Contemporary Jesuits! You Have But Two Choices: The Politics of John Paul II or Ultramontanism

G. J. MCALEER & JAMEY BECKER
LOYOLA COLLEGE IN MARYLAND
U.S.A.

A sad choice, many would think. Nevertheless, these are the only two options. And just how sad a choice it is, rather depends on how one understands each of the terms. On the one side, we will argue, is John Paul II's advocacy of a Christian politics of cultural work that aims at a cultivation of the human, it aims, quite simply, to transform by a Christ-centered process of civilization. On the other side, is ultramontanism understood as a Christian politics centered on transformation by means of temporal power. Before detailing the two choices, and assuming that choosing John Paul II seems intolerable to some, let us intensify the costs of that particular choice. Here is a passage from Albert Camus:

Indeed, who are we to dare to criticize the highest spiritual authority of the century? We are nothing, really, mere defenders of the spirit who will never forget their duty toward those whose mission it is to represent the spirit[1]

These words were addressed to Pope Pius XII in 1944 to censure him for his putative inactivity during World War II, a presumed inactivity that remains the subject of controversy. Pope John Paul II has also been accused of leading a quiet life during the war, and keeping his head

[1]Albert Camus, "Criticism of the pope for not having condemned dictatorship earlier," *Between Hell and Reason: Essays from the Resistance Newspaper Combat*, trans. A. de Gramont, 1944 – 1947 (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1991, p. 99: henceforth, HR.

down, so to speak. There is always a likelihood that anything but the exercise of an obvious temporal power will be seen as religious quietism. We will not discuss Pius XII but merely add that if one were to read Shusaku Endo's *Silence* as a commentary upon Pius, one may well come away thinking that Pius (however paradoxically) is one of the greatest martyrs of the Church. We do not wish to identify John Paul II's politics of civilization with the approach taken by Pius — it simply does not follow Endo's paradox — but draw upon Camus' comments to reinforce a risk: it has to be acknowledged that what we would like to term the "new papal politics" will always have to run the risk of seeming like religious quietism. The ultramontanist, by contrast, will always have the comfort of being seen to be active. Still, it is our concern to ask whether John Paul II or ultramontanists are better thought of as, in Camus' words, "defenders of the spirit."

Let us first note the odd fact that a pope, it seems, cannot be heroic: why should John Paul II be denied what is granted Albert Camus? Camus did not take up the gun in the French Resistance, yet is lauded as heroic for his underground work in writing and publication (there is a strange logic afoot here, for Sartre, who did even less than Camus during the war, is even more iconic). Indeed, so sure of the importance of his *cultural work* during the war years is Camus that he is happy to describe himself as a defender of the spirit: it is on account of his cultural resistance that Camus understands himself to be *invested with a moral authority* sufficient to censure a pope and to call the Church back to her historic mission. It seems clear, however, that Karol Wojtyla did no less cultural resistance than Camus through drama, recitals and indeed, even entering into the seminary. Just as Camus' activities could have got him executed if caught, so too Wojtyla's activities.[2] Both of them, of course, should be lauded for their cultural resistance to the Nazis.

What interests us here is that their choice requires us to think, for their choice raises a very deep issue about a resistance politics and violence, the general subject of this essay. Specifically, we want to show that both John Paùl II and Camus believe that a politics of cultural work —

[2]George Weigel documents the summary execution of five seminarians in Krakow the day before Wojtyla entered the seminary. See, *A Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999), pp. 69-75: hereafter, WH.

which will sometimes become cultural resistance[3] — is not quietism but a powerful response to nihilism. Both Camus' own political theory and his interpretation of Christian politics will nicely bring out what is theoretically at stake in the new papal politics. More, although Jesuits have in recent years tended to ultramontanism, we want to show that Jesuits have developed models of politics as cultural work. Theoretically, this is to be found in Camus' Jesuit contemporary, Gaston Fessard, and in practice, in the Jesuit reductions of Paraguay.

