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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: FROM *MARIALIS* *CULTUS* TO MISSION

A NEW CHALLENGE IN LITURGY, DEVOTIONS,
AND POPULAR RELIGION

Introduction

This introduction will consider three things: the new Marian "problem," the genesis of the problem to be considered, and the methodology used here.

The new Marian "problem"

In 1987, Alan Bloom wrote: "Every age has its problems, and I do not claim that things were wonderful in the past. I am describing our present situation and do not intend any comparison with the past to be used as grounds for congratulating or blaming ourselves but only for the sake of clarifying what counts for us and is special in our situation."¹

That statement describes this reflection. Every age has its problems, and the living Church develops through its response to them. Vatican II responded to the Marian problem of 1963–1964 not only through its statements in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium*, but also through the many theological reflections it depended upon and engendered.² Ten years later a new Marian problem emerged. The *recta et aurea via media* between minimalism and maximalism of 1964 did not seem to be followed in Marian cult. The Magisterium responded with *Marialis*

¹Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Touchstone, 1987), 22.

²Cf. J. A. De Aldama, S.J., *De quaestione mariali in hodierna vita ecclesiae* (Rome: PAMI, 1964); cf. also the articles, some by members of our Society, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 20 (1970): 5–225.

Cultus in 1974. Again, this response to a problem depended upon work done by theologians and instigated further theological and liturgical studies.³ By 1984, a new Marian problem emerged. It was dependent upon the pastoral and theological situation which had been developing, and it brought many of these together. Beginning responses have come forth from the Magisterium by means of new Marian liturgical texts, but the problem continues today. More theological and pastoral work is called for, because that is the nature of this new problem: *Is the liturgical adaptation required by the Church, including the place of Mary in the celebration of the Gospel, actually occurring? And what remains to be done?* The problematic nature of these questions and their ecclesial importance can be better understood by an examination of how the problem arose.

The genesis of the problem

It was only by 1964 that the Marian crisis spoken of by Laurentin was laid to rest with the requirements spelled out in *Lumen Gentium* the year before. A new problem or crisis emerged around 1974. Vatican II was not being followed, some said. I. Calabuig-Adan showed that, insofar as Marian "cult" was concerned, there was no crisis on the part of the Magisterium nor on the part of historical and biblical studies nor on the part of the renewed texts of the Roman Liturgy.⁴ The very next year, the promulgation of *Marialis Cultus* gave a clear account of what Vatican II had accomplished, along with criteria for future developments in Marian piety.

There would be further developments regarding Mary's place in the official liturgy of the Roman Church. But one area, touched on in the crisis of 1974 and given guidelines in *Marialis Cultus*, remained problematic: What was actually happening in the sphere of what we call Marian "devotions," known in official documents as "pious exercises"? This

³Ignacio M. Calabuig-Adan, O.S.M., "Problemi e tendenze del culto della chiesa alla Beata Vergine Maria," in *Identità dei Servi di Maria*, Atti del convegno internazionale O.S.M., July, 1974 (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 1974), 119–120.

⁴Calabuig-Adan, "Problemi," 121–124.

sphere was recognized as pertaining to the external worship of the Church, and, though not liturgy, related to it. *Marialis Cultus* had called for a renewal of existing devotions and for creativity in the development of new forms of Marian devotion. Biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological criteria for this work were laid out.

Whatever one may say about whether that program of the Magisterium was followed or not, especially with regard to the processes set up for correspondence in work between local churches and Rome, all of a sudden a new crisis emerged. The work of the Council on missions, on non-Christian religions, and on the relations between the Church and cultures proceeded apace. A whole new set of references for liturgical renewal came out of the meeting of the work of liturgical renewal and the work of evangelization. All of this applied to the sphere of Marian devotions. Adaptation, inculturation, popular religion, and evangelization became part of the picture of Marian devotions.⁵ This is best exemplified by putting together the two Apostolic Exhortations of Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* of 1974 and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975. The anthropological criteria of the former and the liturgical interest of the latter came together. If there had been a crisis in some sectors of the Church regarding approved Marian devotions in 1974, the "drama" of the "split between Gospel and culture" (addressed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*) added a new dimension to it.

During the 1970s, two theological-pastoral currents of Vatican II came together: liturgy and missions. Both concerned contemporary culture and the cultures of various peoples. These currents had been developing before Vatican II in theological studies and statements of the Magisterium which reflected on pastoral situations.⁶ These situations were part

⁵Cf. W. Beinert, "Prospettive teologiche della pietà mariana," in *Il culto di Maria oggi*, ed. W. Beinert (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1978), 33. In the third edition of this book, (1987), cf. P. Lippert, "I 'Mesi Mariana'," 316. Also cf. B. Secondin, "Religiosità popolare e spiritualità," in *Spiritualità—fisionomia e compiti*, ed. B. Calati et al. (Rome: LAS, 1981), 140–148.

⁶Cf. *Liturgy and the Missions*, ed. J. Hofinger, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1960); *The Assisi Papers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1957); Pius XII,

of a rapidly changing world. By the sixties these changes were related to the role of the Church in the contemporary world. Somewhat evident in Vatican II's first document on the liturgy, concern with cultural changes became stronger in later documents of the Council. If the Constitution on the Liturgy had been done last, it certainly would have been different. The response of the Church to a new and changing world was to give direction to the involvement of the Church in culture and the participation of the people in the Church, especially in cult. The liturgy was to be adapted, sometimes profoundly, to the cultural ways of the people. Cultures not yet evangelized were to be respected, adapted to, and given due regard for the truth that their non-Christian religions contained. Priests and religious, especially those who would serve people barely or not at all evangelized, were to be properly prepared. The Gospel and tradition of the Church were to be incarnated in every local Church.

