

GRAIL READER 1

(1967 – 1993)



SELECTION OF MATERIALS
USED AT THE INTERNATIONAL GRAIL SUMMERPROGRAMME
SIGTUNA – SWEDEN
16 - 21 JULY 1996

Editors: Kerstin Jacobsson and Marijke de Koning
Grail: Stockholm and Lisbon - April 2011

We like to mention that we are happy to finish this Reader in the year that the Grail celebrates its 90th anniversary.

2011 is also the year that for the first time in the Grail history the International General Assembly will take place in Africa.

That God may continue to bless our initiatives.

Kerstin Jacobsson and Marijke de Koning
Grail: Stockholm and Lisbon 2011

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There are many reasons for taking a journey
and always somewhere deep inside ... the
courage to come home differently ...

Marsie Silvestro (1987)

PREFACE

One of the many beauties of the Grail is that it is a movement that responds to challenges of the times – indeed that we as Grail women feel urged and *called* to respond to these challenges. This requires from us both a capacity for discernment - to be able to ‘read’ the signs of our times - and for an openness to respond to the needs and challenges of the present.

We also believe that it is important that we know our collective history. In what ways have Grail women before us responded to the challenges of their time? That is why we think it is important that we read the documents of the past in our formation programmes or other meetings. This is also a way of building our movement collectively – interpreting our common past, sharing the present and so being able to journey together into the future.

These were the documents we were reading and reflecting upon in 1996 at our first, and thus far, only formation programme in Sweden. It gave us a flavour of the concerns Grail women have had in different times, what they felt challenged by as well as the intellectual endeavors they had embarked on. And it helped us reflect on our own lives in our time, our needs and hopes, the questions we are struggling with and to situate them in the continuity of the Grail – as a movement of women challenged by the spirit and committed to the transformation of the world.

Of course, we did more than talk during that week. We painted, sang, collected flowers, shared poetry, created beautiful rituals, and gave full space to that creativity that is as much the ‘soul’ of the Grail as any intellectual reflection. The reader may reflect this side less since the emphasis is on sharing the texts.

In any case, I hope reading the documents in this Grail reader will give you a feeling both for the past, the present and the future of our Grail movement.

Maybe some of you will even feel challenged to collect the traces of our Grail journey from the time that has passed since 1996, and so continue documenting the living history of the Grail?!

Kerstin Jacobsson

INTERNATIONAL GRAIL SUMMER PROGRAMME 1996

Place: Kyrkans Utbildningscentrum, Sigtuna – Sweden

Dates: Wednesday, July 17th – Sunday, July 20th

Participants:

From Sweden: Anna-Maria Ahlen Anne Palmer Anneli Nilsson Bibi Helgesson Karin Beskow Kerstin Jacobsson From Germany: Kerstin Gommel	From Portugal: Alice Fernandes Isabel Varandas Lídia Martins Fátima Grácio From the U.S.A: Peg Linnehan From the Netherlands: Marijke de Koning
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Alice Fernandes, Anne Palmer e Lídia Martins

Daily Schedule:

9.00 Morning prayer (for those whose wish)

9.30 – 12.00 Programme

12.00 Lunch

15.00 – 17.00 Programme

18.30 Dinner

20.00 Still point/ Celebration



Anneli Nilsson and Anna-Maria Ahlen

Inspiring sources of our spirituality

God is love

Mystery of death and new life

Silence

Sounds

Air

Smell

The others for who I do something

Others who inspire me



Alice Fernandes, Anneli Nilsson e Anne Palmer

Inspiring poem (Yes it hurts, Karin Boye. Translation: Kerstin Jacobsson)

Yes it hurts when buds are bursting.
Why would otherwise spring hesitate?
Why would all our burning desire
be bound in the frozen pale?
The shell was the bud all winter.
What new is there that puts such pressure?
Yes it hurts when buds are bursting,
hurts for what is growing
and for what is closing.

Yes it is difficult when drops are falling.
Shivering by fear, heavy they are hanging,
sticking to the branch, growing, slipping.
The weight forces them down, however they climb.
Difficult to be uncertain, frightened and divided,

difficult to feel the depth calling
and yet remain sitting and just shivering –
difficult to want to stay
and to want to fall.

Then, it is as worst and nothing helps
the buds of the tree burst as in rejoice
then, when no fear holds any longer,
the drops of the tree fall,
forgetting that they were afraid of the new,
forgetting that they were worrying for the journey,
feeling for a second the greatest comfort,
resting in the trust
that creates the world.



Bibi Helgesson, Isabel Varandas e Anna-Maria Ahlen

Inspiring prayer

May the blessing of god be upon you
May God's peace abide with you
May God's spirit illuminate your heart
Now and forever



Peg Linnehan, Lídia Martins, Marijke de Koning, Fátima Grácio, Kerstin Jacobsson and Isabel Varandas

Excerpts of a Letter of Kerstin Jacobsson after the Programme to Fátima Grácio and Marijke de Koning

Uppsala, 2nd of August

I must tell you happy I am over the effects of the programme on us here. I myself feel wholeheartedly how much the Grail means to me and in my academic "desert walk" it was really an "oasis" (Fatima's expression) with this creative and meaningful time together, And the feeling of Grail as a family has never been more apparent. Anna Maria was very inspired too, and Karin and Anne have already been in touch with new ideas and plans. For our group this was like a "vitamin injection" indeed.

Moreover the feeling that we are quite a "bunch" of people in Europe now that are interested in joining the journey – I think of the Dutch, the Eastern Europeans and us here. I think a programme in Jena next year will be perfect.

INTRODUCTION TO THE READER

1. Justification of the format and contents of Grail Reader 1

Grail Reader 1 must be considered as a highly situated initiative.

The first version of this Reader consisted in more than 200 photocopied pages, selected by Fátima Grácio and I in 1996 from documents available in the Grail Archive of the Golegã Grail Center. This was done to create a resource for the International Grail Summer Programme which was held in Sweden in that year.

Of course we did not use all the 200 pages during our five day program. We started with some of the texts and then the flow of the conversations in the group made us travel in a nomadic way through part of the material. One of the texts was even rejected by the group as suggesting too much the Christian ideal of sacrifice. (For those who remember: the Indian legend *Bamboo*).

After the Programme in Sweden, Kerstin Jacobsson and I got the idea of editing the Grail Reader in order to make it available for the International Grail. As you notice, the compiling of this Grail Reader took a long time to be finished: 15 years! There is a Dutch proverb that says “Wat in het vat zit verzuurt niet” (What the vessel contains does not sour). We think that this is very applicable to this “product.” The initial version has been preserved during all these years in the archive of the Porto Grail Center.

In April 2004, eight years passed after our initial idea, Kerstin came to Porto with Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo. We went to a presentation by Maria de Lourdes of a book just published by Jose Saramago. We also went together to the Requiem of Mozart on Palm Sunday. In between of these two events Kerstin and I made a selection out of the texts for the present Grail Reader.

Now, seven years later, on the eve of Palm Sunday 2011, we are finishing it, with the content we decided in 2004. Initially we had thought of introducing some more recent Grail texts too, but finally we thought it was more interesting to stick to the content we used at the Programme in 1996. We do not include in this Reader Janet Kalven’s article we studied in the Programme as well, “Women Breaking Boundaries. The Grail and Feminism” published in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (pp. 119 – 142), now that we have access to her book.¹ Also we did not include the article “The Nexus of Survival” of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, published both in English and in Portuguese².

Maybe this Grail Reader 1 will challenge someone to compile a Grail Reader 2.

¹ Janet’s book *Women Breaking Boundaries: A Grail Journey, 1940-1995* was published in October 1999.

² In OLIVEIRA, Rosiska Darcy de (org.). *Planeta Fêmea*. Rio de Janeiro : IDAC, 1993. pp. 27-32.

2. Opening the Reader and travelling through documents and texts

We think there are several “threads” we can follow through this Reader, but the main “weaving” will be done by the readers themselves.

In **Chapter I** Rachel Donders opens our journey through the texts with a letter in *Let us Celebrate* (1994) in which she refers to a “small band of young women”. These women were living in the “Low lands near the North Sea”. No country name. No frontiers. She finishes her letter by mentioning that a new small group, “recently born in Sweden”, is entering in our common history. It was this Grail group that received the Grail Summer Programme in Sigtuna, Sweden, that contained and “stored” the Grail, became “a vessel rich in content” and keeps sharing it with other women until today. Receiving – Containing - Sharing, “three aspects of our life, symbolised by the Grail cup”. (The Swedish Grail women have been organizing a retreat for several years in the Cistercian Monastery in Sobrado, Spain, where they are sharing with women of other Grail countries their spiritual path).

In **Chapter II** Paula Larsen shares her view on the history of the Grail Movement in the perspective of “metamorphoses the Grail had to undergo in order to become what it is at present” (1981). In the title of her article she refers to “continuity in change”. It is interesting to follow this thread back to a talk of Han Fortmann (See **Chapter V**) given at the General Assembly of 1967 (two years after the end of Vatican II) and published in an issue of *Grail Review* in 1967: “A community of believers in a changing world”. Fortmann shares his thoughts on the consequences of cultural change and the need for a non-authoritarian manner of accepting the change of our cultures. He criticizes the authoritarian structure of the (Roman Catholic) Church, underlines the “strength coming from small groups,” the importance of mutual tolerance and warns of the danger of ethnocentrism and institutionalisation and advises: “open your doors as wide as possible” and “institutions so far as necessary and freedom as much as possible”.

In **Chapter III** you can find the official documents we worked upon in the Programme: from the IGA of 1993 there is the “Mission of the Grail in the Nineties” and from 1988 “The Grail Faith Message”. In between these documents there is a selection of basic guidelines of the International General Assemblies of 1967, 1971, 1974 and 1979, describing the Grail and its spirituality.

Chapter IV includes personal reflections of four Grail members, all published in issues of *Grail Review*. It opens with a letter of Rachel Donders, at that time (1959) International President of the Grail, on the idea of “dedication”.

Eleanor Walker writes about the Grail as a “community building community” (1961) and about “the great human and spiritual effort” that is required “to transform such an association into a true community of love”.

Magdalene Oberhoffer writes in 1964 (as International President) about how her “Grail journey” must be linked to her “*being part of the pilgrim Church,*” affirming that the Grail, as well as the Church, is living in a time of transition. She expresses the importance of one of the characteristics of the Grail: “to be always in a situation of

pioneering". Threads can be woven with the articles (in **Chapter V**) of Fortmann (The freedom of the Grail "to express itself in different civilizations and situations") and Tine Halkes ("Let us remain close to him [Christ] and his cross, which is the mast of our Grail ship".)

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo's article about "polarities in the Grail" (1965) focuses on the importance of "the recognition of opposed poles in life" and of "the affirmation of the compatibility of opposing tendencies (...) expression of a vital reality". Polarities and tensions are inherent to Christian faith and to the Grail.

In **Chapter V** a woman and a man from the Low Lands near the North Sea inspire the Grail with their articles in *Grail Review*. Fortmann, with his talk to the IGA already mentioned above and Tine Halkes with her article "The world, the church and the layman" (1964), in which she refers to the changing relation between the Church and the world. Defending the return to the fundamentals, she underlines the importance of "our shared humanity as God's people. Together as pilgrims we are making our way towards fulfilment, towards salvation." It is the time of shifting from a powerful Church, a Church that was the norm of a (evil) world towards the Church as the "people of God" in the world.

In **Chapter VI** we travel to the year 1969 through *COMMUNICATION* n° 6 and n° 7. THE QUEST IS NOT DEAD ... AND THAT'S ENOUGH. "Youth is a quality of life!" writes the International President Eileen Schaefer and a consultation is made to the generation of Grail women-age- under-25. And in *COMMUNICATION* n° 7 we are invited "to orbit carefully into tomorrow". And the International Board of the Grail presents us their "Highlights of vision".

In **Chapter VII** we are returning to the nineties, *Grail Women Shaping the Future*. We close our nomadic journey through the texts and are coming back again, once more (as good nomads), with Rachel, to the *Sources of our Grail dynamism* (1993):

"We have turned a corner of awareness".

"There remains, within all the change and growth,
that striving together as women
for 'a high and far-removed spiritual good'.
The Quest for the Grail continues"

Marijke de Koning

I. GRAIL FOUNDATION DAY AND SYMBOLISM OF THE CUP

The Grail and All Saints Day

Rachel Donders

In: *Let us celebrate*. November 1994, n°1

There was once long ago in the Lowlands near the North Sea a small band of young women, some four or five of them, who together felt inspired to try out a new kind of life, a God-centred life, free, joyous and in the service of a great ideal.

So far this sounds like a fairy tale, a dream.

What they had in mind however was far from dreamy: in fact it was quite concrete.

As Christian women they wanted a life of total dedication not behind walls or under a veil, as it has been decreed many ages ago, but in free and full engagement in the modern world.

A deep and sustaining interior life would be their support.

With that in mind they formed a strong community and they set out with determination.

The year 1921 the feast of All Saints on November 1st was chosen as their Foundation Day. In that historic and now almost mythical moment, we Grail-women of 1994, have our roots.

Each country of course knows its own-Grail-beginnings-in-history and everyone of us personally can remember the moment when she felt sure: "the Grail is my path!"

Besides those moments though, it is right to call to mind from time to time that very first beginning, when the Grail seed was sown.

From that recognition a tradition has sprung up in the Grail-world: to celebrate November 1st, All Saints Day, individually and communally, in sincere gratitude.

This year we should mention a special feature: for the first time a small but healthy young group, recently born in Sweden, and calling itself "Grail-splashes", will join in the tradition, acknowledging and strengthening their share in our common history.

TO THEM and TO ALL OF US:

HAPPY FEASTDAY!

MATERIAL FOR REFLECTION

It is suggested that we all take some time in or around All Saints Day for a quiet reflection on what the Grail can mean in our life.

Here follow some thoughts, meant to be a help, but also meant to be enriched and deepened by personal meditation.

THE GRAIL, a mysterious object

THE GRAIL, a mysterious object in the legends and myths with which we are familiar is often described as a chalice, a cup, a vessel of beauty and charm. Usually we centre our thoughts on the stories woven around this object and on the interesting and mysterious personalities and their adventures we meet. Next to that, even the object itself, its shape, its use, its function, can be seen as a beautiful symbol for the quality of our life.

Here we consider three elements which are functions of a cup:

RECEIVING – CONTAINING - SHARING

RECEIVING

Looking at the shape of the chalice we can be struck by its openness, its emptiness, its readiness to receive even its eagerness to receive. Receptivity can be considered as an innate quality of our whole earth. Fields and meadows stretch out wide, open to sunshine, rain and wind and for the soft fall of seed, - branches of trees and bushes reach out, waving and waiting for the dew and the freshness of the atmosphere, - buds and flowers naturally turn to the light and open their petals to receive it, together with moisture, pollen and all that makes for fertility of life, - tiny newborn birds thrust unproportionedly big beaks wide open to receive food. Looking around in nature we notice all this openness and eagerness to receive.

And what about receptivity among us humans? Aren't we on the receiving end from the earliest moment of our existence? Food, drink, care, protection, consolation, instruction – you name it – material sustenance as well as spiritual nourishment, we need it, we crave it, and if we are not receptive no life is possible.

How beautiful to see the joy, the eagerness with which a child receives: eyes lightening up, mouth smiling, hands stretched out in pleasure, hope and trust.

There is a certain art in receiving well. How painful, on the contrary, when there is refusal, or lack of appreciation. To be truly receptive is not always easy. It sometimes asks for waiting quietly, like fields in spring; for conscious openness to recognise the gift and the moment; for tactfulness too and often for humility to recognise our need and for trust that the cup will be filled in due time, even when and while its emptiness has made us suffer.

CONTAINING

Our Grail cup is not only a symbol of receptivity, it also speaks of the capacity to contain and store. We might think again of Mother Earth, how in the big and small hollows of her crust and deeper still in caverns and craters she stores the precious moisture continuously received: how oceans and riverbeds teem with forces of life and growth: how in the multi-shaped world of animals and plants powers are stored: how every atom contains energy. The whole world, the whole universe is a store-house of treasures, and we are part of it. We all receive and we all store.

