The Benedictine Spirit in Anglicanism

by Robert Hale, O.S.B.

It is impossible to set precise limits to the extension, influence and expressions of the Benedictine spirit. Benedictinism, as the abbots themselves have acknowledged, has expressed itself in 'great diversity … in a wide variety of forms.' St John's Collegeville is quite different from New Camaldoli which differs notably from Mount Saviour, etc. Yet all these communities are Benedictine, at least in the fundamental sense that they all seek to follow the *Rule,* which in its flexibility and 'indetermination offers the possibility of many adaptations.'

And in the broader sense of the *spirit* of the *Rule,* one can argue that the Benedictine ethos extends quite beyond cloister limits to inspire a variety of forms of Christian living. The Anglican spiritual theologian Martin Thornton, for instance, insists that 'the genius of St Benedict cannot be confined within the walls of Monte Cassino or any other monastery; the *Regula* is not only a system of monastic order, it is a system of ascetical theology, the basis of which is as applicable to modern England as it was to sixth century Italy.'

Can the Benedictine spirit even inspire and characterize a Church as such, In deed an entire communion of Churches? Several Anglican theologians respond affirmatively in reference to their own Communion. This article proposes to examine this thesis and to offer some Roman Catholic reflections about its ecumenical implications in general and some Benedictine thoughtsabout its challenge specifically to the Benedictine world.

A Church of Continuities

Most Roman Catholics probably still think of the Anglican Church (in the United States known as the Episcopal Church) as arising in the sixteenth century and as a direct consequence of certain marital problems of Henry VIII. But Anglicans themselves resolutely propose another conception of their Church quite different from this simpler interpretative model. John Macquarrie, for instance, one of the most influential of living Anglican theologians, [writing in 1970] affirms:

> 'Anglicanism has never considered itself to be a sect or denomination originating in the sixteenth century. It continues without a break the *Ecclesia Anglicana* founded by St Augustine thirteen centuries and more ago . . . Our present revered leader, Arthur Michael Ramsey, is reckoned the one hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, in direct succession to Augustine himself.' In this view, then, the Anglican Church was founded by St Augustine of Canterbury (a *monk,* it might be noted here, sent to England by the great monastic Pope Gregory I).

The Anglican Bishop Stephen Neill insists in the same way as Macquarrie upon this continuity of Anglicanism with the pre-reform Church in England, only he takes us back even further into the Celtic origins of Christianity in England; he writes: '

> The [Anglican] has never imagined that the Reformation was anything other than a Reformation. It was in no sense a new beginning. The English Churchman regards himself as standing in the fullest fellowship and continuity with Augustine and Ninian and Patrick and Aiden and Cuthbert and perhaps most of all, the most typically Anglican of all ancient saints, the Venerable Bede.'

Thus, the Anglican insists that if one wishes seriously to come to terms with Anglicanism, he is going to have to go back to its true roots and study Augustine, Ninian, Patrick, Aiden and Cuthbert (all of them

monks), and especially that most Benedictine of these founding fathers, also 'that most typically Anglican of all ancient saints, the Venerable Bede.'

The Anglican theologian Anthony Hanson notes that there is nothing particularly, new about this insistence on Anglican continuity with the pre-Reform Church: 'Anglican apologists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries constantly maintained that the Church of England was not a breakaway Church, like the Evangelical Church in Germany or the Reformed Church in France. It was the same continuous Catholic Church that had at the Reformation "washed its face."'

