THE HEALING MASS: FIELDS AND REGIMES OF IRISH CATHOLICISM

Cet article présente une étude de cas à propos du catholicisme irlandais contemporain en milieu rural. Il propose une théorie et une méthode à caractère ethnographique susceptible de combler l'espace entre micro et macro-analyse, visant à explorer la religion locale.

Tout en concentrant son attention sur des « cérémonies religieuses » l'auteur met à jour le monde changeant des « champs d'expérience religieuse » locaux. Ceux-ci trouvent leurs articulations les plus importantes non seulement dans les rituels mais aussi dans des discours qui se disputent l'autorité culturelle, non seulement à l'échelon local mais aussi à l'échelon national, voire international. Ainsi, ces espaces de signification en devenir peuvent prétendre eux aussi à un avenir politique, à titre d'« habitus » de modalités religieuses spécifiques.

I. — INTRODUCTION

It was still light when the bus pulled out of Killybegs and headed east over the last range of rugged, brown hills of Southwest Donegal. Before us the gentler, greener, rolling lands stretched away from the street villages of Dunkineely, Mount Charles, Inver, and Donegal Town. As the bus turned north onto the broader road that leads through Barnesmore Gap and on toward Derry, the women's chatting began to subside. They had been talking, as they would at any social gathering, of family matters. The sky had darkened and Fiona, the young woman who had organized the trip, sent word forward that the rosary would now begin. With the smoothness of habit, young and old fished beads from handbags and launched into the first five decades. "Hail Mary, full of Grace..." rose from the back rows of the bus and then the response... "Holy Mary, Mother of God..." resounding from the front. Ten decades, glorious and sorrowful, brought us through the more prosperous looking East Donegal market towns of Ballybofey and Stranorlar, across into the Diocese of Derry and, finally, through the gates of Castlefinn parish churchyard.

The journey, from the poor, Gaelic west of Donegal to the more fertile and anglicized East of the country, was one that many generations of their ancestors had made before them. Their grandfathers and mothers had been on their way to "hiring fairs", seeking to supplement the meager family incomes eked out of six rocky acres and a cow on the mountain through seasonal work on the larger and typically Protestant farms further east. This time the destination was a "Healing Mass" — a recent charismatic addition to the regional religious scene which had for some time been drawing mini-bus loads to its well advertized monthly

Southwest Donegal is a peninsula, several hundred square miles in extent, jutting into the Atlantic from the northwest corner of Ireland. Its bogs and mountains, and few, small, fertile glens, are home to some ten thousand souls living in mountain farms, small valley hamlets, street towns, and, on its eastern verge, the bustling fishing port of Killybegs. Although several thousand Protestants lived in this area up until the 1920s, the population is now almost entirely Roman Catholic. Most of the people still do at least a little of the traditional subsistence farming that has sustained them over the years, supplemented by sheep-keeping, some fishing, factory work, much social welfare, and, lately, renewed emigration. As elsewhere in Ireland, the Catholic Church plays a vital and visible role in the economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual life of the region. Lately, however, the Church there, as elsewhere, is in a certain state of flux, which manifests itself most clearly in just such unusual but not extraordinary events as the "Healing Mass".

The current status of the Roman Catholic Church and faith in Ircland is a matter of some disputation. Popular commentators of the 1960s and 70s were prone to announce the final erosion of the monolithic, ascendant Church. Whether they greeted the change with joy, relief, or dismay, few questioned the final arrival and growing hegemony of the forces of secularism. A number of more recent events, however, have cast some doubt on that perception. The success of the referendum making abortion unconstitutional and the subsequent failure of another referendum proposing a very limited legalization of divorce, demonstrated the existence of an apparently vigorous, and at least temporarily successful, resistence to the onslaught of "paganism" or "enlightment", depending on your point of view.

But Catholicism was not only asserting itself on the legislative front in the form of a new "moral majority". Statues of Mary moved all over Ircland, to the amusement of many and the consternation of some, including much of the clergy. This is a manifestation of an altogether different sort of religiosity, but one which cannot be dismissed as irrelevant because it does not conform to the "legalistic" stereotype to be found in much critical commentary on the Church. A respectable, rule-following Catholicism is certainly evident in both the behavior and world view of many, perhaps especially middle class, Irish Catholics. Yet there are more ways of being Catholic in Ireland than such a model imagines, and the religious meanings and experience which characterize the various forms of Irish religiosity are not accessible to statistical surveys: to date almost the only method with which social scientists have attempted to plumb those particular depths.

The ethnographic approach to Irish Catholicism taken here makes a very different contribution to our understanding, offering a tightly focused view of a particular "religious occasion:" in this case the "Healing Mass", for which the

above bus riders are bound. Such a perspective is more likely to penetrate into the structure of experience in such settings, and in the process may do something to reveal the complexity underlying the superficial appearance of uniformity. The Healing Mass, when put into context, also offers an opportunity to use a feature of local Irish religious culture to understand the ways in which the Catholic Church, and indeed other religious bodies, build both institutions and experience. The Healing Mass is, after all, a political event within the Church, and potentially part of a larger political-religious process.

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The bus ride serves as a metaphor for the personal and social construction of experience, for the changing circumstances of both the terrain and one's life. In another sense, however, it is more than a metaphor, for it is often the bus in its absolute mundane reality that takes people as individuals and in groups from one occasion to another, from one experience to another. The women on the busride to the Healing Mass are cases in point. As I later found out, they were bound from, and hence to, significantly different religious experiences.