In the cultural development of humankind, so scientists tell us. It was in the Neolithic Period, the Stone Age that our ancient parents began to store. They invented containers, - earthen pots, woven baskets, later also vessels of bronze - , to store the food and the good things they had gathered. Then, mysteriously, spiritual things too began to be stored. Not in books or writing yet, but in that wonderful vessel, the human memory. Dreams, events, stories, thoughts, knowledge, it all began to be stored in the consciousness and sub-consciousness of the human race, each member becoming a vessel rich in content. All of us who read this and ponder it are vessels rich in content!

SHARING

Filled as it is with wonderful things we cannot let the cup stand useless, barren, isolated. It has to be shared. We have to share. Sharing makes us into a community. We partake in each other's cups, in material as well as spiritual goods. In a true community all share and this means for all of us receiving AND giving. In turn we are receiving or sharing.

It is a kind of art to find a balance here. Maybe we prefer to receive! Maybe we are happier or more satisfied when we give! Both have their appropriate moments.

If receiving is not always easy, sharing may also ask much of us. To be open towards others, to share in the other person's experience and let her share in mine, to know when to listen, when to speak we have to overcome self-centredness, shyness, pride maybe. But we also find great joy in sharing, in an exchange on a deep level, in the revelation of beauty and depth, also great sympathy with the suffering in the life of a friend. Sometimes we are awed by the content of the cup.

RECEIVING – CONTAINING - SHARING

Three aspects of our life, symbolised by the Grail cup, that cup of which we think when we gratefully pray in psalm 23

"MY CUP IS OVERFLOWING"

II. A VIEW ON SIXTY YEARS OF GRAIL HISTORY (1921 – 1981)

The Grail 1921-1981: continuity-in-change

Paula Larsen

In: THE GRAIL in the EIGHTIES

Paula Larsen is a Dutch psychologist. Her knowledge of our history is first-hand; she has been a Grail member since the early days of the Youth Movement.

I have been thinking about the rich history of the Grail Movement over the past 60 years and how to describe it so that others can form some idea of what occupies and animates the Grail.

There are three ways of going about this.

I could give a chronological account of the first enthusiastic beginnings of the Society of the Women of Nazareth (evolved into what is now known as the Nucleus of the Grail) in Rijswijk, a small municipality on the outskirts of The Hague, in the Netherlands, in the year 1921. From there I might trace events by the way of the rise of the Grail Youth Movement, first in the Netherlands and then in other countries, to the post-war development in 18 countries on all six continents.

Another way would be to look at the phases of development in the Grail and at the ideas that were alive at different stages, stressing particularly the moments of change, the divisions and crises inherent in any development.

There is a third way possible: starting from the base of what the Grail now professes to be and how it now appears, to look for the roots of these phenomena, or rather, the metamorphoses which the Grail has had to undergo in order to become what it is at present.

I have opted for this last way. In doing so I want to pursue basic ideas rather than persons and events: the basic ideas which have animated the Grail in the course of its history. Has the Grail kept its identity through all metamorphoses? Which permanent values are to be found throughout the changes? What lines have the developments followed in the course of the years? Where are these developments clearly illustrated?

Essential elements

It is of course impossible to make a profound study within the scope of a short article. I can only touch on a few points to show the continuity-in-change experienced in the last 60 years. And in order not to make the account too abstract I will illustrate it here and there with some factual examples.

At the last International General Assembly in 1979, with representatives present from 17 countries, the Vision Statement, part of which is quoted on page 5, was adopted.

This statement goes on to affirm that what is written is in continuity with what the Grail said about itself in former documents. It thus confirms the identity of the Grail with its origins, whatever emphases there may be on later developments or elaborations of what was previously to be found only in embryo.

The various aspects of this continuity-in-change could each provide a whole chapter in a history of Grail development.

Among these aspects I name as constants:

- The Grail as a women's movement
- With a religious inspiration, based on the person of Christ and "the radical call of the Gospel"
- Directed towards the bringing of wholeness to all people according to the spirit and mission of Christ
- Employing modern methods and resources for that purpose.

Early History

The founder of the Grail was Dr. Jacques van Ginneken (1877 – 1945), Jesuit and Professor of Philology at the University of Nijmegen. At the beginning he aimed at bringing together a group of young women who would co-operate in his "work conversion" among non-Catholics in the Netherlands. Some years before he had founded another group, the Women of Bethany, whom he intended should work among children with no religious affiliation in the big cities. He then initiated this second group, the Women of Nazareth, for catechetical work among older girls, especially those working in factories, and to organize his retreat work among non-Catholics. He also visualized a second objective for this group: the founding of a university institute in Java, part of the former Dutch East Indies, for women of the whole Indonesian Archipelago.

In actuality it was a very small group and could not undertake anything on a large scale. It is typical, nevertheless, that from the outset members pursued both ends – work for conversion among Dutch factory-girls and possibilities for the higher education of non-Christian women in Indonesia. From the very first years there were women in the group of various walks of life and educational backgrounds, including several former students of van Ginneken himself.

In 1929 the new Bishop of Haarlem asked the Women of Nazareth to abandon all the activities undertaken up till that time and to devote themselves entirely to the launching of a youth movement for Catholic young women in his diocese. This demanded an enormous change of orientation, not made without much pain and difficulty. But it gave birth to the Grail.

The group gave themselves so intensely to this new project that gradually they became identified with it. However, in assuming the leadership of a youth movement within their own local diocese, they did not lose sight of the original vision of a world-wide outreach. And in totally unforeseen way the youth movement eventually provided the means of realizing this goal. Through the phenomenal success of the Grail in the early thirties, its leaders were invited by German, English, Scottish, Australian and later United States Bishops to initiate something similar in their countries.

Post-war developments

Looking back, we can see that in Europe of the thirties, the youth movement was a contemporary and very effective channel for action. This was no longer the case after World War II. Elsewhere in the world, from the forties onwards, this activity also proved to be less effective as a means of reaching Grail goals.

Faithful to the basic idea emphasized from the beginning to go on searching for the most up-to-date methods and those most suited to the situation, the Grail abandoned the almost exclusive focus on the youth movement in order to take up a wide variety of other activities which would bring them in close contact with women.

The following examples of work undertaken in the period after the Second World War are by no means exclusive:

- The pioneering of an innovative training programme for nurses and the education of "family helpers", a new form of social service in the Netherlands of the immediate post-war period
- The preparation and sending out of teams of women of various professions as volunteers in the medical, educational and social field to Third World countries
- Long-term residential programmes of personal and apostolic formation for younger women
- Work in universities, lecturing, staffing of libraries, in research projects
- The setting up Bookshops where Christian literature, music and art was obtainable and which provided a meeting-point with a diverse variety of people
- Work with women students, often those from foreign countries
- Activities in the field of ecumenism, religious education and search renewal
- Work at the base with women in the Third World, including practical education in literacy, health, home economics and agriculture, stressing awareness of their condition and potentialities
- The fostering of co-operatives with local women and communities to improve the economic situation.

Expanding approaches

More recently some of the main thrusts have been:

- leadership training in the Third World for both women and men, particularly in development and community organization skills
- the fostering of base Christian communities
- work with the poorest people in city slums of both Third and first World
- work with minority populations and immigrants
- education and action on issues concerning women, peace, justice
- provision of "space" and guidance for meditation and prayer, spiritual and personal development.

The above list indicates that the Grail does continue to explore every opportunity offered to bring nearer the goal of changing the world into that "universal society of justice, peace and love" of the Vision Statement.

Father van Ginneken formulated it differently, more in accordance with the spirit of his own time. He spoke of "winning the whole world for Christ", of "conquering the

world", "world conversion". There is a tremendous difference between the expressions of then and now and the transition from one formulation to the other has come about very gradually.

It reflects a whole development of thought among the Catholics of the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world. Shaped by its past history, the Dutch Catholic community in the twenties was much closed in on itself, but at the same time, strongly mission-oriented. Jacques van Ginneken was a man of extraordinary vision but he was also a man of his time, expressing himself in terms understandable to his contemporaries. However, the change in the formulation of Grail aims and the expansion and broadening of means and methods do accord with his spirit and religious intuition.

The radical call of the Gospel

There is one aspect which I believe illustrates clearly this continuity-in-change in the Grail. It is the element expressed in the Vision Statement by the phrase "challenged by the life of Christ".

From the beginning Father van Ginneken was convinced that the movement was to be characterized by an intensely spiritual life. In his time he saw this as a synthesis of a deeply religious inner life and a more "worldly" outward appearance. These two poles were to be in balance. The early members had to live the life of modern, active, attractive young women, but at the same time they were to cultivate an "interior life" which in the twenties and thirties had an almost monastic flavour. The accent was focussed on Christ's redeeming cross, entirely in agreement with the spirituality of those days.

After the Second World War and even more after the second Vatican Council the emphases in spirituality have shifted considerably. Catholics are much more conscious that together with all Christians they are part of the people of God, redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection and set up a sign for the salvation of the world. They also have become aware that outside the Christian tradition there are other religions through which God is also revealed and which have their own special values. Moreover, individual sanctification is no longer seen as the most important aim. What is now demanded is an intense participation in the continuation of Christ's work, directed towards bringing wholeness to all humanity.

This is now the main concern of the Church. It is also the main thrust of the Grail, undertaken with a much sharper awareness than before that many others of different philosophical and religious traditions are striving for the same goal.

The radical call of the Gospel is now interpreted as a call to work with others in the radical spirit of Christ for the completion of a world where the rights of all are honoured whatever their sex, race, social status, age or capacities. Did not Christ make his mission clear when he applied to himself the words of Isaiah, declaring that he had come "to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to the blind new sight and to set the downtrodden free (Luke 4, 18)"? unlike John the Baptist, he did not live the life of a penitent but put himself on the side of the poor, the sick, the oppressed, to whom, according to his own word, God's salvation was directed. Indeed, he was murdered by those in power because of this stance. As he said himself, the world did not understand him.

The quest goes on

It is in accordance with this example that the Grail tries to answer the radical call of the Gospel, directing itself in the first place, as a women's movement, to the needs of women. Certainly this radical orientation is more visible in the Third World than in the rich countries of the West. It seems that in just those countries where the Grail first started we have to go through a long and searching process of self-conversion. In the Grail, as in the Church, much can be learned from the Christians of the Third World.

The Grail has changed in its external appearance and way of working. We are present in many countries and cultures and confronted with ideas and needs completely different from those of the twenties of this century. We want to be true to ourselves and true to our original inspiration. We hope to be able to play our modest role in the mission of Christ. Father van Ginneken called it "world conversion". Nowadays it means that we are committed to redeeming the world, to bringing about a situation where, in accordance with God's purpose, justice, peace and love reign.

III. OFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Grail women shaping the future

THE MISSION OF THE GRAIL IN THE NINETIES

Approved at the IGA 1993

The vision of the International Grail
is of a world transformed in love and justice,
by the power of the spirit that moves in all that lives,
and through women's commitment of their talents and energies.
It is a vision of hope and a work of faith.
It is a journey towards wholeness
In the depths of human hearts,
In cultures and societies,
in the universe.

At this International Assembly of the Grail
We once again
Entrust the future to the Spirit of God
Who is the central mystery of our lives.

In communion with one another
across time and space
we reaffirm in joy
our desire to seek
and labour for
this new life of promise.

(cf. Vision Statement, 1979 & Faith Message, 1988)

Poised now towards the end of the 20th century, we enter into a new understanding of the state of the world. Enmeshed in a web of human and environmental crises, we perceive more clearly the interconnectedness of all the dimensions of life. It is no longer possible to tackle any problem in isolation from all the others affecting life on Earth today.

Humankind and Nature are joined in their suffering and the threat of annihilation. The whole of life struggles for survival in the arms of a culture of death. Violence and war, human misery and the extinction of species, material and spiritual poverty are the legacy of centuries of domination of the few over the many, of men over women, of human over nature. The AIDS epidemic sweeps across the globe as human health is increasingly assaulted by toxins throughout our environment. Racism, sexism, colonialism, and classism continue, as global economic powers, unrestricted by national boundaries, pursue profits, heedless of their destruction of the peoples and resources of the Earth.

We find ourselves standing at a crossroads of survival.

Believing that "from the beginning till now the entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth" (Rom.8:22), we affirm that a world order of life can emerge from the ruins of our present reality. We live in trust that the spark of the Divine within the human is inviolable and will triumph in the end.

We find seeds of hope among women throughout the world who, having been denied full participation in society, still have the potential for creating new cultural and structural models.

We find seeds of hope among young people who, disillusioned by the societies they have inherited, have a capacity to search for creative ways of living with a global perspective.

We find seeds of hope wherever women and men who are marginalized rise in resistance and struggle for change, wherever the human dignity and worth of those who suffer is affirmed.

We find seeds of hope in the existence of groups with whom we feel an affinity of purpose and with whom we can collaborate.

We find seeds of hope within the Grail as we struggle to make manifest within our own community the principles of a universal society of justice, peace and love.

This International General Assembly 1993 addressed in a spirit of urgency three interrelated themes: Building Justice and Solidarity, Facing Cultural Changes, Contributing to the Survival of the Planet.

Facing our world together we have felt a new sense of mission. Our increasing cultural diversity has awakened new enthusiasm for Grail outreach and growth. We are united in our determination to find ways of strengthening and combining our resources to serve new regional and international strategies. We feel ourselves called by the Spirit to commit our lives and join our energies in order to develop the seeds of hope we find present in the world today.

We are committed to developing strategic and effective ways of meeting the urgent cries for justice throughout the world.

We are committed to challenging women, wherever they may be, to gather together and bring forth their unique gifts and life-giving powers.

We are committed to implementing innovative ways of thinking and being that ensure the quality of life for each person and contribute to the survival of the planet.

We are committed to uncovering the sources of life that abide in the roots of our diverse cultures that lie silent in the heart of each human being.

We deeply desire to live these commitments within our Grail community, with respect for each other as we meet the challenge of authentic intercultural relationship.

Working in our local contexts as individuals and as Grail groups, interconnecting regionally and internationally, we are bonded in action, in solidarity, and in faith.

The Grail

**[Selection of] *basic guidelines International General Assembly,*
1967, 1971, 1974, 1979**

Compiled by Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo

THE GRAIL

In faithfulness to the original concept, in acknowledgement of the present reality and in openness to the signs of the time pointing to a new future for the mission of the Church in the world, we recognize the International Grail as a composition of ever-new and diverse efforts to fulfil this mission, shared by women of different vocations in collaboration and interaction with each other. (IGA '67)

The diversity flows from and corresponds with the manifold differences in cultural and social situations in different parts of the world, the pluriformity of modern society, the historic development of the Grail, and shows forth freedom of spirit and flexibility of approach. The unity of the Grail is rooted in a common vision and mission, shared by all who participate in its life and permeating all expressions, and this unity is strengthened by the existence of a Nucleus. (IGA '67)

In order to maintain and nourish this unity, expressed in diversity, structuring of the Grail is needed, providing for freedom of expressions, forms of organisation and creative experimenting, on local and national levels and in specific fields, together with a continuous strengthening of the unifying elements on all levels. (IGA '67)

The Grail is an international movement of women rooted in Christian faith. Conscious of our identity and aware of our potential, we feel urged by the spirit and challenged by the life of Christ and the radical call of the Gospel to participate in the transformation of the world. (IGA '79)

At the core of the Grail as a transformation influence, there is a spiritual dimension from which everything else gets meaning and depth.

We are aware that the "transformation" in which the Grail is involved is not the simple result of our efforts.

We plunge into the deepest mystery of life, the presence of the Spirit who operating in efforts and aspirations for liberation as well as in suffering and limitations is the real force transforming society. (IGA '71)

We believe that God is the source of life and that the Spirit is acting through human history to fulfil the aspirations of people for solidarity and freedom.

As we enter ever more closely into the mystery which is God and the life of his Spirit, our faith urges us to be actively present in the struggle for full human development. (IGA '74)

The common mission of the Nucleus is that of the Grail to foster the Kingdom of God on earth in a joined effort with other women, consciously taking part in the historical growth of mankind toward a fuller human development.

