

In what ways can the concept of holy or sacred leisure inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the twenty-first century?

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ABSTRACT

Arising out of a perceived need to update a theology of leisure and its relationship with work, this thesis examines the ways in which the concept of holy or sacred leisure, dating from the early Christian centuries, can inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the 21st century. Adapting the Theological Action Research Model of the *Four Voices of Theology*, by Cameron et al.,¹ this thesis has four parts. Parts One and Two, the Normative and Formal Theologies, form the literature survey. Adopting Jean Leclercq's fourfold definition of leisure, *otia*, *quies*, *sabbato* and *vacatio*,² the Normative Theology examines firstly the meaning and purpose of leisure as described by key authors in the Classical Greek and Roman Periods. It then moves to Holy Scripture, the Patristic Period and the Early Christian monastic rules highlighting the religious, cultural and spiritual context in which the understanding and practice of leisure flourished and developed. Moving ahead to the nineteenth century, Catholic Social Teaching is surveyed, starting in 1891 with *Rerum Novarum*, examining the ways in which the Catholic Church adapted to new patterns of leisure and work. The Formal Theology provides a twentieth century commentary on the theology of leisure drawing its inspiration from three Catholic authors, the German philosopher and theologian, Josef Pieper, the Benedictine Jean Leclercq and the Trappist monk Thomas Merton. Using their contributions it examines how both old and new ideas, together with new approaches can enhance our Christian understanding of holy or sacred leisure, and its relationship with work, in the modern world. Moving from the literature review Part Three of the thesis, the Operant Theology, uses a thematic analysis of twenty-two semi-structured interviews. During these interviews participants were asked to describe how they understood and used their leisure time, especially in regard to a meditative or contemplative practice. Additional topics such as silence, solitude, mindfulness, the Sabbath, holiday time and the ways in which each of these contributed to their overall well-being and happiness are also covered. The final part of the thesis, the Espoused Theology, forms the synthesis and conclusion. Incorporating the voice of the author of the thesis, it draws its inspiration from the Normal, Formal and Operant Theologies and

¹ Helen Cameron et al., *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010).

²² Jean Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*, *Studia Anselmiana* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum S Anselmi, 1963).

formulates a Theology of Leisure and its relationship with work, appropriate for the twenty-first century.

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Right from its start in 2002, this thesis has been truly a collaborative process using “collaborative enquiry” as a means for exploring different facets of work and leisure. First and foremost my thanks go to all those who collaborated in the retreat workshops that were focused on the spirituality of work and leisure at Douai Abbey in rural Berkshire. The ambience and beauty of this country setting on the edge of the Wessex Downs, together with the hospitality offered by the monastic community, enhanced the experience of everyone who participated. But, above all, it is the generosity of the twenty-two men and women, drawn from the participants at these different workshops and lectures, who have to be acknowledged for offering to give up their time to be interviewed. Special thanks go to Tim Malnick, then at the University of Bath, who introduced me to the process of collaborative enquiry and helped facilitate some of the sessions, and also to Dr Josie Gregory of the University of Surrey who provided useful advice on the interview process.

Even before starting this thesis I have been guided by a number of scholars and academics. Firstly the late Professor André Delbecq of the University of Santa Clara, California, USA and the staff of the School of Applied Theology, part of the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California, USA, all of whom showed enthusiasm and support for what I was doing. Secondly, back in England, where I embarked on this doctoral thesis, members of the School of Divinity at the University of Oxford, especially Dom Henry Wansborough of St Benet’s Hall, Professor Henry Mayr-Harting, Professor Oliver O’Donovan, Professor Bernd Wannenwetsch and Sister Benedicta Ward. Their wisdom, intellectual rigour and insights have been invaluable and although it was not possible to complete my thesis at Oxford they provided the essential tools for subsequent research. After this, during the period 2006 to 2012, I was encouraged in my research by Professor Jonathan Wooding at the University of Lampeter. Dr Anthony Purvis, Dr Paul Pearson and Patrick F. O’Connell of the International Thomas Merton Society provided invaluable resources and advice. I am also grateful to Dr Clare Watkins of the University of Roehampton who provide guidance on the “Four Voices of Theology” model. When time and opportunity permitted, and I was able to resume this thesis, the gentle and patient guidance of my supervisor Professor Peter Tyler at St

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INTRODUCTION

(i) THE CHOICE OF TOPIC

This thesis began its journey in the Spring of 1998 when I was seeking a topic for my dissertation for the degree of a Masters in Applied Theology at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. At that time I had been a member of a Benedictine community for sixteen years. Immediately after ordination, eleven years earlier, in 1987, I had been appointed to the position of Cellarer (or Bursar) and given responsibility for the day to day oversight of the finances, the domestic arrangements and the general management of the monastic buildings, its school, playing fields and grounds. Having over fifteen years of experience working in the Hotel and Catering industry, an MBA from the University of Bath and professional membership of what is now called the Institute of Hospitality, I was perhaps the ideal candidate for such a responsibility. My appointment came at a time when religious orders, not only in the UK, but the world over were attempting to “professionalise” their charitable operations by making them more efficient and, more importantly, bring them into legal compliance with current UK and EEC legislation.

After ten years in the position of Bursar I was granted a nine month sabbatical (August 1997 to May 1998) which I chose to spend at the School of Applied Theology (SAT), Berkeley, California, U.S.A, where I opted to register for the Masters in Applied Theology Programme rather than just “audit” classes. On my return to the monastery in July 1998 I was appointed Vocations Director and asked to help with the community’s Pastoral Programme which delivered residential and non-residential retreats and talks to the many visitors who came to the monastery in search of rest and spiritual sustenance. The choice of topic for my master’s dissertation at SAT was guided by a desire to have something tangible that I could take back to the monastery and use for retreats and talks. During my sabbatical a chance conversation with one of my tutors directed me to Professor André Delbecq³ at the University of Santa Clara, a Catholic University, run by the Society of Jesus, in the heart of Silicon Valley. Professor Delbecq was facilitating,

³ Professor Delbecq passed away in October 2016 having spent 40 years at Santa Clara University. He was first Dean of the Leavey School of Management and then served as Director of the Institute for Spirituality of Organizational Leadership. He also held the post of Faculty Senate President and was a professor and senior fellow of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education.

for senior executives, a series of fifteen seminars or modules, held on a Saturday, under the general heading of “Spirituality and Business Leadership.”⁴ Many of those who attended were working in the Silicon Valley computer industry and gave up part of their “free time” at weekends to attend. The fifteen modules were centred around selected readings specially chosen to illustrate basic principles and promote reflection and discussion on the integration of business leadership with the spiritual life.⁵ To engender respect and sensitivity in these discussions, the seminars used “Appreciative Enquiry.”⁶ In contrast to “problem solving,” which often emphasises and amplifies problems, appreciative enquiry focuses on what works best for an individual or an organisation. It asks, “what are the “high moments”?” Because these statements are grounded in real experience and history people know how to repeat the success.

In subsequent discussions Professor Delbecq encouraged me to focus on the teaching of the Rule of Benedict (RB)⁷ and its charisms, especially the role of the Abbot (RB 2 & 64), the Prior (RB 65) the Bursar (RB 31), the Tools of Good Work (RB 4), the virtues of humility (RB 7) and obedience (RB5 & 71), the chapters on Manual Labour (RB 48) and the Artisans of the monastery (RB 57).

After a period of exploration and reflection I decided to adopt an approach broadly similar to Professor Delbecq but with two major differences. First, as remarked earlier, the majority of the readings would be taken from the RB. Second, using the monastery guesthouse and conference centre, rather than a sequence of Saturdays every two weeks, attendance would take the form of six residential weekends, over a twelve month period, Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime, at two-month intervals. This was equivalent to twelve full days each year. The six weekends would address different

⁴ These seminars focused on themes such as Business Leadership as a Vocation, Listening to the Inner Voice in a Turbulent Environment, the Discernment Process in the Spiritual Traditions, the Special Challenges of Leadership, Wealth v. Poverty, Social Justice and Unheard Voices, Contemplative Practice in the Hectic Space, the Mystery of Suffering and the Leadership Journey, Different Spiritual Masters.

⁵ The readings were drawn from a wide range of religious authors. These provided a balanced approach for each of the above topics and gave participants a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

⁶ Peter Critten, *Recognising the Spiritual Potential within Communities of Practice through Appreciative Enquiry*, ICOS (University of Surrey: 2002), Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Enquiry* (Plano, Texas, USA: Kodiak Consulting, 1996).

⁷ Throughout this thesis I will refer to the *Rule of Benedict* as RB and use the Latin/English edition edited by Timothy Fry OSB. Timothy Fry, ed., *RB 1980: The Rule of St Benedict in Latin and English with notes* (Collegeville, Minnesota, USA: The Liturgical Press, 1981).

topics and themes. These weekends could be attended as a series or just on a one-off basis. Each weekend would consist of five 90 minute sessions. The weekend was interspersed with an opportunity to attend the Divine Office, the daily Eucharist, informal discussion time, an opportunity for a country walk on the Saturday afternoon and socialising. Within each 90 minute session I aimed to spend 30 minutes explaining the topic under consideration, a further 30 minutes for small group discussion (broken down into groups of five or six) and a final 30 minutes for feedback and summaries usually in the form of a flip chart presentation.

What these “retreat-workshops” would hopefully do was fivefold. They would:

1. Fill a gap in what I perceived to be a lack of pastoral concern for the many issues affecting the workplace.
2. Provide an opportunity to integrate Benedictine monastic ideals with professional business practice and leadership skills.
3. Bring my managerial experience and professional qualifications in secular employment, linked to my own spiritual monastic journey, to bear on the content and delivery of the retreat workshops.
4. Attract a constituency of participants that reached out to leaders and managers in both the profit and not-for-profit sectors, especially those on the boundaries of religion or without any religious belief.
5. Allow this constituency to participate and experience the Benedictine and monastic way of life in a non-threatening or invasive way: they could participate to whatever level they felt comfortable.

As a basis for my Master’s dissertation, I decided to conduct three “pilot retreat workshops” to test my ideas. It was only after conducting these retreat workshops, and receiving the feedback from the participants, that I completed my dissertation, which I submitted in the Spring of 1999. I was awarded my Master’s degree later that year.

Meanwhile, I had approached a number of UK management journals in order to publicise the retreat workshops. These attracted a great deal of interest both at home and abroad, including the *Tablet*, the *Financial Times*, *Management Today*, *Personnel*

Management and *The Times*. For practical and logistical reasons I set a limit of eighteen participants for each of the weekend retreat workshops.

The retreat workshops in the first two years were heavily oversubscribed to the extent that sometimes I had to turn applicants away, offering the possibility of a later date. Over this five year period, although the topics remained the same, the emphasis differed.⁸ For many participants it was their first contact with a monastery and the monastic way of life. Initially, one of the primary issues motivating attendance was the ethical dimension of work, especially decision-making. The Enron crisis,⁹ which had taken place in the United States, together with the regulation of businesses, especially the financial sector,¹⁰ remained a “hot topic.” So too were issues around work-life balance, well-being and happiness. At that time Lord Layard from the London School of Economics was promoting his “happiness theory.”¹¹

I ceased to offer these retreat workshops on the Spirituality of Work at the end of 2004. I felt that, after having been on offer for a number of years, these retreat workshops were in need of a re-appraisal. My hope was that they could be relaunched in a different format at a later date.

Soon after this, in early 2005, I had started to notice a greater interest in the way that people used their leisure time, especially in the context of work-life balance, well-being and happiness. More and more people were speaking about stress-related illnesses.

⁸ From September 1998 to December 2004 I conducted 33 weekend retreat workshops (Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) on the “Spirituality of Work” spaced at two monthly intervals. Over that five year period these were attended by 178 different people. Many of these came on one or more of the retreat workshops. Several attended all six.

⁹ The “Enron Crisis” or “Scandal” was first publicised in 2001 when the American Energy giant Enron went bankrupt. At the same time Enron’s auditors, Arthur Andersen, one of the “Big Five,” were subsequently dissolved as a result of what was called one of the largest audit failures in the history of accounting. Using accounting loopholes and false reporting Enron had been able to cover huge losses resulting from failed deals and projects. A number of Enron executives were prosecuted and given custodial sentences. Arthur Anderson lost its license to audit.

¹⁰ The Global Financial Crisis of 2007/8 and the collapse of Lehman’s Bank came much later.

¹¹ Richard Layard (b.1934) is a British labour economist currently working as programme director of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics. Latterly he has become active in the area of “happiness economics.” He advocates that taxes, in addition to being used for public services, goods and redistributing income should be used to counteract the cognitive bias that causes people to work more than is good for their happiness. Taxes, therefore, should help people preserve a healthy work-life balance. He is a Labour Peer (2000) and is credited with advocating many of the policies that led to the election of “New Labour” to government in 1997.

What impact did work have on their mental health? What form did their leisure take? Did it have a contemplative dimension? If so, how did it impact on the way they made decisions? The effect on their relationship with their colleagues and the workforce, not to mention their families and close friends, was a significant factor also. There were other questions too. When faced with failure and disappointment how did a contemplative practice help? Finally, to what extent did their role as a leader promote the “Common Good” in their organisation? For this reason, after a gap of three years, I decided to relaunch these retreat workshops but with the focus on leisure rather than work.¹²

In the earlier stages of the retreat workshops on the Spirituality of Work I had felt that I was either talking too much or trying to steer the conversations in the way I wanted. I had my own agenda that might be stifling potentially valuable contributions. I needed to listen more. After consulting a friend, who was a business consultant and a trained facilitator, I decided to move from “appreciative” to “co-operative enquiry” which had been pioneered in the UK by John Heron¹³ at the University of Surrey and Peter Reason of the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) at the University of Bath.¹⁴

There are a number of underlying principles about “co-operative enquiry” process. The first is, that in addition to the facilitator, each participant is a co-researcher. This enquiry is not the traditional questionnaire or interview where the participant has a set of questions to answer which are then collated anonymously. After the first two introductory sessions, the makeup of the group remained constant forming a cohort of

¹² From December 2007 until October 2009 I facilitated 10 one day retreat workshops (non-residential) on the “Spirituality of Leisure.” The first workshop in this series was offered twice to two different groups. After these initial “taster sessions” some opted out. Subsequently 8 retreat workshops on different aspects of the spirituality of leisure, using co-operative enquiry” were attended by a cohort of 17 people.

¹³ John Heron, *Our Process in this Place, ICOS - Living Spirit* (University of Surrey, Guildford, UK: 2002), John Heron, *Co-operative Enquiry: Research into the Human Condition* (London: Sage, 1996), John Heron, and Peter Reason, "The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ People," in *Handbook of Action Research*, ed. Reason Peter and Helen Bradbury (London: Sage, 2001).

¹⁴ P Reason, "Introduction: The Practice of Co-Operative Enquiry," *Systematic practice and Action Research* 15 (3) (2002), Mark Baldwin, "Co-operative Enquiry as a tool for professional development," *Systematic practice and Action Research* 15 (3) (2002), Peter Reason, "A Lay-persons Guide to Co-operative Enquiry," Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARP), 2007, accessed 26/03/2007, 2007, www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/coop_inquiry.html.

around sixteen people.¹⁵ Thus, the second important feature of this process was the possibility of having successive cycles of enquiry. Each time we gathered, members of the cohort were making new contributions, often as a result of their reflections since the earlier meeting.

Using this approach it is possible to facilitate several cycles of enquiry. In essence, the outcomes from the first cycle of enquiry become the questions for the second cycle enquiry and so on. In particular, I wanted to use this enquiry to explore different aspects of sacred or holy leisure, especially the concept of monastic leisure or *otia monastica*. I use the word “facilitate” deliberately because I wanted these retreat workshops to be an opportunity for the participants to share their own experience and wisdom about the topics under consideration. I saw my facilitator role as a listening one, introducing the topic and then opening up discussion, using agreed guidelines. This enquiry, conducted over a two year period, enabled me to formulate my research question for this thesis: “In what ways can the concept of holy or sacred leisure inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the twenty-first century?”

In the formulation of the research question cited above I was initially influenced by two books. First, Josef Pieper’s *Leisure the Basis of Culture*¹⁶ and Dom Jean Leclercq’s *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*.¹⁷ Further research and reading revealed another important work by Dom Jean Leclercq *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.¹⁸ Written and published in French, and not widely available, this analysis of the use of the word *otia* or *otium* in the Patristic and Medieval writings spurred me on to explore the theme of *otia sancta* (holy or sacred leisure) further. Trained in the French encyclopaedic tradition, Leclercq’s writings, although scholarly and detailed, are accessible to any interested reader. Some of his more important literary output has been translated into English. His great *magnum opus* is his editions of the collected works of St. Bernard of

¹⁵ Not everyone could attend every session but there was a group of around 12 people who consistently did.

¹⁶ Josef Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend, Indiana, USA: St Augustine’s Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Jean Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi, Third ed. (New York, USA: Fordham University Press, 1982).

¹⁸ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.

Clairvaux (c.1090-1153).¹⁹ In the last couple of decades, in addition to *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, the works of Josef Pieper, especially those focusing on the *Theological* and *Cardinal Virtues*, have become popular and widely read also. Like Leclercq many of them have been translated into English. His concise, lucid style is readily accessible, and has gained popularity, not just amongst theologians or philosophers, but amongst a lay readership. As we shall see later, Pieper's writing is frequently influenced by Scholasticism²⁰ and beyond that the Greek and Roman philosophers of Classical antiquity. Jean Leclercq had been a good friend of the third contemporary writer I want to engage with in this thesis, namely the Trappist monk Fr Thomas (Louis) Merton.²¹ Merton, as we shall see later in Chapter Five, considered himself to be an "amateur theologian." However, his style of "popular theology," as it has been called, has attracted a worldwide readership and is counted amongst the most important Christian writers of the twentieth century. For my thesis, these three Catholic authors, Pieper, Leclercq and Merton, the last two monks following the Rule of Benedict, but in different traditions (Benedictine and Trappist), together with a German Catholic philosopher, are the focus of my reading about sacred and holy leisure. The result of this enquiry, parts One and Two, (Chapters 1 to 5) form the literature survey of this thesis.

(ii) THE VOCABULARY OF LEISURE

By way of introduction, and before embarking on how *sacred or holy leisure* is understood, it is important to understand what is meant by the English term "leisure", especially in relation to the Christian idea of what it means to be human and what part leisure plays in God's plan for our salvation.

¹⁹ St Bernard of Clairvaux (c.1090-1153) was a founding member of the Cistercian Order so called because of the Abbey of Cîteaux. Together with 31 companions, which included some of his own brothers, he set about reforming Cîteaux. Later St Bernard became Abbot of Clairvaux. By the time of his death, the number of monks at Clairvaux exceeded 700. In addition to his reforms St Bernard is famous for his sermons.

²⁰ Scholasticism is a term applied to a rigorous theological approach, some of which relies heavily on logic and reasoning, much of it in the tradition of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. One example is the *Summa Theologica* and other writings of St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), some of which will be introduced into this thesis later.

²¹ Louis was his monastic name, the name given him when he was clothed as a novice. As an author Fr Louis was always known by his baptismal name, Thomas.

In its contemporary use, leisure signifies free time, freedom from or freedom for some activity, unoccupied time, time at one's own disposal.²² Having leisure can also indicate having the time to do things without haste (in a leisurely manner), to deliberate or to contemplate. Also, leisure can be misunderstood. It can be associated with idleness, boredom and acedia.²³ For instance, to the uncritical or uninformed observer engagement in contemplation may look like idleness, or scribbling on a sketchpad may look like boredom. Perhaps a more practical guide to defining leisure activities is the report *Leisure Time in the UK: 2015* published by the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) which lists the wide variety of activities associated with leisure used to compute its analysis. These can be found in Appendix F. Activities such as resting, reflecting, meditating and thinking are included under the sub-heading of "resting and taking time out" whereas religious activities such as going to church are categorised under "participatory activities."²⁴

In his *Theological Investigations* Karl Rahner devotes a chapter to the "Problem of Leisure."²⁵ He remarks, in the opening paragraph, that before any theologian can proceed to do understand leisure, they need to look at the contributions of philosophy, sociology and medicine. But, it is impossible, he adds, to do this without reference to work. Thus, it is impossible to explain leisure in a vacuum. By the 1960's the five day working week had become commonplace, certainly in Europe and North America. But it is an oversimplification, he remarks, to speak just about five days' work and two days' leisure. Leisure, as defined above, can be understood as free time, rest, recreation, play, the opportunity to engage in cultural activities such as theatre, art, poetry and finally the freedom to observe the sabbath. In pre-industrial times, for the majority,

²² The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives the etymology of leisure as coming from the Old French *leisir* which in turn derives its origin from the Latin *licere* meaning "to be permitted." The principal English meanings of the noun "leisure" are the freedom or opportunity to do something specified or implied. Conversely it can mean freedom from doing from some occupation. In a slightly narrower sense it denotes the state of having time at one's own disposal often without haste; time which can be spent as one pleases, free or unoccupied time. More rarely still it can be time to deliberate, meditate or contemplate. Some of these meanings can imply the freedom to play or recreate but not necessarily. Unlike its co-relative English word 'work' leisure is rarely used as a verb although it can be used as an adjective e.g. leisure time, leisure classes, leisure pursuits. According to OED the earliest recorded use of "leisure" in the English Language goes back to the 14th century for instance Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*.

²³ The meaning of *acedia* I explain in more detail at the end of Chapter One. For the moment it suffices to say that *acedia* can be understood as sloth, torpor, sorrow, faint spirit, despondency, and disquiet.

²⁴ Office for National Statistics, *Leisure Time in the UK: 2015* (London: 2017). Table 1, pp. 24-25

²⁵ Karl Rahner, "Theological Remarks on the Problem of Leisure (Vol.4)," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966). pp.368-390.

work was far more physical and toilsome. People worked longer hours and so the focus was more on rest and sleep to recover their strength for work the following day. Although holidays or vacations were rare there were many Church Feasts on which labourers did not work. Any free time was used for recreation, play, pageantry, games, festivals, and Sunday worship. All of these, in varying degrees, formed an important part of “non-work” time in pre-Industrial Revolution society. There is also a further distinction that needs to be made. Namely, what is work for one person can be leisure for another. The hobbyist interested in nature can collect fauna for his private collection in his leisure time; for the university researcher, engaged in the some environmental survey, it is work. Digging the garden, no matter how back-breaking, can be a leisure activity for the enthusiastic gardener. For an agricultural worker or any labourer, it is, again, hard work. There is also the matter of paid and unpaid work especially in relation to caring for the family or an aged relative. What impact does that have on the free time available for leisure? Do women, especially those who have full or part time paid employment, have less opportunity for leisure because of commitments at home?

Given the amount of time people spend “at leisure”²⁶ it is perhaps surprising how little theological comment and academic study this topic has attracted. Although the publication of the Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, by Pope Leo XIII, with its focus on work, was an important watershed in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), it and subsequent encyclicals up until Pope St John Paul have a limited amount to say about leisure. A review of CST on leisure is contained in Chapter Two (below).

With some notable exceptions,²⁷ little seems to have written by Catholic authors about the meaning and purpose of leisure. In his *Theological Investigations*, Karl Rahner

²⁶ It is generally accepted that those people in employment have increased “non-work” time. For instance, the Office for National Statistics report for 2015 records that on average men spent six hours and 9 minutes per day in leisure activities compared to five hours and 29 minutes for women. When not at leisure women spent more time at unpaid work. Leisure time was lowest (four hours 46 minutes) for those in the 25-34 age range but increased with age so that those aged 65 and over spent almost double the time at leisure with seven hours and 10 minutes per day. Those employed full-time took the least leisure time but enjoyed it most. People in S.E. England spent the most time in leisure activities (5 hours and 2 minutes). The majority of leisure time for both men and women was spent consuming mass media e.g. watching TV, reading, listening to music. See *ONS Survey Leisure Time in the UK: 2015* (2017) Statistics. pp.1-26.

²⁷ See the unpublished STL Thesis by Edward Fitzgerald, “Towards a Theology of Leisure” (Oxford, 1970). This thesis is available in a redacted form in a series of four articles published in the *Clergy Review* in 1974. Edward Fitzgerald, “A Time for Play,” *Clergy Review* 59, no. April, May, June & July (1974). Also Jeff Crittenden, “Holy Leisure: A life of Prayer, Contemplation and Celebration” (St Stephen’s, 2002).

comments, “Mankind may be more free but what is this freedom for?” he asks. Often people do not know what to do with this freedom and escape back into work. Work then becomes an analgesic against empty boredom. A shorter working week should allow the spirit to fulfil itself in acts of no economic value, namely spiritual activity and leisure.²⁸ He concludes,

How many sacrifices will it cost, how many false starts must be made, till man learns to “do something with” the free time of freedom which he is beginning to win for himself, and for which the five day week is only a symbol.²⁹

In a different vein, Hugo Rahner (1900-1968) has written a theological treatise on the role of play in culture and society.³⁰ Play is an integral part of leisure. More importantly it is an opportunity to participate in the life of God himself, an activity which is both joyful and serious. The life of nature is located within the “play of grace.” Rahner, following Aristotle, promotes the virtue of *eutrapelia*. This virtue was the “mean” between accepting and rejecting joyous, refreshing, relaxing things, between gravity and playfulness, crying and laughing. The Greeks, he adds, defined this as the “serious-serene” man. It is this doctrine, says Rahner, that great Christian thinkers adopted and worked it up into the doctrine of “man at play.” Quoting an example from one of the Early Christian Fathers,

So we read in the Conferences of the Fathers that some were scandalised to find the Apostle John playing with his followers. John told one of them, who was carrying a bow, to draw an arrow: he did this several times and then John asked him if he could keep on doing it without interruption; the reply was that the bow would break in the end. John therefore argued that man’s mind would also break if the tension was not relaxed.³¹

Leonard Doohan, in *Leisure: A Spiritual Need* believes that there is a need for authentic leisure in every aspect of the Christian life. Leisure is a vital component of a person’s spiritual growth. He emphasises the need to rest, to read, to re-create, to re-think, rejoice and re-focus.³² In the wake of the Second Vatican Council the English Benedictine Congregation published a theology of monastic life called *Consider Your Call*. Writing

²⁸ Rahner, in *Theological Investigations*.p.389

²⁹ Ibid.p.390

³⁰ Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play*, trans. Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York, USA: Herder and Herder, 1965).

³¹ Ibid.p.130. A similar story is told about Abba Anthony in Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (London: Mowbrays, 1975).p.5,§13

³² Leonard Doohan, *Leisure: A Spiritual Need* (Notre Dame, Indiana, USA: Ave Maria Press, 1990).pp.78-79

mainly about work, in five short paragraphs they treat the subject of leisure. The editors recognise the importance and value of leisure, especially providing opportunity for defined periods of prayer and solitude, but also giving the opportunity time to spend time with their family, relaxation and recuperation. But there is no doubting the importance of work. However, some sabbatical time, especially at key stages of a monk's life is recommended also. The dangers of becoming over-involved in work is stressed.

For effective work, but much more important, for the effective growth of fraternal charity, individuals and communities need to stand back from the rush of active involvement. Far from being a form of escapism or "dropping out", this (leisure) would allow a sane and positive assessment of the activities of ourselves and others; and provide the opportunity to share pursuits conducive to health of mind and body, and to relax in the company of the brethren.³³

The Trappist monk Michael Casey reminds the reader of the implicit attraction to holy leisure in the Benedictine vocation. There is a time and space of freedom in which the deep self can find fuller expression. Self-realisation is the principal task of the monk or nun. This is not the result of a self-conscious narcissism, he explains, but is a response to God's call embodied in what we are. A member of a Benedictine community is not formed by particular tasks but rather is asked to grow to the particular possibilities in the tasks assigned to them.

Leisure is not idleness or the pursuit of recreational activities. It is, above all, being attentive to the present moment, open to all its implications, living it to the full...It is more important that monks and nuns do a few things well, being present to the task they undertake, leaving room for recuperation and reflection, and expecting the unexpected. Leisure allows openness to the present. It is the opposite to being enslaved by the past or living in some hazy anticipation of a desirable future.³⁴

Writing in a similar vein Sister Joan Chittister emphasises that leisure is an essential part of Benedictine spirituality. It is not laziness and it is not selfishness. It has something to do with the depth and breadth, length and quality of life. The challenge is to be counter-cultural and not to succumb to modern trends in work and leisure where we are trained to be doers and makers rather than dreamers and seers. Benedictine

³³ Daniel Rees, ed., *Consider your call: a theology of monastic life today* (London: SPCK, 1978).pp.308-309

³⁴ Michael Casey, *Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of St Benedict* (Brewster, MA, USA: Paraclete Press, 2005).pp.26-27

spirituality sets out to develop people who reflect on what they are doing. The Gospel is the filter through which they see the world.³⁵

A number of non-Catholic authors have written on the Theology of Leisure, notably Karl Barth's focused defence of the Sabbath in his *Church Dogmatics*.³⁶ Graham Neville notes the impact that increased leisure time is having on society in the twentieth century.

If leisure is "free time", it can have its own dignity. It is like the life of heaven - free from self-seeking, often binding its participants to fellowship. And at its best utterly absorbing. Perhaps it achieves a third love enshrined in Jesus' summary of the Law. Worship expresses love of God. The active life is where we show our love of neighbour. We love ourselves in leisure.³⁷

(iii) METHODOLOGY

Having established an area of interest I was seeking a methodology which would facilitate the investigation of my research and help answer the question, "In what ways can the concept of holy or sacred leisure inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the 21st century?" The challenge was to find a way of integrating the different strands of my research interests, in particular the application of sacred or holy leisure, including *otia monastica* (monastic leisure), to contemporary organisational practice as articulated by the twenty-two interviewees. Further research and enquiry led me to the existence of the Theological Action Research Network (TARN) which was a joint collaboration (at that time) between Heythrop College, London and Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford.³⁸ I attended a number of their seminars and conferences. Several members of that group engaged in Theological Action Research had published a book on the application of co-operative enquiry. I have adopted their model which is described and elaborated in *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action*

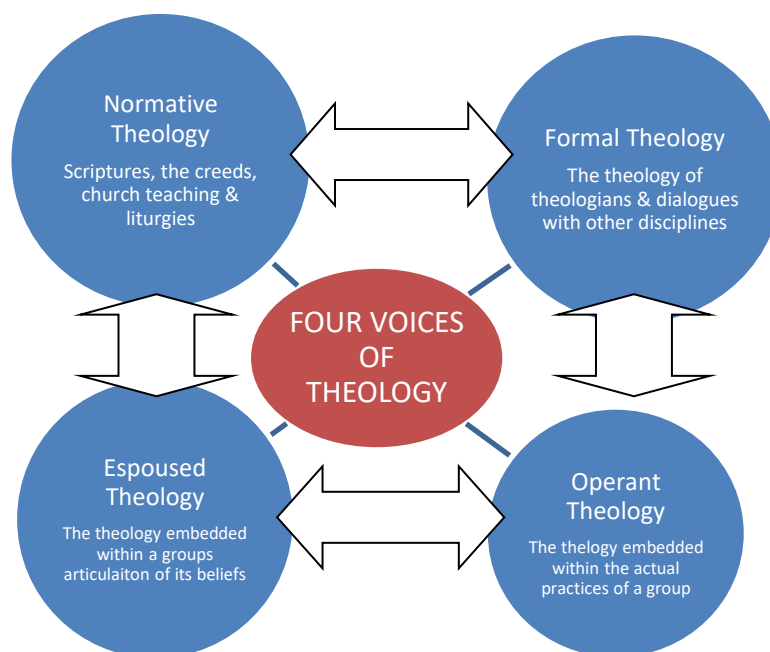
³⁵ Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of Benedict Today* (San Francisco, USA: Harper, 1991).pp.97-98

³⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. Vol III Part 4 (London: T & T Clark, 1961).§ 53,pp.47-72

³⁷ Graham Neville, *Free Time: Towards a Theology of Leisure* (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, 2004).p.8

³⁸ Ripon College, Cuddesdon, Oxford provides theological courses for men and women training for the Anglican ministry.

Research and Practical Theology.³⁹ The approach of the authors of this book provides a framework on which to hang four distinct but integrated aspects of the theology of the contemplative dimension of leisure including sacred leisure.



The Four Voices of Theology (Bhatti et al. p. 54)

In this thesis I have adapted the Theological Action Research (TAR) approach illustrated in the diagram above.⁴⁰ However, the parameters of my particular project do not fall neatly into what Cameron et al describe as TAR. Greenwood and Levin (2007)⁴¹ and Burns (2007)⁴² identify several characteristics of TAR. For them TAR can be summarised as a partnership, a process, a conversation and a way of knowing. Its main features are:

- context based, addressing real life problems (such as balance between work and leisure)

³⁹ Cameron et al.

⁴⁰ Deborah Bhatti et al., *Living Church in the Global City: Theology in Practice* (London: Heythrop College, University of London, 2008).

⁴¹ Greenwood, D.J. and Levin, M. (2007), *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, Thousand Oaks CA, Sage.

⁴² Burns, D (2007), *Systemic Action Research: A Strategy for Whole System Change*, Bristol, Policy Press.

- a collaborative process between participants and researcher(s) in which everyone's contribution is taken seriously
- an attitude to research that sees the diversity of experience and capacity coming from the contributors as an asset that enriches the process
- the expectation that meanings derived from the research process will lead to new actions (i.e. a change in behaviour)
- the expectation that reflection upon action will lead to new meanings

Chapters One and Two, which form Part One, constitute the *Normative Theology*. As the word normative implies, this theology is based on “the norms” which in this context we might describe as “traditional church teaching” or, as it is often described, Church tradition. Cameron et al describe this as “the theology of the scriptures, the creeds, official church teaching, liturgy and prayer.” The church is continually “updating” its teaching, for instance reinterpreting or adapting basic doctrines to the current times. A common way of doing this is through encyclicals, exhortations, homilies and speeches. In a rapidly changing world and a move to globalisation, Catholic Social Teaching has become an important element in how the Church adapts to the twenty-first century. Since the pontificate of Paul VI, successive popes have left the confines of the Vatican to travel to each of the major continents in order to visit local churches. These journeys are often used as an opportunity to exhort, encourage and teach. In Chapter One the focus is on the concept of sacred or holy leisure including *otia monastica* (i.e. monastic leisure or *otia sancta*) as found in the Patristic period and Early Church, including the monastic rules up to and including the *Rule of Benedict*. In addition, it includes the biblical and classical influences on holy or sacred leisure. The second chapter examines *Catholic Social Teaching* on leisure from *Rerum Novarum* (1891)⁴³ onwards up to and including Pope Francis. *Rerum Novarum* (RN) represents an important watershed in the Church’s social teaching on work. It is sometimes referred to as the “workers charter” because it addressed the abuses and violations of worker rights arising out of the Industrial Revolution. Successive popes have celebrated and updated the Church’s teaching on work in successive encyclicals such as that of Pope Pius XI *Quadregesimo Anno* (QA) promulgated to mark the fortieth anniversary of RN.⁴⁴ Looking back seventy years, Pope St John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* reminds the reader of the importance of

⁴³ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1891).

⁴⁴ Pope Pius XI, *Quadregesimo Anno* (Rome: Libreria Vaticana, 1931).

RN which is celebrated as the *magna carta* of worker's rights.⁴⁵ Church documents such as these, and many others, are a constant reminder that the Church is continually looking at things anew in a rapidly changing world.

Chapters Three, Four and Five of Part Two constitute the *Formal Theology*. These examine leisure from the perspective of three twentieth century Catholic authors already mentioned above, *Josef Pieper*⁴⁶ (Chapter Three), *Jean Leclercq*⁴⁷ (Chapter Four) and *Thomas Merton*⁴⁸ (Chapter Five). As we will see, each of these three authors, in different ways, not only looks back to the Normative Theology of the past but also to the future. Furthermore, they are among a rare group of Catholic writers who have written, either explicitly or implicitly, about leisure. What they have in common is that they remind us that leisure has its foundation in important theological principles. Although it is not my intention to embark on a comprehensive survey of everything written in the context of a theology of leisure, neither is it possible to confine this examination exclusively to a theological perspective. It has to be remembered that other disciplines, such as the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, ethnography), psychology and economics have made a significant contribution to our understanding of leisure in the twenty-first century. Pieper, for instance, trained as an anthropologist. Merton was influenced by an enormous range of writers who encompassed such subjects as philosophy, politics, anthropology, spirituality, mysticism and the religions of the East. Leclercq underwent a rigorous academic formation which included not only philosophy and theology but also the classical languages and skills necessary to pursue the philological research of ancient manuscripts.

The *Formal Theology* is followed by the *Operant Theology*. As indicated earlier, for this third element I have used a thematic analysis of the twenty-two interviews

⁴⁵ St Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (Rome: Libreria Vaticana, 1961).

⁴⁶ Josef Pieper, "The Social Meaning of Leisure in the Modern World," *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 4 (October 1950 1950), Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*, Josef Pieper, *Happiness & Contemplation* (South Bend, Indiana, USA: St Augustine's Press, 1998), Josef Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man* (South Bend, Indiana, USA: St Augustine's Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*, Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, Jean Leclercq, *Alone with God*, trans. Elizabeth McCabe (Bloomington, Ohio, USA: Ercam Editions, 2008), Jean Leclercq, and Thomas Merton, *Survival or Prophecy?* (Collegeville, Minnesota, USA: Cistercian Publications (Liturgical Press), 2008).

⁴⁸ Leclercq, and Merton, Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1973), Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (London: SPCK, 1990), Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1961).

described in the research project outlined below in Section (iv) of the Introduction. In this *Operant Theology* we literally “hear” the voices of the participants, their thoughts and reflections about leisure, its contemplative dimension and the impact it has on their lives, both at work and at home. Chapter Six provides a short biography for each of the participants (who have been anonymised) and then goes on to describe the interview process. The next three chapters represent some of the main themes that emerged under three broad headings. *Understanding Contemplative Leisure* (Chapter Seven); the *Context for Contemplative Leisure* (Chapter Eight) and the *Fruits of Contemplation* (Chapter Nine).

Drawing on the other three voices of theology, the *Espoused Theology*, Part Four, articulates what this theological voice might say to us as we attempt to formulate a theology of leisure for the twenty-first century, especially one that has been influenced and shaped by our understanding of holy or sacred leisure going right back to the early Christian centuries. Together with the *Normative* and *Formal Theologies*, I incorporate the voices of the participants contained in the *Operant Theology*, and, in addition, as a participant observer, my own voice too. Together, I suggest the ways in which these voices reimagine or espouse a theological understanding of work and leisure in the twenty-first century. In doing this I have had to be highly selective because of the enormous volume of material. However, I have identified four themes which I think are worthy of consideration. These are:

1. Meditation, Contemplation
2. Christian Mindfulness
3. The Role of Rationality and Intuition
4. A Spirituality of Sabbath and Rest

(iv) THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The main question that needs to be answered here is, “why these particular people”? “How did you select them and how?” For the purpose of this project the group was formed of 22 participants, 13 males and 9 females, mainly practising Christians, who hold senior management or leadership positions across a broad spectrum of occupations

in the “for profit” and “not for profit” sectors. Some are recently retired although they remain active in consultancy or voluntary work.⁴⁹

As a selection criterion I have adopted an approach described as “purposeful sampling” outlined by Michael Quinn Patton. This is an accepted approach in the disciplines of sociology and psychology. Patton explains that a different logic differentiates qualitative from quantitative sampling. Typically a qualitative enquiry, such as this one, focuses in depth on relatively small samples selected on a “purposeful” basis. He writes,

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.⁵⁰

Following the principal of “Purposeful Sampling” the common factor is that each person interviewed had some form of contemplative practice. However, unlike the majority of TAR projects, those interviewed never met as a group. If they had ever met, some would have known each other because they had attended workshops on the spiritual dimension of work and leisure at the same time.⁵¹ Each person underwent a semi-structured interview for sixty minutes during which a series of cue cards were used to prompt comment.⁵² These interviews were recorded digitally and then transcribed. Using qualitative data analysis software I coded each transcript to identify common themes.⁵³

Although my project fulfils, to some degree, the criteria outlined by Cameron et al, a number of significant factors differentiate it from the three practical examples they give. The first is the fragmented nature of the constituency that my project draws upon. The participants do not occupy the same physical space in a workplace; neither do they belong to the same organisation, church or association. Secondly, even though some of

⁴⁹ A more detailed breakdown (age, religion and gender) is given in Chapter 6.

⁵⁰ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park, California, USA: Sage, 1980), pp. 169-186

⁵¹ As described in the introductory chapter, these were facilitated by me over a period of ten years from 1999 to 2009.

⁵² The seventeen words were broken down into three groups. They were 1. Quiet, Peace, Silence, Rest, Sabbath and Vacation. 2 Contemplation, Meditation, Mindfulness, Well-being and Happiness. 3. Discernment, Prudence, Wisdom, Courage, Reflection and Intuition.

⁵³ The software package I used was MAXQDA which is very similar to NVivo.

them knew one another, they never met as a group and, apart from a couple of cases where the participants were married, they did not know the other person was participating. In my project twelve participants (55%) had attended a series of workshops on the *Spirituality of Leisure* that began in December 2007 and ended in October 2009. Over a period of almost two years they came together on a Saturday for a six hour period on ten occasions. These Saturday sessions were recorded and transcribed. Additionally, in previous years (from 1998 to 2007), some of these participants had attended the series of residential weekend workshops on the *Spirituality of Work* mentioned above. These sessions followed a loose structure or agenda. The outcomes arising from small group work were recorded using flip chart presentations. As a result of this familiarity, and using a process of co-operative enquiry described above, a remarkable level of trust and openness was achieved in a relatively short space of time. All of these sessions were important in formulating the seventeen key words (see above) which were introduced in the semi-structured interview.

The remaining ten participants were not connected with this Spirituality of Leisure group. They were relative newcomers and had either attended (usually separately) one of my later seminars on the spirituality of work or the contemplative dimension of leisure.⁵⁴ However the common denominator was that each participant had an interest in the contemplative dimension of leisure linked to some kind of meditative or contemplative practice, which as the thematic analysis will illustrate, took many different forms.

⁵⁴ These seminars were sponsored by the BMW Foundation for Responsible Young Leaders. The Foundation was established in Germany by Herbert Quant, the founder and owner of BMW. Its main objective is bringing together young leaders from all over the world and promoting ethical and responsible leadership on a national and global level. Recently the BMW Foundation has dropped the focus on “young leaders” and widened its remit to all responsible leaders irrespective of age.

PART ONE

A NORMATIVE THEOLOGY OF LEISURE

Otium lies midway between the two perils *otiositas* and *negotium*, which is the very denial of *otium*. *Otium* is the major occupation of the monk. It is a very busy leisure, *negotiosissimum otium*, as St Bernard and so many others have repeated.

(Dom Jean Leclercq *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1982, p.67)

CHAPTER ONE

SCRIPTURE, PATRISTIC PERIOD, EARLY CHURCH & MONASTIC RULES

Cameron et al in their introductory chapter of *Talking about God* define normative theology as “being concerned with its theological authority - an authority which may even stand to correct, as well as inform, operant and espoused theologies.”⁵⁵ Thus, the normative theology “is part of an interdependent dynamic of scholarly readings of scripture, church history and doctrine.” Drawing on that authority, Chapters One and Two survey the Christian literature relating to leisure from two distinct periods. The first period (Chapter One) includes Holy Scripture and the Patristic Period. I have also referred to some of the early monastic rules up to and including the RB. The second period under review (Chapter Two) starts with the Papal Encyclical of Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and successive Encyclicals and Church documents (addresses, homilies, exhortations, etc.), including the Second Vatican Council, which relate to leisure, up to Pope Francis. In this analysis of sacred or holy leisure I have been guided by the four-fold definition of *otia monastica* used by Dom Jean Leclercq, namely the Latin terms *otia*, *quies*, *vacatio* and *sabbato*.⁵⁶ I have used these references to identify the original source document quoted by Leclercq, and where available, provided an English translation.

LEISURE IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY: THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

As the Christian Church, in both the West and East, became established, especially after the unification of church and state in 312 under the Emperor Constantine (d. c. 337), the Mediterranean rim became a melting pot for philosophical ideas and intense monastic experimentation.⁵⁷ A familiarity with the geography of the Early Christian world is needed to understand its literary influences and the way in which these were disseminated across both the Celtic world and Roman Empire from the British Isles on

⁵⁵ Cameron et al. Pp. 54-55

⁵⁶ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. These words can appear in either the singular or plural form e.g. *otium* or *otia*, etc.

⁵⁷ To support this theory see for instance, David Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (London: World University Library/Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

the Western rim to Cappadocia in the East.⁵⁸ The ability to read and write was crucial too.⁵⁹ European and Celtic monasticism was strongly influenced by Eastern literary sources, especially monastic writings and monastic rules. However, as very few of the Latin Fathers read Greek, they relied heavily on Latin translations of Greek texts.

Access to a vast network of merchant ships and trade routes meant that books, authors, manuscripts could be conveyed relatively easily within the vast confines of the Roman Empire. In cities such as Alexandria or Antioch, Greek and Roman cultures merged and more often collided. Latin became the common language of politics, religion, commerce and social intercourse.

From the time of Jesus' public ministry and through the apostolic period the emerging Christian Church came into conflict with the political and Jewish authorities. In spite of this, the Christian Church grew relatively quickly and spread throughout the Roman Empire as St Paul's Letters and the earliest Christian texts testify.

IMPORTANT LITERARY LOCATIONS

A cursory glance at a map (see Appendix D) dating from the fourth to sixth centuries A.D. will reveal Christian and monastic activity in Northern Africa (present day Algeria and Tunisia) with Augustine (c354-430) Bishop of Hippo, being its most famous author and resident. Often regarded as the greatest of the Latin Fathers of the Church he is associated with monastic rules for both men and women. These were probably composed by one of his disciples during or shortly after his lifetime.⁶⁰ A thousand miles to the West is the Nitrean Desert of Lower Egypt, famous for many of the Desert

⁵⁸ This topic is covered in the introductory chapters of Knowles., *Christian Monasticism*, London, 1969 and this two way influence is illustrated by the map contained in Appendix D.

⁵⁹ For instance the RB legislates that time must be given to *Lectio Divina* (sacred or prayerful reading) every day (RB 48:1) and during Lent each brother is to receive a spiritual book from the monastery library (RB 48:14-16). Whether or not the ability to read was a precondition for joining a monastery is not clear. Monks might learn to read as part of their monastic noviciate. RB 38:12 implies that the monks have different reading abilities and only those who are competent at reading should be allowed to read in public. Key texts such as the psalms might be learned by heart. Neither did the ability to read mean you had the ability to write although the copying of manuscripts, especially sacred scripture, was to become an important occupation of monks. See also Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*.p. 15.

⁶⁰ The authorship of the both the *Praceptum* (rule for men) and the *Regularis Informatio* (rule for women) continues to be debated. In spite of his interest and commitment to monastic life Augustine makes no reference to writing these rules himself and they are not included in the list of his writings composed by his friend and biographer Possidius of Calama. Thus these rules appear to be a later attribution. See St Augustine of Hippo, *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule*, ed. George Lawless OSA (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). pp. 23-49 for a summary of the debate.

Fathers such as Amoun (c.295-c. 353),⁶¹ whose life and teachings are recounted in a number of sources available in Latin.⁶² It is possible that the “*vitae eorum*” referred to in the Rule of Benedict (RB 73:5)⁶³ refers to this and similar lives such as those contained in Cassian’s *Conferences* and *Institutes*,⁶⁴ On the coastal edge of Lower Egypt was Alexandria, a city of great intellectual activity and political importance, second only to Rome, where Greek philosophy, especially that of Plato, collided with Semitism and the newly established Christian religion. This was home to Origen (c.185-c.254), Clement (c.150-c.215) and Athanasius (c.285-c.373), later Evagrius (c.346-399) and Cyril of Alexandria (d. c.444). *The Life of Antony* by St Athanasius (c.293–373) describing desert monasticism was the first of a number of books to have a strong influence on the foundations of monastic life.⁶⁵ Although spending the final 25 years of his life in Rome, Plotinus (c.205-270) first made Alexandria his intellectual home. His writings influenced not only Christian philosophy and theology but Jewish, Islamic, Gnostic and pagan metaphysicians too.⁶⁶

The Nile basin of Upper Egypt (Thebes) became host to the monastic experimentation of Pachomius (c.290- c.346), the first example of coenobitic life, which greatly influenced the monastic rules of the West including the RB.⁶⁷ Heading north into Palestine, was Jerome (c.342-420), a Westerner, whose native language was Latin. After extensive travels to Rome, Constantinople, Antioch and the Syrian Desert, he settled in Bethlehem. His lives of Paul the Hermit (also known as Paul of Thebes d. c. 340)⁶⁸ and

⁶¹ Amoun was the third founder of Egyptian monasticism, with Antony and Pachomius.

⁶² These were available from about the sixth century onwards arranged either by theme and topic or by author (i.e. alphabetical collection). The *Verba Seniorum* is available in Ward.; the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* found in Benedicta Ward, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Norman Russell (London: Mowbray, 1980), Benedicta Ward, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin, 2003), Columba Stewart, *The World of the Desert Fathers* (Oxford: Fairacres Publications, 1995).

⁶³ Fry.see note 73:5 on p.297.

⁶⁴ John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey O.P., *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Walter Burghardt, John Dillon, and Dennis D McManus (New York, USA: Paulist Press, 1997), John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey O.P., *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Dennis D McManus, Walter Burghardt, and John Dillon (New York, U.S.A.: The Paulist Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ St Augustine in his *Confessions* attributes his reading of the *Life of Antony* as a major influence in his conversion.

⁶⁶ Plotinus’ *The Enneads* is the edited version of his collected essays and notes used in lectures and debates made by his disciple Porphyry (c.234-c.305) Plotinus, *The Enneads (Abridged)*, trans. Stephen McKenna & John Dillon (London: Penguin, 1991).

⁶⁷ Armand Veilleux, ed., *Pachomian Koinonia Vol II: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules*, vol. II (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1980).

⁶⁸ Traditionally Paul of Thebes is the first Christian hermit who according to Jerome’s *Vita Pauli* is reputed to have been visited by St Antony.

Hilarion (c.291-371) would have been influential in bringing knowledge of monasticism to the West.⁶⁹ More important, by far, was his translation of the Bible into Latin, or the *Latin Vulgate*, as it is called.⁷⁰ Not far from Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, was another important Latin author Rufinus (c.345-410).⁷¹ He was particularly significant because he redacted and translated Basil of Caesarea's monastic rules, the Greek *Asceticon*, into Latin (see below). It is probably this Latin redacted version of the *Rule of Basil* that RB 73:5 refers to.

In the Jordan desert and around the Dead Sea a combination of eremitical and coenobitic monasticism manifested itself in the form of *Laura*.⁷² This form of monastic life was a "half-way house" between the eremitical and the coenobitic. After serving a monastic apprenticeship the monk would move to an isolated location gathering together with others for the Sabbath celebration.⁷³ Moving further north to Syria the *hypaitrae*, lived in the open air and the *denditae* lived in the hollow of trees or hanging basket. More famously the *stylites* inhabited the top of a pillar (e.g. Simeon Stylites c.390-459).

In Asia Minor (Pontus of Cappadocia) Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379), rejecting the eremitical tradition, started to experiment with monastic life living in small fraternities, the members of which he preferred to call brothers rather than monks because the term "monk" was associated with the desert tradition of the solitary hermit and anchorites. Out of this communal experience emerged his famous *Asceticon* or *Rule of St Basil*. Basil was practical and pastoral, building on the outskirts of Caesarea hospitals and hostels for the poor or dying, providing social and medical support to the local community in an institution that came to be called the *Basileiados*.⁷⁴ Bettering that,

⁶⁹ St Hilarion is reputed to have been the founder of the anchoritic life in Palestine. First converted to Christianity by the influence of St Antony in Alexandria he returned to his native Palestine in 306.

⁷⁰ Initially Jerome used a Greek version of the OT which proved unsatisfactory. Eventually, over a fifteen year period, he was able to translate the OT from the original language because he had learned Hebrew while living as a hermit in the Syrian Desert. See ODCC p.1451

⁷¹ Rufinus was to translate a redacted version of Basil of Caesarea's *Asceticon* which in the Latin West was referred to as *The Rule of Basil* (see RB Ch.73 v. 5)

⁷² Knowles. *Christian Monasticism*, World University Library, (1969) pp.20-21

⁷³ Christian monastic reformers such as Romuald (c.950-1027) founder of the Camaldolese and Bruno (c.1032-1101) founder of the Carthusians drew on the tradition of the *Laura* and the Desert Fathers. These rules made provision for the monks to live in individual cells enclosed in a remote location surrounding a church and communal facilities. Most of the time was spent in the solitude but they came together for the daily prayer, the Eucharist and some meals.

⁷⁴ Augustine Holmes, *A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St Basil* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000).

Basil's friend, John Chrysostom (c.347-407) chose to build his monastery right in the heart of the city of Constantinople.

Crossing the Mediterranean to Italy monastics seem at first to have been regarded with some suspicion in Rome.⁷⁵ There were, however, some fervent communities of men and women ascetics. Charity was their primary motivation and inspiration for their rule of life. By this time (381) St Jerome had arrived in Rome. He appears to have been "well connected" to Roman society especially to a small group of influential Roman women one of whom, Paula, was to become a significant support in caring for his domestic household.⁷⁶ St Augustine underwent his conversion in Rome where he had been influenced by St Ambrose (c.339-297), Bishop of Milan, and Athanasius' *Life of Antony*. Ambrose founded a monastery and wrote a number of hymns for the Divine Office which the RB refers to as *Ambrosian Hymns* (RB Ch 9:4). Ambrose is one of the few Latin Fathers who knew both Latin and Greek.⁷⁷

Gaul (France) benefited from strong monastic connections, although, like Rome, it lived under the potential threat of Barbarian incursions. Hilary of Poitiers (c.315-367) gave Martin of Tours (d.397) a plot of land to build a monastery at Ligugé which attracted many recruits, some of whom had been influenced by the *Life of Antony*. Another monastery was built at Marmoutiers where solitaries came to live together. In South Gaul, especially around Marseilles, monasticism took firm hold. Cassian (c.360-435) founded two monasteries nearby. Here he compiled in Latin, the *Conferences* and *Institutes* from the records of his stay in monasteries the East; in particular his visits and with the Desert Fathers. Like the *Rule of Basil* translated by Rufinus mentioned earlier, the *Conferences* and *Institutes* are referred to in RB 73:5. The island monastery of Lérins under Honoratus (c.350-429) became famous for its monastic observance and scholarship. Notable members were St Hilary of Arles (c.403-449), St Caesarius of Arles (c.470-542) and St Lupus (c.383-479). St Benet Biscop (c.628-689 or 690) became a monk of Lérins in 666.

⁷⁵When St Paulinus of Nola, a monk, visited Rome in 394 he was greeted by Pope Siricus with 'haughty reserve.'

⁷⁶However, Jerome's relationship with the Roman aristocracy turned sour when he started to advocate continence between men and women. Both he and Paula fled to Bethlehem where he remained until his death.

⁷⁷His treatise on Christian ethics directed at the clergy, *De Officiis Ministrorum*, based on Cicero's *De Officiis*, is an example of the influence of Classical Latin authors.

Last, but not least, the British Isles became an important centre for monastic life and scholarship. In addition to “Roman Christianity” which had been brought to the South East of England, and eventually further north to York, by St Augustine of Canterbury (d. 605/6) and continued by monks such as St. Benet Biscop,⁷⁸ St. Theodore (602-690) and St Paulinus (d.644), “Celtic Christianity,” was pushed westwards by the Anglo-Saxon invasions. It continued to flourish in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and North England with some notable monastic foundations. There was a strong desire for voluntary exile and a missionary dimension to Celtic monasticism which led monks such as St Columbanus or Columban (c.543-615) to found monasteries in both Gaul (Annegray and Luxeuil) and Italy (Bobbio). St Patrick (c.390-460), a Welshman, evangelised Ireland. *The Voyage of St Brendan* by another missionary, St Brendan (c.484-577 or 583), which describes his visit to the “northern and western isles” (perhaps the Orkneys and Hebrides), was widely popular in the Middle Ages. Since then it has provided an important metaphor for pilgrimage and missionary activity.

LEISURE IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In contrast to the pagan culture characteristic of the Roman Empire, rather than promoting the life of leisure enjoyed by the elite classes, the early Christian church appears to have been anxious to make all forms of work an obligation. Jesus had been born into a working family and drew most of his first disciples from a working class background. Very little mention of leisure is made in the Gospels. St Paul, a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), is particularly vocal in emphasising the importance of working and earning one’s own living (e.g. I Thes.4:11 and II Thes.3:6-12). Jesus is quoted as saying that the “labourer deserves his food.”(Mat. 10:10).

As the Church started to grow numerically and spread geographically, early Christian writers such as Tertullian, Jerome, Hilary of Poitiers, and later on Rufinus, Ambrose, Gregory and Augustine started to integrate their ideas and concepts about leisure that had emanated from Classical antiquity with scripture. Tertullian, for instance, refers to the “(pagan) philosophers who give the name of pleasure to quietness and repose.” He goes on to write of the calm interior that God wishes each of us to possess free from

⁷⁸ St Benet was to found the monastery of St Paul’s in Wearmouth, Northumbria, and later Jarrow, where St Bede the Venerable (c.673-735) famous for the *Historica Ecclesiastica Gentis Angelorum* (completed in 731), at the age of 7, had been placed into St Benet’s custody.

anger and sadness.⁷⁹ He views *otium* as a state of the soul without activity or idleness during sleep.

Hilary of Poitiers speaks of a “religious leisure” symbolised by the *otium Domini*. In contrast however commenting on Psalm 118 he characterises *otium* as a state of inertia and idleness. What becomes evident is an imprecision in the way *otia* and *otiosas* are used. Although *otiosas* invariably indicates idleness, *otium* can be used in both a negative and positive sense. For instance, St Peter Chrysologus views *otium* as a form of torpor.⁸⁰

Without doubt it is Augustine who gives the term *otium* greater precision in a positive context. Augustine’s thinking had been shaped by his earlier life and conversion experience. As a young man he had been strongly influenced by the philosophical concept of leisure and put it into practice by living in a philosophical community before his baptism. Augustine defends the *deificari in otio* which provides the necessary retreat and seclusion for seeking and finding God.⁸¹ He writes of the obligation to know God. Quoting Psalm 45:10 he writes,

We seek unity (with God), the simplest thing of all. Therefore, let us seek it in simplicity of heart. “Be still and know that I am God!” This is not the stillness of idleness but of thought free from space and time.⁸²

In the *City of God* Augustine gives even a fuller exposition to *otium*. Again he is careful not to confuse leisure with idleness. Following Varro, the Roman philosopher, he describes the three types of life,

There again, there are three kinds of life. The first, though not idle, is one of leisure, spent in the contemplation of truth or in the search for it. The second exists in engagement with the business of human affairs. The third is a judicious combination of the other two. But when it is asked which of these is the more worthwhile here again no controversy arises as to the Final Good. Rather, the question is which of these three makes the attainment or the preservation of the Final Good either difficult or easy...He is not made happy by a life of learned leisure merely, or of public affairs, or a life which

⁷⁹ Alan Menzies, ed., *Ante Nicene Fathers Vol. III: Tertullian* (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: T & T Clark with Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1887). P. *De Spectaculis* XV, 2 “God has enjoined us to deal calmly, gently, quietly and peacefully with the Holy Spirit because these things alone are in keeping with his nature.”

⁸⁰ Sermon 77 PL 52, 418a

⁸¹ St Augustine, Letter 10:2 PL 33, 74

⁸² St Augustine of Hippo, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, *The Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John Baillie, John T McNeil, and Henry P. Van Dusen (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1953). “*De Vera Religione*” p.258

combines both. Indeed there can be many people living in anyone of these three ways who nonetheless go astray in their search for the Final Good which makes a man happy.⁸³

What Augustine is implying here is that *otium* alone does not facilitate our search for God but a judicious use of all three: even then, a successful search cannot be guaranteed.

LEISURE UNDERSTOOD AS *OTIA MONASTICA*

Now we turn our attention to the use of the term *otia* in its monastic context. The examination of the Latin term *otia monastica* (monastic leisure) and related words found in the early monastic rules and other early Christian texts is a complex task that presents a number of challenges in terms of approach and interpretation. Firstly, as Jean Leclercq's study on monastic leisure points out, there are several Latin words associated with leisure such as, *quies*, *otium*, *vacatio* and *sabbatum*, each having its origin in secular (*profane* in French), biblical and Patristic traditions.⁸⁴ It is worth quoting at length the following passage from Leclercq,

Because it anticipates eternal rest, monastic life, the life of the "cloistered paradise" is a life of leisure. That is the definition most frequently found and in this case is expressed in terms like *otium*, *quies*, *vacatio* and *sabbatum*, which are occasionally used to reinforce each other *otium*, *quietis*, and *vacatio sabbati*. These terms must be understood properly; the reality they describe is as different from quietism as the traditional *ἡσυχία* is from hesychasm. *Otium* lies midway between the two perils *otiositas* and *negotium*, which is the very denial of *otium*. *Otium* is the major occupation of the monk. It is a very busy leisure, *negotiosissimum otium*, as St Bernard and so many others have repeated.⁸⁵

Secondly, when the survey is extended to the English Language the task is compounded. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction (ii), down the centuries, the term leisure has assumed new meanings and a fundamental change in emphasis. A different understanding of leisure in the twenty first century, allied to the numerous leisure activities, is due in greater part to emerging technologies, advances in communication,

⁸³ St Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*, trans. R.W.Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Book XIX, 2 p.914

⁸⁴ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.

⁸⁵ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*. p.67. The Latin word *otiositas* which means laziness or idleness can easily be confused with *otium*. The Latin for commerce or any other form of economic activity was *negotium* which is the opposite of *otium* i.e. not to be at leisure. (The Italian for a shop is *negotio*). The English adjective "otiose" derived from *otium* is rarely in modern usage.

and changes in work patterns and working hours that have come into effect since the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. The worker has more free time and a greater choice as what to do with that free time. Activities associated with free time such as sports, entertainment, travel, outdoor pursuits, internet gaming and shopping compete against the traditional leisure activities like Church attendance, reading and family visits.⁸⁶

By the fourth century, the oppressive and savage persecutions of Christians by the Roman Empire had ended. The *Pax Romanum* ensured that Christians could practise their faith openly. Monasticism in both the West and the East grew and flourished in what was a pagan culture. What part did this culture and its foundations in Classical Antiquity play in the way that monasticism developed, especially in its attitude to *otia*?

OTIA IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PATRISTIC PERIOD

(a) Greek Philosophy

Here we examine the extent to which early Christian writers and monasticism were influenced by Greek philosophers such as Plato (c. 427–c.347 BC) and Aristotle (c.384–c.322 BC). The evidence suggests that the philosophy, language and literature of Classical Antiquity were part of the cultural wallpaper in which early Christian monasticism flourished. Andrew Louth, in his introduction to *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* writes,

One general and fundamental problem of Patristic Theology is its relationship to contemporary Hellenistic culture, dominated as it was by ways of thinking which had their roots in Plato; and it was in terms of such methods of thought that Christian theology found its first intellectual expression.⁸⁷

This is particularly the case with the early Christian writers and their legacy. References to the Greek equivalent of *otium* σχολή (*skholé*)⁸⁸ can be found in the philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. For Plato and Aristotle⁸⁹ there were three main types of life or

⁸⁶ Statistics.ONS Leisure 2015 Table 1, pp 24-25

⁸⁷ Louth. P. xi

⁸⁸ In English our word for “school”, “scholar”, “scholasticism,” are derived from this Greek word meaning “leisure”.

⁸⁹ See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J.A.K.Thomson, *Penguin Classics*, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1976). p.69 (1095b15-19). Plato argues for the supremacy of the philosophical contemplative life. See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, Second Edition (Revised) ed. (London: Penguin, 1974). p.344 (581c). Apparently this tri-partite division originates from Pythagoras.

activity: pleasure, politics and contemplation. In Hellenistic culture leisure was considered an indispensable aspect to living the “good life” and citizenship. The citizen needed leisure in order to contemplate. Aristotle even goes as far as making contemplation, together with “happiness” (ευδαιμονία) the fundamental goals or ends of life.⁹⁰ Aristotle regarded contemplation as the highest form of activity,

Contemplation is both the highest form of activity (since the intellect is the highest thing in us, and the objects it apprehends are the highest things that can be known), and also is the most continuous...Also it is commonly believed that happiness depends on leisure; because we occupy ourselves so that we may have leisure.⁹¹

Just as importantly, the opportunity to contemplate was linked to moral development and ethical decision making. The education of the young men aspiring to engage fully in the life of their city, or *polis*, and in particular the ability to be able to think “rightly” about how to act morally and politically, were inextricably linked to leisure. Leisure, having the free time to study, read, debate and discuss, was necessary for the development of character, virtue and the proper performance of political duties.⁹² This meant employing one’s intellectual faculties to the full.⁹³ Play or recreation was not the same as leisure.⁹⁴

The freedom to be at leisure was normally only available to those of the privileged classes, whose property, wealth and position enabled them to participate fully in the life of the city without worrying about the routine distractions of day to day living. Mundane concerns and other aspects of economic activity were delegated to a hierarchy of artisans, servants and slaves. Consequently, says Aristotle,

Nor must those who are to be citizens be agricultural workers, for they must have leisure to develop their virtue, and for the activities of the citizen.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Aristotle. Book X p.312-342 (1172a19-1181b23). St Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) the father of Scholastic Theology, freely quoted from Aristotle. Happiness in the next life, i.e. eternal beatitude, rather than happiness in this life was the goal of every Christian.

⁹¹ Ibid. Book 10, vii, 1177a5-25, (p. 328)

⁹² Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A. Sinclair and T.J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1981). Book 8, iii, 1137b23-1138b2 (pp.455-457)

⁹³ The curriculum for educating children for citizenship consisted of reading and writing, physical training, music and (sometimes) drawing. See *ibid.* Book 7, iii, 1137b23, (p. 455)

⁹⁴ Ibid. Book 8, iii, 1137b23 (p.456) Although play has its uses, comments Aristotle, it cannot be an end in itself. It belongs to the sphere of work

⁹⁵ *ibid.* Book 7, ix, 1138b24 (p.415)

(b) Roman Philosophy

The majority of monastic writers in the West had little, or no, knowledge of classical Greek but had access to many of secular texts through Latin translations and commentaries.⁹⁶ Outside the monastic sphere, Greek or Hellenistic culture, especially its philosophy, had a profound influence on Latin philosophers and writers such as those mentioned above. Categorized as *libri liberalis*, or *libri seculares* or *scholastici* many of these Latin authors appear in lists of collections of monastic school libraries and the liberal studies curricula where many monks would have studied before entering the noviciate.⁹⁷ These texts were important, not so much for their subject matter, but for teaching Latin grammar and syntax and how to write properly. Whether the monks approved of their contents, or carried on reading these pagan authors in adult life, is uncertain. Nonetheless, it is possible to claim an indirect influence. A number of the early Latin Fathers such as St. Ambrose (c.339-397), St. Augustine (354-430) and St. Jerome and later St. Anselm (c.1033-1109) and St. Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167) drew on secular classical sources such as Cicero and Seneca.⁹⁸

In the Roman philosophers and other Latin writers the terms *quies*, *otium* (or *otia*) and *vacatio* are used in the context of leisure or to refer directly to leisure. It is evident that in spite of their classical origins, these references to *otium*, *quies* and *vacatio* anticipate the Christian contemplative life. These classical authors were part of the cultural wallpaper into which the early Church was born. Their importance can be gauged by the legacy of their writings to the present day.

(i) *Quies*

Most frequently the term *quies* is used to convey the meaning of repose, tranquillity, peaceful or agreeable surroundings, often qualified by adjectives such as sweet, delightful, pleasant, charming, calm, fertile, tender and gentle. In contrast to “staying

⁹⁶ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*. For instance Plautus (c. 254-c.184 BC), Ennius(c.239 BC–c.169 BC), Terence (c. 195/185–c.159 BC), Cicero (106-43 BC), Virgil (70-19 BC), Suetonius (c.69-c.122), Sallust (c.86–c.35 BC), Ovid (43 BC– c.17/18 AD), Seneca (c. 4 BC-c. 65 AD), Quintilian (c.35-c.100), Martial (c. 40-c.102) and Pliny the Younger (c. 61-c.112).

⁹⁷ Ibid.p. 114

⁹⁸ Secular poets like Lucan, Statius and Persius and masters in reflection and philosophy such as Cicero and Seneca. See *ibid.*p. 114; St Ambrose’s *De Officiis* owes much of its content and structure to Cicero as does St Aelred of Rievaulx’s treatise on *Friendship*. St Jerome is the most famous among the Doctors of the Church for having drawn on secular literature. Amongst others he praised Persius and Homer.

alert for Vigils” it can be associated with sleep, slumber and drowsiness.⁹⁹ More specifically it can be used in the context of philosophy such as in Lucretius who contrasts *quies* (stillness) with being “in motion.” Its medical use can signify rest and recovery from physical sickness and, perhaps more importantly, spiritual sickness. In military terms it can be the absence of war, fighting and other forms of combat. Closer to home it can indicate also interior harmony and concord in one’s family and political activities.

Cicero claims that *quies* provides the necessary repose for writing and study.¹⁰⁰ Above all Cicero indicates that it is a particular state of mind and soul which is not always easy to attain, or know how to use. *Quies* was synonymous with tranquillity, peace and calm. Nonetheless, for Cicero the active life was superior to the contemplative. Action had to flow from the intellectual life of study, writing and contemplation.

The Stoic philosopher Seneca in particular, elevated this interior life to a unique status amongst other classical writers. Seneca was far more forthright in his defence of leisure and retirement. Two treatises in particular are important, *De Tranquillitate Animi* and *De Otia*, or as he preferred to call the latter, “the private life.”¹⁰¹ In his earlier writings he proposes that the best kind of life is one which combines retirement and action. Echoing the advice of Aristotle, he draws attention to the tension between living a life of pleasure, a life of contemplation and an active life.

There are three kinds of life, and it is regularly asked “which is the best?” One is given to pleasure, the other to contemplation, the third to action...Yet you cannot have one without the other. The contemplative cannot contemplate without action, the man of action cannot act without contemplation, nor does the third character, of whom we have agreed to think ill, favour an idle pleasure but one which he has made stable by reason.¹⁰²

However, further on in his treatise, he admits that it is possible for someone living in retirement, through their writings, to benefit from prosperity and have a lasting effect and influence.

⁹⁹ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁰ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, trans. E.O. Winnstedt (London: Harvard University Press: Loeb Classical Library, 1912).II:20 p.172 “si quies dabitur”

¹⁰¹ Seneca, *Seneca: Moral and Political Essays*, ed. John M. Cooper and John Procopé, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).pp.178-179.

¹⁰² *On the Private Life* in *ibid.* p. 179

They found a way to make their repose more profitable to men than the bustle and sweat of others. Hence they can be seen to have done much, though they did nothing in the public realm.¹⁰³

(ii) *Otium or Otia*

In its earliest use *otium* or *otia* is used in contrast to *opus* or *opera* (work) hence the Latin *negotium* or *negotia* means “business” in English. Generally the word *otium* evokes the idea of tranquillity and peace in both a personal and social or collective sense. It can even imply, therefore, an absence of war. The calm and peace of the countryside is characterised by leisure as is sometimes the town.¹⁰⁴ It is also associated with sleep, dreaming, rest and repose, delights of eating, games and delicacies of many types and even negatively referring to listlessness or sluggishness. However, leisure has to be used in moderation. The challenge is knowing when and how to use leisure. *Otium* is considered also necessary for study.¹⁰⁵ Children in school for instance are “at leisure” so that they can study.¹⁰⁶ Education and leisure are inextricably linked.¹⁰⁷

One of things that the writings of Cicero and Seneca draw attention to is how much leisure depends on the kind of life people lead.¹⁰⁸ From earliest times the Greeks had made a distinction between different life styles such as theoretical, practical, play, games, contemplative, active and of course political and war. The emphasis usually depended firstly on how one saw the end purpose of one’s life and secondly the way in which one understood the body, its soul and emotions. Aristotle for instance, writes that for living the “good” life, happiness, fulfilment and contemplation are inextricably linked.¹⁰⁹ From then to this present day the perennial dilemma comes to the fore. The tensions between *otia* and *negotia* reflect the dichotomy that exists between the

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 178

¹⁰⁴ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p. 28 note 9 *otia ruris*’ quoting from both Marital and Virgil and ‘*Urbanum vitam atque otium*’ in Terence.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 27 note 4 *Truculentus* or *Mercator* by Plautus and *Hecyra* by Terence.

¹⁰⁶ It is useful to remind ourselves that the English word “school” is similar to the Greek word for leisure “skole.”

¹⁰⁷ An insight of what the liberal arts curriculum might contain for monks of the Middle Ages, especially access to classical authors, can be found in Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*. p.112-150

¹⁰⁸ A comprehensive survey of the ‘types of life’ can be found in R Joly, *Le thème des genres de vie dans l’antiquité classique*, vol. Classes des lettres et sciences morales et politique (Académie Royale de Belgique., 1956).

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*. See in particular Book X

contemplative (*vita contemplativa*) and the active lives (*vita activa*) especially in religious life. In contemporary society the life of the busy citizen, fully engaged in the workplace, is marked by the same tension that leads to stress, burnout and illness.

Cicero opts for *actio* rather than *cognitio*. Or, to put it another way, the political life is superior to the intellectual life. However, he recognises and esteems the contemplative life as long as it benefits society, the freedom to be useful to others.

Others, of equal ability, but of different attitude towards the pursuit of life, preferred ease and retirement, as Pythagoras, Democritus, Anaxagoras, and they transferred their attention entirely from civic affairs to the contemplation of nature, a mode of life which, on account of its tranquillity, and the pleasure derived from science, than which nothing is more delightful to mankind, attracted a greater number than was of advantage to the public interest.¹¹⁰

Seneca, in *De Tranquillitate Animi* states that the best kind of life is a combination of the two forms: retirement and action. In *De Otia (The Private Life)* he is far more explicit. He urges “retirement” and justifies it in the following way,

What is the wise man’s attitude as he retreats into retirement? One of knowing, that even then, he will be doing things for the benefit of prosperity....So why should it be wrong for the good man, if it enables him to govern the centuries to come and address not just a few men but all men of all nations, present and future?...They found a way to make their repose more profitable to men than the bustle and sweat of others. Hence they can be seen to have done much, though they did nothing in the public realm.¹¹¹

Seneca’s letters to Lucilius several times emphasise the importance of leisure over idleness and reinforce the importance of using leisure for learning. “Leisure (*otium*) without learning is death,” he writes to his protégé.¹¹² Pliny in his letters associates fruitful leisure with the idea of retirement, repose, silence and tranquillity, elevating leisure to a *studiosum otium*.¹¹³ Writing to his friend Caninius Rufus he reminds him that this form of leisure is hard work and toilsome.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Cicero, *De Oratore (Vol 3)*, trans. H Rackham (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press Loeb Classical Library, 1989).

¹¹¹ Seneca.p.178 (6.4)

¹¹² Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. See notes 65-71. “Otium sine litteris mors est.” (Letter 82, 3)

¹¹³ Pliny the Younger, *Complete Letters*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: OUP, 2006).pp. 26-27 (1.22.11)

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p.4 (1.3.3) “Apply yourself to your books in this time of boundless and slothful retirement. Make this your business, and leisure your work and relaxation.”

Examples of leisure being applied to families, the city and other groups, rather than individuals, can also be found in the literature. For these, the opportunity for leisure signified the absence of internal strife in the city, as well as attack from without. Leisure was a collective indicator of the happiness, prosperity and well-being of the city and the families within it.¹¹⁵ These references to *otium* and *otia*, and most especially those in Seneca, anticipate Christian contemplative life. They provide a spiritual and psychological framework that would become the foundation for successive Christian writers.

(iii) *Vacatio*

As with the use of *otium* or *otia*, it is Cicero and Seneca who provide the greatest evidence of the use of *vacatio* and its root *vacare*. Pliny, in his letters associates fruitful leisure to the idea of retirement, repose, silence and tranquillity elevating leisure to a *studiosum otium*. But, he adds this form of leisure is hard work and toilsome. It requires commitment.¹¹⁶

Here the meaning has more to do with being unoccupied, out of work or being available to do some task. It is in Seneca that the term *vacatio* is first associated with contemplation where it is contrasted with nature and action.¹¹⁷

Nature wished me to do both – to act and to be free for contemplation (*contemplationi vacare*). I am doing both. Even contemplation involves action.¹¹⁸

Seneca also uses *vacat* when he associates it with pleasure calling it *voluptati vacat*.¹¹⁹ Here he emphasises that neither can exist without the other. He writes, too, about freedom for wisdom, freedom for oneself (*sapientiae vacant*). Leclercq comments that using *vacat* in this way elevates the term to a special place in antiquity.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p. 31 and Notes 46-50.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. note p. 78

¹¹⁷ Seneca, *On the Private Life*, p.179 (7.2)

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.177 (5.8)

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Seneca, “Nec ille qui voluptatem probat, sine contemplatione est: nec ille qui voluptati inservit, sine voluptate est; nec ille cuius vita actionibus destinata est, sine contemplatione est.” (The contemplative cannot contemplate without action, the man of action cannot act without contemplation, nor does the third character of who we have agreed to think ill, favour an idle pleasure but one which may be made stable by his reason.

¹²⁰ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p.43 Note 12

(iv) *Sabbatum*

In a number of different ways pagan antiquity became familiar with the concept of the Jewish Sabbath through its contacts with the Jewish nation and the Jewish Diaspora. In its narrow sense *sabbatum*, as described in the Old Testament, was a concept both alien and repugnant to pagan religion and philosophy. In spite of this, the Jewish religion was tolerated by the Roman authorities.

Evidence of the Christian celebration of the Sabbath is independently provided in a letter written by Pliny the Younger (c. 61– c.113) to the Roman Emperor Trajan while Pliny was governor of Bithynia Pontus (Turkey) in about 106. Pliny was seeking advice from the emperor on how to deal with Christians.

They (the Christians) also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honour of Christ as if a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony, it was their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind.¹²¹

LEISURE IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

In the OT there are a number of references to “rest” and “refreshment” or as it was translated in the Latin Vulgate by the noun *requies*, or the verb *requiesco*. Of further significance is the Hebrew word *shabat* (Latin *cessare*) from which is derived the word Sabbath. “God rested from all the work he had done in creation” (Gen 2:3). *Requies* is also synonymous with the Promised Land, a place of rest and the sabbatical year “In the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath for complete rest of the land” (Lev 16:31). Later Augustine and Gregory were to use words such as *requies* to express their desire to possess God and the contemplative life.¹²² In contrast *otium* and *otia* in the OT have a wide range of meanings most of which are used in a pejorative sense to mean idleness or laziness (Ex 5:17; Sir. 31:3, 17). One positive example of its use however is

¹²¹ Pliny the Younger, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, trans. Betty Radice, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1963). Book 10, Letters 96-97, p.294

¹²² Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.p.21

associated with Sabbath rest, peace and quiet (I Chron. 22:0). *Vacatio* and its derivatives are seldom used. In the Septuagint (LXX) *vacare* conveys the same meaning as *quies* and *otium* most notably in Psalm 45:11 “Be still and know that I am God.”

However, *Sabbatum* is widely attested in the OT, which later, in the early Christian Church, was to be transformed into the Christian Sunday or *Dies Domini*, “the Day of the Lord.”¹²³ In the NT Sabbath frequently appears, but often as a topic of conflict. Right from the start Jesus clashes with the Jewish authorities over Sabbath observance and establishes a new benchmark for Sabbath observance, “The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath, so the son of man is Lord, even of the Sabbath.” (Mk 2:27-28) In spite of the many restrictions and observances Sabbath for the Jews was supposed to be a day of joy which was free from work. This mandate was extended to aliens, animals and the land.

THE EARLY MONASTIC RULES AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF OTIA MONASTICA

As described above, in the section on “Literary Sources,” monastic experimentation, facilitated by the relative ease of travel throughout the Roman Empire and the Celtic West of the British Isles, became important corridors for the transmission of numerous ideas and texts. This is highlighted by Luc Brésard, a Cistercian Trappist monk of the Abbey of Cîteaux. His insights about the migration of the different monastic rules helps us to understand the way in which the concept of *otia monastica* evolved within the constraints of monastic practice. He classifies the earliest Christian monastic rules as “Mother Rules” (Eastern)¹²⁴ There are three mother rules he continues, two of which are from Africa, the *Rule of Pachomius*¹²⁵ and the *Rule of St Augustine*¹²⁶ and the third, the

¹²³ *Didache* 14 see Thomas O’Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (London: SPCK, 2010), p. 99 Already, by the time of the N.T., as reported in Acts 20:7, Christians were gathering on the first day of the week, i.e. Sunday, “to break bread.” However, the chief reason for the substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath (Saturday) claims St Ignatius of Antioch (c.35-c.107) was that it celebrated the Lord’s resurrection. In his *Letter to the Magnesians* (IX) he writes that it was this that gave the Sunday its joyful character. Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165) in the *First Apology* (§67) connected it with the first day of Creation. Later, Tertullian (c.160-c.225) in *On Prayer* (§23) elaborates further by emphasising that the “Day of the Lord’s Resurrection” is a day from refraining from “business” and “kneeling.”

¹²⁴ Luc Brésard, *Monastic Spirituality*, Three vols. (Stanbrook Abbey, Worcester: A.I.M., 1996).

¹²⁵ Veilleux.

¹²⁶ St Augustine of Hippo, *The Monastic Rules*, trans. Sister Agatha Mary S.P.B and Gerald Bonner, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, New York, USA: New City Press, 2004).

*Rule of Basil*¹²⁷ from Asia Minor. The contents of these three rules are variable, and each has a different structure and content. The second generation of rules is the western “Daughter Rules.” These depend on these three eastern mother rules. Several generations of daughter rules, he adds, can be distinguished. Some of these daughter rules are more important than others. For instance in the first generation there is the influence of *Cassian’s Institutes*.¹²⁸ Although they are not a monastic rule in the true sense, they describe for the coenobite of Gaul, the observances inspired by Pachomius and the hermits of the desert. In the second generation the influence of the *Rule of the Master* is significant.¹²⁹ *The Rule of Benedict*(RB) belongs to the third generation. Composed around 540 by Benedict of Nursia¹³⁰ (c.480-c.550), it distils and refines a variety of literary sources into one document that came to be accepted as “the monastic rule *par excellence*.”¹³¹

In an explicit reference to other sources the RB mentions the “Conferences of the Fathers, their Institutes and their Lives, there is also the Rule of our holy father Basil.”¹³² The *Conference* and *Institutes* alluded to in RB 73 are almost certainly those of the Latin author Cassian (c.360-435).¹³³ Similarly “the Lives” could refer to the *Vitae Patrum* compiled in the sixth century. *The Rule of St Basil* that is mentioned in the RB was probably the Latin reduction by Rufinus.¹³⁴ Rufinus was almost certainly responsible also for the Latin translation (c.404) of *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, an account of a journey of seven monks from the Mount of Olives to visit the famous monks of Egypt in 394. Besides the Latin version of the *Rule of Basil* other Eastern monastic rules were available to Latin readers, such as the *Rule of Pachomius*.¹³⁵ This

¹²⁷ Klaus Zelzer, ed., *Basili Regula: A Rufino Latine Versa*, vol. 86, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum* (Vienna, Austria: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986).

¹²⁸ Cassian, *The Institutes*.

¹²⁹ Luke Eberle, ed., *The Rule of the Master: Regula Magistri* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications, 1977).

¹³⁰ Now the modern city of Norcia in the Province of Perugia, Italy.

¹³¹ Benedict of Aniane’s systemization of the Benedictine Rule was accepted at Synod of Aachen in 817 and adopted throughout the Christian Roman Empire by the majority of monasteries in the West.

¹³² Fry, RB Chapter 73:5. See also footnote 73.5 on p.297.

¹³³ Different reasons are given why the RB does not cite Cassian by name. One plausible theory is that Cassian was under suspicion because of his semi-Pelagian tendencies. His teaching on grace contained in Conference 13, where he adopted an anti-Augustinian tradition, was later declared unorthodox. (see Fry, *RB80*, p.58)

¹³⁴ Holmes, p. 47. The *Asceticon* went through many stages of development and is available in English as the ‘Longer’ and ‘Shorter Rules.’ See St Basil of Caesarea, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M Silvas, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

¹³⁵ Veilleux, pp. 7-8.

was the first monastic rule that systematically legislated for coenobitic life and was available in a Latin translation made in 404 by St Jerome¹³⁶ (c.343-420). Another important Eastern influence was *The Life of Antony*¹³⁷ by St Athanasius (c.296-373) composed while he was Bishop of Alexandria. It provided Latin readers with the earliest account of Eastern Christian monasticism lived by the desert hermit St. Antony (c.251-c.356). From the perspective of this study on *otia monastica* it provides an insight into the *fuga mundi* that drove men and women out into the desert to engage in a life of prayer and develop a greater intimacy with God. Although not a monastic rule in the strict sense, St Gregory of Nazianzen (c.329-389) said of the *Life of Antony* was a monastic rule in the form of a story.

This Eastern influence was set to continue. When Benedict of Aniane (c. 750-821), compiled his *Codex Regularum*, he assigned great importance to the Eastern monastic rules.¹³⁸ Even more notable, an eleventh century Italian document enumerates twenty-six monastic founders of whom only four are from the Latin West and even one of these, St Jerome, is often considered an Easterner.¹³⁹

If monks were assigned a particular time to engage in sacred reading or *Lectio Divina*¹⁴⁰ it must be assumed that the majority of them could read although this did not preclude

¹³⁷ Robert G Gregg, ed., *St Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, *Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. Richard J Payne (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

¹³⁸ Fry, RB80, p.71, n.11

¹³⁹ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*, *The Love of Learning*, pp.89- 90. See also footnotes 4 and 5.

