⁴³⁵ Foucauld continued to pray for guidance, request to leave the order, and work on his own Rule., all the while suffering through insecurities regarding his decision.⁴³⁶ In 1896, Huvelin consented to allow him to write to the Father-General of the Trappists to request to leave the

⁴³³ Antier, 132.

⁴³⁴ This manifested itself in the *Congrégation des Petits Frères de Jésus*, (Foucauld, *Règlements et Directoire*, 23-40) written in 1896, which he presented to Huvelin after he had requested permission from the Father General of the Cistercians to dispense with his vows.

⁴³⁵ January 29, 1894, letter from Abbé Huvelin to Foucauld “...you are not made, *not at all made*, to lead others.” Bazin, 96.

⁴³⁶ 30 August, 1895 “The Abbé tells me to find out whether I could not discover what God expects of me, here, in this life where I am... You know with what respect and affection I listen to this word: but everything calls me in an opposite direction... Time or death, and in any case God will arrange the rest. But I always hope He will allow me to follow Him in the way He points out to me.” Bazin, 96. “Il y a trois ans, j’avais beaucoup de difficultés intérieure, beaucoup d’anxiétés, de craintes, d’obscurités: je désirais servir le bon Dieu, je craignais de l’offenser, je ne voyais pas clair, j’avais beaucoup de peines: je me suis mis alors de tout mon Coeur sous la protection de Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours, la suppliant de guider mes pas somme elle guidait ceux de Jésus Enfant et de me conduire en tout manière à ce que je n’offense pas Dieu, mais au contraire de manière à ce que je sois un sujet de consolation pour Notre-Seigneur Jésus, de manière à ce que je console autant qu’il me sera possible ce Coeur de Jésus qui nous voit et qui nous aime.” Letter to Father Jerome 8 November 1896; Six, *Itinéraire*, 153

order.⁴³⁷ After a trial of six months, the Father-General agreed to let Foucauld leave the order less than a month before he was expected to take his solemn vows.⁴³⁸

Foucauld's future was unclear. A month after he gave his permission, Huvelin received the Rule that Foucauld had written in 1896 for his proposed Little Brothers of Jesus.⁴³⁹ He was horrified. He considered the mortifications were so extreme as to be virtually unlivable. Huvelin wrote to Foucauld: "The rule is impossible, and it contains everything but discretion. I am heart-broken."⁴⁴⁰ When Foucauld finally left the Trappists⁴⁴¹ Huvelin set down several rules. He refused to allow Foucauld to enter another order. He also refused to allow him to write another rule. He instructed Foucauld to attach himself to some community,⁴⁴² for spiritual nourishment, and to live as a hermit.⁴⁴³

Life at Nazareth

⁴³⁷ 15 June 1896, Letter from Abbé Huvelin to Foucauld "J'aurais tant voulu vous garder à une famille où vous êtes aimé, à laquelle vous auriez pu donner beaucoup... Je trouve, mon enfant, qu'on vous a bien dirigé et formé à la Trappe." Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 39.

⁴³⁸ Bazin, 94-101; Antier, 130-133.

⁴³⁹ The Petits Frères de Jesus "qu'aucune congregation dans l'Église ne donne aujourd'hui." A copy of the Rule is published in Foucauld, *Règlements*, 23-36.

⁴⁴⁰ Bazin, 99.

⁴⁴¹ Upon leaving the Trappists, on February 14 1897 Foucauld renewed his vows of celibacy and made a vow never to own more property than a poor working man in front of his confessor Father Robert Lescand, Gorrée, 49; Bazin 115.

⁴⁴² Huvelin originally wanted Foucauld to attach himself to the Franciscans: "I prefer Capharnaum or Nazareth, or some such Franciscan convent..." Bazin, 107.

However, the Franciscan Fathers at Casa-Nova were not in need of his services. According to Bazin, he was recognized by the Brother Guest master who then recommended him to Poor Clares of Nazareth with whom he afterwards settled. Bazin, 111.

⁴⁴³ "...not in the convent, but only under the shadow of the convent; asking only for spiritual assistance, living in poverty at the gate. Do not think of banding any souls around you, nor, above all, of giving them a rule. Live your life, then; if any souls come, live the same life together, without making any regulations. On this point I am quite clear." Bazin, 107.

Foucauld desired a “real imitation of Nazareth, which must find the conditions for its rigor in a natural context, where these conditions already exist and are not artificially created and rebuilt as religious.”⁴⁴⁴ Returning to Nazareth on March 10th 1897, Foucauld was confident that he had found that ideal that he had been searching for:

I am settled in Nazareth henceforth...The good God has let me find here, to the fullest extent, what I wanted: poverty, solitude, abjection, very humble work, complete obscurity, as perfect an imitation as possible of the life of our Lord Jesus in this same Nazareth [...] La Trappe made me ascend, made me a life of study, an honoured life. That is why I left it and embraced here the humble and hidden life of the divine workman at Nazareth...I am very happy.⁴⁴⁵

Yet this was not a calm period in Foucauld’s life; his thought was constantly exploring and evolving. It was during this time at Nazareth that he produced the largest number of writings,⁴⁴⁶ the majority a reflection upon the Gospel and its practical applications. He explored a variety of different rules, considered gaining companions, becoming a priest, a chaplain, or founding his own rule. The three years he spent at Nazareth were extremely productive.

⁴⁴⁴ “imitation <<réelle>> de Nazareth, qui doit trouver les conditions de sa proper rieur dans le contexte normal où ces conditions sont déjà là comme humaines et non artificiellement cherchées et reconstruites comme religieuses” Pierangelo Sequeri, “Ripartire de Nazareth? Appunti su Charles de Foucauld e la nuova evangelizzazione” in *Charles de Foucauld, l’eloquenza di una vita secondo l’evangelo*, eds. H. Teissier, C. Dagens, A. Chatelard, P. Sequeri (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2003), 156-7. Quote translated into French by Bouvier, 154.

⁴⁴⁵ Letter to Louis de Foucauld 12 April 1897, Hillyer, 78-9; Wright, 39-40; Bazin, 110.

⁴⁴⁶ During this time Foucauld produced three-quarters of all his spiritual writings, Leptit, 36.

While Foucauld originally began by feeling “infinite peace, flooded with peace and overflowing”⁴⁴⁷ by 1899 he complained of “being in very great need of solitude”⁴⁴⁸. Foucauld was beset by an inability to pray, for which Huvelin prescribed written meditation.⁴⁴⁹ A life in Nazareth had seemed like the perfect imitation, but Foucauld quickly became aware of the responsibility of following his own rule, away from an Order. Foucauld considered following a Rule obediently to have the highest spiritual importance.⁴⁵⁰ Practicing obedience by following a Rule makes:

us vanquish ourselves a hundred times a day in a host of little ways: these little victories are nothing in themselves, but if one understands how much they are nothings and does not attach to them an importance they do not possess, it is a good way to make us masters of ourselves and increase in courage little by little...⁴⁵¹

About himself he wrote “it is impossible for me to live, even for a day, a life which is not regular.”⁴⁵² Yet he felt considerable concern about which Rule he should be following.

⁴⁴⁷ Bazin, 117.

⁴⁴⁸ George Gorrée, *Memories of Charles de Foucauld*, trans. David Attwater (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1938), 50.

⁴⁴⁹ Six, *Itinéraire*, 206. It was also a practice of St. Theresa of Avila who Foucauld respected greatly, Ibid, 201.

⁴⁵⁰ Foucauld remembered the advice of his novice-master Dom Polycarpe: “Soyez fidèles dans les petites choses pour l’être dans les grandes, et n’oubliez pas qu’obéir à la Règle, c’est obéir à Dieu.” September-October 1896, Charles de Foucauld, *Lettres à mes frères de la Trappe* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 100; Hillyer, 84.

⁴⁵¹ 10 November 1897 “C’est l’avantage d’une règle, de l’obéissance, de nous forcer à nous vaincre nous-même cent fois par jour en une foule de petites choses: ces petites victoires ne sont riens et si on n’y attaché pas une importance qu’elles n’ont pas, c’est un bon moyen de nous faire rester maîtres de nous et d’augmenter peu à peu le courage, par l’habitude du commandement et de la victoire...” Foucauld, *Dernière*, 158; english translation Hillyer, 85.

Before he had left for the Holy Land he had renewed his vows of celibacy before his confessor and also vowed to never own more property than a poor working man.⁴⁵³ Living as a sacristan and worker for the Poor Clares of Nazareth,⁴⁵⁴ he originally adopted the diet of the Sisters, with the exception of the almonds and dried figs the nuns ate on Sundays and feast days.⁴⁵⁵ Although he had resolved after his retreat of 1897 to try and release his concerns⁴⁵⁶ regarding his external rule, describing its purpose as a “shell to hide” his inward intentions,⁴⁵⁷ he felt considerable stress regarding his diet during the winter. As a result he took up the Trappist practice of eating one meal a day.⁴⁵⁸ Upon a visit to the Poor Clares of Jerusalem he began keeping the diet of the Trappists. One of the nuns described him to Bazin as “Trappist he remained in the full sense of the term...”⁴⁵⁹ In the Fall of

⁴⁵² Hillyer, 90; Retreat at Ephrem.

⁴⁵³ Gorée, 46; Bazin, 115.

⁴⁵⁴ “I serve Mass and Benediction, clean out the place, run errands, in fact, do any job that is given to me...On Sundays and holy days there is no work to do and I can pray the whole time. My lodging is in a wooden hut just outside the convent. It is exactly the life I wanted.” 22 March, 1897; Gorée, 47. See also letter to Marie de Blic, 24 April and 25 November 1897, Bazin, 113-114. The Poor Clares were founded by Francis of Assisi. Francis’ approach to Islam, as a ‘universal brother’ may have influenced Foucauld’s future activities in North Africa. See, Scott M. Thomas, “The Way of St. Francis? Catholic Approaches to Christian-Muslim Relations and Interreligious Dialogue” *The Downside Review*, 444 (July 2008): 157-168; Steven Saxby, “Francis and the Sultan: A Model for Contemporary Christian Engagement,” in *Catholics in Interreligious Dialogue: Studies in Monasticism, Theology and Spirituality*, eds. Anthony O’ Mahony and Peter Bowe (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2006), 120-150.

⁴⁵⁵ Bazin, 115.

⁴⁵⁶ “Follow me. I am your rule: do everything that I would do...That is your only rule, but your absolute rule...” 6 June, 1897; Hillyer, 86.

⁴⁵⁷ Hillyer, 86.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 87; “jusqu’ici je faisais deux repas, mais ma vie est si peu mortifiée, je souffre si peu que j’ai entrepris depuis hier de n’en plus faire qu’un” LAH 16 January, 1898; Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 60.

⁴⁵⁹ Bazin, 129.

1898 he decided to stop modeling his life on the Benedictine Rule, deciding that he needed “something very simple and numerically small, resembling the simple communities of the Church’s early days”⁴⁶⁰ and settling on the Rule of St. Augustine.⁴⁶¹

His close relationship with the Poor Clares had also presented him with a number of opportunities. Foucauld became especially close to Mother Elizabeth du Calvarie⁴⁶² the founder of the two Poor Clare houses and Abbess of Jerusalem. She felt that Foucauld was refusing to use his talents and strongly suggested that Foucauld rejoin the Church hierarchy. First she suggested that he find a companion.⁴⁶³ When this did not come to pass,⁴⁶⁴ she suggested that Foucauld become a priest and perhaps a missionary as well.⁴⁶⁵ During the Spring of 1900, Foucauld considered the possibility of purchasing the Mount of Beatitudes upon which he could be a hermit.⁴⁶⁶

With this in mind, it is possible to view the study of theology, and his copious writings, as an opportunity to explore and perfect his lifestyle. With the variety of opportunities presented to him at the time and in the Church as a whole, to paraphrase Evagrius of Pontius, he could not truly imitate unless he studied theology. Foucauld requested family members send a number of books to him during his time

⁴⁶⁰ LAH 22 October 1898; Hillyer, 89.

⁴⁶¹ Gorrée, 49.

⁴⁶² “She is a saint...How beautiful God makes souls, and how goof He is to let me see them! What treasures of moral beauty there are in the depths of these cloisters, and what fair flowers blossom there, for God alone!” Letter to MdeBlic, 15 October 1898; Bazin 127.

⁴⁶³ Gorrée, 49; LMB 15 September 1898; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 74

⁴⁶⁴ Six, *Itinéraire*, 234.

⁴⁶⁵ Bazin, 129-130.

⁴⁶⁶ Gorrée, 51; Bazin 131-134.

at Nazareth.⁴⁶⁷ One book of dogmatic theology he “read every day as a book of devotion”⁴⁶⁸ Unlike his time as a Trappist,⁴⁶⁹ theology had now become a comfort to him: “I am profoundly astonished to see that, far from distracting me from union with Jesus, my reading and theology bring me to a deeper appreciation in it.”⁴⁷⁰ He considered it essential, however, to include meditation after his studies. It had been Huvelin’s suggestion that Foucauld continue to record meditations after his relocation to Nazareth, during which time Foucauld had been unable to pray.⁴⁷¹ By writing down his thoughts as he meditated and prayed he was able to stay awake for longer periods of time.⁴⁷² Over time this program of study and meditation became:

absolutely necessary to know our duties, to know the truths of religion, the examples and teachings of our Lord who is our rule of life [...] without meditation we are like a vessel without a compass or a rudder, we do not know how to act, where to go, what to do; a miracle would be needed for us to

⁴⁶⁷ Foucauld had use of the library of the Poor Clares, Bazin, 114. Despite this he asked his sister for a German translation of the Vulgate, the last edition of two courses of philosophy by two Jesuits, four volumes by Abbé Darras, the work of John Chrysostom, among others, Bazin, 119.

⁴⁶⁸ Gorrée, 48.

⁴⁶⁹ Although the study of theology had always interested him, he had questioned its ability to be of equal value as practical action: “The studies interest me, Holy scripture above all – it is the Word of our heavenly Father. Dogmatic theology, too; it is the study of what we must believe about the Holy Trinity, our Lord and the Church; that, too, brings us much nearer to God: moral theology less...But these studies...have not the same value as the practice of poverty, abjection, mortification, and finally the imitation of our Lord which manual labour provides.” 21 May, 1893; Bazin, 92-3.

⁴⁷⁰ Hillyer, 89.

⁴⁷¹ “En quittant Rome je ne voulais plus rien écrire. Mais je me suis trouvé dans de telles sécheresses, une telle impossibilité de prier, que j’ai demandé à mon directeur s’il fallait continuer à ne pas écrire, ou reprendre les méditations écrites: il m’a répondu: <<Ecrivez vos méditations: c’est une très bonne manière de méditer: et elle est particulièrement utile pour vous, parce qu’elle sert à fixer les pensées>> J’écris donc tous les soirs.” Letter to Father Jerome 15 February 1898; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 138.

⁴⁷² Leptit, 35.

arrive at the harbour, even a tug [boat] would not be enough.,⁴⁷³

In his meditations on the Bible, it is possible to witness Foucauld's changing thoughts with regards to his vocation to the life of Nazareth. In his final year as a Trappist he came to the conclusion that the different periods of Jesus's life had been an example to the world of three different modes of religious life. The periods were Nazareth, the temptations, and the public ministry and they corresponded with vocations to the hidden life of Nazareth, the life of the desert, and the lives led by priests and apostles.⁴⁷⁴ In a very brief manuscript, written about the Gospels in Spring of 1897, returning once again to this topic, Foucauld decided that as lives lived by Jesus the three vocations did have things in common: "poverty, chastity, continual obedience to God, contemplation, practice of all the inward virtues..."⁴⁷⁵

To speak of an evolution of thought here would be too linear. The issue of vocation, and the proper imitation of Jesus' life was an issue of constant importance for Foucauld, and as such he often repeats or goes back to certain statements. For example Foucauld expressed a sentiment very similar to that of the Spring of 1897 in

⁴⁷³ "absolument nécessaires pour connaître nos devoirs, connaître les vérités de la religion, les exemples et les enseignements de Notre-Seigneur qui sont la règle de notre vie [...] Sans méditation nous sommes comme un vaisseau sans boussole et sans gouvernail, nous ne savons comment agir, où aller, que faire; il faudrait un miracle pour que nous arrivions au port, un remorqueur même ne suffirait pas, car il faut la méditation pour nous prouver à nous-mêmes qu'il faut nous laisser remorquer, et nous y décider" 11 November 1897; Foucauld, *Dernière*, 175.

⁴⁷⁴ Hillyer, 79; "La vie de Nazareth, c'est ma vie, celle de la sainte Vierge, de saint Joseph... La vie de la quarantaine c'est ma vie, celle de saint Jean-Baptiste et de sainte Magdeleine... La vie de monastère c'est ma vie, celle de Pierre et de Paul, des apôtres, de saint François d'Assise." In this quotation, the first person is Jesus instructing Foucauld on the issue of vocation: "Il me semble, Pasteur adoré, que vous me répondez." Charles de Foucauld, *Qui peut résister à Dieu* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1980), 66.

⁴⁷⁵ quoted in Hillyer 79.

a letter to his sister 29 October 1891: “Let us pray for each other, in order to be faithful to what God desires from each of us in our own lives. They appear very different, but it is only in appearance; when God makes the foundation of life as it ought to be, all lives resemble each other, the rest is of little importance.”⁴⁷⁶ It is important to remember that these meditations were intended to be private, and as such are far less an example of formed theology and more the private working through of theological concepts of personal importance. He used the Bible constantly as a source for his spiritual life.

Two-thirds of all of Foucauld’s spiritual writings were about the Bible. The vast importance that Foucauld placed in reading the Bible was very unusual for Catholics of this time period.⁴⁷⁷ Its importance can be seen in all of Foucauld’s works, particularly in his Rules, all of which have extensive biblical quotations at the beginnings of the chapters. The Rule of 1899 outlines an extensive plan for scriptural reading⁴⁷⁸ the purpose of which was to “try hard, by the purity of Heart, prayer, mediation and good works, to have the mind of Jesus.”⁴⁷⁹

As Foucauld moved further and further away from a mainstream monastic vocation, his dependence on the Gospels as a source for the imitation of Jesus grew.

⁴⁷⁶ Bazin, 90.

⁴⁷⁷ Leptit, 36; Although it was not totally unheard of. Alfred Weber promoted a daily study of the Bible in his *Oeuvre catholique de la diffusion du saint Évangile* (1901), Bouvier, 75. The *École biblique de Jérusalem* was founded by R. P. Lagrange (1855-1938) in 1888 and in 1893 in the encyclical *Providentissimus*, Leo XIII praised those who used the Bible for spiritual nourishment, Jacqueline, “Introduction”, *Matthieu*, iii.

⁴⁷⁸ Article XII and Chapter XII, Rule of 1899; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 81 and 155-160; Bouvier, 74-5; Hillyer, 72.

⁴⁷⁹ “s’efforce, par la pureté de Coeur, la prière, la méditation et les bonnes oeuvres, d’avoir l’esprit de Jésus afin d’en pénétrer ses frères” Chapter XII Rule of 1889; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 158.

In his last troubled years with the Trappists he wrote two meditations on the Bible.⁴⁸⁰ During his three years at Nazareth, five of his six meditations were Biblical exegesis.⁴⁸¹ Foucauld viewed the Gospels, particularly John,⁴⁸² as a window into Jesus, allowing for a more perfect imitation of Jesus. Readers are “impregnated with the Spirit of Jesus, ceaselessly reading and re-reading, meditating and re-meditating his words and example: so that they become in his soul as it were a drop of water falling and falling on the same spot of paving stone.”⁴⁸³ In this way they are meant to become “a living Gospel”.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ For an analysis of his first spiritual writing, written in 1896 “Méditations sur l’Évangile au sujet e principales vertus”, see Maurice Bouvier, “Introduction”, in Foucauld, *L’Esprit de Jésus* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 2005), 12-21. For the full text see Foucauld, *L’Esprit de Jésus*, 53-172. The second, “Méditations sur l’Ancien Testament”, written during the final months of 1896, reflect “l’inquiétude de Frère Marie-Albéric sur sa vocation et une certaine incertitude sur la voie où Dieu l’appelle” Bernard Jacqueline, “Introduction” in Foucauld, *Qui peut résister à Dieu* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1980), 13. For the full text see, Foucauld, *resister à Dieu*, 27-94.

⁴⁸¹ The sixth, “Considérations sur les fêtes de l’année” (1896), was a collection of daily spiritual reflections based on the liturgical calendar of the Church. See Foucauld, *Considérations sur les fêtes de l’année*, Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1987. The others are, in chronological order: “Méditations sur les passages des Saints Évangiles relatifs à quinze vertus” (1897) in Foucauld, *Aux plus petits de mes frères*, Paris: Nouvelle Cité, ; “Méditations sur les Saints Évangiles” (1898-1899) in Foucauld, *La Bonté de Dieu*, Paris: Nouvelle Cité, and Foucauld, *L’Initiation du Bien-aimé*, Paris: Nouvelle Cité, ; “Petites remarques sur la Bible” (1898) in Foucauld, *Qui peut résister à Dieu*, 241-303; “Extraits des Saints Évangiles sur l’imitation de Notre Seigneur, l’amour du prochain, la pauvreté et l’abjection” (1898) in Foucauld, *Petit frère de Jésus*, Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 2003, 41-168; “Lecture du Saint Évangile selon saint Matthieu” (1899) in Foucauld *Commentaire de saint Matthieu*, (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1989).

⁴⁸² In John can be found “des principes propres à régler toute notre vie, principes qui d’un mot éclairent toute notre route sur la terre et servent de direction à tous nos pas” Bouvier, 74.

⁴⁸³ “Il faut tâcher de vous imprégner de l’esprit de Jésus en lisant et relisant, méditant et reméditant sans cesse ses paroles et ses exemples; qu’ils fassent dans nos âmes comme la goutte d’eau qui tombe et retombe sur une dalle toujours à la même

This stress on the importance of the Bible, when used as a source for the imitation of Jesus, could have a basis in Foucauld's experiences with Islam. The Qur'an lies at the heart of Islam as the uncreated Word of God. As God's revelation for humanity, sections of the Qur'an are memorized. Memorizing the Qur'an in its entirety is considered a great spiritual accomplishment. Islam places such importance on the reading of the Qur'an that it is the most read, and memorized, of any sacred text.⁴⁸⁵ Having studied Islam and the Qur'an, Foucauld may have internalized the importance of the text and transferred it to Christianity.

Reading the Bible had been an important element in Foucauld's spiritual life since his conversion.⁴⁸⁶ Foucauld explained that his interest in the scriptures lay in the fact that "it is the Word of our heavenly Father".⁴⁸⁷ The difference in the use of the uppercase and lowercase 'w' when speaking about the Bible and Jesus has become a recent discussion within Christian evangelical circles, especially regarding how it relates to the Christian communities' interaction with Islam. Due to a trend

place..." Letter to Louis Massignon 22 July 1914; Six, *L'Amour*, 166-7; quoted in Bouvier, 75; translated to English by Hillyer, 71-2.

⁴⁸⁴ "un Évangile vivant", Bouvier, 76. "Par leur exemple, les frères et soeurs doivent être une predication vivante: chacun d'eux doit être un modèle de vie évangélique; en les voyant on doit voir ce qu'est la vie chrétienne, ce qu'est la religion chrétienne, ce qu'est l'Évangile, ce qu'est Jésus. La différent entre leur vie et la vie des non-chrétiens doit faire paraître avec éclat où est la vérité. Ils doivent être un Évangile vivant: les personnes éloignées de Jésus, et spécialement les infidels, doivent, sans livres et sans paroles, connaître l'Évangile par la vue de leur vie." Article XXVIII, Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 647.

⁴⁸⁵ Caesar E. Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 7th ed. (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 2003), 79.

⁴⁸⁶ Bouvier, 75; In 1891 Foucauld complained that he could not read the Bible at Akbès as much as he would like or is used to because of the manual labour; Hillyer, 71.

⁴⁸⁷ 21 May, 1893; Bazin, 92.

within the last 60 years to compare the two revelations of God: Jesus and the Qur'an, as opposed to the comparing the two scriptures, there has been an effort to refer to Jesus as the true revelation, as the "Word" while the Bible become the "word", not comparable to either the Jesus or the Qur'an.⁴⁸⁸ This is not to say that Foucauld would have been aware of these modern concerns, but his reference to the Bible as the "Word" and his desire to become a "living Gospel" are interesting examples of a potential Islamic influence in his understanding of the Christian Bible as revelation.

Mission to the Muslims of Algeria

Foucauld went through periods when he understood the model of Nazareth in rigid, almost literal terms. Over time, Foucauld's thought evolved⁴⁸⁹ and came closer to his spiritual director's advice, that Nazareth was wherever one worked with Jesus in poverty and silence.⁴⁹⁰ After much soul searching, and a failed attempt at purchasing the Mount of Beatitudes and gaining permission to found his order in the Holy Land,⁴⁹¹ Foucauld, unable to make a decision about what to do and denied the advice of his spiritual advisor due to the inadequacies of the post, left the Holy Land for France in August 1900.⁴⁹² While visiting Rome to obtain permission to enter the

⁴⁸⁸ James A. Tebbe, "Comparing Christ and Qur'an, A Brief Theological History and Assessment of Liabilities" in *International Review of Mission* Vol. LXXXVIII No. 351 (1999), 414-424, 416-7.

⁴⁸⁹ Hillyer, 78-95; Bouvier 133-180.

⁴⁹⁰ Hillyer, 78; LAH 2 August 1896, 27 January 1897, 16 September 1898.

⁴⁹¹ "I saw the Patriarch, and I told him what I had to say to him. And, although he dismissed me quickly enough, I am very pleased...I am in deep peace and great joy: I have but one thing to fear; being unfaithful to grace..." Letter to a friend 28 June 1900; Bazin, 134.

⁴⁹² Although Foucauld did not know that. He left for France with every intention of returning following his preparation for ordination. He still considered the purchase of the Mount of Beatitudes to be a viable plan and intended to beg for the necessary funds in France, Hillyer, 103. From Rome 3 September 1900 "I think that I wrote

priesthood, Foucauld had met a missionary to Ethiopia and was reminded of his own travels in Africa.⁴⁹³ The topic was raised again when he was preparing for ordination at Notre-Dame-des-Nieges. One of the novices had been interested in Foucauld's geographic work and asked him about his time in Morocco.⁴⁹⁴ Reminded yet again of the debt he owed the country that was in such a state of poverty and, in his opinion, in moral decay, when he became a priest on June 9, 1901 he intended to minister to Morocco:

My retreats for the diaconate and priesthood made me see that the life of Nazareth which appeared to be my vocation must be led not in my beloved Holy Land, but among souls most in need of the physician, sheep most in need of a shepherd. The heavenly feast of which I was about to be a minister must be offered not to kinsmen and rich neighbours, but to the halt, the blind, and the poor – that is to say, to souls lacking priests.⁴⁹⁵

Foucauld spent almost a year at Notre-Dame des Neiges, silently preparing for his ordination and allowing his understanding of imitating Christ in his Incarnation to mature. Towards the end of his life Foucauld wrote that “[w]hen one is filled with Jesus, one is full of charity. One goes to those one would save, as Jesus went to them in becoming incarnate...”⁴⁹⁶ The response to God's offering of love, a total love of God, eventually manifested itself in a desire for missionary work. Foucauld continued to use the model of the Incarnation in his understanding of the nature of this work. In a continuation of his view that every moment of the

you that it is no longer a question of my living on the Mount of Beatitudes: according to the Abbé's advice, after being ordained a priest, I shall return to Nazareth, where I shall continue to live as a priest, but in the shade” Bazin, 139.

⁴⁹³ Antier, 174.

⁴⁹⁴ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 118.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter to Abbé Caron, Vicar-General of Versailles 8 April 1905; Bazin, 140-141.

⁴⁹⁶ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 209.

Incarnation was ripe with the power of salvation, The Visitation had become a point of devotion for Foucauld, and a model for evangelization. Foucauld was struck by the idea that God could exist silently among men and bring about their sanctification. He was inspired by the story of the Visitation, when a pregnant Mary visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. In a meditation written in 1898 Foucauld understood the story as a personal instruction from Jesus:

I made my Mother take me to the home where John was to be born...Not only her did I urge along to sanctify others as soon as she possessed me, but I do so to all other souls to whom I give myself...to all those who possess me but have not yet been given a mission to preach, I say to these, let them sanctify souls by carrying me in silence amongst them.⁴⁹⁷

Foucauld prayed to be a vessel for such a visitation, to bring the hidden Jesus silently, without preaching, to Muslims.

Foucauld was able to accept a model of evangelization that did not include preaching because of his own understanding of Islam. Based on his experiences and then given a theological foundation in his emphasis on the Incarnation, Foucauld had an appreciation for Islam that was in contrast to previous centuries of Catholic salvation-pessimism.⁴⁹⁸ Foucauld makes several statements in which he indicates that he is open to the possibility of Muslims in heaven. In a conversation with Doctor Dhauteville, a Protestant, he affirmed his belief that good Muslims, and good Protestants, would be welcome in heaven: “I am not here, not to convert the Tuareg in a single stroke, but to try to understand them and improve them. I am certain the

⁴⁹⁷ Foucauld, *Meditations*, 98-99.

⁴⁹⁸ Gavin D’Costa, “Catholicism and World Religions: A Theological and Phenomenological Account” in *The Catholic Church and the World Religions*, ed. Gavin D’Costa (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 2.

Lord will welcome in heaven those who led good and upright lives, without their having to be Roman Catholics.”⁴⁹⁹ God “will not repulse anyone who comes to him”⁵⁰⁰ and in at least one case, Foucauld was at the deathbed of a Muslim woman, made no attempt to convert her, but merely reminded her of God in non-denominational terms.⁵⁰¹

While Foucauld never explains the nature of Islam or its role in salvation history, in a letter to Henry de Castries Foucauld mentions Mohammed⁵⁰² in relation to Luther and Calvin,⁵⁰³ giving an indication of his understanding of Islam. Foucauld understood Islam then, in a traditionally Christian way, as a heresy.⁵⁰⁴ In other letters he describes Islam as containing truth amidst its errors⁵⁰⁵ and, in that way, is not

⁴⁹⁹ quoted in Antier, 266.

⁵⁰⁰ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 213.

⁵⁰¹ Bazin, 304-305.

⁵⁰² Foucauld does not consider Mohammed a prophet. Muhammed was not mentioned in any Vatican II documents, see Christian W. Troll, “Catholicism and Islam” in *The Catholic Church and the World Religions*, ed. Gavin D’Costa (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 96-97. For an analysis of the issues surrounding recognition of Muhammad’s prophethood, see David A. Kerr, “‘He Walked in the Path of the Prophets’: Toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad,” in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Zaidan Haddad (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 426-446. For a modern missionary’s perspective, see Jacques Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (New York: Crossroads, 1989).

⁵⁰³ “Quand une personne intelligente parle, elle se fait comprendre: elle se fait toujours comprendre d’hommes qu’elle voit souvent, à qui elle parle familièrement, avec qui elle s’entretient chaque jour – S’ils ont mal compris, elle le voit et s’explique – Mahomet, Luther, Calvin se sont fait comprendre; tous ceux qui veulent enseigner quelque chose se font comprendre.” LHC 1 November 1909; Foucauld, *Castries*, 185.

⁵⁰⁴ Sidney Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 41-42; Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

⁵⁰⁵ LHC 15 July 1901 “les vérités qui peuvent subsister au milieu des erreurs soient un bien, et restent capables de produire des grands et vrais biens, ce qui arrive pour l’Islam” LHC 15 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90. *Nostra Aetate* states that other

unreasonable, unlike the pagans.⁵⁰⁶ This alignment with some form of ‘truth’ may be the foundation of Foucauld’s belief that Muslims are able to enter heaven. Foucauld never expresses an interest in trying to discover, or interact with Islam as a religion tradition, after his conversio.

While Foucauld had a lack of interest in Islam, either as a theological problem or as a helpful tool for Christianity, he had infinite time for Muslims. In Foucauld’s understanding, the Incarnation had revealed a view of humanity that was all encompassing and did not differentiate along religious boundaries. It was from within this conception of humanity’s relationship with God that Foucauld understood his relationship with Muslims. In his first letter to his friend Henry de Castries from Beni Abbès, Foucauld asked him to “Pray to God that I am truly a brother to all the souls of this country.”⁵⁰⁷ One of the concepts most famously attributed to Foucauld is the idea of the universal brother. This is a brotherhood shared in Christ.

Foucauld’s conversion experience had instilled in him a belief in God as a loving Father.⁵⁰⁸ God, presented to Foucauld through the love of his family, which he in turn sacrificed to join accept the monastic life, *was* a loving family:

religions, “often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men” D’Costa, 20 and *Ad Gentes* states that “[Missionaries] should be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word which lie hidden among them,” see Martin Ganeri, “The Catholic Magisterium and World Religions,” in *A Catholic-Shi’a Dialogue: Ethics in Today’s Society*, eds. Anthony O’Mahony, Timothy Wright and Mohammad Ali Shomali (London: Melisende, 2008), 30.

⁵⁰⁶ “Leur religion n'est point déraisonnable comme celle des idolâtres, et avec des erreurs elle contient des vérités...” Letter to Monsieur Jorrand 7 March 1908; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 263.

⁵⁰⁷ “Priez Dieu pour que je sois vraiment le frère de tous les âmes de ce pays” LHC 29 November 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 113.

⁵⁰⁸ Bouvier, 53-55.

Thank you, my God, for the sweet words of consolation you give us here: 'My father and my mother left me, but the Lord took me.' You replace our parents, you serve as our father and our mother, and with what perfection, my God! With what sweetness to the soul, that's what orphans know, my God! This is what all those know who have abandoned their families, and the world, that you care so gently for everything. Thank you for saying it in words so tender.⁵⁰⁹

Foucauld's understanding of God was that of a loving God. He came to this conclusion by meditating on the miracles of God, most importantly the Incarnation:

The goodness of God led him to create creatures to participate in the wealth of his happiness and glory, and this goodness has brought the incarnation, through which he considered excellent not only to obtain for man salvation but also a high degree of holiness...⁵¹⁰

Through the Incarnation, God's love elevates and joins together all of humanity. In essence, God as Father presents humanity with a family. Bouvier explains Foucauld's thought: "By the Incarnation [...] the Son, without ceasing to be the Son of God, is made brother and united to all human beings."⁵¹¹ Not only does he present

⁵⁰⁹ "Merci, mon Dieu, des douces paroles de consolation que vous nous donnez icic: <<Mon père et ma mère m'ont laissé, mais le Seigneur m'a pris.>> Vous remplacez nos parents, vous nous tenez lieu de père et de mère, et avec quelle perfection, mon Dieu! Avec quelle douceur pour l'âme, c'est ce que savent les orphelins, mon Dieu! C'est ce que savent tous ceux qui ont abandonné leur famille, le monde, et à qui vous tenez si doucement lieu de tout. Merci de nous le dire en des termes si tendres" 1897, Foucauld, *Méditations sur les psaumes* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 2002), 76.

⁵¹⁰ "De même que la bonté de Dieu l'a porté à créer pour faire participer des créatures aux richesses de son bonheur et de sa gloire, de même cette bonté l'a porté à faire l'incarnation, moyen qu'elle a jugé excellemment bon pour faire obtenir à l'homme non seulement le salut mais un hautdegré de sainteté" 6 November 1897; Foucauld, *Dernière*, 60.

⁵¹¹ "Par son Incarnation, où se réalise l'Alliance annoncée et attendue, le Fils, sans cesser d'être le Fils de Dieu, s'est fait frère (Hb 2, 10-18) et solidaire de tout humain." Bouvier, 179.

himself as Father, but he also gifts humanity with a brother, making communion with God as simple as relating to a loving family.⁵¹²

Having sinned so seriously in his past, including considering conversion to Islam, Foucauld felt that his conversion was based on the fact that God had never stopped protecting and loving him.⁵¹³ God had never stopped loving him; God had never stopped calling him. Despite his unbelief, he had still belonged to God. This belonging to God, the calling of God the Father as father, was a part of a calling for all humanity:

To be a father is to produce a being similar to oneself: God is more truly our father than any human father: he alone created us, is our true father... he loves every man like a father, an immense love, a love truly paternal, and divinely paternal, as a God who is truly Father.⁵¹⁴

All humanity, Christians or not, belong to this family that God has given us by the Incarnation.

Colonialism

Sometimes the idea of universal brother has been used to present Foucauld's work as irreconcilable with his colonial involvement. As Chatelard outlines: "this universality is habitually linked to an international perspective that completely

⁵¹² 4 February 1898; Foucauld, *Considerations*, 124-5.

⁵¹³ "Oh! Mon Dieu comme vous aviez la main sur moi, et comme je la sentais peu! Que vous êtes bon! Que vous êtes bon! Comme vous m'avez gardé! Comme vous me couviez sous vos ailes lorsque je ne croyais même pas à votre existence." 8 November 1897; Foucauld, *Dernière*, 114.

⁵¹⁴ "Être père c'est produire un être semblable à soi: Dieu est donc bien plus vraiment notre père qu'aucun père humain: lui seul produit crée, est vraiment père...il aime donc chaque homme comme père, d'un amour immense, d'un amour vraiment paternel, et divinement paternel, comme aime un Dieu qui est vraiment Père " Foucauld, *Voyager*, 32.

escaped Charles de Foucauld... it is not easy to be a ‘brother without borders’”.⁵¹⁵ In fact, French colonialism bolstered the familial connection that Foucauld felt towards the Muslims of Algeria.⁵¹⁶ In his Directory, written in 1909 and redacted until his death, Foucauld wrote, “the country [literally, ‘fatherland’] is an extension of the family... consequently the colonies of the country, are part of the big national family.”⁵¹⁷ Foucauld supported the joining of religion and republicanism in France’s *mission civilatrice*⁵¹⁸ and combined with his Gospel message was the message of the French Revolution: Liberty Equality, and Fraternity. He frequently quoted both “texts” in the same passage.⁵¹⁹ Yet his conception of brotherhood between men did not always mean that he was a welcome supporter of colonial practices. Even when they were given leave to operate in an area French missionaries were not always willing to act in support of government policies.⁵²⁰

Foucauld first identified himself as a “brother” in *Reconnaissance au Maroc*, the written account of his trip to Morocco. He was able to fit in very well, and the

⁵¹⁵ “cette visée universalite est habituellement associée à une perspective internationale qui échappait totalement à Charles de Foucauld...il n’est pas facile d’en faire un ‘frère sans frontières’” Chatleard, *Tamanrasset*, 156.

⁵¹⁶ Bouvier, 307-8.

⁵¹⁷ “La patrie est l’extension de la famille...conséquent des colonies de la patrie, qui font partie de la grande famille nationale.” Article XXXVIII, Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 673

⁵¹⁸ Lahourai Addi, “Colonial Mythologies: Algeria in the French Imagination,” in *Franco-Arab Encounters*, eds. L. Carl Brown and Matthew S. Gordon (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1996), 100.

⁵¹⁹ Latham, “Silent Witness,” 54.

⁵²⁰ An excellent study of the tensions within French colonialism between the Republicans and the Catholic Church is J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided, Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Jews and Muslims with whom he interacted often referred him to as a brother.⁵²¹

This weighed on him as he wrote his account of his journey in his flat in Paris and struggled with religious belief. In the Avant-Propos he refers to the fact that his disguise made him a “faux frère”.⁵²² Louis Massignon had had a similar experience in Egypt:

I myself had tried on two separate occasions, with great intensity, to comprehend and to penetrate the Islamic way of life in the villages, where I thought the *real* Muslims lived... The failure of my first attempt to really reach the Muslims was due to that fact that, even though I was well prepared linguistically for the challenge which faced me, I had idly sought an unwholesome hospitality, the false asesis of physical humiliation, the perverse abandonment of my real self in the garb of a *fellah*, crawling with lice which I scratched off my chest unable to close my eyes because they were infested with flies.⁵²³

Foucauld’s understanding of brotherhood was an issue of equality. It was “the intention to be, and to be seen, in a relation of basic equality with the other, whoever that ‘other’ might be.”⁵²⁴

It was not merely a matter of lowering himself, but also of raising the condition of others. That meant equality before God and also before the state. Almost immediately upon settling in Beni Abbès Foucauld set to work taking on both the local Muslim customs and exposing the failures of French colonialism by tackling

⁵²¹ Bazin, 35, 47.

⁵²² Foucauld, *Reconnaissance*, xi.

⁵²³ Quoted in Giulio Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon 1883-1962 Christian Ecumenist*, ed. and trans. Allan Harris Cutler (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 41.

⁵²⁴ Latham, “Silent Witness,” 56.

the issue of slavery.⁵²⁵ Infuriated by the acceptance of slavery by France, Foucauld protested as loudly as he dared, or his superiors dared to allow him,⁵²⁶ in the current climate of clerical persecution in France, using both the gospel of the Lord and the gospel of the country to argue his cause.⁵²⁷ Despite the failure of his attempt to abolish slavery, he was a vocal proponent of assimilating the Algerians into France: “a progressive integration of the Muslims of Algeria or other conquered territories, such as Morocco, into French society.”⁵²⁸ This integration would not be a quick process but something that needed to be worked towards, nonetheless. He explained in a letter to a local army captain in 1916, “I am persuaded that what we must seek, for the native peoples of our colonies, is not a rapid assimilation, that is impossible, but what we are asking for is an assimilation in generations and generations... not only French nationality and education, but a French mentality.”⁵²⁹ It would be the

⁵²⁵ The Muslim-run the slave trade in Africa was highlighted in the 1888 papal encyclical, *In Plurimis*. See, Andrew Unsworth, “Louis Massignon, the Holy See, and the Ecclesial Transition from ‘*Immortale Dei*’ to ‘*Nostra Aetate*’” *ARAM* 20 (2008): 299-316, 302.

⁵²⁶ Guérin: “We must consider carefully the circumstances in which we find ourselves and take care that we do not have taken from us the means through which we can do a little good by making grand gestures that can have *no* result.” “Given public opinion on the subject of converting the Mussulmans, it is best not to attract the attention of those who surround us.”... “We must... never contemplate making an official denunciation of what happens in these countries.” Fleming, 148-9.

⁵²⁷ “It is hypocrisy to put on stamps and everything else, ‘liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights,’ you who fetter slaves and condemn to the galleys those making a lie of what you print on your banknote; you who steal children from their parents and sell them publicly; you who punish the theft of a chicken and allow that of a human being.” Annie of Jesus, ; Hugues Didier, “Charles de Foucauld et l’Algérie.” In *Courrier de la Fraternité séculière Charles de Foucauld* No. 131 (2007-8): 35-47. Fleming, 146-9.

⁵²⁸ “une integration progressive des musulmans d’Algérie ou d’autres territoires conquis ou à conquérir, tel le Maroc, à la société français “ Didier, “l’Algérie”, 45.

⁵²⁹ “Je suis persuade que ce que nous devons chercher pour les indigènes de nos colonies, ce n’est ni l’assimilation rapide, elle est impossible, l’assimilation

fulfilment of their brotherly destiny: “these younger brothers become brothers equal to us, like us.”⁵³⁰

He became more and more aware as time passed that his own relationship with the military had the power to derail his efforts. To obtain permission to enter Algeria, or Morocco as was his original plan, Foucauld needed approval from religious authorities - Mgr. Guérin the Perfect Apostolic of the Sahara and Mgr. Livinhac, Superior-General of the White Fathers⁵³¹ - and from the government and the military. Contacting the military, while involving official letters and requests also involved calling in old favours and friendships. It was during this time that Foucauld sent his first letter to Henry Castries, an old comrade of Louis de Foucauld, outlining his plans for a hermitage and asking for his prayers for “our humble project... you who so love Algeria and Morocco.”⁵³² The directeur des Affaires indigènes à Alger, Commandant Lacroix, was an old friend from Saint-Cyr. It was he who took the “necessary steps”⁵³³ to ensure that Foucauld would receive the necessary permission during the anti-clerical government of Waldeck-Rousseau.⁵³⁴

demandent des générations et des générations... non seulement la nationalité et l’instruction française, mais la mentalité française” Letter to Captain Duclos 4 March 1916, Muller 76; Didier, “Algerie,” 46.

⁵³⁰ Letter to Fitz-James, 11 December 1911, quoted in Antier, 292.

⁵³¹ The letters written by Abbé Huvelin, the Abbot of Notre-Dame des Neiges, the Prior of Notre-Dame of Stauëli, Foucauld’s bishop, the Bishop of Viviers, and Foucauld himself to these religious authorities can be found in their totality and translated to English in Bazin 143-147. It is interesting to note all but two, those written by Dom Henri of Stauëli and Foucauld himself, discuss his military experience as a reason why he should be allowed to go.

⁵³² “notre humble projet...vous qui aimez tant l’Algérie et le Maroc” 23 June 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 85; Muller 35.

⁵³³ Bazin, 148; Muller, 36.

⁵³⁴ Antier, 180.

No priest was allowed to live in the Sahara unless they lived near a garrison,⁵³⁵ and Foucauld craftily highlighted his eagerness to “give spiritual help to our soldiers” while making it known that his purpose was “*above all* to sanctify the infidel populations”.⁵³⁶ At Beni Abbès Foucauld was in daily contact with the soldiers at the nearby garrison. They built his hermitage and he essentially acted as a chaplain. The soldiers attended Mass in his chapel, he heard their confessions, and gave them biblical instruction.⁵³⁷ In 1903 Foucauld rearranged his travel plans so that he could be of assistance at the battle of Taghit where he administered the sacrament to all of the wounded.⁵³⁸

Foucauld’s relationship with the military took on another dimension when he began to join them on expeditionary trips to the south of the country. A former friend, Captain Henri Laperrine, who commanded the country from In Salah to the Oases Territory and was in the process of subduing the nomadic Tuareg, approached him in 1903.⁵³⁹ He wanted Foucauld’s help with this pacification of the Tuaregs. The White Fathers had made themselves unpopular with both the government and the military.⁵⁴⁰ Affiliated with, but yet not a part of either the colonial government or the missionaries, Foucauld was the obvious choice to aid Laperrine in this endeavor.

Laperrine had no official permission to include Foucauld in the expeditions, and it is clear from his writings that he considered Foucauld’s previous military

⁵³⁵ Fleming, 184.

⁵³⁶ Letter to Mgr Bazin, 22 August 1901; Bazin 145.

⁵³⁷ Six, *Itinéraire*, 274.

⁵³⁸ Bazin, 202-207.

⁵³⁹ For a survey of the friendship between Foucauld and Laperrine and their roles in the conquest of Algeria, see Fergus Felming, *Sword and the Cross* (London: Granta Books, 2003).