Towards the accomplishment of this mission the Nucleus, because of its particular vocation, brings elements of freedom, continuity and unity. (IGA '67)

We recognize that the transformation of society goes beyond change in social structures and that God is working through struggles for liberation "to make all things new".

In its life and work, the Grail strives for the integration of living faith, full potential of women, work for transformation, to build a universal society of justice, peace and love. (IGA '79)

The Grail and its spirituality: THE MYSTERY OF DEATH AND NEW LIFE

We affirm that Christian maturity is the process of incorporation of our lives into Christ in His Paschal Mystery.

This means that the very reality of our human existence – seen as a passage from death to life, from darkness to light, from that which is less to that which is better and more whole – is progressively taken up in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. (IGA '67)

We agree that Christian maturity implies a tension arising from the Christian's being present in the world and in to the world, trusting its values and at the same time aware of sin at work in the world; that is in the measure that the action of the Holy Spirit penetrates the Christian that complexities and tensions can be accepted and continually integrated and that the life-long process of human maturity in becoming stable, responsible and available is for the Christian also a process of growth, in Faith, Hope and Love. (IGA '67)

We see that the Eucharist is the source and culmination of our sharing in this passage from death to life in Christ as the celebration of the Eucharist actualizes the paschal Mystery. (IGA '67)

We see Christian maturity expressing itself through the witness of charity in our lives. This witness involves as ever-renewed gift of ourselves to God and others assuming the full responsibilities and risks of our involvement in the world. (IGA '67)

Conscious of our struggle, at this moment of history, to find meaning in life and to give an adequate expression to it, the grail affirms that the search for God, in Christ, is its deepest ongoing motivation. (IGA '71)

Our participation in the transformation of society receives from this search its spiritual dimension. We touch here upon the deepest mystery of life; the presence of the Spirit who operating in efforts and aspirations for liberation as well as in suffering and limitations, is the real force bringing man to his ultimate destiny. (IGA '71)

In this search, we undergo individually as well as communally times of crisis of faith, periods of doubts and anxieties, experiences of liberation and of light. In all this we want to stay with each other depending on hope as a gift. (IGA '71)

This enables us to refocus our Grail community and its expressions and concerns again and again in this religious search.

In this evaluation, we become aware of our human limitation, of sin, of the power of evil, and of the need to go continually, as individuals and as groups, through the process of death and resurrection, which brings us to reconciliation with God and each other. This we celebrate in the Eucharist and in the hearing of the Word. (IGA '71)

Faithful to this search for God in Christ, the Grail community is part of the Church in her desire to be renewed in the Spirit. (IGA '71)

The Nucleus vocation manifests Christian faith and hope in a particular way and expresses that the fullness of the Kingdom is yet to come. Nucleus members affirm this meaning of their lives through prayer and worship, both personally and communally. (IGA '67)

We find the inmost source of our commitment in Christ's liberating act of salvation – His passage from death to life. We gain strength and inspiration from Jesus as He reveals God to us – through His life and message, in sharing the Word, the Bread and prayer together. (IGA '74)

The Grail and its inner reality: PRAYER AS A WAY OF LIFE

We affirm that a personal reflection with Christ through prayer is essential in our lives, that prayer should be both personal and communal in its expressions, that it remains flexible as to times, patterns and forms, always related to the person and group in the current situation. (IGA '67)

We see the importance of asceticism as involving the personal effort required in pursuing Christian maturity. This includes the acceptance of weakness and limitation in our lives and a constant striving towards developing an authentic Christian quality of life, realizing our basic need to strive for expressions of asceticism which are true to our circumstances of life, keeping in mind that asceticism frees us from ourselves in order that we may be able to establish true relationships of love. (IGA '67)

We think it important at the present time to emphasize expressions of religious experience, of worship and ritual, both valuing classic forms coming to us from the great religious traditions and different cultures and encouraging new expressions in tune with contemporary sensitivities. (IGA '71)

The way religion search is expressed by participants in the Grail varies, according to personal call and life situations. We feel that it is essential for the group to accept and affirm explicit as well as implicit expressions in this realm. (IGA '71)

We affirm the proposal of an international group "giving expression to the contemplative element in the Grail".

Recognizing that such a group would be at the service of the whole Grail movement we affirm also that the material support of such a group be an international responsibility. (IGA '71)

We experience prayer as an essential part of our lives both in our need for inner silence in order to be open to the Spirit and to all reality and as communal expression of our life in the Grail. (IGA '74)

Grail Faith Message – 1988

God is the central Mystery of our lives, creator and life-giver to the whole universe, beyond, yet within us, our horizon and beyond our horizon, who calls each one by name, who is with us always and all ways.

The Grail is an international movement of women, rooted in Christian faith. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Grail women have seen revealed the compassionate heart and unfailing love of God. This revelation carries with it a call to make real in our own lives the same compassion and love.

At this time of our history we also find some among us who are deeply touched by the Mystery in other ways. When we live and work together, we know through our day-by-day experience that we do stand together on common ground. But when we try to express this sharing in words, we sometimes feel confused. We place our trust in the Spirit, and the Spirit helps us see that our common ground is likewise a common path, that all of us are journeying toward the healing and wholeness of ourselves and our world.

Through our Grail life we have often received great spiritual riches. But our personal lives and our life in community have also brought us moments of anger and frustration, confusion and loneliness, darkness and dry seasons. These are painful tests of our faith, yet we believe that, in spite of all, the desert will finally flower.

Our faith moves us to celebrate: we can give thanks for all we have received; we can sing and drum and dance, praise and rejoice, laugh and shout and play together, in countless languages and forms.

We bring our faith to a world which is becoming a global village:

- a village with a great variety of cultures, traditions and expressions, cultures which enrich and challenge us as well as limit and dominate us;
- a village confronted by the powerful forces of science and technology, and by unjust economic, social and political structures.

As Grail communities we are rooted in local cultures. Together as women we want to use our collective talents and energy to transform the whole global village into a place where each person and culture will grow and enrich the others.

We heed the cry of people everywhere, longing for freedom, dignity and justice. We are called to action in a world where people struggle to put bread on the table and to fill their jugs with water; where women try to take their own lives in hand; where all dream of a hope-filled future for every child. The challenge of the gospel message of liberation becomes real for us in many struggles.

In each place our actions take different forms. But we believe that in the pain of every effort to bring about change New Life is breaking through.

Our hope in the transformation of the global village and of the whole creation is strengthened by the conviction that terror, poverty and oppression will not have the last word. We rely on God's promise: "Behold I make all things new".

We are a faith community of women. Just as a crystal reflects light in a multitude of radiant colours, our belief reflects the different experiences and expressions of faith among us.

We see the richness of our diversity even as we struggle to understand it better. But who can limit the sparkling rays once the sun has touched the crystal?

We are learning that we are nourished and challenged by different wellsprings:

- the magnificence of the cosmos: God alive in every star, in every blade of grass;
- a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- the Bible as we read it with women's eyes;
- the church as it is becoming a community of believers;
- the strength and hope of those who struggle for justice;
- new symbols and rituals that help us celebrate the experiences of our daily lives.

Indeed, we see God revealed in many ways in our world. Often we simply remain quiet before the Mystery, knowing that there is "nothing so much like God as silence".

We share the hope that the Spirit will guide us step by step to understand one another. We support one another's searching and discoveries, rejoicing in the radiant colours which the one light evokes from the crystal.

IV. GRAIL MEMBERS WRITING IN *GRAIL REVIEW*

Letter of the International President in the second issue of *Grail Review* on the idea of “dedication”

Amsterdam, June 1959

Dear Members and Friends of the Grail,

God greet you all!

It is with great pleasure and happiness that we send out this second issue of our "Grail review", trying again to meet each other in a simple, direct and personal way, communicating some of our experiences criss-cross over the continents, taking some moments from our busy life to think together about values and ideas of mutual interest. Many encouraging letters have been received in response to the first Grail Review, and I do hope that the Editorial Team has succeeded again in composing this number in such a way that many aspects are represented. The notes on "Marriage and Virginity as Christian Message to the World" by Professor Groot may serve as a provocative basis for discussion; "Experiment in a City Parish" and "Service Career Program" bring to the fore some apostolic fields in which Grail teams are actively engages; the letter from a French and an American Grail member about their year at "Lumen Vitae" in Brussels gives interesting information about the newest developments in catechetical work; South Africa's account of a "Summer Camp 1959" brings in our teen-agers; with Australia's Grail President we make a short trip to New Zealand; and finally the News Reel brings us up-to-date with the movements of our team members in different parts of the world...

But again we realise, I think, while reading about the different aspects of our apostolate, how necessary it is to recognise **the underlying current of the spirituality** from which all these activities flow. That is why I would like to try in this letter from which all these activities flow. That is why I would like to try in this letter to clarify a little more one of the basic elements of the spirit for which we stand, in which we try to live and for which we make an appeal: **the idea of dedication.**

What do we – in the Grail – mean by dedication?

We see dedication as **an attitude of mind and heart and soul, lasting, enduring, continually "at work" in us and around us, and that: Christ-centred and freely chosen, every time again.**

"Dedication is the free flow of love, from person to person and heart to heart", says the German theologian Dr. Karl Rahner. A beautiful formulation, don't you think? – one which we truly can ponder about, in order to see more clearly the elements it contains. Deep down in every human heart there is the desire, ineradicable, for love, for a flow of love, for a love which is at the same time being received and being given, a love which fills all the heart's emptiness and at the same time empties the heart of self... Beautiful words, somebody might say, but what does that really mean?

It is the fundamental tragedy of this world (including the world of our time!) that that which at the beginning was beautiful, sacred, pure: the concept of love in mankind, and community as an image of, even as a sharing in, God's own life, - "God is Love" – has been disorientated, soiled and spoiled, perverted even, and to such an extent that whole fields of life have as it were fallen away from this original concept. We all tread these fields and live in this world of struggle and confusion! We only need to think of the literature of our days, our magazines and films, of the conditions of work for thousands of people, of the material conditions of life for millions, of married life and the preparation for it ... how often do we meet "love" in its original strength and purity: related to God as the root and source of all love?

Still, a trace has always been left! A dream is still being dreamt! There have always been the saints and the prophets, the chosen ones those who are "sent"; everywhere there are the little ones, too, in a hidden way, maybe, but consciously struggling and striving, or quietly growing and grasping for that one precious pearl, for a little bit of love in the family of man.

There is always Christ, the Son of God, Who has entered the human community in order to bring love in His own Person; there is His Mystical Body the Church which faithfully and loyally participates in His work of restoration, His work of **redemption**, that is: in the **restoration of that sacred relationship of love between God and His world**.

It is here that the Grail finds its place. To help bring about again in human society a free flow of love from person to person, from heart to heart ... if the women of the world would find each other with all their capacities of love, of understanding, of outgoingness, of goodness and pity and warmth for every relative in that great family of man, - if they would pool their love talents in one great wave of **readiness for Christ's redemptive work** – something could begin to stir, even already now in our time...

But let us be realistic! Those "women of the world" with their capacities of love, where would they themselves find their inspiration and strength?

In other words, we Grail members, when we endeavour to go out into different fields, when we participate in modern society with our hearts full of desire to bring love, how can we expect not to grow cold ourselves, how can we imagine that we ourselves are not subject to that perversion and spoiling of what is most sacred in man, our image and likeness of God, our sharing in God's own life through Christ... are not we ourselves "world" too in a real sense of the word?

Dear members of the Grail, that seems to me the deepest point of our contribution in the apostolate of the conversion of the world: that we begin by a total conversion of ourselves, a **wholehearted restoration of our relationship with Christ in love**, a free flow of love from person to Person and heart to Heart!

"The Grail, as an international movement calls women whatever their walk of life to dedication to Christ". Here lies the crucial point: that in going out to the world and among our fellowmen we are deeply united with Christ, personally "in love" with Him, bound to Him, in marriage or in virginity, with a sacred bond of love, truly dedicated to Him as the Redeemer of all.

Only on the basis of that dedicatedness can our work be fruitful.

Dear Grail members, let us try to make this still more concrete. What does it mean to live in this attitude of mind and heart and soul?

It means a true God-centredness all through our days!

It means living *in faith*, looking at things and at people with eyes which know that there is more beyond them, and that all things are only signs of greater realities...

It means living *in hope* for the things to come, the final restoration of everything in Christ at His Coming...

It means living *in charity*, in true outgoingness to all around us, giving ourselves for the sake of their well being without counting the cost...

It means living *in humility* and in a consciousness of our shortcomings and failures, ever ready to acknowledge them in truth and ... to try again!

It means living *differently* from many around us, different in interests and points of view, in choice of work and leisure, in friendship and study and material conditions;

And at the same time it means *no isolation* from those around us, but *deep community* and conscious sharing, actively and positively, with all...

Much could still be said this great theme of dedication! Dedication is marriage, dedication in virginity; dedication and the Church; dedication and the Sacraments; the dedication of Our Lady ...

It is a tremendous theme and I hope that these few thoughts may encourage us to think about it more, to share our ideas with one another, and more than anything else: to try and live indeed in this attitude of heart, close to Christ and close to all our fellowmen.

With my best wishes and greetings,

Yours in Him,

Rachel Donders

The Grail: a community-building community

Eleanor Walker

In: Grail Review, Vol.III, Third Quarter, 1961

The word "community" is often in our lips these days. It is the subject of a vast literature of sociological analysis, of political and philosophical theory, of theological reflection. It is part of our "Grail" vocabulary too – we often speak of "building international community", of "strengthening family and community" as well as of "community development" or "world community". It is the purpose of this article and of those which follow to explain and to illustrate at least some of the meanings behind this word that we use so often and which has in fact such a deep meaning for our time.

For "community" is, consciously or unconsciously, a preoccupation of much of the human family today. It is the avowed object of many experiments being carried on in the milieu of industry (creating "community" among workers, or between workers and employers), in education (e.g. the "community college"), in civic life (the "community center") and in economic organization (various forms of "co-ops", "communes", etc.). The search for a deeper realization of the community experience is also evident in many spontaneous groupings of people – families, professional people, religious groups – bound by a common ideal, or common problems. Within the Church, too, we find both a growing consciousness of the meaning of community in Christian life and a multiplication of efforts to realize it more deeply in the lives of the faithful, of the clergy and religious. The frequent occurrence of both the word and the work indicates that "community" is a reality of which we feel the lack in many aspects of existence. Indeed, the lack that literature is analyzing, that such attempts at creating "community" are trying to fill, is part of the daily reality of life in our time, part of the anguishing experience of limitation and imperfection which points to the underlying mystery of personal and social existence.

Immersed as we are in the life of the human community, we are members of the Grail cannot help feeling ourselves part of this yearning and striving for a deeper experience of community in the society around us. At the same time, since the Grail springs out of the Church, and exists for the sake of partaking in the Church's mission in the world, it must represent a particularization and a manifestation of the communal life of the Church, which is none other than the life of charity. Considered thus, the work of the Church can itself be said to be one making community: the definitive supernatural community of the members of the New Adam. Within the Grail as a whole each team, each center, each working unity, must strive to become a concrete expression of this fundamentally supernatural community.

Thus two main questions present themselves: how can the Grail itself approach as closely as possible the ideal of authentic Christian community? How can the Grail as an apostolic movement help in the development of the various environments where it is working, so as to prepare people for the Christian ideal of community? Since most of

our formation and apostolic activities can be brought under these two headings, it is worthwhile to see what insights may be gained from considering them in this light.

The Grail as a realization of Christian community

The very existence of the Grail is a manifestation of the renewal of community life which the Church is experiencing in our time. Especially significant in this connection is its character of *movement*, of a spontaneous association of "women of all walks of life" who have glimpsed something of compelling beauty and given themselves to the pursuit of it together. The exterior organization is at once a sign and a means of realization of an inner dynamism which seeks communion with all who have a like urge for dedication and self-giving.

Often we speak of the Grail as a "community of love". No term could in fact be more profound or more accurate as a description of a true Christian community. But when we begin to grasp the full meaning of the word "love", and at the same time consider the Grail in its concrete existence, embracing women of diverse cultures, education and social conditions, we can see that a great human and spiritual effort is required to transform such an association into a true community of love.