¹⁴⁰ A monastic, whatever their occupation or duties, would normally be occupied in “sacred reading” or *Lectio Divina* two to three hours per day. See for instance the Fry. pp. 249-253. The only explicit mention of *Lectio Divina* in the *Rule of Benedict* is in the Chapter on *Manual Labour* (RB 48:1) “The brothers should have time for manual labour as well as for prayerful reading (*Lectio Divina*). The readings were taken from scripture, the Church Fathers or some other spiritual writing. During Lent a book was assigned from the library and the brothers instructed to “read the whole of it straight though.” (RB 48:15). The amount of time allocated to *Lectio Divina* varied according to the time of year. The availability of daylight to read was an important consideration. The day was divided into twelve equal periods, thus an hour in summer, depending on location, could last 75 minutes, whereas in winter, it was considerably shorter, around 45 minutes. Typically, during summer, a monk could spend up to “four hours” in *lectio divina* (i.e. five hours real time) and in winter, “three hours” (i.e. just over two hours real time). On a Sunday considerably longer was spent in *lectio divina* as only necessary work was done. See also, Aquinata Bockmann, “RB48: Of the Daily Manual Labour - Part II,” *Americian Benedictine Review* 59, no. 3 (2008), Aquinata Bockmann, “RB48: Of the Daily Manual Labour - Part I,” *Americian Benedictine Review* 59, no. 2 (2008), Michael Casey, *The Art of Sacred Reading* (Victoria, Australia: Dove/Harper Collins, 1995), Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Studies, 1979), Thomas Keating, *Open Mind Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (New York: Continuum, 2000), Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, Minnesota, USA: Cistercian Publications, 2011).

the possibility that sometimes they were read to in a group. In addition, reading at meals was an integral part of monastic life (RB 38:1). Benedict was careful to ensure that the reader, designated for a whole week, was up to the task (RB 38:2). It was also the norm for a monk to be given a book to be read “straight through” for his Lenten reading (RB48:15). Writing, especially copying, was not only a skilled task, it was hard work and required considerable concentration. Many monks were trained to work in the *scriptorium*, not only copying, but illuminating texts. Monastic formation, writing and study relied on many of these texts to provide the rules for Latin grammar and syntax. Étienne Gilson in a famous observation said that St Bernard and the Cistercians “renounced everything save the art of writing well.”¹⁴¹

INFLUENCES OF THE BIBLICAL TRADITION ON *OTIA MONASTICA*

(i) *Quies*

The principal biblical sources for early Western monastic writers would have been in Latin, especially St Jerome’s Latin Vulgate referred to earlier, although Christians in the East would have had access to Greek and Syriac texts of the bible. The Latin verbs *quiesco* (to rest, to keep quiet, to repose in sleep) and *requiesco* or *requies* (to rest, to quieten down, to rest upon something) are commonly used to translate the Greek *παύω* and its derivatives. There are additional shades of meaning such as relaxation, sitting down, lying down or even being asleep.

References to *requies* are more commonly found in the Old Testament, for instance, when Abraham offers hospitality to the Lord by the oaks of Mamre. There its meaning is associated with rest and refreshment, “...rest yourselves under the tree (*requiescite sub arbore*)” (Gen: 18:4). The alternative *cessare* can be found also. In the Priestly account of creation “God rested from all the work (*cessaverat ab omni opere*) he had done in creation” (Gen 2:3). In other words God ceased from working. In the Hebrew, this ceasing from work is *shabat*, which is the basis for the noun Sabbath in Exodus 31:12-17. In both Deuteronomy and the Book of Joshua *requies* is synonymous with the Promised Land, “for you have not yet come into the rest (*ad requiem*) and the possession that the Lord your God has given you” (Deut. 12:9)¹⁴² and “The Lord your

¹⁴¹ Etienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of St Bernard*, (New York, 1940) p.63 quoted in Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, p.113.

¹⁴² See also Deut. 3:20; 25:19; 28:65

God is providing you a place of rest (*requiem*), and will give you this land” (Jos.1:13). In the context of the Sabbath, following earlier versions, Jerome occasionally uses *requietio*. “It is a Sabbath of solemn rest (*requietionis*) to you” (Lev.16:31).¹⁴³ It is also associated with the sabbatical year, “In the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath for complete rest (*requietionis*) for the land” (Lev.25.4).

For the author of Second Isaiah the Sabbath is far more than just a prohibition from business or travel. Observance of the Sabbath is the means to finding happiness in the Lord; it is symbolic of eschatological hope.

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs, then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth. (Isaiah 58: 13,14)

In the same way that rest is associated with Sabbath, repose and peace (interior and exterior) are often used together, “...stay with him a while until your brother’s fury turns (*requiescat*) away” (Gen.27:44). There are, for instance, frequent uses of *requies* in the Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), “The rich person toils to amass a fortune, and when he rests (*requie*) he fills himself with his dainties” (Sir. 31:3). It can also denote rest from work, preoccupations or disturbances. Perhaps most significantly an eternal rest after a life of suffering, “Death is better than a life of misery, and eternal sleep (*requies aeterna*) than chronic sickness” (Sir. 30:17). Jerome, Augustine and Gregory frequently employed these words in their commentaries to speak about the desire to possess God and the contemplative life.

S. Jérôme, S. Augustin et surtout S. Grégoire ont employé ces mots et les ont commentés pour parler de ce désir, et déjà de cette possession, que constitue la contemplation amoureuse.¹⁴⁴

In Jerome’s Latin Vulgate there are no instances of the use of *quies* in the New Testament.

(ii) *Otia*

¹⁴³ See also Lev. 23:32, Ex.31.15’

¹⁴⁴ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.p. 21

The use of the term *otium* or *otia* in the Old Testament has a wide range of meanings. Most often derivatives such as *otiosa* or *otiositas* are used in a pejorative sense to mean idleness or laziness.¹⁴⁵ In the Book of Exodus Pharaoh accuses the Israelite captive slaves of being lazy (*otio*) preferring to sacrifice to the Lord rather than make bricks (Ex.5:17). Proverbs promises food to those who till the land but nothing (or poverty) to those who follow worthless (*secatur otium*) pursuits (Prov.12:11). Similarly Ecclesiastes reminds those “who toil (*otioso*) with their wisdom and knowledge and skill that must leave all to be enjoyed by another (Eccl.2:21). The approach of old age and death, Ecclesiastes continues, is accompanied by “old men bent over and women who cease to grind (*otiosae*) at the mill.” (Eccl: 12:3). The Prophet Ezekiel criticises God’s chosen people for their “excess of bread and prosperous ease (*otium*)” while the poor go hungry. (Ez. 16:49). In a positive sense leisure in the O.T. is associated with Sabbath rest, peace and quiet. In the First Book of Chronicles David speaking to his son Solomon promises that the Lord will give peace and quiet (*otium*) to Israel in all his days. (I Chron.22:9).

The frequency of references to *otium* and its derivatives in the New Testament are rare. There are three incidences of the use of the word *otium* in a negative sense in Matthew’s Gospel. The first (Mat. 12:36) tends to be translated “careless word” (*verbum otiosum*). In the remaining two instances (Mat. 22: 3,6) it means “idle” (*otiosos*) or “standing around” (*otiosi*). St Paul, writing to Timothy, also uses the word to mean idle, “Besides that they learn to be idle (*otiosae*), gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle (*otiosae*), but also gossips and busybodies” (I Tim. 5:13). Finally in the Epistle of James *otiosa* is understood to mean dead, useless or barren.

(c) *Vacatio*

In the OT *vacare*, *vacatio*, *vacate* and *vacuitas* (which has the same root as *vacatio*) are seldom used.¹⁴⁶ In the Greek LXX *vacare* is translated by the Greek σχολη and conveys the same meaning as the Latin *quiescere* and *otium*. These are used in either in a positive or negative sense. One of the most memorable uses is in Psalm 45:11 “Be still

¹⁴⁵ When *otium* is used in its O.T. Greek form (Septuagint or LXX) the corresponding words ἀργία, and occasionally σχολη, can be found.

¹⁴⁶ There are many versions of the Latin Vulgate. Although there are two instances of *vacuitas* these are not found in St Jerome’s version of the Vulgate.

and know (*vacate et videte*) that I am God.” It is used also in association with *otium* such as in Exodus 5:8, 17 to mean ‘idle’ (*vacates otio*).

(d) *Sabbatum*

The Sabbath is widely attested in all the traditions of the Old Testament (Ex.34:21; Ex. 23:12; Ex.20:8-11; Deut.5:12-15; Lev.23:1-3; 19:3; 26:2; Ex.31:12-17; 35:1-3). It was to have a far reaching influence on the Christian faith, culture and liturgical practice.¹⁴⁷ For the chosen people of Israel the Sabbath was the seventh day of their Jewish week; it celebrated the day on which God rested from his work of creation. It was confirmed by both versions of the Decalogue which sanctified a complete absence from work (Ex.20:10) and special gatherings for worship. In the Pre-exilic age, the earlier negative formulation of Sabbath develops into a more positive understanding so that it is not just a time when work is forbidden but also an opportunity for both worship of God and for rest. This precept applied just as much to their slaves, servants and domestic animals as much as it did to the Israelite people themselves (Ex. 20 and Deut. 5). Whereas God had liberated his chosen people from slavery in Egypt so the slave is to be freed from work on the Sabbath (Ex.23:12). This freedom is extended even into the seasons of ploughing and harvesting when it was more difficult to interrupt agricultural work (Ex.34:21). Thus, duties to God and neighbour are fused together to form an indissoluble unity.¹⁴⁸ The Book of the Covenant lays down that every Israelite, his ox and donkey, his slave, and also the alien shall rest and be refreshed every seventh day.

Six days shall you do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your home born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.” (Ex.23:12)

Banished into exile, the Israelites placed an even greater significance on the Sabbath. Together with circumcision, Sabbath worship and rest were what distinguished the Jewish faith from the neighbouring pagan religions. For the prophet Ezekiel faithful observance of the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant that existed between God and his chosen people (Ez.20:12, 20). In contrast, the desecration of the Sabbath is the reason

¹⁴⁷ The Sabbath is the most widely attested of all the Old Testament practices. Although some commentators have tried to associate its provenance with earlier pagan practices such as those of the Babylonians, Canaanites and the Kenites its origin and practice is uniquely Jewish and rooted in the Decalogue. See , s.v. "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament." p.3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.p.4

why disaster has overtaken the Israelites (Ez.20:13-24; 22:8, 26; 23: 38). It is during this post-exilic period that the highly developed rituals for sacrifices and Sabbath observance are developed to ensure no falling away from strict observance.¹⁴⁹ Anyone who profanes the Sabbath is to be put to death (Ex.31:14f). Love of God and loyalty to his covenant are shown in zealous and scrupulous fulfilment of the Law whose supreme commandment is keeping the Sabbath holy.

Third Isaiah provides a more eschatological and personal vision of the Sabbath.¹⁵⁰

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable, if you honour it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs, then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth. (Is.58:13-14a)

In addition to the weekly Sabbath observance, the OT speaks of a Sabbath which is to be kept every seventh year and during which the fruits of the harvest are not to be gathered and the land left fallow (Ex.23:10; Lev.25:1-7). What the untilled land produced of its own accord was to provide sufficient nourishment for all. All loans to the poor are released (Deut.15: 2-11) and slaves are set free and receive back their land. Following the same custom (Lev.25:8-17), at the Jubilee, which was to be celebrated every fiftieth year, (seven by seven plus one), slaves regained their freedom and land reverted to its former owners. The prohibition to work was extended even to fighting battles which on a number of occasions led to the Jewish armies being defeated by their enemies or Roman oppressors. The capture of Jerusalem by Pompey, Herod and Titus took place on the “unlucky day” as the pagans called the Sabbath.¹⁵¹

The Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora attached the same importance to the Sabbath observance. Additionally, it united them with their Palestinian homeland with a special bond. The celebration of the Sabbath became also a foretaste of eternal glory, an

¹⁴⁹ For instance no fires are to be kindled (Ex. 35:3), nor burdens carried (Jer.17:21ff), nor trade carried on (Neh. 10:32), nor the winepress trodden, nor beasts laden, nor markets held (Neh. 13: 15-22), nor highways traversed nor business pursued (Is. 58:13). What is needed for the Sabbath is to be prepared the day before (Ex. 16:22-26, 29)

¹⁵⁰ According to historical evidence Third Isaiah was almost certainly composed in the period c. 530-510 BC (perhaps contemporary with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah) and after Ezekiel (c. 593-563 BC) whose composition covers the period before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the earlier part of the exile.

¹⁵¹ See note 137 in Kittel. The Sabbath was the obvious day to attack the Israelites because their defences were down.

unending Sabbath.¹⁵² Depending on local circumstances some pagan communities adopted this Sabbath day of rest mainly on the principle that there was little they could do if the Jewish population refused to work. However, the Jewish Sabbath was often ridiculed by Greek and Latin authors such as Ovid on the grounds that it was a day which Jews spent in idleness and sloth. Seneca blamed the Jews for squandering one seventh of their lives in inactivity!¹⁵³

A number of commentators on the biblical influences upon Sabbath make the point that it was supposed to be a day of joy which allowed freedom from work rather than a day of solemn duties and self-restraint.

The Jewish Sabbath is not a Puritan Sabbath: it is not a gloomy or a sad day. It is rather a day of joy and of pleasure. All the restrictions imposed upon us during this day as for example to refrain from work and travel, are intended primarily not to impose burdens upon us, but rather to give us full leisure and thus to increase our joy and our pleasure on this sacred day. Our spiritual as well as our material life is to be richer, more pleasant and more delightful by our leisure on the Sabbath day and by the observance of its ceremonies.¹⁵⁴

The word *sabbatum*, *sabbata* and its derivatives frequently appear in the New Testament in connection with the Jewish Sabbath feast.¹⁵⁵ However, Jesus, almost from the start of his public ministry, comes into conflict with the Jewish authorities over the Sabbath observance. In the Gospel of Mark the plucking of ears of corn by his disciples on the Sabbath causes outrage amongst the Pharisees. Neither is help and healing to be brought to a sick person in danger of death (Mk.3:1-6). The carrying of all kinds of objects is also forbidden (Jn. 5:9), and travelling on extended journeys.

Luke has two additional accounts of healing on the Sabbath. By having these he is telling us more than any of the other evangelists about the Sabbath, and its relevance to the new Christian community. The first is the curing of the woman who afflicted with a spirit is unable to stand straight (Lk.13:10-17), and the second is the man who has dropsy (Lk.14:1-6). In these and other incidents Jesus is portrayed initially as trying to

¹⁵² The concept of eternal Sabbath was to be taken up later by Basil of Caesarea speaking of the relationship between the Sabbath and Heaven as the eighth day.

¹⁵³ See note 135 and 136 on p.17 of Kittel

¹⁵⁴ J.Z. Lauterbach, "The Sabbath in Jewish Ritual and Folklore," in *Rabbinic Essays* (Cincinnati, USA: Hebrew Union College Press, 1951). Quoted in Leclercq, *Otia*, p. 52.

¹⁵⁵ Mat. 12:1; 24:20; Mark 6:2; Luke 6:1, 6, 7, 9; 13:14, 15; 14: 1,3;18:12; 23:56; John 5:16; 7:22; Acts 13:42, 43.

preach the Good News to the chosen people of Israel. It is only after their rejection that his preaching is redirected to the Gentiles. John's Gospel has two further Sabbath healing narratives. The first is Jesus' command that the lame man of Bethesda should take up his bed and walk (Jn. 5:1-9) and the second the healing of the man born blind (Jn. 9:1-41). The message is that his divine mission cannot tolerate any interruption, even from the Sabbath.

The early Christian Church residing in Palestine clung at first to the Jewish Sabbath which was on a Saturday. On the other hand the Gentile Christian churches, which arose out of the Hellenistic Christian and Pauline mission, did not consider this tradition binding. In conscious opposition to the Jewish Sabbath the "Day of Rest" was moved to the Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection.¹⁵⁶ Already, in NT times, the "Day of the Lord" or, the "Lord's Day," began to replace the Jewish Sabbath. The earliest reference to the "Day of the Lord" is in the Book of Revelation (1:10).¹⁵⁷ The emphasis of the missionary preaching in the *Acts of the Apostles* is that the Sabbath is done away with. Acts, 20:7 affirms that St Paul and the Christians of Troas assembled on the first day of the week to "break bread."¹⁵⁸ In I Cor. 16, 2 St Paul exhorts his new converts to put by alms on this day also.¹⁵⁹ Thus Christians started to keep the beginning of the week as the dawning of a new creation at whose commencement Jesus was raised from the dead.

INFLUENCE OF THE PATRISTIC TRADITION ON *OTIA MONASTICA*

(i) Quies

Tertullian (c.160-c.225) is the first Christian author to write about *quies* and associated meanings. In one of his first works *De Spectaculis* he speaks of the calm interior that God wishes each of us to possess free of anger and sadness.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Although in English the word "Sunday" is derived from the pagan *dies solis* (day of the sun), the Latin is *Domenica*, that is, "the Day of the Lord."

¹⁵⁷ The "Day of the Lord" in NT Greek is κυριακήμέρα.

¹⁵⁸ "On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them..."

¹⁵⁹ "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come."

¹⁶⁰ In Leclercq, *Otia*, p.21, n.1

God has enjoined us to deal calmly, gently, quietly, and peacefully with the Holy Spirit, because these things are alone in keeping with the goodness of His nature, with His tenderness and sensitiveness, and not to vex Him with rage, ill-nature, anger, or grief.¹⁶¹

Later in the same treatise, evidencing the influence of the Classical philosophers, he writes,

Thou art too dainty, Christian, if thou wouldst have pleasure in this life as well as in the next; nay, a fool thou art, if thou thinkest this life's pleasures to be really pleasures. The philosophers, for instance, give the name of pleasure to quietness and repose; in that they have their bliss; in that they find entertainment: they even glory in it.¹⁶²

Further on he emphasises the way in which *quies* can enhance Christian joy.¹⁶³ In *De Anima*, Tertullian confronts the Stoics and their errors, especially about sleep and repose.

He accordingly sets before your view the human body stricken by the friendly power of slumber, prostrated by the kindly necessity of repose immoveable in position, just as it lay previous to life, and just as it will lie after life is past: there it lies as an attestation of its form when first moulded, and of its condition when at last buried—awaiting the soul in both stages, in the former previous to its bestowal in the latter after its recent withdrawal.¹⁶⁴

St Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-c. 367) commenting on the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in St Matthew's Gospel (27:4) uses the term *quies*,¹⁶⁵ and again in *Contra Constantium*.¹⁶⁶

The understanding of *quies* is far more developed in St Augustine of Hippo (354-430). For him, repose and stability are creation's natural state.

But because there is in man a rational soul, he subordinates all that he has in common with the beasts to the peace of that rational soul. He does this so that his mind may engage in some kind of contemplation, so that he may in some degree act according to

¹⁶¹ Menzies. *De Spectaculis* XV, 2

¹⁶² Ibid. *De Spectaculis* XXVII 4, 5

¹⁶³ In Leclercq *Otia*, p.21, n. 2

¹⁶⁴ Menzies. *De Anima* XLIII, 9, 11

¹⁶⁵ J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina* (Paris: J P Migne, 1860). Vol. 20, 546

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. (PL 10, 602) Additionally *quies* is found in a number of early liturgical texts especially those relating to the funeral rite such as *quies perpetua* or *quies aeterna*. The phrase *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine* which has been used from earliest times is taken from the Book of Esdras. The idea of rest or repose that God takes on the Seventh Day (Sabbath) is transferred to those who have died.

that contemplation, thereby displaying that ordered agreement of thought and action, which, as we have said, constitutes the peace of the rational soul.¹⁶⁷

He applies *quies* to the rest of the saints in heaven,

Next, let us consider...how the saints are to be occupied when they are clothed in immortal and spiritual bodies, and when the flesh will live no longer in a carnal, but a spiritual fashion...I do not know what the nature of that occupation, or rather of that rest and repose will be.¹⁶⁸

In his letters, St Jerome speaks of a calm interior and exterior leading to an absence of indignation, a place appropriate for prayer, the tranquillity of the countryside, a silence that is difficult to find in the town. Writing to Marcella he says,

Wherefore, seeing that we have journeyed for much of our life through a troubled sea, and that our vessel has been in turn shaken by raging blasts and shattered upon treacherous reefs, let us, as soon as may be, make for the haven of rural quietude. There such country dainties as milk and household bread, and greens watered by our own hands, will supply us with coarse but harmless fare. So living, sleep will not call us away from prayer, nor satiety from reading.¹⁶⁹

Rufinus unites *quies* and silence in his preface to his *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*.¹⁷⁰ Sulpicius Severus (c.360-c.420) in his *Dialogues* emphasises the inextricable bond between *quies* and the Eastern monks especially those living the eremitical life in tranquillity and free from worldly distractions.¹⁷¹

Palladius (c. 365-425) spent several years with the monks of Egypt where he was a pupil of Evagrius Ponticus (c.346-99). During that time, while in Alexandria, he visited the monk Isidore. Palladius writes in his *Lausiac History*,

When I visited him as a young man and besought that I might be trained in the solitary life, since I was in the full vigour of my age and needed, not discourse, but bodily hardships, like a good tamer of colts he led me out from the city to the so-called Solitudes five miles away and handed me over to Dorotheus.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*. Book XIX Ch.14, p.941 quoted in Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p.23

¹⁶⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*. Book XXII, Ch. 29, p.1171 quoted in Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p.23

¹⁶⁹ St Jerome, Letter 43:3 quoted in Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. p.24

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.p.24,n.29

¹⁷¹ Ibid.p.25,n.32 (*Dialogue* 1:2,2)

¹⁷² *Lausiac History* I (Isidore)

The Lives of the Desert Fathers contain several references to *quies* translated as “stillness.” This is a technical term expressing the state of inner tranquillity and profound silence which allowed the monks victory over passions. It was a necessary condition for contemplation and is synonymous with the Greek ἡσυχία (hesychia).

For this ascetic (John of Lycopolis) was particularly devoted to stillness. Spending his days as he did in prayer and hymnody and much contemplation, he saw clear visions of divine nature, sometimes while full awake, sometimes while asleep.¹⁷³

And so you too my children, should cultivate stillness and ceaselessly train yourselves for contemplation, that when you pray to God you may do so with a pure mind.¹⁷⁴

Ammon kept such a profound silence (stillness) that you would think you were in the desert.¹⁷⁵

For he (Abba Bes) lived a life of the utmost stillness, and his manner was serene, since he had attained the angelic state.¹⁷⁶

They (the monks of Nitrea) inhabit a desert place and have their cells some distance from each other, so that no one should be recognised from afar by another, or be seen easily, or hear another’s voice. On the contrary, they live in profound silence (stillness), each monk isolated on his own.¹⁷⁷

Antony said to him, ‘Serve the brethren in silence and do not taste anything until the brethren have resumed their journey. When they had stayed a full three weeks without Paul’s having eaten anything, the brethren asked him why he kept silent. When he did not reply, Antony said to him, ‘Why are you silent? Speak to the brothers.’ And he spoke to them.¹⁷⁸

St Gregory the Great, who experienced personally the tensions between public and contemplative life, warns his clergy about the dangers of becoming preoccupied with worldly affairs,

It is great assuredness of heart to have nought of worldly concupiscence. For if the heart pants attaining earthly things, it can never be secure and tranquil, because either things not possessed it desires, in order that it may possess them, or things obtained it is afraid lest it should lose them, and whilst in adverse circumstances he dreads prosperous ones, so in prosperous circumstances he dread such as are adverse, and he is tossed

¹⁷³ Ward, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*. I,45, p.59

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. I, 62, p.62

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. III, 4, p.65

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. IV, 1, p.66

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. XX, 7 p.106

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. XXIV, 6,7, p.114

hither and thither as if it were by a kind of waves, and is hurried about in various fashions by the challenges of shifting affairs.¹⁷⁹

But he has a warning too for those who love a secret place of quiet, longing for a retreat of speculation. He reminds them of the example of the only begotten Son of God,

And so there are some, as we have said, enriched with great gifts, who while they are ardent for the studies of contemplation only, shrink from serving to their neighbour's benefit by preaching; they love a secret place of quiet, they long for a retreat for speculation. With respect to which conduct, they are, if strictly judged, undoubtedly guilty in proportion to the greatness of the gifts whereby they might have been publicly useful. For with what disposition of mind does one who might be conspicuous in profiting his neighbours prefer his own privacy to the advantage of others, when the Only-begotten of the supreme Father Himself came forth from the bosom of the Father into the midst of us all, that He might profit many?¹⁸⁰

(ii) *Otia*

Patristic evidence suggests also that *otium* and *otia* can be used in both a negative and positive sense depending on circumstances and context. Tertullian for instance, in his *De Anima*, views *otium* as a state of the soul without activity or idleness during sleep,

What indeed would be said, if in the case of Hermotimus were believed to be such that the repose of the soul was a state of actual idleness during sleep, and a positive separation from the body?¹⁸¹

However, in his *Apologeticum* he qualifies this by linking *otiosarum* to baseness and lasciviousness.

The consuls Piso and Gabinius, no Christians surely, forbade Serapis and Isis, and Arpocrates, with their dog head friend, admission to the Capitol – in the act of casting them out from the assembly of the gods – overthrew their altars and expelled them from the country, being anxious to prevent the vices of their base and lascivious religion from spreading.¹⁸²

Hilary of Poitiers in his *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* interprets *otium* as ineptitude and uselessness.¹⁸³ In another commentary, this time on Psalm 118, he

¹⁷⁹ St Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. John Henry Parker and J.G.F. and J. Rivington (Oxford and London: 1844). <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoraliaIndex.html>. Ch. 35

¹⁸⁰ St Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care (Regula Pastoralis)*, trans. Henry Davis S.J. (Westminster, Maryland, USA: Newman Press, 1950). Ch. 5

¹⁸¹ Menzies, *De Anima* 44, 3

¹⁸² Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 6, 8,

¹⁸³ PL 9, 991 *In Matth.* 12, 19

characterises it as a state of inertia and carelessness.¹⁸⁴ In regard to the Sabbath he is far more positive speaking of a “religious leisure” symbolised by the *otium Domini*.¹⁸⁵ In Rufinus’ translation of the *Rule of Basil sermo otiosus* is just idle gossip.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, in Pelagius’ (c. 454–418) commentary on St Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians *otiosum* is condemned as a vice.¹⁸⁷

To occupy one’s thoughts throughout life with journeyings which you cannot perform tranquilly and easily, is not the part of a man whose thoughts are engaged with that last journey which is called death, and which alone, as you understand, really deserves serious consideration. God has indeed granted to some few men whom He has ordained to rule over churches, the capacity of not only awaiting calmly, but even desiring eagerly, that last journey, while at the same time they can meet without disquietude the toils of those other journeyings; but I do not believe that either to those who are urged to accept such duties through desire for worldly honour, or to those who, although occupying a private station, covet a busy life, so great a boon is given as that amid bustle and agitating meetings, and journeyings hither and thither, they should acquire that familiarity with death which we seek: for both of these classes had it in their power to seek edification in retirement.¹⁸⁸

In another letter, this time to the monks of Capraria in 398, Augustine assures them that although burdened and occupied with the duties of office he can share in their monastic leisure through being a member of the same Body of Christ to which they belong.

When we reflect upon the undisturbed rest which you enjoy in Christ, we also, although engaged in labours manifold and arduous, find rest with you, beloved. We are one body under one Head, so that you share our toils, and we share your repose: for “if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (1 Cor 12:26)”¹⁸⁹

In a later treatise *De Vera Religione* he writes of the obligation for mankind to know God. In support of this endeavour he cites Psalm 45, v.10

¹⁸⁴ PL 9, Ps 118

¹⁸⁵ PL 9, 985 *In Matth.* 12, 2

¹⁸⁶ PL 103, 513 Reg. 40

¹⁸⁷ In I Cor., 11, 27. Pelagius’ commentary is one of his few surviving works due to the fact that he was eventually condemned as a heretic in 418. Subsequently most of his writings were lost. These commentaries on St Paul’s letters have survived in a “worked over form” and more recently the original manuscript has been discovered and edited by A. Souter (1922-31) and more recently Theodore de Bruyn (1993).

¹⁸⁸ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. Trans. J.G. Cunningham <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102048.htm> St Augustine, *Letter 10:2*

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. St Augustine, *Letter 48:1*

If your mind eagerly pants to behold these things, keep quiet. Do not strive except being accustomed to material things. Conquer that habit and you are victorious over all. We seek unity, the simplest thing of all. Therefore let us seek it in simplicity of heart. "Be still and know that I am God!" This is not the stillness of idleness but of thought, free from space and time.¹⁹⁰

St Augustine was preoccupied also with the tensions that might arise within the monastic communities in regard to whether or not the brothers should live by the work of their hands or depend on the gifts and alms of others. *De Opere Monachorum* addresses this perennial tension which can lead to so much discord both within and without the monastery.¹⁹¹ On the one hand he is on record as defending the need for monastic *otium*, but here he defends the need for the brothers to do manual work. The two are not incompatible providing there is an appropriate balance between them. In this treatise he twice uses derivatives of *otium* to indicate laziness while maintaining the need for the brothers, following the example of St Paul, to work to "earn their bread,"¹⁹² adding that it is more important to "idle their tongues than idle their hands."

More than anywhere else it is in *De Civitate Dei* that St Augustine gives a fuller exposition on *otium*. Following Varro, the Roman philosopher, St Augustine identifies three kinds of life, being careful not to confuse leisure with idleness,

There again, there are three kinds of life. The first, though not idle, is one of leisure (*otioso*), spent in the contemplation of truth or in the search for it. The second exists in engagement with the business of human affairs. The third is a judicious combination of the other two. But when it is asked which of these is the more worthwhile here again no controversy arises as to the Final Good. Rather, the question is which of these three makes the attainment or the preservation of the Final Good either difficult or easy...He is not made happy by a life of learned leisure (*otio*) merely, or of public affairs, or a life which combines both. Indeed there can be many people living in anyone of these three ways who nonetheless go astray in their search for the Final Good which makes a man happy.¹⁹³

What St Augustine would seem to be implying here, and in other places, is that it is not *otium* alone which facilitates our search for God but rather a judicious combination of all three, *otium* together with business or human affairs, and a combination of both. In the final chapter, without making any claim as to what form it might take, he uses *otium* to symbolise the eternal rest promised to all the elect who believe in the one true God,

¹⁹⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*. P. 258 (*De Vera Religione* PL 34,151, Psal. XLV,11)

¹⁹¹ Not all scholars accept that Augustine was the author of *De Opere Monachorum*.

¹⁹² PL 40, 560 and PL 40, 573

¹⁹³ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*. Book XIX, 2 p.914 (PL41, 624)

And yet to tell the truth, I do not know what the nature of that occupation, or rather of that rest (*quies*) and repose (*otium*) will be.¹⁹⁴

Writing towards the end of the fifth century, Julianus Pomerius (d. c.499-505),¹⁹⁵ in his *De vita Contemplativa*, which was directed at reforming the local clergy in Gaul, spoke positively of a quiet or restful leisure namely *otiosa quies*.¹⁹⁶ He is concerned whether a cleric, preoccupied with pastoral duties, could ever attain the rewards of someone who withdrew completely from the world. Later on he encourages an *otiosum studium* characterising a busy leisure.¹⁹⁷ St Gregory in his commentary on the prophet Ezekiel interprets the couch or bed as a symbol of *otium* upon which the soul of the bride is totally preoccupied with God.¹⁹⁸

(iii) *Vacatio*

In the earliest Patristic corpus Tertullian uses the verbal form of *vacatio* to signify that something is missing, tainted or deficient. For instance, writing against the Roman games and idolatrous worship he speaks of their “tainted idolatry.”¹⁹⁹ And, on the behaviour of Christian women, he warns them to be devoid of any fault.²⁰⁰ In the later literature the term takes on a more spiritual meaning. St Cyprian uses the phrase in the context of emptying oneself for Christ and for God,²⁰¹ for prayer²⁰² and the sacraments²⁰³, while St Jerome applies the same meaning to the teaching of the saints²⁰⁴ and other spiritual exercises.²⁰⁵

St Augustine, more than any other early Christian writers, develops a more comprehensive doctrine of *vacatio*. Augustine contrasts Christians with Jews who remain in the wilderness. Their occupations are empty in comparison with those

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. Book XXII, 29 (PL 40, 560)

¹⁹⁵ Julianus Pomerius was an exile from North Africa who eventually settled in Arles, Gaul where he became an Abbot and more importantly the teacher of St Caesarius (470-542) who in turn was instrumental in preserving the writings of St Augustine and establishing monasteries.

¹⁹⁶ *De Vita Contemplativa* II, 16, 1 in PL 59, 459 ”

¹⁹⁷ Ibid III, 28 PL 59,510

¹⁹⁸ *In Ezechielem Prophetam* II,7,11 PL 76, 1020

¹⁹⁹ *De spectaculis* 10, 11 We see, therefore, that the arts also are consecrated to the service of the beings who dwell in the names of their founders; and that things cannot be held free from the taint of idolatry whose inventors have got a place among the gods for their discoveries.

²⁰⁰ *De cultu feminarum* II, 2, 4

²⁰¹ *De habitu virginum* 24

²⁰² *Epist.* 1, 1

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ *Epist.* 22, 35, 7 (see Leclercq n.5 p.45)

²⁰⁵ Ibid 39, 4, 7”

Christians who recognise and understand the mystery of Christ or *fructuosa vacatio*.²⁰⁶ More than anything else however St Augustine uses *fructuosa vacatio* to describe the fullness of the Sabbath; the mystery of that seventh day when God rested from work of creation.

For the morning and the evening of those days are all counted, until, on the sixth day, all the things that God had made are finished, and, on the seventh, there is established the great mystery of God's rest. (Civ. Dei. XI, 6)²⁰⁷

God's rest is all powerful, inexhaustible and is the symbol of that rest in which all those united to God will rejoice. Works now accomplished in faith here on earth prepare us for that day of eternal rest.²⁰⁸

When God rested from all his works on the seventh day, and hallowed it...God's rest signifies the rest of those who rest in God, just as the house of joy means the joy of those who rejoice in the house. ...Most appropriately therefore, it signifies by this that those rest who are in him, and whom he causes to rest...and shall eternal rest in him if they have first drawn near to him in this life.. (Civ. Dei. Xi)

Later on in the *City of God* St Augustine returns to this same theme. He wishes to demonstrate that every individual must use all their rest, all their leisure to seek the truth about God,

As for the three kinds of life – the life of leisure, the life of action, and the combination of both: a Christian might conduct his life in any of these ways and still attain to everlasting rewards, provided that he does so without prejudice to his faith...the delight offered by a life of leisure ought to consist not in idle activity, but in the opportunity to seek and find the truth...²⁰⁹

St Augustine enlists also the teaching from the psalms. Mention has been made already of Psalm 45:11 "Be still and see that I am God"²¹⁰ Neither is the "Day of the Lord" to be frittered away aimlessly.

Vacatio and its derivatives are used by a number of other early Christian authors and Latin translations. In the Latin translation of Origen (by Rufinus) the verb *vacare* is

²⁰⁶ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.p.45 quotes Augustine *In Ps. XXXIII, 1, 9*

²⁰⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*.pp.456-457

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 458

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 948 Book XIX, 20

²¹⁰ *Psalm 45:11* "Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus"

used in relation to both the vision²¹¹ and the word of God.²¹² In another Latin translation, this time of Hesychius, *vacatio* is closer to *contemplatio*²¹³; similarly in Julianus Pomerus *vacatio* is used several times.²¹⁴ Additionally, the term can be found in several monastic texts such as the *Vitae Patrum*, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, *Vita Melaniae*, and monastic authors St Caesarius of Arles and Cassiodorus.²¹⁵ In the Life of Antony a more rare form of *vacatio* is found, *vacantia* which is applied more to spiritual than to bodily activities.

In the RB *vacare* is employed in a both a positive and negative sense in a number of places. The first in the Prologue 43 where *vacat* is used twice in a neutral sense of “time to accomplish,”

If we wish to reach eternal life, even as we avoid the torments of hell, then while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life, we must run and do now what will profit us forever.²¹⁶

In the second instance *vacet* or *vacat* is used negatively three times in RB 43²¹⁷ and later in RB 48²¹⁸ the first two uses meaning “idle talk” and the third as “not being idle.”²¹⁹

The third instance *vacent* and *vacant* are applied to *Lectio Divina*: in RB 48 “From the fourth hour until the time of Sext they will devote themselves to reading”²²⁰ then “they will devote themselves to their reading or to the psalms....should be free in the morning to read until the third hour...”²²¹ and finally, “while the brothers are reading.”²²²

Although this important chapter 48 is entitled “On the Daily Labour” much of the instruction is devoted to the time and amount of sacred reading. Here the RB is imposing an important balance between manual work and reading. In do so it is making an implicit statement about the nature of *otia monastica*.

(iv) *Sabbato*

²¹¹ Origen, *In Cant.* 2, 7-8 (trad. Rufinus),

²¹² Origen, *In Gen.* 1,7(Trad. Rufinus)

²¹³ *In Lev.* 23, 26 PG 93, 1092

²¹⁴ *De vita contemplativa*, 1, 13, PL 59, 429

²¹⁵ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*. See p. 48 notes 23 to 28.

²¹⁶ Fry. P.164 -165 Prologue 43”

²¹⁷ Ibid. RB 43, 8

²¹⁸ Ibid. RB 48:

²¹⁹ Ibid. RB 48:24

²²⁰ Ibid. RB 48: 4

²²¹ Ibid. RB 48: 13, 14

²²² Ibid. RB 48: 17

The term *Sabbato* (and *Sabbatum*) appear more frequently in the Patristic literature when referred to in the context of the Gospels, for example Jesus speaking or healing on the Sabbath. In conscious opposition to the Jewish Sabbath, the *Didache* (c.100–110) attests that the “breaking of bread and giving thanks” was celebrated on “the Lord’s own day.”²²³ The *Letter of Barnabas* (c. 120-130) draws a parallel between the day of rest at the end of creation and the new Sabbath or Sunday. It then introduces the notion of “the eighth day.”

Moreover, the Lord says to them, “I cannot stand your new moons and Sabbaths (Is. 1:13). It is not the Sabbaths of the present time that are acceptable to me, but the one I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make a beginning of an eighth day, which is the beginning of another world. Therefore we celebrate the eighth day with gladness, for on it Jesus arose from the dead, and appeared, and ascended into heaven.”²²⁴

It was the commemoration of the Resurrection which for St Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-c.107) gave the Lord’s Day its joyful character.

And so those who lived according to the old ways came to a new hope, no longer keeping Sabbath but living according to the Lord’s day, on which also our life arose through him and his death – which some deny.²²⁵

St Justin Martyr (c. 100-c.165) connects the Lord’s Day with the first day of Creation.

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.²²⁶

²²³ Bart D Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers Volume I*, vol. 1, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press, 2003).p. 439. See also, O’Loughlin.pp. 99-100

²²⁴ *Epistle of Barnabas*, XV, 8-9, in Bart D Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume II*, vol. II, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²²⁵ St Ignatius writing to the Magnesians, IX,1 in Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers Volume I*.p.249

²²⁶ The First Apology: The weekly worship of the Christians(Chapter LXVII) in Philip Schaff, ed., *Ante Nicene Fathers: Vol I: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: T & T Clark with Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1885). P.186

The *Epistle to Diognetus* reiterates that it is not blasphemy to maintain that God forbids us to do anything good on the Sabbath.²²⁷ Origen rejects the Jewish Sabbath because it cannot possibly be kept by a Christian.²²⁸

In the early Church two distinctive characteristics of the Sunday celebration were the absence of Sunday fasting and not kneeling for prayer. The first echoed Jesus' exhortation for the wedding guests not to fast when the bridegroom was still amongst them (Mat 9:15; Mk. 2: 19; Lk. 5:34), and the second symbolised the resurrection of Christ emerging upright from the tomb.

Like the Jewish Sabbath it was a day of rest, but a day of rest that was incomplete in the sense that it would not come to its full completion until eternal life had been achieved. For St Jerome the true Sabbath will come when the saints reign over all with Christ but for the present moment it is a hope for the future.²²⁹ In his *City of God* St Augustine speaks of *sabbati vacationes* as a symbol of the eternal rest to come.²³⁰ The eschatological nature of the Sabbath is again stressed by Augustine in one of his letters.

The Sabbath which the Jews celebrate temporarily will (for us) be eternal: we know that we must interpret it as eternal. This unspeakable rest is without explanation...it is upon him we throw ourselves, it is in the sight of him we are spiritually regenerated.²³¹

And again much more fully in the *City of God*,

Then shall these words be fulfilled, "Be still and know that I am God"; then shall be that great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among his first works as it is written, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God began to make."²³²

More than once St Augustine insists that the paschal mystery is the foundation of Christian hope. Just as God the Father rested after creation, Christ rests after his redemption (during the Jewish Sabbath) in the tomb. There is continuity also in the symbolism between the rest of Christ and the rest of all Christians.²³³ And to

²²⁷ Epistle to Diognetus IV, 3 in Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume II*, p. 139

²²⁸ Origen, *De Principiis* sourced in <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04124.htm> on 4 June 2014

²²⁹ Jerome Epist. 36, 16, 3

²³⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*. Book XI, 9 p.459

²³¹ Augustine, Sermon. 362, 27 PL 39, 1631

²³² Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the pagans*. XXII 30 p. 1181

²³³ Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manicheos* 1, 22 PL 34, 33 and *Serm.* 221 PL 38, 1090; 231, 2 1105.

complement Easter there is Pentecost when the fruits of the resurrection are spread throughout the world, where the Spirit of Christ glorified is sent out to all mankind, thanks to that great feast which is the *sabbati sabbatorum*.²³⁴ But, because it remains a “Sabbath of Hope” the Christian Sabbath must be filled with good works that lead to God. It is not a day of idle rest or repose.²³⁵ Augustine and others insist that the Sabbath is more a “Sabbath of the heart”²³⁶ characterising the essential spiritual nature of the Sabbath.²³⁷

To better express better the contemplative dimension of the Sabbath, namely rest in union with God, writers such as St Jerome adapt the Latin for Sabbath to *sabbatissimus* and *sabbatizare*. St Gregory the Great devotes considerable energy to refuting a heresy that supports the retention of the Jewish Sabbath and other Jewish practices such as refraining from work on Saturday, circumcision and sacrifices. He reminds them that thanks to Jesus Christ they have been relieved of this obligation. “We know” he says, “that it is necessary to understand and observe the Sabbath in its spiritual sense, not in accordance with the Old Law.”²³⁸

St Ambrose makes the link between peace, rest and sabbath.

...we must take refuge from this world in that place where there is peace, where there is rest from toil, where we can celebrate the great Sabbath, as Moses said, “the Sabbaths of the land will provide you with food.” ...Let us take refuge like deer beside the fountain of the waters. Let our soul thirst, as David thirsted, for the fountain.²³⁹

Thus Christians keep the eighth day i.e. the beginning of the new week, as the dawning of a new creation at whose commencement Jesus rose from the dead and after his post resurrection appearances ascended up to heaven. However, although the Christian Church freed itself from the Sabbath it adopted the Jewish week and kept almost unchanged the Jewish system of enumeration, counting the days up to the Sabbath but giving special prominence only to the Lord’s Day.

²³⁴ Augustine *Serm.* 270, 5 PL 38, 1242

²³⁵ Augustine *Serm.* 9, 3

²³⁶ Augustine *Serm.* 8, 6”

²³⁷ Augustine *Formulae Spiritalis Intelligentiae*,

²³⁸ Gregory *Epist.* XIII, 3

²³⁹ St Ambrose, *Treatise on Flight from the World*

The observance of Sunday as a day of rest consecrated especially to the praise and service of God began to be regulated by both ecclesiastical and civil authorities from the 4th century. Particularly significant was a law promulgated by Emperor Constantine in 321 commanding abstention from work, including legal business, for townspeople, though permitting farm labour. Both the Council of Elvira (c.306)²⁴⁰ and the Council of Laodicea (c.380)²⁴¹ enjoined abstention from work as far as possible and introduced penalties for those who missed the Eucharistic assembly.

Nonetheless, the notion of Sabbath observance, as opposed to Sunday observance, continued to be retained in the early Christian centuries with the former's focus on rest and repose. With its emphasis on the reading of scripture this development was to play an important part in the shaping of the concept of *otia monastica* in monastic rules and practice.

OTIA MONASTICA, ACEDIA AND IDLENESS

So far, this examination of *otia monastica* has focused on four categories, *quies*, *otia*, *vacatio* and *sabbatum*. There is one further category, *acedia*, that needs to be examined in order to understand the spiritual and psychological nature of *otia monastica* and the confusion that might arise from failing to distinguish between the positive and negative aspects of sacred or holy leisure.

The term *acedia* can be found several times in the Greek LXX, for instance in Psalm 119:28, where it is translated as “sorrow” or in Isaiah 61:3 where it is translated as “faint spirit.”²⁴² Later, its meaning was modified to convey sadness, spiritual torpor and sloth as in the Third Vision of *The Shepherd Hermas*,

For, like elderly men who have no hope of renewing their strength, and expect nothing but their last sleep, so you, weakened by worldly occupations, have given yourselves up

²⁴⁰ Canon 21 “If anyone who lives in the city does not attend church services for three Sundays, let that person be expelled for a brief time in order to make the reproach public.” <http://faculty.cua.edu/pennington/Canon%20Law/ElviraCanons.htm> Sourced 3 June 2014

²⁴¹ Canon 29 “Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.” <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3806.htm> sourced 3 June 2014

²⁴² Ps.118:28, ἔσταξεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἀπὸ ἀκηδίας βεβαίωσόν με ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου (My soul melts away for sorrow.) Is.61:3, τοῖς πενθοῦσιν καταστολὴν δόξης ἀντὶ πνεύματος ἀκηδίας” (the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.)

to sloth, and have not cast your cares upon the Lord. Your spirit therefore is broken, and you have grown old in your sorrows.²⁴³

of a wretched mind it makes a person horrified at where he is, disgusted with his cell, In the early Christian monastic tradition the vice of acedia, (or despondency or disquiet as it is sometimes translated), was not only associated with idleness but with too much talking and malicious gossip also.²⁴⁴ Evagrius Pontus (c. 346-399) was the first Christian monk to write extensively on acedia.²⁴⁵ His importance lies not only in the content of his writing but also in the fact that he had a significant influence on Cassian. Furthermore, Evagrius provides an important link between Eastern and Western thought because he transmitted in his writings many of Origen's central ideas which in turn had been shaped by the pagan Greek philosophers, especially Plato.²⁴⁶

In *The Institutes* Cassian devotes a whole section to acedia.²⁴⁷ Drawing on the example of the industriousness of the St Paul and the teaching of the Desert Fathers, Cassian describes in graphic detail the symptoms of acedia and the justification for rooting out this vice which, he says, is sometimes called the "noonday demon" mentioned in Psalm 90 (91).²⁴⁸

Once this has seized possession and also disdainful and contemptuous of his brothers who live with him or at a slight distance, as being careless or unspiritual. Likewise it renders him slothful and immobile in face of all the work to be done within the walls of his dwelling. It does not allow him to stay still in his cell or to devote any effort to reading.²⁴⁹

²⁴³ Daniel Robison, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, trans. Daniel Robison (Marston, Oxford: Amazon, 2013).

²⁴⁴ The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (ODCC) describes *acedia* as a state of restlessness and inability to either work or pray. It was more commonly applied to monks and hermits but in its general use it described a state of listlessness or torpor, of not caring or not being concerned with one's position or condition in the world leading to an inability to discharge one's duties in life. In some cases it is linked to depression.

²⁴⁵ The term *acedia* (sometimes written as *aecidia*, *accidie* or *accedie*) comes from the Latin *acedia* derived from the Greek ἀκηδία.

²⁴⁶ In the last 20-30 years there has been an increased interest in the writings of Evagrius especially his treatise *On Prayer*. These and recent studies show that he has occupied a central place in the history of Christian spirituality. For instance see John Eudes Bamberger, ed., *Evagrius Ponticus (Pontus): The Praktikos Chapters on Prayer* (Spencer, MA, USA: Cistercian Publications, 1970).

²⁴⁷ Cassian, *The Institutes*. pp. 219-234.

²⁴⁸ Psalm 90 (91):6 "You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday." The 'noonday demon' or the 'destruction that wastes at noonday' i.e. the sixth hour (i.e. midday) afflicted the monk when he was most vulnerable, oppressed by the fierce heat of the desert.

²⁴⁹ Cassian, *The Institutes*. Book X, II.1, p. 219

Then, the monk listless and hungry as if he had engaged in a long fast looks for an opportunity to leave his cell, or for some other distraction,

Next he glances around anxiously here and there and sighs that none of the brothers is coming to see him. Constantly in and out of his cell, he looks at the sun as if it were too slow in setting. So filled is he with a kind of irrational confusion of mind, like a foul mist, and so disengaged and blank has he become to any spiritual activity that he thinks that no other remedy for such an attack can be found than the visit of a brother or the solace of sleep alone.²⁵⁰

Quoting principally from St Paul's two *Letters to the Thessalonians*,²⁵¹ Cassian wishes to highlight the dangers of acedia and the way in which it can lead the monk through idleness to spiritual bankruptcy.

When he (St Paul) wants to prove that he was not disquieted among them, thanks to his exercise of work, he notes with clarity that those who do not want to work are always disquieted by the vice of idleness.²⁵²

The Rule of the Master echoes Cassian's concern and distrust of any monk left to his own devices,

After the Divine Office has ceased during the day, we do not want these intervals when the psalmody of the Hours is suspended to be spent idly, lest short-time idleness produce no long-term profit, because an idle man produces death and is always craving something. For while a brother is engaged in some task he fixes his eyes on his work and thereby occupies his attention with what he is doing and has no time to think about anything else, and is not submerged in a flood of desires.²⁵³

The RB famously commences the chapter on the daily manual labour (RB 48:1) with the phrase, "idleness is the enemy of the soul" which has its origins in the *Book of Sirach* "Put him to work in order that he may not be idle, for idleness teaches much evil" (Sir.33:28-29) and another phrase attributed to King Solomon in the *Book of Proverbs* (31:27), "...she does not eat the bread of idleness." Later on, in the same chapter, the RB exhorts the seniors to be alert for apathetic brothers.

One or two seniors must surely be deputed to make the rounds of the monastery while the brothers are reading. Their duty is to see that no brother is so apathetic to waste time

²⁵⁰ Ibid.X,II,3, p.220

²⁵¹ For example, "But we urge you beloved to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we have directed you." I Thes. 4:10; "Nor did we eat anyone's bread for free." (II Thes. 3:8a)

²⁵² Cassian, *The Institutes*. X,VIII,1, p.225

²⁵³ Eberle.p. 208

or engage in idle talk to the neglect of his reading, and so not only harm himself but distract others. (RB 48:17-18)

In addition to highlighting the dangers of idleness or *otiositas* and *acediosus* the RB warns monks in the opening lines of the Prologue against sloth (*desidia*), or more specifically the “sloth of disobedience” (RB Prologue v.1). In each of the above instances the RB is following the tradition of Cassian, the *Regula Basilii* ²⁵⁴ and the *Rule of the Master* in giving a negative interpretation of *otia*.

SUMMARY

This first chapter, which represents the initial exploration of the normative theology of leisure, has closely examined five words, *otia*, *quies*, *sabbatum*, *vacatio* and *acedia*, commonly associated or identified as pertaining to leisure in the first six centuries of the Early Church. It has identified a number of key areas associated with the understanding of *otia monastica* and, more widely, sacred or holy leisure, or *otia sancta*. The first of these areas is the influence of Classical Antiquity, especially the writings of Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle. Following from that there were a number of Classical Latin Authors, notably, Cicero, Seneca, Ovid, Pliny and others who were influential in the way that *otia* was later understood. We saw that the influence of these classical authors was facilitated by several factors. Firstly, the relative ease in which people could move around the literary locations of the Roman Empire, either by land or sea. Thus, these texts were widely disseminated. Secondly, the availability of these texts and their use in monastic libraries, not only for study of their contents, but for the grammar and style of the Latin language, as they became manuals on how to write well. Thirdly, the fact that the majority of monastics would have been able to read Latin, and some write it also, meant that they could read Latin translations of important Greek texts such as the *Rule of Basil*.

St Jerome’s translation of the bible into Latin (the *Vulgate*) made Holy Scripture widely available to Latin readers in the West. References to *requies* are found in the OT. The understanding of *requies* as “eternal rest” by early Christian writers such as St Jerome, St Augustine and St Gregory is particularly significant. In contrast, the term *otia* is used

²⁵⁴*Regula Basilii Magnus*, 192, PL 103, 550. See also Longer Rule 37 on “Work and Prayer” in Holmes. “What need is there to say how great an evil is idleness, since the Apostle plainly commands that the one who does not work shall not eat. Just as daily food is necessary for every person, then so also is work necessary according to one’s strength.”

more in a pejorative sense in the OT although we can find a more positive interpretation in King David's words to his son Solomon, "the Lord will give peace and quiet to Israel" (I Chron. 22:9). As one would expect far greater prominence is given to *sabbato* as it formed an integral part of the *Decalogue* and Israelite culture, and, even more so, when the Israelites were taken into captivity in Babylon. In order to assert and maintain their cultural identity, their customs and traditions, especially the Sabbath, became more important. Of all the four words, *sabbato* is used most frequently in the New Testament, especially the Gospels where Jesus often comes into conflict with the legalistic observance of Sabbath. The term *Vacatio* is hardly ever found in the OT, with the notable exception of its derivative *vacare*.²⁵⁵

Moving to Early Christian authors, we saw that Tertullian was the first to write of *quies*. Later, St Augustine has a far greater understanding of *quies* corresponding it to both eternal rest in heaven and contemplative rest here on earth. St Jerome associated *quies* with silence, tranquillity, the peace of the countryside. *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (*Vitae Patrum*) also provide evidence of the use of *quies* or "stillness" as synonymous with the Greek term *hesychia*. St Gregory struggled continually to reconcile his desire for *quies* with his duties as Pope.

When writing of *otia*, St Ambrose was also concerned with the tensions that civil and ecclesiastical responsibilities could bring. With echoes of Cicero's *De Officiis*, he warns those in leadership positions to know when it is right to speak out, and right to keep silent. It is St Augustine who gave the term *otia* a fuller meaning. Augustine defends the *deificari in otio* that provides the necessary seclusion and holy leisure for seeking God. In his *City of God* St Augustine stresses the importance of *otia* but also recognises the necessity for engagement with the world. He calls for a judicious balance between the two.

The understanding of Sabbath gradually takes on a deeper and spiritual meaning. It is more than the ritual observance of Sabbath, or even the Eucharistic celebration described in the *Didache*. The notion of the "eighth day" starts to become important. It is a joyous celebration of creation. St Augustine emphasises the parallel between God resting after the work of creation and Jesus resting in the tomb before the day of

²⁵⁵ In the Greek Septuagint (LXX) *skole*, the Greek word for leisure is equivalent to the Latin *vacare*.

Resurrection. The Christian Sabbath, St Augustine reminds us, is not only the foundation of Christian hope but a day for performing good works that lead to God. Thus the Christian Sabbath starts to have a contemplative dimension. This is a theme that St Ambrose reinforces by making a link between sabbath, peace and rest.

In contrast, the terms *otia*, *quies*, *vacatio* and *sabbatum* appear to have been relatively undeveloped, or hardly mentioned, in the “mother” monastic rules such as the *Asceticon of St Basil* (which came to be translated and redacted as the *Rule of Basil* in the West), the *Rule of St Pachomius* and the Latin *Rule of St Augustine* (both for men and for women). Neither do Cassian’s *Conferences* and *Institutes* or *The Life of Antony* by St Athanasius make explicit mention of *otia monastica*. Perhaps this is because *otia monastica* was so ingrained, implicit in the way of life, that it hardly needed to be mentioned. The “daughter rules,” such as the *Rule of the Master* and the *Rule of Benedict*, seem to be more preoccupied with preventing idleness and acedia. The focus is on keeping the monks occupied through the daily obligation to the *Opus Dei* (Divine Office), *Lectio Divina* and manual labour. Of course the monks were allowed to sleep at night and even rest on their beds after their midday meal. The real emphasis was “resting in God” so that God could rest in every individual in this life and the next. Nonetheless, in these texts, we start to detect the emergence of the concept of *otia monastica* or *otia sancta*. As monasticism developed in the Christian world so did its infrastructure and involvement in worldly affairs. The tensions between the secluded contemplative monastic life and the demands of keeping monasteries economically viable was never far away.

CHAPTER TWO

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING ON LEISURE SINCE RERUM NOVARUM (1891)

(i) Papal Social Teaching on Leisure

This second chapter on Normative Theology examines Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The Roman Catholic Church is the visible presence of Christ in the World and the Pope, the successor to Peter, who Christ appointed as its first leader, is its visible head. One of the primary functions that flows from this Petrine authority is the duty to evangelise and teach. This social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is one of the principle ways in which the Church fulfils her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, especially in regard to promoting justice and the common good. Additionally, in a number of different ways, it is also universal. Firstly geographically: its members come from all over the world. Latterly membership has increased in the continents of Africa and Asia and decreased in the traditional strongholds of Europe and the Americas.²⁵⁶ Secondly, its believers embrace a variety of cultures to which the Church has been able to adapt without diluting its fundamental teaching and beliefs. Thirdly, the Church embraces a variety of liturgical practices including those of the Eastern Rites in Eastern Catholic Church.²⁵⁷ Fourthly, some countries are more economically and technologically advanced than others. In the poorer countries this has major implications for working conditions, human justice and the distribution of wealth. The final aspect of the Church's universal nature is that it has to operate within different political systems and constraints. As an organisation the Church is hierarchical with its leadership strongly focused on the Pope in Rome with the influence of its Curia, the equivalent to the UK's Civil Service, extending throughout the world.²⁵⁸ Not only does each country have its own hierarchy of

²⁵⁶ According to the latest statistics published in 2020 by the Holy See the Church is made up of 1,329 million baptised making it the second largest religion after Islam. 48% of Catholics are in the Americas, 22% in Europe, 19% in Africa and Oceania and 11% in Asia. See Holy See, *Annuario Pontificio e dell'Annuario Statistico della Chiesa* (Rome: Holy See Press Office, 2020).

²⁵⁷ The thirteen Eastern Rite Churches have greater autonomy while remaining "in communion" with Rome.

²⁵⁸ The Roman Curia is formed of a number of departments or "Dicasteries" each having its own function. CST on work and leisure generally comes under the oversight of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development which was formed in 2016, at the instigation of Pope Francis, out of four dicasteries that had been established after the Second Vatican Council, namely Justice and Peace, Pastoral Care of

bishops but the Pope has a representative, usually resident in that country, who provides a link between the Holy See, the local bishops and the national government or governments.

As described earlier the focus of this chapter is the Church's teaching on work and leisure since *Rerum Novarum* (RN) promulgated in 1891. RN represents a significant landmark in the Catholic Church's teaching on work and, as described earlier, was developed and updated by successive popes. Pope St John Paul II suggests:

The social doctrine of the Church, developed in the nineteenth century, when the Gospel encountered modern industrial society with its new structures for the production of consumer goods, its new concept of society, the state and authority, and its new forms of labour and ownership. The development of the doctrine of the Church on economic and social matters attests the permanent value of the Church's teaching at the same time it attests the true meaning of her tradition, always living and active.²⁵⁹

In another one of his encyclicals, Pope St John Paul II provides an additional reminder of the importance of CST, "Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts."²⁶⁰

In addition to encyclicals and exhortations there are the various addresses to specific groups, and "exhortations." Pope Paul VI and his successors have travelled widely to different parts of the world, engaging not only with the Roman Catholic Church, but with local cultures and other religions. International papal travel has witnessed a marked increase in the number and variety of addresses, sermons and exhortations, many of which are frequently directed or adapted to local issues and pastoral needs.²⁶¹

Migrants and Itinerant People, Pastoral Assistance to Healthcare workers and *Cor Unum* responsible for coordinating humanitarian relief. See Holy See, *Statutes of the New Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development* (Rome: Holy See Press Office, 2016). There is a separate Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life which at the same time took over the functions and responsibilities of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. It has responsibility "for the promotion of the life and apostolate of the lay faithful, for the pastoral care of the family and its mission according to God's plan and for the protection and support of human life." See Holy See, *Statutes for the New Dicastery for the Laity and Family Life* (Rome: Holy See Press Office, 2016).

²⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Rome: Vatican, 1987). §41

²⁶⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Anus* (Rome, Vatican, 1991) §24

²⁶¹ For an overview of CST relating to work and leisure there are several guides and compendia such as Rodger Charles, *Christian social witness and teaching: Vol II Modern social teaching* (Leominster: Gracewing Fowler Wright, 1998), Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *From 'Rerum Novarum' to 'Laborem Exercens': Towards the Year 2000, Rerum*

It is important to remember that CST, as articulated in encyclicals and other documents, is directed at the “universal church” which, as explained earlier, is made up of “the faithful” from different language groups, races, cultures, practices and customs. In fact, many of the encyclicals explicitly state that they do not seek to put forward a particular “technical solution.” They can only provide basic principles and goals. In the light of this CST has to be interpreted or applied to local needs appropriate to the different geographical or national regions. This is usually done through the national or regional conferences of bishops such as the *Catholic Bishops Conference for England and Wales* or the *Conference of European Bishops*. Consequently, pastoral strategies are developed and implemented at a national and diocesan level. The second part of this chapter will review some of these documents, publications and statements issued by local Conferences of Bishops.

Notwithstanding the importance of leisure in everyday life there are only a small number of explicit references to leisure in CST. These references do not provide a comprehensive exposition of the theological understanding of leisure, compared to that of the more detailed examination of holy or sacred leisure and *otia monastica* in Chapter One. When surveying CST for the term “leisure” or a “theology of leisure” or a “spirituality of leisure” one has to look also for implicit as well as explicit references to the word “leisure.” In Chapter One a number of key words associated with leisure was identified including not only leisure, but also quiet, solitude, rest, Sabbath, stillness and idleness. There are a number of additional implicit references to leisure which this chapter will draw the reader’s attention to. For instance, phrases or words such as, Sunday or Sabbath observance, worker rights, free time, holidays, physical rest, recreation and regeneration, family duties, personal development, cultural activities, sports and Sunday Mass and other forms of religious worship, could all be brought within a wider understanding of leisure and its theology.

Novarum Laborem Exercens 2000 Symposium (Rome, Italy: Pontifica Commissio Iustitia et Pax, 1982), Michael J Naughton, *Work as Key to the Social Question: the great social and economic transformations and the subjective dimensions of work*, *Work as Key to the Social Question: the great social and economic transformations and the subjective dimensions of work* (Vatican City and Rome: 2001).

(i) Leo XIII (1810-1903)

The publication of *Rerum Novarum* (RN)²⁶² in 1891 by Leo XIII (who held office from 1878-1903) marked an important watershed in the RC church's social teaching on work although little is said about leisure. The years leading up to its publication, especially the preceding two decades, were years of social and political unrest both in Europe and North America. Much of this turmoil was brought about by two key movements; first the industrial revolution and secondly socialism, which later was to manifest itself in different guises, including a number of fundamental political ideologies which were in essence agnostic and in opposition to Church teaching. The industrial revolution had its origins in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The term itself dates from around the 1830's.²⁶³ Its key effects were the mechanization of manufacturing and production, the movement from a land-based agricultural economy to an urban based industrialised one, the migration of tens of thousands of people from the countryside to towns and cities that were ill equipped to accommodate them. Production capacity was increased by the newly invented coal-fired steam-generating machinery and the more efficient use of water power. By 1850 the distribution of raw materials, products and goods was greatly enhanced by a comprehensive network of canals, railways and roads. However this revolution brought with it a number of what Pope Leo XIII refers to as "social evils," amongst which were squalid housing, low wages, exploitative work practices and dangerous working conditions. These developments brought workers into conflict with the powerful factory and land owners. These were the years of the great strikes in Belgium, France, Germany, England and the USA. On May Day 1890, one year before the publication of RN, the trade unions led and organised extensive strikes to draw attention to their unjust work conditions and demands for an eight hour working day. By implication this meant claims for more free time and the opportunity for leisure.

By 1890 the whole of Europe was in the grip of what Leo XIII was to call in the opening paragraph of RN "a revolutionary change." Urged on by Catholic industrialists,

²⁶² Leo XIII. *Rerum Novarum*, (Rome 1891), Libreria Editrice Vaticana,.

²⁶³ Louis Auguste Blanqui in 1837 spoke of "la revolution industrielle" and Friedrich Engels in 1844 of "an industrial revolution, a revolution which at the same time changed the whole of civil society" *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844). However Louis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization* has proposed that it began in the early middle ages with the printing of books, the invention of the mechanical clock and the monastic emphasis on order and timekeeping. The popularisation of the term is credited to a series of lectures given by Arnold Toynbee much later in 1881.

who feared for the survival of their businesses, somewhat reluctantly, the Church realised that it had to intervene.²⁶⁴ An encyclical was deemed the most appropriate means. Sometimes referred to as the new “Social Decalogue” (as the encyclical’s subtitle “the rights and duties of capital and labour” suggests), *Rerum Novarum* (RN), promulgated by Leo XIII, focused on immediate issues of concern.

...some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion...²⁶⁵

However RN contains only one explicit reference to “leisure.”

As a general principle it may be laid down that a workman ought to have leisure and rest proportionate to the wear and tear of his strength, for waste of strength must be repaired by cessation from hard work. In all agreements between masters and work people there is always the condition expressed or understood that there should be allowed proper rest for soul and body.²⁶⁶

However, although the encyclical touched only briefly on leisure, its insistence on the provision of just working conditions, wages, holidays, rights to property ownership, the freedom to associate politically and, ultimately, the right to strike as a last resort, paved the way for greater access to leisure activities for the “working classes.” Also, very importantly, it emphasises rest and leisure for both body and soul. The Church was walking a tightrope where so easily it might be seen to be favouring the employers and owners on one hand, and the workers on the other. The Church’s verbal assault was not only upon the “hard-hearted employers” and “the greed of unchecked competition” but also on the “socialist solution.” This socialist philosophy fundamentally undermined what the RC church considered to be the true nature and purpose of work and leisure, and in addition, the right to private property and the freedom to religious worship.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Charles. pp.3-30

²⁶⁵ Leo XIII. §3

²⁶⁶ Ibid. Due to a lack of expertise in this area Pope Leo XIII enlisted the assistance of Fr Matteo Liberatore S.J., a former editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, to write the first draft which subsequently underwent several revisions. Rodger Charles S.J. *Christian Social Witness and Teaching Vol.2* (1998) pp.5-16, provides some background to this encyclical’s provenance and composition.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. §8-10

(ii) St Pius X (1835-1914), Benedict XV (1854-1922) and Pius XI (1857-1939)

Leo XIII successors St Pius X (held office from 1903-1914), Benedict XV (held office from 1914-1922), and Pius XI (held office from 1922-1939) continued to address social issues such as the family, education of children and duties to the state. However there is no explicit mention of leisure. One might surmise why this is so. Two possible reasons are that Sunday, as a day of rest, remained sacrosanct throughout this period and keeping the Sabbath (i.e. attending Mass) was an obligatory part of this. The second reason could possibly be that the Church, through its social teaching, wanted to preserve the social structures of civil society. This meant that the working classes kept to their place in the hierarchy of things. Leisure was associated more with the upper echelons of society or the “leisure classes” as they were sometimes referred to.²⁶⁸ Building on the teaching of RN Pius X chose to reiterate the teaching on private property, the freedom to associate, dignity of the poor and the rights of trade unions. But there were concerns that newly formed associations of Catholic workers, especially in Germany and Italy, might dilute the authority of the Church. Everyone was equal in the sight of God but not necessarily in the sight of men. The worker needed to be conscious of his social position and keep to it.

Benedict XV especially reinforced the criticism of the central errors and evils of liberal capitalism with its worship of wealth and material prosperity. Soon after World War I, Pius XI had to face the social unrest arising from the economic turmoil, the catastrophic loss of life and political mistrust that had resulted from an uneasy peace settlement throughout Europe.

Technological advances had changed also the industrial landscape of the previous century. The world economic recession of 1929-1934 brought intolerable demands in terms of a catastrophic collapse of industry, personal poverty and public confidence. In 1931, on the fortieth anniversary of the publication of RN, Pius XI promulgated *Quadregesimo Anno* (QA)²⁶⁹ to reinforce and update the teaching of what he called Leo XIII’s “magna carta” for social reform. Without any specific mention of the need for leisure, rest or recreation, Leo XIII focuses on the essential social and economic

²⁶⁸ For instance see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1994). Written in 1899.

²⁶⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Rome: Vatican, 1931).

structures needed for the worker and family to flourish. Whatever the RC Church's attitude to these new problems, the powerful trade union movement was winning, for the working classes of Europe, a shorter working week, paid holidays and more leisure time. The availability of more free time, together with a greater affluence and ease of travel presented a new social and moral challenge to the Church. For instance, one leisure activity that flourished was the cinema. In June 1936 Pius XI promulgated his encyclical *Vigilanti Cura*(VC)²⁷⁰ on the motion picture industry. The Holy Father recognised the power and potency of the “silver screen” especially when the spoken word was added.

There is no need to point out the fact that millions of people go to the motion pictures every day; that motion picture theatres are being opened in ever increasing number in civilized and semi-civilized countries; that the motion picture has become the most popular form of diversion which is offered for the leisure hours not only of the rich but of all classes of society. (VC §2)

This new form of leisure, now available to all social classes, could bring moral dangers which Pius XI urges the local bishops and national bishops' conferences to moderate.

The power of the motion picture consists in this: that it speaks by means of vivid and concrete imagery which the mind takes in with enjoyment and without fatigue. Even the crudest and most primitive minds, which have neither the capacity nor the desire to make the efforts necessary for abstraction, or deductive reasoning, are captivated by the cinema. In place of the effort which reading or listening demands, there is the continued pleasure of a succession of concrete and, so to speak, living pictures. This power is still greater in the talking picture for the reason that interpretation becomes even easier and the charm of music is added to the action of the drama. Dances and variety acts which are sometimes introduced between the films serve to increase the stimulation of the passions. (VC§2)

The above passage reveals Pius XI's alarm about the potential dangers of the cinema. Naturally he wishes to protect his “universal flock” from moral harm. However, he also realised, that as a leisure activity, the showing of motion pictures could “be directed towards the noble end of promoting the highest ideals and the truest standards of life.”

(iii) Pius XII (1876-1958)

Pius XII (who held office from 1939-58) reinforced his predecessor's policy on capital, labour and social welfare the focus again being on the rights and sanctity of the worker,

²⁷⁰ Pope Pius XII, *Vigilante Cura: On the Motion Picture Industry* (Rome: Libreria Vaticana, 1936).

private property and the family. In November 1936, three years before his Papal election, TV had started to be broadcast into the homes of the British public. The technology spread rapidly and by the mid 1950's the TV had become a household item for many families and individuals in Europe, North America and farther afield. This innovation, together with cinema and radio, was viewed in a more positive light by Pius XII in his encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (MP)²⁷¹ of September 1957,

Therefore, the three chief technical methods of telecommunication, i.e. those of the Motion Pictures, Radio and Television, deal not only with men's recreation and leisure - though many who "listen-in" and view, seek this alone, - but especially with the propagation of those subjects which, while aiding both mental culture and spiritual growth, can powerfully contribute to the right training and shaping of the civil society of our times. Much more easily than by printed books, these technical arts can assuredly provide opportunities for men to meet and unite in common effort; and, since this purpose is essentially connected with the advancement of the civilization of all peoples, the Catholic Church - which, by the charge committed to it, embraces the whole human race - desires to turn it to the extension and furthering of benefits worthy of the name. (MP, § Sight and Sound Communication)

Pius XII sought to promote these technological advances as means of not only promoting "mental culture and spiritual growth" but also as ways of "training and shaping civil society" and bringing about greater cultural understanding and unity. Furthermore he envisioned these three leisure activities becoming an important tool for mission and evangelisation.

(iv) St John XXIII (1881-1963)

St John XXIII (who held office from 1958-63) writing in May 1961 about Leo XIII encyclical RN and Pius XI QA reminds the reader in *Mater et Magistra*²⁷² of the many social and economic benefits that have been brought about in the last 70 years not least in the sphere of "suitable" leisure and recreation,

Clearly, this sort of development in social relationships brings many advantages in its train. It makes it possible for the individual to exercise many of his personal rights, especially those which we call economic and social and which pertain to the necessities of life, health care, education on a more extensive and improved basis, a more thorough professional training, housing, work, and suitable leisure and recreation. Furthermore, the progressive perfection of modern methods of thought-diffusion—the press, cinema,

²⁷¹ Pope Pius XII, *Miranda Prorsus* (Rome: Vatican, 1957).

²⁷² Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra: Mother and teacher* (London: CTS, 1961).

radio, television—makes it possible for everyone to participate in human events the world over. (§ 61)

But these developments, he warns, can bring about dangers, particularly the inability to think independently, use personal initiative, exercise responsibility and express and fulfil one's own personality (§ 62). Through the use of the phrase "suitable leisure" St Pope John XXIII was flagging up the potential dangers that some leisure activities could pose.

(v) St Paul VI (1897-1978)

Pope St Paul VI's "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" *Apostolicam Actuositatem*²⁷³ (AA) promulgated in November 1965 drew attention to the fact that the laity could be effective in many walks of life including that of leisure.

The apostolate in the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others. In this area the laity can exercise the apostolate of like toward like. It is here where they work or practice their profession or study or reside or spend their leisure time or have their companionship that they are more capable of helping their brethren. (§ 9)

The same applies to Christian laity travelling or taking a holiday abroad,

Travellers, whether their interest is international affairs, business, or leisure, should remember that they are itinerant heralds of Christ wherever they go and should act accordingly. (§ 10)

It is the duty of the bishops in their role as pastors and teachers to remind those in their care that,

They should show, moreover, that earthly goods and human institutions according to the plan of God the Creator are also disposed for man's salvation and therefore can contribute much to the building up of the body of Christ. Therefore, they should teach, according to the doctrine of the Church, the great value of these things: the human person with his freedom and bodily life, the family and its unity and stability, the

²⁷³ Pope Paul VI, *Actuositatem Apostolicam (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965).

procreation and education of children, civil society with its laws and professions, labour and leisure, the arts and technical inventions, poverty and affluence. (§ 12)²⁷⁴

On the same day Paul VI proclaimed a *Declaration on Christian Education* (*Gravissimus Educationis*)²⁷⁵ in which he drew attention to the fact that not only is education more accessible to all ages, but for adults, especially it provides an opportunity for further intellectual, cultural and spiritual development,

Indeed, the circumstances of our time have made it easier and at once more urgent to educate young people and, what is more, to continue the education of adults. Men are more aware of their own dignity and position; more and more they want to take an active part in social and especially in economic and political life. Enjoying more leisure, as they sometimes do, men find that the remarkable development of technology and scientific investigation and the new means of communication offer them an opportunity of attaining more easily their cultural and spiritual inheritance and of fulfilling one another in the closer ties between groups and even between peoples. (§ *Introduction*).

(vi) St John Paul II (1920-2005)

St John Paul II (in office 1978-2005) continued the teaching of Vatican II and his predecessors. This is the first Pope of modern times who was photographed engaging in leisure activities such as mountain walking. As a seminarian and young priest, outdoor pursuits such as soccer, kayaking, mountain walking and swimming had featured regularly in his leisure activities. In addition, he used drama and poetry as a medium for communicating the deeper truths about the Christian faith to those in his pastoral care, especially the young and students.²⁷⁶

He was also an experienced user of the media and knew how to use it to full effect. Commenting on the European radio and television industry and its power to influence, he says,

As we meet today, I am reminded of the tremendous potential for good which radio and television possess, and which is constantly increasing....You can significantly influence the thinking and the modes of work and leisure of present and future generations.

²⁷⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus* (*Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops*) (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965).

²⁷⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Gravissimus Educationis* (*Declaration of Christian Education*) (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965).

²⁷⁶ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York, USA: Harper Collins/Cliff Street Books, 1999). pp.33-43; 58-66; 102-121

(Address to the participants of the 21st Administrative Symposium of the European Broadcasting Union, Vatican, 3 October, 1985)

The following month he followed up these references to leisure with another, this time speaking to American travel agents visiting Rome for a world travel congress,

Through the recreation and leisure made possible by travel, people are restored and renewed, body and spirit. They return home to family and work with a new perspective and enthusiasm for life. The Church also attaches importance to the phenomenon of tourism because of the cultural enrichment that it offers. This corresponds to the deep longings of the human heart and can counterbalance certain dehumanizing tendencies in our highly technological society. *(Address to Participants in the World Travel Congress of the American Society of Travel Agents, Vatican, 14 November, 1985)*

During his visit to the United States in September 1987, speaking to the Communications Industry, St John Paul II said,

Humanity is profoundly influenced by what you do. Your activities affect communication itself: supplying information, influencing public opinion, offering entertainment. The consequences of these activities are numerous and diverse. You help your fellow citizens to enjoy leisure, to appreciate art and to profit from culture....At this point, you must cultivate the integrity consonant with your own human dignity. You are more important than success, more valuable than any budget. Do not let your work drive you blindly, for if work enslaves you, you will soon enslave your art. Who you are and what you do are too important for that to happen....You need time to rest and be re-created, for only in quiet can you absorb the peace of God. *(Address to the people of the Communications Industry at the Registry Hotel, Los Angeles, 15 September, 1987)*

For St John Paul II sporting activity was a “factor of human ennoblement” at the individual, interpersonal and international level. He saw sport as a “school of human virtue” rather like Benedict in his RB calls the monastery a “school of the Lord’s service.” He goes on, “the ideals of fair play, honesty, friendship, collaboration and mutual respect which are so much part of sport are very important building blocks of the new civilisation of peace to which the youth of the world aspire.”²⁷⁷

(vii) Benedict XVI (b. 1927)

Benedict XVI (b.1927), in office from 2005 until his resignation in 2013, during the course of his Papacy, made some significant references to leisure. One of his main

²⁷⁷ Connie Lasher, "A Hymn to Life: the Sports Theology of John Paul II," *The Living Light* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2002 2002), <http://www.usccb.org/education/catechetics/winter2002.pdf>.p.7

preoccupations was the dangers presented to young people by a secular culture. A second was the restoration of Sunday observance to its proper place in society. A third the role of sport, especially its competitive dimension, as a way of inculcating fair play, ethical values and respect.

Addressing the German bishops during their *Ad Limina* visit to the Vatican in November 2006 Pope Benedict made the following point about the dangers that a secular culture can present to young people, that there is a God-shaped hole that needs to be filled.

Young people today live in a secularized culture, totally oriented to material things. In daily life - in the means of communication, at work, in leisure time - they experience at most a culture in which God is absent. Yet, they are waiting for God. (*Address to German Bishops on their "Ad Limina" visit, Vatican, 18 November, 2006*)

The restoration of a Sabbath spirituality ranks highly in Pope Benedict's exhortations. In February 2007, soon after his election to the Papacy, he wrote,

Finally, it is particularly urgent nowadays to remember that the day of the Lord is also a day of rest from work. It is greatly to be hoped that this fact will also be recognized by civil society, so that individuals can be permitted to refrain from work without being penalized. Christians, not without reference to the meaning of the Sabbath in the Jewish tradition, have seen in the Lord's Day a day of rest from their daily exertions. This is highly significant, for *it relativizes work* and directs it to the person: work is for man and not man for work....Rest gives men and women the possibility to remember and experience anew God's work, from Creation to Redemption, to recognize themselves as his work (cf. *Eph 2:10*), and to give thanks for their lives and for their subsistence to him who is their author." (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* §74)

Later on in the same year, during the Papal visit to Austria, Benedict XVI, made a similar plea, for the restoration of Sunday observance, the foundation of Christian leisure, to its rightful place.

"Sine dominico non possumus!" Without the Lord and without the day that belongs to him, life does not flourish. Sunday has been transformed in our Western societies into the week-end, into leisure time. Leisure time is something good and necessary, especially amid the mad rush of the modern world; each of us knows this. Yet if leisure time lacks an inner focus, an overall sense of direction, then ultimately it becomes wasted time that neither strengthens nor builds us up. Leisure time requires a focus – the encounter with him who is our origin and goal. My great predecessor in the See of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Faulhaber, once put it like this: Give the soul its Sunday,

give Sunday its soul. (Homily in St Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna on 9th September 2007)

In 2011, speaking to the Bishops of the United States during their "Ad Limina" visit to Rome,

America has a proud tradition of respect for the Sabbath; this legacy needs to be consolidated as a summons to the service of God's Kingdom and the renewal of the social fabric in accordance with its unchanging truth. (*Address to the Bishops of the United States, 26 November 2011.*)

Again, this time during one of his traditional Lenten visits to the Roman parishes, he urged his audience to use their leisure time to "proclaim God's merciful love."

Always open your hearts wider to the pastoral work in the missionary context, which impels every Christian to meet people - particularly youth and families - where they live, work and spend their leisure time, in order to proclaim to them God's merciful love. (*Pastoral Visit to the Roman Parish of Santa Maria Liberatrice at Monte Testaccio 24 February 2008*)

In September 2010 Pope Benedict issued a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, emphasising that salvation takes place in all spheres of life including leisure time,

The Lord offers salvation to men and women in every age. All of us recognize how much the light of Christ needs to illumine every area of human life: the family, schools, culture, work, leisure and the other aspects of social life. It is not a matter of preaching a word of consolation, but rather a word which disrupts, which calls to conversion and which opens the way to an encounter with the one through whom a new humanity flowers. (*Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini 30 September 2010 §93*)

Like his predecessor St John Paul II, on a number of occasions Pope Benedict has emphasised the importance of sport and other physical activities as a means of aiding Christian formation, especially that of young people living in deprived areas. Speaking at a Mass in Naples in October, 2007,

For many...life is far from simple. There are so many situations of poverty, housing shortages, unemployment or under-employment, the lack of any future prospects. Then there is the sad phenomenon of violence....How important it is, therefore, to redouble our efforts for a serious strategy of prevention that focuses on school, work and helping youth to manage their leisure time - an intervention which involves everyone in the fight against every form of violence, which begins with the formation of consciences and the transformation of everyday mindsets, attitudes and behaviour. (*Homily Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples*)

A couple of years later, speaking to the participants of the World Swimming Championships in Rome, Pope Benedict turned his attention to the ethical nature of competitive sports and its importance in our human and Christian development.

Sports have considerable educational potential in the context of youth and, for this reason, great importance not only in the use of leisure time but also in the formation of the person. The Second Vatican Council listed sports among the educational resources which belong to the common patrimony of humanity and facilitate moral development and human formation (cf. *Gravissimum Educationis*, §4). If this is true for sports activities in general, it is particularly true for sports in parish youth centres, schools and sports associations, with the aim of assuring the new generations a human and Christian formation. As I recently had the opportunity to recall, it should not be forgotten that "sports, practised with enthusiasm and an acute ethical sense, especially for youth, become a training ground for healthy competition and physical improvement, a school of formation in the human and spiritual values, a privileged means for personal growth and contact with society" (*Address to participants in World Swimming Championships*, 1 August 2009).

(viii) Pope Francis (b.1936)

Leisure is not a concept that exists by itself. Pope Francis, who was elected in 2013 following the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, reminds us that it has to be integrated with both love and joy. In a *Letter to Families*, on the Feast of the Presentation in 2014, he exhorts his readers,

In your journey as a family, you share so many beautiful moments: meals, rest, housework, leisure, prayer, trips and pilgrimages, and times of mutual support... (Letter to Families 2 February 2014 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord)

While recognising the importance and need for leisure, rest and cultural engagement Pope Francis has not been slow to highlight the dangers that can arise from a “spiritual worldliness” which can dampen our commitment to the Christian message. This, he continues, can be done, firstly, by using the statistics of the business world to place too great an emphasis on quantifying our effectiveness and output, secondly by diminishing the quality of our free time. As always he makes a direct link between the way we are perceived to engage with leisure and rest and human justice, especially in regards to the poor and marginalised. Speaking directly to priests and religious gathered in St Patrick’s Cathedral, New York in September 2015, reminds them of the important example they have to set to the faithful. He warns,

Yet, if we are honest, we know how easily this spirit of generous self-sacrifice can be dampened. There are a couple of ways that this can happen; both ways are examples of that “spiritual worldliness” which weakens our commitment as men and women of consecrated life to serve, and diminishes the wonder, the amazement, of our first encounter with Christ. We can get caught up measuring the value of our apostolic works by the standards of efficiency, good management and outward success which govern the business world. Not that these things are unimportant!....The other danger comes when we become jealous of our free time, when we think that surrounding ourselves with worldly comforts will help us serve better. Rest is needed, as are moments of leisure and self-enrichment, but we need to learn how to rest in a way that deepens our desire to serve with generosity. (*Speaking to Priests and religious gathered in St Patrick’s Cathedral, New York 24 September, 2015*)

The following year, during his visit to Mexico, Pope Francis emphasised again the link between leisure, justice and social reintegration, in particular the need to create public spaces for leisure and recreation.

Social reintegration begins by making sure that all of our children go to school and that their families obtain dignified work by creating public spaces for leisure and recreation, and by fostering civic participation, health services and access to basic services, to name just a few possible measures. This is where every process of reintegration begins. (*Address to the Centre for Social Adjustment §3, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, 17 February 2016*)

Another recurring theme in Pope Francis’ pontificate has been the that of personal sanctification and the universal call to holiness for each and every human being. However, in *Gaudete et Exsultate* promulgated in March 2018, he warns of some of the dangers associated with consumerism, leisure, free time and rest that can thwart our spiritual journey,

This does not mean ignoring the need for moments of quiet, solitude and silence before God. Quite the contrary. The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods at times leave no room for God’s voice to be heard. We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy but rather by the discontent of those whose lives have lost meaning. How can we fail to realize the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God?

Finding that space may prove painful but it is always fruitful. Sooner or later, we have to face our true selves and let the Lord enter....The same distractions that are omnipresent in today’s world also make us tend to absolutize our free time, so that we can give ourselves over completely to the devices that provide us with entertainment or ephemeral pleasures. (We need to distinguish between this kind of superficial

entertainment and a healthy culture of leisure, which opens us to others and to reality itself in a spirit of openness and contemplation.)

We need a spirit of holiness capable of filling both our solitude and our service, our personal life and our evangelizing efforts, so that every moment can be an expression of self-sacrificing love in the Lord's eyes. In this way, every minute of our lives can be a step along the path to growth in holiness.²⁷⁸

The tension between economic market forces, inequality and injustice, especially in the rural economies of the world, which are so dependent on the sale of their produce for their livelihood, is also commented on in an address to the International Catholic Rural Association in December 2016. The demands of business, claims Pope Francis, diminishes the quality of agricultural life with its times for work and leisure, its weekly rest and its concern for the family. It is no good speaking about solidarity unless this is accompanied by a just allotment of land, pay and access to markets.

Like his predecessor Pope Benedict, there is a constant emphasis on the importance of Sabbath and its inextricable link to rest. Even more importantly, Pope Francis emphasises the contemplative dimension of holy leisure. This time addressing one of his regular general audiences he reminds those present that the "Sabbath is a day of contemplation and blessing." Not only that, it is a day of the Eucharist during which we thank God for our life, his mercy and his gifts.