There were women, like Fiona, who not only attended weekly and even daily Mass at their home churches, but who were regular attenders at a local Charismatic prayer meeting. Margaret, another woman on the same bus, although equally punctilious in her regular Mass attendance, considered such prayer meetings "over the top" — emotionally excessive and doctrinally suspicious fanaticism. For her, the excursion to the Healing Mass was the latest in a series of trips to usually more established religious shows: the Vigil at Knock (a Marian shrine), for example, or the recent "parish mission" conducted by members of the Redemptorist Order in her home town. She might well bring her personal "intentions" to such occasions, but in seeking, for example, a possible cure for her arthritis, she was not anticipating a reconstruction of self, like Fiona had and was experiencing. Then there was Una, who had come down into Killybegs from a mountainy farm in the next parish west. For her it was not the Mass, but the presiding priest, Father Heaney, that drew her to undertake the voyage. Raised with stories of the miraculous curing power of certain priests. Una had heard that this strange cleric from the North of the County might be possessed of "the cure". She sought his efficacious touch and prayers.

interpretive frameworks are generated and shared. The bus trip to the Healing Mass is only one stage in a longer journey, or, rather, in two journeys. The first is Fiona will move in the direction of Una's sort of religiosity. The charismatic movement, whether it succeeds or fails, is coming into being at this historic and perspectives, I do not wish to overstress the idiosyncrasy of the individual. No always a charismatic, three years ago she would have shared more in perspective Such personal movements are not, however, purely personal, for there is also the much longer journey — the historical process in which the personal movements of these women join the flow of decades and centuries of development in the Irish Catholic Church. It is extremely unlikely, for example, that either Margaret or In depicting the difference among these three women's religious experiences doubt every person on the bus was to some extent unique in this respect. What is processes with which anthropology is concerned, are the ways in which such the life historical voyage of these women and their neighbors. Fiona was not with Margaret, less with Una. Either Una or Margaret might become a charismatic prayer group member, though I suspect from different points of entree. more interesting and more important for understanding the social and cultural juncture, Una's folk religion is not.

Attention to such religious occasions as the Healing Mass thus reveals an important variation beneath the veneer of apparent rural Irish Catholic conformity: a variation that betokens not only individual differences but historical process. These women are all believing and very much practicing Catholics living not more than a dozen miles apart in the northwest corner of their Island nation, yet they dwell to some extent in different "fields of religious experience" (1). These "fields" comprise, not so much distinctive rituals or even beliefs (at least in some senses of that slippery term), as distinctive, shared interpretive framework embraced by loosely bounded groups of people. "Fields of religious experience", so defined, may be attributes of ethnic, regional, or class segments of larger societies, or any social group capable of maintaining a shared and distinctive interpretation of things religious. Although such "fields" may, and typically do, involve a number of characteristic rituals, these may not be the exclusive property of those within a single religious field, but may instead be shared by members of very different "degrees" of belief, but also distinct "fields" of religious experience—interpretive frameworks shared by groups within the assembled crowd. Even the Sunday Mass can be a different sort of experience for the equally religious "charismatic" and "folk" communicants.

Although groups and individuals from different "fields" may be present at a number of the same religious occasions, there are often specific occasions which stand at the center rather than at the edge of a field, and which thus serve as vital opportunities for the definitive expression of the interpretive framework of that "field". That expression may be in the form of discourse—key terms, distinctions, oppositions, and associations—which, when charged with emotional force at such dramatic occasions as prayer meetings, for example, can then be invoked in other contexts. The key expressions may also be in more purely symbolic forms, involving images and actions. A new religious field within Catholicism, or any other complex religious system, is born not so much through the invention of new language or symbols, as through novel combinations or reappropriations, or through importing language and/or images from other spheres.

By introducing the notion of "fields of religious experience", I wish to move away from the too simple folk/orthodox distinction which still dominates much anthropological and historical thinking and writing on local European religion. Like other uses of the work "folk", folk religion implies a local uniformity of belief and practice relatively undisturbed by change over considerable periods of time. Anthropologists and historians writing on this topic have followed Bossy (1970) in interpreting the contemporary opposition of folk and orthodox religion in various corners of Europe as the latest stage of a process begun at the Council of Trent. That is to say, the Counter-Reformation Church extended its hegemony through a concerted attack on the local communal aspects of religion in favor of those which stress individual salvation. Thus devotional acts are interpreted in this processual political context. While this position does make sense of much to explain resurgent religious movements, nor diversity of local religious experience and hehavior among the "folk". It also seems to ignore the fact — well argued by Christian (1981) — that individualism, in the form of votive seeking after cures and favors if not salvation, has for very long been a central concern of most "folk".

Mart Bax (1987) has added an important element to this perspective by attending to some of the complexity of local devotional history, Marian apparitions for example, and the lack of unilinear development in the institutional Church. He interprets devotional movements, not as resurgences of localism, but as manipulated from above by competing "religious regimes" within the Catholic Church. Bax reminds us that there has been more than one institutional group vying for dominance in the Catholic Church, and that monastic orders, for example, might promote devotional activities which gain followings at the expense of competing diocesan clergy. This model is again political, but politics from the top down. Meaning is reduced to a simple, direct product of political manipulation. From this perspective the current Marian apparition at Medjugorje, of which we will hear more below, is simply a Franciscan plot.

or create the settings and occasions which are compelling enough to lead people into potentially new patterns of experience and behavior. Such regimes are more which anthropology may be best equipped to explore. If religious regimes, as Bax himself argues, are trying to gain adherents through shaping their devotional lives, then they are competing in the realm of meaning. They must either capture ning are intimately related, and religion serves political goals, meaning is sought and created for other reasons as well. As Christian's (1981) work on XVIth century experience and emotions to bear are most powerful. Although power and meaand symbols which are ambiguous enough to allow individuals to bring their own congregants. That is to say, the real emotional force necessary for conversion, or at European Catholic Church, they leave unaddressed precisely the questions dence, to make symbols and actions emotionally compelling. misfortune. It is these circumstances which seem, from the ethnographic compelling needs created not only by communalism but by group and individual gained them much without the deeply rooted local devotion to relics, fueled by the Spain well illustrates, Jesuit ownership and distribution of relics would not have practice) has ultimately to come from the individuals in attendance, and rituals least substantial change of religious experience (rather than simple continuing "creative space" for the active participation rather than passive adherence of likely to be successful in this enterprise when they leave what we might call While such political theories certainly shed light on much of the history of

