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SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

There is a large amount of what might be called “common spiritual heritage” between Catholics and evangelicals. We use the word “common” because all communions, Roman Catholic and Protestant (as well as Orthodox) share in this rich tradition. Unfortunately, one group often is unaware of the contributions of the others. Certainly this is true of evangelicals who, on the whole, are unaware of the *source* of much spiritual and devotional material that they themselves utilize.

The cultural and moral decline which has occurred in contemporary society is reflected in the current state of literature and the arts. Evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry correctly observes that “The sorry fate of literature and the arts in our time likewise gives great reason for cultural concern.” [1] This is not to say that the twentieth century has been completely devoid of authors writing from a Christian perspective. Henry mentions W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, C. S. Lewis, and others who exhibit an authentic Christian stance. Concerning the ratio of evangelicals to Roman Catholics in literary contributions, he notes that “Catholics have been more successful than evangelicals in writing significant novels; they also far out-number evangelicals as syndicated newspaper columnists. This may in part reflect the price of an excessive evangelical withdrawal from the culture.” [2]

On the other side of the ecclesiastical aisle, concerning the “contemplative dimension of the life of faith, Vatican II speaks to the need for Roman Catholics to develop a personal devotional life and perspective. A Christian, therefore, should reflect “an attitude which manifests the virtue of piety, an interior fount of peace and a bearer of peace to every sphere of life and apostolate.” [3] At the center of this spiritual

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1 Carl F. H. Henry, “Secularization,” in Ball, *In Search of a National Morality*, p. 24.
2 Ibid. Also see Henry’s work, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).
3 Flannery, *Vatican Collection: Vatican Council II*, p. 246.

development, “Prayer is the indispens able breath of every contemplative dimension.” [4] Priests are instructed: “Therefore, in the sometimes exhausting rhythm of apostolic commitments, there must be well ordered and sufficiently prolonged daily and weekly periods of personal and community prayer.” [5] Also vital to personal Christian formation is exposure to the Word of God. Along with study of the Scriptures, a spiritual heritage is built with literature and hymnology which speaks to the trials and triumphs experienced by God’s people. As charismatic Catholics can testify, Roman Catholics have a great deal to learn from evangelical hymns and devotional material.

LITERATURE

One of the reasons so many Roman Catholic lay persons are converting to evangelicalism is that they did not find a dynamic personal relationship with Christ in their Catholic church. The reality is often lost in the ritual. On the other hand, one of the reasons that a number of noted evangelical scholars (e.g., Thomas Howard and Richard Neuhaus) have converted to Catholicism is that there is a deep intellectual tradition not found in the typical evangelical church. Ironically, while Rome is losing many of its laity “out the bottom” to evangelicals, evangelicals are losing some of their intellectuals “out the top” to Catholicism. Obviously, each has something to learn from the other.

Catholic tradition is rich with literature. This section will examine some of the literature which has emerged from the Christian tradition. The content of these writings are for the most part devotional in nature with some theological implications. Space restrictions force us to be limited to a few examples out of a vast number of works.

Evangelicals, for the most part, are unaware of the origin of some Christian spiritual classics that they treasure—many of which originated from the church fathers and scholars from the Middle Ages. Our samples will be, for the most part, works written before the Protestant Reformation.

THE LIFE OF ANTONY (A.D. 357)

This was written by Athanasius (c. A.D. 296–373), who was the champion of orthodoxy against Arianism and the author of the creed that bears his name. When in exile in the West, certain Christians asked Athanasius to write concerning the life of Antony, whom Athanasius had known personally.

Antony (c. A.D. 251–356) was born in Egypt in a Christian family. He was a shy lad, disliking school and never learning to read or write. At age 20, he retired to the desert

4 Ibid., p. 247.
5 Ibid.

where he devoted his life to the practice of Christian asceticism. He attracted a number of disciples and organized them into a community of hermits.