And the Roman Catholic scholar of Anglicanism George Tavard, citing Anglican theologians of the sixteenth century regarding the 'uninterrupted succession' of their sacraments, theology and faith, acknowledges that among the Anglican writers of that period 'this theme constantly recurs.' Thus, to the traditional polemical Roman Catholic query of' where was the Anglican Church before Henry VIII?' the Anglican pointedly responds:

> 'In England, where else?' And he proposes this response very sincerely, it should be noted, not as a rhetorical *Monastic Roots*

The first chapters of a typical Anglican history of the English Church are filled with towering monastic figures of Celtic Christianity: St Ninian, who brought a missionary form of monasticism to England before the end of the fourth century. St Germanus, who like Ninian was a disciple of the monasticism of St Martin of Tours, and who visited England in the fifth century: 'British Christianity, he found, was virtually indistinguishable from the fierce monasticism introduced from southern Gaul some time earlier.' Thus English Christianity already had a monastic spirit in the fifth century. St Patrick, an English youth carried off into slavery in Ireland who escaped to France and there lived under Germanus in the monastery of Auxerre for more than adecade. 'Consequently, when in 432 Pope Celestine sent him to Ireland, the Christianity he brought was rather exclusively monastic.' Thus Celtic Christianity, soon to spread to England in a very pronounced way, was
essentially monastic, the abbot ruling supreme even over bishops. St Columba, who in the seventh century crossed from Ireland into western Scotland, carried with him the heritage of Celtic monastic Christianity. He founded the famous missionary monastery of lona, and 'it was from this centre that most of the remaining districts of England were won to the Christian faith after the breakdown of Edwin's Christian kingdom in 632.'

Augustine had also written to Rome about his perplexity at the variety of liturgical forms and customs: 'Since we hold the same faith, why do customs vary in different Churches, why does the method of saying Mass differ in the holy Roman Church and in the Churches of Gaul?' Gregory's response, not what one might expect from Rome, is almost Anglican in its serene insistence on ecclesial pluralism:

> My brother, you are familiar with the usage of the Roman Church in which you were brought up. But if you have found customs, whether in the Church of Rome or of Gaul or of any other that may be more acceptable to God, I wish you to make a careful selection of them, and teach the Church of the English whatever you have been able to learn with profit from the various Churches... For things should not be loved for the sake of places, but places for the sake of good things.'

Anglican ecclesiology, with its biblical and Patristic cast, and nourished by its own experience as an international communion of autonomous Churches, tends 'to favour very strongly the recovery of the old vision of sister Churches within a single family.' If there is such a thing as a characteristically

monastic ecclesiology, it certainly tends in a similar way to stress the importance of local and regional Churches. The above text of the monk and pope who was so little concerned with centralization and *Romanitas* reflects this monastic-Anglican ecclesial perspective.

Augustine and his fellow missionary monks, following the directives of Gregory, not only founded monasteries and schools, but established parishes, dioceses and provinces, laying the very foundations of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* of the middle ages and of the post-Reform period.

Thus Gregory's monks evangelized the newly-arrived Anglo-Saxon peoples as the Celtic monks had evangelized their predecessors, so that these two fundamental roots of the English Church and nation both bear a clearly monastic stamp.

But one might pose the objection that if the specific topic of this article is the *Benedictine* spirit of Anglicanism, Celtic monasticism is not Benedictine, nor (as some scholars insist) is Gregorian monasticism. But it has been pointed out that the problem is somewhat anachronistic, since monasticism did not tend to accept a single rule as binding until the Carolingian reform, and the category 'Benedictine' appeared only many centuries after St Benedict and the *Rule*. St Columba and St Augustine would not have thought of themselves as 'Benedictine', it is true, but neither would St Bede, St Dunstan or St Anselm. They were simply monks seeking to live faithfully their particular monastic calling, in a spirit of kinship with their fellow monks who had preceded them. And such a sense of continuity and kinship, characteristic in general of monasticism, has a particularly solid 'objective' basis in the case of English monasticism, because Celtic and Gregorian monasticism were assimilated into later English 'Benedictine' experience through the synthesizing genius of the Venerable Bede.

Venerable Bede

The Anglican historian Bishop J. Moorman notes that Bede 'has rightly been called the "Father of English History"' and that his *History of the English Church and People* still remains the basis of modern knowledge of the English Church in the early period. And it was almost exclusively through Bede that the English Church of the middle ages and of the Reform had access to its origins.

