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MARIAN DEVOTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

*Johann G. Roten, S. M.**

Placed on the dividing line between old and new, a half-way sensible person, one conscious of his or her own lease on time, never crosses the threshold into new and uncharted territory before looking back to the past for illumination and guidance. In fact, all of our projections and millenarian schemes seem to be, unless we be blessed with a special gift of prophecy, the distilled fruit of amazement and anger over past things and experiences—a combining for good measure not only of successes but also of failures and failed expectations. Speaking of failed expectations: is it not almost invariably so that planning proposals and program projections are little more than failed expectations in disguise, recycled as “new” mission statements and downsized objectives? Unless, of course, we resort to the solution of millenarian apocalypticism,¹ by bringing history to a screeching and terminal halt, avoiding thus the uncomfortable position of people living (with Paul Tillich) on a philosophically permanent threshold.² Of the three solutions on how to deal with the future here outlined, only the first appears viable in the eyes of the author of this report. Being neither blessed with the gift of prophecy nor a friend of millenarian fatalism, it would seem appropriate to seek re-

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¹See Warren Kappeler, “Contemporary Millenarianism: A Response to the Disaster Syndrome” (M.A. thesis in Religious Studies, University of Dayton, 1998), 25–48.

²Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 7ff.; id., *Auf der Grenze, aus dem Lebenswerk Paul Tillichs* (Munich: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1964).

demption of the past in the future, remaining ever aware, however, that much of our future is rooted in the past.

I. Mirror and Icon

Considering Marian devotion on the threshold of the third millennium—who would have the audacity to speak of Marian devotion *in* or *of* the third millennium!—let us first inquire about the past. What are some of the more salient features of twentieth-century Marian endeavor? It is commonly accepted that devotion, distinguished from devotional practices, implies dedication of self to God. The term “devotee” (devoted person) suggests dispositions of joy and generosity. Being an “act of the virtue of religion” (Thomas Aquinas), devotion conveys a stable interior disposition and readiness to serve God.³ Interior in disposition and exterior as active expression, authentic devotion encompasses all facets of the human person and should mark one’s whole life. Essentially directed to God, there exist, however, derivative forms of devotion, such as devotion to Mary and the saints; these forms find legitimacy only in constant reference to God. For example, Marian devotion is devoid of real religious (as in *religio*) significance, if it is unable to overcome self-serving and idolatrous tendencies. The desire to serve Mary is legitimate only if, by the same token, it strengthens and deepens our resolve and ardor to serve God. It may be added, that Mary is for us simultaneously icon and mirror. Marian devotion is like an icon, allowing a glimpse into eternity, or to put it differently, our relationship to Mary widens our heart to God and opens the mind for a deeper understanding of his ways. Similarly, Mary reflects our own being—its shortcomings as well as its hopes. In sum, Marian devotion must be placed on a solid theological foundation, for it is thanks to the intelligence of Mary’s person and role that we are able to sharpen

³*Dictionnaire de spiritualité* . . . (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–), 3:702ff., esp. 708–709. It is surprising that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.C., 1994), which devotes its entire fourth part (arts. 2558–2865) to Christian Prayer, does not actively deal with devotion or spirituality. Intended or not, avoiding abstract terminology, the Catechism focuses on common ground, bringing the attention of the reader to bear on the universal call to prayer (art. 2566ff.).

our perception of God's will and of our destiny as creatures of God redeemed in Christ.

Consequently, it would seem reasonable to assume that twentieth-century mariology has left its mark on Marian devotion past and present. Hence we would like to propose three series of observations and suggestions regarding Marian theology and devotion of the past hundred years.⁴

II. Lessons of the Past

1. *Patterns of Causality*

Marian theology of the first half of the twentieth century was influenced by a variety of factors. There was first the theological heritage of the previous century. Marian theology of the nineteenth century and the first half of the past century was characterized by a highly active and productive dogmatic reflection, carved into the rock of scholastic categories and terminology. Consciously or unconsciously, it had been feeding on counter-reformation and anti-modernist theology, and thus stressed difference and opposition which in turn led to a certain overcompensation in things Marian. The typical mental and iconographical representation of this period is that of the Queen of Heaven, the woman hailed as antidote against all heresies. Dovetailing with the Western penchant for monophysite Christology, the figure of Mary achieved singular eminence. In everything as similar as possible to Christ, Mary is unique and incomparable; she is to be placed above all creatures. Giving in to the adage *Quantum potes tantum aude*, mariologists—for a time—may have applied the principle of convenience, *Deus potuit, deuit, ergo fecit*, too generously. Dogmas such as the Immaculate Conception and the Assump-

⁴It goes without saying that one hundred years of theology and devotion cannot be compressed into a series of observations. Accurate as these observations may be in themselves, they do not replace a thorough historical study of that period. Unfortunately, there is no full history available. Useful contributions toward a future history of Marian doctrine and devotion in the 20th century have been made by Theodore Kochler, Stefano De Fiores and René Laurentin, not to speak of the equally valuable contributions of recent mariological congresses, especially the 1991 Huelva convention.

tion not only reflect the Christological tradition of the mariology of the so-called "Marian century," they also highlighted the somewhat spiritually aggressive and reactionary character of its dynamics. However, the two dogmas were not proclaimed in reaction against a heretical movement within the Church. They were not the result of deliberations by an ecumenical council, but fell under the direct responsibility of a pope. They were based on tradition rather than being explicitly rooted in scripture, and they were not shared with other churches as doctrinally or juridically binding statements.

Though Mary was represented more and more frequently as an autonomous woman, without the Christ child in her arms (e.g., as the Immaculate Conception), her theological stance presented a high degree of Christological relationality. Mary's motherhood, her role as associate, spiritual mother, mediatrix and coredemptrix—all titles in high favor among mariologists of the first half of the twentieth century, were the result of assiduous reflection on the theological analogy between Christ and his mother. However, the prominence of the divine maternity was never considered exclusive and self-contained. Matthias Joseph Scheeben's "Spousal Motherhood" was intimately related to Mary's *Personalcharakter*.⁵ Jean Baptiste Terrien's "Universal Motherhood" led its author to expand Mary's role as mother to all human beings, grounding thus her spiritual maternity.⁶ Clement Dillenschneider opted for "Messianic Motherhood" as first principle, but characterized Mary—integrating the ecclesiological perspective in his mariology—as the "Holy and Eschatological Icon of the Church" and spiritual mother of the faithful.⁷ The latter (spiritual maternity) became a much researched theme during this time. Theodore Koehler, for example, who has written a number of studies on this

⁵Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VI: *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*. Fünftes Buch: *Erlösungslehre*, 1. Halbband (2d ed., Freiburg: Herder, 1954).

⁶Jean Baptiste Terrien, *La mère de Dieu et la mère des hommes d'après les pères et le théologie* (4 vols.; Paris, 1900-1902), 1:i, x.

⁷Clement Dillenschneider, *Le mystère de la corédemption mariale. Théories nouvelles. Exposé, appréciation, critique, synthèse constructive* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), 313f.

theme, researched not only the relationship between Mary's spiritual maternity and divine maternity, but also that between her spiritual maternity and her role as mother of the Church.⁸ He was not primarily interested in a historical investigation about a specific Marian title, but wanted to explore the theological foundations of Mary's relationship with us. He attempted this, for example, in a series of articles specifically directed toward Mary's maternal role in the life of the Church and in our lives.⁹

The Christological orientation of mariology had, without doubt, a strong and lasting impact on devotional practice. Marian devotion had been blossoming since the early Counter-reformation days and was thriving ever since the heyday of Romanticism, as can be documented with the statistical explosion of local Marian pilgrimages, the increasing number of Marian devotions and apparitions, and, since the late-nineteenth century, the growing practice of crowning Marian images and of making personal and collective consecration to Mary.¹⁰ A further and important feature to be added to these various expressions of Marian devotion is evident all through the first half of the twentieth century, the establishment of Marian apostolic

⁸In 1949, Koehler was called upon to make a major contribution to the first volume of Hubert du Manoir's multi-volume encyclopedia, *Maria. Études sur la Sainte Vierge* (Paris, Beauchesne, 1949-1971). It dealt with the spiritual maternity of Mary (loc. cit., 573-600). He returned to the topic at least four different times, notably, in 1961, with another major study for volume 6 of du Manoir's *Maria*, where he examined the connection between spiritual maternity and Mary as the mother of the Church ("Maternité spirituelle, maternité mystique," in *Maria. Études sur la Sainte Vierge*, ed. H. du Manoir [8 vols.; Paris, 1961], 6:551-638).

⁹See, e.g., "Maria, Mater Ecclesiae," *Études mariales* 11 (1953): [133]-157; "Notre Mère, notre Paradis," *Cahiers marials* 15 (1959): 177-185; "Notre Mère l'Église, notre Mère Marie-du Moyen Age à notre époque," *Cahiers marials* 136 (1983): 13-24; also "Les titres donnés à Marie notre Mère, aux 19e et au 20e siècles: Avant le Concile Vatican II. Une question de titres" and "The Prayers of the Faithful to Mary, Our Mother, during the Last Two Centuries before Vatican II: Some Examples"—papers published in *De cultu mariano saeculis XIX-XX: Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis* . . . (7 vols.; Kevelaer, 1987), 1:195-215 and 2:269-281.

