IN GOD'S IMAGE; KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
IN THE WRITINGS OF PAUL CLAUDEL

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INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of a symbolic universe, redemption, man's vocation, the significance of woman, are key themes of the drama Tête d'or written in 1889 at the beginning of Claudel's literary career, as they are of the exegetical work Paul Claudel interroge l'Apocalypse published three years before his death in 1955. Between these two monumental works extends a vast galaxy of literature, philosophy and theology, all concerned to a greater or lesser extent with the same problems. It is a literature based on the best and most varied of Western culture, yet imbued with an Eastern ethos and bearing the imprint of many countries and many minds; a literature in which is found the full spectrum of human knowledge and the human condition.

An understanding of these themes within the scope of Claudel's literature is essential for an interpretation of his religious thought. This thesis is concerned with knowledge of God in the writings of Paul Claudel, seen particularly from the point of view of man as an image of God. In this context, what knowledge does man have of God? What are its sources and how is it mediated? The particular aspect of the divine image which it is man's vocation to realize is indicated by his name. An interpretation of the name therefore will be an important consideration in this study. Part 1 takes man as its central
interest, part 2 Mary, and part 3 Christ. The third part also attempts to evaluate the importance of the Pope and the Christological significance of the poetic vocation. Thus each section presents a different basis for the study of man's knowledge of God, and shows the movement from man to Mary, and from Mary to God. Interpretation of the Claudelian symbolism will be a basic consideration in this thesis. A simple key to the major symbols is given in the appendix.

The thesis is based on three works representative of the scope of Claudel's religious writings at their best. These are the play L'annonce faite à Marie, the work which Claudel in his eightieth year considered the crowning stone of his dramatic and poetic works; the great autobiographical poem Cinq grandes odes which forms a unity with the liturgical Processional pour saluer le siècle nouveau; and Un poète regarde la croix, an exegetical commentary on the seven words from the cross and the chief of Claudel's commentaries upon the Passion. As a background to these major texts will be set Le partage de midi, the Otage trilogy, Le soulier de satin, the studies of the apostles and the Old Testament commentaries. All quotations are from the Gallimard Oeuvres complètes de Paul Claudel unless otherwise indicated.
PART 1  RESPONSE TO GOD

CHAPTER I
CONVERSION - A NEW ORDER

There are two movements discernible in much of Claudel's theatre: the first leads to conversion, the second to sainthood. Both however are essentially one movement toward God. But God's ways are strange: in the words of a Portuguese proverb prefaced to Le soulier de satin, Deus escreve dirceito por linhas tortas, God writes straight in tortuous lines. Perhaps the strangest twist in God's writing is the curve of sin which moves man away from God. We are concerned in chapter I with the first movement and some of the consequences of conversion. The rôle of sin in Claudel's writings and its place in the divine economy will be discussed in chapter II, whilst the fulfilment of vocation which issues in sainthood will be the subject of the third chapter.

Not every man is redeemed, but Claudel's thesis is that all men, even the most degraded, are occasionally moved by redemptive impulses whose logical end is conversion, the beginning of the road to sainthood. This we may illustrate in the case of Toussaint Turelure, a principal character in the first two plays of the Otage trilogy. As former novice of the religious order at Confontaine, he has been
instrumental in procuring the death of his former noviciates, superiors and masters in his allegiance to the French Revolution. At the end of L'otage he is seen to have achieved his aims of political power and ingrafting into the nobility and a leading aristocratic family. At the beginning of Le pain dur he is shown exuberant in outlining his project for converting the Coûfontaine monastery into a paper-mill. But underlying his exhilaration for the new age of science and beneath his mask of cynicism and bantering, there lurks the fear of death. He is old and lonely. His bond with Sichel, his Jewish mistress, his "charogne," is one of hatred and necessity. He hates his son Louis for his own image which he sees in him. Seemingly complete in his self-sufficiency and self-assurance, he falters at two decisive points.

The first occasion is in the first scene of act 2 of L'Otage. Toussaint has come to ask Sygne de Coûfontaine for her hand in marriage. He is in a position to blackmail her because he has the pope, her guest, as a hostage in his hands. In requesting her hand he covets her name, her fortune and her charms, but there is also another motive.

Mon corps est rompu, mon âme est dans les ténèbres et je tourne vers vous mon visage plein de crimes et de désespoir! (1)

His cry is essentially a cry for redemption addressed to a representative of the religion he tried to destroy.

The second occasion occurs in Le pain dur where there is
a failure of his self-composure, likewise in the presence of a woman he covets. This time his proposal of marriage is to his son's fiancée. His means of blackmail are again in terms of what the victim holds most precious, namely: the funds which Lumir has lent Toussaint's son and which are necessary for her share in the liberation of Poland. His cry, hold and motive are practically the same as before.

Faites-moi oublier la mort! Faites-moi oublier le temps! Faites-moi trouver intérêt à quelque chose hors de moi! Utilisez en moi ce qui était fait pour servir et à quoi personne n'a jamais cru. (2)

The dramatic climax of Le pain dur which results in Toussaint's death, is reached when Louis threatens his father with a pistol for money. Toussaint refuses his demands, not because his love of money prevails over his fear of death, but because the money guarantees his hold over Lumir, his hope of redemption.

What then was Lumir's special appeal to Toussaint Turelure? A clue is given in the lines

Et que ses bras sont blancs! J'ai vu ses bras à diner, l'autre jour. Il me faut ces bras-là. (3)

The appeal is certainly sensuous, but the colour of Lumir's arms hints at a different appeal, an appeal for light. Lumir is a pun on lumière as cygne is a pun on cygne. Both women are bearers of light and Toussaint's response to them gives proof of his dormant spirituality, since, in the words
of another work

\[\text{ou ne peut rien désirer si l'on n'a en soi une certaine similitude de la chose désirée.} \] (4)

Toussaint Turelure dies unregenerate and by violence, in the steps of Georges de Coûfontaine who perished at the end of L'otage. The last words of the trilogy, however, probably herald the conversion of Pensée as the last words of Le soulier de satin announce the conversion of Rodrigue. In Rodrigue's case the progressive spiritual emancipation is paralleled by progressive physical bondage; humiliated before the court of Spain, his achievements accredited to other men, sold as a traitor to a soldier. But with the death of Prouhèze, his terrible longing may now find satisfaction in its ultimate source. In the last scene his daughter's fate is his last earthly care. He has, however, an intuition of his impending conversion.

\[\text{On dirait que le ciel m'apparaît pour la première fois. Oui, c'est une belle nuit pour moi que celle-ci où je célèbre enfin mes fiançailles avec la liberté.} \] (5)

He who dominated America as viceroy now wants the humblest position in a convent. With the sounding of a trumpet "qui soudain nettoie l'âme de tout le passé et lui intime un ordre nouveau" Rodrigue is summoned into the kingdom of heaven. The cannon announces that his daughter has reached the boat of Jean d'Autriche. His earthly cares have passed away. In a sense the whole play has been a prologue for the last words:
"Délivrance aux âmes captives!"

The convert now finds himself a member of two kingdoms and at grips with traditional concepts and unfamiliar dimensions. His growth in grace and the catholicity of his vision depend partly on his integration of time and space with eternity. This knowledge becomes more apparent after an evaluation of the experience of sin, but it will be dealt with here as a framework within which a more specifically redemptive vocation is fulfilled.

For the convert the dimension of time in the spiritual kingdom into which he has entered is as an eternal "now", and the meeting of the two orders, the temporal and the intemporal, "cette irrésistible explosion de l'Eternité."(6) This is the underlying significance of the time bomb in the mined house which will destroy Yse and Mesa. Spatial considerations are vain in an understanding of the kingdom of heaven "qui s'échappe à notre prise par l'absence de la dimension." (7)

Claudel's treatment of time is an attempt to make one aware of a divine purpose worked out for the most part over a period of years, not infrequently a life-time. The Otage trilogy concerns three generations, but it is set within a context of five. Man is called to an awareness of his particular place in time.

Le ruisseau devant et derrière moi je cause à la fois avec tous les moments de sa vie. (8)
The scope of Claudel's vision of time is matched by his treatment of space. Thus, in *Le soulier de satin* the unity of place is the world, the only fitting dimension for this epic drama. The repercussions of any one event are felt at other parts of the globe and may be crucial in the orientation of other lives. But the world is an impermanent scene against the backdrop of eternity. It is against this impermanency that the drama of human destiny is played out; hence the force of the scenic directions at the beginning of *Le soulier de satin*:

> Il faut que tout ait l'air provisoire, en marche, bâclé, incohérent, improvisé dans l'enthousiasme! (9)

The position of the Christian in time and space is indicated in a single line in the poem *Saint Jean L'Évangéliste*:

> Il est tout blanc. C'est le soir. C'est Éphèse. Il est assis sous un pin. (10)

The first statement refers to John's sanctity. The last localizes him in space, but the pine, a tree similar enough to an arrow, indicates his orientation heavenwards. The two middle statements are statements of time and space. John is within time and space, but he envelops both.

To the spiritually endowed it is granted to see that the kingdoms of heaven and earth are mutually penetrable.

> Ainsi du plus grand Ange qui vous voit jusqu'au caillou de la route et d'un bout de votre création jusqu'à l'autre, il ne cesse point continuité, non plus que de l'âme au corps (11)
When Mara announces the death of her daughter, Violaine expresses no regret for the child. For her there is no great distance between the world of the living and the company of heaven. The intrusion of celestial voices in L'Annonce and the appearance of Dona Frouhèze's guardian angel in Le soulier de satin are attempts to emphasize the continuity and the reality of the two worlds apprehended by the spiritual consciousness of exceptional women. Claudel's art is an attempt to portray the continuity of space and time, heaven and earth, which may be grasped in a single vision.

In Claudel's theatre music is employed as an element able to "faire pénétrer cette union du temps avec ce qui n'est pas le temps, de la distance avec ce qui n'est pas l'espace, d'un mouvement avec un autre mouvement." Men are called to adapt themselves to a music already present and to realize their part in the immense orchestra of the redeemed. It is thus that they will be both "révélés et anéantis"; revealed because each man has a unique part to play, annihilated because the total effect is more important than the brilliance of any one performer. The idea of the orchestra applies equally to the natural creation which Claudel envisages as celebrating a continuous hymn of praise to the Creator. Thus in Le soulier de satin the Isles of Japan are as so many musical instruments whilst Europe, embroiled in strife, is a discordant instrument.

In notable instances Claudel uses the reaction of his
protagonists to music as a criterion of their spirituality. Toussaint Turelure is not only out of harmony with the society he dominates, but he attempts to quell the music of those about him, especially that of his mistress Sichel, a pianist of European fame.

Croyez-vous que ce soit par amour pour moi qu'il m'ait prise? Non, vous ne devineriez jamais! C'est pour m'empêcher de faire de

la musique! (13)

But for Sichel, contrary to her daughter Pensée, the ringing of the bells of Rome brings her anguish of heart. Pensée is in harmony with nature, though for this blind girl, unenlightened by faith, the music of creation is sad. This may be judged by her reaction on Orian, her spiritual counterpart.

Ce n'est pas drôle qu'à la vue de ce beau visage, sans que je sache comment, il y ait quelque chose en moi qui se soit mise à chanter? quelque chose . . . de si triste, de si enivrant, de si amer? (14)

The most spiritually enlightened arouse music in those about them. All who see Dona Musique want to sing. When Violaine appears to Jacques in the garden of Combernon, beautiful in the flower of her youth and arrayed in a golden dalmatic, she awakens in him a dormant musicality which is abruptly shattered by a staccato anger when he rejects her at the evidence of her leprosy. When Violaine becomes blind her blindness serves, as in the case of most of Claudel's blind saints, to make her aware of the harmony to be
perceived between heaven and earth. Pierre de Craon will place her on the pinnacle of his cathedral with her eyes banded.

Afin qu'elle écoute mieux, ne voyant pas, le bruit de la ville et des champs, et la voix de l'homme avec la voix de Dieu en même temps. Car elle est Justice elle-même qui écoute et conçoit dans son coeur le juste accord. (15)

Claudel, taking his lead from Augustine, compares history to an uninterrupted musical flux. His dramas are pursued equally at a musical level as at the dramatic and symbolic levels. Though Joseph Samson has pointed out, *l'Échange* is a play of little music because it deals with the disintegration of human relationships, and violence. In *Le père humilié* the eventual redemption of the lines of Turelure and Coëffontaine in the person of Pensée is heralded by the music of the bells and the fountains of Rome. *L'Annonce faite à Marie* may be considered as a drama of bells which toll out the message of Christianity. In this play the ringing of the angelus acts as a musical focus for decisive events. It sounds at three points: in a prologue where Violaine is summoned to a religious vocation, at the end of the third act where Violaine is instrumental in the resurrection of Aubaine, and finally at the end of Act V where the significance of Violaine's life is realized. Communion has been re-established between heaven and earth, and between a divided France.
Toutes les dissonances qui ont constitué le drame se résolvent non seulement en un accord parfait mais dans l'unité parfait, en un son trois fois répété. (16)
CHAPTER II

ETIAM PECCATA

Claudel's first cycle of plays, L'arbre, treats of the author's emancipation from a pagan adolescence and his attempts to integrate himself into the Christian religion to which he had been converted in the Cathedral of Notre Dame on Christmas day 1886. The drama Tête d'or dramatizes two aspects of the adolescent mind: on the one hand the willingness to serve in blind obedience to a cause, represented by Cébès, and on the other hand the desire to dominate, represented by Tête d'or. The play presents the spectacle of a mind obsessed with death and power. L'échange is similarly an exteriorization of conflicting elements of the author's personality. Claudel confided to Marcel Schwob that the theme of L'échange was very personal.

I have depicted myself under the guise of a young man who sells his wife in order to recover his freedom. Desire in all its aspects is expressed by the American actress, while the wife represents the sense of duty. I am all the main characters — the actress, the deserted wife, the wild young man, the business man. I have not aimed at any objective truth in the character of Léchy Elberon, or in the judgment on her behaviour.
The same comments apply more or less to the other plays of the cycle.

Between these plays published in 1901 and the play Partage de midi of 1906 there is a decisive break. Claudel's theatre reels under the impact of the shock of another mind, that of Ysé of the Partage de midi who later becomes Dona Prouhéze of Le soulier de satin and whose personality is continued into the spirits of Lumir of Le pain dur and Pensée de Coüfontaine of Le père humilié. This intrusion, described in the first and second Grandes odes, has its personal basis in Claudel's life, in his tragic encounter with a Polish woman whom he met on his way back to China to resume his diplomatic career after the depressing discovery that he was not suited to a monastic vocation. The nature of the liaison becomes apparent in the plays of the second cycle, Le partage de midi, Le soulier de satin, L'ôtage trilogy and L'annonce faite à Marie, all of which are concerned with an understanding of sin and its place in the scheme of redemption. Compared with the second cycle, the problems of guilt and sin are barely touched upon by the first cycle. The remainder of Claudel's writings contains a poignant commentary upon these themes.

The experience at the heart of Claudel's preoccupation with sin is starkly presented in Partage de midi, a
play of great dramatic intensity. There are only four characters, three men and a woman. Each man has a particular appeal for this lone woman who enters into a marital relationship with each during some part of the play.

The first act takes place on board a ship bound for China. The chief interest lies in the delineation of the protagonists and in the break-down of Mesa's self-sufficiency in the presence of Ysé, the wife of De Ciz. Mesa is a dejected and moody man, refused by God whose presence he felt as an inexorable reality. Here was a man in a spiritual vacuum, How was this vacuum to be filled? Confined together, in space and time on this tiny speck of a boat moving beneath a blazing sun, Mesa and Ysé are fatally and unwillingly impelled together. Aware of their mutual attraction, Mesa will exert all his will power in rejecting the temptation to love the wife of another man. Three times he swears: "Je ne vous aimerai pas." (1)

The second act, like the great dramas of the fall and the redemption, is set in a garden – the garden of death of the cemetery of Hong Kong. The funereal atmosphere intensifies the horror of the action. Mesa has arranged to meet Ysé in this place. Before they meet, Ysé pleads with De Ciz not to leave her. He refuses, and
departs. Mesa and Ysé are again irresistibly drawn together, despite their awareness of the nature of the bond between them: "Mesa . . . je t'épouse avec un amour impie." Each has become the universe for the other, in a conflagration of destructive passion.

Mais ce que nous désirons, ce n'est point de créer, mais de détruire, et que ah!

Il n'y ait plus rien d'autre que toi et moi, et en toi que moi, et en moi que ta possession, et la rage, et la tendresse, et de te détruire . . .

When De Ciz returns, Mesa discusses with him the prospect of employment at the Customs, but he presents the position in such a manner that De Ciz refuses to take it. De Ciz is now ready to risk a mission into inland China. Mesa recognizes the danger of the mission, since the Boxer uprising is on the point of eruption. Despite his warnings to De Ciz on the peril of his undertaking, Mesa is an accomplice in permitting De Ciz to embark on a mission that will result in his death. The echoes of David's adventure with Bath-sheba are unmistakable.

The third act takes place in a mined house. Ysé has left Mesa and is living with Amalric. The uprising is in full swing. Amalric and Ysé prepare for death. There is apparently no hope left for them. Amalric withdraws and Ysé is left alone in a moonlight night. At this point
Mesa appears in a doorway. He has come back to reclaim Ysé and his child. Ysé's only answer is silence.

Amalric returns and the two men fight. In the fight Mesa has his right shoulder dislocated. He is propped up unconscious in an arm-chair and left to die whilst Amalric and Ysé flee into the night, protected by a pass which Mesa brought with him and which is respected by the Chinese. They leave behind them the body of the child of Ysé and of Mesa, which, like the unlawful offspring of the marriage of David and Bath-sheba, had perished.

When Mesa regains consciousness he knows that he is going to die. Alone in the star-light night he anticipates his encounter with Christ. It is Mesa's canticle, later suppressed by Claudel, which contains an interpretation of the religious significance of the event. He questions God as he questioned Ysé on her betrayal, but God is silent. For the silence brings its own explanation.

Qui a goûté à votre silence,
Il n'a pas besoin d'explication. (4)

Mesa's experience has shown him his own condition, his pride, his self-centredness, his essential nothingness. Even his love for God was a self-centred thing.

Sans doute que je ne vous aimais pas comme il faut, mais pour l'augmentation de ma science et de mon plaisir. (5)
His love for Ysé has been the means for destroying his self-sufficiency, but more important still is his insight into God's love for humanity, the love of Christ on the cross, by analogy with the love he felt for the woman who had betrayed him.

Oh! je sais maintenant
Çe que c'est que l'amour! et je sais ce que
vous avez enduré sur votre croix, dans ton coeur,
Si vous avez aimé chacun de nous
Terriblement comme j'ai aimé cette femme, et le
râle, et l'asphyxie, et l'étouf! (6)

The only obvious didactic element in the play, added in the Nouvelle version pour la scène of 1949, is the presence of the omega sign, symbol of Christ, Eternal Witness. For Christ is both the alpha and the omega. The sign is found twice, in the cemetery in the shape of a tomb "(qui donne) l'idée d'un piège"(7) and again as the shape of the arm-chair in which Mesa awaits death. Even as Mesa and Ysé are united in the trap of sin and death, they are united in the arm-chair where the arms of the omega are about them in their redemption.

Claudel stated that Le soulier de satin was his conclusion to Le partage de midi. The theme of this epic work is indicated by the two phrases which accompany the title: Deus escreve direito por linhas tortas, and
Augustine's phrase, *etiam peccata, "even sins." Thus the play will serve as a justification of the obscure ways of God with man, and the place served by sin in the divine economy. The title derives from Prouhèze's gesture of entrusting her slipper to the Virgin Mary in whose grace Prouhèze trusts to be kept free from sin. The title, however, hints at the underlying spiritual conflict — "Satan's slipper," or the temptation to destruction by compromise with the allurements of sin. Thus in the unseen realm the drama will be played out between the Virgin Mary and the devil.

As with *Le partage de midi* the play centres around the mutual love of a man and a married woman. They are prevented from sin by the grace of God and of the Virgin Mary, but there is a suggestion that they have already committed adultery in their hearts. Thus the play is a more subtle presentation of the problem of adultery. Prouhèze is the first to fall. Entrusted by her husband to Don Balthazar, she escapes from her guardian to rejoin Rodrigue. Dona Prouhèze has warned Don Balthazar of her intentions, but he, realizing the conflict in her heart, has shown some complicity in her escape. Honour demands his death. His blood is on her head.