St Benedict Biscop, the learned monastic founder of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the two abbeys in which Bede lived his entire monastic life, decided that these two houses should follow the *Rule of St Benedict*. Consequently, according to our modern religious categories, this monastic life was 'Benedictine'—but never in the exclusive sense, for 'it came to combine all that was best in the Benedictine and Celtic ideas of monasticism.'

Bede himself, in his *History,* enthusiastically championed the monastic and ecclesial forms brought to England by the monks of Pope Gregory, whom he venerated as the 'apostle' of the English Church. Rome. This is naturally an aspect of his contribution that is noted and appreciated by Anglicans, and that indicates, they argue, that it did not all begin with Henry VIII and Archbishop Cranmer.

Monasteries and monastic schools multiplied, and brilliant monastic Churchmen and theologians such as Anselm continued to emerge. Bishop Moorman notes that the monastic presence was not at all limited to the cloister or school, but often extended to the very heart of the Church diocese:

> 'Many monks subsequently became bishops, and England developed the curious custom, elsewhere practically unknown, of the "Cathedral priory" where the cathedral of a diocese was manned not by secular clerks but by professed monks. About half of the great cathedral

> churches in England were monastic, the prior and monks taking the place of the dean and canon.'

What the medievalist, Friedrich Herr, affirms of monasticism in the middle ages generally is thus true in a particular way in England: monasticism constituted 'the heart of the Church.' Thus Anglicanism, in insisting on its continuity with Norman, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic Christianity, all decisively characterized by the monastic experience, realizes that the formative years for the development of its spirituality, liturgy, theology and polity were monastic years.

The flowering of the monastic life continued into the 1100s; and as Bishop Moorman notes, the 'vast number of monastic houses founded in or about the twelfth century shows this type of life was highly valued.' Still, monasticism had reached its peak, and a general decline began. The foundation of the Franciscan, Dominican and other new orders, the new spirit of scholasticism, the Black Death, the monastic decadence linked to excessive wealth and many other complicated causes led to a notable decline in monastic vocations. By the beginning of the sixteenth century 'the great houses were half empty … the shell of English monasticism was too big for its body.' This is the general context of that drastic step of the dissolution of the monasteries. One of the principal authorities on the dissolution writes with vividness: 'In April 1536, at the end of the twenty-seventh year of the reign of King Henry VIII, there were, scattered throughout England and Wales, more than eight hundred religious houses, monasteries, nunneries and friaries, and in them there lived close on 10,000 monks, canons, nuns and friars. Four years later, in April 1540, there were none.' Of course, in the post-Reform period monasticism and the dissolution were often topics of controversy between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. All sides seem generally agreed now that, on the one hand, monasticism had seriously declined and, on the other, Henry and Cromwell were quite interested in the financial, and not just the moral and theological, implications of the suppression of the religious houses.

In any case, the fact of the dissolution obviously poses a major difficulty for the thesis of the fundamentally Benedictine spirit of Anglicanism; for if one accepts and defends this thesis, how is he to explain the fact that monasticism was the first thing to go at the moment of the Anglican Reform, and that Anglicanism was able to live on splendidly for centuries without any form of monasticism whatever?

Book of Common Prayer and Benedictine Spirit

The first part of the answer that many Anglicans and others propose regarding this objection is that monasticism was not just eliminated by the Reform. Rather, the essentials of the Benedictine spirit were rendered immediately accessible to the entire Church through the key and characteristic work of the Anglican Reform, the Book of Common Prayer. It is extremely important to note this decisive fact about the Anglican Reform: at its centre and guaranteeing its spirit stands not a towering reformer (a Luther, a Calvin), not a theological doctrine or a moral code—but a book of liturgical prayer. In this fundamental respect alone the Anglican reform has a clearly Benedictine spirit to it.