¹⁰Stefano De Fiore, "Maria in der Geschichte von Theologie und Frömmigkeit," in *Handbuch der Marienkunde*, ed. W. Beinert and H. Petri (2 vols.; Regensburg: Pastel Verlag, 1996), Bd. I, 204ff., esp. pp. 213-221.

movements, such as, Maximilian Kolbe's "Militia of the Immaculate Conception" (1917), Frank Duff's "Legio Mariae" (1921), and Harold V. Colgan's "Blue Army" (1947)—to mention only some of the more influential among these Marian mass movements.¹¹

The distinctive mark of the Marian devotion of this period is one of efficient causality. Mary is a powerful woman, close to her Son and influential. She is addressed as mediatrix and hailed as coredemptrix. Thus, her role on our behalf is perceived in categories of spiritual efficiency. The distance between Mary and ordinary human beings, suggested by her theological image, did not mean separation or rupture. It stressed perfection (the ideal) and power. It presented a personal challenge, with the assurance of ever-faithful dependability. The plethora of devotional practices were centered mainly on this faithful dependability, acting out zealous attachment to Mary according to the simple logic of "Ask, and it will be given to you." Prayer, especially in popular Marian devotion, took the form of petition. It was steeped in the confident knowledge of the suppliant power of the Mother of God to whom her Son would refuse nothing. A similar expectation of efficient causality on the part of Mary can be noted when perusing the textbooks of Marian apostolic movements.¹² They all roughly concur in the pursuit of personal sanctification by prayer and active cooperation in the work of Mary (and the Church) to advance the reign of Christ. Working in union with and in dependence on Mary will further the reign of God and bring about victory over evil. Regarded as Queen and the Immaculate Conception (or the inspiration behind Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12:1), Mary leads her troops into victorious battle. This militant image of Mary may have been nursed unconsciously by sentiments of despondency following the Church's loss of temporal influence and earthly possessions

¹¹See, e.g., the articles in *Martenlexikon* regarding Kolbe (ML 3, 1999, 600–601), Legio Mariae (ML 4, 1992, 73–75), and Fatima Apostolate (ML 1, 1989, 450–451).

¹²See, e.g., *The Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary*, published by Concilium Legionis Mariae (Dublin: DeMontfort House, 1985), 10.

during the latter half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

There is a third facet of Marian devotion which suggests patterns of causality shaping Mary's relationship with us. We are dealing here with Mary's spiritual motherhood, her special care for the brothers and sisters of her Son. Mary's role as spiritual mother is based on a Mother-child relationship, allowing the mother, as proposed by some spiritualities, to form in her child a new life according to the image and in the likeness of Christ.¹³ Far from implying spiritual passivity, Mary's spiritual motherhood promotes a childlike docility and expectation with regard to her ability and authority to form us into other Christs.

2. Patterns of Representation

The Marian devotion of the Christological period was rich and varied. It stressed Mary's primary role as Mother of Jesus, and inferred from there her mission on our behalf. The downside of this theological perspective was a lack of historical dimension. The tendency during the Christotypical period was to overlook Mary's individuality. Similarly, it failed to consider her role as member of the Church. Setting in during the 1940s and culminating in chapter VIII of *Lumen gentium*, the ecclesiotypical orientation¹⁴ in Marian studies counterbalanced some of the Christotypical characteristics, but not without bringing its own limitations into play.

As announced in the ecclesiotypical label, the primary analogy for Mary now is no longer established with Christ but with his body, the Church. This new theological reference marks a turning point from the vertical mediation of the Christological

¹³See, e.g., the very popular spiritual handbook by Emile Neubert, *Mon idéal, Jésus, fils de Marie*, 11. ed., corr. et augm. (Mulhouse, France: Editions Salvator, 1963). This is more than a collection of Marian prayers and meditations. Neubert proposed an authentic spiritual journey according to the *sequella Christi*, understood as Christ's love for his mother, becoming our love for his mother, and her help in our pursuit of greater conformity to Christ.

¹⁴Johann G. Roten, "Affetto al suo piacer quel contemplante," in *Mater fidei et fidelium: Collected Essays to Honor Théodore Koehler on His 80th Birthday*, *Marian Library Studies* n.s., vol. 17-23 (1985-1991): 33-34.

orientation to a more horizontally oriented mediation: Mary is now viewed in her relationship with the Church, and draws her importance from the role she plays as archetype and model of the Church. More specifically, the ecclesiotypical orientation depicts Mary as pre-eminent member of the Church in her relationship with the other members of the Church.

Theologically speaking, what derived from this approach is a mirror-effect. In ecclesiotypical perspective, which rests on solid patristic foundations and uses typological language, the Church reads and explicates itself in the figure of Mary, and vice versa. For example, in Mary, the Church is Bride, Virgin and mother. Various authors adopted the ecclesiotypical reading of Mary's person and role in order to stress the personal characteristics of the Church, identifying thereby the nature of Church not as "what" or "it" but as "who" and "she."¹⁵ Conversely, Mary achieved a more pronounced typological status. She was recognized as "Type of the Church" (Yves Congar), "Archetype of the Church" (Otto Semmelroth), "Prefiguration of the Church" (Henri de Lubac), or "personal concretization" of the Church (Joseph Ratzinger).¹⁶ Personalized beginning of the New Covenant, Mary highlights the ongoing receptive participation of the Church in salvation and thus represents, in Erich Przywara's words, the "inner form of the Church."¹⁷ By way of consequence, the "encompassing motherliness" (Balthasar)¹⁸ of the Church and her holiness are more clearly evidenced. Furthermore, in re-establishing Mary as member of the Church, the Church's soteriological role was more clearly pinpointed. In sum, the figure of Mary, described in her relationship with the Church, draws her importance from the role she plays as archetype and model of the Church.

¹⁵See, e.g., Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Wer ist die Kirche? Vier Skizzen*, Herder-Bücherei, Bd. 239 (Freiburg I. Br.: Herder, 1965), 175.

¹⁶See J. Roten, "Memory and Mission: A Theological Reflection on Mary in the Paschal Mysteries," *Marian Studies* 42 (1991): 96 (hereafter MS).

¹⁷Roten, "Memory," 95.

¹⁸H. Urs von Balthasar, *Der antirömische Affekt. Wie lässt sich des Papsttum in der Gesamtkirche integrieren?* Herder-Bücherei, Bd. 492 (Freiburg I. Br.: Herder, 1974), 153ff.

Marian devotion during this second period was in rapid decline, and reflects the "decline of interest in Mariology"¹⁹ between 1966 and 1972. Matthew F. Morry speculated about possible causes to explain the decline in Marian devotion, and thought it might somehow relate to modern attitudes which he labeled as humanism, feminism, and naturalism. He asserted that "whatever the problem about Mary and modern man, it is clear that to understand Mary she must be considered within the context of salvation history."²⁰ Following the Vatican Council's call to basics and a return to the sources of Christianity, Marian devotion was considered by many—not least because of its luxuriant growth and quasi-elephantiasis during the previous period—as too particular, too esoteric and thus superfluous, maybe even colored with a tinge of sectarianism. Struggling with questions about God, Christ and Church, theologians, pastors and faithful Christians hailed such essentials as love of God and love of neighbor. They rallied around the ideals of the first Christian communities, and discovered openness to the world as primary spiritual challenge and social action as foremost apostolic endeavor. During this period, some Marian devotion was in part absorbed and enriched by the liturgy; it was re-centered in Scripture and re-evaluated in ecumenical dialogue. All these tendencies of rejection, neglect and reassessment led to what were signaled as patterns of representation. Devotion perceives Mary more readily as a member of the Church, a believer, disciple and—with growing importance—a sister. The focus is not so much on Mary's power or person, but on what or whom she represents, namely people living their own salvation history. And so Mary becomes the representative of the ideal disciple, bonded with us in sisterly solidarity. The relationship with her tends to be more mediate or indirect; prayer to her evolves more frequently to prayer with her, and specific Marian devotions are replaced in part with the prayer of the Church. Sometimes, abandoned in favor of a more Christ- or Spirit-centered spirituality, Marian devotion, in order to survive, adopts and entertains a certain

¹⁹Charles Newman, "The Decline of Interest in Mariology," *MS* 23 (1972): 37.

²⁰Matthew F. Morry, "Mary and the Contemporary Scene," *MS* 23 (1972): 153.

anonymity—promoting Marian attitudes, such as faith, simplicity and hospitality, rather than specific Marian devotional practices like the rosary, scapular and consecration.

3. *Patterns of Identity*

A refocusing of this tendency occurred during the late 1970s, thanks to new efforts to promote Marian devotion,²¹ but probably even more so because of a renewed interest in the person of Mary herself. If the first period had been vertically oriented, highlighting Mary's efficacious action on behalf of her devotees, the second period suggested a greater juxtaposition between Mary and the faithful, notwithstanding the fact that Paul VI had proclaimed her "Mother of the Church" at the end of Vatican Council II. Juxtaposition allowed for better comparison, but it was conducive to freezing Mary into a typological category where she served as archetype, exemplar, icon or model, for the purpose of characterizing either the Church or the individual faithful.

During this third period, allowing for patterns of identity, the mariological discourse opted for a more anthropological stance. Many different lines of reflection converged toward this reappraisal. We find here the more down-to-earth images of the second period: disciple, sister and believer, but also a more important concentration on the historical reality of Mary and her condition as God's creature. Mary is not only actor in the event and process of salvation history, she is also recipient of salvation, and thus a redeemed creature. This fully graced person is indeed both a "fully and perfectly redeemed person" and the "ideal of faith," and thus is justly acclaimed as the "personal summit of the faithful." All of these aspects—personal redemption, ideal of faith and hence model for all faithful—highlight Mary's personal identity. The attention is no longer directed primarily to her relationship with Christ or the Church. It now centers on what makes of Mary a human being in her own right and with her own destiny. Her personal identity clearly states that she is creature before God and in need

²¹See, e.g., Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Mariialis cultus*, Introduction and nos. 13, 14, 25, 28, 38 (hereafter cited as *MC*).

of salvation. Redeeming grace was given to her in abundance, but it needed to be received in faith and lived out in obedience patterned on the Fiat of the Annunciation. This allows for a new kind of appropriation. Mary is seen as the one who shares in the human condition common to all. More specifically, she shares creaturely need and status when dealing with dependence on and interdependence with God.

