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POPULAR RELIGION AND MARIAN IMAGES

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

It is once again fashionable to speak about popular religion. We observe a resurgence of popular religion not only where it customarily had its *Sitz im Leben*, that is among the people, but also in anthropology, sociology of religion and in theological discourse. Popular religion is no longer equated with unenlightened faith of the illiterate. Rather, popular religion is seen as one of the many postmodern alibis for the imminent demise of modernity. It takes an active part in the broad and pervasive upsurge of new religiosity. Popular religion acts as an antidote against positivism and scientism; it curbs consumerism, especially in regions and strata of society where its strength and energizing capacity is related either to the subsistence economies of the poor or the pursuit of fitness and a healthful environment by the affluent.

The "opium of the people" lingers on, however great Marx's distress and Freud's miscalculations.¹ Gone are Barth's and Brunner's critique of religion, as well as Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity."² Already in the seventies, Greeley, Cox and

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¹It would be useful to remember that Feuerbach, Marx and Freud grounded their understanding of religion on the assumptions of a scientifically graspable production of human history, that is on the notion of religion as a human projection. It is based on the inversion of the original Hegelian dialectic. Instead of a dialogue between human persons and a superhuman reality, religion became a dialogue of persons about religion, that is, a human monologue. Secularization has its origin where the reflection on religious reality gives way to projections of religious reality. The de-constructing of religious projection did not eliminate the need for religious reflection.

²Of a radically different vein are Barth's, Brunner's and Bonhoeffer's critiques of religion. Barth's theological self-recapitulation: "Gott für die Welt, Gott für den Menschen, der Himmel für die Erde" (*Letzte Zeugnisse*, Zürich 1969, 21) diminishes and weakens the human and institutional reality of religion. His theology indirectly plays

Berger pointed to the persistence of religion, in particular, popular religion.³ The subsequent discourse on the disappearance of the secularization theory seems to confirm this: the sacred is identified as one of the most fundamental elements in any genuine culture.⁴ Similarly, the social sciences seem to reach the conclusion that negative reactions to industrialization and rapid urbanization caused a proliferation of new social forms of religious expression and content.⁵

Traditionally, Catholic Christianity has been favorably inclined toward popular religion. Although fully aware of its highly volatile character, recent papal documents recognize the undeniable riches of popular religion. Properly monitored, popular religion may constitute an authentic encounter with God in Jesus Christ.⁶ John Paul II identifies the human soul as the carrier of true religion: a real hunger for the "sacred and the divine," he says, "is always found in the depths of popular piety."⁷

into the hands of secularization. This is also true for Brunner, although for different reasons. A proponent of existential theology, which he pointedly called *Eristik*, Brunner considered the anthropological *Anknüpfungspunkt* as the salient feature of his theology. Based on openness to the world, *Zeitbewusstsein*, a strongly ethical orientation, and pneumatological positions, his critical stance toward institutionalized religion tends toward isolated anthropology. Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" is the result of convergence between worldliness and a theology of the cross. Passionately reflecting a religious interpretation of history, he pictures a crucified and powerless God facing an autonomous world.

³The authors mentioned are among the first to question or contradict secularization. They do so in the name of popular religion and its nearly fundamentalist persistence (e.g., see Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973], esp. 169 ff.). Peter Berger, neither professional theologian nor pastoral minister, stated in 1968: "I think that religion is of very great importance at any time and of particular importance in our own time" (*A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* [New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968], xi). Andrew Greeley's *The Mary Myth: On the Femininity of God* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977) is a telling example of deep-seated and persistent religious patterns, rediscovered in the depths of the human psyche rather than in theological discourse.

⁴Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Social Forces* (March 1987): 587-611.

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

⁶*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 48. The same article holds that popular religion (in the words of EN, "popular piety") "manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and the poor can know."

⁷*L'Osservatore Romano*, (Eng. ed.), 4 September 1980, 8.

I. ELEMENTS OF POPULAR RELIGION⁸

Popular religion is located at the intersection of a theological message, spiritual commitment and cultural expression. Popular religion without a theological message degenerates to a set of folkloric practices and patriotic observances. The absence of spiritual commitment (i.e., the effective expression of devotion) widens the gap between theology and culture. The ever-threatening dichotomy between theology and culture can be overcome only in the heart and mind of the committed religious individual and in a community of like-minded people. Cultural expression lends concreteness and immediacy to the theological message; it constitutes the specifically popular character of religion.