A politics common to Jesuit thought and action, Albert Camus and John Paul II might seem unlikely to many. Did not John Paul II make an historic and unwelcome intervention (WH, 425-30) in the governance of the Society of Jesus in the years 1981-83? This intervention is usually glossed as the radical, forward- and liberal-thinking Jesuits being reined in by the authoritarian, traditionalist pope. Such a caricature both ignores the fact that the Jesuits were already beginning to rethink a direction taken in GC 32, which regret would be documented in GC 34,[4] and it ignores the degree to which the youngest generation of Jesuits wished to re-affirm an older self-understanding that had been seemingly forgotten.[5] Although never stated as such, Weigel understands the political theology of John Paul II to be very close to Augustine's. That is, the cultural resistance of the Church is to be based

[3]At the time of writing, Cardinal Winning of Scotland has explicitly called the Catholic community of the United Kingdom to a new cultural resistance. The socialist government of Tony Blair is the first government to seek legislation to make *legal* human embryo cloning. These embryos will then be cannibalized – whatever is useful will be stripped from the embryo, killing the embryo, of course – and used to rebuild decaying flesh in humans already born. See Cardinal Winning, "Be warned, Mr. Blair: Cloning is Killing," *Daily Telegraph*, Sunday, August 20th, 2000.

[4]The documents of the General Congregations of the Society of Jesus are available through The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis University.

[5]*Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millenium*, ed. M. Tripole, S. J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999) is a series of essays by North American Jesuits reflecting on their mission within higher education in light of GC 34. Those contributors to *Promise Renewed* who are the newest members of the Society appear to be almost conceptually separated from those members entering even a few years earlier. Just as the fate of the Church, and the Jesuit order, in the immediate post-Vatican II years can be usefully viewed as a sociological shift, so the outlook of the newest Jesuits seems contiguous with a new generational outlook. An informal source for the character of this new Catholic generation is Alexandra Stanley's report on World Youth Day 2000 in the *New York Times*, 21st August, 2000.

upon a severing of Christianity from power: to invoke Augustine, the Church is to be the City of God and not the city of man. This theology is at the root of the pontiff's censure of Jesuit, and other, clerics who have participated in government, like the Sandinista government of the 1980's in Nicaragua (WH, 452). Government, the city of man, is characterized by a lust for domination, and government as such cannot separate itself from violence and coercion.[6] The city of man is the heir of the fall of Adam and Eve and the first crime performed by Cain, a homicide. Members of the City of God, by contrast, have offered the most complete sacrifice to God: they are broken and humble spirits having forsaken their lust for domination (CG, 377-9). As such, when attacked they cannot return violence for violence for should they do so they would revert to being members of the city of man (CG, 1031). The good, then, are to be strangers to dominion (CG, 596).

On Augustine's and the Pope's model of Christian politics, the Jesuit (F. Cardenal) in the employ of the Sandinista government, and that government's clerical ministers (D'Escoto & E. Cardenal), were ultramontanists and inevitably (in a sense to be explained later) drawn into the violence of government. This phrase is often taken to refer to the nineteenth century movement in support of the relationship between Altar and Crown but its theoretical formulation, the Church holding temporal political power, belongs to the Middle Ages. It was the Augustinian monk, Giles of Rome, in his *De ecclesiastica potestate* who most cogently argued for the temporal power of the Church. The papal politics of John Paul II is a critique of the ultramontanism (in this technical sense) of recent Jesuit politics, and much of the Church's politics in the past. The fundamental political obligation of the Church, in the vision of John Paul II, is to build human civilization, to provide a moral authority that can persuade intellects and form conscience (WH, 295-6). Cultural formation is then at the heart of the new papal politics. A powerful analysis of this new politics can be found in a document of Cardinal Lustiger. In an analysis of the French Church, he notes that the restorationist and accommodationist wings of the Church are (bizarrely) united in thinking that the Church must be a "Church of power," tied to the State. To the contrary, the Church must be an evan-

[6]Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1972), 600-1 & 875-6: hereafter, CG.

gelical Church, building French conscience through contributing to French culture (WH, 389). Lustiger's direction of the French Church has witnessed a remarkable transformation in French intellectual life. Anyone who follows the developments of this intellectual culture, cannot help but see the dominance now held by Catholic intellectuals in French philosophy: almost all of the French philosophers now most known in the English-speaking world are explicitly Catholic: Courtine, Marion, Nancy, and Manent. Yet, we would like to argue that John Paul II's understanding of cultural resistance in the face of violence returns to a very deep political understanding of the relationship between culture and resistance found in Jesuit thought and history (and that his intervention in the Society could be seen in this light).