This third methodological approach to the study of Mary had considerable impact on devotion to her. In an effort to bring her ever closer to the multifaceted needs of ordinary human condition, her profile, already flattened during the second period, achieves even greater extension and applicability. She is no longer only sister, but is extolled as the older sister and alter ego of the woman advanced in age or as the virgin and answer for the feminist theologian in search of a feminine model of freedom and autonomy. Rightly *and* wrongly, Mary speaks to abused women, to single and unwed mothers. Woman for all seasons, her figure is instrumentalized for a growing variety of symbolizations—from earth-mother and symbol of fertility, to feminine face of God and figurehead of justice. Mary has become a prominent cultural figure promoting life and fertility, thanks to the archetypally maternal valence of her primary role as *Theotokos*.

By the same token, the form of devotion has shifted. Influenced by a pronounced universalization of her name and person, devotion to Mary has evolved toward a more pronounced individualization and secularization. Individualization and secularization are the consequences of a growing horizontal appropriation; they denote a certain eagerness of identifying oneself, one's expectations and worries with the name and figure of Mary, but without adopting the traditional expressions of Marian devotion. Silent, freely formulated or completely absent, prayer (or its equivalent) is a way of celebrating equality, similarity and solidarity with Mary. Her place is no longer specifically Church-bound or at the side of her Son. It can now be situated, on a parameter of significance, somewhere between symbol and model. Her name has both explanatory value (symbol) and motivational or justifying character (model). As symbol, Mary stands for a better understanding (in

a mostly feminine mode) of some of the eternal questions regarding God, life, and religion. As model, Mary invites fellowship and solidarity in some of the major causes of human endeavor, such as freedom, justice and equality. This so-called devotion may no longer be rightfully called so, because it moves beyond the meaning and scope of *devotion* as described earlier. On the other hand, this trans-denominational and largely trans-religious appropriation of Mary's figure makes of her the common property of both individual assimilation and secularized interpretation.

This tendency toward a biblically and liturgically non-descript reinterpretation of Mary in the third period found opposition and triggered reaction during the last decades of the twentieth century. The reaction we are talking about seems to signal a return to a more classical schema of Marian devotion. General interest in a variety of new-old forms of venerating Mary seems to be increasing. Indicative of this trend are not only the many and sometimes innovative ways in which the rosary is prayed, but also a growing number of people who are attracted by the scapular devotion, the litanies, the Little Office, chaplets, novenas and (not to be forgotten) Marian consecration. An increasing number of Marian publications reflect this call for retrieval of traditional devotions.²² Some of these developments are influenced by recent apparitions and their messages which, in turn, are marked by older and, in part, recognized apparitions, such as Fatima.

But this explains only partially the recent attempts at rehabilitating Marian devotions of the Christotypical period. A more basic and psychological reason seems to issue from the human need for more specific, formal and ritualized expressions of prayer. Vatican II and its call for more essential Christian living promoted a generic spirituality of love of God and love of neighbor. The developments in Marian "devotion" during the third period led to highly individualistic and secularized forms of spiritual interest in Mary. These two developments combined may be at the origin of what might be called

²²See, e.g., *The Essential Mary Handbook: A Summary of Beliefs, Practices, and Prayers*, A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publ., 1999), 101ff.

a neoclassical period of Marian devotion. However, initial observations seem to indicate that devotees are practicing a vastly eclectic and experimental approach to Marian devotion. Proceeding by trial and error, they easily move from one devotional practice to another, leaving behind what does not seem to work, but concentrating mainly on proven forms from the past.

III. Challenges of the Present

1. Checks and Balances

Looking at the balance sheet for Marian devotion in the twentieth century, it would seem that we have come full circle—though not to be misunderstood as a simplistic reenactment of “What goes around comes around.” Indeed, the twentieth century left us with a rich and varied heritage about Mary and Marian devotion. Central to this spiritual treasury are the mutually enriching and complementary aspects of Christological, ecclesiological and anthropological formulations of Mary’s place in the Christian message and her significance for us. They are at the origin of some of the most salient features of twentieth-century Marian devotion.

- 1) We would like to mention in the first place the ability of the Christological period to promote a coherent “Marian spirituality,” based on Mary’s formative role on our behalf. Emile Neubert’s *My Ideal*, for example, was more than a simple compilation of Marian prayers. It offered the devotee a journey in the company of Jesus and Mary. This journey was in fact a spiritual program punctuated with practical exercises. Drawing its followers along a path of spiritual development, it led to personal intimacy with Jesus and Mary through consecration. Regrettably, the subsequent periods largely abandoned the approach of a spiritual life-project with Mary, not least because of the shift in focus from Jesus to the Church.
- 2) The immense merit of the second period was the biblical, patristic and liturgical enrichment of Marian devotion. Reappropriated by the Church and for the Church, a leaner body of devotional practices gained in

biblical foundation; its outreach was broadened, thanks to a more pronounced historical consciousness, and it became more liturgical, as can be documented in the 1986 collection of Marian masses which elevated some of the more particular devotions of religious congregations to ecclesial spirituality. In re-rooting Marian devotions in the deeper strata of the Church's memory, this second period opened new windows of opportunity for ecumenical dialogue on Mary.

- 3) The third period led to a new kind of identification with Mary. Less devotional in a traditional sense, the relationship with Our Lady now stressed comparability and proximity. Most important, but somewhat ambiguously, Mary is regarded as common property and becomes fair game for many a spiritual and political interest group. The anthropological marker is clearly visible and invites a somewhat diffuse and unspecified devotion from below.

2. Presence as Criterion of Devotion

Marian devotion of the twentieth century, regarded as a whole, comprises all the essential facets of true and well-rounded Christian *religio*. Its challenge, as in the past, was how to orchestrate and safeguard unity between the Christological, ecclesiological and anthropological components of its overall expression. In all probability, this will again be a crucial factor in the future.

The meaning and survival of devotion, in fact of religion *per se*, hinges upon the perception and realization of the divine or divinely inspired presence of the object or subject of devotion. There is no sense in prayer, meditation and devotion, if the faithful individual does not have some assurance or moral certitude that his or her act of religion does, in fact, reach the intended addressee. Further, the faithful person must be able to ascertain that the addressee is more than a mailbox or voice-mail number. Prayer and devotion are patterned on expectation and response. In short, there is no true Marian devotion without Mary's actual presence to her devotees. It is our opinion that Mary's presence is ultimately rooted and safeguarded in

the aforementioned unity of the Christological, ecclesiological and anthropological foundations of her person and work. Thanks to this threefold foundation of history (Scripture), ecclesial memory of Mary (Tradition) and eschatological reality (active presence to the Church on earth), Mary's presence is not only defined as to meaning and content, but also as to its spiritual and experiential reality. Indeed, presence is a multifaceted reality.

Presence is an eminently relational reality, implying presence to a person, a thing or event. If this aspect of presence seems fairly obvious, it is sometimes overlooked that, as self-possession, self-knowing and consciousness grow and develop, so too the relational capabilities of the person augment—the presence to self and also the presence to others. We are referring here to the relational capabilities or potentialities of the human person: a highly spiritual or well-integrated person should be capable of a higher quality of presence than someone who lacks integration or higher consciousness. Presence, then, occurs in relationship. Human presence is never unilateral, meaning, for example, that it would be useless to speak about Mary's presence to us without ascertaining, at the same time and as a condition, *our* presence to her. Notwithstanding God's loving and active omnipresence, and Mary's "encompassing motherliness" and holiness, there must be a point where—for real presence to happen—God's or Mary's presence are personally perceived, acknowledged and shared by the faithful. It follows that presence creates communion, provided it is based on free self-giving and the ability to share. Frequently, our impression that efforts of prayer and devotion remain unanswered is due to a lack of authentic presence initiated by our giving over of self to God's will. In its stead, what happens is a quasi-imposition of our requests and expectations, thus preventing us from capturing the offer of God's and Mary's presence and reciprocating it. However, presence, as we understand it here, can never be direct or immediate presence.

Presence among people and the presence of God in this world, as well as in our relationship with the saints, is medi-

ated; we use words, gestures, signs and gifts to express our presence to others. Hence, devotion is a ritualized and symbolic activity, using images, medals, formalized prayer and special times and seasons to establish contact with the invisible. Likewise, we receive God's presence, and that of his saints, in and through symbolic communication, for example, in the symbolic events and words of Scripture and, especially, in the worship of the Church, where the traditional symbols are proclaimed and enacted in manners which call for active participation of the faithful. Of the three great mysteries of God's self-communication only that of inner-trinitarian communication is immediate (non-mediated). Incarnation and the divinization of the human person are mediated forms of divine self-communication and are, thus, symbolic in expression. Jesus Christ, fullness of revelation, is the primary and ultimate symbol of God's self-communication.²³

3. *The Presence of Mary*

As far as the special presence of Mary is concerned, we know that it is totally dependent on the manifestation *ad extra* of the Holy Trinity. More specifically, "Mary's presence in salvation history and in liturgy is always discreet, mediated and illuminated through the mystery of Christ, and her presence is one of wonder, praise, faith, prayer—as befits the disciple of Christ."²⁴ This sentence summarizes what is meant by the Christological, ecclesiological and anthropological presence of Mary. It says clearly that Mary's presence is not limited to past events of salvation history: "The Virgin Mary is constantly present on this journey of faith of the People of God toward

²³For more information on presence and symbolic communication, see the following: Avery R. Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 19ff.; Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 306ff.