The insights of symbolic analysis, which seek to get at the compelling nature of the religious occasion, need not be abandoned in order to see the role of such occasions in large-scale historical, political configurations. Analysis of such occasions as the "Healing Mass" in terms of fields of religious experience offers a way to re-connect the problems of religious experience and religious politics. We can, on the one hand, achieve a fuller description of the phenomenology of local religion, of the ways in which locals interpret such occasions, either fitting them into an intact field or beginning to learn a new framework for interpreting their religious lives: a new field of religious experience. On the other hand, this approach can also illuminate the relation of such experience to the historical and political dimension of religious systems. Religious belief and experience, as Weber (1963) argued at length, are intimately related to the power and authority of churches. This fact is apparent through even a short-term view of such occasions as the Healing Mass (and its possible place in the charismatic movement in the Catholic Church). A longer historical view, however, makes it even clearer that fields of religious experience are neither static nor disconnected from the political dimension of churches. They have histories, and are often linked to Bax's (1987) "religious regimes".

The Healing Mass treated here can thus be viewed as a "border occasion" — in a geographical as well as conceptual sense. It stands, like a beacon, at the verge of the charismatic field of religious experience, drawing pilgrims from the west. It is a prime example of how a religious regime promulgates itself through the promotion of just such "border" occasions, attracting adept and novis alike. More accessible than the prayer meeting (for reasons that will emerge in the course of our exploration of the event), it is more likely to draw people by degree into a new discourse. In so doing, the Mass both taps and creates power, building new institutions as well as new religious world views.

II. – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to interpret the meaning of the Healing Mass for the participants, and assess its role in existing or emerging religious regimes, we need first to trace the historical developments whereby the present state of Irish Catholicism — and its specific regional incarnation — was constituted. Having indulged in a necessarily brief and schematic survey of the recent history of Irish religious regimes, we can then profitably return to the Healing Mass and its place in the contemporary scene.

Historians and sociologists have certainly recognized the fact of religious change in Ireland over the past several hundred years, although they dispute the timing and precise nature of those transformations. The "devotional revolution", described by Larkin (1972) for the middle decades of the XIXth century, despite the arguments put forward by critics (2) concerning exactly what was "revolutionary" and where and when these transformations took place, is a useful way of referring to what was undoubtedly a general process of religious change. As Larkin's work points out, the changes were political as well as devotional, involving the development of a religious regime as well as new fields of religious experience.

The religious regime in question was diocesan, and its dominance in Ireland can be traced, ironically enough, to the Penal Law days of the XVIIIth century, during which the religious orders suffered a blow from which they were not to recover (see Fenning, 1972). Although the diocesan structure was also crippled, as Inglis (1987) notes, by the end of the century the British government finally saw the advantage of a strong Catholic Church which might achieve, if not the conversion, than at least the "embourgeoisement" and/or pacification of the peasantry. It may be further supposed that the English preferred an episcopally dominated Catholic regime, less thoroughly connected to the power centers of Catholic Europe than were the religious orders. The establishment in 1795 of a state-supported national seminary at Maynooth, outside Dublin, provided an Irish center for the training of a secular clergy. This academy soon supplied curates as well as parish priests to most parishes. By 1829, when legislation finally removed all remaining legal impediments to the practice of Catholicism in Ireland, the bishops, all secular rather than regular clergy, and many Maynooth trained, were firmly in place. As Inglis points out (1987), their rule was both symbolized and effected through the building of churches throughout the country.

The diocesan regime was firmly established and centralized with the accession of Archbishop, later Cardinal, Paul Cullen, who brought an iron hand and

ultramontanism to the Irish church. The Religious Orders offered little in the way of alternative religious regimes. Rather, the central dialectic of the church was between the dominant ultramontanism of Cullen and his party, and the Gallican leanings of several bishops, most notably Archbishop McHale of Tuam. This opposition was political, having to do with the degree of direct control over the Irish church to be enjoyed by the Vatican, but it also had its cultural side, which brings us to the matter of fields of religious experience.

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Like the Counter-Reformation, the "devotional revolution" of XIXth century Ireland was aimed at the firm establishment of a religious regime. The later movement was, however, far more able to penetrate into local fields of religious experience. From a Weberian perspective, the Maynooth-trained diocesan clergy were poised to accomplish the transition from "magical" to "ethical" religious belief and practice. A step along the historical road toward rationalization, for Weber that transition was also a means by which true priestly domination was achieved. Indeed, the devotional revolution seems a classic case of the institutionalization of charisma. The weekly Mass became the central ritual in a religious field dominated by a discourse and iconography which affirmed the power of the Church as institution.

its own discourse, adding to the standard Victorian world view an idiom of opposition to the British which extolled the virtues of an oppressed Catholic field of religious experience characterizing the provincial middle class Irish Catholics. New settings and occasions — for example, missions, new devopeasantry even as it praised the growth of a Catholic world empire (4). It is within this nexus of language, settings, and occasions that we may locate the emerging Elias (1978, 1982) concept of "Civilizing Process" to this transformation of what the French would call the mentalité of the devotionally revolutionized Irish (3). inglis argues that the role of late XIXth and early XXth century local clergy was Catholic, the Church offered a model for respectability not unlike the English one. Ironically, in this respect Irish middle class "civil" Catholicism out-victorianed the Victorians. The "secret life" of such Irish men and women, if there was state and sensibility were learned and acted out in particular settings and occasions - both sacred and secular - such as schoolrooms, parlors or churches. In the Irish Catholic case, these culturally charged settings were much enhanced by the elaborate rituals of the Church. Irish Catholicism also provided Sociologist Tom Inglis (1987) has pointed out the applicability of Norbert crucial in providing models of middle class civility combined with a strong attention to bodily self-control. For the middle class or aspiring middle class Irish one, awaits discovery. As in other Victorian cultural formations, psychological tions -were experienced and interpreted from within this framework.

