

But when the doctrine of justification by faith alone is expounded—preached, rather—in the moving terms with which *Across the Divide* concludes, “where the sinfulness, impotence and needs of Christian people are never out of view and all praise is for saving grace and the deliverance from evil that it brings”. there is no doubt that we recognise “basic truth about every Christian’s communion with God”. We know that this is “direct adoration of the living Lord—Christ crucified, risen, reigning and coming again”. This is precisely what, or rather whom, in all humility, every Catholic has also found. Paradoxically enough perhaps, for Evangelicals, this is an adoration of the living Lord that is never more personal, spiritual, gratuitous, and so on, than in the old-fashioned Catholic custom of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. On the whole, western Catholics have had remarkably little explicit awareness of the Resurrection of Christ. Perhaps the most radical correction of Catholic doctrine and practice in recent years was the decision by Pius XII to restore the Easter Vigil (1951). But Catholic devotion to the presence of Christ in the sacrament, and the custom of frequent confession, were, and are, *at their best* (and Catholics are not always at their worst), genuine encounters in faith with the exalted and sovereign Lord: Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come (I Thess 1: 10).

The Agenda that the Open Letter sets for serious, unhurried theological discussions between Anglicans and the rest of us must surely be accepted with gratitude—if for no other reason than that we cannot but be led in the end into all truth by such sharing of reflection upon our work of faith, labour of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess 1: 3).

FAITH AND EXPERIENCE II:

CHARISMS AND ECCLESIOLOGY

SIMON TUGWELL O.P.

Heribert Mühlen’s “Introduction to the Basic Christian Experience” (wrongly entitled in English *A Charismatic Theology*)¹, though not intended as a work of speculative theology, is nonetheless a theological work of considerable interest—probably the first so far to come from within Catholic Pentecostalism.

As we should infer from the very title of his book, one of Mühlen’s fundamental beliefs is that there is such a thing as “the basic christian experience”. It is the “experience” of a real pres-

¹ *A Charismatic Theology*, by Heribert Mühlen, Burns & Oates, 1978. pp.360 £4.95

ence of Christ in his life, consequent upon a personal decision for Christ, that makes a man a christian (p. 43). For Mühlen this can never be simply a private conversion experience, however: there is no experience of Christ which does not involve an experience of the church. The essential christian experience is Jesus's own experience of the Spirit, continued historically in the church. According to Mühlen, Jesus gave the church, not just the Holy Spirit, but his own *experience* of the Spirit. Reference is also made to Jesus's experience of his Father, though it is not quite clear whether Mühlen believes the church to be the continuation of this experience too. He does maintain that the kernel of Jesus's kerygma is his "Abba-experience". He also says that "God gives us his experience of himself". He regards it as an important sign that God is renewing his church that "the experience of the primitive church has today been bestowed in an historically new and surprising way to many Christians in all Churches" (p. 94).

On this basis Mühlen develops an ecclesiology and a spirituality which contain many interesting and important points. I shall return to some of these in due course. But it is necessary first to express the considerable difficulties which I find in these fundamental propositions on which the whole thesis rests.

First, there are serious historical and exegetical difficulties. Mühlen evidently considers that it is profitable to ask questions about Jesus's "experience", which is doubtful; he is also very confident that we can answer such questions, which is even more doubtful. Like J. Jeremias, he reckons that the "abba" texts in the New Testament give us a reliable clue to the heart of Jesus's message as he himself presented it. But this has been challenged, for instance by Vermes, with evidence that it was not as impossible as has been suggested for a first century Jew to address God as "abba".

Further, Mühlen moves easily from the kind of critical analysis of texts with which Jeremias supports his position to a seemingly quite uncritical use of sayings from the fourth gospel. No doubt these sayings tell us much about the developing understanding of Jesus in the early church. But can they really be taken, without further ado, as telling us about the personal experience of the historical Jesus?

And even if we surmount these obstacles, it is still far from clear that Jesus went round proclaiming his own "Abba-experience". No doubt he talked about his Father, no doubt it was very moving to listen to him doing so; but that is not quite the same thing.

There is also a difficulty about "the experience of the primitive church". If this is proposed to us as something we can, in principle, discover empirically, then I think we shall have to say that, on the evidence now available to us, it seems that different early

christians had very different views and, presumably, different experiences of what it meant to be christian. It is not too difficult to see that Hermas and the author of the Letter of Barnabas are responding to the same stimulus, ultimately; but their response is very different. Similarly, if we confine ourselves to New Testament evidence, it is far from clear that there is any one "experience" common to Matthew, John, Paul and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews.

