

## MYSTIC APOSTLE

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### Introduction

#### Quotes:

"To have a vow of obedience seems to me to be absurd if it does not imply a deep concern for the most fundamental of all expressions of God's will:

the love of his truth  
and  
the love of our neighbor."

"Whatever I have written can be reduced in the end to the one root truth: that God calls human persons to union with himself AND WITH ONE ANOTHER IN CHRIST."

Recognize the author of the quotes?

Could it have been Medaille? Of Course. Double union is central to both. Author, Thomas Merton.

What has been said of Merton in his approach to Eastern thought is also applicable to the efforts of our Team. It is said of Merton that he did not so much reach out for contact with other traditions but rather, he went so deeply into his own that he could not help discovering the common roots. What follows is evidence of that: ten years of research into our tradition have not only brought us to the very heart of the Gospel, to the source of Truth himself, but have clarified our rootedness in Christian tradition.

So for example, last year we showed the common ground shared by the Maxims of Medaille, the Cloud of Unknowing, and the writings of Paul. It was a tentative study with a tentative conclusion. Medaille was inviting us to be mystic-apostles. The idea had engaged me enough to stay with this theme, and throughout the year I studied the Complete Works of John of the Cross; the idea was to compare the two - especially their maxims. Two other sources "sneaked into" the above plan: my retreat brought me into the Exercises of Ignatius and my reading led me to Phillipe d'Angoumois. Heard of Ignatius - but not Phillipe?? Who is Phillipe? He was a director of lay people and spiritual writer for religious whose writings date from 1610 - 1638 in France AND he was one of the founders of the Company of the "Saint Sacrament". Getting closer to "home". What follows is simply a putting together of three interesting sources which help us understand Medaille with more clarity.

#### Definitions of Mystic and Apostle

Mystic - one who experiences the reality of her baptismal promise: union with God  
- "one who is always trying to live the will of God", as Merton says, in its most fundamental expression - love of his truth  
- love of neighbor.

Mystic as understood by Paul who does not hesitate to use such terms as "IN CHRIST" more than thirty times. Paul who lived the life of faith and received the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith (II Cor. 3: ). Paul who could exclaim, "I live, no not I, but Christ lives in me." Paul who (Ephesians 3) could pray that we too

would know "the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge and be filled with the utter fullness of God".

Mysticism according to Teilhard de Chardin: "IN ITS BEST SENSE IS FOUND WITHIN AND NOT IN DISSOCIATION FROM THE TOTAL STREAM OF HUMAN EVENTS".

Apostle - as understood by Merton:

"All the good that you do will come not from your work or you, but from the fact that you allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used by God's love." Apostle as understood and lived by Paul who could say (1 Cor. 1:17), "Christ sent me to preach the Good News, AND NOT TO PREACH THAT IN TERMS OF PHILOSOPHY, in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed." Paul who could thank God (1 Cor. 1:4) for teachers and preachers "BECAUSE THE WITNESS TO CHRIST has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while waiting for Our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed."

An apostle - one whose dependence is totally and only in God - who does not have security derived from others, which of course, they cannot give - an apostle - one whose deepest pain when rejected in the apostolate is that in rejecting her, it is Christ and His Father that is rejected.

So Medaille can say, when we engaged in apostolic activity, "Never speak of yourself, whether for good or ill..." because it is God Himself that must be central and He alone who must be made visible in our apostolic activities. In this sense, is there any radical difference? Can one be a true mystic without being a true apostle? Not really. It is not possible to be one and not the other. Yet the pendulum of history swings from accenting mysticism to accenting activism. AND WE IN OUR OWN LIVES find it difficult to remain, to make our home in that very slippery place where both can be in harmony. Yet these two concepts - "mystic, apostle" - represent two traditions that have been side by side in the tradition of Western Christianity; they not only frequently touch, overlap as it were; they also mutually nourish.