What, however, of the peasantry? Even in areas like Southwest Donegal, new, bigger, and far more expensive churches replaced the thatched huts or open shelters in the course of the XIXth century, providing the institutional setting for the "devotional revolution". Well provided with priests, the peasantry in these remote areas now began to attend Mass regularly and in great numbers. They too were introduced to the revival and expansion of devotional practices then popular on the continent. Under these conditions, the clergy achieved considerable success in imposing both social control and priestly domination. It is clear, however, that the religious field (as we have defined the term) of a considerable portion of the local populace in many areas remained, if not resistant, at least creatively adaptive in the face of the official church. In southwest

peripheral language in Bakhtin's (1963) terms, was not after all hostile to the dominant religious regime. The civilizing force of the Church was aimed at social control — quelling riotous, drunken, and beligerent behavior (see Connolly, magico-religious approaches to healing. In Donegal, for example, priests with reputations for drinking have been, and still are to some extent sought out for their curing powers (Taylor, 1990). Even such intrusive institutional Church occasions as Redemptorist missions might be incorporated in a local religious occasions and rituals from their own point of view. Yet the folk discourse, a chapels to regular mass attendance at the parish church. Clearly, however, this are stories, for example, about the shift from worship at ruined and roofless threat; quite the contrary. The local religion only served to infuse them with a magical charisma they might have otherwise lost in the course of their rise to world view which stresses the accessible healing powers of extraordinary events than others, doing little, for example, to affect Holy Well devotions, or the various Within the local clergy, some priests were far more accepting of local heterodoxy tary or archaeological evidence, but in the collective memory of the people. There portrayed them as powerful shamans as well as priests, such heterodoxy posed no point of view of the clergy, on the other hand, in so far as local religious fields 1982) - far more than at attacking unorthodox belief and practice. From the the Church (at least as locally perceived), and the people interpreted Church (Taylor, 1989). In all this, there seems to have been accommodation on both sides. religious forms and perspectives. The process was far more dynamic than that process was not one in which folk religious practices were simply replaced by new Donegal those shifts have left a residue not only in occasional pieces of documeninstitutional domination, The clergy co-opted a variety of folk practices, thus institutionalizing them within

The absence of any politically organized alternative religious regime, and indeed of any viable competing ideology, no doubt contributed to elerical complacency in these matters. The old religious orders were far too weak to pose any sort of threat, and the new preaching orders, such as the Redemptorists, entered Ireland under the auspices of Cullen and mainly served to augment the power of diocesan clergy rather than challenge it. There were of course conflicts among bishops, and between prelates and unruly priests, but the fact that most bishops had risen through pastoral ranks and that large class divisions did not separate the two groups as they did in many continental churches, served to limit the nature of such disruptions. Thus, the disparity between fields of religious experience was tolerable, since no rival religious regime could capitalize on the disjunction, as was frequently the case on the continent (5).

This situation prevailed through the middle of the present century. Even independence and the formation of an Irish state did not appreciably lessen the idiom of opposition which had for so long dominated religious/moral discourse. The cultural identity of Catholic Ircland was still "at risk" — besieged by forces, if not of ascendent Protestantism, then of materialism, paganism, and communism. As for the idiom of Empire, Catholic triumphalism continued to prosper in the age of radio, achieving a zenith in the massive celebration of the Eucharistic Congress in 1932. The new Irish state was content to allow the Church a dominant role in health and education, and the hierarchy was generally perceived to have the last word on all issues defined as moral.

In such outlying areas as Southwest Donegal, the transition to and growth of the new Irish polity only served to strengthen the secular power of the local elergy,

who were unreflectively accepted as the leaders and representatives of their parish constituencies. Even modernization, in the form of running water and electricity, sometimes arrived through the real or apparent agency of the parish priests many of whom, in the late 1950s, turned on the lights throughout the West of Ireland. Devotionally, hierarchy and diocesan clergy continued to dominate all religious fields, revitalizing the Marian cult in the 1950s, and steadily promoting Knock as an international pilgrimage site.

It was only in the 1960s that a combination of circumstances began to threaten this single-regime Catholic hegemony. Under the leadership of Sean Lemass the Irish state began to pursue an international modernizing policy even as Dublin began to grow at the expence of rural areas. These social and cultural shifts coincided with the Church reforms of Vatican II. The received wisdom dates the decline in Church power in Ireland from this period, or at least did so until the recent success of the constitutional abortion, and failure of the divorce, referenda. The decline in measurable religious practice is relative, however, and the Irish are still among the most observant Catholics in the world. There is no doubt, however, that critical voices are heard far more openly today than ever before. The media in particular, as Inglis (1987) points out, challenge the Church's "moral monopoly". The state, on the other hand, especially in the face of huge financial difficulties, is unlikely to attempt to wrest control of either education or health from the Church.

The reforms of Vatican II, issuing no doubt from the Churches difficulties elsewhere in the world, have had a decisive impact on both the ritual structure and discourse of Catholicism in Ircland. New religious forms and language have been imported from abroad, and the resulting ferment has led to the formation of a variety of quite different fields of religious experience. In so far as the diocesan elergy may not dominate these fields, they represent the potential bases of alternative religious regimes. The Charismatic Renewal is one such field, and looked to be quite popular among the expanding urban middle class when it arrived from America in the mid-70s. In the last few years this movement has arrived at the edge of Southwest Donegal, representing a new phase in the ongoing dialetic we have been discussing throughout this paper. Let us then return to the "Healing Mass" and attempt to assess what it means for local fields of religious experience and the formation of regimes in Irish Catholicism.