This program was followed seriously by Conferences of Bishops and Synods of Bishops. The Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) published the Medellin document (1968) and, after the Synods of 1974 and 1977, the Puebla document (1979). The vocabulary of cult and Marian devotion acquired words like *inculturation* and *popular religiosity* which took their place alongside devotions (*pia exercitia*), liturgical adaptation, and the "incarnation" which was the goal of "evangelization." Studies of inculturation and popular religion abounded.⁷ The split between Gospel and culture was evident even in cultures long considered evangelized. In 1974 and 1978, the Congregation for Divine Worship said the second phase of liturgical renewal should begin: adaptation. All the work of evangelization was related to the

Evangelii Praecones (1951) and *Fidei Donum* (1957); H. Carrier, *Évangile et cultures* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), Pt.3.

⁷ Basic bibliographies on popular religion may be found in A.J. Chupungco, "Popular Religiosity and Liturgical Inculturation," *Ecclesia Orans* 8/1 (1991): 97; R. Manselli, *Il soprannaturale e la religione popolare nel medio evo* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1986), 2. On inculturation, see A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 272-279; A. Peelman, *L'Inculturation—L'Église et les cultures* (Paris: Desclée: 1988), 193-194.

anthropological criterion of *Marialis Cultus*, in fact, yet the dramatic split between Gospel and culture persisted in the continuing Church renewal. There were some efforts to do what the Council had called for insofar as Mariology and Marian liturgy and devotion were concerned. But, as was becoming more evident, these were hardly enough. Why?

In this "drama" there is a problem of terminology regarding distinct religious realities. Theologians, bishops, and popes spoke of popular religiosity, popular religion, popular catholicism, devotions, pious exercises, popular Marian symbols, cultural symbols in the liturgy, and Marian devotion. One aspect of this problem is the need for clarification of the terms *liturgy*, *devotion*, and *popular religion*. And since this is a theoretical and pastoral problem, involving the very depths of every Christian person's life, it is better to call this consideration a *challenge* rather than a crisis. Clarity in terms should throw light on the reality we live. The challenge is to clarify them.

To reflect on this problem is very important for the pastoral purposes of the Liturgy. The Liturgy leads to daily exercises of spirituality and becomes the matrix for devotions and popular religiosity. This is especially true, as Castellano observes, in the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year where the ordinary life of Jesus and Mary gives nourishment to our daily existence, as we wait and watch in hope for the fulfillment of the Promise.⁸

The required methodology

Two kinds of interdisciplinary study are needed to meet this challenge. There is a need to bring data from anthropological, social, and philosophical disciplines into theology, to aid in theological analysis. Secondly, there is a need to bring together the contributions of various theological disciplines. This will mean that at times an analysis or conclusion will not be theological per se, for example, the definition of natural religion which comes from the aid which the philosophy

⁸ J. Castellano Cervera, O.C.D., *L'Anno liturgico* (Rome: Centro di Cultura Mariana, 1987), 4, 245.

of religion and the social sciences bring to theology. Again, at times, conclusions from theology will be used—for example, in the definition of Christian liturgy. This approach is called for both by the nature of the problem as well as by the Magisterium of the Church.

Procedure

There are two parts to this reflection. The first part will consider the definition of the terms *popular religion*, *liturgy*, and *devotion*. The second will describe aspects of the present state of the Church with regard to these realities.

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN “LITURGY AND DEVOTION” AND “POPULAR RELIGION”

A. POPULAR RELIGION

We will take into account three contexts to reach an adequate definition of “popular religion.” First, we will consider “religion” in its broadest sense, diachronically and synchronically. Our data will come from the history of religions and the philosophy of religion. Then, we will examine religions of the past and present, in order to clarify what is “official” and what is “popular.” Thirdly, in terms of the preceding, we will make the effort to locate “popular religion” in Christianity, as it has endured in time and in various places.

1. “Religion”

a. *Word*⁹ What we experience we express in words. Words express the meaning of reality, for our experience is understood as meaningful.

⁹ Basic bibliography on “word” would include the following: Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); D. W. Rasmussen, *Mythic-symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology* (Nijhoff: The Hague, 1971); P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (T.C.U. Press, 1976); Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge, 1980); *Hermeneutics and the Tradition*, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, LXII (1988).

Meaning implies direction—how one aspect of reality relates to social, and “historical” (not in the sense of critical history). The development in language for the child, from simple sounds to statements of completed thoughts, coincides with the development of social relationships, from the given to the chosen (i.e., the ethical). All of this occurs in a group context—in a “We”—and not in a context of Cartesian egos.

*b. Symbol*¹⁰ All of this always occurs, too, in a symbolic context. The first moments of language, based on the ability to think in the person and the provision of external expressions of “word” by the cultural group, are symbolic. Just as the first external words are concrete—based on the physical world, so first thoughts are concrete, in the sense that they originate from sense experience—with imagination—and retain the conditions of matter. Such “concrete” thoughts differ from “abstract” thoughts which derive from them. The meeting of the mind and other realities is an intelligent encounter in which we “see” meaning with “the mind’s eye,” as a participant in the reality which we encounter through an immaterial identification with that reality, but under the conditions of matter. When we express the meaning of any aspect of reality interiorly, as well as, though not necessarily, exteriorly, our expression or thought (and language) is *symbol*. Symbolic thought is polyvalent, participatory in the reality whose meaning is expressed, given or discovered in the cultural context (not invented).

Symbols are neither signs nor concepts. Signs point to another reality; they are not participatory. Concepts are ab-

¹⁰ Cf. K. Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” in *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 221–252; M. D. Chenu, *Faith and Theology* (Dublin: Gill, 1968), 96 ff.; P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); L. Gilkey, “Symbols, Meaning, Divine Presence,” *Theological Studies* 35/2 (1974): 245–267, and *Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (New York: Seabury, 1975), Chapter 3; A. Dulles, S.J., “The Symbolic Structure of Revelation,” *Theological Studies* 41 (1980): 51–73; A. Olson, ed., *Myth, Symbol and Reality* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1980); S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); and A. Dulles, S.J., *The Craft of Theology—From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

stracted from symbols—invented, monovalent—and need not be social or based on cultural communication (they can be perspectivist in an individualistic sense). Concepts are thoughts about thoughts. In abstract thinking, we “de-define out” many aspects of meaning to zone in on one. And since all words—concrete and abstract—proceed into discourse or larger wholes of expressed meaning, the relation between symbol, example, and story is primary, coming before the derived discourse of concept, proposition, and ratiocination. Religion, for example, is symbolic, while theology is conceptual. Love relationships are expressed symbolically, but studies of love are conceptual.

