

## THE WAY AS THE GOAL: ANIMATING THE MEDIEVAL PILGRIM ROUTE IN POSTMODERN SWITZERLAND \*

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**ABSTRACT:** *With the ever-growing net of cultural-touristic holiday routes in Switzerland, people are becoming more and more tired of impersonal travel and aimless wandering. While some are still satisfied with the commonplace phrase “the way as a goal,” others look for more meaning in their favorite activity. Here comes pilgrimage as an ideal combination of bodily and spiritual search. But is a leap from “tourist” to “pilgrim” realistic and how can it help to replenish one’s Christian faith? A project of two Swiss missional organizations was set exactly for this purpose: to animate the life of faith of the post-modern seekers of truth.*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

It is said, “Pilgrims pray with their feet”. This can be understood in more ways than one. It can mean walking in place of praying, walking while praying or, in a more general sense, walking as animation of one’s faith.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I will adopt this latter understanding. I would also suggest that such expression of Christian spirituality, which assumes bodily involvement, promotes an experience of God in its entirety and is deeper and more pertinent to human nature than a similar experience obtained in stillness. Geographical pilgrimage, as a journey in space that enables an imaginative travelling in time, belongs to

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<sup>1</sup> My sincere thanks go to the pilgrim leader Pius Süess-Bischof from Bethlehem Mission Immensee who kindly granted me access to his collection of materials relating to the formation and development of the animation project Einsiedeln – Rüeggisberg and to Caritas Switzerland for providing me with the last sample of the guide to their installations “*Ein gutes Stück Weg.*”

<sup>2</sup> According to Alister McGrath, the notion of “animation” of a believer’s faith is at the core of the classical understanding of Christian spirituality. See *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 2.

the former notion. At its best, it is a holistic experience, based on the deepest longing of human beings to turn the physical, outward, aspect of journeying into a spiritual, inward one.

This phenomenon is especially applicable to such a walking culture as the Swiss, for whom the human body has been traditionally seen as the most natural means of cognition of the spatial world through hiking and climbing. However, in postmodern Switzerland with the ever-growing net of cultural-touristic holiday routes on offer, people are becoming more and more tired of impersonal travel and aimless wandering. “The way is the goal,” they often reply when asked about the aim of their journey. This answer supports Zygmunt Bauman’s apt sociological observation with regard to our postmodern reality, namely, that “the point of ... life is to be on the move, not to arrive.”<sup>3</sup> For what these people are lacking is a sense of destination, and what they are seeking is meaning.<sup>4</sup> In response to this need, an increasing number of walkers and tourists are discovering for themselves the Way of St. James – an old pilgrim route, which crosses Switzerland from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva, stretching further westwards as far as Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain.<sup>5</sup> It is in the context of this once third most important pilgrimage in Europe and the numerous local pilgrimages it comprises that such people come to realise that in “being a pilgrim, one can do more than walk – one can walk *to*.”<sup>6</sup>

This aspect of contemporary pilgrimage has gained momentum since the 1980s and has increasingly become the focus of attention of a booming scholarship which approaches this phenomenon from predominantly anthropological, sociological and psychological perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Its basic argument in connection with the current resurgence of pilgrimage is

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<sup>3</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 91.

<sup>4</sup> According to psychiatrist Victor Frankl, this is an important aspect of human psyche, which he calls “will to meaning.” It makes people search for a narrative within which they can see themselves as a part of the same movement. See Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (New York, Washington Square Press, 1985), 121.)

<sup>5</sup> It is virtually impossible to estimate how many Swiss people take this pilgrim route yearly. But according to the latest statistics from the pilgrim office in Santiago, the numbers of those who make it all the way to the Cathedral of St. James have increased more than 60 times over the last twenty years.

<sup>6</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Hall, S. and du Gay, P. (London: SAGE, 1996), 21 (emphasis preserved).

<sup>7</sup> In comparison, there is still a shortage of scholarly attention to the biblical and theological aspects of pilgrimage from a Christian viewpoint. A 2004 collection of articles *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* edited by Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004; hereafter: Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*) has been a valuable contribution towards the filling of this gap.

commonly built on the assumption that having the goal as such (regardless of its content) makes pilgrimage much more attractive for postmodern hikers than walking as a purely leisure time activity.<sup>8</sup> Yet, however important the destination in itself may be, overemphasizing its role, in my view, is the most critical point in this theory. For being a pilgrim does not mean walking towards a goal *per se*,<sup>9</sup> nor towards a goal that others had walked to in the past. Being a pilgrim means being able to identify with both the way and the goal in the present moment.<sup>10</sup> For ideally, “if we visit because we belong, we must passionately belong with what we visit”.<sup>11</sup> Or, I would add, we must be seeking this sense of belonging which ultimately points towards the eschatological hope.

This is why the degree of identification with the way, as well as one’s role on it, can serve as a litmus test in distinguishing between two attitudes to following the way, as well as to life in general, namely, that of a “tourist” and that of a “pilgrim”.<sup>12</sup> Both metaphors establish an implicit link between physical travelling and identity building and therefore are also linked to one another. Or, as Victor and Edith Turner put it proverbially, “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist”.<sup>13</sup> What, then, are those walkers we can meet today on the Way of St. James in Switzerland – more “pilgrims” or “tourists”? And what is the major criterion that should help us to distinguish between the two? I propose that this distinction has much to do with the walkers’ ability to connect with the meaning of the pilgrim route they are treading, i.e., the ability to enter its story and find their place in it.

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<sup>8</sup> A point also emphasised by a Swiss psychologist Bruno Kunz. See Bruno Kunz, *Psychologische Aspekte des Pilgerns*, <https://www.sinnwaerts.ch/pilgern/psychol-aspekte-des-pilgerns/>, accessed 5.8.19.

<sup>9</sup> From a psychological perspective, “having a goal” can be no more than arriving in a refuge at the end of a tiring day or covering a certain mileage at the end of a week.

<sup>10</sup> As David Brown notices, “liminality or transformation is no longer the primary motive for Christian pilgrimage, but rather identification....” *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 219.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Cragg, “Jesus, Jerusalem and Pilgrimage Today,” in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations* 12.

<sup>12</sup> Although Bauman in the above cited article considers a “tourist” to be the central metaphor of Postmodernity whereas a “pilgrim” of Modernity, I think that both metaphors are still applicable to the existing forms of disposition in relation to pilgrimage found in today’s Church. This view is also supported by Doris Donnelly. “Pilgrims and Tourists: Conflicting Metaphors for the Christian Journey to God,” *Spirituality Today*, 44, no. 1 (1992), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 20. Though the Turners use this comparison in a different context, their intention is still the same, i.e., to stress the outward similarity between the two groups – being on the move.

Yet, as a matter of fact, few people today, Christians included, can relate to the medieval concept of *Camino de Santiago* as a place-oriented pilgrimage, or *Wallfahrt*,<sup>14</sup> which was undertaken with the goal of obtaining a cure or washing away sins on reaching the alleged tomb of Saint James the Great. Many find it difficult to reconcile, culturally and theologically, the post-Reformation understanding of faith as *the conviction of things not seen* (Heb 11:1, RSV)<sup>15</sup> with a sometimes obscure mixture of biblical and apocryphal images which still decorate some lesser shrines, chapels, wells and other signposts that mark the historic pilgrim routes. The contemporary seekers of the meaning can neither read their message, nor feel that they belong in it. Such detachment from the original symbolic and ritual aspects of pilgrimage is not only due to the interruption of the tradition and memory related to it at the time of the post-Reformation period,<sup>16</sup> but also to the loss of the sense of history and place so characteristic of Postmodernity.<sup>17</sup> For the Christian pilgrim tradition is inseparable from its own culturally specific and socially constructed reality, which in the case of the Way of St. James goes back to the medieval interpretation and practice of Christ.<sup>18</sup> Or, we can say, it tells the old story in the time-bound theological and visual language.

My own rather modest pilgrim experience prompts me to posit that what the majority of the newly-fledged pilgrims are seeking on the Way of St. James today, those from the Reformed tradition especially, has little to do with medieval mysticism of place<sup>19</sup> but rather with re-connecting to the historical faith and, in this way, re-discovering their true identity

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<sup>14</sup> There is a qualitative difference in German between the two types of pilgrimages, one being more place orientated (*Wallfahrt*) and the other more way orientated (*Pilgerfahrt*). In medieval monasticism in *Wallfahrt* one used to leave home in order to visit a holy place, to pray there and then to return home with new strengths. Yet, the intention to come back to the same home was not there in *Pilgerfahrt*, which was thought of in conjunction with the desire of a better, heavenly country (Heb. 11:16). Anselm Grün, *Auf dem Wege: zu einer Theologie des Wanderns* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 2005), 35. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German sources in this thesis are mine.

<sup>15</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from this version of the Bible.

<sup>16</sup> As a matter of fact, this tradition has never been totally eliminated in Switzerland, but, despite many artificial obstacles, was kept alive by the Catholic population of the country.

<sup>17</sup> These issues are most exhaustively dealt with in Oliver O'Donovan, "The Loss of the Sense of Place," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 55 (1989), 39-58.

<sup>18</sup> Though the earliest recorded pilgrimages to St. James shrine in Santiago date from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the early 12<sup>th</sup> century that they began to flourish.

<sup>19</sup> This is not to overlook a growing tendency in Switzerland to define some Christian pilgrim sites as *Kraftorte* (magic places). Such New Age and neo-pagan approaches to old pilgrim shrines go beyond the scope of this thesis.

as God's pilgrim people. In other words, modern pilgrims set off on a physical journey in search of a sense of belonging through the experience of pilgrimage as *Pilgerfahrt* and the pilgrim routes as "storied ways,"<sup>20</sup> i.e., the ways that were originally set in the context of the Christian story as metanarrative.

This is why I have deliberately left the discussion about the validity of "holy" places and "sacred" objects outside the scope of this thesis, choosing to concentrate on the theology of walking, which is inseparable from Biblical and monastic theology of the way and its goal. Not least, this choice has been determined by my personal conviction that the Way of St. James has been and should continue to be experienced within a living Christian, rather than purely historic-cultural, context<sup>21</sup> in order to remain a pilgrim route proper, i.e., a route where travellers can refresh their faith as well as find it anew. This means that in order to make the message of *Camino de Santiago* accessible for postmodern pilgrims, this route has to undergo some creative changes. A recent project of two Swiss missional organizations, Caritas Switzerland and Bethlehem Mission Immensee, has resulted in an attempt to implement such a change by animating the old pilgrim route between Einsiedeln and Rüeggisberg (a leg of the traditional Way of St. James in Central Switzerland) in order to make it meaningful for contemporary pilgrims. Thanks to this project, various new installations, such as signposts, stone altars and pilgrim stations have appeared along the route – the combined work of local artists, school classes, art historians and theologians. I will set the following discussion in the context of these new installations,<sup>22</sup> offering a critical analysis of the project in relation to the medieval pilgrim tradition (predominantly monastic) as well as to its potential to animate the life of faith of the modern seekers of truth.