Concerning Antony's disposition, Athanasius writes that "He was never agitated or gloomy, but seemed to radiate in his countenance the joy and imperturbability of his soul." [6] Antony is represented as one who, although experiencing visions and trances, "spoke of these with reluctance, and only to those who sat with him during his ecstasy and afterwards pressed him to tell them what he had seen." [7]

Antony didn't wish to draw attention to himself and, on one occasion when a soldier asked him to heal his child, replied: "Man, why do you make all this clamor to me? I am a man just as you are. If you believe in Christ whom I serve, go and, as you believe, pray to God and it will come to pass." [8] *The Life of Antony* was translated into Latin and was influential in Roman circles. Augustine mentions the work in his *Confessions,* and Antony's subsequent victories over his spiritual trials in the desert have inspired Christians down through the centuries.

THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE (C. A.D. 397)

Augustine's *Confessions* is best described as a spiritual autobiography. The best known of his many works, it clearly details the personality of Augustine. In reading this book, one follows Augustine (A.D. 354–430) from his childhood in Tagaste, Northern Africa, through his investigations in Manichaeism, Platonism, and skepticism. He finally comes to faith in the God of the Bible and is baptized in A.D. 387.

Augustine often expressed his Christian convictions in Neoplatonic terms, at times even buying into their ideas. Nonetheless, his views were consciously and progressively Christian, and he always made an effort to ground them in Scripture and the great Christian teachers before him.

Augustine treated a number of different themes in this work. God is Creator and not to be confused with his creation. He is the proper object of human love and humanity acquires spiritual insight and power through conversion to Jesus Christ. Augustine's godly mother Monica never ceased to pray for her son, and when they both went to Milan he fell under the influence of the eloquent bishop Ambrose and was converted.

The later portions of the *Confessions* deal with Augustine's struggles with the Donatists' and Pelagians' transcendent nature of God and an involved analysis of the nature and relationship of time to creation. Augustine was the first great Christian theologian to follow the Apostolic Era and one of the finest systematizers that the church

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6 "The Life of Antony," in Frank Magill, ed., *Masterpieces of Christian Literature* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 96–97.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.

has produced. The doctrines and concepts that would tax the great minds who followed him in church history were first broached by the "Bishop of Hippo."

THE CITY OF GOD (C. A.D. 413–426)

Augustine also wrote *The City of God*, which has been called the first major philosophy of history. "It seeks no less a goal than to define God, man, and the world." [9] Augustine chose the city as a model because "the city was in his day the center . . . of culture and political life." [10]

Augustine contrasted the City of God with the "city of man." Those who trust in the true God are citizens of the City of God. This "city" is temporal here on earth and will—at the eschaton—become the eternal abode. The city of man—the present world—is peopled by the just and the unjust alike. It serves as a "training ground" for the saints who experience trials and testings along with the unjust. However, "The tide of trouble tests, purifies, and improves the good, where as it beats, crushes, and washes away the wicked." [11]

Augustine here addressed the pagan charge that Christians were responsible for the sack of Rome. He argued that this distinction occurred because of evil internal reasons and was a part of God's "permissive" will. In dealing with the issue of the divine permission of oppression, Augustine offered that "a good man, though a slave, is free; but a wicked man, though a King, is a slave." [12]

Themes addressed throughout this work include the providence of God, the nature and function of philosophy, and the nature of sin—which Augustine identifies primarily as pride. His purpose was to "give a newness to historical events, and yet he relates this newness to a providential order." [13] All of this activity has as its origin and purpose the love of God which is manifested in Jesus, who is God's "co-eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, who essentially serves as the instrument of creation." [14]

What is striking about Augustine is that, although a committed Catholic bishop, his writings are claimed by both evangelical Protestants and Catho lics. Indeed, through both Luther and Calvin, Augustine is in a real sense the grandfather of the Reformation. To this day many of the best known, and best worded, theological formulations of Christian truth used by orthodox Protestants are in the words of Augustine.

CUR DEUS HOMO (A.D. 1098)

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9 Ibid., p. 141.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 142.
13 Ibid., p. 144.
14 Ibid.