The primacy of symbol (and *mythos* or *story* in narrative discourse) to concept (and *logos* as ratiocination in logical discourse) is not simply chronological, for we do not ever grow up out of it. Symbol is always epistemically our first and basic mode of thinking. Even the word “concept” derives from the prior symbol of mental reproduction or birth (hence, Socrates’ use of the midwife image).

This epistemology of symbolic thought is something new, but “new” as a “recovery.” Centuries of Western rationalism attempted to put concepts in a place of priority to symbols, so that in the West even the word symbol (in its original cultural meaning) was lost and replaced with “sign.” “Myth” was relegated to the sphere of fiction and sign. This state of affairs, though still making many persons uneasy because of our past, has led to the rebirth of “symbol” and “story” in the examination of cultural expressions of meaning. History, anthropology, and psychology have joined with the phenomenology of religion in this rediscovery.

c. Religion In the study of cultures of the past and present, it has been obvious that the deepest dimension of the human person has been expressed in symbols and stories which underlie all other dimensions of human nature and development: physical, psychic, intellectual, social and moral. This dimension is the religious dimension.

In the religious dimension of the people in any cultural group is located those stories (“myths”) and symbols which

express the meaning of the "largest whole," the totality of reality. They tell "what it is *all* about." And from these symbols and stories derive the meanings of all other aspects, parts, and dimensions of reality. They fit into the "whole."¹¹

Symbols are the first concrete expressions of the meaning of reality. Myths or stories are symbolic extensions of these words. And just as exterior expressions of symbolic word can be oral or gestural, so the exterior expressions of the symbolic meaning of stories are narrative ("mythical") and ritual. The deepest and basic stories are religious, and these are expressed in religious rituals.

Religion in any culture is expressed in "story" and ritual.¹² But the purpose or meaning of these is to locate humankind in relation to the source of the meaning of the whole of reality. These stories and rituals show that the world points to its source and maintainer(s), transcendent to time and space. And they allow humans to relate to that source in order to lead meaningful lives, to live well. This is remarkably demonstrated in myths and rituals of creation.

Although these roots can be seen in the "natural theology" which developed conceptually in various religions, when leisure allowed the opportunity for reflection, the symbolic prior stories remained. Only slowly, when rationalism prevailed in the West in the post-Renaissance period, did the concept of God and religion begin to replace the symbolic relationship with God and others in religion. In the Western Church, theology and rubricism as conceptual systems eventually took over first place, relegating the reality of symbols and participative rituals to a secondary unnatural place. The roots did remain, however, and the movement of renewal in the Church began as a reaction to this. Those theologies which retained a symbolic basis (especially that of Aquinas) and the movement of positive theology started a recovery of the symbolic basis of religion in the Church, in line with the

¹¹ Cf. P. Tillich, *What Is Religion?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 141, 162; M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 36–38.

¹² Cf. J. B. Wiggins, ed., *Religion as Story* (New York: Harper, 1975); J. D. Shaughnessy, ed., *The Roots of Ritual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973).

historical and biblical movements. This blossomed at the Vatican Council II and continues. The same recovery took place in the social sciences, especially anthropology, psychology, and the phenomenology of religion. This integration of insight among the disciplines corresponded to the recognition of the "signs of the times" and to the needs of the people in various cultures and to the renewal of the Church undertaken by the Council.¹³

d. Popular religion Is this religion natural to the people in any culture, expressed in the symbols, natural and social, universal and particular, which allow those people to participate in the meaning given to the whole of reality by the Source of all? It has many varieties, but this basic meaning is present in each one. Symbols change through history, acculturation, migration, and other factors, but basic symbols and symbolic structures which express meaning remain. Cultures develop societally into complex religious institutions, but the basic meaning of religion remains in the varied religious symbols for all people.

2. "Popular" Contrasted to "Official"

Throughout history there has been development in most cultures. The cultural stage which is the *terminus a quo* in the process of development is called "primitive religion" in contrast to "complex religion." Anthropologists have discovered that primitive cultures were not pre-logical. They had symbolic, even conceptual, systems of thought that had logical systematization. What developed out of them, however, was a complex system of conceptualization which allowed for technical development and conceptual reflection on religious myths and rituals. This demanded a system of economics which developed to the point of providing a leisure class with sufficient resources for record keeping and a religious class with officials who ensured the correct and

¹³ Among others, cf. H. R. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); H. Maurier, *The Other Covenant—A Theology of Paganism* (New York: Newman, 1968); W. Brennan, O.S.M., "The Theology of Other Religions," *Catholic Library World* 43/4 (1971): 206–210.

expanded celebrations of myth and ritual. Rubrics were the earliest "theology."

Societal development with organs of government provided for the development of leisure classes: rulers, merchants, and guardians of "correct" traditional religion. The majority were the subjects of these authorities in various ways. The traditional religion of a group was preserved, providing identity and meaning based on the origins of the group. The authorities authenticated this identity. In religion, civil authorities found their identity. Religious authorities were in that sense superior to the civil, for which reason civil authorities sought at times to arrogate religious authority in many ways.

The people were the whole group, subject to the myths of origin which were basically religious. Mediators between the divine and the whole group, civil and religious leaders, guaranteed the continuity of the whole group. But as mediators they became, by historical processes of social complexification, a group apart. They stood between the divine and the rest of the people. This "rest of the people" came to be called "the people." They were not necessarily powerless nor poor. They were not different from the mediating officials set apart, except for that function of mediatorship. They were the majority. But they were those who received what was originally given to the groups from their origins through mediated processes.