The Healing Mass

The mood was exuberant as we disembarked from our minibus and walked into the as yet uncrowded church. The service would not begin for another half hour or so, and the congregants, mostly women, busied themselves renewing acquaintances and surveying the scene. There was a clearly visible difference between regular attenders and newcomers — a considerable proportion of the crowd. When the service began, and especially later on as events grew increasingly unconventional, this perceptible variation in degrees of adeptness became more obvious. As we shall see below, the differences were not simply those of degrees of belief or religiosity. Una, Margaret, and Fiona — as indicated at the outset of our discussion — dwell in different fields of religious experience. Beneath the drone of the rosary, giving the impression of great ritual unity, the women on the bus felt and thought very differently about the occasion they were about to attend.

I had been invited to come to the Mass by Fiona and her two friends, Mary and Ellen. The three women had been to Medjugorje, the current Marian apparition site in Yugoslavia, where they had all been transfigured by the experience. Their language and manner were, to use the American Protestant idiom, "born again". My wife and I were greeted with "kisses of peace", God bless you-s, and beatific smiles all around: to judge from my experience in the region, decidely atypical behavior. They took turns telling their Medjugorje stories, each of which had an articulate narrative structure. Margaret, the fortyish, fashionably dressed wife of a local grocer, went first:

"I went to Medjugorje on a holiday really, filling in for someone who had cancelled... I saw the cross on the hill illuminated — all lit up — but then I discovered it was only a concrete cross... there was a group of English people there staring at the sun and yet it wasn't bothering their eyes. We looked too and I could see the rays separated from the sun itself, and sun was a disc with a « V » (wedge) out of it, and a friend of mine saw the rays touching the mountain. No one was dazzled by the sun like you would be, you didn't see spots when you looked away. Then the sun seemed to turn blood red and go behind the cross. When I saw the sun with the little piece missing I thought it meant that a small portion of the world would be saved... I didn't really believe in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist before going to Medjugorje, and about six months after returning I went to a funeral in Frosses (Donegal) and Father Michael performed the mass, and suddenly I saw, when he held up the host, the image of the sun at Medjugorje and I really believed in the presence of Christ — the sun had been the host with the piece missing like when the priest breaks off a piece — and I was overcome and cried."

The other women told similar stories of miraculous experiences, each of them stressing a powerful moment, if not of conversion or rebirth, then at least of direct and ecstatic contact with the numinous. Two of them spoke of feeling "an electric shock" from touching the hand of one of the visionaries who communes nightly with Our Lady, and all of them remarked on the mystical feeling of peace and oneness that dominated the scene there. The three hours of the service go so fast... even though it was in Croatian, you paid attention and you could nearly follow it" (an interesting twist on Vatican II, here the non-intelligibility of the service augmented its religious power). The three women organized the Killybegs prayer group, which had been meeting weekly for about a year, as a result of their Medjugorje experience.

If the "communitas" Turner (1969) spoke of seems to glow at Medjugorje, it should not be assumed that all present experience the occasion in precisely the same manner — from within the same field of religious experience. The three women of the prayer group expressed dismay at the growing number of religious objects — rosaries, statues, and the like — left by visitors at the apparition site. "I think it takes away from the sacredness of the place... all those bits of rag and objects were like Doon Well (a Donegal Holy Well with a considerable reputation for curing)... it's all pishogues (superstitions)". Though they fully accepted the supernatural character of the apparition site, these women were thus anxious to distinguish their own religious field from that of the peasants, which involves, among other things, the manipulation of objects. A similar distinction emerges, as we shall see below, in reactions to the Healing Mass.

The Healing Mass of Castlefinn had been going for about a year, held on the first Wednesday of the month by parish priest Father Heaney in the Doneyloop

parish church. Our minibus brought 24 women and one male anthropologist about fifty miles to the event. Inside the church we joined the other bus loads that had come from many points in the surrounding countryside and from the city of Derry about twenty miles north. About 250 people gathered that night, something like 90% of them women. While a majority of them were between forty and sixty, a full age range was present. People milted around the church in a more relaxed manner than usual for mass. The priest was hearing confessions, and several young people were setting up microphones for their instruments in the front of the

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The priest turned the congregation over to "Donny", the young leader of the local prayer group who asked us to stand up and "praise Jesus in your own way". Donny proceeded to give out a fairly fluent though restrained stream of pentecostal style "praise", including a few moments of apparent "tongues". To judge by the halting, half-whispered, half-mumbled "praising" from the pews, however, it appeared that many of the congregation were neither familiar nor comfortable with the form. This impression was reinforced by the priest's message that "those who want to learn how to pray like Donny should join your local prayer group... it takes about one year to pray like that". The mass itself proceeded in the usual manner, though the reading—Christ and the lepers—and sermon dealt with the theme of healing. Live music and much singing of a more or less evangelical nature once again clashed with the typical Donegal church experience. More extraordinary business was to follow.

The priest stepped down from the altar before the congregation and asked if there were any who wanted to tell of how the power of prayer had healed them or their loved ones. Several came up, one at a time, and "witnessed", relating stories of family members in hospital, close to death. These testimonies were delivered nervously and, at least by contrast with American Protestant Pentecostals, amateurishly. There was no well-worn phrasing — the "praise the Lord's" that punctuate witnessing in, for example, the Holy Ghost churches of the American

With the completion of the witnessing, the service proper came to an end. Most of the congregants rose to chat with one another at the back of the church, or repair to the community center next door for tea and biscuits. Several dozen remained in the first few rows of pews however, for what was the most unorthodox aspect of the occasion. Members of the prayer group arranged themselves in four groups of three along the dais, one of them including Father Heaney. These were healing groups, and the congregants remaining in the pews were prospective patients. Several other prayer group members acted as ushers, sending the congregants up to one group or another as vacancies occurred. Each "patient" was warmly greeted and, having seated her or himself with the group of choice, commenced to talk of problems and pains, after which the prayer group members would "lay hands" on the afflicted and pray silently but with visible fervor.