If it seems to some a stretch that John Paul II and the Jesuits might have a political theory in common, it surely appears more implausible still that the great theorist of absurdism could have a politics in common with Catholicism. Such a doubt, however, is to underestimate the tradition of Catholic radicalism, as well as Camus' seriousness and thoughtfulness in the face of Catholicism. Having no background whatsoever in Christian thought or practice, Camus wrote a thesis for his teaching degree, written when he was 22, with the title: "Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism: Plotinus and Saint Augustine."[7] This early reading of Augustine appears to have led to a life-long appreciation of Augustine. The presence of Catholicism in *La Peste*, for example, is the Jesuit Paneloux whose specialty is Augustine.

This long-standing interest in Catholic thought is compounded by the many personal and polemical interactions Camus had with Catholic intellectuals. His very public polemic with François Mauriac over the question of forgiveness for collaborators is well documented,[8] as is Camus' later acknowledgement that he was bested in the debate by Mauriac.[9] With this intellectual, cultural and personal background

[7]Although Camus even at this relatively early date had rejected Christianity, his biographer notes, "to prepare his thesis, Camus carefully read and scribbled in the margins of the two volumes of Augustine's *Confessions* in the Gamier Classics edition." (Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus: A Life*, trans. B. Ivry [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997], p. 44: hereafter, AC).

[8]See the multiple entries in HR.

[9]Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. J. O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 70.

appreciated, it will not seem so outlandish to say that Camus' late, and most theoretical work, *The Rebel,* is pervaded by an engagement with Catholicism. It is striking, for instance, that it is the first book in modernity to develop a theory of homicide: *The Rebel* continues a (broken) tradition for writing a treatise on this most crucial of topics, which was last done by the Catholic thinkers of the Middle Ages and in the Baroque, especially by Jesuit intellectuals.[10] But there is more: Camus' engagement with Augustine brings us to the figure whose thought acts as an horizon both for Camus' political thought and that of the new papal politics. *The Rebel* is structured around Camus' late agreement with Augustine[11] that there is a propensity within human nature to the violence of nihilism.[12] Camus writes, the rebel's "only virtue will lie in never yielding to the impulse to allow himself to be engulfed in the shadows that surround him and in obstinately dragging the chains of evil, with which he is bound, toward the light of good." (R, 286) Just as the Council of Trent stated (!), there is, Camus argues, a propensity within human nature to moral transgression. In Camus, this is the desire for a metaphysical completeness, a desire for unity, (R, 255) that is fundamental to man and yet, as a "blind impulse," (R, 10) fundamentally corrosive. Nihilism, whether that of Saint-Just or de Sade, Marx or Hitler, Romanticism or Surrealism — Camus is as broad in his critique as he is uncompromising about the guilt of these modern logics — begins at the moment this desire for unity crosses the "borderline" and becomes a lust for domination. (R, 22) Fessard's position on the propensity to moral transgression and its issuance of nihilism is very close to Camus'

[10]For a list of Jesuit tracts on homicide at the Jesuit colleges of Coimbra and Evora alone, see F. Stegmüller, *Filosofia e Teologia nas universidades de Coimbra e évora no Século XVI,* (Coimbra, 1959: Universidade de Coimbra, 1959).

[11]Camus' position is clear throughout *The Rebel.* Here we must disagree with Woelfel who treats Camus as though he is a Platonist in regard to human evil, that is, evil is a result of ignorance. See James W. Woelfel, *Camus: A Theological Perspective,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp.74-5.

[12]In his *Carnets,* Camus writes, "the only great Christian mind who looked the problem of evil in the face was Saint Augustine. He wound up with the terrible 'No man is good'..." (AC, p. 229) and the Catholic writer Julien Green reports Camus' comment at a public lecture hosted by the Dominicans, "I am your Augustine before his conversion. I am debating the problem of evil. And I am not getting past it" (AC, p. 230).

and typically Jesuit.[13] In his analysis, nihilism is rooted in the *historical* separation of the "irrational forces" (FC, 6) in human nature from that which is rational in that same nature.[14] This separation has seen a series of historical intensifications. The separation is the result of the deepest and most anterior of separations, the separation of Adam and Eve in sin from God. This division resulted in the fracturing of the life of reason and the irrational forces of our animal life. Indeed, it threw these two dimensions of the human into conflict (FC, 31).

