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Life Together: An Exploration of Four Monastic Models in the Contemporary World

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Abstract

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This thesis is an ethnographic study of the ways in which four ecumenical Christian monastic communities construct sacred space, articulate rituals, create rules of life, and tactically subvert inherited theological and ecclesial systems.

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I would like to thank the four communities who so graciously hosted me in the summer of 2013: East Belfast Mission, The Iona Community, The Taizé Community, and the Monastic Community of Bose

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Introduction and Methods

Over my past four years at Emory, I developed a fascination with Christian monastic communities. I went on personal retreats in high school, but upon attending Emory and taking courses my freshman year on Early and Medieval Christianity as well as Christian Mysticism, I discovered an academic interest in intentional communities on the margins of society. Moreover, over the past year or so, I became interested in the ways in which today's monastic communities were translating traditional practices and values for the contemporary moment. I knew that this would be the driving question for my senior thesis.

For this project, I originally chose Ampleforth Abbey, an historic English Benedictine monastery outside of York, England. A week before my Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory research proposal was due, the abbot of the monastery informed me that Ampleforth was in a season of turmoil. Its monks were aging and divisive questions had arisen about the future of the community. Because of this, the abbot rescinded his offer for me to visit. In a panic, I turned to several ecumenical communities recommended by the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, who was the Dean of the Chapel at Emory University in the spring of 2013. These communities had all been founded within the last century, had a commitment to ecumenism and social justice, and made claims of having some connection to the various Christian monastic traditions.

To better understand the daily life, practices, and commitments of the communities, I spent six weeks during the summer of 2013 living alongside the

communities and participating in their common life. In addition to participating in their worship services, I took on specific roles in order to provide some type of reciprocity for my hosts. In East Belfast, this meant working in the mission's café, sharing coffee with Protestant ex-paramilitary fighters, and designing ways to measure social impact for the mission's social entrepreneurship arm. At Iona, this meant joining a retreat on the work of Parker Palmer, participating in his "Courage Circle" program in addition to Iona's Pilgrimage Walk alongside other pilgrims. At Taizé, I camped outside with the youth, scrubbed toilets with volunteers, and joined in English language Bible studies. And at Bose, I worked on the farm, picking green beans and clearing greenhouses alongside a Cambridge Ph.D. and a Mozart enthusiast. While some might see such intimate participation in the common life of these communities as compromising, making me too involved to be objective and critical in my research, I felt that the embodied experience of the place, of its rituals, and of its people gave me the thickest understanding of what Clifford Geertz calls "webs of significance." To me, it was only by becoming involved in the daily life that I could get at the rich and various ways that meaning is constructed in community, their "webs of significance."

My approach attempts to imitate that of Karen McCarthy Brown. Defending her participation in Vodou initiation rites as an ethnographic researcher and religion scholar, she writes,

> … Ethnographic research, whatever else it is, is a form of human relationship. When the lines long drawn in anthropology between participant-observer and informant break down, then the only truth is the one in between; and anthropology becomes something closer to a social art form (Brown 12).

She goes on to draw a connection to the work of Clifford Geertz: "… Ethnographic writing has its greatest integrity when it stays close to the small slices of social interaction that provide its data…" (Brown 15). These slices of social webs of significance in Brown's work inspired my approach to studying these communities. I sought to draw my data from the details of daily life.

This brief study of four communities: East Belfast Mission, the Iona Community, the Community of Taizé, and the Monastic Community of Bose is not intended to make over-arching claims about the future of Christian monasticism. However, it does acknowledge the monastic milieu within which these communities operate and wonders, even hypothesizes how they might be shaping a significant piece of future Christian monastic life. Acknowledging these resonances, the ethnographic study of these communities examines the ways in which these communities have undermined inherited theological, social, political, and economic commitments. The study is unapologetically pursued through embodied, lived experience of the places, however brief and intense. It privileges ethnographic exploration for data rather than relying upon existing textual sources to describe and analyze these communities.

While the ethnographic approach relies upon Brown, other theorists are espoused for specific chapters, notably, Belden Lane for the exploration of place and Michel de Certeau for his ideas about tactics in a consumeristic society. Lane's approach to place acknowledges both the constructed and natural dimensions of place, the ways in which we imbue geographic spaces with meaning while simultaneously being moved by their natural and constructed wonder. For the

purposes of my work, Lane provides a theoretical framework for my exploration of the ways in which the communities studied, particularly Iona and East Belfast Mission, use place and space as ways of constructing identity and meaning, as well as subverting and being caught up in the capitalist milieu in which they find themselves in 21st century Western Europe.

To further explore the ways in which the communities subvert or manipulate, as well as reinvigorate the socio-economic, political, and ecclesial systems of which they are a part, I have chosen to view their actions as "tactics." De Certeau, in his work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, defines tactics as,

> A calculus which cannot count on a [spatial or institutional localization], nor thus on a boarderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality… It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities.' The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them (Certeau xix).

For the purposes of my project, I will simplify Certeau's definition to define tactics as the practical choices an individual or community make in order to achieve agency and an identity in a depersonalized and consumeristic society.

These tactics are employed to counter the "strategies" of institutions and systems. Certeau defines strategies as, "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power… can be isolated from an environment" (Certeau xix). Again, my own definition for this study is that strategies are the various forces imposed by systems which restrict agency and protect hegemonies and current structures.

In the following chapters, brief ethnographic sketches are drawn, the details connected to the monastic past and looking to the monastic future, all while

acknowledging the subversive and reinvigorating character of the communities' daily actions in the present. It is my hope that the sketches will provide starting places for the further exploration of the ways in which contemporary communities are reappropriating the Christian monastic tradition for an inter-religious or even post-religious future, preserving that which is vital, and "pressing on to win the prize" (Philippians 3:14) of what King called the Beloved Community.

Descriptions of Sites

To begin to explore the ways in which these four monastic communities have constructed sacred space, drafted rules of life, and embarked upon a common work, one must be familiar with the basic histories and current situations of each community. The purpose of the following descriptions is not to analyze, but to contextualize. It is to give the reader a general sense of where these four communities have come from and where they are going. By examining the communities generally now, this approach allows us to dive deeper as we explore specific themes later.

East Belfast Mission

East Belfast Mission (EBM) was originally founded by Thomas Ewart in 1809 as a Sunday school for rural children in the farmlands right outside of Belfast. By 1825, the congregation had grown large enough for the construction of Ballymacarret Methodist Chapel, one of only two Belfast Wesleyan churches in use at the time. In 1870, the chapel was rebuilt as Newtownards Road Church and again

in 1900 as the largest Methodist church in Ireland with a capacity of over 1500 people. (Mitchell)

The church grew with the rise of the shipping and linen industries in the early 1900s, but as these industries began to wane with the advent of the Hungry Thirties, Newtownards Road Church became a center of social work, providing thousands of meals a month for/to the poor of East Belfast. This work established the church as a center of social activism and a place committed to community relief until its destruction by Nazi Germany in the Belfast Blitz of May 1941. In the wake of the war, Newtownards Road joined with Pitt Mission in the early 1950s. (Mitchell)

After going through several phases of post-war rebuilding, Newtownards Road Methodist Church launched an "evangelism explosion" in 1978 under the leadership of the Reverend Jim Rea. This act of community outreach highlighted issues of alcoholism, unemployment, and debt in the East Belfast neighborhood and foreshadowed the official opening of East Belfast Mission on the same day as a massive Unionist rally in 1985. With the launch of EBM came initiatives aimed at reducing hunger, unemployment, and homelessness in the local neighborhood. (Mitchell)

Simultaneously, EBM functioned as an intermediary in many of the negotiations between paramilitary groups during flashpoints in the conflict between Protestants (called Christians in Northern Ireland) and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Garry Mason, the Mission Superintendent, knew many of the Protestant paramilitary groups that were active in the Newtownards Road neighborhood and,

because of his position as a clergyman seeking peace instead of sectarian interests, was able to bring many leaders to the table, often at EBM, in order to move towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Today, EBM is housed at the Skainos Centre, a mixed-use redevelopment project completed in the winter of 2013. The Skainos Centre is a space not only for Sunday church services, but also for the Hosford House Homeless Hostel, ReFresh Café, mixed-income apartments, multipurpose community space, and offices for local businesses and NGOs. It is the centerpiece of EBM's vision for comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. (Mitchell)

In many ways, this new center imitates the Benedictine monastic foundations of the Middle Ages, providing a community gathering space, weekly worship services, and an economic engine and catalyst for the surrounding area. Today, when one thinks of EBM, a church may not be the first thing that comes to mind. Most of the stakeholders do not attend church, aren't Christian, and aren't even religious. But they are a part of the mission of the organization because they believe in the work EBM is doing, not necessarily the theology, but the daily social action that they believe will lead to the neighborhood's flourishing.

The Iona Community

Since St. Columba's founding of Iona Abbey in the sixth century, the island has been a center of Christian spirituality, art, theology, and music. Previously, the island and its highest point, Dun I, were considered sacred by the Celts. During the Celtic period of the monastery, scribes are said to have written the Book of Kells and

crafted other treasures of Celtic Christianity. Viking raids in the ninth century caused many monks to flee the island, but eventually security was reestablished and Benedictines were invited to rebuild on the Columban foundations at the advent of the thirteenth century. At this time, a convent of Benedictine nuns was also founded. These communities flourished until the English and Scottish Reformations dismantled all religious houses in the British Isles and the monks and nuns were dispersed.

The abbey sat in ruins until the turn of the twentieth century, when the Duke of Argyll donated the traditional abbey site to the Church of Scotland. Shortly thereafter, George Macleod became inspired to rebuild the medieval abbey. Working with Glasgow's poor, Macleod felt that the Church of Scotland's ministers had become disconnected from the lives of those they were called to minister alongside, so he took a group of seminarians and unemployed Glasgow artisans to Iona to work together to rebuild the abbey. He believed that this not only gave work to the unemployed, but allowed the ministers to become acquainted with the lives of the poor. It is out of this commitment to faith working itself out in justice that the modern ecumenical community was founded. (Personal Notes)

Today, Iona has once again become a center of spirituality, music, art, and theology. Pilgrims, both Christian and non-Christian, flock to the island every year for retreats hosted by the abbey. John Bell and Iona's Wild Goose Publications are producing new music, unapologetically Christocentric, Trinitarian, and Social Justice oriented. And the community's members, dispersed throughout the U.K., adhere to Iona's rule of life, committing to work for economic, environmental, and political

justice to the extent that each member is able. Drawing from its rich tradition, the Iona Community seeks to foster ecumenical dialogue, a renewal of liturgy and contemplative practice, and social justice through its common life.

The Community of Taizé

Founded by Brother Roger as a way to minister to defeated France in 1940, Taizé has become a major pilgrimage site for youth in Europe and around the world. Brother Roger believed that if Christians could not worship together, Christ could not be real, and it was out of this belief that Roger created an ecumenical community of brothers. After Pope John XXIII's call for a renewed ecumenism, he and Roger became good friends, and the pope invited Roger and his monks to Rome for an audience. This visit became an important milestone for the community, inspiring it to more deeply pursue ecumenical reconciliation and dialogue. (Roger)

At the same time, youth began arriving at Taizé for retreats, camping in the fields and volunteering with the monks. Yet, the monks noticed that the youth would always stay outside playing soccer instead of coming into the church for prayers. In an effort to make chant that was more accessible to unchurched youth, the distinctive style of Taizé chant was developed, where a phrase or two, often from scripture, is repetitively sung with simple tones and harmonies and printed in many different languages. (Roger)

Today, the monks of Taizé have developed an entire program for the thousands of youth that flock to the community every summer, as well as yearly "Pilgrimages of Trust" that seek to further the work of peace and reconciliation by

sending brothers to hold conferences around the world. The retreat program at Taizé consists of daily meals and prayers, as well as scriptural studies with your language group and daily meditations given by brothers ranging from the social justice implications of U2 to training sessions on conflict resolution. Each visitor has a weekly job and long-term volunteers organize the work and make sure the camp is maintained. Seeking to be a voice of peace and non-violence in a world torn apart by conflict, the brothers of Taizé hope to carry on Brother Roger's original mission of modeling for the world what the Church can be. (Personal Notes)

The Monastic Community of Bose

Taking up Vatican II's call for monastic renewal and ecumenical dialogue, Enzo Bianchi founded the Monastic Community of Bose in 1965. Shortly thereafter, a reformed minister asked to join, and the community developed its own liturgical forms that incorporated Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox elements in its services. The community even received a special ordinance from the local bishop that allows non-Catholic members to partake in the Eucharist. The bishop believed that the Eucharist was at the heart of a common life, and the community shared a common life. Therefore, the community could not be divided over the Eucharist. Today, the community of celibate men and women has grown to over eighty members of various Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox backgrounds. The monastery sees thousands of visitors a year, primarily Italian speaking, for the retreats led by Bianchi and other community members. (The Community in Brief)

The community is entirely self-sufficient economically, living off of income and produce from its farms, ceramics workshop, book sales, and icons. Each novice is invited to bring their individuality and whatever personal goals they may have with them to the monastery. A scientist is expected to continue her study of science, the artist her painting, and the farmer her planting. The community is not united through a common identity or theological belief, but rather through the rule of life and common work, worship, and meals. Bose has become a center of ecumenical dialogue and theology, with its leader, Bianchi, a leading voice on the future of ecumenism and monasticism.

Chapter One: Spiritual Geographies: Examining the Construction of Space in Two Communities

The ways in which a community conceives, designs, operates within, and uses its space indicates its theological commitments. Space cannot be divorced from belief and one's commitments become incarnate in the spaces one inhabits. Communities have finite resources and the allocation of those resources in construction, preservation, and expansion of physical spaces demonstrate theological priorities and decisions that the community itself may or may not be aware of.

Moreover, for communities coming out of the Christian tradition, a tradition possessing a wealth of architectural variation in its various denominations, the shape of a steeple, the use of color in a sanctuary, and the placement of a lectern are all indications of theological commitments and affinities. Belden Lane, in his work, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, writes, ""…the particularity of place, becomes intrinsic to the incarnational character of Christian faith" (Lane 243). This presents a challenge for the ecumenical monastic community: "How do we convey the richness of the entire Christian tradition without privileging one denomination?" The question becomes even more challenging for the Christian community that engages the broader non-Christian world: "How do we convey the Christian foundations of our community in a way that is accessible and inclusive to those who do not identify as Christian?" These questions force a moment of translation for the community, "What

is worth preserving and incorporating into an ecumenical or secular context and what must be left behind or abandoned in favor of a more inclusive future?"