⁵⁴⁰ Six, ‘Postérité’, 475; Shorter, 2.

experience and love of France to be the true benefit of his choice of companion.⁵⁴¹

Foucauld has sometimes been accused of being an agent of colonialism, a spy, a charge that his postulator for canonization, Maurice Bouvier, has even had to address.⁵⁴² Although Laperrine manipulated Foucauld's original decision to enter southern Algeria by feeding him an exaggerated story of a Tuareg woman who had helped the survivors of the Flatters' massacre and was ripe for conversion,⁵⁴³ Foucauld was not necessarily aware of the degree to which he was intruding. Although he was accompanied by the military, when it came time to decide upon a community in which to settle he always asked permission⁵⁴⁴ and only settled in Tamanrasset on the invitation of Mousa ag Amenstane. Yet Foucauld was not completely naive. He lamented his situation in a letter to his sister:

The indigenous people receive us well. It is not sincere; they cede to necessity. Will they be able to distinguish between soldiers and priests and see in us universal brothers?⁵⁴⁵

From his first days at Tamanrasset Foucauld understood that he had a responsibility "through friendship to undermine the walls of suspicion and ignorance that separated the French from the Touareg."⁵⁴⁶ In many ways his emphasis was on

⁵⁴¹ Fleming, 168-176.

⁵⁴² Muller, 78.

⁵⁴³ Bazin 200-201; Fleming 168-9.

⁵⁴⁴ July 29 1904 "Altitude about 1000 metres, Very favourable spot...Arir ag Bedda gave us a good welcome...M. Roussel asked him if I could stay at Ideles. He said: no."; August 4 1904 "about 2000 meters above sea level; cold; cold often rains, snows...M. Roussel asked Si Mohammed ben Ottman if I could stay at Tazerouk. He replied: no." Fleming, 176.

⁵⁴⁵ LMB 3 July 1904; quoted in Chatelard, 157; English translation Antier, 220.

⁵⁴⁶ LHC 28 October 1905 "Vous savez ce que je cherche chez les Touareg; les apprivoiser, lier amitié avec eux, faire tomber peu à peu ce mur de preventions, d'ombrage, de defiance, d'ignorance, wui les sépare de nous... Ce n'est pas l'oeuvre

friendship, as opposed to brotherhood.⁵⁴⁷ At first, it was excessively difficult and he found no way to penetrate the community.⁵⁴⁸ The situation changed, however, when he fell seriously ill in 1908, and it was the local Touareg who nursed him. After Foucauld's recovery, his friend Lapperrine reported "he is more popular than ever among them".⁵⁴⁹ Ian Latham has asserted that it was this friendship of reciprocity, based on a mutual need for each other that allowed Foucauld to shift from being viewed as an outsider to becoming a member of the community.⁵⁵⁰ It was through the intimacy of convalescence that Foucauld first began to discuss religion with the Tuaregs.⁵⁵¹

Over the years he provided council and advice, using the example of God's instructions in the "holy books".⁵⁵² Foucauld's relationship with the Musa developed into something akin to that of the Islamic master and acolyte.⁵⁵³ He even created a set of prayer beads that could be used by both Muslims and Christians. He gave them to the local women and they would all pray together on the small beads, "My God, I love thee" and on the larger beads "My God, I love thee with my whole heart".⁵⁵⁴ Over time, they became a community for him, not just physically, but spiritually as well.

d'un jour; je commence à défricher, d'autres suivront qui continueront." Foucauld, *Castries*, 176; English translation Hillyer, 126.

⁵⁴⁷ Latham, "Silent Witness," 56; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 150-162.

⁵⁴⁸ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 247-264.

⁵⁴⁹ Latham, "Silent Witness," 57.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 56-58;

⁵⁵¹ Bazin, 267.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, 243.

⁵⁵³ Emma Loosley, "The Challenge of Monasticism: Louis Massignon and the Hospitality of Abraham" *ARAM* 20 (2008), 317-327, 321.

⁵⁵⁴ Antier, 273; Bazin, 282; Preminger, 229. Interfaith prayer is not accepted by the Church "given our deep differences in understanding God," D'Costa, 25-26.

Inculturation and Continual Conversion

Foucauld's use of Islamic practices, such as his dress that "might have some kinship with the clothes of certain Orientals"⁵⁵⁵, his study and use of the local languages, his quotations from the Qur'an,⁵⁵⁶ and use of the term *zawiya*,⁵⁵⁷ could be interpreted as inculturation. That is to say, he was presenting Christianity to Muslims in an Islamic way to make it easier for them to receive. Missionaries often accepted, and took on the practices of as much of the local culture as was possible and "molded Christianity as need dictated".⁵⁵⁸ Foucauld's decision to mix such techniques into his Christian spirituality was based on his own experiences, however, and as such was not inculturation. As Ian Latham explained:

the mental movement is the exact opposite of that normally invoked for practicing inculturation. Charles does not start from his Christian belief and practice, moving towards an appropriate Muslim adaptation; rather, he begins by reflecting on the truth and value of his Muslim experience ... and 'completes' that experience with the explicit content and centre of that faith: the living person of Jesus Christ... Islam is for him the way to Christ, who becomes its subjective fulfilment"⁵⁵⁹

At Tamanrasset, Foucauld had an opportunity to complete a circle of spiritual discovery. After being exposed to the transcendent God in the otherness of Islam, Foucauld discovered the immanent Jesus, and he returned to the Muslim world to find Christ through Muslims. Foucauld was not performing these acts for the benefit

⁵⁵⁵ Bazin, 111.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 243.

⁵⁵⁷ "Si Dieu realize mes desires de zaoui'a dans le Sahara..." LHC 15 July 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 90.

⁵⁵⁸ Daughton, 70-71. See D'Costa, 21-26.

⁵⁵⁹ Latham, "Silent Witness," 54.

of the Muslims alone. He was getting important spiritual nourishment from his exposure to Muslims.

Two of Foucauld's most common prayers for his own spiritual development were for an increase in his ability to love,⁵⁶⁰ and for his own conversion.⁵⁶¹ These prayers, however, were for essentially the same thing. Latham writes:

...he is constantly both reminding himself and recommending to his Muslim visitors the twin commandment of 'Love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself'... Jesus comes to 'fulfill' this 'law' of the human heart, in his own life, and then in the life of his followers. But the 'law' itself is the same for all, Christian or Muslim. In this perspective, which Charles does not explicate but which he seems to imply, the call to 'conversion' of the other is fundamentally the same as the call to the 'conversion' of oneself: a call Charles constantly recalls, 'Lord, convert me!'⁵⁶²

The Catholic Church describes conversion as a continual process for the Christian, an "uninterrupted task",⁵⁶³ and a constant reaffirmation of their Christianity.

Foucauld understood the conversion of a Christian to go hand in hand with the conversion of others: "Loving our neighbour – that is, loving all human beings as we do ourselves – consists in making our life's work the salvation of both the souls of others and our own souls."⁵⁶⁴

Just as Christians could act as catalysts for conversion for Muslims, so Muslims could also assist in the conversion process. One of the ways that a Christian

⁵⁶⁰ "c'est la pratique du 2e commandement, l'amour du prochain comme soi-même, si semblable au 1er, l'amour de Dieu par dessus tout. Priez pour moi, bien cher ami, pour que j'obéisse fidèlement au 2 commandements, si divinement doux." LHC 10 December 1911; Foucauld, *Castries*, 194;

⁵⁶¹ Annie of Jesus, 82; Letter to Paul Voillard 6 May 1907; Charles de Foucauld, *Correspondances Sahariennes* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1998), 833.

⁵⁶² Latham, "Silent Witness," 61.

⁵⁶³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1428

⁵⁶⁴ Letter to Marie de Blic 31 July 1916; quoted in Muller 245.

continues this process of conversion, or reaffirmation, is to recognize Jesus: “The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced.”⁵⁶⁵

Jesus acts as the lynchpin in a cycle that Foucauld attempted to complete in Tamanrasset: from transcendence to immanence to a very Christian trans-immanence,⁵⁶⁶ from an omnipresent God, to a God who became human, to a God present in *all* humanity.⁵⁶⁷ He followed Muslims to God, his family to Jesus, and he followed Christianity to find Jesus in the family of humanity.

On July 2, 1904, the feast of the Visitation, while on his first tour of Southern Algeria, Foucauld prayed to the Virgin Mary to “Continue your Visitation: visit the Tuaregs, Morocco, the Sahara, the infidels, and all souls, ... unworthy me; visit me, beloved mother ; convert me, I ask you on my knees...”⁵⁶⁸ Foucauld prayed to be a vessel for such a visitation such as Mary’s, to bring the hidden Jesus silently to Muslims. In this instance he also prays for his own visitation, to be moved and touched by a Jesus hidden in humanity. He prayed to see Jesus in Muslims, to see the Jesus hidden amongst Islam. Just as in Morocco, seeing men in prayer had led him to see God, in Tamanrasset he looked in man for God: “how compelled are we to seek

⁵⁶⁵ 1432.

⁵⁶⁶ “Christianity made the absolute claim that *Absolute Transcendence* had been permanently made Immanent without losing any of its absoluteness. Thus, another experience of Transcendence was given conceptual shape, first in the doctrine of the Incarnation and then in the doctrine of the Trinity. Properly stated, the problem shifted from transcendence-immanence, which is present in all forms of religious experience, to a *trans-immanence* whose heart is at the center of all Christological controversies. This is the heart also of the Trinitarian controversies. Christianity made the nature of Transcendence immanent forever in history.” José C. Nieto. *Religious Experience and Mysticism. Otherness as Experience of Transcendence*. New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1997, 19.

⁵⁶⁷ For the unity of humanity in modern Church teaching, see Ganeri, “Magisterium,” 27-29.

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Bazin, 224.

out Jesus and love him in the ‘least ones’, the sinners and the poor.’⁵⁶⁹ In so doing, it would affect a conversion of his heart.

Theologian José Nieto has argued that an awareness of God, particularly in a mystical sense, has its roots in community, and awareness of others. Looking at the Bible he demonstrates that the first religious experience is not founded on isolation but on a relationship with another:

The radical element of otherness in the companionship of Eve is overwhelming in the Adamic myth...Looking at *each other*, woman and man experienced guilt for the first time. Here the biblical myth injects the first human awareness of Transcendence with the feeling of guilt and transgression rather than love. Fear, nakedness, and awareness of each other as guilty ones constitute the original religious experience of the Paradisiac myth.⁵⁷⁰

The gift of Foucauld’s interaction with Islam was an awareness of transcendence. The first time was in Morocco, when the “sight of this faith, of those souls living in the continual presence of God, made me see something greater and more real than worldly occupations, *ad majora nati sumus*”.⁵⁷¹ He asks those coming to North Africa as Little Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart to “voir Jésus en tout humain”.⁵⁷² As Bouvier has noted,⁵⁷³ it was not a humanitarian mission but one based on a theology of inclusion. He called it a “sacrement du frère” not a

⁵⁶⁹ Annie of Jesus, 59.

⁵⁷⁰ Nieto, 7.

⁵⁷¹ LHC, 8 July 1901 “la vue de cette foi, de ces âmes vivant dans la continuelle presence de Dieu, m’a fait entrevoir quelque chose de plus grand et de plus vrai que les occupations mondaines: <<ad majora nati <<sumus>>...” Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

⁵⁷² Directory July 1916 Pratiques 8th, 1961 p. 125.

⁵⁷³ “Son service du prochain, en effet, si remarquable, n’est pas d’abord une manière d’exercer sa propension naturelle au don de lui-même, comme s’il avait été marqué depuis toujours par un appel de type humanitaire. La source de son dévouement et de sa fraternité est d’origine théologique, elle vient de sa foi et de la réponse d’amour à l’invitation faite par Jésus...” Bouvier, 313.

“sacrement du pauvre”.⁵⁷⁴ Muslims were Self but Other, a paradigm that would continue into France’s relationship with Algeria in the 21st century.⁵⁷⁵

In Tamanrasset, Foucauld was trying to make friends: “the friend of choice, a friend of the heart [soulmate]”,⁵⁷⁶ To do so, he was striving to find the good in man, the God in man. Bouvier has noted that beauty and goodness are the principal attributes of transcendental God, and that it is in discovering their beauty that one has knowledge of God.⁵⁷⁷ Bouvier sees this belief in Foucauld’s theology: “My God you are good for showing me your beauty in creatures!”⁵⁷⁸ When recounting interactions with Muslims, Foucauld tried to acknowledge their positive characteristics. For example, in his frequent descriptions of Mousa Agmantane Foucauld highlights his piety as a positive attribute.⁵⁷⁹ Foucauld struggled to ensure that his continued relationship with Muslims was a constant reaffirmation of, or a continual conversion to God by acknowledging the image of Jesus in them.

In this way Foucauld was in no way embarrassed or bothered by taking on Islamic practices or phrases, such as Allah akbar,⁵⁸⁰ or using Muslim behaviour as an

⁵⁷⁴ Bouvier, 314.

⁵⁷⁵ Gilles Kepel, “Self and Other: The Heart of the Franco-Arab Paradox”, in *Franco-Arab Encounters*, eds. L. Carl Brown and Matthew S. Gordon (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1996), 306-328.

⁵⁷⁶ “ami de choix, l’ami de coeur “Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 159.

⁵⁷⁷ Bouvier, 50.

⁵⁷⁸ “Mon Dieu que vous êtes bon de m’avoir montré votre beauté dans les créatures” Foucauld, *Dernière*, 49.

⁵⁷⁹ Bazin, 242.

⁵⁸⁰ “<<Allah akbar>> Dieu est plus grand, plus grand que toutes les choses que nous pouvons énumérer...” LHC 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 94; “...au delà de ce paisible et frais tableau on a les horizons presque immenses de la Hamada se perdant dans ce beau ciel du Sahara qui fait penser à l’infini et à Dieu – qui est plus grand = Allah Akbar?” LHC 29 November 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 112. Christian Troll, however, feels that use of this Islamic term denies God’s immanence: “[Allah

example in spiritual matters. When the fact that local marabouts traveled by foot Foucauld, inspired by their poverty, strove to walk everywhere.⁵⁸¹ Therein lies the benefit of community: “To be aware *is to be aware of*; therefore, pure self-consciousness without being aware of Otherness is itself nothingness.”⁵⁸² Taking on certain Islamic practices were both a means of reconnecting with Morocco and also a part of his imitation of Jesus. He was imitating Jesus in his last place.

Foucauld’s focus on the Incarnation, on an imitation of Jesus in his humanity, could be understood as flowing from his interaction with Muslims. Ali Merad feels that Foucauld’s imitation of Jesus is, “from the Muslim point of view, the most eloquent way to espouse the Gospel message.”⁵⁸³ He compares it to the imitation of Muhammad in Islam and describes it as the fulfilment of Qur’anic injunctions to Christians.⁵⁸⁴ There is another possible connection. It is never mentioned, but Foucauld’s reconnection with his Christian family and Christian literature was not his first reintroduction to Jesus Christ. Long before he picked up the Bible he had picked up the Qur’an. The Qur’an contains various accounts of the life of Jesus, including the virgin birth, but denies his divinity. In fact, it stresses those aspects of

akbar] implicitly denies to God the greatness of love that consists in binding Himself in solidarity with his creation to the extent of being willing to suffer and die on a cross, without thereby ceasing to be God.” Troll, 100.

⁵⁸¹ June 3 1903; Bazin, 188-189.

⁵⁸² Nieto, 209. It is similar of the thoughts of Stanislaw Grodz, who suggests “noble competition that inspires and encourages people to do what is good” as one aspect of “dialogical” approach to Christian missionary work, “ ‘Vie with Each Other in Good Works’: What Can a Roman Catholic Missionary Order Learn from Entering into Closer Contact with Muslims” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18, no. 2 (April 2007): 205-218.

⁵⁸³ Merad, 21.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 19-25.

the Incarnation, particularly the Annunciation,⁵⁸⁵ that Foucauld himself would later focus on. It could be argued that just as Foucauld was hidden in Morocco, Jesus is hidden in the Qur'an – a Christian among Muslims. Parallels can also be drawn between the Jesus in Nazareth and the Jesus in the Qur'an. In both cases Jesus is present but without divinity, or without an acknowledgment of divinity. This could be one aspect of why Foucauld was drawn to a hidden, Incarnated God. In Algeria Foucauld hid himself amongst the Muslims. His dress, his language skills, reinforced his refusal to completely align himself with France.⁵⁸⁶ Like Jesus in the Qur'an, as a fulfilment of his imitation of Jesus at Nazareth, Foucauld hid himself amongst the Muslims, and he hoped to sanctify them from within.

Conclusion

The experience of the immanent God, of Jesus in the Incarnation, was the catalyst for Foucauld's conversion. So different from the extreme transcendence of Islam, yet his recognition of God as Man may have its origins in his relationship with Muslims. It certainly led him back to them. His awareness of this mystery, his understanding of abjection and poverty, led him to see in the life of the Muslims of

⁵⁸⁵ See Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim* (Boston: Oneworld, 1999), 17-40; John Flannery, "Christ in Islam," *One in Christ* 41, no. 3 (2006): 27-36; Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany: State of New York Press, 1991), 3-7 and 156-166.

⁵⁸⁶ "...when Laperrine had decided to create a military post in the Ahaggar...the Father systematically refused to establish himself in the immediate proximity. More than that, finding the contacts were becoming too frequent, he tried to avoid them. He constructed a new hermitage...far from every route of communication...He only sought contacts with us again when they were useful to the cause." Quoted in Hillyer, 136.

North Africa the “last place” of Jesus. Foucauld was called to orientate his life towards them, to continually convert by seeing Jesus in the face of Muslims.

Foucauld’s life following his conversion became a continuous effort to imitate the hidden life of Jesus: love imitates, he asserted. He understood this imitation to necessitate the totalizing experience of the Incarnation, involving obedience, obscurity, work, and contemplation. Through his interpretation of the Visitation his imitation of Christ called him to “sanctify souls” by carrying Jesus to the Other. These two apparently contradictory impulses – to hide himself, yet to carry Christ to others – formed the essence of the tension in Foucauld’s vocational life.

Chapter Four: Asceticism and Eremiticism

Introduction

Understanding the vocation of Charles de Foucauld is central to understanding his life, mission, and relationship with Islam. Unfortunately such an understanding is not readily available. Foucauld wore many hats. He was an ordained priest but had no parish. He tried to live by a monastic rule but yet he did not have a community. He had a zeal for the conversion of souls but he did not preach. Charles de Foucauld lived a life of multiple and, on the surface, contradictory callings. He deeply respected human life, yet he desired his own death.⁵⁸⁷ Committed to a monastic life of peace he continued to assist the French colonial army until the day he died.⁵⁸⁸ He felt called to be a witness for Christianity before Islam but he also had a desire for solitude.⁵⁸⁹

While in many ways Foucauld was a unique individual who interpreted his relationship with Islam in an innovative way, he was also a man who deeply loved the Catholic Church and its traditions. How then, can we understand his life through

⁵⁸⁷ “If you know how I desire to end my poor and miserable life...” Summer 1902; Bazin 170; “Jen e puis pas dire que je désire la mort; je la souhaitais autrefois; maintenant je vois tant de bien à faire, tant d’âmes sans Pasteur, que je voudrais surtout faire un peu de bien et travailler un peu au salut de ces pauvres âmes” LMB 20 July 1914; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 129.

⁵⁸⁸ Muller, *Charles de Foucauld, frère universel ou moine-soldat?* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2002).

⁵⁸⁹ “... mais je suis moine, non missionnaire, fait pour le silence, non pour la parole; et pour avoir de l’influence à In Salah, il faudrait entretenir et créer des relations, aller voir et recevoir des visites, ce qui n’est pas ma vocation. Je tâche seulement d’ouvrir un peu la voie à ce qui sera votre oeuvre.” Letter to Père Guérin (LPG) 2 July 1907; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 528.

the living traditions of the Church? Recently the method has been to describe Foucauld with the terms that he himself used. Antoine Chatelard prefers to use the term “missionary-monk” to describe Foucauld’s experiences. Jean-Francois Six had criticized this usage as being vague and not covering Foucauld’s range of life experiences.⁵⁹⁰ Six views Foucauld as someone whose life was concerned with the world, rather than the monastery and describes his life as “quasi-ermit à Nazareth, en moine quasi-cloître à Beni-Abbès, enfin en <<missionnaire isolé>> au Sahara”.⁵⁹¹

The main problem with these definitions of Foucauld’s vocation is that they start from a term that Foucauld himself used at a specific time, often in a letter to a friend or colleague,⁵⁹² and then try and explain his life’s work. There is also a tendency, because Foucauld did this himself, to describe his vocation as different at different times, as a vocation that changed. All of this is confused by the fact that Foucauld has inspired a variety of groups, cleric, monastic, and lay, that try and emulate his life.⁵⁹³ How is it possible to understand Foucauld’s vocation, when it seems to be all things to all people?

While trying to explain that Jesus fulfilled the promise of the Incarnation at every point in his life, Foucauld had to reach an understanding about the meaning of action. Maurice Bouvier has condensed Foucauld’s observations: “[t]he outward behaviour of a man during the good and the bad, that is the reality of a man’s life.”⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁰ Jean-François Six, Maurice Serpette, and Pierre Sourisseau, *Le testament du Charles de Foucauld* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 2.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*, 227.

⁵⁹² Letter to Father Antonin 13 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 273-276.

⁵⁹³ There are 19 different groups in the Foucauldian spiritual family.

⁵⁹⁴ “L’expression extérieure de la vie de l’homme situé dans le bien et le mal, c’est la réalité de la vie de l’homme.” Bouvier, 129.

The action of Foucauld's life, his reality, was strict asceticism. He performed "terrible mortifications"⁵⁹⁵ from before his conversion until the end of his life. This asceticism, given context and religious significance from his understanding of the Christian eremitical tradition, is the defining action of his religious life. It contributed significantly to his ability to develop a unique spirituality, which has inspired such a variety of different expressions, and allowed him to develop a relationship with Muslims which is regarded as a pioneer of interfaith relations. By situating this action within the tradition of the Church it is possible to learn more about a specifically Foucauldian "vocation."

Asceticism as Culture

Asceticism is often interpreted as a manifestation of religious or philosophical belief. Modern theorists have, however, engaged with asceticism as a universal, rather than a historical-religious, behaviour.⁵⁹⁶ In his book, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*,⁵⁹⁷ George Harpham theorizes about the relationship between asceticism and culture. He sees them as inherently interconnected. Like Michel Foucault, he understands culture to have an ethical nature. All cultures impose rules, written or unwritten, on their members that must be followed by denying the individual certain desires and behaviours: "Where there is

⁵⁹⁵ The recollections of Brother Michel. Quoted in Bazin, 253.

⁵⁹⁶ See the work of the Asceticism Group, a collection of scholars, mostly of the early Christian Church, who have published such titles as *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Ricahrd Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Asceticism and the New Testament*, ed. Leif E. Vaage and Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁵⁹⁷ George Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

culture there is asceticism, cultures structure asceticism, each in its own way, but do not impose it”.⁵⁹⁸ For Harpham, asceticism is the mode by which society functions. Asceticism enables communication within that culture and also between cultures. Because asceticism is the common feature of culture, it is also what is comparable between cultures and therefore allows us to understand and communicate with different societies.⁵⁹⁹ With definition in mind, it is beneficial to investigate Foucauld’s asceticism, as the only truly persistent behaviour – spanning both his pre and post conversion lifestyle, first as it regards his non-spiritual reality before looking at its meaning within a theological framework.

Prior to Foucauld’s decision to return with the army to Algeria in 1881, during which time he “showed himself to be a soldier and a leader”,⁶⁰⁰ there can be no doubt that he was a man of little restraint. As a teenager he had been expelled from boarding school in Paris for “[l]aziness and disobedience.”⁶⁰¹ Nicknamed “Le Porc”, “Piggy”, at military school, he almost turned away for premature obesity.⁶⁰² He blew through his inheritance, needing to be put under the control of a guardian.⁶⁰³ This had all changed, however, by 1885 when he was awarded the Gold Medal by the Royal Geographic Society his friend Henri Duveyrier acknowledged, “one does not know what is to be most admired, these fine and useful results, or the self-

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, xi.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Bazin, 11.

⁶⁰¹ Antier, 51.

⁶⁰² Ibid, 47.

⁶⁰³ Letter to a friend 9 April, 1887; quoted in Bazin, 72.

sacrifice, courage, and ascetic abnegations, thanks to which this young French officer has obtained them.”⁶⁰⁴

The single most important feature of the French concept of civilization was mastery over every aspect of life including the human body and social behaviour.⁶⁰⁵ In this sense the *mission civilisatrice* extended to the French themselves. It was because “the French believed they had triumphed over geography, climate, and disease to create new internal and external markets, and because they before all other nations had overcome oppression and suppression to form a democratic and rational government, that republican France deemed itself so civilized.”⁶⁰⁶ It was the perceived⁶⁰⁷ ability to exert control, even and especially over themselves, that gave the French power in the imperial age. Being “civilized” was what allowed them to acquire colonies to “open up new fields for [France’s] civilizing mission.”⁶⁰⁸

Maintaining French civilization was essential for the success of the civilizing mission. As Ernest Roume, the governor general of French West Africa explained, “The establishment and maintenance of order and security are the indispensable conditions for all progress...”.⁶⁰⁹ To maintain their mastery over the self, especially in the face of what was considered to be barbarous chaos, was of paramount importance. This was very literal in the case of soldiers to allow them to obtain and hold on to control in the colonies. Foucauld reportedly remarked: “The African army

⁶⁰⁴ Hillyer, 16.

⁶⁰⁵ Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 5.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

⁶⁰⁷ Victoria Thompson asserts that French control was often only skin deep, capable of manifesting itself in physical responses. Thompson, 24-31.

⁶⁰⁸ Quoted in Conkin, 12.

⁶⁰⁹ Quoted in Conklin, 51.

is still better than the European; half of the men in my company would have made excellent monks.”⁶¹⁰ The maintenance of “Frenchness” was also a tool of instruction, especially for those like Foucauld who believed in assimilation. In Tamanrasset, Foucauld instructed the assistant Senior Surgeon at Fort Motylinski about how to relate to the Tuaregs. Doctor Hérrison to “[m]ake them understand that a Frenchman's life is made up of peaceable honesty, work and production. *Show them* that the foundation of our peasant's lives is the same as theirs, that we resemble them, that we live in our country as they do, but in a more beautiful country.”⁶¹¹ Foucauld employed such a method himself⁶¹² and advocated it on other occasions.⁶¹³

Louis Massignon, in his defense of Foucauld against accusations that the assistance he lent to the military invalidated his relationship with the Muslims of North Africa, argued that Foucauld’s support of the military was “the only social solution capable of assuring the order and peace of the desert”.⁶¹⁴ Foucauld had personally experienced war as a child in Strasbourg. He had also been witness to the Hamidian massacres of the Ottoman Empire.⁶¹⁵ His good friend had been killed by the Tuareg while exploring the region.⁶¹⁶ Foucauld believed that order needed to be established in the region and was confident in France’s right to colonize with that

⁶¹⁰ Bazin 11.

⁶¹¹ The recollections of Doctor Hérrison, relating to the years 1909 and 1910. Quoted in Bazin, 286. Italics mine.

⁶¹² Aside from his day to day life, Foucauld took a young member of the Tuareg tribe, Oûksem ag Chikat, to France on an educational visit, Letter to Paul Voillard 12 July 1912; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 863-4.

⁶¹³ Letter to Duc de Foltz-James, Bazin, 308.

⁶¹⁴ “c’était alors la seule solution sociale capable d’assurer l’ordre et la paix au désert” quoted in Lucienne Portier, “Louis Massignon et Charles de Foucauld,” in *Louis Massignon*, ed. Jean-François Six (Paris: Éditions de l’Herne, 1970) 355.

⁶¹⁵ Bazin, 97.

⁶¹⁶ Letter to Mrquis de La Roche-Thulon 18 March 1905; Antier, 211.

goal in mind. On the other hand, if France refused to control themselves than they would have no hope of imposing order: “What I see of the officers of the Sudan saddens me. They appear to be pillagers, bandits, buccaneers. I fear that this great colonial empire, which could and should give birth to so much good [...] is presently only a cause for shame”.⁶¹⁷ While Foucauld facilitated the military presence in the region, he was also a blunt critic:

It is deplorable to send lightweights here, you know the kind I mean, and you can guess what contempt they inspire in the natives; on the Moroccan frontier we must have troops that do us honor and not men who inspire universal contempt. Europeans are represented in these parts only by lightweights and by the Foreign Legion.⁶¹⁸

He also extended his criticism to the culture in France.⁶¹⁹ Foucauld saw the fate of the people of the colonies as inextricably intertwined with the salvation of the French people.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁷ Antier, 217-8

⁶¹⁸ Fleming, 149.

⁶¹⁹ Letter to Comte de Foucauld, 3 April 1906 “Our civilized nations, which have among them many savages, many who are ignorant of primary truths and as violent as the Tuaregs...” Bazin, 246. Also questioned the French Catholic culture, Letter to abbé Caron 30 June 1909: “Let us return to poverty and Christian simplicity. What struck me most during those few days in France after nineteen years away was the advances made by the taste for costly vanities, and their appearance among all classes of society, even among the most Christian families, together with a great lack of depth and an addiction to worldly and frivolous distractions completely out of place in times as grave as these, in times of persecution, and in no way in harmony with the Christian life. The danger lies *in us*, not in our enemies.” Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 188.

⁶²⁰ “Il semble que le mal soit très profond. Ce sont des vertus fondamentales qui manquent, ou sont trop faibles: les vertus chrétiennes fondamentales elles-mêmes: *charité, humilité, douceur*. Elles sont faibles et mal comprises. La charité, qui est le fond de la religion [...] oblige tout Chrétien à aimer le prochain, c’est-à-dire tout humain, comme soi-même, et par conséquent à faire du salut du prochain, comme de son propre salut, la grande affaire de sa vie.” Letter to Joseph Hours (LJH) 3 May

Despite his support for French colonial goals, Foucauld's ascetic response to North Africa did not manifest itself in traditionally acceptable French ways. During his trip to Morocco, undoubtedly an exercise in self-discipline, Foucauld lived in filthy and degrading conditions. Although these actions were certainly “for France” and therefore acceptable, what challenges the idea of Foucauld as essentially French was his insistence on performing these behaviours, with certain hygienic modifications, both on his return to French North Africa and France proper.⁶²¹ Foucauld transposed North African practices into the heart of French civilization, and in so doing questioned the Republican French understanding of mastery over the self, and of civilization.

One response to pluralism is to find refuge in the ascetic behaviours of a preexisting culture. Such was the official French response to the colonies. An alternative response, which Foucauld employed, is to use asceticism to create a cultural response unique to the ascetic. In his article on the social function of asceticism, Richard Valantasis takes Harpham's argument a step further. Valantasis recognizes that asceticism is the transformation of an individual. Since asceticism is what allows the individual to relate to culture, than an ascetic is capable of creating culture:

At the center of ascetical activity is a self who, through behavioral changes seeks to become a different person, a new self; to become a different person in new relationships; and to become a different person in a new society that forms a new culture. As this new self emerges (in relationship to

1912; Charles de Foucauld, *Correspondances lyonnaises (1904-1916)* (Paris: Karthala, 2005), 90-91.

⁶²¹ “il s’installe à l’arabe, sans lit-il couche en burnous sur le tapis – et travaille en gandourah” Six, *Itinéraire*, 42.

itself, to others to society, to the world) it masters the behaviors that enable it at once to deconstruct the old self and to construct the new. Asceticism, then, constructs both the old and the reformed self and the culture in which these selves function”⁶²²

Asceticism is not merely that upon which culture is overlaid, but rather as a formative act, it can create culture. Not merely a creative force, asceticism can also function as an oppositional movement. One of the powers that asceticism has in society is its ability to oppose the dominant culture without overthrowing it.

An ascetic can participate in a number of different cultures at the same time.⁶²³ This is a position shared by the convert. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, converts frequently experience a destabilization of self during which they “do not know how to coherently organize the different (and often opposite) religious (and non religious) ideas which they have received from the encounter with the Christian message or which they have developed as a consequence of this encounter.”⁶²⁴ This inability to integrate causes problems for the convert within society. They can be incapable of integrating, or society can be unwilling to accept them. Leone poses the question: “How do converted people invent a language in order to recount and account for religious conversion?”⁶²⁵ In Foucauld's case, the language was the body. Harpham explains: “Ascetic discipline is a bodily act that points beyond itself, expressing an intention that forms, and yet transcends and negates the body... We look to a work of art for evidence of a will seeking expression by imposing itself

⁶²² Ricahrd Valantasis, “A Theory of the Social Function of Asceticism” in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 547.

⁶²³ Valantasis, “Social Function,” 549.

⁶²⁴ Leone, 79.

⁶²⁵ Leone, 80.

upon alien matter. The ascetic body in this sense an exemplary artifact: what the ascetics displayed to their audience was precisely their *form*.”⁶²⁶

Foucauld’s life shows someone struggling to integrate different, and sometimes oppositional, systems with varying degrees of success. As part of this struggle create his own space in which he could coherently integrate his experiences:

By the systematic training and retraining [of the body and mind], the ascetic becomes a different person molded to live in a different culture, trained to relate to people in a different manner, psychologically motivated to live a different life.⁶²⁷

Foucauld's ascetical training and conversion began in North Africa, and his failure to operate within the European system is exemplified by his idealization of this Moroccan experience and how this affected his integration into the Trappist Order. His inability to remain in the Trappist order, characterized by his issues with poverty, hierarchy, and obedience, is a failure to incorporate into the existing structure. Foucauld’s decision to enter the Trappist Order was based on the belief that he would not be living in France but would rather be living in the poverty of predominately Muslim Syria, in the much poorer sister house of Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur in Akbès, Syria:⁶²⁸ Once there he realized that he was still living a predominately European asceticism. As he wrote to Huvelin:

You hope that I have enough poverty. No. We are poor as compared with the rich, but not as poor as our Lord was poor, nor as I was in Morocco...⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶ Harpham xiv-xv.

⁶²⁷ Valantasis, “Social Function,” 548.

⁶²⁸ Charles de Foucauld, *Inner Search, Letters (1889-1916)*, trans. Barbara Lucas (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 11; Bazin 83. For a description of Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Coeur see Bazin, 84-6.

⁶²⁹ Letter to Huvelin 30 October 1890; Purcell, 15; Wright, 39.

This was confirmed during the Hamidian massacres of Armenian Christians, from which the monastery was spared because “Europeans are protected by the Turkish Government... It is miserable to be in such favour with those who slaughter our brethren”.⁶³⁰ Later in his life, Foucauld came to realize the importance he placed on a non-European environment for his ascetic expression. In a letter to the Trappists he outlined his life after ten years in North Africa, outlining the ways in which the geography, the local culture created an ascetic life very different from the monastic life in Europe.⁶³¹

Foucauld was not able to experience “Moroccan” asceticism again until he participated in the training tours of Southern Algeria with his friend Laperrine in 1904. Left by Laperrine in Akabli to study the language of the Tuareg, Tamahaq, Foucauld remarked “[a]mong other comforts there is one that I have been asking of Jesus for a long time; it is, for the love of Him, to be in similar conditions, as to well being, to those in which I was in Morocco for my pleasure. Here my establishment is just the same.”⁶³² It is true that during this time Foucauld was working with the French military to further military expansion in Algeria.⁶³³ Considering, however, that Foucauld had looked within a monastery to experience Morocco, it is safe to conclude that the Moroccan ideal was composed of more than acting as an independent agent for the colonial government. The training tours appear, on the surface, to be one of the occasions when he collaborated with the France, that is to say he was actively working for the colonial goal of France and traveling with no

⁶³⁰ Bazin, 97.

⁶³¹ Letter to Father Antonin, 13 May, 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 273-276.

⁶³² February 20-March 14 1904 Bazin, 213.

⁶³³ Antier, ; Bazin

less a colonial authority than the military in a newly conquered region. Yet on the tour Foucauld did not behave as a Frenchman. He waived the right to the trappings of the army, refusing to use the horse provided, refusing to use his bed, and he turned his private room into a chapel.⁶³⁴ At Akabli, by studying the language, he began the process of immersing himself in another culture, hiding himself amongst the unknown, becoming like the Other and consequently subverting the whole notion of French civilization. Foucauld's linguistic study was so exhaustive that it remains the standard work on Tamahaq and has been influential in the development of Amazigh nationalist movements.⁶³⁵

Peter Brown has described asceticism as “a long drawn out, solemn ritual of dissociation – of becoming a total stranger.”⁶³⁶ The ascetic action removes the individual from his peers, because he or she no longer behaves as others do. If others do not share the ascetic behaviour, it makes the practitioner the solitary participant in a foreign culture: a hermit. Evidence of this process is visible throughout Foucauld's life. On his first campaign Foucauld was “the admiration of the old Mexicans of the regiment, who were connoisseurs.”⁶³⁷ Amongst the Trappists he was singled out for attention based on his abilities, a development that made him very uncomfortable. The abbot of Notre-Dame des Nieges described him as “an angel amidst us... He wants nothing but wings.”⁶³⁸ Foucauld's asceticism, as formalized in the rules he wrote, persisted in keeping him a hermit, even when he wished for help. Huvelin,

⁶³⁴ Bazin, 211 and 248.

⁶³⁵ Rossetti, 392.

⁶³⁶ Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101, 91.

⁶³⁷ Henri Laperrine quoted in Bazin, 11.

⁶³⁸ Bazin, 91.

upon seeing a draft of Foucauld's first Rule,⁶³⁹ replied "[y]our Rule is absolutely impracticable. The Pope hesitated to give his approval to the Franciscan Rule; he considered it too severe, but this Rule! To tell you the truth it terrified me."⁶⁴⁰ Although Foucauld abandoned this first Rule, and wrote and redacted others,⁶⁴¹ when the opportunity arose to gain a much-desired companion, the severity of his asceticism was too much. Brother Michel, who joined Foucauld in 1906 until the first several months of 1907, had spent three years in a Zouaves' regiment in Africa and another three years with the White Fathers. After his time with Foucauld, Brother Michael would go on to join the Carthusians,⁶⁴² a community of hermits. Despite this considerable ascetic experience, Brother Michael only stayed with Foucauld for four months. He was forced to renounce his mission due to serious illness, no doubt exacerbated if not caused by the "terrible mortifications" kept by Foucauld. Brother Michel described these mortifications in detail to René Bazin,⁶⁴³ concluding his recollection with the prayer "God grant me to imitate him according to my strength."⁶⁴⁴

If to become a hermit one has to become a stranger, than it was a process that Foucauld began prior to his conversion. His experience with Islam had changed him in ways that set him apart from his French contemporaries. This did not negatively impact his experience. Dualities, or pluralism, may lead an individual outside the

⁶³⁹ Congrégation des Petits Frères de Jésus, 1896; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 27-36.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter 2 August 1896; France, 142.

⁶⁴¹ Règlement des petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus, 1899; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 47-322; Règlement des petites soeurs du Sacré Coeur de Jésus, 1902; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 331-566.

⁶⁴² Antier, 254 ft. 16

⁶⁴³ Bazin, 249-257.

⁶⁴⁴ Bazin, 257.

norms of society but they “may also lead to larger cultural space and greater opportunities.”⁶⁴⁵ Through asceticism’s ability to both create the space for, and initiate cultural formation, Foucauld created the space necessary for his unique interaction with the Muslims of the region. His refusal to live with the French soldiers,⁶⁴⁶ his understanding of, and interest in, the local languages and stories, his poverty,⁶⁴⁷ all separated him from the average French soldier or explorer. While it is impossible to know the extent to which Foucauld was truly accepted amongst the people, we do know that the women prayed for his conversion to Islam as that he would not go to hell,⁶⁴⁸ he certainly had a unique relationship with them. His attitude allowed him to converse with the local women,⁶⁴⁹ ride with the men,⁶⁵⁰ act as a judge amongst them (while the Qur’an was used for swearing oaths),⁶⁵¹ and perhaps, most tellingly, act as arbitrator between the local people and the military.⁶⁵²

Eremiticism as Vocation

Foucauld’s inability to work within the accepted monastic vocations of the Church allowed him the space to retrieve and reinterpret for himself, the ancient tradition of the hermit. In May of 1887, Foucauld wrote his editor M. Challamel and

⁶⁴⁵ Ching, 12.

⁶⁴⁶ Antier, 275.

⁶⁴⁷ “To his honoured excellency, our dear friend above all, Monsieur le Marabout Abed Aissa [servant of Jesus] [...] Here we are arrived from Paris [...] I saw thy sister and remained two days at her house; I also saw thy brother-in-law. I visited their gardens and houses. And thou, thou art in Tamanrasset like the poor man!” A letter from Moussa to Foucauld 20 September 1910; Bazin, 295.

⁶⁴⁸ Carrouges, *Solider*, 247; Preminger 229; He was sometimes called a roumi – an outsider or unbeliever, *ibid*, 212.

⁶⁴⁹ Antier, 268; Preminger, 207-211.

⁶⁵⁰ Antier, 267.

⁶⁵¹ Bazin, 287.

⁶⁵² Leptit, 89-91.

requested several volumes of devotional literature. Included in his list was *Vies des Pères du Désert*, translated by Robert Arnaud d'Andilly.⁶⁵³ First published in 1635, the book is the translation into French of early saints lives including the first hermits Paul and Anthony,⁶⁵⁴ as well as *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*,⁶⁵⁵ attributed to Rufinus of Aquileia.⁶⁵⁶ The lives of the hermits made a considerable impression upon Foucauld. On a number of occasions, including the last year of his life,⁶⁵⁷ he described himself as a hermit and expressed a desire “to follow the example of the hermits”.⁶⁵⁸

When Foucauld first voiced his desire to be a hermit he faced stern opposition from those who advised him. Dom Polycarpe wrote:

Well, the good Father [sic] Albéric has got it into his head that he will leave us and become a hermit and live alone in the desert. We have tried to tell him that the Church no longer accepts this sort of life; that those who have had the same idea have ended up apostatizing or going mad. Nothing works. You absolutely must find a way of curing the good Father [sic].⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵³ Bouvier, 98; France, 138.

⁶⁵⁴ Robert Arnaud d'Andilly, *Les Vies des Saints Pères des Déserts, et De Quelques Saints*, (Paris: Du Fond de M. Josse, 1736), Book One.

⁶⁵⁵ Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Norman Russell, London: Mowbray, 1980, XIX 7-8.

⁶⁵⁶ Arnaud d'Andilly, Book Two

⁶⁵⁷ “Mais je viens de m'apercevoir, à la suite de tintements d'oreille continuels, que je suis Presque sourd de l'oreille droite; la gauche entend normalement; ce n'est donc pas gênant de tout. Il est probable que tôt ou tard le tour de l'oreille gauche viendra; pour un ermite la surdité est l'infirmité rêvée.” LMB 29 January 1916 ; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 241.

⁶⁵⁸ France, 138.

⁶⁵⁹ “Eh bien! Ce bon Père Albéric s'est mis dans la tête da nous quitter pour se faire ermite et habiter seul dans un desert. Nous avons beau lui représenter que l'Église n'admet plus ce genre de vie, que ceux que j'ai connu s'être mis cette idée dans la tête avaient fini par apostasier et devenir fous. Rien n'y fait. Il faut absolument que tu nous obtiennes la guérison de ce bon et si excellent Père...” Letter from Dom Polycarpe to Mother Clémence 28 August 1895; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 96.

Nor was Abbé Huvelin any more pleased with the idea, and when he finally relented he insisted that Foucauld attach himself to a community, "...not in the convent, but only under the shadow of the convent; asking only for spiritual assistance, living in poverty at the gate."⁶⁶⁰ The eremitic movement, one of founding ascetic movements in the Christian tradition, developed alongside coenobitic monasticism. In the early years, both movements were essentially equal in popularity, perhaps with eremiticism having the upper hand thanks to the widespread appeal of Athanasius's *Life of Antony*. Yet, eremiticism went through a public relations crisis at the end of the fourth century and again in the fifth⁶⁶¹ that it would never recover from in the west.⁶⁶² This crisis ensured that the number of hermits, and potential future hermits, in Europe decreased to the point of rarity and allowed the coenobitic tradition to develop into the prevailing form of monasticism in the Latin Church.⁶⁶³ With this kind of response it is extremely unlikely that Foucauld could have become a

⁶⁶⁰ Bazin, 107.

⁶⁶¹ Early monasticism owes much of its theology to the work of Origen (184-254). In 375 Epiphanius of Cyprus (315-403) launched an attack against the Origen saying he had corrupted the true faith. Epiphanius's work became the catalyst for those who had disagreements with the monks of the Egyptian desert and quickly turned into a political and personal battle that spread throughout the entire Christian world and had many casualties, including the reputation of eremiticism (see Elizabeth A. Clark. *The Origenist Controversy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992; Marilyn Dunn. *The Emergence of Monasticism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

⁶⁶² Eastern Christianity did not have the same doctrinal difficulties with asceticism and the eremitic tradition was able to develop. See, Arthur Vööbus, *A History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1960); Sidney H. Griffith, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 220-245; Guita G. Hourani and Antoine B. Habchi, "The Maronite Eremitical Tradition: A Contemporary Revival," *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 451-465; Kallistos Ware, "Separated From All and United to All: The Hermit Life in the Christian East," in *Solitude and Communion*, ed. A. M. Allchin (Oxford: S. L. G. Press, 1975), 30-47.

⁶⁶³ It was formally accepted by the Church as an independent vocation in the 1983 Code of Canon Law; Canon 603.

stereotypical hermit in the modern understanding of the word – living alone and completely removed from society.⁶⁶⁴ Yet his understanding of his vocation, of the meaning of his ascetic lifestyle came directly from his early studies in the eremitic tradition.

Union with God was the goal of eremitic asceticism.⁶⁶⁵ Foucauld was known amongst his contemporaries for his experiences of mystical union with Christ. The priest who instructed Foucauld in preparation for his ordination, recorded several times when Foucauld was overtaken in union:

His spirit was taken over by prayer. The *Introibo ad altare Dei* Was enough to plunge him into ‘distractions’ in the manner of Saint Ignatius. So accustomed was he to the exercise of being in the presence of God, where he was totally submerged in mystical union, that he would enter into that presence at the slightest opportunity, sometimes in spite of himself. Recovering, he would throw himself at my feet and ask for forgiveness’. I was deeply affected.⁶⁶⁶

Foucauld declared the goal of his asceticism as “[c]ontinually to see Jesus in myself, making his dwelling with his Father in me...”⁶⁶⁷ Origen, the third century theologian who greatly influenced early ascetic practice,⁶⁶⁸ identified Jesus as the model upon

⁶⁶⁴ Meditation January 1916 “*St. Paul the Hermit*: Here was a true hermit, living in almost continual prayer, extreme penance, extreme poverty and complete solitude.” Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 196.

⁶⁶⁵ “Frequently *monachos*, “monk”, is understood in relation to its root word *monos* and given connotations of “solitary” or “single”. However, a Syriac translation of the word describes an ascetic individual as a person of “one-ness” or “unity of being”” M. Dunn, 8.

⁶⁶⁶ Recollection of Father Léon Laurens (Diocese of Mende); Antier, 176.