The title means “Why the God-Man” and was written by Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury (c. A.D. 1033–1109). Anselm is considered the greatest theologian between Augustine and Aquinas and has been called the father of scholastic theology. (See chap. 5 concerning his contributions.)

This famous work was written “in the form of a dialogue or debate between Anselm and an friendly interlocutor named Boso, whose duty it is to raise and pursue the questions of faithful inquirers as well as unbelievers.” [15] Its main purpose is to show that the debt incurred by humanity “calls for the payment of something that is more than the whole world and all that is not God.” [16] Only God could satisfy such a payment, hence, “Of necessity, then, salvation calls for the work of a God-Man.” [17] As already noted, the Reformers used Anselm’s “satisfaction” theory of the atonement to good effect in constructing their theological system.

THE STEPS OF HUMILITY (A.D. 1129–1135)

The author is Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux (A.D. 1090–1153), and it is considered to be “contemplative” theology. Bernard’s purpose was to identify humility as a cardinal virtue and discuss the steps leading to its apprehension. He was reluctant to write this work because “To write from his own motives and to satisfy his own desires would be a violation of the virtue he intends to describe.” [18]

Bernard examined the elements that make up pride, such as curiosity, frivolity, foolish mirth, and the like. Christians of all persuasions have gained insight into the practice of holiness from this godly man.

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

Although many evangelicals are loathe to admit it, their theology is heavily influenced by one of the greatest Christian theologians of all time, Thomas Aquinas (c. A.D. 1225–74).

His magnum opus, *Summa Theologiae,* is the ultimate in theological dialogue. It is one of the greatest contributions any Christian mind has ever produced. Its basic view of God, of Christ, and even of salvation is so Calvinistic that it would shock most evangelicals, were they to take time to study the angelic doctor.

Arvin Vos is one of the few contemporary evangelicals to recognize this in his excellent book, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought.* [19] *Since we*

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15 Ibid., p. 203.
16 Ibid., p. 205.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 206.
19 See Arvin Vos, *Aquinas, Calvin, and Contemporary Protestant Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

have thoroughly discussed Aquinas's many contributions to contemporary evangelical thought in Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal, [20] we will not belabor the point here. It suffices to give the conclusion: Evangelicals should not be singing "should Ole Aquinas be forgot and never brought to mind"!

THE DIVINE COMEDY (C. A.D. 1320)

The author is Dante Alighieri (A.D. 1265–1321) and the work falls into the category of "allegorical" poetry. The poem develops on four levels: literal, allegorical, moral, and analogical. As a story, Dante is sent on an "imaginary pilgrimage which Dante made through Hell, up the mountain of Purgatory, and outward through the celestial spheres into the very presence of the Triune God." [21]

The theological and philosophical structure of the poem is borrowed from some distinctly Roman Catholic dogmas—such as "Limbo" and "Purgatory." In spite of the problematic nature of the aforementioned doctrines for evangelicals, Dante's work can serve to illuminate medieval thought and he represents the best of Christian humanism in his era. Also, he describes God's splendor thusly: "There is a light up there which makes the Creator visible to that creature who, only in seeing Him, has its peace." [22]

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS (C. A.D. 1322)

This book is a number of brief anecdotes concerning Francis of Assisi (A.D. 1181–1226). The author of *The Little Flowers* is unknown. The type of work is known as "hagiography," which are writings that comment on the lives, works, and sanctity of saints. [23] Francis was born in Assisi of middle-class parents. At age 20 he contracted an illness which triggered his conversion ex perience. He discovered his gift was preaching and founded the Order of Friars Minor, subsequently called Franciscans.

This collection relates the virtues practiced by the followers of Francis, namely poverty, simplicity, humility, charity to the poor, and joy in the Lord. Francis traveled throughout many countries and his reputation for godliness grew and his religious communities flourished.