The following chapter will explore the ways two communities, East Belfast Mission and the Iona Community have constructed and utilized space and dealt with the consequences of those decisions. It seeks to tease out the strategies, priorities and commitments that guide these decisions as well as make explicit the theological beliefs undergirding such commitments.

East Belfast Mission: From Methodist Mission to the UK's "Social Enterprise of the Year"

Glenn Jordan, the director of East Belfast Mission's (EBM) Skainos Project, says that "Contemporary Evangelicalism needs to reinvent itself with every generation" (Jordan Interview). This maxim holds true for the Methodist Mission of East Belfast, not only in its mission, but also in its use of space. Originally founded as a Sunday School for rural children, the social work of the mission drove the congregation to rebuild a new Church every fifty years since its founding in the mid-1800s. It has operated as a soup kitchen during the Great Depression, was bombed by the Nazis during World War II, served as a meeting site for the Peace Process at the turn of the twentieth century in Northern Ireland, and is now experiencing its newest iteration as the Skainos Project.

The Skainos Project is a multi-million pound comprehensive community development project located on Newtownards Road in the heart of East Belfast. The center is nestled between Ulster Defense Force murals depicting masked gunmen brandishing AK-47s and proclaiming loyalty to "God, King, and Country." Union Jacks are draped across the street in zigzag fashion in preparation for the

paramilitary marches that take place during "parade season" in late June and early July. This "Christian," or Protestant, neighborhood is one of the most economically distressed in all of Northern Ireland and has been a hotbed of paramilitary activity and violence since the Troubles began plaguing Northern Ireland in the 1970s. It is out of this context that the Skainos Centre has emerged and EBM has sought to offer an alternative vision of community on Newtownards Road.

The Skainos Centre is comprised of office spaces, a central outdoor square, residential apartments, a community garden, a café, a dance studio, a gymnasium, a multi-purpose sanctuary, a kitchen, and a temporary housing complex for the homeless. Situated among boarded up shops, fast-food joints, and low-income housing units, the colorful façade of the exterior office complex and the leafy hanging garden that covers the exterior of the apartments and café immediately differentiate the complex. There is something vibrant and energizing here. There's a well-lit square and an open door café on an unkempt and dim street. The use of a colorful exterior to the office, the well-lit square, and the bio-wall on the apartments indicate that the Skainos Centre is "set apart". It is a space unlike its surroundings.

For two millennia, Christians have been erecting such spaces. They called them sacred and believed that in some way, they were sacralizing the physical, creating "holy ground." Describing this purpose of sacred space, Lane writes, "The spiritually conceived landscape is one that metaphorically represents and concretizes the experience of faith generated there" (Lane 238). Throughout the Church's history, Christians developed certain architectural forms such as the cathedral and utilized certain symbols such as the cross as distinctive markers of the

sacred. The construction of sacred space located spiritual experience. "Repeatedly, it is place that lends structure, contextuality, and vividness of memory to the narrative of spiritual experience" (Lane 244) .One did not need to be told where one was or what was expected in such a setting. By stepping into the space, one inherited an identity and a ritual duty. Through the sacralization of space, the community member became free to enact the ritual duty demanded and inherited a localized narrative of experience.

More specifically, monasteries have existed as a unique subset of Christian sacred spaces. There, if cloistered, community members live their whole lives on "holy ground". And even if the community is not cloistered, the sacred space serves as the central location of the community's common life and work. The monastery exists as a sort of sacred economic engine, employing not only the monks, but also local community members. And by organizing, employing, and bringing together the surrounding community for common worship, the monastery serves as a community center for historically Christian communities.

East Belfast Mission's Skainos Centre fits into this traditional category of monastic settlement and should be viewed as such. Despite an absence of traditional Christian iconography and language, the space functions as a sort of Wesleyan-derived secular monastic space. It serves as a worship center, an economic engine, a café, and a center for community organization. Each facet of the Skainos Centre can only be viewed in conversation with the other pieces and in light of its Wesleyan past; the space must be viewed as a complete monastic community translated into post-Christian Belfast.

What makes the Skainos Centre situation unique is its reliance on government funding. Both the UK and Republic of Ireland gave grants to the center for construction and the carrying out of its services. For this to be possible, the center cannot be explicitly "faith-based." Herein lies the tension: What does it mean to operate a monastic model shaped by Wesleyan Protestantism in a secular society? By looking closely at architectural choices, one comes to understand the ways in which EBM navigates that tension.

At the center of Skainos is a large, multipurpose space that can seat several hundred people at a time. There are large wooden doors at the entrance surrounded by glass. One exterior wall is constructed out of stained glass void of iconography. Removable chairs occupy much of the tile floor space and a removable altar sits at the front with a carefully hidden Christian cross, subtly ingrained in the center. Power outlets for guitars and amps are present behind the slightly elevated stage. The wall opposite the stained glass is wood-paneled, jutting out to accommodate an old pipe organ hidden behind the paneling. The roof is constructed as a series of undulating wooden beams encompassing the entire room. And according to Glenn Jordan, the director of the Skainos Centre, each aspect of this room has a purpose and is the product of an intentional theological choice.

The room is designed to be multipurpose. It is not singularly a place for Methodist worship services. While I was in residence, the room was used for Sunday worship, for a Wednesday night dance recital, and for a community health fair. For EBM's leadership, the sacredness of the space is not diminished by the multiplicity of the space's uses. It was created to be mobile. There will be a time for

an altar and a lectern but they shouldn't be permanent fixtures. By using plastic chairs instead of pews, mobility is privileged over tradition. The Christian traditionalist, used to pews and Christian iconography, walking into the space on a Sunday morning, would be struck by the transience of the arrangement.

Yet, Jordan insists that the space is imbued with permanent theological nuances. Apparently, these features were non-negotiable and convey what EBM found most vitally important. The windows are stained glass. They do not convey images from Christian sacred history, but they do cast an array of colors upon the congregation as the sun rises on a Sunday morning. In this choice, the community says that "God is Light," that by manipulating natural light, one comes to know God in a way not possible in a windowless room lit only by stage lighting. And color matters. It does not necessarily matter who is depicted in the windows so much as the diversity of light, the diversity of expressions of the light, made present in the common worship space. It is a theological statement. Light and color have something to say to the community.

Perhaps the most paradoxically subtle yet explicitly Biblical piece of the sanctuary is the roof. A series of undulating wooden beams, the roof is meant to envelop the practitioner in a tent. "Skainos" is the Greek word for tent, or gathering place, and the idea is that this can be a meeting place for the practitioner and non-practitioner alike, somewhere to encounter God and one another. It is a reference to the Biblical tabernacle, the tent where God would meet his chosen people Israel in the deserts of Sinai. Describing the purpose of the design, Jordan states, "The people of God meeting in the tent of meeting under the hovering presence of God. It is a

reminder to the congregation that we meet in a place of worship and vision…" The underlying theological purpose of the space is made evident in this architectural decision. This is a place for encounter with the divine in community. Jordan believes, "There's a way of reading texts and the building that teaches theology and helps form people." In this statement, one notices a belief that space, however subtle, can form one's theological vision and can transmit certain ways of understanding texts and theologies into the average practitioner that ultimately lead to social transformation.

This approach to religious education and space is found throughout the Skainos Centre. Along the central staircase, what looks like colorful bolts and screws with numbers on them are embedded in the exposed concrete walls. Normally, when working with exposed concrete, the holes left when the rebar is removed are filled with cement. But here, EBM decided to commission a local artisan to design ceramic pieces that looked like the bolts and screws that would have gone into the ships built in the old shipyard nearby. Each piece has one of five dates inscribed on it and each date represents a significant moment in EBM's history. Each "bolt" corresponds to another bolt on the opposite side of the Centre, symbolizing the diversity of people that hold the community together. The "bolts" simultaneously point one back to the past as well as to the future, a future that celebrates diversity. Nowhere in the center is it written, "We celebrate diversity," but EBM hopes that one will not only come to a lived understanding of the concept, but will be formed by the architecture to intuit this value.

A recurrent theme for EBM is intentionality, found not only in the design, but also in the use of the spaces the community built. Refresh Café functions as one of the only cafes and cafeterias in what would otherwise be a food desert. The meals are discounted for pensioners and mobile meals are delivered to those who cannot leave their houses. The exterior walls of the café are sliding window panes and the ceiling has the same undulating wooden beams as the sanctuary. Large, colorful light fixtures drop down into white and purple booths and tables. This place is not "Christian" or Catholic or republican or loyalist. It is meant to be an oasis for all of East Belfast and beyond.

It is designed to be an intentionally social space. The same theology of the tent applies to the café. It's meant to be a gathering place for those who are lonely, for those collaborating on projects, and for connections that otherwise wouldn't have happened. Glenn Jordan says that one has to approach the workspace expecting and celebrating interruptions. It's part of being in community. He tells a story about a time when he was meeting with an official from the Republic of Ireland to talk about the work of Skainos. An older woman who regularly eats at the café named Flo saw Jordan and ran up to the table. Glenn described Flo as "larger than life" and said that she had been living in one of the homeless recovery units behind the café. She asked Jordan if he had heard a recent country album that had been released. Before he could answer, the Irish official said that he had not, so Flo decided to stand up and sing the entire song, with dance moves. The performance in the middle of the café ended up lasting nearly fifteen minutes and then Flo decided to move on. Jordan used this as an example of both the challenges and the

opportunities the café presents to community members. They could become easily annoyed by the interruptions; after all, Jordan had just lost a quarter of his meeting time with an important financial source. Or, one could embrace those interactions as examples of the beauty of life in East Belfast and trust that Flo was telling Skainos' story better than Jordan could. He said he preferred to choose the latter.

The intentionality behind the café and residential space are consistent with traditional forms of monastic hospitality. The Desert Father and Mothers used to say that one should greet everyone who goes through the door as if they are an angel sent by God for one's conversion. What that means at EBM's café is that everyone is welcomed, a space of hospitality and safety is carved out of a violent neighborhood, and in the organic encounters that take place, something of the divine is present. Jordan describes Skainos as "one great big act of incarnation." The café seems to be one of the most immediate examples of this theology.

In many ways, one can see the fruits of this approach, particularly among the elderly and young professionals. The elderly will meet for afternoon tea, with the older women of the neighborhood often segregating from the men who hold their own afternoon tea. Many of the older men were former paramilitary volunteers who "found religion or a wife" and left the organizations. Now, Protestants and Catholics will come together for tea or a meal. Despite its Protestant heritage, EBM was able to create a space that felt welcoming enough for those who had even participated in the troubles to find a place of peace.

Among young professionals, the café has become a business hub, a place for lunch or afternoon meetings. Many of these meetings are held by EBM staff or

community leaders, but increasingly the café is being used by local businesses as a meeting hub. It is difficult to measure the economic impact such hospitality provides the East Belfast Community and it will be interesting to see if such spaces encourage those same young professionals to make East Belfast a permanent home.

The various populations using the Skainos Centre underscores the political dimension of the space. Lane writes, "Sacred places generate political polarities, just as does the practice of any authentic spirituality" (Lane 4). These polarities are visible in Skainos' situation along Newtonards Road. Union Jacks are strung along lampposts and two large Ulster Defense Force Murals are painted on the walls of adjacent buildings, serving as bookends which mark Skainos space and the surrounding partisan neighborhood. Because Skainos chose to have a leafy bio-wall instead of murals to cover its exterior, a political statement is made, a "political polarity" is created. This is not a Christian space or a Catholic space. This is a space committed to the flourishing of everyone and a renewal of communal and personal life. The community seems to understand this. Catholics come to teach the Irish language to Christians, both religions take advantage of the services EBM offers, and ex-paramilitary fighters even come together for lunch and prayer many days a week. EBM has constructed a political polarity, a third way that is neither Christian nor Catholic, which demands non-partisanship in a partisan city.

Yet, despite all of the excitement surrounding the Skainos Center, the space offers EBM several challenges. In its decision to radically embrace inclusivity and downplay traditional theological expressions, several community members wonder if something has been lost. Even Jordan, when asked about how meaningful the

sanctuary is to worshippers, says that "We need more weddings, funerals, and communion services before it can feel like home. We need those rituals to make the space feel like home." At an EBM gathering where the leadership team asked the parishioners how the move was going, one man stood up and said that the funeral for his father took place in the old church and he didn't see any of that in the new space. He didn't recognize the place where his father was eulogized. Parishioners also asked why the altar of the old church, hand crafted years ago by a parishioner, was no longer used. That's where they first received communion, that's where they were married, and that's where they wept when their loved ones passed away.

Despite all of the vibrancy of the new space, something of the sacralizing familiar was missing for these parishioners. Belden Lane writes, "Personal identity is fixed for us by the feel of our own bodies, the naming of the places we occupy, and the environmental objects that beset our landscape" (Lane 7). Jordan insinuates that there is an unavoidable period of sacralization that must take place in designated sacred spaces. It is not enough to call something a sanctuary; sacred moments: christenings, baptisms, communions, weddings, and funerals are constructive acts that sacralize sites.

Moreover, many parishioners found the sharing of what was once theirs difficult. Nothing can be permanently stored in a room. During the week, the sanctuary may look like a job fair, not a place of prayer. And someone may go to the Skainos Centre one evening for quiet only to encounter neighborhood youth at their weekly after school events playing hide and seek and sneaking vodka and cigarettes in the chapel. When everything becomes a community space, does anything belong

to the parishioner? Can the sacred embrace so much of the profane that it loses its sense of the sacred? Can a religious community become so "incarnational" that it loses its uniquely set-apart nature? Belden Lane would argue that this tension—between possessing a space and sharing it—is at the heart of the Christian approach to space,

> …the Christian tradition has always maintained a tension between place and placelessness, between the importance of attaching meaning and remembrance to particular locales and the danger of misusing the places to which we lay claim. To imagine our possession of a place as an end in itself, as a guarantee of our possession of truth, is ever a temptation (Lane 241).

Experiencing this tension at EBM, one wonders if the nuanced theological vision of the community leaders is lost upon the average parishioner.