Rodrigue in turn feels the same passion for Prouhèze.
The carnal aspect of his desire which breaks forth at an angry moment is not minimised.

Je me moque de son âme! C'est son corps qu'il me faut, pas autre chose que son corps, la scélérate complicité de son corps!

But they are never to marry as Prouhèze has been obliged in order to marry her lieutenant/to maintain his loyalty to Spain.

The force of Rodrigue's love, which on the one hand prepares his heart for conversion, is also utilized in his subjugation of America and the preparation of vast areas for the proclamation of the gospel. Prouhèze's love for Rodrigue is also allowed to serve in the plan of redemption, being instrumental in the redemption of her husband, Don Camille. Her declaration, four times repeated, "Non, je ne renoncerai pas à Rodrigue!" (9) may be seen as a counterpart to Mesa's thrice repeated avowal that he would not love Ysé. Camille's statement, "Mais d'où viendrait autrement cette lumière sur votre visage?" (10) indicates that she has achieved the renunciation, the condition demanded by Don Camille before he will render his soul to God.

The physical dimensions of Le soulier de satin are immense. By comparison, the setting for L'annonce faite à Marie is minuscule, but this play has a far more basic
outlook in that it attempts to come to an understanding of the origin of sin. Of the three plays discussed, this contains the best objective treatment of the theme of sin, though chronologically it precedes *Le soulier de satin*. The play opens with a conversation between Pierre de Craon, master builder, and Violaine, a young girl in love with Jacques Hurry. In the eyes of the world Pierre is a man of blameless character. Violaine alone knows that he is culpable of covetous lust, for during his last visit to Combernon, Pierre tried to take Violaine by force and drew a knife upon her. His attempt failed and as a punishment he is smitten with leprosy. Before his crime Pierre was innocent. Through Violaine he now knows good and evil. The symbolism is unmistakable.

\[\text{O jeune arbre de la science du Bien et du Mal,}
\text{Voici que je commence à me séparer parce que j'ai porté la main sur vous.}\] (11)

It is reiterated at a later point by Jacques Hurry.

\[\text{Et Violaine était le surjon secret de l'Arbre saint, issu de quelque racine souterraine.}\] (12)

Claudel interprets the nature of the original sin as sexual. Thus from this point of view, the attempt upon Violaine, the action which sets the play in motion, is a re-enactment of the original sin in the garden of Eden.

If Pierre de Craon emphasizes the fall, Jacques'
role appears to illustrate the banishment from the terrestrial paradise. The encounter between Jacques and Violaine takes place in a setting of incomparable beauty.

Elle est entourée d'arbres épais et de rosiers formant berceau dont les fleurs abondantes éclatent sur la verdure.  

(13)

Its beauty is perhaps best expressed for Jacques in Violaine's face.

Ne me damnez pas par la privation de votre visage!  

(14)

His happiness is shattered by the evidence of her leprosy. She has betrayed him by her clandestine love for another. There is no other issue but to part. Violaine is expelled from the garden by Jacques, but Jacques is also expelled from the Eden of Violaine's presence. Pierre's sin was one of disobedience, Jacques' was failure to trust in the love of the beloved. In Pierre and Jacques there lived the old Adam.

The motivation for sin would appear to have its origin in the heart of man. Claudel, however, sets the initiative one step further back - with the devil. Such is Pierre's explanation for his fall:

Vous êtes la première femme que j'aie touchée. Le diable m'a saisi tout d'un coup, qui profite de l'occasion.  

(15)

Mara and Pierre, both violent characters, are aware of a
sharp conflict of spiritual forces. They know the
terrible force of a soul bringing damnation upon itself.

Violaine, . . . Dis!
Sais-tu ce que c'est qu'une âme qui
se damne?
De sa propre volonté pour le temps
céternel? (16)

Jacques is apparently unaware of sinister forces at work,
possibly because his mediocrity renders him incapable of
the same spiritual heights and depths as Pierre or Mara.

The counterpart to the fall is the Passion where
human sin is at its most manifest, but where also the
divine providence in turning sin to redemptive purpose is
set forth most clearly. These themes are presented in
Un poète regarde la croix. If Christ died for the sins of
humanity, every member of humanity is responsible for His
death. In the account of the Passion, Claudel shows his
remarkable power of transposition into the various rôles
of the protagonists, but it is more than a self-transposi-
tion, it is a self-identification for the Passion was an
event in which Claudel felt himself more than superficially
implicated.

The commentary is a constant reiteration of the
thesis that the greatest gifts of mankind can be subverted
to destructive ends. The crown of thorns was a work of
artistic merit and showed considerable skill in its fashion-
ing. Its skill consisted in the careful choice of the
materials, plaiting them into a crown. "... disposer les épines atroces sans nous blesser nous-mêmes, mais de telle façon que le bénéficiaire en conserve tout le profit..." (17) Claudel's symbol for creativity is the right hand. In the treatment of Christ, man's creativity is used in the destruction of the Creator, particularly in the destruction of the face.

In this work of destruction there is now a common cause among all human groups.

In the contemplation of the Passion there is twin knowledge: that of the condition of Christ represented by light and that of the natural condition of man represented by darkness.

In the Fall we have seen that the initiative lay with demon forces working through the instrumentality of men. In the Passion the same forces are at work but this time they are augmented; for Mary contemplates her Son "en proie à cette équipe de travailleurs..." dirigés à
la fois par les démons et par les anges . . "(20) Demons and angels, man and God are all at work in procuring the redemption of the world.

A full understanding of Claudel's treatment of the theme of sin, however, demands a study of the first and second Grandes odes where the adventure with Ysé is outlined, and its aftermath in the life of Claudel delineated. The play which presents the most subjective presentation of the incident ends with Mesa casting himself on the mercy of God. It is a play which shows but little contrition. The second ode, however, vividly portrays the penitential aspect of the experience.

In the first two odes Claudel describes his own pilgrimage from the Egypt of his youth. Like that of the children of Israel, Claudel's pilgrimage lay through the burning deserts of spiritual aridity and bitterness. It was an experience which he described as "une adhésion passionnée dans les ténèbres." In the desert Claudel has wrestled with God in a conflict of wills. Like Amalric wrestling with Mesa, he has come to know his opponent better in a moment of struggle than in a whole life-time spent side by side. In this type of combat, many times described, there is sure knowledge.

Je ne dis pas que cette forme de connaissance soit supérieure à la connaissance intellectuelle, mais à coup sûr elle est plus intime. (21)
The most terrible experience was that with Ysé, like the arrival of exhausted travellers at an oasis that had dried up.

With time the conflagration of passion died down, though there remained the smouldering and bitter ashes of penitence. The tears of penitence cleanse but leave the soul void.

Maintenant jaillissent
Les sources profondes; jaillit mon âme salée...
Maintenant je me suis parfaitement clair, tout Amèrement clair, et il n'y a plus rien en moi Qu'une parfaite privation de Vous seul! (22)

It is now as in conversion that the divine initiative is again expressed, this time by the breath, symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of the presence of the vine, symbol of Christ. It is a time of deliverance, a time for laughter. It is now that dialogue is restored between the soul and Christ. The vision of Christ granted to the penitent is expressed in the words of Peter

"Seigneur, il fait bon pour nous en ce lieu, que je ne retourne pas à la vue des hommes." (23)

and in the words of Jesus to Mary Magdalene

"Ne me touchez point! Ne cherche pas à prendre ma main." (24)

The first words were originally uttered at the time of the
transfiguration of Christ which took place in the presence of the three chief disciples. The second words were the first addressed by Christ after the resurrection. In both cases the particular vision of Christ came as climactic moments in the lives of people extraordinarily privileged. Claudel appropriates both visions to express his joy at forgiveness, a high water mark in his religious experience.

To understand Claudel's interpretation of the role of sin in the spiritual pilgrimage of man, it is necessary to consult the full scope of his writings. The chief effects of sin are alienation from God, and concomitantly personal and social disintegration. The personal drama is vividly presented in Partage de midi, whilst the social implications of sin committed are presented in Le pain dur where Toussaint Turelure's overweening interference in other people's lives eventually brings his own downfall. The nature of the sin committed varies, but the central preoccupation is with sexual lust, in particular adultery, which is later defined as a kind of spiritual homicide in that it destroys the divine image of the one desired.

The three plays in the order in which we have considered them show an increasing objectivity in the treatment of this theme. By comparison with the macabre
humour of *Le partage de midi* the tragedy of the main
events of *Le soulier de satin* is constantly set out
against a background of burlesque action. Whereas the
adultery of Ména and Ysé is the central experience in *Le
partage de midi*, Pierre's attempted rape, the deed which
precipitates the action of *L'annonce faite à Marie*, has
already taken place when the play begins.

Knowledge of God is increased by experience of sin,
but Claudel pre-supposes that God must first be known for
the effects of sin to be fully realized. Amalric is not
shown to have any sin-consciousness though he too is living
with the wife of another man. For Ména, however, the ex-
perience is one of damnation. For Ména God is known as
Judge, though his final appeal is to the mercy of God.

Ména gains a further insight into the character of
God by an audacious identification of his love for Ysé with
the love of Christ on the cross for the world. Here the
sinner is identified with the Saviour. The penitent on the
other hand is aware of his essential nature which is one of
void. Herein lies the difference between the creature and
the Creator. God, present as judge to a sinner, is absent
to a penitent.

Claudel's second cycle of plays illustrates that all
serves in a plan of redemption, even sins. Rodrigue's love
for instance may be covetous, but it teaches him the desire that will finally lead him to God. The social implications of his love are no less important, since they provide the impetus which will prepare India, China, America and Japan for the gospel. But in no event is sin shown to be more fully exploited than in the crucifixion of Jesus, where the sin of man becomes the means which procure the substitutionary atonement, the basis for the forgiveness of sin.
CHAPTER III

FULFILLMENT OF VOCATION

(i) The Name

The play which best presents Claudel's understanding of vocation is undoubtedly *L'annonce faite à Marie* which we shall take as our basis for a study of this theme. When the play opens, Pierre is on the point of departure from the congenial farm of Combernon into the world where he will continue his work as builder of churches. But he leaves Combernon in bitterness. The woman he loves is to be given to another. Life stretches monotonously before him. Worst of all, he has been smitten with leprosy, the vengeance of God marked upon his flesh for his attack upon the living temple of the Holy Spirit. His sickness is unto death. Violaine, however, has anticipated his need for forgiveness and is up before him to open the barn door to let him pass on his way. It is a symbolic action for she reveals to him the vistas of a new day, the perspectives of a new life. But her mission to him is not complete until she mediates the divine forgiveness with the pledge of a kiss. Upon this new-found basis of forgiveness Pierre is now ready to embark upon his vocation.
His fame is already known as a builder of churches. Before 
him lies his greatest work, the construction of St. 
Justitia.

Our next information about Pierre comes through an 
assistant whom he has sent to gather sand for the stained-
glass windows of his cathedral. Pierre has assumed his 
responsibility of leadership in a community of fervid 
believers whose faith and devotion he fosters in the con-
struction of his gothic cathedral. He is fashioning the 
stone, "cette belle pierre blanche et douce qui est la 
gloire de France"(1) to the glory of God. He is realizing 
his name, Pierre de Craon, (fashioner of) limestone. With 
this understanding, the scenic directions at the beginning 
of scene ii, act 3 acquire more than a pictorial force.

Des pierres monstrueuses, des grès aux 
formes fantastiques s'en détachent. 
Ils ressemblent aux bêtes des âges 
fossiles, à des monuments inexplicables, 
à des idoles ayant mal poussé leurs 
têtes et leurs membres. (2)

Pierre will wrest these great boulders from the earth and 
make these semblances of idols serve as a thing of beauty, 
as a habitation for the eucharist, the body and blood of 
Christ.

As with Pierre, the vocation of Anne Vercors is 
indicated by his name. In Pierre's case the meaning of the
name is clear, but in the case of Anne Vercors the meaning of the name is in doubt, part of Claudel's ingenuity being to suggest meanings which his art is complex enough to support, but which one can never be sure that Claudel actually intended. We give, however, the following tentative explanation for this medieval name. In medieval French "cors" is a homophone which may be derived from classical Latin "cor" - heart or "corpus" - body. The first element "ver" is from "verum" - true. In this name both senses are implied so that the name could be translated as "Anne, true of heart, true of body". As a farmer, both qualities are essential, the former as a leader of the Combernon community, the latter as befits one who must co-operate with the soil to bring forth meat and drink for the sustenance of humanity. His words to Jacques Hury, his successor and son-in-law, indicate that Anne has achieved the integration demanded by his name.

Donne à manger à toutes les créatures, aux hommes et aux animaux, et aux esprits et aux corps et aux âmes immortelles. (3)

In the *dramatis personae* of the play, Anne's wife is not listed as Elisabeth but as La Mère, Claudel's intention being to express her vocation in terms of her role as a mother. She is not a woman of spiritual insight, nor is she a match for her husband in the perception of character or
religious truth. Unable to withstand Anne's request for permission to go on a pilgrimage to Rome, she lets him depart, fearing only too well that she will never see him again. She is a tool in the hands of her daughter Mara, who is unscrupulous in using her as an unwilling bearer of threats to Violaine and to Anne. The events in which she is embroiled are far beyond her understanding. As a mother and housekeeper of Combernon, however, she excels: prudent, resourceful, loving. It is in her role of mother, rather than of wife that she is seen to best advantage.

The fourth type of vocation in this play is portrayed by Violaine, the symbolism of whose name will be discussed at a later stage. She becomes the last of the holy recluses whose prayers avail in the protection and prosperity of Combernon. Her ministry is one of renunciation, expiation and prayer. The chief human instrument in the conversion of Mara and Jacques, she is also the counterpart to Joan of Arc with whom she is associated in the restoration of stability in France, and in the healing of the divisions of Christendom.

In this drama the married couples play a complementary role in the completion of one another's work. Anne is herself "vercors" but his wife is equally so. Their combined talents are necessary for the smooth running of the farm, even as Jacques and Mara will be called upon to continue in
the same work. But Pierre and Violaine are likewise wedded. When Pierre outlines the plans for the building of St. Justitia, Violaine is moved to give him her most valuable possession, the gold ring which her fiancé, Jacques Hury, has given her as a pledge of their betrothal. The ring he accepts. Her giving and his acceptance signify that they are both wedded to the same redemptive work, his to be pursued in the construction of the houses of God, hers in prayer and expiation. The marriage is sealed by a kiss, which has a deeper sacramental significance.

The gift of a ring occurs also in Le livre de Christophe Colombe where Isabelle, queen of Spain, entrusts a ring to a dove which conveys it to Columbus. They are thus joined in the same vocation of the discovery and evangelism of America. The ring not only binds the two partners but it is the wearer's sign of marriage to his vocation. In Columbus's words

C'est avec cet anneau que j'épouserai la terre entière. (4)

The whole earth is his wife even as Pierre's cathedral is his wife

Cette église seule sera ma femme qui va être tirée de mon côté comme une Ève de pierre, dans le sommeil de la douleur. (5)

The couple are thus linked together in their vocation to the world, but their vocation is not limited
to this sphere, for they have a mutual vocation in deepening their awareness of certain divine attributes, particularly justice. In man's deep-seated yearning for justice, Claudel sees man as "solidaire de Dieu lui-même". From this point of view, Dona Prouhèze's marriage with Don Pélagé, "juge terrible de sa majesté", is not just a tragic mistake but a means of awakening her to an understanding of divine justice. It may be significant that her marriage with this man, for whom there is no greater charity than to kill evildoers and for whom justice is unmitigated by love, is without children. Such is the sterility of his justice.

The marriage of Joseph and Mary, in Claudel's opinion, illustrated the union of Justice and Love. In Pensée's marriage, the role of justice is apparently attributed to Orso, whilst the role of love and mercy is given to Orian. The mercy of God receives culpable expression in Orian's case but his fault will be redeemed by Orso, who marries Pensée on the understanding that he will surrender his full conjugal rights. A commentary given many times by Claudel in his exegetical commentaries is appropriate in this context.

Il nous appelle dans la miséricorde, mais le prophète nous dit qu'il nous épousera dans la justice. (7)

We interpret the symbolism of Orso's renunciation, which
alone however, does not only have this meaning, as indicating that whereas the mercy of God is prepared to espouse the darkness of humanity, (for Pensée is a Jew, blind and unenlightened) the justice of God remains more aloof from the human condition. If this is the case, one may feel that Claudel has allowed his symbolic considerations to prevail over a more realistic attitude.

The Claudelian dialectic of the dual role of justice and mercy receives its best exposition in L'annonce faite à Marie, where Jacques and Mara opt for justice in contrast to Anne and Violaine, who opt for mercy. Jacques' justice is shown to be faulty because his condemnation of Violaine is based on evidence which is in itself irrefutable, but which must be understood in the light of the motive which caused her leprosy. Love alone would have been prepared to trust her innocence, despite all evidence to the contrary. By contrast, Violaine's attitude to Jacques is quite clear.

Mais moi, Jacques, je ne vous aime pas parce que cela est juste.
Et même si cela ne l'était pas, je vous aimerais encore et plus. (8)

Her life will be lived out in confirmation of these words. When she dies, Pierre de Craon, recognizing her as the counterpart to the little martyr whose bones are at the foundation of his cathedral, hails her as "cette autre
Justice. (9) Violaine, as the delegate of God among men, illustrates that the pursuit of love, unfettered by notions of justice, is supremely just.

Finally, the couple are called to fulfil the vocation of parenthood. In Pierre's case the physical aspect of his paternity is manifest in his cathedrals, which are also considered as his daughters. A more profound aspect of the parenthood of the couple is exercised in the continuation of their own personality into the lives of the succeeding generation. In this play it may be seen that each person has a younger counterpart: Pierre and his apprentice, Anne and Jacques, Elisabeth and Mara, Violaine and Aubaine. Each serves as a pattern for the younger member.

The apprentice is a hot-blooded young man, quick to defend his master. He is a little vain with his learning, conscious of his superiority to the peasants by whom he is surrounded and to whom he is slightly patronising. His enthusiasm for his work, however, is sincere and with time he will become wiser, and perhaps become as good a builder as Pierre himself.

In Jacques, Anne recognizes elements of his own youth. Jacques' name, a possible pun on "jachéré", contains his condemnation and his hope: condemnation because
his talents lie dormant, hope because the fallow ground is capable of rich harvest. His understanding of his vocation will be in terms of that which he knows best, the earth. In the last scene we are told that the harvest at Combernon has never been better. Jacques has attained the qualities of one true of body, but he has yet to become true of heart, to develop those qualities worthy of the master of Combernon, especially the quality of justice. His justice of man to man, which would cut off a man's ears in punishment for a theft of a few saplings, is doubtless as just in its own way as the justice that Anne presents of God's dealings with man.

Cent pour un, l'épi pour une graine et l'arbre pour un pépin
Car telle est la justice de Dieu avec nous, et sa mesure à lui dont il nous repaye. (10)

Striking confirmation of Mara's vocation to motherhood is given by Violaine in words which are practically the only ones in which she is proved wrong. When Mara follows Violaine to her leper's retreat, Violaine thinks that her voice is that of her mother, a strange mistake since Violaine is later shown to possess powers of great spiritual perception. The experience of maternity, with the responsibility of the farm in the passing years, has likened her to her mother.

Mara is unloved and unlovely. The truths she
speaks about people are caustic and alienating. She has succeed in marrying the man/she loves with a fierce possessive love, but the marriage is little better than a contract based on property considerations. It is not hidden from her that the heart of the man she loves is with the woman he loved, and whom he felt had betrayed him. The tragedy of her life is poignantly expressed in her phrase "... elle dort toutes les nuits à son côté comme une épée nue." (11) In the supreme bond of motherhood alone is her love freely given, and with her conversion, freely returned. Her words of joy on the resurrection of her child are the only real affection she shows in the whole play. Her joys and her sorrows will be bound up in the life of her child.