⁶⁶⁷ Retreat December 1903; Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 155.

⁶⁶⁸ Samuel Rubenson, “Christian Asceticism and the Emergence of the Monastic Tradition,” in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 49-57. 53.

which to base one's unity with the God. Jesus is the reconciliation of the diversification of created beings and their return to eternal unity:

At once in his unity with the Father and in his distinction from the Father, he is the exemplar and the pattern for all created intelligences. Participation in the Son's unity with the Father is the goal toward which the creation is meant to move.⁶⁶⁹

In becoming like Jesus, in imitating Christ, humanity once again becomes united with God, achieving salvation.

Foucauld was very clear on the method by which he was to achieve ascetic union: "*Watch and imitate* him. Jesus himself suggested this very simple method of achieving union with him and perfection to his apostles."⁶⁷⁰ Philip Hillyer has identified the connection between all of Foucauld's vocational roles as "his unwavering belief that he was called to imitate Christ."⁶⁷¹ He desired to be "the most precise imitation of Jesus, by love."⁶⁷² Foucauld understood imitation to be the natural response to love:

...love strives for union, for the transformation of the one who loves to the one who is being loved, and the unification of the one who loves with the one who is loved; and imitation is union, the unification of the one with the other by their resemblance; contemplation is union of the one with the other by knowledge and life..⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁹ Richard Norris, *God and the World in Early Christian Theology* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), 129.

⁶⁷⁰ May 13, 1903; Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 152.

⁶⁷¹ Hillyer, 9.

⁶⁷² "la plus exact imitation de Jésus, par amour" Foucauld, *Castries*, 97.

⁶⁷³ "l'amour tend à l'union, à la transformation de l'être que aime en l'être aimé, à l'unification de l'être qui aime avec l'être aimé; et l'imitation est l'union, l'unification d'un être avec un autre par la ressemblance; la contemplation est l'union d'un être avec un autre par la connaissance et la vie" Quoted in Nurdin, 375

It is this love for God that inspires men to imitate Christ, and in imitating Christ to increase in love, “Imitation is the daughter, sister, mother of love. Let us imitate Jesus because we love him; let us imitate Jesus to love him more!”⁶⁷⁴ The surest sign of love, God teaches us, is suffering:

It is not to buy us back that You suffered so much, o Jesus. The slightest of your acts has an infinite price, since it is an act of God and it would have over abundantly - only had for buying back one thousand worlds, all possible worlds. *It is to carry us, draw us to love you freely, because love is the most powerful means to attract love, because to love is the most powerful means to create love. And to suffer for what they love is the most invincible means to prove that they love.*⁶⁷⁵

Suffering is the act of imitating Jesus in his greatest act of love.

The acts by which the ascetic comes to know themselves and transforms themselves, fasting, celibacy, personal mortifications, are not, in Foucauld’s understanding, acts of punishment for the body or the soul, but are instead acts of love. They are acts intended to bind the individual to Christ’s loving sacrifice: “In order to be an *alter Jesus*, if *we* are no longer to *live*, but *Jesus live in us*, we must above all things be holy, before all burn with love like His Heart; we must also carry the cross and be crowned...”⁶⁷⁶ This ascetic concept of suffering to bind oneself to Jesus⁶⁷⁷ has roots in the martyrdom experiences of the early Church.⁶⁷⁸ While the development of the ascetic movement was undoubtedly a combination of social and

⁶⁷⁴ Hillyer, 176.

⁶⁷⁵ Nurdin, 366. Italics my own.

⁶⁷⁶ Bazin, 188.

⁶⁷⁷ On the first page of the notebook Foucauld carried with him everywhere; “The more firmly we embrace the cross, the more closely we are bound to Jesus, our Beloved, who is made fast to it.” Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 213.

⁶⁷⁸ E. E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

theological factors,⁶⁷⁹ there is no denying a connection between the early martyrs and the theology of early monasticism.

The Christian Church developed under a cloud of persecution. Outsiders in Roman society, their private rituals were considered highly suspicious. By the time fire destroyed Rome in 64, they were acceptable scapegoats.⁶⁸⁰ The early Church suffered under sporadic persecution, with the exception of the reigns of Nero (54-68) and Trajan (98-117), until the middle of the third century. By that time the Roman Empire was in the middle of economic and military crises. With the unity of the Empire under threat, the Christians became the scapegoat that average Romans could rally against and were systematically targeted. The last of the great persecutions was under the emperor Diocletian (284-305).⁶⁸¹ For the martyrs, and the ascetics who followed them, Jesus' death at the hands of Roman authorities, while not a martyr's death, became the template that gave meaning to their own experiences.⁶⁸² Therefore, according to the hermit Antony, the body is not "an irrelevant piece of matter, not a prison of the soul but a home to be cleansed, a sacrifice to be purified".⁶⁸³ To make one's body a sacrifice, a Christian ascetic is imitating the suffering and sacrifice of the cross.

Asceticism as Civic

⁶⁷⁹ M. Dunn, 2; Henry Chadwick. *The Early Church*. Revised Edition (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 176.

⁶⁸⁰ Chadwick, 25-26.

⁶⁸¹ Bell, *Cloud of Witnesses*, 12.

⁶⁸² Bowersock, 14.

⁶⁸³ Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 71.

The call for unity that is the foundation of eremitic asceticism also extends beyond the hermit to the world. The sacrifice Christ made on the cross was not to glorify God, but rather to, as Foucauld put it “is to carry us, draw us to love you freely”⁶⁸⁴ for our salvation and sanctification.⁶⁸⁵ It was a transformational act. Harpham argues that the ascetic, connected as he is to an ongoing cultural movement, belongs to “a community of imitation which both temporally and spatially exceeds the boundaries of the individual life”.⁶⁸⁶ The Christian would argue that this understanding is incomplete. The ascetic’s connection to the Christ event means that the ascetic does not merely exceed the boundaries of their lives in the world but also spiritually. He is imitating Christ:

By such imitation, or rather by such likeness – for, coming from within it is more than imitation - by union with Christ in life and act, ‘keeping in step’ with Him at every moment, we do not merely perfect ourselves, we reproduce Him; and that is a thing of far greater importance than self-perfection.⁶⁸⁷

The Christ event gives asceticism a universal range.

Traditionally, some hermits actually spent time with people. Some lived in communities, others were called to act as an authority within the wider Christian community.⁶⁸⁸ While the hermits certainly spent a fair amount of time dealing with

⁶⁸⁴ Nurdin, 366. Italics my own.

⁶⁸⁵ “Vous Dieu, venu habiter visiblement parmi nous [...] Et cela pourquoi? Par Bonté, par bonté pour les hommes, pour les sauver et les sanctifier” quoted Nurdin, 368

⁶⁸⁶ Harpham, xiv.

⁶⁸⁷ Alban Goodier, *An Introduction to the Study of Ascetical and Mystical Theology*. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1938), 94.

⁶⁸⁸ Antony lived in seclusion for 20 years before he began teaching other ascetics. Still a hermit he was able to achieve isolation in his ‘inner mountain’, M. Dunn, 3; Apollo spent 40 years in the desert before he heard God tell him “now make your

the everyday problems of the people,⁶⁸⁹ whether they wanted to or not,⁶⁹⁰ their greatest work for humanity was done through their prayer and meditation. It was through their silent contemplation and works of self-transformation that the hermit was able to participate in God, to allow themselves to become “human vessels” for “the treasure of God”,⁶⁹¹ and consequently, for his advice. It was also through their mystical communion that they were able to work for the spiritual wellbeing of the people.

The hermits acted as spiritual protectors for their communities. The desert viewed as the arena of spiritual combat. It was where a person encountered God, but it was also where demons could be found. The early stories are filled with stories of hermits fighting demons. They fought demons for their own survival, but also for the survival of the entire community. The History of the Monks in Egypt describes how:

There is not a village or city in Egypt and the Thebaid⁶⁹² that is not surrounded by hermitages as if by walls... Indeed it is clear to all who dwell there that through them, the world is kept in being, and that through them too human life is preserved and honoured by God”.⁶⁹³

The hermits were not merely encountering personal demons. By giving themselves up to the spiritual life, the hermits became witnesses for humanity in the mystical

way to the inhabited region, for you will bear me ‘a peculiar people zealous in good works’”, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, VIII 1-5.

⁶⁸⁹ The cells in some of the Egyptian hermit colonies were built with rooms for them to consult in. Brown, 93.

⁶⁹⁰ Even during times when he wanted solitude, Antony was pestered to give advice and perform exorcisms. It was this that prompted him to retreat to his ‘inner mountain’. M. Dunn, 13.

⁶⁹¹ *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Prologue 3.

⁶⁹² The Thebaid was the name for an urbanized area of the delta in northern Egypt and also an area in Upper Egypt, near Thebes.

⁶⁹³ *Life of the Desert Fathers*, Prologue, 6-9.

struggle between good and evil. They became Christianity's appointed protectors and defenders. As Abba Macarius of Alexandria said "Tell them: For Christ's sake I am guarding the walls".⁶⁹⁴ They really were seen, as Origen described the divisions emerging in the Church in his time, as elite soldiers. The followers helped the soldiers, but it was the soldiers' responsibility to fight for, and protect them.⁶⁹⁵

They faced the demons, but they also faced God. Through their asceticism, they placed themselves before God as sinners and strove to be worthy of salvation. As individual members of the human race they unified themselves and strove for union with God, but as members of the mystical Body of Christ they illuminated all of the community. Connected to the rest of the community by the mystical body of Christ⁶⁹⁶ the hermits' union with God lifted up their fellow Christians: "the people are supported by their prayers as though by God himself".⁶⁹⁷ They preserved humanity with their asceticism: "Civilization, where lawlessness prevails, is sustained by their prayers, and the world, buried in sin, is preserved by their prayers".⁶⁹⁸ As vessels for God they sanctified the community. The hermits "were like trees, purifying the atmosphere by their presence".⁶⁹⁹ As they tried to imitate

⁶⁹⁴ Kallistos Ware, "The Way of the Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative" in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbrush and Richard Valantasis. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3-15. 7.

⁶⁹⁵ Chadwick, 179

⁶⁹⁶ 1 Cor. 12:26, "If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honoured, all rejoice."

⁶⁹⁷ Ware, 7.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁹⁹ Ward, 12.

Christ in asceticism, they, imperfectly, imitated Christ in reality. They were humans and yet were “true citizens of heaven”.⁷⁰⁰

Foucauld’s understanding of sanctity as mission was influenced by his devotion to the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth. Foucauld was struck by the idea that God could exist silently among men and bring about their sanctification. He was inspired by the story of the Visitation, when a pregnant Mary visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. In a meditation written in 1898 Foucauld understood the story as a personal instruction from Jesus:

I made my Mother take me to the home where John was to be born...Not only her did I urge along to sanctify others as soon as she possessed me, but I do so to all other souls to whom I give myself...to all those who possess me but have not yet been given a mission to preach, I say to these, let them sanctify souls by carrying me in silence amongst them.⁷⁰¹

By being filled with charity one is called to carry this charity amongst the people, as he was to put it in 1916.⁷⁰²

Huvelin frequently told Foucauld that “One does good much less by what one says or does than by what one is.”⁷⁰³ Foucauld took this meaning to heart, particularly in his missionary work. In a letter to his brother he wrote

The grace of God can do all things, but in face of so many moral miseries... one sees clearly that human means are powerless, and that God alone can effect so great a transformation. Prayer and penance! The farther I go, the more I see that these are the principal means of acting upon these poor souls.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Prologue 5.

⁷⁰¹ Foucauld, *Meditations*, 98-99.

⁷⁰² June 1916; Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 209.

⁷⁰³ Fleming, 61.

⁷⁰⁴ Letter to de Blic 9 December 1907; Bazin 262.

Foucauld understood his imitation of Christ as having two missionary components. The first was instruction through imitation.⁷⁰⁵ The second was conversion through sanctification, “the sanctification of the peoples of this region is in my hands. They will be saved if I become a saint”.⁷⁰⁶

The idea that hermits could “preserve the world” by their prayers was predicated on the belief that they were connected to the rest of humanity. According to Origen, God (the Father), whose utter unity differentiates him from the world, created rational beings. In the beginning these rational beings were united to God, “he created all his creatures equal and alike, for the simple reason that there was in him no causes that could give rise to variety and diversity”.⁷⁰⁷ Diversity was a consequence of the fall. The material world is the place for all rational beings to recognize their alienation from God and to make conscious attempts to return to union with Him.⁷⁰⁸ Union with God is the natural state of all rational beings. While Origen did not deny that reunion with God was partly brought about by our own actions, in concert with God’s grace, he did repeatedly state that “the end is always like the beginning” and therefore the end of the world for Origen must include a union of ALL rational beings with God:

For those souls who have not fully achieved the return to God for which the cosmos exists, Origen suggests that there may be ‘some future healing and connection, certainly quite harsh and full of pain for those who have refused to

⁷⁰⁵ Six, et. all, 27; “D’abord, preparer le terrain en silence par la bonté, un contact intime, le bon exemple...” LJH 25 November 1911; Foucauld, *lyonnaises*, 70.

⁷⁰⁶ Foucauld, *Meditations* 159; Ariana Patey, “Sanctity and Mission in the Life of Charles de Foucauld”, *Studies in Church History*, 47 (2011): 365-375.

⁷⁰⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, quoted in Norris, 119-120.

⁷⁰⁸ Joseph Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 26-7.

obey the Word of God...⁷⁰⁹

The goal of uniting mankind in God is stressed in early eremitic writings. For the hermit Anthony, “unity with one’s fellow men, and with God in Christ, is repeatedly drawn upon [...] to stress the need for love. As members one of another we must love one another; if we love our neighbour we love God and if we love God we love ourselves.”⁷¹⁰ For Anthony the Pauline image of the Church as the body of Christ is, instead, the image of the entire creation.⁷¹¹

Foucauld understood the Incarnation as connecting all of humanity together.

The Incarnation was with a desire for the glory of God but its purpose was the salvation of man:⁷¹²

...the motive which led the Holy Trinity to the Incarnation is the desire for the salvation of man, therefore the desire to share the riches of his happiness and glory: the motive is goodness...⁷¹³

Foucauld believed that the Incarnation was, above all the work of the love of the Holy Trinity and that through Jesus all men are called to take part in this love.⁷¹⁴ It is through this love of the Trinity present and calling to all creation, that all of humanity is a member of Christ:

Jesus is the head of the Church. The Church is the body of Jesus, all the faithful are members of Jesus, the infidels themselves, as long as they live, are, in a way that is

⁷⁰⁹ Trigg, 30.

⁷¹⁰ Rubenson, *Letters*, 65.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid*, 78-9.

⁷¹² Bouvier, 119-128

⁷¹³ “...le motif qui a poussé, porté la saint Trinité à faire l’incarnation c’est le désir du salut des hommes, le désir, par conséquent de partager avec les richesses de son bonheur et de sa gloire: ce motif c’est donc la bonté...” 6 November 1897; Foucauld, *Dernière*, 60.

⁷¹⁴ Bouvier, 122.

removed but real, members of Jesus because they belong to the Church as its remote material.⁷¹⁵ All men are, some in one way, others in another, members of Jesus... All are in some way part of his body. What we do to the body, a member of any kind, we do to the head (if you walk on the foot the head says “you hurt me”)... So anything we do to any member of Jesus, any human however good or bad, we do to Jesus...⁷¹⁶

Sharing the same Father, and being brothers in the same family, all humanity has certain similarities, and all humanity has the face of Christ.⁷¹⁷ Foucauld’s mission to the Muslims of North Africa was based on the belief that “[e]very living human being, however wicked, is a child of God, an image of God and a member of Christ’s body: there must therefore be respect, love, attention and solicitude for their physical relief, and an extreme zeal for the spiritual perfection of every one of them.”⁷¹⁸

Martyrdom and Asceticism

Foucauld’s death has been read by different sources as martyrdom. For most of his champions after the First World War, Foucauld was a martyr for France. His violent death during the war, and possibly for it,⁷¹⁹ added him to the list of men who had died on the sacrificial altar of the trenches. Louis Massignon saw Foucauld’s

⁷¹⁵ For a discussion of Church teaching regarding the Body of Christ and non-Christians see, D’Costa, 8-10.

⁷¹⁶ “Jésus est à la tête de l’Église, l’Église est le corps de Jésus, tous les fidèles sont les membres de Jésus, les infidèles eux-mêmes, tant qu’ils sont vivants, sont d’une manière éloignée mais réelle, les membres de Jésus puisqu’ils appartiennent à l’Église comme sa matière éloignée. Tout les hommes sont donc, les uns à un titre, les autres à un autre, les membres de Jésus... Tous, d’une manière ou d’une autre, font partie de son corps... Ce qu’on fait au corps, à un membre quelconque, on le fait à la tête (si on marche sur le pied, la tête dit: <<Vous me faites mal>>)... Donc tout ce qu’on fait à un membre quelconque de Jésus, à humain quel qu’il soit en bien ou en mal, on le fait à Jésus...” 1898, Foucauld, *Petit Frère de Jésus*, 83-4.

⁷¹⁷ Bouvier, 311-12.

⁷¹⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 146-7.

⁷¹⁹ Chatelard, *La Mort de Charles de Foucauld*. Paris: Karthala, 2000.

death as a death *for Islam*. The problem with this interpretation, as Didier sees it, is that “Massignon confused the situation which Charles de Foucauld effectively found himself in – ‘guilty’, it is true, of having weapons, but incapable of ensuring his defense – with his desire to die as a martyr.”⁷²⁰ The discussion of Foucauld’s possible martyrdom is, perhaps unsurprisingly, based around his death and Foucauld’s reported desire for martyrdom. Within the context of asceticism, it is more accurate to look at whether he *lived* as a martyr rather than whether he *died* as one.

The basis of the association of ascetics with the persecuted can be found in theological discussions of the martyr’s contemporaries. The Christian theologians, in the face of voluntary martyrdoms, devised a definition of martyrdom to differentiate between the real and solicited. One element of this definition was that a person did not need to die to be a martyr.⁷²¹ Origen’s teachings on martyrdom would be influential in the eremitical tradition. While death is the corporeal end of the martyr, it is not the goal, the goal is union with God and shedding the corporeal is an act that must be done while you are alive. It is in accepting one’s martyrdom that is the conclusion of an abandonment of the body:

And I think that God is loved with the whole soul by those who through their great longing for fellowship with God draw their soul away and separate it not only from their earthly body but also from every corporeal thing.⁷²²

⁷²⁰ Didier, “Massignon,” 341.

⁷²¹ G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-4, and 70.

⁷²² *Ibid*, III

According to Origen, it is not only those facing death who can detach themselves from the world:

...just as those who endure tortures and suffering demonstrate in martyrdom an excellence more illustrious than those not tested this way, so also those who by using their great love for God have broken and torn apart such worldly bonds as these in addition to their love for body and life...these have been able to return like an eagle to the house of their master.⁷²³

By severing their attachment to their bodies and the world, ascetics were able to achieve the same thing as the martyrs – union with God.

Foucauld began to consider martyrdom as an important element of his spiritual life after the massacres of the Armenian Christians that occurred during his time as a Trappist in Syria. . Foucauld described the events:

Around us there were horrors, a number of massacres, burnings and lootings. Many of the Christians were really martyrs, for they had died voluntarily, without defending themselves, rather than deny their faith...Europeans are protected by the Turkish Government...It is miserable to be in such favour with those who slaughter our brethren”.⁷²⁴

The frustration that Foucauld expressed at being shielded from these experiences mirrored his discontent with the lack of physical asceticism and self abasement that he had discovered in the Order. This was the event that convinced him of the importance of martyrdom as the pinnacle of self-annihilation.⁷²⁵ From that point onward, Foucauld cultivated a love of martyrdom as part of his ascetic life.⁷²⁶

⁷²³ Isabelle Kinnard, “Imitatio Christi in Christian Martyrdom and Asceticism: A Critical Dialogue,” in *Asceticism and Its Critics*, ed. Oliver Freiberger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 131-150, 132.

⁷²⁴ Bazin, 97.

⁷²⁵ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 89.

⁷²⁶ July 6 1897: “Pense que tu doismourir martyr, dépouillé de tout, étendu à terre nu, méconnaissable, couvert de sang et de blessures, violemment et douloureusement

While Foucauld's desire for an actual physical end to his life waned as he became invested in the spiritual development of the Tuareg, "I cannot say I want to die; once I did but now I see so much good that needs to be done",⁷²⁷ he never stopped the spiritual exercise of dying in life: "Grant that I may die to all worldly things and life to be forgotten and despised in the world for your sake."⁷²⁸ Dying, detaching oneself from the world, was essential to an ascetic imitation of Christ.

Foucauld explained:

To possess him, obey him, imitate him, be one with him, lose myself in him by losing my own will in his – all this cries out to me to be completely detached from everything that is not him. The desire to possess nothing but him cries out: detachment! His words cry: detachment! His example cries: detachment! His will cries: detachment!⁷²⁹

Frequently Foucauld's talk of death is not related to the actual end of his life but rather a continuing goal for his own conversion,⁷³⁰ for his ascetic life: "By praying, sacrificing myself, dying, sanctifying myself: in short, by loving him."⁷³¹ Therefore regardless of the actual circumstances surrounding his death, Massignon could accurately speak of Foucauld having died for Islam, because that was his ascetic life goal regardless of the physical outcome: "I must work with all my strength to

tué... et desire que ce soit aujourd'hui... Pour que jet e fasse cette grace infini, sois fidèle à veiller et à porter la croix. – Considère que c'est à cette mort que doit aboutir toute ta vie: vois par là le peu d'importance de bien des choses. Pense souvent à cette mort pour t'y préparer et pour juger les choses à leur vraie valeur." Foucauld, *Voyageur*, 35;

⁷²⁷ 1914, Hillyer, 145.

⁷²⁸ 1916 Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 206.

⁷²⁹ December 1903; *Ibid*, 155.

⁷³⁰ "Unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground dies, it remains alone; if it des, it brings forth much fruit. I have not died, so I am alone. Pray for my conversion that, dying, I may bear fruit." Six, *Autobiography*, 161.

⁷³¹ Six, *Autobiography*, 161

sanctify myself: *mortification, mortification, penance and death!* It is when one suffers most that one most sanctifies oneself and others.”⁷³²

Conclusion

Charles de Foucauld was at once a priest without a parish, a monk without a cloister, a missionary who did not proselytize and finally a martyr before his physical death. Any attempt to understand his vocation must simultaneously include this diversity while point towards the ultimate goal of unification. The ascetic impulse allowed Foucauld to see beyond French dominance and gave him the power to create space for cultural and interfaith exchange. George Harphram says that Christianity has given asceticism a formal, systematic and theological structure.⁷³³ Yet Christianity also provides the framework for an asceticism that can see beyond itself, and allowed Foucauld to envision a missionary movement based on an understanding of the Incarnation as the connection of all humanity. His extended sense of the body of Christ let him reinterpret the missionary role of the hermit in modern times.

⁷³² Ibid, 155-6.

⁷³³ Harphram, xii-xiii.

Chapter Five: Hermit and Community

Introduction

In his two most recent books, *Le testament de Charles de Foucauld* (2005)⁷³⁴ and *Charles de Foucauld autrement* (2008),⁷³⁵ Jean-François Six, who has written about Foucauld since 1957, has attempted to highlight what he sees as the “ultimate”⁷³⁶ legacy of Foucauld. The main points of his argument are outlined in the article “Les Postérités Foucauld.”⁷³⁷ As the general coordinator of the Sodalite-Union of Charles de Foucauld, which was founded by Foucauld during his lifetime and continued after his death as a simple confraternity of people both lay and religious,⁷³⁸ Six argues that the visibility of the religious congregations of the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus has led to an understanding of Foucauld that is predominately monastic. In response he offers another vision of Foucauld, one centered in the final years of Foucauld’s life, which Six interprets as Foucauld’s final and complete conversion into a “missionnaire isolé”.

⁷³⁴ with Maurice Serpette and Pierre Sourisseau, (Paris: Fayard, 2005).

⁷³⁵ *Charles de Foucauld autrement* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2008).

⁷³⁶ Les disciples de cet ultime Foucauld...” Six et al, *testament*, 229; “Et il est frappant que, meme au moment où il reconnaît cette ultime étape de Foucauld, il reste fortement attaché à ne voir en Foucauld que la stature primitive de celui-ci: trappiste, ermite.” Six, “Postérités”, 496.

⁷³⁷ Six, “Postérités,” 465-482.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid*, 473.

Six asserts that Foucauld experienced a vocational shift from a monk to a missionary.⁷³⁹ He locates this transition in what he calls “l’explosion missionnaire de 1908”⁷⁴⁰ when Foucauld first mentioned the idea of a “confrérie”, which would later evolve into the Sodalite-Union.⁷⁴¹ After this point Foucauld became a missionary and slowly moved away from all the markers of traditional Latin monasticism to the point where “Foucauld of the Sahara, poorly defined by René Bazin as ‘the hermit of the Hoggar’, is not at all a monk or a hermit.”⁷⁴²

Six understands a hermit to be inactive⁷⁴³ which is not a descriptor that could be used on Foucauld in his later years. He asserts that the “hermitage” at Asekerm built in 1910 was not, in reality, a hermitage because Foucauld used it as a meeting point with the Tuaregs.⁷⁴⁴ Foucauld should not be regarded as a monk during this time because he stopped living in an enclosure and rather than spend his time in “uninterrupted prayer” he focused on his linguistic work.⁷⁴⁵ On the other side of the debate reside scholars from the monastic congregations. Antoine Chatelard describes

⁷³⁹ “La lumière apportée par ce <<phare mystique>>... s’est réfractée en faisceaux de couleurs différentes.” Six, “Postérités,” 465; “... l’UNION fondée par Foucauld suit une ligne, non pas opposée, mais autre.” Ibid, 476; “Les disciples de cet ultime Foucauld ne mésestiment aucunement la première strate, celle des quinze premières années qui ont suivi la conversion, où Foucauld a vécu comme exclusivement l’adoration, la contemplation; au contraire, ils l’intègrent comme partie prenante de la deuxième strate, celle des dernières années...” Six, et al., *testament*, 229.

⁷⁴⁰ Six et al., *testament*, 229.

⁷⁴¹ Six, “Postérités,” 472; idem, *testament*, 68-73.

⁷⁴² “Or Foucauld au Sahara, malgré R. Bazin qui l’a défini comme <<l’ermite du Hoggar>>, n’est aucunement un charteux ni un ermite...” Six, “Postérités,” 472.

⁷⁴³ Six et al., *testament*, 186-7, 229.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid, 8-9; Six, “Postérités”, 470, 472.

⁷⁴⁵ Six, “Postérité,” 472.

Foucauld as “a new kind of monk in a special mission”.⁷⁴⁶ Another brother, Ian Latham, while rejecting the idea of Foucauld as a missionary, echoes Six’s rejection of the eremitic vocation: “Charles came to the Sahara to be with the Muslims (not to be a ‘hermit)”.⁷⁴⁷ Six has highlighted a disunity in the Foucauldian legacy, that there is not one legacy, but rather two and that “[t]hese legacies are different in that they refer to two different Foucaulds.”⁷⁴⁸

It is certain that the vocation of Foucauld, or more specifically his understanding of how he should relate to the world, evolved over time.⁷⁴⁹ By all outward appearances by the end of his life Foucauld was engaged with the world: he had abandoned the strict enclosure of monasticism,⁷⁵⁰ visited France three times after having sworn never to return,⁷⁵¹ and wrote elaborate instructional letters to military leaders.⁷⁵² Yet, at the same time he wrote eloquently about silence and solitude.⁷⁵³ It

⁷⁴⁶ “Une nouvelle espèce de moine en mission spéciale.” Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 265-282.

⁷⁴⁷ Latham, “Silent Witness,” 65.

⁷⁴⁸ “Ces posterities sont différentes en ceci qu’elles se referent à deux Foucauld différents.” Six, “Postérités,” 465.

⁷⁴⁹ It has been identified by a number of Foucauldian scholars, although the dates are debated: “Yet this recognition of a change of outlook almost at the end of his life was only the final manifestation of a long series of changes in de Foucauld’s perception of himself and the world around him dating back to 1907 (undoubtedly) or 1903 (possibly).” Hillyer, 145; Six “l’explosion missionnaire”, Six et al., *testament*, 229; “his physical and psychological crisis of January 1908” Latham, “Silent Witness,” 58;

⁷⁵⁰ Letter to Father Antonin 3 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 275.

⁷⁵¹ Response to an invitation to France: “I am always that weak child you know so well. My heart has not changed. Under the circumstances, I think I should never come back to Paris, and not even to France.” LAH 14 December 1905; Antier, 247.

⁷⁵² Rossetti, 381-396; Jean-Marie Muller, *Chalres de Foucauld Frère universel ou moine-soldat?*, Paris: Éditions la découverte, 2002.

⁷⁵³ LHC 16 May 1911: “Ces premiers jours de retour ici ne sont pas des jours de solitude; j’ai été reçu avec une affection qui m’a touché par les Touaregs et j’ai à tout moment leurs visites. Mais bientôt une demi-solitude se fera; et déjà dès que le soeil

is in trying to reconcile or describe a perceived dichotomy in this behaviour that Foucauldian scholars have fallen into disagreement. By placing the emphasis on change and evolution, rather than on sustained beliefs and actions, it is possible to view Foucauld's legacy to the Church as multifaceted rather than fractured. One possible way to reintegrate Foucauld's vocational life into his legacy is to reinvestigate the frequently pejorative understanding of the role of the hermit.

Latham and Six have both identified the illness that Foucauld suffered and almost died from in the first months of 1908 as a catalyst for greater interaction with the local population, although they do not agree whether this interaction qualified as a change in vocation.⁷⁵⁴ This brush with death certainly contributed to the implementation of certain changes. This was not, however, his first serious illness.⁷⁵⁵

est couché, c'est le grand calm si doux, <<benedicite noctes et dies Domino>>... Je suis la seule âme dans ces deserts, à dire le cantique <<benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino>> en face de ces belles montagnes; daigne Dieu donner grace à ces Touaregs, si bien doués, pour qu'ils aiment et servent Dieu et que leurs âmes louent le Seigneur comme le fait la creation inanimée", LHC 16 May 1911; Foucauld, *Castries*, 191; "Since I was twenty I have always relished the sweetness of solitude, whenever I got it – Even in my non-Christian days, I loved the solitude of beautiful nature along with books, but now all the more when the sweetness of the invisible world prevents one's solitude from ever being lonely. The soul is not made for noise, but for meditation, and life ought to be a preparation for heaven – not only by meritorious works, but by peace and recollection in God. But man has launched out into endless discussions: the little happiness he finds in loud debates is enough to show how far they lead him away from his vocation." Bazin 297; "Mais je viens de m'apercevoir, à la suite de tintements d'oreille continuels, que je suis Presque sourd de l'oreille droite; la gauche entend normalement; ce n'est donc pas gênant de tout. Il est probable que tôt ou tard le tour de l'oreille gauche viendra; pour un ermite la surdité est l'infirmité rêvée." LMB 29 January 1916; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 241.

⁷⁵⁴ Six et al., *testament*, 24; Latham, "Silent Witness," 57-8.

⁷⁵⁵ Was ill in 1905; Antier, 227, LMB March 21 1905: "This powerlessness leads us into that humility which is the truth."; He had been suffering with problems in his feet during the spring and summer of 1906, LMB Aug 16 1906, Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 236-240; This could have been the result of the near fatal snake bite he received on his foot on August 11, 1906, for which he needed three bleedings and

Nor was the idea of a change in his vocation, or perhaps for our purposes the change in the expression of his vocation, a new one. Indeed, the years prior to 1908 were filled with changes and conflicts that challenged Foucauld to reconcile them within his understanding of himself and his role. Foucauld's rejection of Western monasticism, as embodied in the Trappist Order or the Rule of St. Benedict,⁷⁵⁶ was not necessarily a rejection of monastic life. Rather it gave Foucauld the space to retrieve the eremitic tradition which, despite modern interpretations, allowed Foucauld to respond to the different situations he encountered in North Africa – sometimes even as a missionary.

The Eremitic Call

Foucauld entered the country with the express purpose of going to a place that was ignored and forgotten and offering the people the benefit of his brand of silent mission. He had established himself at Beni Abbès on the border with Morocco in a comparatively standard monastic/priestly format: he ministered to the local soldiers, built a fraternity with an enclosure, and attempted to live a regulated life as established in his own rule.⁷⁵⁷ His decision to leave Beni Abbès, to leave the stability of the enclosure, and to live the last years of his life traveling throughout the country was a serious departure from his former life and necessitated an expansion of his understanding of his role. Such change was not a smooth and joyful fulfilment of

cauterization, Antier, 249; on May 6 1907 he wrote to Paul Voillard, “Je vieillis...” (I am getting old), Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 833.

⁷⁵⁶ Letter to Fr. Antonin, 3 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 275.

⁷⁵⁷ “I shall reside there as chaplain of this humble oratory without the title of parish priest or curate or chaplain, and without any emolument, living as a monk, following the Rule of St. Augustine, either alone or with Brethren, in prayer, poverty, work and charity, without preaching, and not going out except to administer the Sacraments, *in silence and enclosed.*” letter 22 August 1901; Bazin, 145.

his vocation but was characterized by unhappiness, self-doubt and a constant struggle to balance his desires against what was best for the people. Foucauld did not experience the shift described by Latham and Six because he wanted to but rather because he was responding to a call.

The Rule of St. Benedict, written in the sixth century and the foundation of the Cistercian and Trappist orders, offers a definition of a hermit:

...there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against evil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their members to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.⁷⁵⁸

The Rule of St. Benedict highlights this special function of the hermit. Unlike the monk, whose vows of stability to his community tie him to a specific life and function within the everyday running of the Church, the hermit, bound to no one but God and the greater community of humanity, is able to be sent to those areas of crisis in which his intercession is most needed – where he is called.

When Captian Dinaux left Foucauld at Tamanrasset on October 15 1905, he wrote, "He will remain alone in the midst of the Tuaregs, 425 miles from In-Salah, and will be united to us only by the monthly courier which we are going to try and inaugurate."⁷⁵⁹ As Foucauld noted it was:

away from all important centres: it does not seem that there will ever be a garrison here, or a telegraph, or a European, and that for a long time there will never be

⁷⁵⁸ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 32-33.

⁷⁵⁹ Bazin, 238.

a mission: I choose this abandoned place and I settle in it, by asking Jesus to bless this establishment where I want to live only by the example of His life at Nazareth⁷⁶⁰

Foucauld was establishing himself far away from any other Europeans, far from any other Christians. He was able to do this, precisely because he was a solitary, unaffiliated with any monastic community or parish. René Voillaume, one of the founders of the Little Brothers of Jesus, noted Foucauld's "vocation as a hermit humble and solitary, had placed him in a situation particularly favorable to evangelization."⁷⁶¹ The Rule of St. Benedict recognizes the otherness of the hermit as a central element in his power. By setting himself apart, not only from society but also from accepted forms of monasticism, the hermit becomes the ultimate 'stranger'. Peter Brown argued that the early Christian ascetic was, by his nature, in a position of power. It is those outside of accepted society that are expected to take on roles of responsibility.⁷⁶² The process of becoming a hermit is essentially "a long drawn out, solemn ritual of dissociation – of becoming a total stranger."⁷⁶³ By cutting his ties with society the ascetic puts himself in a position to be an impartial mediator for the community. The power of 'otherness' that Peter Brown identified in the ascetic of Late Antiquity applies just as neatly to the hermit in the Latin Church.

⁷⁶⁰ 11 August 1905 "Je choisis Tamanrasset, village de 20 feux en pleine montagne, au coeur du Hoggar et des Dag-Ghalo sa principale tribu, à l'écart de tous les centres importants: il ne semble pas que jamais il doive y avoir garnison, nit télégraphe, ni européen, et que de longtemps il n'y aura pas de mission: je choisis ce lieu *délaissé* et je m'y fixe, en suppliant Jésus de bénir cet établissement où je veux dans ma vie prendre pour seul exemple sa vie de Nazareth..." Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 231. Similar to LPG 13 August 1905, Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 370-374.

⁷⁶¹ René Voillaume, *Charles de Foucauld et ses premiers disciples* (Paris: Bayard Éditions, 1998), 27.

⁷⁶² P. Brown, 91.

⁷⁶³ Ibid.

Sociologists have discovered that it is those outside of accepted society that are expected to take on roles of responsibility – such as a parish priest in a small community.⁷⁶⁴ Foucauld was able to fill this role, respond to this need, in Algeria.

In March 1903 Foucauld received his former comrade Henri Laperrine at Beni-Abbès. Laperrine confided in Foucauld his orders to take the Hoggar for France.⁷⁶⁵ The following month, he received a visit from Mgr. Guérin who proceeded to discuss missionary work and opportunities with Foucauld in detail. It was Guérin's suggestion that Foucauld consider the possibility of being a missionary,⁷⁶⁶ to "let a missionary lead the life of St. Anthony in the desert."⁷⁶⁷ For decades the French government and the French missionaries (not in concert) had attempted to "pacify the Tuareg."⁷⁶⁸ Each attempt had ended in defeat and massacre.⁷⁶⁹ In 1896, Laperrine had had success around Timbukto and after being given control of the Sahara, he began to play the role described by Fergus Fleming as "spymaster".⁷⁷⁰ He began writing to Foucauld about his experiences and his belief that Foucauld would be an asset to the region:

I believe there is a great deal of good to be done, for if we may not hope for immediate conversions and to get *doctrine* accepted, we can, by example and daily contact,

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid, 91.

⁷⁶⁵ Bazin, 178.

⁷⁶⁶ Hillyer, 111; LAH 10 June 1903.

⁷⁶⁷ June 1 1903, Bazin, 190-1.

⁷⁶⁸ Fleming, 32-33; 71; 141. For information about the Tuareg, see Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

⁷⁶⁹ Fleming, 32-33; Aylward Shorter, *Cross and Flag in Africa* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 3.

⁷⁷⁰ Fleming, 172.

put in evidence the Christian *morale* and spread it.⁷⁷¹

Seeing an opportunity in Foucauld, whose military value had been aptly displayed in Morocco, Laperrine began cultivating him in preparation for transplantation in the Sahara.⁷⁷² Convinced of Foucauld's value to France's interests in the region, Laperrine allowed him on training tours and, knowing full well that no priest was allowed to live in the Sahara unless they were attached to a garrison,⁷⁷³ allowed and encouraged his settlement in Tamanrasset.⁷⁷⁴ He considered Foucauld a military asset: "he will be in a position to furnish for us the most useful information about the good to be done in the country."⁷⁷⁵

The White Fathers⁷⁷⁶ had been continually unable to penetrate the Sahara. Those who had attempted it in 1876 and 1881 had been massacred. This had prompted Lavagerie to create his own Catholic army, "The Armed Brothers of the Sahara", but the project lost the support of the French government and was

⁷⁷¹ Bazin, 208; Fleming argues that Laperrine manipulated Foucauld by exaggerating the level of readiness for conversion in the Sahara with the story of a woman who had helped the survivors of the Flatters expedition, Fleming, 168-9. Foucauld's response to the letter from Laperrine in his diary 21 June 1903, Bazin 200.

⁷⁷² Laperrine's diary: "I am very pleased to have a few days with him. Face to face with the adventurous life, the de Foucauld of Morocco finds himself again: he misses his sextant, copies his maps, etc." Fleming, 175; "...I'd rather have him far away from us so that people will get used to seeing him without any bayonets around." And "I hope to make him the first priest of the Hoggar, Moussa's chaplain, perhaps even head of a village." Fleming, 176.

⁷⁷³ Ibid, 184.

⁷⁷⁴ "I authorize Foucauld to come to the Tidikelt. I have no right to do so, but I hope to get away with it, as usual, with several threatening letters and a few menaces from the sub-division, backed by all the higher-ups. It is curious how one gets acclimatized to kicks in the pants...They have now practically not the slightest effect. I simply keep a special folder for them in my archives" Fleming, 172-3.

⁷⁷⁵ Rossetti, 385.

⁷⁷⁶ Jean-Claude Ceillier, *Histoire des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2008).

disbanded.⁷⁷⁷ When the French occupation of the Sahara made the survival of any missionaries much more likely, the White Fathers ran up against obstacles put in place by the anticlerical government, making any expeditions impossible.⁷⁷⁸ The Laws of Association, passed in July 1901, essentially made Catholic orders illegal because they were governed by a foreign body: Rome.⁷⁷⁹ The Law of Separation, December 1905, secularized all church schools, hospitals and other institutions. The White Fathers were given strict restrictions. They were only allowed twenty-one establishments in Algeria and the French Sudan, fitted with only four hundred personnel.⁷⁸⁰

Neither White Father nor military, but affiliated with both, Foucauld's separation from the world made him the obvious person to act as ambassador for France in a hostile region. Foucauld was aware of the responsibility placed upon him. He was not happy with this development in what he had previously thought of as a stable monastic vocation. Referring to the training tours, Foucauld confided to Huvelin, "Nature is excessively opposed to it. I shudder – I am ashamed to say - at the thought of leaving Beni-Abbès, the quiet at the foot of the altar, and at flinging

⁷⁷⁷ Shorter, 3.

⁷⁷⁸ Although Shorter has suggested that by the time the Sahara was available "The White Fathers were already in Timbuktu, and crossing the Sahara no longer held any practical interest for them." 30.

⁷⁷⁹ This had special repercussions for missionaries who had for years acted independently of France and now had to be seen as patriotic, Daughton, 3-24; Laverigie, missionaries were not representatives of France by "the peaceful envoys of the Pope." Shorter, 10.

⁷⁸⁰ Shorter, 15.

myself into journeys, of which I have now an excessive horror... Should I not glorify God more by adoring Him as a solitary?⁷⁸¹ In another letter he wrote:

If Mgr. Guérin could and would send another priest there, I would certainly not go: my very clear duty would be to remain at Beni-Abbès. But I believe he will send nobody there, I even believe he cannot send anybody.⁷⁸²

Nor was he naively unaware of the military's plans for him. He worried about the implications for relations between the Church and the local population. He made sure to ask permission of the tribal leaders if he was interested in settling in the area, and accepted when they refused.⁷⁸³ When settling in Tamanrasset, he acceded to the wishes of the Tuaregs, who did not want him on tribal land, and settled on the opposite side of the river.⁷⁸⁴ He worried that the people would not be able to tell the difference between a soldier and a priest:

The natives receive us well; not sincerely: they yield to necessity [...] Will they know how to distinguish soldiers from priests, to see in us God's servants, ministers of peace and charity, universal brothers? I do not know. If I do my duty, Jesus will pour down abundant graces, and they will understand.⁷⁸⁵

He accepted this difficult position because he felt that it would be temporary.

It was clear on his first training tours that the work Foucauld was doing and the goals he was setting were not for him. He spent the trip of 1904 composing

⁷⁸¹ Bazin, 209; He also expressed concerns to Guérin, 24 November 1903, Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 235-238; He had already confided concerns to his cousin: 31 August 1903; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 116-7.

⁷⁸² Bazin, 208; also letter to Guérin 24 November 1903: "Je n'y irai que force par le devoir. Ma vocation est la cloture: je ne dois en sortir que pour cause impérieuse." Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 237.

⁷⁸³ Fleming, 176.

⁷⁸⁴ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 233.

⁷⁸⁵ Letter to friend July 3 1904; Bazin, 223-4; Antier, 220.

Observations on missionary journeys in the Sahara, a collection of instructions on the behaviour of future missionaries, how they should travel, how they should eat, how they should evangelize those around them: Christians, soldiers, the indigenous population, and slaves.⁷⁸⁶ Foucauld also made plans for the White Fathers and Sisters to set up houses at ten stops along his route and also for a central house with an agricultural colony, orphanage, and hospital.⁷⁸⁷ He told a friend, “I believe that He wants me to fix their wandering, I will do it; maybe it will be soon; because my ordinary vocation is silence and the cloister, not the races!”⁷⁸⁸ Foucauld related all of the information he had gathered to Guérin and the White Fathers at their mission station at Ghardaïa where he celebrated Christmas.⁷⁸⁹ On his return to Beni-Abbès in 1905 he wrote:

I return without meaning to go away again; above all with the great desire that the White Fathers in the future may do what I have done this year...⁷⁹⁰

At Beni-Abbès he met with General Lyautey who agreed with Laperrine’s feelings that the White Fathers should not be allowed to enter the Sahara for the time being.⁷⁹¹ Foucauld acknowledged the shortcomings of the White Fathers in his journal:

(1) They have caused trouble for the military authorities almost everywhere they have been; (2) while they are decent people, in almost every case they commit blunders,

⁷⁸⁶ Bazin, 219-222.

⁷⁸⁷ Hillyer, 119.

⁷⁸⁸ “Je croirai qu’il veut que je me fixe au leur d’errer, je le ferai; ce sera peut-être bientôt; car ma vocation ordinaire est le silence et la cloture, et non les courses!” LHC 15 July 1904; Foucauld, *Castries*, 156.

⁷⁸⁹ Bazin, 226-227.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 228.

⁷⁹¹ Antier, 221 and 226.

are tactless, get mixed up in what doesn't involve them; (3) they do very little good; there is no desire at all for them to found schools, because the children who have attended them end up usually worse than others.⁷⁹²

When his presence was sought in the Sahara several months later by Laperrine, and with the permission of both Guérin and Huvelin together in Paris, he accepted.⁷⁹³

He continued to hope for help from the White Fathers or Sisters. Foucauld hoped to remain at Tamanrasset enclosed, “like St. Magdalene at the Sainte-Baume, without doing anything else than adoring Jesus,”⁷⁹⁴ and letting the White Fathers take over his hermitage in the north. Huvelin told him that he needed to maintain both hermitages to make himself present throughout the country⁷⁹⁵ and during his retreat of 1906 he resolved to split his time between Tamanrasset and Beni-Abbès until Guérin could send priests to the region.⁷⁹⁶ He requested the presence of the Little Sisters in 1906, and although it was refused he still hoped for the possibility in 1908.⁷⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the anti-clerical Combes government had ended in 1905, and came to support the idea of the White Fathers in the region, the order's powers were only being more stymied by every passing year. Guérin outlined the issue to Foucauld in a letter in 1906:

I have just received a letter of the colonel Laperrine telling me that he has just officially asked the governor of Algeria for three White Sisters for Tamanrasset [...] I hardly know

⁷⁹² Rossetti, 387.

⁷⁹³ Antier, 228; Bazin, 231.

⁷⁹⁴ Hillyer, 128.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 127.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid 128; He desired to stay in one place. LAH 26 October 1905: “What I would do elsewhere, Father Guérin can, if he wishes, get done through others, and get it done better.” Hillyer, 127.