Thus, Christians who set off today on the traditional pilgrim routes are confronted, regardless of their confession, with a few major issues in relation to following the way: the physicality of walking and *not* the earthly nature of Christian faith, moving in space and in

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<sup>20</sup> I have coined this term by analogy with Bruggemann's "storied spaces," which I find a very helpful re-definition of the "holy" or "sacred" places, not least because of its emphasis on the memory attached to them by a particular tradition. See Walter Bruggemann, *The Land* (London: SPCK, 1978), 185.

<sup>21</sup> Despite the Council of Europe declaring the Way of St. James the first European Culture Route (1987) and UNESCO recognising it as one of its World Heritage Sites (1993), this did not necessarily promote the old pilgrim route as an important Christian site but rather made it more attractive for the culture tourists.

<sup>22</sup> In this article, I have narrowed down my sphere of reference to these relatively new, man-made artefacts.

spirit, the way as animation of our faith as well as our feet, and ultimately with the way as a symbol of life and following it as the inherent state of our existence. For “the way is the goal” has also another meaning, which points towards the core of the Christian message of salvation – the message centred in the remembrance of Jesus who *is* the way (Jn 14:6), with all the implications that *that* has for our life today. As Moltmann summarised it, “Christ is not merely a person. He is a road too. And the person who believes him takes the same road he took. There is no Christology without christopraxis, no knowledge of Christ without the practice of Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

However, it is over “christopraxis”<sup>24</sup> that the opinions within the Church have been constantly divided. Yet it is precisely at the point of translating idea into action, the knowledge *about* God into the knowledge *of* God, that pilgrimage has proved to be a helpful spiritual discipline.<sup>25</sup> It is there, within the act of pilgrimage as an exercise in the incarnate, dynamic faith,<sup>26</sup> that the interpretation and practice of Christ, or discipleship, has been evaluated from the times of the Early Church until the multi-denominational Christianity of Postmodernity. With respect to this, I am going to show that the three major interpretations of discipleship, in relation to “following Jesus,” throughout Church history have determined three corresponding attitudes to pilgrimage as a model of Christian life, or discipleship in miniature. These are: following, imitation and re-enactment. But how did these approaches find their reflection in the Christian view of pilgrimage? Such excursus will help us to

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<sup>23</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World (Wer ist Christus für uns heute?)*, trans. Kohl, M., (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1994), 47.

<sup>24</sup> “Praxis,” from Gk πράξις, what one does, deed, action, practice; function (of body parts). B. M. Newman, ed., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* [UBSDICT] (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971.)

<sup>25</sup> There is a variety of opinions in scholarly as well as devotional literature as far as classification of pilgrimage as an expression of Christian spirituality is concerned. It is noteworthy that Richard Foster in his classic work *Celebration of Discipline* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980) does not include pilgrimage at all, while Alister McGrath in his almost twenty years later written *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) does, describing it as “an act of self-denial or personal discipline” (133). This comparison illustrates most vividly how the attitude to the practice of pilgrimage has changed in our time. It is my assumption that had Foster written his book today, he would have probably included pilgrimage in the chapter “Multiple Disciplines,” even though with the remark “not obligatory.”

<sup>26</sup> Some authors, e.g., Ladner, interchange the terms “discipline,” “exercise” or even “a retreat on the move” in connection to pilgrimage. See Gerhart B. Ladner, “*Homo Viator*: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order,” in *Speculum*, no 42 (1967), 233-259. In my view, all of these can be applicable if the underlying meaning stresses a holistic, experiential and learning aspect of faith-journeying – a time of real growth in discipleship.

evaluate which pilgrim practices from the past could still be applicable for the Church today and which should be left to history. It is from such an historical perspective and understanding of the concept of “the way” in relation to Christian life and identity, that we will begin reflecting upon its contemporary meaning and, in particular, the following aspects:

- 1) If, according to Bauman, between the Reformation and Postmodernity a transition from “pilgrim” to “tourist” has occurred<sup>27</sup>, is a change in the opposite direction still possible and what would it involve?
- 2) What can the role of pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise be in the promotion of such a change?

My personal interest in the subject stems from my involvement in a number of stage pilgrimages along the Way of St. James in Switzerland over the last four years, walking with the same group from a local Reformed Church. This is why, while bearing in mind that on this pilgrim route one can meet people of different or no church affiliations, I will approach the topic largely from the perspective of the Swiss Reformed Church, both contemporary and historical.

Hence, if it is true that “pilgrims pray with their feet,” there must be something intrinsically special about walking. Even more special, about walking the way that has a story to tell; walking the old pilgrim route animated to speak this story for our time in particular. But firstly, is there a theological rationale for such animation? In other words, to what extent, if at all, can the Biblical concept of “following Jesus as the Way” be embodied in the actual walking the literal pilgrim road?

### **The Way as Following**

The life of discipleship has often been summed up in the metaphor “walking in the way of the Lord”. Yet, what exactly do we understand by that? This well familiar and somewhat overused idiom has received different interpretations in the thought and practice of the Church throughout its history while remaining at all times the most essential constituent of Christian understanding of discipleship and therefore – I am going to argue

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<sup>27</sup> See Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist.”

further – of pilgrimage. So, what underlies this concept, which provoked such discord between theologians for its theory and practice?

It seems to me that the touchstone for the interpretation of this metaphor is striking a balance in the extent to which we conceive “walking” in this context as literal or figurative, actual or imaginative, as outer or inner journeying. For ultimately such an approach derives and is therefore inseparable from the most fundamental aspect of the human perception of faith, namely, whether it is something affecting our minds or hearts, souls or bodies, spiritual or physical, part of our humanity or the whole person.

In this and the next chapter I am going to show how biblical theology of the way and walking the way<sup>28</sup> can help us in our exploration of the meaning of this metaphor and therefore make a valuable contribution to the principles of animating a pilgrim way for contemporary Christians. But before proceeding to the climax of the theology of the way in the Gospels of John and Luke, let us consider what can be immediately drawn out from the idiomatic saying in question and how it can shed light on the later concept of “following Jesus” as applied to our way of life embodied in pilgrimage.

Although the commandment to *walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded* goes back to Deuteronomy (5:33; 8:6), this scripture can only reveal its multifaceted meaning when considered in the context of other similar verses. There are a whole host of those in the Bible, characterised by the usage of “walking” not as a means of changing place or temporal sequence of events but as a metaphor of life in faith. Thus, the Scripture urges a believer to walk in the law of the Lord (Ex 16:4), in newness of life (Rom 6:4), according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4), in love (Rom 14:15; 2 Jn 1:6), by faith (2 Cor 5:7), in the light (1 Jn 1:7), in the truth (2 John 1:4; 3 John 1:3-4), etc. To summarise the biblical

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<sup>28</sup> This is not customary terminology in English scholarship. Neither are these the standardized concepts in the German-speaking theological realm. Thus, Anselm Grün talks about theology of the way (*Theologie des Weges*) and theology of wandering (*Theologie des Wanderns*) as related yet separate concepts. See Grün, *Auf dem Wege*, 63ff. However, Nikolaus Wandingen sees them as a unified concept, i.e., the implicit theology of walking and the way (*Theologie des Gehens und des Weges*) as foundation of Judaism and Christianity. See Nikolaus Wandingen, “Zur Rede von einer ‘impliziten Theologie’: Versuch einer Begriffserklärung,” in *An Grenzen lernen. Neue Wege in der theologischen Didaktik*, edited by Christoph Drexler and Matthias Scharer, (Mainz a. Rhein: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 2007.) While accepting Grün’s separate classification, I prefer to substitute his notion of “theology of wandering” for “theology of walking,” due to the allusion to walking aimlessly, without settled route or destination, which the verb “wandering” has in English.



message, *to live* with God means *to walk* with or before God (Gen 5:24; 17:1) with all one's heart (1 Kings 8:23).<sup>29</sup>

However, as biblical authors used to select their imagery very carefully, it is important to realise that in these verses “walking” does not merely substitute for “living”<sup>30</sup> but instead denotes an action that is inseparable from its object – “the way.” Indeed, the people of God, from Abraham to Jesus and from Paul to the early Christians, had been itinerant wanderers in response to God's call, so that for them “walking” and “the way” existed only in their dialectic unity. For, in biblical imagery, to choose the way of love (1 Cor 13) means to walk in love; similarly, to make a moral choice between the wide and narrow way (Matt 7:13 ff.) means to actually walk one of them. The same applies to *the way of life* (Jer 21:8). Such way cannot be lived by mental comprehension alone; it has to be walked. As psychologist Erich Neumann put it paradoxically, “the walker is the way that walks itself,”<sup>31</sup> which means that by walking the walker and the way become one. Or, we can say that it is in following the way that life becomes meaningful, and it is in this sense that the metaphor “the way of life” as the unfolding of events in space and history in time should be understood. Such primeval understanding of the way marks the apex of New Testament theology of the way – Jesus' own identification with it (Jn 14:6). According to St. Augustine, while *truth* and *life* refer to the pre-incarnate existence of the Son, Jesus is *the way* in the flesh: “When Jesus says, ‘I am the way, and the truth and the life,’ then he is the truth and the life in his divinity, yet the way in his humanity – the way that leads to the truth and the life.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> On discussion between concrete and metaphorical use in Paul's writings of the verbs πορεύομαι and περιπατέω in their relation to Hebrew *hālakah* (“the way things are done”) see Robert Banks, “‘Walking’ as a Metaphor of the Christian Life: The Origins of a Significant Pauline Usage,” in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, ed. Edgar Conrad and Edward Newing (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 303-313.

<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, some more recent translations tend to replace the concreteness of the original with such general words like “live,” “conduct” or “behave.” However, I would agree with the authors of the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* who notice that “the result is to diminish a reader's capacity to allow concrete, everyday activities to become windows on divine realities.” See Leland Ryken, et al, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 923.

<sup>31</sup> Orig.: “Der Gehende ist der Weg, der sich selber geht.” See Erich Neumann, *Kulturentwicklung und Religion* (Zürich: Rascher-Verlag, 1953, Band 1), 63.