In any religious group, then, there is a dichotomy of people and mediating officials. Studies of popular religion have called this the dichotomy of people and "officials" (or "clerics" or "conceptualizers") who reflected on and handed on original cultural wisdom. Some studies, of a Marxist bent, injected notions of class and power into this analysis, but they did not disagree with the basic non-ideological analysis here presented.¹⁴

¹⁴ Besides Manselli, *Il soprannaturale*, see L. Maldonado, *Introducción a la Religiosidad popular* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1985); T. Goffi, "Vissuto Spirituale Popolare," in *Problemi e prospettive di spiritualità* (Brescia: Ed. Queriniana, 1983), 409-430; C. Agostino, "Pietà Popolare," in *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, a cura

In this sense, *popular* religion adds nothing new to what we have already said, except for the distinction—which is very important to recognize for our purpose—of the difference between the original symbolic expressions of religion in a culture and the conceptual reflections which arose historically as functional mediators in the institutions developed a complex approach to various aspects or to the whole of reality. Reality contextualizes beings. Meaning is the truth of beings *an Sich*, insofar as they are also “beings in the world.”

We express in exterior words what is already an interior word, a thought. Our exterior words are made possible by our family and culture group. As social animals, we are given by others the ways of developing what is natural to us. This includes all of the nurture other people afford us: linguistic, economic, relational, and so forth. What we are given by nature and the natural world is augmented by what we are given by other persons and the social world.

We are beings of the natural world who transcend nature by our interior powers of grasping and expressing meaning. We are natural and cultural; bodies with an interior power of transcending physical limitations; persons with that interior life we call intellect and will, powers of “seeing” and “hearing” meaning in nature and culture and of acting according to what is meaningful in order to live well. Of course, we can also lie and act contrary to meaning, the relational truth of realities. Then metaphysical and moral evil are upon us.

We are born into a *Mitwelt*, a group that nurtures us to live according to the meaningfulness of reality as that group understands what “to live well” means. Our physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral dimensions are given care and cultivation until, with mature development, we contribute to the group through self-care and care for others. Non-care and non-nurture become evil, harming persons

di S. De Fiore e S. Meo (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1985), 1111–1122; A. Terrin, “Religiosità Popolare e Liturgia,” in *Nuovo Dizionario de Liturgia*, a cura di D. Sartore e A. Triacca (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1983), 1168–1176.

and the group. Groups organize methods of this cultivation. These methods become concretized as "institutions" which hand on the "wisdom" of the group, the lore of meaning. These form a "natural polity" or "society" and become "cultural realities" with their own meaning, just as realities in nature have their own meaning.

Through acculturation, the cultural realities of one group become enhanced by those of another group. This process enables each group and its persons to aim at "the better life." Acculturation may also occur within one cultural group, through discovery and invention. It is also true that, just as evil can corrupt a cultural group, a more evil situation can arise through strong personalities within a group or within a process of acculturation.

The grasp of meaning by persons within a limited cultural group is always cultivated by the group teleologically. Interruptions can occur due to "evil" (even the natural destructions called "natural evil"), but the *telos*, the "nature of culture," always goes beyond mere survival. This cultivation is linguistic (both in words and gestures), poetic (including many arts of "making" cultures).

Four further remarks seem noteworthy. The development of writing helped to further the institutionalization of the mediating function. Secondly, theological and hierarchical development in Christianity were social ecclesial "institutions" with a mediating function. Thirdly, natural symbols were always the expressions of religious meaning, even though conceptual explanations of them were functioning as mediators in the growing complexity of religions. Fourthly, in processes of acculturation, often brought about by war, mediators in religion—especially in an "imposed" religion, but even in a "voluntary" change of religion—were often "foreign" to the origins of the cultural group; this caused a reaction of retention, unofficially, of the original symbols and meanings of the old culture group (before the change). In some cases conquerors left the original religion of the conquered untouched. In other cases there was syncretism of old and new.

3. "Popular Religion" in Christianity¹⁵

Christianity spread into the Gentile world through conversion. The first "mediators" or converters to Christianity from other religions were Jewish. The original beliefs of Christianity were expressed in symbols of Jewish culture of the time of Jesus. In the spread of Christianity in its earliest days we see a meeting of Jewish symbols with the symbols of other cultures and their religions.

The Jewish culture in which Christianity originated, humanly speaking, was itself a culture with non-Jewish symbols in it from its origin and with symbols that came from acculturation with other cultures, as well as its own religious expressions which came from its inception and historical development. We know from biblical testimony that the efforts by "officials" to "convert" cosmic and foreign religious symbols were not always effective.

The spread of Jewish religion, Christianity, and Islam as religions of the Book (and, comparably, Buddhism) always included a process of acculturation. These three religions claim a universality which includes the idea of acculturation necessarily, even though there be no advertence to that idea. Their claims to universality and their methods of attaining it differ, for the most part, and these differences bear on the modes and depths of acculturation involved.

The history of the spread of early Christianity in the West is well known. Attention has been given to cultural changes which occurred in Christianity, both to the people and to the institutions (such as liturgy) in the early days of its history, especially in the Roman Empire. Other situations—such as

¹⁵ Most authors go through this history, with interesting differences. Cf. S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); A. Mirgeler, *Mutations of Western Christianity* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964); *Evangelización de la cultura e Inculturación del Evangelio*, Theological faculty of San Salvador University (Buenos Aires: Ed. Guadalupe, 1986); N. Mitchell, O.S.M., *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* (New York: Pueblo, 1982); A. Chupungco, *Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1982). On Jewish symbols, see J. D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985).

the spread of Christianity in Persia, Syria, and post-Roman Europe—need further study. Most of the study that has been done regarding any area of this spread has been done in the last one hundred years. The lack of interest and knowledge before that time makes for a lack of documentary sources for such further study. There were no official studies or reflections on evangelization in the Catholic Church till recent times.