Nihilism is ever-present interior to us and in our relations with others, therefore, but it is nihilism as an ideology that is of especial concern to Fessard. The emergence of the extreme rationalism of the eighteenth century and its secularization — which was further intensified by the French Revolution and the subsequent emergence of democracy — was (and is) founded on a rejection of the irrational forces of the human animal. This intensification of nihilism, and its justification in what Fessard calls the "rationalist postulate" (FC, 16), became manifestly obvious in the First World War: Fessard must be given full credit for calling attention to an event, whose origin in democratic liberalism, is all too often overlooked (FC, 5). In having rejected the irrational forces of human nature, the "rationalist postulate" gave birth to two further species: Hitlerism and Marxism. Indeed, for Fessard, they are most fundamentally species of the same genus, the "rationalist postulate" (FC, 16). It is remarkable that Fessard and Camus are in almost total agreement about the nihilism of our modern history, if not exactly about the logic of their causes, though even here, they both agree that fundamental propensities are in conflict inside the human. In Camus, the urge to metaphysical unity stands in tension with the "borderline," whilst in Fessard, it is the (now divided) movements of reason and the irrational forces of our nature. Structured by conflict (one has only to read Kant to see this), the "rationalist postulate" which would have us rely on reason alone as the solution to conflict can only be a "solution" that exacerbates the original conflict. This is seen in its

[13]Please see G. J. McAleer, "The Politics of the Flesh: Rahner and Aquinas on *Concupiscentia*," *Modern Theology*, 15 (1999), pp. 355-365.

[14]Fr. Gaston Fessard, S. J., *Par dela le Facisme et le Communisme*, (Paris: Éditions de la Fédération Nationale d'Action Catholique, n. d.): hereafter, FC.

species which, in Augustine's phrase, are "dominated by the lust to dominate" (CG, 5).

Nevertheless, an initial skepticism that Camus holds a politics in common with Catholicism is justified. *The Rebel* is a sustained critique of Christian politics. Still, we want to demonstrate that Camus has not rightly identified the nature of such a politics and that his thought does in fact coincide with the new papal politics, just as it coincides with certain Jesuit ideas and practices. The Jesuit reductions which aimed at a terrestrial justice are a fine example of Catholic action which Camus mistakenly thinks the Christian is theoretically prohibited from: although Camus does not realize it, he and the Christian are in fact very close. The Jesuit reductions are well-known in French letters — even Enlightenment thinkers who campaigned against the Jesuits acknowledged the greatness of the Jesuit enterprise in Paraguay[15] — and so it is surprising that Camus did not recognize that this enterprise broke his logic of Christian thought and action.

In a response to Mauriac, and it is a theme repeated in *The Rebel,* Camus notes that the Christian believes in a justice beyond this world — which is true — and so, Camus reasons, the Christian can afford to be more indifferent to justice exercised in this world, more, as he puts it, "indulgent" towards injustice (HR, 72). The rebel seeks to establish the "unitarian reign of justice" (R, 24) and Camus posits a conflict between the value of justice and grace: it is this conflict that holds the key to the establishment of modernity for Camus. Camus marks 1789 as the beginning of modernity because, "1789 is explained by the struggle between divine grace and justice" (R, 112) and between the rebel's justice and the Christian's grace there can be no compromise: "The world of grace and the world of rebellion. The disappearance of one is equivalent to the appearance of the other" (R, 21).

Thus, a politics that goes beyond nihilism cannot, for Camus, be a Christian politics. In Camus' understanding, grace leads to a religious quietism (R, 21) — and Paneloux in *The Plague* is cast as such — a quietism that is as violent as nihilism: through its very inactivity, violence reigns (the charge against Pius, and in some peoples' minds at least, John

[15]Jean Lacouture, *Jesuits: A Multibiography,* trans. J. Leggatt (Washington, D. C.: Counterpoint, 1995), pp. 230-231.

Paul). This other-worldly version of Christianity, and it is often repeated by those who know relatively little about Christian logic, perhaps stems from Camus' familiarity with, besides Augustine, Pascal and Kierkegaard who represent a more disembodied form of Christian thought.[16] Do not the reductions bespeak precisely Camus' passion, "to believe in man and to hope to achieve his greatness"? (HR, 72) It is true, of course, that the reductions were not a site of violent resistance to violence, and Camus does think this is sometimes necessary. Still, he also develops a model of cultural resistance — which he practiced during the war — and it is this model which the reductions themselves exhibit.