<sup>32</sup> Orig.: *Ego sum via, ego sum veritas, ego vita. Manens apud Patrem veritas et vita: induens se carnem, factus est via.* See St. Augustine, *Confessions* 11.8.10. cited in Eginhard P. Meijering, *Augustin über Schöpfung, Ewigkeit und Zeit: Das elfte Buch der Bekenntnisse* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 36. Elsewhere Augustine expressed it even more specifically: “the *pilgrim* way in his humanity” (*secundum humanitatem*

Thus, Christianity at its roots is faith incarnate, which endorses “a kind of religious materialism” that involves “the recognition of the importance of actions and indeed of physical actions”.<sup>33</sup> In the light of the above, what does it mean for us to follow Jesus as the Way? Does Scripture tell us only about Jesus’ part in our salvation (“our way *to* Jesus”) or does it also have something to say about our life of discipleship (“our way *in* Jesus”) in relation to “the way *of* Jesus”? In other words, apart from the theology of the way, does it also offer us a theology of walking, which can become a theological rationale for animating an old pilgrim route?

It is at this specific point that the ways of the pre- and post-Reformation understanding of discipleship part. In this chapter I will concentrate on the interpretation of the above concepts within the modern Reformed tradition as well as on the historical background that contributed to its formation. For such beliefs and attitudes are likely to be a part of the worldview and personhood of a large number of contemporary Swiss pilgrims, and it is from their perspective that I would like to set the rest of the discussion in this thesis.

Hence, who are they, the present-day walkers of the Way of St. James in Switzerland? Many of them would be the heirs of that generation, of which probably no-one has left us a more vivid and discerning account than Wilhelm Bousset:

They mask themselves in the armour of irony and scepticism of their own forging; they penetrate deeply into the problems of life, but their hypercritical intellect prevents them from yielding to any deeper feeling... As they stand for pure intellect and keen observation, they regard the material world as a varied, delightful drama, a bubble whose brightly-coloured glories we admire, well knowing that it soon bursts. ...They are voluntary wanderers in the desert who lead a life of deliberate barrenness.<sup>34</sup>

The words “intellect,” “observation,” “desert” and “barrenness” seem to stand out in this description, sharing the commonality of bodilessness and non-participation. As opposed

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*factus est via peregrinantium*). See Augustinus, *Sermo* LXVII, 3, in *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1863), emphasis added.

<sup>33</sup> J. G. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today: Why? Where? How?* (London: SCM, 1988), 181.

<sup>34</sup> Wilhelm Bousset, *The Faith of a Modern Protestant*, trans. F. B. Low (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 16.

to Abraham and Jesus, these people are wanderers in a sense of being aimless walkers in the man-made environment of virtual reality, not in the material world created by God. Quite logically, the people with such a *Weltanschauung* would more likely than not tend to think of “walking” in someone’s way or “following” somebody, whom they cannot testify to empirically, as of a mere figure of speech, making no connection to their immediate activity — actual walking.

The roots of such an approach go back some five hundred years to the time of the formation of the general conception of discipleship in Protestant theology, which is following the exalted Christ of faith, not in the footsteps of the historical Jesus<sup>35</sup> – a dichotomy that, at least in practice, has dominated the past two millennia of the history of Christianity. Already from a linguistic viewpoint, the New Testament concept of “following” is much more open to interpretations than that associated with the Old Testament “walking,” which has given rise to the whole debate regarding *Imitatio Dei* as opposed to “following Jesus” and their subsequent interpretations.<sup>36</sup>

“*Be imitators (Μιμηταί)*<sup>37</sup> of me as I am of Christ,” says Paul (1 Cor 11:1; cf. Eph 5:1). What did he mean: his life in Christ and his relationship with the Lord or his identification with the historical Jesus? The Reformers voted for the former. For, “...*even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way*” (2 Cor 5:16). Does it mean that everything that has to do with our humanity, bodiliness in particular, plays a subordinate role, if any at all, in New Testament expression of faith? The Reformers’ answer was in the affirmative. For Christians, they would argue, are called

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<sup>35</sup> This is a continuing discussion in the Church, which is sometimes referred to as “believing in Christ” as opposed to “following Jesus.” Some scholars, however, try to take the middle way in this discourse, proposing such understanding of discipleship as “following Christ” – an attitude, in which they see an expression of *Gemeindetheologie* in the New Testament. See, for example, Hans Dieter Betz, “Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament,” in *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie*, 37 (Tübingen: JCB Mohr [Paul Sieback], 1967), 187.

<sup>36</sup> This debate goes back to medieval theology and practice. However, up until the present day there is a great deal of disparity, partially linguistic, in the interpretation of *Imitatio Dei*, particularly between the Anglican and the Swiss Reformed traditions. While the former widely accepted the notion as it is, the latter tends to translate it into *Nachfolge* (following), trying to avoid the word *Nachahmung* (imitation).

<sup>37</sup> Or *followers* (KJV, NIV).

to walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4),<sup>38</sup> that is, by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7).

Taken literally, such seemingly over-spiritualized (but, in fact, over-intellectualized) exegesis of these crucial verses from the Epistles has consequently resulted in the necessity to adjust the interpretation of “following Jesus” by substituting the immediate connotation of the underlying physical phenomenon, i.e., “walking,” for the more “stationary” and abstract one “abiding” (μένει, as in John 6:56; 15:4). From today’s perspective, it is fair to say in support of the Reformers, who famously built their soteriology on *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, that such emphasis on the rational aspect of faith at expense of the physical and experiential must have stemmed from their ultimate goal to advocate an unmediated devotion of God and their *not of this world* perception of faith. As Luther summarized it, “one cannot comprehend the word with either hands or feet or the whole body, but only with heart alone, by faith.”<sup>39</sup>

No wonder, this definition of the path of faith, if we can put it like this, was seen by the adherents of the father of the Reformation not only as a theological rationale for prohibition of pilgrimages<sup>40</sup> but also for any bodily involvement, let alone physical actions, in the human quest for the divine.

Following Luther, the founder of the Swiss Reformed Church, Huldreich Zwingli, went even further in his anti-corporeal views of the human being. Influenced by the dualistic perception of the nature of humankind in Erasmus,<sup>41</sup> he was convinced that “if there is any evil in the mind, it proceeds from contact with the body,” which resulted in his condemnation

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<sup>38</sup> I share a view expressed by Gustav Wingren in “‘Weg’, ‘Wanderung’ und verwandte Begriffe,” *Studia Theologica* 3 (1951) 111-123, who attributes Paul’s concept of “walking in the Spirit” to a way of life based on clear, strong principles of conduct, not to the anti-material essence of faith.

<sup>39</sup> “...das wort kan man mit kainem ding fahen weder mit henden noch mit füssen noch mit dem ganzen leib, sonder allein mit dem hertzen, mit dem glauben.” Martin Luther, “Sermon von der Himmelfahrt Marie,” 1522, in D. Martin Luther Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883), WA 10, III, 271, 35f.

<sup>40</sup> According to some opinions, the main focus of Luther’s and Calvin’s attack on medieval pilgrimage was strictly speaking on abuses rather than the practice itself. Graham Tomlin, “Protestants and Pilgrimage,” in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*, 120. However, I do not think that pilgrimage as a traditional Roman Catholic practice could have been advocated by the Reformers anyway. It becomes especially obvious when pilgrimage is considered in the context of their other writings, e.g., on images and rituals. See, for example, Helmut Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus des Westens* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 122-137.

<sup>41</sup> As a matter of fact, Zwingli’s thinking even more than Luther’s was shaped by Erasmus and his theology based on “spirit-flesh” dichotomy that ultimately goes back to Origen and Plato. See David Marsh, “Erasmus on the Antithesis of Body and Soul,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37, No 4, (Oct. - Dec. 1976), 673-688.

of pilgrimages as “not only foolish but anti-Christian.”<sup>42</sup> This verdict, which in principle upheld the exclusion of any physical experience as a valid instrument in the cognition and expression of Christian faith, paved the way to the whole epoch of a false anti-materialist spirituality, which has still not quite come to an end in the Reformed cantons of Switzerland.<sup>43</sup> Instead, generations within the Reformed Church had to learn to identify themselves with “inner-worldly pilgrims,”<sup>44</sup> who, in Weber’s somewhat ironic description, “invented the way of embarking on pilgrimage without leaving home and of leaving home without becoming homeless.”<sup>45</sup> This type of pilgrimage has also become and for a long time remained a prototype of the Reformed understanding of discipleship.

This is why today we have the right to ask ourselves not only what did Reformers mean concerning Christian discipleship, the nature of faith and pilgrimage but also, if this is what Reformers meant, were they right?

Indeed, *one believes with the heart and so is justified...* (Rom 10:10). This is the way of our salvation (“our way to Jesus”). But does Luther mean such a way to faith, or does he describe the way of faith of an already believer? If it is the former (which I doubt), then pilgrimage is redundant.<sup>46</sup> But if Luther meant the latter, then he must have underestimated the potential of a pilgrim road to promote the believers’ comprehension of Scripture.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Huldrych Zwingli, “Die Akten der zweiten Disputation vom 26. - 28. Oktober 1523,” in *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, II, ed. Egli, E. and Finsler, G. (Leipzig, 1908), CR 89, 246-248, 676.

<sup>43</sup> The beginning of this epoch could be traced back to the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 by Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli as head of the Zurich Church. Among other things, the Confession had elevated the teaching on “body-soul” dualism at the doctrinal level, setting in opposition the “immortal soul” and “mortal body.” See Bullinger, “Second Helvetic Confession,” 1566, ed. Bratcher, D., Ch. 7 *Of Man*: <http://www.crivoice.org/creed2helvetic.html>, last modified 09.09.2006.)

<sup>44</sup> Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist,” 21. Such invention, however, does not belong to the Protestant ethic alone. According to Gerd Theissen, early Christian understanding of *Imitatio Dei* goes back to so-called wandering radicals (*Wanderradikalen*) among whom were those who understood following literally and those whose approach was more symbolic in permanent (“*sesshaften*”) communities. See Gerd Theissen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1977.) Yet both groups called themselves *peregrini*. The latter view has become widely popular in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who thought of pilgrimage as an affair of the “heart,” and in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Swiss mysticism of St. Nicholas of Flüe (Brother Klaus).

<sup>45</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1930), cited in Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist,” 21.

<sup>46</sup> As a means of salvation, but not as an opportunity for it.

<sup>47</sup> According to Josef Sudbrack, Luther’s new approach to the Scripture, with his stress on its factual message – a method, which led to the formation of the historic-critical exegesis in the 19<sup>th</sup> c., had replaced the old allegoric-symbolic interpretation of the Early Church and a rigid formalistic one of the Late Middle Ages. See

Because, we could reply to Luther from today's perspective, "the divine word... communicates itself in particular,"<sup>48</sup> and pilgrimage, as we shall see further, can provide a necessary context for such communication.<sup>49</sup> This context is walking as an attempt to practice Christian faith in living it out *with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength*,<sup>50</sup> – an exercise, which, when properly implemented, can become a valuable experience of growth in discipleship. For, "we cannot grasp Christ merely with our heads. We come to understand him through a total, all-embracing practice of living; and that means discipleship. Discipleship is a holistic knowledge of Christ".<sup>51</sup>

In the light of the above, my argument is the following:

- 1) Geographical pilgrimage can be conceived of as a metaphor or an "embodied parable"<sup>52</sup> of the believer's way of life – "walking in the way of the Lord," and as such it can become "a micro-journey by means of which one explores the macro-journey of one's life",<sup>53</sup>
- 2) Such journeying is to do with translating the external experience of "following the way of Jesus" into the internal experience of "my way in Jesus," and as such it can help to comprehend as well as practice our faith as "faith in action",<sup>54</sup>

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Josef Sudbrack, "Unterwegs zu Gott, obgleich schon stehend vor ihm," in *Spiritualität des Pilgers: Kontinuität und Wandel*, ed. Herbers, K., Plötz, R. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993), 122.)