Throughout the centuries, converted peoples brought their cultural symbols with them into the Church. The functional difference between the “official” and the “popular” religion operated in various ways. The “official” mediators who brought the Gospel and theology to agrarian and then to urban peoples, after the time of the Roman Empire, were missionaries, monks, or royal officials. Missionaries from Byzantium and from Rome and from Ireland brought to new culture groups a Christianity which had two kinds of cultural expression new to them. They brought the Gospel, the theologies of the Fathers of the Church—East and West, and the discipline of Rome, along with their own cultural symbolic expression of these and their own conceptual theologies and ideas of Church order. Liturgies were brought to these peoples from the churches of origin and were adapted, in many cases, to the new peoples. New jurisdictions were set up according to the disciplines of Rome and Byzantium. Bishoprics and patriarchates arose in new areas. Liturgies bound these churches together. The monastic liturgies were often the only source of catechesis in the West apart from urban centers. As nations and cities developed, royal officials and then “friars” became officials of conversion to whole countries and to urban populations.

The liturgies and theologies and disciplines of Rome (and of Constantinople) became models of the “substance” of what was handed on to new peoples. The substance is the tradition, symbolic in nature, going back to Jesus and the Apostles and first disciples. Certainly it contained, especially in the New Testament writings and developing liturgies, conceptual explanations of the Christian faith and signs to aid in the symbolic expression of the liturgy. This “substance” of

Christianity was expressed in the converted Gentile groups, with the help of new conceptual developments. As the Church became more developed in social organization, and Rome and Byzantium became centers from which missionaries went to new peoples, the substance of the religion was guaranteed by canonical Scriptures and disciplinary laws and theological explanations couched in the cultural ways—both symbolic and conceptual—of these non-Jewish culture centers; thus, a medley of symbols was brought to a group having its own symbols.

Natural symbols common to cosmic religion, Jewish symbols, and symbols of converted non-Jewish peoples—along with conceptual derivations from them—encountered new symbols and concepts. While the substance remained traditional in Jewish-Roman symbols (in “Europe”), the new understanding of this substance had to be expressed in new symbols or combinations of different cultural symbols.

The more that peoples of different cultures entered the Church, the more symbolic encounters occurred. In all of this development, the “officials” were the mediators between the older cultural expressions of the Church’s substance or tradition and the new cultural ways.

New peoples retained old symbolic religious expressions, but these were related to the traditional symbolic expressions brought to them. These people were not educated nor were they people of critical reflection. Symbols were often juxtaposed. Symbols have many meanings, as we have seen. Sometimes the Christian symbol contained meanings more appropriate to one culture than another. Sometimes the Christian symbols were taken “the wrong way,” according to the pre-Christian religion. Sometimes the symbol was understood only according to an explanation given by one missionary with his own theology. Since the people were not given to conceptual reflection, they were very conservative of their symbolic expressions, whether old or new (ones given by a missionary). They were not given to theological reflection which might have facilitated seeing new meaning in symbols.

We see many instances of all of this in the history of Europe since 300 A.C.E. What was going on was a mediation of the substance or core of tradition going back to Jesus. Officials mediated this process in a more- or less-developed conceptual effort. The people often retained old symbolic meanings and expressions or particularly explained new Christian symbols alongside their older ones. A theologian could be heterodox, if his concepts veered away from the Christian symbols. A member of the "people" could be more orthodox than the theologian. Or, vice versa. The teaching Church, which developed in centrality, became the official judge of such issues.

The learning Church was always in need of purifying its symbols, according to the judgment of the teaching Church, through the Gospel, liturgy and symbols of the missionary center or teaching center of the Church. On the other hand, the teaching Church at times did not hesitate to use non-Christian philosophies in theological explanations, to lay a Christian meaning over non-Christian religious symbols (with limited success) and to emphasize conceptual processes at the expense of awareness of symbols of the people and, even, of the bases of their own concepts. Sometimes they gave wrong explanations to symbols.

What Vatican II called for had to happen: a meeting of official mediating offices and the people, with both returning to the Gospel and basic tradition of liturgy, under the guidance of the Magisterium. Some of this work has started, but the process is slow and the extent of work that must yet be done is enormous.

B. LITURGY AND DEVOTIONS¹⁶

Liturgy is the official public worship of the Church. This worship is organized by officials, as is public worship in any religion. This official organization began in the post-resurrection community and developed historically under the care of official mediators.

¹⁶ *Mediator Dei*, 15; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 15; cf. C. Ernst, O.P., "The Ontology of the Gospel," in *Vatican II—The Theological Dimension*, ed. A. Lee (Thomist Press, 1963), 170 ff. A. Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984).

Liturgy is the re-enactment of the sacred story of Jesus, making present the salvific reality of His words and deeds. The core of liturgy is the paschal mystery of Jesus. The "doing" and "telling" of this re-presentation of the words and deeds is symbolic and organized. It is ritual and narrative anamnesis, as is the official public worship of every religion.

Christian liturgy is distinguished in content from liturgy of other religions. And that content has shaped the specific form of Christian liturgy, even while its general form is in harmony with the human religious structures of other religions.

The meaning of the whole of reality for Christians is expressed in symbols which reveal the truth of Jesus in relation to all persons and things. This content, called the new creation in Christ, is expressed in faith that this revelation is beyond natural religion and is the fulfillment of the special revelation already made to the Jewish people.

Since Jesus' words and deeds expressed His revelation of meaning in the cultural symbols of His situation, these have become the archetypal symbols of the Church, preserved as the substance of the faith. These Christic symbols had their own cultural history within Jewish religion and the forms of natural religion which influenced the Jews. They developed, in the incarnation of Christianity, in other cultures, too. But the substance remained the same, protected by the official Church as it guided exegesis and doctrinal development.

The people from various cultures who are evangelized express their faith through the incarnation of the substance of the faith under the guidance of the official Church. This incarnation should be an inculturation of the faith as part of the process of evangelization. Only in this way, which is a complex and difficult process, can the people participate in the worship that is theirs by right.