The Skainos Centre is a radical reinterpretation of the traditional Christian monastic space. Commitments such as common worship are provided for but not privileged. The space harkens back to a Christian past but does not proclaim a monolithically Christian future. And to the leadership of EBM, the design of the centre is not "secular." It is so deeply Christian that it seeks to accommodate all members of the community, not just religious practitioners. Yet, the space is experienced differently by different levels of the community. Some see the café simply as a place to grab a healthy bite and use the youth program as free babysitting. Many of the parishioners are excited about the new space but feel a sense of loss because of the absence of familiar symbols. And the leadership views the space as the future of the Methodist mission. The multiple experiences of meaning or lack thereof add a level of complexity to Skainos. Is it at once all of these things or none of them? What does the space have to convey to be viable?

The Isle of Iona: An Ancient Pilgrimage Renewed for All People

Where EBM intentionally carved out a sacred space in the midst of violent East Belfast, the Iona community rests on an island that has been considered sacred for thousands of years. Even before the first Christian missionaries, traditionally thought to be St. Columba, the island was a sacred site for the Celts. It was believed that somewhere on the highest point on the island, Dun I, a mythical fountain was hidden. In some of the remaining rubble at the Nunnery, one can see carvings that could either be depicting St. Brigit or a Celtic goddess. It was out of this Celtic tradition that St. Columba is said to have founded a monastery in the sixth century. The monastery became a center of religious life and missionary activity in the centuries to follow, yet fell into disuse during the English Reformation.

The abbey was refurbished by George Macleod during the Great Depression. A minister of the Church of Scotland, Macleod believed that the church's ministers had become unable to relate to the working poor of Glasgow, and so in an attempt to both employ Glasgow artisans and allow ministers to live alongside the working poor, Macleod began rebuilding Iona Abbey. In his work, Macleod sought to preserve and refurbish the monastery in the same way it would have existed in the twelfth century.

Today, Iona Abbey serves as the home base of a community dispersed throughout the UK and bound together by a common rule. The island has become a major pilgrimage site for not only Christians, but also for a variety of spiritualities and none. One must differentiate the island from the Abbey and community founded on the island. The island's sacredness transcends traditional religious

demarcations and exists as a refuge for pilgrims of all stripes, a "thin place" where heaven and earth blend indistinguishably, as the Celts used to describe such sites.

Therefore, one must understand that the island can only be known as a destination, as something to be temporarily experienced until one must go back to the ordinary home, wherever that may be. Pilgrimage is the only access point to the sacred space and the primary ritual action that takes place on the island, regardless of religious affiliation or theological commitments. There are neo-Pagans, Christians, and environmental tourists all huddled together on the ferry trying to get their first glimpse of the island. These people, while sharing a dearth of common beliefs, are bound together by the common experience of travel. Describing the multiple experiences of sacred space, Lane writes, ""What fascinated me most was the messiness, ambiguity, and mystery of people's deeply personal experience of place, as this works its way through the cultural grid that they inevitably bring to it" (Lane 6). There is an underlying assumption that there is something on the island that will provide the pilgrim with an experience of meaning, however it is expressed or understood. In fact, it may be the contested character of the site that gives it a meaning. Its identity is constructed out of this contestation. Lane cites Taussig, "Taussig, in his *Mimesis and Alterity*, would suggest that the human understanding of the meaning of a place emerges out of the process of an imitation of all the 'differences' that we discern there" (Lane 4). The construction of sacrality is a dynamic process, being always created, destroyed, and recreated by the various experiences and narratives people bring to the places they inhabit.

To understand the pilgrimage site, one must map the modern pilgrimage. For most, the journey starts with a train from Glasgow. The train climbs high into the misty and remote western side of the Scottish Highlands. There is a sense that one is entering another world, or at least a more primitive one. After several hours, the train stops in the town of Oban, where pilgrims are ushered onto a ferry for the Isle of Mull. The ferry passes small islands, lighthouses, and outposts in the fog and drizzle before it docks on the island. Once docked, buses are waiting to drive across the island to the westernmost shore, directly across from Iona. At this point, some pilgrims will hike across Mull as part of their spiritual practice, as a way of preparing their minds, bodies, emotions, and spirits for the encounter with the sacred awaiting them on Iona. But for both camps, the walkers and bus riders, the desolation of the island lends itself to an empty solitude, a sense that one is on the edge of the world.

Descending out of the rocky hills, one gets a first glimpse of the green island and the ancient abbey on its eastern shore. Everyone is snapping photos, oohing and aaahing, and proclaiming the beauty of the island. The seekers experience a collective anticipation with the destination in sight. Crowding onto the last ferry, some pilgrims eagerly chat away while others stand removed, taking in the cool sea air, the ocean spray, and the mystique that is the Island of Iona. By completing the journey, one has begun to experience something of the place upon which one has never set foot.

This narrative of the journey transcends the sectarian beliefs of the pilgrims. All are seeking something and all believe that what they are seeking can be found on

the island. More than just being a "seeker-friendly" community, Iona is seeker-dependent. The economy of the island is based on the support of the pilgrims. The Abbey has no permanent residents and is run by short-term volunteers. And the community formed around the common journey, not common belief. The place, therefore, is founded upon the temporary. It exists only as a spiritual vacation spot and never as a home.

Since Iona's sacredness is dependent upon travel, one must acknowledge the privilege associated with such a model. Only those with disposable income and leisure are able to visit the island. This is not to say that every pilgrim is wealthy, but every pilgrim has at least enough disposable income and flexibility to take a retreat. Notably, many of Iona's pilgrims are not Scottish. British, American, and Continental Europeans made up the majority of retreatants in June 2013. So while the pilgrims may not share certain religious beliefs or even certain understandings of Iona's sacredness, they are all, at some level, affluent, making the island itself self-segregating.

As a place then, Iona is a physical space and a geographic location, but it primarily exists in the imagination. It is a mindset, an ethos, a way of seeing the world as one grand pilgrimage. Ionas are those places along the way where one is closest to the ultimate. A community member or a pilgrim may spend only one week at Iona, but the experience of going to, being at, and leaving Iona is supposed to grow in one's imagination and continue to affect the pilgrim. Lane says, '"Landscape operates as a function of the imagination" (Lane 238). Iona exists as a physical location, but is constantly growing, expanding, and changing in the

imagination of each pilgrim long after he/she has left and according to his/her needs.

The Iona Community is the primary advocate of the journey narrative. The retreats hosted at the Abbey are intentionally designed to foster a sense of journeying and pilgrimage with fellow retreatants. The Abbey Church was rebuilt with the traditional cross-shaped layout of medieval cathedrals. Utilizing this design, the liturgical leader sits on a large chair in the middle of the nave while the community faces each other across aisles. With this layout, the community is quite literally singing to each other, a pedagogical technique that makes the congregation its own teacher, in the same arrangement as Benedictine worship. This pedagogical approach is present in nearly all of the community's actions. The dining room is arranged and the food is distributed in a way such that one has to interact with the entire table throughout the meal. The cleaning of the Abbey is designed in the same way. The Abbey's architecture is utilized in a way that facilitates a reciprocity, not just of conversation, but of food, work, and song, between community members. The pilgrims are the students, teachers, workers, guests, and facilitators of each others' journeys. This is a deeply egalitarian approach to space and communal life. It is worth noting that to do this, the community did not redesign the Abbey. They simply embraced the traditional structure and adapted it to modern liturgical sensibilities and lifestyles.

The Iona Community uses the island itself for one of its most important weekly rituals, the pilgrimage walk. A volunteer leads retreatants at the Abbey and the Macleod Center on a nine-kilometer walk around the island. Visiting different

sites, the pilgrim is urged to consider different spiritual lessons from Iona's geography and past. There is a belief inherent in this ritual: one gains insight by travelling to a place. Meaning or ultimacy is conveyed through the physical experience of a place, and the island's history is incorporated into the pilgrim's spiritual journey. It is in walking to the hermit's cave that solitude becomes real. Tossing a stone into Martyr's Bay, sacrifice has a story. For the Iona community, the experience of meaning is an embodied act. It is not enough to tell someone about an event or a place. One must walk there and enact it. There is a knowledge that is not accessible through description. The integration of the Iona narrative, the inheritance of the mythic imagination of Iona, is dependent upon the pilgrim's experience of the land itself. Spiritual formation cannot be divorced from geography.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter was not meant to construct a comprehensive theology of place. It is not systematic or universal. There is no room for an Eliadan imagination. It simply seeks to describe the ways in which the two sites constructed and utilized their physical spaces and experienced or failed to experience sacrality. In the cases mentioned, the embodied experience of the place is a primary way of coming to know its sacred meanings. Beyond sermons and liturgical rites, the architectural designs, physical geographies, and the proximate locations are transforming, catechizing, and revelatory in themselves. Each community has intentionally constructed their spaces and sought to imbue them with sacrality. For EBM, this meant Methodists trying to create a non-partisan oasis of spiritual, political, social,

and economic renewal in East Belfast. And for Iona, this meant constructing a physical destination that represents the spiritual pilgrimage that is the human life, a destination that changes in the imagination of each pilgrim long after he/she has left the island. The experience of both spaces has infinite variations and descriptions. It is my hope this chapter has elucidated a few of the ways in which these places are experienced and the role that physical space plays in the respective visions of the communities.

Chapter Two: The Reconciled Church: Exploring the Rituals and Practices of the Taizé Community

The religion theorist Eliade argued that hierophany establishes sacred space that becomes cosmicized as religion, partitioning off ordered boundaries in a chaotic and profane world. This clear demarcation between the sacred and profane seems too simple—not entangled enough--upon examining the role of ritual practice at the four monasteries explored here. Put bluntly, the binary categorization of spaces universalizes the human experience of rituals. It is a colonialization of a person's experiences, intentions, and theologies. Moreover, it is an imposition of a language of ritual that may not make sense for every religious practitioner. For many peoples, the world does not exist as a dichotomy of sacred and profane. To force these distinctions is to reject the ritualization of everyday life. (Eliade)

Central to monastic thought is the idea that everything one does is a re-sacralization of an already sacred world. It is an affirmation that what God created is good (Genesis 1:1-31). Brushing one's teeth, showering, mowing the yard, all of these mundane tasks can become sacred ritual practices. Traditionally, the observance of the Christian calendar and praying of the hours were ways for monks to sacralize time. Offering prayers before meals, voyages, or sleep were reminders that daily actions were sacred rituals. The monastery existed as an acknowledgement of life's inherent sacredness.

This acknowledgement pervaded various facets of Christian monastic practice and has a diversity of historical expressions. At its inception, the Christian tradition carried with it a Jewish sense of a sacred calendar and daily prayer. Ritual meals, morning and evening prayers, the recitation of Psalms, and holy days were all continuations of first century Judaism. One of the earliest Christian assemblies, the Didache community, active as early as the late first century, would hold regular "love feasts." In this early form of the Eucharist, the community would come together around a table, recite Psalms, read teachings of the early disciples and sayings of Christ, and allow wandering prophets from war-ravaged Palestine to prophesy. In the third and fourth centuries, the Desert Fathers and Mothers marked time by reciting Psalms both individually and communally. Early forms of Eucharistic practice were present in their assemblies as well, in daily meals together as well as ritualized Eucharistic celebrations, indicating the centrality of the common meal to the life of these proto-monastic communities.

Yet for both the Didache and Desert communities, ritual was not limited to the reciting of Psalms and early Eucharistic forms. Dramaturgical enactments were also present, reminding the community of important lessons or truths. As mentioned, the prophesying of the wandering prophet in the Didache community provided a space for narrative dramas within the broader liturgical structure. In the Lives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, Benedicta Ward includes a story about Abba Moses performing a drama to teach the community. Upon being summoned to a monastic assembly to judge a wayward brother, Abba Moses carries with him a sack with sand spilling out of it, saying that his sins are spilling out behind him as he

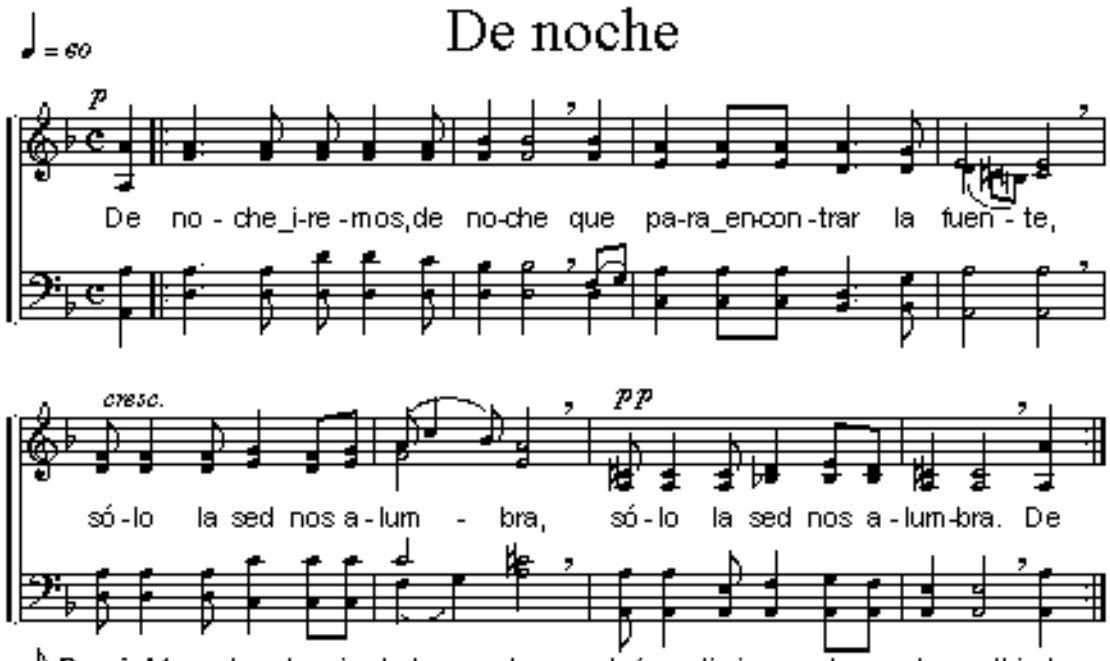
goes to judge another sinner. A bit later, the stylites, monks who lived on top of pillars, would serve as embodied rejections of the political and economic systems they were born into. In the midst of conventional ritual practice, dramaturgical forms, such as these mentioned, allowed for the expression of inspiration in proto-monastic communities.