⁷⁹⁷ Hillyer, 157; LMB 20 April 1906 and 8 March 1908; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 149 and 167-8.

what response he will be able to receive from the governor. At the moment, the lay missions in high places have all preferences, and the government replaces everywhere fervently, teachers for teachers, nurses for lay nurses, very lavishly paid, all posts occupied in the past, at much less expense, by monks - or nuns – this in colonies as in France.⁷⁹⁸

In 1907 the government began closing down White Father schools, with most having been shut down by 1914.⁷⁹⁹ While Foucauld was aware of the anti-clerical restraints binding the White Fathers, this did not prevent him from becoming frustrated by their lack of response to his requests:

I can well understand the White Fathers, seeing the evangelization of the Musulmans to be slow and difficult, have turned aside their efforts and sent the great majority of their missionaries into Equatorial Africa, where they are working wonders, and affecting conversions as rapid as they are numerous, and wining heaven for a host of souls. Here they would have saved a few, there they save many: so I can understand their going there. It is nevertheless true that Algeria, Tunis and Morocco (where there are only chaplains at the consulates) are entirely neglected...⁸⁰⁰

Aylward Shorter, a historian of the White Fathers, has noted that by the time the Sahara had been opened to the White Fathers, they had already reached Timbuktu and the Sahara no longer held any practical benefits for them.⁸⁰¹

The Need for Companions

⁷⁹⁸ Letter from Guérin 19 March 1906: “Je viens de recevoir une lettre du colonel Laperrine me disant qu’il vient de demander *officiellement* au gouverneur d’Algérie trois soeurs blanches pour *Tamanrasset*. Cette demarche l’honore grandement, mais je ne saïd guère quelle response il pourra recevoir du gouverneur. En ce moment, les missions laïques en haut lieu ont toutes les preferences, et le gouvernement remplace partout avec ferveur, par des instituteurs ou institutrices, infirmiers ou infirmières laïques, très grassement payés, tous les postes occupés autrefois, à bien moins frais, par des religieux - ou religieuses – ceci aux colonies comme en France.” Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 435-6.

⁷⁹⁹ Shorter, 16.

⁸⁰⁰ Letter to Duc de Fitz-James 11 December, 1911; Bazin, 307.

⁸⁰¹ Shorter, 30.

At Tamanrasset Foucauld's spiritual life was beset with problems. He wrote:

I am cowardly and cold. Very halfhearted in my prayers. My life is very prosaic, lukewarm, and empty. Prayer is difficult for me. Barely have I begun than I must do battle with sleep or with unbearable thoughts. This difficulty is constant.⁸⁰²

At the end of 1906 he concluded "I am miserable; only my intentions and wishes follow the right path, while I get lost in a mass of petty things, not finding any time for reflection in this exterior life."⁸⁰³ And again in the final months of 1907: "All my pious exercises leave something to be desired. They are always halfhearted, sometimes too short or too fast, full of distractions. At times sleep overtakes me, at other times I put them off from hour to hour."⁸⁰⁴ All the while he persisted in work that he felt was in opposition to his vocation: "I am a monk, not a missionary, made for silence not for speech... [although] I make and receive visits, it is not my vocation."⁸⁰⁵

One solution to the problem, particularly the problem of travel between the hermitages and therefore periods of time spent outside of an enclosure, was a companion; but Foucauld confessed, "I am so cowardly that I cannot without trepidation picture having a brother in my solitude. For me, it is so much better to be

⁸⁰² Antier, 248.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, 250.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, 256.

⁸⁰⁵ Letter to Guérin July 2 1907: "Sans doute j'y passerai, aux allées et venues, plus longtemps que par le passé et je tacherai d'avoir quelque rapports avec les pauvres et de les habituer à la confiance envers les marabouts; mais je suis *moine*, non *missionnaire*, fait pour le silence, non pour la parole; et pour avoir de l'influence à In Salah, il faudrait entretenir et créer des relations, aller voir et recevoir des visites, ce qui n'est pas ma vocation." Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 528.

alone.”⁸⁰⁶ Despite his initial resistance to the idea, the size of the country, the scope of the issue, convinced Foucauld “that Jesus wants me to work to establish this double life [the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus].”⁸⁰⁷ In December of 1906, Foucauld who had only ever lived the Rule alone, was given the opportunity to live it with a companion. During his visit with Guérin and the White Fathers he was introduced to their lay novice Brother Giles (Jean-Marie-Goyat). Having spent time in the army and considered too unstable for traditional monasticism, it was hoped that this companion would be the beginning of the realization of the Foucauldian dream.⁸⁰⁸ Foucauld named his postulant Brother Michel and took him back to Beni-Abbès with him where they celebrated Christmas together. Brother Michel wrote an account of his four months with Foucauld, outlining in particular Foucauld’s “terrible mortifications.”⁸⁰⁹ He concludes his account: “I was his first and last disciple. God grant me to imitate him according to my strength.”⁸¹⁰

After Christmas the two men set out for Tamanrasset. From the first day Foucauld was concerned about Michel’s ability to follow the Rule, sensing in him a fear and not seeing in him the two virtues that can overcome fear and hesitancy – humility and obedience.⁸¹¹ At In-Salah they were forced to stop. Brother Michel was overcome with exhaustion and dysentery. Hoping for Brother Michel recovery, Foucauld bought a hermitage in the village.⁸¹² In March 1907 Foucauld was forced

⁸⁰⁶ Antier, 247.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, 221.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, 250.

⁸⁰⁹ Bazin, 253; 249-257.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid, 257.

⁸¹¹ Letter to Guérin 6 March 1907, Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 496.

⁸¹² Antier, 253.

to give up the dream of a companion, writing simply, “Sent Michel back to El Golea. Extremely weak in body and spirit, soul and virtues.”⁸¹³

The responsibility that Foucauld felt towards the Touaregs, and his failure to attract any interest to the region, was only given added urgency by his continuing ill health. While the illness of 1908 was certainly the most serious, Foucauld had been plagued with illness since 1905. When he returned to Beni-Abbès after the training tour of 1904, in the spring of 1905, he admitted to his cousin that he was feeling ill:

I must confess to you that I have been tired since my return, especially the last twelve days; not ill, I celebrate holy mass, I stand, but a bad headache, a fever, all types of discomforts... I believe it is not serious... God must be praised in all things. This powerlessness, this incapacity, is good. It shows us the little that we are and how little God needs our work.⁸¹⁴

This illness stayed with him into the following month.⁸¹⁵

In 1906 he had a more serious incident at Tamanrasset. In August he was bitten by a horned viper, a poisonous snake, just outside of his hermitage.

Fortunately his friend Motylinski was staying with him. Foucauld needed three separate bleedings and cauterizations to prevent the spread of the poison.⁸¹⁶

Although he reported his “bad feet” to his cousin, he still made his trip north to Beni-Abbès in September.⁸¹⁷ The reality of his lifestyle was becoming apparent, however.

⁸¹³ Ibid, 254

⁸¹⁴ LMB 21 March 1905 “... je dois vous avouer que je suis fatigued depuis mon retour, surtout depuis une dizaine de jours: pas malade, je célèbre la sainte messe, je suis debout, mais de gros maux de tête, de la fièvre, tout un ensemble de malaises... Je les crois sans gravité... [...] Il faut louer Dieu de tout... Cette impuissance, cette incapacité est bonne, elle nous montre le peu que nous sommes et combine peu le bon Dieu a besoin de notre travail...” Foucauld, *Bondy*, 134.

⁸¹⁵ LMB 11 April 1905; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 135.

⁸¹⁶ Antier, 249.

⁸¹⁷ LMB 16 August 1906; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 151.

He was unable to attract anyone, even the White Fathers, to his mission. He was the only European in the area, the only beacon of Christianity, and his health was not what it had been when he had gone to Morocco as a youth. In the spring of 1907 he wrote to his friend Father Voillard:

I am getting old. I should like to see someone better than I replace me at Tamanrasset, another better than I installed at Beni-Abbès so that Jesus may continue to reside in those places, and that souls may get more and more there.⁸¹⁸

Loss of Eucharist

The original concept of Foucauldian mission was based on his understanding of the Mystery of the Visitation. The Visitation had become a point of devotion for Foucauld during his years in Nazareth, and a model for evangelization. Foucauld was struck by the idea that God could exist silently among men and bring about their sanctification. He was inspired by the story of the Visitation, when a pregnant Mary visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. In a meditation written in 1898 Foucauld understood the story as a personal instruction from Jesus:

I made my Mother take me to the home where John was to be born...Not only her did I urge along to sanctify others as soon as she possessed me, but I do so to all other souls to whom I give myself...to all those who possess me but have not yet been given a mission to preach, I say to these, let them sanctify souls by carrying me in silence amongst them.⁸¹⁹

At her example, sanctify souls without departing from silence, in bearing among unbelieving peoples, with a small number of brothers, Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, and the practice of the

⁸¹⁸ “ Je vieillis, et je voudrais voir quelqu’un, meilleur que moi, me remplaçant à Tamanrasset; un autre, meilleur que moi, installé à Beni Abbès; de manière que JÉSUS continue à résider en ces deux lieux et que les âmes y reçoivent de plus en plus...” Lett ero Paul Voillard 6 May 1907; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 833; English translation, Bazin 257.

⁸¹⁹ Foucauld, *Meditations*, 98-99.

evangelical virtues through a life of imitating the hidden life of our Lord.⁸²⁰

When Foucauld entered North Africa in 1901 he answered this call first as a priest. In his letter to Mgr. Bazin, requesting permission to enter the country, he outlined his role as a chaplain to the soldiers in Algeria but maintained that his mission was above all “to sanctify the infidel populations *by bringing into their midst Jesus present in the most Blessed Sacrament* as Mary sanctified the house of St. John the Baptist by brining Jesus into it.”⁸²¹ In his first letter to Henry de Castries he outlines his plans for evangelization of the country: “this evangelization, [comes] not by speaking, but by the presence of the Very Holy Sacrament, the offering as the divine Sacrifice, prayer, penance, the practice of the evangelical virtues, charity...”⁸²² Although he recognizes other opportunities for evangelization, it is the Eucharistic sacrament that best achieves it. Although, as Hillyer has pointed out, Foucauld stops using the Visitation as a metaphor for evangelization when he enters Algeria,⁸²³ he does use it once more on his first visit to Southern Algeria. On July 2, 1904, the feast of the Visitation, while on his first training tour, Foucauld prayed to the Virgin Mary to “Continue your Visitation: visit the Tuaregs, Morocco, the Sahara, the infidels, and all souls...”⁸²⁴

Despite the change in metaphor, the place of the Blessed Sacrament was at the forefront of his missionary endeavour to the Tuaregs. In contemplating the threat

⁸²⁰ Hillyer, 76.

⁸²¹ Letter to Mgr. Bazin, 22 August 1901; Bazin, ; Hillyer, 159; italics mine.

⁸²² “C’est l’évangélisation, non par la parole, mais par la presence du Très Saint Sacrement, l’offrande du divin Sacrifice, la prière, la penitence, la pratique des vertus évangéliques, la charité...” LHC 23 June 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 84.

⁸²³ Hillyer, 160.

⁸²⁴ Quoted in Bazin, 224.

the training tours posed to his vocation he wrote, “But after reason has said all that, I see those vast areas without a priest, I see myself as the only priest who *can* go there, and I feel myself under extreme and ever growing pressure to go”.⁸²⁵ Captain Dineaux, when he left Foucauld in Tamanrasset in 1905, specifically mentioned the opportunity he had to celebrate with Foucauld on the training tours: “He manifested an extraordinary devotion and seemed in ecstasy. It was a revelation for us.”⁸²⁶ In a letter to a friend in 1911, Foucauld speaks of his desire to keep a priest “fixed here, among the Tuareg, where the continuous presence of a priest is more necessary than elsewhere...”⁸²⁷ The Eucharist was at the heart of Foucauld’s mission to Algeria.

In 1906 this core of his method of evangelization was taken away from him. To celebrate the Mass, a priest must have another person present to say the responses, and to represent the Church. Without the Church the Mass cannot take place. When he first moved to Tamanrasset, Foucauld was joined by his servant Paul who, while not baptized, was able to act as server. Only months after settling in Tamanrasset, Foucauld became aware of the problems with Paul and the possibility that he might leave. The following year Foucauld began to worry in earnest about the possibility of losing Paul and consequently the ability to celebrate the Mass and asked if he could get special permission to celebrate alone: “Paul goes from bad to worse – morally – the impossibility of saying Mass without him alone makes me

⁸²⁵ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 155.

⁸²⁶ Antier, 230.

⁸²⁷ “si nous étions deux, mon frère serait à poste fixe ici, chez les Touaregs, où la présence continue d’un prêtre est plus nécessaire qu’ailleurs...” Letter to Father Antonin 13 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 275.

keep him...”⁸²⁸ One month later Paul was gone and Foucauld was left with no recourse to celebrate the Eucharist and consequently without his main means of radiating God’s love and saving presence to the Muslims.

While in July of 1907, Foucauld was very optimistic about the opportunity for celebrating Mass presenting itself, but this did not prove to be the case. Until the end of the year, he only saw two Europeans in six months – one in October and another in December⁸²⁹ - and only had the opportunity to celebrate the mass five times.⁸³⁰ At Christmas he wrote to his cousin about this sadness in his life:

That night, no Mass, for the first time in twenty-one years. Up to the last minute, I hoped someone would come. But nothing came, no Christian traveler, no soldier, no permission to celebrate alone.⁸³¹

On New Years Day 1908 Foucauld expressed the sadness and frustration he was feeling in a letter to abbé Huvelin. Lamenting what he saw as his failed work of many years he wrote: “What a harvest I should have had! Instead of that, misery, destitution, and not the least good towards others. A tree is known by its fruit, and mine shows what I am, a useless servant.”⁸³² This distress was undoubtedly brought on, in part, by his inability to provide that service that he considered to be his greatest gift to the people and that was at the centre of his mission - the Eucharist. The month before he had written to his cousin describing his role:

⁸²⁸ Letter to Guérin 2 April 1906; Bazin, 246.

⁸²⁹ Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 249.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid*, 254.

⁸³¹ “Cette nuit, pas de messe, pour la première fois depuis 21 ans [...] Jusqu’à la dernière minute, j’ai espéré qu’il viendrait quelqu’un, mais rien n’est venu, ni un voyageur Chrétien, ni un militaire, ni la permission de célébrer seul.” LMB 25 December 1907; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 165.

⁸³² Antier, 259.

Does my presence do any good here? If it does not, the presence of the Blessed Sacrament most certainly does. Jesus cannot be in any place without radiating.⁸³³

On January 20th, 1908 Foucauld wrote in his diary “I am ill. Forced to stop my work. Jesus, Mary, Joseph I give you my soul, my spirit and my life.”⁸³⁴ The years leading up to this illness had, in many ways, displayed as failures his plans and desire until that time. He had been completely unable to attract others to the cause of the Tuaregs. There were no missionaries to take over his work and allow him to return to his vocational ideal of silence and stability. The only two people who had shared his enthusiasm had left him: a fellow translator and old army comrade Motylinski had died (he will be discussed in more detail in the next section), and his first and only disciple had been unsuited for the task. For years he had seen himself as someone who “procures [the presence] of the Blessed Sacrament”.⁸³⁵ With the loss of the Eucharist he was forced to reevaluate his role in the process of evangelization. The inability to celebrate the Mass coincided with this illness and the realization that if he died at that time he would die with his mission unfinished, the promise of a legacy unfulfilled, and the Tuaregs abandoned. He had tried to give everything of himself. Laperrine wrote to Guérin after hearing of Foucauld’s illness, “I am going to say

⁸³³ “Ma presence fait-elle quelque bien ici? Si elle n’en fait pas, la presence du Très Saint Sacrement en fait certainement beaucoup.” LMB 18 November 1907; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 163.

⁸³⁴ “Je suis malade. Obligé d’interrompre mon travail. Jésus, Marie, Joseph, je vous donne mon âme, mon esprit et ma vie.” Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 247.

⁸³⁵ Bazin, 262.

some foolish things to him and also invoke your authority to let him know that penance leading to gradual suicide is not permissible..”⁸³⁶

On January 26 he wrote to his cousin, “I thought it was the end but the Lord had not so willed.”⁸³⁷ Having returned to Tamanrasset from Beni Abbès to the worst famine in years, Foucauld had given away all his provisions to the poor. When the community learned of his illness, however, they were able to find some goats milk and nursed him back to health.⁸³⁸ By the end of January he received word that he had been granted permission to celebrate Mass alone and in February he was able to report “Great happiness... I lack nothing.”⁸³⁹

For years Foucauld had seen himself as someone who “procures [the presence] of the Blessed Sacrament”.⁸⁴⁰ With the loss of the Eucharist he was forced to reevaluate his role in the process of evangelization. This new way of thinking coincided with his illness and convalescence with the assistance of the Tuareg. His friend Laperrine reported that as a result “he is more popular than ever among them”.⁸⁴¹ Ian Latham has asserted that it was this friendship of reciprocity, based on a mutual need for each other, that allowed Foucauld to shift from being viewed as an outsider to becoming a member of the community.⁸⁴² It was through the intimacy of convalescence that Foucauld first began to discuss religion with the Tuaregs, and so

⁸³⁶ “Je vais lui dire des sottises et m’autoriser de vous pour lui dire que la penitence allant au suicide progressif n’est pas admise” Letter from Laperrine to Guérin 20 January 1908; Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 247.

⁸³⁷ Antier, 259.

⁸³⁸ Latham, “Silent Witness,” 57.

⁸³⁹ Antier 260.

⁸⁴⁰ Bazin, 262.

⁸⁴¹ Latham, “Silent Witness,” 57.

⁸⁴² *Ibid*, 56-58.

the pathway for meaningful interaction was opened.⁸⁴³ While he was allowed to resume celebrating the Mass in 1908, and this gave him great happiness, he was not given permission to reserve the host in the tabernacle until 1914.⁸⁴⁴ A shift in understanding was necessary for him to continue in his duty to make Christ present for the Tuaregs. He did experience what Six calls, “l’explosion missionnaire de 1908,”⁸⁴⁵ but Foucauld was able to respond to these changes from within his vocation as a hermit.

Eremiticism and Mission

In some cases early Christian hermits acted as missionaries. Their role, as described by St. Benedict, actually makes them ideal missionaries, as they are prepared, as Foucauld was, to go to places where others were not able to go.⁸⁴⁶ Hermits act as missionaries in two ways. First, hermits raise humanity up through their own ascetic union with God. Connected to the rest of the community by the body of Christ⁸⁴⁷ the hermits’ union with God lifted up their fellow Christians: “the people are supported by their prayers as though by God himself”.⁸⁴⁸ They preserved humanity with their asceticism: “Civilization, where lawlessness prevails, is sustained by their prayers, and the world, buried in sin, is preserved by their prayers”.⁸⁴⁹ Faced with the loss of the Eucharist, it is essential that Foucauld *become* the sacrifice. In the years that follow, he emphasizes this sacrifice:

⁸⁴³ Bazin, 267.

⁸⁴⁴ Bouvier, 89.

⁸⁴⁵ Six et al., *testament*, 229.

⁸⁴⁶ Chittister, 32-33.

⁸⁴⁷ 1 Cor. 12:26.

⁸⁴⁸ Ware, 7.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

The grace of God can do all things, but in face of so many moral miseries... one sees clearly that human means are powerless, and that God alone can effect so great a transformation. Prayer and penance! The farther I go, the more I see that these are the principal means of acting upon these poor souls.⁸⁵⁰

Connected to the Muslims by the body of Christ,⁸⁵¹ “[s]ouls are saved by sanctity, sacrifice, example and words.”⁸⁵²

The second method of eremitic missionary work was based on the power that hermits derived from their mystical union with God. Hermits, by their union with God, became imperfect embodiments of the divine. As Foucauld explained it, to let Jesus live in man was to make simple human acts “the acts of Jesus, of infinite and divine effectiveness.”⁸⁵³ In their interaction with humanity, however limited or extensive, hermits act as witnesses of Christ. Both Islam and Christianity have used the metaphor of a lamp.⁸⁵⁴ The light indicates the presence of God.

Eremiticism has its theological roots in the experience of martyrdom. The word “martyr” is Greek for “witness”.⁸⁵⁵ Bowersock points out that “[e]arly martyrdom absolutely presupposed self-sacrifice within some kind of a community”.⁸⁵⁶ The execution of the martyrs was a public sacrifice, “a performance

⁸⁵⁰ Letter to de Blic 9 December 1907; Bazin 262.

⁸⁵¹ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 146-7.

⁸⁵² 1916; *Ibid*, 200.

⁸⁵³ “c’est faire que nos actes ne soient plus de pauvres actes simplement humains, mais les actes de JESUS, d’une efficacité divine et infinie.” LPG 15 September 1907; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 560.

⁸⁵⁴ Gregory I described ascetics as the sacrificial flame upon the altar, Kinnard, 141; Ali Merad has described Foucauld as a lamp, using traditional sufi imagery for the hermit, Zoe Hersov, “A Muslim’s View of Charles de Foucauld” *The Muslim World*, no. 3-4 (1995): 295-316, 307.

⁸⁵⁵ Bowersock, 5.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 55.

orchestrated by God".⁸⁵⁷ God was transforming public entertainment into a spectacle of witness. To bear witness as a martyr was to perform a missionizing service, the power of which was in the act, the sanctifying act. The example of martyr's witness can be found in *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*,⁸⁵⁸ which was read by Foucauld.⁸⁵⁹

Traditionally, the hermit did not see this public witness as beyond his purview, although some dealt with the intrusion from the world more cheerfully than others. In certain cases the hermit purposefully used the powers that the union with God conferred upon him to enlarge the numbers of the earthly Church. In one example the ascetic Apollo came upon a group of pagans while out walking. He prayed to God and was able to literally stop them in their tracks. The immobile pillars of salt were only able to move again after they accepted Christianity in their hearts.⁸⁶⁰ Apollo used the personal connection that he had made with Christ after 40 years in the desert to allow him to effect their conversion.

In another case the ascetic used his connection to humanity through God to reach another person. Euthymius, a hermit in Palestine in the early fifth century, sensed the illness of a paralyzed Bedouin boy. He then visited the boy in a dream and told him to come to the hermit's cave. When the boy appeared, brought by other members of his community, Euthymius performed a miracle and the boy was healed. After witnessing this miraculous event, the boy's entire tribe converted.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid, 52.

⁸⁵⁸ *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, XIX 7-8.

⁸⁵⁹ Bouvier, 98; France, 138.

⁸⁶⁰ *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, VIII, 26-29.

⁸⁶¹ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. R. M. Price and (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 15-16.

Euthymius used the powers derived from his asceticism to call, heal, and finally convert.

These miraculous events stood as witness to the power and reality of God. Sometimes the witness was more subtle. For instance, Euthymius was the cause of mass Bedouin conversions. He did not actively seek out their conversion, but they converted upon having heard about Euthymius's life and deeds.⁸⁶² In the case of Marcarius the Great, a pagan priest was converted by the ascetic's actions. Maracrius saw the potential convert as someone to be treated with consideration, rather than as an enemy to be attacked and therefore, like Foucauld, allowed his actions and life to speak for Christianity.⁸⁶³

Amongst the Tuareg Foucauld was determined to live out this ideal of witness. He wrote:

My apostolate must be of kindness. In seeing me, people must say to themselves: 'Since this is a good man, his religion must be good,'. And if I am asked why I am gentle and good, I must say: 'Because I am the servant of someone far more good than I. If only you knew how good is my master, Jesus.'⁸⁶⁴

. His goal when working with the Tuaregs was to assist them:

Putting them at ease, making friends with them, helping them in small ways, giving them good advice, exhorting them quietly to follow natural religion, proving to them that Christians love them.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶² Cyril of Scythopolis, 20.

⁸⁶³ Ward, 18.

⁸⁶⁴ France, 156.

⁸⁶⁵ "Il faut mettre en confiance, se faire d'eux des amis, leur rendre de petits services, leur donner de bons conseils, leur amitié avec eux, les exhorter discrètement à suivre *la religion naturelle*." LMB 16 December 1905; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 147.

He provided council and advice, using the example of God's instructions in the "holy books".⁸⁶⁶ Foucauld's relationship with Mousa has been compared to that of the Islamic master and acolyte.⁸⁶⁷ He also took on the traditional eremitic role of arbitrator.⁸⁶⁸ He would often settle issues within the community if Mousa was not present and he was the obvious go between for interaction with the French officers.⁸⁶⁹

Both evangelical methods, sacrifice and witness, involve a strict focus on the imitation of Christ. This understanding of union with God as mission had always been an important element of Foucauld's missionary work in Algeria. Within the context of The Visitation, his model when he first entered Algeria, he wrote:

At her example, sanctify souls without departing from silence, in bearing among unbelieving peoples, with a small number of brothers, Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, *and the practice of the evangelical virtues through a life of imitating the hidden life of our Lord.*⁸⁷⁰

The Eucharist is always given the first place in Foucauld's writings, but he also refers frequently to the effectiveness of personal sanctification as a tool for expanding the Church in Africa: "the sanctification of the peoples of this region is in my hands. They will be saved if I become a saint."⁸⁷¹ Yet after the loss of the Eucharist there is a shift in the importance Foucauld places upon the imitation of Christ. The morning Paul left the Fraternity, which began his struggle to regularly

⁸⁶⁶ Bazin, 243.

⁸⁶⁷ Loosley, 321.

⁸⁶⁸ "While the Great One (Anthony) is still alive...go to him...and wait until Anthony comes out from the cave and refer the care to him. And whatever he says to you, go by his decision, for God speaks to you by him." quoted in Brown, 93.

⁸⁶⁹ Leptit, 89-91.

⁸⁷⁰ Hillyer, 76: Italics mine.

⁸⁷¹ Retreat 1902; Foucauld, *Meditations*, 159.

celebrate Mass, Foucauld lists thirteen points that he needs to remember in imitating Christ. The last was, “I must remember to let the Heart of Jesus live in my heart, so that it may no longer be I who live, but the Heart of Jesus living in me, as it lived at Nazareth.”⁸⁷² Describing the three principles that guided his life, in a letter of 1911, he listed “imitation of the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth” above adoration of the Sacrament for the first time.⁸⁷³ The demotion of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament need not be seen as a casting aside of his eremitic vocation. Adoration of the Sacrament, while beloved, was a means to an end: union with Christ, not the end in and of itself. The change in emphasis highlights the new importance placed upon Foucauld as the vessel for Christ, rather than the Eucharist, which was a far more literal fulfilment of the eremitic vocation than when he had depended on the host.

The missionary work that Foucauld engaged in did not disrupt Foucauld’s eremitic principles.⁸⁷⁴ Although Foucauld wrote that he was “doing everything possible” for the conversion of souls⁸⁷⁵, this statement says more about Foucauld’s understanding of missionary work than a seismic shift in his ideology. Foucauld’s missionary work was still based on his principle of silence. He never preached to the

⁸⁷² May 17, 1906; Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 170-171.

⁸⁷³ “... ma vie: c’est une vie de moine missionnaire fondée sur ces trois principes: *imitation de la vie cachée de JESUS à Nazareth, adoration du T. S. Sacrement exposée, établissement parmi les peuples infidels les plus délaissés en faisant tout ce qu’on peut pour leur conversion.*” Letter to Father Antonin 13 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 273.

⁸⁷⁴ Ethiopian Christianity, surrounded by Islam, “posses the last remaining substantial tradition of robust Christian hermitical [sic] asceticism” the strong monastic tradition includes an active element which has functioned as a successful system for evangelization. See Joachim Persoon, “Review Article Ethiopian Monasticism,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7, no.3 (2007): 240-245.

⁸⁷⁵ Foucauld, *Trappe*, 160.

people, instead his discussions on religion were based on meditating on commonalities between the two faiths and on moral issues. He discussed “natural religion” with them, offered them advice from the “holy books” and invented a rosary that could be said by Muslims and Christians.⁸⁷⁶ In this way he was fostering their existing piety, a quality he had always admired in Muslims. He saw his work that of “clearing out” and preparation⁸⁷⁷, much the way his own thorns had been removed to prepare him for the Living Christ. At the same time he continued to make Christ present for the Tuareg through the Eucharist and his own example using the tools of the hermit, “meditation, discernment, self-control, and godly obedience”.⁸⁷⁸

Balance of Contemplation and Witness

Some scholars of asceticism have argued that the image of the solitary hermit, completely isolated from the world, is a false one. The imagery of the desert is more complex:

Many monastic writers speak of the desert [...] as a place not just of solitude (eremia), but of stillness (eremia) [...] Other monastic writers speak of the desert as a place of struggle, of hand-to-hand combat with demons, of temptations, inflamed imagination, and for those successful in this combat, of pride. In their writings (a notable early example is St. Athanasius’ Life of St. Antony) the desert seems to be a noisy, clamorous place, worse than the world, not a place of quiet or stillness at all.⁸⁷⁹

The desert was a place of contemplation, but also of encounter, both with God, but also with temptations and tribulations. Foucauld found the mission that he had

⁸⁷⁶ Bazin, 243 and 282.

⁸⁷⁷ Six, ‘Postérités’, 475.

⁸⁷⁸ Cyril of Scythopolis, 13.

⁸⁷⁹ Louth, 2.

devised for himself to be an exercise in ascetic discipline.⁸⁸⁰ He had to overcome his natural aversion to sin and replace it with love, but he also had to struggle with his desire for and love of solitude. He wished that he had more time to spend in prayer.⁸⁸¹ Despite his more public life amongst the Tuareg he still spoke eloquently of silence as his vocation, “the soul is not made for noise, but for meditation”⁸⁸² and talked about his struggles with his cousin: “Deafness is a handicap hermits long for.”⁸⁸³ Part of the ascetic desert for Foucauld was accepting the responsibility to encounter that his vocation had thrust upon him and finding tools to balance this call to witness with his needs for solitude.

Foucauld adapted his understanding of silent contemplation to fit the lifestyle to which he had been called. At his hermitage in Askerm, which he established in 1911, he writes that the presence of the “invisible world” prevents solitude from ever being lonely.⁸⁸⁴ An awareness of God means that one is never alone. Jean-François Six has pointed out that solitude was actually impossible at the Askrem “hermitage” because Foucauld used it as a meeting point with the Tuaregs.⁸⁸⁵ Yet by this point, the Tuaregs had taken on a significant role in his spiritual life, and he was able to see time spent amongst them as time in prayer.

⁸⁸⁰ “I must overcome the natural severity I feel towards sinners, together with my disgust, and replace them with compassion, interest, zeal and lively care for their souls.” Dec 1903; Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 147.

⁸⁸¹ “Mais j’ai hate d’achever pour donner plus de temps à la prière et aux âmes.” LMB 22 September 1911; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 201.

⁸⁸² 1911; quoted in Bazin, 297.

⁸⁸³ “pour un ermite la surdit  est l’infirmitt  r v e” LMB 29 Jan 1916; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 241

⁸⁸⁴ Bazin, 297.

⁸⁸⁵ Six et al., *testament*, 8-9; Six, “Post rit s”, 470, 472.

After the loss of the Eucharist it became increasingly important to, not only become a more perfect vessel for Jesus, but to see Jesus in others. He wrote to Huvelin September 1907, having been without a permanent server for over a year:

I do not sufficiently keep the presence of God. I get absorbed in what I am doing and in distractions, reveries. *I do not look enough upon Jesus, who is here: however to keep company with him would be easy in this solitude.... I do not see Jesus enough in all human beings.* I am not supernatural enough with them. Not sufficiently gentle or humble, not careful to do them good whenever I can.⁸⁸⁶

Without the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Foucauld needed more than ever to rely on his understanding of Jesus' presence in humanity. For Jesus to be present with 'such love' there must be suffering; that is how Jesus always demonstrates his love for humanity, by constantly lowering himself, through every action from the Incarnation to the Passion, and therefore, Jesus takes the last place for all eternity. Foucauld felt that the Muslims of North Africa were the last place: "No people seemed to me more abandoned than those."⁸⁸⁷

His choice to be with them was his choice to be alone with God. Foucauld blatantly rejected removing himself from the Muslim community, even when he was offered the opportunity to live amongst the French. His friend General Nièger describes the situation:

the Father systematically refused to establish himself in

⁸⁸⁶ "Je ne garde pas assez le présence de Dieu, je m'absorbe dans ce que je fais ou dans distractions (rêveries que je ne chasse pas assez vite) et ne regarde pas assez Jésus qui est là: pourtant Lui tenir compagnie serait facile dans cette solitude... Je ne vois pas assez Jésus en tous les humains; je ne suis pas assez surnaturel avec eux; pas assez doux, ni assez humble; pas assez soigneux de faire du bien à leur âme chaque fois que (je) le puis." LAH 17 September 1907; Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 270. Italics my own.

⁸⁸⁷ Letter to Abbé Caron, Vicar-General of Versailles, 8 April 1905; Bazin, 141.

the immediate proximity [of the military post]. More than that, finding the contacts were becoming too frequent, he tried to avoid them. He constructed a new hermitage [...] far from every route of communication [...] He only sought contacts with us again when they were useful to the cause. His benevolence ill-concealed his impatience in tolerating purposeless visits [...] ultimately the law of his relations with his Saharan compatriots can be expressed in this rather crude formula. Foucauld only willingly let his solitude be violated in favour of the Touareg [sic], that is to say his apostolate [...] to abdicate from his dear isolation required an effort of renunciation and abnegation from him. I cannot forget that, pointing one particular evening to the surroundings of his poor hut, he stated 'I have a horror of the world and its hypocrisy'. Evidently it was of our world that he wished to speak. I can't believe that he attributed to the Touareg [sic], whose faults and vices he knew perfectly, a level of morality superior to ours. However, it is incontrovertible that he lived for them and appeared happy in their midst.⁸⁸⁸

Foucauld directly connected his rejection of French life as solitude, despite the fact that he kept company with the Tuaregs. Discussing the uniforms of the French officers he wrote, "As it concerns myself, I prefer to remain as insignificant as possible, like the divine carpenter of Nazareth. I am a monk, made for silence, not for speech or publicity".⁸⁸⁹

Like the eremitical orders of the Camaldolese,⁸⁹⁰ Foucauld lived a semi-eremitic life at Tamanrasset. These communities of monks live as hermits in separate cells or hermitages but come together as a community to share the occasional meal and to celebrate certain Hours of the Divine Office. Foucauld engaged with the Muslim community, as his community. His linguistic work, which more firmly

⁸⁸⁸ Quoted in Hillyer, 136.

⁸⁸⁹ France, 159.

⁸⁹⁰ Peter-Damian Belisle, "Overview of Camaldolese History and Spirituality," in *The Privilege of Love*, ed. Peter-Damian Belisle (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2002), 3-28.

established his life amongst and with them, took the place of manual labour.⁸⁹¹ He would share his meals with them.⁸⁹² He would share his prayers with them. He even created a set of prayer beads that could be used by both Muslims and Christians. He gave them to the local women and they would all pray together on the small beads, “My God , I love thee” and on the larger beads “My God, I love thee with my whole heart”.⁸⁹³ The Muslims of the Hoggar became part of the faith community that he, as a hermit, would join for spiritual nourishment. His interaction with them was not merely for their benefit, but also for his own. His life with the Tuargés, is eremitic – he has removed himself from the world (France) to encounter God (Jesus in Muslims).

Philip Hillyer has argued that Foucauld internalized the idea of enclosure to allow him to go where he needed to go.⁸⁹⁴ When he began to travel amongst the people of Algeria he felt that Jesus was telling him that “it is love that should make you inwardly recollected to me, and not separation from my children: see me in them, and like me at Nazareth, live near them, lost in God.”⁸⁹⁵ In 1907 he told Guérin that he was in “an enclosure – imaginary and without walls but real, at the foot of the most holy Sacrament.”⁸⁹⁶ As Hillyer rightly points out, Foucauld had not been living under a vow of enclosure so, in fact, his enclosure had always been

⁸⁹¹ “Je passé mes journées dans ma vie monastique et solitaire; remplaçant le travail manuel par des copies de touareg et d’études faites au cours de l’année de voyage...” LMB 18 February 1905; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 134.

⁸⁹² Bazin, 289.

⁸⁹³ Bazin, 282; Premiger, 229.

⁸⁹⁴ Hillyer, Chapter 10.

⁸⁹⁵ 26 May 1904; Hillyer, 119.

⁸⁹⁶ Hillyer, 131.

“imaginary but real” to some extent. In 1909 Foucauld acknowledged this to be the case.⁸⁹⁷

Hillyer also puts forward the idea that Foucauld came to consider the whole of Algeria as his enclosure.⁸⁹⁸ When Antony, the archetypal hermit, was called down from his mountain to teach and help the people he allowed this intrusion only after he discovered his “inner mountain”.⁸⁹⁹ One of the ways that Foucauld was able to accept the loss of his idea of enclosure was to create one that was “imaginary and without walls but real”.⁹⁰⁰ When he had his annual retreat in 1904, having just returned from his first training tour, he resolved to “in all comings and goings and travels when I am not making some other spiritual exercise say some Aves...”⁹⁰¹ In 1908 he reiterated his plan to “recapture in the periods in which nothing prevents me from leading a perfectly regular life the time stolen, in other periods, from purely spiritual things”.⁹⁰² The three months that he spent traveling between hermitages became the perfect opportunity both for his spiritual regrouping and for his work of sanctification.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁷ Hillyer, 132.

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid, 133.

⁸⁹⁹ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. and ed. Robert C. Gregg (London, 1980), 68.

⁹⁰⁰ Hillyer, 131.

⁹⁰¹ Bazin, 226-7.

⁹⁰² Ibid, 124.

⁹⁰³ We know from traveling companions that he did this. Captian Dineaux: “The legs of our journey were for him a test of mortification. The pace of a detachment of camel troopers is considerably faster than that of a walker. The priest continued to follow us on foot to the point of exhaustion, telling his beads and reciting litanies.” Antier, 229-230.

Walking can be understood as an act of possession. In southern Algeria, the ability to travel unchallenged was a sign of political dominance.⁹⁰⁴ In Genesis God told Abraham to take possession of the land by walking over it: “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it to you.”⁹⁰⁵ As Foucauld traveled the country he sanctified the land for Christianity. He used the opportunity to “think of the flight into Egypt and the annual journeys of the holy family to Jerusalem,”⁹⁰⁶ to “travel with the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt.”⁹⁰⁷ His migrations ceased to be merely travels but acts of union with God by imitation. Through imitation Foucauld made Christ a presence in Algeria because “[b]y union with Christ in life and act...we do not merely perfect ourselves, we reproduce Him.”⁹⁰⁸ As he continued to erect hermitages throughout the country, and travel between them, his understanding of his monastic enclosure, that is to say sacred space, began to encompass the entire Sahara.⁹⁰⁹ The mission to Algeria was not only about conversion but the sanctification of space and the dilation of the boundaries of the Church through Christ’s presence.

Viewing Algeria as his cloister was also part of the process of becoming one with the community of the Tuareg. In 1909 Foucauld mentions enclosure for a last time during his retreat, a retreat broken up by his first trip to France. During this retreat he says he can break his enclosure if no other priest can go, or if such travel

⁹⁰⁴ See Fleming, 32-36 for French expeditions to the region ending in violence.

⁹⁰⁵ Gen. 13:17

⁹⁰⁶ Letter to Abbé Caron 9 June 1908; Hillyer, 131.

⁹⁰⁷ LAH 22 November 1907; Hillyer, 130. Also see LMB 16 April 1909, Foucauld, *Bondy*, 180 and meditations February 1916 February, *Autobiography*, 201-207.

⁹⁰⁸ Goodier, 94.

⁹⁰⁹ Hillyer, 133.

was prevented by some higher duty.⁹¹⁰ While the higher duty which called him to France will be discussed in the next chapter, for now it is interesting to note that Foucauld discussed breaking enclosure in relation to France. In 1910 he tells Col. Regnault that he still lives in a cloister in Tamanrasset.⁹¹¹ In his 1911 letter to Father Antonin he compared his lifestyle to that at La Trappe. The nature of the life in Algeria is poor because the reality of life in Algeria is poor. Foucauld would demand of any companion a life, not of a European, even one living in a monastery, but of an Algerian. The clothes, food, the very environment itself creates the asceticism of a cloister far more rigorous than in the houses of France.⁹¹² General Nieger was struck, during the Tamanrasset years, by Foucauld's attitude towards the military, claiming that Foucauld tried to avoid physical contact with Frenchmen: "I cannot forget that, pointing one particular evening to the surroundings of his poor hut, he stated 'I have a horror of the world and its hypocrisy'. Evidently it was of our world that he wished to speak."⁹¹³ Algeria was the cloister.

Conclusion

Foucauld did not spend time trying to define his vocation. In the final years of his life he concluded "[h]umans do not choose their vocation: a vocation is a call, the words 'choose your vocation' are nonsense".⁹¹⁴ Foucauld describes a vocation as an "*appel*", literally a call or an appeal, or a cry for justice. His spiritual life, which he had based on eremitic asceticism, placed him in a position to accept such a call.

⁹¹⁰ Hillyer, 132.

⁹¹¹ Ibid, 135.

⁹¹² Letter to Father Antonin, 13 May 1911; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 274.

⁹¹³ Quoted in Hillyer 136.

⁹¹⁴ Charles de Foucauld, *Directoire* (Paris), 50.

Neither a soldier nor a White Father, but affiliated with both, he was able to respond to the needs of the people in a way that both groups had been unable to fulfill. Yet responding to this call threatened his understanding of his spiritual life and needs. Taking advantage of the fluidity of expression open to the hermit, Foucauld was able to reinterpret his missionary role within the context of a life of contemplation, letting this vocation to silence be his act of witness.

Chapter Six: Eremiticism and Culture

Introduction

Within the Western Latin Church eremiticism has existed within the context of the dominant, coenobitic form of monasticism. In that setting it has long acted as an agent of renewal, as a “spontaneous protest” against the laxity and decadence of prominent European monastic congregations.⁹¹⁵ The traditional hermit saw eremiticism as a vocation in and of itself, while Latin hermits saw the eremitic vocation as the beginning of a new monastic experience.⁹¹⁶ Foucauld existed within the Latin Church and, while he borrowed much from traditional eremiticism, he also had a reforming tendency. It was during the time of change at La Trappe, when he longed for the poverty of Morocco, and he wrote to his cousin: “I relish the charms of solitude more and more, and I am trying to find out how to enter into a deeper solitude”,⁹¹⁷ that he also began to ruminate on the possibility of founding a new order.⁹¹⁸ Foucauld wrote rules for three separate communities,⁹¹⁹ based on a monastic interpretation of his vocation to the imitation of Jesus, devotion to the Eucharist, and zeal for souls, yet his greatest success during his lifetime would come from his establishment of the Association des frères et soeurs do Sacré-Coeur de

⁹¹⁵ Henrietta Lesyer, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* (New York: MacMillian, 1984), 10.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 21-22.

⁹¹⁷ Bazin, 93.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 94.

⁹¹⁹ Foucauld, *Règlement*, 23-566.

Jesus,⁹²⁰ which was not a monastic order at all, but rather a confraternity open to all Catholics “celibate or married, ecclesiastical or laymen”.⁹²¹

The development of the confraternity was not a shift away from monasticism.⁹²² Unlike medieval hermits in the Latin Church, Foucauld was not bound to a monastic congregation nor was he in Europe and bound to a culture of coenobitic monasticism. He had accepted the role of the hermit as described by St. Benedict, and was prepared to respond to any call,⁹²³ whether it be in North Africa or at home, in France.⁹²⁴ The confraternity was a response to a need that he perceived while responding to the call of the people of North Africa. The failure, or the immanent failure, of France’s colonial endeavour was apparent to Foucauld. He located this failure in France’s loss of religious devotion, which had led to fundamental errors in its application of colonialism. Foucauld used his asceticism to first, establish an ascetic culture oppositional to secular colonialism. He then used his eremitic principle of reform to attempt to change the religious and colonial understanding of France, through his confraternity. This Latin element of

⁹²⁰ Six et al., *testament*.

⁹²¹ “célibataires ou mariés, ecclésiastiques ou laïcs”, Introduction, Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, 1909; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 577.

⁹²² In a letter to Father Antonin, a Trappist, in 1911, he speaks of the possibility of gaining other monks to live in the desert following his guidance Foucauld; *Trappe*, 275.

⁹²³ Charles de Foucauld, *Directoire* (Paris), 50.

⁹²⁴ Despite the fact that the monastic congregations of Little Brothers and the Little Sisters of Jesus were intended to be missionary (“They will be in the most out-of-the-way parts of non-Christian countries, so that Jesus will be brought to the places where he is least known, and search may be made with him for his most lost and abandoned sheep.” Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 160, the Constitutions, as written by Foucauld allow for establishment in Christian countries, Article III, Constitutions, Petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus, and Petites soeurs du Sacré Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 78 and 338.

eremiticism was another way of embracing their traditional role as witness to the community. Foucauld's eremitic witness was not merely to the Muslims of North Africa, but also to France.

Sacrifice and France

Foucauld's understanding of sanctifying personal sacrifice was based on traditional eremitic asceticism, but it was also based on the revival of these concepts in France. Foucauld was influenced by the work of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704). He read Bossuet after his engagement with Islam and before his formal reconversion to Catholicism.⁹²⁵ Bossuet, court preacher to Louis XIV, was a disciple of the French School of Spirituality. The French School, sometimes known as the Bérulle School, was the principle devotional influence within French Catholicism from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. It was forged in response to the Protestant Reformation and advanced an understanding of "the transcendence, holiness and absolute nature of God" which can be mediated by the mystical union with God through the annihilation of the self and imitation of Christ as the pinnacle of adoration and worship.⁹²⁶ Huvelin based his teachings on Cardinal de Bérulle and the French School.⁹²⁷

The French School emphasized an understanding of sacrifice and allowed "the persistence of a Tridentine theology of the Eucharist that asserts the sacrificial

⁹²⁵ Foucauld read Bossuet's *Élevations sur les mysteries*, which had been a gift from his cousin Marie for his confirmation in his youth, Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 310.

⁹²⁶ Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*. Translated by Agnes Cunningham, SSCM (Pittsburgh: Doquesne University Press, 1994).

⁹²⁷ Salin, 475 and Antier, 113.

and expiatory nature of Catholicism's central rite".⁹²⁸ It was the influence of this spirituality that created "a continuous set of cultural discourses and social formations that did their part in creating a certain political culture of national sacrifice" that permeated French thought, both religious and secular, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two points characterize sacrifice in this philosophy for which Christ on the cross is the paradigm. The first, is the total annihilation of the self; nothing less than the total abandonment of the individual is accepted. The second, is the belief that sacrifice, which means to be 'made holy',⁹²⁹ has a function in the salvation of humanity. Its purpose is to atone, or expiate sin: "On this logic, transgressions can never be thought away, excused, or eliminated in some 'spiritual way.' Even Christ's good intentions could alone never suffice in place of a real sacrificing death and resurrection."⁹³⁰

The idea of making reparations to expiate the sins of others has a long tradition within the Church, beginning, of course, with the Passion. Through the French School French understanding of Eucharistic sacrifice became bound with the imitation of Christ urging "self-effacing self-sacrifice of the human individual. Such self-immolation in some way expiates for human sin by participating in what [...] Jesus accomplished by his death on Calvary."⁹³¹ This belief became solidified in French culture through the Revolution. Bossuet, closely associated with Louis XIV, reinvigorated the doctrine of the divinity of the French king.⁹³² When the French

⁹²⁸ Strenski, 13.