Of benefit for the modern reader is the glimpse one gets of the moral character of Francis: "He is tender without sentimentality, gentle to all—even to his enemies—and strong beneath his gentleness." [24] Francis of Assisi was a man so revered by his

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20 Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal.*
21 Ibid., p. 259.
22 Ibid., p. 261.
23 Broderick, *Catholic Concise Encyclopedia* , pp. 179–80.
24 Magill, *Masterpieces of Christian Literature*, p. 266.

contemporaries as to be designated “the second Christ,” a title made official by Pope Pius XI. [25] Catholics are not alone in taking spiritual inspiration from this godly man.

THE *DIALOGUE* OF CATHERINE OF SIENA (A.D. 1370)

This is a devotional meditation composed by Catherine of Siena (A.D. 1347–80). A woman of uncommon spirituality, Catherine lived in a time of moral laxity and ecclesiastical decadence. She ministered to the sick and poor during this turbulent period and was to become a trusted advisor to the pope.

The *Dialogue* is comprised of four sections: divine providence, discretion, prayer, and obedience. Her status in the Roman Catholic Church is such that she was designated a “Doctor of the Church” in 1970, an honor shared with just one other woman, Teresa of Avila. [26]

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST (A.D. 1418)

One of the most widely read books in the world outside the Bible, near the top of the all-time best sellers even for Protestants, was written by Catholic monk Thomas à Kempis (c. A.D. 1380–1471). Thomas was born at Kempen, near Cologne, of poor parents. After education at a school run by the Brethren of the Common Life, he entered the house of the Canons Regular, who adopted the Rule of St. Augustine. He lived there the rest of his life and became known as a writer, preacher, and spiritual advisor of great stature.

The major purpose of this work was to instruct Christians in the need and method of modeling Christ. The inner life is examined; the need for humility, contrition, self-discipline, and submission to spiritual superiors are stressed. Concerning the quality of this spirituality, it is said that: “The noblest product of this simple, mystical, churchly piety is the *Imitation of Christ*— a book the circulation of which has exceeded that of any other product of the Middle Ages.” [27]

THE *LIFE* OF ST. TERESA OF AVILA (A.D. 1562)

This is a work about the spiritual life, written by St. Teresa herself. Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada (A.D. 1515–82) possessed a keen intellect and her *Life* is an animated personal narrative. Teresa regarded an event that occurred when she was forty as her true

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25 Encyclical “Rite Expiatis” (30 April 1926); quoted in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 133.
26 Magill, *Masterpieces of Christian Literature*, pp. 280–83.
27 Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 3d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), p. 255. For a modern translation of this classic work, see William C. Creasy, *The Imitation of Christ: A New Reading of the 1441 Latin Autograph Manuscript* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1989).

conversion: “A picture of the wounded Christ and a copy of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* were instrumental in bringing her to a new pitch of devotion.” [28]

In the monastery, Teresa experienced a number of mystical ecstasies and raptures which were interpreted by some of her advisors as being Satanic in origin. However, her careful descriptions of these experiences lead one to conclude that she remained within the borders of authentic biblical faith.

Her *Life* advances the concept that Christian devotion mainly consists of mental prayer. She distinguishes four degrees of contemplation and her work is a spiritual classic. She founded the Discalced (“barefoot”) Order of Carmelites with the help of a young monk who came to be known as St. John of the Cross. Like her predecessor, Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa was declared a “Doctor of the Church” in 1970. [29]

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL (A.D. 1587)

Written by St. John of the Cross (A.D. 1542–91), this is a manual for mystical contemplation. John was born in Fontiveros, Spain, and after a rather uneventful life joined the Carmelites and subsequently was ordained in A.D. 1567. In A.D. 1572, St. Teresa called him to Avila to minister at the Convent of the Incarnation. Because of his involvement in an ecclesiastical dispute, he was imprisoned in Toledo. During this time, he experienced visions and wrote *Dark Night of the Soul.* [30]

The central theme of this work is that the goal of the human soul is union with God. The process involved may include spiritual darkness and despair, which is the first stage of spiritual progress. One is reminded of Job’s tribulations, which were misunderstood by his “counselors.”