As certain monastic forms became more institutionalized, especially after the creation of the rules of Saints Basil, Pachomius, and Benedict in the fifth and sixth centuries, ritual practices became more institutionalized as well. The Rule of Saint Benedict goes beyond simply reciting the Daily Office to prescribe specific types of sacred readings for meals and before bed. It orders nearly every facet of their lives in a way that makes the monastery the ideal "school of charity."

This routinization of the monastic life varied and continues to vary depending upon the monastic order. The daily life of the mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans are not nearly as strictly organized the Cistercians or Carthusians. The tension between spontaneity and routinization is a constant theme across monastic history. One can trace this tension all the way from the "Love Feast" of the Didache to Vatican II's call for monastic renewal. This chapter seeks to explore the ways in which the Taizé community has constructed and routinized ritual spaces. Specifically, the core rituals and their underlying theological assumptions are identified, their relation to historical monastic practices are contrasted, and their translations for a secular audience are parsed.

Originally, the brothers of Taizé attempted to practice traditional forms of monastic chant. They met for prayer three times a day and invited the young

pilgrims already beginning to visit their small community in the 1950s to join. This invitation was met with little excitement. Many of the visitors did not grow up in the Church and were not familiar with the monastic liturgical forms. The various tones and harmonies proved too challenging for the casual pilgrim to participate. Recognizing this, the monks developed a form of chant unique to Taizé. It involves the simple repetition of a phrase or verse, often from the Bible, that is easily memorized and sung. There is no set number of times the chant can be repeated. It is up to the leader to end one chant and begin another. An example of this chant is below.



♪ **By night**, we has-ten, in dark-ness, to search for— liv-ing wa-ter, on-ly our thirst leads us on-ward, on-ly our thirst leads us on-ward. / **De nuit** nous i-rons dans l'om-bre, car pour dé-cou-vrir la sour-ce, seu-le la soif nous é-clai-re, seu-le la soif nous é-clai-re. / **Di not-te**_an-dre-mo, di not-te, per in-con-tra-re la fon-te, so-lo la se-te c'il-lu—mi-na, so-lo la se-te ci gui-da. / **In dunk-ler Nacht** woll'n wir zieh-en, le-ben-di-ges Was-ser fin-den. Nur un-ser Durst wird uns leuch-ten, nur un-ser Durst wird uns leuch-ten. / **T'kër-kojm do ni-se-mi** na-tën bu-ri-min në terr ta gjej-më rru-gën veç e-tja do na e ndris rru-gës veç e-tja do na prij. / **Csak ván-do-ro-lunk** az éj-ben, mert for-rás vi-zé-re vá-gyunk, szom-junk a fény a sö-tét-ben, szom-junk a fény a sö-tét-ben. / **W cie-mno-ści i-dzie-my**, w cie-mno-ści, do źró-dła Two-je-go ży-cia. Tyl-ko pra-gnie-nie jest świat-łem, tyl-ko pra-gnie-nie jest świat-łem. / **Nak-ty mes ieš-ko-me** ke-lio, ku-ris ve-da prie šal-ti-nio, vien šis troš-ki-mas mus ly-di, vien šis troš-ki-mas mus ly-di. / **Ci lën-dëm**, ńu dem, ci lën-dëm, Ba ńu fekk-(a) ndox muy ball mi. Su-ńu mar rekk moo ńuy lee-ral, Su-ńu mar rekk moo ńuy lee-ral.

Music: J. Berthier
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Notice the brevity. The chant is only two lines with a simple time signature and an easy to follow melody. This particular chant was originally composed in Spanish. The monks of Taizé would therefore chant the piece in Spanish, but translations in a variety of languages are printed below the piece for persons of all language backgrounds to not only sing along, but also comprehend the meaning of the chant. While this may seem to be obvious, the expectation that one should be able to

participate in a service in a language one comprehends is relatively recent. In the Roman Catholic Church, mass was said in the vernacular only after Vatican II in the 1960s. Implicitly, by including translations, Taizé is making a theological statement about liturgy: To fully participate, one must be conscious of what one is chanting. It is not enough for the body to simply participate in the chant. Consciousness must be involved as well. The chant is meant to foster contemplation, not hypnosis.

Further, the chant is meant as a form of catechesis. It was developed as a way to evangelize the pilgrim who does not attend church. Each chant is packed with theological assertions and statements about the spiritual journey. In "De Noche," an apophatic approach to the divine that hearkens back to St. Gregory of Nyssa or St. John of the Cross is espoused by the line, "By night, we hasten, in darkness, to search for…" Implicit in this line is the assumption that spirituality is a search. This is consistent with monastic metaphors of spiritual pilgrimage or journeys, a motif popularized by works such as *The Way of the Pilgrim* in the East and the Grail myths in the WeSt. Secondly, the author says that we not only search, but the search is undergone "by night". This assumes the "Dark Night of the Soul" that St. John of the Cross described in his Western description of apophatic contemplative experience. To borrow the journey metaphor, faith is a journey undertaken without fully realizing what one is doing or where one is going. It is a darkness.

Next, the chant identifies the object of the search: living water. "Living water" is what Jesus calls himself while speaking to a Samaritan woman in the gospel of St. John:

> [10]Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." [11]The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? [12]Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" [13]Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14]but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." [15]The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." –St. John 4:10-15

The narrative depicts Jesus offering salvation to a woman of an ethnic and religious minority, transgressing many of the religious, cultural, and gender norms of first century Palestine. In the same way, Taizé is attempting to convey the hope of the Christian message to the young people of the world, especially those trapped in poverty and violence. By alluding to certain texts or narratives, Taizé is trying to tell the non-Christian pilgrim something about God and who God loves.

But this is all done obliquely. In the chant, only the phrase "living water" is used. The entire woman at the well narrative is not. At this level of participation, the metaphor evokes an entire narrative and Christology for insiders whereas outsiders are given a beautiful metaphor and no more explanation. It is a subtle acquaintance with gospel imagery, and one can probably assume what the brothers of Taizé believe the "living water" to be, but at this point in the service, they stop with the evocation of the image. They do not yet move to explanation. It is enough for the outsider to chant without fully knowing, "in darkness, we search for," Taizé might say.

The chant ends with a repetition of the line, "Only our thirst leads us onward." This line indicates several basic beliefs about the role of desire in Taizé

worship and devotion. First, thirst is used as the appropriate metaphor for desire, indicating that it is out of a lack that one is propelled forward. Secondly, the phrase "leads us onward" indicates a movement towards a *telos*, or end. There is desire and there is a goal or satisfaction for this thirst. The thirsty journey in the darkness has a destination. That destination provides the satisfaction of one's thirst, the "living water" which one may drink and "never thirst again." While the message is nuanced, relying upon metaphor and analogy to convey the convictions of the Taizé community, it is starkly Christocentric. Stripping the chant of metaphor, it essentially reads, "Let your desire, though now confusing, be satisfied by Jesus Christ." This message is not much different than the call of the repentant sinner in American Evangelicalism or missionary movements. Taizé's chant must be understood as a primary expression of its evangelical mission. Yet, instead of going to the ends of the world to share this message (Matthew 28:16-20), the world comes to Taizé.

This message, seeker-friendly yet Christocentric, is also conveyed through the arrangement and order of the ritual space. In the 1960s, as Taizé became a popular pilgrimage site, a new church was built. It was called the Church of Reconciliation. Consistent with Taizé's mission to bring together all Christian denominations as well as be an advocate for non-violence and economic justice, the church is intended to model the hoped-for-reality. The church itself is designed in the traditional cross form but with simplicity in mind. There are no pews. Everyone except for the brothers sit on the floor. Brothers either sit on prayer benches, the floor, or wooden chairs. Their section of the space is partitioned off

with a wall of ferns. Externally, the cathedral has a simple wooden façade except for the Russian Orthodox style onion domes on the roof. Volunteers stand outside holding signs that say "be quiet" in several different languages. The signs do not say, "you are entering a holy place, act reverently." It is not assumed that the pilgrims believe the space to be holy or know what it means to act with reverence. But in asking all who enter to be quiet, Taizé is essentially asking for the same thing. It is a shift in language that lends itself to the same result. There is not one universal idea of a sacred space and therefore a simple sign asking for quiet must do.

Analyzing this practice, one wonders if the same end is met by demanding quiet instead of religious reverence. Have the monks of Taizé translated a religious idea into secular language or have they sacrificed a religious state for a hollow silence? Does it matter that outsiders, pilgrims, approach the ritual space being quiet while insiders, monks and practicing Christians, approach it being reverent? Approaching thus, do the two groups have two different types of experiences or does the experience of the place transcend the language with which one approaches it? Or, are reverence and quiet analogous terms, quiet simply being a more inclusive expression of the same idea? It would be hard to definitively answer this question, but it is something worth considering as the communities analyzed here seek to translate traditionally religious language into phrases comprehensible to their increasingly non-religious pilgrims.

Another notable translation is the front of the church. Rather than featuring a large crucifix that one might find in a Catholic church, the iconostasis of an

Orthodox church, or the pulpit of the Protestant church, the Church of Reconciliation has large red drapes that look enflamed when lit. Below, hollow squares are stacked and candles are lit inside of the squares. This is pictured below.

(http://tamedcynic.org/how-many-churches-would-tear-down-the-sanctuary-for-visitors/)

One must realize that this arrangement is not a divergence from Christian architecture. A cross, though small, is present. The altar is central, indicating a core commitment to Eucharist or Communion. The church uses stained glass, though the glass does not hold the biblical narratives of traditional design. And the candles as well as the drapes hint at fire, a traditional symbol of the Pentecost, the reception of the Holy Spirit by the first disciples. And to the left of the stage, an icon of "The Virgin of Taizé" is displayed with a votive candle constantly burning beneath it. It is

an attempt to preserve the theology of Christian architecture while making that very architecture welcoming for the unchurched pilgrim.

The arrangement and design of Taizé's ritual space strives to be at once welcoming and fully Christian. The community does not see a contradiction. Rather, they see Christian design as a way to be fully welcoming. For them, it is the deepest embodiment of the Christian message. Yet, in this welcoming, there are boundaries and hierarchies. The monks are separated from the general assembly by the ferns. Wall space is reserved for those with disabilities, privileging them over other pilgrims. And the same potted ferns block the audience from getting more than fifteen feet from the front of the church. Additionally, monks enter and leave the service through a different entrance. These boundaries and delineations are used to maintain order and protect the disadvantaged.

Otherwise, an egalitarian sense is intentionally fostered throughout the services. Every morning, the monks serve "blessed bread" for all present. Everyone, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or non-Christians are encouraged to come and participate in this central ritual. Catholics and Orthodox require denominational affiliation to receive communion and most Protestant churches require some type of Christian affiliation. But at Taizé, all are welcomed to receive the bread and dip it in the wine. To accomplish this and circumvent denominational restrictions, the monks developed a unique approach to the consecration of the bread. Before the service, a monk also ordained as a priest consecrates some of the bread and then mixes it in with other bread that is merely blessed and can be consumed by all. Because no one knows which bread is blessed

and which is consecrated, no denominational distinctions can be made and everyone is encouraged to come and consume, imagining the bread to be consecrated or blessed, whichever they prefer. This practice allows the assembly to share in a common communion ritual, maintaining a fidelity to their specific denominations while maintaining a visible fidelity to the mission of Taizé: reconciliation among Christians and the world. This example will be further explored in the chapter on "Monasticism as Tactic."

The traditional sacrament of confession is approached in much the same way. In the evenings, after about thirty minutes of chant, several of the monks will stand at various places along the perimeter of the church, speaking various languages, and offering advice or counsel to anyone who approaches them. Pilgrims approach them with questions about Christianity, seeking advice about important life decisions, or to seek solace for a mistake they made or a relationship or life lost. This is not the enclosed confessional booth of some Roman Catholic parishes. Here, monks are in the open, worshipping with the people and then moving to make themselves present among the people. The monks' habits are the only visible identifiers in the crowd. This is a confession made in solidarity, a heart opening up to another heart. The monk may ask the pilgrim questions, trying to understand what it is the pilgrim is truly asking. The purpose of this space is not to offer simple solutions to a pilgrim's problems. It is first of all an act of solidarity, a wading into the questions with the pilgrim. Once the question has been articulated, the monk helps the pilgrim discern what it is God might be saying to them. What does the question mean practically for the pilgrim's life? Consistent with the

mission of Taizé, the spiritual direction is not for the sake of merely cultivating spiritual experience, but for the "reconciliation of the world." What does this question mean practically? How will this change your life once you return back to your country, to your city, to your small group? Taizé's approach to spiritual direction and discernment will be explored more fully later in a section on the community's "biblical sessions." (Interview with Brother James)

On Thursdays, the back barrier of ferns is removed and an icon of the Crucified Christ is laid flat on the ground to be venerated by pilgrims. The pilgrims line up behind the monks and approach the icon on their hands and knees. This practice is entirely optional, though its Christocentrism is apparent to all. This is not the subtlety of the initial plea for quiet or the use of red-orange drapes instead of an iconostasis. This is the Suffering Christ made present to the people through the icon.

The practice assumes a belief in not only the sacramentality of the world, but also in the theology of the icon, historically, a constant tension in both the Eastern and Western Churches. In certain Christian theologies, such as Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and Methodism, sacramentality denotes a belief that in the physical world, there are sanctifying outward signs of inward graces. The Catholic Catechism defines a sacrament as: an outward sign of inward grace, a sacred and mysterious sign or ceremony, ordained by Christ, by which grace is conveyed to our souls. In Orthodoxy, the icon is believed to be a sacramental object, an object that conveys to the believer the grace of God. This idea has been deeply contested by various Christian denominations. Some

Protestant traditions, such as Baptists, reject the idea of sacramentality all together, while others, such as the Orthodox, believe that while they name several sacraments, many more could mysteriously exist. Within Christianity, there is no agreed upon definition of what a sacrament is. Each denomination has their own definitions and ideas of sacraments' functions. This disagreement has often prevented various denominations from worshipping together.

By inviting the worshippers to kiss the icon, Taizé is invoking the Orthodox tradition. The community does not demand total participation, but it does invite everyone to participate. Taizé does not offer a theology of the icon or an explanation during the service. The community does not try to intellectually convince everyone of the icon's efficacy or validity. Taizé invites all to "Come and see," participate in the ritual and come away with one's own meanings. There are analogies the community could make, comparing the veneration of the icon to Catholic prayers at the foot of Madonnas or Protestant prayers in front of a cross, but it doesn't. The brothers do not try to make sense of or rationalize the practice for everyone. They make the icon available, invite practitioners to come and experience, and then everyone silently retires to their beds or the canteen for the night.