The coexistence of theological message, spiritual commitment and cultural expression represents an explosive mixture, viable only if the following minimal requirements can be met:

- 1) In popular religion, the theological message has to be simple; therefore it must undergo de-complexification. Its propositional characteristics will tend toward univocality; the content is symbolically and emotionally rearranged, and both content and motivation reveal a strong moral component.
- 2) The spiritual commitment in popular religion is primarily social. It is, thus, highly visible, mostly ritual, and affective in tone.
- 3) There is no authentic popular religion without cultural flexibility. The transformative and flexible character of culture allows for its penetration by the theological message, for the assimilation and ultimate adaptation of its fundamental contents. In popular religion, the con-

⁸The following developments on popular religion are not affiliated with any particular theory or ideological obedience. Popular religion—in our mind—is not limited to the culture of a poor society; it does not necessarily contrast laity and clergy or rural and urban areas. Although practiced by the masses rather than the sophisticated and learned, popular religion is here understood as having a strong cultural component that is amalgamated with theological and devotional elements. For more information about the wide range of interpretations, see, N. Greinacher and N. Mette (eds.), *Popular Religion* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1986).

stitutive cultural myths are safeguarded but amplified, and often morally and materially redirected, by the religious message.

Based on these general characteristics of popular religion, the following more specific aspects can be highlighted:

- 1) *Popular religion is communal.* It is expressed in group devotions, processions and pilgrimages—activities in which like-minded people manifest their beliefs and needs. Popular religion, if appropriated by individual piety, tends to evolve toward patterns of subjective mysticism and superstitious behavior. Conversely, the strong social component of popular religion warrants, to some degree, psychological and theological balance.
- 2) *Popular religion is visual.* The simplicity of the theological message and the need for collectively shared religious values generate signs and symbols which translate into a sense of belonging and active beliefs. The visual character tends to be pervasive: seeking approbation of beliefs (e.g., rosaries turning gold), using imagery to identify groups and individuals belonging to those groups.
- 3) *Popular religion has ritual.* The ritual element flows from the communal and visual aspects; it involves activity and movement. It reflects life in a socially contained and institutionally structured form. Beyond its self-protective function, it often retains and celebrates, in ceremonials and ordinances, the foundational event or *raison d'être* of the group's existence and history.
- 4) *Popular religion is integrative.* It acts as a melting pot of culture and religion, of life experience and religious sentiment. Maybe even more importantly, by recalling tradition and actualizing the past, popular religion is one of the major factors of ethnic and historical identity. Not infrequently, popular religion forms a bridge between pagan past and Christian present, drawing on archetypes of the human condition (e.g., fertility) and giving them religious and Christian significance.
- 5) *Popular religion has a creative function.* It attempts to sacralize culture and frequently succeeds in recast-

ing a religious event or message as a cultural reality. This may be called the incarnational role of popular religion. It helps to avoid religious elitism, esotericism, and spiritualism.

- 6) *Popular religion plays a critical role.* Throughout history, popular religion has repeatedly mobilized its adherents to resist whatever threatened their geographical, historical, and especially their social and religious identity. Ambivalent and frequently ambiguous as these attempts at defensive mobilization may be, the noblest function of popular religion is to serve as a critical reminder of the eschatological dimension of life.
- 7) *Popular religion sublimates.* In times of trial and need, popular religion soothes pain and strengthens hope. It diverts attention from personal failure and the pressure to succeed. Alas, it may indeed at times be nothing more than the "opium for the people." However, authentic sublimation attempts to compensate human indigence with divine abundance.

II. ASPECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS IMAGE

Brief though present description may be, it highlights the complex task of popular religion to mediate, in simple and concrete fashion, between a theological message and its cultural expression. No wonder that images play a prominent role in popular religion. Their evocative and unifying character assists in disseminating the religious message. They awaken spiritual motivation and commitment, and facilitate the cultural expression of religion. Religious images are of considerable importance in the mediating task of popular religion. Thus, the function of religious images⁹ in popular religion can be described as follows:

⁹The religious image—in our opinion—should meet the following requirements:

- (1) It should have a liturgical character, that is, lend itself to ritual and celebration and, thus, literally be a *celebrated* image;
- (2) It is charged with *affective* religiosity as a result of its being an object of devotion;
- (3) The religious image has an *intellectual* component: its significance has been shaped by successive interpretations and reflections;
- (4) Simultaneously, it is *juridically* protected insofar as the religious image is rooted

- 1) The religious image mediates between theological message and cultural identity. In the representation of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the classical motif of the *Orante* and Immaculate Conception are merged with the traits and the typical attire of an Indian Woman. Thus, the Guadalupe image conveys the idea of theology incarnate. Culture has been elevated to theology. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe bridges the gap between classical theology and the need for acculturation.
- 2) The religious image mediates both theological message and spiritual commitment. A theological message per se may not be conducive to prayer, but the religious image can bridge this gap. It visually translates the theological message in such a manner that it conveys a prayerful atmosphere and invites to prayer. Indeed, we believe in the intercessory power of Our Lady. However, to be confronted with the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help may quicken our piety. Why? This image is literally charged and permeated with the ardent prayers and bold expectations of innumerable faithful, past and present. And so, frequently, religious images are an incentive to and an orientation for the spiritual life.
- 3) The religious image mediates between individual and group. Some people are drawn to Rouault and the dark and dramatic expression of his art; others prefer the serene sobriety and crisp lines of Matisse in his maturity.
Great artists may divide their audiences and cater to specific tastes. By contrast, images of popular religion tend to unite people. Destined for communal use, their graphic form and message are easily discernible. Popular religion produces images tending toward unanimity, images which act as visual support for common beliefs.
- 4) Religious images mediate between past and present. This is particularly true for icons, which are expressions of the never-ending and never-changing splendor of the Holy. Religious art of the West has similar power. While it

in its signifier's intention (e.g., a doctrinal statement). These aspects, though not here further explained, may serve as a foundational backdrop.

activates religious memory, it also triggers political consciousness. Piero della Francesca's *Birth of the Virgin* is reminiscent of religion's turn to the anthropocentric in the Renaissance. Our Lady of Pötsch stands for centuries-old hostility between Christians and Turks in the Balkans.

- 5) The religious image mediates between sacred and secular. It is an emphatic and attractive reminder of the presence of the sacred in a secular world. Representations of the alleged apparitions in Medjugorje proclaim peace, the peace which this world cannot give. On the other hand, Marian images may come to signify the urgency of social change or the aberration of political strategy. In the latter situation, the religious image pinpoints the discrepancy between sacred and secular and calls for consonance.

We conclude that there exists a symbiosis, or at least an interdependence, between popular religion and religious imagery. This relationship is particularly strong in the case of Marian images. The above-mentioned characteristics stress the mediating character of religious images; they suggest a formal proximity or similarity with Marian categories. These categories have a mediating function. Marian categories contribute to the reconciliation between theology and culture, theology and spirituality, individual and group, the sacred and secular. These conclusions can be drawn from some of the more salient traits of the popular understanding of Mary. For some authors, the essential attributes of the "popular" Mary are power and mercy,¹⁰ both of which are bridges between God and humanity and, thus, between theology and culture. Other authors depict the popular image of Mary with more detail, as a living presence—maternal, mediating and sharing in human suffering. Essentially, Mary as Mother connotes communion, which represents both strength and protection. At the same time, she serves as model of Christian existence, with the suggestion that there is a bridge between the ordinary human condition and God's special gracing.¹¹

¹⁰E. M. Toniolo, "La figura di Maria nei canti popolari," *La Madonna* 26 (1978): 32-60.

¹¹G. Agostino, "Chi è Maria per il popolo?" *La Madonna* 32 (1984): 5-6.