Reinforcing the Sabbath theme in his Encyclical *Laudato Si' (LS)*²⁷⁹ Pope Francis stresses the importance of contemplative rest which is inextricably linked to the Eucharist,

On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the "first day" of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims "man's eternal rest in God." In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity. We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. We are called to include, in our work, a dimension of receptivity and

²⁷⁸ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate (On the Call to Holiness in Today's World)* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018). § 29-31

²⁷⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (On the Care of Our Common Home)* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015).

gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity. Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else. The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, “so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be refreshed” (*Ex* 23:12). Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor. (LS §237)

Speaking more recently at a general audience in the Vatican Pope Francis echoed and reinforced the same theme,

The words of the Decalogue seek and find the crux of the problem, casting a different light on what rest is....What, then, is rest according to this commandment? It is the moment of contemplation, it is the moment of praise, not that of escapism. It is the time to look at reality and say: how beautiful life is! Contrary to rest as an escape from reality, the Decalogue proposes rest as the *blessing of reality*. For us Christians, the centre of the Lord’s day, Sunday, is the Eucharist, which means “*thanksgiving*”. It is the day to say to God: thank you Lord for life, for your mercy, for all your gifts. Sunday is not the day to forget the other days but to remember them, bless them and make peace with life. How many people there are who have many opportunities to amuse themselves, who are not at peace with life! Sunday is the day to make peace with life, saying: life is precious; it is not easy, sometimes it is painful, but it is precious.

To be introduced to authentic rest is a work of God in us, but it requires us to distance ourselves from the devil and his attraction (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* §83). In fact, it is very easy for the heart to succumb to unhappiness, dwelling on reasons for discontent. Blessing and joy imply an openness to good that is a mature movement of the heart. Goodness is loving and is never imposed. It is chosen. (*Address at General Audience 5 September 2018*)

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1962-65)

Although Pope St John XIII had called the Second Vatican Council in 1959 it was Pope St Paul VI who brought it to completion. The principal document dealing with social issues was *Gaudium et Spes* (GS)²⁸⁰ or, to give it its English title, *The Church in the Modern World*. It was the final document to be promulgated in December 1965 (on the last day of the fourth and final session). The following quotation illustrates the broad range of activities that constitute the Council’s understanding of leisure.

²⁸⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965).

With the more or less generalized reduction of working hours, the leisure time of most men has increased. May this leisure be used properly to relax, to fortify the health of soul and body through spontaneous study and activity, through tourism which refines man's character and enriches him with understanding of others, through sports activity which helps to preserve equilibrium of spirit even in the community, and to establish fraternal relations among men of all conditions, nations and races. Let Christians cooperate so that the cultural manifestations and collective activity characteristic of our time may be imbued with a human and a Christian spirit. All these leisure activities however are not able to bring man to a full cultural development unless there is at the same time a profound enquiry into the meaning of culture and science for the human person. (GS§ 61)

NATIONAL CONFERENCES OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

(i) Europe

At the beginning of this section on CST I made the observation that Papal Encyclicals and similar documents are normally addressed to the Universal Church. The teaching of each encyclical has to transcend the cultural and political differences of each region, country and language group. For instance, in 1999 the Italian Conference of Bishops issued guidance on the pastoral care of leisure, tourism and sport. In regards to leisure its specific brief was to deepen the theological and pastoral understanding of “non-work” time. The outcome was a pastoral plan which enabled dioceses, local churches, associations and groups to co-ordinate a range of leisure activities for all age groups.²⁸¹

Closer to home, the Bishops Conference of England and Wales confined itself to general guidance. For instance in its document *The Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching* published in 1996, just before the 1997 General Election, it made mention of the world of work and the right to adequate rest but without explicitly referring to leisure.²⁸² An update on this document in 2001 passes again on the topic of leisure. Rather surprisingly, neither is leisure or a “Spirituality of Leisure” mentioned in the Conference’s publication on the *Spirituality of Work* in the same year.²⁸³ The Irish Bishops have concentrated their energies in preserving Sunday (especially Sunday

²⁸¹ Ufficio Nazionale della CEI, *Progetto Culturale e Pastorale del Tempo Libero, Turismo e Sport* (Rome: 1999).

²⁸² Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching* (London: Catholic Media Trust, 1996). p.21

²⁸³ Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, *A Spirituality of Work* (London: Catholic Media Trust, 2001).

morning) as a day of worship and leisure.²⁸⁴ Emphasising statements from earlier years, for instance in 2008, they encourage Irish MEPs to support the motion that, in the European Parliament's recent working time directive, as a general norm, Sunday should be recognised as being a compulsory rest day.²⁸⁵ The Scottish bishops have had no statement to make on leisure.

(ii) United States

The Bishops of the United States, through their website (www.usscb.org) have emphasised the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on leisure, principally that Sunday is a day of grace and rest from work.²⁸⁶ An alternative focus has been on care of migrant workers employed in the tourist industry and the "sex trade." The most significant contribution however has been their pastoral letter on *Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy* published in 1986. The challenge, they state, is to determine how to strike a balance between labour and leisure that enlarges an individual's capacity for friendship, for family life and for community. Furthermore what government policies should be supported to attain the well-being of all especially the poor? Leisure, prayer, celebration and the arts are central to the realisation of human dignity and the development of a rich cultural life.

Turning their attention to issues of justice with the focus on rest, recreation, holidays and leisure, they state,

The dignity of workers also requires adequate health care, security for old age or disability, unemployment compensation, healthful working conditions, weekly rest, periodic holidays for recreation and leisure, and reasonable security against arbitrary dismissal. These provisions are all essential if workers are to be treated as persons rather than simply as a "factor of production."²⁸⁷

The link between worship and the world of work is also stressed,

²⁸⁴ In many European Catholic countries there is a tradition of playing sport, both amateur and professional on a Sunday afternoon presumably on the assumption that both players and spectators had attended Mass in the morning.

²⁸⁵ Irish Bishops Conference, *Press Conference: General Meeting of the Irish Bishops Conference* (Maynooth: 2009).

²⁸⁶ Vaticana, Libreria Editrice, ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994. §2184

²⁸⁷ Catholic Bishops Conference of the United States, "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy" (Washington DC, USA1987). §103

To worship and pray to the God of the universe is to acknowledge that the healing love of God extends to all persons and to every part of existence, including work, leisure, money, economic and political power and their use, and to all those practical policies that either lead to justice or impede it. Therefore, when Christians come together in prayer, they make a commitment to carry God's love into all these areas of life.²⁸⁸

They continue with the reminder that holiness is not limited to moments of private prayer. Holiness has to pervade all aspects of life. It is achieved in the midst of the world, in family, in community, in friendships, in work, in leisure, in citizenship.²⁸⁹ Neither must the challenge of providing a balance between work and leisure be neglected. Tedious and boring work can lead some to look for fulfilment only during the time away from work. Without leisure there is too little time for nurturing marriages, developing child-parent relationships and fulfilling commitments to other important groups: the extended family, the community of friends, the parish, the neighbourhood, schools and political organisations.

Elaborating on this theme they state,

Leisure is connected to the whole of one's value system and influenced by the general culture one lives in. It can be trivialized into boredom and laziness, or end in nothing but a desire for greater consumption and waste. For disciples of Christ, the use of leisure may demand being countercultural. The Christian tradition sees in leisure time to build family and societal relationships and an opportunity for communal prayer and worship, for relaxed contemplation and enjoyment of God's creation, and for the cultivation of the arts which help fill the human longing for wholeness. Most of all, we must be convinced that economic decisions affect our use of leisure and that such decisions are also to be based on moral and ethical considerations. In this area of leisure we must be on our guard against being swept along by a lack of cultural values and by the changing fads of an affluent society. In the creation narrative God worked six days to create the world and rested on the seventh (Gn. 2:1-4). We must take that image seriously and learn how to harmonize action and rest, work and leisure, so that both contribute to building up the person as well as the family and community.²⁹⁰

SUMMARY

This second part of the Normative Theology of Leisure has examined Catholic Social Teaching in the aftermath of the industrial revolution since the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. It has taken account of the many social, political, economic and

²⁸⁸ Ibid. §329

²⁸⁹ Ibid. §332

²⁹⁰ Ibid. §338

technological developments that have taken place in that 130 year period. During this time it has been possible to discern a change of theological emphasis as the amount of free time, due to a shorter working week and longer holidays, has increased. Many references have been made to both the benefits and dangers of leisure and its associated activities. The secularisation of society, especially Sunday trading and the increased incidence of Sunday sporting events, have contributed, amongst other things, to the decline in Sabbath observance.

Pope Leo XIII's concern for workers' rights was motivated, in part, by a desire to stem the increasing influence of socialism, but it was motivated also by social factors; the squalid living and dangerous working conditions of those forced to leave their rural lands and migrate to the cities in search of work in the factories. The misery and wretchedness of workers had to be mitigated by the provision of adequate leisure and rest for soul and body. From 1914 to 1939 three successive pontificates adopted the same emphasis. In particular, Pius XI, through his encyclical *Quadregesimo Anno* published in 1931, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, reinforced the rights of the worker and the proper conditions for the family to flourish, this included the primacy of Sunday rest and attendance at Mass.

During these inter-war years (1918-1939), with the introduction of the cinema, there was an attempt to stem some of the moral dangers that might arise from the "silver screen." But, on the whole, this new form of leisure activity was seen by both Pius XI and Pius XII as a positive development which could be directed to promoting the highest ideals and standards of life. Cinema was a new tool that could enhance the mental culture and spiritual growth of the individual, and more generally, assist in shaping civil society. The introduction of radio and then television, accelerated the speed and range of communication. They became not just a recreational leisure activity but also an invaluable political and social tool, especially for those communities in remote areas or under war-time occupation. Neither were the papal authorities slow to seize on radio, and later television, as a tool for communication and evangelisation especially for those who could not read.

On the seventieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* Pope St John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (1961) emphasised the increased social and economic benefits that had been brought about, including those in the spheres of recreation and leisure. With more leisure time and access to public transportation and private cars, sports and outdoor activities become increasingly important. This is a theme taken up later by Pope St John Paul II who himself was an outdoor enthusiast and athlete. Physical exercise promoted not only good health but moral development. Sport, especially team sport, was a way of teaching teamwork, fair play and mutual respect.

In a similar vein, leisure also provided opportunities for cultural activities and an opportunity for Christians to be key influencers whether at work, through socialising, in education, or travel. Pope Paul VI recognised too how this could be aided by technological innovations, scientific investigations and new means of communication. Pope St John Paul II used his many travels to not only highlight leisure as a means of promoting the contemplation of beauty and the cultural diversity of different countries, but also, to flag up its dangers, for instance the increased access to pornography, unbridled consumerism and the sex trade.

Pope Francis reminds us that leisure has to be integrated with love and joy. As a man of the twenty-first century, with extensive pastoral experience in South America, he is aware, perhaps more than his predecessors, of the importance and nature of leisure. He is also cognisant of a spiritual worldliness which can dampen the Christian's commitment to the Gospel message. A constant theme for Pope Francis is the universal call to holiness of each and every person. In the face of constant intrusions it is essential to recognise the need to use some of our leisure time for moments of quiet, solitude and silence. In a world overwhelmed by words, information and new gadgets there has to be a place for God's word to be heard.

Here we have heard echoes of the previous chapter where we examined our theological understanding of leisure in Holy Scripture, the Early Church and the Patristic Period. Those key words, leisure, quiet, silence, rest, sabbath, solitude are emphasised repeatedly by Pope Francis, especially with relevance to contemporary challenges

brought about by the social, economic and technological innovations of the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

The key issues around leisure that have latterly dominated CST have been the Sabbath, the Sunday Eucharist and the right of every person to have adequate working conditions, remuneration, rest and leisure, the latter, not merely for physical restorative purposes but for the opportunity to use their Sunday to contemplate, bless, give thanks and rest in God. Pope Francis has re-emphasised that Sunday is not just a day of rest, it is much more than attending Mass. It is also the day of contemplation and blessing. It is the day we thank God for our life, mercy and His gifts. We need the Sabbath to rest in God and for God to rest in us.

As this survey of leisure in CST since 1891 has proceeded it has been noticeable that leisure becomes increasingly important, and more frequently referred to, especially during the pontificates of St John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. There are a number of reasons for this positive development. Firstly, the increase in free time and opportunities for leisure of different kinds has competed with Sunday observance (an integral and essential part of leisure) to the extent that Church attendance, in the Western hemisphere at least, has reduced considerably. Sunday trading, consumerism, the weekend break, sporting fixtures and sports participation all make the Sunday observance more difficult. Successive popes have been at pains therefore, to rigorously defend the sanctity of the Sabbath. A second reason is that latterly, the Papacy has recognised increasingly the strong links between the family and leisure, especially the educational dimension and the moral development that leisure time, such as cultural activities and sports, affords. For the Church the family is the “basic unit” that makes up the parish community and the church at large. Leisure provides the family with the time to grow spiritually. Finally, since Pope St Paul VI, successive popes have been inveterate travellers visiting literally the four corners of the earth. As papal travellers we have witnessed them “at leisure” as they have embraced different cultures, languages, customs, religious and political beliefs. It is a reminder for us that every journey we undertake, especially to somewhere new, is a pilgrimage, an exploration, an opportunity to find “God at work” in and amongst his creation.

PART TWO

A FORMAL THEOLOGY OF LEISURE

If we strive to be happy by filling the silence of life with sound, productive by turning all life's leisure into work, and real by turning all our being into doing, we will only succeed in producing hell on earth. If we have no silence, God is not heard in our music. If we have no rest God does not bless our work. If we twist our lives out of shape in order to fill every corner of them with action and experience, God will seem silently to withdraw from our hearts and leave us empty.

(Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island*, Burns & Oates, London, 1955, p. 112)

CHAPTER THREE

JOSEF PIEPER (1904-1997)

In their *Four Voices of Theology Model* Cameron et al describe *Formal Theology* as the “theology of theologians and dialogues with other disciplines.” They continue,

This is...the theology of the academy, of the professional theologian....This is a theological voice which may already be being heard through the espoused and normative voices. However, the formal voice has its own distinct role in the conversation: it can be seen as offering a specifically “intellectual” articulation of faith seeking understanding, through practising a form of thought which engages in critical and historically and philosophically informed enquiry, regarding the ways in which faith is, and has been expressed....But formal theology also has a positive role to play, in constructively offering developed modes of thought that can enable reflection on practice and the articulation of an *Espoused Theology*.²⁹¹

From the above statement it is clear that this *Formal Theology* (Part Two) and the previous section *Normative Theology* (Part One), which together form the literature survey of this thesis, will be crucial in providing an understanding of the *Operant Theology* (Part Three) and finally the articulation of the *Espoused Theology* (Part Four) embedded in the conclusion and summary.

Undoubtedly one of the most important contributors to the topic of leisure has been the German Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper (1904-1997). Pieper was in the forefront of the Neo-Thomistic wave in the twentieth century. The importance and success of his writings can be evidenced by the number of his works which have been translated from German into English. *Leisure the Basis of Culture* is undoubtedly the most relevant to this thesis and is probably the most well-known of Pieper’s works translated into English. A number of books by Pieper on St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the theological and the cardinal virtues followed.

Pieper was a professional academic, initially teaching philosophical anthropology at the University of Münster from 1950 to 1976. As a student, he had studied philosophy, law and sociology at the universities of Berlin and Münster. Most notably, he was one of the few Catholic writers to focus on leisure in the twentieth century. His seminal work,

²⁹¹ Cameron et al. p. 55

published soon after the Second World War, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, mentioned above, was a watershed publication.²⁹²

In the opening paragraph Pieper reveals his reasons for embarking on a defence of leisure, focusing on the importance leisure plays in the moral and intellectual heritage of the civilised world.

A few years after the Second World War, in Germany, [it] seems of all times, not to be a time to speak of “leisure.” We are engaged in the re-building of a house, and our hands are full. Shouldn’t all our efforts be directed to nothing other than the completion of that house? This is no small objection. But there is a good answer to it. To “build our house” at this time implies not only securing survival, but also putting in order again our entire moral and intellectual heritage. And before any detailed plan along these lines can succeed, our new beginning, our re-foundation, calls out immediately for a defence of leisure.²⁹³

This focus on the economic regeneration of Germany was a cause for concern, not because it was a bad thing in itself, but rather because an exclusive focus on work could be to the detriment of the moral and civilising influence of leisure. In Part One, Normative Theology, we examined closely, in Chapter 1, the origins of leisure, drawing on a number of texts including Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy, Holy Scripture, the Patristic period and the early monastic rules up until the sixth century. Chapter 2 surveyed Catholic Social Teaching relating to leisure. Here we saw an increased awareness of the importance of leisure in society in general but also in the Roman Catholic Church. Today, seventy years later, Pieper’s prescient caution about the intellectual and moral development of society is just as valid, if not more so, in an era of what Pieper described as “total work,” unfettered globalisation, nuclear proliferation, global warming, secularism, terrorism and most recently a life threatening pandemic in the form of Covid-19. If Germany was to avoid the mistakes of its past, Pieper’s warning is important in so far that leisure, in its widest understanding, has a major contribution to make to the formation and content of our intellectual and moral development.

Pieper’s contribution as a philosopher and theologian is succinctly summarised in an obituary by the Christian ethicist Gilbert Meilaender published shortly after Pieper’s death.

²⁹² Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*.

²⁹³ Ibid. p.3

In the mind and the writings of Josef Pieper the Greek philosophical tradition and the Christian theological tradition met and enhanced each other. In one of his characteristically succinct formulations Pieper himself once stated the connection in a way especially fitting if we seek to contemplate the significance of his life's work; "The ultimate perfection attainable to us, in the minds of the philosophers of Greece, was this: that the order of the whole of existing things should be inscribed in our souls. And this conception was afterwards absorbed into the Christian tradition in the conception of the beatific vision. "What do they not see, who see him who sees all things." ²⁹⁴

In his autobiography Pieper makes reference to St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Romano Guardini (1885-1968) as being two of the major influences on his intellectual formation. Pieper first came across Aquinas (*Doctor Angelicus*) in the sixth form of the Paulinum, Münster.²⁹⁵ He mentions that while in the sixth form one of his teachers (who he does not mention by name), formerly a Dominican, had a profound influence on him. This anonymous teacher recommended that Pieper should read Aquinas's *Commentary on St John's Prologue*. Pieper explains,

It was not easy even to find an edition; and so far, there was no German translation. But two of us (a fellow sixth former) set to work with a will. Naturally we sixth-formers failed to grasp a lot of things; and no doubt we did not get very far. But I was immediately fascinated by the marvellously pithy lucidity of these texts. Almost a decade and a half later I published a German translation of what was my earliest reading in St. Thomas under the title of *The Word*.²⁹⁶

The second formative influence was Romano Guardini (1885-1968). As a child, the Italian-born Guardini had moved, with his parents, to Germany where he remained for the rest of his life. Guardini's focus as a student had been on the Franciscan theologian and philosopher, St Bonaventure (1221-1274).²⁹⁷ Pieper first came into contact with Guardini, by now a Catholic priest, during a Summer Conference at Burg Rothenfels in Franconia in the early 1920's.

And then, primarily through getting to know Romano Guardini, we encountered a hitherto unsuspected dimension of spiritual reality and proceeded to seize hold of it with passionate intensity. We came to understand what a "sacred sign" is in reality, and that, beyond all the stifling crassness of moralistic and doctrinaire talk, something real takes place in the sacramental and cultic celebration of the mysteries, something that,

²⁹⁴ Gilbert Meilaender, "A Philosopher of Virtue," *First Things* April 1998 (1998).

²⁹⁵ The Paulinum was one of the oldest and most famous of secondary schools in Germany in which his father, a principal of another school, had him enrolled in 1914.

²⁹⁶ Josef Pieper, *No One Could have known: an autobiography - the Early Years 1904-1945*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius Press, 1987). Kindle edition location 597.

²⁹⁷ Bonaventure, like Thomas Aquinas, studied at the University of Paris and was an exact contemporary receiving their master degrees on the same day.

otherwise, can only be spoken about. We came to realize that this is the core of all intellectual and spiritual life, and not only in Christianity but in all the pre-Christian and extra-Christian religion. Guardini was an incomparable teacher. There was nothing professorial about him; yet at the same time he would not allow any kind of familiarity, which did not please everyone.²⁹⁸

In later years Pieper was to meet Guardini again at the University of Berlin where Guardini held the chair in the Philosophy of Religion from 1923 to 1935; and subsequently, by chance, at Rothenfels a second time, where Guardini was giving a series of seminars. These and other influences such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) set Pieper on a trajectory to explore Christian anthropology. Pieper admitted that he was a “slow writer” and it was not uncommon for him to pen, by hand, three drafts of a book or journal article. Pieper did not waste words. Brevity, succinctness and lucidity are the hallmarks of his writing.

Part of Pieper’s mission was to “redeem” leisure by restoring a renewed understanding of its meaning and purpose, mainly by reference to the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas. But this was part of a larger project and helps to explain where Pieper’s defence of leisure began. Just as the Second World War was ending Pieper had published his original German edition of *On the Christian Idea of Man*.²⁹⁹ Reflecting on Aquinas’ opening sentence to the second part of the *Summa Theologia* “Because man is created as the image of God it now remains – after His archetypal image has been dealt with – to speak of his reflection, namely man.” Pieper expresses the concern that,

Moral teaching is first and foremost teaching about man; that moral teaching must make the idea of man visible; and that therefore Christian moral teaching must deal with a Christian exemplar of man.³⁰⁰

Quoting Meister Eckhart’s (c.1260-c.1328) maxim that people should not think so much about what they ought to do, they should think about what they ought to be, Pieper goes on to lament the fact that later Christian moralists have drifted from this ideal of being

²⁹⁸ Josef Pieper, *No One Could have known: an autobiography - the Early Years 1904-1945*. Kindle edition location 454

²⁹⁹ Josef Pieper, "On the Christian Idea of Man," *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 1 (January 1949). A new translation in book form was published as Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man*. Pieper published the original German edition just at the end of the Second World War.

³⁰⁰ Josef Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man*. (2011) p. 3

to a focus on doing, moralising, prohibitions and rules. The answer to the question “who they ought to be” is for Pieper, unequivocally, Christ. Any Christian, as the name suggests, should be *Alter Christus*, another Christ. But, this is easier said than done. The picture or exemplar of what a Christian should look like has to be unfolded, applied and interpreted.³⁰¹ There are a number of ways that this can be done, adds Pieper. Pieper summarises what is, in effect, not only a concise summary of the Theological and Cardinal virtues but also a framework for a Christian anthropological understanding of man.

Thomas Aquinas, the great master of Western Christendom, decided to express the Christian idea of man in seven theses. First, the Christian is a person, who, in his *faith*, is aware of the reality of the Trinity. Second, the Christian looks forward – in *hope* – to the ultimate fulfilment of his being in eternal life. Third, the Christian – with the Theological Virtue of *love* – turns to God and his fellow man, affirming them with a love that is far stronger than natural love. Fourth, the Christian is *prudent*, i.e. he does not let his view of reality be clouded by what the will dictates without reference to the truth and the real situation. Fifth, the Christian is *just*, i.e. he is able to live in truth “with the other”; he sees that he is one member among other members of the Church, of the population, and of the all-embracing community. Sixth, the Christian is *brave*, i.e. he is prepared to be harmed- and even to accept death, if necessary –for truth and for the realisation of justice. Seventh, the Christian is *moderate*, i.e. he does not allow his desire for possessions and enjoyment to become destructive and repugnant to his being.³⁰²

What is the connection between these virtues and leisure? For Pieper leisure was the indispensable element needed to grow in virtue. Leisure time, infused by the grace of the Holy Spirit, provided the person with the time to think about how to act. For Pieper it means that the virtuous person is right, in both the supernatural and natural sense. Virtue is the ultimate of what a person can be; it is the fulfilment of the person’s ability “to be” in both the natural and supernatural sphere. Above all, the virtuous person *is* in such a way that from the innermost tendency of his being, he realises the good through his actions.³⁰³ It is important to stress, Pieper continues, that there is a hierarchy of virtues the most important of which is love – the love of God and the love of neighbour.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Ibid. p.5

³⁰² Ibid. p. 6-7

³⁰³ Ibid. p. 10-11

³⁰⁴ Ibid. p.11-12

This Thomistic insight into the Christian nature of man provided Pieper with a foundation to examine the role of leisure as outlined in *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, written quite soon after *The Christian Idea of Man*. As we have already discovered from the analysis of leisure in the chapter on *Normative Theology* Pieper reinforces the claim that our modern understanding of the value of work and leisure differs greatly from that of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This hinges on our understanding of the human person.

An altered conception of the human being as such, and a new interpretation of the meaning of human existence as such, looms behind the new claims being made for “work” and the “worker.” ...If something of real import is going to be said on the matter, it will be achieved not by reconstructing a historical narrative, but by digging more deeply to the very roots of a philosophical and theological understanding of the human person.³⁰⁵

Pieper is particularly interested in the phenomenon of “intellectual work” and the “intellectual worker” especially the assumption that human knowing is accomplished in an exclusively active/discursive operation of the *ratio*. Certainly, in the current world of work, decisions, driven by measurable goals, output, cost effectiveness, seem to be made using different forms of rational logic heavily reliant on utilitarian or deontological principles. If he was alive today Pieper would have every right to be concerned. These words of his, written more than seventy years ago, are again disturbingly prescient when we read about workplace stress, depression and breakdown:

And when we look into the face of the worker, it is the traits of effort and stress that we see becoming more pronounced there and, so to speak, permanently etched. It is the mark of absolute activity...the hard quality of not being able to receive, a stoniness of heart, that will not brook any resistance.³⁰⁶

Here, Pieper is laying the foundation for his principal thesis that “total work” with its focus on activity, outcomes, productivity and economic regeneration is undermining the Christian conception of what it means to be human and created in God’s image. One of his main arguments is that the “worker” has been driven into a situation where he or she no longer has the time to think properly. Any available leisure time is devoted to activities directed more at physical recuperation than the pursuit of cultural and religious ideals.

³⁰⁵ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p.7

³⁰⁶ Ibid. p.14

Elaborating on this Pieper makes another crucial observation,

The medievals distinguished between the intellect as *ratio* and the intellect as *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the power of discursive thought, of searching, of re-searching, abstracting, refining, and concluding [cf. Latin *dis-currere* “to run to and fro”], whereas *intellectus* refers to the ability of “simply looking” (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye. The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things in one, *ratio* and *intellectus*: all knowing involves both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the intellectus’ untiring vision, which is not active but passive or better, receptive – a receptively operating power of the intellect.³⁰⁷

Pieper reinforces also the Scholastic distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus*.

Not only the Greeks in general – Aristotle and no less Plato – but the great medieval thinkers as well, all held that there was an element of purely receptive “looking” not only in sense perception but also in intellectual knowing or, as Heraclitus said, “listening in to the being of things.”³⁰⁸

Quoting from the *Disputed Questions on Truth* by Thomas Aquinas, Pieper continues,

Although human knowing really takes place in the mode of *ratio*, nevertheless it is a kind of participation in that simple knowing which takes place in higher natures, and we can thus conclude that human beings possess a power of intellectual vision.³⁰⁹

The use of the *ratio*, Pieper continues, really is work, hard work, it is toilsome and difficult, but, at the same time, a mark of our humanness. In contrast, the simple act of *intellectus* is not work. And Pieper concludes, referring to Aquinas again,

Human knowing is a partaking in the non-discursive power of vision enjoyed by the angels, to whom it has been granted to “take in” the immaterial as easily as our eyes take in light, our ears sound. Human knowing has an element of the non-active, purely receptive seeing, which is not there in virtue of our humanity as such, but in virtue of a

³⁰⁷ Ibid. p.11

³⁰⁸ Ibid. p.12

³⁰⁹ Ibid. p.12 See also St Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate* (*Disputed Questions on Truth*), trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953). <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/QDdeVer15.htm>. Question XV Article 1. In this treatise, amongst other things, Aquinas comments on *De Consolatione de Philosophiae* (*On the Consolation of Philosophy*) by the sixth century Roman philosopher Boethius and another work *De Spiritu et Anima* (*Spirit and Soul*) attributed to St Augustine. Aquinas rejected its Augustinian provenance and recent studies attribute this work to Alcher (13th century), a monk of Clairvaux at the time of St Bernard and his successors.

transcendence over what is human, but which is really the highest fulfilment of what it is to be human and is thus “truly human” after all.³¹⁰

Neither does a greater effort necessarily lead to a greater quality of output. Quoting Aquinas again,

The essence of virtue consists more in the Good than in the Difficult. When something is more difficult, it is not for that reason necessarily more worthwhile, but it must be more difficult in such a way, as also to be at a higher level of goodness.³¹¹

We sometimes say that, “if a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well.” The crucial point is not what we are doing, or aiming for, but the ethical rightness, or the good, of what we are attempting to do. Again, this is a reminder to us that all we do must be directed toward the *Common Good*; a concept that has been greatly devalued in the area of decision making especially in the context of economic and political discourse.

Virtue, especially the virtue of love, according to Aquinas, perfects us so that we can follow our natural inclinations in the right way. The highest realisations of moral goodness take place effortlessly because it is of their essence to arise from love. Pieper illustrates by reference to the highest form of Christian love being the love of one’s enemies. To love one’s enemies requires that our natural inclination to hate one’s enemy has to be suppressed to a heroic degree. But, Aquinas raises the bar even higher, “if the love were so great, as to completely to remove all difficulty, that would be a still greater love.”³¹²

So, the thrust of Pieper’s argument is that the essence of knowing lies not only in the effort of thought i.e. *ratio* but in the grasp of the being of things, in the discovery of reality. Being at leisure allows us to do this. Writing about the “leisure of contemplation” he continues,

³¹⁰ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p.12

³¹¹ Ibid. p. 17 quoting *Summa Theologia* II-II. Q.123,a.12,ad 2um “Virtue essentially regards the good rather than the difficult. Hence the greatness of a virtue is measured according to its goodness rather than its difficulty” and Q.27, a.8, ad 3um. “Further, whatever is more difficult seems to be more virtuous and meritorious since virtue is about that which is difficult and good. Now it is easier to love God than to love one's neighbour, both because all things love God naturally, and because there is nothing unlovable in God, and this cannot be said of one's neighbour. Therefore it is more meritorious to love one's neighbour than to love God.”

³¹² Ibid. p.18 quoting *Quaest. disp. De Caritate* 8, ad 17um.

Just as the realm of the Good, the greatest virtue is without difficulty, so in knowing, the highest form would be the lightening-like insight, true contemplation, which comes to one like a gift; it is effortless and not burdensome. Thomas speaks of contemplation and play in a single breath. “Because of the leisure of contemplation” (*otium contemplationis*) the Scripture says of Divine Wisdom itself that it “plays all the time, plays throughout the world [Wisdom 8:30].³¹³

Pieper then contrasts the over-valuation of the difficult in intellectual work with the Christian understanding of self-sacrifice. The Christian does not intend the painful as such, nor seeks exertion, nor the difficult simply because it is difficult, rather, what one seeks is a higher bliss, a healing and the fullness of existence, and thereby the fullness of happiness. Consequently man, the intellectual worker, mistrusts everything that is without effort, he can only own that which he has reached through painful effort.

In the third chapter of his book Pieper tackles the question of leisure versus idleness and laziness. He points out that the code of the life of the High Middle Ages stated that the inability to be at leisure went together with idleness, that the restlessness of work for work’s sake arose from nothing other than idleness. In this code of behaviour idleness meant that the person had given up on the responsibility that comes with his dignity. In short, he does not want to be what God wants him to be. It is a form of *acedia* or “despair of weakness” of which, quoting Kierkegaard, consists in someone “despairingly” not wanting “to be oneself.”³¹⁴ Sadness has seized the person in the face of divine goodness.³¹⁵ That sadness, says Pieper, is what Aquinas describes in his *De Malo*. Here Aquinas is concerned as to whether or not spiritual apathy is a mortal sin. It was the soul’s refusal to rest in God on the Sabbath.³¹⁶ He concludes,

For spiritual apathy signifies a sadness arising out of the repugnance of human desires for divine spiritual good, since such repugnance is obviously contrary to charity, which belongs to a divine good and rejoices in possession of that good. Therefore, since what is contrary to charity, which gives life to the soul, is a mortal sin, it evidently follows

³¹³ Ibid. p.18 quoting *Commentary on the Sentences 1, d.2*

³¹⁴ The monastic understanding of *Acedia* is covered in Chapter One.

³¹⁵ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p.28 and see also Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, in *Kierkegaard's Writings (Vol 19)*, ed. Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong (Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 1980). pp.49 ff.

³¹⁶ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p. 28

that spiritual apathy is a mortal sin by reason of its kind since “Those who do not love abide in death,” as I John 3:14 says.³¹⁷

In contrast, the opposite of *acedia* is not the industrious spirit of the daily effort to make a living, but rather the cheerful affirmation by man of his own existence, of the world as a whole, and of God – of Love. From this arises a freshness of action that should never be confused with the “workaholic.”³¹⁸

Given Pieper’s vision of mankind it has become clearer why his defence of leisure is so important. Leisure is a condition of the soul. It is not the same as taking a short break, or time off, the weekend or a vacation. In a sense leisure liberates itself from the constraints of time. We might better say that leisure is a disposition of the soul. Here we get to the kernel of his argument when Pieper gives a three-part definition of leisure:

[First] Against the exclusiveness of the paradigm of work as *activity*, first of all there is leisure as “non activity” – an inner absence of preoccupation, a calm, an ability to let things go, to be quiet. Leisure is that form of stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whosoever is not still, cannot hear. Such stillness as this is not mere soundlessness or dead muteness; it means, rather, that the soul’s power, as real, as responding to the real – a co-responsence, eternally established in nature – has not yet descended into words. In leisure, there is, furthermore, something of the serenity of “not-being-able-to-grasp,” of the recognition of the mysterious character of the world, and the confidence of blind faith, which can let things go as they will; there is in it something of the “trust in the fragmentary, that forms the very life and essence of history.”³¹⁹

For Pieper, leisure is not the attitude of the one who intervenes, but of the one who opens himself up, who “let’s go.”

Second, leisure is the condition of considering things in a celebrating spirit. The inner joyfulness of the person who is celebrating...It belongs to the very core of what we mean by leisure. Leisure is only possible in the assumption that man is not only in harmony with himself but also, is in agreement with the world, and its meaning. Leisure lives on affirmation. It is not the same as absence of activity; it is not the same thing as quiet, or even an inner quiet. It is rather like the stillness in the conversation of lovers, which is fed by their oneness. The festival is the origin of leisure, its inmost and ever-

³¹⁷ St Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil (De Malo)*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). P.368

³¹⁸ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p.29

³¹⁹ Ibid. p.31 Final quote taken from the journal entry of the poet Konrad Weiss.

central source. And this festive character is what makes leisure not only “effortless” but the very opposite of effort or toil.³²⁰

Just as in the same way that God rested from his work on the seventh day and saw that “everything was good, very good” (Genesis 1:31) leisure too has that festive, celebratory aspect to it.

Finally, leisure stands opposed to the total focus on work as the main social activity. The break, weekend or even the vacation does not necessarily provide opportunity for leisure as understood in its authentic state. These periods of inactivity are rather a physical and psychological restorative to the human body that needs to be rested from constant physical exertion. Nobody, adds Pieper, who wants leisure merely for the sake of “refreshment” will experience its authentic fruit. Hence the ability to be at leisure is one of the basic powers of the human soul. It is the power to step beyond the working world and win contact with those superhuman, life giving forces that can send us, renewed and alive again, back into the busy world of work.³²¹

Pieper continues,

As contemplation, so leisure is of a higher rank than the *vita activa* (even though this – the active life – is the truly “human” in a sense). But the ranking cannot be reversed: while it is true that the one who prays before going to bed sleeps better, surely nobody would want to think of praying as a means of going to sleep. In the same way, nobody who wants leisure merely for the sake of “refreshment” will experience its authentic fruit, the deep refreshment, that comes with deep sleep.³²²

Having defined leisure Pieper goes on to ask how can this renewed vision of leisure be realised? Will it ever be possible to keep, or reclaim, some room for leisure from the forces of the total world of work? This freedom to be at leisure is much more than the observance of the *Sunday Sabbath* for instance. Leisure has to be a “space for true learning, of attunement to the world-as-a-hole.” At the most basic, “will it be possible to keep the human being from becoming a complete functionary and what needs to be done to make this happen?” There have been, observes Pieper, various attempts such as the fight to preserve a “traditional” or classical curriculum rather than a vocation or technical oriented one in secondary and tertiary education. The humanist movement is another example as is the pursuit of “art for art sake.” Each of these movements has

³²⁰ Ibid. p.33-34

³²¹ Ibid. p.34

³²² Ibid. p.34-35

attempted, in different ways, to reject or combat the utilitarian nature underpinning modern culture and the total world of work.

Neither does the emergence of the “intellectual worker” or the “proletariat” help. Both are still bound to the work process. The only meaningful way would consist in making available to the working person a kind of activity that is not work and thereby opens up an area of true leisure. However, it would not be enough to just create the external conditions for leisure. The project could only come to fruition if it were possible for the working person to “be at leisure” as the Greek expression has it i.e. to do leisure whereby the “not-idle” nature of real leisure is attained.³²³ As Aristotle famously asked, “with what activity shall we fill our leisure?”³²⁴

The clue to finding a suitable activity, continues Pieper, is in recognising that the celebration or festival is at the heart of leisure where three conceptual elements come together, firstly, relaxation, secondly effortlessness of a particular activity and finally the opportunity of “being at leisure.”

But if celebration and festival is the heart of leisure, then leisure would derive its innermost possibility and justification from the very source whence festival and celebration derive theirs. And this is worship...No more intensive harmony with the world can be thought of than that of “Praise of God,” the worship of the Creator of the world.³²⁵

Although the above statement is often greeted with discomfort or opposition, the truth of it, adds Pieper, cannot be denied. Religious worship or festival is the most festive of festivals. He continues,

There is no worship “without the gods” whether it be *mardigras* or a wedding...A festival that does not get its life from worship, even though the connection in human consciousness be ever so small, is not to be found.³²⁶

Even in the secular world artificial festivals such as May Day, Bastille Day (France) or Labor Day (USA) are created to fulfil this need. In fact, as the world becomes less religious, there seems to be an increase in the number of secular festivals being created to fulfil the needs of the population. Sacrifice, a gift given voluntarily, is also at the centre of the festival. When separated from worship leisure becomes toilsome and work

³²³ Ibid. p. 48

³²⁴ Aristotle, *The Politics*. VIII, 3 (1337b35)

³²⁵ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*.p. 50

³²⁶ Ibid. p. 51

becomes inhuman. Boredom, idleness, despair, acedia are all products of leisure without worship. Finally, “despair, the sister of restlessness, rears its hideous head.”

What lines, taken from so unlikely a source, remarks Pieper, could be more apt for the twentieth century worker than those of Thomas Carlyle,³²⁷

To work, is to pray...Fundamentally speaking all genuine work is religion, and every religion that is not work can go and live with the Brahmins, the Antinomians and the whirling dervishes.”³²⁸

Pieper’s final plea is for a reawakening of the sense of worship. Nothing new has to be found or rearranged. It is already part of the Christian heritage and at the centre of Catholic worship, namely the Mass, which, at one and the same time is sacrifice and sacrament, a visible sign. If, in leisure, mankind overcomes the working world of the work-day, not through his uttermost exertion, but in withdrawal from it. Through the sacred mystery of the Mass the human being is rapt, seized and removed from the world of work. Quoting from the Preface for the Mass of Christmas Day,

a new light has shone upon the eyes of our mind, so that, as we recognise in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible.³²⁹

Another book of Pieper’s worth commenting on is *Happiness and Contemplation* originally published in German in 1957 and first published in English in 1958.³³⁰ With all the different understandings of “happiness” comments Pieper, anyone “might be surprised to come across the bald statement that man’s ultimate happiness lies in contemplation.”³³¹ This statement, found in Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentes (Against the Pagans)*,³³² Pieper explains, “goes right back to a store of traditional wisdom whose root goes deeper than historical time, and perhaps further than the human domain.” Aquinas, he continues, is a witness for that tradition which in our present day can cast a renewed light upon the reality in which we find ourselves.³³³ Happiness, explains Pieper, encapsulates all forms of our experience of happiness ranging from the

³²⁷ Ibid. p.55 quoted from Thomas Carlyle “*Work and do not Despair*”

³²⁸ The same maxim is often attributed, wrongly, to the Rule of Benedict. Terrence Kardong, “Work is Prayer: Not!,” *Assumption Abbey Newsletter*, October 1995, 1995. Kardong maintains that it was a maxim created by a nameless 19th century German Abbot who wanted his monks, especially the lay brothers, to spend less time in prayer and do extra manual labour!

³²⁹ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*.p.60

³³⁰ The most recent English edition is Pieper, *Happiness & Contemplation*.

³³¹ Ibid. p.13

³³² Ibid. p.14 *Summa Contra Gentes* 3,37 “Ultima hominis felicitas [est] in contemplatione veritatis.”

³³³ Ibid. p.14

immortality of divine life (beatitude) right down to the petty satisfaction of a fleeting desire which can manifest themselves in thousands of different ways (like eating ice-cream!). But this is a positive thing. This range and ambiguity of the word “happiness” reflects the structure of the whole of Creation. All that God creates is good. Again quoting Aquinas,

As created good is a reflection of the uncreated good, so the attainment of a created good is a reflected beatitude.³³⁴

The fact that humankind regards the attainment of such a range of created goods as happiness, means that it is close to the insight that each gratification points to the ultimate one and that all happiness, no matter how trivial, has some connection with eternal beatitude.

But, every fulfilment this side of heaven reveals an inadequacy.

It is immediately evident that such satisfactions are not enough; they are not what we have really sought; they cannot really satisfy us at all.³³⁵

The search for happiness is not confined to philosophers, or clerics, or religious. It is within the grasp of everyone, irrespective of status in life. It is part of their human condition. It is a right.

Contemplation is not held up as one among other modes of happiness, even though an especially lofty one. Rather, what it says is this: however the human craving for happiness may time and time again be distracted by a thousand small gratifications, it remains unwaveringly towards one ultimate satisfaction which is in truth its aim. “Amid a thousand twigs,” says Virgil in Dante’s universal poem, “one sweet fruit is sought.” The finding of this fruit, the ultimate gratification of human nature, the ultimate satiation of man’s deepest thirst, takes place in contemplation.³³⁶

Pieper has an interesting point to make too on the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness without joy would be unthinkable. Again, relying on Aquinas, he emphasises that they are two different things and joy is essentially secondary. It is the response to happiness. Joy comes about by possessing an attained good; it is a consequence.³³⁷ This raises an important question which I will address later, “can one be joyful yet not

³³⁴ Ibid. p.16 Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de veritate* 5.1 ad 5. Pieper comments that when speaking about God Aquinas invariably uses the word *beatitudinis*, whereas, when speaking about mankind, he uses the word *felicitas*.

³³⁵ Ibid. p.17

³³⁶ Ibid. p.43

³³⁷ Ibid. p.49

happy?” Often joyfulness can be the result of extremely painful physical or mental effort. Winning a marathon, completing a thesis, giving birth to a healthy child, surviving surgery or coming through a course of chemotherapy are all painful experiences but they have (hopefully) joyful and happy outcomes.

However, for our purposes, the most significant contribution from this small book is the chapter about “What constitutes contemplation?” Pieper tells us that the Latin terms *contemplatio* and *contemplari* correspond to the Greek words *theoria* and *theorein*.³³⁸ *Theoria* has to do with a purely receptive or “disinterested” approach to reality which is totally divorced from utilitarian objectives. Firstly, *theoria* and *contemplatio* devote their full energy to revealing, clarifying and making manifest the reality which has been sighted; they aim at truth and nothing else. So, the silent perception of reality is the first element of the concept of contemplation.

Secondly, as examined above, contemplation is a form of knowing arrived at seeing, or intuition, rather than thinking. Repeating much of what he has said in *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, this mirrors the distinction made above between the *intellectus* and the *ratio*. Without a doubt, he continues, intuition is perfect form of knowing.

For intuition is knowledge of what is actually present...thinking, on the other hand, is knowledge of what is absent, or may be merely, the effort to achieve such knowledge; the subject matter of thinking is investigated by way of something else which is directly present to the mind, but the subject matter is not seen as itself. The validity of thinking, Thomas Aquinas says, rests upon what we perceive by direct intuition, but the necessity for thinking is due to a failure of intuition. Reason is an imperfect form of *intellectus*. Contemplation then, is intuition; that is to say, it is a type of knowing which does not merely move toward its object but already rests in it. The object is present just as a face or landscape is present to the eye when the gaze “rests upon it.”³³⁹

Thus the person who knows by intuition has already found what the seeker is thinking; what he knows is present “before his eyes.”

The third and final element is that contemplation is accompanied by “amazement.” In other words, we see a reality that exceeds our comprehension even though we see it and have a direct intuition of it. “Amazement is possible only for one who does not yet see

³³⁸ Ibid. p.73

³³⁹ Ibid. p.74

the whole.” One of the characteristics of earthly contemplation is that it is accompanied by an “unease” in the face of the unattainable.

Quite aside from the distraction caused by the requirements of physical life - a distraction which is both inescapable and wholesome - there inevitably intrudes into the midst of the peace of contemplation the soundless call to another, infinitely profounder, incomprehensible. “eternal” peace. This is “the call of perfection to the imperfect, which call we name love.”³⁴⁰

It is not possible to ascertain whether Pieper had any direct contact with either Leclercq or Merton whom I will discuss in the following two chapters. Neither does there appear to be any evidence of letters passing between Pieper and the two monks. But, certainly Merton was aware of Pieper’s writings, particularly those on the virtues. This is not surprising because one of the principal aims of monastic life is “to grow in virtue.” The *otia monastica* waters the garden in which the virtues can grow. In his lectures on the vows to the junior monks Merton deals with the importance of justice which, he claims, is higher than all the other moral virtues.³⁴¹ Quoting Pieper, Merton says that the good man is not so much the strong man (fortitude), or the temperate man but the just man.³⁴² Aided by prudence, justice orients the man towards the good. Man reveals his true being when he is just. Then Merton continues turning his attention to the virtue of temperance,

The inordinate use of reason appears more in vices which are opposed to justice than in the vices opposed to fortitude and temperance...but the good of reason shines more brightly in justice than in the other moral virtues. But, if justice is the most important of the four Cardinal virtues, temperance is the most beautiful Pieper points out. Temperance is more than cutting back on eating and drinking. Rather, temperance orders and harmonises the parts of man’s being as a whole. From this inner order flows serenity of spirit. Quoting Pieper again, “temperance is selfless preservation, intemperance is self-destruction through the selfish degradation of the powers that aim at self-preservation.”³⁴³

Merton also points out to his novices that in St Thomas, humility (a virtue which features prominently in the RB), is a branch of temperance.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 75 Here Pieper quotes from a letter to Jacques Rivière from Paul Claudel May 23, 1907.

³⁴¹ Thomas Merton, *The Life of the Vows*, ed. Patrick F O’Connell (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications, 2012).p.57

³⁴² Josef Pieper, *Justice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957).p.40

³⁴³ Ibid.p. 49

SUMMARY

This chapter on Josef Pieper has provided an important reminder about the fundamental importance of leisure in the twenty first century. His seminal contribution, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, written soon after World War II, is just as relevant now as it was then. In our own day, when there is a constant focus on infrastructure projects, manufacturing, retailing and expanding our service industries, Pieper's remarks provide a timely warning for a society which is in danger of losing its moral compass and intellectual heritage. What he was doing was spearheading an intellectual revolution that placed leisure as the foundation of culture.³⁴⁴ Pieper is encouraging us to put spiritual and moral growth ahead of economic growth and financial prosperity. His intervention, in many way, is prophetic. Although he accepted the necessity for economic regeneration he saw plainly that the dominance of economic utilitarian principles threatened to undermine Christian civilisation. Additionally, although people had more free time, leisure was in danger of being relegated to becoming just another form of economic activity.

As we have seen, there are a number of key elements to Pieper's project. First, at the core, is that each and every human being is created in the image of God. "What are we created to be," asks Pieper? Although it has tended to become a cliché, *being*, he emphasises, is more important than *doing*. As the name suggests, a Christian should be *alter Christus*, another Christ. It is who we are rather than what we do that is important. The contemporary focus by theologians on doing, and moralising about what to do, has distracted us from our principal Christian goal. Have we been distracted, he asks, by the business of today's world?

³⁴⁴ Although taking a different approach it is worth noting that a decade later Elizabeth Anscombe would also challenge utilitarianism by promoting a return to virtue ethics and the importance of the virtues, thus emphasising a focus on the agent and the agent's intention, rather than the act. See G.E.M Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958), Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A study in moral theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985). Makes a similar point in his final paragraph. "What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers, they have already been governing us for some time....We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another - doubtless very different - St Benedict." (p. 263).

Secondly, guided by St Thomas Aquinas, Pieper goes on to outline his Christian idea of mankind using, as his framework, the Theological and Cardinal virtues. Why are these virtues important? Because each virtue reflects an attribute of the Divine in whose image we are made. Here, his emphasis is on the importance of being right in both the supernatural and natural spheres. It is the virtues that guide us in this task, not expediency, utilitarian motives or even a sense of duty.

Thirdly, the emphasis on activity and productivity, the analytical focus on data for making decisions prevents or diverts the individual from having time for “intellectual knowing” or “listening to the being of things.” To illustrate this he contrasts the *ratio*, logical systematic knowing, which he reminds us can be very hard work, with the *intellectus* or receptive seeing, which is non-active and passive. Having the leisure of contemplation allows us to do this receptive seeing or gazing. The person, he warns, who places total reliance on the *ratio* tends to mistrust everything that does not involve painful effort and hard work. Contemplation, what the Greeks called *theoria*, is synonymous with the *intellectus*, the “gazing” or “seeing” described earlier. A further important element of this seeing is intuition, or the “silent perception of reality. It is a type of knowing that does not merely move towards its object but actually rests in it.” A final aspect of contemplation is that it is accompanied by amazement. Through contemplation we see a reality that exceeds our comprehension. Amazement is only possible, he adds, for one who does not yet see the whole.

Fourthly, for Pieper, leisure is a disposition of the soul, it is not the same as taking a short break, time off, a weekend or vacation. In fact leisure cannot be constrained by the limits of time, it cannot be measured in hours and days. In this context he contrasts quiet or the absence of noise with stillness. It is he says, “the stillness in the conversation of lovers, which is fed by their oneness.” We might say that quiet is an external disposition whereas stillness is interior. “Leisure is that form of stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality, only the person who is still can hear.”

Also, there is in leisure the implication that some things cannot be known, or seen. Consequently, in leisure, there has to be an element of “letting go.” It is only by engaging in leisure, as the ancient Greeks did that we can achieve this “letting go.” We

are reminded by Pieper of the famous question posed by Aristotle, “with what activity will we fill our leisure?” So leisure is not being idle or doing nothing. But, what should that activity be, he continues? He makes the point that free time, or leisure, is in danger of being devoted only to restorative or even hedonistic activities allowing very little room for activities that are directed at maintaining contact with our divine origins. These are necessary for the restoration of the body.

However, one indispensable aspect that is often missing is festival and celebration, especially that enshrined in the Sunday Sabbath, the celebration and sharing of the Eucharist. Through the celebration of the Mass we are rapt, seized and removed from the world of work. This is the time when we can be attuned with the world. When leisure is separated from worship, he adds, it becomes toilsome and work becomes inhuman. Boredom, idleness, despair, acedia are all products of leisure without worship.

A further insight that Pieper gives us is about the search for happiness and its relationship with leisure and contemplation. Happiness, he reminds us, is within the grasp of everyone, it is part of our human condition, it is a human right. And it is through contemplation that we are able to quench that deep thirst for happiness, which, he adds, is not the same thing as joy. Joy flows from happiness, it is secondary, it is a consequence of happiness.

In criticism of Pieper’s stance on leisure one could raise a number of points. The first is that Pieper, perhaps quite understandably, was speaking from an academic perspective. Like Merton, who we will examine later in Chapter 5, Pieper is a prophet, a visionary. But, is he creating a utopia that many living in our present day might find it difficult to agree with, let alone attain? Perhaps, one might argue, that Pieper is “out of touch” with the workplace? The liberal capitalist structures of western society, together with its focus on wealth generation and property ownership create a tension. This is particularly true in our present times when the economies of the world are coping with the Covid-19 pandemic. Redundancy and unemployment create a level of anxiety, both individually and collectively, that make it impossible for many to benefit from this unwanted free time. People would rather be working, enjoying a reasonable standard of living and paying their bills rather than having enforced leisure time. There is admittedly a

movement towards living a more sustainable life-style and living more simply but we are only in the early stages of this development. The challenge is dealing with the “here and now” of life.

A second criticism that we might level at Pieper is, that in spite of his writings being, at times, so prescient they do not provide the complete answer. Post Second World War II Germany is markedly different now and we can only admire the way in which Germany emerged from Nazism and has regenerated itself, not just economically but intellectually and morally as well. Not only does it find itself as a major player and influencer in European politics, but it sets a standard for other countries to follow. If Pieper was alive today he might be impressed by the way in which his country has pulled itself out of its turmoil.

CHAPTER FOUR

JEAN LECLERCQ OSB (1911 -1993)

Since this thesis examines the monastic concept of sacred and holy leisure including *otia monastica*, two monastic writers are significant. The first is the Benedictine monk Jean Leclercq OSB who, in his writings and research, critically examined and systematised *otia monastica*. His prodigious output on other monastic themes and authors, especially St Bernard of Clairvaux, have made him one of the foremost contemporary Benedictine scholars of the twentieth century.³⁴⁵ The other monk is Fr Thomas Merton, a Trappist, known in his monastery as Fr Louis who will be examined in more detail in the following chapter. As we saw in the previous chapter Merton was certainly aware of Pieper and quotes him several times in the classes he gave on the Cardinal virtues to the novices and junior monks.³⁴⁶ Merton also mentions having read Pieper's *Happiness and Contemplation*,³⁴⁷ *Leisure the Basis of Culture*³⁴⁸ and *In Tune with the World: a Theory of Festivity*.³⁴⁹

Leclercq and Merton were monks following the *Rule of Benedict*. Leclercq was a Benedictine monk of Clervaux, Luxembourg. Merton, in contrast, lived an enclosed and much stricter observance in the reformed Trappist monastery of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, USA, which, like Clervaux followed the *Rule of Benedict*.³⁵⁰ As Leclercq's autobiographical memoir reveals, after initial formation, he spent a great deal of his time outside his monastery engaged in studying, researching, writing and teaching. This involved extensive travelling, not only through Europe and North

³⁴⁵ After completing studies Jean Leclercq OSB lectured at the Gregorian Pontifical University and Sant'Anselmo, the Benedictine Pontifical College, both in Rome. He travelled and lectured widely throughout the world. The most comprehensive bibliography of his work can be found in E Rozanne Elder, ed., *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God: Studies in Honor of Jean Leclercq* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA - Spencer, Massachusetts, USA: Cistercian Publications, 1995). Compiled by Michael Martin (pp. 415-498).

³⁴⁶ Merton, *The Life of the Vows*.p 56 and p.327 Merton quotes from Pieper's *The Four Cardinal Virtues*.

³⁴⁷ Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life (1952-1960)*, ed. Lawrence S Cunningham, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Harper Collins E Books, 2007).p.230

³⁴⁸ Ibid.p.356

³⁴⁹ Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Waters of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage (The Journals of Thomas Merton Vol. 5 1963-1965)*, ed. Robert E Daggy (New York, USA: Harper One, 1997).p.302

³⁵⁰ Monasteries and convents following the Rule of Benedict (RB) are usually part of a congregation which have their own constitutions. These interpret the RB according to congregation's traditions and needs. The constitutions of the *Trappists* or the *Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance* (OCSO) date from the 17th century reform at the mother house of *La Trappe*, (hence Trappist) in France, led by Abbot de Rancé (1626-1700).

America, but to countries and continents such as Africa, the Far East, Australasia, where the monastic orders were growing and in need of some encouragement backed up by academic expertise.³⁵¹ Leclercq is perhaps best known for *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*.³⁵² This, together with his study of *Otia Monastica*³⁵³ form a unique contribution and insight in to how leisure was understood and practised in the early Church, the Patristic and medieval periods. Leclercq's *Otia Monastica* is a systematic examination of the early Christian and medieval literary sources that have contributed to our modern understanding of monastic culture and leisure. In this work it is possible to identify how the idea of an *Otia Monastica* or the more general concept of holy or sacred leisure emerged down the centuries.

It was the writings of these two monks, the exchange of correspondence, interspersed with several face to face meetings, (mainly at Gethsemani), that brought them closer together.³⁵⁴ As the letters between the two monks testify, over the years, Leclercq formed an enduring relationship with Merton.³⁵⁵ Leclercq extended to Merton the fateful invitation to the Inter-Monastic Conference in Bangkok in December 1968 where Merton, at the age of 53, was tragically and accidentally electrocuted. Merton had been a Trappist monk for only twenty-seven years.

Like Pieper, both Leclercq and Merton lived their formative years in the aftermath of the First World War. Following the Second World War they witnessed a resurgence in monastic life in the late 1940's and 1950's. Both were men of letters and had a prodigious output not only in terms of books, journal articles and research, but also the impact they had on a readership wanting to know more about monastic life and its spirituality. Following the evils, horrors and destruction of war, young men (and women), now discharged from active military service, embraced monastic life as a radical alternative to secular employment.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ Jean Leclercq, *Memoirs: From Grace to Grace* (Petersham, Massachusetts, USA: St Bede's Publications, 2000).

³⁵² Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*.

³⁵³ Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.

³⁵⁴ Leclercq, and Merton. Jean Leclercq made several visits to Gethsemani Abbey. See also Thomas Merton, *School of Charity: Thomas Merton's Letters*, ed. Patrick O.C.S.O Hart (New York, USA: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990).

³⁵⁵ Leclercq, and Merton.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.p. 19 Letter to Leclercq dated October 9, 1950 Merton rejoices that his monastery had 150 novices.

In the inter-war years the lives of Leclercq and Merton had taken different paths. From an early age Leclercq had always wanted to become a monk, whereas Merton's calling to the monastic life came much later. As documented in their respective autobiographical writings Leclercq's path to the monastery was far more conventional. Brought up in a stable Catholic family, as a teenager he followed the usual secondary lycée education. Then, at the age of 17, he joined the monastery of *Saint Maurice* at Clervaux in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. After his monastic and priestly formation the academically gifted Leclercq moved onto postgraduate studies spending time at some of the most prestigious academic institutions in Rome and France. These included the international Benedictine university in Rome, Sant'Anselmo, and in France the Sorbonne, Institut Catholique, Collège de France and L'Ecole des Hautes-Études where Leclercq came into contact with many eminent Catholic scholars. Writing in his memoirs Leclercq mentions that the teaching of Anselm Stoltz³⁵⁷ and Erik Petersen were of great influence during his formative years as a young student at Sant'Anselmo. This influence was to impact on the way that Leclercq systematised his research into the deeper meaning of *otia monastica*.

He (Petersen) and Fr. Stoltz drew out attention to the importance of words and the history of their meanings. This concern never left me, and it appeared in my two volumes³⁵⁸ in the *Studia Anselmiana* dedicated to the monastic vocabulary of the Middle Ages.³⁵⁹

Leclercq had extensive experience as a historical researcher under the guidance of a number of eminent scholars.³⁶⁰

As we have seen earlier, Leclercq's methodology was focused on a detailed and systematic linguistic analysis of key terms such as *quies*, *otia*, *vacatio* and *sabbatum* in Patristic and medieval texts examined in Chapter One. Each term was an important facet

³⁵⁷ Fr Anselm Stoltz OSB (1900-1942) was a German Benedictine monk, scholar and spiritual director. He drew heavily on Patristic sources. His *Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* has recently been translated into English (2013). He died prematurely at the age of 42 from a disease contracted whilst hearing the confessions of soldiers in the trenches during WW II. Erik Petersen was a historian of ancient religions but lost his university chair in Germany when he converted from Lutheranism. He had to leave Germany and found refuge on the Aventine near Sant'Anselmo. He became a professor at the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology.

³⁵⁸ Jean Leclercq, *Études sur le vocabulaire monastique du moyen âge*, vol. XLVIII, *Studia Anselmiana* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum S. Anselmi, 1961), Leclercq, *Otia Monastica: Études sur le Vocabulaire de la Contemplation au Moyen Âge*.

³⁵⁹ Leclercq, *Memoirs: From Grace to Grace*. p.33

³⁶⁰ For instance Etienne Gilson (1894-1978) and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) whose lectures he attended in Rome and Paris.

of the wider concept of *otia monastica*. Leclercq understood the importance of going back to original documents and critical texts. Merton's approach was different however, it was more eclectic. He drew from a far wider range of sources and, towards the end of his life, showed a particular interest in the religions of the Far East. Their research and writings overlapped as their exchange of letters and personal contacts evidence.

Over a period of thirty years, one of his crowning achievements was the critical edition of the works of St Bernard of Clairvaux. But the latter represents only a small part of his vast literary output. One recent comprehensive bibliography of his work compiled in 1995 by Michael Martin runs to eighty-eight pages and is based on five earlier bibliographies.³⁶¹

Although Leclercq frequently alluded to *otia monastica* he does not seem to have been attracted to the enclosed and stricter contemplative life espoused by other monastics, such as the Trappist Thomas Merton, where the monastic routine was far more geared to the *otium* of contemplative life. Leclercq seems to have spent most of his professed monastic life either studying in Italy or France, travelling, and teaching or lecturing internationally. His superiors recognised that this was what he was good at. In his memoirs Leclercq reports that he visited fifty-five countries.³⁶² In other monastic houses this amount of travelling may have seemed excessive but it enabled Leclercq to draw on a wide range of sources and cultures especially when he visited India, Asia, Africa and South America. His memoirs and letters provide the scholar with a comprehensive overview of how monasticism was developing during the twentieth century, especially in the developing world. They also provide a glimpse in to the links between other Christian monasteries (for instance the Anglican, Episcopalian and ecumenical communities) and, just as important, non-Christian monasticism, especially those found in the Buddhist and Hindu religions.

If there is little evidence of a physical stability to his monastery Leclercq maintained strong links, both emotionally and psychologically. He frequently returned to Clervaux, especially during the academic vacations. He remarks,

I did not neglect making numerous sojourns to Clervaux, where the Abbot and the community helped me continually in every way possible. For two years, I was also

³⁶¹ See in Elder.(1995) pp.415-498

³⁶² Leclercq, *Memoirs: From Grace to Grace*. p. 109

director of the guest wing. I could do so only on and off, while still prolonging my sojourns especially during the summer.³⁶³

Leclercq's seminal work on monastic culture, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*³⁶⁴ was widely acclaimed beyond the cloister. In this treatise, amongst other things, Leclercq promotes the idea of a monastic theology, (a prolongation of Patristic theology as he calls it), as opposed to a Thomistic or Systematic theology illustrated in the previous section on Josef Pieper. In his memoirs Leclercq comments that the concept of monastic theology was first mentioned to him in 1945 while he was in Paris. He continues,

The contemplative orientation of monasticism had yielded a particular way of doing theology. The phrase "monastic theology" ...was suggested by a Dominican in 1945 and had passed into *Pierre le Venerable*. It was used again in connection with Rupert of Deutz and others, beginning in 1953, applied to St Bernard and to the Cistercians.³⁶⁵

In his *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* Leclercq elaborates on the distinction between monastic and scholastic theology.

The difference between scholastic theology and monastic theology corresponds to the differences between the two states of life: the state of the Christian life in the world and the state of the Christian life in the religious life. The latter was what was, in fact, until the end of the twelfth century, unanimously called the "contemplative life."³⁶⁶

This did not mean that he promoted one in favour of the other. He is quite clear that both approaches were not only complementary, but essential. However, some of his critics thought he was trying to promote monastic theology over Thomism. Defending his dual approach, addressing a conference of young Cistercian monks, he says,

There are certain things which the church wishes us to know and which we will not learn from our monastic authors. We will not find in them all of theology. We speak, quite legitimately, of monastic theology: but this attractive new formula should not become for us the excuse for a new form of laziness which would consist in studying only the monastic authors. In order that we might become capable of assimilating the theological contribution of the centuries which followed the epoch of our Fathers, it is most important that we have a clear idea on the problems which had not arisen in their times. We have need of a terminology that will be precise and sure, provided by experience, and approved by authority. We need concepts.... We should not succumb to

³⁶³ Ibid. p. 77

³⁶⁴ This book was originally published (in French) in 1957 as *L'Amour des lettres et de désir de Dieu: Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du moyen âge*.

³⁶⁵ Leclercq, *Memoirs: From Grace to Grace*. p.80

³⁶⁶ Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God: a study of monastic culture*. p. 228 See also n.22 on p.229

the temptation of believing that fervour, religious ardour, and, still less, religious sentiment will ever take the place of the knowledge and the methodical and the methodological study of traditional scholastic philosophy and theology.³⁶⁷

Another important work, published by Leclercq in 1955, was about the life and spiritual doctrine of the Camaldolese mystic Paul Giustiniani (1476-1528)³⁶⁸ who in 1520 founded the monastery of Montecorona in what it now Umbria, Italy. Paul Giustiniani had been a reformer. Leclercq wrote this short treatise at the invitation of the then Abbot of Montecorona. Although Leclercq did not set out to deliberately write a treatise on *otia monastica* the spiritual doctrine of Giustiniani expounds a rule for an “amiable solitary” which is built around the monastic understanding of leisure, the *otia negotiosissimum* which St Bernard spoke about.

The Camaldolese Order, to which Giustiniani belonged, is now part of the Benedictine family of monks and nuns. It was founded around 1012 by St Romuald (950-1025/27). Like the later Cistercians, it was a Benedictine reform. However, in contrast to the Cistercians, with its emphasis on community life, the Camaldolese sought to blend the coenobitic and eremitical life, the latter based on the model of the Desert Fathers. Although its provisions for solitude were not as demanding as those of the Carthusians, it made greater provision for solitude and contemplation than the regular coenobitic life of the Benedictines. This rule of life was loosely based on the Eastern monastic model of the *laura* described earlier. Giustiniani eventually went on to establish a new eremitical congregation of his own.³⁶⁹ Quoting from the writings of Giustiniani, Leclercq links the concept of solitariness and leisure together,

The hermit in his solitude is free from all the ordinary occupations of other men. In this sense the solitary life is a life of leisure. Contrary to what one might think, however, it is a leisure full of work, the most laborious of leisures, *negotiosissimum otium*. It must be so: otherwise eremitic life would be worthless rather than useful.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Ibid.p. 276 Quoted from part of a conference given to the students at the house of the General of the Reformed Cistercians in Appendix IV.

³⁶⁸ Leclercq, *Alone with God*. Thomas Merton, increasingly dissatisfied by life at Gethsemani was attracted by the greater solitude that the eremitical dimension of the Camaldolese way of life offered. At Leclercq's request Merton wrote the preface to the English edition of *Alone with God*. Merton also explored the possibility of transferring to a Carthusian monastery.

³⁶⁹ The Camaldolese Hermits of the Congregation of Monte Corona, to give them their formal title, still have communities in Italy, Spain, Poland, South America and the USA. Unlike the Camaldolese they (Coronese) are not part of the Benedictine Confederation.

³⁷⁰ Leclercq, *Alone with God*.p.62

He stresses the importance of keeping the balance of this work in favour of “innumerable and endless” spiritual occupations. Again, quoting Giustiniani,

Those who have ever practiced the occupations of religious leisure imagine that a solitary is constantly overwhelmed by inactivity and idleness, bored stiff, full of regrets, like a sleepy man, or an irrational animal that lets the time pass doing nothing. ...I declare that long years of experience have proved that the more I am solitary, the less I am idle. Only when I am not solitary am I inert, subject to boredom and regret....Is it idleness to read, to study, to compose, to write? Is it idleness to examine our conscience, to regulate the soul's affections, to recall our past life, to put in order carefully our present life, to provide prudently for the future?³⁷¹

In the introduction to Giustiniani's doctrine Leclercq describes Giustiniani's early life.

Study absorbed him for many years, first in his own city (Venice), then at the University of Padua, and finally on the island of Murano, where he sought a leisure free from distraction. As a humanist imbued with Stoic doctrine, he renounced the pleasures of the flesh and turned increasingly towards God. Without forgetting Seneca and Cicero, whose books led to his conversion, he nourished his soul on the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, the monastic writers of the Middle Ages, and the Great Scholastics. In 1510, at the age of thirty-four, he entered the hermitage of Camaldoli as a novice. A year and a half later, shortly after he had pronounced his vows, he was drawn to reform the whole Camaldolese order. In 1520, after ten years of trouble and effort, he left the hermitage of Camaldoli to seek out a still more solitary life in absolute indigence. Disciples came to him, with whom he founded the Company of the Hermits of St Romuald, which continue to exist under the name of the Congregation of the Camaldolese Hermits of Montecorona.³⁷²

It is worth noting that Leclercq uses the term “leisure free from distraction.” It was several years later that Leclercq published his seminal work on *Otia Monastica* mentioned earlier. It is also striking that Leclercq makes reference to the influence of Stoic doctrine and two pre-Christian writers Seneca and Cicero already mentioned in the first part of Chapter One on the *Normative Theology* of leisure. In spite of his close contact with Montecorona, Leclercq was never attracted to their way of life, especially their solitariness. At the invitation of its Abbot, Leclercq wrote the book on Giustiniani during a short sojourn at the monastery. He comments that he found the isolation of the hermitage so difficult he had to make weekly excursions to Rome to escape!

³⁷¹ Ibid.p.64

³⁷² Ibid.p.11

In the chapter on the occupations of the hermit Leclercq emphasises that the hermit, in his solitude, is free from all the ordinary occupations of other men. Going on to quote from the Giustiniani's monastic rule for Montecorona Leclercq continues,

All must keep busy at manual work during the proper and prescribed time for it. Then they must devote other definite hours to reading, prayer, and other spiritual exercises, so that the whole length of the day and night may seem short and insufficient. There should always be more to do than there is time for. Woe to him who begins to find the days too long.³⁷³

From this short passages we start to discern how the concept of *otia monastica* manifests itself in the daily routine of a Montecorona monk. How does this holy leisure impact on the monk's daily round of work and prayer? Leclercq draws the attention of the reader to two different individual timetables for the hermit monk.

They are characterised by a perfect equilibrium between all the needs of the body and those of the spirit. With winning naturalness the author passes from the most concrete details to sublime considerations.³⁷⁴

Then Leclercq goes to give a few examples emphasising that there should always be a balance in favour of spiritual activity. Starting with some practical advice on how to occupy their holy leisure, Giustiniani encourages the monks,

Never fail to set the table for meals, for you should never eat in a negligent way. If you have no table or bowl, or if they are dirty, asked for clean ones, and always eat in an orderly and gentlemanly way

When you go to bed, before falling asleep, read a book of history, preferably the life of a saint or some other easy and devout subject.

Each time you return to the cell after the office, genuflect and say a short prayer, at least a *Pater* an *Ave*, or else, or "Oh Lord Jesus, I adore thee, have mercy on me and help me."³⁷⁵

Next he moves on to the type and the timing of manual work,

Do manual work of that kind and to that extent that either serves practical needs, or keeps you healthy, or makes you humble, or provides necessary relaxation. Prefer the more modest and menial tasks, those which help your brothers more than yourself. If there is no need for such work or if your health does not require it, then concentrate on spiritual rather than physical exercise. Just as the soul is not for the sake of the body, but the body for the soul, so spiritual occupations are not subordinated to the body, but

³⁷³ Ibid.p. 62

³⁷⁴ Ibid. p.62

³⁷⁵ Ibid. p.63

bodily works are ordained to those of the spirit. After Vespers they spend the time until compline at manual work in common, or if there is no common work, do then all the tasks that you can save for that time: washing linen, fetching wood or water, sweeping the cell or the church, and so one. Get all these jobs done ahead of time for the next day. Always keep your cell very tidy and well swept (when I say cell I mean also the garden and the fountain et cetera that are in front of it).³⁷⁶

Then follows some advice on the best position to assume for prayer and making confession,

To avoid falling asleep at prayer, lean a little or not at all. Your confessions should be brief, pure, and without repetitions: just tell your sins simply without entering into any detail of when and how; do not seek advice; do not discuss any other matter; do not return to past confessions.³⁷⁷

An interesting passage, which highlights the paradox of being an “amiable solitary”, then follows. Giustiniani continues that the life of someone living in the world is far more prone to idleness,

But, my Lord God, I in my solitude speak to you.... I declare that long years of experience have proved that the more I am solitary, the less I am idle. Only when I am not solitary am I inert, subject to boredom and regret. Never do the days seem so short, the night so brief, the passage of time so rapid, as when I can enjoy amiable solitude, free of all outside occupation and far from men. It seems to me that in this, more than in other way of life, occupations are both lacking and superabundant. No indeed, the life of solitaires is not what some may imagine, inactive and idle.³⁷⁸

In fact, Giustiniani maintains that the life of a solitary is even busier,

Instead, you must admit that the solitary life is more active and laborious than any other, busy not at external corporal tasks or worldly business, but at those nobler and more fruitful interior and spiritual exercises as best suit the part of ourselves that is immortal.³⁷⁹

Next he lists some of the “activity” that occupies a solitary’s day. But he laments the fact that because of this lack of time to do everything some projects have to be put aside or remain uncompleted.

Is it idleness to read, to study, to compose, to write? Is it idleness to examine our conscience, to regulate the soul’s affections, to recall our past life, to put in order carefully our present life, to provide prudently for the future? Is it idleness to repent our past misdeeds, to combat temptation and inordinate desires, to arm ourselves in advance

³⁷⁶ Ibid. p.63

³⁷⁷ Ibid. p.63

³⁷⁸ Ibid. p.64

³⁷⁹ Ibid. p.65

against the near occasions of disturbance and downfall, to think of death and to place it before our eyes so that it may not catch us unawares? Is it idleness to meditate on human and divine realities worthy of ceaselessly occupying noble minds, and to ponder these, not in haphazard daydreams, but with order and concentration? Is it idleness to raise our voices frequently by day and by night in psalms, canticles, praising God the creator, and thanking him for all his benefits? Or with a voice still more ringing and effective to ascend by mental prayer toward the divine majesty in so far as mortal man can? Thus may we as it were, leave this world in so far as our mortal state allows and converse in heaven with the blessed spirits, with the holy angels, and with the divine Creator and ours.³⁸⁰

The solitary is also a witness to those outside the cell. Hence, the solitary, in spite of being enclosed, fulfils an apostolic role, sets an example which others can imitate,

Thus may we in some way contemplate the ineffable and inexpressible perfections of God, as in a mirror and by analogy. Is it idleness to arouse and exhort others to such a life, to such exercises, by speech, to those present and by letter to those absent, is it idleness to wear cheap, rough garments, to eat poorly and meagrely, to keep long vigils, to do hard and menial work? By these means we can tame the pride of flesh and curb the desires of the flesh, training the body to submit to and obey the soul and reason in everything. Do you maintain that all these activities and many other similar practices of hermits are mere inertia, boredom, lethargy?³⁸¹

This reaffirmation of the importance of holy leisure and solitariness was part of their overall project for monastic renewal. In the view of both Leclercq and Merton the monastic life was in need of radical reform. It had become moribund and had lost sight of its foundational charism. Already, we are starting to see what *otia monastica* looks like, how it is organised and what impact its practice has on the daily life of a fifteenth century monk. The challenge, as we ponder these authors, is to articulate what ways these and other texts we are considering, might shape our understanding of leisure in the 21st century.

SUMMARY

In contrast to Pieper, who drew his inspiration from Scholasticism, especially Aquinas and later exponents such as Guardini, Maritain and Gilson, Jean Leclercq focus is on Patristic and monastic writers. But, similar to Pieper, Leclercq wants us to reconnect with ideas and concepts about leisure that pre-date Christianity going right back to the Greek and Roman philosophers. Both authors wish to emphasise the importance of

³⁸⁰ Ibid. p.64

³⁸¹ Ibid.p.66

reconnecting with, in the twentieth century, a leisure that has contemplation, meditation, prayer and worship at its heart.

Leclercq's distinction between monastic and scholastic theology is important also. Monastic theology, he reminds us, although a relatively new term, is in fact something very old; it is a prolongation of Patristic Theology. Furthermore, it has always been an activity associated with the contemplative life; for this reason it is more often subjective and personal. Thus, we come to experience God rather than know him. The "gazing" through contemplative prayer (*intellectus*), rather than intellectual enquiry, (*ratio*), enlivens the sense of God's presence in our lives. It is through contemplation, facilitated by monastic leisure, that our relationship with God is deepened. Adopting a monastic theological approach should not be an excuse for ignoring a scholastic or systematic approach. Monastic theology, he adds, is only one part of the equation. The two approaches, monastic and scholastic, are complimentary. We need the theological terminology and systematic structure that scholastic theology can provide.

Leclercq's methodology focuses on a detailed and systematic analysis of language of leisure going right back to the Greek and Latin authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny and Cicero. In the context of *otia monastica* terms such as *quies*, *otia*, *vacatio* and *sabbato* are significant. By tracing their source and usage it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of these terms and the way in which they can illuminate our current understanding of leisure.

Another important insight that Leclercq provides is about the "busy-ness" of monastic leisure, what St Bernard has described as *otium negotiosissimum*. *Otia monastica* is not a life of inactivity. Far from it, every minute of the waking day is an opportunity to be contemplative. As Pieper reminds us, being contemplative is a state of the soul. The different monastic rules of life and their routines handed down to us hardly leave the individual with any "free time." Although the contemplative seeks a life free from distractions there are many occupations that a monastic has to engage in, the Work of God (the *Opus Dei*), reading and study (*Lectio Divina*) and manual labour. If there is, by chance, a random free moment this is an opportunity for some necessary housekeeping or personal need. Drawing from the writings of Giustiniani, Leclercq reminds us that the vice of idleness, often manifested as boredom, apathy, *acedia*, is far

more prevalent amongst those who live in the world. In our modern society busy-ness has become one of the hallmarks of the successful person. Multi-tasking, the culture of presenteeism, being at your desk even if you are not doing anything, or just to be seen to be working, alienate the person from what it means to be truly human and at one with God.

With its focus on *otia monastica* Leclercq's understanding of sacred or holy leisure is very narrow. As we have seen from the survey of his relevant writings and research he confines himself to a monastic context. But we need to remember that this approach was a product of his scholarly training, the way that he had been taught and encouraged by some great masters of philological research. With its sharp focus on monastic life, there may have been also a hidden agenda. Perhaps Leclercq felt that twentieth century monasticism, often with a strong emphasis on pastoral work and education, was starting to lose its contemplative dimension? The dilemma between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* rears its head again. How does one strike the balance? But, as the following chapters will demonstrate, if leisure needs to be understood in a much wider societal context, we need to be reminded also of its classical and early Christian foundations.

CHAPTER FIVE

THOMAS MERTON OCSO (1915-1968)

Thomas Merton was born in Prades,³⁸² France to an American mother and a New Zealand father. Both were artists who had met at art school in Paris.³⁸³ The death of his mother from stomach cancer, when Merton was only six, had a profound effect on him. He then followed his father around Europe. One of the most stable periods, as a teenager, was his secondary education at Oakham School in Rutland, England.³⁸⁴ However, his subsequent move to Cambridge University to study English at Clare College ended badly, without him taking his degree. Merton left under a cloud having formed a fleeting relationship which resulted in him fathering a child.

By now his father had died also and his guardian, a close friend of his father's, had practically disowned him because of his indiscretions while at Cambridge.

Consequently, Merton was left to fare for himself. Moving to the USA, a more mature Merton applied for American citizenship and settled into life at Columbia University, New York.³⁸⁵ In 1938 he acquired a BA followed by an MA in English the next year.

In his autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton relates that as an infant he had been baptised an Anglican. But his mother had been rather ambivalent about religion.

Churches and formal religion were things to which mother attached not too much importance in the training of a modern child.³⁸⁶

But Merton's father obviously took Thomas's religious upbringing more seriously because Merton continues,

My baptism, at Prades, was almost certainly Father's idea, because he had grown up with a deep and well-developed faith according to the doctrines of the Church of England. But I don't think there was much power in the waters of baptism I got in

³⁸² Prades is situated in the foothills of the Pyrénées Orientale 45km east of Perpignan.

³⁸³ The artistic talents Merton's parents manifested itself in Merton's interest in art and photography.

³⁸⁴ Oakham is an English Public School in Rutland, UK. Merton embraced public school life and obviously did well enough academically to gain entrance to Clare College, Cambridge.

³⁸⁵ The BA in Literature at Columbia was taught by Mark Van Doran (1894-1972), a distinguished American poet. His classes were to have a strong influence on Merton. Van Doren became a mentor and life-long friend to Merton. See William H Shannon, Christine M Bochen, and Patrick F O'Connell, eds., *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 2002).p.503

³⁸⁶ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948).p.5

Prades to untwist the warping of my essential freedom. Or loose me from the devils that hung like vampires on my soul.³⁸⁷

It was the reading of St Augustine's *Confessions* and the *Imitation of Christ* together with contemporary Catholic writers such as the French philosopher Étienne Gilson's *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*³⁸⁸ that set Merton on his journey towards Catholicism. While a student at Columbia University he started attending Mass at his local church. One evening in September 1938, soon after reading about the Jesuit Gerald Manley Hopkins' (1844-1889) conversion to Catholicism and call to the priesthood, Merton decided that he must follow the same route. Two months later, following instruction, at the age of twenty-three, he was received into the Catholic Church.³⁸⁹ He was confirmed the following year.

Pursuing his vocation Merton applied to join the Franciscans. After initially being accepted to start in 1940 he was subsequently advised to withdraw after revealing his past profligacy at Cambridge.³⁹⁰ Now he had to earn a living and fortunately his master's degree enabled him to obtain a teaching position at St Bonaventure's, a Franciscan liberal arts college, in New York State in September, 1940. The following Lent Merton attended the Holy Week retreat at Gethsemani Abbey, a Trappist monastery in Kentucky. This made a deep impression on him and after ascertaining that his past misdemeanours presented no impediment to priesthood, in December 1941, after barely a year at St Bonaventure's, Merton joined Gethsemani. The following February he started his noviciate as Brother Louis to become a Trappist monk. He made his simple vows in 1943 and solemn vows in 1947. Priesthood followed in 1949.

Fluent in several European languages, Merton was a voracious reader, and from his schooldays immersed himself in European culture, especially twentieth century literature and philosophy. Merton's Abbot noticed his talent for writing and encouraged him to continue. Although for most of his monastic life, he lived behind the cloister

³⁸⁷ Ibid.p.5

³⁸⁸ Étienne Gilson had been also one of Leclercq's teachers.

³⁸⁹ Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*.p. 223. According to Merton, whilst pouring the water over his head, the priest used the words "if thou be not already baptised" which seems to indicate that Merton's was a "conditional baptism." There might have been doubts about the validity of his infant baptism at Prades, or, if it had been valid, he could not obtain the necessary evidence to prove it.

³⁹⁰ Before starting his novitiate with the Franciscans, Merton had a crisis of conscience and felt compelled to confide that while at Cambridge University he had fathered a child. On the advice of the superior Merton withdrew his application.

wall, he soon attracted the attention of a worldwide readership. He continued studying and throughout his life kept journals full of his questions and musings. From 1951 Fr Louis had the responsibility of the formation of the junior monks or “scholastics” as they were called. For ten years (1955 to 1965) he was the Master of Novices. Many of his conferences for the novices, junior monks and the rest of the community are published or available on tape.³⁹¹

In spite of his academic ability and literary talents Merton did not regard himself as an academic in the same way that Pieper or Leclercq might have done. From the deferential tone of the initial correspondence between Merton and Leclercq, Merton regarded himself as very much the “amateur theologian” and Leclercq his superior. In fact Merton had some reservations about his relationship with Leclercq. In his journal dated June 6, 1961 he wrote,

He (Leclercq) told me I was a pessimist, too anxious, too negative. Also, I had a feeling of an underlying disharmony between us, a kind of opposition and mistrust (*méfiance*) under the surface cordiality and agreement. He is certainly one of those, one of very many, who accept any writing I have done with great reservations. That I can certainly understand. As a theologian I have always been a pure amateur, and the professionals resent an amateur making so much noise.³⁹²

Although his adult life was spent in the United States, the European influence was never far away. His autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*³⁹³ was a best seller and classified by the *National Review*³⁹⁴ as one of the most important one hundred non-fiction books of the twentieth century. In a recent visit to the USA Pope Francis named Merton, together with Dorothy Day (1897-1980)³⁹⁵ and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) among the most influential Americans of modern time. In a relatively short life he wrote more than seventy books, two thousand poems, numerous essays, periodical

³⁹¹ Although some of these tapes are available online all are available at the Thomas Merton Centre at Bellarmine University, USA

³⁹² Patrick Hart O.C.S.O, and Jonathan Montaldo, eds., *The Intimate Merton: His Life from his Journals* (Oxford: Lion, 2000).p. 221

³⁹³ Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Also published in the UK as Thomas Merton, *Elected Silence* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1949). The original hardcover edition eventually sold over 600,000 copies. By 1984 paperback sales exceeded three million. The book has remained continuously in print, and has been translated into more than fifteen languages.

³⁹⁴ The *National Review* (NR) is an American semi-monthly conservative editorial magazine focusing on news and commentary pieces on political, social, and cultural affairs. The magazine was founded by the author William F. Buckley Jr. in 1955.

³⁹⁵ During his time in New York, before joining Gethsemani, Merton had been influenced by Dorothy Day, her Christian vision, pacifism and outreach to the poor. They exchanged many letters.

articles, reviews, sketches and photographs.³⁹⁶ In contrast to Leclercq, apart from local excursions, Merton hardly left his monastery until the final years of his life (1968) when he travelled to Alaska, California and Asia.

The term *otia monastica* does not appear in his writings more than a dozen times, but it is obvious from his journals, lectures, and other writings, especially those on silence, solitude and contemplation, that *otia monastica*, sacred or holy leisure, was indispensable for living an authentic monastic life. *Otia monastica* was part of what it meant to be a monk. For Merton, sacred leisure was implicit in the daily monastic routine. It was taken for granted and formed an indispensable foundation to his and every other monks' search for solitude which he continually refers to, not only the exchange of letters with Leclercq, but in many other places. Merton did not want to examine the origins of *otia monastica* so much, rather he wanted to experience it. The only times Merton seems to feel a need to write about *otia monastica* is when it is violated. The noise of machinery, agricultural equipment, the guns and hunting dogs of neighbouring farmers, is a constant irritant. He resents too the incursions of commercialisation in the monastery that had resulted in cheese production and other activities.