Although Aubaine's mother is Mara, Violaine is also the physical mother of the child, since its resurrection was accompanied by a flow of milk. Equally important, Violaine bequeaths her own spiritual nature to Aubaine, symbolized by the change in the child's eyes from black to blue. Aubaine will be to her generation a redemptive force even as Violaine is to the generation of Pierre de Craon and Jacques Hurry. The idea of the continuation of the spirit of Violaine in Aubaine is indicated by the common element in their names - (h)aine; both women will assume the hatred of their unregenerate people.
From this study it is clear that each man is summoned to develop his particular talents. In the pursuit of vocation there is not so much a development of new talents, as a re-orientation of one's natural abilities to redemptive purposes. Thus Andrew, the Galilean fisherman with battered hands, shrewd to seize the exact moment in throwing the net, strong to haul in the catch, and who would rather sink than let one go, becomes a fisher of men who knows when the moment is ripe for the harvest of souls, and who hauls men from their murky depths, zealous that none should escape the net of salvation. Any person who shifts from the natural bias of his character is almost bound to fail. Anne on his return from his pilgrimage to Rome realized that he had not been called to a redemptive vocation like his daughter, but that each man is called to fulfill the particular vocation to which he has been called and in which he is placed.

A further consideration is that like-minded and like-spirited men and women are called together to fulfill a vocation whose references are not to the world alone, but to themselves and to their spiritual children. The marriage of Jacques and Mara is a far more suitable match than Jacques' marriage with Violaine would have been. "It is not good for man to be alone." For Jacques there is Mara, for Anne, Elisabeth, for Pierre, Violaine.
Finally the name is of great importance in the character and vocation of its owner. The names of Orian and Orso, the brothers of Le père humilié, are the names of constellations, their personal vocation being to achieve that state of light common to a star, this being the symbol for a saint in Claudel's writings. With respect to Pensée, however, they exert a redemptive influence.

O frères inséparables, l'un amène Pensée et l'autre l'a reçue. (14)

The common element of their name, "or", is the divine symbol, its value in this case being to serve as a mirror of the sun, symbol for God. They themselves are not the light, but only the pointers to the light, even as Signe de Coüfontaine was not the light she symbolized (cygne), the swan being a white bird, but only its herald (signe). Orian differs from Orso in possessing the element "-ian" (Latin - door) to his name. If the concept of Orian as a door is intended, it would reinforce the idea that he will be the chief means whereby she will have access to God.

Joseph Samson notes that the verb "penser" in Claudel's writings sometimes has a technical sense of being in harmony. Thus as Pensée is in harmony with the natural creation, with her conversion she will learn to vibrate with the divine music about her. It will then be her vocation to reveal the world of hidden music to the men and women of her generation.

In view of the murders perpetrated by Toussaint Turelure,
his name has an ironic ring. Here is a man who failed in his vocation, for the toussaint refers to the communion of saints. The name Sichel, which he gives to his Jewish mistress Rachel, is also ironic. It is German for sickle. Sichel is apparently an instrument of vengeance in the hand of God, for it is by her action that Toussaint Turelure is destroyed, reaped as it were, in the harvest of the damned.

The name of Jacques Hurry is open to various interpretations. His perfidy may be indicated by "j'ai juré", for the love he swore to Violaine crumbled at its first major test. The name may also indicate the adjective "ahuri", possibly signifying the amazement Jacques experienced at his conversion when he realized the import of Violaine's sacrifice.

The other names in L'annonce faite à Marie will be developed later in our study. In this play, however, the lack of a name is equally significant. Thus the facelessness of the mother is paralleled by the namelessness of the apprentice. They will pass away, but their works will live on in monuments to God's glory, whether in stone or in the living personalities of men.

(ii) The Vocation of Joy and Sorrow

Regardless of the particular vocation to which one has been called, vocation can always be viewed from two points of view, the vocation of sorrow and the vocation of joy. The former vocation by far prevails in Claudel's writings, although joy is its ultimate end.

The causes of suffering are various: there is first of all physical pain which is particularly the lot of the leprous who abound in Claudel's works. Some are chosen to bear suffering as in the case of Violaine and the Emperor
of *Le repos du septième jour*, but for others suffering appears to be indiscriminately forced upon them. All men, however, are invited to co-operate with the forces at work on them. To suffer is to exist.

On existe encore ... il y a connaissance accrue de nous-mêmes ... et du côté de l'inconnu ... disons la Volonté de Dieu, qui s'applique à nous avec insistance, familiarité et douleur ...

A second cause of suffering is occasioned by enforced solitude, which may be constructively employed for the study and meditation necessary for an artistic vocation; as in the case of Dante, Pierre de Craon and Claudel himself. The solitude which Claudel experienced as a lone man in the midst of a foreign people is referred to in *Connaissance de l'est*.

Il ne me sera point accordé de fixer mon pied sur le sol inébranlable, de construire de mes mains une demeure de pierre et de bois, de manger en paix les aliments cuits sur le foyer domestique.

The same sentiment is echoed by Pierre in the prologue to *L'annonce faite à Marie*.

Ne ferai-je jamais le dessin d'un four et de la chambre des enfants?

Perhaps it may not be altogether coincidental that the initials of both men are the same.
The suffering that accompanies solitude is frequently occasioned by the marriage of the beloved to another. The marriage is felt as a betrayal and is a constant source of grief. But if the couple cannot be joined in love, they can be joined in suffering.

Aie de moi ceci, mon bien-aimé!
La communion sur la croix, l'amertume
comme celle de la myrrhe
Du malade qui voit l'ombre sur le cadran
et de l'âme qui reçoit vocation.

In *Le soulier de satin* Rodrigue and Prouhèze are seen as a mutual cross. It is a grim symbolism.

Fourthly, there is the suffering which comes from the knowledge of one's own impurity in the presence of God. There is something of this sense in Violaïne's reply to Mara's statement that God had punished Violaïne harshly, "Pas plus que je ne l'avais mérité". (19)

The major symbols to describe suffering are four: the sword, the cross, the thorn and fire, but with the sword considered as "cette abréviation de la croix" (20) and the thorn as a part of the crucifixion in that it derives from the crown of thorns, the idea of suffering resolves around two concepts, that of the Passion of Christ and that of fire. For both there is the idea of physical destruction linked with spiritual redemption.

Ces feu éternel, que nous demande-t-il?
Il ne demande pas, il redemande. Il
redemande cette image de Dieu en nous
dont nous avons reçu le germe igné
et que notre vocation est de restituer. (20)

Man's suffering has its chief significance in the
light of the cross where man's suffering is associated
with the suffering of God.

Eh bien, toute souffrance en nous,
 morale ou physique, relève de la
couronne d'épines et, nous configu-
rant au Christ, nous investit de son
caractère d'expiation, d'autorité et
de présidence. (21)

Suffering may be the lot of every Christian, but the
experience of joy is no less important. Indeed Claudel
sees joy as the goal to which all his writings tend.

L'idée générale de ma vie et de ma
vocation ... un grand désir et un
grand mouvement vers la joie divine
et la tentative d'y rattacher le
monde entier. (22)

This is the vocation which Pope Pius of Le père
humilié sees as the duty of mankind. Joy is attained in
the realization of the value of one's special gifts and
talents, the realization of the significance of the part
one plays in the divine plan for the world. Anne's joy
as a farmer is manifest when he hands over Combernon
to Jacques

O bon ouvrage de l'agriculteur, où le
soleil est comme notre boeuf luisant,
et la pluie notre banquier, et Dieu
tous les jours au travail notre
compagnon, faisant de tous le mieux! (23)

In a quiet autumn afternoon when the fruits of the
harvest have been gathered in and Violaine awaits burial,
Pierre sings the praise of his vocation as an architect.

O que la pierre est belle et qu'elle est
douce aux mains de l'architecte!
Et que le poids de son oeuvre tout
ensemble est une chose juste et belle. (24)

Whereas before, he had coveted the forbidden fruit of
Violaine's body, now at the end of a lifetime of renunciation he possesses all.

Certes j'ai toujours pensé que c'était
une bonne chose que la joie.
Mais maintenant j'ai tout!
Je possède tout sous les mains, et je
suis comme quelqu'un qui, voyant
un arbre chargé de fruits,
étant monté sur l'échelle, il sent
plier sous son corps le profond
branchage. (25)

The experiences of both suffering and joy touch
the deepest elements of the human personality. Both are
necessary in the spiritual pilgrimage. Claudel's message
is that without suffering there is no joy. In Le soulier
de satin the vocations of sorrow and joy are illustrated
respectively by Prouhèze, whose daughter's name Sept-Épées
is eloquent witness of her sorrows, and by Musique, a less
convincing character than Prouhèze, due to Claudel's intention
of making her serve a symbolic function. As with
man's knowledge of God, where the distinction between the
divine initiative and the human response is not always
clear, joy and sorrow blend into each other. Hence
Claudel is able to say
Au-dessus de la joie et la même chose qu'elle, il y a cette douleur qui nous réalise tout entiers. (26)

The notions of conversion, sin and the fulfilment of vocation may be summed up by the one word "connaissance", which Claudel uses in the sense of "co-naissance" and which might be translated as "birth into conformity with". There are two aspects of this conformity. The first/birth into conformity with God, which is to say the continuous development of one's divine image in conformity with its divine model. Thus Jacques' retort to Pierre de Craon, "Mais Violaine n'est pas une pierre pour moi et la pierre ne me suffit pas!" (27) indicates that Pierre's understanding is based on the references implied by his name. Thus with his growth in grace, he will come to a greater understanding of God, the great Master Architect. Similarly, Anne's knowledge of God will be in terms of God as the producer and sustainer of life, whilst Violaine will understand Him as the great Redeemer.

The second aspect of co-naissance is man's conformity with the communion of believers. Pierre must learn to appropriate the knowledge of Anne and Violaine, for there is totality of knowledge only in the totality of
the church. The church of God, however, extends back in
time, with its rich heritage of the saints. A study of
their lives, so prevalent in Claudel's writings, is re-
warding for the light which is thrown on the knowledge of
God in the fulfilment of their vocation as an image of the
Divine. Their accomplishments are proof of the totality of
one's inherent spirituality. Thus Rodrigue turns to a
study of the saints,

Ces grandes possibilités de moi-même... (qui) me ressemblent bien plus que je
ne le fais à moi-même avec ce corps flétri et cette âme avortée!

Man's "connaissance" is therefore in direct propor-
tion to his "co-naissance".

The notion of birth has further implications in
the Claudelian epistemology. The new man is being
wrested from the old Adam, man is passing from darkness
into light in the painful separation of his dual nature.
Claudel uses the awareness of pain as proof of the spiritual
progression,

... celui qui ne souffre pas, c'est
que la vie sur lui a interrompu son
travail. Il y a une pause dans
l'accouchement.

Man is giving birth, as it were, to his spiritual nature.
The underlying symbolism of this activity is derived from
the opening verses of the book of Genesis where the Spirit
of God brings forth order out of chaos. But there is
the further idea that the birth pangs of Christendom
result from its giving spiritual birth to the unregenerate.

The fulfilment of vocation is perfectly presented
by Violaine. Her pain is physical because her leprosy
is accompanied by the disintegration of her body. She
is totally bereft: deserted by her father and lover,
hated by her sister and the people charged to feed her.
The man she loves has rejected her with bitter words and
alone in the presence of God, she is aware of her own im-
perfection.

Her experience of fire, however, may be interpreted
as her marriage to the Holy Spirit, whose symbol is fire,
and by whom this virgin mother has conceived the grief of
war-torn Christendom. Her joy and sorrow at the birth of
her daughter are summed up in her words "parce qu'un homme
est apparu dans le monde" (30), which imply the previous
words of Jesus, "When a woman is in travail she has sorrow,
because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of
the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy." (31)
With the change in colour of Aubaine's eyes, a daughter of
the soil has become a daughter of God.

Violaine's earthly vocation is practically fulfilled.
She awaits the final sacrifice, the decisive factor in
the conversion of Jacques and Mara, which reveals the
meaning of her life to Pierre and Anne. Violaine has
become a saint. For Aubaine, Jacques and Mara, the pilgrimage is just beginning.
(i) **The Wisdom of God**

The attempt to understand the strange and mysterious attraction between a man and a woman is central in Claudel's religious quest. Is knowledge of God to be revealed in terms of the mutual attraction between husband and wife? It is significant that the Song of Solomon, one of the shortest books of the Old Testament, receives one of Claudel's longest commentaries, its fascination for him being in its love interest and its Marian symbolism. Claudel's conclusion to a life-time's meditation was that encounter with every woman was an introduction to Mary, "La Beauté qui tient l'Innocence entre ses bras."(1) For Claudel, Mary represented the wisdom of God, the perfect woman, the soul and the church. The wisdom of God, mediated by the activity of Mary, consisted largely in implanting in the heart of man a three-fold desire for beauty, possession and completion, qualities which a man seeks to find in the spouse, but which are also to be realized in the church.
Man's desire for beauty is profound, as profound in Claudel's opinion as his need for justice. Thus the appeal of the woman resides largely in her beauty. Claudel's heroines are nearly all women of outstanding beauty, a fact recognized even by those who are not their lovers. Beautiful in her features, beautiful in voice, Prouhèze was called "sirène" only too truly by Don Balthazar, since her unsung song of love for Rodrigue echoed in Balthazar's heart and lured him to the shores of destruction. Unable to resist her fatal charm, he failed in his duty to Don Pélagie by allowing her to escape to Rodrigue.

The more subtle beauty which is evident to the lover rather than to the world at large, is more apparent in the woman's love for a man. The man's desire for beauty is matched by a similar desire in the woman. Thus Ysé found all of Mesa's features attractive, though no one would have thought of calling him handsome. The metaphysical appeal of the man's beauty is indicated in Sichel's impassioned speech to Louis in Le pain dur after his proposal of marriage. In this speech she renounces her Jewish faith, but the pivotal words in this speech, "tu es beau", would seem to indicate that Sichel is transferring her religious allegiance to Louis, finding satisfaction in the beauty she finds in him. The tragedy in her case is that he in turn does not find the same beauty in her.
The lover is usually unaware that the beauty of the beloved is a prototype of the beauty of God, though Rodrigue's expression of the beauty of Prouhèze in terms of the morning star, that which was most beautiful for him in the realm of the natural creation, will finally lead him to such an awareness. The poignant words of Pierre de Graon, "O image de la Beauté éternelle, tu n'es pas à moi!"(3) are the highest expression of the beauty of the beloved. Violaine's inherent beauty has its origin in God, in whose image she has been fashioned.

Correlated with man's desire for beauty, is man's desire for possession, in particular the possession of the earth. This longing is the passion of Tête d'or as it is of Rodrigue and of Christophe Colombe. But with the woman, man has reached a limit, Prouhèze being for Rodrigue "l'unique frontière de ce coeur qui n'en tolère aucune". (4)

For man, possession of the earth may be achieved in the possession of the woman, who is his supreme link with the earth. This idea is found in the Cantique de la Rose where the perfume of the rose, frequently used with underlying sexual implications, is the perfume of the whole of creation.

Non le parfum de la rose! C'est celui de toute chose que Dieu a faite en son été!
.. La profonde délice à notre âme de toute chose que Dieu a faite! (5)

The possession of the earth is a consideration which we will
develop in a discussion of the poetic vocation.

The desire for the man to possess is matched by a counter-desire in the woman to be possessed. This is one of the key ideas in the Cantique du Rhone from La cantate à trois voix where the idea is violently enunciated. The same sentiment is expressed in Ysé's words to Mesa

Et qu'importe que tu me fasses mal
Pourvu que je sente
Que tu me serres et que je te sers? (6)

The last line is admirably balanced, and the subtlety of the homophones are apparent only from the written text.

But the man seeks not only beauty and possession, but completion. Claudel's theatre and poetry constantly expound the belief that certain couples have been eternally linked in the mind of God. Life becomes a constant search for the counterpart of one's incomplete personality. Both therefore possess the key to the soul of the other. This is the significance of Mesa's cry which comes at decisive moments of Le partage de midi, "Ysé, je suis Mesa." The tragedy of Claudel's theatre is that the beloved is already married, as with Mesa and Ysé, Rodrigue and Prouhèze, or in his poetry, Dante and Beatrice.

It is in the bond of marriage that the essential nature of man and wife are to be revealed, but Claudel indicates that the revelation which can come from the spiritual counterpart alone, can be given outside marriage. We have
seen that Pierre and Violaine are co-workers, in the spiritual reconstruction of France, a kind of spiritual marriage linking them together. Violaine brings Pierre forgiveness, the condition necessary for him to begin whole-heartedly on the work of St. Justitia. Pierre, however, also has a message for Violaine.

Pierre de Craon, (la regardant soudain et comme frappé d'une idée)- Est-ce tout ce que vous avez à me donner pour elle? un peu d'or retiré de votre doigt? (7)

The implication of these words is that Violaine is called to give her whole personality for a redemptive work.

This yearning for completion and its satisfaction outside marriage are set forth in a few words spoken by Beatrice to Dante. These lines are a good example of Claudel's remarkable gift of lucid expression in poetry of ideas which his prose, frequently diffuse, often fails to achieve.

Tu vois bien que nous nous servons d'une seule âme pour être deux.
... Ce que nous nous donnons l'un à l'autre, c'est Dieu sous des espèces différentes. Le voici refait d'un homme et d'une femme enfin cet être qui existait dans le Paradis! (8)

(ii) The Woman

Woman is nearly always portrayed in the writings of Claudel as having a greater spiritual awareness than man.
Hence at the terminal point of *Le soulier de satin* and of *L'annonce faite à Marie* for instance, the woman ends her spiritual pilgrimage when the man begins. In the case of Orian who precedes Pensée in death, Claudel is careful to point out that this man is by no means a saint. He justifies his belief in the greater spirituality of woman by showing that whilst Adam was formed from the earth, Eve was drawn from the already refined substance of the body of the man. This is a worth-while vindication of a symbolic interpretation because, biologically considered, the female structure being the far more basic of the two, the Genesis account is wrong.

Even as the Old Testament issues with Christ, the perfect Man, the experience of the poet ends in recognizing Mary as the perfect woman. In the first of the *Cinq grandes odes* the muses are nine in number, and are the pagan muses of a Roman sarcophagus. The description of Mnemosyne, however, bears comparison with Mary whom Luke reports to have been constantly meditating upon the significance of the events of Jesus' life

> Elle écoute, elle considère . . .
> Pure, simple, inviolable! elle se souvient . . .
> Elle est posée d'une manière qui est ineffable
> Sur le pouls même de l'Être.  

(9)

The nine muses of the first ode, become one muse in the fourth ode, the *Muse who is grace*. It is not, however,
until the **Processional pour saluer le siécle nouveau**, which completes the **Cinq grandes odes**, that the Marian significance is fully realized. The poem is completed on the day of the Assumption, and elucidates the experiences related in the Odes, even as the resurrection of Christ elucidated the meaning of His life and crucifixion.

The best poetical treatment of Mary in the Old Testament is exemplified in the person of Judith, who, captured by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar's army, demands to be led to the general Holofernes. "Menez-moi à votre général, car il est temps que la Sagesse face à face le regarde avec ses yeux bleus." (10)

But Mary is also to be found in the gentile world. Claudel pictures Ulysses hastening home to Penelope, hastening home to the wisdom of God. Amongst the Romans, the wife of Pontius Pilate is the spokeswoman for Mary, the Wisdom of God.

'Rien entre toi et ce juste,' conseille Madame Ponce Pilate qui est cette chose à moitié rêvante et dormant qu'on appelle la Sagesse des Nations . . . (11)

In the person of Mara, however, there would appear to be an exception to Claudel's belief that Mary is to be found in every woman. Her name is Hebrew for bitter. She is not ignorant of the bitterness of her nature:
"Violaine est morte.
Le beau fruit mûr, le bon fruit doré
S'est détaché de la branche, et, seule,
amère
au dehors, dure au dedans comme la pierre,
Nous reste la noix hivernale ...

The murder of her sister, in a sense re-enacts the murder of Abel by Cain, although in this case the two characters are reversed since Violaine, as the elder daughter in a family without a son, inherits the property of Combernon which she hands over to Mara. In the earlier version of this play, *La jeune fille Violaine*, Mara had requested an interview with Violaine not knowing what she would do. When Violaine appeared, Mara battered her to death with a stone, and hid the body in a ditch under some leaves.

By comparison with this unpremeditated and somewhat bungled murder, the murder of Violaine by Mara in *L'annonce faite à Marie* shows an increase in finesse. This time Violaine was buried by a fall of sand. Though the suggestion of foul play may have been present in the minds of those investigating the death, it could always be assumed that the death had been accidental, a plausible enough explanation in view of the blindness of the dead woman. In any case, no one would have bothered too much. Her presence was a curse upon the neighbourhood. "Sainte Vierge! qué dommage qu'a soit pas morte!"(13) The plan failed because Pierre de Craon happened to be at hand some time after the crime had been committed.
In the earlier version Mara flung herself upon Violaine, but in *L'annonce faite à Marie* she led her blind sister by the hand to destruction, an action as treacherous perhaps as the kiss of Judas. By this deed Mara showed herself the daughter of the devil, who in the words of Jesus was a murderer from the beginning.

