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Archetypal renewal in the Catholic Church

The founder of analytical psychology C G Jung developed the idea of archetypes. These included concepts such as the Mother figure, the Trickster and the Puer Aeternus (or the Eternal Youth.) Animus and Anima are also often regarded as archetypes. These represent the presence of the masculine in a woman, and the feminine in a man. These archetypes are aspects of humanity which Jung regarded as existing in any age or culture. Jung also recognised that as well as archetypes there were archetypal images. These are images which have become fixed in our consciousness as containing certain values for us. Thus the Catholic Church, which is part of the consciousness of millions, can be represented as an archetypal image.

For those who see themselves as belonging to the Church, it represents a certain sense of our collective through a common belief and culture. Among its characteristics is its conviction that it is linked to Jesus Christ through the apostle Peter. It has a celibate priesthood generally speaking. It adheres to certain rites of worship. It believes that our lives are punctuated by certain moments of sacred intervention called Sacraments. It follows a certain religious calendar. It maintains that the Bible is the sacred book of Christians and that it is at the heart of its beliefs. The Church also issues its own documents and statements which it argues, places biblical teaching within the context of what are called 'signs of the times.' It has a minute independent state which it enables it to be treated with a certain official status within the secular world.

In the past the Catholic Church has been what has been called, to use a term elaborated by Stephenson Bond, drawing from C G Jung, a Conscious Dominant. (Stephenson Bond D, *The archetype of renewal: psychological reflections of the ageing death and rebirth of the king* Toronto, 2003) Here the Catholic Church occupied a central position in the collective sub-conscious. However, the world where this was plausible is now no more. The Catholic Church as we know it was primarily an occidental construct even if its origins were in the Middle East. Increasingly the centre of the world is no longer in the West. Its focus is more and more on the East. Even within the West it is no more the focus of society, and while it can gather in numbers for great events, in its day to day existence it is contracting.

The Church as an archetypal image remains but its externals are rapidly disappearing. In ancient mythology the King must die for the tribe to be renewed. Here the Conscious Dominant is embodied in the King. In history the violent deaths of Charles I, Louis XVI of France and Nicholas II of Russia shows how this can be lived out in reality.

If we believe that the Catholic Church needs to be renewed some key part of it must die. This must lie in the Catholics' own King who, to all intents and purposes, is the Pope and yet 'Pope' is only the name given the man who is essentially the Successor

of St Peter. What needs to die is a certain idea of the Papacy and this is the idea of the Papacy as being monarchical in its exercise of power. The present Papacy is still fundamentally that which was created under Pope Pius IX when after 1870 he described himself as the Prisoner of the Vatican. An elaborate veneer of monarchical awe and reverence was developed to compensate for its gradual loss of lay monarchical power after the revolutions of 1848.

The succession of Peter has existed in many different forms since the time of the Apostles. St Peter as a model for church leadership has nothing in common with the occupants of the Vatican throne. Of course we do not know many facts about Peter but a prominent association is his personal acknowledgement of this shadow side. The legend of his death that he insisted on being crucified upside down in deference to his master is the ultimate sign of this acknowledgement.

The Second Vatican Council introduced partial reform but in recent years there has been a clawing back towards the old centrifugal tendency in the Church. The First Vatican Council was the first such Council since the Reformation but before then there was a strong Conciliarist movement which vested the succession of Peter in the Bishops in Council and the Pope rather than in the latter alone aided by his curial officials. It is not widely appreciated that Thomas More, who for obvious reasons is usually held up as a defender of the Papacy, wrote in favour of the authority of Councils in a letter to Thomas Cromwell in March 1534. [see Oakley, Francis *Moreana* 64, March 1980, 82-88 at p 82] Thus it is possible to be a defender of the authority of the Councils and a defender of Peter simultaneously.

The Second Vatican Council was intended to complete the work of the First Vatican Council which was aborted in 1870 because of the Franco-Prussian War, but it turned into a movement of reform from within. The drive for reform arose from the aftermath of the Second World War when the Catholic Church was extremely triumphalist. Churches were packed and there was extensive missionary activity.

There was another side to this. There was much soul searching about the changing world and the experience of the War. Here Catholic clergy had shared the suffering of clergy of other denominations. We see this for example in the life of Titus Brandsma, the Dutch Carmelite, who died in Dachau Concentration Camp, but who in prison preached to other Christians. On the other hand there had also been much collusion with the occupying powers during the Second World War by some national Churches. Angelo Roncalli, who served the Papacy in Bulgaria, Turkey and France, was aware of the gigantic suffering caused by the War and also of Church collusion. It was he who as Pope John XXIII called the Council.

In the 1950s and 1960s Churches in the Third World became stronger but they owed little culturally to the classicist model of Catholicism exported by Europe and North America. This contradiction is vividly illustrated in the work of the Catholic Japanese novelist, Shusaku Endo, who questioned whether an occidental church could ever put down durable roots in a society like that of Japan. The late William Johnstone SJ, a friend of Endo's also challenged the Church as being purely Western in construct.