III. MARIAN IMAGES AND POPULAR RELIGION

Having established a formal or structural similarity between popular religion, religious images and Marian categories, let us now turn to the Marian image in popular religion. Numerous questions immediately arise: What constitutes a Marian image in popular religion? Is there a difference between Marian images of a more popular nature and other images? What precisely are those other images like? In determining the popular image of Mary, is there need for cultural and historical differentiation? More specifically, what constitutes the popular character of Marian imagery? Is it a purely mental category? On the other hand, are popular representations of Mary limited to holy cards? Or should monumental art, such as statues and frescoes in churches, be included? What changes are noted? Are there specific trends, and what factors shape these trends? What is the religious and cultural importance of Marian images in popular religion?

Only a few of these questions will be dealt with in this study. Our approach will be phenomenological, based on Marian imagery of this century, and will deal with visual documents found mainly in the context of North Atlantic culture. We begin by clarifying some nomenclature and making some qualitative decisions. North Atlantic religious imagery of the twentieth century, including Marian images, falls into three broad categories.¹²

Religious art can be an immediate expression of religious belief and behavior. In this case, content is the dominant factor and form its subordinate variable: the theme commands the artistic expression (e.g., representations of the Ascension of Christ, of the Eucharist, of St. Dominic). However, the artistic composition will take on a different expression if the rendering is intended to be devotional or, by contrast, liturgical. In the latter situation, art reflects orthodoxy, which is understood as the religious belief and behavior defined by the Church's un-

¹²The following attempt at categorizing North Atlantic religious imagery rests on personal observations, choice of terminology and contents. The designation "North Atlantic" covers Western Europe and the United States.

derstanding of self, of God's self-revelation, and of their various historical articulations. Since religious art grounded in the semantics of orthodoxy always includes a public dimension, it is endowed with an official status.

Not so in the case of devotional art. Although the emphasis on content and semantic orthodoxy is still strong, the primary appeal will be directed toward the religious sentiment of the individual and the people. Devotional art wants not only to promote piety but also to do it in a pleasing way, often drawing the "consumer" into an atmosphere of abstract sensuality, or wrapping the onlooker in a cocoon of fetal peace and gratification sealed against the hurricanes of life. However, it may also confront the devotee with dramatic and bloody depictions of the heroes and models shown.

There is a third category of religious art, not always in tune with the semantics of orthodoxy nor necessarily intent on cajoling the spectator into attitudes of personal and collective devotion. It springs from the artist's own experience of the holy, of self, and of life, and turns to the religious for visual support. Artistic sensitivity may discover a spontaneous affinity with iconographic contents without slavishly espousing them. Alas, the religious motive does not always survive this approach unscathed! In the process, it may suffer alienation or be degraded to iconographical meaninglessness. It may be said, on the other hand, that some of the most accomplished Marian artwork of this and other centuries are the fruit of a happy marriage between the highly personal sensitivity of the artist and a respectful artistic translation of iconographical categories.

Based on this general description, Marian art in the twentieth century can be investigated and assessed according to the following categories.

1. Devotional images

Marian images can be essentially devotional and thus reflect an attempt to foster personal and collective devotion to Mary. Devotional images represent a very broad and pervasive category, satisfying not only religious but sometimes also ideological needs. The devotional image frequently has a functional character; it may be used not only to commemorate anniver-

saries or adorn "Thank you" cards, but also to decorate special prayer cards and advertisements (e.g., "pro life" posters). Content, style and quality of the devotional image reflect a broad variety of realizations—some happy and some not-so-happy.

2. Liturgical images

The second category corresponds to the liturgical image. Here, we are dealing mostly with commissioned art which, in content and sometimes even in style, is subject to ecclesiastical authority. Liturgical art, by its very nature, is public and communitarian, closely linked to church architecture, liturgical purpose and usage. One of the special features of liturgical art is its contextual character. The specific work of art—be it a painting or a statue—forms part of an architectural and iconographical ensemble, and should therefore be read and interpreted within that context. Thus, a Marian liturgical image may indicate the patron of a church, highlight a particular element or link of the iconographical message, or simply serve as a decorative piece.

3. Artistic images

The third category can be labeled as official or "profane" art, the type which usually constitutes the object of art history. It is represented by recognized and celebrated artists. Sometimes it may be identified by the artist's name and specific style more readily than by the specifically religious thematic of the art.