The tidings brought to Mary were the tidings brought to Violaine. But as Mary brought forth Jesus, Violaine would bring forth Aubaine. Claudel, however, surely implies other tidings, incumbent upon Mara's conversion; the salutation of the angel to Mara, which could be expressed thus: "You shall no longer be called Mara, but Maria." Abram has become Abraham, Saul has become Paul. Mara, the bitter, Mara, treacherous murderer of her sister, is to be transformed into the likeness of the mother of Jesus. Such is her dignity as a child of God.

(iii) The Soul

Just as every man shows certain female traits in his physical anatomy, Claudel indicated that the soul showed a similar kind of spiritual hermaphroditism. This idea receives its simplest exposition in the parable of Animus and Anima. Animus is unflatteringly portrayed as a man of letters, who, after his honeymoon with Anima, reveals his true nature: "vaniteuse, pédantesque et tyrannique." (14)

...
Animus knew that he draws on her for sustenance despite his wretched treatment of her. Animus despised the talents of Anima until he heard her sing: "une étrange et merveilleuse chanson". (15) After this Animus could not rest until he had heard her song again. By ruse he persuaded her that she was alone.

Peu à peu Anima se rassure, elle regarde, elle écoute, elle respire, elle se croit seule, et sans bruit elle va ouvrir la porte à son amant divin. (16)

Claudel gave his own interpretation of this parable, saying that Anima represented the soul whilst Animus represented the soul's intelligence, whose outlook on life was utilitarian. The progression shown in this parable is from the divine lover, or God, to the soul and thence to the intelligence; that is, intellectual enlightenment stems from a spiritual awareness.

The soul is thus a pivot for the intelligence. The idea of woman as this centrality is frequent in drama, as in the person of Marthe of L'échange, Ysé of Le partage de midi and Violaine, the hidden focal point of L'annonce faite à Marie, although the simplicity of the Animus-Anima duality is not so apparent. The conception of the soul as a woman receives its simplest dramatic presentation in the person of La Princesse of Tête d'or. The play, however, is not a debate between Animus and Anima, because Claudel is still trying to
emerge from a certain Nietzschean complex. The princess is a simple character compared with Issé or Prouhèze, but she illustrates the thesis that salvation comes through the cultivation of spiritual faculties. Cébès failed because he trusted in Tête d'or rather than the princess. "Mais s'il m'eût aimée, il ne serait point mort." (17) That this play portrayed an exteriorization of conflicting elements in Claudel's mind seems clear from his refusal to let Jean-Louis Barrault produce it on the grounds that it would be an immodest spectacle.

The fourth ode, however, the ode which centres on the question of poetic vocation, sets forth quite clearly the debate between the soul and the intelligence. The poem is in the form of a dialogue between the poet and the muse who becomes Grace. The poet shows the same boorishness as Animus and a similar utilitarian approach to reality. He will keep records and draw up lists. He will extol the glories of a modern technical era with its locomotives and heat furnaces. The poet, however, is more astute than Animus for he knows his need is for God.

Seigneur, combien de temps encore? ... Les ténèbres sont mon habitation.
Ténèbres de l'intelligence; ténèbres du son! (18)
Ténèbres de la privation de Dieu!

He seeks God but fails in his quest because his intellectual attempt is without reference to his spiritual
faculties.

The poet's first experience of the muse is of an exhilarating force which is identified with the "soeur de la noire Pythie." (19) and is later revealed as Grace, though it is not until the Processional pour saluer le siècle nouveau that the muse is recognized as Mary. There are, however, hints scattered throughout the ode, which indicate that the debate is also taking place within the divided personality of the poet. Thus in the opening lines, his emotions are described from the point of view of a young girl at a ball, whilst the second strophe makes the statement, "O la femme qui est en moi!" (20) The levels at which the dialogue is pursued are between Claudel and Mary, as well as between the soul and the intelligence of the poet.

The opening words of the third strophe are climactic for the poet glimpses the true nature of his spiritual being.

- 0 part! ô réservée! ô inspiratrice!
  ô partie réservée de moi-même!
  ô partie antérieure de moi-même!
  ô idée de moi-même qui étais avant moi!  (21)

The ideas present in this vision are not only that the poet has seen the intention that God had in calling him into existence, an intention which it is his vocation to realize, but that the Virgin Mary in herself shows him the perfection which his soul is capable of attaining.
(iv) The Church, Supreme Lily

We have seen in an earlier section that the wisdom of God implanted in the heart of man a longing to find completion in the spouse. The symbol for the spouse is the rose, and although it is applied to woman, it may equally well symbolize the relationship between husband and wife. Claudel, however, believes that the wisdom of God has also infused into the heart of man the desire for communion with the mother. This urge may be associated with the desire for knowledge of the earth but there is also the desire for protection, which could be deduced from Claudel’s association of the womb with the house, an idea elaborated by Bachelard. The need for security is no less developed in woman, as is shown by Yse who married De Ciz mainly for security. Man’s desire is therefore essentially for wife and mother, relationships exemplified in the Virgin Mary, who is also the symbol of the church in the writings of Claudel.

Mary is sometimes spoken of as the rose, but it is an idea little developed in Claudel’s doctrine of the church, since Claudel follows St. Bernard who claimed that no one person was a Bride of Christ, rather than Origen who leaned to the more individual interpretation which has predominated in mystical literature. The Church is sometimes symbolized as a tree, in a manner analogous to Paul’s figure of the church as the body of Christ, but by far the most common
symbol of the church is the lily, "qui apporte le sens parfait et le centre suprême aux dispositions calculées d'un univers concentrique." (22) As with the rose, the lily is chiefly important for its shape, colour and perfume, the symbolic qualities which we shall now endeavour to elucidate.

The shape of the water lily, for it is the water lily which Claudel mostly considers, is that of the chalice, an important symbol in the Christian faith because it was the cup of communion between Jesus and the disciples at the last supper. Claudel indicates the reciprocal activity between man and God in drinking from the chalice. Thus man drinks the wine, the blood of Jesus, whilst God drinks the iniquity of mankind. The cup which the disciples drank at the last supper finds a parallel in the cup of bitterness which Jesus drank in the garden of Gethsemane.

The perfume of the lily is as the incense of humanity to God.

De cette coupe parfaite s'exhale une odeur qui est l'offrande, l'âme, l'esprit, la vapeur, le sacrifice de la création entière . . . " (23)

The perfume of the lily is received by God, however, not only as a vapour but as a liquid

. . . la goutte élaborée, présentée . . . aux lèvres d'un Souverain par toute la nature qui est son échanson . . . (24)

As with God, so with man, for the communion wine is
represented in terms of breathing and drinking. "Il nous permet de puiser à la même source, de reprendre à la même bouche une haleine liquide."(25) In the idea of breathing is the idea of the reception of the Holy Spirit, since it is believed that the love between two people is not the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit Himself, whose symbol is breath. In drinking, communion between the believer and Christ is achieved. Thus in two words, "haleine liquide", Claudel is able to fuse the twin idea of communion with the Holy Spirit and communion with Christ. In contrast to the perfume of the rose where the thorn symbolizes the suffering thought to be inherent in the inability to participate fully in the existence of the beloved, the drinking from the chalice is accompanied by pleasure, for although the thirst may be insatiable, there is pleasure in drinking.

The shape of the lily indicates the essential character of the soul, which is that of void. The measure of the awareness that the church has of its lack, as indeed of each soul, is the measure with which the soul may be filled by the presence of God. Hence the joy of the penitent at forgiveness, he of all men being most aware of his lack. The shape of the lily also has the dynamic aspect of growth, since growth in grace will be accompanied by an increasing capacity for God. The long stem of the water lily is like an umbilical cord, for the cup is seen as the "nombril de toute
There is connection between the flower and the earth, which Claudel sees as a maternal body, as there is between the church and God, who is considered equally as mother as well as father. The symbolism of the stem indicates a kind of placentary awareness between the church and God.

Claudel is apparently aware that the lily is an hermaphrodite flower by the fact that he attributes a male principle to the pollen.

Avec Marie et Joseph Il a marié le lys au lys ... tous ces lys ensemble qui ne font qu'une seule tige en une corolle suprême, où l'Esprit Saint ne cessera de S'approvisionner de pollen.

Thus the Holy Spirit which Claudel presents as male, and the church which he understands as female, are combined in the lily.

A more developed consideration is the colour of the flower, which is white, the colour of the stamens, which are gold. The whiteness is important as it represents light, a divine quality, but the gold is no less so because its appearance is like a condensation of the sun, Claudel's symbol for God. Gold therefore acquires the various attributes of God.

A noter que l'or est le symbole à lui tout seul des trois vertus théologales: La Foi par son titre, l'Espérance par sa valeur acquisitive, la Charité par son éclat diffusif. Et tout cela ensemble est d'or profond enseveli par Dieu au fond de toute conscience humaine, le miroir où Il trouve sa ressemblance et en qui sous le
This study on the lily shows something of the complexity of Claudel's art, where the same symbol is applied to the soul, to Mary, and to the church. The symbol, however, is ingeniously used, for the lily includes the three members of the triune God; the Father by a "placental" awareness, the Son by the idea of the chalice, and the Holy Spirit by the pollen and perfume. From the point of view of man, the lily represents the potentiality of growth, the essential "femaleness" of the soul, and man's spiritual goal—transformation into a body of light and gold, qualities which have their origin in God.
CHAPTER V

MARY AND THE FATHER

In terms of human relationships God is known far more frequently in scripture as Father, although the idea of the motherhood of God is also to be found. Claudel's interest in woman, together with his constant sense of balance, is at the heart of his development of the doctrine of the maternity of God, a doctrine which on the whole has been neglected by theologians. The dual nature of God, "ce Père et cette Mère que Je suis"(1) is elaborated chiefly in the exegetical works, occasionally in startlingly bold anthropomorphic terms. It is Claudel's belief that the maternity of God is exemplified in the person and activity of Mary.

... comme toute paternité est en Dieu, toute maternité est en Marie, ou du moins ... elle a été choisie pour dépositaire de cette maternité qu'il y a en Lui ... (2)

Mary is seen as mother in the realm of natural creation, where the earth is constantly personified as a mother, and as "la représentante par excellence de ce pouvoir d'enfanter qui est celui de toute créature humaine"(3) If we apply this idea to Simon,(4) whose emotional attachment to the desert wanderers is that of a father, it could be implied that his relationship to them is also one of spiritual
Cladadel represents Mary in constant childbirth in the figure of the sun, (his symbol for God), evaporating water from the sea. The comparison of the birth pangs with the crucifixion underlines the idea of her redemptive suffering.

. . . la mer, crucifiée par un milliard de bras sur ses deux continents,
A plein ventre ressentant la traction rude du ciel circulaire avec le soleil immobile comme la mèche allumée sous la ventouse . . . (5)

Mary is in fact bringing forth the sons and daughters of God after a period of gestation.

. . . quelqu'un avec nous par rapport à cette semence du Christ en nous déposée qui ne cesse pas d'engendrer et de nourrir. (6)

Et de même qu'au fond de sa profondeur elle a façonné le Christ, c'est elle qui façonne le chrétien à l'image de Celui qu'elle aime, jusqu'à ce que le moment soit arrivé pour lui de sortir. (7)

With the emergence of the child from the womb, this passage hints at a basis for Claudel's symbolism of the open door, representing a new beginning.

Man's need for God is expressed in Claudel's works as a need to be re-integrated with the mother. In the following lines it may be noted that the ideas of mother and sea are juxtaposed, the second word being intended to include
the meaning of the first.

La matièrie première! C'est la mère, je dis, qu'il me faut! Possédons la mer éternelle et salée, la grande rose grise! Je lève un bras vers le paradis! je m'avance vers la mer aux entrailles de raisin! (8)

The last line may be interpreted as a desire for re-entry into the womb, thereby achieving an intimate knowledge of the mother. A Jewish saying has it that in the body of the mother, man knows the universe which, upon birth, he forgets. Be that as it may, the following passage clearly indicates that there is knowledge of God through the establishment of a lacteal relationship.

Serait-il erroné d'appeler La Mère ce suc, cette saveur secrète des choses, ce goût de Cause, ce frisson d'authenticité, ce lait qui instruit de la Source? (9)

Every mother shares in the experience of Mary, the representative of the motherhood of God. By association with Mary, every mother may deepen her insight into the divine nature by considering God as the supreme Mother. Claudel also hints at the motherhood of every human creature, an idea which he develops with respect to Christ and the poetic vocation, but which he does not otherwise elaborate. The "mother", however, is also invited to an awareness of the motherhood of God through a profound attachment to the church, which Claudel envisages more as the mother of all men than as the spouse of Christ.
CHAPTER VI

MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

(i) Water, fire and light

In Claudel's writings, Mary is seen not only as the soul perfect in grace, the exemplar to which every Christian must conform, but Mary is understood to be active in the sanctification of the believer. This work she shares with the Holy Spirit, the essential difference in their work being expressed respectively by the symbols of water and fire. These two symbols are reconciled in the concept of light. Even as a chief activity of the Holy Spirit is symbolised by breathing, the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost being in fact the Holy Breath, one of the chief activities of Mary is in inspiration, or "in-breathing" an awareness of divine truth into the mind of the believer, in particular into the consciousness of the poet. In the Claudelian symbolism, the ideas of light and of breath may be combined in the white dove, a symbol in which both God and man coexist.

At the heart of the interest in water, fire and light lies the belief that the soul is to be understood in terms of these three basic elements. These ideas are indicated in the Cinq grandes odes with respect to the Ysé incident. In the first ode the idea of fire is implicit in the lines

Ne comprends-tu point mon ennui, et que mon désir est de toi-même? ce fruit à dévorer entre nous deux, ce grand feu à faire de nos deux âmes! (1)
Other writings indicate that the origin of the fire is in the soul itself. In the second ode, however, the reference to the soul in terms of water and light is explicit.

J'ai voulu l'âme, la savoir, cette eau qui ne connaît point la mort!
J'ai tenu entre mes bras l'astre humain!  

In each case, the poet is said to desire the elements of fire, water and light, a desire good in itself since, as Claudel indicates, it can find satisfaction in God, but reprehensible in this case because the fire, water and light of another soul are demanded outside a legal marital relationship. Just as the soul is spoken of as composed of these three substances and as desiring them, the Holy Spirit's interrogation upon the soul is also in terms of fire, water and light. It is possible, however, to reduce these three concepts to water and fire by considering light as a derivative of fire. Thus Claudel speaks of God's presence in man in the following terms.

Il (Dieu) est au fond de nous comme une source, . . . une source d'eau vivante, dit Saint Jean, une source de feu, jaillissant jusque dans la vie éternelle.  

The idea of water is associated particularly with the Virgin Mary, whilst the idea of fire with the Holy Spirit. We turn now to discussion of both.

A common name for Mary is Sagesse or Sapientia - wisdom. The root idea of Sapientia, as Claudel points out, is "sapere," that is to say the action of tasting. The
concept of taste is important for Claudel, as it is a source of knowledge, supremely so in partaking of the bread and wine of the Mass. Taste, however, is possible only through the medium of water, because only dissolved substances can be tasted. Knowledge of God, therefore, is mediated particularly through Mary who is associated closely with water. Water is known as a vehicle for grace, but it is also spoken of as a symbol for grace itself.

L'eau, c'est la Grâce du ciel ... (qui) pénètre partout à cause de sa pureté.

Claudel thinks of Mary in terms of fresh water, but her association with the sea is more frequent in his writings. The coupling of Mary with the sea is quite clear in the following quotation where Claudel substitutes Maria for classical Latin "mare" which is in fact the root derivation of "la mer".

La Genèse nous apprend qu'au Troisième Jour, Dieu sépara l'Aride des Eaux et qu'il appela la première Terre et Mer (Maria) la congrégation des autres.

The sea is a favourite symbol of Claudel's, representing grace, freedom and the inexhaustible; approximately half of Le soulier de satin takes place on the sea. The sea voyage becomes a kind of parable of the Christian life since a vessel is the symbol of the church and the stars the symbol for the saints. Thus the Christian is on a pilgrimage to a distant land, entrusted to the church,
which buoyed up by grace, plots its course by the light of
the sun (God) or by the light of the stars (the witness of
the saints). It is significant that for Toussaint Turelure,
the man whose actions disturbed whatever harmony there was
about him, the struggle of his life is described by him as
a constant attempt to avoid drowning.

Ce n'est pas moi qui me suis mis à
l'eau, c'est la mer qui m'a pris et
qui ne m'a plus quitté. (6)

The idea of the blue liquidity of the sea is consistent-
ly employed by Claudel to indicate spiritual vision. Thus,
in l'étage trilogy the eyes of Sygne and Lumir are blue,
whilst the eyes of Sichel, the woman whose cunning engin-
eered the plot that resulted in Toussaint's death, and the
eyes of Lady V, the leading figure in the Italian uprising
that stripped the Pope of his temporal powers, are black in
accordance with their spiritual incomprehension. The eyes
of Pensée, however, are both black and blue. They might
well be black for she is a Jew and the curse of her grand-
father's virtual murder is upon her head as an inheritance
from her parents, for whom "Il y a assez de malheur et de
pêché en nous pour suffire à faire de l'amour". (7) Pensée
is therefore in balance between the powers of darkness and
the spirituality of the Virgin Mary.

By contrast with the action of water which is slow,
gentle and penetrating, the action of fire is violent, though
no less penetrating. Claudel's study on Paul is interesting for Paul's experience of the Holy Spirit, since the doctrine of the Holy Spirit derives largely from the Pauline writings. The few lines of the poem are intense with violence: the flame, the lightning flash, the goad, the sword and the sudden cry.

Mais Paul... Vivant ne refuse point la societe de Votre gloire Et d'etre cet homme-là dont s'emerveille le prophete en sa parabole, Disant: Qui de vous habitera avec les ardeurs intolérables?

Both water and fire imply the idea of destruction. For a thing to be tasted, there must be a certain commixture of the water molecules with the substance being tasted. The interpenetration of the two, however, is a gentle action compared with fire, which suddenly destroys. Claudel always implies that the raison d'etre of a life is achieved by means of a certain self-destruction. The physical basis of this idea may be grasped by considering the soul to be incense. The incense finds its raison d'etre in destruction, an idea lucidly expressed in the line "Il se consomme en se consumant".

The gravitational aspects of fire and water do not escape Claudel, who uses both to indicate two ways of return to God. With respect to Water the words of Augustine, "Amor meus, pondus meum"—my love, my weight, can be used
to indicate the gravitational attraction between the water
of the soul and the water of the sea.

Loin de tout regard humain la mer est
occupée à faire le siège d'une goutte
d'eau. (10)

As the blood of the body returns to the heart, so all the
water in creation returns to the sea. Claudel uses the
idea of Mary as the heart of the church in the metaphorical
sense of the seat of affection, rather than in its literal
sense as a motive force. Thus man is continually being
invited to return to God by means of his love for the
Virgin Mary.

Fire on the other hand is unaffected by gravitational
considerations.

Que parles-tu de fondation? la pierre
seule n'est pas une fondation, la flamme
aussi est une fondation . . . (11)

The flame has, as it were, a foundation in the sky. Man
is thus invited to return to God by aligning that aspect of
his nature, symbolised by fire, with the Holy Spirit.

We have compared water with fire. Claudel, however,
constantly compares water with light, describing water in
the same terms as light. Both indeed are like fluid ele-
ments which penetrate, impregnate and reunite. Violaine's
experience is of fire, but it is also of light, the light
which brings her self-illumination. Violaine's close
association with the Holy Spirit would suggest that the
light had its origin in the Holy Spirit. At any rate, the association of the Holy Spirit with light is to be found in the New Testament. The nature of Mary is similarly in terms of light.

Moi, moi, qui suis comme une exhalation de la vertu de Dieu... la candeur même de la lumière éternelle ...

(12)

Her offer to the poet in the fourth ode is one of "eau brillante et de miel ardent". (13) Claudel elsewhere defines honey as liquid light. For him it is significant that the complex of ideas associated with light is of the feminine gender.