Turn to Spain. Notice 16th century attempts to be true to the Christian tradition in the midst of religious turmoil of the Reformation. True, here we find the cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition, but it is to two who used very different methodologies that we look. The writings of John of the Cross, 1542-1591, and Ignacio de Loyola's Spiritual Exercises, 1522 (predating the Society!). John of the Cross was primarily a poet. In the Spanish tradition poetry was considered essential to prayer. His Maxims: Sayings of Light and Love (76), Maxims on Love (80). What follows is a simple placing side by side of two authors:

#### SIMILARITIES

John of the Cross

Medaille (Maxims)

#### PURITY OF INTENTION

Strive always to keep God present and to preserve within yourself the purity he teaches you. Strive for the greater honor and glory of God in all things.

Have God alone before your eyes, his unique contentment, his glory, and attach no importance to anything else.

SIMILARITIES (Cont.)

John of the Cross

Medaille

REASON

Be attentive to your reason in order to do what it tells you concerning the way to God.

Blessed is he who, setting aside his own liking and inclination, considers things according to REASON and justice before doing them.

Love and act according to reason and duty and not according to whim or the rash movement of some inclination.

Desire for your body a perfect submission of its imagination and all its senses to the direction of REASON.

TRIALS

Have a great love for trials and think of them as but a small way of pleasing your Spouse, who did not hesitate to die for you.

Never considers events, however trying as obstacles, but as very beneficial and necessary to living your life; if you view them as the effects of the very gentle, very loving Providence of God your Father on your behalf, you will love them tenderly and receive them willingly.

TRANSITION TO DIFFERENCES

St. John of the Cross wrote with the intention of teaching souls the dynamics of growth in union with God. Medaille's primary interest seems always to include the total double union, at least implicitly. Medaille is not giving detailed explanations; his is rather a synopsis of a journey of the spiritual life; he presumes a first step, i.e. an experience of God.

e.g.-John of the Cross: "If anyone is to reach perfect union with God through his will and love, he must obviously first be freed from every appetite, however slight."

Medaille in Constitutions: Means to arrive at this end:

"Living and dying in him, with him, and through him, make your own the holy purpose of the Divine Savior: the glory of God, his Father, and the salvation and sanctification of others".

Means similar, emphasis slightly different.

DIFFERENT EMPHASIS

John of the Cross

Medaille

ON OBEDIENCE AND FIDELITY

God desires the least degree of obedience and submissiveness more than all the services you think of rendering Him.

In order to direct yourself more exactly toward this fidelity, consider carefully that resistance to grace however slight, interferes amazingly with the flow of grace BOTH upon your progress in this virtue AND the good works directed toward the glory of God AND the benefit of the neighbor.

DIFFERENT EMPHASIS (Cont.)

John of the Cross

Medaille

ON CHARITY TOWARD THE NEIGHBOR

Not observing the imperfections of others, preserving silence and a continual communion with God, will eradicate great imperfections from the soul, and make it the possessor of great virtues.

Always have a good opinion of others always speak well of them; excuse and conceal as best you can all the wrong you might see in them; always be kind to others and never unkind to anyone.

ON DEGREES OF PERFECTION

Always be more disposed toward giving to others than giving to yourself and thus you will not be envious of nor selfish toward your neighbor. THIS IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF PERFECTION, for God is angered with those who do not give precedence to His good pleasure over that of men.

....love others with a pure and constant love, an ardent love, which when need be, spends itself for the neighbor as Jesus Christ spent Himself wholly for us and for his Church

However different the approach of each author, notice the similarity when they discuss union with God:

The Spiritual Canticle (p.519)

Just as one who is espoused does not love, care, or work for any other than her bridegroom, so the soul in this state has no affections of the will, nor work, nor appetite that is not entirely inclined toward God. She is as it were divine and deified, in such a way that in regard to all she can understand, she does NOT even allow the first movements contrary to God's will.

