

while for the less serious cases of mortal sin there was the possibility of absolving from mortal sin more than once. Venial sins do not seem to have been confessed, and absolution from them may well have been sought through personal sorrow, and perhaps through sacramentals, which brought to the sinner the fruit of the prayer of the whole Church.



A STUDY IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY PIETY

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SOME years ago there came into my hands a little book in Middle French entitled *Le Saint Voyage de Jherusalem*. Its author was a certain Seigneur d'Angleure, who in 1395 made the pilgrimage to the holy places, and included in his itinerary Mount Sinai and the monasteries of Anthony and Paul in Egypt. It was a very comprehensive journey; the Seigneur had an eye for detail and would have excelled today as a compiler of Blue Guides or Baedekers. He could not write a travelogue in the Morton style, however, still less Waugh's, and the value of his record lies in the remarkably complete list of relics and customs which he managed to 'do' with disarming simplicity and devotion. His piety is not repulsive, for the charitable anxiety of the good knight and his contemporaries to leave no event of scripture unmarked for the edification of the faithful covers a multitude of transgressions committed in their identification. I am not aware that this work has been made available in English; a selection of its material will not come amiss to throw an entertaining light on the piety of the medieval pilgrim some hundred years before reformers were to slight such exercises as abuse.

The pilgrims seem to have shut their eyes to passing interest as far as Venice where, in the Maison-Dieu, they opened them to see a tooth of Goliath, one and a half feet in length. The Seigneur relaxes to give us a fair amount of commentary here, admonishing the reader that he 'need not be so surprised' at its size and weight, and pointlessly retails the entire episode of the combat with David

as evidence. It is not clear whether the tooth of Goliath was regarded as a relic or just a sight. There were other good things to be seen at Venice, such as a manual cross of St Helena made from the wood of the true cross, and a two-handed vessel used by our Lord at Cana, when he changed water into wine.

From Venice, after an excursion by boat to Padua, the company crossed the Adriatic to Rhodes, *via* Corfu. They struck a sand-bank outside the harbour, and had to call on three other ships to pull them off. The island was then in possession of the Knights of Rhodes, and the pilgrims were duly impressed by the magnificent fortifications. They venerated relics in the church of the Knights, notably the basin used by our Lord to wash his apostles' feet, a cloth of gold woven by St Helena, and a thorn from the Lord's crown reputed to blossom every Good Friday. So the company took care to arrive at Rhodes in Holy Week on their return journey and, avers the author, duly found the thorn in flower. There were many churches at Rhodes 'both Catholic and Greek'.

At Beirut they venerated several holy places associated with the legend of St George. They saw, where he slew the dragon, a chapel the very length of the beast, built by St Helena to mark the site. They saw where the maiden sat waiting to be devoured, an olive tree to which the saint tethered his horse while he spoke to her, and a fountain made by St George's lance. Later on, near Jaffa, they visited a ruined church which marked the site of his martyrdom.

In due course the holy city was reached. The pilgrims entered on foot and were lodged in a hostel; then, in the small hours of the morning, an officer described as the guardian of the church of the Holy Sepulchre came to take them round the stations. It is from these stations, of course, that our devotional way of the cross was derived and propagated in the west about this time. The sites listed by the Lord of Angleure are therefore familiar to us but include one or two of exceptional interest. They were shown the house steps on which our Lady stood to peer over the heads of the crowd as her son passed by, the home of St Anne where Mary was born and the house where she went to school. Other charming sites associated with our Lady are 'the stone on which she was accustomed to rest, when she made the holy stations after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, her dear child', the fountain where she washed out her son's clothes, and the stone where she

sat opposite him when he preached to his disciples. It is difficult to feel superior in the humble company of the Seigneur d'Angleure. Had I been with him, I would have venerated as devoutly as he 'the place where the blessed Virgin let fall her girdle to St Thomas when the angels were bearing her to heaven'. But later on our credulity will be more severely taxed.

Among the more unexpected relics of the apostles are the following: 'a little below Mount Olivet, the place where the apostles made the Credo', a site where our Lady came and 'took counsel from monseigneur St James', and another 'where St John the Evangelist sang mass daily before our Lady after our Lord's ascension'.