The motive power for this effort can only come from a true dedication, a true self-giving in the depths of the being of each, to a vocation which is common to all. This self-giving in response to a call of God, which can only be a deeply personal act, is at the same time that which makes possible self-giving to others, and hence community. There is in fact an intimate connection between the development of the personal response to God and the ability to give oneself to the community. That is why we can say that the members of such a community as the Grail are held together primarily by their common vocation, by their common response to a particular call of God. This response means for each one a *commitment, a dedication*, in the depth of the person, which at the same time makes possible true community. In the words of Canon Guelluy, "Any genuine progress in community life necessarily brings with it a deepening of the personality; if more personal attitudes are not achieved, there has merely been a passage from the individual to the gregarious"³.

The depth of being to which the call of God is addressed in each person is in fact the only basis on which we could hope to make a community out of such a diversity of human and cultural conditions as we meet in the international Grail movement. Therefore it is essential that in the meeting with others, and in the formulation they may eventually receive as they are drawn more deeply into the life of the movement, the concern for the person be uppermost. This is not so that self-giving may be avoided, but just so that the giving of self to God and to the other may take place at the deepest level of being possible⁴.

³ Robert Guelluy, *Esprit communautaire surnatural*, Bruxelles, La Pensée Catholique, Office Général du Livre, p. 42.

⁴ Perceptive and helpful observations on the development of a truly personal life may be found in Dr. Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, New York, Harper 1956.

The Grail and community-building

Any life of genuine charity will always propagate itself far beyond visible limits, by virtue of the creative power of self-giving love. But besides this radiating power of charity, which remains beyond our calculation, there must be a conscious effort to prepare the human environment for the eventual meeting with grace. Not only must the yearning for community be met as a legitimate human need, but a normal experience of community must also be encouraged as a basis for participating in the life of the Church. "To seek the will of God... means in particular to seek for the human means which God wishes to use for supernatural ends."⁵

Our experience of community – or the lack of it – in social life affects our experience of community in the Church. The life of charity transfigures, without eradicating, existing forms of human relationships. For example, the natural relations among the members of the human family are the normal medium for the growth and expression of the life of charity implanted in its members by their baptism into Christ. The different types of religious communities which have sprung up in different historical periods also illustrate the close relationship that exists between the human community as such and the forms of communal life in the Church. As in other aspects of life in the Church, we have here a meeting – a creative, a transforming meeting – of two realities, the terrestrial and the divine.

Therefore we must come to understand the human society around us in terms of the opportunities or obstacles it presents with regard to a helpful experience of community. In fact, true community is threatened almost everywhere in the world today. The clan-community which prevailed until recently in large parts of Africa and Asia is rapidly dissolving. Once stable agrarian societies are undergoing the impact of industrialization, which is seldom controlled with a view to the protection of human values. And the long industrialized societies of Western Europe and America are experiencing a disintegration of traditional human relationships which has a profound effect on the cultural and psychological life of their members, especially of the young. That all these changes have great consequences for our manner of participating in the life of the Church is beyond question, as those engaged in pastoral care well know.

When we consider the activities in which the Grail is engaged, and its characteristic ways of working, we can see how closely related they are to these problems of person and community. In countries undergoing radical economic and social transformation, attempts at improving social, economic and educational conditions go hand in hand with an awakening of the women of these areas to a fuller realization of their share in the human and Christian development of their people. In areas where historical factors have separated large segments of the population from one another, there can be seen going on a gradual but determined effort to overcome isolation and build up mutual trust in a common sense of responsibility for the whole. And in the materially most privileged societies, which are often the most affected by disintegration, the effort goes into calling forth the latent resources of the personality by an ever deepening appeal to the energies of love and self-giving.

⁵ Guelluy, *op.cit.*, p.12.

In all this work of "community building", the relation between person and community remains crucial. There is no question of exalting community as such, of creating a kind of "mystique" of community which would make any sort of human solidarity into something quasi-divine – as if any human experience of community could take the place of that which can only be the fruit of personal participation in the Mystery of Christ. But the role of the human community can be decisive in the way in which it helps or hinders the person to receive and respond to the call of God.

Therefore the way in which the Grail normally works – not primarily through the application of "group methods and techniques (though something may be learned from these), but through the *sharing of life* – is also the way that is most conducive to the building of true community. This is ultimately the very simple secret of that integration of life and work and spirituality of which each team and each center tries to be a manifestation and a radiating center. That is why the life itself of the team or center is of such importance in communicating the spirit of the Grail, and why it is most often through direct contact with that life that the movement deepens and spreads. That is the reason, too, behind the traditional: "I can't explain it – you just have to go and see for yourself!"

We all know only too well how imperfectly this ideal of community is achieved, both within the Grail and in the milieus in which it is working. But we may be grateful that in trying to be true to our vocation as women, staying close to life, fostering love by giving love, trying to create personal bonds wherever we are, bringing others to a more personal, because more self-giving, form of existence, we may realize in a special way something of the call of Christ to be one in Him as He and the Father are one.

We are all pilgrims

Magdalene Oberhoffer
In: *Grail Review*, Vol. VI, n° 3, 1964

These remarks originally formed the introductory section of a talk given in Lent at "De Tiltenberg" to members of the Grail in the Netherlands. We present them here because we feel that they could introduce as well a reflection on renewal anywhere in the world.

AFTER MY LONG JOURNEY I should like to share with all of you my impressions, experiences and conclusions, for I am deeply aware of the fact that I travelled for you and with you and that now we should harvest the fruits of this trip together.

It was for me not merely a "Grail journey" in the sense of visiting our different centers in Australia, Asia and North America, and getting acquainted with our people there. For the fact of my travelling as a member of the Grail and in my present function cannot be separated from another: namely, that of my being *part of the pilgrim Church*. I do not mean just geographically – with planes that is not such a problem – but rather the coming in contact with different civilizations and seeing the Church in all those different situations and stages of development, living as "little flock" and as leaven. Through this contact it became clearer to me than ever before that the Church is no static entity whose exterior aspect is fixed once and for all, but an organism in full development, the Church en route. We as Grail are immersed in this process because we are a movement within this living, growing Church; we are a Grail en route.

A second realization, something we all know in theory but often do not accept in practice, was that the Grail, like the Church, must develop within these different civilizations a great richness of expression, consciously based on a common vocation of dedication in the world and for the conversion of the world. I should like to go into these two points a little more deeply because they are of fundamental importance for our whole Grail movement, especially at this time of the Council.

A pilgrim Church

Much has been said about the great transition, the change taking place in the Church at this moment of history, as a sign of growth and development. This process takes on all the characteristics of a pilgrimage; it is the re-living of the Israelites journey through the desert, of which the Lenten liturgy so often reminds us. We can, in fact, find a number of parallels between our situation today and what they experienced thousands of years ago:

- the leaving behind of the security of old patterns of life – as we must do now, for example, with many patterns and traditions of the spiritual life;

- the search for new ways, often accompanied by insecurity, impatience, and perhaps even doubt as to the right direction;
- hunger and thirst – missing the familiar nourishment in strange and perhaps threatening surroundings;
- fatigue – weariness with having always to start up again, never able to settle down safely and rest;
- with some nostalgia for the past;
- an ardent longing to see the new goal, still partly obscured by distance;
- the necessity of abandoning oneself to God's guidance in the darkness of faith, in fidelity to the leadership of the hierarchy and to the charisms which God places within the Church;
- being allotted an "iron ration", that is, the bare essentials of revelation and vocation which are necessary to sustain us on the march;
- but at the same time being fed miraculously with manna from heaven and living water from the rock, as long as we do not doubt (as Moses and the people did at Meriba) and entrust ourselves in entire confidence to God's guidance.

From what I have said you most probably have already begun to make the application to our life in the Grail as part of the pilgrim Church. Indeed, in view of the great changes going in the Church, it would be strange, alarming even, if we did not find ourselves also in some way in a time of transition. We can in fact observe the very same process going on in all those groups in the Church which may be considered to be truly alive and in earnest.

When we look at the history of our movement it becomes clear that we have always been en route – there has always been movement, never stagnation. I believe it is precisely one of the characteristics of the Grail to be always in a situation of pioneering. Certain periods however stand out as times of extraordinary change, when so to speak we suddenly enter upon a completely new landscape in which we have to adapt ourselves and find our way anew.

This was surely true of the years during and after World War II, when the change in our external mode of life was even more drastic than now. And now too, we have arrived at such a moment, in the world and in the Church, when everything depends on re-evaluation and the choice of the right way. Let us not sever the Grail from the whole Church – we are not a private agency, but a living branch of the vine that is always green. And exactly because we are experiencing this time of renewal as part of the Church, we may confidently rely on the help of the Spirit promised by Christ and which works not only in Rome but everywhere in the world.

A variety of external forms

It sounds like a commonplace to say that the same principle may be expressed in different ways. And yet in the Church it has been accepted in practice only in the last years that, for example, the Eucharist may be celebrated in different civilizations with different rites, that the Latin rite is in quality equal to and above other rites, that calling the others "back home" is not the thing which is most ardently to be desired. It is a recent phenomenon for us to be hoping, as we are now, that the young Christian churches in Africa and Asia will develop still other forms of liturgy so that the Church at the end of time will stand as a richly adorned bride of the Lamb.

Do we dare venture upon this diversification of expression with the Grail too? Do we dare allow this vocation, once its essence is clearly grasped – this is of course the condition *sine Qua non* – the freedom to express itself in different civilizations and situations? Will we not be shocked if Australia does things differently from the U.S.A., South America differently from Portugal? Can the Grail become African with the Africans and Japanese with the Japanese? In practice we have not yet arrived at this point, and it will be possible only if our whole community stands open to the growth that is needed. This means not just tolerating differences, but consciously accepting and appreciating them. And notwithstanding all the resulting joy, this openness will require sacrifice. Whoever has worked in an international team knows how much to fruitful cooperation and interaction.

We must enter into this creative and challenging time as a great family, made up of old and young, with different responsibilities, concerns and experience, all shouldering our communal work together in the Spirit of Christ. We shall try to consider with great attention and care each other's insights and desires, realizing as fully as we can the horizontal dimension of our belonging to each other and to the world. But let us not lose sight of the vertical dimension, our intimate relationship with the living God, through which alone we enter into the reality of the saving cross, of which the Dutch bishops spoke in their pastoral letter for Lent:

One cannot choose a vertical orientation towards God alone, nor a horizontal orientation towards man alone. This verticalism and this horizontalism have been forever broken through in the person of Jesus Christ. He loved his brothers until death. It was exactly in this service to his fellow human beings, carried to its uttermost limit, that he served God, his Father. In Christ we observe the service of God carried out in the service of men. In the love of God charity towards neighbor is fulfilled and in love of neighbor our love of God is fulfilled. What holds for Christ holds also for the Christian.

Thus we have our pattern of life in Christ himself, he who is the way and the life. Let us remain close to him and his cross, which is the mast of our Grail ship. Then we shall sail our course in safety.

Polarities in the Grail

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo
In: *Grail Review*, Vol. VII, Nº 4 – 1965

The International Meeting and the guide lines it formulated are one step in a long process of striving to lay bare the inner core of our present vision of the Grail. They come out of a meeting of minds of a cross-section of the Grail: that is to say, of women matured by life and those still at the beginning of their commitment; of women who see everything in relation to a long past, and of girls who see everything in terms of tomorrow; of women from northern and southern Europe, from the new world and from ancient cultures; of women from all kinds of professional backgrounds; of married women, single women, and women consecrated to God in virginity.

One might be tempted to think in the face of such a diversity of participants, each one bringing with her the historic conditions of the Grail she was representing, one could only take a meager middle road, putting everything together, and out of a desire to respect everyone's point of view, affirming at the same time aspects which seem to exclude each other. In these comments, I should like to try to show that the combination of apparently divergent elements does not flow only from different individual or collective experiences, but is inherent in the very physiognomy of the Grail; and that it is not a question of a middle road, of a more or less explicit compromise trying to satisfy every tendency, but it is rather a question of trying to seize and express the dialectical condition of Christian life.

Inherent in the concept of the Grail is the recognition of opposed poles in life, and the affirmation that neither of these poles must develop to the detriment of the other. Thus, Rachel Donders could write of the polarities experienced in the post-war years:

It seems that we somehow had to come to grips with different tendencies among ourselves, which sometimes seemed had to come to grips with different tendencies among ourselves, which sometimes seemed to oppose each other, and which had to be sorted out. This certainly was not, or not always, merely a question of one generation differing from the other, nor of differences in cultural background leading to a variety of opinions ... These tendencies are still among us, appearing perhaps in different forms. They are the more or less permanent polarities between which we must constantly be making our way.⁶

Here indeed is the charism present in the Grail: the affirmation of the compatibility of opposing tendencies, not as a compromise, not as a mathematical average, but as the expression of a vital reality. This charism certainly has characterized the Grail as a whole since its beginnings. The living principle of our tradition is the harmony of opposite poles of life; it is a line of growth which does not develop one direction at the expense of the other, but which, by accepting the zig-zag of life, integrates apparently

⁶ *Grail Review*, V, Nº 4, p. 25

contradictory ideas and alternatives. The principle involves the realization that these polarities are not an evil to be endured, but, on the contrary, are the very condition of life, the source of new energies, arising from a synthesis and not from a mutilation.

The idea of polarity as a key to vitality was a favourite theme of Father van Ginneken, who saw in the ability to synthesize apparently irreconcilable extremes the true mark of greatness, and who found in Christ Himself the ultimate exemplar of this synthesis. "Jesus knows no golden mean, but only the harmony of faultless extremes", he wrote and in his "Litany of Jesus Perfections" he develops the contrasting qualities: kingly power and humble submission, simplicity and critical intellect, masculine strength and feminine tenderness, reverence for tradition and power of innovation, flexibility and refusal to compromise, strict asceticism and warm appreciation of this world, *diesseitig* and *jenseitig*, in the midst of life and yet not of the world, Lion of Judah and Lamb of God, and then concludes, "this duality of Lamb and Lion, in our destiny and in our character, is still possible and salutary also for us Christians".⁷

For some, this affirmation of the unity of opposing tendencies, this attempt to harmonize contrary qualities, seems utopian. Hence the criticism that in seeking to be all-inclusive, the Grail drowns in vagueness, that it loses all specific identity, that the desire to reconcile everything with everything simply conceals a new type of triumphalism that one is looking for "a sheep with five legs". In short, these criticisms point to the danger of an ambiguity which would condemn the Grail from the beginning.

No one can deny the reality of the danger, but this should not stop us from pursuing a goal which is not only deeply rooted in our own tradition, but is also implied in the most profound research of contemporary man. It is a fundamental idea of our time that a dialectical process is at work in every aspect of life. Life does not develop in a straight line – we must accept the presence of contradictions, let them grapple with each other and thus yield a more perfect synthesis; and this process holds true for human groupings as well as at the level of the individual. Indeed, even the apparent peace and stability of the physical universe is the result of an infinite play of opposing forces which maintain matter in a state of continual tension, capable in consequence of deploying energy in all its forms.

This polarity is not foreign to the fundamental spiritual attitude of Christianity. On the contrary, a Christianity based on the Gospels and nourished by them is a Christianity in which contradictions confront each other, or at least apparently contradictory values approach harmony as an ultimate limit. One would need a full exegesis of the New Testament to demonstrate this, but let it suffice here to think for a moment of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth ... Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted ... Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled ..." The Christian life according to the Beatitudes unfolds not as a life blissfully happy, but as a continual tension which is the very condition of the Kingdom of Heaven in this world.

⁷ Grail Review, VII, N° 2, pp. 18 - 23

**I. Salvation history:
the autonomy of the world and the transcendence of faith**

The first polarity we encounter concerns the context of the Christian's life in the world. It is experienced as a tension between the autonomy of the world and the transcendence of the faith.