John does not locate sin in earthly pleasures themselves. “What possess and harm the soul are not the things of the world but rather the will and desire for them.” [31] The end result of this exercise: “Supernatural being, communicated by love and grace, overcomes the dark night of the soul.” [32] The Catholic church has proclaimed St. John of the Cross the doctor par excellence of ascetical and mystical theology. Concerning John and “Calvinist mysticism,” Fr. Louis Bouyer writes: “The most striking thing about St. John of the Cross is that he draws his teaching from exactly the same Biblical sources as

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28 Magill, Masterpieces, p. 393.
29 Ibid., pp. 392–95. The title “Doctor of the Church” is bestowed on eminent scholars and leaders who display great spiritual gifts and holiness of life. See Broderick, *Catholic Concise Encyclopedia*, p. 134.
30 John J. Delaney and James Tobin, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), p. 620.
31 Magill, *Masterpieces of Christian Literature*, p. 409.
32 Ibid.

Calvin and his successors, and that the dominant themes . . . are just those which govern what we do not shrink from . . . calling Calvinist mysticism." [33]

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE (A.D. 1609)

This work was authored by St. Francis of Sales (A.D. 1567–1622) and concerns Christian growth in sanctification and spiritual maturity. During his time as bishop of Geneva, Francis counseled many men and women and wrote a number of letters dealing with problems of a spiritual nature.

Francis of Sales was concerned to point out that "The religious life is not a special vocation for a few Christians, but a possibility and so a duty for all." [34] Although set in a Roman Catholic framework, the *Introduction* transcends denominational boundaries, for "In all Christian bodies, thousands have found, and still find, that this book of religious counsel is sane, wise, deeply perceptive, and unfailingly helpful." [35]

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD (A.D. 1692)

Brother Lawrence, born Nicholas Herman (c. A.D. 1605–91), wrote this practical guide on Christian devotion. Brother Lawrence was a lay monk in a Parisian monastery. His superior gathered letters and meditations written by Lawrence and, supplemented by personal conversations with the monk, gives us a picture of this remarkable man.

Brother Lawrence worked for fifteen years in the monastery kitchen and later, because of lameness, became a cobbler. He performed the simplest of tasks to the service of God, who can be "served as well in the kitchen or on the battlefield as in the Church while receiving the Sacrament." [36] For Lawrence, "The service of God is primarily an affair of the will and not of the understanding." [37] This unassuming monk reflected in his work and posture the biblical injunction, "Do all for the glory of God."

PENSÉES (A.D. 1670)

The *Pensées* ("Thoughts") were written by Blaise Pascal (A.D. 1623–62). Possessing one of the most towering intellects in the modern world, he also was a devout and committed Catholic, interested in Scripture as well as science. As early as age 16 he made contributions to geometry, physics, applied mechanics, and mathematic formulations which still are useful in modern science. He suffered ill health and died before reaching age 40.

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33 Bouyer, *Spirit and Forms of Protestantism,* p. 93.
34 Magill, *Masterpieces of Christian Literature,* p. 428.
35 Ibid., p. 432.
36 Ibid., p. 544.
37 Ibid.

The *Pensées* were notes Pascal wanted to use to write an apology for the Christian religion. As religious literature, it ranks alongside such masterpieces as Augustine's *Confessions.* One of the significant ideas advanced here by Pascal is that "Man must learn to reflect upon himself and seek to understand himself in relation to the rest of nature." [38] Another is that humanity is "characterized by a peculiar ambivalence of misery and grandeur; on the one hand, man experiences a disproportion within himself and in his relation to nature; on the other hand, he is the highest of all creatures." [39]

Pascal had little use for the utilization of pure reason in the task of understanding God's existence, preferring the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" to the God of the philosophers. This is evident in his famous statement "The heart has reasons of which the mind knows nothing." He was steadfastly Christocentric in his faith. For Pascal, "Apart from Jesus Christ we do not know what is our life, nor our death, nor God, nor ourselves." [40] Here again, his faith transcends his own religious jurisdiction and is widely embraced by Protestants.