⁹²⁹ Ibid, 18.

⁹³⁰ Ibid, 15-16.

⁹³¹ Ibid, 17.

⁹³² Ibid, 36-7.

Revolution killed his descendent, Louis XVI, it sparked a cultural revolution marked by a national obsession with sacrifice.

The death of the Christ-King⁹³³ was a great sin that needed to be expiated by the French people. As the counterrevolutionary Joseph de Maistre explained, “every drop of Louis XVI’s blood will cost torrents of French blood; four million French people, perhaps, will pay with their heads for the great national crime of antireligious and antisocial insurrection, crowned by regicide.”⁹³⁴ Such concepts were even picked up by the Republicans themselves.⁹³⁵ The violence of the Paris Commune and the military defeat of 1870-1 only solidified these ideas in the national consciousness.⁹³⁶ In the wake of these national disasters, people not only offered up the events that caused them to suffer, but actively sought opportunities for reparation to atone for the sins of the nation.⁹³⁷

A study of Foucauld’s thought demonstrates his belief and participation in this very French understanding of suffering for the expiation of the sins of others. At the heart of Foucauldian spirituality is the hallmark of the French School: a deep Eucharistic devotion, and an imitation of Jesus. The Passion is described as an event of incomparable suffering and self immolation: “in front of the crucifix they learn the price of suffering and annihilation, seeing that it was at the hour of greatest

⁹³³ Burton, *Blood*, 44-53.

⁹³⁴ Quoted in *Ibid*, 48.

⁹³⁵ Quoted in Strenski, 36-37.

⁹³⁶ Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, translated by Jefferson Chase (London: Granta Books, 2004); Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 28-35.

⁹³⁷ See Burton, *Tears*.

annihilation that Jesus saved the world.”⁹³⁸ Imitating this Passion is an essential aspect of Foucauldian spirituality:

It is by the cross that Jesus saved the world; it is by the Cross, by letting Jesus live in us and finish in our suffering the work of the Passion, that we may continue the work of Redemption til the end of time. Without the cross one does not have union with Christ crucified, nor Jesus the saviour.⁹³⁹

For Foucauld, this imitation of Christ is not only advantageous to others in the sense of reparation, but it encompasses a total way of life that also imparted sanctification, and gave moral instruction by example: “I must work with all my strength to sanctify myself [...] It is when one suffers most that one sanctifies oneself and others!”⁹⁴⁰

The culmination of French national sacrifice was the construction of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre.⁹⁴¹ Its construction in Paris was seen as the ultimate act of national atonement.⁹⁴² Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was another hallmark of the French School that became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century. Although it first appeared in the thirteenth century, it gained its modern form after the visions of seventeenth century Visitationist nun, Marguerite Mary Alacoque. The Christ of her visions was physically wounded by the sins of humanity:

⁹³⁸ “...devant le crucifix ils apprennent le prix des souffrances et des anéantissements, voyant que c'est à l'heure du plus grand anéantissement que Jésus a sauvé le monde” Directory of the Association, Article XV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 626.

⁹³⁹ “C’est par le Croix que Jésus a sauvé le monde; c’est par la Croix, en laissant Jésus vivre en nous et achever en nous par nos souffrances ce qui manqué à Sa Passion, que nous devons continuer jusqu’à la fin des temps l’oeuvre de la Rédemption. Sans croix, il n’est pas d’union à Jésus crucifié, ni à Jésus sauveur.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 646.

⁹⁴⁰ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 155.

⁹⁴¹ Burton, *Blood*, xiii.

⁹⁴² Jonas, 200.

Now, in another vision, the body of Jesus revealed the injuries and insults of an entire people. 'He presented himself to me,' Marguerite-Marie wrote, 'covered with wounds and His Body all bloody, his Heart torn by wounds and all worn out. In fear, I lay face down before him. I dared say nothing, and he said to me, 'Here is the state to which my chosen people have reduced me.'⁹⁴³

Ivan Strenski explains its popularity within French Catholic culture:

This common ground of the heart provided a venue where both Christ and devotee could play their roles as sacrificial victims. The devotee not only meditated on Christ's expiating death and total immolation of himself before the Father, but also took the occasion to enter into Jesus' cosmic action by seeking a total identification with the suffering lord.⁹⁴⁴

The devotion increased in popularity throughout the nineteenth century, as the idea of expiating suffering became more prominent. National dedication to the Sacred Heart was for the expiation of the nation's sins since the Revolution, uniting the suffering of pious Frenchmen under one banner.⁹⁴⁵ In 1899, Leo XIII encouraged all Catholics to dedicate the entire world to the Sacred Heart.⁹⁴⁶

Foucauld was devoted to the Sacred Heart⁹⁴⁷ and his establishment in North Africa is steeped in French sacrificial imagery. At Beni-Abbès he established the Fraternity of the Sacred Heart. He offered Morocco, which he never reentered, to the Sacred Heart.⁹⁴⁸ The first slave he purchased and released was named Joseph of the Sacred Heart.⁹⁴⁹ The congregations he created whilst in North Africa are dedicated to

⁹⁴³ Jonas, 24; Walsh, 227.

⁹⁴⁴ Strenski, 25.

⁹⁴⁵ F. Brown, 33-4.

⁹⁴⁶ Walsh, 228.

⁹⁴⁷ Bouvier, 32-33, 104-5, 195.

⁹⁴⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 149.

⁹⁴⁹ Bazin, 162.

the Sacred Heart.⁹⁵⁰ Their mission was to “see in all humans a soul to save” and radiate charity like “it radiates from the Heart of Jesus”.⁹⁵¹ This mingled Muslim hospitality in the image of a Moroccan fraternity,⁹⁵² open to all, with Catholic hospitality: a broadening of French sacrificial ideology to include the colonies. He understood the Sacred Heart of Jesus as “generous, gentle, humble and courageous *towards all men*”.⁹⁵³ Through the Incarnation, God had presented humanity with a family, a brotherhood.⁹⁵⁴ At his Fraternity of the Sacred Heart, Foucauld could be a brother with “all the people here, be they Christian, Muslims, Jews or whatever”⁹⁵⁵ by sharing in their suffering of poverty and humility, displaying the sanctity of such a life, as Jesus had sanctified poverty in Nazareth.

The Failure of French Colonialism

Foucauld’s use of the Sacred Heart, presupposes some element of French participation in the sanctification of the colonies. It also implies that the colonies were part of France, and therefore able to take part in the national sacrificial offering. Foucauld was a vocal proponent of assimilating the Algerians into France: “a progressive integration of the Muslims of Algeria or other conquered territories, such as Morocco, into French society.”⁹⁵⁶ Ian Latham has interpreted Foucauld’s

⁹⁵⁰ Foucauld, *Règlements*.

⁹⁵¹ “la règle de voir en tout humain une âme à *sauver* [...] la charité doit rayonner des fraternités comme elle rayonne du COEUR de JÉSUS...” Rule of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Preliminaries; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 104-5.

⁹⁵² Antier, 188-9.

⁹⁵³ Article XXVIII, Constitutions, Petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 86. Italics mine

⁹⁵⁴ Bouvier, 179.

⁹⁵⁵ Annie of Jesus, 52.

⁹⁵⁶ “une integration progressive des musulmans d’Algérie ou d’autres territoires conquis ou à conquérir, tel le Maroc, à la société français “ Didier, “l’Algérie”, 45.

understanding of brotherhood to be a reference to equality: equality before God and before the nation.⁹⁵⁷ Although Foucauld recognized that a true assimilation of French and Muslim North African would be the process of many years, even generations,⁹⁵⁸ he was horrified to discover that despite a public proclamation of a *mission civilatrice*,⁹⁵⁹ the situation on the ground in French Algeria was decidedly different.

His first encounter was with the issue of slavery. He was aware that the support of slavery was a governmental decision made by the Arab Bureau, but one that the officers on the ground were horrified at having to enforce.⁹⁶⁰ This was an affront to Foucauld's religious code of ethics, certainly, but it also offended him as a Frenchman:

It is hypocrisy to put on stamps and everything else, 'liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights,' you who fetter slaves and condemn to the galleys those making a lie of what you print on your banknote; you who steal children from their parents and sell them publicly; you who punish the theft of a chicken and allow that of a human being⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁷ Latham, "Silent Witness," 54-55.

⁹⁵⁸ "Je suis persuadé que ce que nous devons chercher pour les indigènes de nos colonies, ce n'est ni l'assimilation rapide, elle est impossible, l'assimilation demandent des générations et des générations... non seulement la nationalité et l'instruction française, mais la mentalité française" Letter to Captain Duclos 4 March 1916, Muller 76; Didier, 46.

⁹⁵⁹ Daughton, 33-38.

⁹⁶⁰ "les officiers ici et dans les postes voisins (Taghit, etc.) sont tous unanimes à désirer l'abolition de l'esclavage, l'affranchissement, mais il faudrait que l'ordre leur en soit donné de haut; car c'est *par ordre du général Risbourg*, ordre confirmé par le colonel Billet, que l'esclavage est maintenu [...] avec de tel précédents, les Bureaux arabes, malgré leur desirs d'affranchissement et de justice, n'osent agir sans ordre..." LPG 4 February 1902; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 76-78. "Non seulement ceux qui sont esclaves le restent, mais on en achète, on en vend chaque jour, au vu et au su des Bureaux arabes qui (malgré les regrets personnels et intérieurs de ces braves officiers) se croient obligés à cette attitude par la discipline et les ordres reçus." LPG 28 June 1902; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 99.

⁹⁶¹ Hugues Didier, "Algérie." 35-47; Fleming, 146-9.

Guérin, having recently returned from a visit to France, during which he received confirmation of increasing anticlericalism,⁹⁶² asked Foucauld to prevent his zeal from manifesting itself in exterior action.⁹⁶³ Guérin wanted Foucauld to put aside his growing desire for public and political action because the French government would not allow it:

We must consider carefully the circumstances in which we find ourselves and take care that we do not have taken from us the means through which we can do a little good by making grand gestures that can have *no* result.⁹⁶⁴

Foucauld was forced to give up his campaign. Soon thereafter, however, he was called to take part in the military tours of the Sahara where he came across further examples of disregard for the responsibilities of leadership and colonialism amongst the military.⁹⁶⁵

Nor was he happy with the religious response from within France. He had originally taken on the training tours of Southern Algeria with the assumption that the White Fathers would take over the responsibilities in the area.⁹⁶⁶ The White Fathers, although given responsibility for the whole of equatorial Africa, had been founded by the Archbishop of Algiers after he had tried to alleviate the suffering of the indigenous peoples of the colony from the famine of 1867. Theoretically the responsibility for the colonies should have been of primary importance. Yet the anti-

⁹⁶² Letter from Guérin 2 September 1902; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 109.

⁹⁶³ Letter from Guérin 17 Sept 1902; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 117.

⁹⁶⁴ Letter from Guérin 17 September 1902, “[...] pour combattre l’esclavage, il faut avoir grand égard aux circonstances de personnes et de lieux au milieu desquelles on se trouve, et veiller à ne pas se faire supprimer les moyens qu’on eut avoir de faire un peu de bien, en faisant des coups d’éclat qui d’ailleurs ne porteront *aucun* résultat.” Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 117.

⁹⁶⁵ Antier, 216-218.

⁹⁶⁶ Bazin, 219-222.; Hillyer, 119.

clerical steps taken by the government had left them unable to help him. The Prefect Apostolic outlined the issue to Foucauld in 1906:

At the moment, the lay missions in high places have all preferences, and the government replaces everywhere fervently, teachers for teachers, nurses for lay nurses, very lavishly paid, all posts occupied in the past, at much less expense, by monks - or nuns – this in colonies as in France.⁹⁶⁷

Despite the reality of the persecution of religious congregations by the French government,⁹⁶⁸ Foucauld was not completely convinced that it was the only issue. In 1911 he wrote to a friend:

I can well understand the White Fathers, seeing the evangelization of the Musulmans to be slow and difficult, have turned aside their efforts and sent the great majority of their missionaries into Equatorial Africa, where they are working wonders, and affecting conversions as rapid as they are numerous, and wining heaven for a host of souls. Here they would have saved a few, there they save many: so I can understand their going there. It is nevertheless true that Algeria, Tunis and Morocco (where there are only chaplains at the consulates) are entirely neglected...⁹⁶⁹

In the lack of help for his work with the Muslims, Foucauld saw the hand of an increasingly disinterested French society – even amongst the Catholics, interest in the colonies was not what he thought it should have been.

Foucauld's Anti-Secular Culture

⁹⁶⁷ Letter from Guérin 19 March 1906: “En ce moment, les missions laïques en haut lieu ont toutes les preferences, et le gouvernement remplace partout avec ferveur, par des instituteurs ou institutrices, infirmiers ou infirmières laïques, très grassement payés, tous les postes occupés autrefois, à bien moins frais, par des religieux - ou religieuses – ceci aux colonies comme en France.” Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 435-6.

⁹⁶⁸ Shorter, 16.

⁹⁶⁹ Letter to Duc de Fitz-James 11 December, 1911; Bazin, 307.

In his seminal book *Orientalism*, Edward Said identifies Orientalism, the depiction of the Middle East and North Africa directly connected to colonialist acquisition and accumulation in the nineteenth century, as a secularization of Christian theology. Like the French use of Catholicism for the construction of their nationalist culture in the nineteenth century, the Orientalist as the recreator and redeemer of Middle Eastern and North African culture secularized Christian concepts.⁹⁷⁰ The problem with Said's theories on Orientalism and Christianity, as identified by critics such as William Hart and Albert Hourani, comes when Said mistakenly sees a confluence between the secular Orientalist discourse and the Christian discourse with Islam.⁹⁷¹ As work such as J. P. Daughton's has indicated, in the colonies there was a dichotomy between the workings of secular government and the missionaries.⁹⁷² Foucauld, although not exempt from modern secularizing concepts such as race or the creational power of Orientalism,⁹⁷³ was convinced of the secular nature of colonialism's fatal flaw.

In 1907, the year before he verbalized an idea of the confraternity,⁹⁷⁴ he began to identify a problem in the colonial system:

Next to nothing is being done for the native peoples of our Algeria; for the most part our civilians are seeking only to enlarge the wants of the natives, so as to make bigger profits from them. The military administer them by letting them go their own way, without seriously trying to help them to make progress [...] The clergy concern themselves no more with the

⁹⁷⁰ Said, 121-122.

⁹⁷¹ William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83; Albert Hourani, "The Road to Morocco," in *The New York Review of Books* 26, March 8 1979;

⁹⁷² Daughton.

⁹⁷³ Bazin, 288.

⁹⁷⁴ letter to Guérin 1 June 1908; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 617-625.

natives than as if they did not exist – with the exception of the White Fathers. Even the White Fathers, whose order was founded for the sakes of these natives, finding the work unrewarding have turned their attention to the Negroes of Equatorial Africa.⁹⁷⁵

The foundation of these problems is, according to Foucauld, a lack of understanding of Christian duty: “everyone who has read his catechism and knows he ought to love his neighbour knows what a nation’s duty is towards its colonies. But alas, do many people take no notice of catechism”.⁹⁷⁶ Several months later he wrote to Abbé Huvelin:

I live amid infinite poverty and suffering, for which the world does nothing and wants to do nothing. What the natives see of us – Christians professing a religion of love is neglect, or ambition, or greed, and in most of us, indifference, dislike and harshness.⁹⁷⁷

The ascetic, by the discipline and control of his body, creates and develops a culture unique to himself.⁹⁷⁸ Foucauld’s use of North African culture in his ascetic life allowed him to create a space for the development of interfaith and intercultural exchange with the Muslims he surrounded himself with. Creating this space was achieved by removing himself from French colonial culture. In doing so he created a culture of religious colonialism that was in direct opposition to the status quo.

Unlike the “million Europeans living in Algeria [who] lead a quite separate life, without in any way entering into the life of the country”,⁹⁷⁹ Foucauld immersed himself in Algerian culture. He lived amongst them. He wore their clothes.⁹⁸⁰ He

⁹⁷⁵ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 175.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 176.

⁹⁷⁷ LAH 1 January 1908; Foucauld, *Huvelin*, 279-280.

⁹⁷⁸ Valantasis, “Social Function,” 547.

⁹⁷⁹ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 175.

⁹⁸⁰ Bazin, 160.

suffered with them during famine.⁹⁸¹ He came to know their language so well that his dictionary is still used today by nationalist groups.⁹⁸² Rather than enlarging their wants, he gave them the example of someone who would give up everything. He shared their trials and in doing so tried to sanctify them, as Jesus did with humanity by becoming Incarnate.⁹⁸³ He also tried to validate the life of mission for the people of France by his own example.⁹⁸⁴ He was an alternative to the prevailing “spirit of triumphalism [...] [of people] who see enemies to combat where they should see ailing brothers and sisters to care for, wounded victims lying on the path for whom they should be good Samaritans.”⁹⁸⁵ He explicitly states that the people of France have become obsessed with the mistaken belief that foreigners are enemies and behave as if they are dangerous.⁹⁸⁶ Not only was this an idea that should be foreign to a good Christian,⁹⁸⁷ but it was, in Foucauld’s opinion, a misunderstanding of the situation. According to Foucauld, the real danger “lies *in us*”.⁹⁸⁸

Foucauld became convinced that the problem in colonialism ran deeper than just an attitude in the colonies. Instead, it was a problem at the foundation of France itself, to which his fellow devotees to the Sacred Heart had been dedicated. He saw the lack of interest in the improvement of the colonies as a reflection of France’s loss of religiosity. He noted that in France, “[i]t seems the evils of society go very deep

⁹⁸¹ Latham, 57-8

⁹⁸² Rossetti, 175.

⁹⁸³ Keryell, “d’inculturation,” 211.

⁹⁸⁴ Bazin, 305.

⁹⁸⁵ LJM 3 May, 1912; Foucauld, *lyonnaises*, 90-94.

⁹⁸⁶ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 175.

⁹⁸⁷ “Les non chrétiens peuvent être ennemis d’un Chrétien: un Chrétien est toujours le tendre ami de tout humain; il a pour tout humain les sentiments du Coeur de Jésus..” LJM 3 May, 1912; Foucauld, *lyonnaises*, 92.

⁹⁸⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 188.

indeed. Fundamental virtues are lacking, or are very feeble, such as the fundamental Christian virtues themselves: charity, humility, gentleness. They are weak and little understood.”⁹⁸⁹ This lack of interest in the colonies was, in itself a sin: “Time is given us so we may sanctify ourselves and save others, and not so we may be useless and wicked. We must heed Jesus’ grave warning: ‘Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.’”⁹⁹⁰ Foucauld understood the fates of the colonies and France to be intertwined. As the people of the colonies would be saved if he sanctified himself, the expression of this witness of Christ to the people of France was equally important.

An Eremitic Reform of France

To combat this “great lack of depth and addiction to worldly vanities”⁹⁹¹ Foucauld first suggests a book, a stirring treatise on the plight of the indigenous peoples and the poor colonial response, to move those “who can be moved”.⁹⁹² After a trip to France in 1909, however, he became convinced of the need for a reform of French life:

...I have seen love of material things and vanity taking an ever growing hold on the Christian world. After my last retreat a year ago, I jotted down on paper a scheme for a Catholic association with three aims: *to bring Christians back to a life in conformity with the Gospel by drawing to their attention the example of Him who is the only true model; to make love for the holy Eucharist grow among them as our unique possession and our all; and to awaken among them an effective movement towards the conversion of unbelievers, leading them especially to fulfilment of the strict duty binding on all Christians to give a Christian education to the unbelievers*

⁹⁸⁹ LJH, 3 May, 1912; Foucauld, *lyonnaises*, 90-91.

⁹⁹⁰ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 185.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 188.

⁹⁹² *Ibid*, 176.

in their colonies.⁹⁹³

Foucauld's concept of a confraternity, which would become the Frères et Soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, was inspired by missionary aims, but realized by an eremitic reform – not of the people of the colonies, but of the spirituality of the French people. The movement was intended to be an internal, personal, reform of the individual's relationship with God – an eremitic reform – which, like a traditional eremitic monastic reform, moves from the individual into the community. As Foucauld understood his missionary work, it was to “make use of what seem to be the most reasonable means, while making oneself as holy as one can and remembering that one does good insofar as one *is* good.”⁹⁹⁴ Once France has been rededicated to the Sacred Heart *then* that love “embraces all those who are embraced by the Heart of Jesus.”⁹⁹⁵ The Directory, the guidebook for the confraternity, is not a departure from Foucauld's earlier work, but rather an extension, and expansion of it.

In 1909 Foucauld completed his Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, a “Confraternity for the practice of the evangelical virtues, devotion to the Holy Sacrament and the conversion of infidels”.⁹⁹⁶ The Association was opened to “Catholics of both sexes, of all conditions, celibate or married, ecclesiastics or lay people”.⁹⁹⁷ Its openness to lay people immediately sets it apart

⁹⁹³ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 183; Italics mine.

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 182.

⁹⁹⁵ “elle embrasse tous ceux qu’embrasse le coeur de Jésus” LJH, 3 May 1912; Foucauld, *lyonnaises*,

⁹⁹⁶ “Confrérie pour la pratique des vertus évangéliques, la dévotion au Très Saint Sacrement et la conversion des infidèles.” Foucauld, *Règlements*, 573.

⁹⁹⁷ “L’association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus est une confrérie s’adressant aux catholiques de tout sexe, de toute condition, célibataires ou mariés,

from the other rules written by Foucauld. Its dedication to the conversion of the infidels is also a shift from the less aggressive wording of Rule of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart and their mandate to “live in the country of missions”.⁹⁹⁸ Based on these differences, Jean-François Six sees the establishment of the Association as the final step in Foucauld’s transition from monk to missionary.⁹⁹⁹ Yet, despite superficial appearances, the Directory is in no way a decisive split from Foucauld’s monastic past. In fact, it is in the Directory that Foucauld synthesizes his decades of thought about the contemplative life and mission work into a cohesive whole, attempting an eremitic reform of French spirituality. In that sense, Six is absolutely correct in admonishing other scholars and Foucauldian devotees for disregarding the Directory.¹⁰⁰⁰ The Directory is in fact Foucauld’s comprehensive guide to eremitic mission.

The Directory has an almost identical goal to Foucauld’s monastic orders. The monastic Rule of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart asks its monks to “imitate the hidden life of Our Lord at Nazareth, adore night and day the perpetually exposed Holy Sacrament, and live in the country of missions”.¹⁰⁰¹ The Directory has

ecclésiastiques ou laïcs”, Introduction to Statuts et Directoire 1909; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 577.

⁹⁹⁸ “vivre dans les *pays de missions*”, Constitutions of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Article préliminaire; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 77.

⁹⁹⁹ Six et al., *testament*, 193.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Six, “Postérités”, 469.

¹⁰⁰¹ “Les petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus ont pour vocation particulière *d’imiter la vie cachée de Notre-Seigneur à Nazareth, d’adorer nuit et jour le Très Saint Sacrement perpétuellement exposé, et de vivre dans les pays de missions.*” Constitutions of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Article préliminaire; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 77. In 1906, Foucauld had proposed to change the wording of the Rule to “vivant parmi les peuples infidèles les plus délaissés”, Six et al., *testament*, 194.

three purposes :“1) the imitation of Jesus; 2) a cult very devoted to the Holy Eucharist; 3) the conversion of infidels.”¹⁰⁰² The first two points are essentially the same.¹⁰⁰³ The third point is a bit different. The Rule of the Little Brothers restricts the possibility of public methods of evangelization. A monastic order, the brothers are expected to live a more traditional contemplative, indeed eremitic, life: “They are seen as solitaires, although living several together, because of the great introversion in which they pass their lives, thanks to the perpetual cloister, in silence, and their distance from secular things and outside business.”¹⁰⁰⁴ Despite this restriction Foucauld envisioned this to be a missionary order,¹⁰⁰⁵ similar to the role of contemplatives in mission countries in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰⁶ The brothers were expected to have a zeal for souls and there was the understanding that they were to see “in every human being a soul to be saved”¹⁰⁰⁷ and it was to this end that they

¹⁰⁰² “Les frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus se proposent trois buts: 1° l’imitation de Jésus; 2° le culte très dévôt de la Sainte Eucharistie; 3° la conversion des infidels.” Statutes of the Association, Article préliminaire; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 581.

¹⁰⁰³ The Directory deals with the imitation of the life of Nazareth in Article 1 (Foucauld, *Règlement*, 581) and while the Directory does not discuss devotion to the Eucharist in terms like “perpetual” the fact that the Directory is open to all walks of life means that the Eucharist would not be readily available for some of its members in the way it would be in a religious order.

¹⁰⁰⁴ “Ils se regardent comme *solitaires*, bien que vivant plusieurs ensemble, à cause du grand recueillement dans lequel s’écoule leur vie, grâce à la clôture perpétuelle, au silence, et à l’élouidnement des choses profanes et des affaires extérieures.” Rule of the Little Brothers, Préliminaires; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 103.

¹⁰⁰⁵ “They will be in the most out-of-the-way parts of non-Christian countries, so that Jesus will be brought to the places where he is least known, and search may be made with him for his most lost and abandoned sheep.” Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 160

¹⁰⁰⁶ Menasce, Jean de. “The Contemplative Life and Missions.” In *International Review of Missions* 56 (1967): 330-337.

¹⁰⁰⁷ “la règle de voir en tout humain une âme à *sauver*” Rule of the Little Brothers, Préliminaires; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 104.

were to establish themselves in the missionary milieu. The purpose of this zeal was not to

collaborate in the glorification of God [...] on the salvation of souls by the oral predication of the Gospel, but to collaborate in it, however, with effectiveness by carrying in amongst the people Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist, Jesus given in the Holy Sacrifice, evangelical virtues and charity of the Heart of Jesus which we try hard to practice.¹⁰⁰⁸

The entire contemplative work of the Little Brothers was intended to work towards missionary ends. They would be able to be considered “saviors” by their imitation of Jesus in penance and prayer and their devotion to the Eucharist.¹⁰⁰⁹

In apparent contrast, the Directory of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus asks its members to “work with all their strength for the conversion of the infidels.”¹⁰¹⁰ On the surface, this sounds like a significant shift in direction from passive, or silent, to active or even aggressive action. In the next sentence of the Introduction, however, Foucauld expands on this directive, describing the means of evangelization open to the brothers and sisters: prayer, reflection and the advice of

¹⁰⁰⁸ “A la vérité, nous ne coopérons pas à la glorification de Dieu, à l’oeuvre de Notre Seigneur, au salut des âmes, par la prédication orale de l’Évangile, mais nous y coopérons cependant avec efficacité en portant au milieu des peuples Jésus present dans la Sainte Eucharistie, Jésus offert dans le Saint Sacrifice, les vertus évangéliques et la charité du Coeur de Jésus que nous nous efforçons de pratiquer.” Rule of the Little Brothers, Chapter III; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 116.

¹⁰⁰⁹ “[...] Ils doivent être <<sauveurs>> par la presence du Très Saint Sacrement et l’oblation du Saint Sacrifice, par l’imitation des vertus de JÉSUS, par la penitence et la prière, par la bienfaisance et la charité; la charité doit rayonner des fraternités comme elle rayonne du COEUR de JÉSUS...” Rule of the Little Brothers, Préliminaires; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 104-5.

¹⁰¹⁰ “Les frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur sont invités à travailler de toutes leurs forces à la conversion des peuples infidèles.” Introduction to the Statutes and Directory; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 578.

the Association leaders and spiritual directors.¹⁰¹¹ The Directory is a guide to the spiritual life of its members, as well as a handbook on evangelization because Foucauld understood these two concepts to be intrinsically intertwined: “Charity, which is the heart of religion [...] obliges all Christians to love their neighbours [...] and consequently to make their neighbour’s salvation, like their own, the great aim of their lives.”¹⁰¹² To achieve one you must achieve the other and Foucauld sets out for the members of the Association the path of personal sanctification as a method of mission using symbolism from his past, his understanding of union with God and the body of Christ.

Foucauld uses eremitic symbolism throughout the Directory, the most striking example of which is his invocation of the Virgin Mary. The brothers and sisters were expected to wear two scapulars dedicated to Mary.¹⁰¹³ The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel creates a connection, not only with the Virgin Mary but also signifies an association with the Carmelite Order. Foucauld had long been a devotee of Teresa of Avila and the Carmelites, a decidedly eremitic monastic order that developed from hermits living in the Holy Land.¹⁰¹⁴ The second scapular, the Immaculate Conception, is tied to Foucauld’s decision to make the Holy Virgin of the Mystery of the Visitation the patroness of the Association. Foucauld’s devotion to Mary had always involved several elements, one of them

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid.

¹⁰¹² LJH 3 May 1912; Annie of Jesus, 74.

¹⁰¹³ The third scapular they were required to wear was to the Sacred Heart, Statutes of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Article XV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 587.

¹⁰¹⁴ Elias Friedman, *The Latin Hermits of Mount Carmel* (Roma: Teresianum, 1979).

being Mary's role as mother of humanity and the brotherhood of all men.¹⁰¹⁵

Foucauld does make reference to this incarnation of Mary in the Directory,¹⁰¹⁶ but it is Mary's role as God bearer, an image that Foucauld has used before in relation to eremitic mission, that he uses to important effect in the Directory.

Foucauld's devotion to the mystery of the Visitation has been an early hallmark of his unique vocation to mission. The Visitation offered a model of silent sanctification: "to all those who possess me but have not yet been given a mission to preach, I say to these, let them sanctify souls by carrying me in silence among them."¹⁰¹⁷ This image is echoed in his rule for the Little Brothers, who "[n]ot having received from God the vocation to speak, we sanctify and preach to people in silence as the Holy Virgin sanctified and preached in the home of Saint John in silence by carrying Our Lord and practicing her virtues there."¹⁰¹⁸ Philip Hillyer identified a shift in Foucauld's thought from imitation of Mary to imitation of Jesus, that Hillyer claims led him to abandon the Visitation model in 1902.¹⁰¹⁹ Although Foucauld discussed the Visitation again in 1904, when he first started to travel amongst the Tuaregs,¹⁰²⁰ the symbolism of the Visitation did disappear from Foucauld's work. Yet Foucauld chose to revisit the model again while writing the Directory, when he was trying to put forward to the public his ideas about evangelization. In the

¹⁰¹⁵ Hillyer, 77.

¹⁰¹⁶ Directory of the Association, Article XV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 628.

¹⁰¹⁷ 1898; English translation: Foucauld, *Meditations*, 99.

¹⁰¹⁸ "N'ayant pas reçu de Dieu la vocation de la parole, nous sanctifions et prêchons les peuples en silence comme la Très Sainte Vierge sanvtifia et prêcha en silence la maison de Saint Jean en y portant Notre Seigneur et en y pratiquant Ses vertus." Rule of the Little Brothers, Chapter III; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 116-7.

¹⁰¹⁹ Hillyer, 77.

¹⁰²⁰ "Continue your Visitation: visit the Tuaregs, Morocco, the Sahara, the infidels, and all souls" July 2 1904; Quoted in Bazin, 224.

Directory, Mary's example of mission through personal sanctification is presented as a role to imitate: "our celestial Mother in this mystery is our model; like she sanctified... like Mary had haste to take our treasure, Jesus, to our faithless brothers..."¹⁰²¹

The other eremitic imagery that Foucauld invokes is that of the lamp. The symbolism first appears in the Introduction to the Directory: "where they will carry their apostolic efforts, the light of Christ will shine."¹⁰²² In the final article of the Directory, dealing with death, Foucauld again recalls the symbolism of its members as bearers of light: "Their lamp will be lit, the oil of charity will burn there and throw a deep light."¹⁰²³ He is referring to the results of the labours of the members of the Association, who in their union with Christ make Him present in the world. Like the symbolism of the Visitation, Foucauld is trying to describe that state at which individuals, through their transformation of the self, are able to carry Jesus to far flung areas of the world. The imagery of the hermit as a lamp is used in both Christian and Islamic culture. Gregory I described the ascetics as the "sacrificial flame upon the altar".¹⁰²⁴ Their light indicates that Christ is present. Ali Merad sees Foucauld as a lamp for the Muslim world, referring to the lamps of hermits discussed in pre-Islamic poetry:

Charles de Foucauld's image has become a source of

¹⁰²¹ "notre Mère céleste est dans ce mystère notre modèle; comme elle sanctifia la ... comme Marie ayons <<hâte>> de partager notre trésor Jésus avec nos frères infidèles" Directory of the Association, Article XV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 629.

¹⁰²² "là où ils porteront leurs efforts apostoliques, la lumière du Christ luira" Introduction to the Association; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 579.

¹⁰²³ "Laur lampe sera allumée, l'huile de la charité y brûlera et jettera une vive lumière." Directory of the Association, Article XL; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 678.

¹⁰²⁴ Kinnard, 141.

radiance in the solitude and silence. It reminds us of the ‘monk’s lamp’ dear to the ancient Arab poets, with its glimmer that made the heart of the solitary traveler beat with gladness, at the thought that throughout the unfathomable desert night, this fragile light was like the joyful sign of a fraternal presence.¹⁰²⁵

How then, does Foucauld propose for people, lay and religious to become lamps for unbelievers? Uniting oneself with God does this. The measure of grace, or light, in the acts of the members of the Association is based on “the measure of Jesus living in us”.¹⁰²⁶ Article XXVIII of the Directory outlines the general and particular means for the conversion of souls. The third method, after celebrating the Mass and establishing tabernacles, is personal sanctification: “The first thing to do to be useful to souls is to work persistently and with all our might for our personal conversion.”¹⁰²⁷ This personal conversion is achieved through prayer and penance. This is solitary work. The members of the Association are asked to “get lost in contemplations” and “wish to get lost forever”;¹⁰²⁸ “The soul which loves Jesus must [...] enter more and more into a life of prayer and meditation”.¹⁰²⁹

The brothers and sisters of the Association are instructed on the ways of personal sanctification through the articles of the Directory. They are instructed to

¹⁰²⁵ Hersov, 307.

¹⁰²⁶ “On fait du bien non dans la mesure de ce qu’on dit et ce qu’on fait, mais dans la mesure de ce qu’on est, dans la mesure de la grace qui accompagne nos actes, dans la mesure en laquelle Jésus vit en nous” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 645.

¹⁰²⁷ “La première chose à faire pour être utile aux âmes, c’est de travailler de toutes nos forces et continuellement à notre conversion personnelle.” Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ “L’âme qui aime se perd dans la contemplation de l’être aimé et voudrait s’y abîmer à jamais.” Directory of the Association, Article XI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 624.

¹⁰²⁹ “L’âme qui aime Jésus doit [...] entrer de plus en plus dans une vie de prière, de méditation et d’oraison.” Ibid.

detach from all that is not God,¹⁰³⁰ devotion to the Eucharist,¹⁰³¹ study of theology and the gospel,¹⁰³² penance¹⁰³³ and ordering their lives through keeping an hour and frequent discussion with their spiritual advisor¹⁰³⁴ to establish the “divine will in us”.¹⁰³⁵ They are asked to unite themselves to Christ by imitation of His poverty, particularly in clothing, diet and style of living,¹⁰³⁶ hiddenness,¹⁰³⁷ charity, peace, humility, courage,¹⁰³⁸ and manual labour,¹⁰³⁹ because to be united to God is to “have the same tastes as Him”.¹⁰⁴⁰ As demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the articles are directed towards the spiritual life of the members, the Directory is first and foremost a spiritual guide. It is a guide to the methods an individual can use to unite himself with Jesus because the members

are good not by the measure of what they say and what they do but in the measure of what they are, in the measure of grace which accompanies our acts, in the measure of which Jesus lives in us, in the measure in which our acts are acts of Jesus acting in us and by us.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³⁰ Directory of the Association, Articles X, XX; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 623, 634-6.

¹⁰³¹ Directory of the Association, Articles XII and XIII ; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 625.

¹⁰³² Directory of the Association, Article XIV, XVII, XIX; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 625-6, 630-1, 633-4.

¹⁰³³ Directory of the Association, Article XV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 626-9.

¹⁰³⁴ Directory of the Association, Articles V, VIII ; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 617-8, 620-1.

¹⁰³⁵ “la volonté divine en nous” Directory of the Association, Article XX; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 635.

¹⁰³⁶ Directory of the Association, Articles IX, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 621-3, 641-3.

¹⁰³⁷ Directory of the Association, Article X; Foucauld, *Règlement* 623.

¹⁰³⁸ Directory of the Association, Article XXI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 636-40.

¹⁰³⁹ Directory of the Association, Article XXII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 640-1.

¹⁰⁴⁰ “pour être unis au Coeur de Jésus, il faut avoir les memes goûts que Lui” Directory of the Association, Article IX; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 584.

¹⁰⁴¹ “On fait du bien non dans la mesure de ce qu’on dit et ce qu’on fait, mais dans la mesure de ce qu’on est, dans la mesure de la grace qui accompagne nos actes, dans la mesure en laquelle Jésus vit en nous, dans la mesure en laquelle nos actes sont des

The members can only fulfill the call of the Association for conversion of the infidels if they work for their own conversion.

As has already been discussed in this thesis, Foucauld understood all of humanity to be interconnected, not just as a family, but as members in the body of Christ: “the Church is the body of Jesus, all the faithful are members of Jesus, the infidels as well [...] in a distant way, but real.”¹⁰⁴² The different members of the body are all connected, and how they live affects the entirety of the body joined in Jesus.¹⁰⁴³ Foucauld revisits this theme in the Directory. The members have a duty to see “Jesus in His enemies, in all sinners, in the infidels”.¹⁰⁴⁴ It is the reason that Catholics have the responsibility, for love of God and consequently their own salvation, to work for the conversion of others:

Souls, universally distant from the creed, all lost sheep, are those sick and spiritually blind persons towards whom Christian charity must go first: they are the most suffering members of Christ, His members suffering spiritually; they have the right to care more than His healthy members¹⁰⁴⁵

In the Directory, Foucauld once again uses the French imagery of the Sacred Heart.

The members of the confraternity are expected to be “united in the Heart of

actes de Jésus agissant en nous et par nous.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 645.

¹⁰⁴² “...l’Église est le corps de Jésus, tous les fidèles sont les membres de Jésus, les infidèles eux-mêmes, [...] sont d’une manière éloignée mais réelle,” 1898, Foucauld, *Petit Frère de Jésus*, 83-4.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁴ “s’ils doivent voir Jésus dans Ses ennemis, dans les plus pécheurs, dans les infidels” Directory of the Association, Article XXXIV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 666.

¹⁰⁴⁵ “Les âmes, universellement éloignées de la foi, y sont toutes ces brebis perdues, ces malades et ces aveugles spirituels vers lesquels la charité chrétienne doit aller d’abord: ils sont les membres les plus souffrants du Christ, Ses membres souffrant spirituellement; ils ont droit à nos soins plus que Ses membres sains,” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 652.

Jesus.”¹⁰⁴⁶ Their devotions, penances, and prayers are to be united with the Heart of Jesus, for the reparation of the sins of France and its colonies.

The Directory outlines how its members are expected to assist the suffering members of Christ in Article XXVIII. The first five means are spiritual in nature. They are the Mass, the presence of the Eucharist, personal sanctification, prayer and penance. The Mass and devotion to the Eucharist are essential means, first by making Christ present in the world and specifically in parts of the world where he had been hitherto unknown. While this has always been an important focus of Foucauld’s work, the Directory follows the shift Foucauld made post-1908 with more emphasis on the individual’s participation in the sacrifice. Union with Christ in His sacrifice, perpetually offered up in the Mass, is presented as the way to work for the salvation of souls.¹⁰⁴⁷ Through devotion to the Mass, prayer, and penance one is able to sanctify oneself and participate in acts of salvation: “It is by the cross that Jesus saved the world; it is by the Cross, by letting Jesus live in us and finish in our suffering the work of the Passion, that we may continue the work of Redemption til the end of time. Without the cross one does not have union with Christ crucified, nor Jesus the saviour.”¹⁰⁴⁸

¹⁰⁴⁶ “pour être unis au Coeur de Jésus” *Stautes*, Article IX; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 584.

¹⁰⁴⁷ “si nous voulons travailler au salut des âmes avec Jésus, que notre vie soit une vie crucifiée” *Directory of the Association*, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 646.

¹⁰⁴⁸ “C’est par le Croix que Jésus a sauvé le monde; c’est par la Croix, en laissant Jésus vivre en nous et achever en nous par nos souffrances ce qui manqué à Sa Passion, que nous devons scontinuer jusqu’à la fin des temps l’oeuvre de la Rédemption. Sans croix, il n’est pas d’union à Jésus crucifié, ni à Jésus sauveur.” *Ibid.*

The final five methods for the conversion of the infidels are a good example, kindness, establishment of friendly relations, and aiding the work of different missionary and religious organizations.¹⁰⁴⁹ While these are public acts, involving some kind of interaction with the public, they are firmly rooted in the internal work outlined throughout the Directory. By good example, the members are only bringing to the public the work that they have been doing for their own personal sanctification. Instead of preaching, the members are expected to let this outward demonstration of inward transformation act for evangelization by becoming living Gospels.¹⁰⁵⁰ Kindness, treating all men with love and charity, occurs when Jesus lives in the individual, the individual is drawn to works of charity.¹⁰⁵¹ Again it is a public manifestation of the internal transformation: “They are good in order to imitate Jesus, ‘love one another as I have loved you’ [...] it is necessary to show [kindness] to all: all are sons of the heavenly Father, all are images of God and members of Jesus.”¹⁰⁵² Establishing friendly relations, while intending to assist them with conversion, is also a part of imitating Jesus.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁹ Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 645.

¹⁰⁵⁰ “Ils doivent être un Évangile vivant: les personnes éloignées de Jésus, et spécialement les infidels, doivent, sans livres et sans paroles, connaître l’Évangile par la vue de leur vie.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 647.

¹⁰⁵¹ “Ils doivent laisser Jésus vivre en eux, Son Coeur vivre dans leur coeur. Il embrasse tous les hommes dans un même amour et répand Ses dons sur tous.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 652.

¹⁰⁵² “Qu’ils soient bons pour imiter Jésus, << aimez-vous les uns les autres comme je vous ai aimés >> [...] c’est envers tous qu’il faut l’avoir: tous sont fils du Père céleste, tous sont images de Dieu et membres de Jésus.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 648-9.

¹⁰⁵³ “Dieu, pour nous sauver, est venu à nous, s’est mêlé à nous, a vécu avec nous dans le contact le plus familier et le plus étroit, de l’Annonciation à l’Ascension.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 649.

There is no doubt that the Directory, in describing the methods of evangelization, presents means that are more applicable to lay people, in particular the last five methods mentioned above. Foucauld acknowledges this openly. He writes that the duties of the lay members to the infidels are very serious because lay people have different opportunities to help.¹⁰⁵⁴ Perhaps the rules of the religious members put limits upon their ability to have relations with the infidels,¹⁰⁵⁵ or perhaps the position of a lay person would be accepted by the infidels better than a cleric.¹⁰⁵⁶ Although Foucauld acknowledges the importance of the laity in the Association, whose incorporation into missionary work was one of his goals for the organization, it is essential that their ability to take material action is not overemphasized, as it might skew our understanding of the Association.

The laity are subject to the same restrictions regarding missionary work that had guided Foucauld throughout his life. Their job, like the job of all the members, is to sanctify silently. That they might be able to offer material aid to the infidels does not change the fact that “the duty of the brothers and sisters who are neither priests nor religious is not to instruct the infidels in the Christian religion, to achieve their conversion; but to prepare”.¹⁰⁵⁷ Their work is to make present, if they are able, in the lives of the infidels the love of Christ which they have cultivated within themselves.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 670-2

¹⁰⁵⁵ “les règles de leurs institutes les empêchent de dépasser certaines limites d’intimité” Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁶ “Leur état de laïc n’inspire point de défiance au sujet de la religion” Directory of the Association, Article XXXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 671.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Le devoir des frères et soeurs qui ne sont ni prêtres ni religieux n’est point d’instruire les infidels de la religion chrétienne, d’achever leur conversion; mais de la préparer [...]” Directory of the Association, Article XXXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 671. Also Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 185

It is also important to note that while the laity are involved in the organization, they were never intended to be the only members. The Association is open to priests, monks and nuns, many of whom would have restrictions placed upon their movement and on their interaction with the public. The lay people to whom the Directory was aimed were not the lay people of Algeria specifically, but the lay people of France. It is improbable to expect that any more than a few of these individuals would have the opportunity to be in contact with the Muslims of Algeria in any way other than the spiritual.¹⁰⁵⁸

The proposed membership of the organization, the makeup of the Directory and the restrictions placed on external acts of missionary work, all point towards a reading of the Directory as a guide to contemplative, even eremitic, mission and certainly not as a renunciation of the monastic lifestyle. The external acts are merely manifestations of the internal work placed on the members; without the personal sanctification, the individual work of each member, there can be no benefit to other souls.¹⁰⁵⁹ These works, the imitation of Christ in suffering for love and sanctification, are individual eremitic acts. Although the members of the Association were expected to be “one heart and one soul”¹⁰⁶⁰ the makeup of the group precludes any kind of communal monastic life. The members are expected to be connected spiritually, mystically, as they are to all other members of the body of Christ but also united in

¹⁰⁵⁸ Although they were expected to work for the salvation of their neighbours as well, Article XXXV, XXXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 668-72.

¹⁰⁵⁹ “On fait du bien non dans la mesure de ce qu’on dit et ce qu’on fait, mais dans la mesure de ce qu’on est [...] Le degré de notre sanctification personnelle sera celui du bien produit par nos priers, nos pénitences, nos exemples, nos actes de bonté, nos oeuvres de zèle.” Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 645.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Directory of the Association, Article XXXIV; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 668.

purpose.¹⁰⁶¹ The reason that the Association is open to so many walks of religious life is because its message, its goal, is dependant on the individual's relationship with God. It is the responsibility of the members to cultivate within themselves, with the Directory and a spiritual director as guide, the union with Christ that allows the individual to use their prayers and acts as works of sanctification as the hermits did in the early Church and as Foucauld had done.

Conclusion

Foucauld had reentered North Africa in 1901 with certain assumptions about France and the colonies. Despite having divergent goals since the Revolution, the French government and the Church had presented a united outlook, in the later years of the nineteenth century, in matters surrounding the empire. The government funded Church schools, orphanages, and hospitals around the world¹⁰⁶² and the missionaries embraced civilizing terminology in their propaganda.¹⁰⁶³ They presented a united front for the 'betterment' of Algeria and Foucauld was shocked and horrified when he came face to face with the realities of the system. Foucauld's response to this failure was to envision a reform of French spirituality, a rededication to the expiating suffering of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the betterment of France and the colonies.