In the original idea of Father van Ginneken, there was a vision of Christianity as an historical process, bringing to completion the plan of God. Today, the historical character of salvation has received greater emphasis, and our understanding of the way in which Christianity develops in history has become much more subtle and complex. We no longer think in terms of a conquest – even a spiritual conquest – of the world in which we live, but rather of a continual dialogue. a dialogue presupposes two partners, which means in effect that the world is viewed in its fundamental autonomy vis-a-vis the Church, and the Church is seen in its transcendent character. But the picture is not so simple. Church and world are intermingled in the concrete realities of daily life in such a way that the true history of salvation is taking place exactly where their meeting occurs. *The Church is in history*, in this world, caught up in all the aspirations and movements of mankind, although she never loses sight of the beyond; and *grace is at work in the world* – there is a continuity of grace on both sides of the frontier between Church and world, in unlabelled as well as in labelled situations.

In the work that preceded the formulation of the guide lines, some among us, having spent all their adult life working within Church structures, defended at all costs the autonomy of the world, its value in itself, the need for Christian commitment to the tasks of building the world – in short, they were most concerned for the values which had been lacking in their past experiences. Others, on the contrary, coming out of concrete involvements in secular structures, brought with them the lived consciousness of the ambivalence of earthly realities, together with an awareness of the need for the spiritual realities as a pole of orientation for the evolution of the world. But these two attitudes cannot be confined to particular experiences. Ultimately, both are rooted in the same basic belief in a history of salvation, that is, an action of God which is total and which, being addressed to man, includes all his institutions, his structures, his discoveries, the earth on which he lives and the spiritual community which he forms with his fellows. In this unity, which is the dialogue of God with man, there is always, however, so long as the world is under the sign of redemption from sin, an autonomy of the world as such and a transcendence of faith with regard to all the realities of the world. Hence, it is not the attitude of the Grail to commit itself solely to one of these two poles. Rather it strives to witness at the same time both to the autonomy of the world and to the transcendence of the faith which is found therein.

One cannot affirm both poles, however, without raising other tensions, those much closer to the level of daily decisions. Certainly Father van Ginneken stressed the importance of actual accomplishment in concrete tasks. In that spirit, believing in the autonomy of the world, the members of the Grail seek serious involvement in concrete

tasks, which presupposes a certain stability. But, at the same time, the Grail as a movement striving to respond to changing circumstances, to grasp at the right moment the occasions which present themselves in a world moving at enormous speed. In order to be able to enter into the Church-world dialogue, it is necessary to be at precisely those meeting points where the dialogue becomes most urgent. The emergence of new tasks thus requires a certain flexibility, a mobility of the Grail in the whole of its commitment.

These two poles – *stability* and *flexibility* – in fact constitute a dialectic, and there is no one simple formula to assure a synthesis. The Grail with the totality of its members cannot shift continually from one sector of life to another, but it can always be sufficiently flexible through some of its members to undertake those pioneering tasks which new situations demand. Perhaps in the last analysis the way of synthesis is to be found in the attitude of mind – an openness and sensitivity to "the signs of the times", a spirit of search, a sense of adventure – and at the same time, once the necessary choice has been made, an attitude of stability, of serious and authentic commitment to a given task.

II. Communion within the People and God

The Grail is a communion of women of all vocations, a group effort, a community of ideals and action. The present development of the theology of the People of God, centered on that fundamental communion which is the very life of the Trinity, has re-affirmed both these aspects of communion in the spirit and coordinated effort in action. At the same time, there has been in the Grail an endeavour to affirm both in theory and in fact the unique value of each person. An accent on the particular destiny of each one, a desire to develop fully the potentialities present in the individual ("Lord, let me grow to be that for which you have destined me"), a concern not to sacrifice the person and her development to an immediate common need – all this has been part of the striving in the Grail through the years. The contemporary affirmation of the autonomy of the human person throws this principle into new relief and leads us to a re-examination and purification of every community experience which does not take it fully into account.

At the same moment that long established community structures are being shattered by the sudden irruption of the autonomy of the person, we discover anew the need to be in relation, and we search for communal forms in free association, which while respecting individual liberty are nonetheless effective as witness to and service of the group. Thus, the tension between the person and the community is not to be resolved once for all. Rather it will be necessary to seek continually for a harmony at a higher level between the two dynamisms of *personal* and *community identity*.

Another tension revealed itself concretely during the July meeting, that between spirit and institution, *current* and *structure*. For all of us, the Grail is certainly a spirit, a current of good will, a stream of self-giving and of apostolic concern lived by women and girls in varied circumstances. The broad vision of a Grail in which unity springs forth from diversity is so deeply rooted in us that every attempt to frame a definition

of membership stumbles over it. Nevertheless and in unexpected ways, the July meeting was led to define more clearly the meaning of membership in the Grail. In our search for a structure – capable undoubtedly of freeing the spirit, but still having definite juridical elements – we were confronted immediately with the need to define concretely the conditions of belonging. In the definition, there is no intention of denying the broader character of the current, but experience testifies to the tension between the fluidity of the current and the stability and firmness of a definition of membership. To achieve a synthesis, the current must be supported and developed by the structural elements, and the structures must be open to the changes which the very existence of the current brings with it.

In the heart of the community, another tension exists between the affirmation of the *national character* of each group in the Grail and the *international character* which is intrinsic to the movement as a whole. Clearly the Grail cannot contribute effectively to the Church-world reality unless it is authentically rooted in local conditions. On the other hand, the July meeting has strongly affirmed the international character of the Grail, an international character which is not merely a kind of unity at the top, a unity of purpose, a federation grouping autonomous and differentiated branches. The international character of the Grail must also be alive in the concrete situation. This means that each member of the movement must also be alive in the concrete situation. This means that each member must be able to recognize herself and to be recognized, in whatever part of the world, as belonging to the same family and living in the same spirit. Moreover, it means the ability to make the international dimension – that is, the world in the broad sense, other countries – truly present in the manifestations of the life of the Grail in the local situation. Living these two realities involves a tension. Sometimes, one is obliged to develop stronger roots locally, with the accompanying dangers of exaggerated nationalism, of separation from the worldwide family, of affirming values foreign to the common patrimony; sometimes, one must stress the international, with its danger of isolation from the concrete reality, and of involvement in a vague myth which interferes with really getting to work where one is.

Ways of passing beyond this tension will be found in the affirmations of the July meeting. I would stress especially the recommendation to integrate in each country elements of other nationalities in a responsible manner. Notice that priority is given to the country: we speak of integration into each national entity of the Grail, which implies first of all the development of an indigenous Grail, with all the possibilities to express the Grail spirit in the language, culture and traditions of the country. It means too, that the members of other nationalities are present not as outsiders but as truly responsible elements, thus helping constantly to establish the relation between national and international.

III. Christian maturity

The development of the human sciences has helped to bring out the autonomy of the person, the laws of his organic development, his essential rights on the natural level. The discovery of this autonomy has played and continues to play an enormous role in

the whole of Christian spirituality. Since its beginning, there has been in the Grail along with a goal-directed asceticism, an emphasis on the properly human in personal life, an accent on freedom, initiative, responsibility, the free giving of self. Today all these values comes to the fore. The blossoming of the human being is seen not as based on a one-sided contempt of the world, nor on the mutilation of the self, but rather as flowing from the liberation of the deep-seated energies of the person through an oblation love. In Christian language, this oblation love is called conformity to the Paschal Mystery. However, the passage from the human to the Christian does not come about without rupture, for full human development must be achieved through death to sin, through the victory over egoism and pride. On the one hand, man needs initiative, self-assertion, mastery over energies; but at the term of his effort, man will always find the need to submit himself to circumstances and to others, to surrender himself to a reality which surpasses himself. Here comes into play that dialectic so deeply rooted in the spirit of the Grail, the dialectic of lamb and lion.

In this affirmation of the human, the recognition of the fundamental freedom of the person is crucial. Freedom is affirmed as the right to discover one's own way, to choose it and to follow it. Freedom also manifests itself in the possibility of honestly facing oneself and one's own existence. Freedom, when it expresses itself in a fragmenting of existence, can lead to a denial of commitments or to a refusal to assume them. On the other hand, commitment is seen as the most free of human acts, the act by which we most truly pledge ourselves; it is the act which risks, which fashions life and shapes history. A paradox appears between these two poles: at one moment *freedom* will seem to empty the person of all commitment; at the next moment, *commitment* seems to empty the person of all freedom. A solution to the tension can only be found in a human existence assumed in all its reality, that is, an existence which in order to be real must always be committed, and in order to be authentically committed must continually deepen and refine its capacity for full and free response.

Springing from all these tensions at the level of the human person, a question was posed at the July meeting: how conceive formation? In the discussion, a formation carried on in specially designed circumstances was challenged. In the light of the new awareness of the human person, formation in the situation was naturally emphasized. For this polarity, too, a healthy tension must be found. Formation in the situation gives real foundations and lived experience, while formation in a special center allows a deepening and perspective which the normal situation cannot provide.

Beyond these tensions, these polarities, we must disclose one other, which underlies the rest. The Grail is a movement of women of all vocations, all situations. Here is a reality to which all of us are devoted, in which we believe and which we wish to realize in action. We are deeply convinced that in the grouping together of women of all ages, races, professions and vocations, there is a richness greater than that which any one category of women could offer; and we believe that out of their common action something new appears in the world. Now, to affirm this interaction, these common efforts, in our day means to affirm also that all women, as all the faithful, "are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity," to the same holiness. It

is also to affirm the right and duty of all to share in the common responsibility for the movement and its service to the world. Since the beginning, the movement was seen as having a nucleus of women dedicated in virginity for their entire lives; today we believe firmly in the necessity, the value and the role within the movement of this nucleus, as a corporate group, with a structure of its own, and in which each member, responding to a personal call to virginity, sees it as essentially related to her commitment and availability within the community of the Grail.

These two elements clearly define the two poles of the same sociological and ecclesial reality. At first sight they might appear as an ambiguity, since this polarity is difficult to express in clear definitions; but it is just the synthesis of these two elements for which we are striving, and which we are sure will release fresh energies for the entire movement and for the world itself. The road to this synthesis may not be fully in view, but we know that it will be opened up by the theological development of the understanding and interplay of charisms within the People of God. May the years ahead bring to maturity the intuition of this synthesis so strongly felt in the depths of our being – that is our hope and together we are committed to its realization.

V. OTHER ARTICLES IN *GRAIL REVIEW*

The world, the church and the layman

Tine Govaart-Halkes⁸

In: *Grail Review*, Vol. VI, N^o 4 – 1964

WE MUST BEGIN WITH A BIT OF THEOLOGY, to know what is happening with regard to the concept "lay", and why it is perhaps only now acquiring its full meaning. The word "lay" comes from "laos", "laos Theou", the people of God. As such this word "laos" is already a cult-concept, belonging not to the profane but to the sacred vocabulary. The "people of God" is different from other peoples, which are "ethnè". St. Paul says, "You are no longer no people (ethnè), but you are God's people /laos Theou)."

The word "laos" thus has at once another dimension to it, which the word "laicus" never had. "Laos" did soon come to be used of the people gathered for worship as distinguished from the one presiding, the "kleros" or priest. But this use did not yet imply an opposition, with its resulting friction, such as arose in the following centuries, but rather pointed to a difference in function. The word "laicus" has never had for us such a positive meaning, but has meant rather "unskilled", "merely-lay", "not-knowing", "unlettered". The french word "laic" even has the connotation of "atheistic", totally secularized in the pejorative sense of the word.

Church and world: a history of changing relationships

How did this come about? We must go back to the concept of "world", with which these questions are closely connected. In the newly founded Church the "world" generally meant the world as inimical to it. The Church was the assembly of believers who, set apart as it were from the world, believed in their election, and, though together, felt threatened by that world which scarcely knew and still less accepted them, so that they had to arm themselves against it. Besides, this infant Church was still expecting the end of time, and found the world of little interest in comparison with the "things of the Lord" which were their real concern. In St. John's Gospel too we find "world" used in the sense of that which is evil, sinful, personified as the evil spirit.

This idea was to change when, with the peace of Constantine, the Church was no longer persecuted, but acquired a physiognomy of its own, and the world was considered as being as it were in the service of the Church. As the Church became an institution, it could affirm itself and become so to speak the norm for the world. The world must then adapt to the Church, be imbedded in it, be subordinated and ordered to it.

Everything that happened in the world had to receive its sanction from the Church in order to be considered truly Christian.

⁸ Catherina Halkes (1920-2011) was Professor at the University of Nijmegen, Holland, and a leading figure in European feminist theology. You can read the text of her farewell speech on her retirement from the chair of Feminism and Christianity in 1986 in <http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/884033halkes.html>

As you know, this state of things lasted a long time, and it was only with the Renaissance and humanism that man, the world and especially knowledge acquired a meaning of their own. Man gained in self-confidence and came to see that the world has its own laws – notwithstanding Galileo's condemnation by the Church.

Only slowly did we gain some insight into the possibilities man has here on earth. Before the war we still learned in the catechism: "Why are we on earth?" "To serve God and thereby to go to heaven." Now the children learn: "We are on earth to be happy *here and hereafter*." That is a considerable improvement, for it means that the world acquires a positive value and a meaning that we can trust. Until recently we had a certain mistrust of the world; the word is still somewhat tainted on that account. This world was but a brief stopover on the way to heaven, and our aim was to make it as quick and safe and unstained as possible.

Related to this attitude is a clearly individualistic conception of salvation. The most important thing was that I should become holy; if I managed this and sinned as little as possible, all would be well. This is a whole view of creation, redemption and salvation that goes together with our view of the Church, and that we are leaving behind in our effort to return to the fundamentals. What we are concerned about is not just you and me personally – though we care about that too – but all of us together in our shared humanity as God's people. Together, as pilgrims, we are making our way towards fulfilment, towards salvation. In other words, we roam about the earth, we live and work on the earth, and that some earth acquires a positive meaning, for we must be happy here as well as hereafter.

It is interesting to watch this conception of the world change. People used to shake their heads, asking why so much concern for this world. Now we are convinced that we Christians must be concerned along with the others, must take risks, must commit ourselves *in this world*, though naturally we must not make an absolute of it, so that we see only the world, and lose the perspective of that vertical line that points towards its final consummation.

With the changing of the concept "world" we have quite another orientation towards life, and as lay people we have quite another orientation towards the world. A new relation between Church and world has come into being. If it was previously one of opposition, now we see that another relation is growing. The church on earth is at the service of the world, in a relation of *diakonia*, creating room for the message of Christ, so as to bring the Kingdom of God into existence on earth through men. The Church is not itself taking up all the room, but is rather offering service everywhere.

The mission of the people of God: being-church, in the world

How do we see this? The word "church" is in Greek "ecclesia", related to the word "klètoi", "the called". This is the same concept as the "people of God", which gives our being-human another dimension. The Church is all of us together, all who by faith and grace are taken out of the world and consecrated to God. That is our baptism, in which we make our Christian profession, the *professio christiana* of the ancient rite. Christian baptism is the entrance into the people of God, not to stand there apart, but to be sent

back to the world, *with a mission*. For that is the meaning of Pentecost: to receive a mission, a concrete task *in the world: to be Church*.

This being-Church is the essential mandate of the whole people of God. It means being mediator between God and the world. God, who so loved the world – we must note here the positive meaning of "world", His creation – that He did not spare His only Son, but sent Him on earth, to this world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God did not send His Son into the world in order to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." It is this truth that gives such importance to the Council's deliberations on Schema 13, and to that whole dialogue between Church and world of which Paul VI speaks in *Ecclesiam suam*.

Christ, who came to be the mediator for all of us towards his Father, and who through that one mediation bound us all to Himself, returned to his Father, but his mediation remained. That is what we must share in, we the whole people of God, the whole Church. This is the high-priestly function of Christ, in which we participate through baptism and confirmation. And in the well-known formulation of the first letter of St. Peter we read, "You are a royal priesthood."

Now there is of course a danger that people are going to talk about lay priesthood, which is of course incorrect. What is the priestly function? To be a priest means to mediate in grace, mediate between God and man; that priestly people Peter talks about is all of us who are baptized, who believe, and who take part in the priestly function of Christ. Together we form that royal priesthood of those who are gathered and held together by the sacraments, and only in this basis can we understand correctly what the ordained priesthood is. We are all a priestly people, but some are called out of the world by God in a special manner to give his priestly function that special form which is the ministry, ordained to the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments.