For Mühlen it appears that "the experience of the primitive church" is, in fact, operating rather as a dogmatic hermeneutic principle than as an empirical, historical concept. But then we are entitled to ask on what grounds he arrives at this principle. It is not self-evident that we could use "Jesus's experience of the Spirit" (even if we did know exactly what that phrase meant) as a way of isolating from the diversity of primitive christian experience something we could call "*the* experience of the primitive church", which could then be set up as a norm for all time as "*the* basic christian experience". St Paul certainly indicates a kind of isomorphism between the events of Jesus's life, death and resurrection and the condition of the believer who "dies with him, is raised with him, and is ascended with him", but since the conclusion of this is that our life is therefore "hidden with him in God", it is not clear that we are entitled to infer any parallelism of *experience*. And even if such an inference were legitimate, we should have to say that St Luke in the Acts uses a quite different kind of isomorphism (for instance between the martyrdom of Stephen and the passion of Christ), and shows no interest at all in Paul's sacramental conforming of the believer to Christ. St John actually seems to indicate a disparity between Christ and his disciples, when he makes our Lord say "you shall do greater things than these, because I go to the Father".

Even if we were to confine ourselves to one particular section of the early church and declare their experience to be normative, we should still have to ask what it would in fact mean to talk in this way. Evidently we would not be intending to refer to the totality of their experience, otherwise modern christians would have to try to reproduce exactly the conditions of life of these primitive believers. But if we try to narrow it down, for instance by saying that we are only interested in "their experience of being christian", we are left with equally disturbing awkwardnesses. We surely cannot say that "the experience of being a christian" is like "the experience of being cold". Maybe it is more like "the experience of being married" or "the experience of being British". But it is far from clear that such phrases really say anything more than that it is possible to be cold (or British) and that when you are cold (or British) you know you are cold (or British); in either case it would allow for considerable diversity within the subjective

feeling of being cold (or British).

And if being christian involves doing everything, as St Paul says it should, "in the name of the Lord", then being christian has to be as comprehensive as being alive, and I am not sure that we gain anything in clarity or insight by talking about "the experience of being alive".

I am sure that it is legitimate in some way to use the primitive church as a norm by which to judge the present day church, and I think Mühlen is honest and well within his rights as a theologian to suggest that in some ways the present day church has fallen short of the full measure of life that should be her's. The Vatican Council did the same thing. And there is something rather disingenuous about the way in which some 'charismatics' (like Abbot Parry) try both to reassure us that they are not in any way criticising people who prefer not to be 'charismatic' and at the same time to present their particular spirituality as if it were, in some way, a necessary consequence of basic christian beliefs. Mühlen is quite clear that he is challenging us to ask ourselves whether we are not "incomplete" christians. He seems to be prepared to go at least some way with the typical Pentecostal view of church history, according to which, after an initial period of intense vitality, most christians lapsed into a more or less subchristian condition, leaving it to a select few to maintain the true tradition of the christian life. Mühlen "catholicises" the picture by identifying the religious and especially the contemplatives as the bearers of this true tradition, and never accuses the church at any period of total apostasy; but he does seem to have a low opinion of the state of faith of the laity in general, which it would be difficult to substantiate historically. (Meersseman's recent massive work on the lay order of penance in the middle ages, *Ordo Fraternalitatis* (Rome, 1977) sets out to redress the imbalance there probably has been in histories of spirituality, which do generally concentrate on the spiritual 'specialists').

Mühlen's appeal to the primitive church is not unlike the medieval appeal to the *vita apostolica*, and is legitimate in the same kind of way. But the very different accounts of the *vita apostolica* given by different people, who were all supposedly appealing to the same thing, should warn us that the most we can hope to do is engage in some kind of dialectical relationship with the documents and monuments of christian antiquity, and so produce our own way of being faithful to the apostolic ideal. There is no simple objective norm to be found.

Mühlen, in fact, seems to allow for something of this element of dialectic, when he says that the "experience of the primitive church" is now being "bestowed in an historically new way". But I find his language puzzling. What does it mean to abstract an "experience" from its historical setting, and transfer it to a new context which will give it a new modality? Is the historical modality

not part of the experience?