²⁴Thomas A. Thompson, "To Live the Mystery of Christ with Mary"—The Presence and Role of Mary in Liturgy," in *Mater Fidei et Fidelium: Collected Essays to Honor Théodore Koebler on His 80th Birthday*, J. Roten, ed., *Marian Library Studies*, n.s., 17-23 (1985-91): 711.

the light.”²⁵ *Redemptoris Mater*, here quoted, uses the term “presence” abundantly.²⁶ The whole encyclical letter is a reflection on Mary’s “role in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church.”²⁷ Mary’s “special presence” in the mystery of Christ and his Pilgrim Church is again emphasized in the latter part of the encyclical.²⁸ On top of being active and exemplary, Mary’s presence is repeatedly described as “maternal.”²⁹ Indeed, Mary becomes and “continues to be a maternal presence” in the Church as this is announced in John 19:25-27. Mary “‘advanced in her pilgrimage of faith’ and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity *the mystery of Christ*. And she still continues to do so.”³⁰

The characteristics of presence anteriorly mentioned can easily be detected in the context of *Redemptoris Mater*. Mary’s presence is personal and relational; it is based on free and loving self-giving; it is mediated and creates communion. Mary’s presence—active, exemplary and maternal—can further, and more specifically, be pinpointed as:

- 1) Material presence: There exists a form of Marian presence, unassuming but real, which find expression in devotional objects (images, medals, beads, scapulars).
- 2) Moral presence: Mary’s example of faith, commitment, purity, self-giving and sense of justice makes of her a model of Christian life.
- 3) Archetypal presence: Mary’s typical, archetypal or eschatological role in salvation history, until its completion, defines her presence as inspiring, attractive, and especially as exemplary. She is both blueprint and es-

²⁵*Redemptoris Mater*, 35 (hereafter cited as *RM*).

²⁶There are at least 22 passages where the expression “presence” appears: in the early paragraphs (1, 2, 3, 5, 8), again in the 20s (19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28), 30s (31, 33, 35, 38), and 40s (42, 44, 47, 48, 49, 52).

²⁷*RM*, 1.

²⁸*RM*, 48.

²⁹*RM*, 24, 28, 52.

³⁰*RM*, 19.

chatological realization not only of the Church but also of each believer.

- 4) Apocalyptic presence: The reference here is to Mary's mysterious presence to seers, and the impact apparitions have on the masses of believers.
- 5) Transformative presence: Mary's role as mediatrix and spiritual mother promotes our transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Mary's transformative presence highlights the Church's sacramental activity and the Spirit's transformative grace in our lives.

As can easily be seen, the category of presence plays an important role in theology in general, hence also in Marian studies and Marian devotion. Presence ascertains actualization. It is an antidote against historicization and symbolic reductionism. In particular, presence as explicated here offers a cultural and theological antidote against what we perceive as (1) a loss of sacramental sensitivity, and (2) a loss of eschatological orientation of life.

4. *Sacramental Sensitivity*

One of the characteristics of contemporary culture, North Atlantic culture in particular, is the loss of sacramental sensitivity. Reality, in the latter culture, lacks any direct and obvious reference to God; this is not so in some of the more traditional cultures. The world-view of the Amerindians is extolled as holistic. Natural, social, spiritual dimensions of life are perceived as profoundly integrated. The present social and natural world have a depth dimension which is the result of the solidarity of human beings with the natural world, the centering of individual human existence in the social community, and the reciprocity of the human spirit with the spirit transcending the human.³¹ The same awareness of spiritual realities is attributed to the African culture: the physical world is embraced and penetrated by the spiritual world. North Atlantic culture,

³¹*The Study of Spirituality*, edited by Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 316-318.

on the contrary, is based on scientifically and economically graspable assumptions of human history. Its mentality operates on the basis of the Cartesian-Kantian dichotomy of subject and object, and its concept of religion identifies not with a dialogue between human persons and the divine but with a dialogue of human persons about religion; it is a "religious" monologue. God is absent from this world; hence his creation is no longer marked with the sacramental grace of his presence.

For deism, whose logic forbids sacramental sensitivity, there exists only the original act of creation. All subsequent acts of interaction with the world are denied and excluded. This rule of thumb applies to miracles, the incarnation, virginal conception and resurrection. Since there is no room for any providential involvement in nature and human history, sacramental sensibility is no longer of import. A certain misunderstanding of religion may have heavily contributed to the loss of sacramentality. For some, the talk about sacramentality elicits fear of idolatry and magic exorcised solely by pushing God out into utter transcendence. The largely Protestant view of the doctrine of predestination, likewise, situates the judgment on human destiny at the beginning and outside of history. If everything is preordained, there is no need anymore for secondary causes, and God's sacramental manifestation in creation and the things of life is no longer opportune.

The philosophical result of these developments is called secularization. However, secularization does not have to be the consequence of philosophical theories. Loss of sacramental sensibility can be attributed to a superficial reading of reality. It is a form of distraction from the essentials, of indifference toward anything that does not hold a promise of instant gratification; in most cases, it reflects a fatal fascination with the self, obstructing the view for anything but one's own mirror image. In the end, God is like the God of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, crucified and powerless, facing an autonomous world. True, there has been for some time a "rumor of Angels,"³² suggesting the rediscovery of the supernatural and an end to seculariza-

³²Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).

tion.³³ Persistence of religion is not, however, synonymous with sacramental sensitivity. It may apply that negative reactions to industrialization and rapid urbanization caused a proliferation of religious expressions.³⁴ But many of them are non-sacramental, because they are mere projections of religious reality. The very basis for sacramental sensitivity is the Incarnation.

Incarnation cannot be reduced to myth, cipher or spurious data. God's coming in the flesh has changed forever the Christian understanding of time and history. Indeed, it has an essentially sacramental character. This sacramental character imprints itself upon time as presence and revelation, pointing beyond the figure of a merely historical Christ to the Alpha-and-Omega in which everything in heaven and on earth will be brought together. Hence, the sacramental character of Incarnation may never be severed from the Total Christ, the Christ of time and eternity. The presence of Christ sustains everything. It symbolizes for all times his solidarity with humanity in its pain and in its need of many forms of redemption. In Mary's Yes at the Annunciation, Christian philosophy and theology finds a permanent and unwavering point of reference for its thoroughly incarnational ethos. Thanks to Mary's Yes in her own time, two things become clear for Christians: (1) faith that is based on Incarnation cannot have recourse to flight from the world and (2) faith that relies wholly on God's initiative is prohibited from hastening salvation by its own efforts.

5. Eschatological Orientation

The loss of eschatological orientation seems to represent a second and far-reaching consequence of modernity. For Saint Paul, the present life of Christians is salvation lived in hope "that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God."³⁵ Hence, medieval Scripture reading focused not only on

³³See J. Roten, "Popular Religion and Marian Images," *MS* 45 (1994): 62-64.

³⁴June Macklin and Luise Margolies, "Saints, Near-Saints, and Society," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 14 (1988): 5-16, esp. 11.

³⁵Rom. 8:21.

the historical (literal), dogmatic, and moral meaning, but also added a fourth sense or interpretation with regard to hope: *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria/Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*.³⁶ The anagogical meaning "shows us where we end our strife." Modern philosophy replaced eschatological orientation with meta-narratives of human progress or forward-oriented pragmatism. The knowledge of the Absolute (Hegel) became absolute action (Marx), a movement directed toward this-worldly and horizontal fulfillment. Secularized Judaism (Marx, Freud, Reich, Marcuse, Adorno, Wiener, Buber and Bloch) has played an important role in the history of negative or broken eschatology. The alteration of the Old Testament God-image in Kabbala and Hasidism, and its rejection during the nineteenth century, was replaced in the twentieth century by mere urging, yearning and reaching out to a secularized future of utopian character. North Atlantic mentality seems to be impregnated with the consequences of the loss of what the Germans call *Letztbaltungen* (an overall attitude toward life marked by the ultimate fulfillment, both individual and collective, in the eschaton).

Here are some of the cultural expressions characterizing the loss of eschatological orientation and its replacement with *Letztbaltungen* (a life style concentrated on purely temporal existence). There is first what some authors call (maybe paraphrasing Nietzsche) a *gay nihilism* (a joyful or happy nihilism) or the perfect ego-cult without guilt trip. For its adepts, immediate personal concern is the sole concern there is. Self-indulgent concentration on the self is promoted to categorical imperative. Freedom is freedom from any obstruction of instant gratification. This philosophy of life is the brain child of consumerism and media culture. Media culture extols the "good life" as continually maximized and accelerated gratification. Thus, the consumer's hunt for instantaneous and ever more pleasurable gratification is on, and totally mobilizes the individual's attention and energy. Eschatology is reduced to the self and the present. But there are more subtle forms of

³⁶Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 27.

loss of eschatological orientation. There exists a variety of ways to express new religiosity which promote the development of a proto-sensitivity and archetypal insight into the life of nature, cosmic rules and the abyss of human consciousness. Eschatology is here sometimes understood as a quest for unity, totality and harmony, achieved, for example, by plunging into the stream or ocean of life. The artisan of unity and harmony is, unfortunately, the subject him- or herself. Totality is reached through amplification of self-consciousness and autosuggestion.

Eschatology is, then, no longer the hopeful journeying toward "the glorious freedom of the children of God," but consists in uninhibited self-appropriation of the divine. Both negative eschatology and this more subtle form of dealing with transpersonal reality (artificial eschatology) operate on reductionism. In both cases eschatology is reduced to self. The difference between the two attitudes described is one of intensity. Negative eschatology denies or rejects eschatological orientation; artificial eschatology masks the absence of eschatology. A third variant is less radical but more insidious. It has to do with religious anomie and a growing lack of identification with the whole or certain aspects of the Church's message. Secular values and habits weigh heavily on the ability to cope with the objectives and norms of the Church. Contemporary religious culture pursues freedom from repression in all of its forms, not least that of institutional emancipation. Add to this the pursuit of existential meaning amid trial, hardship, darkness and guilt, but also amid material affluence and a culture of dissipation. One of the consequences of this struggle is broken eschatology. Broken eschatology pinpoints a *Letztbhaltung* which is theoretically known and accepted, but because of the overwhelming challenge of contemporary secular culture does not have a real bearing on faith-culture and personal existence.