The various categories here described may overlap or interpenetrate each other. Not infrequently, devotional and liturgical art tend to form an unholy alliance. Devotional art impregnates people's religious imagination and sensitivity in an emotionally tenuous manner; this promotes artistic clichés and straightjacketing attachment to poor artistic quality. Given the fact that devotional art emphasizes the functional and pious dimension more than the artistic expression, the ties between devotional and artistic images are usually very loose. In a similar way, we frequently notice a strained relationship between liturgical and artistic images due to the difficult task of synthesizing the creative freedom of the artist and the didactic purpose of liturgical art. Although religiously

or iconographically independent, artistic images often are the most creative and formative. Authentic religious art should reflect all three categories:

- 1) It should have the emotional impact of devotional art;
- 2) It should follow visually recognizable iconographical canons and thus be theologically accurate;
- 3) It should be translated by genuine artistic sensibility into categories of contemporary understanding.

As we examine these three categories of devotional, liturgical and artistic imagery, it becomes clear that popular religion oscillates mainly between devotional and liturgical art, illustrating thereby what we said about the relation between theological message, spiritual commitment and cultural expression. But, there is need for further clarification on the development and interaction between Marian devotional and liturgical art during this century.

IV. MARIAN IMAGES BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND ART

Before we explore this topic, another important question must be faced. Whatever the appropriate categories to locate twentieth-century popular Marian art, we first need to inquire about the two major sources of any religious art, namely theology and art. More specifically, what kind of theology and what kind of art have left their mark on Marian images in contemporary popular religion?

1. The Theological Image of Mary in this Century

There exists an intimate and mutually fruitful relationship between theological reflection and theological imagination. We find theological imagination frequently at the outset and at the end of theological reflection. Imagination plays the role of existentially rooted pre-understanding of theological contents. It inspires and motivates the theological process and assures existential meaningfulness. At the end of a complex process of theological elaboration, theological imagination provides a theological image as a synthesis. This theological image integrates and simplifies theological reflection by stripping it of its

complexity. The theological image concentrates on essentials and highlights their most visible traits.

Understood in this sense, three major theological images of Mary can be singled out for this century.¹³ They can be found unevenly distributed over the past nine decades.

- 1) Until Vatican II, the theological profile of Mary was marked by the post-tridentine image of the Queen of Heaven, originating in the counter-reformation period and standing for opposition and difference. Later, the ideal and remote character of this image was reinforced by the so-called "privilege Mariology" (in particular by the dogmatic definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption) and the growing number of apparitions (beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century). The distance between Mary and ordinary human beings suggested by this theological image does not mean separation or rupture. It stresses ideal and power; it presents personal challenge with the assurance of ever-faithful dependability. This explains why, during the first half of this century, theological reflection concentrated on the theological image of Mary as mediatrix.
- 2) The theological image of the Queen of Heaven was already replaced before, and especially after, Vatican II by a more ancient image of Mary, one rooted in patristic theology. Mary is viewed in her relationship with the Church, and draws her importance from the role she plays as archetype and model of the Church. This new theological image marks a turning point from vertical mediation to a more horizontally oriented mediation. The primary analogy is not established with Christ but with his body, the Church. Mary is type of the Church with regard to faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. She is archetype of the Church's virginal and maternal character. As the firm believer and first disciple, this image depicts Mary in her relationship—similarity above dissimilarity—with the other members of the Church. This

¹³W. Beinert, *Maria—eine ökumenische Herausforderung* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1984), 75–116.

new-yet-old theological image of Mary does not reject the christotypical understanding of Mary, but it simultaneously suggests democratization, proximity, and identification, without depriving Mary of her maternal role.

- 3) More recently, thanks in part to Paul VI's humanism and John Paul II's personalism, theological attention is concentrated more specifically on Mary's person. The ensuing theological image may be called the New Woman. Mary is presented as model of Christian life.¹⁴ Perceived in the past mainly as pure virgin, caring mother and humble wife, she is now presented as strong woman endowed with liberating religiosity. Mary becomes the exemplary person for the present: John Paul II declares her the model of all those who do not passively accept injustice, misery and hardship.¹⁵ Mary is presented as the pilgrim-model of faith,¹⁶ who reflects and sustains the dignity of women.¹⁷ This theological image of Mary constitutes a mirror of religious and human expectations for people of our time.