One of the fundamental difficulties in Mühlen's whole position is the philosophical problem inherent in the very idea of "giving experience", as it is used by Mühlen. In particular, I find the whole concept of God "giving us his experience of himself" very tricky. The very concept of "God's experience of himself" is difficult, and not sufficiently validated by a reference to I Cor 2: 10. But even apart from this, it is not clear to me that it makes very much sense to talk of anyone giving his experience of himself to somebody else—or, for that matter, his experience of anything else.

There are, certainly, problems in a doctrine of "experience" which makes it totally incommunicable. If it were, then there would be no possibility of talking about experience at all, even to ourselves (except, perhaps, in grunts and whoops). And at times it seems that Mühlen means no more than that the disciples picked up something of what it meant for Jesus to be able to call God "Abba" and for him to have received the Holy Spirit. He uses the analogy of a man introducing his parents to someone. "These are my parents" is not, or need not be, just a statement of fact; it may carry with it something of the man's relationship with his parents. Actually, I think the analogy is less clear than the thing it is supposed to clarify. It makes perfectly good sense to say that the disciples of Jesus came to know and experience God in a new way through their being made privy to Jesus's knowledge and experience of his Father. In line with a traditional catholic view, Mühlen stresses the pedagogical value of Jesus's prayer, and this, for him, underpins the value of shared prayer in the church. And he makes a very important point, not often enough made in this connexion: there can be a genuine "experience of the Spirit" involved in simply being part of a praying community. To experience the church at prayer is to experience the Spirit who inspires the prayer. Thus, for instance, a man may have a true experience of receiving the Spirit, according to Mühlen, precisely in experiencing the faith and devotion of people praying for him; it does not depend, or not simply, on what is going on inside himself individually. The experience of the Spirit is, as Mühlen says, a "we-experience".

But Mühlen seems to mean more than this. He uses a second image, which I find puzzling. It is the image of marriage, in which a man and a woman give themselves to each other in the deepest intimacy. But to give yourself to somebody is not the same thing as to give them your experience of yourself.

There is no difficulty in saying that someone can give someone else *an* experience of himself. I can give you an experience of me by, say, kicking you. But can I give you *my* experience of me? Why should you want it, anyway? What matters is *your* experience of me. Even if that could in some sense be said to include your ex-

perience of my experience of me, it is still not *my* experience of me that you experience.

You could, of course, argue that two people who really do know each other very well indeed, and who really are sympathetic to each other, “get inside each other’s skins” and become “one soul in two bodies”. A lover like Cathy Linton can even feel moved to exclaim “*I am Heathcliff*”. But this is hardly the language of metaphysical exactness—unless we are going to opt for a strict monism, in which there is only one true existent at all, in which case *Tat tvam asi* must follow.

But even if we allow that two people could come to know each other so well that A’s experience of B coincides exactly with B’s experience of himself (“your poor foot hurts me” to the *n*th degree), that can hardly be the beginning or foundation of the whole relationship; it must take a long time to develop. It can hardly be the *foundation-experience* of a marriage that Mrs A experiences Mr A just as he experiences himself. She may think that she knows him “inside out” when she first falls in love with him; but experience shows that she is likely to be wrong.

You might wish to contend that these difficulties disappear in the case of our relationship with God. In so far as all created reality depends on the act of God, so that there must be an act of his within any act of any creature, you could say that human knowledge of God takes place within God’s knowledge of himself, and that created bliss is a sharing in God’s own uncreated bliss. But if we have to translate this into the language of “experience”, I wonder if it will still work? Even if we concede that we can give some sense to the phrase “God’s experience of himself”, surely the beatitude of the saints cannot be said to be “God’s experience of himself”. God’s beatitude is evidently the basis for all beatitude, but it is still not precisely *his* experience of it that makes the saints happy; it is their own experience of it. Even if their experience is exactly like his in every respect (whatever that might mean), it is still their own experience that makes them happy.

I suspect that there is in Mühlen’s position a confusion between experience and the object of experience. There is a perfectly straightforward sense in which I can want to share my experience with other people, by putting them in a position to experience what I have experienced. That does not mean, however, that I give them “my experience”. To take a somewhat (not too) mundane example. Suppose what turns you on is editors of theological journals. Imagine with what excitement you would meet, say, the editor of *New Blackfriars*. And, being a generous kind of person, you would not want to keep this excitement to yourself. You would want all your friends to share it. You would talk in glowing terms about your meeting with the editor. And eventually perhaps you would even manage to arrange for them to meet him too. You

would then all, in one sense, have had the same experience. You would all have had the experience of meeting the editor of *New Blackfriars*. But does that say anything more than that you have all met the editor of *New Blackfriars*? In that, rather trivial, sense, you could say that you have given your friends your own experience. But in any deeper, more intimate, sense, you could only say that you had arranged for them all to have their own, diverse, experiences of him.