This reform was eremitic, a personal sanctification of the individual – both religious and lay – that would move beyond itself for the salvation of the world.

Foucauld understood the path of eremitic sanctification as open to all. In a letter to

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid, 666-668.

¹⁰⁶² Daughton, 14.

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid, 18.

his friend Jerome, who was preparing for ordination in 1898, Foucauld described what he saw as the purpose of eremitic life:

We have to pass by the desert, and to stay there, to receive the grace of God. It's there we become empty, chasing away all that is not God, and emptying completely this little house of our souls, so as to leave all the place to God alone [...] It's indispensable [...] That's how God builds his kingdom in us, our intimate life with God, our conversion with God in faith, hope and charity. Later our soul will produce fruit, much fruit, but exactly the degrees in which our inner self is formed [...] You can only give what you've got; and it's in solitude, in this life alone with God alone that God gives himself fully to the one who gives their all to Him...¹⁰⁶⁴

Foucauld, speaking in the context of the preparation period of ordination, demonstrates how essential he thought eremiticism was. A personal relationship with God is a hallmark of all religious people, but Foucauld felt that it was best cultivated through eremitic methods. Foucauld understood that eremitic solitude was not reserved for hermits, but was an essential component of all religious life. As he wrote: "Don't be afraid of being unfaithful to your duties to people; on the contrary, it's the only way to serve them effectively."¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶⁴ Letter to Père Jerome, 19 May 1898. "Il faut passer par le desert et y séjourner pour recevoir la grace de Dieu: c'est là qu'on vide complètement cette petite maison de notre âme pour laisser toute la place à Dieu seul. [...] C'est indispensable [...] cet oubli de tout créé au milieu desquels Dieu établit en elle son règne, et forme en elle l'esprit intérieur, la vie intime avec Dieu, la conversation de l'âme avec Dieu dans la foi, l'espérance et la charité. Plus tard l'âme produira des fruits exactement dans la mesure où l'homme intérieur se sera formé en elle [...] on ne donne que ce qu'on a : et c'est dans ce recueillement profond de l'âme qui oublie tout le créé pour vivre seule dans l'union avec Dieu, oublie tout le créé pour vivre seule dans l'union avec Dieu, que Dieu se donne tout entier à celui qui se donne ainsi tout entier à Lui." Foucauld, *Trappe*, 142-143.

¹⁰⁶⁵ "En cela, ne craignes pas d'être infidèle à vos devoirs envers les creatures, c'est au contraire, le seul moyen pour vous de les servir efficacement", Ibid.

Chapter Seven: A Theological Legacy: Louis Massignon

Introduction

Louis Massignon, esteemed Islamist, friend to popes and instrumental in the construction of the Catholic Church's response to Islam in the twentieth century,¹⁰⁶⁶ was also a close friend of Charles de Foucauld. In many ways he was the inheritor of Foucauld's spirituality, a term Massignon himself used.¹⁰⁶⁷ While Foucauld was alive, Massignon was his greatest chance for gaining a companion in his religious life in Algeria. While Massignon did not accept, choosing instead to marry his cousin, the idea was discussed between the two of them in great detail from 1909 to 1913.¹⁰⁶⁸ When Foucauld died, Massignon was executor of Foucauld's spiritual

¹⁰⁶⁶ Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 43-49; Anthony O'Mahony, "Catholic Theological Perspectives on Islam at the Second Vatican Council," *New Blackfriars* 88 (July 2007): 385-398; idem, "The Influence of the Life and Thought of Louis Massignon on the Catholic Church's Relations with Islam," *The Downside Review* 126 (2008): 169-192; Neal Robinson, "Massignon, Vatican II and Islam as an Abrahamic Religion," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 2 (1991): 182-203; Andrew Unsworth, "Louis Massignon, the Holy See and the Ecclesial Transition from 'Immortale Dei' to 'Nostra Aetate': A Brief History of the Development of Catholic Church Teaching on Muslims and the Religion of Islam from 1883 to 1965," *ARAM* 20 (2008): 299-316..

¹⁰⁶⁷ "là encore, je l'ai connu au-delà de ce que peut être la connaissance mondaine, car j'ai été son héritier." Louis Massignon, "Les maitres qui ont guidé ma vie (1957)." *Horizons magrebins. Louis Massignon. Hommes de dialogue des cultures*, no. 14-15 (1989): 159.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Richard Wheeler, "Louis Massignon and Al-Hallâj – an Introduction to the Life and Thought of a 20th Century Mystic," *ARAM* 20 (2008): 232. Upon making this decision he dedicated himself to Foucauld's Union, which was open to laypeople as well as religious: "C'est le jour même où j'allais me fiancer (15 octobre 1913) (...) qu'il fallut bien que je me donne inconditionnellement à l'humble sodalité qu'il essayait de fonder pour survivre après sa mort." Quoted in Keryell, "l'Association," 175.

legacy.¹⁰⁶⁹ It was Massignon who commissioned René Bazin’s biography of his friend and offered its author access to private letters.¹⁰⁷⁰ Despite this closeness between the two, Massignon, with his Gandhian leanings and political opinions that are in line with many modern left of center activists,¹⁰⁷¹ is seen as ahead of his time - beyond it. Foucauld, on the other hand, seems to be bound by it, forever the ‘saint of colonialism’ for many, and separated from Massignon’s Abrahamic inclusivism by the gulf of two world wars and the disintegration of the French Empire.¹⁰⁷² Even Massignon acknowledged the divide between them: “[I] see him such as I have to *complete* him in the *Badaliya* where we love in his place, more than him, our Muslim brothers.”¹⁰⁷³

Yet Massignon’s thought, obviously shaped by a different lifestyle and personality that that of Foucauld, has much in common with and owes a considerable debt to Foucauldian spirituality. Foucauld taught him “through spiritual contact, in very simple words, by interviews and letters, his experiential knowledge of the

¹⁰⁶⁹ Keryell, “l’ Association,” 173-193. Also Voillaume, *disciples*, 33-57.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Voillaume, *disciples*, 39. The letters between the two have been published: Six, Jean-François. *L’Aventure de l’amour de Dieu* (Paris: Seuil, 1993).

¹⁰⁷¹ Although Massignon both supported the idea of “French Algeria” and was one of the architects of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, he also campaigned (sometimes to the risk of his own safety) for the rights of the Algerian revolutionaries and was a vocal opponent of the State of Israel. See: Anthony O’Mahony, “*Le pèlerin de Jérusalem: Louis Massignon, Palestinian Christians, Islam and the State of Israel*,” in *Palestinian Christians, Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony (London: Melisende, 1999), 166-189; Paolo Dall’Oglio, ‘Hallaj, Foucauld, Ghandi’; Wheeler, 229, 239. Massignon continues to be a figure of admiration for human rights campaigners, with former Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali acting as an honorary member of the Association des Amis de Louis Massignon.

¹⁰⁷² See: Paolo Dall’Oglio. “Louis Massignon and *Badaliya*” in *ARAM*, 20 (2008) 329-336; Didier. “Massignon,” 337-353; Wheeler, 232.

¹⁰⁷³ 1954 to Mary Kahil, quoted in Didier, “Massignon,” 338.

human condition, his experiential knowledge of [...] compassion”.¹⁰⁷⁴ Massignon’s understanding of Islam and the relationship between Christians and Muslims encompasses a number of highly lauded and unique innovations. It is also marked by an adherence to his mentor’s teachings on the sanctification of self and the individual’s union with God. With Foucauld as his Christian instructor and the seventh century mystic al-Hallaj as his Muslim one, Massignon combined the example of these two ascetics into an eremitic-based theology of Islam. Massignon developed an understanding of the eremitic life as witness to Islam, in his own personal struggles between the lay and contemplative life, between Christianity and Islam, not only executed, but embodied the eremitic versatility of Foucauld’s spiritual legacy.

Life and Thought

Henri de Castries, fellow friend of Massignon and Foucauld, divided those who participated in the age of Orientalism into two categories: “Orientalists of erudition, and [...] those whom I will call the Arabic specialists of Algeria, for want of a better expression.”¹⁰⁷⁵ If Foucauld can be fitted into the later description,¹⁰⁷⁶ although his specialty was the Berbers not the Arabs and, as Hugues Didier has noted, he was not a formal scholar from lack of talent or opportunity but by

¹⁰⁷⁴ Louis Massignon, “An Entire Life with a Brother Who Set Out on the Desert: Charles de Foucauld,” in *Testimonies and Reflections*, ed. Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 22.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Quoted in Didier, “Massignon,” 349.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Massignon said that it was not academic knowledge he needed from Foucauld, “Rather I needed him to communicate to me, through spiritual contact, in very simple words, by interviews and letters, his experiential initiation into the real understanding of the human condition, his experiential knowledge of the compassion which drew him and committed him to the most abandoned of human beings.” Massignon, “Entire Life,” 22.

choice,¹⁰⁷⁷ then Massignon is certainly one of the former. Although he was another from the colonial period who had life changing experiences with Islam, Massignon's spiritual life was symbiotic with his prolific scholastic life and output.

Born in 1883 in Paris, unlike Foucauld Massignon had a fairly undisturbed French-Catholic upbringing. Like many children of the time he received his religious education from a pious mother. His father, the sculptor who went by the name Pierre Roche, was not a practicing Catholic; nevertheless, it was through him that Massignon was to come into contact with religious concepts that would shape his adult life. Pierre Roche hosted debates and discussions with his friends, some of France's most celebrated artists and thinkers, in which his son was allowed to participate. It was there that Massignon met J. K. Huysmans (1848-1907), the French novelist who had rediscovered his Catholic faith with all the zeal of the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷⁸

Although he practiced his faith as a boy, by the time he was 20 he had lapsed. A voracious scholar, he had an interest in Egyptology and was lifelong friends with Henri Maspero, son of Gaston who was director-general of the Department of Antiquities. As a young man he did a celebrated academic study of the work of Leo Africanus. Although he did not have his own religious reconversion until the following year, by 1907 Massignon had already decided to study the Muslim mystic

¹⁰⁷⁷ Didier, "Massignon," 349.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Burton. *Blood*, 159-173; Joyce O. Lowrie. *The Violent Mystique: Thematics of Retribution and Expiation in Balzac, Barbey d'Aureville, Bloy and Huysmans* (Genevia: Librairie Droz, 1974).

and martyr al-Hallâj who would inform so much of his own spirituality.¹⁰⁷⁹ It was in Iraq in May 1908, after being arrested by the Ottoman authorities as a spy, that Massignon underwent his religious conversion, later referring to the event as the Visitation of the Stranger – the Stranger being a biblical messenger from God and seen in Sufi poetry as the personification of God.¹⁰⁸⁰

Abbé Harpigny has delineated Massignon's life into three periods of interest and influence: Hallajienne, Abrahamique, and Ghandienne. Although Massignon's thought cannot be split cleanly into sections, one ending as another begins, this schema is useful in identifying the main themes of his thought and the influences that surrounded various periods of his life.¹⁰⁸¹ The last cycle, the Gandhienne, refers to the period of political activism that Massignon took part in until his death from a heart attack in 1962. He had been introduced to Gandhi in the 1930s and this meeting gave him an appreciation of Hindu asceticism. It also influenced his understanding of colonialism and, after the partition of India, confirmed his defense of Islamic peoples from cultural and political aggression rights, which he defended in Palestine and Algeria.¹⁰⁸² It was however, "[t]he place of al-Hallâj within Islam, and the place of

¹⁰⁷⁹ Letter to his father 29 April, 1907: "I'm beginning to work fairly steadily [...] on a critical study of the martyrdom of a 10th century Baghdad mystic, about whom innumerable studies have been recounted. In reality, he was such a noble character, and the account of his martyrdom has an intensity of colour and a tragic movement that fires me with enthusiasm." Ian Latham, "The Conversion of Louis Massignon in Mesopotamia in 1908," *ARAM*, 20 (2008): 245-6.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Wheeler, 230-1; Latham, "Conversion," 245-267, esp. 254 266-267.

¹⁰⁸¹ Wheeler 239; O'Mahony, "Common Fidelity," 154-5 and 164.

¹⁰⁸² Wheeler, 239-40; Dall'Oglio, Paolo. "Massignon and *jihad* in the light of de Foucauld, al-Hallaj and Gandhi," in *Faith, Power, and Violence*, ed. John J. Donohue and Christian W. Troll (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1998), 103-114; O'Mahony, "Le pèlerin" 166-189.

Islam with regard to Abraham, [which determined] Massignon's theological interpretation of Islam."¹⁰⁸³

Islam, in Massignon's understanding, is the brother of Judaism and Christianity, not in the same line as these two religions, the line of privilege descended from Isaac, but through the line of Abraham's other son, the exiled Ishmael who still receives some share of divine blessings (Genesis 16:11-12; 21:17-20; 25:12-18).¹⁰⁸⁴ Massignon credited Foucauld with giving him an understanding of religious brotherhood: "Foucauld was given to me as a brother, and led me to find my brothers in all persons, beginning with the rejected."¹⁰⁸⁵ Whereas Foucauld situated this relationship in his understanding of the Incarnation and the Body of Christ, Massignon roots it in our common ancestor in faith, Abraham. Despite this difference in understanding, the effect is the same: an injunction for all Christians to treat Muslims "as brothers in Abraham, not born of the same blood (*nasab*), but of the same Spirit of faith and of sacrifice".¹⁰⁸⁶ Although Foucauld disagreed with Massignon on the issue of the Abrahamic 'vocation' of the Muslims, telling him "it can prove nothing, since Our Lord all men have a vocation to be Christian,"¹⁰⁸⁷

¹⁰⁸³ O'Mahony, "Common Fidelity," 159.

¹⁰⁸⁴ O'Mahony, "Common Fidelity," 159; O'Mahony, "Influence," 176-77.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Quoted in Wheeler, 230.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Quoted in O'Mahony "Common Fidelity," 177.

¹⁰⁸⁷ letter 15 July 1916: "Je penserai longuement à votre projet manuel sur lequel vous me demandez votre avis: après les premières heures de réflexion et de prière, il me semble que les 3 derniers points sont fort bien, vice de construction dogmatique, fausse hiérarchie des vertus, apologétique pratique; je supprimerais le 1er point : méditation sur la vocation donnée aux fils d'Abraham et de sa servante: cela ne peut rien prouver, et depuis Notre Seigneur, tous les hommes ont la vocation d'être chrétiens." Six, *L'amour*, 206; Six et al., *testement*, 204-5; Dall'Oglio, "Badaliya," 331-332. Massignon's understanding of this response: "Foucauld ne comprenait pas ce que je voulais lui dire: le 'temps' de l'avènement de l'Esprit, l'Avènement de la

Massignon used his Abrahamic schema to explain several elements of their shared understanding of Islam.

For Massignon, Islam is an Abrahamic¹⁰⁸⁸ religion not only in lineage, but also in its nature. He locates Islam in the time of Araham and the patriarchs. The Qur'anic revelation is not something *after* Christianity but *before* it, if not in age, then in style and content:

The aim of Koranic revelation is not to expose and justify supernatural data which were hiterhto ignored, but to make intelligences, by reminding them in the name of God of the temporal and eternal sanctions, find again the natural religion, the primitive law, the very simple cult which God has prescribed forever, which Adam, Abraham and the prophets have all practiced in the same way, by convincing the idolaters, Jews and Christians, of the evidence of that divine law which they must recognize, engraved in their intelligence, once they have stripped it of all vain superstition.¹⁰⁸⁹

Despite the fact that it comes into existence hundreds of years after Christ, it is not meant to add something new to revealed monotheism. Massignon sees Islam as “the witness of the faith of Abraham which is revived in Muhammad by an undesertable ancestral conviction”.¹⁰⁹⁰ In this way, he argues, Mohammad is a prophet: what he calls a “negative prophet”¹⁰⁹¹:

Pentecôte n'est pas arrivé pour toutes les générations au Cénacle, au jour où les Apôtres Le ressentirent; autrement il n'y aurait plus d'apostolat [...] En réalité, depuis la Résurrection et la Pentecôte, au-dedans des non-baptisés et de tus les infidèles vivants, il existe un inénarrable gémissment de l'Esprit-Saint qui y vibre snas qu'ils s'en doutent, mais que nous entendons très bien, c'est Lui qui sous-tend notre prière de substitutes à eux.” Quoted in Six, *L'amour*, 208.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Robinson, “Massignon,” 182-205.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Quoted in O'Mahony, “Common Fidelity,” 167-8.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid, 176.

¹⁰⁹¹ David A. Kerr, “‘He Walked in the Path of the Prophets’: Toward Christian Theological Recognition of the Prophethood of Muhammad”, in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville Florida:

in order to be a 'false' prophet one has to positively prophesy wrongly. A positive prophesy is generally shocking for the understanding because it is a predicted reversal of human values. But Muhammad, who believed in a frightening way in this total reversal, can only be a negative reversal, can only be a negative prophet, and that he is very authentically.”¹⁰⁹²

In this understanding of Islam as a retrieval of a pre-Christ faith in God, Massignon sees Islam as a natural religion, “a natural religion revived by prophetic revelation”.¹⁰⁹³

Abraham, like the Incarnation for Foucauld, is Massignon’s key to understanding Islam, not only academically, but as the root of his spirituality. When he joined the Franciscan¹⁰⁹⁴ Third Order he took the name Abraham¹⁰⁹⁵: “I believe in the God of Abraham; real, close at hand, personal... this is the first link which links me to my Muslim friends.”¹⁰⁹⁶ This shared experience is what leads him to God and leads him to God in others, and allows them to “rediscover in themselves the image of Christ.”¹⁰⁹⁷ Like Foucauld, Massignon saw Islam’s great gift as an awareness of “something greater and more real than worldly occupations, *ad majora nati sumus*.”¹⁰⁹⁸ The essence of Muhammad’s message was to proclaim “the virginal

University of Florida Press, 1995), pp. 426-446 and “Muhammad: Prophet of Liberation – a Christian Perspective from Political Theology” in *Studies in World Christianity* Vol. 6 Issue 2 (2000), pp. 139-174.

¹⁰⁹² Quoted in O’Mahony, ‘Common Fidelity’, 173.

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid, 173.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Massignon thought that Francis of Assisi embodied a truly Christian response to Islam. Jean-François Six, “l’Union, la Badaliya et autres associations foucauldien” *Bulletin des Amis de Louis Massignon*, no. 19 (2008): 53-58. 55.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Wheeler, 237.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Quoted in O’Mahony, ‘Common Fidelity’, 175 and Wheeler, 235.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Giulio Basetti-Sani, *Louis Massignon 1883-1962, Christian Ecumenist*, Edited and Translated by Allan Harris Cutler (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 107.

¹⁰⁹⁸ LHC July 8, 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

secret of the intact transcendence of the glory of God.”¹⁰⁹⁹ The additional understanding, the awareness of an immanent God in Christ, came to both men in the form of intimate relationships.¹¹⁰⁰ For Foucauld it was his cousin Marie de Bondy. For Massignon, it was the subject of his doctoral thesis, al-Hallâj.

The Christ in Islam is supplied by the theme of his first period of study, the Hallajienne, which is dominated by the figure of al-Husayn-ibn Mansur al-Hallâj a ninth century Muslim mystic.¹¹⁰¹ When published, his doctoral dissertation, *La passion de Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallâj; martyr mystique de l’Islam*¹¹⁰² was a landmark book that “was almost singlehandedly responsible for arousing scholarly interest in the West in Sufism and Islamic mysticism.”¹¹⁰³ Massignon believed that there were, in Islam, ‘Christic’ figures who were to bring Muslims to the divine sonship of Christ, from within their own religion, even if such an acknowledgment was only at the last judgment.¹¹⁰⁴ Crucified in Baghdad, al-Hallâj had, for Massignon, a direct correlation to Christ on the cross. Massignon understood the death as an act of substitution; al-Hallâj “substituted himself for Muhammad”, standing in for Muhammad to insist on the accessibility of God.¹¹⁰⁵ The Christic al-Hallâj fulfilled Muhammad’s message, which declared God as completely

¹⁰⁹⁹ Quoted in Wheeler, 236.

¹¹⁰⁰ “...Massignon understood that [his] access to God ran through the hearts of other people”, Sidney Griffith “Merton and Massignon”, 69.

¹¹⁰¹ Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallâj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

¹¹⁰² Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, 4 vols, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

¹¹⁰³ Sidnet H. Griffith, “Mystics and Sufi Masters: Thomas Merton and Dialogue between Christians and Muslims” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 15, no. 3 (July 2004): 299-316, 300.

¹¹⁰⁴ O’Mahony, “Common Fidelity,” 156.

¹¹⁰⁵ Wheeler, 235.

inaccessible to man, giving the Muslims the basis for an understanding of the Incarnation necessary for an internal conversion. As Massignon understood it, “Mohammad halted at the threshold of the divine fire [during the Night Journey], not daring ‘to become’ the Burning Bush of Moses; Hallaj took his place out of love.”¹¹⁰⁶

Curve de Vie of Massignon and Foucauld

As mystical men, the relationship between Massignon and Foucauld was formed, strengthened, and continued after the later’s death by a belief in a mystical bond between them. Massignon described it as “the unforeseeable, irreversible, and irrefutable coincidence (at least for the two of us) that have woven a constellation of tiny weblike threads between our two vocations and our two destinies.”¹¹⁰⁷ That the two were both converts was not particularly extraordinary. Although the return of upper-middle class men to Catholicism in the later half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was less a popular movement than a visible one, occurring as it did amongst public artists and intellectuals, in the circles that Massignon frequented reconversion to Catholicism was not unusual.¹¹⁰⁸ Massignon was heavily influenced by his relationship with Huysmans,¹¹⁰⁹ and after his conversion in Iraq he struck up

¹¹⁰⁶ Griffith, “Merton and Massignon”, 70.

¹¹⁰⁷ Massignon, “Entire Life with Foucauld,” 23.

¹¹⁰⁸ Burton, *Blood in the City*, 266; A list of famous French converts: Paul Claudel [1886 - 1890], Charles de Foucauld [1886], J. K. Huysmans [1892], Francis Jammes [1905], Raïssa and Jacques Maritain [1906], Charles Péguy [1907], Jacques Rivière [1913], Ernest Psichari [1913], Gabriel Frizeau [1904]. Ibid, 149.

¹¹⁰⁹ François Angelier, ‘Douleur, substitution, intersignes: aux sources littéraires de la pensée de Louis Massignon’ in *Louis Massignon et le dialogue des cultures*, compiled by Daniel Massignon (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1996), 155-170.

friendships with Paul Claudel¹¹¹⁰ and Jacques Maritain.¹¹¹¹ It was not even the colonial element in their friendship that made them unique. Massignon had been close friends with Ernest Psichari at university,¹¹¹² although Psichari's conversion occurred several years after Massignon's.¹¹¹³ The element of both Foucauld's and Massignon's conversions, which they brought with them into their spiritual lives and allowed them to bind themselves together, was their understanding of witness and the role of Islam in their spirituality.

In his youth, Massignon had worked on a study of Leo Africanus' sixteenth century 'Geography of Morocco'. Having used Foucauld's *Reconnaissance au Maroc* in his work, he was astonished to learn from his friend Henri de Castries that Foucauld was alive, although "he is a failure, living as an independent priest near Beni-Abbès."¹¹¹⁴ A copy of Massignon's work was sent to Foucauld, who responded with a polite letter culminating in a promise to pray for Massignon. He wrote: "I offer my poor and unworthy prayers to God to bless you, begging Him to bless your work and all your life."¹¹¹⁵ When Massignon was in great torment during his conversion in May 1908, he felt that he was being assisted by figures who were

¹¹¹⁰ For an account of Claudel's conversion see Burton, *Blood in the City*, 149-158. The letters between the two have been edited and published as: Paul Claudel, *Paul Claudel, Louis Massignon, 1908-1914*. Edited by Michel Malicet (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1973).

¹¹¹¹ Jacques Keryell, "l'Association Charles de Foucauld" in *Louis Massignon au coeur de notre temps*, ed. Jacques Keryell (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 173-193, 176.

¹¹¹² Basetti-Sani, 38.

¹¹¹³ Frédérique Neau-Dufour, *Ernest Psichari: l'ordre et l'errance* (Paris: Le Cerf, 2001).

¹¹¹⁴ Massignon, "Entire Life with Foucauld," 24; Six, *L'Amour*, 24.

¹¹¹⁵ "j'offre à DIEU pour vous mes pauvres et indignes prières, Le suppliant de vous bénir, de bénir vos travaux et toute votre vie." 2 October 1906; Six, *L'Amour*, 27; See also Didier, "Massignon and Foucauld" 352.

interceding on his behalf. There were ten intercessors, and amongst them was Charles de Foucauld. The young convert saw the prayers that Foucauld had offered for Massignon as having been crucial in his survival and conversion.¹¹¹⁶

The similarities between their conversion stories are unusual. They were both young, agnostic French men working on scholastic missions on the fringes of France's colonial empire. In the course of their work, in which they had to engage under disguise, their lives were risked and Muslims saved them.¹¹¹⁷ Unlike Massignon, Foucauld was working without any form of authorization and Foucauld was never as close to death as Massignon had been. It was, however, the mystical experiences they both had with Islam that spurred on their conversions. For Foucauld it was the geography, the solitude and the "sight of this faith, of those souls living in the continual presence of God,"¹¹¹⁸ that gave him an awareness of God. This conversion was to be completed years later in a Parisian Church. For Massignon it was al-Hallâj, living in the continual presence of God as a witness for Islam and for Christianity, who gave him a hint of the Other. He had been walked past al-Hallâj's tomb on a stretcher on the way to the hospital and later, in fever, he repeatedly muttered 'Haqq', the words of al-Hallâj: 'Ana 'l Haqq' (I [am] the Truth).¹¹¹⁹ He later recalled "I felt solicited to witness GOD".¹¹²⁰ Ian Latham explains:

This sense of being summoned to 'witness God' precedes Massignon's Christian belief: it is the taking up of Hallâj's act of witness: an act made 'with all the saints', and 'in the

¹¹¹⁶ Paolo Dall'Oglio, "Louis Massignon and *Badaliya*" *ARAM* 20 (2008), 329-336, 330.; J-F Six, *L'Amour*, 47-49.

¹¹¹⁷ Massignon, "Entire Life," 25.

¹¹¹⁸ LHC July 8, 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 86.

¹¹¹⁹ Latham, "Conversion," 254-5.

¹¹²⁰ 1922, quoted in *Ibid*, 255.

name of all [humanity]'. Massignon's explicit recognition of Jesus will only intensify this initial profession, but now in union with the One he has come to believe is pre-eminently *the Witness*.¹¹²¹

The summoning to God that they both felt issuing from Islam, was converted into a sense of profound need to reciprocate this witness that marked their Christian spirituality.

In the years following his conversion, Massignon and Foucauld struck up an important friendship. In Foucauld Massignon found someone who could pass on to him an 'experiential knowledge' of relating to Islam: "I needed him to communicate to me, through spiritual contact, in very simple words, by interviews and letters, his experiential initiation into the real understanding of the human condition, his experiential knowledge of the compassion which drew him and committed him to the most abandoned of human beings."¹¹²² Massignon believed that to study mysticism one had to experience it, to feel it. In relation to a methodological argument with another scholar Massignon wrote: "the study of mysticism is not like other disciplines [...] To understand mysticism one must have experienced, and willingly, the trials and sufferings of the most humble life."¹¹²³ It was this methodological approach, the 'copernican revolution' that made his work so groundbreaking.¹¹²⁴ Massignon used words that suggest shock or upheaval in relation to the mystical

¹¹²¹ Ibid, 255.

¹¹²² Massignon, "Entire Life", 22.

¹¹²³ Massignon, "Muslim and Christian Mysticism," in *Testimonies and Reflections*, ed. Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 123.

¹¹²⁴ Pierre Roclave, "Louis Massignon et souffisme," *Horizons magrebins. Louis Massignon. Hommes de dialogue des cultures*, no. 14-15 (1989): 197-204,197.

experience.¹¹²⁵ An individual is only able to make that Copernican decentering with a host: “One gains access to mysticism, however, especially among Semites, only through perfect hospitality.”¹¹²⁶ This concept of sacred hospitality he credited to the inspiration of Foucauld: “This notion of sacred hospitality that I have deepened over many years, since 1908, when Foucauld supported me like an older brother, seems to me essential in the search for Truth among men, in our journeying and work here below, up until the very threshold of beyond.”¹¹²⁷ The ways in which Foucauld was able to penetrate Islam, to suffer with the suffering, was essential to Massignon’s development of a methodology for understanding other religions, and Islam in particular.

It is not surprising then, that it is Massignon who takes Foucauld’s eremitic-based missionary movement, the Union of the Little Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart, fourth into the wider Church. Originally, it was intended that Massignon should join Foucauld in Algeria. After their first meeting in Paris in 1909, Foucauld offered Massignon the “St. Baume [...] in the Hoggar” and told him to remember, when his soul feels the call of Jesus, that “St. Baume that is open to you in the Sahara.”¹¹²⁸ Five months later, Foucauld made a formal offer. He had put Massignon’s name forward for a job studying the “linguistic, archeological,

¹¹²⁵ Patrick Laude, *Pathways to an Inner Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 37; This is very similar to Foucauld use of the word ‘upheaval’ to describe his first interaction with Islam. See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹¹²⁶ Massignon, “Islam and the Testimony of the Faithful,” in *Testimonies and Reflections*, ed. Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 44.

¹¹²⁷ quoted in Mary Louise Gude, *Louis Massignon, The Crucible of Compassion* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 86.

¹¹²⁸ 5 April 1909; Six, *l’amour*, 56-57.

sociological and historical” nature of the Tuareg. Such a job would allow Massignon to live “a monastic life before God, and an apostle’s life before God”. From Tamanrasset, Massignon could begin the scholastic training necessary to become a priest, and once he had received Holy Orders, there would be two priests living out the Foucauldian vision.¹¹²⁹

Massignon did not immediately accept, wanting to complete his studies.¹¹³⁰ He and Foucauld continued to discuss the possibility until 1913. That year, when Foucauld was visiting Paris, Massignon was waiting for him to say Mass. While waiting, he was approached by another priest he did not know who requested Massignon hear Mass with him. Accepting, Massignon later saw Foucauld enter and go directly to the altar, without waiting for Massignon to join him, this Massignon interpreted as a sign.¹¹³¹ He later decided to marry his cousin, effectively closing the door on monastic or missionary life with Foucauld. In another of Massignon’s coincidences, it was on the anniversary of his marriage that he learned of Foucauld’s death;¹¹³² the death of their dream of a life together almost foreshadowed Foucauld’s death.

Massignon’s marriage, although it marked the end of any joint monastic life together, ensured the survival of Foucauld’s work on the Union of the Little Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart, designed as a fraternity open to all walks of Catholic

¹¹²⁹ 8 September, 1909; *Six, l’amour*, 61-65.

¹¹³⁰ Gude, 82.

¹¹³¹ Wheeler, 232-3.

¹¹³² “On January 27, 1917, the anniversary of our marriage, a letter from my wife included a clipping from the *Temps: Foucauld killed in Sahara*. Beside myself, I climbed onto the parapet of the snow-covered trench, seized by a feeling of sacred joy, and cried out: ‘he found his way, he succeeded!’” Massignon, “Entire Life,” 28.

life, as it became clearer to Foucauld that he would likely not gain a companion. On the day of his engagement, Massignon pledged wholeheartedly to the Union.¹¹³³ After Foucauld's death, Massignon was persuaded¹¹³⁴ to take on the responsibility of the Union, even while World War I was still ongoing.¹¹³⁵ He also took on the mantle of presenting Foucauld to the world. He approached René Bazin and asked him to write a biography of Foucauld.¹¹³⁶ He translated the Union's daily prayers into Arabic,¹¹³⁷ and personally introduced Foucauld's work to his various influential and famous friends, such as Jacques Maritain,¹¹³⁸ the Catholic convert, philosopher, future ambassador to the Vatican, and contributor to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, who joined the Little Brothers of Jesus in the last years of his life.¹¹³⁹ Despite his own hand in the formation of the Foucauldian legacy,¹¹⁴⁰ Massignon was concerned that Foucauld's spirituality was getting bound up in the development of canonical institutions,¹¹⁴¹ despite Foucauld's own understanding of the Union as a confraternity.¹¹⁴² In 1928, Massignon published the Directory of the Union to

¹¹³³ Ibid.

¹¹³⁴ By their mutual friend and champion of the Union, Abbé Laurain. See Jacques Keryell, "l'Association," 191-193.

¹¹³⁵ Keryell, "l'Association"; Voillaume, *disciples*, 33-57.

¹¹³⁶ Voillaume, *disciples*, 39; Six, *L'amour*, 232.

¹¹³⁷ Keryell, "l'Association," 179.

¹¹³⁸ Ibid, 176-7.

¹¹³⁹ François Daguet, "Présence du Christ aux non-chrétiens: Jacques Maritain, héritier de Thomas d'Aquin et de Charles de Foucauld," *Revue thomiste* 106, no. 1-2 (2006): 205-241.

¹¹⁴⁰ Jacques Keryell, "Louis Massignon et le problème d'inculturation de la fraternité d'El Abiodh Sidi Cheikh (Algérie)," in *Louis Massignon au coeur de notre temps*, ed. Jacques Keryell (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 211-229.

¹¹⁴¹ Keryell, "l'Association," 184, 186; Six, "l'Union," 54

¹¹⁴² "L'association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus est une confrérie" Foucauld, Introduction to Association, 1909; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 577.

“struggle against the sinking of Foucauld’s work”¹¹⁴³ and eventually formed his own group of people, committed to living out the Union as a rule of life, and which he renamed the Sodalité¹¹⁴⁴ du Directoire.¹¹⁴⁵

Massignon took personal responsibility for Foucauld’s legacy. It weighed heavily upon him and he considered it a God-given duty to protect and disseminate Foucauld’s beliefs, as Massignon understood them.¹¹⁴⁶ This led him into frequent discussions and debates about the nature of Foucauld’s colonialism, which quickly became a subject with the potential to sweep away all of Foucauld’s other works.¹¹⁴⁷ Foucauld’s death has been read by different sources as a martyrdom. For most of his champions after the First World War, Foucauld was a martyr for France. His violent death during the war, and possibly for it,¹¹⁴⁸ added him to the list of men who had died on the sacrificial altar of the trenches. The First World War was seen at the time as the epitome of French atonement. As Maurice Barrès described it in 1914 “all of France becomes a national cathedral”.¹¹⁴⁹ Despite the divisions within the country, the concept of national sacrifice was latched onto in the popular mind because “[i]n response to this perceived national crisis, a consensus formed round the need to repair the national morale and to adopt an ethic suited to the needs of national revival

¹¹⁴³ Massignon: ‘pour lutter contre l’affadissement de l’oeuvre de Foucauld’, quoted in Keryell, “l’Association,” 184.

¹¹⁴⁴ “<<sodalité>> étant le terme technique qui désigne, dans l’ancien Droit canon, un <<confrérie>>” Six, “L’Union,” 54.

¹¹⁴⁵ Keryell, “l’Association,” 186; J-F Six, “L’Union,” 54.

¹¹⁴⁶ Keryell, “l’Association,” 184; Portier, “Massignon et Foucauld,” 354.

¹¹⁴⁷ Keryell, “l’Association,” 187-188; Portier, 354-356.

¹¹⁴⁸ Chatelard, *mort*.

¹¹⁴⁹ Strenski, 55.

and survival”.¹¹⁵⁰ Foucauld agreed with this understanding. In 1915 he wrote to his cousin that perhaps such a terrible war was necessary for the good of souls.¹¹⁵¹ He saw those who died in the war as martyrs for their love of their neighbour, and the war as an opportunity to “elevate and morally purify souls through sacrifice.”¹¹⁵² Muller has argued that Foucauld’s reaction to the war was not compatible with his Christianity,¹¹⁵³ however, it is perfectly in line with the French Catholic devotion to sacrifice.

Massignon was horrified by efforts to associate his friend with France’s attempts to hold onto its colonies. In a talk given in 1957, Massignon said:

We have at this instant people who, not knowing how to justify their policy in North Africa, are going to search sentences of this man, which are in effect colonials sentences, of a colonial epoch, to say that nowadays he would behave in Algeria very much as certain authorities of order behave. Foucauld would not have made it; there still, I know it beyond what can be society’s knowledge, because I was his heir.¹¹⁵⁴

Massignon worked to try and clarify Foucauld’s position, stating that Foucauld’s collaboration with the military was based on his belief that “c’était alors la seule solution sociale capable d’assurer l’ordre et la paix au desert, en faisant que la force

¹¹⁵⁰ Strenski, 54.

¹¹⁵¹ LMB 7 September 1915; Foucauld, *Bondy*, 238.

¹¹⁵² pour élever les âmes et les embellir moralement par le sacrifice...” LMB july 31 1916, p. 246

¹¹⁵³ Muller.

¹¹⁵⁴ “Nous avons en ce moment-ci des gens qui, ne sachant comment faire pour justifier leur politique en Afrique du Nord, vont chercher des phrases de cet homme, qui sont en effet des phrases coloniales, de l’époque coloniale, pour dire qu’actuellement il se conduirait en Algérie tout comme se conduisent certaines autorités de l’ordre. Foucauld ne l’aurait pas fait; là encore, je l’ai connu au-delà de ce que peut être la connaissance mondaine, car j’ai été son héritier.” Massignon, “Maîtres,” 159.

soit juste.”¹¹⁵⁵ Yet Foucauld’s work with colonial agents continues to colour attitudes towards him. Scholars like Hugues Didier and Paolo Dall’Oglio believe that there are certain impassable differences between the thought of Foucauld and Massignon which they attribute to their generational differences.

The major contributing factor influencing the colonialist readings of Foucauld, as opposed to Massignon, was not merely the difference in age but rather the difference in world events that occurred during their lifetimes. Foucauld died in 1916, almost two years before the end of the First World War. The war inaugurated a considerable shift in the way that the colonial endeavor, including its academic wing – Orientalism - functioned. The war had demonstrated to Europe its own fallibility and it entered a new era shaken. In conjunction with this development, and likely because of it, Europe was no longer able to exert the same lever of domination over its colonies.¹¹⁵⁶

Edward Said describes the Orient of the post-war years as “more of a challenge” to Europe,¹¹⁵⁷ and Massignon was amongst those Orientalists who wanted to rise to such a challenge. Like Foucauld, Massignon “lived an intense religious life, supported by a rather strict Roman Catholic orthodoxy, purified, as he believed, by the sharp religious challenge of Islam.”¹¹⁵⁸ Foucauld certainly acknowledged the personal challenge of Islam. Nor was Foucauld unaware of the possibility of the loss of the French empire – it was something he had speculated about. He saw colonialism as a challenge to France to become better, and, in his almost paradoxical

¹¹⁵⁵ quoted in Portier, 355.

¹¹⁵⁶ Said, 257.

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁸ Griffith, “Merton, Massignon and the Challenge of Islam,” 55.

religious-republicanism, to fulfill both its Catholic nature and the promise of the Revolution. For Foucauld it was *colonialism* that was the challenge by presenting Catholic France with an opportunity to interact with non-Christian peoples.

For Massignon, in a post-war context, the challenge was *Islam*, although colonialism certainly presented challenges. Although France was still the dominant category for Massignon, especially in relation to the British,¹¹⁵⁹ Massignon was able to “get from the Orient what he had lost in spirituality, traditional values and the like.”¹¹⁶⁰ While Foucauld acknowledged, both implicitly and explicitly, the imperfections of modern France, he was still confident in its ability to impart positive things to the people. In Massignon, there is a more self-conscious sense of learning from, rather than teaching to – the right to teach is no longer implied.

Foucauldian Eremiticism and Islam in Massignon

Massignon was drawn to Foucauld, both by Foucauld’s commitment to Muslims and also by the way in which Foucauld chose to articulate this commitment. Foucauld had identified the Muslims of North Africa as the most abandoned people and he chose to minister to them – not from a position of dominance or power, but by lowering himself into their abandoned state. By immersing himself amongst the Muslims of Algeria he became a stranger both to them and to his own people, fulfilling his vocational call to eremiticism. Massignon understood this eremitic response to Islam as a natural response. Massignon believed that a person intent on understanding Islam could not judge it from the outside, but must undergo a ‘mental de-centering in line with Copernicus’ to enable them to enter into “the very axis of

¹¹⁵⁹ Said, 270-1.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Muslim doctrine, that virgin point of truth which is at its centre, which makes it live and from which invisibly and mysteriously everything takes sustenance.”¹¹⁶¹

Massignon understood Islam as a tradition in exile. They were excluded, removed, from the promises of Judaism and Christianity. By the nature of its Abrahamic origins, “Islam is a great mystery of divine will, the demand of the excluded, chased from the desert with Ismail their ancestor, against those ‘privileged’ by God, Jews and above all Christians, who have abused the divine privileges of Grace.”¹¹⁶² Massignon was drawn to Foucauld because he believed that they shared an understanding of the nature of Islam, and the nature of an appropriate Christian response:

For my own experience made me feel that the most abandoned of people in the most symbolic metaphysical sense of the most sublime negative way are the Muslims [...] I felt that their temporary exile was the prefiguration of the penitential life of hermits, of solitaries who would sanctify, all Muslim generations, fulfilling for them the sacrifice of the Kurban¹¹⁶³ [sic], obtaining by their brotherly compassion the coming of Mercy.¹¹⁶⁴

This exile has implications for the relations between religions, both for what separates them, as well as possibilities for connection and relation.

The Christian response to Islam, as far as Massignon was concerned, needed to come from the heart of understanding, from the heart of a Christian decentering. A Christian response to Islam must be a response that comes from within Islam.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶¹ quoted in O’Mahony, “Influence of Massignon,” 179.

¹¹⁶² Quoted in O’Mahoney, “Common Fidelity”, 179

¹¹⁶³ “Qurban (from qurraba, ‘to bring near’). Any practice that brings one closer

¹¹⁶⁴ Massignon, “Entire Life”, 22.

¹¹⁶⁵ This concept of response is essentially the basis for modern interreligious/comparative religious studies. William Cantwell Smith stated: “A statement about religion, in order to be valid, must be intelligible and acceptable to

Massignon understood the eremitic response as ideal to the task. He came to this conclusion from his understanding of Islam and the manifestations of its exiled, eremitic nature. The work of Massignon's doctoral thesis, published in two books, *The Passion of Al-Hallaj* and *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*¹¹⁶⁶, was on the topic of Mansur al-Hallaj. Massignon's work was not a mere biography but situated Hallaj in the Islamic mystical tradition: Sufism. In doing so Massignon not only wrote an exhaustive overview of Sufism, but he proved, contradicting other Orientalists of his time who saw Islamic mysticism as a borrowed tradition, that Sufism was an organic system with a Qur'anic origin.¹¹⁶⁷

He did not, however, disagree with modern scholars¹¹⁶⁸ who saw similarities between Christian monasticism and certain Sufi practices. Massignon describes the encounters between the early Muslims and the monks who lived in the deserts of what became Islamic lands as "fertile hybridizations" that allowed for the exchange of ascetic methods and theology.¹¹⁶⁹ This occurred because, Massignon argues, early Islamic interpretations of the passages from the Qur'an concerning monks were

those within. In order to be sincere and of any use, it must also of course be intelligible and acceptable to the outsider who makes it [...] *it is the business of comparative religion to construct statements about religion that are intelligible within at least two traditions simultaneously.*" 1959 (his italics). quoted in Aaron W. Hughes, *Situating Islam: The Past and Future of an Academic Discipline* (London: Equinox, 2007), 59.

¹¹⁶⁶ Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, trans. Benjamin Clark (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997).

¹¹⁶⁷ Roclave; Massignon, *Essay*, 46-48.

¹¹⁶⁸ See I. Goldzieher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981 and Ofer Livne-Kafri, "Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 105-129

¹¹⁶⁹ Massignon, *Essay*, 51.

interpreted differently than later, negative, readings.¹¹⁷⁰ Of verses 5:85 and 9:34 Massignon explained, “It is not monasticism that is condemned *a priori* but only bad monks. Nothing in the Qur’an limits the legality of the monastic life to Jews and Christians: certainly nothing allows bad Muslims to escape the damnation pronounced for thieves and misers.”¹¹⁷¹ Verse 52:27 discusses the possible origin of monasticism. Grammarians and Qur’anic exegetes have attempted to interpret whether this passage places the origin of the monastic tradition in the hands of God or of humans. Massignon claimed that the ‘celebrated’ verse was “unanimously interpreted by the exegetes of the first three centuries A. H. as giving permission and praise.”¹¹⁷² He considered the hadiths - “there is no monasticism in Islam” and “The monasticism of my community is holy war” - to be from a later date.¹¹⁷³ Massignon cites various instances where the Islamic community employed the words for monk (rahib) and monasticism (rabbaniyya) in a positive way.¹¹⁷⁴

The monasticism which the Qur’an and the early Islamic communities viewed in a positive light was not coenobitic, but eremitic: “In reality, the Arab monastic life is based on vows of chastity and seclusion: it is the eremitic life.”¹¹⁷⁵ Massignon continued to insist on a mystical movement that came from within Islam, and did not have a Christian origin,¹¹⁷⁶ but the movement he describes was deeply

¹¹⁷⁰ Sidney H. Griffith, “Monasticism and Monks,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, vol. 3, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. (Leiden, E.J.Brill, 2003), 405-408.

¹¹⁷¹ Massignon, *Essay*, 98-9.

¹¹⁷² *Ibid*, 100.

¹¹⁷³ Laude, 155.

¹¹⁷⁴ Massignon, *Essay*, 98-104.

¹¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 100.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, ft. 201, 118.

influenced by the eremitic way of life.¹¹⁷⁷ Massignon quotes early Sufis who exalted an eremitic lifestyle. Ibn Zayd said, “Many are the ways; the way of Truth is solitary/ And those who enter the way of Truth are alone.”¹¹⁷⁸ Abu Muhammad ‘Abdallah ibn Khubaaq Antaki wrote: “In order to reason and reflect, one must create solitude in a cell or in the house, and learn to know oneself through the fear of God.”¹¹⁷⁹

This eremitic ascetic mysticism had its influence throughout all of Islam because it was by way of the mystics that Islam was spread. The hermitages of the order of the Karramiyya were the foundations for madrassas.¹¹⁸⁰ It was able to spread, and take root because it spoke, not only to the fertile hybridizations between Christian and Muslim ascetics, but because it was based in the very Abrahamic nature of Islam: “The Prophet of God said, ‘Islam began in exile, and it will be exiled again as in the beginning. Happy are the expatriates of the nation of Muhammad, for they live in solitude, alone with their religion.’”¹¹⁸¹ This eremitic, exiled nature is embodied in the Sufi tradition: “The Sufi life is the spiritual ‘exile’ of the ‘exiles’.”¹¹⁸²

Massignon understood the eremitic vocation as a natural Christian response to Islam. It was a mystical experience shared with Islam but also Qur’anicly identified with Christianity. Massignon’s translation of verse 57:27 is “Jesus, son of Mary; and We gave him the gospel, and in the hearts of those who followed him We

¹¹⁷⁷ References to hermits and hermitages: Massignon, *Essay*, 106 ft. 93; 106-107; 158; 175.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 148.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 157.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 175.