At a stage in his monastic life (December 1959) when he was seeking greater solitude, he wrote, speaking of Pieper's *Leisure the Basis of Culture*,

One thing is sure - we do not in this monastery have any faith in the basic value of *otium sanctum* [sacred leisure]. We believe only in the difficult and the unpleasant. That is why we, in practice, hate the contemplative life and destroy it with constant activity.³⁹⁷

As he matured into the monastic life Merton yearned for more of this sacred leisure. As a monk Merton struggled with the tensions between the active and the contemplative life and the link to his personal search for solitude. Merton's approach and understanding of sacred leisure or *otia monastica* was different to that of Leclercq. Although each had chosen to live a life guided by the *Rule of Benedict*, each emphasised the importance and experience of *otia monastica* in different ways. In short, Merton wanted to deepen his experience of sacred leisure whereas Leclercq wanted to write

³⁹⁶ A wide range of bibliographical resources including lists of published books, articles, reviews and images can be accessed at the Merton Center, Bellarmine University, USA at www.merton.org

³⁹⁷ Merton, *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life (1952-1960)*.p.356

about it. Leclercq was more interested in its literary sources and development. But Merton was glad to learn more about sacred leisure from Leclercq. In one of his letters to Leclercq Merton acknowledges the arrival of Leclercq's *Otia Monastica*,

Your *Otia* came yesterday and I began it immediately. It is just what I am looking for. A splendid book.³⁹⁸

His search for sacred leisure often manifested itself as seeking to move away from his abbey at Gethsemani and live the eremitical life, as a hermit. Within a few years of ordination Merton's letters reveal that he was seeking to be transferred to the Carthusians or the Camaldolese.³⁹⁹ Merton is a paradoxical figure. Although he is always hankering for solitude and the monastic cell, he is very gregarious and often welcomes incursions into his life from old friends and others such as writers and academics with common interests. His writing attracted a great deal of interest too. There were often requests for book reviews, interviews, retreats and talks.⁴⁰⁰

Amongst Merton's prodigious output is a translation of two letters by Guigo II (1083-1136) on *Solitude*.⁴⁰¹ Guigo entered the Carthusian monastery of *Grande Chartreuse*⁴⁰² in his early twenties and died there as its fifth successor to St. Bruno, founder of the Carthusian order. Guigo had compiled the order's constitution, or "customs," and is credited with several miscellaneous writings.

Of this particular treatise Thomas Merton wrote,

It is a masterpiece of its kind. ... It contains some of the classical tropes on the solitary life; the *otium negotiosum*, or the contemplative leisure which is more productive than any activity; the *militia Christi*, in which the monk, soldier of Christ, fights not against others but against his own passions, overcoming the world in himself, offering his bodily life in sacrifice to Christ. The hermit, sitting alone in silence and poverty, is the

³⁹⁸ Leclercq, and Merton.p. 89

³⁹⁹ Donald Grayston, *The Camaldoli Correspondence: Thomas Merton and the Noonday Demon* (Eugene, Oregon, USA: Cascade Books, 2015). Grayston makes reference to a number of letters that Merton wrote to secure his *transitus* (i.e. transfer his monastic stability to another monastery or religious order). See for instance p.115 letter to the superior of Camaldoli dated May 5, 1955. Merton even tried to enlist the support of Archbishop Montini, later to become Pope Paul VI (see pp.101-102) and Vernon Moore who had established a Carthusian foundation in Arlington, Vermont, USA (see p. 97)

⁴⁰⁰ Again there are extensive lists of the people who came to visit Merton at Gethsemani both before and after he moved to his hermitage compiled by Patricia A Burton on the Merton Center's website www.merton.org

⁴⁰¹ Thomas Merton, *Guigo II: Two Writings on Solitude: Praise of Life in Solitude & The Solitary Life*, trans. Thomas Merton (Louisville, Kentucky, USA: Thomas Merton Legacy Trust, 1955). P.1

⁴⁰² The *Grand Chartreuse*, situated in the craggy hill tops north of Grenoble, France, is the mother house of the Carthusian Order hence their name "Carthusians."

"true philosopher" because, as Guigo says in another place, he seeks "the truth in its nakedness, stripped and nailed to the Cross."

Quoting from the second letter, he highlights the juxtaposition of "idle" and "lazy." Unlike some of the earlier pejorative references to idleness in Chapter One of this thesis, here idleness, as opposed to laziness, is understood in a more positive way, in fact it is a synonym for "holy leisure."

The (Carthusian) life is continually idle yet never lazy. For it finds many things indeed to do, so that time is more often lacking to it than this or that occupation. It more often laments that its time has slipped away than that its business is tedious. What else? A happy subject, to advise leisure, but such an exhortation seeks out a mind that is its own master, concerned with its own business disdaining to be caught up in the affairs of others, or of society. Who so fights as a soldier of Christ in peace as to refuse double service as a soldier of God and a hireling of the world. Who knows for sure it cannot here be glad with this world and then, in the next, reign with God.⁴⁰³

Continuing with the theme of leisure, Merton, in one of his classes on the *Constitutions of the Cistercian Order* uses the *Apostolic Constitution* of Pius XII *Sponsa Christi*⁴⁰⁴ to reinforce and defend the importance and privilege of monastic leisure and the indispensable ambiance it provides,

A "contemplative monk" who misuses the leisure which the Church gives him for contemplation, and channels it to his own amusement and diversion, especially in constant visits, letter writing, and concern with secular affairs, to the point of his neglecting his *lectio* and the rest of the interior life – such a one is not fulfilling his obligations and has no right to his privileges.⁴⁰⁵

In his lectures on the monastic vows Merton draws on the writings of St Thomas Aquinas. Respect the mystery of your vocation urges Merton.

The contemplative life is much more of a mystery than the active life. It is more interior and more spiritual and therefore harder to see and understand. Hence there is great joy in the contemplative life, greater rest (*vacatione et quiete*), greater continuity, greater independence.⁴⁰⁶

Sometimes, however, the contemplative monk, for the sake of charity, or under obedience has to embrace the active life in order to serve God. But that does not give

⁴⁰³ Merton, *Guigo II: Two Writings on Solitude: Praise of Life in Solitude & The Solitary Life*. p. 3

⁴⁰⁴ Pope Pius XII, *Sponsa Christi* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1950).

⁴⁰⁵ Thomas Merton, *Charter, Customs and Constitutions of the Cistercians*, ed. Patrick F O'Connell (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications, 2015).p. 133

⁴⁰⁶ Merton, *The Life of the Vows*.p.127 Here Merton quotes from Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 182, a.1 "the contemplative life...consists in certain leisure and rest."

the contemplative the right to abandon prayer although he has to sacrifice certain helps, such as leisure, time, silence. In these circumstances, adds Merton, God will reward the sacrifice and make it good.⁴⁰⁷

Merton often highlights the human tendency for the monk to seek an easier life. Here he uses the term leisure in its pejorative sense.

While they seek to live at leisure and to subsist from the labour of others, they have lost the very name of monk. That is, of a solitary, and likewise the life.⁴⁰⁸

Then, referring to St Bernard's sermons *In Cantica*, Merton comments that it is only because St Bernard had withdrawn from public life back to the monastery that he had the time and "leisure" to write them. The biographer of St Bernard, Arnold (Ernaldus) of Bonneval says,

This man of God, finally able to enjoy some moments of leisure (*quietis tempus*), rested from his labours by giving himself to other occupations.⁴⁰⁹

Speaking again of St Bernard, Merton reminds his listeners that the way they read is important and that *Lectio Divina* implies a leisurely approach,

You cannot read St Bernard in the same way as you read a newspaper or the *Readers Digest*. *Lectio Divina* implies leisure, patience, not just seeking out the important passages where everything is concentrated but being able to follow the author through bypaths without the feeling that "one is getting nowhere."⁴¹⁰

In another lecture he reminds his monks that the purpose of our *Lectio Divina* is to provide us with contemplative leisure.⁴¹¹

The Martha and Mary story from the Gospel has often been used to epitomise the distinction and contrast between the contemplative and active life. "Mary has chosen the better part" replies Jesus to the animated Martha (Luke 10:42). Merton refers to this in one of his lectures. He reminds his class that St Bernard and the Cistercian Fathers taught that not only Martha and Mary, but Lazarus too, all lived together in the monastery. They are not enemies or rivals, in fact they are one family. The monastic

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.p. 145

⁴⁰⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Cistercian Fathers and their Monastic Theology*, ed. Patrick F O'Connell (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications, 2016). P. 192 note 716

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 256 note 905

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. p. 262

⁴¹¹ Thomas Merton, *Monastic Observances: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 5*, ed. Patrick F O'Connell (Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA: Cistercian Publications, 2010).p.153

family is composed of three types of monks: Lazarus is the penitent; Martha the active monk, the officer of the monastery, perhaps the cellarer or bursar, and Mary is the contemplative, left completely free for *otium contemplationis*. In fact, continues Merton, a monk will combine in his own life each of these three elements. All have to be penitents, all have some function or work in the monastery, no matter how small, and all have to be contemplatives. The ideal is that the monk should not be without any kind of task, because one must always be contributing to the common good, and in so doing gains much for oneself and attains a deeper peace and union with God. On the other hand, a preoccupation with active works will lead to a loss of vocation. St Bernard says that the *vita contemplativa* is always to be preferred.⁴¹² The *otium Mariae* is not to be looked upon as a loss of time or effort. Again, quoting one of St Bernard's canticles,

Repose is the work of wisdom, and the more restful the wisdom, the more is accomplished in its way.⁴¹³

Then Merton makes an interesting observation in relation to reading material for *Lectio Divina*. Many of the saints and Fathers of the Church (especially St Jerome) had trouble reading the scriptures which were not as attractive from a literary or human viewpoint, as the reading of secular or even classical literature such as Cicero. But, Merton warns, the message from God comes to us in a humble guise so that we will receive it with faith and humility.⁴¹⁴

And Merton gives his novices some practical advice if they find themselves with some spare time on their hands. Here, Merton is encouraging a "creative" sacred leisure. They might have some free time which they might be tempted to "idle away." Rather, he suggests, pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, read a few lines from a spiritual book such as the *Imitation of Christ*, say a few decades of the rosary, write necessary notes, etc. So, even in the leisure time, over which they have some control, there are beneficial activities in which a monk can engage.⁴¹⁵

Time is given us, says Merton, so that we may have the opportunity to amend our lives. This time we are given is a grace and gift from God which we should use with all care

⁴¹² Ibid.p. 150-151

⁴¹³ Ibid. p. 153

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. p. 172

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. p. 188

and reverence. Pray for the gift of time in the monastery so that we can mend our ways.⁴¹⁶

The “School of the Lord’s service” which Benedict intends to establish is not, he adds, a harsh regime, it is not austerity for its own sake. Although the monastic life demands discipline it is not meant to be so hard that it will break the spirit of good souls. It is not a fight for survival of the fittest. Quoting Abbot Delatte,

A schola is a place where there is leisure for thought, study and prayer. In the monastery it is not leisure for the sake of an easy life, but the way is cleared so that we can meditate day and night on the law of the Lord. This requires liberty, peace, interior quiet, indeed a certain happiness.⁴¹⁷

Although the RB prescribes sacred reading or *Lectio Divina*, little is said about its structure or spirituality. For this Merton turns his attention to Jean de Fécamp⁴¹⁸ with his emphasis on *Verbo Dei vacare* (to make room for the word of God) and *otium quietis* (the leisure of quiet).

Rest, respite from physical exertion, is also touched on in the context of work or manual labour. For instance, quoting from *Constitutions of the Cistercians* on the allocation of work, which was assigned for approximately five hours each day, monks were to be given a rest, which they must take in silence, sitting in a group. However, they are not allowed to read a book during this time.⁴¹⁹ Further on, speaking about life in the noviciate, the novices work, rest, read and sleep at the same time as the professed monks.⁴²⁰

Lecturing to the novices and juniors, this time about the Cistercian Fathers and their monastic theology, Merton refers to Abelard’s use of the term *vacare* and *quies*, found several times in the Desert Fathers. Merton understands *vacare* to mean making room for the word of God “to be free for God, to be occupied with God alone.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ Thomas Merton, *The Rule of St Benedict: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition (Vol 4)*, ed. Patrick F O’Connell, vol. 4, *Monastic Wisdom* (Kentucky, USA: Cistercian Publications and Liturgical Press, 2009). P. 68

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. p. 69

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. p.225 (Jean de Fécamp was a Benedictine monk born in Ravenna about 990)

⁴¹⁹ Merton, *Charter, Customs and Constitutions of the Cistercians*.p. 30

⁴²⁰ Ibid.p. 49 The use of the Latin word *schola* is interesting here. The Latin *schola* is derived from the Greek *skole* which means “leisure,” the inference being that education and leisure are synonymous especially if we understand education in its literal sense “to draw out.”

⁴²¹ Merton, *The Cistercian Fathers and their Monastic Theology*. p. 190 note 703

Fleeing the tumult of the age and a world full of temptations they carried the bed of their contemplation to the quiet of solitude, so that they could more sincerely devote themselves to God.⁴²²

In a similar vein Merton has the following to say about *quies* in one of his journals, another of the rare times he refers to Leclercq's *Otia Monastica*,

November 22, 1964. No matter how naive the medieval doctrine of *quies* may seem, it makes sense. It is part of a whole which we no longer have (Chartres!) but I am nevertheless not divorced from it. Realized it clearly singing with attention the Gregorian melodies of the Feast....Adam the Carthusian (Scotus) in a fine text on *quies claustralis* [quiet of the cloister] (published by Leclercq in *Otia Monastica*) sums it all up, simply and adequately, the need for *quies*, not bothering with concerns foreign to our life. I want to give up the retreats.⁴²³

As commented earlier, for Leclercq, the eremitical life was of interest more in an academic or scholarly way. It did not have the strong appeal that it did for Merton although he never discourages Merton in his search for greater solitude. Leclercq reminds Merton of RB 1 "The Four Kinds of Monks" and that the eremitical life has always been part of the Benedictine charism for those who are called to it.⁴²⁴ In 1955 Merton had written the Preface for the French version of Leclercq's study of the Camaldolese reformer Blessed Paul Giustiniani mentioned above, which he later translated into English. In the preface Merton remarks that the Camaldolese reform⁴²⁵ was much closer than the Carthusian reform to the ancient *laura* of the early Eastern monks.

In the introduction to *Survival or Prophecy* (the published letters between Merton and Leclercq) Archbishop Rembert Weakland O.S.B., who at the time of Merton's tragic death was Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation and chairing the conference in Bangkok where Merton died, goes on to remark that the essence of their project, without ignoring completely the reforms of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as those of

⁴²² Ibid. p.190 note 704

⁴²³ Merton, *Dancing in the Waters of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage (The Journals of Thomas Merton Vol. 5 1963-1965)*. P. 168

⁴²⁴ Leclercq, and Merton. p. 12 See also RB1 "The Four Kinds of Monks." RB 1 lists four kinds of monks, two good and two bad. The good monks are firstly those who live in community (coenobites) and secondly, hermits (anchorites). Then there are the two kinds of bad monk, firstly the sarabites "with characters as soft as lead" and fourthly the gyrovagues, the wandering monk drifting from monastery to monastery, always on the move.

⁴²⁵ Leclercq, *Alone with God*. The *Camaldolese* are a branch of the Benedictine order founded by St Romuald (c.950-1027) in the early 11th century. By applying the Rule of Benedict to the eremitical life it allows for hermitages or individual cells whilst still retaining the structure of a community.

Dom Columba Marmion (1958-1923), Dom Paul De Latte (1848-1937), Dom Ildefons Herwegen (1874-1946), Dom Odo Casel (1986-1948), Dom Anselm Stoltz (1900-1942) and Dom David Knowles (1896-1974),⁴²⁶ was to go back to basics and rediscover the treasures of early monastic rules and the Patristic period together with the writings of the Cistercian reformers especially St Bernard.

In the final part of his preface, Archbishop Weakland refers to the prophetic nature of Merton and Leclercq's writings,

Both authors, but especially Merton, saw their roles as prophetic witnesses. Perhaps the most attractive aspect of Merton's monastic renewal in the last half of the twentieth century was his interpretation of the *fuga mundi* (the flight from the world) not as a selfish and individualistic withdrawal from the trials and troubles of the world around him but as a "monastic distancing" of himself to bring about a positive change in contemporary society.⁴²⁷

Merton and Leclercq were separated by the Atlantic Ocean. As we have seen Leclercq was widely travelled.⁴²⁸ Merton, confined to his monastic enclosure, stayed put but received many visitors and letters. He often comments on the amount of time he has to spend replying. In spite of his stability to his cloister Merton had a far wider appeal than Leclercq. Many of Merton's writings were widely disseminated through the English-speaking world. Some of the more popular were translated into other languages. It is impossible to imagine what fruits further collaboration between the two monks might have produced if Merton had lived.

Of great relevance to this thesis are Merton's writings on contemplation, which he commenced soon after the success of this autobiography *Seven Storey Mountain*.

William H Shannon, one of the editors of the *Thomas Merton Encyclopaedia* makes the comment,

It is reasonably safe to say that there is no theme more prominent in Thomas Merton's writings, no subject he wrote more about and in more detail, than contemplation. He

⁴²⁶ Some of their important contributions in English to monastic studies are Dom Paul Delatte OSB, *The Rule of St Benedict: A Commentary* (London: Burns & Oates, 1921), Dom Columba Marmion OSB, *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* (London & Edinburgh: Sands, 1926), Ildefons Herwegen OSB, *St Benedict: A Character Study* (London: Sands & Co, 1924), Odo Casel OSB, *The Mystery of Christian Worship* (London: DLT, 1962), Anselm Stolz OSB, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (London: Herder, 1938), Knowles.

⁴²⁷ Leclercq, and Merton.p. xii

⁴²⁸ Although not set out chronologically Leclercq provides a comprehensive list of his travels in Leclercq, *Memoirs: From Grace to Grace*.

expressed his commitment always to remember contemplation in *The Tears of the Blind Lions* (a 1949 book of poems) wherein he prays, in an image borrowed from Psalm 137,

*May my bones burn and ravens eat my flesh,
If I forget thee contemplation!
May language perish from my tongue
If I do not remember thee, O Sion, city of vision. (Collected Poems 212)*⁴²⁹

Merton's first attempt on this topic of contemplation was a small pamphlet called *What is Contemplation?*⁴³⁰ Written in 1948, it was a response to a letter from a student at St Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana.⁴³¹ The following year it was followed by *Seeds of Contemplation*.⁴³² This was widely read and reviewed. It established Merton as someone who chose to write about contemplation in a way that was available to people who were not monks. Merton wanted to make his thoughts on contemplation accessible to a wide an audience as possible.

He had something to say to those people who perhaps had hardly heard of contemplation and who probably never thought of it as an option in their lives."⁴³³

But Merton had concerns about *Seeds of Contemplation* and over the two following decades tinkered with the text⁴³⁴ with a final revision published in 1961 called *New Seeds of Contemplation*.⁴³⁵ "It was to make contemplation an "in" subject for all who were willing to undergo the spiritual discipline it called for."⁴³⁶ By this time Merton's interest in Zen had started to influence his writing. This interest opened up new pathways to the spirituality of the East.⁴³⁷ A further work on contemplation *Climate of*

⁴²⁹ Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell. p. 79

⁴³⁰ Thomas Merton, *What is Contemplation?* (Springfield, Illinois, USA: Templegate, 1981).

⁴³¹ It was only 25 pages. However, it was published as a small book by Burns & Oates, London in 1950 and the following year by Templegate in the USA and again in different editions in 1960, 1978 and 1981. Source Books published it also in 1977.

⁴³² Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1949).

⁴³³ Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell. P. 80

⁴³⁴ Peter Tyler, quoting Donald Grayston, *Thomas Merton: The Development of a Spiritual Theologian* (New York, USA: Edward Mellen, 1985). states that there were five versions. See Peter Tyler, *Christian Mindfulness: Theology and Practice* (London: SCM, 2018).p.101

⁴³⁵ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York, USA: New Directions, 1961). After its publication Merton asked to have the word "New" removed in subsequent printings.

⁴³⁶ Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell. P. 80

⁴³⁷ This influence emerges very clearly in Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (London: SPCK, 2003). and *Thomas Merton, Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York, USA: New Directions, 1968). published just a couple of months before he died.

*Monastic Prayer*⁴³⁸ was published posthumously in 1969 and reprinted as *Contemplative Prayer* in 1973.⁴³⁹

For Merton contemplation was a paradox. In his earlier work on contemplation *Seeds of Contemplation* he writes that it is a gift, it is beyond our capabilities to receive yet it is what every living person is destined for. It utterly transcends everything, yet it is the only reason for our existence. He continues,

Contemplation, by which we know and love God as He is in Himself, apprehending Him in a deep and vital experience which is beyond the reach of any natural understanding is the reason for our creation by God.⁴⁴⁰

Here, Merton's definition of contemplation mirrors, in many ways, the traditional view that contemplation, or as it was sometimes called "union with God" or the "unitive way," is a grace, it is a gift from God. But later Merton believed that we are already in union with God. At a meeting that Merton held at Gethsemani for superiors of women contemplative communities, he was asked, "What is the best way to help people attain union with God?" He replied, "We must tell them that we are already united with God. Contemplative prayer is the coming into consciousness of what is already there. God is so close."⁴⁴¹ It is almost as if he Merton is saying that by virtue of our human existence, we all possess God within us. Although Merton does not make any direct reference, one might reflect here that Merton is echoing the *logos spermatikos* (in Latin *ratio seminalis*) that St Justin the Martyr (c.100-165) expounded in his *Second Apology*,

In every man there is a divine particle (or seed), his reason, which at least, before Christ's coming, was man's best guide in life.

Thus there is a moral reasoning at work within us, even before we have faith, or a belief in Christ and the teaching of his Gospel.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Thomas Merton, *Climate of Monastic Prayer* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1969).

⁴³⁹ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*.

⁴⁴⁰ Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*. 146

⁴⁴¹ In Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell. 81 The editors explain that this quote comes from one of the sisters present at the retreat given for contemplative nuns at Gethsemani in December 1967. However it is not contained in the published version of the retreats *Springs of Contemplation*.

⁴⁴² Here Justin Martyr is probably reinterpreting a pagan Stoic philosophical term but in a Christian Trinitarian context. One might draw a parallel of his use of the word "seed" (*spermatikos*) to the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:3-9. This seed is a grace which God sows in our hearts. Justin the Martyr, *The First and Second Apologies* (Ohio, USA: Beloved Publishing, 2005). *Second Apology*, Ch.8.p.68

So God is already there. He is within us. What Merton continually emphasises, especially in his later writings, is the importance of the awareness of God's presence in each and every human person. Or, what Merton described as, "coming into consciousness of what is already here."

It is interesting to draw a comparison between Merton's definition of contemplation and the Catechism of the Catholic Church which stresses that contemplative prayer is a gift.

Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God in our hearts. Contemplative prayer is a communion in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness"...Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus...contemplative prayer is hearing the word of God, contemplative prayer is prayer in silence.⁴⁴³

How do we reconcile the Church's definition of contemplative prayer with Merton's description that God is already within us? We are already, Merton says, in union with him. Perhaps the best way to understand this is to remind ourselves what he says about awareness. The awareness of God within us is a grace, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit attainable by all irrespective of their state in life.

In a circular letter written to his friends in 1963, Merton stated,

The contemplative life means the search for truth and for God. It means finding the true significance of my life and my right place in God's creation.⁴⁴⁴

In the above definition Merton had enlarged his vision of the contemplative life and the part that contemplation played in it. There were three elements: firstly the search for God, secondly coming to know oneself, and finally discovering one's right place in God's creation. What is my vocation in life on earth? Seeking God is one of the primary motives for any monk. Perhaps Merton was recalling his own vocation to join the Trappist community at the Abbey of Gethsemani?⁴⁴⁵ As he grew in the monastic life it became clearer that his vocation was not just "to be a monk." Through his writing and

⁴⁴³ Libreria Editrice Vaticana, ed., *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994). 577 §2709-2719

⁴⁴⁴ Thomas Merton, *The Road to Joy: Letters to New and Old Friends*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1989).

⁴⁴⁵ In RB 58:7 The Abbot is advised that "the concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials."

concerns for justice and peace he had an apostolate to reach out beyond the cloister walls to the world.

Many years later, in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, in his opening paragraph, Merton defines contemplation as,

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is a spiritual wonder. It is the spontaneous awe of the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being. It is a vivid realisation of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant source.⁴⁴⁶

It is as if he Merton wishes to emphasise again and again that we have this contemplative spark within us, but we have to grow in our awareness of it. It just needs to be fanned by the wings of the Holy Spirit.

Merton was not only familiar with the prayer of *Lectio Divina* but practised it himself every day. In addition, during his ten year appointment as novice master he would have taught this ancient form of prayer to new entrants and helped them with any problems or struggles they encountered practising it. As we have seen above Merton translated, although never published, the *Letters on Solitude* by the Carthusian Guigo II. But Merton was also familiar with another work of Guigo II called *The Ladder of Monks*.⁴⁴⁷ In this short treatise Guigo II sets out the four stages of *Lectio Divina*, reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*) and contemplation (*contemplatio*). Merton suggests that it is called “divine” (from the Latin *divina*), “because it calls to mind divine truths and prolongs itself by prayer to God.”⁴⁴⁸ This fourfold classification is important because it helps us comprehend how Merton understood the difference between meditation and contemplation. Again the importance of awareness is stressed. In the tradition of *Lectio Divina* meditation involved thinking, reflecting on scripture, and its relevance to one's present circumstances. But the real purpose of meditation, for Merton, was to help the person become aware of the presence of God and most of all bring the person to a state of almost “constant loving attention” and dependence on God.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*. 1

⁴⁴⁷ Guigo II. *The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Mediations*, (1979) Cistercian Pubs. Kalamazoo, USA.

⁴⁴⁸ Quoted from *Silence in Heaven* p.48 in Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell. p. 253.

⁴⁴⁹ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.217

Seldom did Merton understand meditation involving “busy discursive acts, complex logical reasoning, active imagining and deliberate stirring up of affections.” This approach (very much akin to the Ignatian tradition), was liable “to conflict with our silent and receptive attention to the inner workings of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵⁰ Rather, Merton understood meditation as the second rung of Guigo’s spiritual ladder referred to earlier. In *New Seeds of Contemplation* he explains,

Meditation is a twofold discipline that has a twofold function. First, it is supposed to give you sufficient control over your mind and memory and will to enable you to recollect yourself and withdraw from exterior things and the business and activities and thoughts and concerns of temporal existence and second - this is the real end of meditation - it teaches you how to become aware of the presence of God; and most of all it aims at bringing you to a state of almost constant loving attention to God, and dependence on Him.⁴⁵¹

And in the traditional understanding of *Lectio Divina* meditation leads to contemplation, but not automatically.

But when it gets beyond the level of your understanding and imagination, it is really bringing you close to God, for it introduces you into the darkness where you can no longer think of Him and are consequently forced to reach out for Him by blind faith, hope and love....Or perhaps, knowing by faith that He is present to you and realising the utter happiness of trying to think intelligibly about this immense reality and all that it can mean, you relax in a simple contemplative gaze that keeps your attention peacefully aware of Him hidden somewhere in this deep cloud into which you also feel yourself drawn to enter.⁴⁵²

William H Shannon makes a perceptive comment about Merton’s the use of term “meditation.” The *Climate of Prayer* or *Contemplative Prayer*, as it was later called, published after Merton’s death, often has the word “meditation” instead of “contemplation” because, at this time, in the mid 1960’s, when Merton was preparing this book, the term “meditation” was enjoying an increased popularity due to the influence of Eastern religions. Shannon says,

Merton wanted to make clear that meditation (or contemplation) was more than a psychological exercise aimed at bringing an element of quiet and peace into a person’s life, more than a way of relaxing from the cares and problems that life brings. Moreover, he wanted to say that it should not be seen as something new imported from

⁴⁵⁰ Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*.p.51

⁴⁵¹ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.217

⁴⁵² Ibid.p.219

the East. On the contrary, it is a practice deeply rooted in the earliest Christian tradition of prayer.⁴⁵³

A word that will come up in Part Three, Operant Theology is “Mindfulness.” A word or practice that is currently one of the new “buzz-words,” or as Peter Tyler, in his recent book calls it, “a mindfulness storm.”⁴⁵⁴ “Mindfulness” courses were initially developed in the late 1970’s at the University of Massachusetts by Jon Kabat-Zinn as a form of clinical and psychological therapy.⁴⁵⁵ These courses drew their inspiration from Zen Buddhist meditation practices especially those of the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hahn (b.1926), Philip Kapleau (1912-2004) and Seung Sahn (1927-2004). It was Merton’s association with Thich Nhat Hahn⁴⁵⁶ and another Zen Master, Daisetz Suzuki⁴⁵⁷ that nourished his interest in Zen mysticism. Much earlier (1959) Merton had written a book about the Desert Fathers⁴⁵⁸ and was struck by the fact that many of the “words” (i.e. stories) resembled those of the Japanese Zen Masters.

These and similar mindfulness programmes such as those offered by Kabat-Zinn only started to become accessible a decade after Merton’s death. As already mentioned, Merton’s interest in Eastern Religions such as Zen Buddhism and their meditation practices date from the early-1960’s. About the same time, interest in this topic was gathering momentum and attracting the attention of other Catholic authors such as

⁴⁵³ Shannon, Bochen, and O’Connell.p.291

⁴⁵⁴ Tyler.p.1

⁴⁵⁵ John Kabat-Zinn (b.1944) created the Stress Reduction Clinic and Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He was a student of Thich Nhat Hanh. By using mindfulness techniques Kabat-Zinn’s aim was to help people cope with stress, anxiety, pain and illness. See entry for Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wikipedia*, (accessed September 17, 2019).

⁴⁵⁶ In May 1966 Thich Nhat Hahn visited Merton at Gethsemani Abbey. Of the visit Merton wrote, “He is more my brother than many who are nearer to me by race and nationality, because he and I see things exactly the same way.... We are both monks, and we have lived the monastic life about the same number of years. We are both poets and existentialists. I have far more in common with Nhat Hahn than I do with many Americans.” (*Passion for Peace* p.260-262). Quoted in Shannon, Bochen, and O’Connell.p.127

⁴⁵⁷ D. Suzuki (1870-1966) introduced many English speaking people to the concept of Zen Buddhism though his three volume work and many other books and articles. He and Merton collaborated in a dialogue that appeared in *New Directions Annual* (Vol. 17, 1961) called “Wisdom in Emptiness.” This dialogue was published later in Merton’s *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968) mentioned below. On a rare excursion outside his monastery Merton visited Suzuki, then over 93 years of age, at Columbia University, New York, in June 1964. Merton remarked in his journal (*Water of Life* p.116) how important it had been for him to meet Suzuki face to face and experience the deep understanding that existed between them. “This extraordinary and simple man who I have been reading for about ten years with great attention.” Quoted in *ibid*.p.461.

⁴⁵⁸ Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York, USA: New Directions, 1960). The usual introduction to each story of the Desert Fathers and Mothers is the disciple asking “give me a word.” Hence, each story is often described as a “word” when in fact it could be several sentences.

William Johnson and Aelred Graham.⁴⁵⁹ Merton's *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*,⁴⁶⁰ published just before his death, represents Merton's assimilation of Zen into the Christian spiritual life. Although Merton does not appear to have used the term "mindfulness" a number of its characteristics are present in his writings. In a recent article by Rick Mathis, "Merton's Mindfulness"⁴⁶¹ the author draws the reader's attention to the fact that Merton uses a number of terms associated with the practice of "mindfulness" such as presence, detachment and silence. "But importantly, what separates Merton from many other writers on mindfulness," he adds, "is Merton's use of Christian ideas to inform his recommendations."⁴⁶² Mathis draws attention to the fact that during a retreat given to contemplative nuns at Gethsemani Abbey in December 1967 and May, 1968,⁴⁶³ Merton's use of the terms presence, detachment and silence has parallels with the teachings of two Zen authors, Thich Nhat Hahn⁴⁶⁴ (already referred to above) and Bhante Gunaratana.⁴⁶⁵ Quoting *Mindfulness in Plain English* by Bhante Gunaratana, Mathis writes,

Mindfulness is present-moment awareness. It takes place in the here and now. It is the observance of what is happening right now, in the present. It stays forever in the present, perpetually on the crest of the ongoing wave of passing time.⁴⁶⁶

Similarly, Thich Nhat Hahn, in *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, defines mindfulness as,

Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality...right now in one's daily life, not only during meditation sessions.⁴⁶⁷

Detachment also features in these retreat talks. Merton warns the contemplative nuns not to get too involved in such things as praise and work. Merton says,

You have to purify your intentions, you have to do it with a certain amount of detachment. Otherwise it is disastrous.⁴⁶⁸

And, referencing Suzuki,

⁴⁵⁹ William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Aelred Graham, *Zen Catholicism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963).

⁴⁶⁰ Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*.

⁴⁶¹ Rick Mathis, "Merton's Mindfulness," *The Merton Seasonal* 41.4, no. Winter (2016).

⁴⁶² *Ibid.* p.12

⁴⁶³ Thomas Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation*, ed. Jane Marie Richardson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992).

⁴⁶⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: the Classic Guide* (London: Rider, 2008).

⁴⁶⁵ Bhante Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in Plain English* (Somerville, MA, USA: Wisdom, 2011).

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p.134 in Mathis p.15

⁴⁶⁷ Hanh, pp.11-12 in Mathis p.15

⁴⁶⁸ Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation*. p.208 in Mathis p.15

We need to treat passing things as “non-definitive” they are provisional. Everything that happens to go by is all right, it’s real, but it is *provisional* reality. This is fundamental for the contemplative.⁴⁶⁹

Detachment also features in the teaching of Gunaratana,

We learn to view our own reactions to stimuli with calmness and clarity. We begin to see ourselves reacting without getting caught up in the reactions themselves.⁴⁷⁰

Similarly, Nhat Hahn recommends meditations and practices that are designed to bring about detachment, for instance, in their attitudes to coping with failure and success, in particular failures, where detachment allows us to be free and no longer assailed by them.⁴⁷¹

Merton’s final concern during his retreat talks to the contemplative nuns was a common one found elsewhere in his writings and daily concerns, and that was silence. Being silent was part of what it meant to be contemplative.

In the face of so much noise in our lives contemplatives need “to keep silence alive....because no one else is doing it.”⁴⁷²

And Gunaratana writes,

Meditation changes your character by a process of sensitisation, by making you deeply aware of your own thoughts, words and deeds. Your arrogance evaporates and your antagonism dries up. Your mind becomes still and calm. And your life smooths out. Thus, meditation properly performed, prepares you to meet the ups and downs of existence. It reduces your tension, fear and worry. Restlessness recedes and passion moderates. Things begin to fall into place, and your life becomes a glide instead of a struggle.⁴⁷³

Nhat Hahn places great emphasis on silence too, encouraging practitioners of meditation to preserve a spirit of silence throughout the day, not just at times of meditation.⁴⁷⁴

Awareness is connected to the idea of “presence.” It is gifted to everyone as a divine right. To quote Tyler,

For Merton contemplation - or to use the word of his French contemporary Simone Weil, “awareness” - was at the heart of the spiritual life. This was not just something for

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 261 in Mathis p.13

⁴⁷⁰ Gunaratana.p.30 in Mathis p.13

⁴⁷¹ Hanh.p.146 in Mathis p.13

⁴⁷² Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation*.p.6 in Mathis p.15

⁴⁷³ Gunaratana.p.10 in Mathis p.15

⁴⁷⁴ Hanh.p.45 in Mathis p.15-16

“religious professionals” but something that was gifted to all as their divine right...Prayer and contemplation are not, then, an “add-on” to life for Merton, they are at the heart of life.⁴⁷⁵

In Merton’s later writings on contemplation the word “awareness” appears frequently. It describes an experience or a state of heightened consciousness.

Merton uses various synonyms to explain it: awakening, attentiveness, alertness, realisation. To cultivate awareness requires a sense of inner unity. The noisiness, the flood of words which our culture inundates us, makes any kind of awareness, let alone awareness of God, difficult for us. So often, we are not fully present to what is right before us, and yet we are not entirely absent. “We must float along in the general noise. Resigned and indifferent, we share semi-consciously in the mindless mind of *musak* and radio commercials which pass for ‘reality’”⁴⁷⁶

For Merton, awareness was a state of mind, a disposition of the soul: “I am not aware of something,” rather “I am aware.” It eliminates division and facilitates unity,

For in the depths of contemplative prayer there seems to be no division between subject and object, and there is no reason to make any statement about God or about oneself. He IS and the reality absorbs everything else.⁴⁷⁷

Social justice also featured highly on Merton’s agenda, especially in the last ten years of his life. Merton wanted to get away from the idea that the monastic life, especially the contemplative life, the *fuga mundi*, was a flight from the concerns and distractions of the world. In fact, it was the opposite. He had had his famous epiphany on the corner of Fourth and Walnut while visiting the centre of the shopping district in nearby town of Louisville,

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all these people, that they were mine, and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers....the whole illusion of a separate holy existence is an illusion.⁴⁷⁸

Merton lived in politically turbulent times. The USA was actively engaged in the Vietnam War. Nuclear War and World War III were never far from the horizon. Closer to home were the civil unrest precipitated by racial discrimination, unemployment and poverty. The Catholic Church was adjusting to the reforms of the Second Vatican

⁴⁷⁵ Tyler.p.102

⁴⁷⁶ Quoted from Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (London: Sheldon Press, 1986).pp.40-41 in Shannon, Bochen and O’Connell p.19

⁴⁷⁷ Quotes from Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.267 in Shannon, Bochen and O’Connell p.19

⁴⁷⁸ Tyler.p.99 quoting *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, New York, Doubleday,1966) p.140

Council. In a small pamphlet, Kenneth Leech, describes Merton's legacy.⁴⁷⁹ Quoting the opening paragraph of an article by Clifford Stevens in the *American Benedictine Review* of March 1969, he writes,

The men of the 25th and 50th centuries, when they read the spiritual literature of the 20th century, will judge the age by Merton

He continues,

Jean Leclercq called Merton the man who Christianity needed in a time of transition,⁴⁸⁰ while David Tracy called him the most significant Christian figure in twentieth century America.⁴⁸¹

Leech reminds his readers that Thomas Merton and Karl Barth died on the same day. In some ways, he adds, they could not have been more different. But, in other ways, both had much in common.

Barth, Leech adds, had written of early monasticism as,

A highly responsible and effective protest and opposition to the world, and not least to a worldly church, a new and specific way of combatting it, and therefore a direct address to it.⁴⁸²

Both Barth and Merton were "theologians of resistance." While Merton played an important part in the peaceful resistance movement against the Vietnam War, racial injustice and the nuclear threat so too Barth had played an important role by speaking out against Hitler in the 1930's and 1940's.

Leech describes Merton as someone who helped to "nourish the ground for a tradition of Christian resistance to the principalities and powers, a tradition which is in much need of further nourishment today."⁴⁸³ Merton was a social critic rather than a social activist; his pen, and his typewriter, were the weapons of resistance. But this social criticism was not always apparent, especially in Merton's earlier years in the monastery. Leech comments,

⁴⁷⁹ Kenneth Leech, *Thomas Merton: Theologian of Resistance* (Croydon: The Jubilee Group, 1993).p.3

⁴⁸⁰ Cited in the preface to Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, *Gethsemani Studies in Psychological and Religious Anthropology* (Notre Dame, Indiana, USA: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

⁴⁸¹ Cited in Gerald Twomey, *Thomas Merton: Prophet in the Belly of a Paradox* (Paulist 1978) p.1

⁴⁸² Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4.2 p.13

⁴⁸³ Leech.p.4

The *Sign of Jonas* (1952) is widely seen as a major turning-point in his thinking about society, as is *Seeds of Destruction* (1964). From about 1958 onwards, according to F.J. Kelly, we can discern in Merton “a vastly expanded social consciousness.”⁴⁸⁴ The period from 1963 until his death in 1968 was the crucial period for the development of his social thought. By 1966, when *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* was published, the transition from the other worldly, pre-Second Vatican Council Merton to the post-Second Vatican Council social theologian was almost complete.

The year of Merton’s death, 1968, witnessed a myriad of events linked to social unrest. It was the year of the French student riots, Dr Martin Luther King’s murder and the year of uprisings in the Black ghettos of the USA. In the UK Enoch Powell made his famous “rivers of blood” speech. At the same time the interest in oriental spirituality and mysticism was growing, spurred onto some extent, by the Beatle’s famous pilgrimage to India.⁴⁸⁵ It was also the year in which the term “Liberation Theology” was coined by Gustavo Gutierrez, although it was some years before it became widely known. Merton was aware of many of these developments and his earlier contact with Dorothy Day (1897-1980),⁴⁸⁶ and the *Catholic Worker*, mentioned earlier, (which Leech describes as a “radical Catholic anarchist newspaper”) enabled Merton to not only be influenced by the movement’s call to action but to influence others also.⁴⁸⁷

Through his writings Merton was able to engage with a whole generation of key figures including his life-long friend Daniel Berrigan and his brother Philip. Merton stressed (long before Liberation Theology had come into vogue) that the relationship between spirituality, social change and social action was preceded by contemplation.

Theology does not exist merely to appease the already too untroubled conscience of the powerful and the established. A theology of love may also conceivably turn out to be a theology of revolution. “For the world to be changed, man himself must begin to change

⁴⁸⁴ F.J.Kelly, *Man before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility* (New York, Doubleday, 1974) p.xix

⁴⁸⁵ In February 1968 the Beatles rejected the prevalent drug culture and its associated life-style in favour of a spiritual exploration of Eastern spirituality. They travelled to Rishikesh in Northern India to take part in a Transcendental Meditation course at the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

⁴⁸⁶ Dorothy Day became a Catholic in 1927. She had a strong commitment to social justice and world peace. Although religiously conservative she had the ability to combine her progressive social views with the Gospel and the teaching of the Catholic Church. She was co-founder, with Peter Maurin, of the *Catholic Worker* movement. She and the *Catholic Worker* had a strong influence on Merton’s decision to become a Catholic. He wrote, “If there were no *Catholic Worker*, and such forms of witness, I would never have joined the Catholic Church.” (*Hidden Ground of Love* p.151)

⁴⁸⁷ Leech.p.5

it, and he must take the initiative. He must step forth to make a new kind of history. The change begins within himself.”⁴⁸⁸

SUMMARY

This chapter on Thomas Merton has covered a wide number of areas related not only to *otia monastica*, or what Merton refers to more frequently as “sacred leisure” but also contemplation. Through his extensive reading, writing, teaching and life experience, Merton was able to rediscover the treasures of the early monastic and Patristic period mediated through the tradition of the Cistercian reformers, especially St Bernard and later writers, including, as we have seen above, those of Josef Pieper and Jean Leclercq. These treasures he opened up, not only in the classes and talks to his novices, junior monks and guests, but also to a world-wide audience far beyond the cloister wall.

Although Merton never penned a treatise or exposition on *otia monastica* in the same way that Leclercq did, his writings make many references, both implicit and explicit, to those elements which Leclercq identifies as forming the foundation for *otia monastica*. These elements, solitude, silence, *otia*, *quies* and *vacatio*, all appear at different times and places. Sacred leisure was an integral part of what it meant to be a monk. Without it, monastic life did not make sense. But the monastic cell was too a spiritual battle ground. Yet, this was the milieu in which the individual monk, the soldier of Christ, fought against his demons and flourished and deepened his relationship with God. Perhaps, because he took sacred leisure so much for granted, Merton does not refer to it as much as one might expect. But, as Merton soon discovered from personal experience, maintaining the equilibrium between sacred leisure and the other demands of monastic life was not easy. His disquiet and unrest about these tensions soon manifested themselves in a desire to move away from Gethsemani in order to embrace a stricter form of monasticism, such as that provided by the Camaldolese or Carthusians. These, in his view, would offer a more positive experience of sacred leisure. Fortunately Merton’s superiors were prudent and perceptive enough to recognise this hankering for greater solitude and granted permission for Merton to live in a hermitage in the grounds of his monastery rather than leave.

⁴⁸⁸Thomas Merton, *Disputed Questions* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1960).p.65 in Leech p.7

Drawing on the writings of Guigo II, Merton is able also to enhance our understanding between idleness and laziness. In likening sacred leisure to idleness he alludes to the authentic monastic life as one that is continually idle but never lazy. The idleness of sacred leisure should include long periods of silence, contemplative prayer, sacred reading, quiet and stillness. But, there are opportunities also to be creative with this idleness especially when nothing is prescribed for that particular moment of the day. So, for instance, Merton encourages those monks in formation to seize free time for activities that will continue to strengthen their relationship with God; perhaps a visit to the chapel to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or say a rosary, or write up notes. *Lectio Divina* or sacred reading Merton describes as akin to contemplative leisure and certainly a key component of it. Merton uses the fourfold distinction found in Guigo II to differentiate between the progressive stages of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio*. This time, referring to Jean de Fécamp, he emphasises the importance of “making room for the word of God” (*Verbo Dei vacare*.) Merton is quite clear of the difference between meditation and contemplation although in his later writings his use of the two terms is more fluid.

Neither is the monk free from the obligation to contribute to the necessary practical and economic activities of the monastery. Characterised by the examples of Mary, Martha and Lazarus there is a threefold aspect to daily living, although the contemplative leisure of Mary is always to be preferred. One final point that Merton makes about sacred leisure is that in a world preoccupied with work and economic activity the monk enjoys a privileged position which is not to be squandered, especially if it is to the detriment of the interior life.

Merton’s writings about contemplation are some of the most important. These undoubtedly form an essential part of his legacy as a writer on the spiritual life. Composed over a number of years they developed into an exposition of contemplation backed up by his personal experience. Merton’s ideas and practice of contemplation changed and matured especially through his reading about Zen and other Eastern religions in his later years. In his earlier writings Merton adopted a more traditional understanding of contemplation, namely that contemplation was a grace, a gift from God. Towards his final years, in light of his reading about Zen and contact with Zen masters, he modified this, drawing attention to the importance of “awareness.” In doing

this Merton was in many ways ahead of his time and was pre-empting our current preoccupation with mindfulness. Merton recognised the importance of the presence of God in our lives. Contemplation was not so much achieving union with God but recognising that we are already in union with Him; we just need to develop our awareness of this through silence and deep listening.

The contemplative life meant not only searching for God but also the truth. It meant finding the true significance of one's life and the right place in God's creation. Perhaps Merton had been prompted to write these words as a result of his crisis of vocation. Should he remain at Gethsemani or seek a stricter, secluded form of monastic life? It is perhaps well worth reminding ourselves of Merton's opening paragraph in *New Seeds of Contemplation*,

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive...it is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being.⁴⁸⁹

A third important strand to his writings is that of social justice. In his formative years as a Catholic in New York, before joining Gethsemani, Merton had contact with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement. This pivotal influence initiated a life-long concern for social issues both domestically and internationally. Although confined to the monastic enclosure, Merton's letters, entries in his journals and the many meetings he had, witness his deep concern for promoting social justice. The revelation on "Fourth and Walnut" in downtown Louisville confirmed this and made him recognise that all those people and the world beyond the cloister were the focus of his love..

There was a prophetic dimension to Merton's writing. Contemplation had to lead to action. The values of the Gospel and Christ's concern for the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed, the hungry and the abused flowed naturally from the contemplative life. Being a monk was in itself a form of protest, the monk was a type of "metaphysical misfit" who through his witness to the Kingdom of God turned the values of the world upside down. Yet, as in so many aspects of Merton's life, there is a paradox. Just four years before his death, speaking about the quiet of the cloister, he comments that the need for peace, not bothering with the concerns of the world, was foreign to monastic life. Perhaps here Merton was referring to the mundane rather than the important issues

⁴⁸⁹ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.1

raised by social justice? Being a monk and living an enclosed life separate from the world did not exonerate him from the responsibility of caring about social justice; the Vietnam War, racial discrimination and segregation, the proliferation of nuclear arms, were all legitimate concerns.

PART THREE

THE OPERANT THEOLOGY OF LEISURE

In the introduction to this thesis I outlined the approach I wished to take in exploring the way in which a renewed understanding of sacred or holy leisure including *otia monastica* might inform our theological understanding of work and leisure in the 21st century. The need for this exploration stemmed from my personal experience and pastoral work delivering a series of retreat workshops, firstly, on the Spirituality of Work and then on the Spirituality of Leisure, over a period of ten years (1998-2008). Before then, immediately after leaving school in 1961 I had worked in the Hotel and Leisure Industry for twenty years and had gained a radically different perspective on leisure. I was in a unique position to examine the role of leisure in modern society.

One could see from the way that participants engaged with these topics, especially those around work-life balance, burnout, fractured relationships, challenging ethical situations, and their use of free time and leisure for relaxation and prayer, that there was a pastoral need to address these issues. Much had been written about the Spirituality or Theology of Work, but little about the Spirituality or Theology of Leisure. Many of the conversations shared in group facilitation confirmed that the way that people used their leisure time, especially having some form of contemplative practice could help with the difficulties people faced, not only at work, but back home with their families and in other social settings.

As already explained in the introduction, to do this, I have adopted a fourfold framework based on one developed and used in *Talking about God in Practice*.⁴⁹⁰ This dynamic framework has four voices, each influencing one another. Part One and Two of this thesis, as well as being the literature review, represent the Normative and Formal Voices of Theology. In Part One, Chapter One, I examined some of the literature relating to *otia monastica*, or as it is referred to in some literature, especially outside the monastic context, *Holy Leisure* or *Sacred Leisure*. This Normative Theology, surveyed firstly the biblical sources of leisure and following from that the Early Christian writers

⁴⁹⁰ Cameron et al.

of the Patristic period including the monastic rules. Also important were the influence of the Classical Greek and Latin writers on forming ideas about leisure in the early Church. Chapter Two jumped ahead to the end of the nineteenth century and surveyed the Roman Catholic Church's social teaching on leisure since the publication of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. In this chapter we saw the way in which the Catholic Church's teaching had to adapt to an increase in leisure activities and free time and at the same time try to defend the sanctity of the Sabbath including the importance of the Eucharist. Greater personal freedom has necessitated the Church to encourage the faithful to assume greater personal responsibility in order to regain the indispensable sacred space, both physical and spiritual, so necessary to deepen a person's relationship with God.

Chapters Three, Four and Five of Part Two, the Formal Voice of Theology, have presented a contemporary viewpoint of leisure. Each of the three authors, Josef Pieper, Jean Leclercq and Thomas Merton, while relying on the same sources as Normative Theology, namely Holy Scripture, Patristics and the Church's Magisterium, have deepened and extended our understanding of Sacred or Holy Leisure. Drawing on Scholastic and Neo-Scholastic sources Pieper has presented us with a perceptive and lucid commentary on sacred leisure in the twentieth century. Leclercq and Merton have given us two different monastic interpretations of monastic leisure or *otia monastica*. Leclercq's exposition of leisure has relied on a close and painstaking analysis of the Greek and Latin Classical sources, Biblical and Patristic literature, mediated through the lens of the later reformers such as St Bernard, St Bruno, Guigo II and others. In contrast, Merton's commentary on *otia monastica*, or sacred leisure as he preferred to call it, has been far more personal. As a monk, he has spoken about his experience of *otia monastica* and sometimes, the lack of it in a very personal way. His perceived absence of *otia monastica* or sacred leisure almost drove him away from his monastery to seek greater solitude and silence.

Now, at our half way point, the challenge is to elaborate a theology of leisure and work for the twenty-first century. This I am attempting to do using the remaining two voices of theology, the Operant and the Espoused. First the Operant: how do we get a sense of what Holy or Sacred Leisure looks like in the workplace of today? To do this I have

interviewed twenty-two people who hold leadership positions in a number of organisations spread through a variety of sectors. The structure of these interviews have been described in detail in sections (iii) and (iv) of the Introduction on methodology and the research project. Using these twenty-two one hour interviews I have done a thematic analysis of the participants' reflections and responses. In doing this I have tried to let their voices speak with very little intervention or commentary from me. The themes that emerged fell into three main groups. Firstly, how do they understand contemplative leisure? Secondly what works best for them: in other words the "when" and "how" of contemplative leisure? And thirdly, what are the benefits to them of a contemplative practice?

From this Operant Theology we will move to the final voice, that of Espoused Theology. As the word "espoused" implies, the goal is to try to articulate what a Theology of Leisure *should* rather than *does* look like. It is important to remember also that this is a dynamic framework, each of the four voices has an influence on one another. The Espoused Theology is as close as we can get to what might conventionally be called a synthesis. But, it is a dynamic synthesis, one which has to be sensitive to the pastoral needs of not only today but the future as we move to a "post Covid-19 world." Although it is too early to say in what way, or by how much, the world of leisure is going to be changed.

Finally, the interviews opened up many issues that there has not been the space or time to cover in this thesis. In my conclusions I will make mention of some of the more important ones highlighting possible areas of future research.

For the benefit of the reader I have repeated in the Espoused Theology (Part Four) a number of quotations found here in the Operant Theology (Part Three) on the basis that it is easier to have the relevant text in view rather than have to continually refer back.

CHAPTER SIX

MEETING THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. INTRODUCTION

As described above *Operant Theology* is the third element in this examination of the Theology of Leisure. In their book *Talking about God* Cameron et al describe the roles of the “outsider” and “insider.” In this project the outsider, the person looking in, is the researcher, namely the writer of this thesis. I decided that the best way to enlist the insiders or participants was to send a general invitation to all those people who had participated in my workshops on the Spirituality of Work and the later ones on Leisure. This selection was based on “purposive sampling” described in the introduction to this thesis. The group was drawn from what might be called the “professional classes” and held some form of leadership role. Apart from one it was ethnically white. The most important criterion was that they should have some form of contemplative or meditative practice, no matter how informal or irregular it might be. The second criterion was that they should be a member of a Christian Church or community but, as it transpired, one was Jewish. Twenty-two people expressed an interest in being interviewed. The letter of invitation stressed the confidential nature of the interviews. If quoted, the identity of each participant would be protected by using a pseudonym.

But, firstly, the research project had to gain the approval of St Mary’s University Ethics Sub-Committee. This proposal submitted on 23 January 2015 is set out in Appendix A. Once approval had been granted (30 April 2015) I had to enlist the support and cooperation of the insiders, namely the group of people who were prepared to be interviewed for a sixty minute period on the topics outlined in the Letter of Invitation (dated 1 May 2015 onwards) set out in Appendix B.

Those who chose to participate confirmed their willingness by signing a consent form as set out in Appendix C. They were interviewed individually for a period of 60 minutes over a 12 month period. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by me. I thought that it was important that I did this time-consuming task myself because it enabled me to reflect and evaluate as the different themes emerged. At the same time I was building up a pattern of key words. The transcripts and consent forms are held by

the researcher. The original intention, after the initial interviews had been transcribed and analysed, was to conduct a second cycle of enquiry by trying to bring all or some of the group together for a focus session. However, given their disparate locations (London, Berlin, the Midlands, North of England, South East England) and their busy professional lives, this has not been possible. However, it is my intention, at a later date, after this thesis is completed, to try and bring together, if not all, then some of the participants in order to conduct a second cycle of enquiry. Except in a couple of cases the participants were not “theologically literate.” In spite of their lack of theological terminology participants were articulate, frank, reflective and thoughtful.

In order to facilitate this thematic analysis I have used a software package called MAXQDA designed for qualitative research. By coding key words and phrases it is possible to create a consistent and objective analysis of the key themes which will constitute the main elements of the operant theology of leisure. In addition to this introduction, the operant theology provided by this insider group consists of three further chapters. It will give a theological insight as to how we might understand the contemplative dimension of leisure and the ways in which their experience is related to the Normative and Formal theologies set out in earlier chapters.

2. INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research participants are introduced in the same order as they were interviewed. Their contributions and understanding of the different themes made in the Operant and Espoused Theologies also follow the same order.

1. William is a Canadian, 39 years old, who was raised in the Toronto area. He is married with one child and was brought up in the Dutch Christian Church tradition. He is now a practising member of the Church of England. He currently lives in South East England. He studied international project management at university after which he worked with different international agencies in countries such as Sudan, Indonesia and Africa. Most of his work is in humanitarian aid and disaster management. About 50% of his time is spent working with NGOs, especially their local offices, helping them develop the capacity to respond to disasters locally. The other 50% of the time is again spent with NGOs but looking at command formation and management, technology. From a young age the whole concept of giving back and working for the community had always been part of his upbringing and vocation in life.

2. John is in his early 60's. He is recently retired from the post of Company Secretary and Legal Counsel for a large automotive company in the Midlands. He trained as a solicitor. His parents were Irish and he was brought up in Liverpool. He is married with three grown up children. His outlook on life has been shaped by his Roman Catholic faith and his decision to take early retirement was prompted by a number of retreat workshops he attended on the spirituality of work and leisure. He is now involved in voluntary work including the mentoring of teenagers and prison visiting.
3. Evelyn is 54 years old, divorced with two grown up sons in their 30's. She was brought up in Brentford, Middlesex and attended a private school financed by her mother who divorced while Evelyn was young. Both her parents were Irish. She is the youngest of five children. Brought up as Roman Catholic she no longer attends church. Evelyn has had several senior positions in healthcare and currently holds a lead position in Urgent Care Commissioning. She initially trained as a nurse and subsequently acquired further qualifications in mental nursing, psychotherapy and psycho synthesis.
4. Emily is in her late forties and married to James, a lawyer (see below). They have no children. Emily is a psychoanalyst, a Jungian analytical psychologist and also offers sensory motor psychotherapy. She and her husband both live and work in central London. They are active members of a local Catholic Church and its community. After her first degree, and before training as a psychotherapist, Emily studied Pastoral Theology and worked for a number of years as a parish pastoral co-ordinator.
5. Zoe is in her sixties. She and her partner Joseph (see below) have children from previous relationships. They run a small business consultancy based in the south of England with the focus on individual coaching, developing leadership and team skills. They have clients in the UK, Europe and Australia. Both Zoe and her partner regularly practice meditation and belong to their local Quaker community.
6. Becky is semi-retired but works part-time as an executive coach. She has a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Sheffield. Previously she worked for an international executive coaching consultancy based in London and before that was a senior executive with a multinational chemical engineering company where she headed up a number of large projects in the UK and abroad. She is a trustee of several Catholic charities and works a great deal in the voluntary sector 'pro bono.'
7. Max is 43 years old and married. He was born in (East) Berlin and is a German national. When he was young, living in East Berlin, which was then communist controlled, his parents had no strong commitment to Christianity which (he says) they now regret. Max did a carpentry apprenticeship followed by a four year German diploma in social science and community work. While doing his diploma he was influenced by one of his tutors who was a Catholic priest. In 2010 he did a Master's degree at Queen Mary's University, London in political

geography and globalisation development. He moved permanently to the UK 18 months ago. He “found his faith” last year and is looking for a church community to belong to. Latterly he has an affiliation to the German Lutheran Church but is not part of any parish. He also has an affinity to the Quaker approach. Since March 2015 Max has worked for a London base NGO as head of its education department for England South.

8. Caroline is 43 years old, single and a member of the Lutheran Church. She is currently a senior executive in the HR department of a large European multinational automotive manufacturer. She too is a German national and has worked for them for 18 years. Although based in Munich she is currently on a two year secondment to the UK. She studied business at the University of Gottingen and Berkeley, California, USA. Her current HR project focuses on talent management and she spends a lot of her time visiting her companies offices in Europe and further afield.
9. Lilly is married with grown-up children. For a number of years she had a role with a government department training senior civil servants. She resigned from that and after a period of unemployment worked for the Church of England in an HR capacity. Several years ago she underwent a “second conversion”, was confirmed and returned to regular attendance at her local Anglican church. She is currently out of work and may not return to full-time employment due to ill-health.
10. Harry aged 65, is semi-retired and actively engaged in voluntary work. After leaving school he worked in the petroleum industry, mainly in Portugal. After that he spent nearly 20 years in a senior post with a national food retailer but was made redundant. Since then he has occupied himself in a number of voluntary roles as a governor of both a primary and a secondary school. In addition he was Chair of Governors at his secondary school for ten years. He is a trustee of a number of other charities including one that supports the children of AIDS victims in South Africa.
11. Alex is in his early fifties and married with four (teenage) children. They all live on a country farm, situated in the centre of a small village, 30 km west of Berlin, in what was formerly East Germany. Alex is the chief executive of a charitable foundation sponsored by a large German multinational car manufacturer. The foundation’s primary focus is funding social entrepreneurs especially those operating in the third world. He studied theology at the University of Munich. Up until a few years ago he was actively involved in his local Catholic community but a change of pastor brought him and his family into conflict so they no longer attend.
12. Esme lives in Bristol but was born and brought up in South Wales. She is 67 and with her husband attends the local Anglican Church. She currently works as a career coach. She attended the University of Aberystwyth where she studied French and Italian and there met her husband. On graduation she worked in a London bank for two years and then worked as a modern languages teacher in

Bristol. Until becoming a coach she worked in different aspects of the education sector ending up in FE as a careers advisor.

13. Sarah is in her late 20's and originally from the Philippines where she was educated by the Jesuits from elementary school right through to university. She is a practicing Roman Catholic. She came to the UK into 2009 to do a postgraduate degree in international development at the University of Birmingham but returned to the Philippines where she had already started a business. She returned to the UK in 2013 accompanying her husband who was undertaking an MBA program. She is currently involved in a social entrepreneur programme based in London.
14. Jack is 69 years old and married with two teenage children. He joined the British army at the age of 21 serving in many parts of the world including Northern Ireland during the "Troubles." Since taking early retirement from the army he has worked in the security industry as a senior manager in Southern England. Ever since childhood he has been an avid reader especially of history and biography. After frequent visits to a local Catholic retreat centre he was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 2002. He is active in his local Catholic parish.
15. George is 42 years old and single. He was raised a RC but now attends an Anglican Church. His first degree was in engineering. After an initial period working in industry he took a year off to do an MBA after which he worked for one of the large management consultant companies based in London travelling both within and outside the UK. For the last few years, after returning from a 12 month sabbatical (where he worked for a Christian holiday company), he has been a self-employed management consultant currently working on large engineering projects as a consultant programme manager.
16. Cathy is 32 and is from Co. Cork, Ireland although much of her adult life has been spent training and working in London. She comes from a family that has a long association with the medical and caring professions. She has a doctorate in clinical psychology and works for the NHS currently seconded to a local social services unit. Although brought up a Roman Catholic she is no longer a practising member. Cathy uses mindfulness techniques both personally and professionally especially CMBT.
17. Joseph is in his early 60's and is the partner of Zoe. They jointly run a small consultancy focusing on coaching, leadership and teamwork. Like Zoe he attends the local Friends Meeting house (Quaker) and finds their silent discernment process conducive to his spiritual needs.
18. Shane is 34 and is single. He works for a medium sized NGO that was founded and financially supported by a multinational German luxury car manufacturer. He is Canadian from the Toronto area and received most of his education, including an undergraduate degree and an MBA, at universities in Canada and France. Before joining his present organization in February 2014 he was a social entrepreneur and had extensive experience of incubating and financing start-ups

focusing mainly on environmentally low-cost energy production. Using that experience he currently manages the foundations investments and vets social entrepreneur projects that are seeking funding from the foundation.

19. Charles is single and in his late 50's. He took redundancy from a multinational automotive manufacturer for whom he had worked as a project engineer all his life. He has a long list of academic qualifications, mostly gained on a part-time basis, that include an undergraduate and master's degree in engineering, an MBA, a masters in spirituality and a PhD in the Sociology of Religion in which he focused on the spirituality of work and its relevance to the company in which he was then employed. He is a committed Catholic and has a daily spiritual routine which includes meditation, the divine office and, since retirement, daily Mass. He is a great devotee of Carmelite spirituality. Part of his spiritual search has taken him to India and Sri Lanka. After redundancy he spent a year living as a hermit in the Syrian desert. His elderly mother lives close to his home in Essex and he is her primary carer.
20. James is in his 40's and a senior partner in a law firm located in the City of London. He is married to Emily (see above). Although not a Roman Catholic he accompanies his wife to Mass every Sunday. His father is an Anglican priest. He expressed an interest in being interviewed after speaking about it with his wife.
21. Josh is 45 years old and is married with two young children. He lives in Bristol. He has two main professional roles. The first as a city councillor for the Green party. He is also a facilitator educator around ethical and sustainable business teaching in a number of university business schools. He is a Londoner and brought up in a liberal Jewish family although now he identifies himself as a Buddhist. He is a regular practitioner of meditation and is associated with a number of Buddhist retreat centres in the West of England where he both teaches and participates.
22. Edward is in his 30's and is recently married. He and his wife live in South London. Having completed his secondary education in Zurich, where his father was a university professor, Edward graduated from Cambridge University in Natural Sciences. He comes from a strong Methodist background. After university he went to work for an international management consultants for five years. About five years ago he founded a company to assist young social entrepreneurs harness business to bring about good and social change rather than solely profit.

Note: The gender balance was 60% male to 40% female. In terms of religious affiliation 10 were Roman Catholic (45%); 6 Anglican (27%); 2 Lutheran (9%); 1 Methodist (5%); 2 Quaker (9%) and 1 Jewish (5%). Ages ranged from 30 to 60+; 6 were 30-39 (27%); 6 were 40-49 (27%); 3 were 50-59 (14%) and the remaining 7 were 60+ (32%). 12 of the 22 had attended one or several of retreat workshops on either the Spirituality of Work, and/or the Spirituality of Leisure, described in the opening chapter of this thesis.

3. THE INTERVIEW

The semi-structured sixty minute interview was divided into three areas:

1. The first part of the interview focused on how the participant understood the term leisure? This introductory question was used so as to provide an opportunity to say something about themselves, their religious practice and the kind of work they did.
2. The second part focused on the different kinds of leisure activity (as they understood it) engaged in. A summary of these is attached in the Appendix E
3. The third part was structured around three groups of words (see below) which the participant was asked to reflect and comment on. Except for three participants, whose first language was not English, these three word groups were introduced at the time of the interview. Three participants, who were not native English speakers, received advance notification of these words, usually seven days, in case they needed to clarify the meaning in their native language before the interview in English. Hopefully this would enable them to grasp the nuances associated with the different words.

The primary objective of the interview was to determine to what degree they were familiar with these terms, how they understood them and the practical impact on their lives especially their contemplative practice.

Group One:

- Contemplation
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Well-being
- Happiness

Group Two:

- Quiet
- Peace
- Silence
- Rest
- Sabbath
- Vacation

Group Three:

- Discernment
- Prudence
- Wisdom
- Courage
- Reflection
- Intuition

With a couple of exceptions (mindfulness and well-being), the first group of words contemplation, meditation, happiness drew their inspiration from the Formal Theology of Leisure, especially the insights provided by Josef Pieper, Thomas Merton and Jean Leclercq which have been examined above in Chapters Three, Four and Five. From the general literature surrounding work-life balance I was aware of the growing importance of the practice of mindfulness and the promotion of well-being in the work place. Therefore, I thought it appropriate to group these two words with contemplation and meditation.⁴⁹¹ Happiness was another word that had frequently cropped up especially in the context of life goals or aspirations. I was particularly interested to hear to what extent happiness was an economic or social goal as opposed to a spiritual one as described by Pieper above.

The second group of words were drawn from the literature survey on the Normative Theology of Leisure also described above with a particular reliance on the work of Jean Leclercq. These words were quiet, peace, silence, rest, sabbath and vacation. I chose to adapt the Latin definition *vacare* used by Leclercq, to vacation because I thought it would be understood more easily, although it has a different meaning.

The third group of words were derived from topics and questions that had arisen from a series of residential retreat workshops held between 1998 and 2008. The focus of these

⁴⁹¹Although Merton never explicitly uses the term mindfulness or well-being, Merton's comments on awareness described in Chapter 5 is one of the a key components of mindfulness. Asking about mindfulness would hopefully elicit some valuable responses.

retreat workshops were promoted under the general heading of a “Spirituality of Work” or the “Spirituality of Leisure.”⁴⁹²

Unlike a traditional “preached” or “silent” retreat these residential weekends, in a monastic setting (Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime), were participative using a process called “appreciative enquiry”⁴⁹³ mentioned earlier. The traditional approach in organisations is to identify problems and fix them. Often, by paying attention to the problems, they are emphasised and amplified to the detriment of other issues. Frequently, as one problem is solved another emerges to replace it. Appreciative enquiry adopts a different approach in that it seeks to identify what works rather than does not work for an individual or organisation. The result of this process is a series of statements or words that describes where the individual or organisation wants to be based on their “high moments.” Because the statements are grounded in real experience those concerned know how to repeat their earlier success. Consequently this process is not problem-solving or a forum for debate; rather, it is collaborative and participative.

Half of the participants interviewed had attended one or more of these residential weekend retreat workshops. Each workshop consisted of five ninety minute sessions interspersed with time for meals, social interaction and participation in the community prayer and Eucharist. Within each ninety minute session thirty minutes was allocated to working on a particular topic in small groups of four to five people, for instance, drawing on the Rule of St Benedict, what were the spiritual qualities of a leader? This kind of group work generated the third group of words clustering around the spiritual qualities of a leader: discernment, prudence, wisdom, courage, reflection and intuition.

As interviewer/facilitator I tried to speak as little as possible and intervened only to ask questions such as those below, seek clarification or develop responses that seemed to be relevant to the topic at hand. I was particularly interested to hear to what extent their

⁴⁹² These weekend retreat workshops on the “Spirituality of Work” were spaced at two-monthly intervals (i.e. six per year). Each of the six focussed on a different topic. These topics were, 1. Defining work and spirituality: the relationship between the two; 2. The tools of good work: the spiritual qualities of the leader; 3. The Ethical Dimension of Work and Decision making; 4. The impact of the spiritual dimension on relationships inside and outside of work; 5. Coping with success and failure; 6. A Spiritual Toolbox for leadership. Some participants attended all six weekends, others just one or more. The retreat workshops on the Spirituality of Leisure covered topics such as 1. the meaning and purpose of leisure. 2. The meaning and use of time. 3. Solitude & silence; leisure, wealth. 4. What is success? 5. Contemplation and wisdom.

⁴⁹³ For a fuller account of this process see Hammond.

contemplative practice differed from more traditional approaches and how they had been adapted to the modern workplace.

- How were these words understood?
- How significant are they in your life?
- What impact (positive or negative) did they have on the participant's leadership style?
- Do they affect the way you understand and cope with success and failure?
- Do they affect the way you make decisions and exercise your responsibilities?
- What impact do they have on the ethical and moral dimension of those decisions?
- What effect do they have on significant relationships inside and outside the workplace, especially the family.

A final consideration was whether or not having a contemplative practice had an impact on the Common Good as understood in Catholic Social Teaching.⁴⁹⁴

The final thing to emphasise is that the following contributions from those who were interviewed reflect a varying level of understanding and experience of the three groups of words described above. Again it is important to reiterate that only a couple of them had a formal theological training.

In reporting these interviews, I have identified each participant, quoting directly from the transcript of the recordings. In other places, for the sake of brevity or duplication, I have paraphrased what they said.

⁴⁹⁴ Vaticana. pp. 418-419 §1905-1912. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. pp. 93-96 §164-170.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPLATIVE LEISURE

MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION, MINDFULNESS, WELL-BEING & HAPPINESS

In the following three chapters we get to hear the voices of the twenty two participants. These voices represent, in the words of Cameron et al, “the theology embedded within the actual practices of the group.” As far as possible I have tried to allow them to speak without commentary from me. Theirs words are taken directly from the transcripts of the recorded interview without any editing. For three of the participants, Max, Caroline and Alex, English was not their first language. Consequently, when they speak their words and phrasing may sound different from that of a native speaker.

1. MEDITATION

For William the boundary between meditation and contemplation was blurred. He looked at these two terms, together with mindfulness, in a similar way. “People sometimes equate contemplation with meditation” he said. These three, he added could lead to well-being. He had found the ability to contemplate or meditate harder since he had been married (three years), and even harder still since he had a child. Prior to his son being born he would have done much more walking which would have had a meditative element to it. Sometimes this would be intentional. At other times it just happened. He added,

Oh definitely, I am healthier when I have it (i.e. meditation). That being said, maybe weirdly, maybe not, probably because of my personality, too much meditation or time on my own has a very detrimental impact on me. Largely because I have struggled with depression for most of my life.

He continued,

Western Christianity has completely lost most of its notions of meditation which is unfortunate. We are starting to rediscover that, which is great. So, I think the space, the acceptance of meditation would have been drawn from the Eastern traditions, less so the African.⁴⁹⁵

When he had some form of meditative practice he felt far more rooted and stable. It was important to get the basics right. For instance, in an international aid situation (such as Africa) you had to make sure that staff wages, food and accommodation were all in

⁴⁹⁵ William’s work had taken him to Africa for a number of different assignments.

place. It became very difficult to cope with the ensuing chaos when these basics were not in place or went wrong for some reason. To emphasise this William used the model of Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs."⁴⁹⁶ When you get the basic things sorted out people can aspire to the higher things. Being calm and rooted in a meditative practice made dealing with chaos a lot easier. He noted that when he does not have the time to meditate, or does not make the time to meditate, his emotional and anxiety levels increase and the franticness of being able to deal with chaos becomes harder. Fortunately he did not find it too difficult to "step back" physically and mentally when a crisis loomed. "I would say that some form of physical withdrawal or change is really helpful. The connection, I guess, between the physical space and spiritual space for the lack of a better term, is for me well connected." In earlier times he had attended planned retreats but had not done that for quite a number of years.

Meditation also had a positive impact on his family and professional relationships. "the notion of having time on my own, time to walk and meditate in various forms, it helps me to be rooted in who I am, which then allows me to interact with clients from a better place. So it is less about needing to prove oneself." There was also a connection between the people that he would consider wise and the calmness and rootedness that meditation can bring. If he became angry or upset at something, for instance, at what he considered to be a "manipulative" email, or there was some other problem, he found that going for a walk alone brought things into perspective and allowed him to try and understand the scenario. It gave him permission to say to himself "you don't have to prove yourself."

Moving to the second participant, John understood meditation as being similar to contemplation. However, his first thought was that it was associated with certain religions, especially those of the East and used mainly as a tool to de-stress rather than a spiritual practice.

Evelyn had explored and used different forms of meditation especially in the context of the Shakti, a form of dance that comes from the Sanskrit/Yogic tradition. She said that,

⁴⁹⁶ Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization.

it was linked to Kundalini and was supposed to be an extension of yoga, a celebration of divine energy; a spiritual energy or life force located at the base of the spine and conceptualised as a serpent. She continued,

Dancing is good at helping me to balance the body, the emotions. For me the body is very important because I am a nurse. Also, because of my therapy background I do see people who need to go and do that kind of exercise to keep the body healthy.

For Emily meditation was similar to contemplation although she would not use the terms synonymously. For her meditation was more structured. However, due to her busy life she never set the time aside to meditate in the formal sense. She was trying to get more balance into her daily routine but this would require a massive restructuring of her daily timetable. However, during a busy day as a psychotherapist she always tried to punctuate her day with periods of silence even if she used that time for some manual task such as filing.

Zoe meditated regularly, sometimes alone, sometimes with her partner. In fine weather they might go outdoors, either into their garden or local countryside. The contact with nature was important. If indoors, their regular routine would be to light a candle and burn some incense. She explained, in some detail, the process,

We sit here in this room. We light some incense and a candle. I sit here and my partner sits over there. I have a process that has evolved over time. I sit in silence. Shall I take you through what I do? I breathe in peace and breathe out fear. Breathe in beauty and breathe out anger. Breathe in love and breathe out anxiety. Breathe in joy and breathe out worry. Breathe in compassion and breathe out guilt and regret. Breathe in abundance and breathe out scarcity and lack. Breathe in appreciation, breathe out indifference and ingratitude. Breathe in acceptance, breathe out blame and judgement. And I do that as a way of beginning to slow things down. It usually moves to breathe in peace, breathe out peace. I do that twice with the first lot and once for the breathe in peace. And I do that in my mind. I draw up the energy of the earth into my heart and draw down the light, the energy, source. And I see that as pure possibility. Those two energies meeting in a place of love in my heart. I think about that in terms of love, generosity, compassion and joy, I do that three times too. Then I ask to be a channel as a way of channelling to create heaven on earth today. So that the way I will be in the world will be in that way....It was "may I be happy," etc., but now I don't say "may I" anymore I but say "I am." That has evolved over time. I now say I have an open heart. I am healed. I am whole. My heart sings with joy and my thoughts dance with love. I am peaceful and content. I have grace and compassion. I am now surrounded by love. I am happy and at ease. And then I connect in my mind with whoever I am going to be with today so that this morning I connected with my partner and you and some people who I am meeting this evening. And I connect with these people at a soul level and a heart

level. And I go through that same process so that “we” rather than “I” are filled with loving kindness, etc. Sometimes I will repeat the phrase to be sending it out to everyone in the world but it depends how much time I’ve got. But then I sit and ask to know what ever I need to know today. And then I sit in silence. Something that will help me.

Zoe had recently resumed circle dancing, and like Evelyn, had found that the slow form of this dance could be particularly meditative,

There is something about the flow, when everybody is the same flow of it all. You are all doing it together. It is just lovely because there is a movement in the body but there is this meditative aspect.

Becky defined meditation as a state freeing oneself from an object. Pointing to her head she added that meditation enabled free thoughts to come in.

For Max meditation was similar to contemplation but it was for people who deny religion and prefer to use yoga and alternative spiritual practices.⁴⁹⁷

Caroline appreciated the value of meditation but found it difficult to incorporate it into her busy schedule. She explained,

I’m not doing meditation, at least not in a formal sense anyway. I used to do it because since I’ve been an HR person I specialised in psychology. I did many classes and training courses about meditation, mindfulness and things like that. I am probably aware of that and I should probably practice it more. So far I haven’t really got to that point that I meditate every morning or evening or something like that. But I have my meditation moments. But probably not sitting somewhere.

However, she did have a sense of how meditation related to contemplation. She understood them as separate.

Meditation was the active practice that leads you to contemplation I would say. To meditate is the exercise, the happening, all the doing. Trying to be at least quiet. Sometimes I think that when I am going hiking, doing a long hike, when you go hiking for five or six or seven hours that has something has contemplative moments. It

⁴⁹⁷ Max, whose first language is German, kindly provided a German translation for the English words on the card. He explained, “Meditation is a word that is quite familiar in German and doesn’t necessarily need a translation, or in other words, we use the very same word “Meditation” in German. “Meditieren” I would say, is the process “des stillen Nachdenkens.” Contemplation “Kontemplation” describes “ein tiefgreifendes in-sich-gehen” und “Reflektieren.” Mindfulness is a term currently very much in fashion so many it ways to interpret, perhaps, “Achtsamkeit” or “bewusstes Auf-sich-acht-geben.” Well-being “Wohlfühlen” and “Gesundheit im weiteren Sinne” and Happiness “Frohsinn” or “fröhlich sein” also “Zufriedenheit.”

sometimes it feels like meditation to me. Because if you're doing one step after another there is a rhythm.

When asked if she went walking by herself or with other people she added,

I have people who I can go walking with, two or three friends, where we can walk behind each other without talking for one or two hours. This is really good. I don't like to talk that much. Of course you have to talk as well because some topics just come up while you are walking. I love being quiet when I hike. I really love that. So many topics come up and that is what I like. This is a form of meditation for me.

When asked about whether she had any intention of incorporating a meditation routine in her daily timetable she replied,

I think, I need my structure and my routine, and if I have that, or on a weekday when I am at home, that is okay for me. But I feel that when I am travelling, or I am too busy at work, when I get distracted too much, then I feel that I am not myself anymore. I need time to focus and to really feel my own senses again and to come back to my inner values, just to be centred again. Otherwise I feel that I am not feeling good anymore.

Catherine intermittently attended yoga classes when she had the time. Being single she also remarked that she was used to spending lots of her free time on her own. However, she needed to have an agenda. On a weekend she would take her car and drive to some place of interest such as a town, park or country house.

Usually I struggle to do nothing. I know that I have to learn that and that meditation could be a good way of doing it.

Lilian had not found her exposure to meditation very beneficial. She described herself as a "theorist learner" and comes out as a "low reflector." This impacted on the way she took to meditation. The initial introduction to meditation, which took the form of a meditation course was "dreadful." She had tried to practice meditation after that for two months but gave up. She remarked,

I sat in front of a candle and emptied the mind and did the "empty mind thing." Peace is not my thing so meditation does not sit very well with me because I associate it with peace.

Similar to many of the other participants, for her, meditation and contemplation were very similar.

Although he understood it to be the "in thing" at the moment Harry did not practice meditation on a regular basis. As a practising Anglican the Anglo-Catholic liturgy was

more important. However, he viewed meditation and contemplation as going together. There was a hierarchy, meditation led to contemplation, then to happiness and finally well-being. He acknowledged that he needed a way to de-stress and currently used massage and sauna as the way to do that. Walking and swimming also helped. He had considered exploring Buddhism as a way of calm and meditation. From what he had gleaned meditation was a form of repetition and breathing. It was non-analytical, more about de-stressing.

Having studied theology, Alex had access to a wider theological vocabulary than the other participants. As a schoolboy he had experienced daily a fifteen minute meditation session. These were usually conducted by one of the Jesuit priests. Interestingly these had taken different formats, one day based on scripture, another day on a picture, another day on music, or the text of a novel or text of music such as Bach. Looking back it had been “a combination of analytics, music and meditation.” Since then he had more experience of group meditation which to him seemed to be the norm. More recently his meditative practice was much more free and loose. Living in the countryside he could sit in his “den” reading books, theology or novels or writing his journal. He remarked, “I have a feeling that I can speak with Montaigne, Karl Rahner, Ignatius of Loyola, or other writers.”

Esme had struggled with making time for any kind of contemplative practice. Her understanding of meditation and contemplation blurred into one. She remarked that she was not a solitary person and much better with people around her, perhaps in a small group. She preferred thinking with others around her even if the room was silent. If she was honest, she had never done meditation if by that it was understood as sitting still and assuming a particular posture.

A meditation to me feels to be more about freeing the mind and allowing...having said that I don't know. I am somewhat confused sometimes about the two.
Contemplation actually I think is something that can happen at any time. Whereas I think meditation you might have to put a bit more effort into it.

In contrast to contemplation, for Sarah, meditation was emptying the mind of things.

Prior to the interview Jack had done some research and looked up the words “meditation” and “contemplation” in a dictionary. The definition had said that contemplation was the “highest form of meditation.” Consequently he was trying to

work out where meditation and contemplation met on that continuum. Jack had attended a number of *Lectio Divina* workshops and this definition confirmed his understanding of meditation as being the second stage of *Lectio*. He was rather relieved to read that contemplation was on a higher plane rather than being similar to meditation.

Similarly George was familiar with the practice of *Lectio Divina*. However, his understanding of meditation was broader,

For me meditation, there are many different types of meditation, and I am no expert on it. In one sense for me meditation implies a sense of rigour where you meditate on a certain thing, you imagine this or that whereas for me contemplation is a bit more free and wondering. As you mentioned earlier it is a kind of emptying. For me Christian meditation and Christian contemplation seem like different ways of getting to the same result. Personally I would say I go out to contemplate rather than meditate. Contemplation just works better for me.

For all her adult life Cathy had been a practitioner of mindfulness, both in her personal life and professionally. Consequently meditation, as she understood it, was strongly interlinked with mindfulness. However, they were different,

Because for me one of the things that differentiates mindfulness and meditation is that for mindfulness it is how I make sense of that what it means to be in the moment and not to be consumed or worried about the past or the future. Just try and be very present.

She continued,

I think on a societal or cultural level, meditation is thought about as being a bit more formal or a bit more structured. There are more rules to it. I think in a way mindfulness is a kind of a watered-down meditation. Or a more marketable meditation.

Being part of the Quaker community Joseph had a contemplative practice for most of his adult life. Professionally he also conducted meditation workshops for different groups. For him meditation was almost synonymous with contemplation.

I think there are different types of meditation. The word is used, for instance, with guided meditations where you are led into different situations; a way of connecting with the subconscious so there is that in terms of meditation. There is also meditation where you are focusing on your breath, clearing your mind, getting into your alpha waves or whatever. And it can also be contemplation where you are considering a word or a concept or a situation and that is what you are focusing on.

Meditation had strong links also with mindfulness.

Sometimes the two were joined as “mindfulness meditation” where the focus is on the breath, clearing your mind and getting into your alpha waves or whatever.

This meditation was an important part of his morning routine. If he missed it for some reason it affected the rest of his day. He and his partner Zoe frequently travelled internationally for professional reasons. Joseph had found meditation to be a good coping strategy on long distance flights.

I was reminded when you asked about travelling for instance. If you’re doing a 24 hour flight to Australia I guess you use these tools to some extent as a way of managing the flight, of being aware of what is happening to you, relaxing, enjoying. I don’t find it is a strain to be honest. If I am driving the car that can be quite stressful but sitting in a car can be quite meditative too.

Joseph practised meditation also as a way to connect with a higher power.

Yes, and sometimes I manage it, sometimes I don’t. But I think that is very much it. Whether the practice that I do in the morning, be sitting or running, sometimes you are aware that you are connecting to something higher than you.

Although Shane was brought up a Christian, he no longer belongs to a church community. Like Joseph and Cathy, he is a practitioner of mindfulness meditation. However, he found the distraction of social media, especially on his smart phone, a barrier to meditation, especially at free weekends. Nonetheless, there was a positive aspect to his smart phone because he could use an app for guided meditation. For Shane meditation means that when there are thoughts coming into his mind he can be still in the mind, not judgmental of those thoughts, not to try to work them through necessarily but just acknowledge that there is a thought coming.

For Charles meditation was secondary to contemplation. However, he accepted that for some people, Buddhists for instance, “meditation is contemplation and contemplation is meditation.” He associated meditation more with Ignatian spirituality.

James is a high-powered lawyer. His critical thinking was reflected in the answers he gave to the questions posed. Meditation was something that was focused on something in a particular way rather than something that requires more concentration, perhaps more than contemplation. If meditation was synonymous with thinking then he certainly had to do a great deal of that in his work as a lawyer.

I will often be thinking things through, either when I have gone to bed just before going to sleep, or when I am sitting, but not particularly focusing on anything else, so travel might be such a time, or might be when you're holding a book but not reading it. Sermons in church can be a time when you are thinking of something else rather than concentrating on what is being said.

Josh has been brought up in the Liberal Jewish tradition but in adulthood has practiced Buddhist meditation. He frequently leads Buddhist retreats. For him contemplative leisure and meditation were strongly linked. As the following extracts from the interview will confirm, although from a non-Christian tradition, Josh was undoubtedly the most knowledgeable and informed about non-Christian meditation techniques.

So for me contemplative leisure links to the essence of meditation practice which isn't just a scheduled half hour on the cushion during your meditation. Hopefully meditation, or what I understand by contemplative leisure, is taking time to connect to a state of being. It doesn't have to be particularly profound but it is more about allowing things to be as they are in a sort of un-rushed activity-based state which certainly I yearn for plenty at the moment.

Over the years Josh has been able to learn from Buddhist spiritual masters,

Well contemplation isn't a word that I particularly use or be involved with in my Buddhist practice. What I would say, if we start with meditation. There are thousands of different types of meditation across all traditions and even within the Buddhist tradition there are thousands. So I don't think meditation is (any) one thing. I suppose my own training, and it's not just in my tradition, it's in the Advaita (Hindu) tradition as well, possibly Christian tradition too... I think that it is possible for a person or a tradition to approach meditation more as a doing thing or more as "learning to not do" if that makes sense? And so some meditation, or interpretation of meditation, makes it light work. And that can make it a problem for people especially in the West. With our culture so bought into ideas about ambition, development, goals, achievement and all the stress they creates for us, it is not that unusual that people connect with meditation and without realising it make it another thing that fuels ambition. For instance "if only I could realise this state or do this with my mind?" So there can be a subtle tension with certain approaches. Other approaches to meditation talk about that and say, "actually that is a problem that shows something about how our unconscious mind or ego mind is wrapped up in that." It is more about a surrender, cultivating a letting go or a very deep trust in how things actually are. If you like, I don't like active and passive, but is quite good shorthand. One is more about surrender, profound trust, rest in things as they are and the other is an idea based on a current sense of lack which means you have to develop something.