You might, of course, claim a certain privilege of having met him first, which might give you the right in some circumstances to criticise your friends' experience of him. They might have experienced him as being rude, for instance, while you, with your superior knowledge, would know that he was really being witty. In this sense you might say that your experience of him was, to some extent, normative, a kind of *herausgebliche Grunderfahrung*. As your friends grew in experience of him, it might be expected that their experience would come to conform more to the normative experience. Their experience would then come to be *like* yours. But it would not be your experience. And, once again, it would take time for this process to occur.

It is obviously correct to insist that the church's proclamation of faith in her Lord is not just a matter of stating true propositions. She has to communicate something of the "feel" of them. I am uneasy about Mühlen's talk of "the emotion of faith", but I do not want to suggest that kerygma could ever be totally dispassionate.

And there is obviously a sense in which it is true to say that Jesus's experience of his Father is normative, and that the apostles' experience of entering into Jesus's relationship with his Father in the Holy Spirit is also a kind of norm for us. But this is because we believe that Jesus knew the Father fully, and that the apostles were granted a particularly dependable knowledge of God too, on which the faith of the church would rest for all time.

But this does not mean that there is "an experience" which we are all supposed to have—except in the commonplace sense in which we all have "the same experience" when we all look at the same television set, and in the theologically more interesting sense that christian experience of God is "we-experience", something that goes on in the community of believers, not just in communication-proof cubicles.

Finally, there is a theological difficulty in making Jesus's "experience" the essential foundation of the church. It could well be argued that Buddhism does rest entirely on the Buddha's experience of enlightenment. But that is one reason why Buddhism is such a very different kind of religion from Christianity. Buddhism is a teaching, deriving from a particular luminous experience, mediated in a community which assists people to see life and experi-

ence life in one way rather than another. But—at least for Theravada—it is not a system of grace, it does not believe in “acts of God”. (Nor, it must be added, is it finally about “experience”: the experiencing subject is a delusion, and ultimate deliverance involves deliverance from this delusion. Nirvana is not “an experience”).

But christianity presupposes a God who acts; the church is founded on the act of God. It is established essentially not on what Jesus experienced, but on what he did. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”. No doubt this involved Jesus in all kinds of experience, no doubt the consequences for us include all kinds of experience; but what is fundamental is that God has actually done something. And what is fundamental for each one of us is that God has done something to and for us. •

I am sure that Mühlen does not intend to deny the importance of the objective fact of what God has done in Christ. But his tendency to transpose the whole discussion into talk of “experience” does lead him into some rather questionable doctrines.

In his view, for instance, what makes a man a christian is that he makes a personal decision for Christ and experiences a real presence of Christ in his life.

Now, it would not be particularly controversial to claim that some sort of personal decision for Christ is involved in being a christian, and even in the case of adult converts, in becoming a christian, though there would be considerable scope for disagreement about what might count as such a decision; nor would it be particularly problematic to assert that some kind of experiential awareness of the activity of Christ in our lives is at least a desideratum, though there would probably be even more disagreement about what would count as such an experiential awareness. But to state baldly that it is these things that actually make you a christian is, in my opinion, highly controversial.

In the first place, such a contention seems to place an undue weight on the act of man, apparently leaving out the act of God altogether. (I say “apparently” because it would of course be legitimate to infer a previous or at least logically prior act of God from the sheer fact of a man making a decision for Christ; but elsewhere Mühlen more or less admits to being a semi-Pelagian (p. 201), and he uses the kind of language which any classic anti-Augustinian would feel at home with: “you need only take the one tiny step . . .” (p. 258); God will “break into your personal history *if you ask him to*” (p. 229). It looks as if Mühlen does in fact intend to make the act of man primary.)

This position is plainly unacceptable to anyone who subscribes to anything like the Thomist view of grace; and I doubt whether even a Molinist would feel that sufficient room was left for any kind of prevenient grace—unless prevenient grace is, rather arbit-

rarily, not to be permitted to rank as an intervention in our “personal history”.

