more an integral part of ourselves, than the rhythm of our breathing or the beating of our heart. We were created to pray. Prayer is our true nature, and everything is to be turned into prayer. "In the immense cathedral which is the universe of God," writes Paul Evdokimov, "every person, whether scholar or manual laborer, is called to act as the priest of his or her whole life—to take all that is human, and to turn it into an offering and a hymn of glory."[18] And elsewhere the same author remarks: "In the catacombs, the most frequent image is the figure of a woman in prayer, the *Orans*; she represents the one true attitude of the human soul. It is not enough to *say* prayers: we must become, *be* prayer, prayer incarnate. It is not enough to have moments of praise. All of life, each act, every gesture, even the smile of the human face, must become a hymn of adoration, an offering, a prayer. One should offer not what one has but what one is."[19]

18 "Le sacerdoce universel des laïcs dans la tradition orientale," in L. A. Elchinger (ed.), *L'Église en dialogue* (Paris, 1962), 39-40.

19 *The Sacrament of Love. The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 62.

5

A SENSE OF WONDER[1]

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all;
the earth is full of Thy riches.

Psalm 103 [*104*]:*24*

The beginning of philosophy is to feel a sense of wonder.

Plato, *Theaetetus*

There is a service, striking in its symbolism, that members of the Orthodox Church perform at the start or conclusion of any major task or period; on the first day of the month, for example, or at the blessing of a foundation stone, and equally at the commencement or ending of the academic year. It is the ceremony known as the Great Blessing of the Waters. Water is placed in a large bowl, prayers are said over it, the grace and power of the Holy Spirit is called down upon it, and finally the cross is plunged into the water.

This service of blessing is performed above all on January 6, the Feast of Theophany or Epiphany. On this day the Orthodox Church is commemorating, not the three wise men—whose coming has already been remembered on December 25—but the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan. The blessing is often held in the open air, by a river or spring or on the seashore. I can vividly recall the occasions when I have taken part in the Epiphany Blessing of the Waters on the island of Patmos. The abbot of the Monastery of St John the Theologian—the monastery to which I myself belong—comes down with the monks and parish clergy to the harbor and the service is performed at the quayside, with the fishing boats, some

1 This text was originally given as a sermon at commemoration services in All Souls College, Oxford (November 6, 1988), and in Malvern College (July 1, 1989). In its original form it dealt with the meaning of education from a Christian viewpoint. But, since the "sense of wonder" to which it refers is equally a central element in our prayer and worship, I have ventured to include it here in a slightly modified version.

thirty or forty of them, drawn up in a great semicircle. At the culminating moment, when the abbot throws a wooden cross into the water, all the surrounding boats sound their sirens simultaneously, and the young men and boys dive from the boats, racing each other to see who will be the first to retrieve the cross and return it to the abbot.[2]

In an unexpected way this ceremony of the Great Blessing of the Waters helps us to understand the purpose, from a Christian standpoint, of a college or university, and also more broadly the true meaning of Christian worship. Christ's Baptism is seen in the Orthodox tradition as possessing a cosmic significance, as embracing the whole created order. His Baptism is in a sense the reverse of our own. In our case, Baptism is a purification from sin. But Christ is sinless; why, then, should He be baptized? Such precisely is the query posed by St John the Baptist: "I need to be baptized by You, and do *You* come to me?" (Mt 3:14). The Orthodox answer to this question can best be put in simple picture language. We are dirty; at Baptism we go down into clean water and we come out cleansed. At our Baptism, then, we are sanctified by the waters. But Christ is clean; at His Baptism He goes down into the dirty water and Himself cleanses the waters, making them pure. As we affirm in the liturgical texts for the feast of Epiphany, "Today the Master has come to sanctify the nature of the waters."[3] At His Baptism it is not the waters that sanctify Christ, but Christ who imparts holiness to the waters, and so by extension to the entire material creation.