These three theological images can be discovered—as we will point out—in some of the more influential representations of Mary in popular religion. This applies in particular to the images “Queen of Heaven” and “New Woman.”¹⁸ Both show a marked profile of high visibility and embody the classical polarity between this- and otherworldliness. They are

¹⁴“She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has permanent and universal exemplary value” (*Mariæ cultus*, 35).

¹⁵Excerpts of John Paul II's homily in Zapopán (30 January 1977) became part of “The Puebla Final Document”: “Those who do not passively accept the adverse circumstances of personal and social life and who are not victims of ‘alienation,’ as the expression goes today, but who instead join with her in proclaiming that God is the ‘avenger of the lowly’ and will, if need be, depose ‘the mighty from their thrones’”. . . . (*Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, J. Eagleson and Ph. Scharper [eds.], [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1979], 163).

¹⁶*Redemptoris mater*, 25.

¹⁷*Mulieris dignitatem*, 29.

¹⁸See, e.g., Els Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary: A Feminist Appropriation of a Traditional Religious Symbol* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1991).

easily grasped by popular religion, unlike the more nuanced and sophisticated theological image of Mary as Archetype of the Church, which requires more elaborate iconographical knowledge.

2. *The Image of the Human Person in Twentieth-century Art*¹⁹

Religious imaging, mediocre as it sometimes may be, represents a form of art and, as such, is exposed to the laws and history of artistic creation. Marian art in the twentieth century is no exception to the rule, although with some restriction. Since Marian images in popular religion appear mainly as devotional and liturgical representations, artistic images properly so-called are less prominent and numerous. Among renowned artists of this century whose religious art has reached popular notoriety (so as to be considered popular religious art), we count Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault. The name of each of them is synonymous with compact and highly decorative religious art (Chagall in his stained glass windows, Matisse in the religious phase of his mature work). Their religious work reflects the immediacy and simplicity of the icon style. Some examples are Chagall's *Mary with Child*, stained glass, St. Stephan, Mainz (Germany); Matisse's *Study for Virgin and Child*, lithograph, Chapel of Vence (France), 1950/51; and Rouault's *Notre Dame de la fin des terres vigilante* (cf. *illus. no. 1*, p. 84).

The common denominator of twentieth-century art is expressionism. Notwithstanding the confusing multiplicity of currents and schools like fauvism, cubism, dada, the new objectivity, surrealism, abstract expressionism, pop art, *assemblage*, Europe's new realism, constructionism, post-painterly abstraction, op art, minimalism, conceptual art, neo-abstraction and neo-expressionism—the overriding and overarching thrust of twentieth-century art is expressionism with its radical program of deconstructing and reassembling the representation of the human person.

¹⁹See W. Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century* (2 vols.; New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965); H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986³); P. H. Selz, *New Images of Man* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959).

Profoundly marked by two world wars and by cultural transformations without precedent, artistic expressionism has been obsessed throughout this century with the rediscovery of the deeper identity of the human person and, simultaneously, with the artistic rendering of a human condition maimed and broken.

- 1) Artists, from Picasso to the super-naturalists, have experimented with the dismembering, the disintegration and the dissolution of the pictorial form in order to liberate the secret of human existence. Rico Lebrun's *Shell of Mary* (1948) illustrates this process (*illus. no. 2*). The empty shell which signifies Mary is indicative of a complete loss of personal identity. Losing her Son to meaningless death brought her own life and its purpose to the edge. Thus, gutting the representation of Mary of its contents, human existence is revealed as senseless.
- 2) Brokenness of human existence, the other major theme of expressionism, can be illustrated in Graham Sutherland's *Descent of the Cross* (1952). The specific iconographical motif of Christ's death occasions a quasi-total dissolution of all pictorial forms. The devastating effect of the event almost completely disfigures Mary.²⁰

Lebrun and Sutherland are not representative of all expressionism. Artistic deconstruction and restructuring of the human form does not have to end in despair and nihilism. There are many impressive and motivating examples of Marian expressionist art. We mention the work of one painter, the Belgian artist Albert Servaes (1883-1952),²¹ also called the "Fra Angelico of Expressionism," who was, without doubt, one of the most prolific Marian painters of this century (*illus. no. 3*). Master of the tortured form, of symbolic disproportion and vision-

²⁰*Descent of the Cross*, by Graham Sutherland, oil on cardboard, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1946.