As we have seen, loss of eschatological orientation comes in various shapes and shades. But whether negative, artificial or broken eschatology, there is a common denominator to these three situations. They all call our attention to the tragic character of human existence devoid of eschatological meaning. Without the hope of ultimate transformation and immortality,

human existence remains utterly fragmentary and largely meaningless. Mary's very person and existence constitute an antidote against the loss of eschatological orientation. The grandeur of her destiny cannot be adequately measured without the eschatological dimension of her life: the meaning of life comes from God and points to him.³⁷

IV. Suggestions for the Future

1. *The Paradigm of Pilgrimage*

John Paul II once identified the human soul as the courier of true religion: a real hunger for the "sacred and the divine," he says, "is always found in the depths of popular piety."³⁸ Could this observation be interpreted in such a way that popular religion might also be the carrier of authentic sacramental sensitivity and eschatological orientation? A real hunger for the sacred and divine necessarily includes a perception of the sacramentality of reality and the essential orientation of the human person to God (eschatology). Thus, taking the pope's observation a step further, we would like to raise the question: How can Marian devotion help us either to retrieve or promote sacramental sensitivity and eschatological orientation? We would like to pursue this issue by proposing a Marian devotion structured around two organizing principles: the *narrative* and the *ionic* principles. In doing so, we are using the paradigm of pilgrimage, more precisely the two fundamental categories of pilgrimage, namely (1) the journey itself and (2) the destination (image or shrine).

Although no longer setting aside their daily lives to walk for months on end to a famous and far-away pilgrimage site, even today people believe in the cathartic and transformative character of traveling. Traveling (or trekking) that fulfill some spiri-

³⁷For this whole section on loss of eschatological dimension, see J. Roten, "The Theological and Cultural Image of Mary in German-speaking Countries," in *L'immagine teologica di Maria, oggi: fede e cultura: atti del 10° Simposio internazionale mariologico* (Roma, 4-7 ottobre 1994), ed. by E. Peretto (Rome: Ed. Marianum, 1996), 130-135.

³⁸*L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. Edition), 4 September 1980, 8.

tual need is on the rise as the growing number of pilgrimage sites on the World Wide Web show.³⁹ True pilgrimage is not simply passing *through* space, like in an airplane, but going from one place to the next, an inch at a time; it changes lives.⁴⁰ These "soul attractions," as pilgrimage sites are sometimes called, include a variety of ecumenical places—from Saut d'Eau (in Cor Sodo, Haiti) and the International Atomic Mirror Pilgrimage (from Chimayó to Los Alamos, New Mexico) to Kataragama (Sri Lanka's holiest place) and Taizé (in France).⁴¹ A similar diversity can be pointed out for typical Catholic shrines. In 1998, the shrines receiving most pilgrims were Guadalupe (Mexico), San Giovanni Rotondo (Padre Pio's home, Italy), Aparecida (Brazil), Montmartre (Paris), Our Lady of Czestochowa (Poland), Lourdes (France), Lujan (Argentina), Fatima (Portugal), St. Anthony of Padua (Italy) and Santiago de Compostela (Spain).⁴²

Indeed, pilgrimage is a multi-faceted venture, depending on a variety of periods, types and purposes. The prototypical pilgrimage is that of Israel's Exodus from Egypt, but the classical and new cradle-pilgrimage sites of Christianity are Palestine and Rome. These are reduplicated in the post-islamic pilgrimages (Zaragoza, Santiago de Compostela), whereas the Central European shrines of the high- and late-middle ages still promote the veneration of old and new relics. A much different profile can be found in the pilgrimages of the Counter-Reformation, which are frequently symbols of Catholic *reconquista* and expansion. Many pilgrimages of all periods are centered on apparition shrines. Purpose and motivation vary from ideological purpose (patristic and nationalistic, as well as specific socio-political causes) and recreational goal (hiking with backpack and tent; retirement travel for senior citizens) to penitential

³⁹According to some sources, there were 20,000 pilgrimage site references in 1997. The number of people journeying the famous *El camino de Santiago* route in Spain jumped from 4,000 to 95,000 within a decade. (See: "On the Road Again," in *UTNE Reader* [July-August, 1997]: 71.)

⁴⁰"On the Road Again," 73.

⁴¹"On the Road Again," 77.

⁴²*L'Osservatore Romano*, no. 20, 20 May 1998.

and therapeutic reasons (seeking of indulgences or healing). Pilgrimage offers all of these opportunities and more, but is there a common denominator applicable to all its various forms?

Pilgrimage is a way to celebrate Christian identity. This way leads to the origin of our salvation (memorial); it gathers the community of the redeemed in the present (presence), and proclaims "God's tomorrow in the world's today" (prophecy).⁴³ Mary plays a pivotal role in the understanding of Christian pilgrimage and shrine. In her, who is the pilgrim in faith⁴⁴ and star of evangelization,⁴⁵ the "pilgrimage of the Word towards humankind converges with humankind's pilgrimage of faith."⁴⁶ Her womb was the first shrine in which divinity and humanity met and, thus, she is and remains the "living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the new and eternal covenant."⁴⁷ Likewise, her shrines throughout the world are privileged meeting places for the encounter with her Son. On the other hand, Christians are invited to travel with Mary along the road of love (Visitation), hope (Magnificat) and faith (Cenacle).⁴⁸ Hence, we have in the person of Mary a combined symbol of shrine and pilgrimage. She harbored in her body and soul the one she followed during her pilgrimage of faith. In similar fashion, each one of us is also shrine and pilgrim: the Spirit is within us and among us, and yet the "Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'"⁴⁹ Contemporary anthropology tends to identify pilgrimage "as transforming ritual"⁵⁰ and still uses, in somewhat modified form, Arnold van Gennep's model of separation, transition and in-

⁴³The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Shrine: Memorial, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God and The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (Washington, D.C., 1999)—*The Shrine*, no. 3.

⁴⁴*RM*, 25.

⁴⁵Pope Paul VI, apostolic exhortation of 8 December 1975: *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 82.

⁴⁶*The Pilgrimage*, no. 42.

⁴⁷*The Shrine*, no.18.

⁴⁸*The Pilgrimage*, no. 42.

⁴⁹Rev. 22:17.

⁵⁰Paulus G. J. Post, et.al., *The Modern Pilgrim: Multidisciplinary Explorations of Christian Pilgrimage* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 8.

corporation. Van Gennep called these three stages a "rite of passage" or initiation ceremony, marking the transition from youth to social, sexual and spiritual adulthood. The first stage leads to separation from the former world; the second step marks the transition to the new world; and, during the third phase, incorporation back into the community occurs. Separation is usually abrupt and with no turning back. It involves physical as well as emotional separation, isolating initiates during a considerable length of time. The transition period marks the passage from the profane to the world of the sacred. Van Gennep's idea of the sacred is closely connected to the need for regeneration. The life energy found in any biological or social system is gradually depleted and must be recharged. Regeneration in societies comes about by initiating successive generations into sacred adulthood. Here, initiates will find a more profound spiritual vision of reality. Most important, leaving behind their religious naiveté and declared *non-status*, they are given a new status, considered sacred, that of adult.⁵¹ Van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* was written in 1906 and dealt with the organization of so-called primitive societies.

The Turners, directing their interest toward the study of Christian and non-Christian pilgrimages, focused attention on the middle or liminal phase, meaning the passage or pilgrimage journey as such.⁵² Calling pilgrimage a "liminoid" phenomenon, they do not identify pilgrimage with a rite of passage, but with a revision and reordering of thought and behavior understood as voluntary action performed by the individual. The Turners used the word "entelechy," a spiritual inner force, to signify the spontaneous and "driven" character of pilgrimage. This force of devotion or longing, also called *orectic* force (from the Greek *orego*—to reach out, to extend and expand), signifies that pilgrimage originated outside of the

⁵¹Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Phoenix Books; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 65-115; *Culte populaire des saints en Savoie. Recueil d'articles d'Arnold van Gennep*, Archives d'ethnologie française, no. 3 (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1973), 7ff.

⁵²See Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

structure of the hierarchy, as an anti-structure entity moving toward counter-structure, until absorbed by the structure of the Church. Thus, pilgrimage, or the forming of a *communitas* outside of the official church structures, has a potentially subversive character. Pilgrimage is understood as an experience of total involvement and is ripe with possibilities for a "cognitive reorganization" on the part of the pilgrim.⁵³ According to Turner and Turner, the orectic pole is contrasted with the normative pole of the pilgrimage. Ideas, values, and norms constitute the normative role, whereas the orectic pole presents the pilgrim with "highly localized, culturally specific objects and ideas" and sensorily perceptible forms of the pilgrimage symbol.⁵⁴

Emile Durkheim's integrative or correspondence function of pilgrimage⁵⁵ and Victor Turner's "liminal phenomenon" (understood as potential "anti-structure" model of pilgrimage) should not distract our attention from the very *raison d'être* of pilgrimage, which is the "holy place" (shrine or miraculous image) itself. According to Mircea Eliade, "every pilgrimage shrine is an archetype of a sacred centre, marked off from the profane space surrounding it, where heaven and earth intersect and where time stands still."⁵⁶ The sacred center is associated with the manifestation of the divine or with the human eagerness to search for and encounter the transcendent. In Turner's words, the sacred place implies an iconic dimension or "iconicity, the material representation of religious ideas."⁵⁷ Iconic symbols exemplify the scholastic axiom that we "apprehend intelligibles through sensibles." The goal of pilgrimage or the sacred place may thus give way to a holy person or representation thereof. The power of a shrine or image derives from its capacity to attract pilgrims from far and wide, but this does not mean that its significance is univocally predeter-

⁵³See Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 26-32.

⁵⁴Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 134-135.

⁵⁵Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965, c1915).

⁵⁶Cited in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. by J. Eade and M. J. Sallnow (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 6.