Maxims - Medaille

To complete these maxims on the fruitful use of time: so act, as St. Paul says, that with Christ Jesus your whole life be hidden in God. That is to say, do everything IN GOD AND WITH GOD, by the practice of an interior life animated with the sovereign intentions of God himself when he prescribes your actions and helps you execute them well. In everything, desire to be filled, guided and as it were animated by the Holy Spirit, who is truly the soul of our soul, since it lives by him through grace AND IS AS IT WERE, DEIFIED BY HIM.

Another Spanish Mystic

Since Medaille was a Jesuit, it should not surprise us to find that much of our tradition was rooted in his own. Ignatius and John of the Cross were contemporaries, yet Ignatius' orientation was slightly different - closer to home:

1st Principle and Foundation

Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save his soul. The other things on the face of the earth are created for man, to help him attain the end for which he is created.

Hence, he is to make use of them in so far as they help him in the attainment of this end, and rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Indifference1st Principle

Therefore we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

ZEALCall of Christ the King (Spiritual Ex.)

It is my will to conquer the whole world and all my enemies and thus enter into the glory of my Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join me in this enterprise MUST be willing to labor with me, that by following me in suffering he may follow me in glory.

TRUST

"Trust in God as if the success of things depend wholly on you and not at all on God.

But set to work as if God alone were to do everything and you do nothing."

Constitutions (Medaille)

. . . to inculcate divine love: first through a general disdain of and total detachment from all creatures **LOVING NO ONE EXCEPT IN AND FOR GOD.**

. . . through perfect conformity of their will to the divine will, together with true zeal for promoting the greater glory of God in themselves and in others.

Maxims of Perfection

Always be perfectly predisposed to receive with gentleness and indifference everything that is not contrary to God: to be healthy or sick, happy or dissatisfied, loved or persecuted, to do one thing or the other, to live or to die. In a word, predisposed to receive the whole of God's will for you, which you ought to love tenderly whatever it may be. All that comes from the hand of God is very beneficial when we receive it properly.

Maxims of Perfection

Embrace at least in desire, the conversion and sanctification of a whole world..and do so with a generous courage which brings you and urges you to wish to do everything, to undertake everything and to suffer everything **IN ORDER TO GLORIFY GOD**, assist in the salvation of those who cost his dear Son everything.

In order to combine prudence with humility. . . you should expect everything from God in whatever you undertake, nevertheless, be as diligent in carrying out your good works as if all depended on your efforts alone and as if God had entrusted their success alone to your work.

John Staudenmaier has said: "I believe it means that for Ignatius every aspect of my active life and work depends completely on God's action," i.e. "real apostle" - "mystic apostle."

The comparison is far from exhaustive but shows that Ignatius' genius was to create a "structure" that was a person so rooted and formed and formed in the discipline of Jesus that he could engage in service for the Kingdom as a truly authentic companion of Jesus; a person formed in and through prayer is one who is able to engage in service for the glory of God IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT IS ESPECIALLY IN THAT WAY THAT GOD IS FOUND. One might say that, for Ignatius, all of ministry is in a sense mystical union.

Does this same synthesis exist in Medaille? Is there a strong integration? Look at the Consecration formula:

I. Declare firmly in honor of God the Father that you will practice what according to your knowledge is the more perfect; what you believe corresponds to his greater glory and to the greater contentment of God.

(Synthesis: focus on God, union with Him lived out (mystical)  
practice - what glorifies, contents Him - His will  
this is His will - your sanctification  
this is His glory - man fully alive - true for self)  
true for neighbor)

II. Declare firmly in honor of God the Son that you will try to imitate his total self-emptying and totally empty yourself of self -

(Synthesis: a heart empty of self is filled with God  
a heart empty of self then can be apostolic  
If self-seeking is present, then the quality of Christ-life mediated is curtailed -  
the degree of love is always the degree of service)

III. Declare firmly in honor of God the Holy Spirit that you will free your heart from the love of every created being in order to fill it with the pure and perfect love of God and to do everything in the constant practice of this holy love.