Inherent in this practice is the assumption that the experience can speak for itself. There is no need to explain, defend, or construct theologies. Let mystery be the teacher, keeper, revelator, and defender. The veneration of the icon, traditionally an Orthodox practice, now becomes a mysterious act of communal adoration, each individual drawing from it his or her own meanings. The

veneration of the icon, like Taizé's approach to communion, asks for shared experience rather than demanding doctrinal homogeneity.

This practice is meant to be one of the culminations of the retreat experience for the pilgrims. This ritual, as intensely Christocentric as it is, can only be understood in the broader context of the program at Taizé.

Consistent with the evangelical mission of Taizé, bible studies and learning sessions are held daily. Though Taizé welcomes pilgrims from all backgrounds, it requires attendance at these explicitly Christian sessions. They are offered in several different languages and the pilgrim is assigned to his or her particular group based on age. In the "Biblical Sessions", the entire arc of the Bible is taught in a five-day week. On Monday, the subject is creation, on Tuesday, the obedience of Abraham, on Wednesday, the prophets and the Magnificat, on Thursday, a gospel parable, and on Friday, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Each day, a monk reads a short passage of the bible. Then, he will extemporaneously expound upon the passage, teasing out the spiritual truths he found there.

Each narrative corresponds to a theme. For creation, the theme is finding God in the natural world. For the obedience of Abraham, the theme is following the call of God. For the prophets and Magnificat, it is about fighting injustice and saying yes to God's plan. For the parable of the prodigal son, the lesson is about the infinite compassion of God for children. And for the crucifixion and resurrection, the lesson is about the redemption and reconciliation of the world through love. As in the chant, this is an explicitly Christian approach to exegesis and catechesis framed in what one might call "seeker language," a language that is accessible and

comprehensible to those not in the church and not necessarily religious. It is about taking a journey and discovering the purpose of one's life. This purpose often has something to do with the poor or victims of violence. Here, one sees that Taizé has made an interpretive choice. It has privileged certain biblical texts in order to create a narrative it then hopes its pilgrims will enact after they leave. Its themes: the goodness of creation, journeying into the unknown, obediently saying yes to social justice, and the redemption of the world through sacrificial love are conveyed as if they are a summary of the biblical narrative and a comprehensive philosophical approach to life. Taizé suggests that by studying these texts throughout the week, one will come to see one's life within the arc of this story, enacting the journey of Abraham, Mary, and the Christ in one's own life.

After the large group lesson, the pilgrim breaks off to further discuss the story in a small group. This group is made up of about five to ten people. To facilitate conversation, each group member has a handout with discussion questions such as, "Do you think you would have the faith of Abraham to travel to an unknown land?" Or, "If God created the world, how should we treat the environment?" "Have you ever felt called by God to accomplish something like Mary?" "What does it mean for you to seek reconciliation among your neighbors?" These questions are meant to be worked through in conversation with the other pilgrims. Some pilgrims are very familiar with the stories. Others have never heard them. Some find deep personal resonance in their lives and want to use Christian insider language to describe their own situation. Others find the stories interesting from historical, sociological, or anthropological perspectives and don't see a personal connection.

And still others find them deeply mythic and personally relevant though they don't personally identify as Christian. This creates a varied small group experience for pilgrims. Some feel stymied by the orthodoxy of peers while others feel stymied by the irreligion of their group. And still others find the opportunity to simply talk about their lives in a group therapeutic. There are as many commitments, expectations, and experiences as there are pilgrims. Taizé trusts that in the midst of this diversity, something of the hospitality of Abraham, the obedience of Mary, and the sacrificial love of Christ reveals itself to the pilgrim wherever they are on the journey.

After the Biblical sessions, there are optional lessons offered by the monks and volunteers of Taizé. While I was there doing research, the topics ranged from "R.E.M., U2, and the Music of Social Change" to "How to Find Meaning in Life" to "Environmental Justice in the Global South." The lessons attempt to connect the values of Taizé such as social justice and prayer, and apply them to a pilgrim's life outside of Taizé. The sessions are offered by monks or volunteers with a personal interest in a particular subject and would like to share this interest with the youth on pilgrimage. Essentially, this is another pedagogical technique. The sessions are a way for the pilgrim to recognize and integrate the commitments he or she acquired at Taizé into other, "non-religious", spheres of their life.

These services and lessons fit into the larger monastic commitment to "*ora et labora*," prayer and work. Upon waking up, the pilgrim makes one's way from the campgrounds or bunkhouses to the church for morning chant and communion. After the prayers, one eats a simple breakfast of bread, cheese, and cocoa or tea,

served by other pilgrims. Once the meal is finished, each pilgrim is assigned a job to maintain the camp. This could be meal preparation, bathroom cleaning, sweeping buildings, or welcoming new arrivals. Work and meals are ritualized and interwoven with the experience of chant and catechesis. One cannot exist without the other. There is no sacred time and profane time. It is all a part of the Taizé pilgrimage. This is illustrated in the songs sung before work each morning. The words to popular songs like "In the Jungle (The Lion Sleeps Tonight)" are changed to talk about camp life in Taizé, creating a different type of "collective effervescence" than one might experience in the chant service, yet a collective ritual nonetheless.

Evening even holds moments of ritual assembly as well. After the evening prayers, the monks retire and the pilgrims and volunteers assemble at the Oyak, a canteen at the bottom corner of the property. Here, one can buy wine, sodas, pizzas, or croque-monsieurs. One can hear the chatter and songs of the youth from a quarter mile away well past midnight. In the same way that the community shares communion in the morning, the night time pilgrimage to the Oyak might be considered the true end of the night, offering an experience of communion well after the last evening prayers have ceased.

Chapter Three: "The Adaptation and Renewal of the Religious Life": Ecumenical Monastic Rules in Contemporary Times

For the monastic, a rule of life provides a framework within which one can "work out one's salvation with fear and trembling." St. Benedict called the monastery "a school of the Lord's service, in which we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome" (RSB 3). In his exploration of the different forms of monastic life, St. Benedict claims the Cenobites, "those living under an abbot and a rule," have a much more stable and firm commitment to the gospel life than the Sarabaites and Landlopers who have no rules or authority. Without these constraints, St. Benedict implies that the monk will eventually backslide or falter. For St. Benedict, as for St. Pachomius, St. Basil the Great, and others, the monk could best be transformed into the likeness of God by living in community according to a rule of life and under the guidance and authority of an abbot.

These early monastic rules, as well as the Sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, provided a foundation for the development of monastic settlements throughout the Middle Ages, the Reformation and Enlightenment, and into the twentieth century. During these periods, monastic settlements assumed a variety of forms, ranging from the small communities of women known as the Beguines to the massive monastic centers of Benedictine life such as Cluny. In the Christian East, monastic centers were formed at places such as Mount Athos, Cappadocia, and Mt. Sinai. Though the forms, theologies, and cultures of monasteries ranging from Ireland to Ethiopia varied drastically, Christian monastic communities have shared a

commitment to living the gospel and, as Merton said, standing "as trees silently calling an insane world back to sanity" (*Thoughts in Solitude*).

In Merton's best-selling autobiography, *Seven Storey Mountain*, he claims that by cloistering himself in the monastery, he was enclosing himself in "four walls of a new freedom" (*Seven Storey Mountain*) For him, as for other defenders of the monastic life, structure is not a way of repressing one's freedom, desires, or humanity, but rather of expressing them fully. Writing about asceticism in Eastern Orthodoxy, Kallistos Ware says that the purpose is never repression, but transfiguration (Smith). While one may wonder if monastics are deceiving themselves, and contemporary thinkers such as Paul Tillich argue that "we cannot commit ourselves to anything absolutely" (*Ultimate Concern*-Tillich in Dialogue), for the purposes of this exploration of monastic ways of life, we must trust that the desire of the monastic to pursue the Christian life is consciously sincere and each community is attempting to most fully express not only Christian love, but also the complete realization of human possibility; religiously, relationally, psychologically, economically, and sexually.

Periodically, monasticism goes through major changes. This happened when cenobitical communities began to form around the hermits in the Egyptian desert and Palestine, when St. Francis and St. Dominic founded the first mendicant orders in the twelfth century, and in response to broader social movements such as the Reformation or Industrial Revolution. Most recently, Vatican II was such a moment for Western monasticism. In the church's attempt to articulate its place in the modern world, there was a call for monastic renewal, a return to the sources, *ad*

fontes. The Second Vatican Council issued a document on the religious life titled *Perfectae Caritatis* on October 28, 1965, stating, "The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time" (Perfectae). The document was meant to be read as a call for a return to the sources, not as a break with the past. This "return to the sources" is a consistent theme in movements for monastic renewal. Monastic reformers are not trying to reinvent monasticism, but return monasticism to a more intentional living of the gospel and their founder's vision for their community.

Vatican II's call for renewal was founded on several principles, principles that served as guideposts for the communities written about in this work. Those principles were: a commitment to the gospel as the ultimate rule of life, a commitment to the unique characteristics and work of the monastic institute as envisioned by the founders of that institute, a commitment to the life of the Church, the promotion of awareness about the events and conditions of modern life, a commitment to the renewal of the spirit over active ministry, and an adaptation of monastic institutions to the cultural, geographic, and economic realities of their locations (Perfectae). With these commitments in mind, each monastic institution underwent a period of reform, reimagining their specific vocation in the twentieth century.

The monastic communities I have written about share this commitment to a renewal of monastic life in the contemporary world. The Monastic Community of Bose was founded as one man's response to Vatican II and the communities of Taizé

and Iona were deeply influenced by the reforms as well. In their own ways, true to their vocations, these communities are seeking a return to the sources of the gospel life, carrying on the mantle handed down from Macrina, Benedict, Teresa, and Merton.

This chapter explores the various rules of life and their practical implications in the communities of Taizé, Iona, and Bose. Taizé will be used as the control, the primary community through which Bose and Iona will be compared and contrasted. This choice was made because of the wealth of information I was able to gather about Taizé through my time there and secondary source material. The chapter seeks to understand the communities through the traditional monastic values of work, prayer, obedience, hospitality, and chastity, discerning the ways in which these monastic values have been translated and lived. Because East Belfast Mission does not live by a monastic rule, it has been disregarded for this chapter. To the scholar of religion, these rules of life must be read as ways of mediating the sacred, of providing a structure for systematizing and authenticating the communal experience of the divine.

Taizé

Br. Roger wrote Taizé's rule, nearly three years after the community's founding, during a winter retreat in 1952-1953. The rule is meant to convey the spirit of the community's common life. It is not a long laundry list of dictates. Br. Roger believed that Taizé was a "parable of community" and wanted the rule to serve as a support for the vocations of the brothers. It is written as a series of

meditations, similar to the aphorisms that the Desert Fathers and Mothers would give to those seeking questions about the monastic life.

At times, the rule imitates the early formulations of monastic life. For example, St. Benedict exhorts that nothing be imposed which is burdensome. On page seven of the *Rule of Taizé*, Br. Roger writes, "… you do not impose discipline on yourself for its own sake. Gaining mastery of yourself has no other aim than to render you more available. No pointless abstaining; keep to what God asks…" But at other times, the rule conveys different commitments, such as Br. Roger's call for all brothers to "Open yourself to all that is human and you will see any futile desire to flee from the world disappear. Be present to your age; adapt yourself to the conditions of the time" (Roger 11). Here, one sees the same Vatican II belief that a monk is best able to experience solitude and the religious life only when one is open to the needs and hopes of the contemporary world.

Work and Hospitality

Reduced to its simplest formulation, the monastic life consists of *ora et labora*, work and prayer. The monk's day is a constant interweaving of labor and prayer services. But the line between work and prayer is blurry at best. In its ancient Greek form, liturgy means "the work of the people." At Taizé, prayer is not a moment of rest away from work. It is a labor of attention, of quiet, and of worship. And conversely, work is not profane or divorced from religious practice. About work, the *Rule of Taizé* states,

> For your prayer to be real, you need to be at grips with the demands of work. If you were to remain disengaged, lackadaisical, you would be incapable of

> true intercession. Aim for regularity in work. Your prayer becomes complete when it is one with your work. At each hour of the day, prayer, work or rest, but everything in God (Roger 45).

Ultimately, for the Taizé community, work is a form of prayer, a way in which one, through attention, intercedes with the divine.

Primarily, the work of the Taizé community is that of hospitality. Before the foundation of the community, Br. Roger hid Jews during World War II (Roger x). After the community was founded, Br. Roger's father asked his son how he would support the fledgling community, urging him to find a more stable way of life. To this dying wish, Br. Roger responded that the community had a cow, goat, and a few chickens, so he was not worried that they would go hungry. These two early commitments, to hospitality and self-sufficiency, are at the heart of Taizé's approach to work.

To keep the community functioning, pilgrims work alongside brothers. When one arrives at Taizé, he or she is assigned a work group and work time for the week. These range from meal preparation to toilet scrubbing. Before one's chores begin, the entire work group will join in a song about Taizé set to a popular tune, such as "Just Clean It," a play on Michael Jackson's "Just Beat It." These chores usually last about an hour and double as a time for youth to meet each other, swap stories, and flirt. The work groups are led by long-term volunteers, young men and women, who have chosen to stay at Taizé for an extended amount of time. Because each pilgrim works while they are staying at Taizé, the community is able to host thousands of youth at a time without having to hire a staff or exhaust the brothers with work.

Taizé believes that their ministry is to teach the youth how to live in community. Work then serves both a functional and a catechetical purpose. It is a medium through which pilgrims learn how to live the common life. In monastic thought, there is an idea that by modeling the gospel truth, others will come to know that another life is possible. In a way, monastics are trying to be the "city on a hill" that Christ describes in Matthew 5:14. With regards to work, Taizé hopes to convey the goodness of shared labor by enrolling pilgrims in common work.

Shared work is not a common value of many more traditional monasteries. For week-long retreats at Gethsemani Abbey, for example, one needs to do nothing except check-in. The rest is entirely up to the retreatant. By not enlisting their retreatants in common work, Benedictine monasteries are insinuating that work distracts one from rest or time in solitude with God. Taizé claims the opposite. By giving pilgrims chores within the community, Taizé affirms the value of work as an expression of devotion, a continuation of solitude, and a necessary component of spiritual renewal. After all, "Your prayer becomes complete when it is one with your work."