⁵⁷Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 234.

mined. Usually it provides "a ritual space for the expression of a diversity of perceptions and meanings."⁵⁸ All these perceptions and meanings have a common ground: the *actual* world cannot supply them. In C. S. Lewis's words: "A primal desire of man is the imaginative impulse—working under the special conditions of our time . . . to visit strange regions in search of such beauty, awe or terror as the actual world does not supply."⁵⁹ It may be useful to note here what the Turners say about the power of Marian iconicity: "Beyond all other types of Christian representation, Marian icons excite the greatest devotion from iconophiles, and the greatest hostility and hate from iconophobes."⁶⁰ Why is the Marian image so divisive? "One underlying cause may be," say the Turners, "the pervasive evaluation of woman, in the Western tradition, as the dominant symbol of the sensorily perceptible. Woman is seen not merely as *a* vehicle, or *a* vessel, but as vehiclehood, vesseldom."⁶¹

As announced, it is our intent to use pilgrimage as a paradigm for a better understanding of Marian devotion. Pilgrimage forms part of popular religiosity, and so does Marian devotion. Further, it seems convenient and even appropriate to explore the possible correspondence between pilgrimage and devotion, at a time when the Church and the Mariological Society of America are pondering their journey into the third millennium and the significance of this threshold experience. Finally, there exists a real correspondence between pilgrimage and devotion, as we will see. It will lead us to a reassessment of Marian devotion as both narrative and iconic activity. The observations made on behalf of the anthropology of pilgrimage and shrine would seem to allow for the following conclusions:

- 1) Pilgrimage implies a component of *memorial*, a walk down memory lane or a communion with past-into-present values and collective experience. In Christian perspective, the pilgrimage is an opportunity to relive

⁵⁸*Contesting the Sacred*, 10.

⁵⁹Cited in Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), viii.

⁶⁰Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 235.

⁶¹Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 236.

aspects of salvation history and to ponder one's personal journey to salvation.

- 2) There is a *communitarian* element in pilgrimage, suggesting both solidarity among pilgrims and Victor Turner's "communitas," that is, the formation—ephemeral as it may be—of an egalitarian religious sub-culture (called "anti-culture" or "counter-culture"). Without having necessarily a subversive nature, "communitas" allows for personal bonding stressing common interest.
- 3) Pilgrimage offers satisfaction for the deep-seated human craving for *El Dorado* or *Ultima Thule*. This corresponds to Turner's *orectic* pole, the longing and reaching out of our condition as *homo viator*. Striking out on and, if possible, conquering new horizons is both very human and also very personal. In spite of the emphasis on solidarity and community, pilgrimage is a deeply personal endeavor, involving a personal decision and commitment amid the hardship and sometimes loneliness of the road.
- 4) One of the most important characteristics is what Van Gennep called "regeneration"—which, in Turner's system, becomes a "cognitive reorganization" of thought and life. Pilgrimage is a potentially transformative experience. In its course, depleted spiritual energies are restored, one's vision of spiritual reality is rejuvenated or changed.
- 5) Pilgrimage is not possible without separation and transition from the realm of the "profane" to that of the sacred. What is suggested here is a quantum leap. In Van Gennep's way of thinking, this quantum leap leads the initiate from youth to adulthood. Similarly, the passage from profane to sacred has radical, though transitional, character. This entails not only the suggestion of a higher quality of being but also that of coming "home" or arriving to a "sacred place" where one belongs.
- 6) There exists a dialectical relationship between pilgrimage understood as journey and pilgrimage understood

as sacred place. Journey involves separation, passage, transition, hardship, and liminal experience. The "sacred place" is both a magnet for and home to the soul. It is the lieu of conversion and new commitment, and is dependent on the journey for its cathartic experience.

- 7) In the end, pilgrimage prepares and hopefully achieves a new and deeper integration and incorporation of the individual in the greater communion of the Church. Reconciliation between the orectic and normative poles of pilgrimage occurs at this point, normally at a higher level of identity with the Church which makes the pilgrim both a better member and more him- or herself.

These various facets of pilgrimage and shrine will impact the following suggestions regarding Marian devotion. In particular, they will help us to establish the narrative and iconic dimensions of Marian devotion.

2. Narrative Aspects of Marian Devotion

Pilgrimage leads from profane to sacred; it awakens and strengthens in us what is called sacramental sensitivity. Pilgrimage here stands for spiritual journey, not only from heteronomy to autonomy but also, and principally, from doubter or spectator to follower in the ways of Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal of Marian devotion lies here: it sharpens our spiritual senses to the voice of him who said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

So-called "journey spirituality" has many facets. It can be a journey inward or outward, a developmental journey. It suggests passages and thresholds, a striking out into unknown territory, the dynamic interplay of different developmental stages (child, disciple, steward), or a new beginning, based on the archetypal experience celebrated by Dante.⁶²

⁶²"In the middle of the journey of our life / I came to my senses in a dark forest; for I had lost the straight path"—in *The Divine Comedy: A New Prose Translation*, intro. and notes by H. R. Huse (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), Cant. I, 1.

The spirituality which arises from the journey theme has integrating character. It embraces all the dark ambiguities of life, the dying and the rising, the pain and the joy. The road toward the unity of the religious personality is a pilgrimage of the mind, the heart and the soul, but the metaphor that captures this movement best is that of an expanding spiral. Nothing is ever left behind completely, but integrated and transformed; the experience of the past expands in new and deeper ways of being. In its course, our sacramental sensitivity will increase along with our progress on the "way of perfection."⁶³ Devotions *per se* are not synonymous with pilgrimage or journey spirituality. However, it is our contention that there are many elements of Marian devotion which are reminiscent of pilgrimage or journey mentality. We may even go a step further and argue that important expressions of Marian devotion are the result of an actual journey or pilgrimage considered memorable and archetypal for subsequent religious journeys and pilgrimages.

The translation of journey and/or pilgrimage into categories of devotion results in their renaming as *narrative* dimensions of devotion. The narrative is an organizing principle for human action, of which journey and pilgrimage are a part. The narrative metaphor calls up images of storytelling, actors, drama, plot and resolution. The narrative principle imposes structured meaning on human experience, allowing it to be relived and perpetuated. Narration reflects recognizable human sentiments, goals, valuations and judgments.⁶⁴ A narrative understanding of events may lead to a mental re-enactment of the event, taking the soul on a spiritual journey suggested by the

⁶³See for variations of this theme in time and content: Paul J. Philibert, "Pilgrimage to Wholeness: An Image of Christian Life," in *Pilgrimage*, ed. by Virgil Elizondo and Sean Freyne, Concilium 1996/4 (London: SCM Press, 1996), 79-92; John S. Dunne, *The Homing Spirit: A Pilgrimage of the Mind, of the Heart, of the Soul* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Marie Theresa Coombs and Francis Kelly Nemeck, *The Spiritual Journey: Critical Thresholds and Stages of Adult Genesis* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1987); James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

⁶⁴See, e.g., *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. by Theodore R. Sarbin (New York: Praeger, 1986), 13-19.

narration. Thus, what we call "narrative devotion" has at least three components:

- 1) Memory: At the very heart of the Christian memory lies the memory of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. This is the center and focal point of Church identity and Church activity. There is no authentic devotion which can forgo the commemoration and celebration of these events.
- 2) Mystagogical aspects: Narration is invitation to re-enactment. Thus, remembering the salvific events is not enough. We need to appropriate them personally and collectively, but there is no such thing as a simple appropriation of the "holy ways." We need to be led through separation and transition into the "meeting tent" or sacred space. Mystagogy suggests initiation, progress and encounter. We find all of these aspects in narrative devotion.⁶⁵
- 3) Apostolic dimension: "Narrative devotion" has an apostolic dimension, because it is based on action (memory) and leads to action. Indeed, the combination of memory and mystagogy amounts to a special call and mission. Memory and mystagogy lead one to the encounter with the Holy and consecration in his service.

Marian devotion understood as "narrative devotion" offers all of these: memory, the mystagogical experience and encounter, and the practical commitment to both of these. "Narrative devotion" presents a special affinity with the quest for sacramental affinity, because of its constant reference to past or present experience, the memory of Christ's consecration of history and the Marian time and space thus created.

Here, then, are some examples of narrative Marian devotion. The most typical of these examples is, of course, the Marian pilgrimage itself. It leads to Mary (Marian shrine) with

⁶⁵See, e.g., Constantin Andronikof, "Mystagogie doctrinale de la prière," in *Mystagogie, pensée liturgique d'aujourd'hui et liturgie ancienne. Conférences Saint-Serge: XXXIXe Semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, 30 juin-3 juillet 1992* (Roma: C.L.V.-Edizioni liturgiche, 1993), 17-27.

Mary, the proverbial pilgrim of faith. In her company we walk the road many times trodden (memory). It is with her help that we prepare for the encounter that points beyond herself (mystagogy). After the pilgrimage, under her protection and with her encouragement, we return to the same and new life, hopefully better and committed people (apostolic dimension). A Marian pilgrimage, in order to be truly such, always moves between the two mandatory poles of Christ and Church. But there are other, more specifically narrative devotions or special Marian prayers. May it suffice to point out the prayers of the rosary and the Angelus. The rosary has been extolled as a "compendium of the entire Gospel" and a meditation on the mysteries of the Lord's life and salvific work seen through the eyes of his mother.⁶⁶ It is as if Mary were the narrator of the events mentioned, a narrator who was part of the story and still holds an active role in the ongoing event of salvation. Making a prayer of the Creed, drawing motivation from the liturgy and leading back to it, the rosary has truly mystagogical character. It also has missionary power, for it leads to the same road Jesus and Mary walked. The Angelus, which is an abbreviated form of the rosary and is likewise steeped in biblical spirituality, prompts sacramental sensitivity with its attempt at sanctifying different moments of the day.⁶⁷ Combining memory, mystagogy and conversion/commitment, the Angelus remembers explicitly the Paschal mystery and invites us to pray that we might be led "through his Passion and Cross to the glory of his Resurrection." The many Marian novenas and chaplets have a similar narrative or journey function. Though in general less immediately grounded in the biblical message about salvation and Mary, novenas have frequently a quasi-liturgical function insofar as they prepare and lead into a major liturgical celebration. There is the journey, the marked passage and the personal involvement: all are aspects of narrative Marian devotion.⁶⁸

⁶⁶MC, 46.