Notre langue française veut que soit du genre féminin tout ce qui appartient à cette lumière 'qui éclaire', nous dit l'Evangile, 'tout homme venant au monde': que l'on appelle lumière, Sagesse, Étoile, Providence." (14)

Mary dispenses light to the souls of men, a function she shares with the Holy Spirit as well as with Christ.

In a remarkable passage in Le Soulier de satin, Dona Sept-Épées, swimming in the sea, describes her experience in the following terms:

C'est délicieux de tremper dans cette espèce de lumière liquide qui fait de nous des êtres divins et suspendus, des corps glorieux. (15)

The analogy between the water and the light is that the body suspended in the water is like a planet bathed in the light of the sun.
Light is a kindly medium but for Lumir, unenlightened by faith, light outlines the misery and vanity of the human situation. For her, this illumination is more frightenng than death because its pitiless analysis does not offer any solution to the problems it raises.

The experience of light is the highest that the soul is capable of attaining. Paul's experience may be of fire, but for the saintly John sitting under a pine tree in the quiet of the evening, light is his chief experience, light which streams from his head and from his face. It was John's privilege to be the beloved disciple of Jesus, and the adopted son of Mary, facts which Claudel points out in his poem, St. Jean L'Evangéliste. Of all men, John approached closest the source of divine light. Even upon earth, John is close to attaining his eternal destiny, that of a star.

A criterion which Claudel employs for the divine accessibility is its availability to sensual perception. Light is a quality manifestly divine in that it may be apprehended by all the senses.

Mais moi, j'absorbe la lumière par les yeux, et par les oreilles, par la bouche et par le nez, et par les pores de la peau.  

It is to the experience of light, which Claudel's work points, a feature of his eschatology, but which upon earth is the guerdon of the favoured few.
(ii) **Inspiration**

In the preceding section it was seen that water and fire were closely linked, as were water and light. Claudel, however, also couples water and breath, thereby associating the Virgin Mary with the Holy Spirit in the work of inspiration. This becomes evident if we compare the second Grande Ode with the fourth Grande Ode, where there is an intended balance between the two. In the second Ode the Spirit comes suddenly by day to the poet, whilst in the fourth, the muse who becomes Grace, in fact the Virgin Mary, comes by night. The Spirit comes as breath, the muse as the sea. Both are at full strength, the effect of the Spirit being compared to a wind storm, whilst the inspiration of the muse is like the sea at the high-tide of the full moon. The invasion of the Spirit is indicated by the word "soudain" being repeated seven times at the beginning of the second ode, whilst the gift of the muse is rejected by the words "paroles" being scornfully repeated seven times at the beginning of the second strophe of the fourth ode. Both the Spirit and the muse are active in the mind of the poet, the gift of inspiration being perfect, even as the gift of the muse which is expressed in words is perfect, since the number seven denotes perfection.

Mary and the Holy Spirit are both active in the inspiration of poetry as they were in the inspiration of
the Scriptures. Thus Claudel speaks of Mary as co-author with the Holy Spirit

... cette oeuvre magnifique de l'Esprit-Saint, de la Sagesse de Dieu.

Proper understanding of any literary work requires a certain identification of the reader with the author. In the case of the Scriptures the reader must not only occupy the place of the writer but must be accessible to the same spirit which inspired him to write. For Claudel, the inspiration of the Scriptures is shared by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, so that an understanding of the working and mind of the Holy Spirit may be mediated through the intermediary of Mary. It was therefore to Mary that Claudel turned for help in interpreting the book of Isaiah,

Mon guide pendant tout ce long et terrible travail a été la Sainte Vierge qui a inspiré le prophète lui-même.

The new beginning, sometimes symbolized by the opening of a door, may be accompanied by an apprehension of breath. When Violaine opened the doors of the Combernon barn to let Pierre pass on his way, they paused before the beauty of the early morning. Pierre speaks first. His words are not without bitterness for he returns lonely to his work, aware that his body is disintegrating. In later years, however, as he looked back upon this early morning
experience, he would realize that the Holy Spirit had been at work upon him. His awareness is that of breath mingled with the perfume of the rose.

Ce qui était caché redevient visible avec Lui et Je sens sur mon visage un souffle d'une fraîcheur de rose.

(20)

By contrast, Violaine's awareness of a new day, of a new era in her life, comes at the dawn of Christmas day with the resurrection of Aubaine.

Je sens sur ma face le souffle du jour qui naît.

(21)

Claudel obviously intends the experience of Pierre and of Violaine to be contrasted, balance being a chief characteristic of his art. It is not accidental that Pierre is aware of the freshness of the rose, whilst Violaine shows no such awareness. His experience of the Holy Spirit in this instance has feminine connotations, for the rose and its perfume are the chief symbol for woman in the writings of Claudel. His experience would be interpreted to convey an awareness of both the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

Violaine's experience of the Holy Spirit is one of fire, as we have indicated in the study on vocation, but it is also one of breath. Thus her name Violaine is capable of sustaining the interpretation "Vie haleine", Claudel being equally sensitive to homophones as he is to root
derivations. The juxtaposition of life and spirit would suggest life-spirit, her vocation being a life lived in close communion with the Holy Spirit.

(iii) The Dove

In the concepts of light and of inspiration, Mary and the Holy Spirit are closely associated. Both concepts may be reconciled in the bird, which Claudel uses as a symbol for the Holy Spirit and as a symbol for the saint. The chief interest in the symbolism of the bird is in wings, breathing and reaction to light. We shall examine each in turn.

Claudel employs the symbolism of the wings to indicate ascension to God. The concept of the omnipresence of God need not destroy the merit of this idea. Ascension predominates in the symbolism of flying, but in the first Ode the soul is described as a swallow under the impulse to make the autumn migration. The religious symbolism is not developed but suggested, a feature of Claudel's art being to show progression to a certain goal, in the light of which previous hints suddenly become meaningful. Like the bird, the soul is waiting for the summons of God. In his later exegetical writings Claudel combined the idea of wings and lungs into the one concept, thereby indicating that by in-breathing the Holy Spirit we "ascend" to God.

A slight technical digression may elucidate the
symbolism of breathing. The oxygen requirements of the bird are high because of the great energy required in flying. Consequently, a complex system of aeration has been evolved with the lungs continuing into cervical, thoracic and abdominal air-sacs which, in turn, are in contact with the pneumatic cavities of the bones. Thus the whole body of the bird is in intimate contact with air, even to the inner recesses of the bones themselves. In terms of a religious symbolism, the whole body is totally inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the song of the bird one of inspired praise.

The Holy Spirit speaks through the cry of the cock which is like a trumpet rousing men to the last judgement.

The special sensitivity of the bird to light is not neglected by Claudel, who uses this feature to signify an awareness of the divine presence. It is very early morning. "On ne voit rien encore, mais les oiseaux de tous
côtés se sont mis à chanter dans le brouillard."(24)

Those with the gift of spiritual awareness may be described in terms of the bird. John, for instance, is an eagle but he is being transformed into a seraph. A partridge nestles in his lap, for the partridge always returns to its true parent. Thus the whole of creation has returned to the apostle of love in the representative of this humble bird. Conversely, Jacques Hury is described as a wingless man. He is a man in whose life the Holy Spirit is lacking.

All birds show an apprehension of light, but in the dove, light itself is indicated by the colour of the bird. In the dove, light and breath, the human and the divine, find a common meeting place. This is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, "la Colombe Eternelle"(25), as it is of Mary, "Veni Columba mea" being a constant refrain in Claudel's exegetical writings. It is the symbol of high spiritual awareness. Thus Christopher Columbus defines his second name in the following terms: "... tout ce qui est lumière, tout ce qui est esprit et tout ce qui a des ailes!"(26)

In the drama it is applied collectively to the religious recluses at Combernon, "colombes gémissantes", and individually to Dona Musique and to Violine. Musique bears on her shoulder the imprint of a dove, but in the words of Prouhèze, Musique is herself the dove. The description is
fitting: ardent in the pursuit of her husband, gentle lover, features characteristic of the dove. In Violaine's case the title "dove" is not used by Jacques, her fiancé, whose instinctive reaction to her in the garden scene is initially one of reverence and fear, but by Mara who ironically suggests that God Himself is Violaine's lover. "Il est avec toi, petite colombe, et Il t'aime?" (27)

We have seen that Mary is active as water, whilst the Holy Spirit is active as fire. Both elements may be reconciled in the concept of light. Further, Mary and the Holy Spirit are active in inspiring the hearts of men as they are in the dispensation of light. Finally, inspiration and light coincide in the symbol of the dove. For Claudel, both Mary and the Holy Spirit share this symbol. It is then as a dove that the Holy Spirit is symbolised; it is therefore by the soul itself becoming a dove, that the Holy Spirit may be known.
CHAPTER VII

MARY AND JESUS

(i) The Moon and Sun

Our study on Mary and the Father showed that the motherhood of God is exemplified exclusively by Mary, whereas the chapter on Mary and the Holy Spirit indicated that their activity which was contemporary in certain aspects, coincided in others. With respect to Jesus, however, Mary is seen essentially as the mirror image and mother of her son, aspects of her work which we now discuss in turn.

Much of the activity of the Church Fathers has been expended in giving a Christological interpretation to events of the Old Testament. Claudel shows the same pre-occupation, but he widens the scope of his inquiry to develop a Marian typology. As Christ is present in the person of Joshua, Mary is present in the person of Mary, sister of Moses.

Mary, "la servante", was the perfect woman just as Jesus, "le serviteur par excellence" was the perfect man. Further she is herself "une Bible vivante, elle-même est le support du Verbe, elle-même est la tige de ce soleil qui éclaire le monde dans ce rayonnement des paroles qui ne passent pas". (1) If Jesus is head of the Church, Mary is the heart of the Church. Jesus is the perfect word, as
Mary, the rose, is the perfect word. Both exist to the other in the closest possible human relationship.

Le rapport entre elle et cet enfant lumineux qu'elle tient sur son bras ... qui est à la fois son fils, son frère, son époux, son père ... (2)

The chief work of Christ, according to Claudel, was the atonement. Christ's suffering on the cross was matched by the suffering of Mary, whose heart was pierced by the sword promised by Simeon. "On ne conçoit plus Marie sans le glaive que Jésus-Christ sur la croix." (3) The bread of the eucharist finds a parallel in the rosary bead. The importance of the rosary is indicated by a strategic scene in Le soulier de satin which is probably intended by Claudel to be dramatically central in this work. In the seventh scene of the third day Camille returns a lost rosary bead to Prouhéze. Her joy in recovering the bead is expressed in the opening words of the eighth scene.

J'ai retrouvé le grain perdu ... Ce petit caillou transparent ... Cette larme thésaurisée ... L'eau retrouvée ... La semaine du jour futur. (4)

To our knowledge the word "caillou" is used exclusively by Claudel for the eucharistic bread. The conception of bread as seed is also applied to the bread of the eucharist, which in L'annonce faite à Marie is referred to as "La semence eucharistique." Tears are evoked in response to joy or to sorrow. It seems reasonable to suppose that both meanings
are intended. The water enforces the idea of need, water being the basic requirement of life. Thus the bead, a tear of joy and sorrow, becomes by analogy with the eucharist, the food and drink of humanity, and at the same time, by virtue of its power as a seed, the means of self-propagation of the church.

In all these instances Mary reflects the character and activity of Jesus. This idea is symbolized in the phrase, "Pour adorer le soleil Dieu a mis la Lune à notre disposition". The sun symbolizes God, but the Christological significance is clear from the commentary upon the Song of Solomon,

\[ le \ Soleil \ et \ la \ Lune, \ ces \ deux \ grands \ luminaires \ en \ qui \ l'on \ ne \ saurait \ refuser \ à \ un \ poète \ le \ droit \ de \ voir \ des \ images \ de \ Jésus \ et \ de \ Marie. \]

The moon will reflect the light of the sun as Mary reflects the glory of God. It will be at the point of midnight when the moon will be at its supremacy. Thus midnight is the terminal point of Le partage de midi, the idea intended being that the grace and mercy of God will then be most apparent to the two penitents pausing upon the threshold of eternity.

(ii) The Mother and Child

The violence of Claudel's theatre derives largely from the unhappiness between husband and wife. Both
Coeuvre of *La ville* and Louis Laine of *L'échange* leave their wives, the latter lured away by the lascivious Léchy Elbernon. *L'échange* also presents Thomas Pollock Nageoire who thinks that a woman can be bought for money. Nearly every marriage is one-sided: Jacques and Mara, Prouhèze with Pélage and Camille, Louis and Sichel, Sygne de Coufontaine and Toussaint Turelure. The joys of parenthood, a theme responsible for some of Claudel's finest writing, compensate for this violence.

The nativity scene comes as a focal point in Claudel's two chief dramas, *Le soulier de satin* and *L'annonce faite à Marie*, and in his chief poetical work, the *Cinq grandes odes*. In the first play, Prouhèze's joy at the recovery of the rosary bead is associated with a vision of Bethlehem. She too is invited to play her part in Christ's birth into the heart of the unconverted nations. In the second play, Aubaine is resurrected very early in the morning on Christmas day. The third ode has as its framework the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise for the birth of her son. Mary, the sister of Moses and Joshua, Old Testament figures whom Claudel specially selected as the forerunners of Mary and of Jesus, are woven into the structure of the ode which celebrates the birth of Claudel's daughter. Along with the witness of Simeon and of Zechariah, Claudel voices his praise for his conversion and pilgrimage from
Egypt to the promised land. The theme of the mother and Christ-child recurs as a constant theme of praise in the drama, poetry and exegetical writings.

On peut résister à la Vérité, mais on ne résiste pas à la Beauté qui tient l'Innocence entre ses bras. (7)

Claudel's richest symbolic figure, Violaine of *L'annonce faite à Marie*, represents a fusion of both Christ and the Virgin Mary. Like Jesus, Violaine is summoned to assume the sin of a divided Christendom and to become the humblest of all (Violaine) for the redemption of her people. The redemptive aspect of her work will be elaborated in the following chapter.

Violaine, however, a virgin mother, is also to bring forth Aubaine who will be like a saviour to France at the turn of the middle ages, as Christ's chief task was as Saviour of mankind.

In Jacques' salutation of Violaine amid the blossoms of the Combernon orchard beneath a blazing noon-day sun Claudel envisages "la Vierge triomphante et rayonnante que nous sommes accoutumées à saluer . . . à travers les cierges et les fleurs". (8) As with Mary, in her flight to Elizabeth's home, Violaine's salutation resulted in her hurried visit to a lepers' retreat. To the prerogatives of this woman, Jacques Rury bore instinctive testimony when he hailed her variously as "mon âme", "ma reine" and "mon
beau lys”.

For Claudel, the dictum "to Christ through Mary" had a special force, since he believed that intimate knowledge of the Son was to be gained by intimate communion with the mother.

Elle épouse notre coeur avec le sien, et le coeur en vivant le nôtre lui apprend tout ce qu'il y a à faire, en sorte que nous puissions nous écrire: 'Je ne vis plus, c'est le Christ qui vit en moi.'

Thus the faithful reflection of Christ's life, character and work, Mary, glorious in her maternity, stands as mediatrix between man and God.
Whereas our emphasis in Part 1 was upon man's response to God, in this section we wish to show God's response to man in the person of Jesus Christ, and to indicate the implications of the life of Christ in the patterns of Claudel's drama. In the last chapter we intend to show how man's response to God, and God's response to man, are exemplified in the activity of both Pope and poet.

Claudel's constant preoccupation with complementary terms leads him to see in the Incarnation the reconciliation of factors which one would normally consider irreconcilable. We shall demonstrate how this consideration applies with the basic pairs, male and female, fire and water, and using the insight gained from Claudel's understanding of the Incarnation we will show that the 

*Ostage* trilogy, *Le soulier de satin*, *L'annonce faite à Marie* and the third ode establish an increasing approximation to the Incarnation.

The mutual yearning of man and wife for each other indicates that neither male nor female are complete in themselves. This would appear to be the reasoning behind the
following curious statement, although Claudel fully recognizes the perfect manhood of Jesus.

Au neutre: . . . "quod nascetur ex te sanctum " (1)

Claudel's veneration for Latin, with which he was well acquainted, springs from his belief that Latin, language of Rome, replaces Hebrew, language of Jerusalem. The Greek text which provides the basis for such an interpretation also preserves the neuter construction. Claudel implies that in Christ, manhood and womanhood are at once combined and transcended.

O ami, je ne suis point un homme ni une femme, je suis l'amour qui est au-dessus de toute parole! (2)

The significance of this interpretation is that every woman should be able to align herself with the "femininity" of Christ.

We have seen that Claudel constantly links water and fire. These elements are combined in light, which is a symbol for grace. Grace is applied to Mary, but it is also applied to Jesus. Thus in the poem Aux lépreux de l'Hôpital Saint-Louis, there is a dialogue between the leper and the Grace of God, identified as Christ.

Comment viens-tu, Grâce de Dieu?
Elle dit: Avec le feu!
Elle dit: Avec de l'eau fraîche!
Un bouquet de roses fraîches! (3)

Thus are combined water, which is consistently used with
female connotations, and fire, which is understood as a male principle, whilst the freshness of the rose is associated with the soul of woman. As a further confirmation of this idea, it is worth noting that Sygne de Coufontaine gathered together the pieces of the bronze image of Christ, "comme on raconte d'Isis et d'Osiris dans Plutarque". (4) Isis, an Egyptian nature-goddess was also goddess of the moon, whilst Osiris, her husband, is identified with the sun. Sygne's phrase hints that in Christ both Isis and Osiris are combined.

We noted in the first chapter that growth in grace was accompanied by the ability to integrate temporal and intemporal. It may now be seen that the seeming contradiction between the two orders is reconciled in Christ.

.. la réunion en un seul Jésus de Dieu et de l'homme, de l'Être et du Néant, du Fini et de l'Infini, de l'Éternel et du Temps, de l'absolu et du relatif, du Créateur et de la créature, de la sainteté et du péché, de la vie et de la mort . . . (5)

If we apply now the concept that the incarnation combines opposing forces, it becomes obvious that the sequence of events in the Otage trilogy is concluded in the child of Pensée. The inheritance is traced mainly through the mother, Pensée de Homodarmes, whose ancestors all have some contribution to make to the inheritance of her child. Her parents are Sichel, the daughter of the Jew Ali Habenichts, and Louis Turelure. Louis is the son of the aristocratic
Sygne de Coufontaine, and Toussaint Turelure, one of the proletariat who has seized power at the time of the French revolution. Further reference is made to the parents of both Sygne and Toussaint. The child's father, Orian de Homodarmes, is an Italian. The political background to *Le père humilié* concerns the withdrawal of the temporal power of the Vatican. Louis, the French ambassador to Rome, is in collusion with the enemies of the Pope.

The title of the third play of the trilogy refers to the Pope's humiliation. His distress springs mainly from the loss of temporal power and the failure of his beloved nephew, Orian de Homodarmes, to become the papal envoy to the world. Instead, Orian's passion for Pensée cheated the church of its lawful rights. The unborn child, however, will be legitimized by Pensée's marriage with Orso de Homodarmes. Orian's fault will therefore be redeemed. The forced marriage of Toussaint Turelure and the illegal marriage of Pensée and Orian serve in the birth of the child who will combine Jew and Christian, French and Italian, proletariat and aristocracy, royalist and republican, the French secular powers and the Vatican. In this way, sin serves in the plan of redemption, for as the first child of David and Bath-sheba perished, their son Solomon became one of the ancestors of Christ. Thus, in a sense, the fault of Mesa and of Ysé, punished by the death of their child, is
used for redemptive purpose in the child of Orian and Penseée. In this child all the opposing forces find a common meeting ground, so that the child will be as a saviour in a divided France.

The pattern of the maternal inheritance in *Le Sixtage* trilogy is traced through four generations. By contrast, *Le soulier de satin* concerns only two generations, but the inheritance of the child of Dona Sept-Epées and Don Juan of Austria is more comprehensive as the four grandparents are all prominent in this epic work. The maternal grandparents, Camille and Prouhèze, are Spanish and French respectively, whilst the paternal grandparents, Musique and the Vice-roy of Naples, are Spanish and Italian. An aside made by Don Balthazar hints that Musique may be associated with Flanders. Thus the child will receive the heritage of the Latin-speaking Catholic countries.