Two women in their fifties, by their dress and speech from the west of the county, sat near me through the mass. Their behavior throughout betrayed an uncertainty with then entire event. "Well", said one of the other at the conclusion, "what did you think of all that?" "It was different..." replied her friend unsteadily. "It's what they call Chris-matic", the first related, by way of information. What had brought these two, or the many others who come for the first time (regulars estimated newcomers to be something like a third of the congregation) to this religious occasion?

Brid, a neighbor of mine from a mountainy Gaeltacht townland, had come herself to the Healing Mass some weeks before, on a local mission. The brother of a severely disturbed woman in the townland had come to her to ask if she would take his sister to see Father Heaney, to see if he might cure her. There is a strong local tradition of "curing priests" — many of them alcoholic (see Taylor), and most locals will concomittantly seek cures from medical and religious sources—including Holy Wells, pilgrimage sites, and prayers directed to images and relics of Saints. Thus, for Brid, it was quite natural to embark on such a journey, but she was as surprised as most from the western region would be by the format of the Healing Mass. "Lots of singing... lots of music... and then you wait your turn to see the priest". She had seen no point in consulting prayer group members who could not, in her view, have had any curing power.

Other men and women from the mountainy end of the region shared, in varying degrees, this perception. Conal, a fifty year old father of three young children and a small farmer without a car, jumped at the chance to take a vacant spot in the minibus from his parish. "See if you can get a cure for that back of yours" his wife earnestly directed. I spoke with him on several later occasions. Although he reported no relief of his ailment he did say that he had enjoyed the mass. Interestingly, his description of the event focused only on the singing and on the activities of the priest. He did not mention the prayer group or any specifically charismatic behavior. When I asked him about those elements, he seemed confused as to what to make of them.

A conversation with another neighbor of mine, a sixty year old woman, makes the interpretive field at work in these perceptions even clearer. We were talking about miraculous healing priests of days gone by when she said, "It's like that Father Heaney up in Donneyloop... I believe he is very good". It turned out that she had gone on yet another minibus excursion.

"I had this pain in my side that no one was fit to tell me what was wrong, well the priest put his hand on my side and moved it across me here and prayed over me. And that pain went away and never came back". Later on that evening I asked her what she had thought of the lay people curing at the mass. "That's just it", she replied with sharp annoyance, "it was very strange... here's that holy man trying to do his work and then there's them... they're just faith healers aren't they!? I wouldn't go to them and I wouldn't mention to anyone around here that they were in it, because they'd be talking about it, saying I had gone to see the likes of them". Margaret "recognized" a curing priest and noticed nothing "charismatic" about his behavior (at another Healing Mass the priest spoke in tongues). About the lay group she was less clear — they were acting like lay "faith healers", but if they were, then it was odd that they worked in a group and far odder still that they shared the stage with a priest.

For people like Brid and several of the others described above, all of whom represent a traditional "folk" or "peasant" field of religious experience, the trip to the Healing Mass was like a special pilgrimage to a distant Holy Well or apparition site. It was a journey motivated by the quest for a particular cure, a search for another point at which religious power is accessible to those in need. For others from that category the bus trip to Donneyloop was simply another "outing": a social occasion like the bus rides to any other religious event. Such people went looking for diversion and either found it ... "wonderful singing"... or did not... "I'd sooner go to Knock (the national Marian shrine with books,

exhibits, express line confessionals, fish and chips, and dozens of souvenir shops). The specifically charismatic proceedings, if they admitted to noticing them, impressed them only in their peculiarity. They were not moved to join or form a local prayer group. The special symbols and discourse of the event were not yet part of their religious framework.

Yet many who first experienced Donneyloop in this way return. Over a year of observation the monthly attendance at the Healing Mass increased fairly steadily, from about 250 to closer to 600. The percentage of males also rose, from only 10% to something like 25%. Does this represent a conversion from one field of religious experience to another? In some cases yes, but there is evidence that for many of the western congregants this religious occasion was being fit into older frameworks. Not only did an increasing number seek treatment only at the hands of the priest, but these individuals did not manifest any increasing familiarity with the charismatic routines of praising or tongues. Moreover, even though the priest displayed an increasingly pentecostal style, he also began to announce the availability of packets of pre-blessed salt for those who wanted them — a very traditional curing item in West Donegal, just the sort of thing one would have sought from an alcoholic curing priest. The question of course remains as to whether this accommodation serves to maintain two different fields of religious experience at the same occasion, or is meant as bait for purposes of recruitment to a charismatic religious form.

For the regular members of the prayer groups of Killybegs and other communities the religious occasion was a very different event. Their original motivation to attend this or other charismatic events — including the apparition site at Medjugorje — may well have been an affliction. They came now, however, no longer seeking a particular cure in most cases, but because the Healing Mass was now a regular feature of their religious lives. Along with the weekly prayer meetings where members sought intimate contact with the Holy Spirit, the Healing Mass was an occasion for the formal and informal expression of charismatic discourse — or at least some aspects of it. "Healing", in this context has a different meaning than the miraculous cure that Brid sought for the mentally ill neighbor. The testimony of the healed at the mass was meant not only to evince momentary access to the miraculous, but to demonstrate the power of the occasion and of the religious field with which it was most closely linked — that of the local lay prayer group: a kind of "community of affliction" (Turner, 1968).

Among the various prayer groups of the diocese, that of Killybegs is an interesting case (6). All members can be called middle-class, but they live at the geographic and cultural verge of the "Western World" of Southwest Donegal, and their own roots were very much in the surrounding peasant culture. In going to Medjugorje, they were going on a foreign pilgrimage as middle-class Irish Catholics had been doing for several generations. Medjugorje, however, is a current apparition site — Our Lady appears to the visionaries every evening; to go there is to seek not just a few more indulgences, but a religious experience. For these women, that experience could not be sustained within either the traditional field of religious experience, which recognizes the miraculous — but from an essentially peasant cultural perspective — or within the routinized and too demystified field of post-Vatican II middle class Catholicism.