When Jung wrote of the renewal of archetypal images, he seemed to see the imagery being renewed in areas outside organised religion. Writing in the 1950s he mentions

the then current fascination with UFOs. I think this can be extended to the many other images we have subsequently created about the extra-terrestrial world. It can be seen in many films for example in *Star Trek* and also in our fascination with modern technology which depends so much on extra-terrestrial satellites. It can also be seen in the writings for example of J K Rowling, Philip Pullman, Anthony Horowitz, and Ursula LeGuin. This can be demonstrated as overlapping with religious writers like C S Lewis and J R Tolkien who created worlds beyond our own which seemed to correspond to ideas in Christianity.

New Age movements, religious cults and even the Occult provide what might be described as parallel religions to traditional faiths. One cannot but be struck by the dictum attributed to G K Chesterton that when people cease to believe in God they believe in anything rather than nothing. In religious terms the extra-terrestrial points to a medieval idea of Heaven as being something out there rather than something in the here and now.

Nevertheless we should heed the work of the Australian Catholic scholar Tacey who undertook research of the spiritual views of university students. He concluded that to a widespread extent traditional Catholic spiritual values had been replaced by spiritual values from elsewhere. This he says must be acknowledged in a positive way and not denigrated.

It might be argued that the way forward for the Church is not to compete with these movements but to radically alter its own image. In this it must cease to be a centralised authority but dare to surrender its power. The Pope and the Curia must give power to the bishops, the bishops to its priests, and the priests to the people. The remaining vestiges of nineteenth century monarchical authority must be surrendered. Ordinary people are just as capable of making decisions about church life as the clergy. We no longer live in a world inhabited by peasants and industrial labourers who require some kind of clerical squirearchy to lord it over them. Clergy have become increasingly like medieval clerks at the service of a bureaucracy. The etymological link between 'clerk' and 'clergy' is no coincidence. In my experience many modern lay people are highly able middle class professionals who can run a church just as well as, if not better, than a clerical caste.

Psychotherapy does not on the whole deal with the issues thrown up by the collective as represented by governmental and other authorities such as the Catholic Church. An exception to this is the post-Jungian, Andrew Samuels of the University of Essex. A feature of this area of human activity is the role of leader as a focus of loyalty. Samuels writes.

“One of the most dangerous, outmoded, yet persistent themes in our political life is the belief in the heroic leader. But as long as leadership remains a story about heroes, we will continue to have to have a demoralised populace and a power hungry elite. We need therefore to change the psychological relationship between politicians and citizens.” (Samuels A, *A new therapy for politics*, www.andrewsamuels.com/index 2001 p 2)

Samuels also talks about a 'democratic spirituality.' His is not a spirituality that would immediately be understood as such by a confessing Christian or other men or women of faith. Nonetheless he does use biblical language. Of 'democratic spirituality' he means.

“This means bringing back on to all kinds of agendas – personal, political and clinical- of the idea of *absolute equality*. In all the discussions about equality of outcome and equality of opportunity, something has got lost. And this is the notion of absolute equality, which used to be called traditionally ‘equality in the eyes of the lord.’” (Samuels A, *A new anatomy of spirituality: clinical and political demands the psychotherapist cannot ignore*, www.andrewsamuels.com/index 2002 p 19)

The role of clergy in general as clerks or civil servants has become so pronounced that it is at the expense of their primary function. This is spiritual and pastoral. How can clergy be men of prayer and care for others when so much of their time and energy is subsumed into office work? Taken to extremes this can lead to abuse because priests can become imbalanced in their lives and personalities. In the case of the abuse involving Ealing Abbey, Abbot Martin Shipperley, commented on one of the accused that he was a good administrator and good with figures, but that he did not really know him.

“He’s a very good administrator. He’s a very good money man. He’s not a man easily to get close to, a workaholic actually.” [cited in *The Times* 10th November 2011 p13]

It is hard to believe that this could be the case in an institution following the charisma of St Benedict with his roots in the Desert Fathers. The accused seems not to have been a man of prayer or of the liturgy, and he appears not to have been in fraternity with his brothers in community. I suspect that this is mirrored to a wide extent in other parts of the Catholic Church, and that there is an absence of individual relationship in the clerical caste.

I believe that this is also connected with Jung’s concept of Animus and Anima. Administrative skills are primarily aspects of a rational, and therefore of a masculine world view or mindset. Men whose personalities have an imbalance in this direction often lack an awareness of their feminine side. This is bound to be widely present in an all male caste, where relationships with women play a low part. This is because a man’s feminine side is developed primarily through his interaction with women. I am not saying that this necessarily as an argument against celibacy, but more as an argument against a clerical state that has lost its spiritual way. The poet Stephen Spender beautifully expressed the issue in a way drawn from personal experience.

Love for a friend expressed a need for self-identification. Love for a woman, the need for a relationship with someone different, indeed opposite, to myself. I realised that self-identification leads to frustration if it be not realized. [Stephen Spender, *World within world* [London, 1953] p 159

Some see the idea of Yin and Yang (Maleness and Femaleness) as being more of an interconnectedness of opposites. Therefore we work towards this connectedness in order to become more balanced beings. Jung would use the term ‘Individuation.’ With regard to an all male society Whitmont reinforces Spender when he writes.