For Josh this trust was an essential element of his meditative practice.

You might say trust in reality, trust in the universe trust in nature, trust in God or trust in one own Buddha nature. It is trust in something which is universal and is beyond the

personal self that we are always trying to protect or polish or develop ignore. On some existential level it, if we think we are trying to do self-improvement, how we are right now is some way insufficient. The trust is something very profound and whatever your story about yourself there is something very deep that you could trust about what is going on here and be in relationship to.

Another important insight was Josh's comment on meditative contemplation which I felt was remarkably similar to the monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*,

The other thing which does connect with meditation is that in my tradition there is also the idea of a contemplation but a meditative contemplation. So you might take a verse, a few lines, not a big passage, it is not an analytical study. I was doing this just this morning with a particular text. The text is three sides long and sometimes I will sit and read round the read text and meditate. Today I was meditating in a very simple way. Then I lightly read the text. And there is just a couple of lines. And I just dwell with them. You're not trying to analyse. It is a non-analytical activity. For me that is something of what I think contemplation is. And you just sort of, somewhere between meditation or nothing if you like, and analysing all reading something. It is the space where those two things meet. It is a very interesting and powerful space actually. I am sure that you have similar approaches in your own Christian tradition?

Silence was an important aspect of meditation also. Josh made a distinction between silence and quiet. Silence was more foundational...a space where you can be with things as they are and using a Buddhist term, actually have the space to "rest the mind." In order to facilitate this meditative silence he had a room in the attic of his house that he could escape to. It also doubled as his office but had a comfortable sofa where he could stretch out and rest. Josh was a "hands-on" dad with two young children,

Sometimes of an evening I will come up here on my sofa and I will lie here for twenty minutes to an hour, not asleep, not dozing off, not doing anything. But quite awake and almost deliberately having a space to rest the mind. Let it do its thing but with awareness. Because normally our mind is doing its thing but we are not aware that we are spacing out or fantasising. Or, the mind is doing its thing in a concentrated focused way. I don't think that either of those is real rest of the mind. By the mind I mean ones being. I find that incredibly restorative. I find it, in some ways, the real essence of meditation actually. As I said meditation can become a thing. You ask yourself I am I my doing my meditation now? Sometimes you can become preoccupied with meditating. But coming up here, letting things go, but at the same time being awake is important.

Travelling, especially by train, which Josh enjoyed, could be a productive time. During various journeys he had drawn insight as to how meditation could be more spontaneous than planned. Time for meditation arises naturally, for instance while taking a journey on a train, even though it may not be for long periods.

Balancing the demands of family, consultancy work, retreat giving and the role of a local councillor meant that meditation was not always easy to fit in on a regular basis although he recognized that he needed to do it. In order to do this he was trying to discern whether he should withdraw from some of those activities. Meditation had played an essential part also in making critical life-career decisions.

But it is clear that my sense of connection with my spiritual path resulted in a couple of the very clear intuitions. This is my experience. I can anguish a lot, I over-analyse, I worry, I get nervous. And yet the big decisions have tended to happen on a totally different level where I have moments when I know I can make a decision and feel quite positive about it. It is a bit schizophrenic in some ways. Perhaps that relates to meditation in a funny way. Because meditation is not that one's mind is clear all the time, it is not that you don't have stress but rather you create a space and connect with a deeper level of being in which slowly one does get real confidence and a stronger connection. My experience is that the worry does not go away.

Whatever path Josh chose in the future, or had chosen for him, he was convinced that his meditation was beneficial for the world. In conclusion he said,

There is something that compels me to follow a path in a spirit of surrender. And I have done this, and you have reminded me to do it more. To literally connect with the higher powers and beings that we are in service with.

The final participant, Edward, had first come across meditation through a couple of TV reality shows based in a monastery and a retreat centre in North Wales. As a management consultant he had noticed also that different forms of meditation were becoming popular amongst work colleagues and clients. This had prompted Edward to explore more and he made a seven day Ignatian retreat at St Beuno's.⁴⁹⁸ Meditation for him implied sitting down with the express objective of getting into a particular state, trying to create "an absence of stuff." Being from a Methodist background, he acknowledged that he did not pray on a regular basis, or in a very active way, so he was not familiar with this style of meditation. Although he had attended Quaker meetings he was used to being in a silent space. One of the biggest effects of his Ignatian retreat was becoming accustomed to solitude. A couple of times a day he would walk a labyrinth slowly reciting the Our Father. That was the closest he had got to meditation as he understood it.

⁴⁹⁸ A Jesuit Meditation and Retreat Centre in North Wales.

2. CONTEMPLATION

As William had said earlier, he was unsure about the distinction between contemplation and meditation. He certainly thought he had a meditative side to him and enjoyed it. For him the boundaries between meditation, contemplation and mindfulness were quite fluid. While working in Asia he had become aware of a greater acceptance of the Buddhist tradition in meditation, contemplation and mindfulness. That influence had not been so evident in Africa where people were seldom alone for any period of time. People sometimes equate contemplation with meditation. If part of my life contemplation, meditation and mindfulness could lead to well-being.

John said that he had a limited understanding of contemplation. He associated it more with inward thinking rather than prayer or a spiritual practice.

Evelyn's experience of contemplation was influenced by what she knew of Buddhist spirituality. With meditation, contemplation was linked to all aspects of life, even the way you ate your food. People who gulped down their food were diminishing the sacredness of eating which could be an important part of leisure.

For Emily contemplation was quiet time, being with her thoughts. Although contemplation and meditation were similar she thought meditation was more structured, they were not synonymous. She realized that she needed to make more room for a contemplative practice in her busy life but it was difficult to do. Later on in the interview she remarked that the Jungian maxim "the second part of life was more about the self than the ego" had led her to believe that there is a greater need for a contemplative practice as one gets older. At an earlier stage in her career a contemplative practice, although limited, had enabled her to work through a traumatic period of her life. Her professional practice as a therapist had taught her that developmental trauma in individuals or families frequently established an obstacle to contemplative practice.

It means that people cannot be contemplative because their development has not allowed them to be. We cannot assume, even if we give people the time, that they can be contemplative. For some people it would be very scary.

Emily also observed that we are becoming a society that is finding it more and more difficult to be silent. Modern day society is supporting that through its avoidance of silence and creating the space for contemplation.

Zoe did not use the word contemplation very much although she did recognize that the current preoccupation with mindfulness reflected a move towards something akin to contemplation. For her reading a spiritual author could be a way into a contemplative practice, but so could other activities such as gardening or walking in the countryside?

Becky is a keen amateur painter and in her retirement was attending an art foundation course at a nearby college. I asked her whether she thought that her painting had a contemplative dimension to it. She replied that although she found it daunting starting on a blank canvas, eventually, the reflective process kicked in. The painting connected you with someone or something. It could lead you to somewhere you have not been before and bring up significant thoughts that are important to you. The same thing can happen in contemplation. You could not do it in a forced way. Perhaps leaving your thoughts and coming back to them helps. You cannot force things. You need some space and have to come back to them later. In contrast to meditation, which she understood as “freeing yourself from some object,” contemplation was a reflection on something. Having worked in management and professional coaching all her life there was an obvious link between contemplation and mindfulness. Both required a similar approach. The ability to be reflective or contemplative had helped her also in both her professional and personal life. For instance, the way in which she had been able to redefine successes and failures in her own life and that of her clients in a more personal, positive and meaningful way. Reflection or contemplation had the power to help you turn yourself around.

Max, like Becky, is also a keen amateur painter. However, having been brought up in an agnostic setting he only “came to faith” and became a Christian in recent years. Painting as recreation or leisure gave him an entry into a spiritual practice. Consequently recreation had become a form of re-creation. His painting enabled him to withdraw from the hustle and bustle of life and create something that resonates. “I can empty my thoughts onto the canvas. They can be worries, hopes or joys.” As his painting became less figurative it became, in his view, more contemplative. He had moved to painting what he felt rather than what he saw outside of him. “I listen to what comes out of myself and that is where the contemplative dimension comes in.” After a few moments he qualified this statement. Perhaps he was sensing what he saw outside of him rather than contemplating. He added that he had never been taught to contemplate in the sense that he had never found a ritual or practice that he found spiritually nourishing. He added,

I think that I know that I have it within me. I have, in the last year, had the first sort of 100% encounter with my own faith where I felt trusted, I believed. That was a moment of, may be not contemplation, but a moment where I could detach myself and just allow room around me which was good, a warm place which enabled me to let go...It was a decision I made that I wanted to make room. There was a moment when I decided that I did not want have entire control of my life.

Max then went on to make a very perceptive point about contemplation being a state of being rather than a something you chose to do from time to time,

If you are able to contemplate, you have this as an organic part of yourself, just like eating, or breathing....There is part of you that is a contemplative and you have a very good sense of how you do that or get to it. Not necessarily how you explain it to somebody else but how you do it for yourself. I think that would be of massive step forward for humankind, for everyone, to have this. To have this as a possession. I wonder if Western society demanded that contemplative quality in everyone it would have an impact on the way that we make decisions? Decisions always have to be fast. If I say I take time to make a decision it is always frowned upon. They ask why do you need time? What I am trying to say is that there is a huge value in this. So how do you move from the ability to the practice and then the reflection of the practice so that you can scale it and teach to your friends and neighbours?

Here Max was focusing on something very important. Firstly, that everybody had an innate ability to contemplate, even if they did not recognise it. Secondly, the impact that a contemplative practice could have on the quality of decision-making. He was frustrated that some important decisions (in his organisation) had to be made so quickly, spontaneously almost. Max obviously felt that this lack of time impacted negatively on the quality and even the ethical nature of the decision. To secure that time for making decisions is a crucial factor in making sure all aspects of a situation are taken into account. The nature of decision-making today, in many organisations, is that no matter who you are, or what position in an organisation you hold, you dealing with large quantities of data, and data that is often very complex. How does a contemplative practice or mindfulness help you? The answer might be this. It can provide insight, it helps you “see the wood from the trees.” Contemplation Max linked, rightly or wrongly, with religious practice. Meditation was for him similar but for those who deny religion and use techniques such as yoga and other similar aids. Although he was not certain, meditation and contemplation could be rather similar.

Caroline did not have a regular contemplative practice but working in a senior Human Resources position she appreciated its importance and necessity. She understood contemplation as a time for being quiet, where it was necessary to concentrate and be free

from distractions. Contemplation, for her, was something positive and gave energy and power. Meditation was the stage before contemplation. It was the active practice that led you to contemplation.

Lilian understood contemplation and meditation as being very similar. She was continually thinking about things. For her contemplation meant just that; sitting and thinking about things, but in a more prayerful way. Lilian had come back to her Christian faith only recently but found that her Anglican tradition focused more on spoken and intercessory prayer with little time for reflection or contemplation.

Whereas meditation for Harry could be a form of repetition, for instance, using one's breathing, or it could be a form of de-stressing, contemplation however, was a process where "you looked inside and analysed." On his own admission he possessed quite an irascible temperament and the contemplative dimension only came into play after he had lost his temper! For several years he had been in a legal dispute over an inheritance. He admitted that having a contemplative practice had helped with making difficult decisions and handling awkward situations and events such as the death of his mother, his partner and redundancy. In essence a contemplative practice had helped him "let go." It also gave you the ability "to look back and have a giggle about things. Always see the bright side. The glass is always half-full." Harry did not say much about what form his contemplative practice took but he regularly exercised by walking his local footpaths and woods and by swimming. He also found that regular physiotherapy had a therapeutic effect.

Alex, like many others interviewed, linked contemplation to reflection. He described it as a "strong self-dialogue." Having been to a Jesuit High School he had experience of meditation in the Ignatian tradition.⁴⁹⁹ For Alex, journaling, keeping a personal diary rather than a calendar, was a contemplative process. His writing was far more reflective and stemmed from a quiet contemplative practice. He still read a great deal, including philosophy and

⁴⁹⁹ St Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) founded the Society of Jesus and within it established a form of "methodical mental prayer" or as it is commonly known "The Spiritual Exercises." These emphasise an inner discipline through concentration of the exterior and interior senses, especially the imagination, consolation and desolation; through intellectual attention, and through movement towards colloquy and good proposals. Images and ideas should lead to a decision for personal action. This form of meditation responded to the needs of the time. The inner discipline of the monastery could not benefit someone who had to travel independently or further afield to missionary territory. Ignatian spirituality is widely popular today amongst lay people, religious and priests because it is adapted to the active busy life.

theology, and this nourished his spiritual practice. Although he had experience of contemplating in a group he preferred it when alone. As described earlier, when speaking about meditation, Alex's aspiration for the future was that communities of people would come into being, and some were already in existence, where you could combine your personal gifts, contemplation, wisdom and peace in a productive way for the common good.

Esme could be described as an "outdoor contemplative." Invariably the contemplative dimension happened mostly when she was doing something physical or cultural. She had never engaged in any formal meditative or contemplative practice using established techniques. "Contemplation, meditation, or just thinking, all of those blurred for me," she said. Nonetheless, for her, contemplation compared to meditation (which is more about freeing the mind) always has a spiritual dimension. Contemplation was more spontaneous too. It was something that could come into play at any time. It was possible to think more about the grand idea of everything when you were outside or in nature.

Sarah had never considered contemplation as a leisure activity. Perhaps this was because, although she was now living in London, she was brought up in a religious family and received all her education, from primary to tertiary, at Jesuit institutions. Hitherto she had associated a contemplative practice with a seven day retreat or a special time of prayer. But now, having had time to reflect on her answer to the question, she realised that there was a connection between leisure and contemplation. Contemplation was not necessarily confined to certain times and places. As we have already seen, this response is typical of many of the participants in this survey. In general they tend to compartmentalise their lives into work, leisure and spiritual. Sarah commented that she had always understood contemplation as prayer time or spiritual time rather than a time for herself. She added, "this has got me thinking, it does make sense to associate the two together." From what she said it was obvious that her spiritual formation had been strongly influenced by her Ignatian education. She added,

Part of Ignatian spirituality is contemplation, we have this thing called the Examen where you look back at the events of the day. I have been trying to do that but have not had the chance to do it regularly. If I am too tired at the end of the day I tend to spend some quiet time listening to music on my iPod, or doing the Examen in a more structured way...I get into contemplation more when I listen to music rather than when I read.

Her busy schedule here in the UK had prevented her from developing a spiritual routine or having the discipline to do it. She had considered doing a seven day retreat one of the Jesuit retreat houses here in the UK but so far had not managed to get away.

Similar to some of the other participants interviewed Sarah had associated contemplation with making use of the imagination, especially using the information we read in Scripture, and trying to put oneself in that particular context. Meditation, on the other hand, was trying to empty your mind of things. For her contemplation was mid-way between meditation and mindfulness.

While in the UK Sarah was participating in a social enterprise fellowship programme, based around London and the Home Counties, where she was assigned to two different organisations over the span of one year. During this year she was trying to make some time for personal reflection. It had been difficult doing it by herself sometimes so she had joined a church group, which followed the Ignatian format, that met every two weeks. However, she felt that this was not often enough. The physical space that this church group provided, free from distractions and interruptions such as mobile phones, meetings and email, was also an important factor. Sarah felt that making the commitment to the group and turning up on a regular basis, had provided an indispensable support and had forced her to “get into it.” She also valued the protected silence that this time in the group provided. However she cautioned, although you could be silent on the outside, inside you a lot of things are running through your head. Again the group facilitated the absence of these distractions. She needed the space, the silence and the quiet to contemplate. In return, the opportunity to contemplate brought, as one of its fruits, peace.

One of the things that Sarah found interesting was the approach of non-Catholics to things, not so much contemplation, but worship in general. The previous evening she had attended an evangelical community worship where they “gave praise” with big bands and loud music. She had found it interesting that people were able (apparently) to connect more easily with God in this way, rather than in a quiet contemplative space.

When she was asked what impact her contemplative practice had on the way she made decisions at work she replied that it was very seldom. It was when making key decisions around her lifestyle such as career choices, where to live or study, that a contemplative practice was important.

Jack's previous research into the meaning of meditation and contemplation had obviously influenced his answer. This revealed a series of interesting insights. Firstly he had discovered that contemplation was described as the highest form of meditation. This had helped him understand the relationship between contemplation and meditation and where the two overlapped. The idea of contemplation being on a "higher plane" appealed to him and reflected his current spiritual practice. The second insight that Jack was able to pass on was that the etymology of the word contemplation is derived from the Latin words "con" and "templare." Literally "to observe in the temple" (i.e. the brain not the building).⁵⁰⁰

Jack also highlighted the tensions that come to the fore in balancing a busy and responsible job with the need to spend time contemplating. His solution, as he described it "to walk away for half an hour and engage in a little contemplation." His work required him to travel around which meant he could be out "on the road" most days. He always carried a bible in his car. Over the years he had found quiet spots where he could park for thirty minutes, read and contemplate.

George found that walking and bike-riding were conducive to his contemplative practice. He found it easier to be contemplative if he was on his own or in a quiet environment. That being said, his usual prayer time, as he called it, was on the tube going into work. Because it is "dead time" he can shut himself away although he might be crammed into a carriage "like a sardine." Although, he added, you are "nose to nose" with everyone else, no one is interested in you. He used the bible to focus and read a short passage of scripture to start off. One could argue, he added, that this practice was a form of *Lectio Divina*. Because he did not always have a regular routine, perhaps he was travelling somewhere else, he had to miss out on his daily "contemplative time" as he called it.

For George, contemplation involved a lot of mental activity. But because it did not involve work, it did not feel like hard mental activity. For him, contemplation was both

⁵⁰⁰ Part of the background of this meaning is derived from the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle who regarded contemplation as the highest form of human activity. To contemplate, or contemplation, according to the Oxford Dictionary, means "creating an open space for observation." It is a passive exercise and in its secular sense can be synonymous with pondering, musing, looking with continued attention. This understanding of contemplation, as a passive exercise as opposed to active (which is allied more to meditation) reflects the earliest teaching of the Church fathers, and later Thomas Aquinas, who, as we saw above, makes a distinction between the passive "intellectus" (gazing) and active "ratio" (logical thinking). Josef Pieper (see above) makes this same distinction in relation to leisure.

passive, just letting his mind wander, and active, thinking about the future. When presented with the card with the words, “contemplation, meditation, mindfulness, well-being and happiness,” he saw a synergy between all five. Although he valued his quiet time and the “oasis of calm” that his home provided, he also valued being with other people, especially his friends from Church.

George had held a number of responsible positions as a management consultant in various capacities mainly on civil engineering projects. More recently, he had decided, after much prayer and agonising, and against the advice of his parents, to take a year off to manage a ski chalet run by a Christian organisation in the Alps. He had used his contemplative time to build up to this decision.

For him, contemplative time could also be very creative to the extent that it seemed that contemplation and creativity were almost synonymous. George had found that engineering consultancy had not given him the opportunity to be as creative as he wanted. This search for creativity had prompted him also to move away from the Catholic Church and seek a more flexible and uplifting form of worship, not just on a Sunday, which was very important to him, but also during the week, when he could join or lead bible study groups. The idea of vacation, or emptying yourself, was also appealing to him because it created a time and space free from commitments which could be used for extended periods of contemplation.

When asked what distinction he would make, if any, between meditation and contemplation, George replied,

In one sense, for me, meditation implies a sense of rigour where you meditate on a certain thing, you imagine this or that whereas for me contemplation is a bit more free and wondering. For me Christian meditation and Christian contemplation seem like different ways of getting to the same result. Contemplation just works better for me. But in terms of bringing it all together that is where the contemplation sits. The contemplation angle ties in with that rather than what the world would think is the right decision in a given situation.

His contemplative practice had also had a significant impact on the way he viewed society and the Common Good.

In terms of influence on society I think that one of the benefits of contemplation, which I talked about earlier, is that there is a kind of big contemplation and reflection and a small contemplation and reflection. Small contemplation and reflection is thinking before you

...speak and if people think more before they speak they are far less likely to put their “foot in it.” I think that more contemplation is a good thing, especially in terms of the bigger issues, because I think it would encourage other people to take a longer-term perspective. For me the contemplation aspect within work is just as important as the contemplation within leisure, particularly when you are in a management or leadership position.

Finally, when George was asked the extent to which his contemplative practice had influenced his political views and his views on social justice he replied,

That it had helped him to think more deeply about things rather than just take a traditional view. Because of my traditional upbringing, I would tend to hold similar traditional views as my parents, for instance. I would like to think that I have taken into my life the bits that are really good which my parents taught me and then put other stuff with it from the Church and other places...I think most people need a bit of time to contemplate to come up with good decisions.

Cathy, as mentioned above, is a psychologist and a regular practitioner of mindfulness and MBCT (Mindfulness Behavioural Cognitive Therapy) in both her personal and professional life.⁵⁰¹ Her understanding of contemplation was different from a number of the other interviewees because, for her, contemplation and reflection were more about thinking in the past, or the future, rather than the present, which is where the focus of mindfulness is directed. Thinking about what you might have done, or not have done in a certain situation, and how it might have been different. How you might do something different in the future. Physical exercise and yoga were part of her contemplative practice too. Cathy had recently completed a PhD in Clinical Psychology and remarked that “lots of contemplation and reflection were needed” in the process.

Joseph had been influenced by his exposure to the practice of Buddhist spirituality and its teaching. His contemplative practice was both a significant and indispensable aspect of his life which was well integrated into most of the things he did in one way or another. For him contemplation was allied to a focus on a particular word, concept or situation. Having had a contemplative practice for several years meant that he was a far more calm and thoughtful

⁵⁰¹ Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is an approach to psychotherapy that uses cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) methods in collaboration with mindfulness meditative practices and similar psychological strategies. It was originally created to be a relapse-prevention treatment for individuals with major depressive disorder (MDD). See Seligman & Reichenberg, Linda & Lourie (2014). *Theories of Counselling and Psychotherapy*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall. pp. 354–356.

person than he used to be. It had also given him the ability to manage situations that needed managing.

Shane was probably the least acquainted with any kind of spiritual practice although he had started to use a mindfulness app on his smart phone. Consequently, he was not a regular practitioner of meditation or any similar technique. Neither did he have any strong religious affiliation. The closest he came to that was by describing himself as a “lapsed Episcopalian.”

From our conversation he certainly valued quiet time for being reflective, and during his down time he sometimes experienced what he described as a “passive form of contemplation,” especially when reading. It happened unintentionally. For Shane contemplation was allied to decision making. It was when he was in this “mode” and in a state of “happiness” and “well-being” that he felt he made his best decisions. For him it took the form of an active mental exercise in which there had to be some input in the form of data, narrative or situation. This input did not necessarily have to originate from the decision maker. He was very confident about his ability to make the right decisions especially when assessing a team for a start-up project which had applied for funds to his organisation. In such a scenario reflection was a strongly allied to contemplation. He was fortunate to have his own office at work with a nice view. This seclusion and ambience enhanced his ability to make good decisions.

Of all the participants Charles, both as a student and a practitioner, was probably the most familiar with the theological and spiritual vocabulary associated with contemplative leisure. Although highly qualified as an automotive engineer and designer he had not enjoyed his job. Thus, contemplative leisure, or a “spiritual practice,” as he preferred to describe it, had been essential to his coping with the stresses and strains of work. Contemplative prayer had been an important aspect of spiritual practice.

Charles had taken voluntary redundancy two years earlier so at the time of the interview he had a daily routine focused around reading, contemplative prayer and daily Mass. He now regarded his vocation in life as caring for his invalid mother. He did not have a TV, did not take a newspaper and seldom listened to the radio. Neither was he married or had a partner. Thus, his daily timetable was very “monastic” in character. During his holidays, and more recently since his redundancy, he had travelled a great deal. He had walked the Camino in Spain, as a pilgrim, on several occasions, starting from different points, sometimes by

himself, at other times with friends. He had also spent twelve months as a hermit in the Syrian Desert living as a solitary and having contact with the local monastery on a weekly basis only. Charles understanding and practice of contemplation had been shaped by Christian mystics such as John of the Cross (1542-1591)⁵⁰² and the *Cloud of Unknowing*,⁵⁰³ also by Buddhist teaching. He used Buddhist terminology of emptiness, stillness and quietness to define his form of contemplation. He added,

There are different forms of contemplation, but they are all ineffable. There is just something that you know once you have been granted the grace.

He explained further,

I've certainly been influenced, but not strongly influenced. I spent time at Bodh Gaya (where Buddha received his enlightenment) in Bihar, India which is the centre of Buddhism and also in Sri Lanka. Both those visits were explicitly to explore Buddhism. Not so much because I believed in their syncretism but I wanted to find out what insights they had to offer. And they did offer me insights. Somehow they have shaped my own spirituality and prayer life. I'm also aware that my aunt, who was a nun all her life in India, explained that it was not uncommon for Catholic religious orders in India to have their retreats run by a Buddhist. Contemplation is number one, meditation is less so, but for some people, Buddhists for instance, meditation is contemplation and contemplation is meditation. For me contemplation is John of the Cross, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, those sort of people. Meditation is more Ignatius of Loyola.

Of all those interviewed Charles was one of the few to acknowledge that the contemplative state was a grace (given by God). As he said, it is just something you know once you have received it. He also alluded to the ambiguity in the terminology of meditation and contemplation. For Buddhists for instance, meditation is contemplation and contemplation is meditation.

Because Charles had experienced a great deal of psychological pain and anguish in his life, mainly as a result of the work as an automotive engineer, the lives of the saints especially the way in which they had been able to remain joyful while undergoing physical suffering had been an inspiration. For him the contemplative life was "his life." It made him what he was. This meant, that to many people, such as his close family and friends, it had made him

⁵⁰² St John of the Cross was a Carmelite mystic and with the Carmelite nun St Teresa of Avilla (1515-1582) is considered one of the main exponents of Carmelite Spirituality.

⁵⁰³ *The Cloud of Unknowing* dating from the 14th century is considered as one of the most important spiritual treatises in the English Language. Although there is no consensus on its authorship it was probably written by a Carthusian monk. It is part of a larger 14th century spiritual movement that included Richard Rolle (d. 1349), Walter Hilton (d.1396), Julian of Norwich (d.1442) and Margery Kempe (d.1440).

“a stranger” and mildly eccentric. Yet there was no doubt that contemplation was the foundation of his life. When I asked Charles whether he thought being contemplative was a disposition rather than an occasional event he replied,

The contemplative disposition is to be living in the present moment with God at that moment in time. It pervades all your life, whether you are awake or asleep, active or passive if you like. This is what every religious is striving for.

That being said, on his numerous visits to monasteries and religious houses for retreats, both Christian and Buddhist, he had been shocked by their materialism and worldliness. “A religious habit does not make you a contemplative,” he commented. “More often you meet the prayerful, humble person outside the monastic enclosure.” The atmosphere of some churches he had found quite sterile. He preferred smaller, intimate places where he could be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or the relics of saints. In one Abbey there was a small chapel that provided the Blessed Sacrament, a relic of St Benedict and quiet. This was his “dream ticket” for a contemplative space.

James is a partner in a large legal firm. It soon became apparent that James’ answers during the interview were influenced by his legal training and analytical approach. Using an analogy used earlier by Jack he understood contemplation as focusing on something such as a view, something more internal, something more than an activity.

I would see it more as allowing thoughts to develop, probably just organise themselves, which again can be something that thoughts will often do, quite unconsciously, while you are doing something else. It was a passive activity, even more passive than reading.

Although a practising Anglican, for James, contemplation, or a contemplative practice, did not feature in his life. When asked if his spiritual practice embraces meditation or contemplation, his answer was an emphatic “no.” He valued the time to be quiet and reflective and always seized the opportunity to do so when he could. But, he did not actively seek those opportunities out. He certainly spent a lot of time thinking, both inside and outside of work, but was this, he asked, the same as contemplation? If there was a particular challenge at work he might “bring it out and have another look. Mull it over and put it away again.” At the end of the day he liked to have a bit of time, “not doing anything, not thinking about anything that requires any great effort, not having to talk to people.” That being said he did not feel the need for more quiet or reflective space in his life. He felt he had the

balance about right. But there were times when, “you just want to sit, read a book, or nor necessarily read about anything.”

Contemplation was not a word that Josh particularly used, or was involved with, in his Buddhist practice. He continued,

And a lot for me is about exploring the points of integration, interconnection between activity, and sometimes chaotic and potentially stressful, such as political role, activity and the state of being in contemplation. To be, as I was saying before, to exist in the state of contemplation, whether you are busy or not, whether you are in the council chamber or the MBA⁵⁰⁴ classroom, or at home with a two-year-old in a tantrum because he didn't get the cricket bat first.

In terms of contemplation, my understanding of meditation is that I think of it again as two things. First, contemplation could be slightly more receptive state of being rather than an active trying to become. The other thing which does connect with meditation is that in my tradition there is also the idea of a contemplation but a meditative contemplation. For me that is something of what I think contemplation is. But in terms of leisure and contemplation I think in terms of the resting the mind.

Edward's, Methodist upbringing had tended to shape his understanding of spirituality and in particular contemplative leisure. His answers were also informed by what he had learned about *Lectio Divina* through attending various Greenbelt Conferences and the seven day guided retreat in North Wales described earlier.

Although Edward did not have a contemplative practice himself he understood contemplation as implying contemplation of something. There had to be an object.

There is an object that you are contemplating or, I guess, that could literally be an object like a statue, an icon, or nature, a leaf a tree whatever it might be, through to kind of contemplation of the Scriptures.

As he understood it, contemplation was freer than meditation, it was not so structured. Neither did it imply the ultimate contemplation of the Divine. Contemplation had an almost “dreamlike” quality to it.

3. MINDFULNESS

In this section on mindfulness we move into new territory, in the sense that references to mindfulness are not found in biblical texts, the Church Fathers and early Christian

⁵⁰⁴ Josh is a part-time lecturer at several universities which run a Master's Programme in Business Administration (MBA). He focuses on small group facilitation and collaborative enquiry.

Literature. Neither has the term gained much official recognition, so far, in the Church's social teaching and papal documents. In fact the term has encountered some hostility from a number of Church authorities, although in his recent book Peter Tyler has reconciled some of these objections by showing that many elements of mindfulness can be identified in Christian spirituality.⁵⁰⁵ The practice of mindfulness, especially in a secular context in Western countries, over the last ten to fifteen years, cannot be ignored. It has gained considerable ground, as the following participant observations will demonstrate. However, only a few of the participants had an intimate experience of mindfulness in their personal and/or professional lives.

William was aware of mindfulness because his wife's parents were both therapists and counsellors. Mindfulness was an important aspect of their work. His personal encounter with mindfulness though was limited. It had not yet been accepted or practised in the kind of work he did. Within the circles that he was engaged in, and in pretty much everywhere else, mindfulness was a "buzz" word. Although he did not practise mindfulness, he could envisage that together with contemplation and meditation they could lead to well-being.

John, who had worked as a senior lawyer in the automotive industry, recognised mindfulness as a significant area. He was now retired from the industry but understood mindfulness to be an important tool in helping people with work related stress.

Similarly Evelyn, who currently worked as a health care professional, was familiar with mindfulness. However, as we saw in the above sections on meditation and contemplation, she did not practice it. She commented that in her profession, especially in psycho-synthesis, words such as mindfulness, meditation and contemplation were used a great deal. For her, these were all inter-connected with spirituality, heart fullness, well-being, oneness, enlightenment, connectedness, the sacred and the divine.

Emily, a psychotherapist, also recognised the importance of mindfulness although she did not use it personally or in her practice. Her definition of mindfulness was the practice of being in the present moment.

Zoe had far greater familiarity because she had done some work around mindfulness. Zoe defined mindfulness as,

⁵⁰⁵ Tyler.P, *Christian Mindfulness: Theology and Practice* (2018) London, SCM

Being much more conscious of what is happening to you physically. Being really present to yourself. Being present to myself physically is something that I have not been very good at times and I am much more conscious of that now. And that practice of mindfulness has helped me.

For a number of years Zoe had suffered from severe back problems. Up to about ten years previously she had not been conscious of her body at all. Then she had used a book that was looking at mindfulness to manage pain. Having worked through that she used other books on mindfulness. Zoe had found a book by Ruby Wax particularly helpful.⁵⁰⁶

And mindfulness that brought me into consciousness with it. I think it is about trying to be present to my body more. There is a very good book by Ruby Wax on using mindfulness to cope with pain. Her book is really good in terms of talking about it, but is also useful because it introduces people who would not necessarily think about things in that way. We had someone here the other day in our celebration circle who had read the book and also been to a Ruby Wax's show about it. And it really prompted her to be more conscious of her breathing and she said that she felt much calmer and in tune with things because she had been practising mindfulness. That was brilliant to hear.

Zoe added that she too had felt much calmer and in tune with things because she had been practising mindfulness. From her study and practice of mindfulness she recognised that it was based on work from centuries ago. We would not have access to mindfulness unless it had been for them.

As a professional coach to senior executives Becky had come across mindfulness although she did not use it herself. She said,

Mindfulness, for me, is really trying to be present in what you are doing at the moment. For instance being mindful in our conversation with you today, being with you and not having my mind go in all sorts of directions. I sometimes think that it is giving my client my full attention, or my art my full attention, or by prayer my full attention.

But, she warned,

It is often a bit of a buzzword. So I have had some good conversations with people who are using the idea of mindfulness well. But often I think it can be the latest thing. I think to do that well is a deep thing.

In answer to my question on how mindfulness was used in business she replied,

You have to be a little bit careful. Coaches can do it. There is a business about coaching. There is a humanity about coaching so they say "let's do the latest thing",

⁵⁰⁶ Ruby Wax, *Mindfulness: Guide for the Frazzled* (London: Penguin, 2016).

or have something new, or what have you. I think there is some interesting training on mindfulness and loads of books. How well the coaches themselves are mindful is another matter. If you do work with somebody who has that approach it can be very helpful.

She had however worked with a client who had previously used a coach who practised mindfulness. She said that this other coach had not really grasped or understood mindfulness fully. Recently this client was doing a long distance walk and Zoe and he had agreed to have supper with him in a local pub close to the path he was using. She then gave an interesting example on the use of mindfulness,

This client, whenever I worked with him, was constantly going back to difficult times. He always intended to be doing something else but this went wrong. I was trying to get him to be the present and to think forward. Then, without thinking about it, quite simply he said “When I am walking I have to concentrate on what I am doing. He packed his day pack and went walking.” And I said to him “this is the first time I’ve really heard you speak about mindfulness.” Focusing on the walk, on every step and concentrating. It was a big revelation to him. And we used that metaphor of walking for him to take back into his work. How he could focus on the reality of the day, the reality of the situation. Even if it is not an ideal walk, it is pouring down with rain as opposed to it’s a sunny day, how do we really deal with it? And it really changed his approach to work. So I think the experience of mindfulness is quite an important one to physically reach.

I then asked Zoe if she thought that the state of mindfulness, illustrated in that walking metaphor, had any connection to a contemplative practice? She replied,

In the sense that in contemplation, you are trying to maybe focus and reflect. Mindfulness could be a similar quality.

Although he had no personal experience of it, Max, who worked in a community social cohesion unit based in the South of England, recognised mindfulness, together with well-being, as being the latest buzzwords. For some mindfulness could be a foundation for their contemplative practice. He made an observation about the power of mindfulness to change others but without actually calling it that.

Working in Human Resources Caroline was already familiar with the concept of mindfulness. She had attended a number of classes which included training in meditation, mindfulness “and things like that.” She added that mindfulness was something you needed to train for, although she did not practise it personally.

There are so many things in your daily life that you can be mindful about. If I am mindful I am just here and I think about how I can get the best out of the moment. I

don't live for yesterday and I don't know about tomorrow. I live for now. It is very difficult to get to that state of mindfulness all the time. I think you have to meditate in order to concentrate and to feel the mindful moments that are always around you. There are so many things going on that we are not aware of. If we are not mindful we don't actually get them.

Part of Caroline's job involved developing talent within her business. So I asked her if placing and emphasis on mindfulness training was an integral part of developing that talent? She replied,

I think for sure. But I think everybody, the more mindful you tend to be in your life, the better the connection to yourself. Then probably you have less doubts, or make less mistakes. You just become more secure. Because you know what your values are and what is important for you. I think of course that relates to the job as your personal life. If you are mindful of whatever the topic then that leads to a better outcome.

Although Lilian had spent some time as an organisational trainer in the public sector she was not very positive about mindfulness. She remarked about "fashionable new age stuff" which she called "rubbish." But she did recognise the importance of developing "awareness."

As to mindfulness. I think I am mindful about a lot of things that I do. I do not mean in terms of fashionable new age stuff. That is rubbish. I did study some of that on the spirituality course. You can be mindful and aware. I think I am self-aware and other-aware

Harry had a limited experience of mindfulness in a personal context. He recognised that mindfulness was currently the "in thing." He had done a course in mindfulness with an osteopath so mindfulness could have an impact on health, especially his back pain and general well-being.

Alex who lived and worked in Germany was aware of emerging importance of mindfulness too. He remarked that one heard the word mindfulness more and more in Germany. On a personal level, living on a large farm in the German countryside, he commented that,

The longer I live here the more I combine mindfulness to what is changing in nature, the countryside, the times of the year, the smell of nature. I am very mindful of nature. I often think also about my relation with the family and friends and being mindful of them. I relate mindfulness to my inner circle of people and the countryside around me. I am always looking for a quiet room so that if I have guests I have enough mindfulness to speak and concentrate on the person.

On a professional level he remarked that a great number of his team, who were mainly female, practised yoga. It was very much part of their life. If they are not able to do it they become angry. He understood that there was a strong connection between yoga and mindfulness.

Esme was on the cusp of retirement but in her professional life had been a trainer and careers advisor. A couple of her friends had done courses on mindfulness and found them very useful. She had just missed the start of one course run by her local “mindfulness society.” I asked Esme why she thought enrolling on a mindfulness programme would help. She admitted that she could obsess about things, especially in relation to her two grown-up children. If she was not careful these worries would “fill her head” as she put it.

I think mindfulness would help me look at how. Can I do anything today? No. And it is about not being depressed about the past and anxious about the future isn't it?

Sarah had limited familiarity with mindfulness also. For her it had less to do with spirituality and religious faith. She equated it more with things like Yoga or Pilates. She felt that the practice of mindfulness was better suited to people who are not associated with a particular Christian religion or spirituality.

Jack had come across the term mindfulness but hardly ever used it. He was now retired but in his profession as a security consultant and before that in the military, it was not relevant.

George felt that there was an obvious synergy between words such as mindfulness, meditation and contemplation but did not elaborate other than confirm that although he was a gregarious person, and enjoyed the company of other people, especially his friends, family and church group, he liked also the opportunity for quiet and peace, especially the oasis of calm that his home provided.

Of all the participants I interviewed Cathy undoubtedly had the greatest familiarity with the practice of mindfulness on both a personal and professional level. Cathy, as mentioned above, has a doctorate in Clinical Psychology and uses a variation of mindfulness called “mindfulness based cognitive therapy” (MBCT)

In her professional practice mindfulness was currently a hot topic and was everywhere. For Cathy mindfulness and meditation were interlinked. To effectively teach and facilitate mindfulness it was necessary to have it as part of your own spiritual practice. “It comes into how I unwind and how I relax” she said.

Because for me one of the things that differentiates mindfulness and meditation is that mindfulness is how I make sense of that what it means to be in the moment and not to be consumed or worried about the past or the future.

She added, however,

I see meditation and mindfulness as being quite similar. I think on a societal or cultural level meditation is thought about as being a bit more formal or a bit more structured. There are more rules to it. I think in a way mindfulness is a kind of a watered-down meditation. Or a more marketable meditation.

The work of Jon Kabat Zinn⁵⁰⁷ was particularly relevant. She explained,

How many ads do you see in a day? I wish I had money to go shopping or to do this or that. Of course, I know that in terms of how those who set up mindfulness, those who have written about it, Jon Kabat Zinn. He speaks about historically, when we were like men running around in the fields, the hunter gatherer, the main threat to us was wild animals and boars. Our brains would go into flight or fight mode. That would be our main threat but we would come across them once in a while. Today the main threat is this consumerist society. This is what you need, you should have this, this is how you should be, this did how you should look, this is where you should be going on holidays. That is a continuous threat, we are just bombarded with it all the time. Our brains are saturated with it. Basically we are constantly in the state of wanting. Basically his idea is that mindfulness takes us away from that and that all we have is in the present moment. All we have is now. What is the point in worrying about what might have been or will be.

I then asked Cathy to what extent she thought mindfulness had a religious dimension in terms of focus or practice? She paused to think.

The reason I am pausing is because of what I’ve said to people when I am introducing mindfulness concepts. I would say to them that although some of the basis of mindfulness could be rooted in religion, what we’re going to do here today is not about religion. It is a set of coping skills, a new way of dealing with something. Certainly I think its roots lie in Buddhist culture in particular. I know that MBCT or stress reduction mindfulness has had the religious component taken out of it.

⁵⁰⁷ Jon Kabat Zinn has written several books on mindfulness focusing on stress reduction. One of the most important of these, originally published in 1990 and revised in 2013 is *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body to Face Stress, Pain and Illness* (Random House, London).

I followed up her response with another question on the religious dimension of mindfulness. Did she think having a religious element could make it more threatening? She replied,

Yes, absolutely, for a lot of people that would be the case and it would make it less accessible. Because they don't have a belief. Religion is so caught up in a range of things. Difficult life experiences. Working with the Irish community religion is tied up with so much negativity. In other communities just thinking about racism, discrimination, not having the same opportunities. I think that is the case for a lot of people, unfortunately. I don't know, they have become less accepting of religion. It has been taken out.

That being said Cathy's family and a strong religious background had this influenced her mindfulness practice. She continued,

It has had an massive impact on a number of levels. What I do, being in the caring profession, being a therapist, I feel like that all has links to religion. There is a paper that talks about clinical psychologist or family therapists having become the modern-day priests. What we do now was probably done by priests or clergy hundred years ago.

I then asked her if she worked one to one or in groups,

I do both. In my new job, which I've only been doing for two weeks, I am working in children's social services and working with families who whose children are on the edge of care. So trying to prevent them having to go into care. But I suppose the same principles apply to one-to-one stuff as well.

Her work, she added, was directed at the overall well-being of her clients,

Well-being is probably a word that I use on a daily basis. In my work, I don't know if this is that relevant, these words are very interlinked. Mental health and well-being is a phrase I use almost daily. I think that is ultimately what I would be wanting to help those I work with achieve.

Cathy defined well-being in the following way,

I think it is being in a place across a number of areas. For instance, as a child it is education, or as an adult it is work. It also includes living arrangements, financial set up, family set up, spiritual and physical health as well and obviously mental health wise. It is to be in a good enough place, you are safe, secure and content. And that is for yourself rather than for what society says you should be doing.

Living in London and being surrounded by so much wealth had also shaped her attitudes. Peace and quiet were important requisites for her mindfulness practice. It helped her to relax. One practice they did (in mindfulness) was focusing on the noises that you might hear,

and noticing them. Another important aspect of mindfulness is appreciation and being thankful.

Both meditation and mindfulness were part of Joseph's spiritual practice and professional work as a trainer and facilitator. Speaking about mindfulness specifically he explained,

Mindfulness certainly was originally a Buddhist (concept) to my mind. Therefore, for me anyway, it has been around forever sort of thing. As you say it has become popular now, conscious for instance of being part of the mindfulness meditation where you are where you are, conscious of what happening to every part of your body. You do a body sweep sort of stuff. What has happened to my breath? I can feel my breath doing this. When running being mindful of what's happening to my body. Being mindful of being in the present rather than the future or the past.

Joseph also affirmed the impact that his work teaching mindfulness and meditation had on peoples quality of life and the healing that it brought to the world I general.

Yes, and for those particular people improving their quality of life, helping them feel better about things. But I also think, that on a higher level, or a different level, just the act where my partner and I send light and love and healing to people, and to the world, when we do our stuff. It is just sending it out there. It is important and powerful. Again we cannot control the universe but that is part of us doing our bit. I trust that it is having an impact somewhere around. Sending loving kindness to individual and to all beings. Believing and hoping that things will be okay helps them be okay...It is important being able to help people have hope, have a belief in the future, or see themselves getting better. It is a way of helping them be better, or feel better or whatever they don't have to be in the room with you. They don't even have to know. They don't have to know that it is going on.

Shane, being in his mid-thirties, was one of the younger people interviewed. He was very much into the latest technology and spent a lot of time researching it before buying any new gadget or application. He worked mainly Monday to Friday so Saturday was his "down-time." Latterly he had started doing mindfulness meditation using a phone app. He added that this kind of meditation had become more mainstream for people like him. For Shane mindfulness encompassed both meditation and contemplation. Both fell within the practice of mindfulness. From how he understood it mindfulness was something you could apply to every situation in life. He could even be "mindfully drinking" noticing the taste or flavours. He probably practiced mindfulness meditation three times a week using his app.

While on holiday, earlier in the year, in Cambodia and Vietnam, he had travelled around by public bus and really “got in” to using mindfulness. Part of the reason for this was the stress and danger associated with buses and the roads in those countries. He elaborated,

I would listen to the app every time I was on the bus and really sit there. The bus can be very stressful and jumpy, fears of a head-on collision type of thing! I could really find a degree of stability through using the mindfulness app. I found it useful for pushing anxieties away and also circular thinking. Trying to work or trying to work too many variables together at once. I find it very good for that. I will do it any time of day. I do have trouble trying to do it in the office here. It would be a perfect thing to do for 15 minutes and split up the day and probably increase productivity quite a bit. But I worry about it, I have a hard time not being active in the office..

Mindfulness had also helped Shane get along better with his partner. Having had quite a conservative upbringing there were certain subjects that had been “off limits” for discussion. But now,

In terms of mindfulness, having my partner around has helped to calm me in the sense that we can discuss things, especially things that I have never had to discuss, or wanted to, before.

Charles, who as we saw above had travelled to India to explore Buddhist spirituality, recognised mindfulness as a Buddhist term. He added, “it is constructive in terms of day-to-day action, be alert, and living in the present moment.” Although he had read a little about mindfulness after returning from India, being retired, Charles was not familiar with the ways in which mindfulness was being used as a meditative practice in a non-religious context. His focus had been much more on a solitary contemplation.

James recognised that mindfulness was the latest buzz word in organisations and “very common at the moment.” However, he was never quite sure what mindfulness meant.

As a Buddhist practitioner Josh acknowledged the importance and practice of mindfulness and the ways it was being used in Western society. However, he had doubts about whether mindfulness was being used in the right way. From his experience of teaching on an MBA programme he remarked that a lot of people on his courses, who were grappling with their own questions, would write papers on work-life balance and mindfulness.

Josh had not been quick to jump on the “mindfulness bandwagon” as he called it.

If I am honest I have some antagonism to it because I fear, that in part, it can be a bandwagon, but it is a bit more complex because as a sustainability person I notice that in sustainability, and (with) colleagues of mine that work around gender and feminism, it is like a mainstream system. We have a mainstream, powerful corporate business system based around a certain neoliberal, materialist, globalising world view which I have an issue with. But it is a very dominant system. It has its tendrils into our education system, research, culture and media. Any time you have a powerful worldview there is a tendency for things that have a transforming potential, or radical potential, to meet that system and get utterly co-opted or watered down. So before you know it, mindfulness which comes from the Buddhist tradition and means to be radically transformed, and is about compassion, wisdom and all those things. Before you know it it's been changed into a way of getting better business results, success, getting your employees working harder and making them happier. It's not about mindfulness at all. People need to wake up to what is going on there. All sorts of transformative disciplines or approaches that get sucked into the belly of the beast.

I asked Josh if he thought that there was a danger that mindfulness was being used as a productivity tool?

No, nor should it be. It is not that I am cynical about mindfulness. Certainly people like John Kabat-Zinn who started off the mindfulness movement and connected with it in a genuine way, wanted to help people. Actually the mindfulness movement originated through studies around anxiety and depression. So I think that is all coming from a good place. It's good that these ideas come into the West.

Unfortunately business is a place where you can make money if you know about something. If you teach something in your local church hall to a group of anxious elderly people you can make a few quid. If you teach it to a group of executives you get thousands. I fear that with the best will in the world that sometimes their motives are subtle and seductive. They are pretty ambivalent about it.

The other thing I would say is that what is starting to happen, which is a problem, people are training in mindfulness. There is a danger that mindfulness gets a trademark against it and there is a danger that a tradition that goes back thousands of years becomes regulated. So that someone who has been practising mindfulness for over 20 or more years might find themselves prevented from teaching it because they have not gone through a formal training or accreditation process. That could be dangerous.

As a Buddhist I have been well taught. It is a multi-generational thing going on here which is bigger than Buddhism. It is about how different systems of practice and thought and consciousness move around the world. And that is what I am dedicated to. This is a small part of it.

Moving in a slight different tack I asked Josh if he thought that one of the reasons why work-life balance, mindfulness, well-being had become popular was because they were not as threatening as some religious terms, for instance, contemplation? He replied,

When I am talking about “inside and out” from a Buddhist practice you would be getting into ideas about a higher power although we could debate exactly what that means. Mindfulness firstly is a noun, it is a thing. It has been turned very successfully into a product, an eight week course, and a whole thing. That is not all bad because if many thousands of people get to relate to their own mind, begin to meditate, develop some calm. I don’t think that is a bad thing at all. It is a good thing probably. It is a good thing if it is done well.

I think you are right that it stops at a certain point and as I would say, and you would say the same, at some point in a real spiritual contemplative journey things get scary because my ego, the things that you cling onto get blown away. That’s what you really want and I don’t think mindfulness goes there.

I think mindfulness is a first step, a point of connection for people in a very materialist society who would never otherwise go into a Benedictine retreat house, or do a long retreat in a Buddhist monastery. The downside is that if that is what people start thinking spirituality is about then that is not so good. So we don’t know really.

I then asked Josh how he coped with things coming into his mind uninvited, a pressing issue for instance, something that is weighing him down.

So “calm” I would put within the “peace” and “quiet” thing. I think that is what true rest and silence helps you to do, and Sabbath also. Sabbath is not a word I use. But Sabbath as a particular period, either a week, in a day or a lifetime, like a sabbatical where you create the space for whatever is to be. And so, in a funny sort of way it is not your job to manage an anxious thought if it comes up because if I am trying to do something with my anxious thought, or my preoccupation, of which I have many, I am in management mode, activity mode, goal mode, I’m in the mode that I want my experience to be different, I want to be calmer. That is fine and there are techniques to do that. For some mindfulness is a way of doing that. It is having the space and the time to encounter the truth and stay awake to it and still hopefully surrender or even see that the whole thing is sacred in some way.

In that space anxious thoughts may arise and normally when I am not silent, and not at rest and rushed, I could be quite driven by those anxious thoughts such as ‘I’ve got to do these emails or, on the unconscious level, I am just in a state of tension without dealing with it. So for me that is the anxious thoughts being there but without a container or space boundary. From the contemplative and leisure point of view it is not to have an agenda. This must be a space of peace and calm. Rather this is a space that is open. But a space that is open to the inevitable because you do not know what will arise. Things transformed through having the space to be as they are rather than having energy putting into what they are not. There is a lovely phrase in Buddhism about the way you calm an angry bull in a field is just to give it a huge field. If you try to tether or train the bull it gets more whipped up. Eventually if you give it the field the bull will start to settle down.

Our final interviewee Edward, like many of the others, acknowledged that mindfulness had become a bit of a buzz-word. But had it just become, to coin a phrase, ‘meditation-lite’?

I see it as being quite fashionable at the moment and may be, yes, I guess if someone really does it to the nth degree I'm sure it is very powerful. But I'm sure a lot of people are using the word more loosely, 'meditation-lite!'

When I asked Edward why he thought mindfulness had become so popular he answered,

Because I think people see it as a way of counteracting most people's apparent general busy-ness, their fairly constant preoccupation with either work or social media, emails, etc. It is a way of putting a word to something which allows you not to be occupied and to have your five, or ten or fifteen minutes without necessarily having to call it meditation which for some people might be too religious a term, even eastern religion. So it is more secular in one way.

4. WELL-BEING

Although a currently fashionable term in the world of work, especially, human resource management, not all the participants chose to respond. For William contemplation, meditation and mindfulness could be prerequisites for well-being. He was not sure, however, if they would lead to happiness.

John valued well-being on both a physical and spiritual level. For him physical well-being was vitally important. He added,

I've heard so many stories and I've known so many people who've died. I've more friends now who are dead in many cases than I have alive.

Neither were the majority of his friends spiritual people either.

Emily was dismissive of the notion of well-being. She said,

Well-being is incredibly broad. In my profession (i.e. Jungian psychoanalyst) the word is meaningless. It is ubiquitous.

Caroline had a broader understanding of the concept of well-being.

Well-being is just, if I am fine, if I enjoy, if I am relaxed, if I have no physical problems, if I feel good in a psychological and physical way. I just feel good with everything.

Harry was familiar with term well-being. With meditation and contemplation they formed a trio that interacted with each other which ultimately led to happiness. Neither were they necessarily an hierarchy. "There is some going backwards and forwards. Because mindfulness is to do with health as well as well-being."

Alex's understanding of well-being was linked more to a healthy lifestyle, diet and exercise. He explained,

This is strongly linked to your body, or how do you feel in yourself? Are you mindful of what you drink, or what you eat? It is strongly linked to how I feel. In the first part of the year I always fast and I lose a lot of weight. Then I feel much better. My body is much more receptive? I fast. For weeks I do not eat. I just drink water.

I then asked Alex how he survived just on water? He replied,

It is very energising. The people in the team at the foundation say "please stop now you're getting too creative!" My best concentration comes in the first three months of the year. I just do that at the beginning of the year. But not just for one week like a lot of people do. It is a kind of Lenten fast. But longer. When I started it was linked to reciting Lauds and Vespers but although I have lost that link fasting still has for me a strong spiritual dimension. It is a combination of body and soul.

Esme replied in a similar vein to Alex. For her well-being was more than healthy eating and exercise. Social action and outdoor activities were also part of it. She explained,

I think well-being is something that is very important in my life and I think that I have got to a good state of well-being. Good food, good social interaction, outdoor activities and so on.

She added,

Touch wood, being fortunate health wise, but also well-being in a holistic sense. Whenever I have seen any questionnaires about it I seem to score quite high.

Esme had been on a form of medication for depression for over 25 years and had been worried by reports in the press that her tablets could accelerate the onset of dementia. However she was reassured by her doctor. He asked her,

Let's do a tick list of your life? Do you have lots of activity, do you eat well, are you overweight? Do you have a social life? I replied 'yes' to everything. He said 'carry on taking the tablets.'

Esme was reassured, she commented, "That's why I think my well-being is probably just as it should be." She also made an observation about her children's generation. She said,

It is interesting. I look at them and their measure of success is about well-being and having work-life balance. It is not about money."

Jack was aware of the term well-being but hardly ever used it in his everyday life.

Moving on to Cathy. Because of her work as a clinical psychologist Cathy was the most expansive in her understanding of well-being,

It is interesting seeing the word well-being because it is probably a word that I use on a daily basis. In my work, I don't know if this is that relevant, these words are very interlinked. Mental health and well-being is a phrase I use almost daily. I think that is ultimately what I would be wanting to help those I work with achieve.

I then asked Cathy how she would define well-being? She replied,

Working with those who are very much the underclass, the vulnerable of society and trying to work in a way with parents, making early interventions and prevent these vicious cycles continuing. Mental well-being needs to be tied more with social services and moved away from a medical setting.

Shane also brought a different insight to his understanding of well-being. For him it was very much integrative and allied to physical health.

I would associate well-being as much more integrative of body and mind, holistic and much more to do with physical health and that type of thing. I guess like well-being it is more of a state.

Shane added that he made the best decisions in a state of happiness and well-being.

Charles regarded well-being as a "new age" term. He appreciated its importance however. He preferred to think in terms of "joyfulness."

Edward was more familiar with the idea of well-being, and associated it with "social impact measurement."

Well-being is to me a worldwide thing including physical well-being as well as mental... Well-being could almost include economic as well. I associate well-being more with spas or retreats which is slightly different use of the word. I also associate it with, in my world, social impact measurement, scales of well-being. There are several scales of 1 to 10 or 1 to 5 using questions that you can ask. You get people to self-report. There is one that has an (smart-phone) app called "Mappiness" which pops up a thing on your phone at random times during the day and you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10. How happy are you feeling, or how big is your well-being? And it asks what you are doing at the time. It takes in all that data and then tries to calibrate it.

Although Edward did not use social impact measurement one of the trainers he engaged in his organisation did,

No, but we have a trainer who comes to speak to our associates and he has talked about

it and used it for himself. Although I guess in a slightly tighter sense maybe, I might think about it as more to do with the mind rather than the body. Then I would think of it more as mental well-being related to mental health, anxiety or depression. So it has a slightly more medical orientation. David Cameron years ago talked about replacing GDP by GWP, (Gross Well-being Product instead of Gross Domestic Product). Bhutan is famed for measuring that on a national scale and having quite high levels of well-being.

5. HAPPINESS

William was ambivalent about the meaning and role of happiness in his life. Speaking of contemplation, meditation and mindfulness together he said,

If part of my life they could lead to well-being. Whether it leads to happiness or not I don't really know.

Neither was he sure of how to define happiness. "Happiness kind of drums up notions of, images in my mind I guess, of smiley happy people."

For John happiness was his life-long goal.

Yes, I'd say that's probably right, actually. So well-being yes, spiritual well-being as well, and happiness is the most important one of all those, however you get there, however you achieve that, it doesn't matter if somebody says they think otherwise about you. If you yourself, you could be deluded, as well, but if you yourself have happiness, that's the most important, there's no doubt about that.

Speaking about her work-life balance Emily acknowledged that there was a problem.

Happiness is the thing I am trying to address. I would say that I think we have a lovely life, privileged. We can't possibly complain about going to the theatre and concerts too often but the problem is as I say to my husband "my cup overfloweth." That is the difficulty; making vacant time doing the good things and you are not doing the work things.

For Zoe achieving a state of happiness was a life-long project.

Becky regarded well-being and happiness as outcomes arising from meditation, contemplation and mindfulness. The challenge for her was trying to be present in what you are doing at the moment. Happiness was a positive warm feeling, a lighter feeling. It was more of a head thing which she associated with the upper part of her body.

Happiness was that bit of sparkle. Happiness and joy were interconnected. “Joyfulness was on a higher tone too,” she remarked. There was also a strong link between happiness and how you understood success and failure in your life and the lives of others. For the last ten years of her working life she had been a professional coach. She explained,

I would now see success much more so in terms of friendships, the love I give to others and receive rather than the businesses that I have built up all the house I have got. Also the moments of happiness. I think using failure is quite a harsh word isn't it? It is a very comparative word. To know that you have tried your best, or given of your best, the word shame crops up. We can hold the shame of not being good enough. I think that has made me a lot calmer over the years. Often I am working with people in their 40s or 50s. You can see this real anguish about being driven. I have got to get this right. Trying to do things and working all the hours. Almost missing the point really. So success and failure. I also think of success in terms of the long-term rather than just the immediate. We can get quick wins and they are quite fun. But longer term we need to ask are we doing it well? Or, are we cutting nasty corners to get it right?

Max, whose first language is German, was a little unsure about the meaning of some of the terms so he translated them into German on his iPhone App Dictionary. Out of the five words happiness was the one that jumped out at him. He continued,

That is probably the word that I have used the most in the past when people asked me, what do you actually want, what do you seek, strive for. What do you want to achieve? More often than not I would reply I want to be happy.

I then asked Max to expand more on how he understood happiness. He continued,

A good understanding for me is being a good servant. So what makes me happy is to make other people happy. That has an effect on me. If I see that I can help or support people. That is what motivates me. The word servant does not particularly sit well in this day and age. It has a connotation that is not popular. Honestly reflecting on myself I think I am that kind of leader if at all, who likes to serve.

I followed up this statement by asking if he would describe himself as a “servant leader?” He replied that he had not thought about himself in those terms but added “now that you say it perhaps I am?”

Happiness for Caroline was a very rare moment.

It does not stay for a long time. It is just a moment when sometimes you realise it is over almost without realising it was a happy moment or a happy day. Life changes, things change, people's change.

When I asked he what makes her happy she replied,

That is a good question. Something makes me happy if I have the people around me that make me feel good. Where I can be myself. I don't have to play a role. It makes me happy. If I can do the things I am good at, the things I like, play to my strength that makes me happy. To see that I can share moments with others, give something of my own to others as well.

Lilian singled out happiness as being the by-product of the other four words. She explained,

For me, the odd one out is happiness. I think that the top four can be contributed to, but happiness is a by-product of other things. I have heard people say in the past that everyone wants to be happy in life don't they?

Similarly Harry identified happiness as being the end result, the outcome from a practice of meditation, contemplation or mindfulness. He explained,

Happiness and well-being stick out. Mindfulness is the "in thing" at the moment as we know. Meditation and contemplation go together. So I would look on that as needing the first three to achieve well-being, and if you have that you can achieve happiness.

In contrast to both Lilian and Harry, Alex regarded happiness as the weakest word in the group. He explained,

For me happiness it is the weakest word in the group. My nature is more to be happy. If things are going well I'm pretty fine. It is great to have times of happiness. The different worlds in which I move around, within myself, if my life is well balanced, I'm in a good mood, there are strong positive powers.

Following earlier replies from other participants I then asked Alex if he had a preference for using the word joy rather than happiness.

Joy is going much deeper. There is a difference between happiness and joy. In that meaning of joy there are moments of saying yes to the world and yourself.

Although brought up a Catholic Alex and his family had distanced themselves from their local pastor. He followed up on the reasons for this by expressing his dismay at some of the negativity and conservatism prevalent in some sections of the Church, in particular his local Church, that undermined happiness,

The older I get the more critical I get about the negative side of religion, the negative

side of churches and the negative side of closed communities who believe they have the truth. If you look at fundamentalist extremes in religion they create more damage in the world than happiness. If you'd take an overall approach I think there is no way back beyond enlightenment.

Alex continued by making a strong defence of his position,

Every person has the right whatever religion, gender, or sexuality to define and to see as untouchable what they believe. The more I see closed communities preaching that they have the truth in an aggressive way the more I am deeply sceptical. I am fighting to defend those who have a more common sense view. There is no way back from the old ways. If religion fits into that it is fine. Ways of spirituality are helpful for that. If you use God as a something to harm and to do negative things against other people I do not believe in that. And that is radical.

Esme felt that contentment and joy were important elements in happiness.

Contentment is part of it. I do feel, because I am somebody who is very emotional, not as emotional as I used to be. I do feel things very strongly and there are days when I feel real happiness. Seeing somebody succeed somewhere, not just my family, seeing a brilliant play, seeing somebody get better from an illness, just taking my two-year-old granddaughter out, seeing her developing, that is true happiness.

She continued,

Joy is more spiritual if that makes sense? What comes to mind is CS Lewis "Surprised by Joy." The joy that comes from being at one with somebody else. I think that is different from mundane, well not mundane, that's almost an oxymoron, day-to-day happy bouts. Joy is a wonderful word I think. It seems to be part of, I feel joy.

The first weekend I went to Douai and we all went to Mass. I felt utter joy at that. I had not been to a Catholic Mass before. The homily was about reconciliation and why people who are apart for 40 years come together again and wish that they'd never separated. I came home from that weekend feeling utter joy.

By coincidence, or perhaps as part of her preparation for the interview, Sarah had been reading an article about happiness the day before. It was about how the pursuit of happiness can bring about unhappiness because you attach a certain amount of expectation. She added,

You could be over-thinking happiness. This is quite interesting. It makes you appreciate life, and the beauty around you, just a little bit more. So I think happiness would be closely related to that. I think joy is a deeper sense of happiness. I think happiness would be more fleeting while joy is more long-lasting. That is how it seems to me.

In general I feel like people who don't spend time slowing down, thinking and reflecting, they find more reasons to complain about life than those who spend time contemplating, meditating or just being mindful of things. They are short of time to take a step back and reflect. It gives you a different perspective. It makes you appreciate life, and the beauty around you, just a little bit more. So I think happiness would be closely related to that.

Jack hardly ever used the word happiness. It could cover a multitude of areas. Cathy, as one might expect, having trained as a clinical psychologist, had a more developed understanding of happiness especially in the context of her professional work especially working with people who were under-privileged. She cited consumerism as one of the main causes of unhappiness.

Happiness would be the outcome wherever you're at in a holistic sense. I would not be doing the job I'm doing if it was purely focused on economic happiness even though society tends to view it as this. It is hard to not feel like one should have more money, or more things, or a bigger house or a better salary or a bigger car whatever. I think that is what we are fed with the whole time particularly my generation and the younger generation. It is a massive thing. Consumerism, but ultimately that leads to unhappiness. Today the main threat is this consumerist society. This is what you need, you should have this, this is how you should be, this did how you should look, this is where you should be going on holidays. That is a continuous threat, we are just bombarded with it all the time. Our brains are saturated with it. Basically we are constantly in the state of wanting.

Joseph considered happiness to have rather an ambiguous meaning.

Happiness, I suppose it is usually considered around being jolly and laughing and being full of energy and all of that. Can you still be OK without laughing, or joking, or throwing your hands in the air?

In contrast to this kind of extroversion could not happiness be equivalent to "just being, being content or being at peace? This can be happiness too," he added.

Shane borrowed a concept from Aristotle to explain happiness,

Well I know that Aristotle said the purpose of the life was to achieve Eudaimonia, happiness or fulfilment.

He added,

I think happiness is a result of living well, but if it's set as a goal in itself you are destined to fail. I think it is more an end product rather than a result, the end state.

For good measure, Shane added a further quote, this time from a modern philosopher,

Schopenhauer who says that “happiness is the absence of pain.” As mentioned earlier Shane thought that he made his best decisions in a state of happiness and well-being.

For Charles joyfulness was more important than happiness. He then proceeded to explain how he thought happiness and joyfulness were different by using examples from the lives of the saints, especially the Christian martyrs. He added,

These are the kind of people I aspired to be, they were the worldly heroes. But since then it is very clearly the saints. They are my yardsticks against which I want to assess my success or not. It goes back to the joy and happiness we were talking about earlier. And success in the context of the saints mean something quite different. There is one that came to mind earlier in this conversation and that was about St Anthony of the Desert. When he was in dialogue with God and talking about the holiness he had achieved God said something like ‘Simon the Shoemaker has reached a higher level of sanctity than you. And he makes shoes in Alexandria.’ There is some kind of story along those lines. So that brought him down to earth. The saints radiating joy, but not necessarily happy. You may read about happiness being impossible but there is some eminence of joy. Suffering gives us some kind of spiritual fruit.

Although he appreciated the importance of happiness in peoples’ lives it was not something that he necessarily subscribed to himself. Ultimate happiness could only be achieved in the next world in the form of the beatific vision and friendship with God.

For James happiness was more a state of being or contentment, rather than contemplation or meditation which certainly imply some sort of action, albeit in the case of contemplation, not something particularly, that required a lot of effort, or indeed any effort.

Well-being is for me a state of good health that no doubt helps but is not always necessary for the achievement of happiness which I think is probably just a state of contentment.

James went on to acknowledge that meditation was a way, for some people, to achieve happiness although it implied a state of being perhaps less than entirely happy.

Josh made a perceptive distinction between happiness as a habit or an outcome.

Similarly, well-being and happiness; although some would say they are outcomes, you could try and cultivate those things. So a lot of Western neuroscience and psychology say that they are habits. Some are practices and some are results. Or, you could say that all can be practice and all can be results.

As a Buddhist practitioner Josh understood happiness differently. He explained,

Buddhists interestingly enough don't talk all that much about happiness. Happiness would be considered a by-product. Even then it is quite emergent. Because in the West we are so goal oriented we think we are seeking happiness. My teacher once famously said "it is not about being happy it is much more interesting than that." I think they would say happiness, or well-being, contentment, joy comes from being in right alignment. For me joy is not the same as happiness. In fact, Buddhists speak more about joy.

Following up on his comment about joy I asked Josh if more emphasis was placed on joy because happiness generally excluded the possibility of pain. In response he used the analogy of the pain of childbirth. Then he continued elaborating on the connection between "loving kindness" and wanting happiness for others, from which arose compassion.

Buddhists, when they are practising loving kindness, the natural emergent thing that happens is the love for others. If you're honest about it doesn't happen quickly for everyone. Generally there is a sense of wanting happiness for others. May all beings be happy. From that arises compassion because you realise that not all beings are happy. Because you are aware of the suffering of others you also have to recognise joy in their suffering. There will be times of happiness and times of unhappiness. The path is as much about how you react and respond and acknowledge that. In the end that could be true happiness. But in this society I think it's more like a Jungian shadow. If we focus too much on happiness we ignore other people's unhappiness. There is something about the fullness of life which contains happiness and misery. There is certainly a lot of Buddhist voices and verses that say that the nature of the mind is happiness and unhappiness.

Josh then went on to make a point about how happiness and peace can continually be in opposition to misery and conflict.

There are times when we do not feel peaceful, we feel disrupted, all the world is disrupted. I think peace like happiness in a deep way is a very meaningful thing. Happiness includes misery. Peace includes conflict.

Edward, like some of the other participants, made a distinction between the first four words (meditation, contemplation, mindfulness, well-being) and happiness. He explained,

Happiness I guess I see as a bit distinct from the other four in so far as the first four are relatively neutral. They are things that you can practise and so on. Happiness is potentially a result, or a state of mind and so on. I guess I also see well-being and

happiness a two words that are linked. So again, people, speaking of trying to increase happiness, again this is in a kind of policy or social impact measurement.

Neither was happiness is a state you could necessarily plan for, create, or engineer in a particularly designed way he added. Edward's final comment was on the link between happiness and joy. He concluded,

In that I would see joy as being emergent, or linked to happiness. I hear joy most often in a religious context so I associated with a more spiritual kind of thing. For some reason I may be thinking of joy as being slightly more enduring than happiness. More durable. Happiness may be more fleeting. Joy is slightly more long-term.

SUMMARY

In this chapter on understanding contemplative leisure a number of common themes and ideas have emerged that give us a picture of how the participants understood terms such as meditation, contemplation, mindfulness, well-being and happiness. Some found it more difficult than others to differentiate between the first two terms, meditation and contemplation. On a few occasions meditation and contemplation were understood as the same or, at best, the distinction was blurred. Because some associated contemplation with religious experience or belief, the term meditation had become a more acceptable way of describing contemplation in a secular workplace context. Nonetheless there was a considerable amount of congruity in what people said about the first two terms. Inevitably there is some overlap but in this summary I am going to take each in order.

(i) Meditation. Most understood meditation as distinct from contemplation and, for some, meditation was seen as a prerequisite to contemplation. In other words, contemplation flowed from meditation. Meditation was characterised by a degree of formality and structure and the need to actively engage with some form of stimulus, for instance, a text, picture, music, or being out in the countryside. It was a process also that engaged the intellect and the imagination and, for some, the senses such as the smell of the countryside or birdsong. A couple of people mentioned the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* as a way of meditation. At least two others referred to *Lectio Divina* referring to the classical four-fold sequence of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

The absence of noise was important for many too, although some made the point that even in a noisy, crowded environment they could immerse themselves in a bubble impervious to what was going on around them. Given the classic understanding of

meditation (and contemplation) where solitude, quiet and ambience are critical, this seems to indicate that some people, especially the younger participants had adapted so that they could meditate where they were, irrespective of surroundings. This was illustrated by those who spoke about being able to meditate on the train or crowded underground, or used meditation as was a way of coping with the noise and boredom of a long-haul flight.

Neither did all those interviewed think that being still was always necessary. In fact a number found that walking (especially the rhythm of the steps), circle dancing, swimming or cycling all lent themselves to a meditative practice. When asked how they used their free time for contemplative leisure, participants cited twenty-seven different activities(see Appendix E).

But there were others who definitely needed to be alone, in a quiet, still place to meditate, aided perhaps by incense or a burning candle. For others, they needed to be in a chapel, church or alternative sacred space where they could focus on the Blessed Sacrament, or crucifix, a statue, or a sacred picture such as an icon. All this was an indispensable aspect of their meditative practice. Suitable background music could also be introduced and a couple of the younger participants used Apps on their smart phones to provide this music and/or a guided meditation.

Another aspect of meditation was that some people found it easier to do in a group rather than alone, for example an organised prayer group or Quaker meeting. It did not seem to matter if it was a silent group but the presence of others provided some form of spiritual synergy that facilitated the experience.

Neither did meditation always need to be planned. In fact, some of the most rewarding experiences or outcomes from meditation were spontaneous. Some had developed the habit of utilising a spare couple of minutes, perhaps in between clients, or waiting for someone, as an opportunity for meditation. Or, they might use some “mindless” repetitive activity such as filing away papers, or weeding the garden, to meditate. Often these spontaneous experiences provided a certain insight or a solution to a problem they had been grappling with. There were others, who when they missed their regular meditation time, due to work or other commitments, felt frustrated.

Use of Eastern meditative practices such as Yoga, Shakti Dance and Kundalini were mentioned, especially by those who were claimed to be more spiritual than religious. The rhythm, flow, structure and choreography of the dance helped to balance the body and free them from stress. Breathing and posture could help to. Although none of the participants claimed to have adopted the “lotus” position as in yoga, one or two had used prayer stools, or cushions, to aid posture. Sitting with the back upright and feet placed firmly on the floor was not uncommon. Noticing one’s breathing was important too; for instance, at each inhalation they breathed in love and at each exhalation breathed out anxiety and so carried on calming the body.

Although I shall recap more on mindfulness later, meditation, providing it focused on living in the present moment, and not the past or the future, was an important aspect of “mindfulness meditation.”.

(ii) Contemplation. Many of those interviewed realised the importance of contemplation but added how difficult it was. Neither did they appear to have such a clear understanding of the practice as they did of meditation. One participant, quoting Jung’s maxim “the second part of life was more about self than ego,” commented that there was more of a need for a contemplative practice as one got older. The lack of silence and the opportunity to be alone was also a barrier. Another associated contemplation with “inward thinking” or “being with her thoughts” and several used the term “reflection” to describe contemplation. One described how this reflection had helped to come to terms with different failures and help to turn her life around. Another defined it as a “re-creative” process. It was also a way of seeing things in a different light. “Strong-self dialogue” was another phrase used to describe contemplation.

There was a sense among some of the interviewees that contemplation was something for experts, especially people who had gone through a long period of spiritual training associated with a religious practice. The impression given by many of the participants was that contemplative practice was breaking loose from institutionalised religion. But others saw contemplation as an innate ability; something that is part of their life, something that we can all do, even if it is difficult, given the right circumstances. Here, trust, self-belief, detachment and letting go were key pre-requisites. Another commented how contemplation could give energy and power to one’s life.

Neither was contemplation necessarily linked to a particular place, routine or time. It was more a “state of being,” it was the individual’s default mode. As one participant expressed it, “it was to be living in the presence of God at that moment in time. It pervades all one’s life whether you are awake or asleep. Active or passive.” This “state of being” whether you were busy, or not, gave you a better, clearer, view of the world; you saw things differently, or better still your vision was “enlightened.”

Many commented on the association between contemplation and mindfulness. And, for a couple of participants, living in the present, which was an important aspect of mindfulness, was a key component of their contemplative practice even if they did not practice mindfulness itself. Some linked their contemplative practice to prayer, but not all. They appreciated the opportunity to be part of a supportive group that met regularly. This provided a space free from distractions, mobile phones and emails.

A couple of participants, who were amateur artists, described the creative process as contemplative, especially when moving from a figurative to an impressionist approach; starting with a blank canvas and letting your thoughts carry you away. Keeping a journal was another way of facilitating contemplation because you were frequently reflecting on what you were writing. If you wanted, you could come back to it and use it as a stepping stone for subsequent reflections. As with meditation, walking, bike riding, swimming, could all be conducive to contemplation. Another remarked about how being contemplative had helped in organising, more clearly, complex thoughts. It provided a form of clarity.

There was also an active and passive aspect to contemplation. The active aspect involved a great deal of thinking, figuring things out, even applying logic to the situation. Whereas, the passive aspect, allowed your mind to wander more, your mind was open to inspiration, perhaps something you were reading. It had a strong creative component. A contemplative practice helped people make important lifestyle choices or career decisions. And, at a more mundane level, it was a way of relaxing, restoring one’s batteries, especially if you have a lot of responsibility or stress in your job. The act of just going into a contemplative space for thirty minutes, even if it is sitting in your car, has a restorative and healing effect.

A further important characteristic of contemplation was its ethical component. It was a process that helped an individual align their moral compass and values. Although the word conscience was never used there is an obvious association. One or two expressed the importance of contemplation in the context of the bigger issues about life especially those affecting the Common Good. One person contrasted the bigger focus on life issues with the smaller focus. Both were needed but the individual had to contemplate more deeply, especially when some views or attitudes affecting one's own life and the life of others, were entrenched or impacted negatively. There was a positive outcome too in so far as it promoted well-being and happiness.

We saw also how Eastern religions, especially Buddhism, had influenced the views of some of the participants about contemplation. One remarked that contemplation, in countries where Buddhism was practised, was far more integrated into their day to day life. A further comment was about the use of a word or a mantra as a contemplative tool. Integrating Western Spirituality, for instance, the writings of St John of the Cross or the *Cloud of Unknowing*, with Buddhism had been important and the Buddhist approach to contemplation had enabled one interviewee to be far more calm and thoughtful. Emptiness, stillness and quietness were key components of this contemplative practice. Contemplating on the lives of Christian saints, especially those who had suffered mental anguish, had helped another participant cope with his own stress, especially at work.

Finally, only a couple spoke about the "Divine focus" of contemplation. Perhaps they took this for granted but only one participant explicitly understood the contemplative state as being a grace, or a gift from God.

(iii) Mindfulness. When asked for their understanding or experience of mindfulness the participants had a considerable amount to say. For many of them it was the latest trend, the latest "buzz-word" in the world of work. It was also a transformative tool, for instance mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT), was used by clinical psychologists and therapists to help clients, or family groups, cope with social problems, addictions, stress, disruption, mental and physical pain in their lives. Mindfulness had a wide range of applications and can be applied to many situations and settings; the world of work, in healthcare, in social services or just as a personal tool.

Most understood it also as having strong links with meditation and contemplation which led to well-being. One of its important characteristics was that it was areligious, unthreatening or neutral. Although its origins were in an ancient spiritual practice, it did not have to be associated with a particular faith belief, deity or higher power. No one needed to be asked to convert to a religious faith or join a Church in order to embrace mindfulness. One or two associated mindfulness with yoga. One voice of dissent, while recognising the importance of living in the present moment and developing one's awareness, paradoxically perhaps, was very dismissive of mindfulness, describing it as rubbish or "fashionable new age stuff."

The importance of being "in the present moment" was frequently stressed in the interviews. Being much more conscious of what is happening to you physically, especially if your body or mind was experiencing some kind of acute or long-term pain. Mindfulness had a calming effect. One person commented how it had helped her cope with a temporary obsession. It extended also to other people, being aware of their presence, listening to them carefully, giving them, as far as possible, your undivided attention and minimising distractions in conversations you might have with them. Mindfulness had the power to change people for the good. For those who worked in human resource management it was recognised as a useful tool for developing talent, being better connected to yourself, giving confidence and improving the quality of judgements.

Mindfulness was not as structured as meditation. An individual could adapt it more easily to their own personality and needs. For instance, it was a social tool that someone could use to control appetites, addictions to food, drink, gambling and in extreme cases even sexual deviancy. So, there could be a strong moral component to mindfulness. It provided coping tools that could change a person's behaviour for the better and for the good of society. In fact, one participant commented that therapists, clinical psychologists had become the "new priests" of the twenty-first century. They had taken on a role that had traditionally been that of clergy and religious.

One couple who practised "mindfulness meditation" described how they could use mindfulness to reach out to others. They did not quite describe it as prayer, in the traditional understanding of the term, but they would send their light, their love and

healing to others. For them, there was a vicarious aspect to their mindfulness. It was not just about themselves.

A few others spoke of the way in which mindfulness minimised anxiety or distress especially in the midst of some perceived danger, for instance when they thought their life or physical well-being was at risk. It had also given them permission to speak out more often, overcome inhibitions, develop greater intimacy and trust with friends and be more open to others.

Some were slightly less enthusiastic about the practice of mindfulness for a number of reasons. There was a danger of the practice being misused. Life coaches, or trainers, or management consultants who claimed to be familiar with the process were not really practitioners themselves. There seemed to be a consensus amongst a number of the participants that you needed to be able to apply it to your own life before applying to others. The second danger was the commercialisation of mindfulness. It was becoming a business, a money-maker, where the interests of the client were not always paramount. It had been turned into an “eight week course” just like any other management course. A third concern was that mindfulness was being used in a superficial way. It was not getting to the root of the problem. One person described it as “I want to keep things as they are but at the same time feel much better.” Consequently it was being used as a “transformative” or productivity tool within organisations to bring about change in employees while maintain the “status quo.” Mindfulness, something which had the power to transform radically, was being watered down to suit a different set of objectives such as profit, working harder, increasing output and efficiency.

But on the whole, the majority of the participants appreciated the importance and usefulness of mindfulness in the modern workplace and in a secular world. Its use seemed to fall into two distinct, but sometimes overlapping areas. First it was a personal meditation technique used regularly to ground the practitioner in their daily routine, to provide better work-life balance, to enhance their mental health. Secondly it was used as a therapy or intervention, especially in a clinical context, where individual clients or groups were experiencing severe psychological or physical trauma.

(iv) Well-being. Not all chose to give an interpretation of well-being, and even if they did, their answers were often brief. There were, however, some insightful comments

about well-being. Like mindfulness, most recognised well-being as another “buzz-word” and very much in vogue, especially in the workplace. For some, well-being followed on from meditation and contemplation, it was the outcome which then led to happiness. But a couple of participants were quite dismissive of the concept, one going as far to say that the term was meaningless.

Well-being had a physical, spiritual and mental dimension to it. Generally speaking most understood well-being in a “holistic” sense, but some in a very broad way, others narrower. Well-being meant that you were enjoying life, were relaxed, had no psychological problems, were physically fit, generally feeling good about everything. One participant described well-being as being “joyful.” Physical health, particularly, was very important, especially as one got older. He commented on how many of his younger friends and colleagues had died prematurely because they had not “looked after their health.” Several referred to the importance of diet and physical exercise. Social interaction was also very important but not elaborated on. Others had a narrower understanding of well-being relating it to mental health, anxiety and depression. Or, narrower still, it was just about going to the spa pool now and then!

In the context of well-being, one person described the concept of “social impact measurement” that included not only physical and mental well-being but economic well-being as well. Instead of speaking about Gross Domestic Product (GDP) one should speak about Gross Well-being Product (GWP). But not everyone placed economic prosperity or money so high on their list. One commented that as long as people were healthy and had a good work-life balance, that was all that mattered. Another, who worked as a clinical psychologist, felt that well-being should be tied in more with social services than mental health. A couple of participants defined happiness as the natural result of well-being, which in turn flowed from meditation and contemplation. But, there was not necessarily a hierarchy. You could move, regress even, from one to another. One commented that he always made his best decisions when in a state of well-being and happiness.

(v) Happiness. Participants seemed to find the final word “happiness” less easy to define. It was a very subjective term and could mean different things to different people. For a number, happiness was their ultimate goal in life. At one end of the spectrum

happiness was about “smiley happy people,” one could look happy, but appearances could deceive, underneath you could be sad, putting on a brave face, or even be distressed about something. For another it was characterised by “feeling fine and things going well.” On a deeper level, it was the accumulative outcome from meditation, contemplation, mindfulness and well-being combined, or at least from some of those elements. One person expressed happiness as all aspects of life “being in right alignment.”

The emotional makeup of an individual also played a part in how they understood or experienced happiness. Some were “more emotional” than others. Neither were emotions constant; happiness could be something that is triggered by a particular event or a meeting with someone, reading a book, watching a film or a play. Bearing in mind that the people interviewed represented a broad range of personality types this was not surprising.

But, one could be deluded or deceived about what true happiness was. One interviewee highlighted the problem with consumerism. People think that having some particular product or service “will make them happy.” This was not always true. In fact, this kind of thinking could be quite delusional. Another spoke about having to address the issue of happiness in her life. She had a good life style, opportunities for overseas travel and holidays, dining out and access to the arts but there was something missing. She needed to explore further what truly made her happy. Having unrealistic goals, or goals that were simply not attainable, could be a barrier to true happiness. Being content with what you have, acceptance of where you were in life, was probably quite important in the search for happiness.

In terms of religious belief and practice one participant expressed the view that in his own experience negativity and religious fundamentalism could, so often, be a barrier to achieving true happiness. It was an attitude that could destroy, rather than build up, community.

On a more positive side a significant minority equated genuine happiness with joy, contentment and peace. In fact they thought that joy was a better word than happiness. Achieving happiness (or joy) was a life-long project for many. Joy was a far more enduring experience, it was not as transitory as happiness, and, with joy came

acceptance of the necessary pain or hardship you might have to go through to attain it. Some linked happiness to how you cope with success and failure in your own life and the lives of others. There was a strong link also between happiness and friendship; not so much the number of friends, but the quality of friendship. In these friendships, giving to others, especially your time rather than money, was far more important than receiving, as was helping that friend to flourish and share in his or her success. In this respect one mentioned the concept of “being a good servant,” in other words, making others happy, and eventually sharing in their happiness. And, there was a corollary to this; the concept of justice came into play. My happiness could be someone else’s unhappiness. Through my pursuit of happiness am I contributing to the misery of others?

Finally, two participants raised the bar to happiness considerably. For one, quoting Aristotle, happiness, or to use the technical term, *eudaimonia* was the ultimate goal. This he linked to the goal of a contemplative practice. For the other happiness was *beatitudinis* (beatitude), the beatific vision, enjoying the friendship of God, or union with God, the ultimate goal of any Christian. But something, he reminded me, could only come about in the next world. Here, on earth, suffering, misery and conflict were inevitable aspects of our search for happiness and our journey towards God.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONTEXT FOR CONTEMPLATIVE LEISURE

QUIET, PEACE, SILENCE, REST, SABBATH & VACATION

1. QUIET, PEACE AND SILENCE

I have deliberately grouped these three terms, quiet, peace and silence together because many of the participants being interviewed either saw these terms as being synonymous, complimentary or having some synergy. This first set of three words is more about the interior disposition in relation to their physical surroundings, whereas the second set of three words (rest, sabbath and vacation), described in the next section, is about location and time.