This public worship of the Church is officially approved. Other external acts of religion or piety or devotion must also be approved to show that there is a harmony of local symbolic expression and archetypal evangelical symbolic meaning. These forms of cult may originate from the Gospel or from the local natural religious symbols of the people.

In the process of renewal of worship undertaken by Vatican II, criteria for the simplification, purification, and harmonious inculturation of liturgical rituals and of "devotions" have been laid down by the official Church. The Council left as further agenda the pastoral implementation of this process and the need to do the study and dialogue required for inculturation, in order to reach the goal of participation of the people in worship.

At the root of Jewish symbols, Christic symbols, and locally cultural Christian symbolic expressions lies popular religion, sometimes called natural religion, or cosmic religion, or world religion by various scholars. When this popular religion is not in any way evangelized, it is described by the Magisterium as a religiosity, a religious sense, *religiones . . . magis vulgatas* (*Optatum Totius*, 16), or religions even of a higher culture, *apud diversas gentes* (*Nostra Aetate*, 2; *Paenitemini*, 10), able to be perfected in their truth by the Gospel. In the process of evangelization, the symbolic truth of such popular religion may become devotions or even part of the official liturgy if properly approved. If there is some evangelization in which such popular religion becomes in some way expressive of some of the Gospel, though not in an officially approved way, this is called popular Catholicism and sometimes just popular religion. In either sense of the phrase, popular religion is neither liturgical nor part of the external cult called devotions or pious exercises.¹⁷

II. CRISIS AND AGENDA: THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH

A. CRISIS

In our Introduction, we saw that scholars say the Marian crisis spoken of by R. Laurentin in the sixties was resolved by Vatican II. Curiously, however, the same scholars speak of a

¹⁷ Popular religion is not Catholicism popularized, but a not-well-evangelized other religion. The CELAM documents and the Directory of the Liturgical Committee of the Spanish Bishops Conference speak of this second sense of popular religion. We have to keep in mind that it is not a pure Catholicism that has degenerated. Popular religion is always somewhat pre-Christian.

continuation of Marian crisis in the areas of the integration of Mariology into theology and in the areas of popular Marian devotions. And this is with full awareness of *Marialis Cultus*, the *Collectio* and *Lectionarium pro Missis de B.V.M.*, official Roman documents for the most recent Marian Year, the new edition of the Roman Missal for Italy, and the allocutions and *Redemptoris Mater* of Pope John Paul II.¹⁸

It is only fair to conclude that while there may be no crisis in the teaching and guidelines of the Magisterium nor in the official renewed liturgical texts and the many comments upon them in Marian liturgical studies coming from Marian specialists, there is not only a crisis still with us, but also a growing one. This crisis exists in the absence of theological study of Mary and integration of it into theological programs apart from the work of a few Marian specialists. Mary's role is for the most part absent in an integrated way, even in official documents. Only those dedicated specifically to her consider her role in the Church in any detail. A kind of mariocentrism, at times, without integration of Mary into statements regarding Christ or the Church, exists on the theological and pastoral levels. In the case of liturgy one must honestly say that the obligatory calendar has had success pastorally by presenting renewed texts, that the new Masses in the *Collectio* are successful as proposals, and also that *Marialis Cultus* as well as liturgical theological reflections coming from Marian specialists have great value. But these elements have not entered the mainstream of liturgy in the Church nor liturgical studies.

Again, the renewal of Marian devotions does not seem to have "caught on," apart from occasional and specialistic events. There has been some emphasis on popular Marian Catholicism, especially in the Latin countries of Europe and America. However, the local bishops and theologians admit

¹⁸ Stefano De Fiores, S.M.M., "Mary in Postconciliar Theology," in *Vatican II—Assessment and Perspectives*, ed. by R. Latourelle, S.J. (4 vols.; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 1: 469–539; *Do Whatever He Tells You*, General Chapter O.S.M., 1983 (Rome: 1983); I. M. Calabuig-Adan, "Il culto alla beata vergine; fondamenti teologici a collocazione nell'ambito del culto cristiano," in *Maria nella chiesa in cammino verso il duemila* (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 1989), 185–314.

that these phenomena are in need of further evangelization. It is also possible to raise questions about usage of these phenomena for non-religious cultural purposes.

Taking these factors into account, two salient points emerge regarding the challenge at present of renewing Marian theology, liturgy, and devotion in accord with the principles of the Council. First, the developments in Marian theology, or the Marian issues in various branches of theology, must become better known by theologians who are not specialists in Marian theology or liturgy. Secondly, the place of Mary in evangelization must be taken seriously. That will demand inculturation and the investigation of cultural symbols on a deeper anthropological level to serve more profound adaptation of the liturgy and Mary's role in it, as well as the renewal of pious devotions in harmony with the liturgy. Popular religion will have to receive scrutiny from the other disciplines which cooperate with theology, so that proper evaluations may be made in the area of claimed apparitions of the present and of the past.

B. AGENDA

Since all liturgical, theological, and catechetical efforts—whether theoretical or practical—have as their purpose the fuller participation of the People of God in the mystery of the Risen Lord, they are part of the mission of the whole Church to evangelize the world, i.e., to incarnate Christ Who is the Good News. Certain issues stand out as important in order to localize the Mother of the Lord in this work which relates Christ to His people in the Church. I would like to list them, with brief explanations, as the challenge facing us today.

1. Theological Integration

Whatever it takes to make most theologians aware of the good work already done by Marian specialists in liturgy, biblical studies, ecumenical work, christology, ecclesiology and the other branches of theology must be done. That means inviting theologians who specialize in other branches of theology to participate in Marian theological meetings, as well as making sure that the quality of theological work done by

Marian specialists meets the academic standards of theologians in general.

Another aspect of this integration is to find and use methods to communicate good Marian theology to local bishops, to bishops convened in groups, to directors of seminaries, and to Roman congregations. More awareness of the good work done by many specialists is needed by these leaders. Insistence must be paid to academic excellence in this communication, since partisan issues can at times predominate in the choice of what is read.