If we speak of the waters as "dirty," by this we mean that the world around us, while filled with meaning and beauty, is yet a fallen world, broken and shattered, marred by suffering and sinfulness. Into this fallen world God Himself enters, accepting a total solidarity with it, assuming into Himself the entirety of our human nature, body, soul and spirit. Through this act of assumption at His Incarnation and through all that follows after it—through His Baptism in the streams of Jordan, His Transfiguration, Crucifixion and Resurrection—Christ cleanses and heals the marred and fallen world, effecting the renewal not of humankind alone but of the whole creation.

2 For the full text of the Great Blessing at Theophany, see Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, *The Festal Menaion* (London: Faber, 1969), 348-59.

3 *op. cit.*, 381.

What we are doing, then, at each celebration of Epiphany, at every Blessing of the Waters, is to reaffirm our sense of wonder before the essential goodness and beauty of the world, as originally created by God and as now recreated in Christ. Nothing is intrinsically ugly or despicable; it is solely our distorted vision that makes it seem so. Through the power of God incarnate shown in His Baptism in the Jordan, all persons and all things can be made holy, can be transfigured and rendered Spirit-bearing. All things are capable of acting as sacraments of God's presence. As we express it in one of our Epiphany hymns:

> At Thine appearing in the body,
> The earth was sanctified,
> The water blessed,
> The heaven illumined,
> And humankind delivered
> From the bitter tyranny of the enemy.[4]

Water, earth, sky, the human body and the whole human person with its emotions and affections—through Christ's Incarnation and Baptism these are all reborn, transformed, hallowed. The Great Blessing of the Waters is in this way a proclamation that the universe around us is not a chaos but a cosmos. There is glory in everything; this is a world full of wonder.

Now this is vitally important if we are to understand the full dimensions of Christian worship; it also helps us more specifically to understand the purpose of Christian education. The word "education" comes from the Latin *educere*, "to evoke;" and so a school or university is precisely a place in which with rigor and discipline we evoke and cultivate a sense of wonder. As teachers and students we are here in order to pursue truth and knowledge; but truth and knowledge, as Plato recognized, are impossible without a sense of wonder: "The beginning of philosophy is to feel a sense of wonder."[5] A university, then, is a structured environment in which we are to develop our sense of wonder before the universe that God has made, before the human person whose vocation it is to serve as microcosm and mediator at the center of that universe, before all that is con-

4 *op. cit.*, 298.

5 Plato, *Theaetetus* 155D; cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2.15 (982b12). Plato's statement is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 2.9: ed. Stählin, 137.1-2.

ceived by the human mind or fashioned by human hands. It is a place where we are to discover how varied and unexpected is the world in which we live. It is a place where we "lift up our eyes to the hills" (cf. Ps. 120 [121]:1), acknowledging with astonishment the broadness and generosity of our surroundings. It is a place where we are saying explicitly or implicitly, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all." All this is equally applicable to each of our acts of worship.

Plato's insistence upon the link between wonder and truth is confirmed by the seventeenth-century poet Sidney Godolphin:

> Lord when the wise men came from farr,
> Led to thy Cradle by a Starr,
> Then did the shepheards too rejoyce,
> Instructed by thy Angells voyce:
> Blest were the wisemen in their skill,
> And shepheards in their harmlesse will...
>
> There is no merrit in the wise
> But love, (the shepheards sacrifice).
> Wisemen all wayes of knowledge past,
> To th' shepheards wonder come at last:
> To know, can only wonder breede,
> And not to know, is wonders seede.[6]

"To know, can only wonder breede": the "wisemen" at our modern universities cannot afford to dispense with the wonder of the shepherds. For knowledge and wonder go hand in hand.

Some months ago I had a dream. I was back at the boarding school where I studied over half a century ago. A friend took me first through rooms already familiar to me in my waking life. But then in my dream we entered other rooms that I had never seen before—spacious, elegant, filled with light. Finally we entered a small, dark chapel, with mosaics gleaming in candlelight. "How strange," I said to my companion, "that I have lived here for years, and yet I never knew about the existence of all these rooms." And he replied, "But it is always so."