This does not mean that the priest stands over against the Church or the lay people, but that, chosen from among the faithful, he mediates for them. But the total mediation between God and the world, by which we must little by little bring to fulfilment the intentions of the Creator, belongs to all. All of us who make up the Church are here in the world for the sake of what God began in the creation, and for the rest put into human hands, namely, the restoration of our brokenness through the unique mediation and coming of Christ. We as Church are going to exploit this mediation, to bring out all its possibilities, not by making the Church more powerful, but by making the world little by little correspond to the intentions of the Creator. We must make it a liveable world, instead of a jungle where we try to get the best for ourselves by climbing over each other's backs.

This task is not specifically Christian, but is common to all men. You find it in Genesis, where it is said to man and woman together that they are to make the world liveable. Here we have a piece of ecumenical work to do, for we Christians must not think we have the monopoly on this task, but must be convinced that it is in reality a human

one. Moreover we see many humanists and people without a positive belief who take it very much to heart.

The laity and the cosmic dimension of love

Here we come to the famous horizontal and vertical dimensions, so much in the foreground of late. In Robinson's *Honest to God* the question is once again forcibly asked: what are we really concerned about, the world or that line pointing to heaven? We need not wonder that once you discover this world you want to take it seriously, and see your life extending horizontally over a much wider area. This holds for the Christian too, whose being in the Church means precisely that he does this in unity with Christ and with all men gathered around Him.

For me that vertical line means living at the center of a cross, always seeing a further dimension in things, and at the same time, because of it, taking the horizontal dimension more seriously than ever before. As human beings you and I have day after day to act in this world, together with others, in our shared humanity. The whole framework within which we do this, and the belief that gives it perspective, do not require any other special incarnation.

Only now, in view of our renewed concept of the Church, can we go back to the concept "lay". Formerly I learned: "What is the Church? Who is a member of the Church?" with the answer, "The Church is the union of all the baptized who confess the true teaching of Christ in obedience to the Pope in Rome." Here you have the typical institution, with its rules and regulations. You know just where you stand with regard to it. Now we see the Church as primarily that people of God, called together in the Spirit through Christ and turned towards the Father, that in its pilgrimage here on earth clears and levels the way, makes room as it were for the fulfilment of creation.

This is naturally a much more dynamic concept than that of the Church-institution. In any case it is thanks to the changed concept of church, and the positive content acquired by the concept "world", that the moment has now come to give the concept "lay" its proper theological content. And the positive concept of "secularity" in the sense of a "worldliness with a task and a responsibility and laws of its own", as the Dutch theologian Schillebeeckx has developed it in several of his books, makes it possible to see the layman as more than merely the *non*-ordained, the *non*-priest.

Juridically that is what we are, as are all women religious, and also all men religious who are not priests. But there is something not quite satisfying here, something not quite convincing psychologically, something incomplete, deficient even. We will always find a religious different from what we are, with our profession in the world, even though he may be lay in a juridical sense, in not being a priest.

What *is* the difference then? The religious, because he feels so called and has so chosen, consciously by-passes the tentative structures of this world, so as to be a sign of the fulfilment, of the eschatological reality, of the glory that is to come – a sign, and that only, that he is totally available for the Lord. If he teaches or becomes a nurse,

that is another stage, but it is not characteristic of his being a religious. What typifies him in his wanting to be a sign with regard to those structures contained within the world, his reaching out ahead to the future. His is above all an *eschatological* love.

What typifies the layman? That he is engaged in the structures of *this* world, and knows that it is *here* that his positive contribution lies. He has what you might call a *cosmic* love – the love of those who belong to this universe, who want their lives to leave some trace in it, and who are in one way or another completely taken up into it.

Each aspect of love needs the other- it is fascinating to have both in the Church, for if either line is considered separately, both suffer. If the religious is only vertical, he becomes unreal, and conversely, if we lay people identify ourselves *only* with this world and its structures, if we see worldly values as ultimate, then we remain on the surface and there is nothing more in us to indicate another perspective.

Where we are together, there is the Church

We must work together. I believe firmly that the collaboration of the different structures in the Church will be blessed. We are predestined to help each other so that we do not fall into extremes or one-sidedness. We are to point out for each other on the ordinariness of everyday life, in which it is so hard to be truly good, and the other, what is essentially at stake. Then we shall be fruitful for each other.

This is the Church in essence: to be human as it is ultimately meant to be human, and not as it so often, in brokenness; and to place that humanness in security. Because we need the guidance of that one wholly complete man who was Christ, we have the Church, to keep us established in this humanness. And so long as we lay people think, or so long as the hierarchy thinks, that laymen are not necessary in the Church, but only in the world, then we have missed the point. And so long as we think that we get no chance in the Church and therefore must remain in the world, we have a wrong conception of the world, for we see it as a little or even a great deal less than it really is.

Professor Hoekendijk once said, "Formerly we had to find a pious excuse for every worldly gesture. We tiptoed through the world with a perpetually uneasy conscience." And this was so. The world was merely a necessity; we were really concerned about something else. And now we see it just the other way around; we see that the personal salvation of each believer is really constituted and determined by the total community and will come to fulfilment within it.

We feel this also with regard to confession. We can hardly any more confess our sins and try to improve ourselves in a purely private way. We have much more the idea that we ought to confess our common fault, over and over again – meaningfully perhaps each Sunday at the Eucharist – because we fall short in realizing the image of the church, because our way of being human together does not make Christ's face on earth more attractive to others.

The community of believers in a changing world

H. M. M. Fortmann⁹

In: Grail Review Vol. IX, n° 2, 1967

This talk, given to the General Assembly, discusses cultural change and its impact on the Church, and suggests how the believer can live with the changes of the present time. The author is Professor in the Department of Cultural and Religious Psychology at the University of Nijmegen, and has given special attention to this question in his recent writing and lecturing. The talk was given in English, and the transcribed and edited text has been reviewed by the author.

I should like to present some hypotheses as a starting point for our discussion, and I can best do this by proposing six theses.

All cultures are changing

The first one sounds like a platitude, namely, that culture is changing everywhere in the world, and that this change cannot be stopped, because it comes from an internal, one might say a logical, necessity. Change must come whenever the old forms are exhausted. For example, we can say that the Gothic style of the middle ages had to be followed by the new styles of the renaissance and the baroque because the forms of the old style were exhausted. Many studies in the social sciences today show that culture always and everywhere is changing, but not so fast as our world culture at this moment.

Of course, it is impossible to point to a single cause of change; these social processes are very complex and result from the interplay of many causes. Perhaps we could compare the change of culture with the change of weather. Leslie White, an American scholar, has said that you cannot change culture any more than you can change the weather; all you can do is adapt yourself, that is, put on a raincoat and carry an umbrella. This sounds quite discouraging, for if we cannot change culture at all, what are we doing here? There is nothing for us to do except sit still and mediate. White's thesis is not *quite* true, but nevertheless changing a culture is very difficult if the culture is not changing of itself. In many respects the cultural process seems to be

⁹ "In the 1950's and 1960's, the Roman Catholic priest Han Fortmann (1912-1970) was the first to teach such not uncontroversial topics as the psychology and anthropology of religion at the Catholic University, at Nijmegen. However, through his newspaper articles and his radio broadcasts, his influence reached far beyond Academia. Articulating his own views and doubts on contemporary (Dutch) Catholicism, he became a popular figure, an icon almost of critical Catholicism. As this essay shows, both in his major study, *Als Ziende de Onzienlijke* (1964-1968) and in subsequent publications, he felt increasingly disenchanted with the cultural and moral-religious vitality of the western world. Consequently, he stressed the need for an exploration of and a dialogue with eastern religions, mainly Hinduism and Buddhism, to regenerate the life and culture of western man, to show him the way from the 'I' to the 'not-I'. His own research seems to have led him to accept that man's beliefs are projections. Doubting god's existence, and yet knowing he, and the western world, would be lost without god, or at last 'the divine', he hesitatingly found a position between a non-theistic Christianity and a theistic Buddhism." In: Peter Rietbergen <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsid=17020349>

autonomous, it passes over us like a steam roller, or, to use another image, like a stream which sweeps along ships and wreckage in its flow. Everyone is influenced by this process, including those who consider themselves very conservative. Even the conservative wants to change the world.

Some consequences of cultural change

A second point: what are the consequences and the results of this necessary changing of culture? The first result is that it brings with it suffering and conflict for many people, especially for older people who are still rooted in the traditions of the past. This is a disadvantage of the changing of culture. It is always easier for youth to change, because young people do not know what they are missing. For example, many people of my age view the new liturgy with some distress; we long to return to the old Latin liturgy, that splendid work of art, the product of centuries, which cannot be compared to our often clumsy new beginnings.

Change brings suffering, too, because of uncertainty about the future: which way to go? How to educate the children? And all uncertainty causes anxiety, the more so when the topics under discussion are very vital and central. This is why the present day discussions of change in the Church are so heated and emotional. A minimum degree of certainty is an elementary need; no one can live without some safety, some certainty. We need to know where to take the next step. Uncertainty results in perceptual and cognitive overloading, to use the technical terms. If you have no certainty at all, you have to think too much and that is very tiring. According to Freud, there are two sorts of thinking: primary and secondary. The primary process of thinking is the thinking you do by yourself, without any effort. You can call it daydreaming – it goes on all the time, you think in a framework which has not been fixed beforehand, and this is very easy; in fact you cannot stop it. The only one who can stop this kind of thinking is, I suppose, the Buddhist mediator, who is able to keep the mill from turning in his head and who reaches an interior silence. How to come to this inner silence is one of our western problems, and perhaps in the future will become a problem for the whole world. The other kind of thinking is oral, logical thinking, in which you control each step. In our time such strictly controlled thinking is demanded of everyone, so that we experience a permanent discriminative strain. Suppose, for example, that there is no culture to tell you how to greet the other – whether to shake hands, or to wave, or to bow; then at each moment you have to think, what should I do now? What is he expecting of me? So the culture has this advantage at least, that it takes care of many things about which we do not have to think any more.

It is understandable that many people, faced by this discriminative strain, want to fly back to confidence in authority. We all take this attitude at some point, for everyone wants some certainty, someone in whom he can have confidence. It is difficult to stand alone, especially when the past has been quite different from the situation in which we live now. It seems to me that within the Catholic Church today the strain is greater than within Protestantism. Some of my liberal Protestant friends point out that Roman Catholics today are going through much the same problems as Protestants did in the

nineteenth century. They tackled the problems, have perhaps found some solutions, but in any case are no longer so disturbed by them. If you assess the climate in the Catholic Church at present, it is an overheated climate, at once irritated and irritating. We irritate each other, and this is understandable, for everyone is trying to make his own way as safe as possible. Every group within the Church – whether clergy, religious or laity – is involved in these disputes and tensions. The problem does not touch one group alone, but the world, and that is perhaps some consolation.

To sum up, the first consequence of cultural change is that it causes much suffering. You might say that our culture is our house, and when the house collapses, we are left in the cold and must build a new house. But this is still an external matter, and culture is much more, it is ourselves, our own personality. We have assimilated the culture, we have identified with it, it is our own way of life. You learn that way of life in youth, and you will never learn anything later in life as well as what you learned in early childhood. The second consequence of cultural change – and this is an advantage – is that we learn to relativize, more or less. Change makes us learn to think relatively. We discover that life can be led in a number of ways, and that our own way of life is only one of many possibilities. Formerly, even ten years ago, we felt for the most part that if our own tradition was not the only one, it was at least the best one. The changes in culture have had much the same effect as the discovery of the fact of culture by cultural anthropology. This rather new science – it is less than a hundred years old – pointed out that we are like a fish in water: the last thing the fish discovers is the water. It only finds out that it is a water animal when it lies gasping on the cart of the fish monger. Similarly, the last thing we discover is the air we breathe and also the culture we live in and which forms us.

Every culture – and there are at present some three thousands cultures – realizes only one set of possibilities. Ruth Benedict has compared the work of culture on human nature to a fan of many segments: every culture realizes only one segment; all other possibilities remain unrealized. Take languages, for example. Everyone learns his own language in infancy without much difficulty. Perhaps later one can still learn a second language with a good deal of effort, but where are the persons who can speak a second language so fluently that you do not hear that they have learned it later? Each person can realize only one or two possibilities, no more. One can say that this is the poverty of mankind, but this is true only for the individual; mankind as a whole is endlessly creative, and I want to stress this. It is our fate to change, but it is also our pride. It one looks at what mankind has done in its long history, the variety and riches of the different cultures are truly astonishing, and this creativity continues.

Culture and authority

My third point: the change of culture has to be accepted in a non-authoritarian manner. In the literature of the past decade much has been written about the authoritarian character, especially by the social scientist Adorno. There are people whose relation with the bearers of authority is such that they can only have confidence in general, abstract, rigid rules. The less inner safety one has, the more one must rely on external rules. The main problem in facing cultural change is our fear of freedom.

Erich Fromm, in his book *Escape from freedom*, describes the expression of this fear in different periods of history. For example, in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, there was a movement of simple people, peasants and artisans, who had grown free *from* the restrictions of the medieval feudal society, but were not able to become free *for* a new task. So Fromm distinguishes between "freedom from" and "freedom for". Freedom *from* is everywhere today – youth, women, workers, all people are more free than before. But this freedom from external restraints is only the first step; the second step is to become free *for* something.

So, as we have said, the position of authority is a central problem today. Now you must remember that we belong to a Church in which the central authority has decided – almost literally – about all things on earth and in heaven. We cannot say that all persons within the Church were authoritarian, but we can say that the structure of the Church, coming from the middle ages, was authoritarian. This does not mean that all the individuals have an authoritarian character, but that the objective structure of the culture fosters this type of character. Perhaps you will ask whether the Church has always been this way. I think we are not far from the truth when we say that the early Church was much less authoritarian than the medieval Church or the nineteenth century Church. In fact, the first Vatican Council is the high point of the authoritarian structure in the Church. Today, we Catholics have to find a new way of living, because certainty, also the certainty of doctrine, proves to be less than we learned in our youth. The question facing us is whether we will be able to live with many doubts. I venture to say that there are many things in life which are difficult to think about but rather easy to live with. For our intelligence is quite a modest tool, and our hearts often take us further than our thoughts. We can do many things wholeheartedly, although we are half sure, without intellectual certainty, and this is most important. You can feel yourself at home in the Church, although you must say that the Church herself does not know exactly where she stands at this moment.

Certainty in the Church

My fourth thesis is more question than thesis, namely: what sort of certainty may we expect now from the Church? I speak hesitatingly, but I think we may say that there are two sorts of certainty. The first is that of the traditional faith. I think we can all affirm that the traditional faith is still valid, but it has to be reinterpreted. In recent years there has been much discussion, for instance, about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Now, no one wants to say that Christ is not there. Christ *is* there, but we are changing our habits of thought about *how* He is there. That is theology, and it is important, but not *so* important! It is a secondary question. The last century thought in a more physically oriented manner, we think more symbolically, but either way Christ is really present. This example can perhaps help us to deal with other questions. Take the question of life after death. We have the sayings of Holy Scripture and that is enough. We do not know exactly what is meant by them, but is that necessary? Perhaps we have to be content with what we have. We have the Scriptures, and of course their interpretation changes with each century. The manner of interpretation of an Augustine, who was a master, is different from that of the middle ages, which is different from our modern way. But when we go to the core of the matter, we can say

it is not so important. Let the theologians do their job, and we will do our job of living as faithful people.

So, there is the certainty of the traditional faith. Secondly, there is trust in God. It sounds like a platitude, but I must say it: trust in God, trust in the Holy Spirit who is among us. When I meet people who are very pessimistic about the future of the Church, I am tempted to ask them whether they really believe. They say that modern people do not believe, but do they themselves really believe when they take such a pessimistic view of the future? Christ is still with his Church, so I do not see why we may not have trust in the future, that is, trust in God. You can compare the Church with a growing child. A healthy child has, of course, a very uncertain future. No child knows what he will be and what he will do ten years from now. Nevertheless, the child wants to go on, wants to become more adult; he is living on hope and on trust, on what Erikson calls a basic trust. He learns from his mother and from his family that life is friendly, that life will give him what he needs. If a child misses this basic experience, he will have a difficult life. In the child, this basic trust is still untried; it has not yet been tested by life. That same faith and trust have to be re-formed in the adult, but as real virtues, for we speak of virtue only if it has been tested by life itself. The Gospel does not tell us to remain children, but to become children, which is something quite different. Once you have learned what life is, how difficult it is, how great are the burdens you have to bear, then you can say, I will try to refind the faith of my childhood, but now it becomes a faith which has been tested. In spite of many doubts, there is much on every page of the Gospel from which we can live. Take, for example, the will of God. Disputing about the death of God is rather fruitless. But you can *live* from the will of God, and that is healthy. Once you try to do the will of God in the daily struggles of life, you lose your tension.