Albert Camus offers two approaches to creating justice in the face of violence. In one approach, the rebel kills, engaging in Camus' version of a just war: one of the authors of this essay, has tried to show elsewhere that this violent conception of the rebel holds the same theoretical place as Augustine's Christian prince.[17] In a second approach, violence is confronted through an aesthetics that defends the "natural community" (R, 16) and which builds a resistance against effractions of this community (R, 292). It is this path Camus choose in the face of Nazism, and that chosen by John Paul II, Gaston Fessard,[18] and before a different kind of violence, the Jesuits of the reductions. Augustine's *City of God* provides a synthesis of justice, unity, and grace that defies Camus' exclusionary logic: grace versus justice. With Augustine in mind, we can think of the Jesuit reductions as an embodiment of Jesus that repeats in an analogical fashion the Incarnation, the root of the City of God. This will allow us to show that it is not merely that Camus and Christians can share a cultural resistance but that the logic of Augustine's politics is a justice here on earth as Camus so desperately wants. Augustine meets Camus' demands when he states, "If only you had recognized the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord! If only you had been able to see his incarnation, in which he took a human body and

[16]On this point, see the especially fine comments of Jean Onimus, *Albert Camus and Christianity*, trans. E. Parker (n. p.: University of Alabama, 1970), pp. 56, 62-3 & 102-3.

[17]Please see G. J. McAleer, "Rebels and Christian Princes: Camus and Augustine on Violence and Politics," *Revista Filosófica de Coimbra*, 16 (1999), pp. 253-267. The Christian prince does not relate in a straightforward way to the City of God.

[18]For the response to the Occupation by the Jesuits at Lyons, see Lacouture's *Jesuits*, pp. 378-403.

soul as the supreme instance of grace!...So that by this love men might come to him who formerly were so far away from them" (CG,415). Jesus, the *incarnate* God, is a synthesis of grace, unity, and justice, for Augustine. The emphasis on grace as incarnation leads directly to the terrestrial sense of the heavenly city with the unity of persons in the peace of Christ explicitly tied to earthly justice. At the heart of Augustine's theological anthropology is a natural desire for peace that informs the human community: "How much more strongly is a human being drawn by the laws of his nature...to enter upon a fellowship with all his fellow-men and to keep peace with them, as far as lies in them." (CG, 868; 866) But a unity of human persons in peace is only possible if the community is just: such a community being understood as a, "compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life;"[19] a compromise we might add based upon the divine law of "the mutual proportion between things" (Aquinas).

Likewise in Camus, peace can only be secured by a compromise, by the struggle interior to the rebel to articulate and act upon a concept of human unity that does not transgress "the borderline" that separates each of us from one another. A shared objective identity serves as a "borderline," a *principium* of a community of dignity, a "living virtue" (R, 277). In Camus' words, the rebel, "affirms that there are limits and also that he suspects-and wishes to preserve-the existence of things on this side of the borderline" (R, 13). This borderline, interestingly, is described by Camus as "the personal sacrament" (R, 15), An ideology of totality — which articulates the desire for metaphysical completeness — always reduces the human to a single dimension — whether reason (liberalism), economics (Marxism) or race (Hitlerism) — and so denies the original complexity of the human and the need for a reconciliation between the human's propensities. Christian cultural resistance to violence (both interior and social) defends this "personal sacrament" while still aiming at transformation and the conversion of the world to justice.

The politics of John Paul II and Gaston Fessard acknowledge the historical structure of homicide but, rejecting the *dominium* that lies

[19]For this phrase of Augustine's and a elaboration of the concept of terrestrial peace and justice in Augustine, see C. A. J. Coady and J. Ross, "St. Augustine and the Ideal of Peace," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 74 (2000), pp. 153-161.

at its root, hope for a conversion to a new historical moment. Ultramontanism is inevitably tied to violence, however, because the application of temporal *dominium* as a "solution" can only re-introduce violence and reconfirm our historical propensity to violence. What is needed, and Fessard can usefully explain this, is a civilization which forms conscience and converts persons and spaces. If the primitive political order is the domination of the master over the slave, which Fessard accepts (FC, 22), then only a Christ-centered civilization can introduce into politics an event — the event of grace — which is not as such structured by this originary violence (FC, 34). If Fessard's language is Hegelian, the idea remains Augustine's: we may all begin with a nature of domination, as members of the city of man, but it is possible to be transformed and become a member of the City of God, to become a "broken vessel" (CG, 596). If we understand the City of God in these terms, we see that Augustine's city does not remove itself from the world but confronts the unjust and violent city of man with a call to conversion. Thus, Augustine comments, "and in this world the reign of the good is a blessing for themselves, and even more for the whole of human society" (CG, 139).