Such exactly is the aim of all authentic worship, and it is the aim equally of every school or college. A college is a place where we constantly discover new rooms in the universe and in the human heart, in both macrocosm and microcosm; a place where we open the door to each other and invite one another to explore these rooms together.

6 Helen Gardner (ed.), *The Metaphysical Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), 182.

There is also a second, connected aspect to the Christian meaning of a college or school. As a place for the cultivation of wonder and the pursuit of truth, it is equally a place for the cultivation of freedom. Wonder and freedom, truth and freedom—these things are essentially linked. Wonder can be evoked but not compelled; and truth, as Christ observed, makes us free (Jn 8:32). In any university it is our task to bear witness to the value of freedom, and to resist all that erodes or diminishes our liberty. If I am asked by my students at Oxford, "What are you trying to teach us here?" then perhaps my best answer is to say no more than this: "We want you to learn to be free."

"Learn to be free": freedom cannot simply be assumed; it has to be *learnt*. Suppose that you ask me, "Can you play the violin?" and I reply, "I don't know, I've never tried." You might feel that there was something odd about my answer. Unless I have learnt to play the violin through the exacting discipline of a musical training, I am not free to play Beethoven's violin sonatas. And so it is with every form of freedom. Freedom has to be learnt through the *ascesis*, the ascetic discipline, of precise observation and imaginative thinking; and then it needs to be defended with courage and self-sacrifice. As Nicolas Berdyaev observed, "Freedom gives birth to suffering, while the refusal to be free diminishes suffering. Freedom is not easy, as its enemies and slanderers allege: freedom is hard; it is a heavy burden. Men, as Dostoevsky has shown with such amazing power, often renounce freedom to ease their lot."[7] Yet if we renounce freedom, we become less than truly human; and if we deny others their freedom, we dehumanize them.

Freedom is not easy, and this means that in a university we are not offering either to ourselves or to others an easy path. We are never to forget that culminating moment in the Great Blessing at Epiphany. The cross has to be plunged into the waters. There is no other way of transfiguration. It can come about only through repentance, *metanoia*, a radical change of mind; and that means through the creative suffering of the Cross.

7 *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), 47. Compare the Tale of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Such, in part, is the Christian meaning of a college or school. As a place for the cultivation of wonder, its vocation is summed up in words attributed to Christ in the Gospel according to Thomas: "Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds and, when he finds, he will become troubled. When he is troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All."[8] As a place for learning freedom, its role is well expressed in a Jewish saying recorded by Martin Buber in his *Tales of the Hasidim*. Rabbi Shelomo asked: "What is the worst thing the evil urge can achieve?" And he answered: "To make us forget that we are each the child of a king."[9]

8 From the Gospel of Thomas, in Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 135-36.

9 *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 282.

6

Pray without ceasing: the ideal of continual prayer in Eastern monasticism

The literal interpretation

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17): the short but emphatic command of St Paul to the Thessalonians has exercised a decisive influence upon the spirit of Eastern Orthodox monasticism.[1] From the fourth century onwards, the idea has been firmly established in the monastic tradition of the East that prayer is not merely an activity restricted to certain moments of the day, but something that should continue uninterrupted throughout the entire life of a monk or nun. The point is briefly expressed in one of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: "A monk who prays only when he stands up for prayer is not really praying at all."[2] With the same idea in mind a Palestinian monk of the seventh century, Antiochus of the Monastery of St Sabas, alludes to the words of Ecclesiastes 3:1-7: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die...a time to weep, and a time to laugh...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." And Antiochus comments, "There is a proper time for everything except prayer: as for prayer, its proper time is always."[3]

1 The best discussion of the subject, to which I am much indebted, is still Irénée Hausherr, *Noms du Christ et voies d'oraison*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 157 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1960), especially 123-75; English translation, *The Name of Jesus*, Cistercian Studies Series 44 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978), especially 119-89. For a briefer treatment, see Igumen Chariton, *The Art of Prayer*, especially 80-88.

2 *AP*, anonymous collection 104: ed. Nau, *ROC* 12 (1907), 402.

3 *Pandect*, *Homily* 91 (*PG* 89:1712B).