²¹See, e.g., A. Stubbe, *La Madone dans l'art* (Bruxelles: Elsevier, 1958), 341 ff.; Lydia M. A. Schoonbaert, *Albert Servaes* (Tiel: Lannoo, 1984).

ary exaltation, Servaes nonetheless respected and cultivated the iconographical message and enriched the variety of its expressions. Consistent with the existentialist coloring of expressionism, the representation of the Pietà is likely to be one of the most typical expressions of Marian art in this century²² (*illus. no. 4*).

In this short overview on how the human figure was presented in the early twentieth century, we have been talking about artistic images, and not of the typical representations of devotional and liturgical art. The question therefore remains: did expressionism have a significant impact on popular religious art? Yes, but not in its early stages, and not to the point of dissolution of the figurative character of popular religious images. Expressionism, with its reductionist influence on the pictorial form, has contributed to the emergence of essentialist images of Mary in popular religious art.

As a conclusion to this analysis of the theological image of Mary and the artistic image of the human person during the twentieth century, two observations are pertinent: 1) There exists a certain convergence between the formal aspects of the artistic image and some material aspects of the theological image: both tend toward greater sobriety, simplicity and immediacy. 2) There exists a discrepancy in the evolution of theological vis-a-vis artistic images. While expressionism set down its canons of reduction and rediscovery of the essential human form early on in this century, it was only in the second half of the century that the theological image of Mary was restructured and adjusted to a different religious consciousness. The result is striking: artistic images of Mary from the early decades of this century anticipate and illustrate theological contents of the seventies and eighties. Emil Nolde's representation of the Nativity pictures Mary as the "New Woman" and the Incarnation as a transforming process (*illus. no. 5*).

²²Volker G. Probst, *Bilder vom Tode: Eine Studie zum deutschen Kriegerdenkmal in der Weimarer Republik am Beispiel der Pietà—Motive und seiner profanierten Varianten* (Hamburg: Wayasbah, 1986). Although limited to German memorials of World War I, this study is a good illustration of the profuse use of the Pietà motif.

V. MODES OF FORMING AND COMMUNICATING MARIAN IMAGES

As we now return our attention to the Marian image in popular religion, it seems important to focus briefly on its phenomenological character. In other words, how and where does the popular image of Mary appear in this period and what is its meaning? Images, in order to be popular, must be easily accessible, widespread, and have the ability to imprint themselves facilely and discreetly on the religious attention or consciousness of people. Bernard Buffet's recreation of the Avignon Pietà,²³ although highly expressive and thus impressive, is not easily accessible to the many. Lipchitz's intricate Marian sculpture in Assy,²⁴ artistically rendering a complex theological program of spiritual fecundity, is too rich and sophisticated for popular consumption. Popular art allows for easy identification and tends to produce strong and attractive mental images—reflecting both the *fascinosum* and the *tremendum* in religion—which in turn facilitate the creation of new popular images. Keeping in mind that popular images need accessibility, widespread dissemination and easy identification, we are able to state the following about major “carriers” of Marian images in popular art during this century and in North Atlantic culture.

- 1) The classical vehicle of popular religious art remains the presence of statues and images in homes and churches. One of their major assets is continuity. By their mere presence they may shape the religious imagination of many generations. They are present in our lives in times of intense psychological development and explicit religious education. These images are frequently and consciously shared by entire families and church communities. Frequently they represent a treasured family heirloom or are reminiscent of important personal or collective life events. It is here that we most often find representations

²³See Y. le Pichon, *Bernard Buffet, 1943-1961* (Paris: Garnier, 1986), 99: *Pietà* by Bernard Buffet, oil on canvas, private collection, 1948.

²⁴William S. Rubin, *Modern Sacred Art and the Church of Assy* (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1961), plates 31-36.

of so-called miraculous images of Mary (e.g., Our Lady of Good Council, of Lourdes, of Fatima).²⁵ Quite frequently they are rendered in a pre-Raphaelite artistic vein.