The inheritance, however, is more complex than the physical factors would suppose, for Dona Sept-Epées is also the spiritual daughter of Rodrigue. Rodrigue's mission was to America, whilst Prouhèze was in love with Africa, a country of fire and passion like the very character of the woman herself. The King of Naples represents the Latin-speaking countries. The description of Musique, with her blond hair, would suggest that she is temperamentally best suited to Teutonic Europe. Thus the old world is reunited on the father's side, whilst the new world of America and Africa
becomes the inheritance of the child through the mother. The child will therefore be at the same point, metaphorically speaking, as Rodrigue's brother was at the very beginning of the play.

*Fixons, je vous prie, mes frères, les yeux sur ce point de l'Océan Atlantique qui est à quelques degrés au-dessous de la Ligne à égale distance de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Continent.*

Most important of all will be a third inheritance which the child will receive from its grandmothers. Prouhèze is a woman of sorrows, Musique a woman of joy. It is natural that Claudel should have chosen women as the depositories of this legacy, for the woman, believed to be the more spiritual creature, should know joy and sorrow more intimately than the man. Both suffering and joy are necessary in the spiritual pilgrimage, since each is a stimulus for the growth of certain aspects of the personality. Thus the child will participate in the divine nature, for it is in the nature of Christ to know both suffering and joy perfectly.

An appreciation of the names of *L'annonce faite à Marie* alone indicates that the play will produce its Christ child. The name, Anne, was that of the grandmother of Jesus, and it is quoted in this context in the poem *Saint Jacques-le-mineur*. It is therefore possible to see in Anne Vercors a grandparent of Christ. In the play it is the husband, this time rather than the wife, who bears the name since it is he who
is known to have the greater power of spiritual perception.

Although Mara was the physical mother of Aubaine, the child rejected her upon its resurrection. "L'enfant ouvre ses yeux, regarde sa mère et se met à pleurer." Mara's new life begins with the forgiveness extended to her by Jacques and Anne. It is at this point that she realizes that her old nature is dead, a fact recognized by the child. "L'enfant rit vaguement et regarde de tous côtés en poussant de petits cris de joie." If Mara is Maria then Jacques must be Joseph. Again this is consistent with Claudel's treatment of Jacques. Claudel represented the marriage of Joseph and Mary as the union of Justice and Love. Jacques' natural predisposition to cherish justice will be developed within the bonds of marriage. His growth in grace will liken him to both Joseph and his patron, Saint James. It is significant that Claudel attributes the roles of justice and love respectively, to the brothers James and John.

The birth of Christ was preceded by that of John the Baptist. In this play the role of John the Baptist is attributed to Violaine whose mother, Elisabeth, bore the same name as the wife of Zachariah. Anne Vercors therefore becomes Zachariah. His failure to trust in the providence of God to restore Christendom is matched by Zachariah's incredulity that his wife would bear a son. The birth of Violaine, like that of John the Baptist, came late in the married life of the parents. Furthermore, the words used by
John the Baptist to explain his mission are quoted by the apprentice, prior to the resurrection of Aubaine.\(^9\)

In the nativity of Aubaine, the star is not lacking.

*Et là-haut, surmontant le sombre cimier de Monsan-Vierge, resplendissante, arrivant de l'Arabie, L'étoile du matin sur la France comme un héraut qui s'élève dans la solitude.* \(^10\)

The morning star gives a clue to the name of the child, for "alba" is a Latin adjective used substantively to mean dawn. The name has the sense "dawn-child". A possible Christological significance of the name becomes clear by its association with the name of Christ, "the day-spring from on high".

Aubaine, however, has the further meaning, "escheat". Aubaine is the last of the Combernon line, since Mara was unable to bear further children. With the resurrection of the child, the fief, the heritage of Combernon in the person of Aubaine, is returned to the feudal lord, God. Hence in Aubaine the Christ-child is incarnated, and through Aubaine the inheritance of men is restored to God.

This play also witnesses to the incarnation of Christ in Violaine. A slight theological digression is necessary to elucidate this point. The substitutionary atonement is generally understood in terms of the justice and mercy of God. The justice of God demands death for sin, but the love of God provides Jesus Christ who died as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of men. Christ became the
sin of humanity and was destroyed by the cross. Violaine, in assuming Pierre's leprosy by means of a kiss, was becoming the sin of humanity.

Le lèpre, c'est le péché même. (11)

The point of time at which she conceived the sin of the world was early morning in early spring. These times are important, for Claudel associates both with the incarnation.

If now we turn to the third ode, it will be seen that Claudel celebrates the birth of Christ in the birth of his infant daughter.

Venez, fidèles, et adorons cet enfant nouveau-né. (12)

The poet, bearing the child in his arms, enters the promised land in the afternoon of his life.

Soyez bénis, mon Dieu . . . qui êtes vous-même placé entre mes bras sous la figure de ce petit enfant nouveau-né. (13)

At the heart of the ode, the words "il attend" occur three times. The first reference is to the poet's parents, the second to the bells of the church steeple that rang for the poet's own baptism, and the third to "cette grosse planète au-dessus du clocher . . . "(14) which, like the star of Bethlehem, lights the heavens. The family, the Christian community in the whole universe, is awaiting the poet's daughter. Just as all the line of Mary was required for the birth of the Messiah, Claudel himself becomes a tributary to the great stream of life.
Me voici rejoint à l'ignorance et aux générations de la nature et ordonné pour une fin qui m'est étrangère. (15)

The works discussed show a varying complexity in the inheritance of the child. In the Otage trilogy reference is made to at least eleven of the ancestors of Pensee's child, whilst practically nothing is known of the forefathers of the child of the third ode, except the background of the poet himself. Likewise, the time factors involved are variable. The period of time covered by the L'Otage trilogy is from the end of the French revolution to the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war; the span studied is that of three generations, each play being consecrated to the study of a generation. The action of Le soulier de satin covers two generations, whilst L'annonce faite à Marie is concerned mainly with one generation. Finally the third ode concentrates upon one child. In all cases, however, all factors are working together for the birth of Christ in every epoch, in every generation, and in every child.
CHAPTER IX

HIS PASSION

(i) The Crucifixion of the Saints

In the plays discussed, the action terminates with the resolution of opposing forces in a child who will be like a Messiah to its generation. Claudel's chief interest in the life of Christ, however, is centred upon the crucifixion. Thus Un poète regarde la croix, L'épée et le miroir and La rose et le rosaire are all concerned with the Passion. Claudel's position is quite clear from the following statement.

Pour moi, c'est la Rédemption, et la Rédemption par le sang qui est première, l'Incarnation n'ayant eu lieu que pour le rendre possible. (1)

Apart from Claudel's meditations on the passion, there is relatively little written on the New Testament except for the study on the Book of Revelation, a book whose interest for Claudel consisted chiefly in its symbolism.

Claudel uses the figure of marriage to express vocation. Thus, because the chief work of Jesus was in dying for the sin of humanity, the kiss of Judas was the pledge of the marriage of Christ and humanity. The marriage was fulfilled in the union of Christ with the tree. The tree
is Claudel's symbol for man so that the cross becomes humanity dead in its sin, humanity in the state of rigor mortis. It is horrifying symbolism.

... il va goûter de nos clous ...
Voici le lit de notre amour avec vous, puissant et dur! 

As each man is made in the image of Christ, the highest vocation, in Claudel's mind, will be association with the Messiah in the work of redemption. We therefore apply this consideration to the plays L'otage, Le soulier de satin and L'annonce faite à Marie. Each work in turn draws closer to the crucifixion of Jesus.

L'otage presents the crucifixion of Sygne de Coufontaine, for the man she is asked to marry is the image of what she hates. He has been guilty of the murder of her people. The reason seen for her marriage is the protection of the Pope and the preservation of the monarchy. The chief reason, however, is the redemption of Toussaint Turelure. From most points of view he is despicable. This is not necessarily the view taken by Badillon, who sees him in a different light.

A lui aussi Dieu pense de toute l'éternité et il est Son très cher enfant. 

Seen from the point of view of his inheritance, always an important consideration with Claudel, his case is pitiable. His mother had shown great severity to her charge, Sygne de
Courfontaine, the daughter of her mistress. Her attitude to her own son may be gauged from Toussaint's statement: "Toute la haine qu'elle avait pour son mari, la sainte femme n'avait reportée sur moi." Sygne is therefore being asked to break a vicious circle of hate by her redemptive love for this man. Badillon suggests that it is her vocation to marry him. She consents; this is her crucifixion. "Elle se laisse couler la face contre terre et demeure prosternée et les bras étendus." Sygne's "crucifixion" avails in saving Pope and King, but fails in the redemption of Toussaint Turelure, because her hatred for him continues unabated. The cycle of hate remains. Turelure is hated by Louis, Louis is hated by Pensée.

The first scene of Le soulier de satin opens with a kind of orweifition, for the brother of Rodrigue is attached to the mast of a ship that has been ransacked by pirates. His influence is felt throughout the play, just as Sygne's sacrifice overshadows the two other plays of the trilogy.

In this play, Prouhèze is chosen to fulfil the role of Christ in the redemption of Camille. Her sacrifice is anticipated on the first day, when Camille's apostasy is in sight.

Dona Prouhèze. Faut-il donner mon âme pour sauver la vôtre?

Don Camille. Il n'y a pas d'autre moyen.
Later in the play Prouhèze feels obliged to marry Camille in order to maintain his loyalty to Spain. This is the political motivation. The chief reason is that her marriage with Camille is for the redemption of his soul. Camille demands, as it were, the crucifixion of Prouhèze as a proof of God's love for him. Her total renunciation of Rodrigue is the price he demands for the surrender of his soul to God. Prouhèze, however, was successful where Sygne failed.

Marriage with Camille is a kind of crucifixion for Prouhèze, even as renunciation of marriage with Rodrigue is similarly a form of crucifixion. Prouhèze and Rodrigue are each said to be the cross of the other.

Once again, L'annonce faite à Marie gives the clearest insight into Claudel's ideas on a redemptive vocation modelled on the Passion. Violaine's crucifixion begins in the Combernon garden, for had Jacques believed in her, she might have been cured. His renunciation comes therefore like the first nail. It is mid-day and to judge from the floral descriptions given at the beginning of the scene, mid-summer. Both times are important with respect to the position of the sun. It is when the sun is at its most unbearable, when the justice of God is at its most intense,
that Violaine is crucified.

Violaine is eight years a leper. The explanation of this figure is probably that whilst there were seven words from the cross, Claudel believes that there was also an eighth utterance, the last being a shout without words. We interpret the supreme cry in Violaine's case as the agony of the mother giving birth to Aubaine. That the crucifixion of Violaine should issue in the resurrection of the child also has a basis in Claudel's writings, since Claudel sees Christ on the cross, not only as the spouse of humanity but as a mother in travail.

Ainsi, pendant les trois heures d'agonie et de travail sur la Croix . . . c'est un monde nouveau au travers de l'autre qui est créé . . .

Ainsi ce n'est pas seulement de la créature que l'on peut dire, comme saint Paul . . 'qu'elle gémît et qu'elle est en travail d'enfancement jusques à maintenant'. C'est du Créateur Lui-même . . .

Claudel is thus able to interpret every child-birth as a crucifixion, an interpretation which he supports by implying adding the fact that the verb "cruciare" is used by the Vulgate both for the crucifixon and for travail.

The effect of the eighth cry upon the creation is given in the following sentence. "Cette création si long-temps muette, elle frémît sur les lèvres de Jésus mourant . . . elle a enfin trouvé le moyen de passer jusqu'à Dieu . . . (10) Thus with the eighth cry, translated as
the eighth year, the world of nature and of man is resurrected, summoned from death by the cry it could not resist. With the birth of Aubaine, Violaine's crucifixion terminates. The winter is her time of entombment, for the breath she feels on her face is that of a new phase in her life.

The substitutionary atonement made by Violaine is implicit at various places throughout the play, but the following words elucidate the meaning of her sacrifice.

Et certes le malheur de ce temps est grand.

... C'est pourquoi voici mon corps en travail à la place de la chrétienté qui se dissout,

Puissante est la souffrance quand elle est aussi volontaire que le péché! (11)

It is possible therefore, to interpret Violaine's sense of sin as resulting from her profound self-identification with a sinful humanity.

There is little doubt that Violaine's death has helped to establish a new era for France.

... le Roi et le Pontife de nouveau sont rendus à la France et à l'Univers. Le schisme prend fin, de nouveau s'élève au-dessus de tous les hommes le Trône. (12)

Claudel has shown some latitude in his treatment of history. The dauphin was crowned as Charles VII in 1429 whilst the great schism ended in 1417 with the election of Cardinal Otto Colonna who became Martin V. Historical considerations, however, in this play, are important chiefly as a reinforcement of the psychological drama of the protagonists.
It is in the context of the crucifixion that Violaine's name has its greatest significance. A saint in *La jeune fille Violaine*, she has become totally outcast in *L'annonce faite à Marie*. The death of Christ is expressed in Jewish symbolism as the slaughter of the lamb. The mother refers to her daughter as "mon agneau sacrifié". The same idea is contained in the name, in the elements viol-laine, that is, the destruction of the lamb. The word "laine" is used in the play *L'échange* as the surname of Marthe's husband. His restlessness, one might say, is that of the sheep which has strayed from the fold. It is also probable that Claudel was aware that Viol implied destruction, since the destruction of Violaine's body is likened to the breaking of a vessel which contained the best perfume.

We see a further meaning indicative of the rich potentiality of the Claudelian symbolism, though once again it is difficult to say whether Claudel was actually aware of this interpretation. Jacques, Pierre and Mara were equally responsible for the death of Violaine, but the actions of the last two were specifically aimed at her physical destruction. The intention of rape was at the heart of Pierre's action, whilst Mara's deed was inspired by hate, as she herself admitted. The two ideas are thus "viol" and "(h)aine". Each by itself is destructive, but combined in the one name they become Violaine, that is to say "hate's
destruction". In a similar manner, if sodium atoms were received into the stomach they would cause an agonizing death, and likewise the presence of chlorine gas in the lungs. Together, however, as ions they combine to form sodium chloride, common salt, a prime necessity of life. Thus it is possible to interpret Violaine's name as indicating the substitutionary atonement, "hate's destruction", the basis upon which the Christian life is built.

In these three plays, specially privileged people are closely associated with Christ in the crucifixion. This conception is by no means limited to the second cycle of plays. In the first play of the first cycle, for instance, the Princess undergoes physical crucifixion, her hands nailed to a tree. Her suffering is for the redemption of Tête d'or.

Oh! je suis heureuse de penser qu'il n'y a pas une de tant de souffrances qui ne soit à toi. (13)

In the play Le livre de Christophe Colomb, a play of the third cycle, the salvation of a storm-tossed ship depends upon Columbus clinging to the mast. A parallel case is to be found in the plight of Rodrigue's brother at the beginning of Le soulier de satin.

"Marriage" with the cross is the highest vocation to which Claudel's saints are called. We leave aside his study on John.
Francois est réquisitionné pour qu'il serve dans sa chair au crucifix.

... Jésus-Christ avec François une seule chose vivante et souffrante et rédemptrice.

In one of his last studies on the saints, Thérèse de Lisieux is portrayed as becoming the sin of the world.

Thérèse ne bouge pas. Elle est sous le pressoir. C'est l'univers entier qui est le pressoir ... elle est comme un abcès de fixation sur ce corps malade de l'Humanité ... à qui elle soutire son inflammation.

Thus humanity may see the love of Christ for the world in the continual crucifixion of God's saints.

Our reading of the New Testament, however, is that the sacrifice of Christ was complete, finished and perfect and that Christ alone was the offering for the sin of the world. This teaching is prominent in the Letter to the Romans and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Thus Violaine cannot become the substitutionary atonement for the sin of Christendom, because her sacrifice does not coincide with the crucifixion of Christ on Golgotha. We would agree that God is to be known through suffering, and that the tears of the saints are the tears of God, but we would deny that a redemptive vocation can coincide with the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross. In this respect, knowledge of God can be derived from the New Testament alone, not from the lives of the saints. Furthermore, Claudel's doctrine of "cette espèce d'épousement étroit du pécheur pour le
transformer", which is applied to Sygne de Coûfontaine and Prouhèze, appears to be the very antithesis of what is meant by Christian marriage. To our knowledge, there is no evidence in the New Testament that would support a marriage of this kind. It seems to us therefore that this aspect of man's knowledge of God is based upon a false premise in that God does not choose to reveal Himself in the way that Claudel indicates.

(ii) Bread and Wine

The symbols of the body and blood of Christ are at the heart of the Christian faith. Claudel often associates bread and wine with the tree, the symbol for man. By means of the first tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, man fell from a state of grace. The second tree, the tree reared upon Golgotha, was the means of the redemption of humanity. The fruit of this tree Claudel identifies as the eucharistic bread, for in taking it, man knows the evil which crucified God Himself and the goodness of God in the provision of Christ for the redemption of the world. The particular tree which Claudel associates with Jesus is the olive. The berry yields oil as the grape produces wine. The oil of the olive may be used as fuel for light or as food. Thus in terms of a religious symbolism, the blood of Christ can be converted into light for the spiritual
nourishment of mankind.

Claudel extends the taste of the eucharistic bread to include the taste of every substance.

Thus every food is as though impregnated with the taste of bread. All food therefore bears witness to the crucifixion.

It is chiefly the symbolism of the wine which Claudel develops, a symbolism so rich that it may be used as a temporary synthesis for most of the ideas already discussed. The convert enters a new dimension of time. The wine too disturbs the usual temporal notions, the physical explanation for this phenomenon being the effect of alcohol upon the brain.

Even as time is continuous, the communion of believers is in continuity, for the cup unités Christendom.

The conclusion of the second chapter may be expressed in the following couplet:
Invasion de la rose, jadis, ah, n'en fus-je pas embaumé? Il me fallait un vin fort pour me la faire oublier.

The wine has prevailed over the perfume, as the Passion of Christ has triumphed over the passion of Mesa.

In the third chapter, three of the four vocations are directly related to bread and wine. Pierre's cathedral is a habitation for the body and blood of Christ. The farmer works in co-operation with nature to bring forth the elements of the mass.

Interroge la vieille terre et toujours elle te répondra avec le pain et le vin.  

Violaine is herself providing wine for humanity, because in assuming Pierre's leprosy she suffers disintegration of her body.

Et déjà mon âme et mon corps se divisent, comme le vin dans la cuve mêlée à la grappe meurtrie!  

Man's ultimate vocation is joy. Joy, says Claudel, is to be found in the drinking of the wine.

In the second section it was seen that the wisdom of God consisted largely in inspiring man and woman with a mutual longing for each other. The highest expression of love in marriage is described by Claudel in terms of taste and the inbreathing of perfume. Taste, as shown above, has a Christological significance, whilst perfume betokens the Holy Spirit. In the love of husband and wife both Jesus
Christ and the Holy Spirit may be apprehended. There is an essential sameness in partaking of the wine, "haleine liquide", and in partaking of the existence of the beloved. It is significant, therefore, that Claudel should link both experiences in the Cantique de la Vigne.

Que ferons-nous, qui ne puis être une femme qu'entre ses bras et une coupe de vin que dans son coeur,
S'il ne veut point accueillir cela qui n'a point de temps et qui lui vient d'ailleurs? (21)

Communion with the church was essentially communion with the mother. In the drinking of wine there is a similar communion.

La communion tout d'abord avec la terre maternelle où il enfoise ses racines, et de qui il reçoit à la fois âme et corps. (22)

The work of the Holy Spirit and of Mary was described by the action of fire and of water. In wine both are combined.

C'est un dieu ... qui a inventé de joindre, comme pour notre sang même, le feu à l'eau! (23)

With the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, opposing factors are reconciled. Similarly the wine combines "la chaleur du soleil, et la couleur de la rose, et le goût du sang, et la tentation de l'eau qui est propre à être buée." (24)

The poem, La transfiguration, shows Jesus ripe for the crucifixion, ripe for the cross which Claudel likens elsewhere to a pressing machine. Soon the reconciling wine will be poured forth for the reconciliation of man and God.
Wine, unlike bread, can be absorbed directly into the bloodstream. The religious significance of this fact is that the life of Christ passes directly into the life of a believer. The study, Saint Jean l'Évangéliste, is based on two moments in the life of the beloved disciple. In the first incident, John, having received the unleavened bread, drinks the wine, the blood of Christ; in the second John is completely white. His sanctity stems from his total participation in the life of Christ, for in partaking of the cup John has knowledge of Jesus, his Friend and his God.