Part of the difficulty with Mühlen’s view is, I think, that he seems very reluctant to allow that anything can happen to me “personally” unless I am quite conscious of it myself. Reality is conjugated rather oversimply with “experience”. But it is surely quite possible that something will happen to me which is important and maybe even decisive for my “personal history” of which I am not at all conscious at the time at which it happens.

And when we are talking about intervention of God, it all becomes even more problematic. Is it necessarily the case that every real intervention of God must be experientially, empirically, distinguishable precisely as such? Mühlen seems to require that it must. Although he has a strong, even exaggerated, doctrine that charisms are natural endowments being put to supernatural purposes, he wants to maintain a fairly rigorous empirical distinction between the exercise of a charism and the exercise of a natural faculty. The activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives is most typically evidenced when we find ourselves doing things which are not in accordance with our natural bent, it seems (p. 180); but I cannot see why this should be so. Nor can I agree that “being led by the Spirit” must be experientially different from making up my own mind. It *may* be experientially different; but does it have to be? If a man in a state of grace makes a right moral decision, he is surely being “led by the Spirit”, he is performing a supernatural act. But, particularly if he is a genuinely good man, with well formed virtuous habits, it is unlikely that he will be conscious of any *special* intervention from outside.

Discerning the act of God and the act of man is not, in the last analysis, a matter of empirical investigation, but of theological metaphysics. A human act motivated by the Holy Spirit is not an amalgam of two acts, it is a single act which can be analysed in two different ways.

There are, in fact, two weighty reasons for not simply conjugating acts of God with human experiences: first, it is not necessary for every act of God to be experienced at all; and secondly, it is not necessary for it to be experientially different from the human act.

Mühlen is evidently reacting against a misapplication of these conclusions, which would effectively reduce christianity to being nothing more than a matter of moral correctness and objectivistic participation in the sacraments. He is quite right to say that the life of grace ought to impinge much more humanly and warmly on our consciousness. But it is, in my opinion, unhelpful to overstate the case as he does.

Apart from the theological difficulties, some of which I have mentioned, there are genuine pastoral difficulties in his position.

It is surely an important part of christian piety to feel confident that there is an act of God which far transcends my awareness of it. To make my status as a christian *depend* on my decision for Christ is cruel. Of course any adult convert must publicly declare himself for Christ and against Satan. But it is not unlikely that after a year or two he will find himself wondering how seriously he has really made a decision for Christ. As he wrestles with his recalcitrant and devious will, he will often need to take comfort in the thought that what is decisive for him is not that he has chosen Christ, but that Christ has chosen him. Mühlen himself acknowledges that effective conversion is the work of a lifetime.

Similarly it is puzzling and could be very upsetting to be told that there is some experience that we ought to have if we are to count as true christians. It is not just legalism which has made catholics traditionally view "being a christian" as an objective fact, founded on the sacraments of initiation. If we take our stand on the objectivity of our religion, it allows for the extreme variability and unpredictability of the way in which religion is going to impinge on our consciousness from time to time. When we are confused in ourselves, it is a great relief just to "go to Mass" and forget all about ourselves. When we simply cannot make up our minds about the significance of the things we feel and the things that happen to us, it is necessary to be able to fall back on objective practices and customs. And our experience of Christ is something that must be formed and matured over a long time, and an important means given to us in the church to assist this process is precisely the objectivity of liturgical worship. When the Second Vatican Council declared the eucharist to be the *culmen* of the christian life, it did not mean that it was intended to be a "peak experience", but that it is in fact a fulfilment of all that is going on in our lives, a focal point which transcends all our experience.

According to Mühlen, however, the sacraments in themselves are nothing more than "offers" of grace, which become effective "only to the extent that we accept the offer" (pp. 93-4). (I have not been able to check the German original, but unless the author has been seriously betrayed by the translator, he is definitely making the effectiveness and not just the fruitfulness of the sacraments depend upon our acceptance of them).

The traditional catholic belief is that the sacraments are effective provided that we place no obstacle in their way (*is qui non ponunt obicem*), which is a very different proposition. On this view, there will be a genuine gift of grace unless I am positively refusing such a gift. Thus God can do all kinds of things behind my back, which I will only become conscious of long afterwards (and must then, of course, either accept or reject). But on Mühlen's view it is impossible to see in what sense a baptized infant is said to be a christian (as we have always claimed he is) or to be in rec-

ript of grace. And, though I would not wish to take infant baptism as being in every way the norm for our understanding of sacramental initiation, it must all the same be allowed to shed some light on the fundamental relationship between God's act and that of the human being. There may be a great deal that God wants to do for me and in me, which I do not actually thwart, but which I am not yet in a position to do much about positively.