William described quiet, peace, silence and sabbath as being “okay.” Although he saw quiet and peace as being synonymous there was probably some difference. Generally though he thought of them as being the same. Peace was perhaps a stronger word mainly because he described himself as an introvert. But, he qualified this by adding that peaceful places are less noisy, but not always necessarily quiet. He then used the example of his relationship with his wife and son which he described as “stable and at peace.”

John was more of an extrovert in terms of his relationship with peace, quiet and silence. His spirituality was animated more by what he did, especially meeting people rather than sitting in a room and being quiet and thinking. However, as a practising Catholic, in contrast to the “by-rote” nature of some parts of the Mass, he found some of the silent moments, for instance, the short pause after Holy Communion, before the concluding prayers, very helpful. He would use this time to recite quietly some of the prayers of thanksgiving at the back of his missal. John was now retired but when he had been in full-time work it had been more difficult to “switch off” even in Church. There was always something going through your mind.

Even in leisure time there’s a demand on your time. We create a lot of it ourselves ‘cos we have gadgetry these days which is often intrusive – it can be intrusive into quiet time. I used to sit and listen to music quite a bit when I was a younger man.

He admitted that although he now had more time he should listen to music more.

I should do because I have the time but I don't. Because quiet time listening to music is actually quite good for me.

Except on rare occasions, he had always found it difficult to achieve that inner quiet or reflection when surrounded by people, especially if it was noisy environment.

The most important of the three words for Evelyn was silence. She added although one of her sons lived in her house, it was still possible to be quiet. Evelyn stressed the value of silence using the term as being synonymous with quiet. She needed silence to listen. When staying in a monastic guest house she had appreciated the opportunity of the *Great Silence* from 10.00 pm to after breakfast the following day.⁵⁰⁸

Interestingly Evelyn made a connection between peace and diet. If she did not eat the right food she lost that sense of peace. I then asked her how she managed to find a quiet space at work. She replied that she usually tried to find a local church where she could pop in. This enabled her to have a quiet opportunity to think about things. "You can have very good ideas then," she added. Following up on her response I asked Evelyn if that quiet time was creative? She replied that this was the time when she got her best ideas even though she was not actively engaged or thinking.

Quiet time was for Emily and opportunity to contemplate and to be with her thoughts. She had to have a certain amount of silence every day. If she did not, "the tank ran dry." She added,

I can't bear it. I actually end up feeling quite ill. I absolutely do have to have quiet. That is the one thing that is important for me.

I was interviewing Emily in her consulting room tucked away in a corner of a modern office block looking out onto an enclosed courtyard. She remarked,

Here you can tell that it is very quiet. In between clients it is hopeless as I only have eight minutes. I just try and find it where I can get it. But my quiet has to have a bit of length to it.

Emily organised her working day so that, if possible, she did not start seeing clients before 10.00 am. Sometimes there was another chunk of quiet at home before her

⁵⁰⁸ The Great Silence or *Magnum Silentium* as it is also called is common in many religious houses and communities. It usually begins after night prayers (Compline) and ends the following morning after Lauds or Morning prayer depending on the timetable.

husband got in from work. She just tried to find quiet times when she could. She also found music very useful. Her husband had bought her a music centre for her consulting room. Emily might only listen to music, usually classical, for a few minutes in between clients, but during this time she could be doing some kind of repetitive work such as filing, photocopying, or assembling documents. Although she still had to think (put the papers on the right pile!) this background activity gave her the opportunity to be silent in a different way. It took her to a different place. The music fulfilled a different psychological need. She added, “I don’t have to think as if I was reading an academic text.” She agreed enthusiastically to my suggestion that this technique, of creating a silent space during a busy day, was somewhat analogous to the monastic routine of manual labour: simple, repetitive tasks that required little concentration and allowed the body to focus on prayer. It is also a reminder of the power of music to elevate the soul.

Quiet time was also essential for creating a space to make important decisions. The value of this quiet time as opposed to “fast time” as she called it, was to mull things over, to work things out, to become aware of new things. “If you find some time, different layers come to the surface,” she added. Later on in the interview Emily commented on the extraordinary lengths that people will go to avoid silence. She explained,

We are becoming a society that is finding it more and more difficult to be silent and modern day society is supporting that, avoidance of silence and the space for contemplation. So I think there are those sorts of issues around with contemplation as well.

Zoe and her partner lived in a quiet corner of southern England. Frequently, when the weather allowed, they sought quiet in the local parks, woodlands and paths.

Going to nature is really important so we will go to the park and take our breakfast and sit and be in nature because there won’t be any people around, just the deer and the quiet. That is a really good time to reflection and so on.

They had chosen their home because of its quiet location. But there was a difference between sitting in the garden and the open countryside.

I think the landscape makes a difference. We could sit out here in the garden here, it is very quiet. But it is not the same as having that openness.

Silence was essential to the spiritual practice she did daily with her partner. It was the

opportunity for collective silent worship that attracted her and her partner to the local Quaker Meeting House.

Normally it is one hour of silence but if somebody is moved to speak they do. But sometimes you will go to a meeting for an hour and two or three people speak. But on the whole people only speak rarely. Again it is the silence that appeals.

Zoe re-emphasised again that quiet was very important. But, for her there was a difference between quiet and silence. “It is quiet now” she explained, “but silence is more when I am in tune with myself as well. That is different.” She was also one of those people who could create a silent space in a location packed with people. “When we go up to town on the train I can sit and be in silence and cut out everything else,” she remarked. One of the challenges was coping with the contrast between busy and quiet times. Their life tended to be either very busy for a bit and then quiet. When it was quiet, you made the most of it. She also stressed the importance of some quiet preparation time before a session.

Interestingly, even in busy times I know that if I am going to be working with people it is very important for me to make some connection with them before I start and have that quiet time, charge the batteries. I work with client in the room at the end on a one-to-one basis and usually I try to make sure I go in there before I’ve got to start and light the candle, get the ambience right, get myself into the right place.

Becky was also someone who valued the quiet and silence. As a practising Catholic the quiet ambience of the church was important but so too were the prayers and the ritual associated with the Mass. She had recently visited Scotland with a friend, who was not religious, to attend the Edinburgh Festival. She had felt the lack of any religious empathy or connection in this friend,

It was jarring after a little while. I think that the same kind of beauty that you can get in a church, the quiet, is something quite uplifting for me. So I think I very frequently draw on that during the day.

There were different levels of understanding of quiet. Quiet can be quietening down, being quiet. It can be “being at peace.” I am thinking also of it “is very peaceful.” Her search for quiet and peace had been a primary motivator in coming to live in the Yorkshire Moors. It was very peaceful where she lived and it provided her with a lot of nourishment. She explained,

Why I came back to live here was because it had such an emotional support for me that was important. It wasn't just a house, it is a refuge, a place of peace for me. I wanted to understand that better. I wasn't just being sentimental about it. Silence is, whereas the other two I would associate with feelings, silence is about your hearing space. So there is a silence. I tend not to use the phrase being silent in the body although others do.

Max was a keen artist and valued the quiet and silence of his studio, which he rented near where he lived in London.

I would probably say that quiet and silence are in a way similar, but not synonymous. And they are descriptive of a situation that is around you and comes very much from having the absence of any interruption.

I asked Max if sometimes he could be in his quiet space but there were still mental distractions. He replied,

You can be in a quiet place but it is not silent because there is stuff going on in your head. Reaching a place of quietness is actually very desirable and a wonderful aspiration. I guess ideally you can reach quietness without silence. So when it is hustling and bustling around you, or whatever is there, you can still get to that quietness.

I was interviewing Max at his workplace so I asked him if he had his own private work area? Or, was there a quiet room where he could go to be by himself? He admitted that it was difficult to be quiet at work. It was far easier to work at home sometimes, or even on the train when travelling against the rush hour. However, he did not aim for utter silence. That was unachievable. A little background noise, for example quiet music, helped too. If the music got too loud it became counter-productive as did loud phone calls from colleagues in his open plan office. Having been brought up in East Germany the meaning of peace had strong political connotations. It was not an inner peace usually associated with a spiritual practice.

To achieve quiet Caroline had to concentrate and free herself from distractions. She did not have a quiet space at work. She was quite an active person so she did not seek out quiet and silence that frequently. She always had to have something organised on her weekend off. However, she had found that hiking has given her opportunities for quiet. On the occasions that it was quiet, (she lived in a flat by herself) she still had to have an agenda, things to do. If she is quiet it is quiet in the sense that she does not say or do anything. In contrast she understood peace as more related to the world, but also to inner peace.

I accept things the way that they are and I let things go. And I don't always battle against myself.

It was a struggle for her to achieve inner peace. She struggled with silence as well, especially when nothing was happening. But she realised that silence was necessary. She described silence as "a longer period of quietness. It is a holistic quiet." In her previous role she had her own office and had found that she could be quiet and concentrate far more easily.

Lilian was surprisingly hostile to the concept to peace. She said,

Peace is not my thing. I have no idea why you would attempt to try and attain this. I think sometimes you might be very agitated, so you feel you want to be a bit quieter. But peace is not my thing so meditation does not sit very well with me because I associate it with peace.

In contrast Lilian was far more positive about quiet. She explained,

Quiet is a word that I like. Particularly if I am in water. So, because of all those activities that I engage in during my leisure time, the things have prayer attached to them are always, particularly in water, hydrotherapy water, up to my neck or even in a hot tub, often swimming, I carry somebody in prayer each length.

I then asked Lilian if she prayed as she swum. She replied,

Yes but I try and avoid the mother and toddler group when it is very noisy. Quiet is something which I need a degree of.

But then she seemed to contradict her earlier statement about peace when she said that "it was not her thing."

Peace I think of as being that inner peace that people talk about. I like my gut to be turning a bit. Peace lives within my gut. If I am not churning because I am needing to do something then that does not feel like a good place for me.

Lilian then went on to speak about silence. I asked her if she had any place where she could be silent. She replied,

When I was doing the course on spiritual direction and facilitation I was keen on doing the meditation in the living room but at the same time I wanted my husband to be there. I wasn't asking for there to be no noise. If you are in quiet prayer often you become super aware of the environment around you. Birds sing singing and whatever.

After a few busy months, Harry had just returned from a relaxing holiday. He commented that he now realised that he needed more quiet time than activity. Although

he was retired he had many interests such as unpaid voluntary work. Consequently there was no fixed routine. Every day was different. He also commuted between two different London houses. He belonged to a club that had a swimming pool so he found swimming not only an opportunity for exercise and relaxation but also a place of experiencing quiet. Another place he found quiet was the barbers. The man cutting his hair knew he wanted to be quiet and switch off so he allowed him a quiet space. There were places where he could be silent. One of his houses was on the edge of a forest so he could hear the birds and the trees blowing in the wind. The other house, on the other side of London, near the Thames, was directly under the Heathrow Airport flight path.

Alex had a long experience of valuing the quiet which he had started at his Catholic boarding school. In adult life he had a high profile job running a NGO so opportunities for quiet were not that frequent. However, as we heard earlier, he did live on a farm in the countryside. His study, where we conducted the interview, was situated in an old barn away from the main house. He added,

Real quiet is not that often but sometimes you can really hear the quietness. It is quiet now. If I was alone it would be very quiet, you would hear the birds, we have a lot of birds here. A lot of people say that if they come into the village it is much quieter than other places. If I go to the lake or the river, there are the noises of the countryside but it is quiet. Over the winter time there aren't too many people in the village but during the summer with the business, stables, horses and the weddings there are a lot of people and it can get very noisy. If you come from the city you feel how very quiet it is. I need these periods of quiet sitting here alone.

But there were times when he could not accept the quietness so he would put on some music. "Sometimes I think, 'shall I put on some music, or, shall I keep it quiet'?" I knew that Alex's job involved a great deal of travelling around the world. Also his main office was a hive of activity, located on a busy main road. So, I asked Alex how easy it was to find some quiet when he was at the main office. He replied,

It is very difficult. If you asked me it is always much too loud, too noisy. Also my office looks out onto the main street. There are lots of people walking in or out

Although he had his own office it was more a place to greet, meet and talk. But there was no room set aside for quiet. He explained,

I am always looking for a quiet room so that if I have guests I have enough mindfulness to speak and concentrate on the person. It is very important. It is a good point. We do not really have quiet places in our office.

I then asked Alex if he thought there was a difference between quiet and peace. He replied,

Peace is... Quiet is just very much outside, an external thing. Peace means quiet within your heart, it is internal. Peace means that I am at peace with my surroundings. As a person I am okay. The nation is at peace, we have no war, it is much more related to people and how I react to people. It is much more an internal perspective. Quiet has also an internal relevance. If it is quiet it has an effect on you. It is much more important for me to live in peace with my surroundings.

He added,

My farm is place of silence and peace for me. Of course you always have the farm animals, the birds, the children outside. This is a place of peace and silence. And all the other words we had in the first group. I am a person for which the inner perspective is far more important than the external. If I am at peace. There are people who could not live without having it quiet. I'm not so influenced by noise. It is much more important for me to have peace or this active form of silence. Silence is much stronger for me than quiet. In peace and in a quiet is silence for me. Silence is much more active. I try actively to get quiet but inside. But then I can be silent also if there is noise all around. So silence is much more an inner term for me.

It was at times of quiet that Alex was able to see things more clearly and differently,

Sometimes it is just thinking....At other times, especially when you can have quiet, there are moments that you see the thing very clearly. No, you have to change it much more radically. It can be changing the perspective in this oasis as you called it. Being in this place, being quiet, being mindful and meditating. It can also happen if I am in another context.

When he was away from his farm or the office the location of the hotel or place where he was staying clearly had an effect on Alex's ability to experience quiet.

From our earlier conversation I knew that Esme was an outgoing, gregarious person. However, she was someone who occasionally could suffer from depression. One of the antidotes she used to combat this was going to her local market and speaking with the shopkeepers, many of whom she knew very well. Nonetheless, she enjoyed the peace and quiet that her home afforded her,

Going in and talking to them and having a bit of banter that is enough to start restoring my equilibrium. Having said that I do enjoy peace and quiet. It is very quiet here in the mornings. I do enjoy, as I said, getting up early, being on my own, and the peace. Peace is more than just quietness. There is inner peace as well.

I then asked Esme if she could still feel at peace when surrounded by a load of people or

in a packed commuter train. She did not reply directly to the question but shared her experience of walking through London's Hyde Park, which can get very busy, especially as it has a major road through it. Peace was something that she felt she could do with more of.

I've certainly felt that peace in London walking through Hyde Park or something like that. I just think that inner peace is something, like serenity, peace is something that I value very much but feel that I could do with more of.

Although both retired, she and her husband led very busy lives. She was Welsh and he was Cornish. Consequently when they wanted an extended period of quiet and peace they spent several days in their holiday cottage in Cornwall or the Welsh Coast in Cardiganshire. She admitted that although she was gregarious and sociable, she tried to make time for quiet and silence. But perhaps not as much as other people. Like many of the others interviewed she needed quiet to make important decisions. In her case she achieved this quietness while out running in the early morning. Given her age this had taken a toll on her knees. The running provided a kind of rhythm, or "mantra" as she called it.

Sarah, a busy young executive, found it difficult to find quiet. Recently she had a number of her family visiting from overseas and this had placed additional pressure on her timetable.

The rare occasions that I do get an opportunity for quiet I just spend it probably walking around, biking around. It is sort of a mix of both. It depends obviously on the situation as well. If you have guests coming over it is very difficult to find the quiet time for yourself. I have recently signed up to art classes as well which I feel is a good way for me to get in touch with myself a little bit more.

One thing she did try to do at the end of the day was the *examen* but she had not the chance to do it regularly. She explained,

If I am not too tired at the end of the day I do try to spend some quiet time listening to my iPod, otherwise, if you are too tired, and you try and do it yourself, you end up falling asleep.

She added,

Time is not actually an excuse in the first place. It is important to have a discipline to set aside five or 10 minutes of your day. Not a lot. Just to sit down and be quiet and reflect. So I think that is one of the conditions. Something that will have to come from you internally to make that commitment.

She had found that joining a scripture group had been very beneficial. They met in the evening every two weeks. They followed the Ignatian format as described in the *Spiritual Exercises* (see footnote above). This meant spending some time alone reading the scriptures and then meeting as a group to share the insights of a particular verse or passage.

It would help a lot if you have some people to support you which is why I tried a church group. We do it regularly in the sense that we meet every second week. But that is not as often as I would like it to be. We follow the Ignatian format. Read the Scriptures. Spend some time quietly on our own and come back and share. That has been quite helpful for me. It forces you to actually get into it. Obviously you have made a commitment to these people. It wouldn't work if we did not all turn up, or there was one person in the group that was not committed to it. But what has helped the most has been to detach myself. It would help a lot if you have some people to support you which is why I tried a church group. We do it regularly in the sense that we meet every second week. But what has helped the most has been to detach myself. Remove myself from the city. Go somewhere completely different, no distractions, cell phone, email. No contact with any person. Just take time to really reflect and think about things.

Sarah recognised that quiet and peace were need for a contemplative practice. At the same time you would need silence also. You could be silent on the outside but a lot of things were running through your head. It did not feel that this was a good condition in which to contemplate. Earlier in the week Sarah had been to a Hill Song Conference.⁵⁰⁹ She remarked that she found it interesting that people were able to worship in such a loud way. There was very little peace, silence or quiet conducive to prayer that she felt she needed.

Jack accepted the importance of the words quiet, peace and silence in his life but felt that silence should be placed first although it could be argued that quiet and peace were synonymous. He acknowledged that a recent experience of riding on the London underground had demonstrated to him that there was something of the “being at rest” about him in spite of all the noise and lack of silence associated with public transport. Holidays were an important time for making space for quiet, peace and rest. Since becoming a Catholic Jack was a regular attendee at his local church and had joined the “Journey in Faith” group that met regularly. The quiet reflection afforded by such a

⁵⁰⁹ Hillsong is a global association of evangelical, Pentecostal megachurches, located around the world. It was founded in Australia in 1983. There is a strong focus on the literal interpretation of scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit. They also promote creationism and opposition to homosexuality, abortion and embryonic research. Their worship is characterised by a contemporary pop style. They have made over 40 music albums and sold over 11 million copies worldwide.

group had nourished him spiritually. The verse of Psalm 138 had a special significance for him. “Already you knew my soul, my body held no secrets from you.”

There is that kind of intimacy. I find that so moving and so accurate especially when I am walking. And when I go to church I always try to get there early and kneel for 15 to 20 minutes before it all kicks off. I feel so close then, so intimate.

George liked to seek his quiet in the countryside either walking or cycling. He found it easier to be contemplative if he was on his own or in a quiet environment although, as he had mentioned earlier, his quiet, his prayer time was on the tube in the morning commuting to work.

But I guess that during that time, although it is relatively quiet, I can focus on something specific. If I don't do that my mind can wander rather than being contemplative.

Routine and habit were important for making time for quiet and peace.

If I am not commuting into London, or working from home, although in reality I've got more time to do stuff, I sometimes end up not doing my quiet time because there is not that specific spot to do it in. So routine and habit is very important in that respect, for me anyway. As I said earlier, although I enjoy spending time with people and having fun in that way, I do like to have my quiet time and chill out time by myself as well. Be it praying on the tube in the morning or having my own oasis of calm at home.

Peace and quiet were important requisites also for his contemplative practice,

For me I find it easier to pray in peace and quiet in a contemplative way rather than in a group context and so in that way I would find it difficult to separate the two. The quiet contemplative prayer is a key part of my religious life but also when I am contemplating about things such as should I move that I mentioned earlier I try and bring the God angle into that.

When interviewing Cathy, who was a regular practitioner of mindfulness, I was particularly interested in discovering the significance of quiet, peace, silence in her daily routine. She replied that she had a home at the far end of a cul-de-sac which made it very quiet.

I think, for my own mindfulness or meditative practice, quiet is peaceful and it does relax me. It grounds me a bit. And whilst quiet and silence can be peaceful and restful when I go into the park I don't take ear phones. In the gym I do because I want to block out the noise of everything else and listen to what I want to listen to.

I asked Cathy if she thought quiet, peace and silence were synonymous? She replied,

I see them differently. I see quiet as being a time you describe, somewhere, or a setting, where you are. Whereas I feel peace is inside. It is more of an internal thing. Silence can maybe be both. Almost going home I feel that the quality of the air, being able to see the stars, just to go outside at night at home. It is so quiet. In that moment I would definitely have a sense of peace.

For Joseph being content, or “at peace”, as he described it, was essentially the aim or outcome from some form of contemplative practice, albeit meditation, contemplation or mindfulness. With Zoe (see above), his partner, they often attended their local Quaker Meeting House on Sundays. He remarked that although sitting in silence anything could be going on in your head. Perhaps it was something they were reading. During his contemplative practice Joseph also found helpful the reading of *Tao Te Ching*.⁵¹⁰

I think about it and try and work out what it means for me. Then I close the book and sit. Think about what is happening to me. Calm down and get into a place of quiet, then do a meta prayer for everybody. That’s it. I have slowed down and listen. I wait to hear.

Joseph certainly valued the importance of quiet,

It is important to have quiet. I was trying to work out the difference between peace and quiet and silence. Peace to me is the same as being “at peace,” more of being “at ease” with oneself, with one’s relationships, okay and not bother about stuff. So that’s peace but it can come with quiet as well. Quiet is a lack of rushing about. A lack of noise, agitation.

I then asked Joseph to enlarge on what he had said a little. “Do you think that quiet implies being rooted to a place?” He replied,

I don’t think so. My instant thought would be that I am probably quiet when I am standing still but I can be quiet when I am running too as long as it is just a gentle running along. If I am running in a race or something it is not quiet. Or even if I am doing it for myself and trying to see if I can go faster. Silence I think is a physical thing. It is about an absence of noise but that can be I suppose a noise in your head rather than a noise outside of you.

Joseph added that when he found himself in situations surrounded by noise, he could at the same time, experience an inner quiet. He explained,

⁵¹⁰ The *Tao Te Ching* is an ancient text traditionally credited to the sixth century BC sage Laozi although this date is disputed by scholars. It is a fundamental text for both philosophical and religious Taoism. It has also strongly influenced other schools of Chinese philosophy and religion including Confucianism and Buddhism. It is one of the most translated works in world literature. Its title can be translated as *The Classic of the Way’s Virtues* or *The Book of the Way and of Virtue*. It is a short text, written in an enigmatic, poetic, and singular style of about 5,000 Chinese characters. Thomas Merton was strongly influenced by Taoism and the teaching of *Tao Te Ching* (see. Shannon, Bochen, and O’Connell, pp.462-464 & pp.521-523)

Some people get very stressed out in their situations. I can just withdraw.

I asked Joseph if this was something he had trained himself to do or did it come naturally. He replied,

I probably learned it as a child. I can't remember having to consciously do it. I cannot do it all the time. There are times you become overwhelmed by the noise. You mentioned that standing on the underground. I guess I am a Londoner and I grew up travelling on the underground. You easily learn, you are there, you "pull yourself in" kind of thing. Having said that, often, you are very conscious of all the people around you and connected with them in a sort of way. I don't know..

Quiet and the ability to listen deeply were also important, especially when making decisions.

An example might be when you have a decision to make which you are anxious or screwed up about. If you meditate, or whatever, you can get yourself into a place where you are less agitated, quiet, silent and peaceful and be contemplative.

They helped also to keep things in proportion.

You recognise what is yours and what is not. You see the bigger picture and you are at peace with yourself. You believe that all will be well again.

Earlier Shane had admitted that he had a "hard time" when he was not actively doing something in the office, or at least being seen to do something. There were options for withdrawing to a quieter place or stepping outside for fifteen minutes but he chose not to take them. "He just was not good at doing it," he said. Nonetheless he recognised that there was a strong relationship between the six words on the card. Although they were different they were all related. Quiet was important, but for him, as we will see later, Sabbath was the most significant but in a secular sense. The café culture of the city in which he lived (Berlin) was conducive to creating an oasis of silence. "Sometimes," he said, "I like going to a café that is very busy and reading there and just have the swirl of life around me."

For Charles quiet was number one, then probably sabbath. The rest of the words had little meaning. Until his retirement he had kept very busy with work and part-time study. He rarely took a vacation. If he did it was more of a pilgrimage or fact-finding trip. The ideal way of achieving quiet was to book a quiet retreat in a monastery or retreat house where he could hide away in a room undisturbed. For him silence was connected with quiet but they were different. One particular location had the boiler

room under its chapel. Charles remarked,

It might've been noisy but I remember it being quiet. Peace can mean a range of things from inner peace to external peace. It is a misused term.

James did not go out of his way to seek silence. Even when in a church he did not regard silence as particularly significant. Sometimes, during the sermon, his mind would wander.

There are times when I will be thinking about current challenges, or possibly even something that is not as dramatic as a challenge, different situations.

As for being quiet or reflective at work he might seize an opportunity if it arose, but he did not have a particular time. Neither did he feel a lack of opportunity to be quiet or at peace. If there was a lull in the routine he would sit back, allow his thoughts to wander, or to organise themselves. He was more likely to be quiet and reflective at the end of the day and have time not doing or thinking about anything that requires great effort; not having to talk to people which during the day was a large part of his work.

No, as I said, I don't particularly long for quiet peace quiet and silence. Although I do like some quiet and peace, possibly not every day. There are times when you just want to sit, read a book, or not necessarily read about anything.

The word which Josh was particularly drawn to was silence.

I am not entirely sure why and is different to peace. I feel somehow that silence in some ways is more foundational and connects to sabbath which is not a word I use that much. When I do go on retreat I love periods of silence, I am always drawn to it. For me it is not about peace. In a way peace is a bit like happiness. It is great but there are times when we do not feel peaceful, we feel disrupted, all the world is disrupted. I think peace like happiness in a deep way is a very meaningful thing. Happiness includes misery. Peace includes conflict. In a superficial way peace, conflict, same quiet noise. Silence I can't really explain it is almost like the space where you can be with things as they are and actually have the space to really rest the mind, that is a Buddhist phrase.

Drawing on his Buddhist practice, it was important not to have an agenda. This must be a space of peace and calm, a space that is open. But a space also that is open to the inevitable because you do not know what will arise. Things transformed by having the space to be as they are rather than having to put energy into what they are not. Another thing that was important for Josh were boundaries. If he does not create these things get on top of him and he falls into a "stress cycle."

His experience was that, even in periods of quiet, the worry does not go away. The important thing was to create a space and connect with a deeper level of being in which slowly one gains greater confidence.

Whenever I trust my fundamental connection with whatever we might say, the compassionate one, the nature of the universe to which I have made a commitment. First that gives me tremendous peace and confidence which day-to-day I feel I lack a lot. And things often work out for the better.

For Edward wanting to be quiet had to be optional, otherwise it became a chore.

Whereas, if I sit down and think, okay, I want to be quiet. That would be one of the things that I choose to do.

Edward had been influenced by a recent TV programme called the *Great Silence*.⁵¹¹

It did affect me, I think maybe the biggest effect is that I now know I am comfortable, not so much with silence, because I had been to Quaker meetings before, but I guess more solitude. That was something I have always been quite, fearful is too strong a word, worried about.

Another important word was peace. He explained,

I don't think of necessarily being at leisure, I think of being at peace during which I can be very busy. It is more a state of contentment or equilibrium. Silence I think of as being more enduring than quiet.

2. REST, SABBATH AND VACATION

Like the first three words the second set of three words, rest, sabbath and vacation, are also related. But, this time related more to place, time and location.

Sabbath had been an important part of William's upbringing.

For me it goes back to when I was young and growing up. The concept of the sabbath, the day of rest, was pretty black and white at times. And it meant ceasing from almost all activity.

Now, he explained, it was not so easy to define sabbath. It often depended on one's definition of work. Work for some was leisure for someone else.

⁵¹¹ This was a documentary broadcast on BBC TV featuring group of religious sisters living in a monastery. It examined the ways in which they coped with silence and how it enhanced their lives.

The sabbath is more a ceasing from work so how do you find out what work is? My brother runs a landscaping business so for him cutting the grass or working in the garden, would generally fall into his category of work where I don't do that for a paid income.

William had found that keeping the Jewish custom of Sabbath, i.e. the Saturday, was easier for him.

I have gone through periods of my life when I am a lot better at it. I have actually found kind of almost keeping the Jewish notion of the sabbath. For instance the Friday sundown until Saturday sundown. For me it's always been easier to take the Saturday rather than the Sunday as a day of rest. Recently I have become really bad at it again.

Moving on to the concept of rest he explained that he found it incredibly difficult "to do rest" outside the community. He, his wife and young child had just moved to a new town so they did not know many people. They missed the social and church network from where they had moved and so far were only just starting to form a new one.

William was not keen on the idea of vacation. His feeling was that the first four words, quiet, peace, silence and rest all link in to the Sabbath. Quiet and silence were virtually the same although there was probably some difference.

Peaceful spaces are less noisy but not necessarily always quiet. Rest and peace go together. Rest and sabbath go together. Rest and sabbath go together. Yes, I struggle with vacation. I always have.

One of the struggles that William tended to have with vacation was largely to do with his upbringing and other factors. First, his family did not go on vacation, mainly for financial reasons. Second, his parents were not into that kind of thing. So as a youth he had learned how to work but not how to play. It was not until he was 13 or 14 that they physically went away on vacation, and then it was for a short camping trip, Friday evening to Sunday, either to grandparents or other relatives.

John had kept up observance of the Sabbath more out of loyalty and duty.

Yes, I will keep going to Mass. It's something which I will never give up, to my dying day I will keep that up because to me it's what we are and I will never give that up. Occasionally I do get inspiration.

John had been one of the participants who had attended a number of residential workshop on leisure mentioned earlier. He commented that until then he had not really

thought much about Sabbath rest. His three children no longer lived at home, so now that he was retired it gave he and his wife the opportunity to travel further afield like Australia.

Evelyn had also attended the leisure workshops. She was not the kind of person who could “put her feet up.” She added,

When I looked at the material from the workshops on leisure that was probably the first time I thought about the seventh day, Sabbath rest. I started to look at that more.

For Emily the question was how do you define rest, and how does it fit into the day? Sometimes it took the form of watching TV. For her and her husband James (interviewed below), vacations had the sole purpose of rest. Generally they would go to a place where there is nothing of interest to see so that they could relax on the beach or by the pool. For instance, they had planned to go to Oman, but when they looked up the travel guide there were too distractions. In the end, to make themselves rest, they booked for Antigua. She explained,

But when I looked up Oman it had all these interesting forts and I thought it won't work because I will go and look at the forts. In the end to make ourselves rest we went to Antigua. So half a day in Antigua was sightseeing and the rest of the time just reading books and rest. That's what we have to do to get rest.

She and her husband James took several vacations each year mainly because it was the only way of getting some respite from the intense pace of work and London living. They would take it in turns planning where to go and making the travel and accommodation arrangements. Sunday was the Sabbath as far as Emily was concerned. It had to have its rituals. She had to use the best quality table mats and preferably a candle followed by a proper sung Latin mass, then a proper Sunday lunch with a tablecloth!

The word that resonated most with Zoe was rest. “I don't use the word sabbath really,” she added.

We don't observe the sabbath like some people do and do nothing on the sabbath. We go to the Quaker meeting generally and often in the afternoon we would garden or something like that. Vacation I think is an interesting one for us. We often go away but we work when we go away. We often combine doing some work and having a rest, a little bit of a holiday. Interestingly this year we seem to have had quite a lot of weekends when we have gone away which we wouldn't normally do.

Becky recognised that rest was a nice restorative word. She probably appreciated rest more at the moment because she was recovering from an operation. She added, “I notice a big difference if I don’t rest my body. Your body gets quite tired up with things.” For Becky Sabbath meant the Sunday. Because of the operation mentioned earlier, Sabbath was always pretty restful. Vacation she thought of as a holiday word, going away. “I just think of that as packing bags and going on holiday.” Going back to the theme of sabbath I asked Becky if she had ever associated the word with taking a sabbatical. She replied,

I associate the sabbath much more with the Jewish sense of the sabbath. I don’t think it is a word that we use much at all in a Catholic context.

Although Max knew about the Jewish Sabbath, it was not a word he used. Rest and vacation were probably very similar. I asked him what he did in his vacation. He replied,

I have not planned my vacation this year so for this particular year I could not yet answer. In the past probably to explore, having time to explore what is beyond my city, my town and my family. Discovering something new. Travelling to a new place. While having downtime to not do anything. Reading comes with vacation so I choose a book I would like to read. And then travel as far as I can, as exciting as I can.

As for destination he explained,

In the past we have chosen one third of the destinations because they sounded interesting and two thirds because people invited us. There is some occasion or other.

Max added that many of his friends overstretched themselves while on vacation and did too much with the result that they felt they needed another holiday to get over the one they just had!

Caroline valued her periods of rest especially after times of physical activity such as hiking, which she did a lot of. Rest was about recharging the batteries and then carrying on. She tried not to take work home with her at weekends and tried not to open her laptop. However, she might quickly check her emails. Caroline, perhaps not surprisingly, as she worked in a human resource department, was one of the few who understood the word sabbath in the context of sabbatical. For her a sabbatical was a couple of months in length. She explained,

No, I would not see sabbath in a religious sense. I would see sabbatical as a longer

period of time, where people have the possibility of doing things differently, to do different things, what are your plans for the future, how do I want to carry on, is this what I really want to do?

Caroline understood vacation as taking a holiday. She did not understand it in the sense of “emptying oneself.” That was different. She added,

But for me, vacation is a holiday, a nice break, without any deeper meaning. I think sometimes holidays are not that easy because people struggle a lot, because they have to get out of their daily routine and holidays are so different from that.

Lilian was the kind of person who had to focus exclusively on the task at hand. She described one assignment that she had been given during which she had taken very little rest.

Every single weekend and free hour was spent on this study so you didn’t know what was going on in the rest of the universe. It felt to me incredibly isolating.

Vacation and rest were interconnected. She did not keep the “Sabbath sacred” as she called it, although since coming back to faith, she usually was at church most Sundays. She added that she had married someone who is not a Christian so on a Sunday church was frequently combined with some gardening. Additionally she might cook a Sunday roast so Sunday could be a busy day. Vacation was important too. It was the time when she and her husband were together and reconnecting.

Harry valued his time on vacation. Because he was retired he travelled abroad a great deal. The Sabbath he perceived differently to the Sunday. Although he recognised that the majority no longer recognised Sunday as a day of worship and rest he was usually at his local Anglican Church where he was actively involved. Sabbath, the weekend, especially the Sunday he perceived as different from the other days in the week.

Alex no longer regarded Sabbath as being significant in his life.

I don’t use sabbath. When I was younger, when I had a stronger link to the church the Sunday had the meaning of taking a break, don’t do things that you would do during the week. But I have lost that a little bit.

Alex then went on to expound on his own “sabbath spirituality.” On his country farm he was able to create a place of rest.

Every day can be a sabbath especially if I work from here. These are my new ways of

celebrating the sabbath. Being here alone, no meetings, no external influences. For me that is more the sabbath or the Sunday.

Because he did not get as much sleep as he would like, rest for him meant sleeping eight hours in a row. When his children were small vacations were important but not so much now, especially as he travelled overseas a great deal for his work. He added that his children were old enough not to need being taken on holiday!

Alex had recently taken a short sabbatical of three weeks on an isolated island located on a lake north of Toronto, Canada. He described his routine,

I would wake up very early with the sunrise. It was three weeks of sabbath. It created in me a wish for the opportunity to live several months like that just writing, reading, swimming, praying and reflecting.

Esme placed great emphasis on getting enough rest.

Rest, I make sure I have enough. Rest from work? Ceasing from physical activity rather than going to bed. But I do sit down a lot as well especially in the evening. Not even reading sometimes. It is important, rest is very important.

Now that they were approaching full retirement holidays were important too.

We are trying to take more vacation. In the winter every three weeks we try and take a long weekend in Cornwall. During the rest of the year we have to 3 or 4 full weeks. Because my husband is Cornish we have our own community of friends there.

For Sarah rest was taking time off work from a busy life, but not necessarily meaning that you were reflecting or contemplating on something deeper. Sabbath she found it a bit harder to relate to although every Sunday she attended Mass with her husband. The idea of Sabbath rest had become counter cultural for most people, especially her current generation, because it had lost its religious significance. However, she did not see Sunday as a day for doing nothing. The idea of vacation first conjured up having fun, going to many different places, being quite busy and seeing lots of things, a piece of art for instance, ticking them off a list. At the same time vacation could be tiring and even stressful if you had family in tow. Neither was she sure if vacation always provided the opportunity for rest. After a recent holiday visiting some European capitals she had returned exhausted.

Jack was probably one of the oldest people interviewed. He could remember, with some fondness, his Sunday school days. He explained,

There is something about me that is about “peace and quiet” but it is not silent because there is so much racket going on. There is a certain “being at rest” about me. That’s interesting that. And sabbath, you know I often talk about this at church. When I was a kid, back in the 50s, when everything stopped on the Sunday, I miss that. Not everyone used the day in a religious sense but it did create a culture of reflection.

In spite of his age he was still working full-time in the security industry. This involved having to work weekends. Hence holiday time, all 33 days of it, was very important to him. Jack elaborated,

I always try and go away. Once we stayed at home during a holiday and I said to my wife no, we are never going to do this again. There were a few things that we wanted to do locally but I said never again.

Holidays took two forms generally. First, with some male buddies during which time they did a lot of talking, eating and drinking “without being silly.” They also pottered about looking at things. Being an ex-soldier, the battlefields and cemeteries of the Great Wars were favourite destinations. They had also done a number of European cities.

The second type of holiday was family oriented accompanied by his wife and daughter. His son was too “grown up” to join them now. His main objective was to get some quiet, peace and rest.

We went to the north-east last summer and it was marvellous. Lovely beach just 200 yards away. At the end of the street where we were staying there was a shop, so talking about routine, each morning I would get up buy the bread and papers, then come back and have our breakfast. It was such a lovely area. We went to visit a colliery which is now a museum and we really enjoyed that. However, without a doubt, the best holidays we have ever had, but is a bit of a drag to get to, were in the Scottish Highlands. There was a sun lounge with a picture window overlooking the loch which is just wonderful. You see seals and other wildlife.

Being a practising Christian, Sabbath was particularly important for George. He remarked that over the years he had matured as a person. And, although the sabbath day was important, he tried to live as a Christian all seven days of the week. Rest was an integral part of his work-life balance. He added that the seminar workshops which I had run several years earlier had initiated a change in his life objectives. There were times when he had to work hard and do long hours but, generally speaking, he was able to sustain a good work life balance so that he could enjoy life generally and do his best work also. He could combine his love for the outdoors, walking, skiing, with his Christian faith. Although George did not necessarily link his understanding of Sabbath

to sabbatical he did see a space for sabbatical time in his life be it twelve months or just a couple of months. He added,

As far as I can see it is something that many companies in the Western world and the UK are becoming more attuned to in terms of giving more options for staff especially if they have worked for several years in the organisation.

He also valued his vacation time. For him holidays were essential. They were integral for work-life balance. Vacation took different formats. In an average year, part of his vacation was spent visiting his parents, especially at Christmas and Easter. In addition he would take a one week skiing holiday. Another week would probably be spent helping on a children's Christian holiday camp. Although this was not restful it was something he enjoyed in spite of it being quite manic. Then, typically, he would do a three-week trip, perhaps to the Far East or somewhere like that.

That would include taking some pure rest lying on a beach for a few days and then going out and seeing stuff. Funnily enough last year I probably went on my first beach holiday in about 10 years. So Corfu for 10 days and for 9 of those I quite literally lay on the beach, had a sauna each night and it was absolutely great. But normally vacation for me would be a mixture of pure rest and doing other stuff that I enjoy. The idea of vacation or emptying your time from commitments ties in with contemplation. On holiday, particularly if I'm lying on a beach, my mind will wander or ponder things that I have not thought about for a while.

For Cathy rest was important but it could not be divorced from seeking out somewhere quiet. If she went running, went for a walk, she would choose to go somewhere a bit quieter. If it was a gym she took headphones to block out the background noise.

"Letting it all go" was the key to rest for Joseph.

I think rest is important. Rest, for me, is about letting it all go and not having the responsibility, not having to do things, not engaging in physical activity or not forced into thinking consciously about stuff; just being at ease.

Sabbath was about rest too but it had religious connotations, he explained,

Having said that most religions have some form of sabbath. There is usually one day set aside for worship, or for a feast, or a holy day.

For him vacation was an American word which meant going to a different situation and doing different things. For instance a holiday can be active rather than restful. He preferred to talk about "going on leave" or holiday,

Holidays, to me, have peacefulness, rest and relaxation built into them. Vacation implies behaving like a tourist; you have got to look at things, you have got to rush about.

Shane, having been brought up in Canada, accepted that his concept of vacation had been shaped by the North American work ethic. It was quite different from Germany where he now lived. At first he had been challenged as to how to use up all of his newly-earned holiday entitlement. Earlier that year, in January, he had a whole month of holidays, so he went to Cambodia. But, in Canada people did not like to acknowledge that they were on vacation. He explained,

For instance Toronto people will talk about how many hours they worked that week, was it 80 or 90? If people go on vacation they never put an auto response on because they are always on email. But if you were to put an auto response on you never say you are on vacation. Rather you would say “I’m out of the office or unreachable” for such and such days. Here (Germany) you could say I’m on holidays. In North America you’d never admit that you take holidays because it is seen as a level of decadence.

Vacation in North America hardly stretched beyond three weeks and then only after several years of employment with one company. With the possible exception of government agencies, you would be expected to check your emails morning and evening and respond to them.

For someone who did not go to Church on Sundays Shane admitted that his favourite word of the three was sabbath. He explained,

I like the idea that there is one day that is kind of spelled-out for you. Saturday is my sabbath. If I do all those things I talked about earlier. I’m always wondering if I am relaxing in the right way. If I am getting the most out of my relaxing. The way my partner deals with sabbath is hardly moving physically. I couldn’t cope with that. I want the day to be different, restful and restorative but also active in a way.

Sabbath was the most significant word for Charles also. He explained that something he had decided to do when he was working and studying was to strive to make the Sabbath, the Sunday, a day of rest, particularly after he had finished his part-time PhD. While he was doing his doctorate he hardly had any rest at all, for decades actually. He elaborated,

Sabbath was not rest at all. But then I tried to make a point of keeping the sabbath in a Jewish context which would include spending time with my father or mother. So it had a family link to it.

Charles, as mentioned earlier, for most of his adult life, even while working, had lived a

very simple, almost monastic routine. To the outside observer, even his friends and family, it could seem that he was always on vacation! But, this only showed how appearances could be deceptive. He added, “that says more about them than about me.” It also depended on how one defined vacation. He continued,

I don’t believe that I’ve had a vacation for years although I’ve travelled the world consistently and continuously. But they are rarely vacations in the sense of relaxation, put up your feet on a stool, glass of beer or sunbathe.

I asked Charles if he had ever understood vacation in the sense of making time for “emptying out.” For him going on retreat fulfilled that objective, so if you defined a retreat as a vacation, then vacation, he replied, featured highly in his life. What was vacation? As he had recounted earlier, after retiring, Charles had spent a year in a remote spot in the Syrian Desert, not far from a Christian monastery. He described his routine,

I lived very remotely in the Syrian desert in extreme isolation and exclusion. There was no utilitarianism about that.⁵¹² It was indulgence. Was that a vacation? (I ask myself). In that sense perhaps it was a vacation. What I remember thinking is that this is great, no vacuuming to do, no windows to paint, you can be still. You can just indulge in contemplative practice.

Neither was he sure if his retreat to the desert had been a sabbatical.

I would say no. I’m going to contradict myself because there was always some kind of work to do. Things like preparing food is a nightmare in the desert. It is time consuming, it’s not easy, you are rationing water and all your supplies. Things take more time that would normally be very quick. Making a cup of tea takes a long time, just to boil the water, etc.

Rest was something different from vacation or sabbatical,

I think probably for me rest is when I go to the nuns’ chapel.⁵¹³ That is rest. That is really good rest. Or if I take a quiet retreat and do something similar, or book up a room for two or three nights at Aylesford. I just go, hidden away in a room, the staff know me there, they leave me alone. I take some spiritual reading.

For James and his wife, Sabbath observance was about going to Mass. This was part of he and his wife’s leisure time, every Sunday at 11.00 am. That gave them time for a

⁵¹² I never got a chance to ask Charles to clarify what he meant by “utilitarian” but I think Charles is using the term in a non-philosophical sense. His stay, in an isolated cave, in the Syrian Desert did not have any long-term goal. As he said, it was “pure indulgence.”

⁵¹³ James lived very close to a convent and the sisters gave him free access to go and come as he pleased.

leisurely breakfast. He was not sure if vacation encompassed sabbath, it was much broader. He explained,

I always think of sabbath as being something different perhaps because Sundays tend to involve at least some structure around going to church, whereas a vacation, I suppose there is some structure to one's vacation but it is less, it is something that is quite distinct. It is something completely different from what one might call a working week that obviously includes the sabbath on a nonworking day. Funnily enough quiet, peace and silence are not necessarily part of the sabbath or of a vacation. Rest was the time when you did not have to make an effort, perhaps any effort. That included the kind of effort one would usually be happy to make with friends and family in conversation, or whatever you might be doing.

For Josh, rather than speak about the need for rest, he spoke about the need to “rest in things.”

If you like, I don't like active and passive, but is quite good shorthand. One is more about surrender, profound trust, rest in things as they are and the other is an idea based on a current sense of lack which means you have to develop something.

Also, in spite of being Jewish by birth and upbringing and now self-identifying as a Buddhist, Sabbath was not a word Josh used much. For him silence was more foundational. As a parent with two young children, rest was important. This was a physical issue for him because he did not get enough rest. But there was also “rest of mind.” His technique was to snatch some minutes in the quiet of his study. He added,

In that space anxious thoughts may arise and normally when I am not silent, and not at rest and rushed, I could be quite driven by those anxious thoughts such as ‘I've got to do these emails’ or, on the unconscious level, I am just in a state of tension without dealing with it. So for me that is the anxious thoughts being there but without a container or space boundary.

Sabbath, in the sense of a day set aside for worship, was not a word he used. But sabbath as a particular period, either a week, or a day or a lifetime, an opportunity to create the space for whatever you want it to be, he found useful.

For Edward there were negative connotations around rest which were mainly connected with sleep, or maybe not going to sleep or trying to go to sleep. Also, feeling rested, which for him, over the last few years, had been a big issue with not feeling as rested as he wanted. The Sabbath was obviously a kind of day of rest and going to church. But a Sunday could get absorbed by household chores, administration, answering emails.

Sundays rarely felt leisurely or led to contemplation. Edward preferred to call vacation holiday.

I think of it as time off work, time away from work. Usually but not always away from home. Often involves travel therefore quite likely seeing family and hopefully an opportunity for leisure and a time to try and create something of that 'I don't have to do anything today.' There is a kind of second side to holiday. It is an opportunity for an adventure. Go to the other side of the world. I am quite often attracted to.

SUMMARY

In this summary of the Context for Contemplative Leisure I am going to summarise each word in order although, inevitably, there is some overlap.

(i) **Quiet** was understood and experienced in different ways. Although only a couple of people drew a distinction between being extrovert and introvert, this obviously applied to many others being interviewed. There were different kinds of quiet; for some quiet just meant being free from interruptions. For others it could be quiet all around you but there was still a great deal of noise in your head. You could not stop thinking about things. At the other extreme, quiet could be threatening for some, even spell out danger. Quiet was frequently associated with one's location, it was an external thing. There had to be a place to which you could withdraw to be quiet. But quiet could also be associated with activity or rather the lack of it, not rushing about. For some quiet and peace were the same, although a couple thought that peace was a stronger word. Even when one had an opportunity for quiet you had to be careful that technology, like a mobile phone, or music player, did not invade your quiet space. But this technology could have a positive side; using earphones, for instance, blocked out unwanted external noise. For many it was important to seek out places of quiet, such as an open church, park bench or, if they were in a car, a quiet layby on a country road; somewhere to escape to, especially when their work and lifestyle was becoming increasing hectic and stressful.

Open space, being able to gaze into the distance, seemed to enhance the experience of quiet for many. For those with busy, noisy lives, when it was quiet, you seized the opportunity. A few associated quiet time with contemplation and others spoke about their quiet time providing opportunities for creativity or receiving flashes of inspiration.

It was also important for creating a space for some “slow time” to make important decisions and mull things over. “Different layers come to the surface” as one person put it. These were times when one saw things more clearly.

Although all valued quiet time, for some it was more necessary than others. One commented that without the right amount of regular quiet she could become quite sick. Neither was quiet necessarily the absence of noise. Several found that music enhanced their quiet time. As one person put it, music provided a certain psychological need. It was not the same as having to read, it was far more passive. In a similar vein, running, walking, hiking in the mountains and cycling all provided opportunities for quiet.

(ii) Peace. Several made a distinction between quiet and peace explaining that quiet was external whereas peace was internal, one described it as being “at ease with oneself.” Several made the distinction between an “inner” and “outer” peace. On the outside everything seemed calm. On the inside life was in turmoil. Like a swan, gliding serenely on the surface but paddling ferociously under the water. Peace did not have to be associated with quiet. Even when surrounded by close family and friends, although it was noisy, you could still be “at peace.” Location, physical space, was often associated with being at peace, for instance doing laps in the swimming pool. A number of those interviewed had deliberately chosen to live in a particular location because it provided peace. One called it a “refuge” where she could be at peace. In contrast, someone, who as a youth, had been brought up in East Germany (before reunification), commented that they experienced a very different kind of peace. This was a peace enforced by a totalitarian regime. It was a peace motivated by fear and injustice. It was not true peace.

(iii) Silence. Many who led busy lives appreciated opportunities for silence especially in a society where it was becoming increasingly difficult to find. Silence was more foundational than quiet and peace. It was also important to establish boundaries so that you could be silent, even if only for a few minutes, at certain times of the day.

Alternatively, when an opportunity for silence came along, a lull in the pace of work, an interval between clients or meetings, seize it. A busy executive remarked that he had found that the various pauses during Mass, especially after Holy Communion, provided a silent opportunity. Others regularly tried to create a space and time for silence. Silence

was particularly important for enabling you to listen, especially to listen deeply to what was going on around you whether it was another person or the birds in the sky. Silence was also about being in tune with yourself. And, as has been said earlier, a number of people found that they could create a silent oasis in the midst of a busy commuter train or a coffee house.

(iv) Rest. For the majority rest was physical and passive, it was about resting the body or resting the mind. Normally, rest was not something that required effort although a number remarked on how difficult they found it sometimes to “switch off” or “put their feet up.” Part of this was to do with temperament and habit. Many were used to a demanding work ethic that was not always conducive to rest, especially in the company of other co-workers. For majority of participants rest was about restoration and recreation and having a good eight hours sleep, especially after periods of physical or mental exertion; there was a need to recharge the batteries. Many realised that rest was integral to work-life balance. Another characteristic of rest was that it did not require any effort. Rest was often linked to a place or a location with some locations being more restful than others. Those who had to relocate for the purpose of work sometimes found it difficult to integrate socially. However, one participant commented that being part of a community (e.g. Church) was conducive to rest because it provided a group of people with which to relax. For those in the habit of meditating each day, the problem of too much work, or lack of rest, made it difficult to maintain a daily routine. However, quiet times provided an opportunity to catch up. Some of participants associated the Sabbath as a special day of rest, a holy day, but the concept of “resting in God” or “God resting in them” was not mentioned.

(v) Sabbath. The understanding and practice of the Sabbath had, for many, been shaped by their childhood experience. There were problems too about defining the rules around the Sabbath, what you could or could not do. For instance what was work on the Sabbath? Work for one person could be leisure for another. Most associated the Sabbath or the Sunday with religious and social rituals. It was a day of worship not just for Christians but for those of other religious beliefs. All religions have some form of sabbath or Holy Day even if it does not fall on a Sunday, for Jews it is the Saturday and for Muslims it is the Friday. Sabbath had its structure, obligations, special activities and

meals. One participant had reminiscences of his childhood and the traditional Sunday observance when everything stopped for Church and Sunday school. This, he added, helped to create a culture of reflection. For some, the Sabbath, or the Sunday, was not always that restful, it could get busy with church and family commitments, visits, household chores and necessary administration. Another remarked that his church's liturgy not always spiritually nourishing. He attended more out of loyalty and duty. For some, the ideal sabbath was a day by oneself without commitments such as meetings, interruptions or the need to answer the phone or emails. Rather it was a day for relaxation, reading, reflection and praying. Few associated the word sabbath with sabbatical although they realised that a period of sabbatical gave one the time to look at things anew or differently, in a new light. It was an opportunity to think about future plans, career change, what do I really want to do? Where do I want to be? Neither, for some, was Sabbath one particular day in the week. It was rather a state of being; one had a "sabbath spirituality" so that every day was a sabbath. Sabbath permeates your life so that you live as a Christian seven days of the week, not just on the Sunday.

(vi) Vacation. For the majority vacation meant holiday although vacation, an American word, was not one that they often used. Hardly anyone understood vacation in the sense of "emptying oneself" or "making yourself more available to others or to God." For many the only way they could rest or get some respite was to take a vacation and physically distance themselves from work and home. One mentioned the influence of the North American work ethic on his own practice where the entitlement for vacation was far less than Europe. There was a reticence amongst his colleagues to say "I am on vacation" or "I am on holiday." For one vacation was synonymous with being on retreat. But, the majority said that the sole purpose of their vacation was rest although one couple did use their vacation to combine work and rest. Vacation was "downtime", a time to travel, explore, read and relax. For some, vacation presented them with challenges which could be physically demanding. One participant used part of his vacation to do voluntary work on a Christian youth camp. A number engaged in activity holidays such as skiing, hiking and mountain biking. Vacation was also an opportunity for a new adventure, travel to a new land. Was this travel a metaphor for a spiritual journey? For a number of participants there could be problems of overstretching yourself whilst on vacation. People could struggle because they could not cope with a

different routine or they tried and pack too much in. While vacation was a time for renewing, strengthening or building up relationships it was a time especially for family and friends. Nobody associated the word holiday with holyday. It was not obvious that a holiday had that holy dimension as its original meaning suggests.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FRUITS OF CONTEMPLATION

DISCERNMENT, PRUDENCE, WISDOM, REFLECTION, COURAGE & INTUITION

In Chapter Seven, we heard the voices of the participants speak about the way they understood different aspects of the contemplative dimension in their lives and what form it took in their daily routine. How important was it to them? We discovered also, that a contemplative practice is eclectic and can take many forms ranging from simple meditation or contemplation, *Lectio Divina*, mindfulness, dance, walking, cycling, swimming, yoga and Buddhism.

In Chapter Eight we listened to what worked best for them, what kind of space, location, time was best to optimise their contemplative practice. How did they value quiet, silence and peace? Or, were they able to detach themselves from the busy work place or commute and create a contemplative space around them? What part did rest, sabbath and vacation play in their contemplative practice? Were they just an “add on” or an indispensable adjunct to their daily routine?

Now, in Chapter Nine we hear about the fruits of their contemplative leisure, or to use a contemporary phrase, the “outcomes” of this contemplative dimension in their lives. Many people with a Christian theological background will recognise some of these categories as being the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If this is the case what part does God’s grace play in their lives? Others may prefer to identify Prudence and Courage as two of the four Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Justice, Courage and Temperance).⁵¹⁴ Can these virtues be learned or acquired through training or education? Or, as in the case of gifts of the Holy Spirit, are they bestowed by God? Those in a management or leadership role often associate some, if not all, of these words with decision making. To what extent are they part of the intellectual, emotional and spiritual skills needed for a leader to act with integrity? As in the previous chapters, a number of categories, discernment,

⁵¹⁴ In Chapter Three on Josef Pieper our attention was brought to the way in which he uses the Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope and Love) together with the Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Justice, Courage and Moderation) as a framework for his “Christian Idea of Man.” However, this is not a novel idea and we can trace this framework through Thomas Aquinas back to the monastic virtues such as prudence, discretion, discernment, humility, obedience and finally Holy Scripture. But, even before this, we can see the influence of the Hellenistic Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, in particular Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (which Thomas Aquinas commented on at length) where Aristotle systematises the virtues.

prudence, wisdom and reflection have been grouped together in the same section. Whether or not we understand them as spiritual or intellectual skills they are allied to one another in different ways. The last two, courage and intuition, are treated separately.

1 DISCERNMENT, PRUDENCE, WISDOM & REFLECTION

Prudence was not a word that William used very often. He understood it more as a legal term.

But I know that in “juris prudence” there is stuff about making judgements but is never a word I would use. Discernment to me I would define as choosing between a number of options and needing to make a decision. The wrestling with the different options. That could be done individually or within a community of people.

I then asked William if he considered discernment to be a spiritual or intellectual quality. William was not very familiar with the meaning of spiritual. He had only come across the term in a religious Lutheran context. He certainly thought that discernment was not restricted to the world of religion. It had many applications. He explained that he did not like the dichotomy between the spiritual or sacred and the secular. The concept of the spiritual “drove him nuts.” He then continued,

I would rather use the term religious rather than spiritual. Is discernment limited to religion? Definitely not.

Wisdom he valued even more. Having been brought up in an evangelical church the prophetic literature of the Old Testament had made a significant impact on him.

I really like the prophetic literature. I like the concept of the wise elder sitting at the gate. I think that is something that Western society has almost killed off. I just love it. It is so radically important. I just like that inter-generational stuff.

Although he did not have a wise elder sitting at his front door he did have significant wise elders; members his extended family, or Church members, who he could turn to. In the kind of work he did (international relief) it was important to have wisdom but also have a team of people who have “been around the block several times” and also people who are incredibly new. But he cautioned,

The difficulty is that not all people who have been around the block are wise. You can be quite young and still wise.

I then asked William how he would define wisdom? He replied,

The words that come to mind are experience combined I guess with the ability to listen

and ask questions and then, alongside an incredible kindness and gentleness. You won't find that in a Webster's dictionary!

As we shall hear from the voices of other participants John also placed courage and intuition at the top of his list. In his position as legal counsel and company solicitor he had very little time to reflect. In fact, in his opinion, too much reflection could lead to disaster, especially when a quick decision was needed. Now that he was retired reflection was associated more with his leisure time. Going back to his work situation John explained,

Possibly, I took the view that if I'd taken time to reflect...I think that there were probably some bad decisions based on gut reaction which may have been improved by reflection but I'm not sure that's right, because when you're in a high-pressure situation, and people have said this, you can sometimes make better decisions on the hoof than you can when you have time to reflect. And I don't know why that is.

His ability to make decisions quickly and confidently he put down to experience and intuition. I then asked John what part he thought wisdom played in those kind of decisions. For him, wisdom was certainly something that came with age backed up with experience. It was very hard to be wise in your teens or even early twenties.

Wisdom, together with words like love, creativity and will, reminded Evelyn of what she called "seed words" which were symbolic of higher levels of being. She added that she had been strongly influenced by Roberto Assagioli the founder of psychosynthesis.⁵¹⁵ Time for reflection was important too, for instance when driving. She called it "no extra time." Sometimes she would put on music or listen to an audio book. But, she warned, she tried not to mull over things too much. This could be counter-productive. She also recognised that she retained a strong connection to an inherited wisdom from her grandmother and mother, who were now deceased.

Prudence was not a word that Emily resonated with easily. It implied a degree of caution that did not sit well with her personality. She elaborated,

⁵¹⁵ Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974) is famous for developing and founding the science of Psychosynthesis, a spiritual and holistic approach to psychology that had developed from psychoanalysis. He was largely inspired by Freud's idea of the repressed mind and Jung's theories of the collective unconscious. Trained in psychoanalysis, but unsatisfied by what he regarded as its incompleteness as a whole, Assagioli felt that love, wisdom, creativity, and will all were important components that should be included in psychoanalysis.

That is not to say I am never prudent, but it is not a strong thing for me.

However discernment was something she thought about a great deal and talked about with her clients. She explained,

I like the feeling behind the word that can be something quite subtle. And I like it because it implies listening, listening to the heart.

Furthermore, wisdom was something she had always aspired to and was something she was continually hoping to achieve. “As I get older,” she said, “I have a faint suspicion that I might be getting there (laughing), there are small signs of it!” Quiet time she felt was an important time for discernment and acquiring wisdom. Speaking from her personal experience wisdom came out of an inner transformation; one was being “infused” at a different level. She did not explain exactly what she meant by “being infused” but she felt that there was an element of the supernatural playing an important part. There was also, she added, a necessity for a greater wisdom in society as a whole.

As we have already heard, in contrast to their home or garden, Zoe and her partner Joseph found nature and the countryside a good place to go to in order to reflect. Sometimes they would reflect together. Reflection, she added, also helped them to get in contact with their intuition. When one was out of touch with oneself one was out of contact with one’s intuition. Another technique that she and her partner would use to reflect, either individually or together, involved using an “Angel Card” or “Gill Edward’s Card.”⁵¹⁶ Each card had a word and small picture printed on it. On the day of the interview Zoe’s Angel card had been “transformation.” She explained, that it was just another way of thinking about what is important. The Gill Edwards card had been “learning from every opportunity.” Sometimes the two separate cards reinforced each other, they were complimentary. Zoe understood discernment differently from the traditional route of trying to discern what is the right path to take. Although they attended their local Quaker Meeting House most Sundays their primary objective was to seek the group silence rather than discern. She elaborated,

That would be too simple. It is about encouraging people to be who they are, and to be true to themselves, and to be able to recognise their own wisdom and what is really important. And how they can bring that to themselves and to whatever they are doing in

⁵¹⁶ The size of playing cards, they can be used to stimulate or introduce reflection, either individually or in groups. Each card has a different word, thought or quote which can be taken at random (after shuffling the pack!). They can be an aid to meditation, group prayer or a therapeutic aid.

their lives whether that is in a work setting or a home setting.

Although Zoe found the word prudence interesting it was not a word that she normally used. She understood prudence in terms of using one's resources wisely.

Reflection was something that Becky would do during the day or while travelling.

I tend to have a few moments in the morning and then I do have a little bit more reflection at night. So that is my rough pattern for doing things.

Since retirement Becky had been attending a foundation art course at a local college. Starting with a "blank canvas" had helped to improve her levels of reflection.

I think for me I found it quite daunting starting on a blank canvas. So for me it requires quite a bit of reflection beforehand. What is my purpose in this? So in the painting you are connecting with something. So the process of painting can actually take you into a deep reflection and to somewhere you have not been. It can bring up thoughts that are quite important to you.

Retirement had also afforded Becky more time to travel. Before setting out she tried to prepare herself so that she could use the travel time usefully, for instance for reflection, rather than be irritated by it.

I use it in a nice way, perhaps for reflection. Sometimes I find it easier to reflect when I have got people around me. I enjoy my travel unless it is absolutely crowded out. So I think that reflection is a way in which you try and keep yourself in good mental shape so that you are in a good place to receive and in a good place to give.

Reflection was complementary to contemplation whereas meditation was freeing your mind from distractions, the opposite to reflecting. In the context of coping with disappointment and failure, Becky felt that the opportunity to reflect had been very helpful.

If you did not (reflect), if you cannot do that, then failure just mounts up as a threat. To be able to turn yourself around is something that reflection or contemplation helps with. If I felt I had done something, sometimes my failure had been that I had said something inappropriate, been angry, been sharp, is to recognise that I have done it and maybe go back and say, 'look I am sorry.'

Since attending a retreat workshop on discernment she had used this process a great

deal. This gave greater value and depth to her thoughts. Prudence was not a word she used. It did not mean anything to her and was not in her vocabulary. Wisdom, however, was a word she recognised. She revealed that in her work some people commented on her level of wisdom. Becky defined wisdom,

A knowledge of the years maybe? Discernment is the action but wisdom is bringing the thought process involving intuition. Everything comes into wisdom. So wisdom is carrying the wisdom of the elder. Intuition, courage, wisdom and discernment were probably the important skills needed to make a well-considered decision.

The words on the card were not words that Max used a great deal. As English was not his first language he struggled with their meaning. “Does discernment mean insight?” he asked. He understood discernment as a form of making a good judgement. Prudence, on the other hand, was characterised by having a wide vision, foresight and intelligence.

Caroline associated wisdom with age. “I always think of wisdom in connection with older people who are wise.” Like Max, Caroline’s native language was German, so there was an element of “lost in translation” when it came to understanding prudence. It had different meanings in German. Prudence could mean being very assertive of what is around you but at the same time somehow remaining stable.

You know what you are talking about based on your own values and thoughts. So, nobody can easily distract or divert you.

Since coming back to the Christian faith Lilian believed that wisdom could only come from the Holy Spirit. She added,

Ahead of coming back to Christ there have been times when I have acted because I felt it was really important to do so in a particular way. Which has not seemed that sensible and I am quite sensible person. It is only afterwards that I realised that actually I was blessed with a huge dollop of wisdom, I was lucky. I would have said something came from elsewhere, so I would still have put it in a spiritual context, something bigger than me knew that was what was intended.

She thought that prudence came from wisdom, although she admitted that people often thought that she was imprudent in what she said. But when she said something she liked to speak her mind. There was also an element of being led by God’s wisdom. When she had been looking for a spiritual director she had felt “guided” towards a particular person.

My spiritual director is an ex-Franciscan nun but I did not know that when I got her. That is one of the wisdom things. I left my job and was looking for my vocation. I did not know at that time that I wanted to connect with body and feelings and things like that. And I said that was the point of wisdom. I don't want to know, because immediately I got there I did not know this was going to happen. Every time I thought about it I burst out laughing. Again this is God's wisdom. I think she finds it quite amusing that I have landed up at a Roman Catholic Abbey.⁵¹⁷

For Harry wisdom and reflection were closely related. Prudence, he associated more with investing and being cautious, so he understood prudence more from a financial perspective, such as investments, stocks and shares, and more recently, crowd funding.

Alex was in the habit of keeping a journal. Sometimes he just used it to keep a record of the day. But often, when he found the time, he used it as a means of reflection and going deeper into what was going on in the world around him.

I am very mindful of nature. Reflection I often think also of my relation with the family and friends. And being mindful for them.

He admitted that he was not always a very prudent person. He needed to work on that and look deeper at things.

To reflect more and not just jump directly into a decision. I saw that is a weakness in myself so I built people around me who are much stronger on that side, who have prudence and reflection. I have strong intuition and courage but hopefully I get a little wiser so wisdom is important too. So if people help me to reflect a little deeper I have a little more prudence then in the end I come to a good decision through discernment.

Alex valued the contribution that different team members brought to discussions and strategic decision making. As the organisation had grown, so had the complexity. He needed help to see things more clearly. He could not rely solely on his own intuition, courage and reflection. In particular he referred to one of his senior members

She can be hard, which is sometimes stressful for me and others in the team. I think that just leading out of my intuition, my courage and reflection does not always lead to the best decisions. She is one person who is important.

In Esme's experience discernment was something quite sophisticated. It required that people had the mental capacity to make judgements. I then asked Esme if discernment was purely a mental activity. She replied,

⁵¹⁷ The Roman Catholic Abbey Lillian refers to is Douai Abbey where she attended a series of retreat workshops on the Spirituality of Work and Leisure facilitated by me.

I suppose it is spiritual and emotional too. More holistic perhaps? It could mean that you are working with a team of people or you are part of the community.

She explained that she would often talk things over with another person or group.

I have started something in my company which we had been talking about the possibility of doing. Every two months we have an hour of peer group support . At first we had a topic to start with and asked people how they dealt with it when they were coaching people for interviews. And that led to peer-review stuff. I do use my colleagues a lot.

She then introduced the concept of emotional intelligence.⁵¹⁸

You would think that people who are coaching have a high degree of emotional intelligence but there are some there that don't have an ounce of it. All they do is instruct. They are very prescriptive. So I wouldn't go to them.

For her prudence was allied to wisdom. It had to be guided by wisdom. She liked to think that she was wise. But, she added, she had come across a lot of younger people who were wise. She did not necessarily associate wisdom with age. Although she did not usually keep a journal she had recorded her daily activity and reflections while taking part in a charity trek to the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. It had been a demanding, stressful and sometime physically painful expedition. The reflection had helped her to make sense of the pain and misery. She added,

It was a good experience. It was the reflection. Reflecting on what you have learnt and various things.

As mentioned above Sarah was familiar with the *Ignatian Exercises* and the centrality of discernment. She practised the Exercises when she could. She explained,

Discernment is a big thing especially with my Ignatian spirituality background. When I have to make a big decision I always say that I have to discern about this. It always comes with prayer. It is about listening to your inner voice to some extent. Listening to the signs as well as what you see around you. On helping you decide what to do exactly. This is normally for big decisions. So you always say you discern.

Prudence was being careful about things although she was not quite sure. She would not associate prudence with prayer or discernment. Reflection, she guessed, was similar to discernment.

⁵¹⁸ Together with Spiritual Intelligence there has been an increased interest in these “soft skills” as they are sometimes called. For instance see Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996). Also, Danah Zohar, and Ian Marshall, *SQ: Spiritual Intelligence - the Ultimate Intelligence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

You sort of reflect on the past and what the past is trying to tell you. Whereas discernment is more forward-looking, to the future.

Wisdom came with reflection although she would not call herself a wise person. It came after a lot of experience and was the opposite to intuition which for her was just going with her gut feeling.

As already mentioned by Jack, he associated the Sabbath or Sunday as being a day for reflection. His understanding of discernment had been informed by a retreat workshop he had attended. This had been facilitated by a Jesuit priest, a Quaker and a Benedictine monk and explored the different meanings and methods of discernment. He commented,

I think that what I have got now, more than any other time in my life, is a foundation that holds me steady. I don't always think of it and I have to remind myself and go back to discernment or back to offering it up. Because, it does not come automatically.

He continued,

Discernment is a word that has become very important for me and I often refer back to it. It's practice is very important to me.

Jack recognised that prudence was one of the four Cardinal Virtues but did not elaborate. Reflection could have a negative impact on his life especially if it concerned family or work. This was because issues would tends to fester and get him down.

As a result of maturing and doing a series of workshops on the spirituality of work and leisure George admitted that he was a more reflective person and tried to ensure that he had regular periods of reflection and time to "chill out." Over the last few years he had made a number of life-career decisions so discernment and prudence allied with courage had been important spiritual tools in the process of deciding what to do; for instance, his decision to move from being a highly paid management consultant to a chalet manager in a ski-resort. Prudence he understood as being synonymous with caution. But he explained,

It's a funny one. I am cautious in the sense that I like to take my time when I am making a decision, weigh up all the pros and cons and be really comfortable with the decision I've made, but sometimes, that might result in me making a decision that other people might not expect me to make.

As regards wisdom there were different kinds.

I think wisdom for me is about consulting different kinds of wisdom. There is biblical

wisdom. Then there is the wisdom of talking to people whom I respect. My dad in particular I tend to talk about big decisions. There are other Christians whose input I value. To a certain degree I would rely on my own wisdom as well. I am not necessarily saying that I am a really wise person.

He gave another example. Both discernment and wisdom had come into play in a recent decision as to whether or not he should dismiss a team member who had been off work for a long time with depression. In this scenario wisdom is important as a guide on how to handle such a situation. You have to do the right thing for the individual but at the same time how much do you talk about it with other people? It is around fairness, discernment and wisdom.

Over the years, in different management and leadership positions, George had been able to develop these skills to the extent that others looked to him for guidance and help. As he had already mentioned earlier, reflection was also an important element too. For instance, reflecting before you spoke.

Cathy, as we heard above, is a practitioner of mindfulness, both in her personal and professional life. Reflection with contemplation therefore were for her more about being in the past or future than in the present. Mindfulness placed far more emphasis on being in the present, on what is happening now.

Contemplation and reflection are more about being less in the moment and thinking about the past or the future. Thinking about what you might have done, or not have done in a certain situation, and how it might have been different.

Courage, wisdom and reflection, for Cathy, were the three words that stood out. I then went on to ask her how she coped when her decisions were not always welcome or accepted. She replied,

Unless you are okay with yourself and grounded about why you make a decision it can be hard to own that decision and make it especially if it is contrary to what other people think.

Reflection was a big word for her and meant a lot. Similar to well-being reflection was probably a word she used multiple times daily. She gave me an example from a conversation she had had with colleagues earlier that day,

This morning, for instance, I had a meeting with two social workers about a case of they were stuck on and we were thinking about what might be going on for this particular family and how to approach a meeting that they had coming up with the school. All I

was doing was trying to get them to reflect actually and think about the information we already had but in a different way.

I then proceeded to ask Cathy if they had taken her advice.

Yes they did and I got some very nice feedback from one of them who had a follow-up call with somebody in the school and came back to tell me that they had a positive conversation. I think that particularly, in the work that I do, reflection is so important. Because of the high, emotional aspect of the work, and working in the NHS or social services, the workload, the space, the time to sit and reflect and think about what we need to do is a total luxury. As a clinical psychologist it is built into our job description and job plan to carve out time to be reflective.

Reflection led to learning which led to wisdom.

Ultimately it is all about learning. Wisdom brings together intellect, experience and learning. Sometimes I feel that what I consider to be my intuition today is different from my intuition five years ago. Is part of the experience, reflection perhaps having a bit more courage. I was going to say the thing with courage is about saying that you don't know when you're not sure.

Reflection had also been an indispensable part of her recently completed doctoral thesis. As part of her field work she had interviewed twelve young adults who had received liver transplants. She found that after reflecting on each interview successively, she was changing her analysis and modifying her questions as she went along.

In regards to the importance of reflection Joseph gave an insightful explanation. It was a form of receptive listening and inward thinking.

It is about connecting through reflection and working with a word, a concept or a situation and doing it internally, going as deep as you can. Probably it is about connecting with God, the source of all, whatever you are using, almost to get that perspective as well. There is a connection there so that is what it is about. It is about you getting in touch with the inner core of yourself.

Like his partner Zoe, Joseph regularly attended the local Quaker Meeting House and was therefore familiar with the Quaker approach to discernment of listening to the Holy Spirit. He had not given any great thought to the importance of prudence. It was not a word he used very much. It meant being careful or taking care. Wisdom involved simplicity and seeing other dimension to things that are not common ones, connections that, at first, are not always obvious. But wisdom also came with age. It was more than just knowledge. It was more about what you do with that knowledge.

For Shane reflection was part of contemplation.

Also something I think that can be very dangerous in the “thinking fast and slow way.”⁵¹⁹ I think people’s memories of things can be very selective, I am thinking of some business dealings where if I talk to people from all the different perspectives of how they saw something unfold. Although everyone was there you get three completely different stories.

He also saw in himself the danger of being too selective. To overcome this he found it useful to write down all the pros and cons.

One of the things I try to do is put down my big assumptions and my unspoken assumptions because I feel like a lot of times you can have biases or assumptions that are underlying. The act of putting them down force you to integrate those in your decision making. It makes them less easy to forget

As for prudence Shane had learned the hard way. Before joining his current organisation he had been involved in several start-ups involving bio-gas, chemical engineering and environmental projects. They had not always been successful and he had lost a considerable amount of money; not only his own, but that of family and friends too. He commented,

It almost felt to me that I was at a high-stakes poker game and realised all of a sudden that you don’t feel like playing cards. So what I learned was that I don’t need to be taking this massive amount of stress on my shoulders. I don’t have to be involved in something so outsized. It does not have to be a €50 million type project. That episode was not an example of prudence.

Charles was familiar with different Christian writers such as Cassian and Ignatius on discernment although he had not read them for a long time. In his present situation he did not find Cassian that helpful, but he certainly wished for the gift of discernment. As earlier, he expressed his preference more for stillness and contemplation.

Discernment is something that I would love to have. I don’t think I do, or I only have it to a low degree. I read St Ignatius and he has lots of rules for discernment but that, spirituality, is not for me. For me it is stillness, contemplative.

He described reflection as being still, recollected and integrating the past, reflecting back on history, events and decisions. In the past he had also done a great deal of

⁵¹⁹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2011). Its central thesis is that most of the best decisions are made using intuition.

reflection but he now tried to avoid it. He was not sure how to define wisdom. He did not have a simple one line answer.

But what actually is wisdom? The guys who run companies, the captains of industry, what is their kind of wisdom?

He was trying to live a more integrated life with the focus on the present.

So I am less concerned about baggage from the past. Just be, be very present. In fact there is a person who has influenced me significantly, a guy called Eckhart Tolle.⁵²⁰ I have been very influenced by him and he speaks about being very present with the moment and not drawn back into reflection too much. Of course there is a place for reflection.

Prudence, for Charles, was a technical word, the meaning of which, he seemed to have had missed out on, mainly because his secondary education had been at a non-Catholic school. But he did remember that prudence was one of the four Cardinal virtues although he had only learned that later in life.

James understood prudence more from a legal perspective especially in the context of financial planning and pensions. It was very much the “buzz-word.” Although it was not the standard definition of prudence he liked to describe it as, “being careful to avoid unpleasant consequences.” Prudence and courage, in pension terms, were opposite sides of the coin. Prudence implied caution.

Discernment, intuition and reflection he grouped together.

I think discernment and intuition are both aspects of reaching the right answer. Intuition I don’t think of so much. But also instinct derived from legal training and experience. I think discernment is similar in a way. It might imply more of a process of discerning. But, it could be considering a number of options. If your intuition doesn’t immediately give you the right answer you move on to discernment. Reflection might be an aspect of that too. If your intuition doesn’t immediately give you the right answer you move on to discernment. Reflection might be an aspect of that too.

Wisdom was an important virtue too in the legal profession but he did not understand it in a theological sense,

It is certainly a virtue that is required because I think wisdom implies more than legal knowledge. It is more than knowing what the right answer is. There are times to compromise and build up some capital. Wisdom is a more commercial judgement in the

⁵²⁰ Eckhart Tolle is a contemporary spiritual author. See for instance Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999).

work that we do. Experience and this wider knowledge would say trying to recover amounts you have already paid is asking for trouble and it is a good idea to apologise for having made the mistake and caused the disappointment. Funnily enough I think you see a lot of wisdom in the financial “Agony Aunt” pages of the weekend papers.

Josh understood wisdom as understanding things at a deeper level. He explained,

For example Jeremy Corbyn. I don’t think he’s plumbed the profound depths of existential wisdom but his basic politics is more aligned with the sense of how most people actually experience things. Rather than the manufactured consent and create spin of other politicians which is prevalent.

Discernment and intuition were important for accessing wisdom, trying to understand things at this deeper level. Because of his familiarity with the *Ignatian Exercises* and his experience of a seven-day retreat, Edward associated discernment with the discernment of God’s will, more in a religious than technical sense, although he struggled a little bit with those who claimed they could do it easily. Prudence he equated with either a personal or organisational cautiousness especially in a fiscal or economic sense. Wisdom was the word he found most appealing. His gut feeling was that wisdom was to do with age and experience. It was not one-dimensional, it required multiple things. Reflection was about thinking about something, but not in the same category as contemplation.

2. COURAGE

As William had grown older the importance of courage had become more noticeable and important in his life.

Sometimes when I see the word courage, often the connotation is connected with doing something that is difficult. That is an action thing. As I get older, sometimes it takes courage not to act. And I see that a lot more in my interaction with people. Almost not reacting, letting it go.

John commented on the importance of courage especially when making difficult decisions. It was the lack of courage which could cause you to back down in difficult situations.

Similarly, Evelyn, rated courage, together with intuition, as the two most important words on the card. She saw lack of courage as causing many of the problems in her health care sector especially the abuse of patients.

Zoe thought that courage was essential especially when working with one of her groups.

And you have to have courage. And sometimes it takes a lot of courage to say something or not to say something. Reflect back the truth that they cannot see.

She added an important postscript to that statement about “the courage not to say things, to stay silent.”

I think that is interesting though because courage is not to say things. Because we often, when we are working with groups, they often say to us that they feel that they have not been challenged at all and yet they have been able to challenge themselves.

Zoe had experienced considerable physical pain over the last few years. Courage had been an important element in coping with that especially when things might not be going so well. The same applied to one’s professional life. What did it mean to be successful?

Ultimately I think that being successful means being true to yourself, but that takes courage to do. Often I think, you think that you are successful if you have things or whatever, sometimes I look back.

In her work as a professional management coach Becky often had to be courageous. Courage is where we are tested, that edge. We know we can and ought to do it but courage is the energy that enables us. One needed the courage to be truthful and the courage to stand up to other people. Being an only child she had found herself socially excluded from her peer group at school.

I can withdraw and feel isolated and frightened. And I think my courage helps me keep in with things. But also working with the person who is excluded.

For Max courage presumed action in a certain direction. It was the willingness to act.

You feel that there is something that you need to do that you need to act upon it whereas the other ones are more internal. If you have courage you have to show courage in a way.

For Caroline there was little point in having a good intuition or powers of reflection if you did not have the courage to put your decisions into effect. If courage was lacking bad things stayed as they were. In her personal life, especially her career development, she wondered if she was just drifting with no significant new opportunities on the horizon. Should she stay where she had worked for over twenty years with an established network of people whom she had known over many years, or should she

moved on? If so, did she have the courage and flexibility to do that?

In her professional life Lilian had felt that she only lacked courage in terms of her self-preservation in an organisation.

Courage, the only thing I lack, in terms of courage, has never been in terms of my own preservation within an organisation. I will put my neck on the block, I will put my hand up. You need to get rid of me not the others! That has never been an issue so I have got huge courage. Telling the chief executive or my boss that this was wrong and that they could not carry on doing this flagship programme the way they were doing it. That took a lot of courage.

However, what she did not have was the courage to do physical things such as maintaining a balanced diet, losing weight or taking exercise.

Harry thought that courage was an important word. Courage had played an important part in his career and personal life. He admitted that he had also a reputation for being a bit of a maverick. He added,

But, very interesting though, my mother's epitaph given by my father was "courageous and unselfish to the very end." She was ill for four years. Like her I think I have a lot of courage.

At times Harry had felt that he had been taken for granted by close friends or work associates. Nine times out of ten he had wanted to say to the person, "this is what you have done" but kept quiet. Was this restraint a form of courage?

Alex had earlier linked courage with intuition. He said,

I have courage to test things but also to fail. I'm not wanting to avoid things. I would like to create things, some things work, some things don't, but I have the courage to try and I think I have discernment. I have strong intuition and courage but hopefully I get a little wiser so wisdom is important too.

Although Esme thought she was courageous there was an element in her character that made it difficult to cope with the inevitable unpopularity of some people who opposed her decisions.

I think I am quite courageous; perhaps rash even. I think that the one thing that would let me down with courage is if I had to make other people unhappy, or if it was very unpopular with other people. I feel there is still an element in me of wanting to be liked.

Neither was she fazed anymore from huge decisions although she had to be careful,

I think I am confusing courage with the guts, having the guts to do something. I am quite surprised sometimes when people will say to me. 'Oh I can't go there on my own,' or 'I don't want to do this on my own.'

Sarah often prayed for courage when faced with difficult decisions and the prospect of being unpopular because of what you have decided is the right course of action.

Courage is just being ready to take risks. And I guess it also comes with praying over things and knowing that you are making the right decision. You know that you are taking a risk but at the same time you are on the right path.

Having experienced active service in the military, not surprisingly, Jack placed courage at the top of his list.

I think courage is important to stand by what you believe in. I have always used courage when I have been struggling. Perhaps I am getting into the realms of conceit again? When I get depressed it almost becomes a battle that you are either going to win or not going to win. Satan is there beside me and it is like me saying "my God is going to win not yours!" It is having the courage to stand by that than fall foul. I am using analogies, but Jesus being tempted in the desert by Satan. I am not going to have any of that and that's how I feel sometimes in my life. You get tempted sometimes and that I think takes courage.

George had found courage essential in both the personal and professional sphere of the decisions he made.

I think courage is important in decisions. We talked about that earlier. For instance when the decision to leave my job as a management consultant and move to chalet management took a lot of courage.

Often, the expectations of others were so demanding that Cathy needed courage to stand by her decisions.

Courage jumps out at me because I think there are so many expectations at so many levels from society, family, loved ones, organisations and so on. Unless you are okay with yourself, and grounded about why you make a decision, it can be hard to own that decision and make it, especially if it is contrary to what other people think. One also needs courage to say that you did not know, or you were not sure. Or, having the courage to say that you had messed up, or you should not have done or said that. Courage enhances your willingness to learn from mistakes, to move on in life.

Joseph saw a strong link between courage, faith and many of the situations he found himself in.

I think courage is very important because, for myself, I often need to make a leap of faith. If you like, to believe, that the future is going to be okay, and that can take courage. I think also it can be courageous to express yourself, to be who you are rather

than to be what you think other people want, or want to hear. I think courage to go and look at things that you don't want to look at, that you are fearful of, and yet if you are going to go there, if you are going to develop you need to look at. Work with your shadow for instance. That can take some courage. I admire those people who have the courage to be themselves, to look at themselves.

Having the courage of your convictions was important. Having a contemplative practice enabled him to access that courage and intervene when needed. Not only that, it was important to allow and help other people to be courageous. He explained by giving an example from one of his recent workshops.

It is one of the things that came out with this work we have been doing with of these nurses in Ireland. Several times it has come up that having done the workshops they have found themselves being more courageous to do what they believe is the right thing to do. Some are in nursing situations, when they are working on wards. Or, being able to say to someone else, pull them up, "no we should care in this way and not cut the corners," or someone else talking in a meeting where they had the courage not to defend themselves but to just hear what other people had got to say rather than going with all guns blazing. They found that approach helpful but it took courage.

Given his employment history Shane was not sure if he had been courageous, compulsive or reckless about some of the crucial business decisions he had made in the past.

For Charles courage "jumped out" as number one on the list. But he added,

Courage is something that I don't have. Courage is something that I aspire to. I aspire to the courage of the saints when I read how courageous they were. And I look for role models: people like Joan of Arc, that Polish priest who was a martyr (Maximilian Kolbe 1894-1941). These really stand out when the rest of the world is going in one direction and they are going in the other. And I think it is needed for today. I hope I'm granted the gift of courage.

James often found he needed courage in his legal work.

There can be courage in just giving robust advice which may well be what clients want to hear, but is not necessarily the advice they would get if they went elsewhere. Courage in standing one's ground when it is the advice that a client doesn't want to hear.

He then went on to make a perceptive distinction between courage and stubbornness. He gave an interesting illustration of what he meant.

A situation can arise. I am not sure. I wouldn't necessarily see as involving courage. It can do. It is more likely to involve stubbornness. More likely your aim is to explain why it is the right answer so that the client will understand and appreciate for themselves why it is the right answer even if it is not the answer they would like to hear. Where does courage comes in? I had a situation years ago when the client had an issue and they just could not let it go. Actually I thought at the time, and I still think, that it was an indication. It was to do with a same-sex relationship to put in context. I thought it was an indication of prejudice on the part of the client and it did end up just leading to stubbornness. I just thought that the answer is obvious. I have told them the answer. I have explained why it is the answer. They really don't want to know the answer. The answer is not what they want. They want someone to tell them that they can be prejudiced and it is all okay. But I am not going to be that person. I am not sure that that is really courage. A situation that requires courage is perhaps one where the consequences are very unpalatable and I think in that case I had gone beyond caring about the consequences. If they wanted to take their business elsewhere that was fine because they were bigots.