The Charismatic Renewal offered an attractive alternative. By forming a prayer group, they could "follow Our Lady's directions... to pray and fast" and

thus remain very much within the Irish Catholic tradition. But the group aspect was, of course, quite novel, as was the free-flowing format of the prayer meeting itself, with occasional speaking "in tongues" and much testifying. Such meetings allowed the members to sustain the experience of unmediated contact with the numinous. These meetings are also opportunities, aided by constant discussion of biblical texts, religious tracts, and each other's experience, for the generation and expression of a discourse which maintains their new field of religious experience. That discourse is an amalgam of highly emotional Jesus-Self relationship talk and revivified appreciations of the miraculous character of the Catholic sacraments. The prayer group meeting is thus an interesting religious occasion in its own right and one which stands closer to the center of the local charismatic field than does the Healing Mass. It is here, in far more intimate circumstances, that the inductee is enculturated and socialized in stages from peripheral to core member, from novice to adept.

Yet if it is at the center, it does not mean that prayer group is hence inaccessible to the outsider of the sort whom we described above in reference to the Healing Mass. Curing is once again the key. Over the year during which I attended the prayer group meeting. I saw such novices come, often with visible trepidation, to a meeting. They were always brought by a friend or relative who reported having to cajole them and in many cases they were looking not to be healed — that is, have their world view restructured — but cured of some specific ailment. These individuals could be enculturated, drawn not just by the theology but by the real intimacy of a very warm community of affliction.

III. — CONCLUSIONS

The bus rumbled through the Donegal night, time enough for the last five decades of the rosary before the fish and chips stop at Ballyboley. We arrived in Killybegs at midnight, six hours after having embarked. The last hour was passed in conversation, with the young bus driver's radio providing a musical background. Most people talked about local and family matters, as they had at the beginning of the voyage. Those who discussed the mass itself did so quietly. As we have seen, beneath this apparent ritual and social unity lie differences which may or may not prove significant to the development of religious life in Ireland, and indeed elsewhere.

The "fields of religious experience" manifest at the Healing Mass and explored through this paper are clearly dynamic; each of them exhibits a dialectical character which demonstrates the inadequacy of a simple folk orthodox dichotomy. In each case, new religious occasions, whatever their source, may be incorporated into pre-existing frameworks. For Una, Brid, and others who inhabit what can be called a "folk religious field", the Healing Mass is the latest of a long series of religious occasions — the continuing "devotional revolution". While these devotional innovations had the historical consequences that Weber would have predicted — the solidification of clerical domination in a firmly established diocesan regime — the juxtaposition of such events with other social and religious settings and occasions, including such heterodox activities as cure-seeking from alcoholic priests, served to perpetuate an older understanding of the miraculous. That field will survive this new occasion too, as long as such

individuals attend the Healing Mass with a cultural inattention to charismatic elements, seeking instead the curing touch of the unorthodox priest (and Heaney's outsider status within the diocesan clergy reinforces this interpretation) or his blessed salt. As for Margaret, and most other local middle-class Catholics, the Mass may be perceived as another devotional exercise more or less required for eivil respectability — particularly among women. Accordingly, some of them will occasionally attend the Mass, publically demonstrating respectable religiosity and garnering points towards salvation. For others among them, however, the troubling novelty of certain elements of the Mass may be more worrisome, and so they will cease attending — "I'd sooner go to Knock".

For others, however, the Healing Mass occupies a significantly different place — in a new field of religious experience. For those already enmeshed in a charismatic field, like Fiona and the other prayer group members, the Healing Mass takes its place not beside Knock or the visit to a curing priest, but with the weekly prayer meeting and the pilgrimage to Medjugorje (7). As we have seen, the Mass may also serve as a gateway (as can a trip to Medjugorje) into that charismatic field for those from either of the other two fields described above. My suspicion is that it is most likely to do so for those motivated by a personal affliction. Full membership in the charismatic field also offers a new community, however, which may be especially attractive to those who find older associations increasingly fragmented.

What of the larger historical process? Is the Healing Mass a religious occasion standing at the verge of a potential religious regime? The charismatic renewal is reminiscent of far older movements within the Church and Weber's (1968: 1165) discussion of conflict between "hierocracy" and "charisma" may shed some light on the general phenomenon. According to Weber "fully developed office charisma inevitably becomes the most uncompromising foe of all genuinely personal charisma, which propagates and preaches its own way to God and is prophetic, mystic and ecstatic. The "Charismatic Renewal" movement is certainly viewed by many clergy in Donegal, as elsewhere, with some unease. In the words of one bishop, "I don't like charismatics — it begins with charism and ends with schismatics". The Bishop of the diocese which includes Killybegs has appointed a priest as "spiritual advisor" to the prayer groups, whose task it is to periodically attend local meetings and make sure they are not straying too far from orthodoxy. Even if they do not, however, the fact that they have religious experiences — to the extent of access to the Holy Spirit — under their own steam is threatening enough. Moreover, the network of national and international association which links local charismatic groups to one another represents a nascent institution potentially outside the control of at least the diocesan clergy. Yet their theology leads them back to the sacraments of the church. The Healing Mass, whatever its innovations, had both priest and Eucharist at its center. Moreover, the core members of the Killybegs prayer group were the most regular attendants of church and priest run events, many of them attending masses and other devotions daily.

We must, however, return to the general political structure of the Irish Church, for that is the context that will determine the course of events in this regard. The Church is, of course, interested in institutionalizing whatever charisms the movement generates, but the present state of "flux" does present opportunities for various relatively out-of-power groups within the Church to seize upon such occasions as prayer meetings or Healing Masses to both demonstrate and augment their own power and authority.