⁶⁷MC, 41.

⁶⁸See, e.g., *Favorite Prayers and Novenas*, ed. by M. Lorraine Trouve (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997).

All of these examples have a common foundation, as mentioned earlier, in the memorial of the Paschal mystery and, in a special way, in Mary's biblical pilgrimage of faith. Re-enacting the Lukan model of Mary's spiritual biography, they lead from spirit-event (Annunciation, call) to spirit-event (Pentecost, mission), and they find, as is amply evident, a contemporary echo in John Paul II's encyclical letter (*Redemptoris Mater*) "Mother of the Redeemer: On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church." Marian devotion is deeply ecclesial devotion. Its narrative part helps to warrant continuity of the Church's memory. Incarnation is an ongoing process of salvation and thus depends on the memory of Savior and saved. Here is the place of Mary; saved, she both refers and leads to the source of salvation (*Per Matrem ad Filium*). In narrative devotion, we pray with Mary and walk with her the Way of Jesus.

3. Iconic Aspects of Marian Devotion

Pilgrimage and shrine or image are inseparable. We have termed the relation between the two elements as dialectical. One cannot exist without the other; one does not make sense without the other. In the shrine, the sacred place or image, the journey comes to an end and fulfillment. At the same time, there is something in this achievement which points beyond itself, so that what we call home or encounter becomes also the point of departure of a new or deeper journey into the mysteries of God. There is in this "shrine spirituality" an almost hidden suggestion of both "possession" and "absence of possession." Spiritual sensitivity is more *object*-centered than action-oriented. The object (shrine, image) understood as goal, purpose, nostalgia and inspiration becomes an object of vision, giving itself freely to the pilgrim reaching the term of his/her journey. There is a definite visual quality in this second form of Marian devotion which reflects some of the more important characteristics of the aesthetic experience. Indeed, this type of devotion tends to be unitive, "ecstatic," relational and teleological. If narrative Marian devotion has its ultimate model in Jesus, the *Way*, so iconic devotion sees in him the *Truth*. Both (Way and Truth) are expressions of the *Life* we find in Jesus.

But why would we call this form of prayer *iconic* devotion? Why assimilate "sacred space" and shrine with the icon? Usually, the center of the "sacred space" or shrine is marked by the principal signifier of the sacredness of the place, the image—in Marian shrines, frequently a *miraculous* image. Sergei Bulgakov's encounter with Raphael's Sistine Madonna in the Dresden Zwinger (1898) is such an iconic experience. An atheist and Marxist at the time, Bulgakov comes to a new threshold in his journey: "The eyes of the Heavenly Queen, the Mother who holds in her arms the Eternal Infant, pierced my soul. I cried joyful and yet bitter tears, and with them the ice melted from my soul, and some of my psychological knots were loosened. This was an aesthetic emotion, but it was also a new knowledge; it was a miracle!"⁶⁹ Bulgakov's real conversion would come only in 1908, on a sunny autumn day, of which he says: "It was another evening and another sunset, but this time a northern and not a southern one."⁷⁰ The "northern sunset" contrasts with the southern one, and the somewhat worldly beauty of Raphael's Madonna is not good enough to compete with authentic "orthodox" beauty Bulgakov rediscovered during a visit of the *Hagia Sophia*: "This is indeed Sophia, the real unity of the world in the Logos, the co-inherence of all with all, the world of divine ideas."⁷¹ The new knowledge, the aesthetic emotion, the miracle—these are some of the most exquisite traits of iconic devotion. Iconic Marian devotion seeks to nourish the image of God in each person and to promote our God-likeness as individuals in the Communion of Saints. It does not call us to become the Mary or Marian saints that lived centuries ago. Iconic Marian devotion calls individual persons "to become who God already knows them to be—to become who they already are."⁷²

Icons are the work of the Spirit. He guides the hand which executes his design. Icon painters use reverse perspective,

⁶⁹Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, "Autobiographical Notes," in *A Bulgakov Anthology*, ed. by N. Zernov and J. Pain (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 11.

⁷⁰*Bulgakov Anthology*, 12.

⁷¹*Bulgakov Anthology*, 13.

⁷²Anton C. Vrame, *The Educating Icon: Teaching Wisdom and Holiness in the Orthodox Way* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), 99-100.

that is to say they arrange the lines of perspective towards the viewer in order to draw him or her into communication with the holy persons and holy events depicted in the icon. The structure of icons is frequently made up of rectangular and circular geometric forms. A circular form designates the realm of the divine. The earthly domain is symbolized with rectangular shapes and patterns. Rectangular and circular figures are arranged in such a way that the focal point is Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, or both. Thus, in icons, heaven and earth are always related, and frequently embodied in Mary. In other words, iconic Marian devotion invites and safeguards eschatological orientation, not least because in Mary are captured in and mirrored (according to *Lumen gentium*) the essentials of the Christian faith (Mary is the one who *in se quodammodo unit et reverberat* these essentials).⁷³

The characteristic aspects of iconic Marian devotion are as follows:

- 1) Contemplative dimension: Leading from the outside of the shrine to its center and to the encounter with its signifying image, iconic Marian devotion leads to contemplative union with the long-coveted and holy person or event. Contemplation leads to knowledge of the heart, in particular to the prayer of the heart. "The heart unites the rational and intellectual dimensions of the person with the physical, emotional and spiritual."⁷⁴
- 2) Unitive aspect: Without making explicit reference to the unitive stage of the *triplex via*, it can be argued that the sacred place and image are conveying the realities of encounter and home, meaning situations of spiritual intimacy, psychological *Geborgenheit* (i.e., wellbeing, affective and physical security), and even physical respite and recreation for the exhausted pilgrim.
- 3) Celebratory aspect: Finding a home and living a time of contemplation and union leads to joy and celebration. There is no pilgrimage without both solemn liturgy

⁷³LG, 65.

⁷⁴Vrame, *Educating Icon*, 81ff.

and popular festivities. The celebratory aspect of devotion highlights the proximity with the sacred. Engulfed in the peace and joy of the holy place, its miraculous image or message, one finds expressions of spiritual satisfaction and holy exuberance. Thus, the celebratory dimension also stresses the communitarian aspect of devotion.

- 4) Teleological aspect: Iconic Marian devotion has teleological character. Marian devotion, in particular, points beyond itself to the Author of Mary's person and grace. Never an end in itself, Marian devotion extols the marvels of God. Similarly, the icon is a "window unto eternity" and thus the beginning of a new pilgrimage with Mary to God.

Let us now illustrate these observations with some concrete examples of iconic Marian devotions. There is, first of all, the Marian shrine and its (miraculous) image. It is home, shelter and place of rest to the pilgrim. Here, after the many trials and hardships of the road, the pilgrims may exclaim: Now we see! The goal is attained, now we see the longed for image; now the bonding is complete and we will leave this place with Mary's image even more deeply engraved into our hearts, strengthened in our resolve to be better pilgrims. This, then, is the archetypal form of iconic Marian devotion, but there are others.

Marian statues, images, medals, films, and—not to be ignored—our own mental images of Mary constitute the most typical objects of iconic Marian devotion. Vision-spirituality (incarnational spirituality) is in need of images to allow for contemplation, union, celebration, and inspiration. Silent and personal or festive and collective, the veneration of the holy image creates a certain inclusiveness. Images bring people together, bonding without coaxing them into uniformity. In a special way, the powerful and evocative miraculous images of Mary overcome natural divergence; they stress common ground and shared destiny. There are various types of images expressing a specific devotion (e.g., devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel); devotions based on complementary images of Mary (e.g., Sister and Queen) favor a type of devotion which helps

us to venerate Mary's creaturely likeness and ideal spiritual character. There is always and especially the foundational Marian image, that of Mother and child: it is a wonderful synthesis of the Christian message. God gives himself away (as a child), and identifies with the little ones to give them a new nature (represented in the mother). Finally, there is the miraculous image. It has and tells of the history of Mary's and God's active presence among us and is, therefore, of special attraction and devotional importance.

Iconic Marian devotion can also be based on verbal icons. The Magnificat is such a verbal icon because it invites the devotee to contemplate Mary's fulfillment in God and her mission. Marian dogmas, too, may be and should be objects of devotion. There is no Marian dogma that would not somehow attract and implicate the believer; for each one of the four Marian dogmas speaks, directly or indirectly, about who we are in the eyes of God and who he wants us to become. The medal or scapular worn around the neck stress a devotion based on affective or existential union. They project attitudes of communality and affinity with and appropriation of, Mary's person and role in our lives. The highest form of iconic devotion is Marian consecration. The existential bond with Jesus through Mary is here not only symbolized through a medal or scapular, it also becomes an existential and embodied reality and dedication of the whole person.

The history of spirituality holds many examples of iconic devotion, from the veneration of the icons to the newly discovered devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The common denominator of all these devotions is John's icon of "the Woman." She is given to us as an example of Christian existence, both obedient in faith and fruitful in God's service. The Johannine "woman" found a contemporary echo in Paul VI's Marian root-metaphor in *Marialis cultus*. Indeed, the root-metaphor of the *Virgin* underlines Mary's universal significance as the attentive hearer of the Word. Mary is not only the object of iconic devotion (Johannine woman) but is also a *model* of iconic devotion (the *Virgin* of *Marialis cultus*). Marian prayer, according to this type of devotion, is primarily prayer *through* Mary. In the narrative tradition, it was prayer *with* Mary. Here, we

pray through Mary, because contemplating her we see through her the grandeur and graciousness of God.

4. "Both-and"

Too easily, we look down on or turn our back to devotion and devotions. Wrongly so, for much of what we call *sensus fidelium* has its root in popular religion. If we admit with John Paul II that the sacred acts on the soul of the people like a magnet, we need to explore the depths of popular experience. And we should proceed as Richard J. Mouw invites us: "... in all of this probing we need to be especially watchful following Cardinal Newman's advice, for that practical wisdom that dwells 'deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ.'"⁷⁵ In popular religion, of which devotion and devotions are an important part, we find some of the more solid foundations for the survival of religion in general, and institutionalized religion in particular.