MARTYROLOGY

A "martyr" by Christian definition is a person who, rather than deny Christ, gives up his or her life (Heb. 10:26–31). Tertullian (C. A.D. 160–225) the African church father said: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." History is replete with examples of faithful Christians who gave up their lives in witness for the gospel. While there have been numerous notable martyrs, both Catholic and Protestant, it seems fitting to mention briefly one such modern example, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe.

MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Raymond Kolbe was born in Zdunska Wola, Poland, in 1894. He was the second of five sons whose parents labored as piecework weavers, a trade which barely provided a livelihood.

Kolbe entered the Franciscan seminary in Lwow in 1910, and was given the name Maximilian. He was a brilliant student and earned a Ph.D. in philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He would subsequently receive another doctorate, the Th.D. in theology.

As impressive as Kolbe's intellectual accomplishments were it was his deep spirituality that most commended him to his contemporaries. When he was in his early twenties he wrote to his mother: "Pray that I will love without any limits." The one who

38 Ibid., p. 515.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 518.

was known by his friends as “another St. Francis” would be given an opportunity to display such love.

After leaving Rome, Fr. Maximilian taught in Cracow, Poland, and in 1930 traveled to Nagasaki, Japan and established a mission. He returned to Teresin, Poland, in 1936 and became director of a work, “Niepokalanow,” which he had started before his trip to Japan.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Fr. Maximilian was arrested by the Nazis and was imprisoned with a number of his fellow Franciscans. Released from custody on December 10, Fr. Maximilian returned to Niepokalanow and reorganized the friary. Kolbe turned “the Franciscan friary he founded into a hospice for displaced Polish Jews, gentiles, and German invaders alike, with a sense of brotherhood that simply did not include the words ‘enemy’ or ‘unlovable’ in its vocabulary.” [41]

On February 17, 1941, Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in Warsaw. On May 28 he was transferred to Auschwitz as prisoner no. 16,670. In August, as punishment for the escape of one prisoner, the S.S. chose ten prisoners to be sent to a special bunker where they were to be starved to death.

One of the chosen, Francis Gajowniczek, overcome with the realization of his fate, broke down. “My wife and my children,” he sobbed. The S.S. ignored him. Then “there is movement in the still ranks. A prisoner several rows back has broken out and is pushing his way toward the front.” [42] The S.S. tense and raise their weapons. The man is Maximilian Kolbe. He posi tions himself before the officer in charge: “ ‘Herr Kommandant, I wish to make a request, please,’ he says politely in flawless German.” [43] Kolbe continued, “I want to die in place of this prisoner.” “Why?” the officer asked: “ ‘I have no wife or children. Besides I’m old and not good for anything. He’s in better condition,’ he adds, adroitly playing on the Nazi line that only the fit should live.” [44] The request was granted. Fr. Maximilian was stripped naked and put in the starvation bunker.

Kolbe ministered to his fellow prisoners, praying, hearing confessions, and singing hymns. Two weeks went by. One by one, the weakened men died; only four were left, including Fr. Maximilian. The S.S. decided that things were taking too long. A prisoner from the hospital was sent to the bunker and he gave the remaining prisoners lethal injections of carbolic acid. On August 14, 1941, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, “the man for others,” gave his life for another. His body was cremated the following day.

In 1971 the Beatification Process for Fr. Maximilian was begun by Pope Paul VI in St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome, and in 1982 he was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II.

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41 Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others: Maximilian Kolbe, Saint of Auschwitz* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p. viii.
42 Ibid., p. 170.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 171.

Maximilian Kolbe was but one of many Christians who suffered and gave their lives in witness for Christ. In emulating his Savior, Fr. Maximilian's sacrifice serves as an example for all believing Christians.

HYMNOLOGY

The singing of hymns has had a place of importance in Christian worship from the beginning. Here too Protestants are indebted to Roman Catholics. We sing a common heritage in many of the great old hymns.