(Synthesis: obvious - Medaille calls us to be the Congregation of the great love of God; this is the great commandment, "Love the Lord thy God...and thy neighbor as thyself.")

IV. In honor of Jesus, so wholly zealous for the glory of God His Father and for the salvation of souls, manifest great zeal for the advancement, (as far as possible), of the greater glory of God and the salvation and perfection of the neighbor.

(Synthesis: obvious)

V. In honor of the glorious Virgin Mary who was filled to overflowing with all kinds of graces, value fidelity to all the movements of grace, letting yourself be led with great gentleness, humility, and a very great obedience to the most adorable Holy Spirit.

(Synthesis: mystic - apostle: Mary's faith stance, open to receive Word, allow him to come to birth within and give him to his saving mission - sharing the Word for the neighbor's salvation and perfection.)

VI. Declare firmly in honor of the glorious St. Joseph that you will serve and love Jesus and Mary wholeheartedly as he served and loved them, and that when you serve the neighbor, you will do so in Joseph's spirit of humility, gentleness and charity.

(Synthesis: mystic - apostle: Joseph of Scripture; the silent one chosen by God - model of a manner of "being with" and serving according to God's plan, his will; one who lets God work in him and through him; one who has responded in faith to God's love.)

Both Ignatius and Medaille invite us to allow God to "release" the great lover in us. The message of Medaille is one - Mystic-Apostle.

### Phillipe - France 1638

For the laity there was a profound division between the duties of their state and the desire for contemplation and union with God; a defective formulation of the connection between contemplation and action that Ignatius had so well seen.

So, Phillipe d'Angoumois tries to integrate them, writes a "NOVEL", La Florence, (really a "cover" for a five-volume work on the spiritual life). Examples of chapter headings: "Discourse on the conversion of a lady living in the world to a devout life"; "Continual occupation through which the devout soul is united to God". Phillipe calls these helps "definite exercises, spiritual exercises aimed at guaranteeing solitude, and spiritual fervor." The work covers the three stages of the spiritual life (860 pages) and attempts to open to the laity the way of highest mysticism even though he is somewhat cautious and pessimistic about the possibility of a lay person attaining full union with God! He warns the ladies about "abstract mystics", yet sees them as the link between action and contemplation. He seeks to allow these ladies of the world to stay always with God in the midst of action. He tries ejaculations, prayers to be said on awakening, on going to sleep, on dressing, at meals, while going for a walk, etc.

Phillipe was not successful in transforming activity into prayer. Profound union between action and contemplation cannot be attained apart from the mystical life, and Phillipe falls into the dichotomy he tries to rectify. At best his synthesis was a precarious one for the lay people of France in mid-1600's.

As we have seen, Medaille's writings are geared to living the Christ life, fully and unreservedly. We might say of living the mystical life which can integrate action.

Is this charism needed in today's world? We are well aware of the problems that result from an activist approach to our world - to war, violence, injustice and the failure of our culture to contribute to life's deeper values. Do we not also see youth turning to a variety of false or pseudo-mystical experiences? to drugs, the occult? Note the interest in Zen, in Yoga. Today more than ever it is evident that it is, and always has been difficult to remain faithful both to the call to become the persons we are meant to be and to the call to share the gift of God's life with others. Is this not our *raison d'être* as Sisters of St. Joseph? Do we not possess the vision needed for healing today's world?

Vision is made fully real only in living. We have updated since Vatican II, have taken leaps in apostolic areas. Real renewal is still an unfinished task, one perhaps still ahead. One that will only be accomplished by an enfleshing of the integrated vision that is ours.

I would like to end with a challenge from the Hindu tradition: Moslem Hindu mystic, Kabir:

"My inside, listen to me, the greatest spirit,

THE TEACHER is near

wake up, wake up!

Run to his feet -

he is standing close to your head right now.

You have slept for millions and millions

of years.

Why not wake up this morning?"