But quite beyond this, if one examines the basic principles that shape the Book of Common Prayer, note many Anglican writers, one will find that they are specifically Benedictine. Martin Thornton, for instance, argues that the spirituality of the *Rule* is built upon three key moments: the community Eucharist, the divine office, and personal prayer of a biblical-patristic-liturgical cast; but these same three elements, and in the same hierarchy of importance, also constitute the substance of the Book of Common Prayer. Thus, notes the same Thornton, 'from the point of view of ascetical theology, these two documents [the *Rule* and the Book of Common Prayer] have a remarkable amount in common, and in a very real sense, Caroline and modern England remains "the land of the Benedictines."'

Monks and Anglicans take these three principles rather for granted and tend to assume that they will constitute the three central moments of any Christian spirituality; but this, of course, is not the case. Indeed, they are so little evident to some Protestant traditions that, as Thornton points out, wars have been fought over them: 'Let it be remembered that the seventeenth-century battles between Puritan and Caroline churchmen were fought over the Prayer Book, especially over "set prayers." They were battles for and against Benedictine principles.'

The Anglican monk and spiritual theologian, Bede Thomas Mudge, notes that not only Protestantism deviated from this Benedictine-Anglican model, but also much of Roman Catholic spirituality in its later development, characterized by 'extra-liturgical devotions such as the Rosary and Benediction filling the needs of most lay-people.' This reflection poses for the Roman Catholic Benedictine the startling thought that perhaps Anglican spirituality is closer to his own experience than many forms of Roman Catholic spirituality. The Benedictine spirit is certainly at the root of the Anglican way of prayer, argues Dom Mudge, in a very special and pronounced manner:

> The example and influence of the Benedictine monastery, with its rhythm of divine office and Eucharist, the tradition of learning and 'lectio divina', and the family relationship among Abbot and community were determinative for much of English life, and for the pattern of English devotion. This devotional pattern persevered through the spiritual and theological upheavals of the Reformation. The Book of Common Prayer . . . the primary spiritual source-book for Anglicans . . . continued the basic monastic pattern of the Eucharist and the divine office as the principal public forms of worship, and Anglicanism has been unique in this respect.

Roman Catholic Benedictines who have tried to encourage lay groups to pray the psalms as a regular basis for their spiritual life know how arduous that pastoral effort can prove. Thus we should admire the more 'Cranmer's work of genius in condensing the traditional scheme of hours into the two Prayer Book offices of matins and evensong.' Peter Anson (Roman Catholic) and A. W. Campbell (Anglican), in their classical study of religious communities in the Anglican Communion, note that the Anglican Church as such is thus a kind of generalized monastic community in that 'the Book of Common Prayer preserved the foundations of Christian monastic prayer, but simplified it in such a way that ordinary lay folk could share in this type of worship.'

Since Benedictine spirituality was rendered accessible to the Anglican faithful through the Book of Common Prayer, this monastic form of prayer inevitably tended to stimulate a desire for monasticism in its specific form; as Anson and Campbell note: 'The Book of Common Prayer retained the framework of choral worship; a method of prayer which could only find its most perfect development in communities of men and women who were free to give up much of their time to ordered worship in common.'

Indeed, already in the seventeenth-century great Anglican spokesmen such as John Bramhall, Archbishop of Armagh, were lamenting the dissolution of the monasteries:

> First, we fear that covetousness had a great oar in the boat, and that sundry of the principal actors had a greater aim at the *goods* of the Church than at the *good* of the Church... Secondly, we examine not whether the abuses which were then brought to light were true or feigned; but this we believe, that foundations, which were good in their original institution ought not to be destroyed for accessory abuses... I do not see why monasteries might not agree well enough with reformed devotion.

And another great seventeenth-century divine wrote even more pointedly that 'seeing that [monastic life] is a perfection to Christianity, it is certainly a blot on the Reformation when we profess that we are without it.'