If the Incarnation is the event of grace in the world, then it is clear that a civilization must structure the person and space according to the life of Christ. A Christian cultural resistance will be a liturgical one. Recently, in perhaps the most significant theological work in decades, Catherine Pickstock has argued for a liturgical understanding of the *polis* as an escape from nihilism.[20] The liturgical sensibility of the Jesuit reductions is nicely drawn out in the historical fiction of Philip Trower's *A Danger to the State.*[21] Though the novel centers on the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and their final suppression by Clement XIV, much of the narrative takes place on the reduction of San Miguel and over the course of a few pages, Trower nicely captures to what degree the entire life of the reductions was through and through liturgical. The incarnation of grace in the liturgical politics of the reductions demonstrates that grace and justice are not opposed (did GC 32 even think

[20]Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

[21]P. Trower, *A Danger to the State* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998).

so?). Perhaps the most dramatic recent liturgical intervention in politics was the Holy Year liturgy in which John Paul II transformed the Church from a suffering Church into a penitential Church and precisely, a penance for the sins of the Church whether these be failures to develop Christian culture in an genuinely Christ-centered manner or for the sins of ultramontanism. Thus, the Church was re-committed to the cultural mission of shaping conscience and simultaneously was called upon to abandon a philosophy of violence,[22] and therewith ultramontanism which is inescapably connected to the violent *dominium* of the State.

But is a liturgical politics equivalent to Camus' demand that justice rule the world? For Camus justice is composed of persons not only being lucid about "the common dignity of man" (R, 277) but also having the courage to act when "the forbidden frontier" (R, 284) that founds this dignity is transgressed: "Justice in a silent world, justice enslaved and mute...can no longer be justice." (R, 291). Action is necessary, then. And Augustine does not disagree. He writes of the martyrs: "As holy men of God, who have contended for the truth as far as the death of their bodies, so that the true religion might be known...There may have been some in previous times who thought as they did, but, if so, fear kept them silent." (CG, 340) If martyrdom is evidently an action in this world (if not totally of this world), the question remains whether a liturgical politics is sufficient to cultural formation and transformation. Yet, this question immediately becomes, what is action in the world?

"The artist," writes Camus, "reconstructs the world to his plan" (R, 255). The artist, seeking to reduce the violence of the world, aims at stabilization. Perhaps without realizing it, Camus introduces into the artist's civilizing effects, St. Benedict's spirituality. At the center of the Benedictine vision is *stabilitas.* In a centre of resistance to the violence and clamour of the world, is a stillness able to sustain a commitment to human dignity. This is what Camus wants from painting: "A painter's style lies in this blending of nature and history, in this stability imposed on incessant change. Art realizes, without apparent effort, the reconciliation of the unique with the universal..." (R, 257). Of course, St. Ignatius saw Benedict's wisdom. Do not the *Spiritual Exercises* precisely

[22]One this specific point, please see the reporting of the liturgy on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph,* Monday, March 13, 2000.

provide the *stabilitas* for the Jesuit: paradoxically, a movable centre of stillness? It is in the following description of art as a response of the rebel to the injustice of the world, that brings us in uncanny fashion to the Jesuit reductions. Camus writes:

> The principle of painting is also to make a choice... The painter isolates his subject, which is the first way of unifying it. Landscapes flee, vanish from the memory, or destroy one another. That is why the landscape painter or the painter of still life isolates in space and time things that normally change with the light... The first thing a landscape painter does is to square off his canvas. He eliminates as much as he includes" (R, 256).