In popular religion, the theological message tends to be simple. The contents are symbolically and emotionally arranged, and they reveal a strong moral component. The spiritual commitment tends to be social and finds almost immediate practical application. Not least, and this is particularly true for Marian devotion, popular religion would not be truly popular if it were not of great cultural flexibility and communality. Indeed, rightfully understood and practiced, Marian devotion offers a powerful antidote in regard to the pernicious influence of sects. Sects seem to offer answers (practical and existential) to our quest for belonging, wholeness, recognition, cultural identity and transcendence, guidance and vision.⁷⁶ Marian devotion plays an important role in the confrontation with sects. Sects all too easily fall victim to sectarianism. This is no oxymoron, for Auschwitz was the ungodly consequence of sec-

⁷⁵Richard J. Mouw, *Consulting the Faithful: What Christian Intellectuals Can Learn from Popular Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1994), 84.

⁷⁶See *Sects and New Religious Movements: An Anthology of Texts from the Catholic Church (1986-1994)*, ed. by the Working Group on New Religious Movements, Vatican City (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1995), 68-71.

tarianism. Auschwitz teaches us the horrific lesson of the "either-or" approach so typical of sectarianism. It shows us how easily the promises of belonging, wholeness, recognition and cultural identity can turn into their opposites: hateful division, tyranny, slavery, and death.

On the contrary, healthy and balanced Marian devotion schools us in creative tension and the "both-and" approach, where the divine and the human, the individual and communal, the "now" and "not yet" are held in balance. Applied to Marian devotion, this means that narrative and iconic elements complement each other like the two halves of the moon or the two lungs for human respiration. In particular, this means that we are to recognize the psycho-spiritual function and importance of *identification* and *ideal* for Marian devotion. They are two pillars of religious psychology and can be applied to Marian devotion. The last part of this presentation will be an exploration of their meaning and impact on our prayer life with Mary.

V. The Two Pillars of Devotion

1. Keeper of Light and Traveling Companion

John Moschos, in his "Spiritual Meadow,"⁷⁷ tells the story of Abba John the Anchorite who lived in a cave about twenty miles from Jerusalem. Sometimes, Abba John would go on a journey to visit the holy places in Jerusalem or Mount Sinai, or he would pay his respect to hermits and saints near and far. Whenever he set out on one of his travels, he would light a lamp in front of the icon of Our Lady and say this prayer: "Holy Lady, Mother of God: since I am about to undertake a long journey of many days' duration, watch over your lamp and keep it from going out, as I intend that it should not. For I am setting out with your help as my traveling companion." Returning

⁷⁷John Moschos (also known as John Eviratus), *The Spiritual Meadow [Pratum Spirituale]*, introd., transl. and notes by John Wortley (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 149-150. Two documents supply information about John's life: Photios' *Bibliotheca*, (Cod. 199), from the second half of the ninth century, and especially Moschos' own *Pratum*. It would "not be unreasonable to suppose that [he was born] somewhat after the middle of the sixth century" (*Spiritual Meadow*, xvii).

from his journey, he would find the lamp well tended and burning, the icon of Our Lady bathed in the soft glow of its light.

Abba John was a hermit and pilgrim, and he divided his life between his cave and the dusty roads of Palestine. Our Lady's role in his life reflects the two principal occupations of Abba John. She is the keeper of the light and his traveling companion, and there is nothing that prevents her, in Abba John's understanding—neither time nor space—from simultaneously assuming the two roles in her person. Keeper of the light, she takes on the role of sender and gatherer. She sends Abba John on his pilgrim ways, and brings him home again to his cave. The underlying meaning here is one of direction and orientation. Where Mary dwells, there is light: light that shines on the path, but also light which is promise of home, sweet home. Her second role is to be a traveling companion, offering a simple presence of shared pains and joys. Bonding, solidarity, and like-mindedness are likely to occur between those who travel the road together. Of course, "Keeper of Light" and "Traveling Companion" are metaphors, and like most metaphors are lame comparisons of what they are intended to convey. The suggestion is made that "Keeper of Light" and "Traveling Companion" stand for the two pillars of all true devotion, which may also be described as *identification* and *ideal*.

2. Identification and Ideal

The two notions of identification and ideal pinpoint the very conditions of human development and maturity. In the term *identification* are summed up all those events and activities which gratify the human person with positive and rewarding relationships, and whose immediate gain for the individual are security, acceptance, protection and existential well-being. Identification precedes identity, or in other terms, only people who are allowed and able to identify with others (gratifying relationships) will ultimately be capable of developing an authentic and personal identity. Existential bonding begins with the mother-child-relationship, and evolves in more complex but less fundamental types of relationship, such as, for example, peer-bonding and various other forms of partnership. All these kinds of bonding create and promote psycho-

logical patterns of similarity and dependence, but, at the same time, they also nurture a growing sense of self and self-valuation. Identification, then, is an equalizing factor, stressing both communality and diversity among individuals. Most important, however, identification prepares and consolidates the person's existential rootedness and well-being.

The second factor of psychological development here mentioned is the *ideal*. It relates to the first-mentioned factor, identification, in a complementary and dialectical fashion. Identification favors unity and integration, whereas the ideal awakens in the individual a sense of differentiation and expansion. Both identification and ideal are dynamic forces in the construction of the human personality. The latter, the ideal, stresses qualitative growth and development, thanks to which the individual will be able to strengthen the uniqueness of self and achieve an ever greater expansion of personal interests, moral "conquests" and human realizations. Identification safeguards the quality of being, out of which the ideal will distill opportunities of becoming and growing. Ideal covers a multitude of psychological challenges, not all of which necessarily contribute to a positive construction of self. The various concrete forms of implementation range from moral imperatives to all kinds of utopian schemes for a better world, but, in essence, they all proclaim that human life is a comparative form of life, meaning that there exists in the human psyche an innate tendency toward more and better. The ideal and its many forms of concrete expression represent the psychic dynamism which commands progress, self-improvement, goal-oriented behavior and every "new beginning."

It imports to perceive identification and ideal as being fundamentally relational categories of human construction. As previously mentioned, identification occurs in human encounter and interdependence. Patterns of behavior and the adoption of a particular lifestyle are forged in interpersonal relationships. Even so-called impersonal or abstract human values are conveyed and passed on by learning in society, in small groups, and by encountering the personal convictions of others. The same applies where the ideal is concerned. Admiration and affection but, alas, also fear, respect and submission

to authoritative influence will draw people to espouse new goals and new myths. Lifestyle, behavioral patterns and values may be of independently objective significance, but their real and existential meaning is manifested when lived and practiced by concrete individuals. In particular, values become real when existentially proven, and there is no greater existential proof, of any kind, than love. This is why identification and ideal flourish when they are the result of a personal relationship based on love. There is no real love for life without existential groundedness and well-being, both of which, as described, are made possible by identification. But real love for life wants, explicitly or implicitly, lasting or eternal happiness. This is the place where the dynamism of the ideal sets in to promote and guide human aspiration. Impetus and durability of this dynamism are determined by love, be it *eros* or *caritas*; for without love the ideal falls victim to the temptation of the absolute self or the Marxist obsession with the absolute other.

3. "Being with" and "Being for"

Identification and ideal play a decisive role in Marian spirituality and devotion. Reverting to the metaphors coined by Abba John, we can say that in any sound expression of Marian devotion, Mary needs to hold the double role of "Traveling Companion" (identification) and "Keeper of Light" (ideal). Some years ago, the International Marian Research Institute conducted a worldwide survey on Mary and youth.⁷⁸ Results showed that the images of Mary rated most highly (in a list of 12 possibilities) were those expressed in statements or titles suggesting *affective relation* and *closeness*. The preferred descriptions were those of Mary as mother concerned for the Church and humanity, a lover of the poor and a sister in faith. The affective relation thus stressed centers on maternal characteristics, such as acceptance, protection, dependence, warmth, gentleness, and love. All of these titles and their underlying psycho-spiritual values make it possible for us to identify with Mary, and to make her our "traveling companion." A

⁷⁸J. Roten, "The Virgin Mary as Known by Youth, as Taught in Colleges and Seminaries: Two Sociological Studies," *MS* 45 (1994): 179-185.

second set of images—less important numerically—can be interpreted within the poles of a parameter termed *source of inspiration* and *ideal figure*. Representations falling into these categories speak of Mary's greatness and excellence: she is Queen of Heaven, ideal woman, powerful mediatrix, and chaste virgin. As consequence, these titles mark a certain distance between Mary and the respondents (us). At the same time, they suggest a relation of admiration and inspiration. These qualities are typical of the role and function of what we called the ideal, and thus they can be identified with the metaphor of the "keeper of light."

As mentioned, the affective relation with Mary and the relation of admiration with her—corresponding to identification (traveling companion) and ideal (keeper of light)—are complementary types of relation. Religious education should lead from one to the other, beginning with, whenever possible, a relation to Mary based on love. The combined energies of identification and ideal greatly favor the relationship of an *imitative* type, one based on perceiving a person as model. We speak of an authentic model, when there is closeness and distance, affection and admiration, between subject (the person who seeks to imitate) and object (the source of inspiration or object of imitation). Marian devotion understood as the combined effect of identification and ideal is greatly enhanced thanks to what we have called the narrative and iconic elements of Mary's presence in our lives. Or, expressed in categories of pilgrimage, Mary is on the road with us (narrative elements), but constantly points beyond herself and us to present us with the ultimate reason for her being, which can be found only in God and his design for universal salvation (iconic elements). In order to be both sound and authentic, Marian devotion of all times must convey two things, or better, two modes of Mary's presence among us: (1) we need to perceive her *being with us*, and to partake in solidarity with her (identification); (2) we also need to perceive her *being for us*, to enter into the God-centered dynamism (ideal) of her being and mission.