Anglican divines such as Cosin, Herbert, Laud, Taylor and others produced a whole literature of personal and liturgical prayer that enriched Anglican spirituality even more and recovered additional elements of the monastic heritage. This rich spiritual atmosphere nourished one of the most extraordinary experiences of quasi-monastic life, that of Little Gidding. Nicholas Ferrar and his extended family of about thirty in the first part of the seventeenth-century dedicated themselves to a community and liturgical life in a very intensive way indeed; and 'like the majority of medieval choir monks and nuns, the community knew the entire Book of Psalms by heart.' With the death of Ferrar and the intensification of the Puritan wars, the Little Gidding experience had to be abandoned some twenty years after its foundation; but its deep contemplative spirit proved to have a very great influence on devout Anglicans such as George Herbert and Isaac Walton, up to T. S. Eliot in our own time.

During the rest of the seventeenth, and throughout the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, there were regular Anglican proposals for there establishment of the monastic life. 'Again and again,' note Anson and Campbell, 'we come across instances of writers deploring the lack of monastic institutions in the Church of England.' These two scholars of Anglican monasticism trace these proposals through sixteen pages of their study, and the compendium of authors cited includes some of the most notable figures of Anglicanism in these centuries: John Evelyn, Dean William Sancroft, Bishop Thomas Ken, William Law, Bishop George Berkeley, Dr Samuel Johnson, and Poet Laureate Robert Southey.
In July of 1833 John Keble preached the famous Oxford sermon that according to Newman and others marked the beginning of the great Anglo-Catholic renewal. In the context of this movement there was a whole explosion of monastic-religious foundations that restored the specifically monastic experience to the Anglican Communion.

Of course, there are specifically Benedictine houses in the Anglican Communion, such as Nashdom Abbey in England and St Gregory's Abbey in Michigan, for monks, St Mary's Abbey and the Priory of our Lady, in England, for nuns and others. But what about the spirituality that characterizes the other numerous communities and congregations, such as the Society of St John the Evangelist, the Community of the Resurrection, the Society of the Sacred Mission, the Order of the Holy Cross?

Dom Bede Thomas Mudge notes that to overcome anti-Catholic suspicions, 'the first communities went out of their way to justify their existence by a great devotion of works of charity: social work with the poor, the operation of 'penitentaries' for wayward women, and nursing were favourite occupations.' One thinks of certain analogies with the actively-orientated Benedictine communities of monks and sisters in America. But, notes Mudge regarding the Anglicans (and here also one can note the parallel):

> While the works of the early communities were important and needed, it was the spiritual and communal life which drew applicants, and in this atmosphere the basically monastic pattern of Anglican spirituality, which had survived three centuries after the Reformation, had its inevitable effect. No matter how active the apostolate of the community, the corporate recitation of a full form of the Office was present in all of the communities from the very start… It is an unusual Anglican community which has not had as part of its tradition the singing of the Office to the plainsong melodies, a good deal of corporate silence, and a tradition of the cultivation of an intense devotional life, based on Scriptural and Patristic sources. The traditional emphasis on monastic learning and writing also appeared.

Thus, in the context of a wide variety of foundations and apostolates, 'the pattern has, in fact, remained surprisingly consistent and true to traditional monastic roots.' And in the recent wave of religious renewal,

which has swept over Anglican communities as it has Roman Catholic, the Anglican tendency has been precisely to intensify the monastic identity, moving beyond certain Victorian forms of religiosity:

> Having often begun on an active pattern, the communities have gradually developed a more traditionally monastic life, and this has been done as the result of a consensus of the members of the community . . . few people have entered the communities without some leaning, at least, towards monastic observances. This has caused the outward forms of the recent renewal to appear conservative by Roman Catholic standards . . . Anglican religious have, for the most part, deliberately chosen the observances of traditional monasticism and are not eager to be rid of them.

The thesis of Mudge is that almost all Anglican religious communities have a basically monastic, Benedictine spirit in them, simply because they are Anglican and thus inheritors of a precise spiritual (Benedictine) tradition:

> Not infrequently these days, Anglican religious are invited to meetings of Roman Catholic religious, and often asked to describe their community. Normally the reply is that there is no exact counterpart to our life in the Roman Catholic Church... But when asked to describe the life in detail, more than once the reply has been 'Oh, you're Benedictine, of course'... It is a pattern that has been inherited from a nation whose monks, scholars, teachers, historians, rulers, missionaries and martyrs were often either Benedictines themselves or under direct Benedictine influence, and the pattern has proved surprisingly stable, through the changes and reforms of many generations.