¹¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 165.

¹¹⁸² Massignon, *Passion*, Vol. IV, 22.

placed (the seeds of) readiness to forgive, compassion, and the monastic life.”¹¹⁸³ Yet the followers of Jesus “have not followed the obligatory method of this rule for living”.¹¹⁸⁴ In Islam, those who have achieved the rule of life as given to Jesus are the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus of sura 18: Christian martyrs who were buried alive and in this ultimate sacrifice achieved the purity of perpetual fasting and obedience, and are exalted.¹¹⁸⁵ Therefore it is the challenge of monastic perfection that Islam proffers to Christianity: “Islam [...] reproaches Christians for not having yet achieved that rule of monastic perfection, rahbaniya, which alone creates the second birth of Jesus within them, anticipated by them in this advent of the Spirit of God, the resurrection of the dead of which Jesus is the sign.”¹¹⁸⁶ Islam uses the power of the hermit, of the outsider,¹¹⁸⁷ to challenge Christianity to “rediscover a more bare, more primitive, more simple form of sanctification.”¹¹⁸⁸ Foucauld also recognized and was attracted by the simplicity of Islam: “simplicity of dogma, simplicity of hierarchy, simplicity of morality”,¹¹⁸⁹ but while he rejected this simplicity in theology he proved again and again by his life amongst them that he was moved and inspired by the simplicity of their asceticism. Foucauld responded to this challenge by becoming like the Muslims, by joining them in their exile, by becoming a hermit,

¹¹⁸³ Massignon, *Essay*, 101.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁵ Massignon, “Muslim and Christian Mysticism”, 125.

¹¹⁸⁶ Louis Massignon, “The Three Prayers of Abraham,” in *Testimonies and Reflections*, ed. Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 3-20, 15.

¹¹⁸⁷ P. Brown, 91.

¹¹⁸⁸ Quoted in O’Mahony, ‘Common Fidelity’, 177.

¹¹⁸⁹ “...l’islamisme me plaisait beaucoup, avec sa simplicité, simplicité de dogme, simplicité de hiérarchie, simplicité de morale” LHC 14 August 1901; Foucauld, *Castries*, 94-5.

and therefore transforming into a challenge himself.¹¹⁹⁰ Christians are called to this more simple form of sanctification “which the Muslims admittedly only attain very rarely, but through our fault because we have not shown it to them in us, and this is what they expect from us, from Christ.”¹¹⁹¹ Foucauld is a challenge both to Muslims and to other Christians. Massignon sought Foucauld’s experiential knowledge to guide him on his own path.

Eremiticism and Sacrifice in Massignon

At the very core of Massignon’s Abrahamic Islam was the experience of sacrifice and exile as salvatory. As Anthony O’Mahony notes, Massignon was “called to ‘situate’ in relation to the Christian history of salvation that which he discovered in Islam and which he perceived in its founder and book.”¹¹⁹² Massignon’s Islam issues a challenge to Christianity to purify and to sacrifice, for the sake of its own salvation and the salvation of the world. Foucauld understood the eremitic vocation as a cyclical, self-perpetuating, self-sustaining vocation designed to obtain the salvation of both parties. It was a call to the most abandoned, bringing them the sanctifying solace of Christ and recognizing the Christ present in their abandoned state. In the process of being with them in an authentic way, of becoming abandoned oneself and therefore imitating Christ in His abandoned state, one could then make Him present for those in need. Both Foucauld and Massignon recognized the Muslims as the most abandoned of all people. To respond to the abandonment of the Muslims was to be exiled from one’s own community; the response in love made

¹¹⁹⁰ Merad describes him as a lamp – traditional imagery for the sufi and the hermit. Hersov, 307.

¹¹⁹¹ Quoted in O’Mahony, “Common Fidelity,” 177.

¹¹⁹² Ibid, 164.

by the hermit was his own sacrifice. Massignon's understanding of the sacrificial and sustaining role of the hermits in the salvation history of Muslim-Christians relations gives voice to Foucauld's retrieval of the Christian eremitical tradition and hints at an eschatological role for the hermits in modern times similar to the thought of Origen. Massignon's Islam not only issues a challenge to Islam, but its response allows the eremitic vocation to fulfill its function in the history of salvation. Sacrifice, as the pinnacle of the eremitic life is the method by which salvation is attained.

Sacrifice, the total annihilation of the self for another, was the end point of the Islamic mystical tradition. The work of Massignon's thesis was not only to prove the organic nature of Islamic mysticism, but to argue that Hallaj "represents the final completion of the mystical vocations that had sprung up throughout the first centuries of Islam."¹¹⁹³ After Hallaj, and especially since Ibn Arabi, Islamic mysticism, in Massignon's opinion, has been divorced from its true calling.¹¹⁹⁴ This calling and Hallaj's height of mystical importance, was not just his mystical expression "Ana al-Haqq" and the union which it represented. The true culmination of the centuries of work for mystical union with God was Hallaj's death: "The power is in the superhuman desire for sacrifice for the sake of one's brothers."¹¹⁹⁵

Massignon believed in the expiatory function of suffering. In this belief he was supported by his spiritual mentors, not the least of whom was Foucauld.¹¹⁹⁶ The

¹¹⁹³ Massignon, *Essay*, 210.

¹¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, 57; Laude 39.

¹¹⁹⁵ Massignon, *Essay*, 11.

¹¹⁹⁶ In his article "Charles de Foucauld et l'Islam" (1956) Massignon highlights several letters he received from Foucauld that instructed the younger man on the

emphasis both men placed on suffering was not unusual in nineteenth century France where public discourse, both religious and secular, had been permeated with thoughts of increasingly bloody sacrifice since the Revolution.¹¹⁹⁷ Foucauld and Massignon were influenced by the work of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704). Both men read Bossuet after their engagement with Islam and before their formal reconversion to Catholicism.¹¹⁹⁸ Bossuet, court preacher to Louis XIV, was a disciple of the French School of Spirituality that was the principle devotional influence within French Catholicism from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. It was forged in response to the Protestant Reformation and advanced an understanding of “the transcendence, holiness and absolute nature of God”, which can be mediated by the mystical union with God through the annihilation of the self and imitation of Christ as the pinnacle of adoration and worship.¹¹⁹⁹ It was the influence of this spirituality that created “a continuous set of cultural discourses and social formations that did their part in creating a certain political culture of national sacrifice” that permeated French thought, both religious and secular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The purpose of sacrifice, which means to be ‘made holy’,¹²⁰⁰ is to atone, or expiate sin: “On this logic, transgressions can never be thought away,

purpose and benefits of personal suffering: 22.5.09, 31.7.09, 30.10.09, Louis Massignon, “Charles de Foucauld et l’Islam,” *Bulletin des Amis de Louis Massignon*, no. 19 (2008): 35-51, 43-44. The letters can be found in full in Six, *L’amour*, 58, 59-60, 67-8.

¹¹⁹⁷ Burton, *Blood and Tears*; Strenski.

¹¹⁹⁸ Foucauld read Bossuet’s *Élevations sur les mysteries*, which had been a gift from his cousin Marie for his confirmation in his youth, Chatelard, *Tamanrasset*, 310; In his logbook for 25 June 1908, Massignon noted: “...daily meditations, mainly from Bossuet”, quoted in Latham, “Conversion,” 258.

¹¹⁹⁹ Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*.

¹²⁰⁰ Strenski, 18.

excused, or eliminated in some ‘spiritual way.’ Even Christ’s good intentions could alone never suffice in place of a real sacrificing death and resurrection.”¹²⁰¹

His father’s friend, the novelist J.K. Husymans, had also heavily determined Massignon’s understanding of sacrifice. They had met when Massignon was a boy, and Husymans was one of the intercessors Massignon saw praying for him during his conversion in Iraq. Husyman was a proponent of the doctrine of the substitution of sins and through his novels he passed these thoughts into French society.¹²⁰² For Massignon there was no true mysticism without sacrifice, because it was by sacrifice that the social benefits – the true purpose of the mystic’s efforts – were obtained. He explained: “Asceticism is not a private luxury preparing us for God, but is rather the profoundest work of mercy, which heals broken hearts by offering up instead its own broken bones and wounded flesh.”¹²⁰³ In Christianity, the monasteries and convents are the main storehouses of this vast power of prayer and contemplation. Referring to the Trappist Order, to which Foucauld had belonged, “When the convents of strict observance become weak, as we have seen in France, prior to 1789 and in Russia prior to 1917, society itself falls into decay.”¹²⁰⁴ Within Islam, there is the tradition of the *abdal*.¹²⁰⁵ Massignon understood the *abdal* to be “intercessors for humanity since Abraham”¹²⁰⁶ whose mystical work sustains the world. It is from this tradition

¹²⁰¹ Strenski, 15-16.

¹²⁰² Burton, *Tears*, xvii; François Angelier, ‘Douleur, substitution, intersignes: aux sources littéraires de la pensée de Louis Massignon’ in *Louis Massignon et le dialogue des cultures*, ed. Daniel Massignon (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1996), 155-170, 159.

¹²⁰³ Massignon, “Three Prayers,” 4.

¹²⁰⁴ quoted in Griffith, “Merton and Massignon”, 58.

¹²⁰⁵ New Encyclopedia of Islam, 14.

¹²⁰⁶ Massignon, *Essay*, 28.

of the *abdal* and the traditions which describe *sufisms* as a medicine that Massignon drew his understanding of the purpose of Islamic, and indeed all, mysticism.¹²⁰⁷

Mysticism has no purpose without a connection to society. It is when Islamic mysticism breaks from “contending in the community”¹²⁰⁸ that Massignon locates the decay of the Islamic mystical tradition.

It is in mysticism’s function as the sacrificial substitution for the community that Massignon locates the power of “the penitential life of hermits [...] who would sanctify all Muslim generations”¹²⁰⁹ and allows for mystical interaction between Christianity and Islam. Hallaj is considered by Massignon to be the culmination of the Sufi tradition; one of the *abdals*, “one of those given souls, substitutes for the Muslim Community, or, put more Biblically, for all men, among Believers in the God of Abraham’s sacrifice and among the expatriated pilgrims.”¹²¹⁰ For Massignon Hallaj’s sacrificial death is nothing less than Christic. Through his meditation on the Qur’anic Jesus, “Hallaj had defined holiness as a permanent union with the divine ‘Kun’ (fiat), acquiring through asceticism and humility this increasing function of graces within.”¹²¹¹ Hallaj closely identified the function of the *abdal* with Jesus: “both were united through the *shahid al-qidam*, the divine Spirit in Whom they were joined together”,¹²¹² and while Massignon did not explicitly state a connection between the

¹²⁰⁷ Ibid, 10-11.

¹²⁰⁸ Massignon, “Muslim and Christian Mysticism,” 129.

¹²⁰⁹ Massignon, “Entire Life,” 22.

¹²¹⁰ Massignon, *Passion*, Vol. IV, lxv.

¹²¹¹ Ibid, Vol. III, 220.

¹²¹² Ibid, Vol. II, 100.

function of Hallaj for the sacrifice of Islam with the Jesus of Christianity in his *Passion*,¹²¹³ the two were intimately linked in Massignon's private spiritual life.¹²¹⁴

Massignon understood the hermits as “fulfilling for them [the Muslims] the sacrifice of the Kurban, obtaining by their brotherly compassion the coming of Mercy.”¹²¹⁵ The word Kurban, or qurban, refers generally to a practice that brings one closer to God, but more specifically to a sacrifice – especially the sacrifice of Id al-Adha.¹²¹⁶ The sacrifice of the animals during Id al-Adha is a commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son and marks the culmination of the hajj. The day before the feast is the day of Arafat when “God pardons everyone, present and absent (whose names are called out [...]) This is the only feast in which the Muslim (once in his lifetime) must offer a free, personal prayer, an offering of himself, which can become an intercession for his brothers.”¹²¹⁷ Hallaj was accused and condemned for wanting to destroy the hajj, the pilgrimage,¹²¹⁸ because ‘he believes that, while transferring the hajj rites into omnipresence, the essential thing is to gain pardon for all people by means of a totally divested prayer of offering.’¹²¹⁹ In fact, it is at Arafat during his hajj that Hallaj prays for the Copernican decentering, the true exile, that marks the eremitic life of Foucauld and Massignon: “Hallaj asks

¹²¹³ Roger Arnaldez, Hallaj et Jesus dans la pensee de Louis Massignon,” *Horizons magrebins*. Louis Massignon. Hommes de dialogue des cultures, no. 14-15 (1989): 171-178,176.

¹²¹⁴ Claudel, 195 and 201.

¹²¹⁵ Massignon, “Entire Life,” 22.

¹²¹⁶ New Encyclopedia, 374.

¹²¹⁷ Massignon, *Passion*, Vol. IV, 220-1; Arnaldez, 173.

¹²¹⁸ Claudel, 195

¹²¹⁹ Massignon, *Passion*, Vol. IV, 221.

Him to let him ‘be even more lost’ and to let him become kafir [and infidel] in order to be struck down.”¹²²⁰

Kurban has another, Christian significance. It is the word used by Arab Christians for the Eucharist – the sacrifice of Calvary offered continually in the Church for the salvation of souls.¹²²¹ As a priest of the Greek Melkite rite, the liturgical language of which is Arabic, Massignon would have been well aware of the double meaning. The use of ‘kurban’ has meaning both for Hallaj, with his Christic sacrifice within Islam, and for Islam, but also for Foucauld, to whom Massignon referred as a “perpetual pilgrim” with all the Hallajian, sacrificial connotations implied. Foucauld’s missionary strategy was always two fold: the sanctification of Muslim lands by the Eucharist, and the sacrifice of the self. Foucauld embodied the dual meaning of Kurban: the prayer offered from within Islam, which includes the Hallajian desire to become like the infidel, and the Eucharistic sacrifice. When Massignon says that the exiled nature of Islam is calling for hermits who will sanctify Muslims by the Kurban, he is speaking of a Foucauldian, Hallajian eremiticism; a sacrifice inherent to and understood by all the people of Abraham. The hermit is called by the challenge of Islam to offer himself up for the salvation of ALL souls. The eremitic vocation is a natural, Abrahamic response to that challenge,

Contemplation and Action

¹²²⁰ *ibid*, 27.

¹²²¹ New Encyclopedia, 394; R-L Moreau, “La Badaliya et la mission d’aujourd’hui,” in *Louis Massignon*, ed. Jean-François Six (Paris: Édition de l’Herne, 1970), 304-311.

Massignon is well known for his work towards interreligious understanding, the depth of his understanding and immersion in Islam, and his personal Catholic piety which he felt was strengthened, rather than threatened, in the face of his love and understanding of Muslims. These characteristics of Massignon's life, while perhaps not originally inspired by Foucauld – they did not begin correspondence until after Massignon's conversion in Iraq – were strengthened by his relationship with the hermit and Massignon attempts to use Foucauld as a model for emulation. Yet, Foucauld's vocation within the Church, while perhaps not so easily described by the canonical vocations of his day, was certainly contemplative. Massignon, on the other hand, lived a very public life; he was certainly no monk – even his priestly vocation did not include celibacy. While Massignon struggled with the decision to follow Foucauld into the desert and join him in Algeria, after Foucauld's death Massignon was able to find in Foucauld's eremitic vocation a mode of contemplative life which he could follow even in lay or clerical life, resolving the tensions between the monastic and lay sides of himself, and also between the Catholic and the Muslim.

Massignon understood the Christian response to Islam to be sacrificial, eremitic, in nature. Despite this, and his lifelong devotion to mediating the space between the two religions and their followers Massignon did not live a typically Christian life of contemplation, nor even a literal imitation of the life of Foucauld. He did not join Foucauld in the desert, nor did he join any other monastic order as a monk. There was, at times in his life, a palpable tension between his lay calling to work and public life and the call to contemplation, which he saw as being universal: “The call of God has been for all a ‘call to the desert’, since Abraham left the

townsman's life for the life of pastoral wandering."¹²²² By using the eremitic template offered by Foucauld in the Directory, Massignon was able to have a life of contemplative exile in the world, the life of a Sufi.

The decision to marry, to close the door on the possibility of joining Foucauld in the desert, was an agonizing one. It had bothered Massignon so much, that when he chose to go to war, his time on the frontline was intended as expiation for that decision.¹²²³ After the war, while he continued to work towards the publication of the Directory and assisted in Bazin's biography, Massignon struggled with his call to a life of sacrifice. When he had informed Foucauld of his decision to join the war, Foucauld had praised Massignon's actions. He reminded him to always assume the place of greatest danger and to always be willing to sacrifice his comforts and his life for the good of others and the glorification of God.¹²²⁴ This advice weighed heavily upon Massignon as he 'consolidated' his place in the world of academia. He prayed to God for a way to live out his promises:

I understood clearly that I had to fulfill my vocation to the very end [...] Not simply to find shelter in my family life and my scientific and social activity, more or less useful and so perishable, but to remain available, remain at the front until the end, as I had sworn to Foucauld; that is to say, to give more to Muslim souls, make the subject of my courses converge with my prayer for them, go every year at any price to their country, offer more and more of my life for them. The rectification has taken time, but I am trying to keep all my promises and those of my predecessors.¹²²⁵

¹²²² quoted in Griffith, "Merton and Massignon", 125.

¹²²³ Dall'Oglio, "Ghandi", 105; Louis Massignon, *Parole donnée* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1970), 69.

¹²²⁴ 1 December 1916; Six, *l'amour*, 214.

¹²²⁵ Quoted in Gude, 121.

Massignon worked tirelessly for the foundation of Foucauld's last work - the Directory for a confraternity. It was a labour of love. In the Directory Foucauld outlined an eremitic spirituality that could be followed by people in all modes of life. The Directory explicitly states that the laity are to silently sanctify the people of the world through their spiritual life: "the duty of the brothers and sisters who are neither priests nor religious is not to instruct the infidels in the Christian religion, to achieve their conversion; but to prepare".¹²²⁶ Foucauld wrote that the duties of the lay members to the infidels are very serious because lay people have different opportunities to help:¹²²⁷ perhaps the rules of the religious members put limits upon their ability to have relations with the infidels,¹²²⁸ or perhaps the position of a lay person would be accepted by the infidels better than a cleric.¹²²⁹ The changes which Massignon made to enable him to keep his vocation: making his courses align with his prayers, visiting Muslim countries, etc. are an outline for making his work of sacrifice a part of his lay lifestyle. His life in the world gave him the opportunity to make his saving action that of a witness. It is for his role as public witness for Islam that Massignon is best known and which has enabled him to have the deep impact he

¹²²⁶ Le devoir des frères et soeurs qui ne sont ni prêtres ni religieux n'est point d'instruire les infidels de la religion chrétienne, d'achever leur conversion; mais de la préparer [...]" Directory of the Association, Article XXXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 671.

¹²²⁷ Directory of the Association, Article XXVIII; Foucauld, *Règle*, 670-2

¹²²⁸ "les règles de leurs institutes les empêchent de dépasser certaines limites d'intimité" Ibid.

¹²²⁹ "Leur état de laïc n'inspire point de défiance au sujet de la religion" Directory of the Association, Article XXXVI; Foucauld, *Règlement*, 671.

has had on the Catholic Church and Christian-Muslim relations.¹²³⁰ There is in Massignon and Foucauld, as demonstrated by his desire to found new orders and create the Directory for all walks of life, an understanding of the importance of contemplative life but also the need to involve the public in this activity.

Massignon envisioned the Directory as a rule of life, but because the Directory endorsed many different modes of religious life – religious, clerical, and lay - the manifestation of Foucauld’s legacy dictated by individual needs. The Directory would be their common link.¹²³¹ Massignon was dissatisfied with the way that Foucauld’s work was being incorporated into hierarchies and into the traditional Latin monastic life. Although he continued to support the Fraternities of the Little Brothers of Jesus and the other Associations,¹²³² he founded a group in his home, a small group of people dedicated to living the Directory as a way of life. In this form, based on the Directory and led by Massignon, Foucauld’s spiritual legacy took on “a more hidden, more individual and personal character, more eremitic.”¹²³³

This emphasis on personal, individual spirituality was demonstrated again in the founding of Badaliya in 1934. It was a union of prayers whose purpose was the ‘demonstration of Christ in Islam’, the sacrificial offering of Christian mystical substitution on behalf of Muslims.¹²³⁴ Massignon explained to Mary Kahil that “la

¹²³⁰ Robert Caspar, “La vision de l’Islam chez Louis Massignon et son influence sur l’Eglise,” in *Louis Massignon*, ed. J-F Six (Paris: Edition de l’Herne, 1970), 126-147;

¹²³¹ Massignon: ‘ce petit nombre d’associés, désireux d’un minimum de vie contemplative libre, gardant comme lien commun le Directoire” quoted in Six, “l’Union”, 54.

¹²³² Keryell, “d’inculturation”; Voillaume, *premiers*.

¹²³³ Keryell, “l’Association,” 186.

¹²³⁴ quoted in Moreau, 305.

Badaliya n'était pas une de ces oeuvres administratives qui ont besoin, pour exister en Dieu, de paperasseries de sacristie, que Dieu lui, trouverait toujours comme au Tiers Order de St. François, les vrais amis du coeur et qu'elle devait rester reconnue 'de facto' non 'de jure'."¹²³⁵ It was not a rule, nor a systematic method of apostolic penetration but a "disposition spirituelle", a way of thinking about and focusing one's spiritual life for the good of Muslims.¹²³⁶

The idea of personal sanctification, only between the individual and God for the benefit of the community is an eremitic concept. It is also an Islamic one. The eremitic nature of Sufism is demonstrated in mystic's need for solitude, but also in his connection to the community. Sufism was a mystical act for the community, but also within it. Islamic mysticism "was characterized by not being separate from the community's daily life."¹²³⁷ Living in the world, and following the example that Foucauld wrote out in the Directory for people in just such a situation, Massignon could live a life both sufi and eremitic; as an exile and with a connection between the lay and the contemplative, but also between Christianity and Islam.

Although Massignon continued to live in the world, he did what he could to make his life more eremitic, to become more of an exile and therefore to rise to the challenge of Islam. Foucauld lived with the Muslim community in Algeria. His response to the abandonment of the Muslims was to become exiled from his own community – to give them up to become like the Muslims: the response made in love by the hermit. For Massignon, as well, it would be his allegiance with Islam that

¹²³⁵ Letter to MK 21 November 1955, quoted in Keryell, "l'Association," 190.

¹²³⁶ Moreau, 309.

¹²³⁷ Massignon, *Essay*, 113.

would mark him as an exile. His decision to join the Melkite priesthood, which allowed him to maintain elements of a non-clerical lifestyle, such as his family, let him more perfectly imitate Foucauld and Hallaj in their Kurban. He could partake in the sacrifice without actually getting crucified or breaking the vows of sacred hospitality. For him to celebrate his mass in Arabic, the sacred language of Islam, only made his internalization of the sacrifice for Islam more complete. Badaliya was another attempt to become hidden amongst the Eastern Christian Church “whom Muslim conquest had reduced to be no more than one 'small herd'.”¹²³⁸ The minority within the majority, the exiled Arab Christians had the vocation to live as Hallaj and Foucauld had done: to show the Christ in Islam.

Massignon himself, although neither within Islam as a Muslim, nor living an eremitic vocation as Foucauld did, in his engagement with Islam took on the banner of the outsider, the mark of the hermit:

My case is not to be imitated; I made a duel with our Lord and having been an outlaw (against nature in love), against law (substituted to Muslims) and Hierarchy... (leaving my native proud Latin community for a despised, bridged and insignificant Greek Catholic Melkite church), I die lonely in my family, for whom I am a bore... I am a gloomy scoundrel.¹²³⁹

Shades of Foucauld here: “What good I should have had! Instead of that, misery, destitution, and not the least good toward others. A tree is known by its fruit, and mine shows what I am, a useless servant.”¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁸ quoted in Moreau, 305.

¹²³⁹ Quoted in O’Mahony, “Common Fidelity,” 156.

¹²⁴⁰ Antier, 257.

Conclusion

The executor of Foucauld's spiritual legacy, Massignon saw himself as having privileged knowledge of the hermit. Massignon gave a theological expression to Foucauld's eremitical vocation to Islam. For him, the Christian hermits for Islam are a lynchpin in the fulfilment of religious promise. They seem to serve a similar function to the "Christic" figures that Massignon has located in Islamic history. Al-Hallâj, in particular, with his Christ-like martyrdom, gives Christ a presence within Islam. To be attacked or hated is a hallmark of being called to make Christ present: "When God chooses a witness [...] He makes that witness unrecognizable and hateful to others. He veils his soul in order to defend it against vainglory [...] But at the same time this disguise enables the witness to substitute for others in order, unbeknown to them, to bear their sins and to deflect from their punishment."¹²⁴¹ The mark of witness allows the person to be joined to the suffering of others, by bringing ascetic suffering upon them: al-Hallâj in fulfilling Islam became hateful to his peers, and the Christian who associates with Islam becomes an exile like his Muslim brothers.

¹²⁴¹ Massignon, "Three Prayers," 5.

Chapter Eight: An Ecclesial Legacy

Introduction

Perfectae Caritatis, the Vatican II document that deals specifically with the renewal of religious life, decrees that any renewal or adaptation “includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and [...] adaptation to the changed conditions of our times.”¹²⁴² Charles de Foucauld, who was inspired to retrieve the eremitic tradition from early Christian sources and adapt it to Christian-Muslim relations, was imbued with the spirit of renewal. It is not surprising then that Foucauld anticipated many of the developments and reforms in the Catholic Church of the twentieth century. His views on silent evangelization, the role of monasticism in mission work, his involvement of lay people in the work of the Church, his salvation optimism, and even his feelings regarding the use of the vernacular languages in the liturgy are all features of modern Catholicism.

In the history of Western Latin monasticism the hermit, creating new cultural responses with his ascetic devotion and unique in his personal interpretation outside of the normative coenobitic tradition, has been an agent of reform in the contemplative culture of the Church.¹²⁴³ The renewal of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, including the recognition of the vocation of the hermit in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, has borrowed many elements from the eremitic tradition. Foucauld’s ecclesial legacy, in the form of his “spiritual family” and also in those

¹²⁴² *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

¹²⁴³ Leyser, 10.

individuals whose work in the Church he inspired such as Jules Monchanin and Thomas Merton, has been at the forefront of the renewal of the Catholic Church in the century since his death. In the adaptation of traditional forms of monasticism, in the role of contemplation in ecumenism and missionary work, and in developing a space for lay contemplatives Foucauld's work continues to inspire new applications in the renewal of Christian life.

Modern Monastic Movements and Charles de Foucauld

Today there are ten religious congregations that locate their origins in the thought and life of Charles de Foucauld.¹²⁴⁴ The history of the most influential congregation, the Little Brothers of Jesus, touches upon a number of the themes of monastic life in the twentieth century. The Little Brothers of Jesus underwent a complete reorganization after the Second World War – taking off their habit, breaking down their community structure into smaller groups, and foregoing their enclosure to live in the world.¹²⁴⁵ In doing so they anticipated changes ushered in after Vatican II by almost two decades.¹²⁴⁶ The Little Brothers were founded as a

¹²⁴⁴ “Little Guide,” 17.

¹²⁴⁵ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 139; Voillaume, *premiers disciples*, 329-336.

¹²⁴⁶ An important mirror to the case of the Little Brothers of Jesus is that of the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded in 1933 by Sister Marie-Charles in France. Like the Little Brothers of Jesus, originally called the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart, the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart were founded as a traditional monastic institution based on the 1899 Rule. Disagreements within the congregation about the correct interpretation of the Foucauldian sources, led Sister Marie-Charles to leave the congregation for a time. Unlike the Little Brothers of Jesus, the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart waited for Vatican II to “liberate us from the monastic framework” which they now live in small fraternities in France, Spain, and Algeria. “Little Guide” 22; Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, *He took me by the hand*, translated by Lorraine Cavanagh (London: New City, 1991), 17; Kathryn Spink, *The Call of the Desert* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, Ltd., 1993), 76-77; “Le concile

contemplative order, based on Foucauld's 1899 Rule for the Little Brother of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and other institutionalized forms of monasticism that they had been exposed to, such as the Carthusians and the Carmelites.¹²⁴⁷ Foucauld's experiences with solitary life in a mission field led him to develop his own interpretation of eremitic life, different from the established forms of Western monasticism. Well versed in eremitic principles, the Little Brothers of Jesus based their renewal on the "fruits of a genuine experience of meditative life"¹²⁴⁸ and, with Foucauld as their guide, inaugurated an eremitic reform of their coenobitic lifestyle that moved them out of the cloister and into the world.

Inspired by René Bazin's biography of Foucauld, published in 1921,¹²⁴⁹ and assisted in their endeavors by Louis Massignon,¹²⁵⁰ five young French priests, led by René Voillaume, took the habit at the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur, Montmartre in 1933.¹²⁵¹ The following month, in October 1933, they established their first fraternity at El Abiodh Sidi Cheikh, Algeria on the edge of the Saharian desert.¹²⁵² Called the "frères de la Khaloua", the Brothers of Solitude,¹²⁵³ they set out to establish a life of perpetual enclosure, silence, and prayer¹²⁵⁴ based primarily on the Rule written by

Vatican II nous a permis de nous libérer du cadre monastique" <http://www.foucauld-petites-soeurs-du-sacre-coeur.eu/histoire.php>

¹²⁴⁷ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 137.

¹²⁴⁸ "fruits d'une authentique expérience de vie contemplative" Voillaume, *disciples*, 296.

¹²⁴⁹ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 135.

¹²⁵⁰ Keryell, "d'inculturation".

¹²⁵¹ Voillaume, *disciples*, 194-198.

¹²⁵² For a full discussion of the history of the area and local tribes see *Ibid*, 207-212.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid*, 212.

¹²⁵⁴ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 137; Voillaume, *disciples*, 212-218.

Foucauld in 1899 for his proposed monastic order, the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.¹²⁵⁵

The young group had been given the notebook in which Foucauld had written the Constitutions of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart in 1899. Voillaume explained that having the Rule in their hands, in the original, overcame them and “We were completely won over and it no longer occurred to us that we could look in a different direction.”¹²⁵⁶ Louis Massignon and the White Fathers warned the group that the 1899 Rule had never been approved by a bishop and was almost impossible to follow.¹²⁵⁷ The Little Brothers came away certain that “it was necessary to place it in history, and to see why the Father wrote it and how, in what spirit it was conceived.”¹²⁵⁸ Yet they continued to keep to the 1899 Rule, with certain changes and expansions,¹²⁵⁹ and had this expanded constitution accepted by Rome in 1939 because “each time we reread the text of the rules [...] we were enticed, drawn away by a kind of perfume of evangelical simplicity so as to forget that this Rule was inapplicable.”¹²⁶⁰

Internal and external developments prompted a reevaluation of their lifestyle in the 1940s. The Second World War had the effect of separating the brothers from each other and from their fraternity. All but three brothers were forced to leave,

¹²⁵⁵ Foucauld, *Règlements*, 37-93.

¹²⁵⁶ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 136.

¹²⁵⁷ Keryell, “d’inculturation,” 214; *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 136.

¹²⁵⁸ Keryell, “d’inculturation” 215.

¹²⁵⁹ Voillaume, *disciples*, 214-218

¹²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 214.”...chaque fois que nous relisions le texte du règlement rédigé par Charles de Foucauld pour ses petits frères du Sacré-Coeur, nous étions séduits, entraînés par une sorte de parfum de simplicité évangélique au point d’oublier que cette règle, telle quelle, était inapplicable.”

destabilizing the enclosure and the sense of community.¹²⁶¹ The expansion of the congregation in the last years before the war also meant that the group had been focused on the formation of these new brothers. It was these young members who began to question the Foucauldian heritage of the congregation. The main issues of concern to the new brothers were the congregation's overall lack of abjection and the fact that they were not living by the fruits of their labour, as Foucauld had done.¹²⁶²

The Little Brothers spent years trying to interpret the differences between the Rules that Foucauld had written and Foucauld's own lifestyle. The interplay between Foucauld's life and his composition of Rules reflected an attempt to articulate his spirituality for other people, but also for himself. The shifting emphasis that Foucauld placed on the size of the communities is one example of this conflict. His original Rule, written while he was still a Trappist, reflects his desire for an austere life. He orders a life of a small community, solitary and poor.¹²⁶³ After he began his preparation for ordination Foucauld redacted his first Rule and provided for larger congregations to "ensure perpetual adoration [of the Blessed Sacrament] in the Fraternities".¹²⁶⁴ This desire for a larger congregation dissipated over time as Foucauld became more mature in his eremitical vocation. By investigating Foucauld's notes and journals, the Little Brothers discovered three main points

¹²⁶¹ Ibid, 273.

¹²⁶² Ibid, 265 and 292.

¹²⁶³ Congrégation des Petits Frères de Jésus, 14 June, 1896; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 27-36.

¹²⁶⁴ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 11, 62; "Les fraternités aront en general 20 à 25 petits frères: jamais moins de 12, jamais plus de 40." and "Le Très Saint Sacrement sera exposé perpétuellement, nuit et jour, dans chaque fraternité, et il y aura toujours 2 petits frères en adoration devant Lui" Article XXXIV and Article II, Constitutions des petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 89 and 77-8.

where Foucauld's life differed from their own: an emphasis on solitary life (or life in small groups) without an enclosure, no *perpetual* adoration of the Sacrament, and an emphasis on apostolic work, but with no regular ministry.¹²⁶⁵ They decided to address these differences.

The spiritual family of Charles de Foucauld felt that any changes made to an existing monastic framework was in the spirit of renewal. During this time of change the Little Brothers were influenced by the development of the Little Sisters of Jesus.¹²⁶⁶ René Voillaume was in contact with Elisabeth Marie Madeleine Hutin, Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, founder of the congregation. She had not intended to found a new monastic order but to live a life of contemplation tending to the needs of the people of the Sahara, basing her practices on Foucauld's life.¹²⁶⁷ When the Apostolic Prefect asked her to write the constitutions for a new congregation she "insisted on the message of practice rather than the untested theory", forgoing the enclosure and others trappings of the traditional Latin monastic lifestyle.¹²⁶⁸ She wanted her congregation to be a new type of monastic life "which is trying to answer the needs of our times".¹²⁶⁹ This new life was founded, not only on a reinvestigation of Foucauld's life but of the one who inspired Foucauld: Jesus. In 1948 she wrote to Voillaume: "We must build anew. Out of the new that is in the ancient, out of the authentic Christianity of the first disciples of Christ."¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶⁵ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 21.

¹²⁶⁶ Voillaume, *disciples*, 269-274, 283-304..

¹²⁶⁷ Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, 16.

¹²⁶⁸ Spink, 76.

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 77.

¹²⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

For the Little Brothers of Jesus, this meant reliance on their contemplative core. They began to experience what Voillaume called the “fruits of a genuine experience of meditative life”¹²⁷¹. They had been living a life based on strict eremitic principles. The novices of the congregation were trained at the Carthusian monastery of San Bruno, in preparation for life in the desert.¹²⁷² Within the fraternity the brothers had strict rules about silence and solitude. They had added a chapter to their Rule outlining the “Life of the Cell. Hermitages”.¹²⁷³ It was considered to central to the life of the community that when a novice entered the congregation they were led to their cell immediately after receiving the habit.¹²⁷⁴ The Constitutions were clear that “when the Little Brothers are not in chapel, at the feet of our Lord, they have to hold, as much as possible, silence in their cell where they will be only with God.”¹²⁷⁵ They had originally intended to build a secluded hermitage within the cloister but decided instead upon retreats into the desert. While it wasn’t feasible to maintain extended retreats, a three-week nomadic retreat in the desert became part of the noviate.¹²⁷⁶

On the first page of the notebook Foucauld carried with him at all times was written “The more firmly we embrace the cross, the more closely we are bound to

¹²⁷¹ “fruits d’une authentique expérience de vie contemplative” Voillaume, *disciples*, 296.

¹²⁷² Ibid, 225.

¹²⁷³ Constitutions 1936, Chapter XX; Ibid, 218.

¹²⁷⁴ Ibid, 225.

¹²⁷⁵ “Lorsque les petits frères ne sont pas à la chapelle, aux pieds de Notre Seigneur, ils doivent se tenir le plus possible dans le silence de leur cellule où ils aimeront à se trouver seuls avec Dieu.” Ibid, 218.

¹²⁷⁶ Ibid, 228-9.

Jesus, our Beloved, who is made fast to it.”¹²⁷⁷ The detachment that Foucauld strived to achieve was with the purpose of breaking his connection with the world so that he could unite himself instead with God.¹²⁷⁸ That detachment and reattachment created within him something which seems almost counterintuitive: a love of the world that manifested itself in encounters and work done for the good of other people. This was a direct result of his contemplative eremitic life: “When one is filled with Jesus, one is full of charity. One goes to those one would save, as Jesus went to them in becoming incarnate...”¹²⁷⁹

The Little Brothers describe a similar experience. They felt that a movement into the world, the abandonment of the cloister and the beginning of a “contemplative life engaged in the milieu”¹²⁸⁰ was merely an extension of their eremitic lifestyle, the result of their attachment to God. It was a complete Foucauldian evolution:

[Foucauld’s] heart literally burns like Jesus’s own heart; and see how impossible it is to love Him, and love men with and through Him, without being possessed by a desire to give Him to the world and so meet the call of so many, many souls that are hungering for God’s real kingdom. Apostolic desires are therefore nothing for you to be afraid of; if you did not have them, what you feel would not be love.¹²⁸¹

In 1947 the Little Brothers of Jesus established their first fraternity in France with brothers who were already mature in their life of contemplation.¹²⁸² The

¹²⁷⁷ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 213.

¹²⁷⁸ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 155.

¹²⁷⁹ Meditation on Luke 1:39-56, June 1916; *Ibid*, 209.

¹²⁸⁰ “vie contemplative engagée dans le milieu” letter of frère Noël, 8 May 1946: Voillaume, *disciples*, 330.

¹²⁸¹ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 113.

congregation has since been marked by its distinctive way of life. They live in small groups without enclosure so that they may be “inserted [...] into the world of the poor, sharing the hard life of that world.”¹²⁸³ They live and also take on paying jobs within poor communities so as to belong “to their social stratum in every way.”¹²⁸⁴ Yet within this context they continue to live a deeply contemplative life based, as Foucauld always prescribed, around the Eucharist. Their mission continued to be a contemplative one, merely a contemplative life lived in the view of the world: “the mission of the Little Brothers of Jesus is before all else a mission of prayer, adoration and intercession – prayer, adoration and intercession for all mankind, but more especially still for those amongst whom they live and work and to whom their lives are dedicated.”¹²⁸⁵

Contemplation and Action: Contemplative Orders and Missions

The role of the contemplative life in the Church’s mission of evangelization has developed over the past century. In 1926 Pius XI, in the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*,¹²⁸⁶ wrote of the importance of the contemplative life in the role of mission work, both for establishing and for maintaining Catholic life and identity in mission countries.¹²⁸⁷ Referring to the Trappists in the Vicariate Apostolic of Peking the encyclical exhorted the role of the contemplative life in mission countries, particularly the role of hermits:

¹²⁸² Voillaume, *disciples*, 339.

¹²⁸³ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 23.

¹²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 26.

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, *Seeds*, 43.

¹²⁸⁶ René Voillaume makes special mention of this encyclical in regards to the inspiration for the LBJ in an interview contained in *Cry the Gospel with Your Life*, 138.

¹²⁸⁷ *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 27 and 28.

It is, therefore, not to be questioned that these hermits, while they guard intact the spirit of their holy Founder and therefore do not engage in an active life, nevertheless they prove themselves of great assistance in the successful work of the missions.¹²⁸⁸

This positive acknowledgement of contemplative life in the role of missionary activity was highlighted again in *Ad Gentes*, during Vatican II. By manifesting and signifying the “inner nature of the Christian calling” contemplatives can “give expression to these treasures and [...] see that they are passed on in a manner that is in keeping with the nature and genus of each nation.”¹²⁸⁹ Special mention is made of “returning to the simpler forms of ancient monasticism [and] studiously looking for a genuine adaptation to local conditions.”¹²⁹⁰ Adaptation to time, place and culture was highlighted repeatedly in *Perfectae Caritatis*, “especially in mission territories”.¹²⁹¹ Since Vatican II the “dynamic force behind most of contemporary interreligious dialogue, as well as the hearth of its practical implications, is the monastery.”¹²⁹² The Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus have been instrumental in promoting “a new type of contemplative life which [...] [has] spontaneously rediscovered the traditional norms” of eremitic contemplation and missionary action.¹²⁹³

Anthropologist Judith Shapiro, based on her own ethnographic research, has characterized the work of the Little Brothers and the Little Sisters of Jesus as “one of

¹²⁸⁸ *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 28.

¹²⁸⁹ *Ad Gentes*, 18.

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹¹ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

¹²⁹² Gilbert G. Hardy, *The Monastic Quest and Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 2.

¹²⁹³ Menasce, 334.

the most important [missionary] innovations in the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century”.¹²⁹⁴ The attitudes of the congregations have allowed them to remain in countries when other missionary groups have been expelled.¹²⁹⁵ She has identified those characteristics of the group that have contributed to its success, including the organization of the congregation into small groups, evangelization by example, and a contemplative life that focuses on “individual communion with God”.¹²⁹⁶

Jean de Menasce sees the tendency towards smaller groups, in the case of the Little Brothers of Jesus no more than five members,¹²⁹⁷ as a characteristic of the renewal of contemplative orders “rediscovering their origins” and shifting towards a missionary focus in the post-conciliar period.¹²⁹⁸ According to de Menasce: “they are closer to the mode of life of the vast majority of the people in the developing countries, and therefore more evocative of Christ who is at the heart of monastic life.”¹²⁹⁹ Within the context of Algeria, Foucauld needed to be able to move around, to reach as many people as possible, which necessitated small groups with considerable solitary work.¹³⁰⁰ Foucauld wrote that his eremitic existence was beneficial to evangelization: “It is a good thing to live alone in a place. One can thus

¹²⁹⁴ Judith Shapiro, “Ideologies of Catholic Missionary Practice in a Postcolonial Era” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, No. 1 (Jan. 1981): 130-149, 131.

¹²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 135.

¹²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 136.

¹²⁹⁷ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 42.

¹²⁹⁸ Menasce, 335; Shapiro also notes this trend and views the Little Brothers and Sisters as “innovative in this respect”, 136, ft. 22.

¹²⁹⁹ Menasce 335.

¹³⁰⁰ Foucauld, *Trappe*, 273-275; Menasce also makes note of the necessity of solitary work in the case of Foucauld, 334.

have an influence, even without doing anything particular, because one comes to belong and can make oneself so little and so easy to approach.”¹³⁰¹

The Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus, following Foucauld’s example, do not preach. According to Voillaume, “[t]he apostolic action of the fraternities begins with the simple fact of their existence. There is no need for the brothers to talk or preach.”¹³⁰² Their existence, in small groups, is necessary to their method of evangelization, which is to adopt the lifestyle of the people they live amongst.¹³⁰³ Foucauld’s vocation was to imitate Jesus in his “last place”, with the poor, the disposed, the ignored.¹³⁰⁴ He identified this place with the Muslims of the French colonies, writing “[n]o people seemed to me more abandoned than those.”¹³⁰⁵ This was his act of evangelization that the Little Brothers attempt to emulate:

By becoming one of them through communion of life and suffering, as Father de Foucauld came to belong to the Touaregs, he can present them to God – in the measure of his own generosity and his own union with Christ – in living prayer and redemptive oblation.¹³⁰⁶

This sanctifying act, of taking on the suffering of the people they live amongst, dilates the boundaries of the Church: “The Church itself, in its religious life or its

¹³⁰¹ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 17.

¹³⁰² *Ibid*, 30.

¹³⁰³ This is also being adopted by other missionary orders, such as the Society of the Divine Word, looking for a “dialogical way of doing mission.” See, Gordz, “Vie with Each Other in Good Works,” 214. For an analysis of Protestant approaches to inculturation, mission and dialogue, see Michael L. Fitzgerald, “Witness and Dialogue,” *International Review of Mission* 86 (1997): 113-117.

¹³⁰⁴ LLM 1 August 1916; Six, *L’Amour*, 210.

¹³⁰⁵ Letter to Abbé Caron, Vicar-General of Versailles, 8 April 1905; Bazin, 141.

¹³⁰⁶ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 45.

priesthood, thus begins to be present, through the Fraternities, in places from which it was up til then absent.”¹³⁰⁷

In the twentieth century the Church has discussed the need to adapt to the apostolate, and Voillaume has mentioned the influence of *Rerum Ecclesiae* on the formation of the Little Brothers.¹³⁰⁸ As a model to emulate, they had the example of Foucauld who “not only loved these people with a tremendous fraternal love, but adapted himself to them with disinterested, nay, scientific intellectual inflexibility and the greatest care to know them completely.”¹³⁰⁹ This aspect of Foucauldian spirituality had been a part of the lives of the Little Brothers from their earliest days. Before the founding of the first Fraternity at El Abiodh Sidi Cheikh, the young men studied Arabic and Islam.¹³¹⁰ Even though they were going to be hidden in an enclosure, they were dedicated to adapting themselves to the surrounding culture as central to their sanctifying method of evangelization. They consider inculturation an act of sanctification, an analogy to the Incarnation.¹³¹¹ Their monastic and liturgical life had to reflect the lives of the people, and so they based their chapel architecture and habits on local culture and they borrowed music from the Melkite, Syrian and Chaldean rites to allow them to sing parts of the Office in Arabic.¹³¹²

Shaprio has identified the emphasis on an “individual communion with God” amongst the Little Brothers as one of its strongest elements. She defines this as

engaging in a type of contemplative life that centers around

¹³⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁰⁸ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 138.

¹³⁰⁹ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 67.

¹³¹⁰ Keryell, “d’inculturation”, 216.

¹³¹¹ Ibid, 212 and 219.