The work of the brothers is oriented towards hospitality and teaching. Some brothers oversee the maintenance of the camp. Some teach at the Biblical sessions or lectures. Some brothers plan the worship services or lead silent retreats in the village. Others plan and host the "Pilgrimages of Reconciliation," weeks out of the year when brothers from Taizé and volunteers hold large youth meetings around the world. Again, these meetings are aimed at introducing youth to the experience of a common life with a global community. They are often held in places that

highlight social inequalities, such as last year's meeting in the Black Hills, South Dakota. Taizé believes that this is an evangelical vocation, not in the sense of the word in American lexicon, but in the sense of a sharing of the good news of peace and reconciliation with a world torn apart by violence and separation.

Other brothers serve more traditionally cloistered roles in the community. They may make the famous Taizé pottery, write, publish, or translate books, prepare food for the other brothers, or teach novices. The particular jobs of brothers rotate and allow for a diversity of responsibilities. A brother does not do the same thing every day for the rest of his time at the monastery. For a month, he may be charged with making jam. Then, next month, he will move to the pottery studio. This constant rotation makes work stimulating. It is not a rote activity that numbs the mind of the monk. At Taizé, work is meant to be something to which one's attention is fully present, constantly drawing one deeper into the heart of Trinitarian community.

Prayer

If a brother is "at grips with [his] work," his prayer will be "real." The rule urges,

> Let us be attentive to enter into the meaning of the liturgy, seeking to discern, in signs accessible to beings of flesh and blood, something of the invisible reality of the kingdom. But let us also beware of overdoing these signs, taking care to keep them simple, which is the guarantee of their evangelical value (Roger 16).

And for this kingdom to become a reality, the rule states, "… we need to commit ourselves to passionate intercession for humankind and for the Church" (Roger 17).

Therefore, prayer is not simply an expression of personal devotion, but rather, it is an evangelical duty and the vocation of the monk. Without this prayer, the Kingdom of God does not become a reality. Taizé understands prayer as that which God does not need, but is necessary. The Rule explains,

> The Lord does not need our intercession and our praise. Yet it is the mystery of God to require of us, his fellow-workers, to keep on praying without losing heart… The praise of Christ expressed by the liturgy permeates us insofar as it is maintained throughout our humble daily tasks. In the regularity of our common prayer, the love of Jesus spring us within us, we know not how (Roger 19).

Prayer is the source from which the community exhibits the love of God for the world.

Maintaining its commitment to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, Taizé believes that prayer is a deeply embodied experience.

> And since, when we are close to Christ we are filled to overflowing, let us surrender ourselves to the living Word of God, allowing it to reach the deepest parts of our being and take possession not only of our mind, but also of our body (Roger 21).

This embodied encounter with the divine is expressed through the sacraments.

> Christ, the Word made flesh, gives himself to us visibly in the Sacrament. Draw strength from the Eucharist, the meal of thanksgiving, and do not forget that it is offered to the sick of the People of God. It is there for you, frail and weak as you always are (Roger 21).

Prayer must be a physical, embodied experience of Christ in community.

It is worth noting here the multiple names for the sacrament of communion that Br. Roger uses, calling it the Sacrament, the Eucharist, and the meal of thanksgiving. The multiple names suggest that he doesn't really care what one calls

it or what one's precise theological understanding of it is, but it is a fundamental component of the community's prayer life. He doesn't create a new name for communion, or force the community to accept one name (and definition), he simply allows multiple names (and theological understandings) to coexist. What matters is that one comes to the table and takes the bread, chews and swallows, and can "taste and see that the Lord is good." What one believes is happening at the table is up to the individual. Shared ritual action is therefore privileged over abstract theological understandings.

Br. Roger ends his exploration of prayer in the rule by describing the struggles of common prayer. He encourages the brothers not to become discouraged if the group is not able to sing together during the prayers. Reminding the brothers to return their attention to the prayers should their minds wander, Br. Roger wants brothers to remember, "The essential has already been accomplished in you" (Roger 23). The founder understands that prayer is cyclical. There are seasons of fervor and seasons of dryness, oftentimes felt during the same prayer service. What matters is that one refuses to give up and keeps returning to the prayers

> There are days when the common prayer becomes a burden to you. Then just offer your body; your simple presence signifies your desire, momentarily unrealizable, to praise your Lord. Believe in the presence of Jesus Christ within you, even though you feel no discernible resonance (Roger 23-25).

Prayer is a physical posture, an attitude of attention, a commitment to come together, and the source of the community's strength. It is a choice one makes and does not change based on the feelings or frustrations of the brother. And it is in

making this choice, in returning to the Church of Reconciliation to participate in the chant, that the brothers of Taizé model a reconciled Christian communion.

Obedience

From the community's founding in 1949 to his death in 2005, Br. Roger was the prior of the Taizé community. After his death, Br. Alois became prior and continues the legacy of Taizé's founder. Describing the role of the prior in the community, the rule states,

> To avoid encouraging any spirit of one-upmanship, the prior is responsible before is Lord for making decisions without being bound by a majority. Set free from human pressures, he listens to the most timid brother with the same attention he gives to the brother full of self-assurance. If he senses a lack of real agreement on an important question, he should reserve judgment and, in order to advance, make a provisional decision, ready to review it later; for standing still is disobedience for brothers advancing towards Christ. The prior knows best what each one is capable of; if a responsibility is to be given to a brother, he is the first to propose it (Roger 35).

The community, then, is technically led by a man with absolute power to make decisions. Br. Roger believed that this absolute power would give the prior the ability to side with the weaker members and the minorities of the community.

This absolute power is siphoned through the perspectives on the council, which was initially composed of only professed brothers but, over time, came to include new brothers as well. "The purpose of the council is to seek all light possible on the will of Christ for the ongoing life of the community" (Roger 31). Br. Roger then claims, "The first step is to establish silence in oneself, so as to be ready to listen to one's Lord" (Roger 31). One's own wishes, preconceptions, or judgments are not helpful for the council and the prior. What matters is a state of interior silence in which one may be able to discern the will of God. The role of the

council member is not advisor, but listener. Br. Roger urges brothers not to make political calculations on the council and "avoid a tone that brooks no reply, the categorical 'we must'… express in a few words what you feel corresponds most closely to God's plan…" (Roger 33). Decisions are meant to be weighed and pondered in a spirit of collegiality. This is not the U.S. Congress where compromises and pet projects allow hackneyed decisions to be made. The decision-making approach, by granting the prior absolute control and framing the council as a listening committee create an authority structure in which the quietest and meekest voice can find space to be heard and championed.

Chastity

In discussing chastity, I would like to explore briefly gender and sexuality's presence in the life of Taizé. Like many traditional monasteries, Taizé's brothers take vows of chastity upon entering the community. This is a commitment to celibacy for the rest of one's life. Br. Roger writes, "Our celibacy means neither indifference nor breaking with human affections; it calls for their transfiguration" (Roger 73).

For Br. Roger, a celibate lifestyle had obvious advantages for monastic life. First, he claims, "celibacy brings greater availability to be concerned with the things of God…" (Roger 73). We might call this an inner contemplative advantage. Secondly, he believes "Christ alone effects the conversion of human passions into total love for one's neighbor" (Roger 73-75). We might call this the external socio-political advantage of celibacy. It is celibacy for the sake of the other. These two advantages of the celibate life: the inner contemplative and external socio-political,

give the brother the ability to more fully and whole-heartedly give himself to the work of God.

But Br. Roger does not believe that celibacy is an easy choice. He acknowledges that it,

> … requires endless patience… Purity of heart is contrary to all the tendencies of nature… [and] Impurity, even in the imagination, leaves psychological traces which are not always eradicated immediately by confession and absolution. What counts, then, is to live in the continual new beginning of the Christian who is never disheartened because always forgiven (Roger 75-77).

Br. Roger goes on to link purity with an "openness of heart" that neither advertises nor hides the daily struggles of the brother.

The author continues by giving practical advice such as avoiding vulgar jokes, maintaining a vigilance in one's lifestyle, and self-forgetfulness for the sake of the other. Interestingly, he closes his meditations on celibacy by stating, "There is no friendship without the purification of suffering. There is no love of one's neighbor without the cross. The cross alone makes known the unfathomable depths of love" (Roger 79). This view of celibacy, which is simultaneously a suffering, a freedom, a denial of love, and a fullness of love is content with paradoxes. Br. Roger acknowledges the daily challenges and joys of practicing celibacy in community while reminding the practitioner of the eschatological benefits. He understands that celibacy is preserved in attention to the details of one's life, but does not exposit what is a pure or impure thought or action. That working out of one's celibacy seems to be personal, not systematized and categorized.

This same self-contradictory, vague, and stated commitment to celibacy is brought to other sectors of the Taizé community. The community for women

maintains a similar vow and lives with some distance from the brothers. Traditional gender roles between the two communities are reinforced, with women taking care of the sick and orphaned while men lead the broader community. There is a story often told at Taizé of when Br. Roger visits Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Teresa gives Br. Roger a sick orphan to take back to France and get medical treatment. Upon returning to France with the child, Br. Roger places him in the care of Br. Roger's sister, who eventually raised many children in the name of Taizé. Additionally, women do not sit on the council and cannot be the prior of the community. One can assume that their celibacy is articulated in the same way as the brothers.

It's worth also noting the sexual situation of the volunteers and pilgrims at Taizé. Tents, bunkhouses, and bathrooms are assigned based on gender. Yet, work, prayers, meals, and evening gatherings at the canteen are all mixed-gender settings. And groups that bring their own tents are not asked if men and women will be sleeping together. The monks do not make it their job to police the sexual behavior of the pilgrims or volunteers. This is consistent with Br. Roger's commitment to celibacy but relative silence on the categorization of what is pure and what is impure.

Bose

For the sake of brevity, rather than give thorough explorations of their respective rules and daily lives, I would now like to juxtapose the communities of Bose and Iona with Taizé. Enzo Bianchi founded Bose, moving to the town on December 8, 1965, the last day of the Second Vatican Council (History and Life of Bose 5). For three years, Bianchi lived at Bose essentially as a hermit and took trips to visit Trappists at Tamié, Orthodox at Mt. Athos, and Taizé, whose members at the time were all Protestant. In this time, he developed friendships with Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Cardinal Pellegrino of Turin. Concurrently, the local Catholic bishop banned liturgical services from being celebrated at Bose, due to their often ecumenical character. The ban was lifted in 1968 by the sympathetic Cardinal Pellegrino and shortly after, two Catholics and one Protestant man, as well as one Protestant woman joined Bianchi and founded the community of Bose. Upon this occasion, Fr. Ernesto Balducci wrote, "There is the paradoxical faith of these friends who intend to prepare, in absolute poverty, the Christianity of tomorrow" (History and Life of Bose 6).

In 1973, Cardinal Pellegrino presided over the taking of permanent vows by the first seven members of the community. The members committed to "community life" and "celibacy", "in the conviction that the Christian commitments to poverty and obedience are already implied in the promises made by each person in baptism…" (History and Life of Bose 7-8). Since that day, Bose has grown into a center of ecumenical dialogue, theology, and monasticism with dozens of monks and

nuns from the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions, hosting thousands of guests every year.

Compared to Taizé's founding narrative and rule, Bose takes pains to place itself within historical Christianity and monasticism. It claims to be "on the edge of the desert" (The Monastic Community of Bose 9), and "in the footsteps of tradition" (The Monastic Community of Bose 6). This community is not claiming to be doing something new and radical, throwing open the Church in post-Vatican II jubilation, but rather, returning *ad fontes*, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox and primitively living out their vocation. Whereas Taizé's Protestant foundations drew from the past but created new forms of worship such as Taizé chant to adapt to the contemporary world, Bose's founders saw the vitality of their life in the continuation of the ancient monastic traditions.

The introduction to Bose's rule contains the same primitive yet traditionally bound conviction of its founding, "Brother, sister, if you choose to live in this community, your only goal is a radical commitment to live according to the Gospel. The Gospel will be the absolute and supreme rule" (The Monastic Community of Bose 7). The rule borrows from the rules of Benedict, Basil, Pachomius, and other ancient sources in an attempt to draw out the best from the Eastern and Western traditions. Despite its radically ecumenical character, Bose attempts to define itself as a traditional expression of Christian monasticism. In his essay on "Monastic Life and the Ecumenical Dialogue," Bianchi claims,

> If monastics truly respond to their vocation of inner unification, communion lived visibly, and continually renewed reconciliation and mercy… they will be servants of unity and ministers of ecclesial communion (Bianchi 12).

This is the driving purpose of the Rule and daily life of Bose: by returning to sources, Bose hopes to model ecumenical unity and gospel truth to a divided Church and violent world.

Work and Hospitality

In many respects, the work of Bose is resonant with Taizé. Hospitality is a core value and the Rule of Bose quotes St. Benedict in urging its monks to, "treat every guest as if they are Christ himself." Bose hosts thousands of visitors for programs every year, mainly Italian, with a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. It is not as oriented towards youth as Taizé, and monastics do not leave the community to host massive rallies in the same way that Taizé's brothers host "Pilgrimages of Reconciliation." Specific monks are assigned to the work of hospitality though the entire community shares meals with the guests.

Bose believes that whatever was one's vocation or skill set before entering the community, should be cultivated, not sacrificed, by the monastic life. In contrast to Taizé's rotations, Bose's individualistic approach allows for personal gifts to be expressed in the community. During my time at Bose, I met a man who had recently finished his PhD in stem cells at Cambridge before deciding to join the monastery. He loved the common life and prayer, but wanted to continue his life's work in science so he has begun to explore ways of writing about and possibly still doing the scientific work he left behind in some capacity. He is a monk and a scientist. Neither identity must be sacrificed in order for him to live his vocation. Others are icon painters, scriptural commentators, theologians, artists, farmers, and hosts. Obviously, there are times when a monastic is called to do something that may not

be his or her first choice but this is the exception rather than the rule. Bose believes that this diversity of vocations enriches its common life.

Additionally, Bose believes that along with prayer and work, leisure is vitally important to the life of the monk.

> When you relax and take time to enjoy yourself, do simple things like everyone else does. Rest, relaxation and fun are not an evil or a way to forget your vocation momentarily, but are necessary if your life is to be fully human (Rule of Bose 36).