Our common hymnic heritage is rooted in the Scriptures, which repeatedly encourage the singing of hymns and spiritual songs. In Psalm 40 David offers up a hymn of thanksgiving amidst the worshipers in the temple: "he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God" (v. 4). This tradition is carried over into the New Testament. After the Lord instituted his Supper, he and the disciples sang a hymn and departed (Matt. 26:30 ; Mark 14:26). In the Book of Acts we find the apostle Paul and Silas imprisoned at Philippi, before their miraculous release, praying and singing hymns to God while the other prisoners listened (Acts 16:25).

In Romans, Paul encourages believers to witness among the Gentiles by singing praises to God's name (Rom. 15:9). He tells the Ephesian church to "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts" (Eph. 5:18–19). And in Colossians, Paul directs the believers to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

MEDIEVAL CATHOLIC HYMNS

Eastern Christians in the Syrian, Byzantine, and Armenian churches placed great emphasis on the singing of hymns. Several examples illustrate this fact. Ambrose (A.D. 333/9–397), bishop of Milan, introduced the Syrian custom of singing hymns at Milan. "St. Ambrose's hymns set a simple style which persisted throughout the Middle Ages." [45] Anatolius (d. A.D. 458), archbishop of Constantinople, wrote a number of hymns, one of which is "The Day Is Past and Over." [46] Andrew (c. A.D. 660–732), archbishop of Crete, wrote several Canons for Lent and Pentecost as well as the hymn "Christian, Dost Thou See Them." [47] Bernard of Clairvaux (c. A.D. 1091–1153), a famous preacher of the Middle Ages who founded a number of monasteries of the Cistercian order, wrote several

45 *The Hymnal 1940 Companion* (New York: Church Pension Fund, 1951), p. 545. Prepared for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 546.

well-known hymns: “O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded,” “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” and “Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts.” [48] These are sung heartily by Protestants to this day, nearly a millennium later. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 170–220), sometimes called the father of Greek theology, wrote the hymn “Sunset to Sunrise Changes Now.” [49] John of Damascus (c. A.D. 696–754), considered one of the last of the Greek church fathers, organized liturgical chants and authored a number of hymns, such as “Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain,” “Stars of the Morning,” and “So Gloriously Bright.” [50] John Henry Newman (A.D. 1801–90), a convert from the Church of England to Roman Catholicism, is noted for his theological writings, but he also authored the well-known hymn “Lead Kindly Light.”

REFORMATION HYMNS

The Reformation carried forward the tradition of hymnology in the church. Concerning Protestantism and the singing of hymns, Fr. Louis Bouyer comments: “The mode of devotional expression generally preferred, particularly in the Lutheran countries (Germany and Scandinavia) and the Anglo-Saxon ones, is the popular hymn.” [51] About Luther’s most famous hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (now sung in many Catholic churches), Bouyer comments: “This hymn has no trace of superstitious terror; its most striking feature is the virile, joyful defiance of the Christian sustained by faith.” [52]

Bouyer is also appreciative of English Protestant hymns. Concerning the compositions of Charles Wesley he states: “In this form of Protestantism the grace of God in Christ is, certainly, everything. But this grace is viewed in the most orthodox light; it is a power transforming our whole life and being, not a substitute for this change.” [53] Also, “Nowhere could be found more definitely stated the doctrine of salvation by grace alone in Christ.” [54] Generous praise indeed from a Roman Catholic scholar regarding the spiritual worth of Protestant hymnody.

We have only touched lightly on the vast body of literature and sacred music that Roman Catholics and evangelicals share. One need only mention, for example, the Catholic composer Hayden’s great oratorio, *The Creation*, to say nothing of the arts, where the name of Catholic artist Michaelangelo looms over the history of Christian art. Perhaps reading this chapter will bring awareness for the first time to some evangelicals that many literary works and hymns that they treasure have Roman Catholic origins.

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 549.
51 Bouyer, *Spirit and Forms* , p. 24.
52 Ibid., p. 26.
53 Ibid., p. 32.
54 Ibid.