<sup>48</sup> O'Donovan, "The Loss of the Sense of Place," 56. The archetype of such communication between God and humanity is the Incarnation – the Word becoming flesh.

<sup>49</sup> This is why pilgrimage is often referred to as useful, but not compulsory, discipline. Bartholomew, "Journeying on: a Concluding Reflection," in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*, 206.

<sup>50</sup> There are different interpretations of this particular word from Deut. 6:5, which the Septuagint translates as δύναμις and the UBSDICT interprets as "power," "strength," "act of power." In my understanding, such an interpretation implies physical (bodily) involvement.

<sup>51</sup> Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 188. The idea of pilgrimage as a metaphor of Christian life is largely derived from St. Augustine and became increasingly popular in the late Middle Ages. However, I prefer Davies' "embodied parable" to the classical Augustine's "metaphor," because as a figurative way of speaking the truth, "parable," without breaking completely with the original Augustine's concept, sets an "effective sign of advancing on the way towards the heavenly Jerusalem" by a pilgrim as a whole person. For parable as extended metaphor see Sally McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), Introduction.

<sup>53</sup> Bartholomew, "Journeying on," 209.

<sup>54</sup> In conjunction with this, I can think of the present-day church-wide campaign Faith in Action with its monthly engagement in community service projects instead of a regular Sunday service. To me, this is a sign of such an embodied understanding of faith, or faith incarnate.

- 3) It is an experience in “following Jesus as the Way” with our whole being, including our bodies, and as such it can become a valuable exercise in Christian discipleship as a holistic knowledge of Christ.

Hence, “walking in the way of the Lord” is inseparable from the action it denotes, just as “the way” is meaningless apart from “walking”. Therefore it is right to assume too that the life of a disciple, summed up under this metaphor, is not all to do with abiding but also with moving<sup>55</sup> – with our whole being, in faith. This kind of faith, therefore, is an embodied response to God’s call, or “faith in action,” of which pilgrimage can be seen as a school of Christian discipleship in miniature.<sup>56</sup> However, such understanding of the disciple’s identity as “acting pilgrim” is incongruous with the idea of “inner-worldly pilgrims” of the Reformation, just as the concept of “following Jesus as the Way” is incomprehensible by mental contemplation only.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, this concept, which assumes an action attached to it, can become a theological rationale for animation of an old pilgrim route (or any other way), making it into the road that, in turn, can animate a believer’s faith.

But what are the principles of such animation? Or, what is the difference between walking a hiking trail and following a pilgrim road? These questions were central to the medieval monastic theology of “following Jesus” as *Imitatio Dei*, to which we will now turn.

### **The way as imitation**

Thus, having built its theology around the word, and its doctrine of discipleship around the mental “following,” the Reformed Church has for centuries remained suspicious of, if not totally objecting towards, any physical or visual manifestation of its faith, whether in sacraments or rituals, use of images in worship or spirituality in general. Pilgrimage in time and space is a peculiar fusion of all of these; it affects all aspects of a human being.

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<sup>55</sup> In Richard Niebuhr’s observation concerning pilgrimage, “we acquire ourselves not in abiding only, but (also) in moving.” “Pilgrims and Pioneers,” *Parabola* IX (3) Aug. 1984, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Writing in support of pilgrimage, Tom Wright particularly stressed that it “has a valuable role within the Christian teaching ministry.” *The Way of the Lord: Christian Pilgrimage Today* (London: SPCK, 1999), 9-10.

<sup>57</sup> This is not to say that there are no times when the latter can be an appropriate alternative. I am thinking, for example, of the Spiritual Exercises by Ignatius Loyola, who was seeking to help those who were unable to go on geographical pilgrimage to experience what it could be like.

However, as is often the case, practice happened to be stronger than theory.<sup>58</sup> Today thousands of the “inner-worldly pilgrims”<sup>59</sup> are seeking to become the acting ones again, as it were, having few concerns about the Reformers’ arguments against such an identity transformation. Yet, practice alone, however successful, does not exclude the necessity to assess the theological warrant for its resurgence, i.e., not only whether one could or should go on pilgrimage (rationale) but also whether there is a legitimate example and experience of such going (justification). In the first chapter we have concentrated on the former. We shall now turn to the latter. This means going back to the origins of Christian understanding of the concepts of *peregrinus*, *peregrinatio*, and *peregrini*, which are essential for the animation of a pilgrim way as distinct from a hiking trail.

There are different opinions amongst scholars as to what constitutes a Christian pilgrimage and therefore when the first one likely occurred. To distinguish between the often merging dispositions of “pilgrim” and “tourist,” it has become customary to juxtapose a prayerful and a purely historical interest in pilgrim routes,<sup>60</sup> an attitude of personal involvement and that of an observer.<sup>61</sup> But such a general classification inevitably raises questions about the possibility of selfish intentions behind such praying (e.g., “earning” a miracle) or wrong motives behind such involvement (e.g., sheer adventure).

Equally, there is a great variety of assessments of the impact of pilgrimage on believers’ personal and corporate life. Here opinions range from admitting that walking the pilgrim roads helps to overcome one’s inner limitations by discovering the limit of one’s physical potential,<sup>62</sup> to seeing in it a sign of the Church rediscovering a holistic understanding of human personhood in which the spiritual is neither cut from, nor set in opposition to, the

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<sup>58</sup> The historic arguments of the Reformers against geographical pilgrimages have never been publicly revoked.

<sup>59</sup> This term, however, can only be nominally applied to the present-day Reformed Christians. It is a fact that, in the course of history, the Church has virtually lost its self-perception as pilgrim community, whether mental or actual, and this is precisely the identity that is to be re-discovered.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Walker, “Pilgrimage in the Early Church,” in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*, 81. Based on this principle, the names of Alexander of Cappadocia and Egeria are often mentioned among the first Christian pilgrims (Jerusalem, 200 and 381-384 AD subsequently). See H. A. Drake, “Eusebius on the True Cross,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36: 1985, 1-22.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Dee Dyas, “Medieval Patterns of Pilgrimage: A Mirror for Today?” in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> As some members of our group told me, this was their primary reason for walking the Way of St. James.



physical.<sup>63</sup> Although there is much truth in these assertions, on closer look, one cannot help but noticing that they are directed exclusively towards a human being and can therefore only partially contribute to the justification of pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise. For the latter is always meant to be a time of growth in discipleship and as such is unthinkable without entering into a closer communion with God. This implies that pilgrimage as a school of discipleship is never only about “me”; it is always about “me and my God”.<sup>64</sup> To use Tom Wright’s terminology, “following the way of the Lord” ultimately means going on the “inside-out pilgrimage,” which is the only “pilgrimage that really counts.”<sup>65</sup> This is why I concede that the chief goal of the animation of a pilgrim way for contemporary Christians is not only about rediscovering their total personality<sup>66</sup> but firstly and primarily about the holistic rediscovery of and identification with the God, who “for us and for our salvation ... came down from heaven ... and became truly human.”<sup>67</sup>

Peculiarly enough, this quest, which ultimately goes back to the problem of the restoration of the image of God in humanity, or sanctification, is not in contradiction with the general intellectual currents of postmodern thinking. For, as Derek Tidball fairly claims, the crucial question of Postmodernity – the question “Who am I?” – cannot be answered without reference to “Who is my God?”<sup>68</sup> Below I am going to demonstrate that it is when we dare to pursue the latter through the all-embracing enquiry of our whole being that we can start grasping the former.<sup>69</sup> Such enquiry means testing one’s own ideas about God and

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<sup>63</sup> Paul Williams, “The Ritual Reason Why,” *Anvil* 13, No 3 (1996): 245.

<sup>64</sup> Indirectly, this point is expressed in one of the medieval pilgrim songs: *Avant que je m'en aille/ Il faut penser a moi/ Je romprai la muraille/ Qui me retiene en moi.* (“Before I go away I shall think about myself. I will break through the walls that keep me back in myself,” in Pedro Echevarría Bravo, ed., *Chanson du devoir des pèlerins* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Jacobeos, 1971), 30.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, *The Way of the Lord*, 118, Preface x.

<sup>66</sup> Sometimes, especially in the earlier scholarship, the holistic perception of a human being is referred to as total personality approach, which includes the intellect, the emotions and the will (actions).

<sup>67</sup> Nicene Creed, 1988 Ecumenical Version by ELLC. This is by no means to propose here a holistic model of the world as God’s body as, for example, in Sally McFague, “The World as God’s Body,” *The Christian Century*, July 20-27, 1998, 671-673, but rather to try to look from a different perspective at Moltmann’s concept of the longing for love fellowship and ultimately suffering God, and the necessity for the Christians to enter his suffering.

<sup>68</sup> Derek Tidball “The Pilgrim and the Tourist: Zygmunt Bauman and Postmodern Identity,” in Bartholomew and Hughes, *Explorations*, 197.

<sup>69</sup> This connection is by no means linear but also reciprocal. From Moltmann’s somewhat broader perspective, “Only people who find the kingdom of God find themselves. And people who really and truly find themselves find the kingdom of God.” Moltmann, *Jesus Christ for Today’s World*, 29.

the world through interpreting them mimetically, or through imitation, which may call for one's identity to change.<sup>70</sup> Pilgrimage, as a transformative experience, can be both a help and a means to this end.<sup>71</sup>

Hence, we are back to the old debate on a disciple's way of life and its meaning, or *Imitatio Dei*, yet now in conjunction with the theology of walking and formation of one's new identity – of a pilgrim. Contrary to the pseudo-intellectual position of the Reformers who could offer, at least from a theological perspective, only a one-sided interpretation of what it means to *be imitators* (μιμηταὶ) *of God, as beloved children* (Eph. 5:1), i.e., mental,<sup>72</sup> some of their medieval predecessors, pondering on the same issue, had come to realise that “[i]f merely mental contemplation were sufficient, it would have been sufficient for him [Christ] to come to us in a merely mental way.”<sup>73</sup>

Thus, there must be some connection between the Incarnation of Christ and a believer's outward manifestation of “Christ in me,” between Jesus as the example of faith and his disciple as an example, or imitator, of Jesus.<sup>74</sup> This view of the discipleship, known since early medieval time as “imitation of Christ,”<sup>75</sup> acknowledges the human body as a channel of such connectedness between earthly and divine,<sup>76</sup> thus perceiving our bodiliness

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<sup>70</sup> It is noteworthy that in Middle High German *wandern* (to wander, hike) comes very close to the meaning of *wenden* (to turn, change direction). Günther Drosdowski, ed., *Duden: Etymologie der deutschen Sprache*, Vol. 7. (Mannheim, Wien, Zürich: Dudenverlag, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> It is customary to talk about pilgrimage as a transformative experience in the sense of being “an ideal combination of bodily and spiritual search.” See Barbara Haab, *Weg und Wandlung: Zur Spiritualität heutiger Jakobspilger und -pilgerinnen* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1998), 50. I use it here to underline the general potentiality of a geographical pilgrimage as a constant progressing forward to become a practice of one's inner progress.