Every Friday night, the women will set up a volleyball game in a pasture while the men play soccer a few yards away. In between, everyone laughs and mingles and cheers on both sides. Sitting at the evening meal and hearing the arguments about Italian politics, travel stories, and questions about the gospel that day, there is a great humanity in the rhythmic Italian cadence and conversation. In writing about and living its commitment to leisure, Bose affirms that monasticism is first and foremost a way of being fully human.

Silence also plays a role in this commitment to rest and leisure. Guests are restricted from entering certain monastic buildings, creating physical boundaries of hospitality. Between the hours of 8pm and 6am, silence is enforced. At lunch, the community eats in silence, playing classical music while soup and fresh vegetables from the garden are shared. Bose does not possess the same frenetic energy as Taizé. Bose's hospitality is more subdued, drenched in a commitment to silence and an inner life, both in the individual and the community.

Bose also differs from Taizé in the way it engages the outside world. Bose will host ecumenical gatherings and conferences but nothing near the scale of Taizé during the summer or Taizé's "Pilgrimages of Reconciliation and Trust" on different

continents around the world. Part of the ethos of Bose, consistent with its commitment to living "on the edge of the desert," is modesty and its first language is silence. The monastics of Bose believe poverty to be a basic commitment of all baptized Christians and therefore "make it [their] ambition to lead a quiet life and work with [their] hands" (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Prayer

The Rule of Bose very closely resembles the Rule of Taizé on prayer. It emphasizes the centrality of prayer to the monk's vocation. It encourages monks having difficulty in prayer, saying, "When you begin to find the office difficult, trust that your brothers and sisters are able to fill in for your emptiness" (Rule of Bose 38). This is similar to Taizé's reminder that just showing up was an act of devotion.

Bose's rule places a bit more emphasis on personal prayer, quoting Matthew 6:6 about praying in secret, and exploring the personal benefits of private prayer. These include the unification of a divided self, inner peace, the ability to understand others, and acting in accordance with the gospel (Rule of Bose 39). The daily prayer of Bose revolves around the Psalter and daily Eucharist. Committed to sharing Eucharist together, Bose received a special dispensation from the local Catholic bishop for non-Catholic community members at Bose to partake in Eucharist. Bose argued that the Eucharist was the symbol of a common life, and the non-Catholics at Bose were already living a common life, and so there was no reason why they couldn't participate as well. The bishop agreed. Similar to Taizé, along with the incorporation of both Eastern and Western prayers and iconography, both

communities found a way to celebrate the Eucharist in its fullness and maintain its ecumenical commitments (See ritual practices chapter on Taizé).

Obedience

Bose views obedience as something that,

> frees you from the subjectivism that menaces your life according to the Spirit, and you can be totally available in a way that does not permit you to hold yourself back. You must therefore see in the community the Church's nearest face… (Rule of Bose 28).

Formally, a council, which meets weekly, governs the monastery. The council is made up of all community members who have made "liturgical entrance" into the community (Rule of Bose 29). But each year, a general council will meet to reflect upon the community's past year and long-term trajectory. As a community, there is a ritualized space to consider where one has come from and where one is going. This structure is more democratic than Taizé's model, which had a council, but gave the abbot the absolute say.

With respect to the individual's place in decision-making, Taizé and Bose are very similar in warning against categorical imperatives and encouraging community members to subvert their will to the will of the community. As for individual leadership, at Bose, there is one who presides over the council, but he or she does not have the same authority that the prior of Taizé has. The Spirit is discerned and followed by the entire council, with no one member holding ultimate authority.

Chastity

In many respects, Bose's reasoning for celibacy resembles that of Taizé. The inner contemplative and external socio-political reasons are mentioned. One element of the external socio-political stressed by Bose is solidarity with those who

are alone throughout the world. By being celibate, one is able to better understand their loneliness. One additional dimension that Bose adds to celibacy is what we will call an eschatological dimension.

> Christ asked some people to live in celibacy as a way of witnessing that the appointed time has grown short and the present form of this world is passing away, for he is coming soon… So give your undivided being to the Lord, and be a concrete and visible sign of the longing for Christ's return. Your celibacy will be an announcement and prophecy of the Kingdom, where there will no longer be male and female, for all will be one in Christ (Rule of Bose 21).

For the monastic at Bose, celibacy is a sacramental sign, a prophetic reminder that "Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again."

In many ways, Bose does practice this statement that "there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Men and women work together, pray together, and eat together. Yet, there is gender differentiation in ritual spaces. Men pray on one side of the church and women on the other. And, only men can consecrate the Eucharist, though women perform all other liturgical roles in a service.

Iona

In contrast to the many similarities of Bose and Taizé, Iona has a strikingly different way of life and a fundamentally different rule with which to structure it. At first glance, the rule seems consistent with other monastic forms. There are five components: daily prayer, sharing and accounting of resources and money, planning and accounting for the use of our time, action for peace and justice, and meeting with each other (Rule of Iona). At first glance, one might call these: common prayer,

shared work, ordered time, prophetic witness, and common worship; all traditional monastic values.

Yet, these values mean radically different things translated into a dispersed community. Because Iona is made up of a network of members living across the UK, a common life, in the traditional sense, is not possible. Apart from other members, daily prayer becomes a personal devotional practice, sharing resources becomes donating a tax-deductible portion of one's income to the Iona Community, planning and accounting for one's time means living what one defines as a full life, action for peace and justice means choosing a few of the fourteen possible social actions the Iona Community endorses, and meeting with each other is quite similar to evangelical Bible studies that meet regularly in the U.S. Ultimately, one's adherence to the rule is based upon one's personal interpretation of the rule.

Traditionally, rules were meant to be worked out in a common life. They were enforced so that a common life could be possible, so that an individual couldn't place him or herself above the good of the community. Yet, for Iona, there is a shift in the definition of a rule. For this community, it exists as a declaration of shared values and commitments. We believe in prayer, but we do not pray together. One should give out of what one has, but one needs only to write the check rather than pool everything together. A member must work for justice, but it is not as the prophetic witness of a united community, but as an assortment of people who support a broad range of contemporary political issues. For Iona, a rule is a list of shared commitments that a dispersed group of people may or may not be following. The founder of the modern community, George Macleod, wanted Iona to be a place

that the community member comes for a season and then returns to his or her home. The Iona community, or network, exists as a support structure for one's work in his or her home community, not a replacement for that community.

Because Iona's rule does not serve as a guide for living together, but rather as a list of values or commitments, *how* the community lives together on the island is sometimes a point of contention. While I was staying at the Abbey, a group of Quakers came to participate in the Parker Palmer retreat. Because Quaker worship involves sitting in a circle in silence rather than the more formal liturgies of the Iona community, many Quakers decided not to attend the Iona Community's services. Moreover, they decided that they would have their own services, at the same time, in a different location. The hosts of the retreat, Iona members, said the Quaker service could not take place at the same time and as part of the Iona retreat experience, everyone was encouraged to worship together. To this exhortation, the Quakers asked why this was required, saying that this was not what they expected. At one point, the issue became the subject of a heated discussion. Some said that their personal religious expression was being repressed while others said that they had signed up for an Iona Retreat, and wanted to participate in Iona Worship.

At one point, one older Quaker woman asked if there was some type of rule or set of guidelines that they could use to make sense of the situation. For Iona, there wasn't. Because the rule is not written for a life together, but rather for personal practice within a network, there wasn't anything said about worship on the island, no urging like Bose and Taizé to worship together even if one is feeling dry. The group ended up using a set of guidelines from Parker Palmer's "Courage Circle"

work to resolve the issue. While this incident may seem to be juvenile, it points to a broader problem for the community. Without a rule delineating *common practice*, what happens when community members have a different idea about what it means to live a common life? The values that the community espouses have resonances with monastic rules, but the focus on values rather than how to practice is a consequential difference between Iona and other communities.

This approach is in sharp contrast to Taizé and Bose, places where a rule undergirds a radically common and place-based life. Taizé and especially Bose see themselves as communities taking up the mantle of the ancient monastic tradition, fulfilling Vatican II's call to return to the sources and create a monasticism for the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. Juxtaposed with these communities, Iona seems to have taken a different path, trying to glean traditional monastic values for dispersed, geographically distant, mobile modern life. It is a move towards individualism, a living out of monastic values in a secular milieu, as opposed to the resacralization that Bose and Taizé have embarked upon. A Presbyterian minister I interviewed said that because Iona was founded out of the Reformed tradition, it believed in always sending people out. He said it would be too Catholic for them to stay on the island and build a permanent life together. Iona Abbey exists merely to re-energize so that the members can through go and preach the gospel. One wonders though, what exactly these members are preaching when they do not have a common story to tell.

Chapter 4: Monasticism as Tactic

"The greatest sin of the age is to make the concrete abstract." –Nicholas Berdyaev

Ecumenical Monasticism makes the abstract concrete. The communities studied take theological ideas and commitments and attempt to live these commitments practically. For example: At Taizé, the community attempts to live their belief in the reconciliation of all Christians through a communion ritual that includes all present regardless of doctrinal belief. In the daily living of theological commitments, rhetorics, spaces, and rituals are employed as tactics that undermine inherited theological systems and ecclesial institutions.

Michel de Certeau In his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, used the word "tactics" to describe actions that resist the "strategies" of structures (states, bureaucracies, strong cultural assumptions), which claim inherent cultural authority by their authorized and often violating and violent power. They structurally discipline and oppress minority or marginalized groups. Members of these groups and other "ordinary" people develop "tactics" that provide agency and identity amid such structures of power. Everyday acts, these "tactics" from Certeau's perspective, also engage the forces of a capitalism, including questions of labor, time, effort, and space.

In his famous chapter on "walking" he describes how that simple act can resist a city's capitalistic claims on individual humans, attempting to rob the common person of agency and identity. Through the ordinary act of walking a city street, these individuals tactically subvert the power structures of the capitalist

city, exercising their agency, embracing their identity as more than a cog in the larger process. I argue that the ecumenical monasteries I study employed such "tactics." In this chapter, I explore the ways in which particular facets of the communities examined are tactical, such as East Belfast Mission's construction of a bio wall, Taizé's communion ritual, and Iona's pilgrimage walk. I am seeking to explore the ways in which monastic communities resist the strategies of contemporary structures of power, particularly inherited ecclesial norms and boundaries.

Most importantly, this tactical undermining is a way of renewing and reforming the Christian monastic tradition. My research focuses on the localized, ethnographic parameters articulated in the introduction to this thesis. These are not the broad systematic and structural changes brought about through *Perfectae Caritatis*, but small, localized, subtle changes that are enacted in each community. Tactical undermining challenges contemporary norms while claiming a closer fidelity to monastic founders and the values of early Christian communities. The leaders of the communities researched claimed these tactics as part of the newest iteration of monastic renewal. These leaders believe constant reform is a monastic value. Enzo Bianchi, the founder of Bose writes, "… monastic life has always sought to be a *life of conversion*, of returning to the origins, to the gospel…" This "conversion," as Bianchi has called it, has historically been necessary within the larger monastic movement as well. Ironically, monasticism has itself at points been an inhibitor of reform, causing some, like Francis to attempt alternative monastic models and others, like Luther, to abandon monasticism all together.

The monasteries researched in this thesis, especially Bose, emphasize this theme of continual conversion through the enacting of tactics, claiming that this is why monastic history has seen so many reforms, both in the East and in the West. Bianchi claims the energy at the heart of monastic life seems to express itself in one reform after another. He goes on to say conversion and reform are part of each monastic's personal journey and part of the life of every community, and this results in a constant process of renewal within monasticism (Bianchi 12 & 13). André Louf adds, "No single concept summarizes more effectively the numerous vicissitudes of monastic history than that of reform" (Bianchi 13). For the founders and articulators of the ecumenical monastic communities I researched, reform and renewal was a constant theme. Tactics are employed by each community in order to reform or renew not only the community, but also the broader church and society.

Ecumenical Monasticism's Effect on Theological Discourse

An ecumenical common life is a tactical choice that rejects the strategies of separation perpetuated by many theological and ecclesial systems. By living a ritualized common life, narratives of shared experience are cultivated. In diverse ways and through different forms, ecclesial and theological structures have a tendency to separate, to distinguish, as one sees in the denominationalism that exists today. In response, the practices of a common life, including lived rituals, cultivate a shared new narrative of experiences crossing theological and ecclesial systems' boundaries, possibly even creating new ones. In praying together, eating together, and working together, ecumenical communities develop a localized common language for describing life, including experiences of the divine, that is

non-sectarian. This happens in all communities, an example being the uniquely shared vocabulary of students and faculty at a particular university. Narratives of shared experience do not reject denominational language, but overcome its limitations because the theological discourse becomes more rooted in the concreteness of everyday life rather than abstraction.

Requests for help with chores, advice on relational conflict, discussions about the community's future, and common scripture readings are the bedrock of ecumenical discourse. Conversations about creation, the fall, redemption, and resurrection are had in between such chores, business conversations, planning meetings, etc., yet remain rooted in the same, local vocabulary. Ecumenical monasticism forces theological language to be grounded in the concrete. The shared vocabulary that the ecumenical monastery develops is grounded in practical necessity. Theological language, that which seeks to describe the indescribable, must rely upon this bedrock to be understood in each particular community. The duty of the local, tactical Christian theologian is to tease out the ways in which the divine manifests in the mundane, using a language comprehensible to all members of the community to describe the fundamental Christian mystery of incarnation.

By claiming that ecumenical monasticism cultivates and situates theology in the concrete, I am not suggesting that it is anti-intellectual. On the contrary, by constantly striving to return *ad fontes,* the theologies of the monastic communities must/can/delight in drawing from the entire breadth and depth of the Christian monastic and theological traditions. Living an ecumenical common life, the rhetorical world of the theologian is expanded. Writing ecumenically, the

theologian must speak to and from multiple traditions, employing multiple vocabularies, in multiple concretenesses and abandoning a sectarian approach to theological writing.

Certeau asserts, "In the space of language, a society makes more explicit the formal rules of action and the operations that differentiate them" (Certeau xx). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the ecumenical monastery is a tactic that deconstructs and manipulates such "formal rules of action" in Christian theological language. It rejects not only the communal separation of Christian denominations, but also the rhetorical separation of Christian communities. Theological discourse remains dynamic, trenchant, and diverse, but it becomes "our" language instead of "my" language when spoken ecumenically.