Failure to integrate the *Yin* world culturally has led to the widespread rigidity of abstract dogmatic mental attitudes resulting in the sterile, instinct- and feeling disassociated, over rationalistic society of our day. [Whitmore Edward C, *The symbolic quest: basic concepts of analytical psychology* Princeton NJ 1978, p200]

What will be the nature of this renewed church? Most important of all it will be Trinitarian because it will be based on the equal relationship which resides between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the key to our understanding of the way forward in both society and individual relationships. This leads to its second characteristic in that it will be relational. The See of Peter, the bishops, the clergy and the people will be in relationship with another. Their state will be a state of dialogue and creative debate. Clergy will be able to concentrate on spiritual and pastoral matters which will enrich the lives of lay people, rather being mere functionaries as is increasingly the case now. Bishops will be able to concentrate on care of the clergy who are in their charge, rather than attending endless meetings and official liturgies. It will accept what Richard Holloway former Bishop of Edinburgh recognised, namely that the first duty of a bishop is care of his pastors.

A renewed Trinitarian church reflects a fundamental theological truth that God and Man are in relationship with one another, and our relationships with one another seek to reflect this. Martin Buber the Jewish religious philosopher distinguished between 'I-thou' and 'I-it.' 'I-thou' is a relationship between two people as individuals, and Buber states "The primary word I-thou establishes the world of relation." [Buber M, *I and Thou*, New York 1958 2nd Edition 6.] 'I-it' is where we see others as objects. We may often think otherwise but frequently we are denial about this.

In the present Church the priest so often ceases to be a person and becomes instead an object, albeit one with archetypal values. Similarly the people in the priest's eyes become dehumanised. It does not mean that the priest dislikes them or does not respect them, but for him they become objects out there separated by the sanctuary steps. Tragically the new order of mass enhances this separation for example by highlighting the episcopacy as "The Order of Bishops" in the Third Eucharistic Prayer. Buber maintained that institutions are *It*. Here he refers to the *It* as "... animated clod without soul." [Buber 44] This is why it is dangerous to place too much emphasis on the Church as an institution.

Psychotherapy talks about what are called 'object relations.' Here this is not to be confused with object relations as described by the post-Freudian Winnicott. In Transpersonal Psychology a distinction is drawn between the Gross and the Subtle. To put it simply the Gross takes place when we concentrate our energies on the superficial world of objects. In my use of the term, if we are involved in 'object relations' we may be superficially present to others without being engaged with them as subjects.

Carl Rogers, the founder of Person Centred Therapy, writes of the Unconditional Personal Regard which a psychotherapist should hold the client. This should be mirrored in the Catholic Church by the ultimate principle that we are all of equal dignity before God. It is of this that Pope John Paul II wrote in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*.

"We are not dealing with the "abstract man," but with the real, "concrete", "historical" man. We are dealing with "each" man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united himself for ever through this mystery." (John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, London 1979, p41)

In those heady days of 1978 when he was elected there was a time of hope that through his energy and creativity the Catholic Church might be renewed once more. Although Pope John Paul was from a traditionalist background his experience of life had been grounded in the fight for the rights of the individual against the tyrannies of Nazism and Communism. Whether it was because of the attempt on his life or because of the suffocating incubus of the Vatican, Pope John Paul seems to have become sucked into the porridge of the Curia. Robinson, the Australian bishop who fell foul of the Curia wrote.

“ It [The Curia] ensures that the past dominates the present and prevents the Church from breaking away from problematic aspects of its past.” [Robinson, Geoffrey *Confronting power and sex in the Catholic Church*, London & Victoria, 2007, pp128-129]

Avery Dulles, long before he was appointed a Cardinal prophetically enunciated this in a more general context.

“Because the Church carries with it so large a heritage from the past, there is a constant temptations for its members to cling to the ways of their ancestors and to resist the call to confront the world the world of today. In the wake of Vatican II, with its large promises of renewal and reform, we are presently witnessing a new surge of legalism and reaction.” (Dulles. A, *Models of the Church: a critical assessment of the Church in all its aspects*, Dublin, 1976, p 191)

But what happens so often now is that the ills of the church for example in the area of child abuse are blamed on the secular world. The official levels of the Church stay in denial as to the faults in their own institution which have made it possible for abuse to become endemic. These faults are far from being passing aberrations.

A renewed Church will be profoundly Eucharistic. It will indeed be a Holy Communion in which the Sacrament represents our entire relationship with the creative energy of God. Through the Eucharist we are in relationship with God and through God in Jesus Christ with the Communion of the Church and in indeed the Communion of the Cosmos.

Here God is within because we have become united with Jesus Christ in receiving the Sacrament, but God is also without because we are commanded to take Christ into the World. A part of this is in accord with the social teaching of the Church and it is profoundly modern for it accords with humanity’s concern for the future of the planet and indeed beyond. Here the human psyche is directly linked with the cosmos, and the Mass becomes a cosmic event, and humanity is shown to be part of God’s cosmic creation.

3,303 words