<sup>72</sup> This is neither to diminish the importance of the human mind in Christian growth nor underestimate the *de facto* practical contribution of the generations of the Reformed Christians into the expansion of the kingdom (e.g., Swiss Deaconry, which, however, has gradually become a charitable extension of the secular social projects).

<sup>73</sup> Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. C. P. Roth, C. P. (New York: St. Vladimir Seminary, 1981), 27.

<sup>74</sup> Luther granted that Jesus was both, example and gift, yet, largely to avoid the temptation to seek to acquire merit, he laid much stress on the latter rather than the former and thus emphasized the “following Jesus” as in the Gospels rather than the “imitation of Christ” as in the Epistles. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 188, 191.

<sup>75</sup> Even though the book with the same title traditionally attributed to Thomas à Kempis has been in circulation only since 1418.

<sup>76</sup> In the words of John Chrysostom, “because the soul hath been locked up in a body, he delivers thee the things that the mind perceives in things sensible [tangible, material].” See John Chrysostom, “Homily LXXXII on the Gospel of St. Matthew,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1885),

as an opportunity (and indeed, as obligation!) to follow Christ in a more specific way, e.g., as *Imitatio Christi*.<sup>77</sup> It is to such a tradition especially cherished within medieval monasticism that we shall now turn in search of the examples and experiences that can still be appropriate for the postmodern wayfarers treading the old pilgrim route.<sup>78</sup>

The traditional greeting of St. James' pilgrims *Eultreia* or *Ultreia* dates back to the early days of the pilgrimage to Compostela. It probably derives from Greek *euv* "good" and *latreia*, "service," "worship," which together make, "Good service!"<sup>79</sup> Because medieval Christendom, compared with the Early Church, is known for developing a more concrete relationship to reality,<sup>80</sup> it is plausible that this greeting may contain a clue as to the underlying concept behind a pilgrim journey in medieval spirituality and therefore, possibly, in our time. Based on the proposed translation, a medieval pilgrimage to Compostela could have been viewed as an equivalent of a divine service as an incarnate sign of reaching out towards God. For, as Grün put it, they lived out their faith completely, "body and soul."<sup>81</sup>

Up until the present day, this principle of monastic faith-praxis, which goes back to the theology of walking as a journey of the spirit physically enacted with our very bodies, has survived in some forms of walking as embodied meditations.<sup>82</sup> Such walking in medieval

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Series 1, Vol. X, 494. Though still rooted in dualism, this vivid description of a Church Father has certainly influenced much of the early medieval thought.

<sup>77</sup> Some authors, e.g., Betz, stress that because the "imitation" has never meant to be of Christ directly, but of Paul and the apostles, this must have been an equivalent of the "following" for the later generations of Christians. See Betz, "Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi," 155. I do not share this theory of "double imitation," but rather attribute Μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε (1 Cor 11:1) to Paul's invitation to every Christian to join him in the same love and service for Christ.

<sup>78</sup> Apart from the fact that pilgrimage to Compostela is classified as a typical medieval pilgrimage (see: Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 17-18), this excursus into the practice of Middle Ages is due to the often-made observation that medieval philosophical ideas are somewhat closer to the postmodern than the modern ones. (See, for example, Joseph Bottum, "Christians and Postmoderns," *First Things* 40 (Feb. 1994), 28-32.)

<sup>79</sup> There are also other versions as well as interpretations of this greeting. I am inclined to think that the suggested one is the most authentic as this is how it re-appears in some pilgrim songs. See Werner Huber, *Bruder Klaus und die Jakobspilger*. Flüeli-Ranft, <http://www.nvf.ch/jakobspilger.asp>, last modified 14.10.2008.)

<sup>80</sup> According to Davies, such treatment of the reality goes back to the worldview where the universe was perceived as "a sacramental kind of place in which material elements and bodily actions can speak of God." Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 181.

<sup>81</sup> "...bis in den Leib hinein." (Grün, *Auf dem Wege*, 33.) This is in conjunction with Paul's admonition to present our *bodies as a living sacrifice* in the *spiritual worship* (λατρείαν), Rom 12:1.

<sup>82</sup> Some of the practices I mention below are recorded in Arnold Angenendt, *Monachi Peregrini: Studien zu Pirmin und den monastischen Vorstellungen des frühen Mittelalters* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972).

monasticism had two principal patterns, i.e., walking as meditation in itself and walking with a biblical word, verse or story. These were two different methods of finding a synthesis between contemplation and action, knowledge and experience, of which the first one, being a more abstract expression of faith, was considered to be the most profound. It was not a meditation *about* something, but an attempt to learn, practice and rehearse the reality of walking through life in faith: departure, being on the way as a stranger, walking towards the unknown yet certain destination.<sup>83</sup> Such conscious walking was an aid to grasping the meaning of life as being “on pilgrimage through time looking for the Kingdom of eternity.”<sup>84</sup> It could therefore be classified as “inside-out pilgrimage,” or spiritual exercise. Yet, could such praying with the feet be an equivalent of what St. James’ pilgrims called *eultraia*? I do not think so.

Based on Werner Jetter’s definition, “every service (*Gottesdienst*) consists of three communicative terrains: praying (*Beten*) – testifying (*Bezeugen*) – confessing (*Bekennen*).”<sup>85</sup> Assuming that walking does enhance praying,<sup>86</sup> the other two elements are notably absent from the above exercise. Although there is an obvious parallel between such meditation and the journey of Abraham who confessed that he was a *stranger and pilgrim* (παρεπίδημοί) *on the earth* (Heb 11:13, NKJ), the exercise itself is mostly and primarily about practicing general principles of spiritual dislocation and homelessness pertinent to Judeo-Christian culture.<sup>87</sup> In the best case, it can be seen as an imitation of the way (of faith) but not of the Person. Yet *Imitatio Dei* as christopraxis assumes both. It has to do not only with walking towards God as such, but *towards* and *with* the God incarnate. This implies more than initial

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<sup>83</sup> See footnote 14 on *Pilgerfahrt*.

<sup>84</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald S. Walsh et al., (New York: Image, 1958).

<sup>85</sup> Werner Jetter, *Symbol und Ritual: anthropologische Elemente im Gottesdienst* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 138 (emphasis preserved).

<sup>86</sup> Thomas Ohm asserts that walking itself is a prayer, “an actual walk of our spirit in God.” Thomas Ohm, “Die Gebetsgebärde des Gehens,” in *Ex contemplatione loqui*, ed. Thomas Ohm (Münster: Aschendorff, 1961), 382.

<sup>87</sup> As Richard Sennett pointed out, “our faith began at odds with place.” *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 6.

enactment, but identification and relationship.<sup>88</sup> The Bible gives us what can be an example of such approach to pilgrimage as service/worship.

In the first section of this paper I have argued that the God of the Bible wants his people to live with him in a sense of walking *with, before or behind* him.<sup>89</sup> But equally, the Scripture says, God himself wants to walk with his people (Lev 26:12). This idea is especially prominent in the Gospel of Luke, whose extended “travel report” (Luke 9:51-19:27) tells us two basic things: 1) that the actual content of Jesus’ life was walking with his people and 2) that the goal of this journey was Jerusalem.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, “the Way that walks Himself”!<sup>91</sup>

But perhaps the meaning of God’s intention to walk with his people had never been revealed in all its profundity before the events described in the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-34). It is often emphasised that on this post-Resurrection walk the two disciples only recognised Jesus thanks to the sign he had given them, i.e., blessing and breaking of the bread (v. 30). Although this Eucharistic element is of revelatory importance, one can notice at least five others that point towards a direct connection between walking with Jesus as an outward experience and the inward change that it promotes.

First of all, it is the fact that *Jesus himself drew near and went with them* (v. 15) while they were already walking: i.e., God often joins in when his people are on the way. Secondly, as well as a literal walk, it was a journey into the scriptural interpretation of Jesus’ identity: i.e., walking with God can turn an ordinary road into a “storied way”. Thirdly, as the result of the walk the disciples’ perception of Jesus changed from *a stranger* (v. 18, KJV), *peregrinus* (VUL)<sup>92</sup> to the risen Lord (v. 34): i.e., walking a pilgrim way can open one’s eyes on the true identity of God. Fourthly, during this walk together a new love to their God was

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<sup>88</sup> E.g., *mimesis* as a deeper level of relation between Christians and Christ than that assumed by “following” or “imitating” in a merely ethical sense.

<sup>89</sup> It is noteworthy that in the New Testament ἀκολουθέω (to follow) originally simply meant “to walk behind somebody,” with no indication of being understood as imitation – not in the sense of the later New Testament letters where it was substituted for μιμητής (imitator, epigone). For a full exegesis of the term in the New Testament see Hans Jürgen Milchner, *Nachfolger Jesu und Imitation Christi: Die theologischen Entfaltungen der Nachfolgethematik seit den Anfängen der Christenheit bis hin in die Zeit der Devotio Moderna* (Berlin, Hamburg, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 2.1.3

<sup>90</sup> Herbert Haag, *Wanderung und Wandlung: Die Lebensform des Glaubenden* (München: Don Bosco Verlag, 1973), 46.

<sup>91</sup> See footnote 31.

<sup>92</sup> Only Wycliffe New Testament translates here Gk παροικεῖς as “pilgrim.”

kindled in the disciples' hearts: i.e., on the walk with God, some ontological changes to the very essence of one's being may occur.<sup>93</sup> Fifthly, they confessed the good news to the eleven, i.e., a pilgrim walk can become a rehearsal of such confession.