I want to argue that previous attempts at ecumenical theologies have failed because such theologies lacked a common life. Abstract theological discourse disconnected from the concreteness of daily living cannot be ecumenical because it does not spring out of the lived experience of community. Theological discourse divorced from a common life reaffirms pre-existing structures. It is a strengthening of isolated rhetorics. For example, the theologies coming out of Bose draw from a broad swath of the Christian tradition, Bose claiming its place as an inheritor of multiple Christian theological traditions. Yet, Bianchi's work is written as an ecumenical community, a community conversant with various vocabularies but beholden to none. When it is useful to call something Eucharistic, the term is employed, but it is at the discretion of the theologian not the authority structure. The use, then, becomes tactical. It can be abandoned at any time in favor of a more

appropriate word for describing the common ritual. Theological words and concepts, rather than serving as barriers, become tactical devices only useful to the extent that they articulate the sacred experience of the community, not vice versa.

Ecumenical Christian monasteries inevitably deconstruct insider language. The inevitable flow of visitors, new novices, and changing surroundings and demographics offer up new ways of speaking about the divine. We see this already in Eastern-Western dialogue on contemplative practice. Here, an action experienced by both Christian and Buddhist communities must be articulated in a way that is comprehensible for both traditions. Because English is currently the *lingua franca*, much of Western scholarship has described contemplative practice using English words that did not previously have a place in Christian thought. For example, while terms such as "watchfulness" have been a part of the Orthodox vocabulary for some time, Western Christians did not use a term such as "attention" to describe their personal devotion. Cultivating attention is a Buddhist practice that Christians found helpful to describe the mental posture the practitioner must assume in contemplation. By employing such a term, theologians such as Thomas Keating are claiming sources previously inaccessible to the Christian tradition. The searching for *ad fontes* eventually leads to ever-widening and inter-religious streams. If the theologian is willing to venture outside of Roman Catholicism to describe the sacred, why not cite Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, or Hindu sources that prove helpful? When theology is employed to describe the shared experience of the divine and action need not be articulated by inherited theological language, borrowing is inevitable.

Ecumenical monasticism constantly opens new rhetorical possibilities. As increasingly diverse people are welcomed into a common life, theological vocabularies expand. These vocabularies are not diluted, but rather, equipped with an ever-broadening set of descriptors as communities struggle to articulate their experiences of a ritualized common life. These communities place shared practice at the center of their lives, rather than doctrines, placing doctrinal commitments in the place of descriptors, rather than arbiters, of faith.

Ecumenical Monasticism as Liberating Space

In his work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau believes that the consumeristic society we have inherited is depersonalizing. He asserts that rhetoric is controlled by structures, which assume that the individual lacks the ability to "produce without capitalizing, without taking control over time" (Certeau xx). In this world, Certeau saw what everyday people did, they created tactics that are employed to reclaim agency and an identity independent of capitalist culture. One way to do this is by resacralizing now capitalist geographies. This is not a return to a pre-modern world of enchantment, but the ritualization and routinization of space in such a way that it is freed from its need to capitalize. Lane writes, "Human beings are invariably driven to ground their religious experience in the palpable reality of space" (Lane 7). Simone Weil stated, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (Lane 7). This sense of rootedness is at once constructed, imagined, and fetishized, but it is also concretely connected to geographic locations and the natural world. By existing as a location that provides

"dignity-in-specificity" (Lane 247), the ecumenical monastery's common life is a tactical liberation from consumeristic society.

Christian theology has struggled with a God who is at once transcendent and radically incarnate. Christian spirituality has oscillated between a supra-locative divinity and the God-man who was and is immersed in particularity. We are standing on holy ground, but we cannot see that which makes it holy. Lane asserts, "the distinctive contribution of Christianity may lie in its refusal to dematerialize the world of matter" (Lane 246). But, how is this "refusal to dematerialize" enacted? By ritualizing, routinizing, naming, and creating spiritual narratives of place, the communities researched manipulate geographies to create meaning.

An example of such a manipulation is the Iona Community. By reconstructing the ancient monastery, the community is attempting to place themselves within an alternative narrative. People who visit are no longer simply wealthy, white, consumers, but pilgrims literally reenacting the journeys of ancestors, manipulating time and capital for themselves. De Certeau famously uses the example of walking in the city to describe the type of creative tactic necessary to undermine structures. By leading the weekly pilgrimage walk around the island, the Iona Community invites visitors to manipulate expectations and limitations by engaging in a ritualized walk that imbues the practitioner with a dignity and independence not available through consumeristic life. Here, the geography of Iona is claimed as a space for the individual to encounter themselves freed from "normal life" and free to experience alternative realities.

Another example of the manipulation of space as tactic is the East Belfast Mission's architectural design. By quite literally carving out a public square and community garden, what was previously uninhabitable and unused land became life-producing and a common area. In addition, EBM has chosen to erect a leafy "bio-wall" for one of its exteriors, a sharp contrast to the paramilitary murals on adjacent buildings. The community garden public square, and biowall stand as practical and visible rejections of the violent partisan murals painted on the buildings across the street. The demolition of old buildings and construction of Skainos Square is a tactic employed to reject the inherited socio-historical situation and structure.

Mystery as Tactic

Another way that boundaries are transgressed is through the use of mystery as a tactic. By refusing to let ritualized acts be used as exclusionary tools, and by intentionally disguising rituals' denominational identifiers, the ecumenical communities create their own definitions of insiders and outsiders, manipulating to varying degrees Christian ritual spaces, spaces of mystery, in a way that is accessible for their community.

The most obvious example of such action takes place at the Taizé Community around their celebration of the Eucharist. Each morning, a communion service is held in the Church of Reconciliation. Normal Taizé chants are interrupted for the serving of bread and wine. All worshippers are invited to take communion and questions are not asked about one's religious affiliation or commitments. The brothers of the community serve the bread and wine and each participant is told

that they are receiving the body and blood of Christ when they approach the minister. After reception, the participant sits back down and the chants continue for another fifteen minutes until the service ends and pilgrims race to the canteen for breakfast.

Upon first encounter, this ritual sounds very similar to many Christian communion services. Ministers give bread and wine to worshippers who are told that they are receiving the body and blood of Christ. As routine as this may seem, one must realize that Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants rarely share communion. Each denomination has its own rules for who can and cannot receive communion. For Catholics and Orthodox, the consecration of the bread and wine, the priest's blessing that mysteriously makes Christ present in the elements, excludes those who do not share the theological understanding of the ritual from participating. Despite the progress of the Ecumenical Movement over the past several decades, cases of partaking in communion from common loaves of bread and a common cup are rare.

Taizé believes that, as a visible symbol of Christian unity, worshippers should share in communion. To get around theological barriers, before the service, in the sacristy, Taizé has ordained Catholic priests consecrate some of the bread while other bread is "blessed." Then, all of the bread is mixed together and doled out to each minister. Each minister serves the bread he is given, saying, "the body of Christ." At each communion station, a sign written in several languages says, "blessed bread." When the worshipper approaches, one may assume that consecrated bread is consumed, or not. For the Catholic or the Orthodox, one can

imagine that the priest consecrated their host and the host of the Protestant was merely blessed, not consecrated. Alternatively, the Protestant can assume that he or she is consuming blessed bread symbolizing the body of Christ, not having to violate their rejection of Catholic transubstantiation. Taizé believes that this "trick" preserves the denominational commitments of the worshippers while creating a visible symbol of the unity Taizé preaches.

This act does not ignore the theological boundaries established by various denominations. It does not explicitly proclaim their inadequacy, antiquated nature, or label them provincial or superstitious. The ritual respects these denominational commitments while developing a trick for transcending their exclusive nature. Taizé relies upon what may be called an "intentional naïveté," or even an "ecumenical naïveté," regarding the status of communion bread. By mixing consecrated bread with blessed bread, mystery is employed as a tactic for overcoming historical divisions. In the same way that modern Catholics do not chemically break down consecrated bread to determine if it has become human flesh, what I call an intentional naïveté, the brothers of Taizé are intentionally naïve with regards to the status of their communion elements. By claiming an intentional deference to mystery, the community is able to bring together denominations that were previously unable to celebrate a central Christian ritual together.

Interestingly, this type of practice bears resemblance to older forms of consecration. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the priest consecrates the bread behind the iconstasis, out of sight from the worshippers. And in the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church, the priest would have his back turned away from the

worshippers and would whisper "secret words" in Latin over the bread. These actions created a ritual distance, creating a space of mystery for the lay worshipper. For these traditions, it was not and is not the worshipper's job to oversee the consecration of the host, evaluate its status, or witness its transformation. It was the duty of the worshipper to accept the mystery in faith. In its communion services, Taizé is creating such a space. Rather than come to a definitive answer on the theological status of the bread and wine, Taizé adds a layer of mystery to the ritual, a layer consistent with historical practices, which allows everyone to participate in Christian communion.

Even more radical than communion between all Christians, by adding this layer of mystery, Taizé allows even those who are not Christians to participate in a communion service with consecrated hosts. Because Taizé does not question the doctrinal commitments of its fellow worshippers, and because blessed bread is technically made available to all people, even in Roman Catholic or Orthodox traditions, communion is open to all peoples. Taizé invites all peoples to the table, moving beyond ecumenism to a world in which all are invited to experience communion with their own theological perspectives or none.

To some, this practice may seem "gimmicky," a "gaming of the system" or a technicality that is not, in actuality, a major shift in Christian theology. To this critique, one can only reply that this observation has some truth. This critique is the reason why the word "trick" was used to describe the action by which mystery was employed to achieve the community's objective: communion for all peoples. This trick is a tactic, a practical choice made by the community in order to manipulate

inherited theological and historical divisions. The element of mystery, as mentioned, has been present in Christian ritual for centuries. Through the trick of consecration in the sacristy, mystery is utilized as a tool. By calling upon mystery, Taizé absolves itself of the demands for an explicit theology of communion and the definitions that have hindered Christian reconciliation in the past.

Thesis Conclusion:

This project is a brief glimpse at four very different communities, lived alongside for a short period of time during the summer of 2013. I cannot claim to know the future of Christian monasticism or even give a conjecture about its current state. It is not a monolith. Christian monasticism has almost as many definitions as there are communities. This project sought to explore the ways that four communities inhabited space, enacted rituals and practices, constructed monastic rules, and employed tactics to subvert the theological and ecclesial systems they inherited. While the experience of living with these communities for a period did give me an embodied experience of the places, that experience was temporal, circumstantial, and may or may not have been representational of the daily lives of the communities. But, the preceding chapters were an effort to analyze the common life these communities have attempted to construct.

Exploring the construction of space at East Belfast Mission and Iona, I suggested, building on the work of Belden Lane, that there is something natural, constructed, and even imagined about sacred space. I argue that East Belfast Mission's intentional construction of the Skainos Centre was, in many ways, a theological treatise in concrete and glass. The design of the center is meant to convey the theological commitments of East Belfast Mission. Its exterior biowall is a rejection of and departure from the paramilitary murals on the surrounding buildings. And its translation of the Christian sanctuary into a multipurpose space

with subtle Christian undertones has made the space available for a multitude of uses beyond Christian liturgy, though this translation has at times proved disorienting for its parishioners. In its café, East Belfast Mission has sought to cultivate what it sees as Christian hospitality while the customers may or may not understand or care about its religious inspiration. Through the quite intentional design and construction of the Skainos Centre, East Belfast Mission attempted to create a center for community revitalization, applying traditional monastic values to construct a space that welcomes all people.

In comparison, the Iona Community has tried to rebuild the medieval monastery and create a dispersed community of pilgrims, many from the Protestant Christian tradition but many who are "spiritual but not religious," pagan, or secular humanists. Because each pilgrim is there only temporarily, the experience one has at the island is designed in such a way that one carries the island in one's memory well after he/she has left. Iona becomes a mental state of retreat as much as a pilgrimage destination. Therefore, Iona, is an imagined state of mind as well a tangible geographic reality.

Looking at the role of ritual at Taizé in the next chapter, the theme that kept arising was that of translation. Translations are the ways in which the community makes Christian traditions available, known, and comprehensible to outsiders. Through its reformulation of traditional monastic chant, Taizé has found a way to attract European youth to an ancient form of prayer. In Taizé's chants, Biblical Sessions, and workshops, the community attempts to articulate what they believe the Christian gospel message to be for the next generation of the world's youth. And

in the delegation of work to its pilgrims, the community passes along the monastic commitment to work and prayer, "*ora et labora*," as well. My work suggests that for a community to be comprehensible and appealing to outsiders, it must find a way to translate its core values using a language that is understandable and inspiring to those outside of the Christian monastic tradition.

The next chapter, on Rules of Life, examines the ways in which Bose, Taizé, and Iona have constructed their own monastic rules. By using the monastic values of prayer, work, hospitality, poverty, and chastity as categories, in light of *Perfectae Caritatis*'s call for monastic renewal, the chapter teases out the ways in which the monastic communities have adapted these values to their contemporary situation. The monastic communities of Bose and Taizé have self-consciously attempted to create rules that are continuous with historical rules such as that of St. Benedict, St. Pachomius, and St. Basil. These monasteries are not attempting to create something new. This is not a "New Monasticism." For Bose and Taizé, this is a monastic life consistent with what they understand to be the Christian monastic tradition.

In contrast, Iona's attempt at a dispersed community that lives by a common rule is based upon a shared ideological framework rather than the experience of a common life. Certain values are espoused, such as environmental justice and prayer, but the specifics of how these values are practiced are not defined. In the example of the Quaker dissidents, one sees the ways in which the rule of Iona fails to provide a structure within which a diverse community can practice together.

These three chapters on place, ritual, and rules of life, are attempts to ethnographically examine various facets of community life. By applying Certeau's

theory about tactics to these communities in the last chapter, I argue that the construction and manipulation of space, the translation of theological language, and the use of mystery in ritual are all "tactical choices" that simultaneously subvert and reform inherited theological and ecclesial systems. In the practice of an ecumenical common life, the monastic communities live into possibilities previously impossible, such as Taizé orchestrating a consecrated communion for all, East Belfast Mission literally rebuilding a neighborhood devastated by religious violence, and the Iona Community manipulating the geography of the island and giving practitioners agency in its "pilgrimage walk." In these acts, the communities attempt to rearticulate the monastic tradition, in various forms and with varying levels of awareness, to a world grown unfamiliar with its values.

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