Faith means a clinging to the invisible God without false certainties. The same Rudolph Bultmann who has caused the modern upheaval in theology with his demythologizing has also said the Christian lives from an invisible certainty; he does not put his faith in things within this world. I said earlier that we all need safety. We can be glad that modern social security is improving, and we must work for everyone to have a certain safety from the cradle to the grave. But although this is necessary, it is a safety within this world. The distinctive trait of faith is that it accepts this safety gladly and at the same time has the courage to say that it is not the last word. To be really safe, you cannot put your faith in these transitory things.

Strength coming from small groups

My fifth thesis or hypothesis: strength in this changing culture is coming especially from small groups, led by a common inspiration. No man is an island, not any woman either, nowadays less than ever before. Talking together is important, but many discussions are unfruitful because they have no end. It is fruitful to talk about concrete projects, and then there are two important questions: first, what should we do? Not, what do we think? – that is a question for your leisure! And second, how is our group, how are the relations within the group? The group itself is important. In the literature of the social sciences, the small group is the topic of the day. In every industry, in every

business, people are talking about their own working together. There is a constant need for the self-evaluation of the group. This is very difficult, much more difficult than discussing objective topics, because your own person is involved. Of course, we all know theoretically that we are quite blind about ourselves. But in the life of a group, when I disagree with another, the fact of the disagreement is not as important as understanding why I disagree. It is because of the truth, or because I cannot accept that from him? Or because I am irritated or feeling unsafe? The way in which we defend the truth is important. Whether you are conservative or progressive is not so important as the way in which you are conservative or progressive. Life would be impossible if there were only conservatives, and still more impossible perhaps if there were only progressives. One of the traits of the authoritarian character is that he defends his own thesis with intolerance, and this intolerance is his greatest fault.

Tolerance, personal and cultural

The difficulties of working together in a group are many, but it is possible if there is mutual tolerance, and that in two respects, personally and culturally. Every meeting is a clash between persons, so you have to learn to tolerate each other personally. Secondly, you must tolerate each other culturally, and this is perhaps more important, in any case for a group like the Grail in which people from so many different cultures and backgrounds come together. Our greatest danger is our ethnocentrism, which is more hidden than our egoism. We can discover our egoism rather easily, but our ethnocentrism is much more difficult to uncover because culture is unconscious, like water for a fish. We forgot that we are cultured through and through, that is, permeated by the culture, and that all our opinions are influenced by the culture, if not at their core at least in their form. think, for instance, or how difficult it has been for the priests and social workers in the Dutch youth movement to understand the thoughts and feelings of the working class, because they themselves were from the middle class. It was only after much pain and effort that they discovered there was another way, another culture, beside their own.

Group identity

Another question: what is the identity of a group who are working together with a pluralism of opinions and of cultures? What is your own identity as a group? You are better able to answer this question than I am, but perhaps I can give some suggestions for discussion. Perhaps you should not make too strong an appeal to your own history. This applies to the Church as a whole, and to groups within the Church. When the Church is too confident in her own history, she does not see the future. What, then, is the identity of your group? Perhaps it is the identity of pioneers who start out to discover a new land, basing themselves on the love of man and on trust in God. What you and all of us have to do is to cultivate the human soil in this modern world rather than to try to bring about conversions within a short time. We have to help prepare a new world; we are pioneers and cultivators and perhaps we shall not see the harvest, but this is faith, to work on without seeing the harvest. Perhaps your identity could be expressed by that word of the Gospel: "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This concept of identity has two consequences: first, your group should be as ecumenical as possible, for in the near future there will no longer be an ecumenical problem, but only a problem of faith or no faith. All the churches must come together, if they do not want to perish. So my advice is to open your doors as wide as possible. And second, about the institutionalizing of the group, perhaps you could say: institutions so far as necessary and freedom as much as possible. Some institutionalizing is necessary – one must have some forms. Arnold Gehlen, a German social scientist, writes that forms are the food of faith. One cannot have a faith without any forms: you need a liturgy, an authority, a building – I mean a spiritual building – a doctrine, but it all depends on the degree. If we compare the simple Church of Jesus Christ, without much structuring, without much authority, with the Church of the first Vatican Council, we see what has happened in nineteen hundred years. The wonder that we are living now is that old Church is again finding its own youth. And the only question for us is whether we are young enough for the Church, young enough to revive the youth of the Church.

VI. THE QUEST IS NOT DEAD ...
AND THAT'S ENOUGH.

“Youth is a quality of life!”

In: COMMUNICATION nº 6. April 1969

This issue has been written by the “under 25” generation in the Grail.

The philosophy of youth is presented by Peg Siegmund in the first article. The other texts are the compilation of answers to a consultation made last summer with all those within the age range who participate actively in the Grail in various countries. They speak for themselves and any comment would only spoil their freshness.

I think that all of us who are over 25 will find here not only much of what we have been but, I hope, something of what we are – because youth is a quality of life!

Eileen¹⁰

The Grail is ...

... the people attract me, of course! I am constantly reminded and astonished with the possibility of a shared existence in the Grail that I've experienced no place else. I'm not sure exactly what to call it, but almost everyone I've met in the Grail seems to have certain pre-suppositions about life – what makes it livable, I guess – and these more or less co-incide with my pre-suppositions. Also, I'm becoming more and more conscious of the futility of doing great things in life, and so I want to try to do a small thing well – a small thing like living meaningfully in this house (5 people) or sharing meaningfully with a small group of young people who are in contact with the Grail here in Philadelphia.

Maria Ronan – Philadelphia

... the first thing that attracted me in the Grail was the effort to live an authentic Christian life. I had always thought that the kind of life referred to in the acts was only an event of the past, but when I met the Grail, I had the impression of seeing it alive in the 20th century!

Now, after seven years (during which I changed a lot...) there is another aspect in the Grail that attracts me in a special way: the state of continuous search – the "quest",

¹⁰ Eileen Schaefer, International President of the Grail

the constant dynamism in finding new solutions. Nothing is done once for all: what we consider best today, may be different tomorrow and thus we keep trying to be attentive to the signs of the times. I feel that the Grail is something deeply inserted in the present, but that at the same time it goes beyond it, for it looks towards the future.

Celeste Isabel – Lisboa

...the vision of the people and the people themselves: their almost intuitive understanding of what it means to share life.

Marian Schwab – Cincinnati

...at first my interest lay simply in doing something productive and the work of the Grail created an opening. Now, I want to see the Grail in South Africa succeed in fields which have always been of interest but which through the Grail have been made greater realities for me. The Grail – as a movement and through the people within it – are helping me to be a better Christian with greater understanding.

Lorna Greaves – Johannesburg

...a positive contribution towards the betterment of the world; the realistic approach facing the condition of time and place; a conscious effort towards the development of the nations; the respect for the person as she is; the international dimension.

Manuel Oliveira – Porto

...I was struck by the joy and the strength I felt in the group – a strength that seemed to come from the group's and everyone's effort to live in authenticity, in service, and in love. Little by little I came to understand that the source of this strength was the Grail.

Isabel Madeira – Coimbra

...the main thing is that the Grail is so flexible, we adapt ourselves to meet the needs of a particular community or group, rather than try to enforce our ideas on them. We do not have a fixed set of rules to abide by. I found the Grail to be quite unique in this aspect, quite unlike any other group or movement I had been associated with.

Celine Chandy – Singapore

...the search for continuous growth; attentiveness to the needs around and availability to find concrete answers to them; the importance to inter-personal relations; the conscious and dynamic participation in the life of the Church.

Fátima Baptista – Lisboa

...most of all the people, their concern for the world, for the Church, for others, and for their own personhood and contribution to the whole. I find their concerns echo in me, and help me in my search for truth and meaning – and for my possible place in it all.

Becky Hruby – Urbana, Illinois

...what impressed me was the combination of the joy, the enthusiasm, the confidence and the hope of the young together with the prudence, the maturity, the wisdom and the experience of the adult.

Berta Valente – Lisboa

...in South Africa I saw people living together and really sharing their lives together – not just their work, but also discussions, prayer, picnics, fun and all their concerns. To me this was and is important. They were genuine "real" people and so are the Grail members I have now met in Uganda, Europe and the States.

Martha Heidkamp – Chicago

...the witness of people who are really committed, who are able to take situations in hand, who are consistent with what they value as important. This is what I consider a truly existential commitment, where life is made up of what one thinks, chooses and considers worthwhile.

Lourdes Pinto – Lisboa

...group life not for its own sake but for others; the Grail existing with and for mankind.

Fátima Grácio – Lisboa

...the main aspect – the search for a true Christian dimension in life – I don't need to mention, since it appears as essential not only in the Grail but in any authentic Christian life. What touches me most is the community life, a deep bond of friendship which unites people in the same search and helps each one to discover her authenticity and to be open to others.

Annie de Riemaecker – Coimbra

...a new touch given to life, to concrete situations, to people and groups, the vital conviction of all and each one, the adherence to a spirit that goes beyond reality and is yet deeply rooted in the realism of everyday situations.

Manuela Afonso – Portalegre

...the originality and the newness with which everything is done, the diversity of the people, the richness that comes from being international.

Norberta Pinho – Porto

...the general spirit of the people themselves, their love to other people, their simplicity, their way of meeting other people's difficulties.

Hilda Khoza – Pretoria

...the search for an authentic Christian life as the basis for personal growth and group interaction.

Matilde Catalão – Coimbra

...the dynamism, the international character, the openness to the problems of today's world, the welcome to people, the group life, the challenge to responsibility given to each one, the trust in the persons.

Helena Laranjeiro – Porto

...People! and the emphasis upon a constant search for meaning to direct activity, career, life choice, etc. most important: acknowledgement of the worth of each individual in relationship to a group.

Joyce Minkler – New-Richmond (Ohio)

...I feel we meet the Grail, when we commit ourselves, when we are taken by the urgency of a great task to be done. I am puzzled everyday by the discovery of the variety within the Grail: the existence of such different people, free to act and think in their own way and still respecting one another and thus enriching and strengthening the whole.

Maria Alice – Coimbra

...the main thing which first comes into my mind is the people and their openness with others. After thinking I realise that there is something deeper in which all of us participate, in some manner, way or form. This something, can it be called Spirit?

Connie Barrow – Kalamazoo (Mich)

A push toward creatively facing the future

...my picture of the Grail is very limited – I am very much aware of that – my experience of the reality has not been enough to do anything more than imagine the whole. But it seems to me that the Grail's strength lies in it's willingness to risk being flexible, to risk letting people be and do what they are: I think that is maybe why it has been a little more successful at staying with the times, than some other segments of the Church and society. I think one of the Grail's main contributions is bringing people together who have the same concerns so that they can pool their hopes and ideas and acts; be supported and renewed in their efforts. I think the Grail should go in every direction that the people within are competent to help it move: social concerns, education, the life of the Church, the arts.

Becky Hruby

...the broadening the current through more strategic involvement: being attentive to the where of the woman's potential: pioneering in today the seeds of tomorrow; being more involved in international organizations and fostering more collaboration in the different areas of action within the Grail.

Manuela Afonso

...with me Ecumenism is key. I would like to be part of a wider exchange of ideas and experiences of people of all religions. In South Africa I have been involved in programmes arranged to promote understanding, and have become very conscious of the need to understand before there can be real communication. If the Grail is to become Ecumenical, surely this first phase is essential.

Lorna Greaves

...to be "where the action is"; to avoid being in a closed circle or only among the "elite"; to go on finding new ways of action for a new society.

Maria Alice

...providing more situations where more people of different backgrounds, nationalities, etc., can come together and understand each other. To me this means more "structured situations".

Joyce Minckler

...involving more people in the different programmes, keeping the bonds already established, creating friendships with people of other milieus, greater mutual help among participants.

Helena Laranjeiro

...openness to more relationships, not being confined to university students and graduates, working with primary teachers, nurses, etc., developing programmes with high-schoolers.

Berta Valente

...

1 continuing direction of "movement"

2 greater emphasis on youth movements – what they're saying; how we respond – facing issues with them

3 delving into questions of values, meaning: what is "religion" or the spiritual dimension of man? (I think people are desperately searching for a fresh, vital religiosity). This necessitates not being a Catholic movement only.

4 greater emphasis on developing and so-called developed countries – interaction between them. What it really means to be international and how do we keep regular communication going?

Peg Sigmund

...widening the scope of the areas already started, more social projects like the one in Portalegre, more work with teenagers, new forms of influencing the renewal in the Church.

Isabel Madeira

...continuing the lines of involvement in social change and fostering dialogue in the Church. Importance of new projects like the literacy work started this summer in Portalegre and now being tried in Lisbon. Finding new ways for dialogue, like the small groups meeting to discuss the subjects of our bulletin "The Church in Dialogue".

Celeste Isabel

...one direction which I think is most important is the international meeting – personal meeting and encounters with others.

Connies Barrow

...small, informal teams – "meeting points" for exchange and focus of openness to others...

Annie de Riemacher

...I think the Grail should invite more young people, so that they can try to draw more people to the Grail: young people to the Grail: young people are interested in activity; they can produce activities; they are the people who really should be used more. And, I think that we should have more "African" winter schools if possible, so that we may also have more African Grail members who can work among their own people – in this way, the Grail will be an international movement (in South Africa at least).

Hilda Khoza

...a push towards integration new people and capitalising on their talents and capabilities.

Marian Schwab

...helping the young to mature, to grow as conscious, and coherent personalities and to integrate Faith in everyday life.

Lourdes Pinto

...more attention to young people; I think many girls could be more if they would ever be challenged – the Grail could be for them the challenge.

Fátima Baptista

...to make more people aware of the social and religious reality of our time; to offer opportunities for commitment; to guide people in their action.

Guida Pratas

...work with the young, social involvement, adult education.

Gertrude Schoepko

...more closeness to the poor, the underdeveloped, all who are forgotten.

Helena Carvalho

...strengthening the spiritual life of the individual as well as working with our underprivileged fellow beings. Such work, I think should be done in a group so that we learn to work in unity and co-operation.

Shirley Seng – Singapore

...I think we should emphasize two "directions"

1 - communication – both between members of the Grail (say inter-regionally, internationally and even locally) and between the Grail and non Grail persons. There are a lot of young women who would benefit by knowing that the Grail exists, that these are people in India and Paris and Milwaukee doing what we are doing.

2 - development of a new self-identity. Without trying to push the Grail into a self-definition that would hinder its dynamism, I do think that some sort of an attempt at helping people to develop an identity as Grail members in the fullest sense might make us more able to communicate that identity to others.

Marian Ronan

“Orbiting carefully into tomorrow”

In: COMMUNICATION n° 7. July 1969

*How can I keep from singing
when the world sings:
we have come
not to destroy but to love,
to struggle, to live ...
Look what they did with their land ...
And who did it?
Men and women like us ---
average height
orbiting carefully into tomorrow
each wave of space singing the future
and the word is
to live!*

Extract: “The Week” Walter Lowenfels

Communication n. 7 conveys to you the report of the International Board meeting of the Grail, held in Paris, from the 1st to the 15th June.

Between the detailed form of “minutes” and an elaboration of the IB thinking pointing out to the current concerns, the choice of the vehicle of communication is not easy... We hope that our means of expression will convey to you what we did in the IBM – the “what” of our present reality, the “why” of failure and, achievement, and the “how” of the promising tomorrow ...