Hence, post-Easter Jesus on Emmaus road has appeared to his disciples as *peregrinus* – the foremost example of a stranger (Greek) and a wanderer (Latin) on earth. We can say that by entering this role he presents his disciple with a shortcut to his true identity that has been unfolding throughout the Gospel and has its roots in the Old Testament revelation of Yahweh as nomadic God. But equally he shows them that from now on this is the role they should enter themselves. So, not only on the basis of its linguistics, this account has become the archetype of the Christian way of life as *peregrinatio*<sup>94</sup> and of *peregrini* as its followers.

Based on the Emmaus account, every pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise, or indeed worship, should ultimately become a context for discovering our God anew (his identity), entering into a new relationship (identifying) with him and through this becoming renewed ourselves (our new identity). Only walking as imitation of the Person and his way can be considered as a legitimate form of commitment to and communication of Christ, or *Imitatio Christi*. This is what makes every road into a pilgrim way as opposed to a hiking trail, and a “tourist” into a “pilgrim”. This is why being on pilgrimage, literally or metaphorically,<sup>95</sup> becomes a means of imitation of Christ if it fulfils or aims at fulfilling the following criteria:

- 1) if undertaken with an attitude of worship (*λατρεία*) in search of a closer relationship with God;

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<sup>93</sup> With respect to this, a comment of Pope Gregory the Great in his sermon on the Emmaus walk is most discerning: “...though they do not yet love him as God, they can nevertheless love him as pilgrim.” Quoted in Frederic Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire: A Study of Theme and Genre in Medieval Literature* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1971), 24.

<sup>94</sup> *Peregrinatio* (L) comes from *ager*, field. It denotes both, a trip abroad as well as staying there (Grün, *Auf dem Wege*, 13). In broader sense, it stands for a radical way of following Jesus (Mt 19:29) and pilgrimage as a fresh expression of this. However, not everybody thinks that this idea is indigenous to the Gospel and some attribute it fully to Augustine's ideology of *peregrinatio* enhanced by imagination. See, for example, Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Divine Domesticity: Augustine of Thagaste to Teresa of Avila* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 60.

<sup>95</sup> Within medieval spirituality, a journey of life was perceived as a reality while a geographical pilgrimage as its metaphor, “a miniature version of that longer, more complex journey which every soul must choose to undertake.” Dyas, “Medieval Patterns of Pilgrimage,” 106.

- 2) if intended to testify to Jesus' life as an example of such relationship and therefore a model for imitation;<sup>96</sup>
- 3) if the goal of the journey is to confess God in Christ through identification with Jesus and his way.

In view of the above, the greeting of St. James pilgrims, "*Eultraia*," must have been and should remain a sign of their inherent association with the Emmaus walk – as an incarnate testimony that the Resurrected One walks with us, in the midst of our everyday life, on all our ways. This conviction found its expression in the annual "Emmaus walk" as a procession with praying and singing. It has become a rite in itself usually performed on Easter Monday (*Osterspaziergang*) – a tradition, which is still alive in some south German and Austrian villages.<sup>97</sup> It goes back to the second pattern of medieval monastic meditation, i.e., walking with a story. It does not imply a re-staging of Jesus' actions but participating in them, not a mere reminder of the Lord's presence but an opportunity for identification with him. This kind of pilgrimage is not a reality itself but its dramatic representation<sup>98</sup> just as a liturgical service is not a repetition of the encounter with Jesus but the meaningful and effective acts and words, or rituals, that release in us that inherent drama.<sup>99</sup>

In short, the answer of the medieval Christians to the postmodern question "Who am I?" in connection to "Who is my God?" would have been one and the same: "A pilgrim." But what would be the answer of postmodern pilgrims to the hypothetical question of their pre-modern counterparts "Where am I going?"<sup>100</sup> This question inevitably alludes to our

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<sup>96</sup> Sometimes the imitation of Christ was and is understood as continuation of Jesus' way of life, even though modified. See Ulrich Luz, "Nachfolge," in *TRE*, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1979). Yet, imitation also was and can be understood today as a medium for the Holy Spirit's activity *until Christ be formed in you* (Gal 4:19). I adopt the latter approach.

<sup>97</sup> This tradition has become eternalised in Goethe's "Faust," Part I.

<sup>98</sup> This is a classical understanding of imitation or mimesis in aesthetics and as such it is treated, for example, in Betz, "Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi."

<sup>99</sup> I adopt here Mark Earey's concept of worship as drama. See *Worship as Drama* (Cambridge: Grove, 1997), 3-4.

<sup>100</sup> This question has only a superficial resemblance with Novalis' "Where are we going?" and his answer "Always home" ("Wo gehn wir denn hin?" "Immer nach Hause.") in: Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1982), chapter. 24, the latter being a reflection of the essential romantic homesickness and longing for the ideal that will never be satisfied.

corporate memory and individual imagination. And this is where the animation of the pilgrim route begins itself.

### The way as re-enactment

In the previous section we concentrated on the enactment of the way of life as discipleship through pilgrimage as its imitation. We shall now turn to the next level of life's interpretation – to the medieval pilgrimage through its postmodern performance.

Looking at the medieval patterns of embodied meditations from today's perspective, we can draw upon their interpretation of life as conscious walking, where the goal of the journey is not just a terminal but the way to it, too – or, perhaps, especially, the way.<sup>101</sup> For, as we have seen in the context of the Emmaus story, being on the way is an event in itself and as such it can teach Christians of all times what “walking *with* the Lord,” as identification with Christ as a person, in relation to “walking *towards* the Lord,” as identification with him as the road, means.<sup>102</sup> This dialectic tension between horizontal and vertical, “now-and-not-yet,”<sup>103</sup> is one of the inherent characteristics of Christian life as an “embodied parable,” which finds its realisation in the three-act drama of living:<sup>104</sup> departure, being on the way, and the goal. We can say that at its best medieval pilgrimage was a rehearsal of the part of being a disciple in the drama of following Jesus all the way through his passion and cross<sup>105</sup> – the plot, well familiar by prior contemplation of Scripture. Re-stating Cragg, the medievals

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<sup>101</sup> Is it not for this reason that the first Christians described themselves not as the followers of a new teaching but as the people of the new Way? (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.)

<sup>102</sup> But this does not mean to say that “today, the pilgrimage ways have no goals anywhere; they are ways that reveal identity by walking.” See J. G. Muñoz, “Steps of a Pilgrim,” *Reflections*, No 61, <http://www.santiagobovisio.com/ing/reflection/61ref.htm>, last modified 15 November 2005. Such a relativistic view of pilgrimage, so characteristic of Postmodernity, is incompatible with the biblical understanding of the walk of life as seeking the *heavenly homeland* (Heb 11:14, 16). If anything, this is a question of emphasis, which I will deal with later in this chapter.

<sup>103</sup> Wright calls it “a characteristically Pauline position.” See *The Way of the Lord*, 8).

<sup>104</sup> In classical Greek, the basic meaning of δράμα is “action,” which, in turn, derives from the verb δράω, “to do” (*Duden Etymologie*, 135). In this chapter I adopt Trevor Hart's understanding of relationship between drama and life, where “the performance of life is indeed rather more like a certain sort of improvised drama than the playing of a carefully scripted role.” See Trevor A. Hart, “The Sense of an Ending: Finitude and the Authentic Performance of Life,” in *Faithful Performances*, ed. Hart, T. A. and Guthrie, S. R., (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 175.

<sup>105</sup> This is an interpretation of discipleship especially emphasised in Mark's Gospel.



passionately belonged with what they enacted, which is why they were passionate about enacting it.<sup>106</sup>

Although, technically speaking, every pilgrimage today, just as in the Middle Ages, still reflects the same three-part drama, the meaning of the whole in relation to the parts has undergone a radical shift. If, for medieval monks, pilgrimage was firstly and primarily associated with being on the way as a permanent state of homelessness,<sup>107</sup> for contemporary Christians it tends to stand for a one-off exercise in separation from one's daily routine and habitual roles ("a retreat on the move"). If for our medieval predecessors it was a way of an enactment of their *assurance* and *conviction* of the things unseen yet believed to be true, for a large number of the "voluntary wanderers in the desert ... of deliberate barrenness"<sup>108</sup> it has become a way of looking for visible and tangible tokens of what can still be considered as true.<sup>109</sup> At such a time when faith is no longer opposed to unbelief but to certainty, the question of the meaning of life as a narrative worth-while performing is becoming more urgent than ever.

"*Where am I going?*" ask those who have passed the stages of being in any way poor or powerless, captured or excluded, only to reach at the end that state of extreme dislocation and uprootedness, which Henry Nouwen described as a "nuclear man."<sup>110</sup> For such "Where am I going?" is but a desperate cry for acceptance and belonging. This is nothing like medieval homelessness, but its postmodern equivalent – alienation, which has penetrated all the levels of our existence. For,

...we are chronologically far beyond the day when the schoolman told us with mediaeval simplicity that alienation meant estrangement from God, we are now confronted with secular accusations that do no less damage to our self-esteem. Rousseau has told us and a romantic chorus has echoed that we live alienated from

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<sup>106</sup> See footnote 11.

<sup>107</sup> At some stage such homelessness and, connected with it, physical discomfort has become the epoch's ascetic ideal and was almost exclusively understood as a penalty for the remission of sins. We can say that in some sense this was the way *for* the goal.

<sup>108</sup> See footnote 34.

<sup>109</sup> The question of truth in Postmodernity is often expressed by a slogan "the truth is out there," never "in here," which implies that one can never know it for certain. This worldview has not left the postmodern Church unaffected.

<sup>110</sup> Henry Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in the Contemporary Society* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1979), 5ff.

nature; Marx has told us and a communist chorus has echoed that we live alienated from society; Kierkegaard has told us and an existentialist chorus has echoed that we live alienated from ourselves.<sup>111</sup>

Hence, we are alienated from the history of the created world as the divine drama,<sup>112</sup> with the salvation event as its focal point. I propose that to repair this gap, we have to start progressing from the bottom of the Sykes' "estrangement pyramid" to its top, beginning with ourselves – more precisely, with learning to walk as contemporary saints together with the saints of old.<sup>113</sup> In this way, we can start to identify with those who had gone before us and with the goal to which they were walking.<sup>114</sup> This, in turn, implies re-appropriation (rather than accommodation) of the relevant medieval practices and re-discovering through them the contemporary sense of *Imitatio Dei* and ultimately the person of Christ for the postmodern Church.<sup>115</sup> In short, we should start with the enactment of the medieval patterns of pilgrimage, that is, with an enactment of an enactment.<sup>116</sup> It is such re-appropriation that I shall call re-enactment,<sup>117</sup> or engagement with the pilgrimage experiences made in the past with one's whole person – body, mind and spirit – in the present. I concede that if pilgrimage is to help in recovering the meaning, or sense,<sup>118</sup> of Christian narrative for our time, it should be performed as a drama. Why drama?

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<sup>111</sup> Gerald Sykes, *Alienation: The Cultural Climate of Our Time* (New York: G. Braziller, 1964), viii.