Courage was the most important word on the list for Josh and he explained why.

I think courage is important for implementing that wisdom, the courage to act on it. I spend too much of my life being a man of intuition and insight and experiencing fear and anxiety about fully living life. In my own personal journey right now I am doing some raw exploration of that.

Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela were all examples of courageous people. And, there was a special quality to their courage. It was about the quality of their being. He explained,

It seems to me that with many of the great leaders we admire their achievements but we admire also the quality of their being. What do people say of Nelson Mandela? Yes history says he was the father of South Africa, yes he was the first president but what they are really saying is that his capacity to forgive and be compassionate and bring warring factions together was extraordinary.

What his own spirituality had shown him was that culture's script about success was largely deluded. It came back to the truth and authenticity of one's own life and having the courage to be who you are meant to be. In one of my lovely teachers phrases, "the easiest thing is to be what you are not, the most difficult path is to be who you are." He reinforced the point by telling me one of his favourite Jewish stories.

Somebody goes to see their rabbi. Let's call him David. He says to his rabbi he is full of inadequacy because he is not as great as Moses. He can't do this, he can't do that. And the rabbi says to David, "at the end of your life, when you meet God, God will not ask

you why you were not Moses. He will ask you why you weren't David?"

Edward made a distinction between physical and moral courage. Going back to an earlier incident in his organisation he had gone against a key colleague's advice and had changed his mind on an important issue facing the organisation involving one of their interns who had not complied with her contract of engagement. He explained,

It took some courage in the sense that it was going against my colleague who was quite key to the organisation. Because there are only three or four of us. She is a big part of it. I knew that it was no small deal for her. Interestingly though I was quite aware that I was probably behaving more in my default mode. In one way it might have felt, or looked, or seemed more courageous to dismiss her, as it were. Although I am not sure, I am seeing that on the surface. Maybe it is more courageous to be open to the question of being too soft rather than too hard.

In the end Edward ended up deciding to be himself; that the organisation he had founded was one that forgives too many times rather than vice versa. He added,

And I thought okay, yes, I would rather be associated with an organisation that makes allowances rather than one that does not.

3. INTUITION

Many of the decisions William made were based on a gut feeling, which for him, was a form of intuition.

Generally it is an awareness of something that I need to do. It is probably more than 70%; when I don't have the intuition I get completely paralysed because the logic kicks in and I can rationalise anything and I can see it from thirteen different sides. At that point I just have to say I don't know what decision to make!

Like William, John relied heavily on intuition. In the fast moving world of business it is a skill that many of the participants valued. For him intuition and courage went together. You needed that confidence and courage to allow your intuition to guide you. He described intuition as being a series of skills, or factors that have built up over time with experience. Wisdom was important too but this was more a function of age. For him intuition was much deeper. You could be born with intuition. It was not something you could learn. Intuition was drawing on your most basic principles, those inner resources, that you live your life by. He described what he meant by inner resources,

It's like a bank of information....Which decision here is going to make me feel good? Which one can I live with? Which one's going to make me sleep at night, and which worked? Is

this person reliable? Is what they're saying true? What's the angle? What are they trying to achieve here? It's often the interaction with people. Intuition is often that. And a classic case would be the HR department, you know. You can have the best CV, you can have the best references and everything else, and you can still pick the wrong person. You can have a person, on the other hand, who doesn't have that pedigree but who you know, when you meet, has the qualities of that person that far exceed this person (with the best CV). A little bit like – I'm treading on difficult ground here but - the intensely academic... Some of them (i.e. graduates) never lived in the real world against the person who leaves school with nothing, but has an actual attitude to life which is real and commercial and intuition can tell you that despite the wise decision, wisdom is probably the wrong word here, but the obvious decision would be to take one person (the graduate), but you take the other one because you believe that person would make a better team member, would work well with your business or whatever.

Evelyn described her experience of intuition as knowing something is wrong, when in theory, everything seem right. Logic tells her that it should be one way but intuition tells you it should be something else.

For Emily the idea of intuition resonated a great deal. It was a very Jungian term. She described intuition as an “inner eye,”

Intuition is synonymous with an inner eye, that kind of thing. So I would say that all my life intuition is the thing that I have trusted the most. Traditionally, as you get older, the Jungian thing would be that your strongest or dominant function becomes less dominant. The opposite to your inferior function becomes more dominant. And I would say that there has been a change in my inferior function. There has been a diminishing of my intuition. I don't know.

Having said that, as a psychotherapist, she had been able to develop a sixth sense, when, with a client, her intuition enabled her to tell her “where they are.”

I think there is a huge difference in people who have a contemplative and spiritual aspect to their lives and those who don't. It is interesting that you can be in a room with people and you just feel the difference. I can tell intuitively when I am with somebody where they are. I don't want to think of it in terms of contemplative life.

In contrast to some of the other participants who used their intuition to “short-cut” a long drawn-out decision making process, Zoe put reflection or meditation as a prerequisite of intuition.

I think that reflection puts you in touch with your intuition. And I think that when you are out of touch with yourself you are out of touch with your intuition. It's almost like being out of kilter. You can hear your intuition. I think that intuition comes after meditation. But you have to have that quiet to be able to hear it. And you have to have

courage. And sometimes it takes a lot of courage to say something or not to say something. Reflect back the truth that they cannot see.

For Becky intuition acted as a hunch. “Discernment is the action, but wisdom is bringing the thought process involving intuition.” She described intuition as,

It is almost what is my body telling me? It is not a forced thing. It is spontaneous. And it is a much more bodily experience than the rational “what should we do?” To use your intuition, what do you feel about this, what is coming to you? I would actually try to actively use that as well. I guess going back to my coaching work I have been taught quite a bit about getting in touch with your own feelings and intuition and to voice that. And also to use that with others.

Max used his intuition a great deal in his work. It went hand in hand with reflection and courage.

I would say that intuition is more here (pointing to the stomach) and reflection more to here (pointing to the head). Courage I would put slightly next to it because courage has a direction. You feel that there is something that you need to do that you need to act upon. You can have intuition within you. If you have courage, you have to show that courage in a way.

Caroline too relied heavily on her intuition. She described it as follows,

The intuition is that feeling that comes from deep inside of me. That tells me what is the right way to go. I know if I don’t take my time, or I don’t have enough time on my own, if I don’t pay attention to my inner feelings and emotions enough, then I cannot. If I don’t give my intuition enough room, then I make the wrong decisions. So intuition is really something that I need to work with. Some people have a very good intuition and I think I need to take it seriously.

I then asked her if she thought she had good intuition. She replied that feedback from others confirmed that her intuition for people was good. However, she did not always take it seriously. Or at least, had not done so in the past. There were occasions when she did not trust her intuition. This was probably because she did not always have the courage to put her decisions into effect. Perhaps the older she got the better her intuition would get.

Intuition did not seem to feature highly in Lilian’s life although she had been blessed with “huge dollops” of wisdom and courage as she called it. She described a situation when these attributes had come into play significantly.

Intuition, allied with courage, were important for Harry. For him, intuition was a gut feeling. That was how he managed people. But often you need courage in order to implement your intuition.

Alex had a strong intuition, and like many of the other interviewees, it was inextricably linked to courage.

Intuition and courage. I have courage to test things but also to fail. I'm not wanting to avoid things. I would like to create things, some things work, some things don't, but I have the courage to try and I think I have discernment.

Intuition had helped him to form sound judgements. He also thought it important to have a strong experienced team around him that if necessary would challenge his intuition.

The older I get and as the organisation becomes more complex and external influences impact on the organisation, I need people around me who are smart people, who are courageous, so that people tell me the truth, people who are strong enough to argue against my intuition sometimes, or my quick decisions, or my courage. I think that just leading out of my intuition, my courage and reflection does not always lead to the best decisions. So if people help me to reflect a little deeper I have a little more prudence then in the end I come to a good decision through discernment.

Esme had strong views about intuition as a human quality. She had spent many years as a careers advisor and an independent consultant in profit and not for profit organisations. Intuition, she said, is not what people think it is. She continued to explain using the example of an experience when working for a supermarket chain,

It is not just a gut feeling born out of years and years of gaining information and experience. Do you know what? Can I go back to the supermarket experience (where she had worked). Deep down I knew that that these two women were rotten to the core. And a month after I left the HR manager above them, but not their line manager, rang me. She could not apologise enough. That made me feel better. Both those two people have fallen on their swords. They're not there anymore. I can actually sense things. I'm almost on the other extreme of autism. I can hear people in my head. I can sense things without them being apparent. I am right 99%, well 90%, of the time. I've realised over the last few years. I have learned to trust it. I've been right. I have read situations before other people could, in both my personal and professional life. So I am saying that I am prudent in the sense that I will weigh things up. I will go through the motions before I make a decision, will I do this or will I do that? But at the end of the day I am using my intuition.

Initially, Sarah gave a rather simplistic definition of intuition, “it is just going with your gut feeling I guess,” she said. But then she went on to give a fuller explanation and place intuition in a spiritual and religious context,

If you are in tune with how God speaks to you, especially if you discern a lot, and take time to contemplate. I think to some extent that practice is part of you. It is seeing signs around you that enable you to make good guesses based on intuition. Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad. It depends on the situation as well. It is the opposite of reflection and discernment.

A couple of times in the interview Sarah had said that she had felt passionately about some issues. I followed up on this by asking her if strong emotions could colour one’s intuition. Were emotions always a good guide? She replied,

Yes I guess not. Sometimes your intuition can be wrong. I can’t think of an example of the top of my head. Sometimes being rash, not thinking about things carefully could lead to pretty bad decisions as well. Yes sometimes you think it’s quite liberating just to act on your intuition, rather than taking time to think about things. I guess it really depends on the situation. I mean for very big decisions you cannot just rely on your intuition. You need to think things through. You need to discern, to contemplate. There are some things you know, that you just have to listen to your intuition because it is telling you the right thing even if logic is telling you otherwise.

For Jack spiritual discernment was more important than intuition. In fact intuition was a term he hardly used. However, he agreed that people who are not religious, or do not have a contemplative practice, often say that they are guided by their intuition more.

George had relied on his intuition for a number of important decisions in his life. He explained,

If I am making a big decision, to be comfortable with the decision I need to get my heart and head to agree. I would call the gut feeling the intuition. I had a gut feeling when I moved to the place where I am living now that it would be the right place to live. To be comfortable with the decision I had to look at all the options and figure out why it would be a good place. Once I had got my heart and head to agree it was good. As I said earlier I do need time for reflection.

Cathy relied on her intuition a great deal. Like many of the others interviewed, wisdom and courage were indispensable allies of intuition,

Intuition and wisdom. A massive part of reflection for me is learning which leads to wisdom. Ultimately it is all about learning. Wisdom brings together intellect, experience

and learning. Sometimes I feel that what I consider to be my intuition today is different from my intuition five years ago.

Perhaps because of his spiritual practice and attendance at Quaker meetings Joseph had more to say about intuition than some of the others interviewed. There was however a disconnect in so far as, although he did not consider himself intuitive, others did.

I think that, I somehow believed, or have believed, that through the years I am not intuitive. When someone says that this is intuitive I instinctively cannot do it, that I don't have intuition. However, other people around me think that I have. They have told me that I am always using my intuition and that I am intuitive. I can intuitively see what is going on.

Shane was really taken by the idea of intuition. As mentioned earlier he had been strongly influenced by the Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman's book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.⁵²¹ The important lesson was that a lot of the quick judgements you make are right. In regards to his use of intuition I asked if it was a skill he was developing. Shane answered,

It is developing. In some areas I got it very well developed but in other ways probably not. The thing is, about assessing a team for a start-up organization, my intuition is bang on and every time I try and override it with logic then I pay for it. It's a mistake...I think people's memories of things can be very selective, their role in things can be very selective. I am thinking of some business dealings where if I talk to people from all the different perspectives of how they saw something unfold. Although everyone was there you get three completely different stories.

Intuition could sometimes go wrong, especially in relation to trust,

I will give people full trust but they can lose it within days. Perhaps I start from a place of having too much trust. When my intuition on someone is off not necessarily. That is something I think I can work on.

Charles was immediately attracted to the term intuition because, on the Myers Briggs scale of ENFP he was a strong N.⁵²² In other words he had a strong intuition about things. Because

⁵²¹ Kahneman has an interesting Chapter on "Expert Intuition: When can we trust it?" see pp.234-244.

⁵²² Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is one of the oldest and most respected psychometric instruments used throughout the world. It was developed by mother and daughter Katharine Briggs and Isabel Myers and is based on the theories of the distinguished Swiss thinker, Carl Jung. The MBTI provides a useful shortcut to helping you understand yourself and others better. It does not describe skills, ability or intelligence and all preferences are regarded as equally valuable. See Jenny Rogers, *Sixteen Personality Types at Work in Organisations* (London: Management Futures, 1997). The MBTI looks at eight possible preferences organised into four bi-polar scales. Extraversion [E] and Introversion [I]; Sensing [S] and Intuition [N]; Thinking [T] and Feeling [F]; and Judging [J] and Perceiving [P]. Each of the four groups in the MBTI is a continuum and your score will indicate where you are on that continuum. A strong N would mean that you tend to be a visionary thinker with an ability to brainstorm,

Charles had read widely on spirituality I asked him if he come across the word “intuition” much. He replied that in his experience they tended to use terms such as “insight” or “the moving of the Spirit.” He continued,

I suppose for me intuition is when you know something without reasoning, engaging the rational mind. And it’s faster. I know from my own experience that often my intuitive decisions are best. And then I find the reasoning afterwards. That takes a bit longer.

For James discernment, intuition, common sense, reflection, training and experience were all needed for reaching the right answer. In particular one needed common sense. Some decisions came intuitively but if they did not then you had to use discernment and reflection to tease out the answer.

Also referring to the Myers Briggs, Josh valued the indispensable part that intuition played in his life. He said,

It is definitely true in my life that all the major decisions for me have come, in the end, through some sort of deep intuition. But there was a down side. He was strongly intuitive on the Myers Briggs (INFP). Intuitive feeling is big and sometimes I have ran into problems with that. Sometime I wish I had been a bit more rational and had a career plan and built a career...But the grass is always greener! But it is clear that my sense of connection with my spiritual path resulted in a couple of the very clear intuitions. I can anguish a lot, I can over-analyse, I worry, I get nervous.

Deep down he had always had a deep intuition of some vocation, although he had never been sure what vocation meant, or what form it took for him. Although he found it difficult to articulate what his vocation in life was, he explained,

Intuitively, right from the beginning of my spiritual practice, it is still my belief you can affect the world positively up to your own capacity to engage with other people in a wholesome way. You might have the best ideas in the world, but, if you are not aware, or are not acting through some genuine attempt to be kind and compassionate, and to see that it is the most important thing, you are just messing up the world more.

This intuitive drive had led him to become politically active with the Green Party and he had been elected a councillor for his local area. He was currently agonising over whether or not he should seek to retain his seat in the forthcoming local elections.

generating ideas for large-scale change and connecting ideas to make new patterns. The downside is a tendency to wander off-target and go after ideas that are impractical or go for a complex solution when there is a simpler one. See *ibid.*p.4.

On the rational it was a sense of vocation and wanting to speak about these things. If that ends up being a kind of ego trip, or unresolved therapeutic stuff, hopefully I will find that out and I won't have to do it anymore....It is about feeling that one's life is about serving in some way the greater good and the truth of things.

Josh defined intuition as a "level of knowing and coming to know." This knowledge could come not only when you were awake but when you were asleep, dreaming.

Providing a message back to yourself either through a dream or just a gut feeling. Or, intuition happens in the world through synchronicity. But I think intuition may arise from that so it may be that you do that and you have a dream and the next day an idea comes to you.

He added that at times he had lacked courage and had spent too much time being a man of intuition and insight and experiencing fear and anxiety about fully living life.

Edward was the last of the interviewees to be asked about how he understood intuition. For him it came under the umbrella of wisdom in which intellect, experience, spirituality together with intuition all played an important part. It was not one-dimensional. It required multiple things. As he had described earlier when speaking about a challenging work decision, he found it difficult sometimes to allow his intuition to over-ride his logical and rational thinking.

Intuition reminds me of something I was talking about earlier, on coming to decisions based on light and dark. I guess ultimately that I come to a sense of intuition about those decisions. Intuition implies that I can't quite explain rationally how I made the decision. I think of myself as a logical and rational person. Intuition kind of contradicts that. I find it quite difficult to make a decision based on intuition if it went against my rationality or the logical argument. It could be that there are goals and I have to figure out what is the logical way of supporting this intuition. I would probably not feel comfortable until I had laid that out for myself, and actually, to other people. I would not feel confident about telling people that I just feel like this. I need to explain why in a factual logical way.

Ultimately he defended his decision to award the fellowship on the grounds that he wanted the organisation he founded to be one that forgives too many times rather than vice-versa.

SUMMARY

This chapter has been about looking at the fruits or outcomes of contemplative leisure. To summarise I will take the six words in order, discernment, prudence, wisdom, reflection, courage and intuition.

(i) Discernment. The understanding of discernment that the participants illustrated was far deeper and broader than some of the other words. It was a term that did not necessarily have to be understood in a spiritual or religious sense because many of those interviewed used discernment in their day to day decision making at work. In fact only one person described discernment as “seeking God’s will.” Discernment was allied to good judgement. It was also important because discernment implied listening, not just listening to other people, but listening to one’s heart. Some people felt it best, and safer, to discern in groups where you could draw upon the wisdom of several people. It was through discernment that you brought your personal values and beliefs into the equation but for this you needed the mental capacity to make judgements. Some people spoke of the need for quiet, and even solitude, to be able to discern effectively. Two of the participants used the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* for discernment on a regular basis although not always daily. One person, before making a big decision, always used these stressing that with prayer, one had to listen to the inner voice and notice the signs that were around you. Another participant relied heavily on discernment as practiced in the monastic tradition. It provided a foundation on which to make important choices. For one participant, working in the legal profession, used discernment only when his intuition did not provide the answer.

(ii) Prudence. The majority of participants associated prudence with individual or organisational caution, being careful, or taking care; one person described it as “being careful to avoid unpleasant consequences”, it was about using one’s resources wisely. Some recognised it more narrowly as a legal term or related to investment banking or fund management where it was very much a “buzz” word. For others it was a character trait that did not always resonate with their personality especially those who were prepared to try new things or “have a go.” They were prepared to “throw caution to the wind.” But, as one of the younger participants commented, speaking from personal experience, his lack of prudence and impetuosity had resulted in significant financial loss, not only of his own money, but that of others. One person mentioned that prudence was a guiding principle in her life and that prudence was allied to wisdom; the wise person was always prudent. Some admitted that they were not as prudent as they might be and stressed the importance of having prudent

people around you who can balance this weakness. Only a couple of the participants recognised prudence as one of the Cardinal virtues.

(iii) Wisdom. Wisdom was an important virtue valued highly by the majority of those interviewed. It was something that many aspired to, especially the younger ones. More frequently it was associated with age, often older people who had accumulated their wisdom over time and through experience, people who had been “around the block.” Neither was it just about one’s own wisdom. This was enhanced by the listening to the wisdom of others. Some recognised that young people could be wise too, because wisdom was not necessarily dependent on age. But, not all old people were necessarily wise because of their age. A couple of people commented on how the value of wisdom had diminished in Western society, for instance, through implementing ageism policies such as forced early retirement and redundancy. There was a greater need than ever for wise people. When asked to define wisdom many spoke of not only experience, but also the ability to listen, to ask appropriate questions and display “incredible kindness and gentleness.” Another described it as the “knowledge of the years.” It came out of inner transformation. A further interesting point was that wisdom was more about what you did with that accumulated experience and knowledge. Discernment and intuition were also important for accessing wisdom. It was recognised too that there was a kind of infused wisdom, that the supernatural, a higher power (such as the Holy Spirit) played an important part. For another participant wisdom was about encouraging the person to recognise their innate wisdom, to be who they are, to be true to themselves. For some wisdom, allied to intuition, courage and discernment were critical decision-making skills. Biblical wisdom was also important for some, especially those who read Holy Scripture daily or practiced *Lectio Divina*.

(iv) Reflection. This was a word often associated with contemplation or meditation although a couple linked it more to wisdom. More frequently the focus was on past events and decisions. It was about looking back, as opposed to discernment which was about looking to the future. It was a “slow” word, you needed time to reflect. But, if you worked in an environment that required you to react quickly to events, such as market changes, then reflection was a luxury you could not afford because your competitor would take the advantage. In such fast moving circumstances it was recognised that with more reflection you might make a better decision. Place and location could facilitate reflection. Many seized “spare time” for reflection such as when driving a car. This reflection could be enhanced by

playing music or spoken tape; others preferred the quiet of nature sitting on a bench or walking meditatively. One couple interviewed used a pack of “trigger cards” with different words such as “transformation” or “learning from every opportunity” to facilitate reflection. Sometimes, these random cards were complimentary or reinforced each other. Regular reflection on past events had also helped some to come to terms with the ups and downs of life, especially significant disappointments or failures. Although they recognised the importance of not dwelling on the past for too long there was an element of “letting go” and moving on in their lives. If you did not reflect your failures could mount up and become a threat to your mental well-being. “Chilling out” was another feature of reflection that people mentioned. There did not need to be a particular focus for one’s reflection. Allied to discernment and courage, this reflective time was indispensable when faced with career choices or life changing decisions. Reflection was a continuous process in so far that as you continued to reflect you modified and revised your learning from that reflection. One spoke of how reflection lead to learning which then led to wisdom.

(v) Courage. For many courage was about action which most saw in terms of moral or ethical action, although one or two spoke of physical courage as well, especially in the face of long term illness. What was the point of going through a process of reflection and discernment, drawing on the wisdom that you had accumulated over the years, many asked, if you did not have the courage to act on something that you knew was the right thing to do? Many regretted not having the courage to speak out. But, it was not always about doing something. For some, keeping silent, restraining oneself, turning a blind eye or letting go was being courageous. Sometimes there was a need to distinguish between courage and stubbornness; people fixed in their ways, nor prepared to budge even for obvious reasons. Courage came into play especially when making difficult decisions, in particular those that affected other people’s jobs, livelihood or community. We all wanted to be liked by others but we had to accept that being courageous implies that we cannot please everyone all the time. Perhaps we need courage to give the other person the benefit of the doubt rather than coming down hard. One needed the courage to be truthful and stand up to people who did not agree with us; to be who you are rather than the person others wanted you to be. Dealing with this unpopularity and the hostility of others was part of courage also. Furthermore, it took courage to reach out to those same people, maintaining contact and retaining their cooperation; for this one needed the preparedness to forgive and compassion. Some

expressed the view that it was the lack of courage in leadership that had led to the continuance of bad practice or unprofessionalism. Part of courage was naming and “calling out” when things were either wrong, or about to go wrong; it needed courage to name the truth that others could not see. Being true to oneself also took courage. Have the courage to try things out, even at the risk of failing was important. You needed courage also to say you don’t know the answer, or you are not sure, or even saying that “you have messed up.” Most importantly, courage enhanced one’s willingness to learn from mistakes and move on in life. In terms of one’s personal development having the courage to look at “your shadow”, especially those aspects of your personality you don’t want to look at, those things that you are fearful of requires courage. Courage was something that several of the participants prayed for especially before making important decisions or putting them into action. Drawing a parallel with Satan’s temptation of Jesus in the Desert, one participant spoke of needing the gift of courage for overcoming temptations. Faith and courage were inextricably linked also; sometime we need courage to make a giant “leap of faith.” It was important also to help people be courageous through your encouragement, helping them see the situation more clearly, suggesting possible ways of overcoming an issue or an obstacle.

(vi) Intuition. There were strong associations between using intuition and following one’s gut feeling. One person describes intuition by pointing to the stomach and reflection pointing to the head. For another, intuition was something that came deep from inside of you and this meant listening to one’s inner feelings and emotions, or, it was simply knowing something without reasoning. Neither was intuition necessarily one-dimensional. With intellect, experience and spirituality it came under the umbrella of wisdom. Irrespective of how intuition was understood, for the vast majority, intuition was their default decision-making process. It told you the right way to go. If they allowed their logic to kick in, and started to rationalise problems, decisions became increasingly difficult to make. Another person described it as “knowing when something is wrong when in theory everything seems right.” Intuition was an “inner eye” or a “level of knowing and coming to know.” For one participant dreaming was an important guide also to their intuition. For another it was a series of skills or factors that a person had accumulated over time; it was like a “bank of information” and although wisdom accumulated over the years was important, intuition went much deeper. It drew upon a person’s core principles, so it had a strong ethical component as well as a practical one. Not only that, intuition was often guided by one’s interaction with

others, so there was a social dimension also. For one person, their intuition was like a “sixth sense” that enabled her “to read” other people. From this, it was possible to tell whether or not a person had a spiritual or contemplative aspect to their life. But intuition was not something that you always “dived into” without thinking. For some reflection and meditation were prerequisites. Both put one in touch with their intuition. If you were out of touch with yourself then it followed that you were “out of kilter,” you were out of touch with your intuition. There could be also a religious dimension to intuition especially if it was associated with discernment. If you were “in tune” with how God speaks to you, you recognised the signs that enabled you to make good decisions; one’s heart and head had to agree. One person remarked that over time your intuition could change, or better still improve. A couple of those interviewed made a link between their Myers Briggs Type Indicator and their strong intuition. On the other hand, following one’s emotions could mislead someone into making a bad decision. Lack of courage sometimes made it difficult to follow one’s intuition especially when it related to a major challenge.

PART FOUR

THE ESPOUSED THEOLOGY OF LEISURE

*In hoc itaque silentium cordis, dum per contemplationem interius vigilamus, exterius quasi
obdormiscimus*

(In that silence of the heart, while we keep watch within through contemplation,
we are as if asleep to all things that are without.)

St Gregory the Great

Moralia 30:16:34; (CCSL 143B:1527.9-17)

CHAPTER TEN

MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION

INTRODUCTION

In this final part of the thesis I want to gather together the voices that have emerged in Parts One to Three and add my own voice in order to formulate an Espoused Theology of holy or sacred leisure. Through their use of theological action research Cameron et al. describe espoused theology as “the theology embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs.” This, they claim, is just one form of “faith seeking understanding.”⁵²³ This espoused theology is not only strongly influenced by the operant theology (the theology embedded within the actual practices of the group) described in Part Three (Chapters 6 to 9), but it is also informed by the normative and formal theologies outlined in Parts One and Two (Chapters 1 to 5). As the word “espoused” suggests, in this theology there is an element of hope, something not yet realised or arrived at. There is, however, a strong interdependence and overlap between these four voices of theology; a synergy starts to emerge between the normative, formal and operant theologies. Additionally, the espoused theology under consideration in these final chapters brings, together with my own voice, the voice of an “outsider” which adds to the insights of those other three voices. This espoused theology challenges our traditional Christian beliefs about the meaning and purpose of holy leisure in God’s plan for our salvation and the role of sacred or holy leisure in the lives of ordinary men and women.

In a different way, what I am attempting to formalise, or give some theological foundation and authenticity to, is what I had been doing in my *Spirituality of Work* and *Spirituality of Leisure* retreat workshops over the last two decades. Those workshops were a form of “applied theology” or “theological action research” although I did not realise it at the time. During those retreat workshops the theology was implicit. Now, through a deeper examination of the four voices of theology I would like to make that theology more explicit. The four themes I have chosen to focus on are:

⁵²³ Although there is no acknowledgement by the authors the phrase “faith seeking understanding” was the original title of the *Proslogion* by St Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109). Written in 1077-1078 it is a prayer meditation or “discourse on the existence of God.”

1. Meditation and Contemplation
2. Mindfulness
3. The Role of Intuition
4. Spirituality of Sabbath and Rest

I have chosen these four because they not only reflect some of the dominant themes that have emerged but also seem to be most relevant to our times if we look at what is going on in the world of work and leisure. Therefore, in this chapter, I focus on the participant group's understanding of meditation and contemplation and the relationship between the two. Although I treat these terms separately there is an inevitable overlap. The majority of the participant quotes have already appeared in Chapter 7 (Understanding Contemplative Leisure) contained in Part Three but occasionally I repeat them on the assumption that it is will be easier for the reader to have them in view rather than to continually refer back.

One of the things that struck me during the interviews was the wide variety of “holy leisure” activities the participants engaged in. In all, twenty-seven were mentioned. These are listed in Appendix E. There was some inevitable overlap e.g. walking for exercise and walking as a pilgrimage, or participants engaged in more than one activity at different times. But, this was a reminder that we all have our favourite mode, or modes, of spending holy leisure. Much of this depends on our temperament, our life-style, the time available, our location, our family situation, our religious affiliation and practice and many other factors. Out of interest I compared this list with the table of leisure activities in 2015 produced by the UK Office of National Statistics which is far more extensive (see Appendix F). Although not everyone might agree with the ONS classification it gives us a general idea of how varied leisure activities can be.⁵²⁴

The implication is that, in our formulation of an espoused theology of leisure, we need to widen our definition of holy leisure. It is not always confined to an isolated contemplative practice shut away in a quiet corner, although, for some, this is their preferred option. From my conversations with participants it was clear that many discovered God in nature, the outdoors, or conversely a train packed with commuters.

⁵²⁴ This Table of Leisure Activities is interesting because it gives an overall picture as to how leisure is classified and analysed around the same time that the 22 interviews were conducted. These activities include, in participatory activities, going to church (sabbath) and in resting and taking time out, reflecting and meditating. Walking, hiking, cycling, swimming are included under Sports or Outdoor pursuits. Keeping a personal diary (or journal) is included under hobbies.

MEDITATION

As described earlier in Chapter 10, for many of the participants, the boundary between meditation and contemplation was blurred, for others the terms were interchangeable or synonymous. Some believed that there was a difference. They understood meditation to be more of an active process where the imagination, or the intellect, was engaged to bear on a particular situation or phrase, for instance a verse of scripture. This was a belief held by many of the participants, especially those whose spiritual practice had been influenced by the Ignatian spiritual exercises where the use of imagination is a key element.

In terms of the Formal Theology of leisure described in Part Two there is a clear difference between meditation and contemplation. Without wishing to be categorical, the distinction that Josef Pieper makes, following Aquinas, between the *ratio* and *intellectus* is broadly equivalent to the distinction that can be made between meditation and contemplation. In other words, meditation relies far more heavily on the *ratio* and uses the imagination, logic and the other senses. For instance, to engage with an incident or phrase on Holy Scripture, imagine you are an observer or even a participant. How are your emotions affected by being there? Contemplation is akin more to the passive gazing or intuitive understanding, the *intellectus*. In other words being receptive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and listening for the voice of God in our hearts.

If we turn to Merton's understanding of meditation, even when using the term, Merton is really speaking of contemplation as defined by the medieval writers. Certainly in his earlier days of being a monk, Merton normally understood meditation in the context of *Lectio Divina*, especially as described by Guigo II described earlier. Thus, it was a preparation for contemplation. In the monastic tradition this usually means some sacred text, usually Holy Scripture. Strangely, Merton does not speak that much about *Lectio Divina*. This is probably because it was so integrated into his daily monastic routine he did not feel the need to. Writing to one of his friends from the hermitage, where he lived for the final years of his life, he refers to his daily *Lectio Divina* which he prefers to do in Latin!⁵²⁵ In the ten years that he had responsibility for teaching the junior monks (i.e. those in temporary vows before making their final commitment) he would have mentioned *Lectio Divina* which was the

⁵²⁵ Merton, *School of Charity: Thomas Merton's Letters*.p. 311 (Letter written to Dame Marcella Van Bruyn on August 6, 1966.)

foundation of monastic prayer and spirituality.⁵²⁶ When Merton does use the term “meditation” it is probably because, as I have already mentioned in Chapter 5, he wanted to “tap in” to the way in which Eastern meditation techniques were becoming popular in the Western hemisphere. Writing about Merton and his *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*,⁵²⁷ Tyler comments,

There is no doubt that from quite early on Merton was influenced by Buddhism, especially the Zen masters. Buddhist meditation, but above all that of Zen, seeks not to explain but to pay attention, to become aware, to be mindful, in other words to develop a certain kind of consciousness that is above and beyond deception by verbal formulas - or by emotional excitement.⁵²⁸

Tyler comments that this Zen influence is clearly seen in the 1961 revised edition of *New Seeds of Contemplation*. In its preface Merton states this latest version had been revised to address the “loneliness of people outside the monastery...outside the Church.”⁵²⁹

Merton was also in correspondence with another Eastern Religious tradition, the Sufi, Abdul Aziz. Writing to him on 2 January 1996, Merton wrote,

Strictly speaking I have a very simple way of prayer. It is centered entirely on attention to the presence of God and to His will and His love. That is to say that it is centered on faith by which alone we can know the presence of God...My prayer is then is a kind of praise rising up out of the center of Nothing and Silence.⁵³⁰

What Merton describes as meditation in some of his later writings is really contemplation. As Shannon et al point out, in Merton’s *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* (1969), which was renamed and published as *Contemplative Prayer* the same year, although clearly concerned with what in earlier works Merton called “contemplation,” he consistently uses the term “meditation” instead. They continue,

It seems plausible to say that he used the term “meditation” in this later work because in the mid-60’s, when he was putting this work together, meditation as a practice, borrowed from Eastern religions, enjoyed a wide popularity in the West....To such people Merton wanted to

⁵²⁶ See Shannon, Bochen, and O’Connell. p. 234 “In the Merton Archives there is an unpublished and undated typescript of 38 pages entitled *Lectio Divina*.” This typescript was probably prepared for the novices at Gethsemani they state. But, Merton refers explicitly only once, to *Lectio Divina* as Guigo II understood it.

⁵²⁷ Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*.

⁵²⁸ Quoted in Tyler.p.105

⁵²⁹ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.9 in Tyler p.106

⁵³⁰ Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York, USA: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985).p.62 in Tyler.p.101

make clear that meditation (contemplation) was more than a psychological exercise aimed at bringing quiet and peace into a person's life, more than a way of relaxing from the cares and problems that life brings. Moreover, he wanted to say that it should not be seen as something new imported from the East. On the contrary, it was a practice deeply rooted in the earliest Christian tradition of prayer, represented, for example in the prayer of the early desert fathers and mothers and in the mystics of Eastern and Western Christianity.⁵³¹

In the interviews it became apparent that a number of the participants had some familiarity with Eastern religion meditation (e.g. Hindu or Buddhist) and applied it to their personal meditative practice, or it was a management tool used to de-stress. This highlighted the way in which business was using "meditation" as a therapeutic tool, in a secular context, not a religious one. The connection with Eastern religions, especially yoga, the importance of posture, was helping people to rediscover the value of meditation. Some believed that meditation was more structured than contemplation. "it was for those who do not have a particular religion or religious belief." Max's comment confirms the common phenomenon that many people who "meditate" do not have any form of religious affiliation. In fact they deliberately repudiate any commitment to a religious practice. They might have a belief in a particular philosophy underpinning their way of life but they don't want to belong to a Church or similar organisation.

Others, such as Caroline, had a more developed sense of meditation and contemplation and how they related to one another. For her meditation led to contemplation. Working for many years in human resource management had brought Caroline into contact with a number of meditation techniques, especially in the context of improving employee welfare and productivity. This was another example of meditation being used in a secular context.

Meditation was the active practice that brought you to contemplation I would say. To meditate is the exercise, the happening, all the doing. Trying to be a least quiet.

At a personal level, she was a keen hiker and she certainly noticed that there were "contemplative moments" during those hikes, especially when surrounded by the beauty of the mountains or fields. She remarked that the rhythm of her walking facilitated these. These remarks by Caroline prompted me to reflect that the rhythm of walking has long been recognised as an aid to prayer, meditation and contemplation. Down the ages the cloister ambulatory of many monasteries, in addition to being a practical way of providing a covered or enclosed walkway connecting the different buildings (refectory, church, chapter

⁵³¹ Shannon, Bochen, and O'Connell.p.291

room, infirmary, dormitory, etc.), provided a space for monks to slowly walk while meditating. Many medieval cathedrals, together with other ancient churches, universities, colleges, schools and public places not only have cloisters but occasionally have labyrinths of different designs. These provide a recognisable path for people to follow while they meditate. Usually circular in design, they lead the person by a circuitous route to the centre.⁵³² This can be a metaphor for the spiritual journey.⁵³³

Caroline's remarks about hiking long distances, sometimes for several days, staying at mountain refuges or hostels, reminded me also of the ancient pilgrimage routes such as the Pilgrims Way (Winchester to Canterbury) in Southern England, the Cistercian Way in South Wales or the famous *Camino* from France across the Spanish border to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.⁵³⁴ In different ways these pilgrimages provide both a place and an opportunity for meditation and contemplation; a further metaphor for the spiritual journey from birth through to death.

For those who did make a distinction, contemplation was more of a passive process, during which one allowed oneself to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit or a Higher Power. But contrary to traditional beliefs about contemplation someone did not always need to be sitting still, in silence, adopting a particular posture, or even in a special place such as a church or chapel. For many both meditation or contemplation (as they understood it) could take place during a leisure activity such as walking, cycling, running, swimming or even dancing or one of the other "leisure activities" listed in Appendix E at the end of this chapter. In his writing Merton frequently refers to the opportunities that nature, literature, art, music and a "good garden" give to contemplation.

In the interior life there should be moments of relaxation, freedom and "browsing." Perhaps the best way to do this is in the midst of nature, but also literature. Perhaps, also, a certain amount of art is necessary and music. Of course we have to remember that our time is

⁵³² A labyrinth is not the same as a maze, in fact it is the opposite. A maze is a puzzle, a challenge, designed to mislead whereas a labyrinth is an aid to focus the mind and draw the soul towards the centre. It's circular "unicursal" pattern can be constructed in stone, grass or hedge, even turf. Some of the oldest Christian pavement labyrinths, dating from the fourteenth century, can be found in the Cathedrals of Chartres, Amiens and Reims.

⁵³³ Dominic White, *The Lost Knowledge of Christ: Contemporary Spiritualities, Christian Cosmology, and the Arts* (Collegeville, Minnesota, USA: Liturgical Press, 2015).p.116

⁵³⁴ The Camino Pilgrimage or the Way of St James has become increasingly popular amongst pilgrims many of whom do not profess any particular faith. Latest figures indicate that over 300,000 international pilgrims were reported to have taken the route, starting from different points in Europe, either on foot, on bicycle or even horseback. They undertake the pilgrimage for a variety of reasons, such as sabbatical time, a spiritual retreat or purely just walking.

limited and first things have to come first....You also need a good garden, and you need access to the woods, or the sea. Get out in those hills and really be in the midst of nature a little bit.⁵³⁵

A couple of participants remarked how they could “meditate” on a packed tube train and just switch off from the outside world. Sometimes this was intentional. At other times it just happened. It was spontaneous. The important thing was to be open or receptive. Some of the participants moved between using the terms “meditation” and “contemplation” without giving it much thought. The terms were virtually synonymous.

Some also remarked on how a regular meditative practice helped them cope with daily pressures, especially a hectic life or stressful work situations. William commented, “I am healthier when I have it, far more rooted and stable” (i.e. meditation). Being calm and rooted in a meditative practice made dealing with chaos much easier. It also helped in his professional relationships. He added,

The notion of having my own time, time to walk and meditate in various forms, helps me to be rooted in who I am, which then allows me to interact with clients from a better place.

Others highlighted the danger of being too introspective and meditating too much, especially if you were the type of person who dwelt on things, allowed problems to fester or were prone to depression. Not having the time to meditate, remarked William, often meant that one’s stressful emotions and anxiety levels increased. Using meditation as a tool to de-stress was also valuable, especially if at times of work pressure one was able to move into a different physical space, for instance go for a walk outside, take some form of physical exercise. Here William is drawing our attention to the fact that meditation is not just a technique that is part of religious practice (which he had), but also an essential part of maintaining one’s equilibrium and sanity while at work, especially when under extreme pressure.

Alex had vivid memories of a daily fifteen minute meditation (in the Ignatian tradition) being led by one of the priests at his Jesuit High School. These meditations had an innovative approach. Each day took a different format. One day the meditation would be based on scripture, another day on a picture, another day a poem or text of a novel and perhaps another day music. Alex’s comments of his experience of meditation reminded me

⁵³⁵ Thomas P McDonnell, *Through the Year with Thomas Merton* (Garden City, New York, USA: Image Doubleday, 1985).pp.10-11

of how important the imagination is, not only to young people but every one of every age. It was also a reminder of the ways in which meditation can be creatively shaped for our spiritual well-being.

A couple of the participants found it easier to meditate in a small group. They preferred having others around them, even if the room was silent. Meditation had to be a planned event. It did not just happen. This is certainly the case for a lot of people. But for others it was more spontaneous. They found themselves, perhaps during a quiet moment, seizing the opportunity to meditate. It is not planned, it just happened. This struck a chord with two of the participants who regularly attended their local Quaker Meeting House. Often they sat as a group in silence, often without speaking.

Jack had attended a number of *Lectio Divina* workshops so he had a clearer understanding of the difference between meditation and contemplation, especially in so far as it related to this ancient form of prayer. Jack's employment as a security manager covered a wide geographical area. He had different routes and had identified a number of quiet parking spots. He always kept a Bible in the car and regularly applied the principles of *Lectio Divina* to Holy Scripture. A recent convert to Catholicism, he now facilitated regular *Lectio Divina* at his local Catholic Church. For most of his life Jack had been a professional soldier. He had acquired a practical wisdom and the leadership skills that come from the disciplined routine of military life. He was also a great reader and fond of authors such as Thomas Traherne (1636-1674)⁵³⁶ and other Anglican Divines such as George Herbert (1593-1633).⁵³⁷ These kind of authors, in addition to Holy Scripture, were his preferred form of "spiritual fodder" as he called it. This was what nourished him and fed his *Lectio Divina* while sitting in his car in a remote spot in the Dorset hills. When one listened to Jack one received the impression that he was deeply immersed in scripture and religious poetry and that this practice of *Lectio Divina* had a profound effect on his life.

⁵³⁶ Thomas Traherne (1636-1674) was an English poet, clergyman and theologian famous for his *Centuries of Meditations* first published in 1908 after having been discovered in manuscript form ten years earlier.

⁵³⁷ George Herbert (1593-1633) was born in Montgomeryshire, Wales and educated at Cambridge University. He became a priest in the Anglican Church. He wrote poetry in English, Latin and Greek. Before his death at the age of 39 he passed a manuscript of his poems to a friend stating that if they might be of use to any "dejected poor soul" publish them. This his friend did in that same year. The book went through eight editions.

George too was familiar with *Lectio Divina* and regularly used it on his commute to work on a packed train. He always carried a bible with him. For him meditation and contemplation were two different things. Meditation implied a sense of rigour and focus. Contemplation, however, was more free and “wandering.” It was a kind of emptying out. Although he recognised the importance of meditation, “Christian contemplation” worked better for him, although both seemed like different ways of getting the same result. In the course of his professional life, and at a relatively young age, he had made some important life choices. With hindsight, his contemplative practice had not only proved invaluable but a good guide.

Both Zoe, and her partner Joseph, meditated regularly, usually in the morning. They had a set ritual which she described in detail (see Chapter 7). Those people who use the “Jesus Prayer”⁵³⁸ for instance, use the rhythm of their breathing to slowly repeat a short mantra such as “Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me a sinner”, “God come to my assistance” or simply “Maranatha!” “Come Lord Jesus.” But Zoe and Joseph used breathing in a different way. Instead of a mantra they used their breathing to breathe in beauty and breathe out anger, breath in love and breath out anxiety, breathe in joy and breathe out worry, breathe in compassion and breathe out guilt and regret, breathe in appreciation and breath out indifference and ingratitude, breathe in acceptance and breathe out blame and judgement. As the body slows down, she added, they are able to breath in peace and breath out peace.

When interviewing Zoe’s partner, Joseph, he spoke of several different types of meditation.

For instance, a guided meditation, where one is led in to different situations: a way of connecting with the subconscious...there is also a meditation where you are focusing on your breath (as explained above by Zoe), clearing your mind, getting into your “alpha waves.” It can also be focusing on the consideration of a particular word, or concept, or situation.

This too was a reminder that there are other ways to meditate apart from that embedded in *Lectio Divina*. Joseph had obviously been influenced by Eastern meditation techniques, not only in his personal life but in his work as a consultant and professional coach.⁵³⁹ Also, Joseph had found meditation a good coping strategy for long distance flights especially going to

⁵³⁸ The *Jesus Prayer* is a form of prayer used frequently in the Christian Orthodox Church, especially by monks. Neither is this technique confined to Christians. The use of prayer beads or a prayer rope is common in the Islamic prayer tradition.

⁵³⁹ “Professional Coaching” is a phenomenon that has emerged in the last few decades, especially in the world of business. It is almost akin to a “non-religious spiritual direction.” It is usually conducted in a one to one situation but it can be done in a small group. Often the focus is on performance and effectiveness in the organisation rather than personal spiritual growth.

places like Australia where they regularly did some consultancy and workshops. But, meditation was more than a tool for relaxing or de-stressing. Interestingly, he was one of the few who mentioned that he used meditation to connect with a “higher power.”⁵⁴⁰ Here Joseph is alluding to the fact that meditation is often the prequel to contemplation, but as he inferred, it can be a bit “hit and miss.”

Sometimes I manage to do it, sometimes I don’t. Whether it is the practice that I do in the morning, be it sitting or running, sometimes you are aware that you are connecting to something higher than you.

Joseph also made a reference to “mindfulness meditation” which he also practiced, especially with some of his clients although he did not explain what it was.⁵⁴¹

Distractions are common experience also in those who try to meditate or contemplate. I remember one elderly holy monk telling me that he had probably only reached the contemplative state a few times in his long life. As we were reminded in the section of Formal Theology, the contemplative state is a grace, a gift from God. It cannot be engineered by our human effort. Merton moves away from this notion. As we saw in Chapter 5 contemplation is available to all, in fact it is a right.

Evelyn had explored different kinds of meditation and had found that dance, in the form of the Shakti, had helped her release spiritual energy and balance the body and the emotions.⁵⁴² This was a significant insight for me because in the Western Catholic Church’s traditional understanding of spirituality dancing is seldom perceived as a form of meditation or contemplation. It is a reminder that in our modern day world it is necessary to be open to innovative meditation techniques and be prepared to adapt. Similar to Evelyn, Zoe too liked to use dance but this time “line-dancing.” In particular, she found that the slow form of line dancing could be meditative. She explained,

There is something about the flow, everybody is in the same flow, you are all doing it together, there is movement in the body but there is this meditative aspect.

The comments about dance (and movement) remind me that a great deal of liturgical ritual is a form of dance, which is carefully choreographed. It is possible to use the body, without

⁵⁴⁰ The use of the term “higher power” originates from the 1930’s and its use by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for its twelve step programme. The term has been adopted by other twelve-step programmes. Latterly it is sometimes used to refer to the Christian God, or the Divine Buddha without making any religious implications.

⁵⁴¹ Mindfulness is explained in more detail in the following Chapter Eleven.

⁵⁴² White.pp.108-127

speaking, to pray. Sometimes to reinforce the words we proclaim by using actions, for instance the hands outstretched or joined while praying. But dancing has always been part of Christian worship. There are many instances of people dancing in the Old Testament (Job 21:11; Judges 21:21; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Isaiah 13:21; Jeremiah 31:4). Most famously King David danced half-naked before the Ark (2 Samuel 6:14). In the Psalms we read,

And there will be princes dancing there [in Zion]
All find their home in you. (Psalm 87:7)

Let Israel rejoice in its maker,
and Zion's children exult in their King:
Let them dance in praise of his name,
Playing to him on strings and drums. (Psalm 149:2-3)

Praise him with drums and dancing,
Praise him with strings and reeds. (Psalm 150:4)

In a different context, on a couple of occasions, I have observed that liturgical dancing can be used to great effect, for instance for the procession of gifts to the altar before the offertory at the Eucharist.⁵⁴³ There is too a sense of drama with its colours reflecting the liturgical season and the different kinds of music such as hymns, plainchant, musical instruments enhancing the celebration, lifting up the soul.

Location and space are important too. As we heard in the Operant Theology, many participants favoured walking in the mountains or the countryside. Others had their special place like the swimming pool, the dance floor, or the bike trail, even a packed commuter train! Some found a quiet visit to an ancient cathedral or a new church with inspiring architecture that was “uplifting.” Just sitting there, quietly, and allowing the grandeur of the building to work itself into their soul. But the majority preferred to sit silently, alone in a local church or a chapel, or in their car parked up in some quiet spot. Again it is an important reminder about location and architecture. The beauty of the countryside, the singing of the birds, the architecture of a church or chapel, all have a way of drawing the senses and the soul upwards. Each detail and aspect of the building reflects the divine

⁵⁴³ This happened at the closing Mass of the *International Thomas Merton Conference* held at Santa Clara University California in June 2019. Four women, dressed in bright colours, danced their way, barefooted, down the centre aisle carrying the gifts. This had been preceded by the same quartet “enveloping” the congregation in a rainbow coloured ribbon stretching the full width of the church. But, by no means was this a recent innovation. More than 20 years earlier I experienced a similar liturgical dance, still in California, but at the *National Catechetics Conference* in Anaheim in 1998.

presence. Cathedrals, with their soaring arches, stained glass windows, provide a glimpse into heaven.⁵⁴⁴

Structure and routine were also important for some. But this was difficult to achieve for those who had to start off early for work, or commute long distances for meetings or site visits. This was particularly true when one's diary was different from day to day. Catherine explained,

I think I need my structure and my routine, and if I have that, or on a weekday when working from home, that is OK. But when I am travelling, or I am busy at work, when I get distracted too much, then I feel I am not myself anymore. I need time to focus and to really feel my own senses again and come back to my inner values.

Because of time constraints many of the participants, especially the younger ones, relied on modern technology to aid their meditation and contemplation. A variety of apps for smart-phones cover different meditation techniques and guidance, including mindfulness. Some provide background noise such as music, sounds from nature, different mantras and a built-in timer

But using a smart phone or tablet had its dangers. Shane found the distraction of social media a barrier to meditation especially on free weekends when he might have more opportunity for meditation. He did have a mindfulness app and was trying to use it on a regular basis but the nature of his work, and travelling, made this difficult. Indeed, the use of the internet and smart phone apps do have an addictive side, but I think the above example demonstrates a positive effect. At 34 years of age, he was one of the youngest interviewed. He understood and realised the value of having some meditation time but the challenge was fitting it in. When he did meditate Shane tried to deal with distractions by acknowledging them and then trying to let them go. For anyone who practices meditation coping with distractions is one of the major challenges. In the early stages, this is particularly difficult and distractions are one of the principle barriers to progress. The practice of mindfulness, which we shall discuss later, offers some techniques for overcoming these distractions. But, there is no doubt, no matter how good the technique might be, it still requires perseverance, routine and self-discipline.

⁵⁴⁴ Merton relates that one of the factors that initially drew him to Gethsemani was the soaring arches of the Abbey Church.

Two of the participants, Charles and Josh, had what could be described as having a regular meditation or contemplative practice that had been acquired and developed over many years of learning and practice. For Charles (who had a Master's degree in Theology) contemplation was the pinnacle of the spiritual life. For him meditation was more to do with Ignatian spirituality and Buddhists.

James, a high powered City lawyer, often had to give advice on complex legal issues, mainly relating to pensions. He was obviously a "thinker" when at work, and although a regular churchgoer, meditation did not feature highly in his priorities. Funnily enough he found that one of the best times to meditate was during the sermon at Church. He just switched off!

Lilian's was one of the few for whom the experience of meditation had been quite negative. She described herself as a "theorist learner" and "low reflector." Her initiation into meditation, by way of a meditation course, had been "dreadful." After two months trying she had given up. "It was just not her thing." Her experience struck me as quite a common occurrence. Not everyone was temperamentally suited to a particular meditation technique. Also, the initial stage of developing a meditative practice requires self-discipline and perseverance. As Emily had commented earlier, it requires a routine. But, most important of all, one needed to accept that different people need different approaches. It depends on a number of factors especially personality type, religious affiliation (if any), making the time and being in the right place.

During the participant interviews, I was interested to discover to what extent personality and temperament had an effect on a meditative or contemplative practice. To test this "hunch," during the course of the interviews, when there was the opportunity, or the time, I asked participants if they had ever done the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Of those who had made reference to the MBTI, I detected that there was a rough correlation between having a strong N (Intuition) and a regular meditation practice as opposed to those who were a strong E (Extrovert) and did not. However, this data is not very precise and is partly anecdotal. If there had been time this would have been a fascinating area to follow up. The theory behind this is explained in more detail by Michael and Norrissey.⁵⁴⁵ This is an area that would merit further research and study. Like several others, Harry viewed meditation as

⁵⁴⁵Chester P Michael, and Marie C Norrissey, *Prayer and Temperament* (Charlottesville, VA, USA: The Open Door, 1991). See also William Judge, *The leader's shadow: exploring and developing executive character* (San Francisco: Sage, 1999), Francis Dewar, *Live for a Change: Discovering and Using Your Gifts* (London: DLT, 1999), Bruce Duncan, *Pray Your Way* (London: DLT, 1993).

leading to contemplation and then happiness and finally well-being. There was a continuum, one led to another. Like George and Jack, Harry had attended one of the workshops on *Lectio Divina*. Consequently he was familiar with the four step hierarchy traditionally associated with *Lectio Divina* described earlier.

Josh spoke at length about his meditative practice, a term he preferred to use, rather than contemplative practice. Of the 22 people interviewed Josh was the only one who was not a Christian. He had been brought up in the Liberal Jewish tradition but for all his adult life had self-identified as a Buddhist and had been a practising Buddhist in the Tibetan Dzogchen tradition. “I have been trained by experts,” he said, “although I would not call myself an expert.”⁵⁴⁶ I had known Josh for a long time and he had been instrumental in introducing me to the process of “co-operative enquiry” used in the leisure workshops. He was also a trained facilitator and used co-operative enquiry in his consulting work and teaching. I thought also, that having Josh would provide an insight as to how Eastern religions, in this case Zen Buddhism, had influenced Western spiritual practices in a personal way.

For him, meditation was “connecting to a state of being” rather than something practiced at certain times of the day. Neither did he think that meditation was any one thing. He was worried also that many people in the West used Eastern meditation techniques as just another aid in their management “tool box,” they just had to fit in their meditation at all costs. It became just another thing to do in a long list of obligations. Neither did he like the comparison between active and passive in relation to meditation and contemplation. For him, meditation was more about “letting go, cultivating a surrender or developing a deep trust in how things actually are.” Trust was an essential element of his meditative practice.

Josh described a “meditative contemplation” used in his particular Buddhist tradition. This involved taking a verse or a few lines, then “lightly” reading the text and then dwelling on them. He emphasised that this was not meant to be an analytic activity. This practice was fitted more to his idea of contemplation. It created a “space” between meditating and

⁵⁴⁶Josh described his Buddhist practice as belonging to a small UK based tradition called the Longchen Foundation which follows the Nyingma lineage (one of the 4 or 5 main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism). Its approach is often referred to as the Dzogchen (Tibetan) tradition., sometimes called Maha Ati (Sanskrit). This means “Great Perfection”. Further information about this tradition can be found on their website <http://www.longchenfoundation.org/rigdzin-shikpo-rinpoche/>

nothing. As Josh spoke I could not help thinking how similar this process was to *Lectio Divina*. He affirmed this when he commented that you “probably have a similar process in your Christian tradition.”

For Josh, silence was important too, but he made a distinction between silence and quiet. Silence was more foundational, a space where you can be with things as they are and using a Buddhist term, actually have the space to “rest the mind.” Quiet was the absence of noise but it is not the same as silence if your head is buzzing around. Having this time was important to him, especially after a busy day, and he frequently retreated to his den in the attic to facilitate this rest. Meditation had also played a significant part in making big decisions.

In Josh’s comments there were echoes of Thomas Merton and the importance of “awareness” which appears quite frequently in Merton’s later writings. As already mentioned, Merton’s growing attention to “awareness” was spurred on by his interest in the Eastern religions, especially Zen Buddhism. In *Love and Living*, published posthumously, Merton uses various synonyms to explain “awareness” such as awakening, attentiveness, alertness and realisation.⁵⁴⁷ In the same essay in *Love and Living* Merton compares Columbia University,⁵⁴⁸ where he successfully graduated with a degree in English, to a monastery, both of which are, or ought to be, directed toward the “activation of that inmost center...that ‘apex’ or ‘spark’ which is a freedom beyond freedom.”⁵⁴⁹ In another essay *Creative Silence* Merton attempts to express the theme of contemplative spirituality for a new audience in the late 1960’s. He appeals for periods of “silence, reflection, meditation and ‘listening’” Such practice is key to awakening the “silent self within us that cannot be known when persons are “submersed in a flood of racket and words.”⁵⁵⁰ The importance of awareness to Merton is most evident in the distinction between meditation and contemplation.

⁵⁴⁷ Shannon, Bochen, and O’Connell.p.19.

⁵⁴⁸ The purpose of education, Merton wrote, was “to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to the world.” The thing he liked most about the University of Columbia he remarked was that the university was glad to turn him loose on the library, its classrooms and distinguished faculty! In Shannon, Bochen & O’Connell p.271

⁵⁴⁹ Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (London: Sheldon Press, 1979). “Learning to Live,” pp.6-7

⁵⁵⁰ *Love and Living* Creative Silence,” p.40

The real end of meditation is to teach the person to become aware of the presence of God; and most of all it aims at bringing you to a state of almost constant loving attention to God and dependence on Him.⁵⁵¹

SUMMARY

A significant part of the contributions made during the interviews resonated with my personal experience of trying to meditate. A number expressed how difficult they found it to do. Nonetheless, given the plurality of understandings, there is a collective wisdom as to how we might understand meditation better, especially as an integral part of an espoused theology of leisure. Firstly, there is no right way. To paraphrase a comment made by the Benedictine Abbot Dom John Chapman, “meditate as you can, not as you cannot.”⁵⁵² It was apparent that temperament or personality were a crucial element here, especially those who had some experience of MBTI. Somebody who was an introvert might have a strong preference for a form of meditation that needed some kind of “anchor,” for instance Holy Scripture or a spiritual text. Thus, a technique with structure and form was best for them. Others were more free in their approach preferring music or the rhythm of walking, swimming, dancing. Extending the above analogy we could also say “meditate where you can and not where you cannot.” This was illustrated by the extensive list of leisure activities that different individuals used as a “way in” to meditation. Some needed solitude, silence and quiet free from distraction; other were content to seize an opportunity in a crowded commuter train. For others it was while gardening, or cycling, swimming, dancing, running or walking. Part of an espoused theology must have as a core principle that meditation, contemplation and mindfulness are in everyone’s grasp, it is within the capability of everyone, in fact it is a right. Whatever form meditation takes it is an indispensable part of a balanced life style. There are various meditation techniques (too many to be mentioned here) which can be taught but it does not have to be a “one size fits all” approach. Distractions too are a common issue raised by people who want to meditate. Those forms of meditation that use the movement of body such as walking, dancing, cycling or swimming are perhaps better suited to overcoming distractions because they require a certain amount of concentration without necessitating a need to change focus. Eastern meditation techniques, especially those derived from Zen, Buddhism, Hinduism and different forms of yoga, are now widely used in the West as ways of the using posture and breathing of the body to

⁵⁵¹ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.p.217

⁵⁵² The original quote was “Pray as you can, not as you cannot.” See Dom John Chapman, *The Spiritual Letters*, ed. G Roger Hudleston (London: Sheed & Ward, 1935).p.25

overcome an overactive imagination or distractions. Meditation, together with mindfulness are actively promoted in many schools as part of their curriculum. In a number of cases meditation and mindfulness has been found useful for pupils with mental health problems.⁵⁵³ As these children grow into adulthood, hopefully they will adopt some form of meditation technique as part of their daily routine.

CONTEMPLATION

Of those asked about their understanding or practice of contemplation a small number had again been influenced, either by their travels to Asia and beyond, but more frequently by what they had read while exploring the Hindu and Buddhist religions. For instance, while working in Asia, William had become aware of a greater acceptance by Westerners, like himself, of the Buddhist tradition as it related to meditation and contemplation. This influence had not been so evident in Africa he added, mainly because he had observed that people do not spend time by themselves so much. The rationale of his comment (I assumed) was that for him contemplation was a solitary, isolated activity rather than a communal or group one. Evelyn's experience of contemplation was also a result of her interest in Buddhist spirituality. For her contemplation was linked to all aspects of life, even the way you ate your food. People who gulped down their food, she commented, were diminishing the sacredness of eating.

This, she added, impacted on the way people used their leisure time to socialise at table. Her comment led me to reflect on the importance of communal dining either as a family, a religious community, a school, a workforce or any other type of gathering. The meal is far more than providing daily physical sustenance. It is, or can be, both a social and a religious event. That provides spiritual sustenance as well.

In hearing Evelyn speak those words, there were echoes of participating in the Eucharist. It was a sacred communion between the Christian community and Almighty God. Perhaps the sad thing, at least in my experience, is that in our Eucharistic gatherings there is very little horizontal communion, i.e. communion with those present, the parish community, except at the "kiss of peace." Perhaps this is how it should be. The key focus of Holy Communion is

⁵⁵³ See for instance see Saphiang, S., Van Gordon, W. & Shonin, E. "Mindfulness in Schools: a Health Promotion Approach to Improving Adolescent Mental Health" *International Journal of Mental Health Addiction* **17**, 112–119 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-0001-y>

its sacredness and intimacy. It is the time when we consume the Body and Blood of Christ. There are other opportunities for socialising with our neighbour, for instance, after Mass or during the week when individuals in the parish community can strengthen their bonds with one another, and in addition, visit those who are housebound, or sick.

For Emily contemplation was quiet time, being with her thoughts. She realised that she needed to make more room for a contemplative practice in her busy life but it was difficult to do. Later on in the interview she remarked that the Jungian maxim “the second part of life was more about the self than the ego” had led her to believe that there is a greater need for a contemplative practice as one gets older. At an earlier stage in her career a contemplative practice, although limited, had enabled her to work through a traumatic period of her life. She added another interesting insight. Her professional practice as a therapist had taught her that developmental trauma in individuals or families frequently established an obstacle to contemplative practice.

It means that people cannot be contemplative because their development has not allowed them to be. We cannot assume, even if we give people the time, that they can be contemplative. For some people it would be very scary. One can only hope that those traumatised people are able one day healed, and with the grace of God able to engage in meditation and contemplative prayer. Emily also observed that we are becoming a society that is finding it more and more difficult to be silent. Modern day society is supporting that through its avoidance of silence and the need to create the space for contemplation.

Zoe did not use the word “contemplation” very much although she did recognize that the current preoccupation with mindfulness reflected a move towards something akin to contemplation. There were, she said, different ways in to contemplation, for instance reading a spiritual author. Perhaps, without realising it, Zoe was using *Lectio Divina* as a way of doing this. Also, other activities such as gardening or walking in the countryside, could facilitate contemplation.

In the group being interviewed there were two keen amateur painters. One of them was Becky who, in her retirement, was attending an art foundation course at a nearby college. She acknowledged that her art had a contemplative dimension to it. Although she found it daunting, starting on a blank canvas, eventually the reflective process kicked in. The painting connected you with someone or something. It could lead you to somewhere you have not been before and bring up significant thoughts that are important. You cannot force things, she said. You need to leave some space and come back to them later. Having worked

in management and professional coaching all her life there was an obvious link between contemplation and mindfulness. Both required a similar approach. The ability to be contemplative had helped her in both her professional and personal life. A contemplative practice was informing both aspects of her life. For instance, the way in which she had been able to redefine successes and failures, not only in her career and personal life but in that of her clients, in a more personal, positive and meaningful way. Contemplation and the associated reflective process had the power to help you turn yourself around.

Max was the second amateur painter, but preferring to focus on large canvas, abstract oil paintings. He has displayed a number of these oil paintings on social media. Having viewed them I often wondered if it would be possible to “interpret” these and “decipher” their meaning. What message was Max trying to convey in these paintings? He not only found his hobby therapeutic but it gave him also the opportunity to switch off from his day job. He confirmed to me that painting, as a leisure activity, gave him an entry into a spiritual practice. This hobby or recreational activity had become a form of “re-creation.” His painting enabled him to withdraw from the hustle and bustle of life and create something that resonates. “I can empty my thoughts onto the canvas; these can be worries, hopes or joys.” As his painting became less figurative it became, in his view, more contemplative. He had moved to painting what he felt, rather than what he saw, outside of him. “I listen to what comes out of myself and that is where the contemplative dimension comes in.” After a few moments he qualified this statement. Perhaps he was sensing what he saw outside of him rather than contemplating. He added that he had never been taught to contemplate in the sense that he had never found a ritual or practice that he found spiritually nourishing. He added,

I think that I know that I have it within me. I have, in the last year, had the first sort of 100% encounter with my own faith where I felt trusted, I believed. That was a moment of, may be not contemplation, but a moment where I could detach myself and just allow room around me which was good, a warm place which enabled me to let go...It was a decision I made that I wanted to make room. There was a moment when I decided that I did not want have entire control of my life.

Again it was a reminder that we contemplate with our whole body, not just our mind. The senses, such as the eyes and ears, together with the emotions come into play, especially when we are being creative. Art, of course, especially religious art, has had a profound effect on our culture. It is an integral part of our Christian heritage and present in our churches.

Some of it may not be to our taste, or nourish us spiritually, but if it difficult to imagine any church without some form of sacred art. One only has to think about the *Parable Windows* in Canterbury Cathedral and the stained glass in so many other cathedrals and churches throughout the world, the Crucifix, the *Stations of the Cross*, statues of Our Lady and the saints.

Harry admitted that he possessed quite an irascible temperament and the contemplative dimension only came into play after he had lost his temper! For several years he had been in a legal dispute over a family inheritance. He admitted that having a contemplative practice had helped with making difficult decisions and handling awkward situations and events such as the death of his mother, his partner and redundancy. In essence, a contemplative practice had helped him “let go.” It also gave you the ability “to look back” and “have a giggle” about things, always see the bright side. “The glass is always half-full.” Harry did not say much about what form his contemplative practice took but he regularly exercised by walking his local footpaths and woods and by swimming. Again it was a reminder to me that the contemplative dimension has a healing and therapeutic effect on the soul.

Alex, like many others interviewed, linked contemplation to reflection. He described it as a “strong self-dialogue.” For Alex, journaling, keeping a personal diary rather than a calendar or diary of events, was a contemplative process. His writing was far more reflective and this, he added, stemmed from a quiet contemplative practice. He still read a great deal, including philosophy and theology, and this nourished his spiritual practice. Although he had experience of contemplating in a group he preferred it when alone. As described earlier when speaking about meditation, Alex’s aspiration for the future was that communities of people would come into being, (and some were already in existence,) where you could combine your personal gifts, contemplation, wisdom and peace in a productive way for the common good.

Of all the people interviewed Alex was the only one who spoke about journaling. The benefits of journaling, especially in our time-poverty age, is perhaps undervalued and underused. Although not strictly a contemplative practice it can lead us to it. In some ways, the musings and reflections written in a journal are similar to those experienced in meditation. The advantage of journaling is that it is possible go back and review what has been written, perhaps many years, or even decades, after.

Esme could be described as an “outdoor contemplative.” Invariably the contemplative dimension happened mostly when she was doing something physical or cultural. She had never engaged in any formal meditative or contemplative practice using established techniques. “Contemplation, meditation, or just thinking, all of those blurred for me,” she said. Nonetheless, for her, contemplation always had a spiritual dimension. It was far more spontaneous too and could come into play at any time.

Sarah had never considered contemplation as a leisure activity. Hitherto she had associated a contemplative practice with a seven day retreat or a special time of prayer. But now, having had time to reflect on her answer, she realised that there was a connection between leisure and contemplation. Contemplation was not necessarily confined to certain times and places. As we have already seen, this response is typical of many of the participants in this survey. In general they tend to compartmentalise their lives into work, leisure and spiritual. Sarah commented that she had always understood contemplation as prayer time or spiritual time rather than a time for herself. She added, “this has got me thinking, it does make sense to associate the two together.” Here Sarah was connecting with the idea that contemplation is not so much an activity but a state of being, an awareness, that continually impacts on the way someone can experience the hand of God in their life.

Before the interview, Jack having received advance warning of the words on the cue cards, had done some research. In particular he had looked up the word “contemplation.” His research had obviously influenced his answers. The idea of contemplation being on a “higher plane” appealed to him and reflected his current spiritual practice.

George found that walking and bike riding were conducive to his contemplative practice. He found it easier to be contemplative if he was on his own or in a quiet environment. That being said, his usual prayer time, as he called it, was on a packed tube going into work. He observed,

Because it is “dead time” I can shut myself away, although you might be crammed into a carriage “like a sardine.” Although you are “nose to nose” with everyone else, no one is interested in you.

He used the Bible to focus and read a short passage of scripture to start off. Similar to Jack this practice was a form of *Lectio Divina*. Because he did not always have a regular routine, perhaps he was travelling somewhere, he sometimes missed out on his “daily contemplative

time” as he called it. He always felt slightly impoverished when this happened. For George, contemplation involved a lot of mental activity, but because it did not involve work, it did not feel like hard mental activity. Contemplation was both passive, just letting his mind wander, and active, thinking about the future. Although he valued his quiet time and the “oasis of calm” that his home provided, he also valued being with other people, especially his friends from Church.

Contemplative time could be very creative to the extent that it seemed that contemplation and creativity were almost synonymous. George had found that engineering consultancy had not given him the opportunity to be as creative as he wanted. This search for creativity had also prompted him also to move away from the Catholic Church and seek a more flexible and uplifting form of worship, not just on a Sunday, which was very important to him, but also during the week, when he could join or lead bible study groups. A couple of the participants were slavishly loyal to their Catholic roots and attended their local Catholic Church although it was a real “penance” for them. They found the attitude of the priest and the style of liturgy alienating. But, they carried on. Others, like George went to graze on new pastures and were obviously nourished.

Contemplation had also influenced the way George viewed society and the common good especially the distinction made earlier between “big contemplation” and “small contemplation.” Finally, when George was asked the extent to which his contemplative practice had influenced his political views and his views on social justice he replied,

That it had helped him to think more deeply about things rather than just take a traditional view. Because of my traditional upbringing, I would tend to hold similar traditional views as my parents. I would like to think that I have taken into my life the bits that are really good which my parents taught me and then put other stuff with it from the Church and other places...I think most people need a bit of time to contemplate to come up with good decisions.

George’s comments about the way that his contemplative practice had impacted on the common good, his social and political views, was revealing. One of the questions I posed to each of the participants in their sixty minute interview, if time allowed, was the impact that their contemplative practice had on the Common Good. Although I have recorded all their responses there simply is not enough room to incorporate all their answers in this thesis. The term “Common Good” was understood in different ways. For some, purely in its economic sense. But others, such as George, linked to the Common Good to social justice and peace as

well as economic flourishing, which is, incidentally the Church's teaching on the Common Good. The participants understanding of the Common Good is an area that is in need of further research and understanding.

Cathy, as mentioned earlier, is a psychologist and a regular practitioner of mindfulness and MBCT (Mindfulness Behavioural Cognitive Therapy) in both her personal and professional life. Contemplation and reflection, at least for her, implied thinking about the past and the future rather than the present, which is where the focus of mindfulness is directed. Physical exercise and yoga were part of her contemplative practice too. She remarked that her PhD in Clinical Psychology had required "lots of contemplation and reflection." We will hear more from Cathy later in the section on Mindfulness.

Joseph had been influenced by his exposure to the practice of Buddhist spirituality and its teaching. His contemplative practice was both a significant and indispensable aspect of his life which was well integrated into most of the things he did, in one way or another. For him, contemplation was allied to a focus on a particular word, concept or situation. (To me this sounded more like meditation but it illustrates the ambiguity in the use of the two terms). Having had a contemplative practice for several years meant that he was a far more calm and thoughtful person than he used to be. It had also given him the ability to manage situations that needed managing.

Shane was probably the least acquainted with any kind of spiritual practice. From our conversation he certainly valued some quiet time in order to be reflective. During his down time he sometimes experienced what he described as a passive form of contemplation, especially when reading. It happened unintentionally. For Shane contemplation was allied to decision making. It was when he was in this "mode" and in a state of "happiness" and 'well-being" that he felt he made his best decisions.

Of all the participants Charles, both as a student and a practitioner, was probably the most familiar with the theological and spiritual vocabulary associated with contemplation. He had studied theology and spirituality part time at Heythrop College and also had a doctorate, again part-time, in the *Spirituality of Work* from the London School of Economics. It was an important aspect of his spiritual practice. Charles understanding and practice of contemplation had been shaped by Christian mystics such as St John of the Cross and the *Cloud of Unknowing*, also by Buddhist teaching. During a one year sabbatical he had lived

in an isolated cave in the Syrian Desert close to a Christian monastery. Charles used Buddhist terminology of emptiness, stillness and quietness to define his form of contemplation. He added,

There are different forms of contemplation, but they are all ineffable. There is just something that you know once you have been granted the grace.

He emphasised again the importance of contemplation in his life.

Contemplation is number one, meditation is less so, but for some people, Buddhists for instance, meditation is contemplation and contemplation is meditation. For me contemplation is John of the Cross, the Cloud of Unknowing, those sort of people. Meditation is more Ignatius of Loyola.

Apart from Joseph, who had intimated some form of contact with a Higher Power, Charles was the only one to explain that the contemplative state was a grace (given by God). As he said, “it is just something you know once you have received it.” He also alluded to the ambiguity in the terminology of meditation and contemplation. For Buddhists for instance, meditation is contemplation and contemplation is meditation.

For him the contemplative life made him who he was, it was the foundation. This meant, that to many people such as his close family and friends, his choices had made him a stranger and mildly eccentric. When I asked Charles whether he thought being contemplative was a disposition rather than an occasional event he replied, with echoes of Thomas Merton and mindfulness,

The contemplative disposition is to be living in the present moment with God at that moment in time. It pervades all your life, whether you are awake or asleep, active or passive if you like. This is what every religious is striving for.

Although a practising Anglican, for James, contemplation or a contemplative practice did not feature in his life. When asked if his spiritual practice embraces meditation or contemplation, his answer was an emphatic “no.” He valued the time to be quiet and reflective and always seized the opportunity to do so when he could. But, he did not actively seek those opportunities out. He certainly spent a lot of time thinking, both inside and outside on work but was this the same as contemplation? If there was a particular challenge he might “bring it out and have another look. Mull it over and put it away again.”

Josh, who is in his mid-forties, as explained earlier, had been practising Buddhist meditation for a number of years, both as a participant and a spiritual teacher. Contemplation was not a word that he particularly used, or was involved with, in his Buddhist practice.

Edward's Methodist upbringing had tended to shape his understanding of spirituality and, in particular, contemplative leisure. His answers were also informed by what he had learned about *Lectio Divina* through attending various *Greenbelt Conferences*.⁵⁵⁴ Although Edward did not have a contemplative practice he understood contemplation as implying contemplation of something. There had to be an object. But did this mean he was really speaking about meditation?

There is an object that you are contemplating or, I guess, that could literally be an object like a statue, an icon, or nature, a leaf a tree whatever it might be, through to kind of contemplation of the Scriptures.

As he understood it, contemplation was freer than meditation, it was not so structured. Neither did it necessarily imply the ultimate contemplation of the Divine. Contemplation had an almost "dreamlike" quality to it.

What struck me about Edward's answer was "is contemplation for Christians" more a Catholic thing? It certainly was not part of his Methodist upbringing. He was obviously interested in the contemplative dimension and had committed to finding out more by attending conferences and retreats. But I was not certain if his search had provided him with what he was looking for.

SUMMARY

This second section on contemplation has moved beyond meditation. The main reason I wanted to treat them separately is that I believe that they are different even though, as indicated in the interviews, the two terms are often understood as being synonymous. Following traditional Christian teaching, contemplation, for me, only makes sense in a the context of having faith, a belief. Thus, for a Christian, an espoused theology of leisure must

⁵⁵⁴ Greenbelt is a nomadic festival of arts, faith and justice which has been held annually in England since 1974. It is at the forefront in tackling issues of justice such as trade with Third World countries. Its ethos is broadly Christian and claims to provide a space for honest debate. It was one of the catalysts for the Jubilee 2000 movement. Dr Rowan Williams, formerly Archbishop of Canterbury is currently the festival's patron.

mean a faith in the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁵⁵⁵ As we have seen, with meditation, although not necessarily so, it is easy to divorce it from religious belief. One of the reasons that meditation and mindfulness have been so popular in the workplace and different fields of education is that they are not threatening, at least in the religious sense. One could say that too about contemplation of course. Although the term is often used in a secular or philosophical sense, I think, generally speaking it has a stronger religious affiliation. There is no doubt that for Pieper and Leclercq, and most noticeably for Merton, contemplation was the pathway to “resting” in God, the equivalent to what ascetical theology called union with God or the unitive way.⁵⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, this kind of traditional theology taught that union with God was very rare, even in a person who was regarded as “being holy” and deserving of such graces. But following Merton’s argument, outlined earlier, the gifts of contemplation are within everyone’s grasp. Like meditation, it is a right, but a right with far greater privileges because it places us in a special relationship with not only God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but also with God’s creation. In this relationship, we enjoy, in so far as our human state will allow, an intimate union with God. So an espoused theology of leisure, for the twenty first century, has to recognise that this contemplative spirit, or grace, or gift (whatever we want to call it) is within the grasp of all. We don’t have to be a cleric, a religious, or even particularly holy in the traditional sense. We are not putting ourselves forward for canonisation by jumping through numerous spiritual hoops. People often speak of their main aim in life as “being themselves.” In any case, as Merton comments, for us there is very little chance of us being anything else than ourselves.⁵⁵⁷ Hence the acceptance of our self, made in the image of God, is the important thing.

Merton is always putting up a strong defence for the contemplative life. Writing to a correspondent at McGill University who thought that all contemplation was a manifestation of narcissistic regression, Merton comments in his diary,

That is just what it is not. A complete awakening of identity and of rapport! It implies an awareness and an acceptance of one’s place in the whole, first the whole of creation, then the

⁵⁵⁵ I accept that many beliefs or religions do not have the Christian God as their focus so my comments about contemplation are made for a Christian context.

⁵⁵⁶ Adolphe Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* (USA: Echo Publications, 2015).

⁵⁵⁷ Tyler.p.105 quoting from Merton, *Dancing in the Waters of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage (The Journals of Thomas Merton Vol. 5 1963-1965)*. May 1965.

whole plan of Redemption - to find oneself in the great mystery of fulfilment which is the mystery of Christ. *Consonantia* (harmony) and not *confusio* (confusion).⁵⁵⁸

In an espoused theology of leisure the acceptance that we have a special and unique place in God's creation must be an indispensable part of it.

One final point is that contemplation leads to action. The fact that many contemplatives, such as Merton, spent their lives in the monastic enclosure, cut off from the world, does not mean that they had no interest in what is going on in the world, beyond the cloister wall. In fact, it is the opposite. Published soon after Merton's death in 1968, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, contains twenty-two essays that Merton had written through the 1960's. The focus of many of these essays is on monastic reform, especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council. In one of the essays, "*Is the World a Problem?*" Merton says that he speaks as a man of the world who is deeply involved in it. Rejecting the traditional view of a world that is unpredictable, sinful and evil he emphasises the opposite. By choosing the world we can choose to make it a better place, one that is more free, more just, more liveable and more human. The contemplative is not therefore a mere observer of what is going on in the world but has to see the action of Christ in the world.

The world cannot be a problem who sees that ultimately Christ, the world, his brother and his own inmost ground are made one and the same in grace and redemptive love.⁵⁵⁹

So, for our Espoused Theology of Leisure, contemplation or being contemplative is not a form of escapism. It is exactly the opposite. In another essay, from which the book gets its title, "*Contemplation in a World of Action*" Merton reinforces this. Opening with the critical question, "What does the contemplative life or the life of prayer, solitude, silence, meditation mean to man in the atomic age?" Merton answers that the contemplative is not someone who hides behind the institutionalised, regulated cloistered life but a life that has,

A special dimension of inner discipline and experience, a certain integrity and fullness of personal development which are not compatible with a purely external, alienated, busy-busy existence.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ Merton, *Dancing in the Waters of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage (The Journals of Thomas Merton Vol. 5 1963-1965)*.p.250

⁵⁵⁹ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1971).p.156

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.p.157

CHRISTIAN MINDFULNESS

In this section on mindfulness we move into new territory, in the sense that references to mindfulness are not found in biblical texts, the Church Fathers and early Christian Literature. Neither has the term gained much recognition so far in the Church's social teaching and papal documents. In fact, recent statements by different Church authorities have expressed reservations, even hostility, to way in which mindfulness is being adopted by many Catholic organisations and groups.⁵⁶¹ The topic of mindfulness was not covered at all in Part 1 (Normative Theology) and only with reference to Thomas Merton in Part 2 (Formal Theology). However, the practice of mindfulness, especially in a secular context in Western countries over the last ten to fifteen years, cannot be ignored. It has gained considerable popularity, as the following observations will demonstrate. Only a few of the participants interviewed had a regular practice in mindfulness either in their personal or professional lives, or both. Mindfulness was an integral part of Cathy's personal and professional practice. As a clinical psychologist, her training and PhD field work, had used mindfulness. For her meditation and mindfulness were interlinked but they were different. She explained,

(Mindfulness) It is how I make sense of what it means to be in the moment and not to be worried about the past or the future. I just try and be very present...meditation is thought about as being a bit more formal or structured. There are more rules to it. Mindfulness is a kind of "watered-down" meditation, or a more "marketable" meditation.

William was aware of mindfulness because his wife's parents were both therapists and counsellors. Mindfulness was an increasingly important aspect of their work. His personal encounter with mindfulness though was limited. It had not yet been accepted or practiced in the kind of work he did. Within the circles that he engaged in, and in pretty much everywhere else, mindfulness was a "buzz" word however. Although he did not practice mindfulness, he could envisage that, with contemplation and meditation, they could lead to well-being.

John, who had worked as a senior lawyer in the automotive industry, recognised mindfulness as having increasing importance. Although he was now retired he was aware

⁵⁶¹ For instance, the Director of Education in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff has recently written to all parish priests and head teachers to advise them not to use mindfulness as a form of Christian meditation. On 24th September 2019 *The Catholic Herald* reported that the Spanish Catholic Bishops had warned against the dangers of using Zen Meditation and Mindfulness as a form of Christian Prayer.

that mindfulness was an important tool in helping people with work related stress. From the tone of his answer I was not sure if this was a development that he approved of. Having said that, John had taken early retirement because of pressures at work.

Similarly Evelyn, who currently worked as a health care professional, was familiar with mindfulness. However, as we saw in the above sections on meditation and contemplation, she did not practice it. She commented that in her profession, especially in psycho-synthesis, words such as mindfulness, meditation and contemplation were used a great deal. For her, these were all inter-connected with spirituality, heart-fullness, well-being, oneness, enlightenment, connectedness, the sacred and the divine.

Emily, a psychotherapist, also recognised the importance of mindfulness although, like Evelyn, she did not use it personally, or in her practice. Her definition of mindfulness was the practice of being in the present moment.

Zoe had far greater familiarity because she had done some work around mindfulness. Zoe defined mindfulness as,

Being much more conscious of what is happening to you physically. Being really present to yourself. Being present to myself physically is something that I have not been very good at times and I am much more conscious of that now. And that practice of mindfulness has helped me.

Zoe had found a book by Ruby Wax⁵⁶² particularly helpful. She had used a book that was looking at mindfulness to manage pain. Having worked through that she used other books on mindfulness.

And mindfulness that brought me into consciousness with it....Her book is really good in terms of talking about it, but is also useful because it introduces people who would not necessarily think about things in that way.

Zoe added that she too had felt much calmer and in tune with things because she had been practising mindfulness. From her study and practice of mindfulness she recognised that it was based on work from centuries ago. “We would not have access to mindfulness unless it had been for them,” she remarked. The interesting thing about Zoe’s use of mindfulness was that, as well as being a spiritual practice, it was also a therapy for coping with physical pain. Earlier I remarked that a contemplative practice engaged the whole body, not just one part of

⁵⁶² For instance, Wax, Ruby Wax, *How to be Human: The Manual* (London: Penguin, 2018).

it, e.g. the mind, the heart or the soul. I thought how the use of mindfulness had helped Zoe cope with what was obviously a challenging disability.

In answer to my question on how mindfulness was used in business Becky replied,

You have to be a little bit careful. Coaches can do it. There is a business about coaching. There is a humanity about coaching so they say, “let’s do the latest thing,” or have something new, or what have you. I think there is some interesting training on mindfulness and loads of books. How well the coaches themselves are mindful is another matter. If you do work with somebody who has that approach it can be very helpful.

She had however worked with a client who had previously used a coach who practised mindfulness. She said that this other coach had not really grasped or understood mindfulness fully. She then gave an interesting example, described more fully earlier, of how one of her clients had inadvertently used mindfulness when out walking by himself.

I was trying to get him to be the present and to think forward. Then, without thinking about it, quite simply he said “When I am walking I have to concentrate on what I am doing” And I said to him “this is the first time I’ve really heard you speak about mindfulness.” Focusing on the walk, on every step and concentrating.

I then asked Becky if she thought that the state of mindfulness, illustrated in that walking metaphor, had any connection to a contemplative practice? She replied,

In the sense that in contemplation, you are trying to maybe focus and reflect. Mindfulness could be a similar quality.

What Becky had said about her client struck a chord. The first was the idea of having to focus on walking. You become so engaged with thinking about your next step, making sure that you don’t slip on the path, that other concerns and worries evaporate. In effect, you are focussed on the present moment. It is the same with the hillwalking or the labyrinth. Both are metaphors for life’s journey especially when you are encountering “difficult terrain” at home or at work.

For Max mindfulness could be a foundation for a contemplative practice. He made an observation about the power of mindfulness being able to change others, but without actually calling it that. Although mindfulness focuses on the present it does not mean that experience, knowledge, practical wisdom, intuition, justice and prudence do not come into play.

Caroline added that mindfulness was something you needed to train for, although she did not teach it personally. Caroline explained succinctly the impact of mindfulness on her personal life,

There are so many things in your daily life that you can be mindful about. If I am mindful I am just here and I think about how I can get the best out of the moment. I don't live for yesterday and I don't know about tomorrow. I live for now. It is very difficult to get to that state of mindfulness all the time. I think you have to meditate in order to concentrate and to feel the mindful moments that are always around you. There are so many things going on that we are not aware of. If we are not mindful we don't actually get them.

Then she turned to the part mindfulness played in her professional work. Part of Caroline's job involved developing talent within her business. Mindfulness training was an integral part of developing new talent? She explained,

But I think for everybody, the more mindful you tend to be in your life, the better the connection to yourself. Then probably you have less doubts, or make less mistakes. You just become more secure. Because you know what your values are and what is important for you. I think of course that relates to the job as your personal life. If you are mindful of whatever the topic then that leads to a better outcome.