Two main convictions underlined our exchange:

- *the Grail as an international movement means not only the same vision and ideal which makes of us “a family ”but also a two-fold attitude in whatever situation we may be – to give a world-dimension (scope, perspective, vision) to actions on the local level and, reciprocally, to bring the local efforts and undertakings to a stage when they can be relevant and capable of relatedness on the international level;*
- *in its basic intuitions the Grail appears to us as a movement of and for our time; its opportunity is so striking that, in spite of our efforts, we dare to say that the Grail as a whole carries with it “world-project” with potentiality to have a real influence in society today.*

Often, at the end of fruitful and inspiring exchange, one of us would ask: “So ... what?”

A very down-to- earth way of asking ourselves – do these ideas take shape in life? How can we make them more alive? We realize that wherever life is dead, the vision is somewhat stale and even wrong, and wherever there is life, the vision is real and means something to all the people involved. We believe that one of the most important tasks of leadership today is to draw out of the relevancy of life, the vision ... This explains the great concern of the International Board to give more attention to places where life is moving, moving, changing slowly evolving or bursting ...

...Indeed, we are “women of average height”, and we can be and do this, because

“the word is TO LIVE”!

Yours “singing the future” with you,

Eileen and Maria¹¹

¹¹ Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, International Vice-President of the Grail

Highlights of vision

Throughout all our discussions some points kept coming back as KEY-attitudes or elements in our vision today. We try to enunciate here the main concepts, hoping that you will respond to it and pursue the threads presented here.

I. **A new understanding of radicalism which encompasses:**

- pioneering in the different fields where we are involved, in a way that expresses in real life what we assert in words as our vision and commitment;
- accepting as a challenge and a mission to be a platform of encounter and interaction of the most diversified tendencies, in a way which expresses in word and deed the belief in a new dynamism and unity coming out of tensions and contradictions.

II. **Interdependence of life and vision, expressed in a "philosophy of action" which**

- enlightens (gives meaning to) the existing living realities
- fosters the existence of new life as an expression of vision.

III. **Interrelatedness of identity and mission, so that:**

- action flows from being (fields of action are simultaneously constitutive elements of the grail),
- identity is enriched through action (what we do makes what we are)

IV. **Internationality or world dimension understood as:**

- giving international significance to existing local and national realities
- conceiving the overall Grail as a "world project", in which context particular efforts are to be seen and acquire their full meaning.

V. **A new comprehension and a bringing to life of the religious roots of the Grail through:**

- penetrating the values in religious experience in the variety of cultural situations in which we are present,
- searching for that it means to be radically Christian today in the different conditions of the Church and society in which we find ourselves.

CLARIFICATION NEEDED???

How do you react to the above statements?

Do they convey a meaning which is relevant to your particular situation?

Which points are more pertinent to you?

Would like to see their contents more developed? How?

Could you give us some insights from your personal experience?

How do you see these ideas relevant to your relationship and action with others?

VII. *GRAIL WOMEN SHAPING THE FUTURE* in 1993

GRAIL WOMEN SHAPING THE FUTURE is the title of a bulletin produced during the preparation process of the International General Assembly of the Grail held in 1993 at Grailville.

The content consists in four chapters. Chapter 1, 3, and 3 develop the general lines of action of the Grail for the years to come: Grail Women Building Justice and Solidarity; Grail Women Facing Cultural Changes; Grail Women Restoring the Earth. In chapter 4 the Grail is defined as a Spiritual Movement. Chapter 4 opens with an article of Rachel Donders, entitled *Sources of our Grail dynamism*.

Sources of our Grail dynamism

Rachel Donders
In: *Grail Women Shaping the Future*. 1993

Sources of the Grail's dynamism

Lately a favourite expression used to describe The Grail is the term Faith Community. And rightly so, where Faith is understood in its widest sense as:

- a consciously reverent openness to the Mystery in and around us, the Source of Life,
- a vision of world and history revealing ever new dimensions and presenting new prospects,
- a wellspring of hope and trust in life, leading therefore to action and celebration.

Community too has its own deep-lying connotation when it describes The Grail as a bonding of women, of different walks of life, conscious of their womanhood and its particular significance in this time, sharing as their profoundest concern and aim: a fundamental shift, in the direction in which humankind is going in this crucial period of world history, towards a newly-to-be found God-centredness.

The original inspiration

To discover the primary source of the spirituality which gives The Grail its dynamism, one has to go back to a moment in the twenties, more precisely 1928, and find there in one of the suburbs of The Hague, Holland a small band of young women, deeply pre-

occupied by a decision they have to make involving their "to be or not to be". In the course of some eight or ten years these women had been brought together by a professor of the Catholic University of Nymegen, Dr. Jacques van Ginneken, S.J., to take part in his ecumenical work and to engage in a catechumenate for factory girls. More exciting still they were to prepare themselves for a project he visualized in Indonesia, namely a foundation for the higher education of Javanese women on the basis of their particular culture.

At this moment in their development they were asked by the bishop of their diocese to give up these plans and their present work. Instead, the Church leader – a noted sociologist himself – wanted to entrust to them the further education of Catholic young girls in this Western part of the Netherlands, who were leaving school and entering a society where modern industrialization, with all its social, cultural and moral consequences, was in full swing. No mean change of identity and perspective for the small group! A crucial moment! Although he too had to give up a cherished dream, Dr. van Ginneken advised the twenty-or-so women, several of whom had been his students in Nymegen, to accept the challenge. "You go and turn the girls' education into a movement for the conversion of the world", was his exhortation. This struck fire. The idea of forming a movement, the thought of becoming more deeply involved in a world-in-turmoil, and very specially the possibility of creating a new spiritual current as women and among women in this time was certainly attractive. So they set out. A leaders corps for the youth had to be formed, new bonds to be created, centres for communal living established, a name to be found.

To students of literature as several of them were, the well-known saga of the Grail, with its connotations in the Gospel, the Eucharist, the first spreading of the Christian message, and with its rich symbolism of the Quest for "a high and far removed spiritual good", appealed to them. Under that name, the small faith-community of women set out, in hope and courage. The Grail Movement was born.

New dimensions of Christian Faith

In the early days of the Grail movement it was often a discovery for those young women who came in contact with it that the world, in which they were living and which was opening up in wider dimensions for them, was not solely, as the known concept had it, a place of sinfulness and evil, of vanity, of tragic suffering and subtle temptations to be resisted or shunned. It was to be seen in a different light, as the gift of a loving God, full of images and signs of the mysterious Presence, and therefore to be inhabited with joy, to be engaged in with trust and hope, worked in and on, for the sake of the fulfilment of the Creator's Plan.

There was another discovery. Cardinal Newman wrote that every person is created to render to God a special service in life. Each one's life, each one's service is unique, cannot be taken over by another. This thought was to give each member a deeper consciousness of self, a sense of personal worth and personal accountability.

The next step, easily come by, was the realization that being a woman brought particular responsibilities and had its own special meaning in God's Plan.

This spoke with greater urgency in these beginning years of the Grail which saw the first thrust of emancipation of women – not always seen with sympathy by the leaders of Church and Society. This movement, however, encouraged in the women themselves their intuitive sense of a possible and profound change in the course of history through their influence.

Other movements and currents and newly found or acquired freedoms enhanced this hope. Among these were the special phenomenons of youth movements, the student groups in Western Europe shedding their bourgeois traditions, the coming of age of the laity in the Catholic Church. In another realm, there was the phenomenon of growing world-wide mobility and communication. Moreover, there was a feeling that a breakthrough in the scientific knowledge of the earth's powers and qualities was imminent.

The 20th century, with two thirds still to run, seemed a promising century. In spite of the terrible First World War, the Great Russian Revolution, the Depression with all its suffering, there was reason for a positive vision and courageous faith. The Christian message, even if a great struggle might be ahead, was faced with new opportunities, thanks to a God-willed human development.

These, then, seem to be the primary elements of the Grail's dynamism:

- a positive faith-view on this world,
- a hopeful faith-view for the time
- and a confident faith-view on women, specially in their communal creative strength.

This is a spirituality that is not static. It has a real life force, because such faith necessarily opens up new dimensions at every juncture of life, and at every sincere heart's prayer.

First expressions of a Spiritual Dynamism

True to his Christian root the Grail began by spreading among the members, and in wider circles, the most central Gospel-messages:

the Easter message of new Life springing up from sacrificial death, a message, according to the story, first brought by Women to a despondent men's world;
and

the Pentecost message of a Spirit of creative love, descending on humankind as an answer to fervent prayer and openness of heart, and renewing the whole face of the earth through the fervour of apostolic response.

These messages were presented by the Grail not in theological terms but in symbolic and poetic language, in song and music, in speaking choruses and religious dance, in

colourful demonstrations and after having been interiorised and expressed in the simple practices of daily life.

In these early days the parable of the seed, the grain of wheat hidden and dying in the dark moist earth and so bringing forth new life, was a favourite theme.

Great stress was laid on a spirit of sacrifice, self-giving, service, in the following of Christ. The practice of these qualities was at the base of the great mass performance in 1931, in the stadium in Amsterdam, called "The Royal Road to the Holy Cross". There the Grail, (8000 young women), presented itself and its message to the world.

A year later, in the Pentecost play, the coming of the Holy Spirit was celebrated in the same stadium by ten thousand young women. In 1933 the 300th anniversary of the death of a saintly Dutch woman Lydwina of Schiedam, was another occasion for the movement members to express their faith in the strength of the woman's heart, once captured by this exemplary experience of faith and love.

In following years also London, Berlin and Sydney would see such new mystery plays. The spiritual fervour they evoked became an essential element, carried over through life.

In general, in the first half of its existence, the Grail kept close to the theology of the Church, clothing the old truths in new cultural expressions, and trying to shed light on perspectives particularly meaningful for women. Its own cultural identity, permeated by religious ideals, developed in that way.

In the Church of that time the Grail distinguished itself by the fact that it was a women's movement. Leadership, inspiration, and expression, all came from the women themselves, more particularly, from a growing international nucleus of women who committed themselves to further the ideals of the Grail through a life of total dedication. Stories from valiant and influential women, from Scripture, Church History, and from religious and secular literature were sources of meditation, animating the membership, nourishing a sense of responsibility and at the same time giving confidence that a new future could be built.

That this independent leadership of women was not always favourably seen by the local leaders in the patriarchal Church of the time is not surprising. The possibility of women leading women, also in matters of spirituality, was for some time and in several countries subject to doubt and in some cases to suspicion. Although it was still a far cry then from the women's liberation movement springing up later in the century, existentially a certain 'liberation' of women in the Church began to find expression early in the Grail.

New approaches, new languages

From its beginning as a Youth movement the Grail grew over the years into a community of adult women, married and single, with responsible positions in society.

Conscious of their potential as Christian women, fostered by years of formation in the Grail, they tried to be open to and aware of what the Spirit seemed to be saying, and to nurture this in their own situations, in the Church and in the world. In this context new terminologies arose. For, as is well known, languages change, symbols lose their first appeal. This occurs as alternate centres of religious interest arise, a new generation expresses new sensitivities, different cultural regions bring new approaches, and scholars find fascinating new insights into the Christian message and into the workings of life as a whole.

Open to the world and open to the demands of time, Grail members have over the years been exposed to a kaleidoscope of spiritual currents and approaches. It has been no mean task for the women who were responsible for its religious formulation, to remain faithful to the original inspiration, and at the same time to move on, and always to find the right expressive stimulant for action in the rapidly changing decor of the times.

One element was fidelity to the Church and the place of the Grail in it. When, for example, an encyclical like "The Mystical Body of Christ" presented a new concept of the Church, the Grail expressed itself as a cell in this Body, with its own function and life, living in inter-communion with the whole. When again a new term, "The People of God" was coined for the Church community, the Grail thought itself to be one of the "tribes" forming this People, en route through the present world. When "Catholic Action" was the catchword and the Lay Apostolate became an official part in the World Congresses for the Lay Apostolate in those years.

Among the different spiritual currents in the Church, the Biblical and the Liturgical movements probably influenced the life of the Grail most profoundly.

In a joyous union of cult and culture, and a blending of communal expression with individual involvement, daily life, in easy and difficult times, flowed on in the rhythm of the Church's year, its climaxes in the great liturgical feasts. These were expressed in classic psalms and newly created antiphons, in meditative preparations for Sunday Mass, in para-liturgical celebrations of depth and beauty. In that time the sincere effort and joy of "living with the Church" in a range of interior experiences and exterior beauty marked the lives of hundreds, maybe thousands of women.

There were other currents too which evoked sensitivities in the Grail.

The ecumenical Movement bringing the different Christian denominations into touch with each other gradually led women from different Christian backgrounds to membership in the Grail.

The Lay Missionary Movement appealed to hundreds of professional women in the Grail and enkindled a new light on the religious/cultural situation in the world. At the same time it created new bonds between women across cultural frontiers.

The Theological Renewal, as carried by people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer with his "The World is coming of Age" and his idea of "true worldliness", Rudolf Bultmann with his "demythologising", and his re-interpretation of the Christian message for the twentieth century, Paul Tillich who originated the theological expression of God as "the Ground of our being", and Teilhard de Cardin who absorbed all into his "Omega Point", found the Grail deeply responsive.

If many or most of these great ideas could not really be grasped by the total membership of the Grail, there was a certain "osmosis". Through them all, many members of the movement were aware of being on the threshold of a new dimension. Development in the life of the Church and in religious thinking of this period was an enrichment for the Grail, and an enrichment of the life of individual members. At the same time, the Grail members not only received, but out of this richness they also enriched. In their awareness of the currents they stimulated others by their active interests and life dedication. The in-word in this period was SEARCH: for God, for the Kingdom, for the happiness of humankind: for one-self too, for the depth of oneself and the meaning of life.

While, however, all these currents, ideas and spiritual and theological elements have influenced and in a way made the total Grail, country by country growth processes differed. This was natural, depending on the particular character of a people and a place, and on the developmental phase of the Church in each different region. This marks the beginnings of a certain plurality in the life of the whole.

Towards a creative future

Three main elements combine at this time to help identify the evolving Grail: the new impetus from Vatican II, a new, changed world, and a deeper awareness of plurality.

The Second Vatican Council with its particular historic character can be seen as a highlight and a watershed. For the first time in history an Ecumenical Council addressed a message not only to the Church and the adherents of Christian faith, but to the world. It was an event for the world. Here Grail spirituality came into its own.

Summoning again its first inspired world vision, the Grail found that vision now fully supported, broadened, stimulated, with the power to lead to a period of renewed dynamism.

Such a forward path is never smooth for any movement. After the Council the Grail confronted a world which was a far cry from that of the twenties and thirties. Tremendous revolutions and breakthroughs have taken place and still are expanding their influence over the globe, in space, in a cosmic dimension. In all the disciplines of science, in women's self-image, in sexual mores, in demographic movements, in the worldpower fields of economics and politics, in the realm of religious thinking and encounter, revolutions have, at all levels of human existence, shaken humankind, including the Grail.

A "cosmic shift of consciousness" seems to be bringing forth a new future. As one Grail group wrote recently, "We have turned a corner of awareness". There is an awareness in the Grail of a new concept of Faith, a new concept of God-centredness. There is new awareness of the fragility of our planet and at the same time of a strong pull towards a future.

Gradually the Grail is learning to live and be active in a plurality of viewpoints and visions, respecting everyone's fidelity to her own inner contemplative quest and outer active involvement. Some find in this plurality a new dynamism and see it as the Grail's present reality.

True, the fading relevance of once-loved tenets and customs, the transition from a monolithic belief into a diversity of approaches does cause anxiety, suffering, and insecurity in some, with the fear for a loss of the known Christian identity.

There are others who desire to plunge into a vaster sea, the sea where every living being is a part of every other. And there is a range of views and practices between the two extremes.

More than ever, the Grail embraces "women of all walks of life", as the old saying goes. More than ever it is the combination of different spiritual trends and different human approaches to reality, which gives it its own unique identity. Perhaps we may conclude that each meeting with a changed situation in union with each new reaching out towards the Mystery at the horizon of life sparks a new dynamism.

Every renewal gives witness to the ever-present faith-core, mutually recognized and communally celebrated in a relationship of trust and communication. There remains, within all the change and growth, that striving together as women for "a high and far-removed spiritual good". The Quest for the Grail continues...