OTHER ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

Space constraints prevent us from examining poetry in any detail. We will mention one example. Francis Thompson (1859–1907) was a Roman Catholic poet born in Lancashire, England. As a college student, he developed a drug habit and ended up in the slums as an addict. Friends put him into a hospital where he was cured of his addiction and he subsequently entered the Capuchin monastery in Pantasaph, Wales. His *Hound of Heaven* is considered one of the greatest Christian poems ever penned. In it Christ is the magnificent hound pursuing his prey—the elect— through the corridors of time. [55]

We also have said nothing about Eastern Orthodoxy and its considerable body of spirituality. For example, it is in the Russian classic *The Way of a Pilgrim* that we encounter the "Lord, Jesus Christ have mercy on me," which is repeated many times and is an integral part of devotion in some Orthodox communities.

COMMON INVESTIGATIVE EFFORTS

Thomas Oden, professor of theology and ethics at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, became a member of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1990. Oden had for many years "distrusted anything that faintly smelled of orthodoxy." [56] However, a reintroduction to the literature of the Greek and Latin fathers has brought him to a place where he now has as his goal "to set forth the classical teaching of God the Father, Son, and Spirit, on which there has been substantial intergenerational agreement between traditions of east and west, Catholic, eastern orthodox, (and) classical evangelical Protestantism." [57]

Geoffrey Bromiley echoes this same theme. Concerning the study of the early church fathers "a new patristic investigation of these themes be pursued, if possible in friendly dialogue with Roman Catholic theologians." [58] Indeed, he claims that

"What is needed is that evangelical and Roman Catholic theologians, preferably together, attempt a strictly objective historical study of the Fathers apart from the views and positions of a later time." [59] Thus, an investigation into our common spiritual

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55 Delaney and Tobin, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography,* p. 1121.
56 Thomas Oden, "The Long Journey Home," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 1, (March 1991): 85.
57 Ibid., p. 79.
58 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Promise of Patristic Studies," in *Toward a Theology for the Future,* ed. by David F. Wells and Clark H. Pinnock (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971), p. 148.
59 Ibid.

heritage might bring insights to bear on the faith that we all—Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and evangelicals—share.

A FINAL WORD

Appreciating spiritual heritages across denominational lines is evident in the respect that traditional Roman Catholics exhibit for the contributions of C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). Lewis, born in Belfast, Ireland, was a brilliant academician and, after his conversion from agnosticism, he became a staunch defender of orthodox Christianity. He published more than forty books, many of which deal with apologetics, the defense of the faith. One of his lesser known works is a delightful little book that tells of an ongoing correspondence between Lewis and Don Giovanni Calabria of Verona, a Roman Catholic priest. [60] C. S. Lewis lived and died a practicing Anglican and is revered by orthodox Christians from all jurisdictions. [61]

Another example of respect across denominational lines is the grudging admiration that thoroughgoing Calvinist James Sauer holds for that remarkable man of letters, Roman Catholic G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936). Born in London, Chesterton, among his other achievements, was an effective apologist—much in the same strain as his successor C. S. Lewis. [62] In a journal article Sauer thanks God that "Not only did he choose me to be among his chosen people, but he also destined me to be among that other elect who have had the privilege of meeting through literature the great mind and good heart of Gilbert Keith Chesterton." [63] Sauer acknowledges that he has difficulty with some of Chesterton's Roman Catholic notions, "But where he measures up to the Word of Life, we will embrace him, we will feed upon him, we will learn from him." [64] It is important to recognize the common ingredients shared by believers who honor Scripture and recite the creeds in faith. By all means, let us defend our theological distinctions—while laboring together, when possible, "for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." [65]

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60 Martin Moynihan, *The Latin Letters of C. S. Lewis* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1987).
61 John D. Woodbridge, ed., *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), pp. 355–60.
62 Delaney and Tobin, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography*, p. 246.
63 "Chesterton Reformed: A Protestant Interpretation," *Antithesis* 1, no. 6, (Nov./Dec. 1990): 27.
64 Ibid.
65 Jude 3 (NIV).