Although Lilian had spent some time as an organisational trainer in the public sector she was not very positive about mindfulness. She remarked about "fashionable new age stuff" which she called "rubbish." Having been slightly critical of mindfulness Lilian proceeded to elaborate on what was, for her, a different kind of mindfulness.

As to mindfulness. I think I am mindful about a lot of things that I do. I do not mean in terms of fashionable new age stuff. That is rubbish. I did study some of that on the spirituality course. You can be mindful and aware. I think I am self-aware and other-aware

Harry had a limited experience of mindfulness. He recognised that mindfulness was currently the "in thing." He had done a course in mindfulness with an osteopath so mindfulness could have an impact on health, especially his back pain and general well-being. Harry's experience of mindfulness, like a lot of people, such as Zoe earlier, was using it in a physical therapeutic sense, to control or remove pain.

Alex who lived and worked in Germany was aware of emerging importance of mindfulness too. He remarked that one heard the word mindfulness more and more in Germany. On a personal level, living on a large farm in the German countryside, he found it easier to be mindful in nature.

I am not sure what Alex understood by mindfulness. But earlier, when he had spoken about contemplation, there was a connection. He obviously associated mindfulness with yoga because he added the comment that a great number of his team, who were mainly female, practiced yoga. It was very much part of their life. If they are not able to do it they become angry. He understood that there was a strong connection between yoga and mindfulness.

Esme was on the cusp of retirement but in her professional life had been a trainer and careers advisor. A couple of her friends had done courses on mindfulness and found them very useful. I asked Esme why she thought enrolling on a mindfulness programme would help. She admitted that she could obsess about things, especially in relation to her two grown-up children. If she was not careful these worries would “fill her head” as she put it, she was prone to becoming depressed.

I think mindfulness would help me look at how. Can I do anything today? No. And it is about not being depressed about the past and anxious about the future isn't it?

Sarah had limited familiarity with mindfulness also. For her it had less to do with spirituality and religious faith. She equated it more with things like Yoga or Pilates. She felt that the practice of mindfulness was better suited to people who are not associated with a particular Christian religion or spirituality. Jack had come across the term mindfulness but hardly ever used it. He was now retired but in his profession as a security consultant, and before that in the military, it was not relevant. George felt that there was an obvious synergy between words such as mindfulness, meditation and contemplation but did not elaborate other than confirm, that although he was a gregarious person and enjoyed the company of other people, especially his friends, family and church group, he liked also the opportunity for quiet and peace, especially the oasis of calm that his home provided.

Of all the participants I interviewed Cathy undoubtedly had the greatest familiarity with the practice of mindfulness on both a personal and professional level. In her professional practice mindfulness was currently a hot topic and was everywhere. For Cathy mindfulness and meditation were interlinked. To effectively teach and facilitate mindfulness it was necessary to have it as part of your own spiritual practice. “It comes into how I unwind and how I relax,” she said.

Because for me one of the things that differentiates mindfulness and meditation is that mindfulness is how I make sense of that what it means to be in the moment and not to be consumed or worried about the past or the future.

She added, however,

I see meditation and mindfulness as being quite similar. I think on a societal or cultural level meditation is thought about as being a bit more formal or a bit more structured. There are more rules to it. I think in a way mindfulness is a kind of a watered-down meditation. Or a more marketable meditation.

Highlighting the dangers of consumerism she added that the writing and research of John Kabat-Zinn had been a big influence. I then asked Cathy to what extent she thought mindfulness had a religious dimension in terms of focus or practice? She paused to think.

The reason I am pausing is because of what I've said to people when I am introducing mindfulness concepts. I would say to them that although some of the basis of mindfulness could be rooted in religion, what we're going to do here today is not about religion. It is a set of coping skills, a new way of dealing with something. Certainly I think its roots lie in Buddhist culture in particular. I know that MBCT or stress reduction mindfulness has had the religious component taken out of it.

I followed up her response with another question on the religious dimension of mindfulness. Did she think having a religious element could make it more threatening? She replied,

Yes, absolutely, for a lot of people that would be the case and it would make it less accessible. Because they don't have a belief. Religion is so caught up in a range of things. Difficult life experiences. Working with the Irish community religion is tied up with so much negativity. In other communities just thinking about racism, discrimination, not having the same opportunities. I think that is the case for a lot of people, unfortunately. I don't know, they have become less accepting of religion. It has been taken out.

That being said Cathy's family and religious background had influenced her mindfulness practice. She continued,

It has had an massive impact on a number of levels. What I do, being in the caring profession, being a therapist, I feel like that all has links to religion. There is a paper that talks about clinical psychologists or family therapists having become the modern-day priests. What we do now was probably done by priests or clergy hundreds of years ago.

I then asked her if she worked one to one or in groups,

I do both. In my new job, which I've only been doing for two weeks, I am working in children's social services and working with families who whose children are on the edge of care. So trying to prevent them having to go into care. But I suppose the same principles apply to one-to-one stuff as well.

Living in London and being surrounded by so much wealth had also shaped her attitudes. Peace and quiet were important requisites for her mindfulness practice. It helped her to relax. One practice they did (in mindfulness) was focusing on the noises that you might hear,

and noticing them. Another important aspect of mindfulness is appreciation and being thankful.

Both meditation and mindfulness were part of Joseph's spiritual practice and professional work as a trainer and facilitator. Speaking about mindfulness specifically he explained,

Mindfulness certainly was originally a Buddhist (concept) to my mind. Therefore, for me anyway, it has been around forever sort of thing. As you say it has become popular now, conscious for instance of being part of the mindfulness meditation where you are where you are, conscious of what happening to every part of your body. You do a body sweep sort of stuff. What has happened to my breath? I can feel my breath doing this. When running being mindful of what's happening to my body. Being mindful of being in the present rather than the future or the past.

Joseph also affirmed the impact that his work teaching mindfulness and meditation had on peoples quality of life and the healing that it brought to the world in general.

Latterly Shane had started doing mindfulness meditation using a phone app. He added that this kind of meditation had become more mainstream for people like him.⁵⁶³ For Shane mindfulness encompassed both meditation and contemplation. Both fell within the practice of mindfulness. From how he understood it mindfulness was something you could apply to every situation in life. For instance in stressful or dangerous situations. In contrast, much more low risk, he could even be "mindfully drinking" noticing the taste or flavours of the coffee which he very much enjoyed. He added that he probably practiced mindfulness meditation three times a week using his app. He elaborated it was useful if,

Trying to work or trying to work too many variables together at once. I find it very good for that. I will do it any time of day. I do have trouble trying to do it in the office here. It would be a perfect thing to do for 15 minutes and split up the day and probably increase productivity quite a bit. But I worry about it, I have a hard time not being active in the office..

Mindfulness had also helped Shane get along better with his partner. Having had quite a conservative upbringing there were certain subjects that had been "off limits" for discussion. But now,

⁵⁶³ Apps such as these can be downloaded for free, or at a limited cost, either the Apple Store (for iPhone and iPad) or Google (for Android). There are many to choose from such as "Calm-Meditation and Sleep"; "The Mindfulness App"; "Basic Mindfulness Meditation; Headspace: Meditation and Sleep."

In terms of mindfulness, having my partner around has helped to calm me in the sense that we can discuss things, especially things that I have never had to discuss, or wanted to, before.

Charles, recognised mindfulness as a Buddhist term. He added, “it is constructive in terms of day-to-day action, be alert, and living in the present moment.” Although he had read a little about mindfulness, after returning from India, being retired, Charles was not familiar with the ways in which mindfulness was being used as a meditative practice in a non-religious context. His focus had been much more on a solitary contemplation. James recognised that mindfulness was the latest buzz word in organisations and “very common at the moment.” However, he was never quite sure what mindfulness meant.

As a Buddhist practitioner Josh recognised the importance of, and acknowledged the practice of, mindfulness and the ways it was being used in Western society. However, he had doubts about whether mindfulness was being used in the right way. As we heard from the section on mindfulness in Chapter 9, from his experience of teaching on an MBA programmes, a lot of people on his courses, who were grappling with their own questions, would write papers on work life balance and mindfulness.

Josh had not been quick not to jump on the “mindfulness bandwagon” as he called it.

Moving in a slight different tack I asked Josh if he thought that one of the reasons why work life balance, mindfulness, well-being had become popular was because they were not as threatening as some religious terms, for instance, contemplation? He replied,

I think mindfulness is a first step, a point of connection for people in a very materialist society who would never otherwise go into a Benedictine retreat house, or do a long retreat in a Buddhist monastery. The downside is that if that is what people start thinking spirituality is about, then that is not so good. So we don’t know really.

I then asked Josh how he coped with things coming into his mind uninvited, a pressing issue for instance, something that is weighing him down.

For some mindfulness is a way of doing that. It is having the space and the time to encounter the truth and stay awake to it and still hopefully surrender or even see that the whole thing is sacred in some way.

He then went on to describe mindfulness as a way of creating boundaries in one’s life,

Another thing that had relevance to his day to day work, and linked to mindfulness, was establishing the idea of what Buddhists call the “boundary.” A lot of Buddhists wouldn’t

know about this or talk about it. In Tibet the phrase which gets translated as “retreat” (as go on retreat) means a boundary. So it is the idea that does not necessarily mean going away, withdrawing, although it often is. The boundary could be physical but it also includes time, speech and mind.

Our final interviewee Edward, like many of the others, acknowledged that mindfulness had become quite fashionable, and for some a powerful tool, but a bit of a buzz-word. Had it become, to coin a phrase, “meditation-lite”? When I asked Edward why he thought mindfulness had become so popular he answered,

Because I think people see it as a way of counteracting most people’s apparent general busyness, their fairly constant preoccupation with either work or social media, emails, etc. It is a way of putting a word to something which allows you not to be occupied and to have your five, or ten or fifteen minutes without necessarily having to call it meditation which for some people might be too religious a term, even eastern religion. So it is more secular in one way.

SUMMARY

In summary it would be unwise to try and predict to what extent mindfulness is “here to stay.” The evidence seems to suggest also that it is very successful as a “talking” or “thinking” therapy in the world of medicine and rehabilitation for which it was originally developed. NHS Trusts and other public agencies have demonstrated its benefits with different clients, especially those with addictive issues or suffering some form of abuse. It can also be useful in organisations to reduce or help with stress or issues connected to work-life balance. Increasingly it has been introduced into primary and secondary education.⁵⁶⁴ If Merton were alive he would certainly have embraced it as an aid to a Christian contemplative practice. As we saw in Chapter 5 the practice of mindfulness resonates in so many ways with his own experience of Christian contemplation certainly from the point of view of technique with its focus on awareness and being in the present. Two of the participants, Zoe and Josh, both working as consultants and career coaches in the world of business had reservations. The principal one was around the commercialisation of mindfulness and the way in which some consultants and trainers were turning it into a business or a panacea when anything goes wrong in an organisation. It is important therefore to distinguish between mindfulness used as a way of assisting contemplative prayer in a

⁵⁶⁴ Now Vice Chancellor of Buckingham University, Sir Anthony Seldon, while Headmaster at Wellington College, Berkshire, introduced mediation and mindfulness into the school curriculum. Anthony Seldon, *Beyond Happiness: How to find Meaning and Joy in all that you have* (London: Yellow Kite, 2016). The practice of mindfulness can be found in many schools, for instance, see “The Mindfulness in Schools Project” <https://mindfulnessinschools.org> provides online course for teachers at both Primary and Secondary Level.

purely personal or private capacity and those organisations that "sell" it for commercial purposes.

THE ROLE OF RATIONALITY AND INTUITION

During the interviews it was striking how many of those interviewed often allowed their intuition to override either logic, or rational thought, in their decision making. Part of this project on holy leisure is to try to determine to what extent a contemplative practice helps those in leadership positions make "good decisions" especially decisions that might have a positive benefit, not just on themselves, or in the organisation for which they work, but for the Common Good. It was also striking that those participants, who said that they used their intuition, did so almost automatically. It was, for most, their default way of making decisions, even important ones; little logic or rationalisation was involved. Rather, they just knew that it was the "right thing to do." Knowledge, understanding, prudence and experience, together with some practical wisdom, obviously came into the equation. But how was this intuition related to their contemplative practice?

Our current understanding of the word "intuition," derived from the Latin *intueri* (to look into), is essentially a psychological or philosophical term indicating the process whereby an individual can immediately apprehend or perceive an actual fact. A number of philosophical theories such as *Intuitionism* assign intuition a dominant place in our ability to acquire knowledge. Intuition can also be used, as in the case of many of the participants interviewed, to make moral judgement or important decisions where the factual evidence is not always sufficient or self-evident. These are not the kind of decisions that are repetitive or routine where the response is virtually automatic. Rather, these "heavier" decisions can relate to a range of issues such as personnel or staffing, investment opportunities, formulating strategy, organisational issues and ethical dilemmas. Even when all the facts have been obtained and assembled, there remains still, a vagueness, a grey area as to which course of action should be taken. Sometimes these decisions are ethically neutral in so far as they do not require the decision maker to do anything immoral or illegal. But, a number of the participants, when speaking about difficult decisions they had to make, such as redundancy or disciplinary action, even while working within the framework of the law, found the process emotionally stressful. They were not always sure they were "doing the right thing." It was also noticeable in the interviews that intuition was allied to wisdom, prudence, discernment, age and experience.

If we refer back to Chapter 3, on Josef Pieper, we are reminded by him of the important distinction that Aquinas makes between *ratio* and *intellectus*. The following quotes (which are here repeated) were particularly relevant,

The medievals distinguished between the intellect as *ratio* and the intellect as *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the power of discursive thought, of searching, of re-searching, abstracting, refining, and concluding [cf. Latin *dis-currere* “to run to and fro”], whereas *intellectus* refers to the ability of “simply looking” (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye. The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things in one, *ratio* and *intellectus*: all knowing involves both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the intellectus’ untiring vision, which is not active but passive or better, receptive – a receptively operating power of the intellect.⁵⁶⁵

He then continues,

Not only the Greeks in general – Aristotle and no less Plato – but the great medieval thinkers as well, all held that there was an element of purely receptive “looking” not only in sense perception but also in intellectual knowing or, as Heraclitus said, “listening in to the being of things.”⁵⁶⁶

And again, quoting from Aquinas’ the *Disputed Questions on Truth* Pieper adds,

Although human knowing really takes place in the mode of *ratio*, nevertheless it is a kind of participation in that simple knowing which takes place in higher natures, and we can thus conclude that human beings possess a power of intellectual vision.⁵⁶⁷

Later, Pieper, contrasting it with thinking, adds that this receptive gazing is in fact, intuition is the perfect form of knowing. He explains,

For intuition is knowledge of what is actually present...thinking, on the other hand, is knowledge of what is absent, or may be merely, the effort to achieve such knowledge; the subject matter of thinking is investigated by way of something else which is directly present to the mind, but the subject matter is not seen as itself. The validity of thinking, Thomas Aquinas says, rests upon what we perceive by direct intuition, but the necessity for thinking is due to a failure of intuition. Reason is an imperfect form of *intellectus*.

Finally, he states that,

⁵⁶⁵ Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*. p.11

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. p.12

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid. p.12 See also Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate (Disputed Questions on Truth)*.

Question XV Article 1. In this treatise, amongst other things, Aquinas comments on *De Consolatione de Philosophiae (On the Consolation of Philosophy)* by the sixth century Roman philosopher Boethius and another work *De Spiritu et Anima (Spirit and Soul)* attributed to St Augustine. Aquinas rejected its Augustinian provenance and recent studies attribute this work to Alcher (13th century), a monk of Clervaux at the time of St Bernard and his successors.

Contemplation then, is intuition; that is to say, it is a type of knowing which does not merely move toward its object but already rests in it. The object is present just as a face or landscape is present to the eye when the gaze “rests upon it.”⁵⁶⁸

I think it would be fair to assume therefore, that when the participants were speaking about using intuition, it was something very much like, if not the same, as that described by Pieper although they may not have defined intuition, or understood it, in the way elaborated by Pieper. Certainly that resonates with my own experience. Intuition is something like a “sixth sense” which we commonly use in everyday life and we probably rely on more than we realise.

Several of the participants used the term “gut feeling” to describe what we, with the benefit of hindsight, call intuition. Perhaps, “gut feeling” is not as precise a term as intuition because it seems to place the core of decision making in the body rather than the head. For instance, many of the decisions William made were based on a gut feeling, which for him, was a form of intuition. Notice his use of the word “awareness” and the way he substitutes “gut feeling” for “intuition.”

Generally it is an awareness of something that I need to do. It is probably more than 70%; when I don’t have the intuition I get completely paralysed because the logic kicks in and I can rationalise anything and I can see it from thirteen different sides. At that point I just have to say I don’t know what decision to make!

Like William, John relied heavily on intuition. In the fast moving world of business it is a skill that many of the participants valued. If you took too much time out for reflection you “missed the boat” as he put it. Intuition and courage were allies. You needed that confidence and courage to allow your intuition to guide you. He described intuition as being a series of skills, or factors that have built up over time with experience. Wisdom was important too but this was more a function of age. For him intuition was much deeper. Intuition was drawing on your most basic principles, those inner resources, that you live your life by.

Evelyn described her experience of intuition as knowing something is wrong when in theory everything seem right. Logic tells her that it should be one way but intuition tells you it should be something else. For Emily the idea of intuition resonated a great deal. It was a very Jungian term. She described intuition as an “inner eye,”

⁵⁶⁸ Pieper, *Happiness & Contemplation*. p.74

Intuition is synonymous with an inner eye, that kind of thing. So I would say that all my life intuition is the thing that I have trusted the most. Traditionally, as you get older, the Jungian thing would be that your strongest or dominant function becomes less dominant. The opposite to your inferior function becomes more dominant. And I would say that there has been a change in my inferior function. There has been a diminishing of my intuition. I don't know.

Having said that, as a psychotherapist, she had been able to develop a sixth sense. When with a client, her intuition enabled her to tell her "where they are."

I think there is a huge difference in people who have a contemplative and spiritual aspect to their lives and those who don't. It is interesting that you can be in a room with people and you just feel the difference. I can tell intuitively when I am with somebody where they are. I don't want to think of it in terms of contemplative life.

In contrast to some of the other participants who use intuition to "short-cut" a long drawn-out decision making process, Zoe put reflection or meditation as a prerequisite of intuition.

I think that reflection puts you in touch with your intuition. And I think that when you are out of touch with yourself you are out of touch with your intuition. It's almost like being out of kilter. You can hear your intuition. I think that intuition comes after meditation.

For Becky intuition acted as a hunch. "Discernment is the action but wisdom is bringing the thought process involving intuition." She described intuition as,

It is almost what is my body telling me? It is not a forced thing. It is spontaneous. And it is a much more bodily experience than the rational "what should we do?" To use your intuition, what do you feel about this, what is coming to you? I would actually try to actively use that as well. I guess going back to my coaching work I have been taught quite a bit about getting in touch with your own feelings and intuition and to voice that. And also to use that with others.

Max used his intuition a great deal in his work. It went hand in hand with reflection and courage.

I would say that intuition is more here (pointing to the stomach) and reflection more to here (pointing to the head). Courage I would put slightly next to it because courage has a direction. You feel that there is something that you need to do that you need to act upon. You can have intuition within you. If you have courage, you have to show that courage in a way.

Caroline too relied heavily on her intuition. She described it as follows,

The intuition is exactly that feeling that comes from deep inside of me. That tells me what is the right way to go. I know if I don't take my time, or I don't have enough time on my own, if I don't pay attention to my inner feelings and emotions enough then I cannot. If I don't give my intuition enough room then I make the wrong decisions. So intuition is really

something that I need to work with. Some people have a very good intuition and I think I need to take it seriously.

Feedback from others, she added, confirmed that her intuition for people was good.

However, she did not always take it seriously. Or at least, had not done so in the past. There were occasions when she did not trust her intuition. This was probably because she did not always have the courage to put her decisions into effect. Perhaps the older she got the better her intuition would get.

A number of participants allied intuition with courage. One needed courage to implement your intuition, especially if went against the consensus, or seemed “illogical.” Alex, for instance, had a strong intuition and like many of the other interviewees it was inextricably linked to courage.

Intuition and courage. I have courage to test things but also to fail. I’m not wanting to avoid things. I would like to create things, some things work, some things don’t, but I have the courage to try and I think I have discernment.

Although Sarah, initially described intuition as just going with her “gut feeling” she went on to give a fuller explanation and place intuition in a spiritual and religious context,

If you are in tune with how God speaks to you, especially if you discern a lot, and take time to contemplate. I think to some extent that practice is part of you. It is seeing signs around you that enable you to make good guesses based on intuition. Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad. It depends on the situation as well. It is the opposite of reflection and discernment.

Emotions, such as fear, might come into play. A couple of times in the interview Sarah had said that she had felt passionately about some issues. I followed up on this by asking her if strong emotions could colour one’s intuition. Were emotions always a good guide? She replied,

Yes, I guess not. Sometimes your intuition can be wrong. I can’t think of an example of the top of my head. Sometimes being rash, not thinking about things carefully could lead to pretty bad decisions as well. Yes sometimes you think it’s quite liberating just to act on your intuition rather than taking time to think about things. I guess it really depends on the situation. I mean for very big decisions you cannot just rely on your intuition. You need to think things through. You need to discern, to contemplate. There are some things you know, that you just have to listen to your intuition because it is telling you the right thing even if logic is telling you otherwise.

As we heard earlier in Chapter 9, George had relied on “gut feeling,” which he called his intuition, for a number of important decisions in his life. Yet quite a lot of rational thinking went on at the same time. He looked at all the options and “figured out” which were the best. He explained,

If I am making a big decision, to be comfortable with the decision I need to get my heart and head to agree. I would call the gut feeling the intuition. I had a gut feeling when I moved to the place where I am living now that it would be the right place to live. To be comfortable with the decision I had to look at all the options and figure out why it would be a good place. Once I had got my heart and head to agree it was good. As I said earlier I do need time for reflection.

Cathy was another who relied on her intuition a great deal. Like many of the others interviewed wisdom and courage were indispensable allies of intuition. Over the years her intuition had developed, or moved on. She explained,

Intuition and wisdom. A massive part of reflection for me is learning which leads to wisdom. Ultimately it is all about learning. Wisdom brings together intellect, experience and learning. Sometimes I feel that what I consider to be my intuition today is different from my intuition five years ago. Is part of the experience, reflection perhaps having a bit more courage. I was going to say the thing with courage is about saying that you don’t know when you’re not sure. Saying, ‘I messed up there’, ‘I shouldn’t have done that,’ or ‘I could have said that.’ Having the courage to do that.

Perhaps because of his spiritual practice and attendance at Quaker meetings Joseph had more to say about intuition than some of the others interviewed. There was however a disconnect in so far that, although he did not consider himself intuitive, others did.

I think that, I somehow believed, or have believed, that through the years I am not intuitive. When someone says that this is intuitive I instinctively cannot do it, that I don’t have intuition. However, other people around me think that I have. They have told me that I am always using my intuition and that I am intuitive. I can intuitively see what is going on.

Shane was really taken by the idea of intuition. As mentioned earlier, he had been strongly influenced by the Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman’s book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.⁵⁶⁹ The important lesson is that a lot of the quick judgements you make are right. In other words the quick answer usually proves to be the right one. In regards to his use of improving his intuition Shane answered,

⁵⁶⁹ Kahneman. Kahneman has an interesting Chapter on ‘Expert Intuition: When can we trust it?’ see pp.234-244.

It is developing. In some areas I got it very well developed but in other ways probably not. The thing is, about assessing a team for a start-up organization, my intuition is bang on and every time I try and override it with logic then I pay for it. It's a mistake...I think people's memories of things can be very selective, their role in things can be very selective. I am thinking of some business dealings where if I talk to people from all the different perspectives of how they saw something unfold. Although everyone was there you get three completely different stories.

Intuition could sometimes go wrong, especially in relation to trust,

I will give people full trust but they can lose it within days. Perhaps I start from a place of having too much trust. When my intuition on someone is off not necessarily. That is something I think I can work on.

We saw earlier that some found the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) helpful. Charles was immediately attracted to the term intuition. On the Myers Briggs scale Charles was of ENFP with a strong N. Because Charles had read widely on spirituality I asked him if he come across the word "intuition" much. He replied that in his experience they tended to use terms such as "insight" or "the moving of the Spirit." He continued,

I suppose for me intuition is when you know something without reasoning, engaging the rational mind. And it's faster. I know from my own experience that often my intuitive decisions are best. And then I find the reasoning afterwards. That takes a bit longer.

For James discernment, intuition, common sense, reflection, training and experience were all needed for reaching the right answer as a lawyer. But he was more of a logical thinking person. He elaborated,

But, intuition I don't think of so much. It will certainly be part of it but also you need common sense. But also instinct derived from legal training and experience. I think discernment is similar in a way. It might imply more of a process of discerning. But, it could be considering a number of options. If your intuition doesn't immediately give you the right answer you move on to discernment. Reflection might be an aspect of that too.

Josh valued the indispensable part that intuition played in his life. He said,

It is definitely true in my life that all the major decisions for me have come, in the end, through some sort of deep intuition.

But there was a downside. Like Charles, he was strongly intuitive on the Myers Briggs (INFP). Deep down he had always had a deep intuition of some vocation, although he had never been sure what vocation meant, or what form it took for him. Although he found it difficult to articulate what his vocation in life was, he explained,

Intuitively, right from the beginning of my spiritual practice, it is still my belief you can affect the world positively up to your own capacity to engage with other people in a wholesome way. You might have the best ideas in the world, but, if you are not aware, or are not acting through some genuine attempt to be kind and compassionate, and to see that it is the most important thing, you are just messing up the world more.

Josh had defined intuition as a “level of knowing and coming to know.” This knowledge could come not only when you were awake but when you were asleep, dreaming.

Providing a message back to yourself either through a dream or just a gut feeling. Or, intuition happens in the world through synchronicity. But I think intuition may arise from that so it may be that you do that and you have a dream and the next day an idea comes to you.

He added that at times he had lacked courage and had spent too much time being a man of intuition and insight and experiencing fear and anxiety about fully living life.

Edward found it difficult sometimes to allow his intuition to over-ride his logical and rational thinking.

Intuition reminds me of something I was talking about earlier, on coming to decisions based on light and dark. I guess ultimately that I come to a sense of intuition about those decisions. Intuition implies that I can't quite explain rationally how I made the decision.

SUMMARY

In this section it has been noticeable that intuition plays an important part in the way decisions are made by many of the participants, in both the personal and professional spheres of their lives. This does not mean that they do not use logical reasoning as well. As Pieper reminded us earlier human knowledge involves both forms knowing, *ratio* or rational thinking, using logic (which he describes as very hard work) and simply gazing or being receptive to the truth, the *intellectus*. We are walking along the street and the solution to a problem suddenly becomes evident. The facts just dawn on us and we do not have to work them out. This use of intuition was far more than I expected. In my limited experience of the business world I had thought that the vast majority of decisions were made using quantitative data, such as financial reports, budgets, and so on. Intuition, however, would seem to be more important especially in human relationships, recruitment decisions, team formation and selection for promotion. Quite a number of participants confirmed that in decisions involving people, they did not use logic, in fact the opposite. To use a colloquial term, “they had a hunch” or a “gut feeling” which, in certain situations could describe

intuition. Given that most of the participants had some form of spiritual practice I wondered whether or not the Holy Spirit was playing an active part in their decision making, especially the kind of decisions where there is very little black or white, and far more grey. None of them alluded to this but to me there seemed to be a “guiding light” which confirmed to them that they were “doing the right thing.”

Most of the participants, who were not retired, had jobs that involved making complex decisions quickly. As a couple of participants put it, “you can’t sit around and wait, you have to act immediately, especially in a competitive situation.” Others commented that following a “paper trail” and using CV’s, references, was not always the best way to select the ideal candidate for a job. Both John and Jack commented that many of their best team members had been chosen using intuition and a “hunch.” Another participant, Shane was frequently evaluating Third World “start-up” projects for financing; “kicking the tyres” as he called it. There was not always the time, or the opportunity to do “due diligence”, so intuition, practical wisdom, intelligence and even guess-work, came into play. As mentioned earlier, Shane’s “modus operandi” had been influenced by the Nobel Prize Winner Daniel Kahneman. He had been particularly struck by Kahneman’s insistence of balancing intuition with logical reasoning. One could be overconfident in making judgements based on intuition. In contrast, relying too much on data, reasoning could stifle the creativity and entrepreneurship needed to give a “start-up” a chance of growth and survival.

In the quotes above, Josef Pieper seems to be confirming in theory what the participants being interviewed were clearly demonstrating in practice, namely that important decisions were made using both the *ratio* and the *intellectus*. This can be further illustrated by referring to Aristotle’s list of intellectual virtues found in Book Six of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, namely the five ways in which the truth can be arrived at: science, art, prudence, wisdom and intuition. Both Aquinas and Pieper were influenced by Aristotle, especially Aristotle’s writings on ethics and politics.⁵⁷⁰ For Aristotle, science was the equivalent to deduction, evidence based knowledge from things that can be seen or analysed. Art, or technical skill as Aristotle prefers to call it, is concerned with bringing something into being, for instance, a building. So, the practice of art is the study of how to bring something into being. Art is concerned with the production of something. Prudence, or practical wisdom, is

⁵⁷⁰ St Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aquinas frequently quotes Aristotle in his *Summa Theologica* and other works.

the ability to deliberate rightly about what is conducive to the “good life.” The prudent person, for Aristotle, is someone who has been able to navigate the difficulties of a particular situation successfully. Intuition (in Greek *nous*) is the same as intelligence. He explains, whereas science uses reasoning and deduction to extract knowledge, and art and prudence are limited to using variables, intuition is the immediate perception of the truth without having recourse to science, art or prudence. Aristotle places wisdom ahead of intuition. Wisdom is the “most finished” form of knowledge. The wise person must not only know all that follows from first principles, but must also have a true understanding of those principles. Therefore wisdom must be “intuition and scientific knowledge of that which is most precious.”⁵⁷¹

A number of participants spoke about the importance of wisdom in their decision making. Was the wisdom they referred to a practical wisdom, i.e. prudence or the wisdom (*Sophia*) which Aristotle describes as a mixture of intuition and scientific knowledge? Given the age and experience of several of the participants one should not be surprised that it was indeed *Sophia* they were speaking about. However, in the Christian understanding of wisdom, it is God who epitomises Divine Wisdom. The *Sophia* which Aristotle speaks about can only be a pale reflection of that Divine Wisdom. It must follow, therefore, that the wisdom, arising from age and experience, is better described as practical wisdom or prudence, the first of four Cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, courage and temperance) which, as Pieper reminded us above, together with the three theological virtues (faith, hope and love) are the foundation of the Christian life.⁵⁷²

A SPIRITUALITY OF SABBATH AND REST

Participants’ experience of the Sabbath and their Sabbath practice varied. The majority equated the Sabbath to the Sunday although a couple found the Saturday more of “Sabbath Rest” because the Sunday could be quite busy attending church and meeting up with friends and family.

Having been brought up in the Dutch Reform Church William had a traditional and narrow understanding of the Sabbath. It been an important part of William’s upbringing.

⁵⁷¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*.pp.203-213 (§1138b18-1141b8)

⁵⁷² See Pieper, *The Christian Idea of Man*.

For me it goes back to when I was young and growing up. The concept of the sabbath, the day of rest, was pretty black and white at times. And it meant ceasing from almost all activity.

Now, he explained, it was not so easy to define Sabbath. The boundaries were more blurred, especially in relation to abstaining from work on the Sabbath. Work for one person was leisure for someone else. William had found that keeping the Jewish custom of Sabbath, i.e. the Saturday, was easier for him.

I have actually found kind of almost keeping the Jewish notion of the sabbath. For instance the Friday sundown until Saturday sundown. For me it's always been easier to take the Saturday rather than the Sunday as a day of rest. Recently I have become really bad at it again.

In regard to rest he explained that he found it incredibly difficult “to do rest” outside the community. I gathered from our interview that William was speaking more about relaxation or recreation in a social or family context. As we saw in Chapter One, rest or the Latin *quies* can be interpreted in a number of ways. In a physical sense rest could mean relaxing the body, having some recovery time from physical exertion. This kind of rest is particularly important for those engaged in hard manual labour, repetitive toil or any kind of stressful mental work. It can also mean keeping quiet: resting the senses, especially the mind, the eyes and the ears. The search for silence and solitude is also part of this. It can even mean “taking a rest,” that is sitting down, lying down, or even sleeping. Quite a different understanding is in a transitive sense, “resting in God.” William’s feeling was that quiet, peace, silence and rest all linked in to the Sabbath.

John had kept up observance of the Sabbath more out of loyalty and duty. John was Roman Catholic but he did not sound spiritually nourished by his Sunday liturgy.

Yes, I will keep going to Mass. It's something which I will never give up, to my dying day. I will keep that up because to me it's what we are.

He had been one of the participants who had attended a number of residential workshop on leisure mentioned above. He commented that, until then, he had not really thought much about Sabbath rest. His three children no longer lived at home so now that he was retired it gave he and his wife the opportunity to travel.

Evelyn had also attended the leisure workshops. She remarked that was not the kind of person who could “put her feet up” easily. She added,

When I looked at the material from the workshops on leisure that was probably the first time I thought about the seventh day, Sabbath rest. I started to look at that more.

For Emily it was different. She described a set of rituals associated with every Sunday or Sabbath. Sunday was the Sabbath as far as Emily was concerned. She had to use the best quality table mats and preferably a candle for breakfast. That was followed by “a proper sung Latin mass,” then a “proper Sunday lunch” either at home, again with a tablecloth or in a nice restaurant! Both she and her husband James led very busy professional lives so being at “rest” often meant relaxing in front of the TV. It reminded me of how much traditions around the Sunday evolve, especially in families. The meal together tends to be at the centre of the day with a focus on celebration of family life. In some ways it had a sacramental dimension to it although it was not the Eucharist.

The word that resonated most with Zoe was rest. “I don’t use the word Sabbath really,” she added.

We don’t observe the Sabbath like some people do and do nothing on the sabbath. We go to the Quaker meeting generally and often in the afternoon we would garden or something like that.

I then asked Zoe if she thought that she had her work life balance right? She replied,

We don’t have it right. Sometimes we work too much in one go and don’t have the space. I know that when that happens I miss having had the meditative time. I can feel the difference. That is not good for me. I can feel myself getting out of touch. That is quite important. Someone said to us the other day. Our life tends to be that we are either very busy for a bit and then it is quiet. Then you make the most of it..

Becky recognised that rest was a “nice” restorative word. She added, “I notice a big difference if I don’t rest my body. Your body gets quite tied up with things.” For Becky Sabbath meant the Sunday. Because of the operation mentioned earlier, Sabbath was always pretty restful. Becky was a regular Mass goer and valued the liturgy that her local church had to offer.

Although Max knew about the Jewish Sabbath, it was not a word he used. Caroline, although she was a Christian, was not a regular churchgoer. She valued, however, her periods of rest especially after periods of physical activity such as hiking which she did a great deal of. Rest was about recharging the batteries and then carrying on. She tried not to take work home with her at weekends and tried not to open her laptop. However, she might quickly check her emails. Caroline, perhaps not surprisingly, as she worked in a human

resource department, was one of the few who understood the word sabbath in the context of sabbatical. For her a sabbatical was a couple of months in length. She explained,

No, I would not see sabbath in a religious sense. I would see sabbatical as a longer period of time, where people have the possibility of doing things differently, to do different things, what are your plans for the future, how do I want to carry on, is this what I really want to do?

Lillian did not keep the “Sabbath sacred” as she described it, although since coming back to faith, she usually was at Church most Sundays. She added that she had married someone who is not a Christian so on a Sunday church was frequently combined with some gardening. Additionally she might cook a Sunday roast so Sunday could be a busy day.

Harry perceived the Sabbath differently to the Sunday. Although he recognised that the majority no longer recognised Sunday as a day of worship and rest he was usually at his local Anglican Church where he was actively involved. Sabbath, the weekend, especially the Sunday he perceived as different from the other days in the week.

Alex no longer regarded Sabbath as being significant in his life. For him every day could be a sabbath, especially if he was working from home.

I don't use sabbath. When I was younger, when I had a stronger link to the church the Sunday had the meaning of taking a break, don't do things that you would do during the week. But I have lost that a little bit. Every day can be a sabbath especially if I work from here. These are my new ways of celebrating the sabbath.

Alex then went on to expound on his own “sabbath spirituality.” On his country farm he was able to create a place of rest.

Every day can be a sabbath especially if I work from here. These are my new ways of celebrating the sabbath. Being here alone, no meetings, no external influences. For me that is more the sabbath or the Sunday.

Because he did not get as much sleep as he would like rest, for him, meant sleeping eight hours in a row. Alex had recently taken a short sabbatical of three weeks on an isolated island located on a lake north of Toronto, Canada. He described his routine,

I would wake up very early with the sunrise. It was three weeks of sabbath. It created in me a wish for the opportunity to live several months like that just writing, reading, swimming, praying and reflecting.

Esme placed great emphasis on getting enough rest.

Rest, I make sure I have enough. Rest from work? Ceasing from physical activity rather than going to bed. But I do sit down a lot as well especially in the evening. Not even reading sometimes. It is important, rest is very important.

For Sarah rest was taking time off work, from a busy life, but not necessarily meaning that you were reflecting or contemplating on something deeper. Sabbath she found it a bit harder to relate to although every Sunday she attended Mass with her husband. The idea of Sabbath rest had become counter-cultural for most people, especially her current generation, because it had lost its religious significance. However, she did not see Sunday as a day for doing nothing.

Jack was probably one of the oldest people interviewed. He could remember, with some fondness, his Sunday school days. He explained,

There is something about me that is about “peace and quiet” but it is not silent because there is so much racket going on. There is a certain “being at rest” about me. That’s interesting that. And sabbath, you know I often talk about this at church. When I was a kid, back in the 50s, when everything stopped on the Sunday, I miss that. Not everyone used the day in a religious sense but it did create a culture of reflection.

Being a practising Christian, Sabbath was particularly important for George. He remarked that over the years he had matured as a person. And, although sabbath day was important, he tried to live as a Christian all seven days of the week. Brought up a Catholic, over the years George had been attracted to a different style of liturgy and worship which was more charismatic and scripture based. He now attended an Anglican Evangelical church. Rest was an integral part of his work-life balance too. He added that the seminar workshops which I had run several years ago had initiated a change in his life objectives. There were times when he had to work hard and do long hours but generally speaking he was able to sustain a good work life balance so that he could enjoy life generally and do his best work also. He could combine his love for the outdoors, walking, skiing, with his Christian faith.

For Cathy rest was important but it could not be divorced from seeking out somewhere quiet. If she went running, went for a walk, she would choose to go somewhere a bit quieter. If it was a gym she took headphones to block out the background noise.

“Letting it all go” was the key to rest for Joseph.

I think rest is important. Rest, for me, is about letting it all go and not having the responsibility, not having to do things, not engaging in physical activity or not forced into thinking consciously about stuff; just being at ease.

Sabbath was about rest too but it had religious connotations, he explained,

Having said that most religions have some form of sabbath. There is usually one day set aside for worship, or for a feast, or a holy day.

For someone who did not go to Church on Sundays Shane admitted that one of his favourite words was sabbath. He explained,

I like the idea that there is one day that is kind of spelled-out for you. Saturday is my sabbath. If I do all those things I talked about earlier. I'm always wondering if I am relaxing in the right way. If I am getting the most out of my relaxing. The way my partner deals with sabbath is hardly moving physically. I couldn't cope with that. I want the day to be different, restful and restorative but also active in a way.

Sabbath was the most significant word for Charles. He explained that something he had decided to do when he was working and studying was to strive to make the Sabbath, the Sunday, a day of rest, particularly after he had finished his part-time PhD. While he was doing his doctorate he hardly had any rest at all, for decades actually. He explained,

Sabbath was not rest at all. But then I tried to make a point of keeping the Sabbath in a Jewish context which would include spending time with my father or mother. So it had a family link to it.

For most of his adult life, even while working, he had lived a very simple, almost monastic routine. To the outside observer, even his friends and family, it seemed that he was always on vacation. But that showed how appearances could be deceptive. He added, "that says more about them than about me." Rest was something different from vacation or sabbatical,

I think probably for me rest is when I go to the nuns chapel.⁵⁷³ That is rest. That is really good rest. Or if I take a quiet retreat and do something similar, or book up a room for two or three nights at Aylesford. I just go, hidden away in a room, the staff know me there, they leave me alone. I take some spiritual reading.

For James and his wife Emily, Sabbath observance was about going to Mass. This was part of their leisure time, every Sunday at 11.00 am. That gave them time for a leisurely breakfast. He was not sure if vacation encompassed sabbath, it was much broader. He explained,

I always think of sabbath as being something different perhaps because Sundays tend to involve at least some structure around going to church... Funnily enough quiet, peace and silence are not necessarily part of the sabbath or of a vacation.

⁵⁷³ James lived very close to a convent where the sisters gave him free access to go and come as he pleased.

Rest was the time when you did not have to make an effort, perhaps any effort. That included the kind of effort one would usually be happy to make with friends and family in conversation, or whatever you might be doing.

For Josh, rather than speak about the need for rest, he spoke about the need to “rest in things.”

If you like, I don’t like active and passive, but is quite good shorthand. One is more about surrender, profound trust, rest in things as they are and the other is an idea based on a current sense of lack which means you have to develop something.

Also, although Sabbath was not a word he used much (in spite of being Jewish) silence was more foundational and connected to Sabbath. As a parent with two young children, rest was important. This was a physical issue for him because he did not get enough rest. But there was also “rest of mind.” His technique was to snatch some minutes in the quiet of his study.

In a busy working day Josh tried to set up a boundary for two minutes in every hour or after every 10 emails or 10 minutes before lunch or 10 minutes at the end of the day where he could create a boundary site of silence, rest and sabbath. Funnily enough, he added, trains were a place of rest for him, but not necessarily a place for contemplation. When he was on a long journey he would consciously divide the time into periods and have a different activity. Sabbath, in the sense of a day set aside for worship, was not a word he used. But sabbath as a particular period, either a week, in a day or a lifetime, like a sabbatical where you create the space for whatever is to be, that he found useful.

For Edward there were negative connotations around rest which were mainly connected with sleep, or maybe not going to sleep or trying to go to sleep. Also, feeling rested, which for him, over the last few years, had been a big issue with not feeling as rested as he wanted. The Sabbath was obviously a kind of day of rest and going to church. But a Sunday could get absorbed by household chores, administration, answering emails. Sundays rarely felt leisurely or led to contemplation.

SUMMARY

In the above section on “Sabbath” and “Rest” a number of different understandings and uses have become apparent, many of which resonate with the Normative and Formal Theologies in Parts One and Two. Most associated the Sabbath with the Sunday, the “Day of Rest”

although a couple of the participants used the word Sabbath to refer to a day free from any obligations, even attendance at church. This was because Sunday could be a busy day, especially if it involved going to Mass, meeting up with family or friends. For the majority there needed to be both “celebration” and “rest” in their Sabbath.

As we saw in Chapter 3 Pieper takes up this theme of celebration and festival by drawing our attention to the importance of Sabbath. Although written in the late 1940’s it is still as relevant today, his plea, is for a reawakening of the sense of worship. Nothing new has to be found he says. It is already part of our Christian heritage and at the centre of Catholic worship, namely the Mass, which, at one and the same time, is sacrifice and sacrament, a visible sign.

If, in leisure, man overcomes the working world of the work day, not through his uttermost exertion, but in withdrawal from it. Through the sacred mystery of the Mass the human being is rapt, seized and removed from the world of work. A new light has shone in the eyes of our mind, so that, as we recognise in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things.⁵⁷⁴

One dynamic rarely mentioned in the interviews was children. Looking at the profiles of the participants this was probably because the majority were either young married professionals, who had not started a family, or they were single, or they were retired and their children were young adults, or in tertiary education living away from home, or had simply “fled the nest.” On reflection, having only four participants with young children or teenagers could be perceived as a weakness in my desire to “throw my net as widely as possible.” But, as indicated in the introduction, the main criteria for inviting participants was, for them, to have some form of contemplative practice. Those who did have children, William, Alex, Jack and Josh, certainly remarked on how children could impact on their Sunday or Sabbath observance, but never in a negative way. Children, especially young children, can change the way in which families spend their leisure on a Sunday or Sabbath. In addition, there are physical and logistical constraints that have to be accommodated.

For those who associated the Sabbath with the Sunday, invariably this meant attending Mass or a service at their local church. Some were slavish about doing this, they never missed. It was part of an important Sunday ritual for them. So too was spending time with family and friends. Others were not so committed to attending church on a Sunday, or did not belong to

⁵⁷⁴Pieper, *Leisure the basis of culture*.pp.57-60

a church community, or simply did not see it as part of their Sunday routine. For them Sunday or the Sabbath was more a day rest, relaxation, cultural pursuits, perhaps even, strenuous physical exercise. It was only Josh who reminded me that Sabbath, at least for him, was “resting in something.” Although Josh now identified himself as a Buddhist, I felt that here, Josh, having been brought up in the Jewish tradition, was coming close to defining what might be called a “sabbath spirituality” which is not confined to the Sunday or Sabbath but to the whole week. Having a sabbath spirituality is an attitude to life, a state of being, an awareness of living in a world which is Holy and guided by God’s divine providence. “Resting in God” is the mission, the vocation, not just of a monk, but of every Christian, or for that matter, anyone, Christian, Jew or Muslim, who believes in God of Abraham. In Chapter One we were reminded that the ultimate rest is “resting in the eternal bliss of the Kingdom of God.”

It is a reminder to me how in the last five decades, especially since the introduction of Sunday trading, the whole nature of the Sunday or Sabbath observance has changed radically. In the early 1960’s I can remember walking down a deserted Oxford Street, the heart of London retailing, on a Saturday afternoon and a Sunday. Even now one can visit countries in the European Community, and further afield, where shops are closed on Sundays. Sunday observance has been diminished by secularisation, business and consumerism, as has also the introduction of major sports fixtures on a Sunday. Sunday is no longer sacred. In Chapter 2 I covered in some detail how the Church’s pronouncements on leisure and Sunday observance, especially since Pope St John Paul, have become more frequent and more strident. “In your life there must be room for your families and for leisure. You need time to rest and be re-created, for only in quiet can you absorb the peace of God.” (Pope St John Paul II addressing the people of the communications industry in Los Angeles during his papal visit to USA 1987). Pope Benedict speaking at St Stephen’s Cathedral Vienna in 2007,

Without the Lord and without the day that belongs to Him, life does not flourish. Sunday has been transformed in our Western societies to the “weekend,” into leisure time. Leisure time is something good and necessary...yet if leisure lacks that inner focus, an overall sense of direction, then ultimately it becomes wasted time that neither strengthens or builds up.

Most recently Pope Francis has reinforced the importance of the Sunday. How and when do we find space to enter into a fruitful dialogue with God?

On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist, has a special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and the world. Sunday is the Day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of a new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It must proclaim also man’s eternal rest in God. (Pope Francis, 2015, *Laudato Si*, §237)

Most significantly Pope Francis reminds us that the Sunday is not a day of escapism, it is a day of blessing, a day of contemplation, and a day for thanking God. Sunday is not the day to forget other days but to remember them, bless them and make peace with life.

SUMMARY

Drawing upon the three preceding voices of theology this chapter has developed an Espoused Theology of leisure that identifies four key elements:

1. A renewed understanding of meditation and contemplation and the role that each plays in the persons search for God. In particular, contemplation is a pathway to “resting in God.” The gift of contemplation is not reserved for a “holy elite” but for all. Furthermore many different kinds of leisure activity can facilitate meditation and contemplation. Whatever technique we use, made in God’s image we are already in union with God and it is through contemplation that we develop the awareness of God’s continued presence in each and every one of us. Contemplation has to lead to action. We do not living in a vacuum. Neither are we mere observers of what is happening in the world. We have a special and unique place in God’s creation and we must play our part in bring to fulfilment God’s peace and justice on earth.
2. Mindfulness as a “talking therapy” or medical intervention contrasted with mindfulness that can be applied or used for Christian meditation or contemplation. In particular its emphasis on awareness and being in the present moment, not so much concerned with the past or the future but with “the now.” God at work in us.
3. The role of rationality and intuition in decision making and the way in which an intuition can often override rational thinking or logic especially in the context of human relationships. Does the use of intuition, having a hunch or a gut feeling have a spiritual dimension to it? Intuition is part of a portfolio of “soft skills” used with prudence, wisdom and experience. Is it part of our contemplative practice? Are we guided by the Holy Spirit when we make important decisions?

4. Spirituality of Sabbath and Rest. The importance of Sabbath as both a day of rest and a day of celebration. Rest can take many different forms but most importantly, the opportunity for “God to rest in us” and the individual to “rest in God.” Celebration can be formal, for instance attending Mass and thanking God for his gifts or informal, such as family meal or gathering. It is a day of blessing and contemplation during which we remember also the other six days of the week and make peace.

These are unique and original. In the following conclusions I will synthesise the insights developed over the course of this exposition.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

The Research Question: In the introduction to this thesis I commented that one of the main reasons that I had embarked on this project was to give a deeper theological foundation and intellectual rigour to a pastoral initiative I had started in 1998 when I launched a series of weekend retreat workshops on the *Spirituality of Work*. These evolved into a second series on the *Spirituality of Leisure*. Although the participants on these retreat workshops were not seeking deep theological insights, for myself (and perhaps for the benefit of the Academy), I thought it important to engage with a number of texts and authors relating to leisure, especially *otia sancta* (holy or sacred leisure) and in particular, *otia monastica* (monastic leisure). Out of this evolved my research question for this doctoral thesis, “In what ways can the concept of holy or sacred leisure inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the 21st century?” Using a methodology drawn from Theological Action Research this thesis constructs its foundations on something old, namely the way in which the term sacred or holy leisure was understood, firstly (Chapter 1) in the early Christian Church up to the sixth century and secondly (Chapter 2) in the Roman Catholic Church’s Social Teaching spanning the last 130 years..

Literature Review - The Voices of Normative & Formal Theology. A range of texts and authors were examined, in this Normative Theology, which forms the first part of the literature survey of this thesis, Holy Scripture, the Patristic period and the monastic rules up to the Rule of Benedict were examined as well as the way in which a number of key authors, active in the early Christian centuries, shaped the Christian understanding of holy or sacred leisure and its relationship with work. By using five key words identified with holy or sacred leisure, *otia*, *quies*, *sabbato*, *vacatio* and *acedia* it has been possible to detect a gradual change in emphasis. Whereas, in Roman and Greek culture, leisure had been the prerogative of a privileged wealthy class and a ruling elite, it started to be associated with early Christian communities and especially the celebration of the Eucharist on the Sabbath or the “Lord’s Day” as it was sometimes called. Sunday was not only a day of rest dedicated to physical recuperation but also the day on which the people “rested in God” and “God rested in them.” Neither was work confined to economic activity or housekeeping. Most importantly there was a spiritual dimension to work. Every Christian had to strive for his or her salvation through the performance of “good works” and responding to the invitation to live a graced

life. This “resting” found its purest expression in the different monastic communities who dedicated their lives exclusively to the Work of God, the *Opus Dei*, as it was often called. The *quies* of monastic life was epitomised by a separation from the world. It was this separation that facilitated quiet, solitude, peace and rest.

The Monastic Influence: St Benedict, in his rule, reminds his monks that “nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.” Yet, in many ways, this was a very busy monastic leisure that was far from being what we might now call “a quiet life.” It allowed monks to engage in the *Opus Dei* as often as seven times a day. Interspersed with the *Opus Dei* were prayerful reading, or *Lectio Divina* and private prayer which later was to become elaborated into four stages, reading (*lectio*), prayer (*oratio*), meditation (*meditatio*) and contemplation (*contemplatio*). The monks were assigned manual work as well. In the monastic rules, manual work, which had hitherto been delegated to slaves or household servants, became an integral part of life. Not only was manual work respectable, it was a duty and an obligation. This was a different kind of work to the *Opus Dei*, but nonetheless just as necessary. Each monastery had to be economically sustainable and no one was excused, even those from a privileged background, except on the grounds of old age or sickness. As far as possible everything necessary had to be done within the enclosure of the monastery. These two forms of work, the *Opus Dei* and manual work became an important leveller of people irrespective of background or class. Leisure and work operated in both directions. Holy or sacred leisure gave time for the Work of God and manual work provided the necessary opportunity to engage in holy or sacred leisure.

Catholic Social Teaching: This was followed by an examination of leisure in the Church’s Social Teaching since the time of Pope Leo XIII. In this second chapter, the Catholic Church’s teaching on leisure, and especially sacred or holy leisure since *Rerum Novarum*, has been examined. Although from earliest times the worker had “free time” it was the advent of greater economic prosperity, following on from the industrial revolution and mechanisation, that led to improved housing, education and healthcare. Trade unions, which replaced the ancient artisan guilds, by now defunct, helped increase disposable income and improve working conditions. Newly constructed networks of public transportation allowed people to travel further afield and engage in a greater variety of leisure activities including the annual holiday. Until this time leisure activities had been the preserve of the wealthy or the “leisure classes” as they were sometimes called. Now the

Church had to offer guidance to all its faithful, especially the “working classes” on a whole range of leisure activities such as cinema, radio, television, domestic and international tourism. On the whole this guidance was positive and church teaching often refers to the way in which the different cultural activities engaged in during leisure time enhance the individual’s spiritual, moral and intellectual development. Similarly with sport, especially team sports, which develop physical and moral well-being. More importantly all these different leisure activities impacted positively on the welfare of the family, something that the Church was continually keen to stress.

But leisure had its down side as well. More recently, especially since the pontificate of St John Paul II, the dangers of consumerism, secularism, competing Sunday activities and immoral pass-times such as the sex trade and gambling have been flagged up as dangers to spiritual growth. Throughout this period the defence of the Sabbath and Sunday observance have been paramount. But, more recently, bringing us back to the major theme of this thesis, Pope Francis has referred to the Sunday as a “day of contemplation and resting in God.”

Contemporary Catholic Writers on Leisure: Part Two, the Formal Theology, (Chapters 3 to 5) forms the second part of the literature survey. It reaches out to three twentieth century Catholic authors, Josef Pieper, Jean Leclercq and Thomas Merton, who I perceived as being important to the study of holy leisure and its contemplative dimension. These three authors are complimentary in so far as Pieper represents a contemporary Scholastic Theology approach, Leclercq a Monastic Theology approach and Merton a Popular or Personal Theology approach. Each of these three authors, in different ways, go back to the foundations of the Church’s teaching on holy leisure and offer a contemporary commentary in light of the various developments in twentieth century society. In spite of these different approaches there is a remarkable synergy between the three.

(i) **Pieper** was concerned about the danger of progressing economic growth and financial prosperity at the expense of moral and spiritual growth. This was particularly relevant in the aftermath of World War II. But the same can be said of our own time as the world faces the economic devastation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Leisure is far more than just being a service industry, it is indispensable for the moral development of the world and the decisions that flow from it. Referring back to Classical Antiquity, Pieper emphasised the pre-eminence of the contemplative dimension of leisure especially that articulated by the

Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle. Through these and the writings of Thomas Aquinas he stresses the continuity of their thought through to the present day. Leisure is the basis of culture, especially if we understand culture in its widest sense, namely that of “worship of the gods.” There can be no celebration without the gods he emphasises. The Mass, the Eucharist, is this celebration “par excellence.”

His emphasis on the link between contemplation and the Christian virtues is also very important. We are all made in the image of God. “What is a Christian”, Pieper asks? In answer he adopts Aquinas’ seven-fold anthropology, building on the Theological and Cardinal Virtues. The Christian is someone who has faith, hope and love, someone who is prudent, just, courageous and moderate. We cannot grow in virtue unless we have the leisure to contemplate and become aware of God’s grace working in us. There is also, a strong didactic element to leisure, our word “school” has its origins in the Greek word for leisure “skole.” When we are “at leisure” we possess a greater disposition to learn about God, God’s creation and ourselves.

Referring to Aquinas, this awareness, the dawning of God’s presence in our lives, only comes about by allowing our innate intuitive ability (*intellectus*) to operate, this passive intuition he describes like gazing at a landscape and allowing the truth to manifest itself. This is the complete opposite, he reminds us, of logical thinking (*ratio*), a laborious and toilsome process, that often does not allow us to grasp the complete reality of things. We need stillness and to be able “to listen to the being of things.” As Pieper reminds us, “Leisure is that form of stillness that is the necessary for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear.”

(ii) **Leclercq:** The scholarly research of Jean Leclercq provided us with a vocabulary to understand the meaning and practice of holy and sacred leisure in the early Christian Church. Like Pieper, he wants to reconnect with ideas and concepts about leisure that pre-date Christianity. His detailed analysis of the terms *otia*, *quies*, *sabbato* and *vacatio* together with *acedia* remind us of a forgotten legacy. Similar to Pieper, authentic leisure was more of a human disposition than a moment in time, it was a state of the soul. It was about recognising that each and every one of us has a contemplative aspect to our lives which we ignore at our peril. We have a “god-shaped hole” that needs to be filled. We experience God rather than know him.

In our contemporary society leisure has come to be associated with relaxation, physical recuperation, enjoyment, even hedonism. Worse still, some of the worst vices, gambling, pornography and the sex trade are now considered by many as legitimate leisure activities. But are these not also modern manifestations of idleness and acedia that Leclercq draws our attention to?

We might ask the question, “why was Leclercq drawn to the examination of the vocabulary of *otia monastica*?” One answer might be this: Leclercq was writing at a time when monastic life was starting to experience a significant transformation. Following the Second World War there had been an exponential increase in vocations, especially in North America and Europe. It was not uncommon for some monasteries, such as Merton’s to have over a hundred novices. This placed an enormous financial burden on monasteries as they tried to meet the need for accommodation and other facilities, let alone feed the equivalent of a small village. Consequently monasteries were becoming vast infrastructures with expensive plant and maintenance. Somehow they needed to generate income to meet these costs. Monasteries, especially those following the Rule of Benedict, balance manual labour and prayer although latterly manual labour has taken the form of new kinds of work such as running parishes, or teaching, running schools, colleges and universities. These kinds of work necessarily take the monks outside the monastic enclosure. Some would claim that these duties dilute monastic observance and even put the monks and their charges in some moral danger as recent events in Benedictine schools have illustrated.

Was Leclercq’s preoccupation with *otia monastica* prompted, in part, by a concern for the integrity of monastic life and its observance? Leclercq’s endeavour to give *otia monastica* greater prominence was his attempt to redress the imbalance between the contemplative and active aspects of monastic life, the latter often devoted to income generating activities. This was becoming a perennial concern in many monasteries especially those in the developed world. But, this is only one aspect of Leclercq’s endeavours. His focus is often on monastic founders or reformers, for example the Camaldolese monk Paul Giustiniani and more importantly the Cistercian founder St Bernard of Clairvaux. Making accessible critical editions of their writings was his way of reminding us of important monastic principles, such as *otia monastica* and the need to balance work and prayer.

(iii) **Merton** raises similar concerns about the imbalance of monastic life. His search for greater solitude, that eventually resulted in him being given permission to live in a hermitage in the grounds of his monastery, was partly driven by his need to escape the intrusions of the “busy-ness” of economic life. Unlike Pieper and Leclercq, Merton makes few explicit references to sacred or holy leisure. He took it for granted. Rather than speak about it, what was more important, was to experience it and immerse himself in it. Only when his *otia monastica* is violated does he protest.

His voracious appetite for reading, his skills in different languages, both classical and modern, together with his ability to synthesise and write, produced a vast literary output. More than anything, what we learn from Merton, is the important link between holy leisure and contemplation. This is his greatest legacy to the modern reader. Contemplation is not only a state attainable by all but it is also a right. This is one of the reasons why Merton is so widely read and can be regarded as a “popular” theologian. In his later years Merton was strongly influenced by Eastern religions especially Zen and Buddhism, especially drawing attention to the importance of awareness. This was key to realising that we are already in union with God. Our task is to develop that awareness through silence and deep listening.

Quoting Guigo II he makes the useful distinction that the monastic life is continually idle but never lazy. The idleness of holy leisure was the opportunity for long periods of silence, contemplative prayer, *Lectio Divina*, quiet and stillness. It was the time when the monk made room for the Word of God.

An additional insight is based on the Gospel story of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The monk is not just one of these three “archetypes,” but all three. Like Mary, the monk’s day is characterised by contemplative prayer, but also, like Martha some manual labour or form of work and finally, like Lazarus, a penitent, a sinner who is in need of spiritual healing, to be raised to new life. This can be said of all Christians who sincerely seek God. In the words of Raimundo Panikkar there is a fourth archetype, the “monastic archetype,” which is a “constitutive dimension of human life.”⁵⁷⁵ There is an “inner monk” in each and every one of us.

⁵⁷⁵ Raimundo Panikkar, *Blessed simplicity: the monk as universal archetype* (New York, USA: Seabury Press, 1982).p.11

Perhaps out of character with the post-modern world's understanding of monastic life Merton's focus on social justice is very important too. Because the monk lives within the enclosure does not mean that he is not concerned with the poor, the marginalised, the politically oppressed and the abused. Each and every child of God is of legitimate concern. In spite of his seclusion Merton was vociferous and strident in his protests against racism, nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War. And his popularity as a writer gave his protests added weight.

From the old to the new: Having concluded the Normative and Formal Theologies (Chapters 1 to 5), which form the literature review of this thesis, the exploration of holy and sacred leisure proceeds in a different direction. From something old it moves on to something new and to the thing that gives this thesis its unique and original dimension. Over the ten year period (1998-2008) I had been struck by how participants on my retreat workshops had engaged with the topics of work and leisure. Linked to my own experience they not only brought considerable practical and spiritual insights, but wisdom, learning and experience to the sessions as well.

Theological Action Research: Adopting the Four Voices Model of Theological Action Research described in the introduction and Chapter 6 of this thesis enabled me to incorporate the voices of some of these participants. Using the thematic analysis of twenty-two interviews provided the opportunity to synthesise the unique contribution that their different voices brought to this area of research. The result of this is contained in Part Three, the Operant Theology. This is the theology embedded in a particular group. Members of this group may not be trained theologians in the academic sense but they were able to articulate their experience and theological concepts in a personal and unique way.

An obvious weakness inherent in the group interviewed is that they are very much from a white, middle class, affluent background. How representative was this group of society in general? As indicated in the introduction, I wanted to build on the network I had established since 1998 based around those people who had attended one or more of my retreat workshops. I had remained in contact with them throughout so when the time came to invite people to be interviewed they were an obvious choice. To have established a new constituency from which to draw participants would have presented a number of logistical problems. It would have been also overly time-consuming. This group of participants

already existed and were selected on the principle of “purposeful sampling” described earlier in section (iv) of the Introduction. Because each of them had attended one or more of my workshops I knew that they not only had an interest in the contemplative aspect of leisure but the majority had some form of meditative or contemplative practice.

If the opportunity arose in the future, extending this enquiry to groups drawn from other backgrounds such as “blue collar” workers, people from a BAME background, teenagers, people with no religious belief or practice, health workers and carers emerging from the Covid-19 crisis, the long-term unemployed, or women, especially those who have a family caring role, would undoubtedly provide a rich source for theological reflection.

Whatever the drawbacks of choosing these twenty-two participants their interviews produced an enormous amount of data, much of which has not been used in this thesis. For instance, I explored with many of them their understanding of the term “Common Good,” and its practical implementation in their work and in the modern world. Also, the extent to which their contemplative practice had motivated them to take action, especially when faced with some injustice. A third area was relationships. How did their contemplative practice impact on their relationships with the different constituencies they had contact with, both in and outside of work? What part did family and social life play and how significant was it?

Operant Theology: The thematic analysis of the interviews forms the Operant Theology. This is where we hear the voices of our twenty-two participants. In Chapter 7 the way in which those interviewed understood contemplative leisure and terms such as meditation, contemplation, mindfulness, well-being and happiness was revealed. Following from the context for contemplative leisure was examined in Chapter 8. How important, if at all, were quiet, peace, silence, rest, Sabbath and vacation important in their contemplative practice? The final chapter in the Operant Theology, Chapter 9, focused on the fruits of contemplation. How did a contemplative practice promote the virtues of discernment, prudence and wisdom? What part did reflection, courage and intuition play in the way they made important decisions?

Further Research: In my initial approach to the participants (see my letter Appendix B), and in the spirit of co-operative enquiry, I raised the possibility of the group gathering together and discussing some of the above findings. These could have initiated further cycles of enquiry. One of the disadvantages of my particular approach has been not to have the

opportunity to gather all the participants under one roof for any period of time. The ideal would have been to have met, perhaps every three months, but this was not logistically possible. Firstly because the group was spread out over the UK and Europe, secondly because of the expense of travel and accommodation, and thirdly, because by the nature of their employment they were very busy people holding down responsible positions. Perhaps this is additional project for future research especially with the various software packages available for video or virtual conferencing?

The effects of Covid-19. Since facilitating those retreat workshops priorities have changed. This is particularly the case now, as we emerge, hopefully, from the Covid-19 Pandemic. The effects of this virus have been profound, unforeseeable and often uncontrollable. A new normal has been established. The free air that we breathe, which we once took for granted, carries an invisible threat to the life of every human being, especially the elderly and the vulnerable. Not only that, as reported widely in the media, the indiscriminate impact of this virus has had a noticeable effect on the mental health of people also. Manifested in a variety of ways, poor sleeping patterns, anxiety about employment and loss of income; coping with mounting debts and the challenges of home schooling and child care have become more frequent. Linked to this has been the increased incidence of domestic abuse as couples, or children, without anywhere to escape to, become prisoners in their own homes. With this enforced increase in free time, knowing how to occupy it in a positive way, has been a challenge, especially as boredom and frustration set in.⁵⁷⁶ The Covid-19 Pandemic has forced many into solitary isolation. To examine to what extent this isolation afforded opportunity for a contemplative practice is beyond the scope of this thesis but it is further possible area of research. A further research project might well ask the question “to what extent could using one’s free time for a contemplative practice help to improve mental health.” As we saw above Chapters 9 and 11, mindfulness techniques are already being used as a therapy to cope with personal crises, or with families on the verge of breakup.

Positive Outcomes: Yet, there have been some a number of positive outcomes. The first of these has been the way in which people have volunteered to fill the demand for key workers, especially those in the caring professions. Many of them, not only put their own lives at risk for the sake of others, but do so with little or no financial gain. The second effect has been

⁵⁷⁶ In a recent press communique the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales reported a 49% increase in calls and online requests relating to domestic abuse since lockdown on 23 March 2020.

the emergence of a wider and deeper trust for one another. This has happened individually and communally. Throughout the thesis I have highlighted the role that the virtues play in our Christian journey and the formation of our moral compass. This pandemic has certainly provided individuals with the opportunity to show courage and care and compassion for others. On a personal level, in spite of the physical social distancing, Covid-19 has brought people closer together emotionally and strengthened the bonds that knit local communities; for instance volunteers who have stepped in to help run Food Banks, “Shop and Drop” schemes, deliver medicines, etc. On the communal dimension people have “pulled together” by respecting and co-operating in the various safe distancing measure that the devolved governments have introduced to reduce the risk of infection. A third important development has been the way in which new technologies, such as conference calling, has stepped in to provide a substitute for face to face meeting. Perhaps more importantly it has enabled many people not only to “work from home,” thereby minimising the risk of spreading infection, but also help engender a deeper level of trust between colleagues through better teamwork and also between employer and employee. Will we ever go back to working as we did before? Working from home has worked for many people and employers, in some sectors, are starting to recognise the advantages. Most importantly, the implications for the amount and quality of free time, linked to the opportunities for leisure, are enormous.

Espoused Theology: In the final Part Four, the Espoused Theology, linked to my own voice, I have synthesised the new insights gained from the close examination of those texts and the transcripts of these interviews. These are as follows:

1. **The meaning and purpose of leisure in the 21st century.** We have to ask ourselves whether we will ever return to the levels of employment that existed pre-Covid-19? This may mean a dramatic increase in the long-term unemployed but also a shorter working week for those who are employed. The nature of work may change as well especially for those who have got used to working from home. Could this see a move to better work-life balance, improved well-being and levels of happiness? Rather than speak about leisure, as if it meant the same thing to all people, perhaps it would be better to speak of “free time” or the time that we have available for non-income bearing activities. The focus of education at both the secondary and tertiary levels has been about equipping our children and young adults with the necessary skills and

competences to progress into the workplace so that they are “productive.” Should not this education place just as much emphasis on the way we use our free time and leisure time as well? Leisure as well as work provide opportunities for growing in virtue. Arguably, some schools, especially those in the private sector, place more emphasis on cultural activities. But irrespective of whether they are state or privately funded, they require the necessary financial resources, time and staff.

2. **The access to authentic leisure.** Another factor is that having the opportunity to engage in different forms of meaningful leisure depends on having a sufficient income. It is a luxury to speak about leisure when a family does not know when its next meal will come or how they will pay their heating bill. Here, an important aspect of justice and promoting the Common Good comes into play. People may have more free time and “theoretically” opportunities for contemplative leisure but do their personal economic circumstances allow it? Consequently, wealth distribution is a crucial element in this economic equation. We do not have to look far to observe the wide discrepancies between the different standards of living at home and abroad.
3. **Establishing boundaries: the place of rest, solitude and silence in our daily routine.** We saw from the interviews the importance that many of the participants placed on having time for quiet and silence, and sometimes a place for solitude. But, we also heard how some of them were able to create a “silent oasis” in the midst of a hectic, noisy and fast moving world. Others had adapted by using a lull in activity to just withdraw for a few minutes. This did not necessarily entail a change of location, but a change of attitude, or redirecting their attention inwards. Other had become adept at using an application on their smart phone to create a boundary. Perhaps these are some of the “time management” techniques that we have to learn about more if we are to maintain our sanity and survive in our increasingly frenetic world.
4. **The practice of contemplation and mindfulness.** Again, from the interviews it became apparent of the different understandings of meditation and contemplation, and for some the connection of these with mindfulness. It is a salutary reminder that it is never a case of “one size fits all.” It is quite apparent that over the last fifty years, the influence of Eastern Religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism have had a profound effect on the way that people understand meditation, contemplation and mindfulness. I am also reminded of the advice of the Benedictine monk Dom John

Chapman, “pray as you can, not as you can’t.”⁵⁷⁷ We saw also that temperament can play an important part in the kind of contemplative practice individuals prefer. The mindfulness revolution is here to stay and many elements of mindfulness are embedded in different forms of Christian prayer. In spite of the continuing hostility to mindfulness from some Church authorities it is important to promote mindfulness especially as it offers those without religious belief a pathway to a contemplative practice.

5. **Discernment and the role of intuition and courage in decision making.** In an age of information overload, fake news and media bias it is perhaps more important than ever to equip individuals and groups with the tools to discriminate between what is true and what is false, what sources are trustworthy, what is right and what is wrong? As we saw discernment, intuition and courage are important for making critical decisions that affect not just ourselves but others, especially their livelihoods. Together with justice, these are the tools that help shape our moral compass. The speed at which decision makers have to react has also been highlighted, hence we noticed the prevalence of intuition and the way in which many of those being interviewed relied on a “gut feeling” for making decisions. But how reliable is this? Does there need to be some check or form of scrutiny? I would suggest that a contemplative practice is the foundation for making good and right decisions, promoting justice the Common Good.
6. **Developing a Sabbath Spirituality.** A number of comments were made on how Sabbath was more a state of being, it was something that was part of you, seven days a week, rather than the Sunday or whatever your “Holy Day” was. For a smaller number Sabbath was the gathering together with their worship community, celebration with hymns and songs and sharing in the Eucharist. I would propose that one key element in all of this was commitment. We participate in a particular Sabbath rituals because we want to. We go because that is where we are spiritually nourished by the Word of God, the Eucharist and friendship. Or to put it another way, we need to go rather than have to go. As I remarked earlier, there is this “God-shaped hole” that needs to be filled. The important thing here is to ask how do we extend that Sabbath celebration to the other six days of the week? Although we may be physically distanced from our worship community, especially during the Covid-19

⁵⁷⁷ Chapman.p.25

crisis, for six days we are still “present” to them spiritually. A regular, daily contemplative practice can be the catalyst that keeps us rooted. As we saw from the answers participants gave, a contemplative practice can take so many different forms using more traditional methods such as the *Liturgy of the Hours*, *Lectio Divina*, daily Mass, guided meditations and so on. As we listen to and are nourished by the Word of God our lives can be transformed to reflect the presence of God in our lives. This deification, as it is sometimes called, radiates out to others, not in a pious platitudes but in a practical way, showing concern and compassion for others, reciprocating our trust and listening to their concerns.

7. Caring for yourself, promoting work-life balance, well-being and happiness.

Many of the participants interviewed spoke about how a contemplative practice and a good work-life balance promoted well-being that led to happiness. In traditional Christian spirituality, with its emphasis on self-sacrifice and the abandonment to the will of God, caring for yourself has always been viewed at best, as a form of selfishness, and at worse, grave sinfulness. Now, hopefully, we are moving away from this view. For those brought up in this tradition, to change their ways, in many cases, requires a spiritual revolution. But how can we be in a position to care for others when our capacity to care is undermined by our own poor physical, mental or emotional health? In regards to physical well-being sleep, rest, relaxation, nutrition and some form of physical exercise or activity seem indispensable elements. When we speak about mental health it does not necessarily mean that we are mentally ill, but more positively we are alert to the world around us especially the needs of others, we do not over-exert our mental capacity through long hours of staring at a computer screen, we do not allow boredom, or as the ancients called it, *acedia*, to pickle our minds. Emotional health means having the ability to share our feelings at an appropriate time with the appropriate person in the appropriate place. That is why building up trust in relationships, whether formal or informal, is so important. Hopefully the Covid-19 crisis has taught us a great deal about work-life balance; how it is possible to work from home and maintain, or even increase, productivity; how to use solitary time positively. Without the need to commute, it has also meant having more time for the family, even the opportunity to sit down each evening for a family meal. This has to be balanced of course for the need for some kind of face to face

workplace socialisation. In whatever circumstances we are in Covid-19 has many positive things to teach us about helping to create a better world.

The research question, proposed at the start of this thesis was “in what ways can the concept of holy or sacred leisure inform a renewed theological understanding of work and leisure in the 21st century?” Put more simply this thesis has been about the need to redeem sacred leisure in a secular world. By drawing on a number of literary sources, Holy Scripture, early Christian writers, the monastic rules, Catholic Social Teaching and the insights of three contemporary 20th century authors, Josef Pieper, Jean Leclercq and Thomas Merton, reinforced and illuminated by the twenty-two voices of the interviewees, I have demonstrated that this thesis provides a renewed theological understanding of holy or sacred leisure, which may allow contemporary society to reclaim it for the 21st century.

APPENDICES

- A Application for Ethical Approval (p.354)
- B Participant Information Sheet (p.364)
- C Participant Consent Letter (p.366)
- D Two Streams of Monastic Influence 4th to 6th Century (p.368)
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APPENDIX A

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL



St Mary's University

Ethics Sub-Committee

Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one PDF (in order of the checklist) and clearly entitled with your Full Name, School, Supervisor.

Please note that for all undergraduate research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

Please refer to the University's Ethical Guidelines. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.

Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.

If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

Please note:

In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or School Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff) .



St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application.

Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Document	Enclosed? (delete as appropriate)		Version No
	Yes	Not applicable	
1.Application Form	Mandatory		
2.Risk Assessment Form		N/A	
3.Participant Invitation Letter	Yes		
4.Participant Information Sheet	Mandatory (see 3 above)		
5.Participant Consent Form	Mandatory		
6.Parental Consent Form		N/A	
7.Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of Posters, newspaper adverts, website, emails		See Invitation Letter	

8.Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct the study on the premises)		N/A	
9. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule		In progress	
10.DBS included		N/A	
11.Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)		N/A	

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one PDF document entitled with you: Full Name, School, Supervisor.

Signature of Applicant 

23 January 2015

Signature of Supervisor

Professor Peter Tyler



**St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London**

Ethics Application Form

Name of proposer(s)	DERMOT ALAN TREDGET
St Mary's email address	135405@LIVE.SMUC.AC.UK
Name of supervisor	PROFESSOR PETER TYLER

Title of study "Can a more positive engagement with leisure as currently understood arise from a renewed understanding of leisure in early Christian monastic tradition and Christian Social Teaching?."

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School or service	Education, Theology & Leadership
Programme (if undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research)	Postgraduate Research
Type of activity/research (staff / undergraduate student research / postgraduate student)	Doctoral/Postgraduate

Confidentiality	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998	YES

Consent	
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants / participants' representatives?	YES

Pre-approved protocol	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	NO

Approval from another Ethics Committee
--

Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	NO
Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	NO

Identifiable risks	
Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	NO
Are participants over 65 years of age?	YES
Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	NO
Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	NO
Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	NO
Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	NO
Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	NO
Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	NO
Will highly personal, intimate or other private and	YES

confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	
Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	NO
Could the relationship between the researcher/supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	NO

Proposed start March 1 st 2015 aimed completion date 31 st December 2015
<p>Please indicate:</p> <p>When the study is due to commence.</p> <p>Timetable for data collection.</p> <p>The expected date of completion.</p> <p>Please ensure that your start date is at least 3 weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.</p>
<p>Study will commence in February 2015 with invitation to potential participants who hold or have held middle or senior management positions in business, education and not for profit organisations. Stage 1 (February) Invitation to potential participants. Stage 2 (March) Selected participants sent formal invitation will include information on the proposed research and consent form. Stage 3: April to September 45 minute recorded interviews (max 15-20 participants). Stage 4: Transcriptions and analysis of data completed by 31 December 2015.</p>

14)Sponsors/Collaborators
<p>Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include you supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.</p> <p>Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.</p> <p>Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.</p>
As I intend to use Action Research all who agree to participate in this study will be

collaborators in so far as they continue to reflect on the outcomes of this study. I also intend to share anonymously the outcomes of the questionnaire and interviews on a blog.

15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

Please indicate whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. the NHS Research Ethics Committee).

Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project
Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

17. Study Design/Methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)

The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).

You should also include details regarding the requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.

Please include details of where the testing will take place.

Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

(a) This will be a qualitative study using theological action research. (b) I intend to identify a small cohort of 15-20 people willing to collaborate (c) for a 45 to 60 minute 1:1 structured interview. (d) The interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient location and time face to face. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. In the transcripts the identity of the collaborator will be anonymous and referenced using a unique number. (e) Each collaborator will be asked to consent to have his/her original contributions used anonymously for the thesis.

19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done

Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?

Children under 18

Participants with learning disabilities

Participants suffering from dementia

Other vulnerable groups.

If any of the above apply, does the researcher/investigator hold a current DBS certificate? A copy of the DBS must be included with the application.

How will consent be obtained? This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

(a) As far as I am aware no incentives or pressures will make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part. Providing they have the time and inclination it will be their decision to make. They will be asked to complete a consent form. (b) (c) and (d) to not apply.

20. Risks and benefits of research/ activity

Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.

Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.

Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.

Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).

Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).

Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research (e.g. gain knowledge of their fitness)?

I am not anticipating that the questionnaires or interviews will be upsetting although some of the questions may trigger a degree of dissatisfaction about their leadership role especially if they are experiencing stress, facing redundancy, or breakdown in relationships.

21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

What steps will be taken to ensure participant's confidentiality?

Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored.

Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others data.

Describe how you manage data using a data management plan.

You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publicly available once the project has ended.

You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.

Who will have access to the data? Please identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).

Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?

Explain what information will be identifiable.

Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.

Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.

Data and personal information will only be available to me, my supervisor and the person transcribing the taped interviews. They will be stored on a removable hard drive attached to my

personal computer, backed up to Dropbox and a data stick. Participants and their responses/ data will be identified by a reference character and/or number. All the relevant provisions for confidentiality and data protection will be incorporated into the consent form.

22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

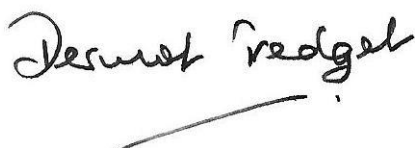
As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable to format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriate written.

Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

After the initial analysis of the interviews I will provide participants with a summary of the outcomes. After time for further reflection I would like to invite as many participants as possible to gather for a focus group to discuss these outcomes with the opportunity for a second reflective cycle. In addition I would like to invite additional feedback from participants using my blog <http://ContemplativeLeisure.blogspot.com> I would also make available an electronic copy of my thesis.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Signature of Proposer(s)



Date:

23 January 2015

Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects)

Date:

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Contact: Dermot Tredget
Mobile: 07887687022
Home: 01635 872096
Email: 135405@live.smuc.ac.uk

1st May 2015

Dear ...

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A CONTEMPLATIVE LEISURE RESEARCH PROJECT

Following your expression of interest I am sending you more information about my research project into contemplative leisure and a consent form. This project will be conducted in accordance with criteria established by the Ethics Sub-Committee at St Mary's University. Consequently, you need to be fully aware of the nature of the research you are participating in. Secondly, I need to obtain your formal consent for the use of any data arising from your participation. As I explained to you before, your initial participation will be in the form of a structured interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. It will be recorded, transcribed and kept confidential. If there is the time and opportunity it may be possible for you to meet with myself and some of the other participants to discuss and reflect further on the outcomes of this enquiry. Alternatively and/or additionally you may wish to contribute further through some reflective writing which can be emailed to me direct. There will also be a blog, moderated by me, on contemplative leisure which you might find a useful way of interacting with others exploring this topic. However, you need to be aware that given the nature of blogs the interaction between contributors and the content would be open to others.

Any reference to the origins of this data will be anonymous. Only myself, my supervisors and the person transcribing the interview will have knowledge of your identity. The data you provide will be stored electronically on my personal computer and backed up on to a separate hard drive. All other copies will be destroyed.

I would be grateful if you could read the following information carefully and if your wish to participate in this research project sign and return a signed and witnessed copy of the consent form to me as an email attachment. If at a later stage you wish to withdraw from the project please inform me as soon as possible using the section at the bottom of the consent form. If you need to discuss anything or require further information please contact me.

INFORMATION SHEET AND OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project is an integral part of my PhD thesis. The current title, which may be modified slightly, is “The concept of ‘Holy Leisure’ in the early Christian monastic tradition and its application to a current understanding and practice of leisure in the world of work.” The main working assumption is that for many people, perhaps the vast majority, their current understanding and practice of leisure has lost its contemplative dimension. In many situations, leisure time can be as frenetic and stressful as work. There is little time for silence, quiet contemplation or simply ‘to be.’ Some attempts to combat this trend can be observed in the current preoccupation with ‘mindfulness’, ‘well-being’ or ‘happiness’ but is this enough? During the interview I will be inviting you to reflect on how you use your leisure time and what part, if any, the contemplative dimension has on the way you lead or manage your organisation.

YOUR PARTICIPATION

I shall be organising and co-ordinating the research. I can be contacted through my university email 135405@live.smuc.ac.uk I particularly want to invite participants, both women and men, who are practising Christians, who hold or have held senior/leadership positions in a variety of organisations from both the ‘for profit’ and ‘not for profit’ sectors including business, education, charitable organisations, the church and the professions (financial, legal and medical). In total I propose to conduct between 15-20 interviews, each on a one to one basis, lasting around 60 minutes at a location and time convenient to you.

In early 2016 you will receive a summary of the outcome of this research which I estimate will take nine months starting in March 2015. After you have received the summary, and had time to reflect on it, I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group to enable you to make any further contribution. If you cannot attend, or have further reflections, there will also be an opportunity to participate either in a confidential blog on contemplative leisure or contribute further feedback in the form of some reflective writing.

I look forward to hearing from you
With good wishes. Dermot Tredget

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Name of Participant (Please Print): _____

Title of the project: An Enquiry into the Contemplative Dimension of Leisure

Main investigator and contact details:

Dermot Tredget	Email 135405@live.smuc.ac.uk	Flat 1
	Mob. 0788 768 7022	45 Chapel Street
	Home: 01635 872096	Thatcham, Berks
		RG18 4JS

Members of the research team:

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

Name of participant
(print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of witness

(print).....Signed.....Date.....

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: An Enquiry into the Contemplative Dimension of Leisure

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Taken from *Christian Monasticism* by David Knowles



APPENDIX E
LIST OF “HOLY LEISURE” ACTIVITIES

(Compiled from Participant Interviews)

1. Art (Watercolour and Oils)
2. Bible Study Group
3. Choral Concerts of Religious Music
4. Church attendance/Sabbath Observance
5. Church/Sacred Music
6. Cycling
7. Doing nothing
8. Fishing
9. Gardening
10. Getting out into the environment
11. Gym
12. Journaling
13. Line Dancing
14. Pilgrimage e.g. Camino
15. Play a musical instrument
16. Reading (biography, church history, theology)
17. Reading Bible/Lectio Divina
18. Running
19. Shakti/Kundalini (Dance)
20. Singing in a Choir
21. Special Liturgy (e.g. Sung Latin Mass)
22. Swimming
23. Time for contemplation/meditation/reflection
24. Visiting Historic buildings/churches/religious shrine
25. Walking/Hiking
26. Weekday Prayer Group
27. Yoga

APPENDIX F: TABLE OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES (O.N.S 2015)

APPENDIX F

LEISURE ACTIVITIES AS DEFINED BY THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS (2015)

Category of leisure	Examples of types of activity (list not exhaustive)	
Participatory activities	Religious activities such as going to church	Participating in meetings for organisations such as scouts or other groups (when not in a position of trust)
Socialising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialising with family Visiting and receiving visitors Celebrations Telephone conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going clubbing or going to the pub Going out with friends Talking in a cafe
Cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cinema Concerts or other live music Plays, musicals or pantomimes Opera Dance performances Art exhibitions and museums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Sports events Visit a historical site Visit a wildlife or botanical site Visiting an urban park, playground, designated play area Visit a heritage park
Reading and taking time out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing nothing, just sitting, reflecting, relaxing, reading, watching, meditating, smoking, sunbathing, thinking, talking to or scratching a cat or dog etc 	
Sports or outdoor pursuits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball games such as football, rugby, volleyball, basketball Walking or hiking Running or jogging Hunting and fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sliding or skating Cycling or rowing Gymnastics Cycling or rowing Swimming or other watersports Other productive exercise
Home based or quiet activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painting, singing, film making or playing a musical Collecting (stamps, coins for example) Writing letters, Christmas cards Conducting experiments Writing novels, poetry or a personal diary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programming, fixing or repairing a computer Surfing the net Communication over the internet (skype for pleasure) Gardening Board games Computer games Played darts Played pool Built a jigsaw
Mass media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watching TV or DVD Listening to radio Reading for pleasure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading brochures, advertisements and catalogues Listening to pre-recorded music
Eating out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating in a restaurant, cafe or pub 	
Recorded travel time with those leisure activities	All travel time recorded is related to the above mentioned activities	

TAKEN FROM LEISURE TIME IN THE UK 2015

OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS

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