Ce Jésus sensible à sa droite, le même qui est le Seigneur,
Il vient tout entier de Le boire et sait ce qu'il y a dans Son cœur. (25)

Thus supremely in the reception of the bread and the wine, man participates in the life of God, and God participates in the life of man.
CHAPTER X

HIS RESURRECTION

The Christ whom Claudel contemplates is not so much the risen Lord, as the Christ in the arms of His mother, or in the arms of the cross. References to the resurrection in our key works are therefore few and must to some extent be implied. These may be divided into three categories: the forgiveness of sin, the birth of the child and the fulfilment of vocation.

Claudel applies the account of the resurrection of Lazarus to the experience of forgiveness. Man, dead in sin, is summoned to life by the voice of Christ. The Christian life therefore is one of resurrection. This idea is quite consistent with the teaching of Paul as given in the sixth chapter of Romans, despite the somewhat tenuous foundation upon which it is based by Claudel. There is a hint of this idea at the end of the second ode where the penitent is granted a spiritual vision of the risen Lord.

Je vous salue, mon frère bien-aimé,
Ne me touchez point! ne cherche point
à prendre ma main. (1)

These words spoken by Jesus to Mary Magdalene, a woman believed to have had a shameful past, are strategically placed. They refer back to the end of the first ode
where the irresistible attraction of Erato for the poet is expressed in the following words:

\[ \text{'Ne sens-tu point ma main sur ta main?'} \]
\[ (\text{Et en effet je sentis, je sentis sa main sur ma main!}) \]

Thus for the forgiven and "resurrected" man the terrible force of carnal passion is passing away. When Violaine is dying, it is Pierre whom she chooses to carry her away. She is now as a brother to him. The power of the woman upon his soul diminished with the disappearance of his leprosy.

The birth of the child can be understood as a new incarnation of Christ, but it can also be interpreted as a resurrection of the old generation. Mara's child resembled her only in the eyes which were black, the colour of death. When the child's eyes became blue it was as though war-torn France itself had been resurrected.

Claudel saw Christ in his baby daughter, but he saw too his own soul, resurrected as it were in his child.

\[ \text{C'est vous, mon âme, et je puis voir à la fin votre visage, Comme un miroir qui vient d'être retiré à Dieu, nu de toute autre image encore.} \]

The fulfilment of the vocation of the mother is closely associated with the birth of children. Her child-birth, as Claudel specifies, is her crucifixion. She dies, in a sense, that her child may live. Her death also implies her resurrection in the child. In the case of the
man, the fulfilment of vocation allows him to appreciate his position in the communion of saints. The separation of his nature of light from his nature of darkness, which began with conversion, is now complete. Jacques is just beginning the same pilgrimage that Anne Vercors is ending.

A présent j'ai fini.
... Je vis, sur le seuil de la mort et une joie inexplicable est en moi! (4)

Violaine's resurrection is implicit in Anne's words, "Parce que je vais à mon père et à votre père."(5) In the quiet autumn evening at Combernon when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, Violaine's soul is stored in the divine granary. The seed that is her body is to be returned to the earth. The season and the hour are both important, for they witness to the fruits of the crucifixion. At evening the clouds are red with the blood of the immolated sun. The body of Jesus has been taken down from the cross.

In the last act of Le père humilié, Pensée is suddenly aware of the quickening of her unborn child. The child will be born in May, the European spring. In spring therefore, Pensée's "crucifixion" will be accompanied by the resurrection of her soul in the child. Spring will celebrate the resurrection, so that the season of the incarnation and the resurrection will coincide.

Forgiveness, birth and the fulfilment of vocation
have in common an experience of joy that is without an after-taste of sorrow, though each may be preceded by great suffering. The vocation of joy to which Claudel summons mankind is therefore the joy of resurrection.
CHAPTER XI

THE DIVINE LOGOS

(i) The voice of God

It would be difficult to over-estimate the importance which Claudel attributed to the power of the voice, a power he associates particularly with Christ. In the first section of this chapter, we shall use a brief study of the voice of God as a key to an understanding of the role of the voice for certain key characters in the second cycle of plays. The second section develops the Christological significance of the word.

The Genesis account of creation attributes the existence of all things to the creative power of the divine voice. Claudel acknowledges this belief when he speaks of "cette voix qui m'a créé..." (1) The work of God, however, did not end with the initial act of creation. Each man is continuously summoned to respond to his name, indicative of his unique spiritual constitution.

Il n'y a pas deux vocations humaines absolument semblables. Il n'y a pas deux nuances exactement semblables de l'union d'une âme avec le nom dont le Verbe se sert pour l'appeler. (2)

Conversion may be interpreted as the positive response to the divine summons. Fulfilment of vocation can also be seen in the same light. "A l'émanation du Verbe,
tout naît, tout s'ouvre, tout se décolle, tout se dilate, tout se développe, tout devient conscient de sa raison d'être." (3) The Verb, the word of God, is here used metaphorically for the sun, since the description given applies especially to plant life. Thus the voice of God, which is addressed personally to each man, creates and sustains him, calling him to the fulfilment of his vocation.

Applying now these considerations to Le partage de midi, the first play of the second cycle, we find that Claudel's persuasion as to the power of the voice is simply but decisively expressed. "Mesa, je suis Ysé!" She possessed the power of voice to call him by the name by which he had been created. This was the woman Mesa might have loved, the woman he could have married. In this poignant phrase she vocalized her awareness of possessing the key to his soul. On a first reading of this play one might think that Mesa and Ysé had previously met. What Claudel implies is that they knew each other in eternity when, before the creation of the world, they were with God.

Le soulier de satin, which contains a fuller exposition of these themes, concentrates on the powerful effect of the voice of the Vice-roy of Naples and Rodrigue upon Musique and Prouhèze respectively. Musique has never heard the physical voice of her lover, which however sounds continuously in her consciousness, ever urging her forward to encounter him. Rodrigue's voice exerts no lesser power
on Prouhéze. "Ah, je ne vis que par elle!" A parallel passage occurs in the thirteenth scene of the third day. Prouhéze has boarded the ship captained by Rodrigue. She comes to request permission to die so that she may draw him closer to God.

Je veux être avec toi dans ce principe!
Je veux épouser ta cause!
.. La force par laquelle je t'aime n'est pas différente de celle par laquelle tu existes.
Je suis unie pour toujours à cette chose qui te donne la vie éternelle!

Thus, as his voice is the ground of her existence, her love for him, the love which she shares with God, is the animating force of his life.

Pensée de Coûfontaine of Le père humilié best exemplifies Claudel's opinions on the allurement of the voice. She is blind, sensitive alike to the voice of nature and of the man she loves. "Il a cessé de parler et je l'entends encore. Il parle et mon âme tressaillit de l'entendre." The meaning implicit in the phrase "Mesa, je suis Ysé!" is made explicit by Pensee who also echoes the same sentiments as Prouhéze with respect to the fascination of her lover's voice.

On dit qu'il n'y a pas d'âme qui ait été faite ailleurs que dans une vue et dans un rapport mystérieusement avec d'autres. Mais nous deux, c'est plus que cela encore, toi à mesure que tu parles, j'existe, une même chose répondante entre ces deux personnes.

For this Jewish girl, physical blindness symbolizes
spiritual blindness. Orian's voice is like the sun projecting its light into her darkness. Her association of the sun with the voice of her lover provides a significant insight into her spiritual awareness, since both terms have metaphysical overtones.

Ceux qui voient, est-ce qu'ils se lassent du soleil? Et moi qui n'a pas de soleil, est-ce que je me passerai de cette voix, comme la révélation de tout, qui m'a dit une fois: Ma bien-aimée? (8)

Thus are linked voice, light and love. In Orian's voice Pensée finds her raison d'être, his voice ever summoning her to newness of life. Conversely, the effect of her voice upon him is as powerful as his upon her. The following lines are so grouped as to constitute one unit.

Ah, j'étais trop orgueilleux aussi, trop dur, trop sûr de moi-même! Tout cela qu'il y avait en moi et que je ne connaissais pas, à mesure qu'elle partait, tout cela qui fournissait en moi comme de la musique! (9)

Her voice, the key to his soul, rouses him to the knowledge of his essential lack and reveals to him unknown regions in his personality.

The voice of the "spouse" is therefore identical in its effects upon the soul of the beloved as the voice of God. The naming which is personal and insistent is like a call to conversion and to the fulfilment of vocation. In Claudel's writings the key to the soul of the other is possessed by only one person. In terms of a spiritual relationship
Orso can never be more than a brother to Pensee. Claudel obviously intends that as the lovers have always been coupled in the mind of God, they will continue forever in the same relationship. In heaven they will become

ceux-là dont il est dit
Qu'ils ne prennent ni ne sont pris
En mariage corporel!

(10)

The exclusion of corporal marriage does not forbid the possibility of a "spiritual" marriage. Thus Prouhêze and Orian will continue to call to Rodrigue and Pensee respectively, despite the fact that the words of Jesus, that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, would seem to exclude such a possibility.

The effect of the voice upon the soul may be summed up in the verb "causer" which means both to cause and to converse with. Claudel implies both meanings. Hence by speaking, the soul of the beloved is simultaneously created and fostered in growth, dialogue being at the heart of the Claudelian epistemology.

(ii) Jesus-Christ, the Word.

The prologue to John's gospel is usually interpreted as the New Testament counterpart to the opening verses of Genesis. The divine creative power by which all things were made is now localized in Christ, the Logos of God. For the Jews, the Word of God was not only a creative force but also
a personal communication of the Divine to the prophets. The Greeks understood by the word "logos" the rational principle which gave meaning and unity to all things. Thus in the person of Jesus-Christ John implied that Jewish and Greek interpretations of the ruling and creative forces of the universe could be reconciled. Claudel maintains these connotations, but once again expands a well-known concept in the direction of his chief interests. In this section we shall examine the importance of the word in the context of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection, before considering the availability of the word in terms of sensual perception.

The male aspect of the "logos" tends to be denoted by "le verbe", the "femaleness" of the word being expressed by "la parole". The Greek understanding of the word as a rational principle is explicit in the following note from *Un poète regarde la croix*.

Le nom de rational en grec est 'logeion', suggérant cette raison centrale et fondamentale de tous côtés égale et parallèle à elle-même, qui est le siège du verbe. (11)

In the Claudelian terminology Jesus would represent Animus in its perfection. The rose, which in Claudel's symbolism may be seen as a counterpart to Animus, is "cette parole parfaite". (12)

Christ, however, transcends the distinction between male and female. Hence the maternal aspect of the logos may be attributed to Le Verbe.
le lait, c'est l'aspect nourricier, le

Verbe élaboré par l'Écriture et les
mamelles de la Grâce.

(13)

More important perhaps than the reconciliation of male
and female, the logos, the voice of God combines the attri-
butes of the Triune God and the Virgin Mary. The Father is
usually understood as the Creator, a function, however,
also shared by "le Verbe créateur". (14) The Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary, whose symbols are breath and water res-
pectively, are coupled in the following phrases from the
argument of the second ode.

... nous sommes reliés à lui (Dieu)
par cet élément fluide, l'esprit ou
l'eau, dont toutes choses sont
pénétrées... La voix qui est à la
fois l'esprit et l'eau... est l'ex-
pression de cette union bienheureuse. (15)

This ode terminates with the dialogue between Christ and
the poet.

The word, like the incarnation, reconciles the various
human and divine attributes. The notion of the word, how-
ever, is equally applied to the crucifixion. Christ is on
the cross, His arms stretched out like the leaves of an open
book where one may read the love of God for humanity. (16)

In the light of the cross all things in heaven and on earth
become readable. (17)

A passage from Un poète regarde la croix describes
Christ on the cross as a flame drawing upon the whole world,
which is symbolized by oil. All is drawn to the tongue of
flame. The tongue, however, also implies the physical tongue, the organ of speech. Thus the spectacle of the Crucified is like a witness of speech and fire, and the whole world is being transformed into a vocal and luminous testimony. (18)

Reference to the resurrection is implicit in the sentiment that the word must die for the phrase to exist. The word dies, but its meaning is resurrected in the phrase.

Plus une chose meurt, plus elle arrive
au bout d'elle-même,
Plus elle expire de ce mot qu'elle ne peut dire et de ce secret qui la tire! (19)

The criterion of the divine accessibility previously enunciated for light applies equally to the word. The obvious sense is that of hearing, a sense exercised in reading the Bible.

Quelle joie d'être aux pieds du Verbe et d'écouter . . . cette bouche qui parle! (20)

The word of God is also to be seen in nature, a consideration which will be developed in the following chapter. The touch of Christ, "calculatrice et nuancée comme un langage" (21), is perceived in times of great suffering. The wine, "Le sang . . la Parole éternelle" (22), when considered as an "haleine liquide" (23) is available to the sense of smell. Finally, Claudel considers the eucharistic bread as "La parole" (24) which is received at mass, and so perceived as taste.

The conclusion of this study may be quite simply stated in Badillon's words to the dying Sygne. "En Dieu le Fils
qui est assis à la main droite . . est toute parole achevée." (25) As with the wine, the word, which reconciles all complementary factors, celebrates the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection.
CHAPTER XII

CHRIST, POPE AND POET

The Pope, of all men in Claudel's writings, is the chief exemplar of the image of Christ in human personality, although the poet himself shows an equal awareness of the divine image in which he has been made. A study of both Pope and poet is therefore essential for an understanding of man's knowledge of God. Insight into the poetic vocation is the logical conclusion to this study, as the Pope himself is encompassed in the span of the poet's mind, as indeed the whole of humanity and the whole of creation.

(i) The Pope, Pontificate of Rome

The chief expositions on the Pope are found in the poem Saint Pierre, and the Otage trilogy, works which were written about the same time. The study of the first Pope emphasizes the frailty of the man who, with clenched fists, denied his Lord. Peter is presented as the terrestrial counterpart to Christ. Jesus is crucified feet downwards; Peter is crucified upside down.

Christ est la tête, mais Pierre est la base et le mouvement de la religion catholique. Jésus a planté la croix en terre, mais Pierre l'enracine dans le ciel. (1)

By contrast with Peter's weakness, the Popes of the
The hostage trilogy show a far greater resemblance to Christ. The hostage of the first play is Pius VII, whilst the Père Humilié of the third is Pius IX. The focal points of the plays are the two Popes. The titles of the three plays suggest that like Christ they are alpha and omega, for despite the aridity of the second play where God and the Pope are apparently absent, the movement of the trilogy leads back to Rome, the home of the Vatican.

Allusions to the nativity and crucifixion are indirect. The Popes in their old age are as defenceless before their enemies as the Christ-child before the Herod who would destroy Him. Though the Popes are not shown to be crucified with Christ, the fortunes of the papacy are bound up with the treatment of the broken crucifix; de-throned, rejected, an embarrassment to the enemies of religion. Pope Pius of Le père humilié is not asked to assume the sin of the world, but he is willing to become anathema on its behalf. (2)

The dual role of the justice and mercy of Christ is exemplified by Pius IX. Men see him as Judge.

Ils ne vous voient que sur Votre trône au milieu des épées flamboyantes, le front ceint de la triple-couronne et fulminant l'excommunication. (3)

They little realize that he is "A leurs pieds, avec Notre-Seigneur" (4), at the place of humblest service like Christ who washed the feet of His disciples at the last supper.

The joys and sorrows of the Pope are the joys and
and sorrows of Christ. The Pope's love for humanity is so great that the loss of one son would be "un malheur assez grand pour que l'amour de tous les autres ne suffise pas à Nous en consoler". (5) The experience of joy, however, is as intense as the experience of suffering. It is to the vocation of joy that the Pope recalls the world.

Fais-leur comprendre qu'ils n'ont d'autre devoir au monde que de la joie!
La joie qui Nous connaissons, la joie que nous avons été chargé de leur donner. (6)

An incident from the life of Christ is dramatised in Le père humilié. Pius, like Jesus, sits exhausted on the edge of a well. He is awaiting the arrival of the "Samaritain" Pensée, a woman who, though claiming Jewish allegiance, is the child of a Gentile father. Louis and Sichel, the girl's parents, both reject the Pope. Pensée, however, is the woman chosen by God to be the mother for the posterity of the church. Her encounter with Orian is an introduction to Christ's vicar.

If men would see the image of Christ, let them look to the Pope. If men would hear Christ, let them listen to His representative, "le Verbe qui a langage en Pie." (7) In the Pope is the activity of Christ most clearly manifest.

... c'est Jésus-Christ, c'est le Fils de Dieu en la personne du pape qui opère, comme son Père opère, ainsi qu'il est écrit, jusqu'à ce jour. (8)

The life of the Pope is the life of Christ.
(ii) **The Poet, High Priest of Nature**

A sense of the mystery of creation which prevails in Claudel's writings is discernible from his earliest works. Claudel, like Mallarmé, sought to discover the meaning of creation. The early works, however, evince some uneasiness before the spectacle of nature. The *Connaissance de l'est*, for instance, realizes the harmonious composition of the world, but is as yet unable to analyse the role of each instrument in the orchestra of creation. "Je comprends l'harmonie du monde; quand en surprendrai-je la mélodie?" (9)

The early works formulate the questions that are later answered by the poet who has reached the promised land of the *Cinq Grandes Odes* and the Biblical commentaries. In the security of the Church Claudel now realizes that

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toutes \ \text{choses universellement au Ciel et sur la Terre appartiennent au Fils de Dieu, et par conséquent elles n'ont d'autre raison d'être que de Le manifester, soit symboliquement par leur forme, soit paraboliquement par leur opération.} \quad (10)
\]

Thus the whole creation witnesses to Christ. It will be the poet's mission to unlock the secret of creation with the key of symbolism. "Nous sommes les Ésopes de cette fable immense." (11) Like Adam he will name the animals, he will understand the spiritual meaning of the universe, and decipher

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\text{le petit catéchisme de la nature: le lys qui est la pureté . . la poule l'amour maternel, le serpent l'ennemi mortel et invisible . . .} \quad (12)
\]
The poet understands the striving of the universe to achieve completion, its impulse to unity which is apparent in the etymology of the word (versus ad unitatem). As mankind received its consummation in Christ, nature will receive its consummation in the poet.

Car d'une part toute la nature sans moi est vaine; c'est moi qui lui confère son sens; toute chose en moi devient Eternelle en la notion que j'en ai; c'est moi qui la consacre et qui la sacrifie. (13)

Prouhèze, possessing Rodrigue's name was able to participate in his existence. Likewise, the poet will share in the life of every creature by repeating the "fiat" by which it was created.

Ainsi quand tu parles, o poète, dans une énumération délectable Proférant de chaque chose le nom, Comme un père tu l'appelles mystérieusement dans son principe, et selon que jadis Tu participas à sa création, tu coopères à son existence! Toute parole une répétition. (14)

Prouhèze, however, knew Rodrigue not only by repeating his name, but by her close association with the Love that was the ground of his being. Thus the poet will seek to discover how all things may be likened to the Love which created them.

Embrassement du devoir poétique qui est de trouver Dieu en toutes choses et de les rendre assimilables à l'Amour (15)

This is the central sentence in the argument which precedes the third and central Ode. By implication it enunciates the
principle that is at the heart of Claudel's religious quest.

The role of the high priest of nature combines three tendencies found in the drama: the desire to assume pontifical office as shown by Coeuvre of La ville, the wish to dominate the earth as exemplified by Tête d'or and Rodrigue, and the longing of Columbus to reunite the world. Claudel will restore the unity lost by Adam at the fall, and deciphering the meaning of the universe, he will consecrate his poetry to the glory of God.

Est-ce que toute cette beauté sera inutile? Venue de Dieu, est-ce qu'elle n'est pas faite pour y revenir? Il faut le poète et le peintre pour l'offrir à Dieu, pour réunir un mot à l'autre mot et de tout ensemble faire action de grâces et reconnaissance et prière soustraite au temps. (16)

In these words spoken by the Vice-roy of Naples in Le soulier de satin, Claudel voices his own conception of the poetic vocation.