The problem becomes acute at one point in Mühlen's exposition: a crucial and interesting idea that he puts forward is that original sin is essentially a sin of distrust, so that the abandonment of distrust is a key, if not the key, to conversion. And Mühlen rightly says that we cannot overcome our own distrust by ourselves. "In the last resort only God can cure our distrust" (p. 65). This would seem to call most emphatically for an intervention of God deep down in our subconscious, which is very likely to precede any conscious psychological shift. However Mühlen infers from our inability to overcome our own distrust that we must "lay bare our deeper self" to God. I simply cannot see how we can be expected to do that unless we have already overcome our distrust. We cannot do it unless God does it; but, it seems, he cannot do it unless we have already done it.

For many reasons, then, so far as I can see, the concept of "the basic christian experience" had better be abandoned. There is no "Grunderfahrung" which can be presented prescriptively as normative for all believers. Instead there are some basic facts, which call for a response and should affect our experience in all manner of ways, but which are not reducible either to our response or to our experience.

But, to be fair to Mühlen, it is necessary to say that his subjectivising and psychologising of christianity is far less sentimental and naive than that of Abbot Parry. In fact, one of his major concerns is to protest against the sentimentalising and privatising of faith. If christianity is, for him, essentially a matter of experience, it is social experience. "we-experience", more basically than it is private experience.

An important concept in his system is that of "self-surrender". He even goes so far as to say that "God is self-surrender", and he sees this as the essence of Jesus's experience, which in turn becomes fundamental in the church. This is the antithesis of that radical distrust, in which Mühlen sees the chief quality of original sin, which begins as a distrust of God and then inevitably overflows into a fairly systematic distrust of other people.

The overcoming of this distrust is, in Mühlen's view, the critical factor in our conversion and redemption. Though he acknowledges that it is, finally, only God who can cure our distrust, he also regards it as theologically important that in fact it is other people who make it psychologically possible for us to unlearn our

reaction of distrust. The church, in principle, is the locus of the overcoming of distrust, because the church should be the assembly of those who have themselves learned to trust, sharing in Jesus's self-surrender to the Father. Since, by and large, our parishes are not in fact propitious settings for self-surrender to occur, it is probably necessary for there to be, for the moment, smaller groups within the parish. Mühlen sees in this one of the main purposes of charismatic prayer groups, and he is adamant that they must never regard themselves as a substitute for the parish or as simply a pious club within the parish. Their task is to renew the parish from within.

We come to God initially full of doubt and distrust, full of a feeling of having been let down by events (therefore by God), bruised from our disappointments at the hands of other people. We have somehow to come to the point where we can "forgive God" and yield ourselves to him. The social experience of the prayer group is at least one way in which this can be brought about.

And when we do reach the point of readiness to abandon our distrust, one of the things we will find ourselves abandoning with it is our aloof, private individualism. The experience of self-surrender is, for Mühlen, intrinsically social. This is why, for him, there can be no true experience of Christ which is not at the same time an experience of the church.

This allows Mühlen to pass by at least one of the traps of pietism unscathed. For all his insistence on personal experience, he is very far from preaching a religion of what Arnold Lunn called "funny inner feelings". In his account of "baptism of the Spirit" he is quite prepared to say that the experience of the Spirit is the experience of the Spirit at work in the faith and prayer of the other people present. The worship of the church is a genuine manifestation of the Spirit, and the experience of being prayed for by people who evidently do believe and trust is itself a genuine experience of God.

And the consequence of self-surrender to God must be not only a new relationship with him, but also a new attitude to other people. This is where Mühlen situates the whole sphere of the charisms, as an essential part of the church's life. The experience of yielding to God leads to a readiness to live for others, and with others. The church has to enter into Christ's orientation towards service, as well as his relationship with his Father. The charismatic aspect of the church's life is simply its ministerial aspect.

It follows inevitably from this that there can be no exclusive concentration on the more peculiar charisms. In Mühlen's presentation it includes, for instance, a readiness to be seen at prayer. He has some very fine things to say about the appropriate bodiliness and visibility of prayer. One of the basic services we have to

render to our fellow christians is simply not being shy about our own christian life.