Some Ecumenical Implications

The thesis of the basically Benedictine spirit of the Anglican Community in general, and of Anglican religious communities specifically, obviously constitutes a healthy challenge for Roman Catholics, and especially for Roman Catholic Benedictines. It means that there is a basic common experience underlying Anglican and Roman Catholic spirituality; since monasticism predates our divisions, it constitutes a kind of 'ecumenical anamnesis' that makes present and living a shared heritage, and also opens up fresh horizons for ecumenical hope and commitment.

Certainly Benedictines have played a key role in the development of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue from the very beginning. Dom Leander, President of the English Congregation of Benedictines and Prior of Douai in the seventeenth century, was the first of a series of papal agents sent to England to explore possibilities of dialogue; his intuitive understanding of Anglicanism has received warm praise from Anglican ecumenical scholars.

Closer to our own time, Dom Lambert Beauduin of Chevetogne, founder of the ecumenical review *Irenikon,* opened up new possibilities for the dialogue with his decisive paper 'The Anglican Church, United not Absorbed,' read by Cardinal Mercier at the pioneering Malines Conversations. On the Anglican side, the ecumenist Dom Benedict Ley and the liturgist Dom Gregory Dix, both of Nashdom Abbey, contributed notably to the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.

But beyond specific personalities, Anglicans have noted that the Benedictine commitment to the liturgical renewal and to a more Christ-centred, biblical and Patristic approach to Christian life contributed significantly to preparing the way for Vatican II, which has narrowed the gap between Anglicans and Roman Catholics to an extent 'not even the most sanguine could have foreseen.' Of course, monastic contacts and exchanges have multiplied since the Council, and organizations such as the Fellowship of St Gregory and St Augustine are dedicated to promoting permanent contact at the monastic and also parish levels.

The three theological documents published by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) indicate substantial theological accord regarding many areas of the faith. The Roman Catholic ecumenist, Jean Tillard, has argued that the next step must be 'a spiritual coming together . . . the reunion of two separated churches is not a mechanical process. And it cannot be the result only of theological discussions and official authoritative decisions. It is primarily a spiritual matter.'

If this 'spiritual coming together' is the key to further progress, what if (as suggested by this article) Roman Catholic Benedictines *already share* a common fundamental spiritual experience not only with Anglican Benedictines, but also with the Anglican family as such? If such were the case, both 'sides' would want to deepen their awareness of this sharing and its important ecumenical implications.
The centrality of the Eucharist and the Word, the importance of praying the Psalms in community, the need to give personal prayer a solid biblical-patristic-liturgical nourishment—all these elements lead to an experience of Christian spirituality for which the emphasis is communitarian and familial, notes Thornton. Dom Bede Thomas Mudge likewise insists on this theme of domestic community:

> There has also been found in traditional Anglican piety a distinct strain of 'homeliness' as it is sometimes called. A warm, tolerant human devotion based on loving persuasion rather than fiery oratory is part of the Anglican temper. Historically, the Anglican clergy ... have been very much part of the domestic scene in the villages and parishes where they have served, and have often been loved and revered. The Anglican liturgical calendar has more commemorations of faithful pastors, such as George Herbert, than of fiery missionaries, and even Anglican martyrs have commonly been of gentle disposition. Anglicanism has always been more attracted by the image of the Church as family, rather than militia, and the similarity evoked to a community of monks, living as a family, under an abbot who leads them as a father, is not accidental.

It is important to reflect deeply on this shared experience of Christian community, for it might constitute the substance of that communion, of the *koinonia* which is the very goal of the ecumenical movement.

The *koinonia* theme has become central for the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. In the recent ARCIC statement on authority, for instance, *koinonia* is one of the key terms which keeps emerging to explain the precise context and scope of Church authority.