(iii) The Poet, Prophet of the Word

The poetic vocation receives its highest dignity from its association with the divine logos. Whereas the Creator gave Himself to man in the Word, the poet renders the whole of creation to mankind in the word. With Christ, the poet also shares a maternal function. The word of his poetry will be as milk for the nourishment of mankind. Christ, the supreme metaphor, joins heaven and earth, God and man.
The basis of Claudel's art is the metaphor, and it is not without reason that the beloved disciple, for instance, is associated with the pine tree and the partridge. Like Christ, the Word of God, the poet longs to be "une parole totalement intelligible."(19)

Claudel expresses the "summa" of Christ's mission, as he sees it, in the symbolism of bread and wine. What then is the relevance of the mass to the poetic vocation? Both elements of the mass are known through taste. But the taste of God, says Claudel, impregnates all things and is the cause of their being. "C'est le goût de Dieu qui les a suscités et c'est la mémoire de Dieu qui les maintient."(20) In the light of this assertion we may interpret the following statement. "Le poète dans sa bouche, sans parler, différencie les paroles à leur saveur."(21) Claudel also implied that "la parole est une nourriture".(22) Thus, as the poet spoke, moving his tongue over the teeth and palate, he was conscious of the taste of every word in the dictionary of the Logos, for every word contributes to the total Word of God.

The etymology of the word "poet" reveals the vocation to which Claudel was called. The Greek word, as he indicates, has the meaning "maker". The poet will therefore be a creator in imitation of the Logos, the creative Word of God. As Pierre de Craon would understand God as the great Architect, Claudel will see God as the supreme Poet. The whole world has become a poem and everything in the universe has its word
Le monde cesse d'être un vocabulaire éparpillé, il est devenu un poème, il a un sens, il a un ordre, il vient de quelque chose et il va quelque part. (23)

The poet's joy in the fulfilment of his vocation will derive from his knowledge of the name, the spiritual significance of every creature. Thus he will interpret the meaning of all things in creation, and, in the wake of the psalmists and the great Christian poets, he will reconcile space and time in the word, in the symphonies of his drama, poetry and exegetical writings.
CONCLUSION

The three sections of this study show a progressive movement from man to God. The first part, "man's response to God", deals essentially with the spouse, whilst the second concerns Mary and the third Christ. Considering each section in turn we shall see what contribution each has to offer to man's knowledge of God, derived particularly from his self-awareness as an image of the Divine. We shall show broadly how the figures of spouse, mother and Christ are fused in the person of Violaine of L'annoncé faite à Marie before indicating how each relationship is compatible with the concept of love.

A deepening awareness of the nature of God is revealed particularly in the encounter of man and woman, either as husband and wife, or as potential marital partners. Before the encounter that will determine the course of their lives, the woman of Claudel's theatre tends to exist in a state of restless agitation. The man, however, is complete in his self-sufficiency. The revelation of the woman comes as a profound shock, revealing man's self-centredness and his essential lack. Claudel's second cycle of plays traces this discovery of the self, the other and God, through Mesa, Rodrigue, Orian and Pierre de Craon. The effect of the man on the woman, which is no less profound, is exemplified in Ysé, Prouhëze and Pensée respectively. In the poetry, a
similar discovery is attributed to the encounter of Dante and Beatrice.

Each partner seeks certain spiritual qualities in the other, though the metaphysical nature of the quest is generally unrecognized. Toussaint Turelure seeks light in Lumir, Sichel finds beauty in Louis, Pensée desires Orian's voice as a sun for her darkness. The woman's dowry is typically beauty, which Pierre de Craon typified as the beauty of God, whilst the man's contribution to the marriage is chiefly justice.

Both yearn for completion. The power of each over the other is symbolized by the voice, a profound symbol as is recognized as the closest analogue of sexuality. Each knows the "name" of the other, his essential spiritual nature. The attraction of the man for his wife, or his spiritual counterpart, may be understood from the symbolism of the wound in the man's side. Rodrigue, for instance, is so pictured. This symbolism is derived from the book of Genesis. The explanation is as follows.

Adam was created in the image of God, but the divine completeness was shared between two people with the creation of Eve from Adam's side. Adam was now incomplete and his attraction for Eve was the search for his lost unity. The image of God was both male and female. Thus man is not the complete image of God, nor is woman, but both together
exemplify the divine image in which they were made. The man loves in the woman the female image of God, and conversely the man’s attraction for the woman is the male image of God. In this sense it is possible to interpret the words of Beatrice previously quoted

Ce que nous nous donnons l’un à l’autre,
c’est Dieu sous des espèces différentes.
Le voici refait d’un homme et d’une femme
enfin cet être qui existait dans le paradis!(1)

The mutual knowledge of the spouses is analogous to their knowledge of God. (1)

The power of the voice which each exercises over the other is expressed by the verb "causer." Using the word in the two senses given to it by Claudel, the partners will create and foster the divine image of the other. Together they will grow into the fullness of the image of God.

This at least is the theory that underlines the couple’s growth in grace. This idea, however, must to a large extent be implied from its subversion. Man has been made in the creative image of God. This fact may be neglected to one’s peril. Toussaint Turelure changed the name of his mistress from Rachael to Sichel. Claudel points out the meaning of her real name, "lamb", in one of his exegetical works. Turelure degraded the divine image of the beloved daughter of the Shepherd of Israel by considering Sichel as "charogne". God’s lamb became the
sickle which destroyed him.

It is chiefly in the context of the destruction of the divine image found in the other, that the problem of sin in Claudel's literature must be understood. The encounter between the spiritual counterparts is violent and the plays of the second cycle centre around the lust that constitutes a kind of spiritual homicide. Claudel's interpretation of the nature of original sin as sexual, explains why the problem of sin is sharply focused on the illicit liaisons between man and woman.

The experience of sin comes as a final death-blow to man's self-sufficiency. Before his fall Pierre de Gruen claimed to be innocent. Now he knows good and evil. In a sense, this experience completes the process of conversion, since the discovery of God and an awareness of sin are usually treated as contemporaneous events. This drama, played out in Le soulier de satin, has the whole world as its back-drop. This epic work, however, contains the perspective of a medieval mystery play, for the world is a stage upon which the forces of good and evil are at work in the conquest of the human soul.

In this experience man realizes similarity with God, for the desertion of the woman is felt as a betrayal. Here man understands the betrayal of Christ by humanity. The experience, however, also allows man to appraise the essen-
the

tial difference between unrighteousness of man and the
holiness of God. Discovery of the other therefore brings
profound insight into the nature of the spiritual void that
can be filled only by the divine presence.

The first major relationship is that established be-
tween the spouses. The second is that which exists be-
tween man and the Virgin Mary, who is variously symbolized
as the perfect woman, the soul and the church. Like
Christ, Mary is seen as the alpha and omega of every soul.
She is the mother who has brought every Catholic believer
into the family of the church. She is seen as the spirit-
ual mother of the believer in the same way in which she was
the physical mother of Jesus. Knowledge of the mother is
a chief source of Claudel's knowledge of God. His thought
revolves around the concept of birth, as shown, for in-
stance, by his understanding of the noun "connaissance".
His preoccupation with the "alpha" of the human existence
is at the heart of his interest in the book of Genesis.
The naming of the animals, the predominance of water in
its diverse forms, the establishment of order out of chaos,
the basic movement of most of Claudel's theatre; these are a
few of the ideas derived from Genesis which abound in his
writings. Claudel's interest in the source is also at the
heart of his fascination for etymologies; Latin, Greek
even Phoenician.
Mary, however, is also the Omega of every Christian life. Perfect in every attribute, she reflects the glory of God as faithfully as the moon reflects the light of the sun. The assumption of Mary is frequently mentioned or implied in Claudel's writings. His exegetical works often end on a Marian note. The Procesional pour sauver le siècle nouveau is completed on the day of the Assumption. The poem which began with the celebration of the Pagan muses of a Roman sarcophagus ends with the praise, adoration and confession of the triune God. Claudel has rejoined the stream of Catholic orthodoxy. His God is the same as that of the Apostles, and his beliefs are those of the historic creeds of the Christian faith, his doctrine is that formulated by the church councils. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary, like the resurrection of Jesus, reveals the hitherto dimly apprehended significance of Mary. Personified variously as Beauty and Love, Mary illustrates the potentiality of every soul and of every woman.

The exemplar of the human soul in its perfection, Mary is also seen as the mediatrix between man and God. With respect to God she Father, Mary exemplifies perfectly the Motherhood of God. She is co-worker with the Holy Spirit, or in terms of a human relationship, the spouse of the Holy Spirit. She exists for Jesus in all possible relationships; daughter, sister, wife, mother. Existing therefore
in all possible relationships to God, Mary exemplifies perfectly the femininity of the Divine, though Claudel's chief emphasis upon Mary is as the exemplar of the Motherhood of God.

By virtue of her role as the Wisdom of God, as "Sapientia" (taste), Mary reveals the "taste" of God to men. Claudel indicates that knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are alike mediated through Mary. As the Wisdom of God who implants the mutual attraction of man and wife, Mary is also responsible in mediating the chief human means whereby God may be apprehended.

Though Mary is associated with water, she is also associated with light. The latter is the more important symbol of the two, since it is capable of being "received" by all the senses.

The centrality of Christ in the human experience was the subject of the third section. The Incarnation was seen to combine various factors, in particular man and God, male and female. The three levels of inheritance marked out by Le soulier de satin included the totality of man's nature; physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. This inheritance complex illustrates the principle that all faculties must be exercised in realizing the fullness of the image of Christ. Animus must be integrated with Anima, joy and sorrow must both be known. Claudel employs the
verb "interroger" to translate the idea of the quest of all the faculties of the personality. It is significant that he uses this verb with respect to his commentaries on the Song of Solomon, and the Book of Revelation. All his faculties will be alert for an understanding of God. Unlike Violaine who went straight to God, Pierre de Craon rose a little higher to heaven through the construction of a cathedral with deep foundations. Claudel's way to God will be through his massive opus which embraces the whole Bible, the scope of history, all men and the totality of nature, for all have something to say concerning the nature of Christ.

As Pierre de Craon would see potential materials for his cathedrals in the limestone semblances of idols, Claudel's theatre postulates the divine image of God in every man, in the Maras and the Toussaint Turelures. Claudel, in fact, attempts to appropriate the experience of all men for an insight into the nature of Christ. Thus, in the second Ode, he is Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Mary Magdalene who hails the resurrected Christ, whilst in the third Ode he is Mary at the birth of Jesus. Claudel's power of transposition into various roles is well shown in Un poète regarde la croix where Claudel is all the characters at once, even God. He will become Toussaint Turelure to know Toussaint Turelure, God to know God, a principle which he sometimes states explicitly.
Claudel's chief contribution to an understanding of Christ is probably in his symbolic interpretations. Like Dante, Claudel was athirst with a passion for the universe. Claudel will reveal the Christological significance of fire and water, bread and wine, of plant and animal.

The pattern of Christ's life, death and resurrection is shown in the cycles of the day and the year. It is early morning in Spring when Violaine contracts Pierre's leprosy. In becoming the sin of the world, Christ is incarnated in Violaine. At mid-day, mid-summer, Violaine is rejected by Jacques. Christ is crucified. She dies toward evening in Autumn. The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross. The body of Violaine is returned to the earth. The entombment of Christ is during winter, during the darkness of night. The pattern should logically terminate with the resurrection of Aubaine in Spring, but the celebration of the birth of Christ in the European Winter demands that Aubaine should be resurrected in December. This pattern of the resurrection of the child with the "crucifixion" of the mother will be fulfilled with the birth of Pénélope's baby in Spring. The pattern of Christ's life in the day and season is matched by the continuity of Christ's life and image in successive generations. Anne is followed by Jacques, Elisabeth by Mara, Pierre by his apprentice and Violaine by Aubaine. By implication the same cycle of
redemption will be continued for every generation.

Claudel's Christology centres upon the cross. The Passion reveals the vocation of Christ. In Christ's "marriage" with the cross He is seen both as the spouse of humanity, and as mother of the new creation. For Claudel, God is known in Jesus Christ, and Christ is supremely revealed on the cross. In the light of the cross all things become readable. Man's suffering receives its highest dignity from its association with the cross where the suffering of man is associated with the suffering of Christ. The crucifixion is transposed into the second cycle of plays, where the "crucifixion" of Prouhéze, Cygne and Violaine is central to the dramatic action of the plays. Hereby Claudel associates specially chosen people for association with Christ in the work of redemption.

As light, the grace of God mediated by the Virgin Mary, is available to all senses. Similarly, the Word of God is available to a total sensual perception. The Word of God is seen in Creation, heard in the Bible, tasted and inbreathed at mass, and the touch of the Word is active upon the soul. Further, as all food is impregnated with the taste of bread, the body of Christ, eating has a sacramental significance. The same is true for speaking since every word was impregnated with the "taste" of the Logos.

The Pope exemplifies in his life the image of Christ. Thus Christ may be known from His faithful reflection in the
Pope. The poet, however, shows an awareness of the divine image in which he has been made. God's response to man was in the Word. The poet's response to God will be by the word. His art will be an attempt to understand by re-creating. The verbs "causer" and "co-naitre" are fully understood by the poet. He will be co-born into the image of Christ whose voice, the cause of his being, fosters his growth in grace.

Claudel's richest symbolic figure, Violaine of L'annonce faite à Marie, combines the roles of spouse, Mary and Christ. Violaine is the spouse of Pierre with respect to their redemptive work in the spiritual reconstruction of Christendom. She is as Mary to Aubaine, who will, as Christ to her generation. As Christ, she is "crucified" by Jacques, Pierre and Mara whom she redeems by her sacrifice. To Pierre she is as Eve before the fall, to Mara, Abel. To both, Violaine was the cause of their fall, for both she was the means of their redemption.

Her name, the expression of her vocation, is also capable of sustaining a rich symbolism. We have variously interpreted the name as "vie haleine" (life-spirit), violaine (destruction of the lamb), vilaine (servant of all), and viol-haine (hate's destruction). It seems unlikely that Claudel was aware of all these meanings inherent in the name of a village near Soissons. Nevertheless, he was well aware that one of his achievements lay in suggesting
new meanings to well-known words, and in re-discovering the etymologies of words. A comparison of *La jeune fille Violaine* with *L'annonce faite à Marie* shows that the Violaine of the later play answers far more readily to the interpretations given to her name.

It may now be seen that two trains of associated complexes predominate in Claudel's writings. The first includes fire, the rose, violence and the Holy Spirit; the second water, the lily, tenderness and the Virgin Mary. The first series symbolizes the relationship between the spouses, and the second between mother and child, that is, between the church and the believer. Both lines are reconciled in Christ. There are thus three close relationships discernible in Claudel's writings; that between husband and wife, mother and child, and believer and Christ. Each relationship is described in terms of perfume and taste. In the first relationship, the perfume of the rose symbolizes the soul. Taste is apparent in the concept of Violaine as the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of good and evil, although the idea of taste is made explicitly by Frouhèze. Taste is evident in the lacteal relationship of mother and child, and perfume is available in the perfume of the lily.

Finally, in the wine, the blood of Christ, taste and the sense of smell are implied in the words "haleine liquide". The conclusion, surely, is that the same description, the
the perception of taste and smell, applies to the same concept. The three associations are different forms of love. The symbolism is profound, for one may live without the stimuli of touch, hearing and sight, but life depends upon eating and breathing. The love of God is therefore known in communion with the spouse, in communion with the totality of believers in the community of the church, and in communion with Christ. These three aspects of love are attributes of the one love, for God Himself is Love.

If God desires that love should prevail in the relationships of man with man and man with God, how is this principle compatible with the dialectic of justice and love? The role of justice is pursued by Jacques Hury, Don Pélage, the Apostle James and Joseph the husband of Mary, whilst love is sought by Violaine, the beloved disciple and Mary. Of those who sought justice, Claudel indicates that Jacques Hury and Don Pélage failed in their quest. On the other hand, Anne Vercors speaks of the justice of God as a hundred-fold return, whilst Violaine, in seeking love, was supremely just. Justice, then, must be an aspect of love. This is also the conclusion reached by Augustine when he says: "Justice is love serving only Him who is its object, and therefore rightly ruling." (3) Men see in the Pope an image of justice, little realizing that his justice is compatible with his love for them. When Jesus was crucified the sun
was at its most intense, the divine justice at its most inexorable. But it was at this time too, that the love of God was at its strongest, since love and justice combine in the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

It is now possible to interpret the reactions of various characters as a reaction to divine justice. For Sichel, a pianist of European fame, the sounding of the bells of Rome brought her anguish of heart. Lumir found the analysis of light pitiless, whilst Toussaint Turelure described his life as a constant effort to avoid drowning. The poet of the first ode was aware of a destructive and consuming fire. Claudel understands the soul chiefly in terms of light, water and fire, and though the idea of music is little developed, it is sometimes included with the other three. These four elements are in a sense neutral. It is the protagonists themselves who are in an incorrect relationship to them. The situation is ironic in the case of Sichel and Lumir since their vocation is for an understanding of music and light respectively. The greatest blessings become the greatest curse when subverted, but enjoyed as a blessing, these elements are understood as aspects of the divine love.

The four elements are at the heart of man's existence. Claudel also claims that both "taste" and the voice of God are the cause of man's being. These concepts may be
reconciled in Prouhèze' words of farewell to Rodrigue.

La force par laquelle je t'aime n'est pas
différente de celle par laquelle tu existes.
Je suis unie pour toujours à cette chose qui
te donne la vie éternelle!

The love of God is thus the creative and sustaining force
of the human existence. The initiative is always with
God and man's response to God is a response to the love of
God. His knowledge is in proportion to his response in
love, to the love of God.

The basis for man's knowledge of God is clearly
indicated in the poem St. Jean l'Évangéliste. The poem
is in two halves, of which the second half must be used to
understand the first. John, the beloved and youngest dis-
ciple, whom the others charged to question Jesus on difficult
cases, participates fully in the life of Christ in drinking
the chalice at the last supper. The second half pictures
John when he is very old. He who questioned the Lord on
difficult cases has only one word for us, "Mes petits
enfants, aïmez-vous les uns les autres."

John's knowledge stems primarily from his love for
Christ, but his love for God is intimately bound up with
his love for man. In the fulfilment of the two-fold law
of love lies the chief source of man's knowledge of God;
in fulfilment of the two-fold law of love man best achieves
his vocation - growth into the full image of the Love which
created him.
APPENDIX

CHAPTER REFERENCES

Abbreviations

A. L'Annoucق faite à Marie.
Acc. Accompagnements.
Apoc. Paul Claudel Interroge l'Apocalypse.
Apôtres. Le Groupe des Apôtres. From the Corona Benignitatis Anni Dei.
C Paul Claudel Interroge Le Cantique des Cantiques.
Cantate. La Cantate à Trois Voix.
Cent Phrases. Cent Phrases Pour Éventails.
D.S.F. Du Sens Figuré de l'Écriture.
Em. Emmaüs.
Is. L'Evangile d'Isaïe.
P. Un Poète regarde La Croix.
P.D. Le Pain Dur.
P.H. Le Père humilié.
P. de M. Partage de Midi.
O. L'Otage.
Ode. Cinq Grandes Odes.
S. Le Soulier de Satin.
The following texts were unavailable in the Gallimard Oeuvres Complètes de Paul Claudel at the time of printing of the thesis.

Quotations have therefore been taken from the following editions.


Claudel, Paul.  Accompagnements (selected essays) 3e édition, Gallimard, 1949, pp.312.

Quotations from this source are marked with an asterisk to distinguish them from those taken from vol.18 Accompagnements, etc.
The first figure refers to the volume number, the second to the page.

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10 A. 9. 42.
11 Line given in a variant for Act 4 Scene 1, L'Annonce faite à Marie, Gallimard, Le Livre de Poche, 1940, p.218.
12 Apôtres. 1. 291.
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A Simple Key to the Major Symbols

These symbols often have the following connotations.

- **blue**: spiritual vision
- **bird**: associated with the Holy Spirit
- **black**: spiritual incomprehension
- **breath**: Holy Spirit
- **column**: the body of the woman: links heaven and earth.
- **door**: opening: a new beginning
- **dove**: Holy Spirit: Virgin Mary
- **fire**: God. Especially the Holy Spirit
- **gold**: mirror, reflection of God; generally has divine attributes
- **honey**: liquid light
- **lamb**: Christ
- **light**: grace: associated with the Virgin Mary
- **lily**: Church, soul, Virgin Mary
- **moon**: Virgin Mary
- **music**: divine harmony
- **name**: vocation
- **perfume**: the soul
- **red**: idea of violence; associated with the Holy Spirit
- **rose**: woman (as spouse)
- **sea**: Virgin Mary as mother (la mer, la mère)
- **seven**: completion
- **ship**: Church
- **stars**: saints
- **sun**: God
- **tree**: man
- **trumpet**: summons to a New Order
- **water**: grace; associated with the Virgin Mary
- **wine**: blood of Christ