There should be more publications which integrate Marian theology into other branches of theology, in order to make available to theologians and to preachers an integrated Marian theology. Too many studies deal either with Marian theology as if it were isolated or with sensational issues alone.

More preaching is called for, too, especially biblical preaching. This preaching should conform to the expectations of the Council and to the post-conciliar criteria such as those given in *Marialis Cultus*. Published popularizations of the theology of Mary's place in salvation are necessary.

2. Inculturation

In recent writings there has been a development of the notion of *aptatio*. Moving from *accomodatio* to *aptatio* to *profundior aptatio* (in renewal of the liturgy) to *incarnatio*, (in the field of evangelization), the notion of "inculturation" developed as an umbrella term for the expression of Christian faith in local cultural symbols.¹⁹ Pope John Paul II has called inculturation "one of the many elements of the incarnation" (*Message to Biblical Comm.*, 1979). He has laid down two criteria for inculturation: "compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church" (*Redemptoris Mater*).

¹⁹ A. Chupungco, "Inculturation and the Organic Progression of the Liturgy," *Ecclesia Orans* 7/1 (1990): 7-21; P. Schineller, S.J., *A Handbook of Inculturation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990); H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures* (Duchesne University Press, 1989); A. Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989); R. O. Costa, ed., *One Faith, Many Cultures* (Boston Theological Institute, 1988).

In liturgical renewal, the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship said, in 1974, that the second phase, after the renewal of texts, must be the adaptation of these to various cultures. In 1978, the consultors of this Congregation stated that "some" conferences of bishops were attending to adaptation of the liturgy. A. Bugnini reported that all of the requests for usage of new forms in the liturgy in the fifteen years after the Council came from third-world bishops. In 1988, Pope John Paul II wrote that an "important task for the future is that of the adaptation of the liturgy to different cultures." While some form of inculturation or "organic progression" is needed even in the "new evangelization" of Catholics in the urbanized secular culture of the first and second world, not to speak of the urgency of the third and fourth world, little has been done here. I think it is fair to say that, in the opinion of many theologians, the work that has been done locally and sent to Rome for approval could and should be expedited more swiftly in Rome. The process of inculturation is slow. While work has been going on for a long time in some local churches, other local churches must begin this process.²⁰

In the sphere of Marian liturgy and devotions very little symbolic inculturation has been done, despite the call of *Marialis Cultus* in 1974. Some work has been done by and approved for religious orders. Even this work should take more into account the symbols belonging to various cultural branches of the order. Other efforts have looked backwards to reviving old forms of devotion, rather than looking forward trying to identify cultural symbols compatible with Mary's Gospel role.

The frequent lack of the dialogue between officials and people which could produce such inculturation displays, at least, a lack of the integration of Mariology into other theological disciplines; it also exhibits the lack of a "renewed study of symbols."

²⁰ Cf. K. Irwin, "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," *Vatican II and Its Documents—An American Appraisal*, ed. T. E. O'Connell (Wilmington: Glazier, 1986), 9–38; Chapungco, *Cultural Adaptation*, 41, 88; Pope John Paul II in *Origins* 19/2, May 25, 1989, 17, 19–25.

3. *Renewed study of symbols*

This phrase denotes the call for the coming together of scholars, officials, and the people in the Church. It is *intellectus quaerens fidem populi*. It is what *Dei Verbum* (no. 8) said was necessary for the "progress of tradition."²¹ The Council and the post-conciliar Magisterium have insisted on the autonomy of non-theological disciplines and the need for theology to take their conclusions into account. As a result we see in many theologians, not without resistance, the use of insights from anthropology, history, philosophy, and socio-psychological studies. One such insight is the epistemology of "symbol." *Symbol* is the key to religious expression of belief in specific times and places. There can be no theological inquiry nor liturgical adaptation which does not take into account the encounter of traditional faith symbols with contemporary symbols. This is very painstaking work. It demands the coming together of the three groups mentioned above.

In the work of evangelization, including liturgical inculturation and the creative quality of contemporary devotions—both of which apply to the place of Mary in Church practice, a knowledge of the symbols of various culture groups is necessary. This means contact with the people through participation in their lives and interpretation of what is learned from such experience. Where the local ordinary is too burdened to do much of this—which means everywhere, I am sure—diocesan committees have to do this. But they need the expertise demanded for interpretation of symbols. This expertise is what is meant by a "new hermeneutic." It applies to primary evangelization among non-Christian peoples and to re-evangelization of peoples with some Christian background.

This hermeneutic is both new and difficult. Non-scholars cannot do this work. And even scholars have acted as if the task were merely historical. Special education is needed in order to do, for example, what *Marialis Cultus* calls for as

²¹ Cf. Z. Alsaeghy, S.J., "The *Sensus Fidei* and the Development of Dogma," in Latourelle, ed., *Vatican II*, 1: 138–156.

application of the anthropological criterion. Centers of study have been needed for this purpose in areas of mission to non-Christian peoples. Such centers are needed everywhere.

Let me give an example. In order to evaluate the symbols of the Gospel and the symbols of another culture as they encounter each other, both the meaning of symbol and the particular meaning of specific symbols have to be understood. One does not learn how to uncover these meanings in most theology courses nor by mandate. In the case of popular religion and of devotion among Christian people, pilgrimages and sanctuaries have come to the fore as symbolic expressions of faith. These entities have been focused upon in the context of Marian practices. One recent volume devoted to a study of this symbolic practice offers no anthropological study of the meaning of this symbol, even though anthropologists have served theology by offering interpretations of this symbol. In another volume, one theologian did an excellent job on the symbolic-ritualistic meaning of pilgrimage from the viewpoint of anthropology in service of theology. One may fairly say, "some do and most don't."²²

Whether the effort is to reconsider the biblical presentation of Mary or to discover ways of presenting biblical images in the symbols of a new time or place, one must engage either in a "meditative reconstitution" of the meaning of a symbol (E. Voegelin) or in the process of what P. Ricoeur calls "remythicization." To do this, acquaintance with the meaning of symbols in various cultures, as studied by historians of religions and anthropologists, is required. Knowledge of the critical and social history of popular symbols in the Scriptures, of the liturgical traditions, of devotions, and of popular religion in the West is required. Awareness of the symbols of one's own culture is necessary. Then an analysis and comparison of the meaning of symbolic