The sites of Calvary and the Sepulchre would not appear to have differed much from their present condition, but perhaps the fourteenth-century pilgrim differed somewhat in his perception from the modern. The Seigneur was able to see, down in the cleft of Golgotha, the head of a dead man 'which some say is the head of our first father, Adam'. This is a rare instance of mild scepticism. He betrays his medieval education when he tells us that a hole in the chapel of the Sepulchre was asserted to be the middle of the world—but the theological bases of these pious fancies were sound enough. Even today, if our impossible world deserves a centre, could any better be found? In the category of holy places is mentioned the site of an unrecorded appearance of the risen Lord to his mother, and a hole whence sprang a tree betwixt Christ and the Magdalen when he said, '*Noli me tangere*'. Of the Lord's seamless garment for which the soldiers dived it is quaintly observed, 'From his childhood our Lady had plied her needle at this garment for our Lord, and as he grew, it grew'. The divided ownership of the church of the Holy Sepulchre is described as between Greeks, Armenians, 'Christians of the Cincture', and the Christians of the land of Prester John.

D'Angleure has some naive observations on his visit to Bethlehem. In the crypt of the nativity he saw a hole 'whereby the star fell which led thither the three kings'. All the holy sites seem tightly packed together, the vault where St Jerome translated the scriptures into Latin next to another where Herod cast the Innocents. Not far away, the pilgrims visited the site of the visitation and the house of Zachary and Elizabeth, where they were shown a cavity in the rock which closed up miraculously to

conceal the baby John the Baptist when Herod's soldiers passed by slaying the little children.

Our author criticizes the filthy condition in which the Saracens maintained the holy city. The various Christian communities were tolerated in their tenure of the holy places, with the exception of the mosque on the site of the temple, which none could so much as approach. The different communities were distinguished by the colour of their turbans. The pilgrims were accommodated in hostels outside the towns and seem, on the whole, to have been well provided for, except for a shortage of wine.

The company left Gaza towards the end of October—having begun their journey in July—and the diary for the following fortnight is a monotonous repetition: 'We journeyed all day to vespers, when we camped at another fountain'. There was some diversion mid-way, on Sunday the vigil of All Saints, when they camped by sweet waters and fell in with two thousand Mahomedans returning from Mecca. In due time they arrived at St Catherine's Monastery at Sinai; 'a place very well kept and proper, and most devotional'. They found about two hundred monks in residence, schismatics of course, who 'do the service very well according to their rite'. Seigneur d'Angleure's comment on the relics of St Catherine is that her head and arm bones were 'marvellously large, compared with present times'. Here he saw the burning bush of Exodus, from which God spoke to Moses. When the Lord left the bush, says d'Angleure, Moses found it all aflower, 'whereat he was marvellously astounded'. So Moses planted the flowers all about, and now, though you break the rock in many pieces, you still see the flowers neatly figured 'as no painter could do it'. Fossils, I suppose.

There were other holy places on Mount Sinai. One was a chapel to mark the site where our Lady appeared to the monks of St Catherine's when they fled a plague of flies, but at her bidding they returned and were never bothered again. They found chapels to commemorate the sojourn on Sinai of SS. Elias, Margaret and Alexis, and on the very summit the chapel of Moses. Just outside there was a hollow in the rock; explained in the following terms: 'It is a fact that our Lord once spoke to Moses without his seeing him, which gave him such a fright that he stepped back as far as he could, and in stepping back gave himself such a crack against the said rock that he would have been all

bruised, had our Lord not willed the rock to become soft as wax at that moment, and so the greater part of Moses's body entered into the rock, as can be seen, especially from the thigh upwards.' There was also a mosque for Saracen pilgrims to Sinai, built over the cave where Moses spent some of his forty days in the clouds. D'Angleure mentions that the Red Sea could be seen in the distance from before the chapel of Moses.

One part of the Sinai massif is called St Catherine's Mount, and is the reputed spot where the martyr's body was deposited by the angels who carried it from Alexandria. A stone marked the very place, its sanctity attested by the respect accorded it by passing birds, in distinction from the stones around.

Eleven days travelling from Sinai brought the pilgrims to the gates of Cairo, and here they found a fountain signally described in this work as 'The fountain God made with his nails'. The legend went that in the flight to Egypt the child Jesus scratched it up for his mother. She washed his clothes in it, and when she spread them out to dry, drops of water ran away from them, and from each drop sprang a little bush bearing balm. These very bushes, or their successors, the Seigneur d'Angleure saw.