This last sentence is important to Camus and he repeats it again with a slightly different formulation: "To create beauty, [the artist] must simultaneously reject reality and exalt certain of its aspects. Art disputes reality, but does not hide from it" (R, 258). That is, the rebellious artist (for there is nihilistic art) refuses to transgress the "living transcendence" (R, 258) of the "natural community" but is willing to "[give] the re-created universe its unity and its boundaries" (R, 269). Like a great art work that civilizes and elevates, the first law of the reductions was a rejection of slavery (unhappily, only for the Guaraní) and the settlement and enclosure of those Guaraní who wanted to live in the reductions. Underlying the project then was an intervention, and a controlling of space and human dynamics that first and foremost reduced exploitation. Like Camus' artist, the Jesuits disputed the reality they found yet preserved something of what they found: "The planning was authoritarian and reductive and drew on foreign concepts. The carving was free, "native," pregnant with authenticity" (Jesuits, 229).

As Philip Tower makes clear in his *A Danger to the State*, the Jesuits and the Guaraní had to struggle to keep their communities free of some of the most immoral and calculating exploiters, and so rightly, but in a wholly cultural sense, the reductions were termed in Jesuit documents as "Christian fortresses" (*oppida Christianorum*). With the artist who affirms human dignity understood as "a fabricator of universes" (R, 255), we can follow Jean Lacouture's descriptions, and see the reductions as, "a reinvention of landscape and of space, subjected to the dictates of line and stone, to the decree of an intellect dominated ... by the laws of reason. What was built here in the heart of the forest... was

a city of "civilizing" order" (Jesuits, 228). This Jesuit "construction of a substitute universe" (R, 255) is compared by Lacouture to the Benedictine monasteries of the Middle Ages, centers of civilization in an otherwise tough and violent life: thus, like the monasteries of Benedict, the reductions were, "an autocratic reordering, first of a landscape and through it of a people" (Jesuits, 228), "ordered by reason and illumined by faith in an only God" (Jesuits, 238). While some would hesitate today to simply, and without further comment, affirm the obviousness of the civilizing influence of the Jesuit reductions (though the Guaraní did practice cannibalism and polygamy before living in the reductions [Jesuits, 234]), Lacouture's analogy is well taken. Let us be honest: has anyone ever heard someone lament the civilizing effects of the Benedictine monasteries in a Europe otherwise fundamentally violent? We only pause before the reductions because we assume that there is there a meeting of alien cultures. Yet, why should one presume that the cultural vision of Benedict had anything in common whatsoever with the tribes of northern Europe? As Camus says, a great work of art includes as much as it excludes, and if the Jesuits were constrained by this aesthetic principle, it remains that the reductions did reconcile the universal and the particular, a long-desired human aspiration. As Lacouture puts it:

> If the geometrical layout of the reduction spoke worlds for the didactic spirit of the project – rationalization of space, the fostering of a small, closely supervised, productive, and monotheistic community – the plastic details of the buildings tell us something quite different: true cultural synthesis, or at the very least a hybridization (Jesuits, 229).

To see the reductions as an "aesthetics of existence" (Foucault) is to see Jesuit practice as expressing Camus' programme of cultural resistance: "In upholding beauty, we prepare the way for the day of regeneration when civilization will give first place to... this living virtue on which is founded the common dignity of man..." (R, 277).

About "one of the boldest enterprises in the history of society, culture, and belief," Voltaire (of all people!) described the reductions as a model of what could be achieved through reason and persuasion (Jesuits, 231). We are able to add to Voltaire: the reductions were also a model of a Christian politics of cultural formation that in the face of

violence aims to transform spaces and people. In their affirmation of rational virtue and the liturgical affirmation of person (body and soul) and of place, the reductions sought to unify in an ordered manner the rational and irrational in human nature. They reductions sought to surmount the historical division within human nature, the goal, Fessard tell us, of every true politics (FC, 28). The reductions and the political theory of Fessard recall a style of Jesuit thought and involvement with the world that expresses in a profound way the political theology of John Paul II. A Christian politics must be Christ-centered if it is to be about the world and God simultaneously (the new Jesuit project announced in GC 34). For the contemporary Jesuit, our reflections would suggest that a return be made to service centered in a liturgical cultivation of space and persons and a return to the task of cultural work: the intellectual life, drama, publication and so on. Such a return might be centered initially in the Jesuit universities, colleges and schools and might be a recommitment of them and the Society of Jesus *ad cordem ecclesiae.*