²² S. Maggiani, O.S.M., "Proposte rituali per i pellegrinaggi e i santuari," in *Maria nel culto della chiesa—Tra liturgia e pietà popolare*, ed. R. Falsini (Milan: Edizioni O.R., 1988), 148–158, provides current anthropological analysis, unlike the articles in the book *Maria—esule, itinerante, pia pellegrina*, ed. J. Beyer, S.J. (Padua: Edizioni Messagero, 1988).

expressions within a culture can be made. Until we can do this, re-evangelization cannot occur, despite cerebral attempts to do that.²³

Without this analysis of cultural symbols there will be no recuperation of a participated liturgy nor of approved devotions. Even popular religion will stay in a "mystified" state. In the absence of such renewal of the meaning of symbols, especially in the liturgy, other phenomena will become exaggerated, such as the overemphasis on alleged apparitions.

Popular religion in its myriad forms offers us a unique opportunity to revitalize evangelical symbols. We can study the symbols of various groups in their expression of natural religion; we can become aware of how they relate these symbols to the Gospels. Certainly, this relation will be in a way that is not inclusive of official rules and interpretations, but it will allow us to do two further things: (1) be prepared to recognize symbols and clusters of symbols in our own religious situations; and (2) see how evangelical symbols can be related further to actual living symbols in society.

This is a very positive endeavor, full of promise despite its difficulty. It is the opposite of that kind of fundamentalism that purports to understand symbols but really stops at the superficial meaning of symbols in popular religion, as grasped unsympathetically and without depth by conceptual outlooks or foreign eyes. Such fundamentalism makes a mystique out of a popular religion which it does not understand.

Such an analysis might enable us, too, to understand better the nature of apparitions. Whether these conform to the Gospel or not, they reveal a structure of religious symbolic life that searches *to see*, to bring transcendence into the world of corporeity, and to release forces of "the seer" not yet fully studied, but taken for granted, in many forms of natural religion. Eventually, such forces could be aligned with liturgical symbols in local churches.²⁴

²³ Cf. Patricia Coyle, "Mary and Youth Today," *Mary in the Church*, ed. J. Hylands, F.M.S. (Dublin: Veritas, 1989), 120 ff.

²⁴ Cf. J. Cornwell, "The Medjugorje phenomenon: 2," *The Tablet* 244/7812, April

4. *Application in the United States*

Very few studies of the role of the Mother of the Lord in the renewed liturgy exist in English in comparison with studies produced in Europe. Only a few such studies in journals have come from the United States. The same is true of studies of inculturation. Some studies of evangelization exist, but there is no consideration of Mary in them, except for a passing nod. Efforts to integrate Mariology into other theological courses are almost non-existent. The role of Marian devotion in the formation of diocesan and religious seminarians is certainly not emphasized. Pastoral letters of bishops do not integrate contemporary Marian theology with other issues. The pastoral programs for inculturation, that is, for harmonizing existing renewed liturgical forms with cultural expressions of the people, either "mainstream" or "minority," have had little impact, especially with regard to officially approved devotions which retain an unrenewed form where they do exist.

This may seem to be the presentation of an overly bleak picture. It is not intended to be negative. It is intended to be objective and to take seriously the norms for renewal promulgated by the Church. It depicts a crisis or, as I prefer to call it, a challenge. This situation will not be solved by laying blame nor by stating reasons perceived for it. It will not be a challenge met, unless those who consider themselves to be interested in the role of Mary in the thought and life of the Church make sure that they themselves are doing what the Magisterium has called for. If Mary is the servant of God and God's people in imitation of Jesus, then we must be the same. We must move outward from closed circles to more integrated theological and pastoral circles. We must have a conversion to be servants of the poor, open to the Spirit who speaks through what the Foreword to the *New Sacramentary* calls "the new state of the world" (15). It is my hope that this effort to clarify the terms *liturgy*, *devotions* and *popular religion*—and their relation to each other—will be of use.

7, 1990, 445–446; W. Jeanrond, "Apparitions or Christian Witness?" and A. Kelly, "The Crisis of the Symbolic Imagination," both in *The Furrow* 36/10 (October, 1985): 645–651; B. Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 63 ff.

Conclusion

I have tried to describe what is a very critical challenge to the Church in the renewed understanding of the meaning of Mary in the mystery of the Church's theology, liturgy, and evangelical daily life. While the teaching and guidelines of the Council and post-conciliar popes have been clear and while the theological work of Marian specialists and of some biblical exegetes and theologians who are not Marian specialists—in the areas of Christology, Gospel, and liberation theology—are deserving of special praise, the crisis remains. In the liturgy, perhaps, the dramatic split between Gospel and culture shines forth most noticeably.

Theologians who specialize in Marian studies and liturgists who see that so often liturgical forms and liturgical studies are too cerebral know that the challenge is here. Much work must yet be done to build upon the good foundations that have been laid. But the ultimate test of whether the goal of all this effort has been reached will be an evangelical imitation and appreciation of the Mother of the Lord in each local Church as it lives in the world of today.

As Christopher O'Donnell, O.Carm. wrote about *Marialis Cultus*:

The future for Mariology will lie in its being, as Pope Paul demanded, liturgical, biblical, ecumenical, and anthropological. Marian devotion will be expressed in liturgy, have its roots in the scriptures, be enriched and corrected by ecumenical sensitivity and take full account of Mary as woman and thus model for men and women of today. It would, I think, be fair to say that the riches and orientation of this magnificent document have yet to be deeply explored and appropriated by the Church as a whole.²⁵

Mariologists are certainly not out of work!

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²⁵ C. O'Donnell, O.Carm., "Growth and Decline in Mariology," in Hylands (ed.), *Mary*, 41.