Cairo made a greater impression on the impressionable Lord of Angleure than any other city he had seen, on account of its size and population, its domestic architecture and its beautiful white mosques. These last he was not allowed to enter. To balance this, he thought the public bathing in the river rather indecent. Other points of interest in fourteenth-century Cairo were the cooked meat shops and public gardens and, on the present occasion, six elephants, two very large, two medium, and two small, and some giraffes.

An interesting personage at Cairo was the Coptic patriarch, brother, apparently, to an Armenian king who had recently died in France. He enjoyed the reputation of feeding daily over a thousand poor.

We are told of the River Nile that it flowed from the earthly Paradise, after which it watered the land of Prester John before coming to empty itself in the Mediterranean.

From Cairo a small party of four went out on asses with a dragoman to view the pyramids, called here 'the granaries of Pharaoh', and attributed to the prime-ministership of Joseph. D'Angleure was vastly impressed by their size and workmanship,

although at the time of his visit the faced stones were being removed by the Sultan's order, one out of every three going to the profit of the masons. It is to be hoped that this arrangement was official.

The pilgrimage approached its end. The monasteries of Anthony and Paul, first monks of the desert in the third and fourth centuries, were to conclude what must have been a most exciting educational journey. The party took a boat to a fortified monastery called St Anthony's on the Nile. This marked the site of the patriarch's early hermit life. His second retreat was three days distant, and to reach it they mounted camels and traversed the desert, observing ostriches on the way. At this second abbey of St Anthony the monks impressed their Latin visitors by their austere lives and generous hospitality. The convent was noted for its delightful gardens. The monks were, of course, Copts, but the good French Catholics had no comment to pass but praise for the reverence of their services. They were correctly advised that the rite resembled that of the Ethiopians.

It was from this locality that Anthony the Abbot, enlightened by God as to the presence of another hermit in the solitude, set out to find Paul. The pilgrims had to follow in his steps, and concerning this part of their journey d'Angleure says that, in his opinion, 'in all the travel a pilgrim faces overseas, there is no way he will find so strange, so desert, as the way from the abbey of St Anthony to that of St Paul'.

At last they came to the place where 'monseigneur St Paul, the first hermit', dwelt. The monastery was all walled about, in the oriental style, with its entrance facing the Red Sea. Clearly, the good brethren maintained the early desert tradition of hospitality, for they rose in the middle of the night to receive their guests, as diligent 'as if each would earn a hundred ducats thereby'. The principal interest at St Paul's was the cave where the hermit lived and, nearby, the grave which St Anthony dug for him with the help of a lion.

The return to Cairo by boat was not without a little excitement in the form of a nocturnal attack by bandits, in which some of the party were wounded by arrows. Crocodiles in the Nile also gave them something to think about. At Alexandria they were submitted to a rigorous customs inspection and lodged with the 'consul of Narbonne and the pilgrims', at whose table they

enjoyed good wine. There were consulates for France, Geneva, Venice, Castile, Cyprus, Naples, Ancona, Marseilles and doubtless other merchant states and cities.

And so, with storms at sea and sickness by land, the Lord of Angleure and his friends came home a year after their departure, sated with adventure and exalted with pious souvenirs. The reader is at liberty to form his own conclusions about the religious value of their pilgrimage, but I am confident that the contemporary reader of *Le Saint Voyage* itched to take his scrip and staff and to share in the author's blessing: 'Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ, who keeps all Christians who make and will make this holy journey, and who have made it, and may he bring us all to Paradise, Amen'.



THE ORIGINS AND TENDENCIES OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY

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The survey that follows is translated from the French. It appeared in the Supplément de La Vie Spirituelle, No. 48, for the first quarter of 1959, and has also appeared in our Dutch Dominican contemporary Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven. Fr Schillebeeckx is a Flemish Dominican, a distinguished theologian, and we hope that his assessment of certain continental developments will be of interest to our English readers, though it may appear strange, and not perhaps be found wholly congenial, to those only familiar with our island scene.

TO understand the religious sensibility of our time, we have to return to the forms of Christian life which characterized the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The modern way of living the faith is very largely a reaction against these older forms.

An anti-Protestant reaction

One might say that the old religious sensibility was *individualist*