Individual diocesan priests, such as Father Heaney in Donegal, may take a strong interest in such movements, but while this may propel them into an individual prominence they might not otherwise enjoy, it does not lead to the formation of a rival religious regime; rather, such developments may only lead charismatics back into the traditional dependance on the clergy. Often, however, it is such religious orders as the Jesuits who are involved in the promotion of Charismatic Renewals, "Search" weekends, and other religious occasions promoting an alternative field of religious experience characterized by a novel discourse. Women too, both lay and religious, have taken a prominent and increasingly threatening role in such movements, especially in the face of continued Church opposition to their ordination.

In Dublin, rather than Donegal, where new suburban sprawl has weakened the parish as a social as well as ecclesiastical unit, and many more follow a lifestyle in tune with therapeutic discourse and egalitarian social relations (within the middle class), circumstances may be ripe for the formation of such communities of affliction. If so, then these movements and occasions may form the bases of alternative religious regimes. But this is only possible to the extent that the diocesan hierarchy loses some of its state-abetted political power.

Meanwhile, a variety of new discourses rise from various quarters within the Church — from a liberation theology that so far remains oriented primarily toward the third world, to the new Ultramontanism of Opus Dei and other conservative lay groups. The competition of these factions and religious fields within the Irish Catholic Church may seem to indicate the disintegration, or at least weakening of the monolithic strength of Irish Catholicism. The co-existence of such different voices, however, may actually strengthen the Church's overall moral authority. With such diversity, anyone can identify his or her own perspective within the spectrum. This may be the case even where religious regimes openly compete with and criticize each other. One is reminded of the recent film, The Mission", where Vatican politics lead to the compromise of religious principles in Rome, while moral authority is preserved with the poor Jesuit missionaries laboring to save Indian souls on the periphery, "beyond the falls".

Lawrence J. TAYLOR

NOTES

This paper is part of a longer work in progress which treats a wide range of "religious occasions" in Southwest Donegal. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Free University of Amsterdam and in the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago. The research for this paper could not have been conducted without the assistance of my wife Maeve Hickey Taylor, whose comments on earlier drafts, along with those of Jojada Verrips, Eric Wolf. Tom Wilson, and Tom Inglis were extremely helpful. For works treating other aspects of local history and ethnography, see TAYLOR (1980a, 1980b, 1981, 1985, 1987).

(1) As with the international Church, local Catholicism is a "field" in Bourdieu's sense of the term (1976 [1972]: 168), where discourse compete. Each discourse corresponds to something like Bourdieu's habitus (1976 [1972]: 82-3): a system of dispositions at once physical, cognitive, and emotional. But the habitus in question is not so well bounded or well defined as a class habitus might be (e.g.), but is rather, as we shall see, far more inchoate and emergent. This inchoateness leaves room for much self-consciousness and event doubt—hence meaning and experience may well be contested within as well as between fields. "Fields", in my usage, has the sense of a magnetic field, with power greatest at the center and fading toward the edge. This metaphor, however, has a real geographic as well as experiential embodiment, indeed the two are not coincidentally related. There are core places and core experiences for each field, and more or less peripheral ones as well.

(2) Sec, e.g. KEENAN (1982), CORISH (1985).

- made a contribution to the development of the anti-sensual character of Catholicism in Europe and the eventual domination of the confessor priest to whom sins of the flesh were confessed. This religious perspective eventually found its way back to Ireland in the XXth century, where it played a part in "civilizing" the Irish laity, who learned the self-control/guilt pattern commonly associated with Irish Catholicism since. This historical schema can be questioned, and the role of penitential saints as role models may be particularly problematic. One wonders, for example, whether early Irish penitential saccticism ought to be credited with this contribution to the historical growth of modern Catholicism precisely in this manner. The sort of fasting and bodily control exercised by these and other ascectic church men and women is often associated not only with the attainment of the certainty of salvation (as Weber remarked), but with the personal acquisition of power as well. Cross-culturally, such religious self-deprivation is a common means by which individuals both manifest and gain access to supernatural powers: from Apache warriors to Ethiopian Prophets. The question is whether or at what point historically such individuals cease to be extraordinary by definition, and therefore not very good models for general behavior. Weber (1968: 1166 ff.) has much to say about the Church's institutionalization of charismatic asceticism, but does not consider the people's perception of such changing types. It is worth noting that the stories told about local ascetic Saints in Southwest Donegal and, I strongly suspect, elsewhere in Ireland do not hold up the likes of St. Columcille as role models for self-deprivation. Rather, they are extraordinary in all respects, and the stories associate their incredible penance to magical powers.
- (4) The topic of discourse, of obvious importance to understanding Protestant religious experience, is relatively neglected in the study of Catholicism. While objects and ritual are of course at the center of Catholic experience, so also is language. This is apparent in the case of charismatics, but it is also so true of all other fields of Catholic religious experience. The topic is explored further in Taylor
- (5) A good example of a case that would very probably have developed differently on the continent is the Marian apparition at Knock in 1879. In Ireland this eruption of the transcendent—always potentially disruptive to established Church regimes—was contained and institutionalized within the diocesan regime; on the continent such apparitions were often the subjects of disputation between diocesan authorities and regular clergy, who were sometimes initially connected with the secres (sf. Warner, 1976 and Bax, nd).
- (6) The charismatic prayer meeting was the object of intensive study during my fieldwork in Ireland and will be discussed extensively in the book currently under preparation.
- (7) Medjugorje, as noted earlier, is the scene of a current and continuing Marian apparition, and attracts thousands of pilgrims from many countries, and many fields of religious experience. Apparently their interpretation of the events and experiences undergone there is a function of their orientation as well as a result of the social interaction of the group with whom they go. In Ireland and the U.S. the Charismatic Renewal movement has been active in organizing such pilgrimages.

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