¹³¹² Ibid, 223-4.

simple forms of prayer, in which emphasis is shifted from the full formality of the Divine Office to individual communion with God, silent adoration before the exposed host, and saying the rosary, which is sometimes referred to as “the poor man’s prayer.”¹³¹³

Foucauld addressed the accessibility of religious devotion in his Rule of 1896.¹³¹⁴

After his experiences in Syria with the Trappists, Foucauld became concerned about the inaccessibility of some of the devotional practices and so he made accessibility important to his Rules: “Children, the ignorant, the illiterate, are often strangers to the European languages, we cannot think of reciting the Divine Office. We replace it with the adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament, prayer, and the recitation of the Holy Rosary.”¹³¹⁵ This provides the opportunity for shared experiences with the apostolate, exemplified by Foucauld’s experiences by the creation of a rosary to be shared by Muslims and Christians,¹³¹⁶ but also inculcates the importance of individual, eremitic, devotion. The Little Brothers are still expected to nurture a mature contemplative life, involving years of preparation, even if it “may sometimes be a matter of their keeping to different inner attitudes individually while the external circumstances of their work or mission remain the same.”¹³¹⁷ This highly individual contemplative life, centered around the Eucharist, retains the eremitic origins of the Little Brothers contemplative life in an enclosure, while allowing them to “go from

¹³¹³ Shapiro, 136

¹³¹⁴ Congregation of the Little Brothers of Jesus, 1896; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 27-36.

¹³¹⁵ “Petits, ignorants, illettrés, souvent étrangers aux langues européennes, nous ne pouvons songer à réciter le Saint-Office. Nous le remplaçons par l'adoration du Saint-Sacrement exposé, l'oraison, la récitation du Saint-Rosaire.” Congrégation des Petits Frères de Jésus, 14 June, 1896; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 27.

¹³¹⁶ Bazin, 282.

¹³¹⁷ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 128.

the battle line in the ranks of their members to the single combat of the desert”¹³¹⁸ by “returning to the simpler forms of ancient monasticism [and] studiously looking for a genuine adaptation to local conditions.”¹³¹⁹

Ecumenism

Today, the Little Brothers of Jesus have established fraternities in 35 countries.¹³²⁰ The Little Sisters of Jesus are even more diverse, with a presence in 62 countries.¹³²¹ They reflect trends in modern Latin monasticism:

[a] glance at a map of all the monasteries of men and women who follow the rule of St Benedict (Benedictines and Cistercians) shows that they are spread all over the whole of the world [...] Their diversity is greater than might at first appear: some are small missionary outposts; others include schools, colleges or perhaps dispensaries; some have a more liturgical bent; others are more directly contemplative.¹³²²

Contemplative life has blended itself with missionary methods all around the world. The emphasis placed upon the missionary role of monastic orders by the Vatican in the last century has opened avenues for the development of a monastic expression of a missionary apostolate. The decision of the Foucauldian orders to expand beyond the walls of Islam has its basis in Foucauld’s universalism, and perhaps even ecumenism, and has allowed the Foucauldian family to become an expression of these concepts not only in location but also in makeup.

¹³¹⁸ Chittister, 33.

¹³¹⁹ *Ad Gentes*, 18.

¹³²⁰ For an up to date list see: <http://www.charlesdefoucauld.org/en/groupe-petits-freres-de-jesus-6>

¹³²¹ For an up to date list see:

<http://www.charlesdefoucauld.org/en/groupe.php?groupe=2>

¹³²² Menasce, 334-335.

It was the colonial experience that first drew Foucauld out of France and allowed him to envision a missionary endeavor. Europe's colonial expansion in the nineteenth century sparked a missionary boom that, for the Catholic Church, took on a French character.¹³²³ The marriage of colonialism and missionary work can be seen in Foucauld's desire for a *Union coloniale catholique*¹³²⁴ and the special place he gave to working for the betterment of the colonies.¹³²⁵ Yet Foucauld's message is open to a universal interpretation.¹³²⁶ In the 1899 Rule for the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Foucauld explicitly states that the brothers are to establish fraternities in mission countries, but that they are also allowed to install themselves in Christian countries as well.¹³²⁷ This was reaffirmed in the rule written in 1902 for the Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.¹³²⁸ In the first years of the establishment of religious institutions and lay associations, the groups focused their attentions on France and her colonies in North Africa.¹³²⁹ With the international expansion, and the breakdown of the empire, the groups have highlighted the universality of Foucauld's vision that was based on responding to the need of those in the "last place" without a specific geographical focus.¹³³⁰

¹³²³ Daughton, 25-55

¹³²⁴ 1 May 1914; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 699-708.

¹³²⁵ "comme pour des parents de donner l'éducation chrétienne à leurs enfants" Article XXXVIII, Statuts de l'association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 601.

¹³²⁶ Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, 13.

¹³²⁷ Article III, Constitutions des petits frères du Sacré Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 78.

¹³²⁸ Article III. Constitutions des petits soeurs du Sacré Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 338.

¹³²⁹ Voillaume, *disciples*, 65-94, 199-206, 207-212.

¹³³⁰ *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 97-110.

The eremitic interpretation of monastic life - self-sustaining smaller groups and individual communion with God - allows the Little Brothers to establish themselves in multiple situations. It was the eremitic nature of Foucauld's vocation that allowed him to go to Tamanrasset, where the White Fathers were not able to penetrate. It also allowed him to become one with the community – the essential feature of his missionary vision and that of the Little Brothers: “It is a good thing to live alone in a place. One can thus have an influence, even without doing anything particular, because one comes to belong and can make oneself so little and so easy to approach.”¹³³¹ One Little Brother in Benares describes the process of establishing oneself:

After my novitiate, I was only too eager to begin living the vocation of the Fraternity in my own country. So I found the learning of a local trade one of the first musts. I set out from the fraternity and stopped at random at the first carpentry shop I saw on the road, and there I was accepted as an apprentice. No tools, nor much inquiry about myself. From the very first day I felt as if I were starting a new life.¹³³²

The Rule of St. Benedict highlights this special function of the hermit. Unlike the monk, whose vows of stability to his community tie him to a specific life and function within the everyday running of the Church, the hermit, bound to no one but God and the greater community of humanity, is able to be sent to those areas of crisis in which his intercession is most needed – where he is called. As Foucauld wrote, “The life of Nazareth can be led anywhere at all; you must lead it wherever it will be most helpful to your neighbour”.¹³³³

¹³³¹ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 17.

¹³³² *Cry the Gospel With Your Life*, 189.

¹³³³ quoted in Voillaume, *Seeds*, 22.

This ability to adapt to surrounding culture has led to some interesting and unique manifestations of religious life. The first fraternity at Sidi Cheikh exchanged ringing bells for the call to prayer.¹³³⁴ Louis Massignon told the brothers that this custom, associated with Islam, had possibly been used in hermit lauras.¹³³⁵ Although the attempt failed, the brothers were forced to stop as this adaptation had upset the local community; it nonetheless offers an interesting example of both integration with local Muslim customs and a retrieval of ancient monastic traditions. More successful has been the adoption by some fraternities of other rites including the Byzantine, Coptic, Syrian, Chaldean and Armenian. It not only allows the fraternities to become integrated with the local culture, it has also helped with ecumenical relations between the churches.¹³³⁶

Foucauld was also an inspiration for the development of Jules Monchanin¹³³⁷ and his Benedictine Ashram. Although not a member of the Foucauldian spiritual family, Jules Monchanin desired to be a priest and hermit in India, his lifestyle reflecting local cultures and values.¹³³⁸ He believed that “Christ expects of each land and of each people an outburst of praise and love, which they alone can offer him...

¹³³⁴ Keryell, “d’inculturation,” 229; Voillaume, *disciples*, 231-238.

¹³³⁵ Letter to the brothers from Massignon 16 September 1935; Keryell, “d’inculturation”, 229.

¹³³⁶ Voillaume, *Seeds*, 36; Keryell, “d’inculturation” 229; This practice was also used by the Little Sisters of Jesus, Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, 152.

¹³³⁷ His thought was part of the intellectual milieu, including Louis Massignon, that developed into the Second Vatican Council, see Anthony O’Mahony, “Catholic Theological Perspectives on Islam at the Second Vatican Council,” *New Blackfriars* 88, issue 1016 (July 2007): 385-398. For more information on Monchanin and Massignon, see Françoise Jacquin “L’abbé Monchanin et l’Islam,” *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997): 27-42; idem, “Louis Massignon et l’abbé Monchanin,” *La vie spirituelle*, no. 694 (1991): 175-183.

¹³³⁸ Weber, 51;

A particular type of Christian spirituality has to evolve out of the particular genius of the people of each country.”¹³³⁹ Monchanin longed for the development of a truly “Indian Christian theology” so that “what is deepest in Christianity may be grafted onto what is deepest in India”.¹³⁴⁰ His was a call to contemplation and, after working as a parish priest for ten years, he was able to found his hermitage in 1950¹³⁴¹ which became a retreat for Christians, but also for Hindus and Buddhists.¹³⁴² He referred to it as a Benedictine ashram, a place where a union between Christianity and Hinduism could develop.¹³⁴³

Foucauld’s life in Algeria inspired Monchanin in the development of his vocation. René Bazin’s book was published in 1922, the same year as Monchanin’s ordination.¹³⁴⁴ On his journey to India he wrote to his mother, “I must be buried in this land of India – somewhat like Father de Foucauld in the land of the Sahara – to be sanctified and to make it fertile.”¹³⁴⁵ Foucauld also, along with Saint Anthony,¹³⁴⁶ became a guide in the way of the eremitic life.¹³⁴⁷ In 1940 he recorded in his journal:

Yesterday I was rereading Foucauld [...] a man of uninterrupted prayer who thirsted so for martyrdom [...] and who found it in his way. An unfruitful life, a call for

¹³³⁹ From *A Benedictine Ashram*, 1951; quoted in Weber, 76.

¹³⁴⁰ quoted in Weber, 2: See also Françoise Jacquin, “Prière trinitaire et expérience hindouiste: la voie ouverte par Jules Monchanin,” *La vie spirituelle*, no. 727 (1998): 247-254.

¹³⁴¹ Weber, 71.

¹³⁴² *Ibid*, 81.

¹³⁴³ For an survey of Catholic thought on Hinduism, see Martin Ganeri, “Catholicism and Hinduism,” in *The Catholic Church and the World Religions*, ed. Gavin D’Costa (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 106-140.

¹³⁴⁴ Weber, 7.

¹³⁴⁵ letter of 16 May 1939; quoted in Weber, 27.

¹³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

¹³⁴⁷ “Will I be a hermit here someday? Was Foucauld’s hermitage cruder still? Life seems too easy here.” 1943 in Kulitalai; quoted in Weber, 51.

disciples (who would be ready to obey anything, to do without everything, to die of hunger), who did not come; plans which were always thwarted; and his fruitful death *nisi granum!* India demands as much and we must beg for holiness... We must now let ourselves be shaped in much patience and through the same Spirit by this Priest, in time and out time, who divides [...] and who unites [...] beyond all else, who died a failure (having served neither Israel nor the world, known only by a few, so little and so poorly known), and who did not see with his human eyes the dawn of Pentecost... Our vocation: to prefigure the holiness of India, to think in order to think that, and to be silent in that silence, hard as diamond.¹³⁴⁸

His contemplative apostolate mirrored Foucauld's in many ways. Monchanin desired "always the most humble place".¹³⁴⁹ A priest, he also used the Eucharist to sanctify the country.¹³⁵⁰ Remembering Foucauld in Algeria, he saw his failure to gain disciples as a sign of future fruitfulness.¹³⁵¹ The most striking example of their similarities is also the most striking element in Monchanin's work – his development of an authentically Indian Christian lifestyle. Like Foucauld, he desired an emptying out of the self to allow "the Spirit alone [to] work his way into this India which he wishes to engulf in unfathomable contemplation."¹³⁵² To achieve this, Monchanin, like Foucauld, based his asceticism on the local conditions of the people, the "standard forms of Indian life".¹³⁵³ By doing this he was able to create a Benedictine Ashram with meditative readings of the Vedas and the Bible, a vegetarian diet,

¹³⁴⁸ journal entry 21 March 1940, quoted in Weber, 49-50.

¹³⁴⁹ quoted in Weber, 18.

¹³⁵⁰ Weber, 54-56.

¹³⁵¹ Ibid, 8.

¹³⁵² Ibid, 31.

¹³⁵³ Ibid, 45, 51

straw mats for sitting and sleeping, and the dress of the Hindu holyman,¹³⁵⁴ that was able to be a place of meeting between Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists.

The multitude of countries and cultures in which those inspired by Foucauld have established themselves has not been their only interpretation of his universalist ethos. As Monchanin's ashram became a point of meeting between religions, so the organizations in the Foucauldian family themselves strive to be points of meeting. Although Foucauld stipulated Catholicism for involvement in his confraternity,¹³⁵⁵ the Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld has decided to expand the inclusivist nature of the Foucauld's confraternity (open to all Catholics: lay, cleric, or religious) to include people of all religions.¹³⁵⁶ Like Foucauld's rosary to be prayed together by Muslims and Christians, the Lay Fraternity sees itself as

a great opportunity today to live this ecumenical dimension in meetings with members of Eastern Rite Churches, other Christian Churches such as Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, and even to enter into inter-religious dialogue with major religions such as Judaism, Islam and Buddhism.¹³⁵⁷

Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, also dedicated to ecumenism,¹³⁵⁸ aspired to the full participation of non-Catholics in the Little Sisters of Jesus. As non-Catholics cannot make their vows to the Catholic Church, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes required the article be removed from the congregation's Constitutions.¹³⁵⁹

The Eremitic Vocation in the Twentieth Century

¹³⁵⁴ Ibid, 6.

¹³⁵⁵ Introduction, Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 577.

¹³⁵⁶ Little Guide, 36.

¹³⁵⁷ Ibid, 42.

¹³⁵⁸ Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, 147.

¹³⁵⁹ Spink, 230-231.

The Church documents discussing monastic renewal describe a “return” to the “origins” of monastic life in the Church – a need to reevaluate religious life in the context of both modern life and “ancient traditions”.¹³⁶⁰ The idea of renewal has been with the Christian community since the time of St. Paul,¹³⁶¹ when it was understood as something that begins with the individual: the reshaping of a person in the likeness of God.¹³⁶² With the concept of the individual interconnected with the idea of renewal in the history of the Church and the emphasis placed upon retrieving ancient traditions the foundation was set for recognition of the eremitic vocation in the twentieth century.¹³⁶³

The 1983 Code of Canon Law recognized eremiticism as a vocation to religious life for the first time.¹³⁶⁴ Hermits were mentioned in the 1977 schema of revised laws, but at that time they were viewed as members of an existing religious community who had received permission to live in greater seclusion.¹³⁶⁵ The canon, however, recognizes hermits as relating directly to the diocesan bishop, as Foucauld did,¹³⁶⁶ and they do not need to belong to existing religious institutes.¹³⁶⁷ In the

¹³⁶⁰ *Perfectae Caritatis*

¹³⁶¹ Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23.

¹³⁶² Yves Congar, “Renewal of the Spirit and Reform of the Institution” In *Ongoing Reform of the Church*, edited by Alois Muller and Nibert Greinacher (New York Herder and Herder, 1972), 41.

¹³⁶³ The Franciscans have been engaged in a retrieval of their eremitic spirituality. See, William Short, “Recovering Lost Traditions in Spirituality,” *Spiritus* 3, no. 2 (2003): 209-218.

¹³⁶⁴ CIC, c. 603.

¹³⁶⁵ Sharon L. Holland, “Institutes of Consecrated Life,” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, eds. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green and Donald E. Heintchel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 453-469, 467.

¹³⁶⁶ Foucauld answered to the Perfect Apostolic of the Sahara, although he entered Algeria as a priest, Bazin, 144-145.

¹³⁶⁷ CIC c. 603, 2.

description of the eremitic vocation the canon does not dictate the form that the hermit's "stricter separation from the world"¹³⁶⁸ must take, allowing hermits to discern and carry out their vocation wherever they choose to live it.

As a contemplative called to live in the world, Foucauld appears to have provided an archetype for the vocation of the modern hermit. For Jules Monchanin Foucauld was a model to compare his own eremitic endeavors against.¹³⁶⁹ Like Foucauld, his ideal eremitic life was one that included easy and open contact with people. He wrote: "It would be above all a contemplative and intellectual life, and I would receive whoever might come, and would talk with Brahmans about spiritual things."¹³⁷⁰ J. Beyer's 1976 description of hermits seems to directly describe Foucauld, and even institutes in the Foucauldian spiritual family:

Today, besides the public witness of the hermits through their abandonment of the world, austerity of life, and eternal solitude, *there are also hermits who remain in the world, live in reserve, supporting themselves by manual labour.*¹³⁷¹

Alongside the description of the stereotypical image of a hermit, is the description of a hermit in the world, aware and potentially active, sustained in their activity by their spiritual life. This aspect of the tradition is ancient and modern, capable of adapting to contemporary needs and contexts, and therefore the very essence of what renewal attempts to achieve.

Foucauld's interpretation of the eremitic vocation also was influential outside of the missionary context, in the world of enclosed monasticism. The example of

¹³⁶⁸ CIC c. 603, 1.

¹³⁶⁹ Weber, 51.

¹³⁷⁰ Ibid, 51.

¹³⁷¹ quoted in Holland, "Consecrated," 468. Italics mine.

Foucauld's life and the guidance of Foucauld's friends and disciples helped to shape the vocation of the twentieth century's most famous hermit, at least within the North American Church: Thomas Merton. Merton (1915-1968) was a Trappist at the Abbey of Gethsemane, Kentucky, USA. A forerunner in interreligious dialogue in the twentieth century, he is perhaps best known for his work on Asian religions, particularly Buddhism. A prolific writer, he published extensively on issues of modern monasticism and spirituality. His commentary and critique of contemporary monasticism was based in his own desire to live an eremitic life and his navigation of the tension between this desire and his participation in the coenobitic Cistercian community. He was finally given his own hermitage on the grounds of the Abbey in 1965, three years before his death at an interfaith conference between Catholic and non-Christian monks in Thailand.

Dorothy LeBeau has noted that, although Merton initially discusses eremitic solitude in relation to contemplation, "after living as a hermit he expresses it in more dynamic, social, ecumenical, and universal terms".¹³⁷² This observation is borne out in Merton's assessment of his understanding of his own vocation in relation to that of Foucauld. In his early letters to various bishops attempting to gain permission to live as a hermit in any number of far away places, Merton describes a desire to be like Foucauld in many ways but "without a similar emphasis on the apostolate [...] contemplative solitude would be the primary concern."¹³⁷³ Although Foucauld was a

¹³⁷² LeBeau, "The Solitary Life" in *The Legacy of Thomas Merton*, ed. Patrick Hart (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1986), 136.

¹³⁷³ Letter to Bishop James P. Davis of San Juan Puerto Rico, June 9, 1959; Merton, *Witness to Freedom*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), 204.

former Trappist, and a recognizable modern eremitic figure within the Church, in his early contemplative development Merton seems to feel that there is no correlation between the eremitic experience of contemplation and a call to serve the community.

By 1961, his position had evolved. In a letter to Herbert Mason he writes:

I think more and more of simply being in contact, in friendship, with the people of the Orient and of Islam. There is nothing I can do for them, or 'do for' anybody [...] I can only try to be someone for them. This I very much want to be. And the doing part need only try to be an expression that I am there. This is very much the Foucauld universal brother idea, I think...¹³⁷⁴

In a letter to Abdul Aziz in 1962 he draws a correlation between this desire to be 'someone' for Islam and Muslims and his eremitic vocation:

I believe that my vocation is essentially that of a pilgrim and an exile in life, that I have no proper place in the world but that for that reason I am in some sense to be the friend and brother of people everywhere, especially those who are exiles and pilgrims like myself...¹³⁷⁵

In 1966 he is full of praise for Jacques Maritain's theory of the "apostolate of contemplatives" which emphasizes "the 'microsignes' of a Christian love that acts without awareness – the human and unconscious 'aura' of a contemplative love that is simply there."¹³⁷⁶

The Foucauldian influence is fairly obvious – Merton cites it himself in the letter to Mason. The second letter, written to Abdul Aziz, is ripe with Louis Massignon's symbolic nouns, identifying and describing Foucauld's eremitic and

¹³⁷⁴ Letter to Herbert Mason January 14, 1961; Merton, *Witness*, 270.

¹³⁷⁵ Letter to Abdul Aziz April 4 1962; Merton, *The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experiences and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straws, Giroux, 1985), 52.

¹³⁷⁶ Letter of Merton to Maritain 20 Sept 1966; Merton, *Learning to Love*, 137

sacrificial function towards Islam: ‘exile’ and ‘pilgrim’.¹³⁷⁷ Since Merton’s slightly dismissive letters of the 1950s, Foucauld had come into fuller contact with Foucauld’s life and writings through his continuing relationship with Jacques Maritain, and his friendship with Louis Massignon. Merton credited the work and influence of Jacques Maritain in his conversion to Catholicism, having been introduced to Maritain by one of his professors at Columbia.¹³⁷⁸ Maritain, himself a convert from Protestantism in 1906,¹³⁷⁹ was a renowned Thomist philosopher and a friend of Louis Massignon. Massignon discussed Foucauld with his friends, and Maritain referenced Foucauld in his work as early as 1927.¹³⁸⁰ After the death of his wife in 1960, Maritain lived with the Little Brothers of Jesus in Toulouse until his death in 1973, joining the order in 1969.¹³⁸¹ Maritain had urged Merton to see Massignon on a lecture tour of the US in 1952.¹³⁸² Merton and Massignon began exchanging letters in 1959.¹³⁸³

Merton was particularly moved by those aspects of Massignon’s work that described sacrificial suffering, the idea that a person needs “‘to assume their condition’ (spiritually I mean), in substitution”¹³⁸⁴ a concept that Merton described as “the only idea that makes any sense in our time.”¹³⁸⁵ Merton was very impressed with Massignon’s work on al-Hallaj, and discussed with his friend Hebert Mason the

¹³⁷⁷ Massignon, “Entire Life,” 22.

¹³⁷⁸ John Dunway, *Jacques Maritian* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 155.

¹³⁷⁹ Dunway, 17.

¹³⁸⁰ Keryell, “I’ Association,” 176.

¹³⁸¹ Dunway, 24-26.

¹³⁸² Griffith, “Merton, Massignon,” 53.

¹³⁸³ *Ibid*, 58.

¹³⁸⁴ Letter of Massignon to Merton, Aug. 2 1960; Griffith, “Merton, Massignon” 59.

¹³⁸⁵ Letter of Merton to Mason, 3 Sept 1959; Griffith, *Ibid*.

“far-reaching effect this book had on his life, coming at a particularly critical moment for him, in helping turn his attention toward the East.”¹³⁸⁶ By the end of 1960, Merton was in possession of most of Massignon’s published work about al-Hallaj,¹³⁸⁷ and was fasting in solidarity with Massignon during Ramadan.¹³⁸⁸ Through his understanding of Massignon’s relationship with al-Hallaj, Merton was able to recognize the “powerful force of the ‘other’, the religious stranger, as one who can kindle one’s own fires anew.”¹³⁸⁹

Merton’s contact with Massignon helped deepen his understanding of Foucauld. The idea of a Christian fasting during Ramadan was a concept Massignon discussed in his 1958-9 article, “Foucauld au desert: devant le Dieu d’Abraham, Agar et Ismael” in relation to Foucauld’s response to the challenge of Islam.¹³⁹⁰ The same article discusses Foucauld’s mystical feelings about the “Night of Destiny”, the 27th of Ramadan, experienced whilst traveling in Morocco.¹³⁹¹ In his journal for 1966, Merton records his observance of this night, in which he prayed “for them and for my own needs, for peace”.¹³⁹² Sidney Griffith describes Merton and Massignon as two people who “understood that their own access to God ran through the hearts of other people [...] for both of them, other religions were other people, not just a set

¹³⁸⁶ quoted in Griffith, “Mystics and Sufi Masters,” 300.

¹³⁸⁷ Ibid, 300.

¹³⁸⁸ Griffith, “Merton, Massignon”, 60.

¹³⁸⁹ Ibid, 69.

¹³⁹⁰ Massignon, “Foucauld au desert: devant le Dieu d’Abraham, Agar et Ismael,” in *Opera Minora*, Vol. III, Beirut: Dar Al-Maaref, 1963, pp. 772-784, 783; Griffith identifies this as the article Merton praised in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Griffith, 64.

¹³⁹¹ Ibid.

¹³⁹² quoted in Griffith, “Mystics and Sufi Masters,” 302.

of doctrines.”¹³⁹³ Merton recognizes this same quality in Foucauld: “Massignon and Foucauld were both converted to Christianity by the witness of Islam to the one true living God.”¹³⁹⁴

Foucauld’s response to this witness was eremitic. In his letter to Abdul Aziz, Merton refers to himself as a ‘pilgrim’ and an ‘exile’. These are terms that Massignon used to describe Foucauldian eremiticism in his article “An Entire Life with a Brother Who Set Out on the Desert: Charles de Foucauld.” Massignon describes the “temporary exile” of Islam as a “the prefiguration of the penitential life of hermits, of solitaries who would sanctify all Muslim generations”¹³⁹⁵, as testified to by the life of Foucauld. These hermits to Islam would fulfill for the Muslims “the sacrifice of the Kurban” – an Arabic word Massignon used to reference both the sacrifice of the Eucharist and the Id Al-Adha sacrifice at the height of the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Merton’s copy of this article, in Massignon’s posthumously published collection of essays, *Parole donnée*, is heavily marked indicating a thorough reading.¹³⁹⁶ As Merton is beginning to feel a pull beyond himself, to recognize and respond to Massignon’s “point vierge” in the heart of every person,¹³⁹⁷ he also develops a greater appreciation of Foucauld as a potential guide and mentor:

¹³⁹³ Griffith, “Merton, Massignon”, 69.

¹³⁹⁴ 17 Nov 1964; Merton, *Thomas Merton: A Vow of Conversation*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone (New York: Farrar, Shaaws, Giroux, 1988), 100.

¹³⁹⁵ Massignon, “Entire Life,” 22.

¹³⁹⁶ Griffith, “Mystics and Sufi Masters,” 301; Griffith, “Merton, Massignon”, 62-3.

¹³⁹⁷ Describing a mystical experience on a street corner in Louisville, Kentucky: “Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, [...] the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes... Again, that expression, le

Often I read your little leaflet on Charles de Foucauld. It moves me deeply. I am very sad at the lack of seriousness of my life compared with the lives of men who have really listened to the word of God and kept it. I have not sought Him as I should!¹³⁹⁸

Foucauld, through the mirror of Massignon, was seen as a fellow hermit who had responded to the challenge of Islam with a total sacrifice of his Christian self by taking on the suffering of the Muslims.

The evolution of Merton's dynamic and socially conscious eremiticism was influenced and guided by his Foucauldian friends, but not necessarily inspired by them. In *The Ascent to Truth*, written in 1951, Merton described contemplation as

the providential solution of problems that seem to have no solution. It is the providential reconciliation of enemies that seem irreconcilable. It is a vision in which Love [...] draws the whole being of man into a Divine Union, the effects of which will some day overflow into the world outside him.¹³⁹⁹

It is therefore possible to view evolution, not merely as something stimulated by Foucauld or Massignon but rather, as Voillaume described the evolution of the Little Brothers of Jesus, as "the fruits of a genuine experience of meditative life",¹⁴⁰⁰ the natural culmination of the eremitic experience.

Merton felt that the idea of the hermit isolated and selfishly removed from society was a Greek rather than a Christian concept. A Christian hermit must be connected to others and therefore "has a special function in the mystical body of

point vierge (I cannot translate it) comes in here." Merton, quoted in Griffith, "Merton and Massignon", 67.

¹³⁹⁸ Letter to Merton to Massignon 18 March, 1960; Merton, *Witness to Freedom*, 276.

¹³⁹⁹ quoted in Monica Furlong, *Merton a Biography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980), 197.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Voillaume, *disciples*, 218.

Christ”.¹⁴⁰¹ Like Foucauld, this connection to others in the body of Christ, is the foundation of the social function of the hermit who withdraws “into the healing silence of the wilderness, or of poverty, or of obscurity, not in order to preach to others but to heal in themselves the wounds of the entire world.”¹⁴⁰² This withdrawal is a withdrawal to a solitude and an emptiness, “[b]ut the emptiness is for the sake of fullness [...] The contemplation of the Christian solitary is the awareness of the divine mercy transforming and elevating his own emptiness and turning it into the presence of perfect love, perfect fullness.”¹⁴⁰³ This fullness, according to Foucauld is what drives the hermit to look outside himself: “When one is filled with Jesus, one is full of charity. One goes to those one would save, as Jesus went to them in becoming incarnate...”¹⁴⁰⁴ Merton described this charity as being “in love with all, with everyone, with everything.”¹⁴⁰⁵

Eremiticism and the Laity

In the twentieth century, the role of the laity has been an important point of renewal within the Church.¹⁴⁰⁶ Their role within the body of the Church, and within religious institutes,¹⁴⁰⁷ as apostles and even contemplatives, has been discussed and highlighted. Just as Foucauld harkened back to the examples of Priscillia and Aquilia

¹⁴⁰¹ Merton, *The Monastic Journey*, ed. Patrick Hart (Kalamzaoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 144 and 151.

¹⁴⁰² Merton, *Monastic Journey*, 153.

¹⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 152.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Foucauld, *Autobiography*, 209.

¹⁴⁰⁵ quoted in LeBeau, 145-6.

¹⁴⁰⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 6; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

¹⁴⁰⁷ For a survey of lay activity in the Benedictine family, see Timothy Wright, “The Benedictine Life: Decline, Growth and Innovation,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7, no. 3 (2007): 179-193. For an introduction to the Rule of St. Benedict for lay people, see Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of Saint Benedict* (London: Fount, 1984).

to inspire modern responses,¹⁴⁰⁸ Vatican II documents use biblical imagery to exhort a renewal: “[o]ur own times require no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified.”¹⁴⁰⁹ Foucauld was passionate about the renewal of the laity as essential to the health and growth of the Church. Today there are an almost equal number of associations of spiritual life as there are religious congregations.¹⁴¹⁰

According to Massignon, Sufi asceticism only functions correctly when it is within the context of a community, not a monastic community, but the wider community of humanity. It is a sacrificial act, an altruistic act, and if this point is lost, then the meaning of ascetic life is misunderstood.¹⁴¹¹ His understanding of mystical substitution in Badaliya, the union of prayers open to all walks of life that he founded in 1934 for the sanctification of Muslims, presupposes a community, in fact a brotherhood, in which this mystical communion and transfer can take place.¹⁴¹² Merton, looking at Christian monasticism, concurs on the importance of community. In his book *Contemplation in a World of Action* published posthumously in 1971, he discusses the fundamental misunderstandings circulating about contemplative life and its role in society:

The renunciation of the world practiced by the Cistercians of the Middle Ages paradoxically gave them a key place in the world of their time, *and their asceticism, their mystical life, were understood to be an essential contribution to a religious*

¹⁴⁰⁸ LPG 1 June 1908; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 622; LPG 21 April 1902; Foucauld, *Correspondances*, 89.

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1.

¹⁴¹⁰ Little Guide, 26.

¹⁴¹¹ Massignon, “Three Prayers,” 4

¹⁴¹² Moreau, 305.

*culture in which everyone participated.*¹⁴¹³

Christian contemplation is intended to be *one lifestyle* in a Christian community. In today's irreligious culture when contemplative life breaks into the public "secular" world it is seen as out of place, as opposed to as one aspect of its natural function. Merton calls on contemplatives to be witnesses to Christ for those in the public sphere.¹⁴¹⁴

Foucauld is an axis for the concepts presented by Massignon and Merton. Foucauld's break into the secular sphere, the foundation of his Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus, was to renew the Christian faithful for the purpose of caring for their apostolate.¹⁴¹⁵ By reestablishing the connection between the monastic and the lay, the contemplative and the world, Foucauld strove to create an awareness of the needs of wider humanity. While Merton and Foucauld both saw Islam as a catalyst for the exploration and improvement Christian spiritual life,¹⁴¹⁶ Foucauld focused less on the example of Muslim mysticism as a point of challenge or imitation¹⁴¹⁷ and more on the needs of the Muslim members of the body of Christ as a call to the maturation of Christian charity.¹⁴¹⁸ Foucauld was responding to a historical reality, in which he believed that the anti-clerical nature of France's government and society was directly impacting the missionary responses in Algeria. He felt that a non-combative response to Islam, either active or contemplative, would

¹⁴¹³ Merton, *Contemplation*, 132.

¹⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 133.

¹⁴¹⁵ Foucauld, *lyonnaise*, 92.

¹⁴¹⁶ Griffith, "Merton, Massignon", 72; Griffith, 310-311; Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, 203-212.

¹⁴¹⁷ Bazin,

¹⁴¹⁸ Foucauld, *lyonnaise*, 91.

only be fruitful, accepted, or even possible, by a renewal of Christianity in the heart of all members of the Church,¹⁴¹⁹ “of both sexes, of all conditions, celibate and married, clergy and laymen”.¹⁴²⁰

Foucauld was interested in renewing the contemplative life of the laity by passing on his eremitic spirituality in the form of the Association de frères et soeurs des Sacré-Coeur de Jésus. The idea of a contemplative, especially an eremitic, laity can seem unusual. The hallmark of the laity is that they are of the world,¹⁴²¹ which can call into question the legitimacy of their contemplation,¹⁴²² as involvement in the world has done for Foucauld. Yet the monastic life of the Latin Church in the twentieth century, as exemplified by the 1983 Code of Canon Law, has placed a greater emphasis on non-traditional forms of contemplation. In previous codes of canon law, it was the uniformity of religious life that was emphasized. In the twentieth century the emphasis was placed on the uniqueness of individual institutes,¹⁴²³ and manifestations of religious life outside of traditional coenobitic monasticism.¹⁴²⁴ It was in 1983 that the eremitic life was recognized by canon law as a legitimate form of independent consecrated life.¹⁴²⁵ In the same code the Church

¹⁴¹⁹ “What a great distance between Jesus’ way of doing and speaking and the militant spirit of those who are not Christians or bad Christians!” letter to J. Hours 3 May, 1912.

¹⁴²⁰ Introduction, Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus; Foucauld, *Règlements*, 577.

¹⁴²¹ *Lumen Gentium*

¹⁴²² Russell, 121.

¹⁴²³ John A. Alesandro, “General Introduction”, in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 1-22, 16.

¹⁴²⁴ It even includes provisions for the emergence of new forms of consecrated life, CIC c. 605.

¹⁴²⁵ CIC c. 603.

recognized secular institutes.¹⁴²⁶ The members of secular institutes are lay people or clerics who assume the evangelical counsels, but continue to live in the world.¹⁴²⁷ This gives recognition to “the Christian faithful living in the world [who] strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within.”¹⁴²⁸

There are direct parallels between the development of secular institutes and Foucauld’s retrieval of the eremitic tradition. Although there were secular institutes dating back to the sixteenth century, they began to take on their present form in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France. The suppression of the Jesuits led to the foundation of twenty-six such institutes by Père Pierre-Jospeh Picot de Clorivière (1735-1820).¹⁴²⁹ He believed that the foundation of religious life resided in the evangelical counsels and that the habit, cloister, and common life were secondary.¹⁴³⁰ Foucauld’s eremitic life was influenced by the same developments in French history. His isolation in Southern Algeria, and particularly the development of his eremitic mission was in direct correlation to the anti-clerical French government and the Laws of Association and Separation (1901 and 1905).¹⁴³¹ These experiences also allowed him to draw conclusions similar to Clorivière in regards to

¹⁴²⁶ CIC c. 710-730.

¹⁴²⁷ Sharon L. Holland, “Secular Institutes” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, New York: Paulist Press, 1985, pp. 525-533 , 526.

¹⁴²⁸ CIC c. 710.

¹⁴²⁹ Louis Fèvre and André Rayez, *Foi chrétienne et vie consacrée: Clorivière aujourd’hui: Le fondateur et le maître spirituel*, Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1971; Louis Fèvre and André Rayez, *Foi chrétienne et vie consacrée: Clorivière aujourd’hui: Le Pasteur*, Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1973; François Morlot, *Pierre de Clorivière: 1735-1820*, Paris: Desclée de Bouwer, 1990.

¹⁴³⁰ Holland, “Secular Institutes”, 525.

¹⁴³¹ Shorter, 10 and 15.

the foundational elements of monastic life, forcing him to release the idea of the enclosure and even of his dependence on the Mass.

There is only one secular institute in the Foucauldian spiritual family, the Jesus-Caritas Fraternity,¹⁴³² founded in 1952. Yet the laity in other branches of the Foucauldian spiritual family retain an emphasis on contemplation in their religious life. The Sodailté Union, founded by Louis Massignon has a spirituality based on Foucauld's *Directory* for the Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus,¹⁴³³ and emphasizes a spirituality that is "more hidden, [is of a] more individual and personal character, more eremitic."¹⁴³⁴ The largest branch of the family, the Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld,¹⁴³⁵ although composed of a variety of individuals - lay, priests, religious, even non-Christians¹⁴³⁶ - considers one of its fundamental precepts to be to "find a 'Desert' space in our busy life. We have to create our own 'Desert' and remain in silence."¹⁴³⁷ While the "Desert" is not considered by the Fraternity to be a goal in itself,¹⁴³⁸ it is considered essential to the life of its members. It is where they "abandon [themselves] to the presence of God"¹⁴³⁹

Within the last century the eremitic ideal of solitude or desert asceticism has become increasingly accessible.¹⁴⁴⁰ Thomas Merton's writings about solitude,

¹⁴³² Little Guide, 22.

¹⁴³³ Six, "L'Union,";

¹⁴³⁴ Keryell, "I' Association", 186.

¹⁴³⁵ Little Guide, 21.

¹⁴³⁶ Ibid, 42.

¹⁴³⁷ Ibid, 64

¹⁴³⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴³⁹ Ibid, 65

¹⁴⁴⁰ In 2000, the Maronite Church instituted "Eremitical Days," a program that invites Maronites, lay and religious, to experience twenty-four hours of eremitical life with an average of ninety participants a year, Hourani and Habchi, 460-463.

contemplation and an eremitic life appealed to the lay population and influenced the development of American monastic life.¹⁴⁴¹ He did not present a contemplative life that was esoteric, exclusivist, or out of reach. In fact, K. C. Russell has suggested that it is within the context of his eremitical life, trying to define its parameters within Latin monastic structures, that Merton created a space for the layperson in contemplative life.¹⁴⁴² While eremiticism is frequently seen as being removed from the experiences of the layperson, and even of the monk, “Merton sees the hermit, or the monk in the dimension of his solitude, living out in a visible fashion something that characterizes the human condition itself.”¹⁴⁴³ Foucauld also spoke of eremiticism as an element that should be present in all spiritual people. He saw it as one aspect of spiritual development that was present in the lives of people with different vocations.¹⁴⁴⁴ Yet it was essential to all vocations because it was “how God builds his Kingdom in us, and forms our interior self, our intimate life with God”.¹⁴⁴⁵

This ability to experience contemplative solitude in all vocations is what Foucauld depended upon when he developed his confraternity. In his vision for the Association des frères et soeurs du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus priests, monks and nuns, and lay people would be joined together in their contemplation. While the “attitudes” of life may have meant that different members were able to be more or less able to be

¹⁴⁴¹ Margaret Brennan, “‘A White Light Still and Moving’: Religious Life at the Crossroads of the Future,” in *Religious Life, The Challenge of Tomorrow*, ed. C. J. Yuhaus, (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 92-108, 94

¹⁴⁴² K. C. Russell, “Merton on the Lay Contemplative,” in *Thomas Merton Pilgrim in Process*, ed. Donald Grayston and Michael W. Higgins (Toronto: Griffin House, 1983), 121-131, 124.

¹⁴⁴³ Russell, 124.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Letter to Father Jerome 19 May 1898; Foucauld, *Trappe*, 143.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

amongst people, they were bound together by their shared purpose in prayer, in penance, and in mortification, and this would also bind them to those they were trying to save. The ability of individuals to allow God to build his Kingdom within him or her, to bind them to Jesus, was to bind them to each other. Personal, eremitic, union in contemplation is that which is able to cross the vocational divide, not that which creates it.

Modern life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries includes elements that are particularly conducive to eremiticism. The alienation and separation that people experience in modern societies,¹⁴⁴⁶ are comparable with the experiences of the hermit, recognized by the Church in their willingness to give modern hermits considerable room to “carry out their vocation [...] in the solitude of the modern city”.¹⁴⁴⁷ Modern hermits, such as Thomas Merton, while not living in an urban environment, are able to instruct people longing for a personal connection with God on how to renew their reality by giving it meaning.¹⁴⁴⁸ Like Foucauld, he wanted to reinvigorate Christian society with a contemplation based not on rules or order but on “complete Christian authenticity”.¹⁴⁴⁹ Foucauld saw embracing eremiticism in a lay context as an answer to modern separation. Solitude with God is what allows us to come together and have meaningful interactions with others, allowing us to

¹⁴⁴⁶ Michel de Certeau and François Roustand, eds. *La Solitude* (Paris: Désclée de Bouver, 1967), 9-10.

¹⁴⁴⁷ J. Beyers quoted in Holland, “Institutes of Consecrated Life”, 468.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Russell, 123.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Merton, *Contemplation*, 133.

transform the difficulties of modern loneliness and separation into hope for engagement.¹⁴⁵⁰

Conclusion

Foucauld has a wide and diverse ecclesial legacy. His spiritual family includes nineteen different congregations and associations and represents all walks of spiritual life. He has been influential in the lives of men such as Thomas Merton, Jules Monchanin and, of course, Louis Massignon. It has not always been clear how the legacy he has left behind should be understood.¹⁴⁵¹ Its variety has sometimes been seen as indicative of a life lived in many stages, with many vocations. The answer, however, could be more transparent. The eremitic vocation is based on a personal relationship with God. It is from this that the hermit gains his power.¹⁴⁵² It is from this union with God that hermit can act as a witness to non-Christians – a missionary – and as a witness to their own community – a reformer. Eremitic union with God can be achieved in many different circumstances and contexts. It is open to anyone who is willing and able to invest the time and energy in a contemplative life. Foucauld's retrieval of the eremitic tradition has enriched the Church in the hundred years since his death and has given insight into an ancient tradition that can multiply in fruitfulness for many centuries to come.

¹⁴⁵⁰ de Certeau, *Solitude*, 10.

¹⁴⁵¹ Six, "Postéritiés".

¹⁴⁵² P. Brown, 90.

Conclusion

Despite having died almost a century ago, the example of Charles de Foucauld's life and spirituality have a surprisingly apropos resonance for the twenty-first century. Although he has been understood by some to be the "saint of colonialism,"¹⁴⁵³ a moniker that is as uncomfortable in our post-colonial time as it was during France's de-colonization,¹⁴⁵⁴ there is no need to separate his spirituality from its time period to allow it to achieve universal significance. In fact, as Thomas Merton and Louis Massignon have argued, it is when one removes the mystic from their societal context that their acts of ascetic sacrifice lose meaning and substance.¹⁴⁵⁵

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent attacks in London and Madrid, have helped to usher in an era of what has been called post-secularism. That is not to say that religion has increased in meaning in the public sphere, but rather that there has been "a change in the mindset of those who, previously, felt justified in considering religions to be moribund."¹⁴⁵⁶ One response to a global terrorism with an avowedly religious message has been the rise of "new

¹⁴⁵³ Massignon, "Foucauld au desert," 775.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Keryell, "l'Association," 187-188; Massignon, "Foucauld au desert"; idem, "maîtres," 159.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Merton, *Contemplation*, 132-133; Massignon, *Essay*, 10-11.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Hans Joas quoted in Hent de Vries, "Introduction: Before, Around, and Beyond the Theologico-Political," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, eds. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 1-88, 2-3.

atheism,” what literary theorist Terry Eagleton has called the “intellectual wing of the war on terror”.¹⁴⁵⁷

As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the secularization of French society influenced Foucauld’s belief system as a young man. Yet it was not necessarily a negative experience. Chapter Two examines how Foucauld’s professed atheism allowed him to be open to the mystical experience he discovered in poverty and suffering through the Muslims of Morocco. The exposure to and participation in the suffering of humanity drew him, in his Christian life, to an experiential understanding of the Incarnation. This, in turn, informed his interfaith relationship with the Muslims of North Africa as surveyed in Chapter Three.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Foucauld’s love of his family and country, concepts he intertwined in language,¹⁴⁵⁸ prevented him from converting to Islam. He had a deep awareness of his Christian religious and cultural heritage. It was this awareness that caused him to locate the problems of colonialism in France’s hostility to its own Catholic heritage and to locate its resolution in a renewal of true Christian spirituality through contemplation, as explored in Chapter Six. In the reign of Benedict XVI, who seeks to draw attention to Europe’s Christian heritage¹⁴⁵⁹ and understands such a retrieval to be in the best interests of its relationship with Islam,¹⁴⁶⁰ Foucauld has been beatified.¹⁴⁶¹ In a papal address to the Ambassador of

¹⁴⁵⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 35, 47-108; idem, “Terry Eagleton: The New Atheism and the War on Terror,” November 10, 2010, <http://ircpl.org/2010/rethinking-religion/events/transcripts/terry-eagleton-the-new-atheism-and-the-war-on-terror-3/>

¹⁴⁵⁸ Foucauld, *Règlements*, 673.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, “Europe and its Discontents,” *First Things* (January 2006): 16-22.

¹⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 21-22, 17.

Algeria to the Holy See, after mentioning Foucauld the letter goes on to say: “An encounter in truth between the believers of the different religions is a demanding challenge for the future of peace in the world and requires great perseverance.”¹⁴⁶²

Such perseverance was personified in Foucauld’s eremitic vocation. This vocation allowed him to respond to the two-fold problem illuminated by Benedict XVI: the need for a truthful encounter between religious faiths, and the renewal of Christian spirituality that is the foundation of such an encounter. As explored in Chapters Four and Five, Foucauld’s eremitic lifestyle allowed him to create a space for interfaith encounters, and his eremitic spirituality gave depth to this encounter facilitating a truly Christian response in love. This eremitical response to Islam has a foundational place in the Catholic theological engagement with Islam in the work of Louis Massignon, and its ecclesial response through contemplative renewal is considered in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Despite the applicability of Foucauld’s life and experiences to our modern context, his retrieval of the eremitic tradition demonstrates most importantly its vitality and versatility. The societal context is that which indicates the meaning and depth of Foucauld’s work, and therefore allows us to understand the vocation of the hermit more fully. Eremiticism is not the antithesis of mission, but instead, embodies one element of mission. Discussing the theological foundations of missions, Henri de Lubac reminds us that the Church is Catholic not only in name but in nature, and

¹⁴⁶¹ The case for Foucauld’s canonization began in 1927 and involved over 20 000 documents and other pieces of evidence, Preminger 270-271.

¹⁴⁶² *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to H. E. Mr. Idriss Jazäiry, Ambassador of Algeria*, 1 December, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051201_ambassador-algeria_en.html

“She is therefore not only missionary in some of her members, charged with a specialized function. She is so in all her members, jointly responsible for a common growth.”¹⁴⁶³ Foucauld’s legacy to the Church has been to demonstrate that interreligious dialogue, the call to be a witness, is open to all by finding meaning in solitude with God. In doing so he has helped to retrieve the eremitical tradition from the stereotypes placed upon it, allowing it to assume a central position in the current Catholic renewal.

¹⁴⁶³ Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Enguld Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 370.

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