<sup>112</sup> Although the secular aspect of alienation emphasised by Sykes is unquestionable, I support the assertion of Hendrik Kraemer who sees human history as drama of communication, which is essentially and fundamentally "a religious drama." See *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (London: Lutherworth, 1957), 18.

<sup>113</sup> I use the word "saints" here in New Testament sense, not in the later Church understanding.

<sup>114</sup> According to Alain de Botton "pilgrimage always involves at least two conversations or discourses – our life story and the story of the pilgrimage and those who preceded us." This is why we depend on our capacity of hearing and understanding the discourse. See "Art of Travel," *The New Yorker* (September 9, 2002).

<sup>115</sup> While it is true that the twenty-first century understanding and performance of pilgrimages should build on the remaining valid structures of the medieval patterns, they cannot be made meaningful for postmodern seekers of truth by mirroring them. This is to do with the incompatibility of the postmodern ways of perception the reality with medieval realism, the latter being what in contemporary thought is held for mystical realism or idealism. See Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 142.

<sup>116</sup> This is not the same as "double imitation," which is referred to a person, not to praxis (see footnote 77).

<sup>117</sup> In some way, this term resounds with Bauman's broad association of Postmodernity with "recycling" old ideas and traditions rather than with creating new ones. See Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist," 18.

<sup>118</sup> The word "sense" (Ger. *Sinn*, cf. Lat. *sensus*) as applied to "meaning" in Germanic languages originally denoted "walk, travel" but also "taking direction, looking for a track" (*Duden Etymologie*, 668), thus making the etymology of the word speak for its theology.

In the classical theory of art, every dramatic event can only then be rendered meaningful when interpreted, that is, when it is represented in some way or performed.<sup>119</sup> Both life and pilgrimage as its miniature version are essentially dramatic, i.e., they unfold their meaning through the participatory rather than observational understanding of reality. Hence, the essence of Christian life is not so much about *being* a disciple but can only be revealed *in becoming* one:<sup>120</sup> i.e., in taking up one's cross daily and following Jesus consciously (Luke 9:23).<sup>121</sup> By analogy, the essence of *being* a pilgrim can only be grasped *in becoming* one, i.e., in re-enactment of the way of Jesus as "*eultreia*," which is ultimately the way of the cross. We can say that through imaginative and time-specific treatment of the same plot the postmodern walkers gain a sense of belonging with those who enacted it in the past and through this – with the plot itself. When walked with such attitude, the trodden routes not only turn into the pilgrim ways but become "a stage on which a traveller performs his own Middle Age while allocating himself the role of pilgrim."<sup>122</sup> An attempt of Caritas Switzerland and Bethlehem Mission Immensee to animate a leg of the traditional Way of St. James in Central Switzerland (*Luzernerweg*) is an example of a postmodern approach to the setting of such a "stage."

Below I offer my interpretation of the result of this animation as it speaks for itself, independent from any background information on the history of its conception and

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<sup>119</sup> It is highly remarkable that such representation (*mimesis*) goes back to the origins of drama (most probably in the form of dancing), which was a way of making sense of a deity (e.g., of a god Osiris in the passion plays of Ancient Egypt, 2000 BC). I posit that dramatic representation of faith as principle is at least as applicable to the postmodern Church praxis as it was to the pre-Christian cult religions.

<sup>120</sup> I am drawing here on Hans-Georg Gadamer's characteristic of drama (*Spiel*) as "an entity that exists only in always being something else in a radical sense" and which therefore has its "being in becoming." See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Barden, G., Cumming, J. (New York: Continuum, 2004) 165.

<sup>121</sup> The examples of such conscious following the way of Jesus in today's Switzerland could be the Foundation *Sozialwerke Pfarrer Sieber*, the life-time project of a Reformed minister Ernst Sieber (1927-2018), with his mission statement "to make visible and tangible God's charity, mercy and affiance" to homeless people, or the society *Franziskanische Gassenarbeit* founded by then a Franciscan monk Benno Kehl who for the last twenty years has been bringing hope to those stranded on the streets of Zurich by the "leprosy of our time" – drug addiction. For both, the Reformed minister and the Franciscan monk, transferring their ministries from the secure environment of the church and monastic walls into the city streets has become a fresh expression of what "christopraxis" of the 21<sup>st</sup> c. means: meeting others right where they are, just as Jesus met the disciples on Emmaus road.

<sup>122</sup> Christoph Kühn, "'Rueguen al apóstol por nosotros!' – Zu Motivation und spirituellem Gehalt heutiger Pilgerreisen nach Santiago de Compostela," *Sternenweg*, no. 7, 1991, 15-24.

realisation.<sup>123</sup> To facilitate this, I take the liberty of imagining myself in the role of a paradigmatic wayfarer who treads this road alone for the first time, trying to read the meaning of its way-drama forwards while evaluating it backwards. The criterion I set in this evaluation will be the extent to which this route would help me *in becoming* a pilgrim, in the sense suggested by the Emmaus story, that is, in giving a worshipful dimension to my walking. The latter, in turn, means establishing whether the animated route provides a setting, which may help me to make the three basic experiences of every service, i.e., that of acceptance (*Annahme*), encouragement (*Zuspruch*), and calling (*Berufung*).<sup>124</sup>

As any traveller who, on reaching of the Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln, takes an authentic St. James' route towards the former Cluniac priory in Rüeggisberg, I shall be surprised to find among the surviving old shrines some stylistically discordant installations: signposts, stone altars, and pilgrim stations. It would take me a while to realize that there might be some internal connection between those objects spread over the 140km stretch of road (a good week of journeying!), unless, from the very beginning, I start taking notes and pictures of what I see and touch.<sup>125</sup> Below I offer a sample of such notes. Although this is just a hypothetical travel log, it should help us to consider some of the pros and cons of such an animation.

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<sup>123</sup> A booklet, "*Ein gutes Stück Weg*," published by Caritas Schweiz, 1999, contains a summary of the project.

<sup>124</sup> Werner Jetter, *Symbol und Ritual*, 138. Although these experiences proceed from praying, testifying and confessing (see Chapter 2), here I would like to start from the opposite end, as it were. Such approach is congruent with the postmodern principle of analysis through experience or participation, which has become a basis for bibliodrama – a creative-performing approach to the Bible based on "trying out," or enactment, of the biblical stories as a method of grasping their meaning as well as finding one's place in them.

<sup>125</sup> This peculiarity of pilgrimage of addressing all the senses of a human being was noticed already in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. by Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem who proudly stated, "While others can only hear, we can see and touch." Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 13:22, quoted in Edward S.J. Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 31,154. I believe that this role of pilgrimage as mediation of devotion is still to be reviewed within the Reformed theology.

## Pilgrim Notes on the Animated Section Einsiedeln – Rüeggisberg

### ► Signposts (Fig. 1, 2)



Fig. 1: "Lassen" ("Let go")



Fig. 2: "Schweigen" ("be silent")

Seven different plaques with walking instructions are fixed on the walls and rocks:

- 1) move
- 2) listen/hear
- 3) pray
- 4) let go
- 5) be silent
- 6) look/see
- 7) turn back (repent?)

Note: I try to follow these directions, which make me walk more consciously. But I am not always sure how to "move," where to "look" or what exactly they meant by "turn back".

► Stone Altars (Fig. 3)



*Fig. 3 Stone Altar*

Instructions on the side of the altar:

*At the first station, we pick up a stone. It will help us to meditate and will remind us of the dark sides in our life. In the following silent meditation, we converse with ourselves and commune with God. During this time, we can reflect on how to grapple with the dark sides or issues in our life. Can we part with them during this day of the pilgrimage? Or do we like to continue carrying these concerns along our pilgrim way? If the former is the case, we can drop the stone at the second station as on an altar. If the latter, we deliberately put it in our pocket to carry it further on.*

Note: The ritual takes place between two “altars”: one, where I pick up a stone and another at some distance, where I can choose to deposit it or not. A weighty stone in my pocket should be a reminder of a certain issue in my life that has to be dealt with. As I walk and reflect on it, the issue gradually presents itself in all its clarity. I feel some relief after all my pockets eventually empty of those stones. Have I forgiven? Am I forgiven? Or is it just a purely physical sensation of feeling my body a load lighter?

► Pilgrim Stations (Fig. 4)



Fig. 4: Pilgrim Station 5 “On the Way of St. James”

Note: There are fourteen large blocks of concrete with images and words attached, engraved, incorporated or otherwise installed into them. There are no titles as such that can reveal the exact meaning of the installations. But as I look at them from all sides, I begin to notice some themes and words that stand out from the children’s drawings, collages, caricatures, pictorial messages and scriptures, which might be the clues to the meaning of each block. This is what I discovered:

- 1) “Poverty”
- 2) “Alienation”
- 3) “Work”
- 4) “Heaven and Hell”

- 5) "On the Way of St. James"
- 6) "Power and Powerlessness"
- 7) "Money"
- 8) "Life in the region of Trachselwald"<sup>126</sup>
- 9) "Human Rights"
- 10) "Exclusion"
- 11) "Captured-Liberated"
- 12) "Solidarity"
- 13) "Time"
- 14) "Hope"

I wonder if these stations were meant to evoke associations with the Stations of the Cross or is it a purely numerical resemblance? Each seems to be telling a story about some kind of an existing conflict or suffering. But is there a narrative line that unites these micro-stories?

I make a special notice of Station 5 "On the Way of St. James" (Fig. 4-6). It speaks to me most, for this is where I am now myself. What was it (and still is) to be a St. James' pilgrim? Some contrasting images reflect the answers. Do I associate myself with the devout unhurriedness of the van Leyden's pilgrims of old, or should I admit rushing through life with the scepticism of a modern tourist?

► On the Way of St. James (Fig. 5)



Fig. 5: *Pilgrim Station 5, Lucas van Leyden (1494 -1533), Resting Pilgrims*

<sup>126</sup> A district in the canton of Bern where the stations are situated.