Mühlen also insists that there can be no authentic christianity which tries to withdraw from involvement in secular affairs into a sealed-off haven of antiseptic holiness. He believes that there are 'socio-critical' charisms, which are at least not totally divorced from politics.

But the church's ministry needs also to be equipped with supernatural gifts of a more dramatic kind. If it would be entirely wrong to maintain that sickness is always contrary to God's purpose and that therefore the church ought to see to it that everybody gets healed by hook or by crook (or else be convicted of lack of faith), a view which Mühlen rightly rejects, it is also wrong simply to ignore the commandment to heal the sick. Praying for the sick is part of the church's job, and that includes praying for their recovery, and that cannot exclude the possibility of miraculous recovery. Similarly it is part of the church's job to declare the word of God, and that cannot exclude the exercise of prophetic gifts. Mühlen is evidently not entirely happy with the way in which such gifts are sometimes exercised or claimed; he does not favour the "Thus saith the Lord" style, preferring something more like this: "it seems to me that the Lord wants us to know . . .". He wants us to take very seriously the element of uncertainty that there must be in all such situations. But the uncertainty does not annihilate the responsibility.

The key to Mühlen's whole understanding of the charismatic, ministerial side of christian responsibility is certainly his view of self-surrender. He is genuinely concerned to indicate how the kind of charisms which the Pentecostals cherish are susceptible of insertion into a more comprehensive, catholic, system; but his own major interest is not in any list of charismatic items which the church ought to have. It is of the essence that christians are surrendered to God and to their fellow men and women, with a readiness to do whatever is required, whatever God wants. This may involve very spectacular or very humdrum tasks. Either way, the important thing is that they are undertaken in a spirit of trust in God, rather than just trust in our own powers—and that evidently does not mean simply ignoring our own powers or the need to develop them.

I think that Mühlen in fact suggests a very fruitful approach to charisms, which is very much in accordance with the Vatican Council's teaching that the church is, *as a whole*, missionary and ministerial. In one way, it is essential for us to be turned towards God; but it is equally true to say that it is essential for us to be turned towards one another. And these two things are not accidentally combined. The service of others is rooted in a readiness to let it be seen that we are turned towards God.

It is in this sense that Mühlen declares that the fruitfulness of the sacraments depends on “charismatic occurrences” (p. 129). The institutional sign calls for that other kind of sign.

In view of this insistence that orientation towards God and orientation towards service belong closely together, since both are aspects of the same fundamental self-surrender, I am not quite clear why Mühlen is so insistent on maintaining a strong doctrine of the difference between baptism and confirmation. He says that “recent studies have brought out the fact that baptism of water for the forgiveness of sins was clearly distinguished in the earliest centuries from laying on of hands as a sign of the continuation of the Pentecost experience” (p. 92); but this is still a very controversial position. To state simply that “nowhere in the Acts of the Apostles does Luke suggest that the Holy Spirit is given already by baptism of water as such” (p. 141) would seem to be to forget Acts 2: 38. And it is far from clear that the early church used “baptism in the Spirit” as a technical term in the way that Mühlen supposes.

The main purpose of the distinction between water-baptism and laying on of hands of Spirit-baptism, so far as I can see, is to support Mühlen’s contention that charismatic service presupposes a certain maturity of conversion. (He is also, I think, trying once again to insert Pentecostal doctrine into a catholic system, and to maintain what is perhaps by now a rather old-fashioned view of confirmation). And here too I think there is a difficulty.

I am sure Mühlen is right to show that christian growth involves both a growth in relationship with God and a growth in service of other people. But surely there is a genuine importance in the traditional view that charisms are, by definition, not correlated with sanctifying grace. It is necessary both theologically and pastorally to insist on this. It establishes the fact that working miracles and prophesying and performing magnificent feats of altruism are not an infallible index of sanctity: they can all exist without charity. And it also frees us from the awful burden of supposing that we can only serve others in proportion to our own sanctity. As many a ‘prophet’ has remarked, when need arises God can open the mouth of a donkey.

An alternative view which could be developed from Mühlen’s premisses is that there is a two-way interaction between the two aspects of self-surrender: not only does surrender to God lead to an increased readiness for service, but service of others can also lead to increased readiness to be dependent on God. This would seem to be involved in the recognition that ministry is itself a means of sanctification (see my article in *The Furrow*, August 1976).