The *koinonia* ideal is treasured in a particular way by the Anglican Communion, which has always understood itself not primarily as a juridical entity or *societas,* bound together by canon law, doctrines and organs of authority, but rather as a bond of the faithful, as a sacramental-liturgical communion of sister Churches.

But of course Benedictine and monastic life is also essentially *koinonia,* recalling the ideal of the apostolic community as presented in the Acts of the Apostles. St Pachomius, father of monastic cenobitic life, and his disciples referred to monastic life simply as 'holy *koinonia.'*

Anglican and Roman Catholic Benedictines already share the substance of this 'holy *koinonia,'* and thus constitute in a real sense a little vanguard of the ecumenical movement. But quite beyond this, it would seem that Roman Catholic Benedictines share the substance of their experience of Christian community with the faithful of the entire Anglican Communion. This shared experience would qualify monks for a special mediating function, that of tendering Anglicanism more available to the Roman Catholic brethren, on the one hand, and explaining certain aspects of Roman Catholic life to Anglicans, on the other.

But before undertaking these special functions, the first task facing Roman Catholic Benedictines is simply to deepen their awareness of this shared *koinonia* with Anglicans, to live profoundly this communion so that it can bear its own special fruit. One obvious component of such a growing process is *study;* monks can become more familiar with the three ARCIC documents and with the basic Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical literature, which is not impossibly extensive. The study of Anglican spiritual writers and theologians can, as Thomas Merton has noted, be of great benefit for Roman Catholic monks, not just for their ecumenical preparation but for their monastic and Christian growth.

Another important component of this growth in awareness is *hospitality,* an intrinsic part of Benedictine life. The monastery can receive individual Anglicans or parish or monastic groups, offering monastic space for retreats, conferences, etc. Such ecumenical hospitality is already fairly widespread in America, but it can certainly be even more utilized as a key means for developing Anglican-Benedictine contact at the inter-personal and grassroots level. Monks can also (depending on the particular observance of their own house) reciprocate these visits, and themselves call upon neighbouring Episcopal parishes and Episcopal religious communities.
As contacts grow, it might become possible to offer an ecumenical *witness* through joint social, pastoral or mission work, depending on the specific situation of the monastery and of the Episcopal group.

When an ecumenical relationship has sufficiently matured, the Roman Catholic monastery might consider entering into a *'covenant'* rapport with an Episcopal religious community or parish; such covenants permit a deeper, more stable communion and commitment to develop.

The chief means of growing in communion, and also its principal fruit, will certainly be the *fellowship of prayer,* in the fuller sense of praying for one another and also praying *with* one another, at least on some occasions. Apart from the delicate question of eucharistic sharing, Benedictines have special possibilities of praying with Anglicans, because the monastic hours of Lauds and Vespers (after the Roman Catholic adoption of the vernacular) are so similar to the Episcopal services of morning and evening prayer that each community can feel quite at home in the context of the liturgy of the other.

Every aspect of community prayer has its ecumenical sense: prayer of petition can focus on the unity we seek which will be primarily the *gift* of Christ's Spirit and not the result of our bargaining and diplomacy; such ecumenical prayer is also prayer of contrition, recognition of our grave sins, especially of omission, that have caused and now maintain the divisions of Christ's people; prayer of commitment is also involved, which pledges our time and energy in this work of reunion in diversity; and such prayer is, finally, prayer of hope and praise and thanksgiving, in recognition of all God's gifts to his various communities in the past and of the marvellous grace of full reconciliation which awaits us.

The basic bond of the Anglican Communion is, and always has been, community prayer; this is also true of the Benedictine family. As we pray for and with each other in the unity of Christ, we rediscover what we are and experience what we shall be.

Dom. Robert Hale is a Camaldolese Benedictine monk at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California. At the time this article was published in 1980 in the English journal Christian (Vol. 5 No. 3)*, he was prior of a joint monastery with the Anglican Order of the Holy Cross. The article is reproduced here by the kind permission of Fr. Hale.*