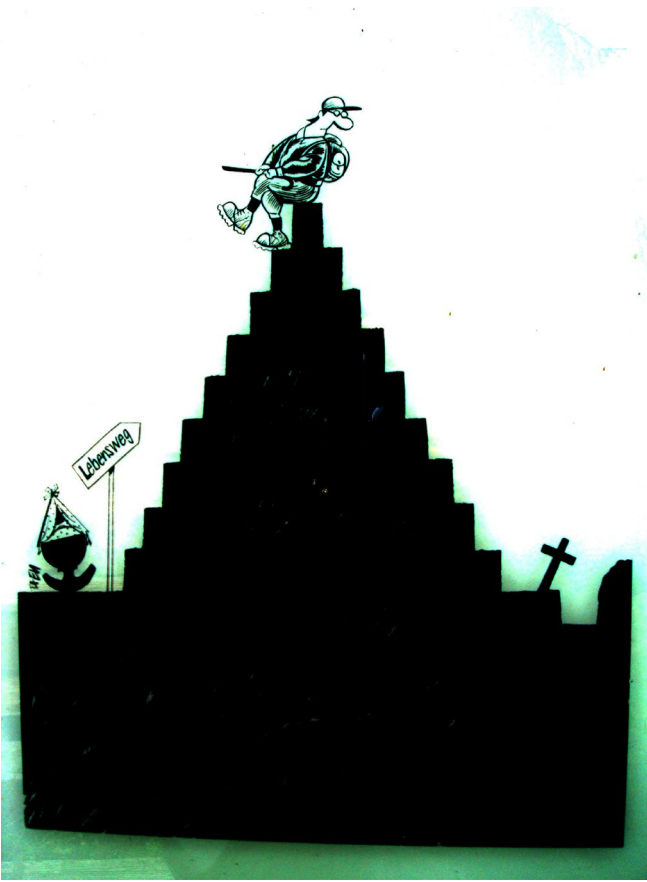


Fig. 6: Pilgrim Station 5, “Lebensweg” (“The Way of Life”), Cartoon by Ernst Feurer (EFEU), Basel, used by permission

(End of the Notes)

Although these installations call for more questions than they provide answers, this may not necessarily be a bad thing, unless it is something that was originally meant to be an answer that generates new questions.

The first such question can be raised in connection with the very necessity to take notes and pictures on the way – not so much to reflect on the thoughts and feelings inspired by the pilgrimage but as an *aide-mémoire* in order to make sense of it all. Such a “memo” appears to be indispensable, especially in the case of the fourteen pilgrim stations with their enigmatic relation to the Stations of the Cross. This is because the first two kinds of installations are there to encourage different modes of contemplation and some related

gestures,<sup>127</sup> and therefore proceed from the first pattern of medieval pilgrimage, i.e., walking as meditation in itself; yet the stations, with their potential to communicate a message, are reminiscent, at least nominally, of the second tradition, i.e., walking with a story. Projected onto the drama of pilgrimage, the former can be compared to the “stage directions” (the signposts) and “props” (the stone altars), while the latter – to the visual “prompts”.

But this is the critical moment of the whole project, because if there are such embodied reminders of a story then, by implication, there must be a recognisable narrative underlying it. And here further questions can be raised: for, if the story corresponds to that of a traditional *Via Crucis*, I should be alerted to it (e.g., with the conventional titles); but if a re-appropriated version of the narrative applies, I must be introduced to it (e.g., with an accompanied text and symbols along the lines of “Jesus Christ for today’s world”).<sup>128</sup> For only then could such stations boost my imagination when they help me to enter and follow the story of how the “poverty” and “alienation” have come to be finally transformed into “hope”. Then will they stop being just fourteen blocks of concrete but will become visual and tactile clues – indeed, the prompts incarnate, which would help me and the others, like the Unbelieving Thomas, to enter the “storied way” and discover that our Lord and God, known here as “a man of sorrows” in the past, is still “in here” in our present sufferings.<sup>129</sup> As David Brown put it, “Discipleship is ... both a matter of locating ourselves within Jesus’

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<sup>127</sup> The importance of a bodily manifestation of one’s intentions or inner response to God has nowadays become a normal worship practice in a number of churches, especially in charismatic circles. However, there is still a great deal of prejudice towards such rituals in the Swiss Reformed Church (e.g., using tokens and gestures to express repentance), which may be a reason why the installations in question, while aimed at providing a certain degree of comfort and acceptance to a walker, do not articulate these intentions with due clarity.

<sup>128</sup> Perhaps this was assumed to be the task of a pilgrim leader, which implies that such a pilgrimage was designed for a guided group only. Although there are some obvious advantages in such an arrangement (e.g., a sense of solidarity and community within a group), the necessity of explanations, written or spoken, has a potential danger for pilgrimage revival to become just another form of clinging to the word and the sphere of rational, so characteristic of the Reformed Church.

<sup>129</sup> This is an experience made by a priest John Dunne in the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. Although Rothko’s murals do not bear the traditional images of the Stations of the Cross, they corresponded to them. Dunne described the phenomenon of entering such a “storied way” as having the narrative going from living in his mind to living in his heart. John S. Dunne, *The House of Wisdom: A Pilgrimage* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), ix.

story *and* acknowledging the way in which our own situation differs significantly from his.”<sup>130</sup>

It seems to me that the project in question was envisaged as a means to attract our attention to those differences without giving us a chance of entering Jesus’ story first. Consequently, it has left no space for Jesus to enter ours. This is why if this animation has become a “stage,” then it is such that was prepared for experiencing what it is like to be *encouraged* (to walk consciously) or even *accepted* (there is not a life issue exempt from dispensation at the stone altar). Yet, despite its radical idea to present some pressing social issues in an imaginative way, it has not been set in order to become a medium for the Holy Spirit’s activity through which one could be reminded of the unchanging *calling* to every disciple of all times: to take up one’s cross and follow Jesus. And as such, it has not been set for worship.

In short, an old pilgrim route Einsiedeln-Rüeggisberg that once was an Emmaus road has failed to become one again. Instead, it seems to have offered a setting where the postmodern wanderers can practice a long and progressive departure:

- from the bondage of the things from one’s past;
- from “the armour of ... scepticism” and detachment of a tourist;
- from the “house of the word”<sup>131</sup> as the world of pure intellect.

Hence, in the “embodied parable” of life, this way stands solely for the first act of the drama of living. It does not give an answer to the question “Where am I going?” in a sense of walking *towards*, but only in terms of walking *off*. Yet, with an irony so pertinent of Postmodernity, this no-answer can still be helpful in its unhelpfulness. Because, ultimately, walking off is the first step towards the holistic expression of what we believe, even if all it means is leaving behind what we do not. In this sense, such action can be seen as manifestation of one’s parting with an identity of a “tourist” as a symbol of Postmodernity,

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<sup>130</sup> David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>131</sup> This understanding of the departure comes from St. Ambrose, who saw our spirit as making a dwelling in a spoken word from where it should be liberated – a thought very topical in today’s Reformed Church. See Ambrosius von Mailand (Ambrose), “De Abraham II 1,” in *Monachi Peregrini: Studien zu Pirmin und den monastischen Vorstellungen des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Arnold Angenendt (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972), 129.

even if the whole way towards *becoming* a “pilgrim” is still ahead. For “by walking, kneeling, crawling, riding a bike, or moving in a wheelchair, we are protesting against the modern age, as we who are pilgrims pray with our feet.”<sup>132</sup>

**Conclusion: “Where am I going? The way is the goal.”**

This has become a frequent reply, spoken or unspoken, not only from those one meets today on the Way of St. James but also on other walks of life. It is a typical “tourist’s” answer, though, that is, such an answer that exposes three major deficiencies in one’s life, i.e., lack of (every) experience of God, lack of remembrance of such experience accumulated by the past generations, and lack of the eschatological hope. Ultimately, these deficiencies point out to one and the same root, i.e., alienation, or the loss of the sense of home in a biblical as well as a secular sense.

However, as goalless as it sounds, this reply may not be that far from denoting the truth if re-phrased more specifically, namely, “walking the way of the Lord is the goal”. For this is the only way that, when walked, can satisfy the innermost longing of every human being to finding a spiritual homeland. This is why following it makes life meaningful, the way itself – the goal, and the walker on it – a disciple, or “a learner.”

Christian spirituality as “an outworking in real life of a person’s religious faith”<sup>133</sup> has developed a variety of useful methods of learning from Jesus, or spiritual disciplines. But that particular one which is to do with practicing to follow him completely, body and soul, not only helps a disciple to identify with the Lord in a more concrete way but also promotes her own identity-building – as *peregrinus*. For, as we have shown above, the transition towards a pilgrim identity is not only possible but also a necessary condition of becoming a follower of Jesus and receiving *Imago Dei*, no matter what prior image or persona has to be

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<sup>132</sup> John Eade, “Introduction to the Illinois Paperback,” in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 5. Nancy Frey, approaching this metaphor from anthropological perspective, takes it further by asserting that “through movement pilgrims make statements about themselves and society,” which is why they “not only pray with their feet but also speak with or through their feet or bicycles.” *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 218, 220.

<sup>133</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 2.

parted with for this. This is why, Tidball notices, “postmoderns may like being tourists. But believers of any age will tenaciously hold to being pilgrims.”<sup>134</sup>

Hence, the role of pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise with regard to such identity change can be summarised as below:

- 1) discipleship is about taking on a new identity – of a pilgrim, of which Jesus himself had become an archetype on Emmaus road;
- 2) geographical pilgrimage as a micro-journey of Christian life provides a visual, experiential and communal context which serves as a reminder of that new identity;
- 3) this reminder is a holistic experience (“embodied parable”), where one’s faith is enacted and practiced in its entirety;
- 4) thus, by walking a pilgrim way Christians can enter and rehearse their new role.

This is why the outcome of every pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise should be the incorporation of its learning experience in the everyday life of a disciple, i.e., making it a source of one’s spiritual growth. Then, we can say, the goal of every pilgrim way is animating one’s faith, so that one day the distinction between life and pilgrimage will become no longer visible.

The table below reflects the three major interpretations of discipleship as “a holistic knowledge of Christ” we have considered in this paper (highlighted) in relation to the role of pilgrimage in every particular context. Although, generally speaking, the development of pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise has proceeded from the necessity to practice the purpose of Christian life, we have proposed that, from today’s perspective, *becoming* a pilgrim means starting to revive this tradition while progressing from the bottom of this pyramid to its top:

Living out THE GOAL:

Life = Pilgrimage

**Following:** “Walking in the way of the Lord”

↓↑

Practicing identification

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<sup>134</sup> Tidball, “The Pilgrim and the Tourist,” 197.

**Imitation:** “Walking in the way Jesus walked”

↓↑

(Re)-discovering BELONGING

**Re-enactment:** “Walking in the way of the saints”

Such understanding of a Christian way of life reconciles the theology of the way with the theology of walking, Christ’s work with our part in him, making the very meaning of the Way inseparable from our walking. For,

If “way” is not only a metaphor for changing of place or temporal sequence of events, if “way” is not only allegory of the events in space and history in time, if “way” does not only symbolise difference and change, if “way” as the so-called “right way” and “wrong way” does not only bid an allegory of moral choices, if “way” becomes an *epitome of human being*, that is of such a being, who presents and advances himself in the animation of becoming, the question about what “way” truly means becomes unavoidable. Such fundamental way should not only be considered; much more than this: it has to be walked.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Richard Wisser, *Vom Weg-charakter philosophischen Denkens: Geschichtliche Kontexte und menschliche Kontakte* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 20 (emphasis preserved).

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