- 2) Of a more ephemeral nature are those images to which we are exposed in book illustrations, missalettes, parish bulletins, classroom materials, greeting cards, and bulletin boards. Serving a specific, usually short-term, purpose, these religious images may not have a lasting impact on our religious and Marian imagination. However, because they are varied in style and theme, they allow for a broader selection and, potentially, for a more personalized identification with a specific motif or type of Marian image. Although popular religious ephemera may cater to religious consumerism, it presents undeniable graphic and artistic qualities. Easily legible, it conveys a simple message couched in attractive graphics. More recently, clip art and illustrations in juvenile literature have played a major role as specific types of "carriers" of religious images. Clip art is readily available and adaptable; it takes advantage of the graphic qualities of pop art. Of a similar artistic nature are some of the higher quality illustrations in children's books.
- 3) A third and important means for spreading and developing Marian popular art comprises religious films, videos, and comic strips (cartoons). The influence of these media in the formation of Marian images is still largely ignored. The religious film has been with us since the beginning of this century, first as short Gospel stories and passion narratives (e.g., *From the Manger to the Cross* [1913]), later as full-length cinemascope movies (e.g., *King of Kings* [1961] and the *Greatest Story Ever Told* [1965]). The romanticized image of Mary in these movies, and especially in the rosary movies of Father Peyton, changed with the new realism of Pasolini, Rossellini, Zeffirelli and Scorsese. Since the first version

²⁵On behalf of miraculous images, see: K. Kolb, "Typologie der Gnadenbilder," in *Handbuch der Marienkunde*, H. Petri and W. Beinert (eds.) (Regensburg: Pustet Verlag, 1984), 849-882.

of the *Song of Bernadette* in 1943, apparitions have taken a more and more prominent place in religious films. Although not sufficiently recognized as important factors in the formation of "official" Marian images, films, videos and cartoons may have created in many instances a parallel image of Mary, largely detached from its theological origins, but very much alive. The sequential and multi-media approach of film and cartoon has contributed to a greater concretization and popularization of Mary's image.

- 4) A further category of "carrier" consists of Marian images kept in prayerbooks, wallets and on nightstands. A Marian image or medal carried around in one's wallet for years surely influences its owner's understanding of Mary. Most of the time, these images indicate a familiar and personal relationship. They suggest not only the need for protection but also a genuine affection. However, it is difficult empirically to assess the importance of this type of vehicle for the elaboration and dissemination of an authentic popular image of Mary.
- 5) A last, but not least, vehicle is the mental Marian image of those who, by vocation or dedication, are called to promote the knowledge of Mary. There is more than some likelihood that much of what we call catechesis is not immediately based on theological reflection but on theological imagination. We carry with us a basic mental image of Mary which helps us to organize theological data and guides us in the articulation of these contents for others. It may well be that this basic mental image is the result of popular religion (theological message, spiritual commitment and cultural expression) more than of any other type of theological and catechetical influence.

The last two vehicles mentioned are easy to pinpoint but difficult to assess. It may safely be assumed that they, in turn, are decisively influenced by one or several of the first three vehicles ("classical" images, various "graphic" images, films and comic strips). Based on these three modes of communication, we will attempt to develop the categories of what we believe are the most representative Marian images of twentieth-century North Atlantic popular religion.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF MARIAN REPRESENTATIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Prior to identifying the various types of popular Marian images, we would like to set the stage by retracing some of the important steps in the development of Marian representations during this century. Marian art in the twentieth century has been the result of the interaction (or lack thereof) of three types of images: the artistic image, the liturgical image and the devotional image.

1. *The Artistic Image*

The artistic image, identified with the names of great artists, was more prominent in the first half of this century and for a variety of reasons:

- 1) Both expressionism and religion attempt to penetrate the layers of non-authenticity to discover the core of human reality (e.g., the Germanic Expressionism of Emil Nolde²⁶). In more recent decades, the typically expressionist statement of the artist's vision of reality has sometimes given way to experimentation with exclusively formal aspects of art, even religious art.
- 2) There existed during the period from 1920-1950 a strong desire to bridge the gap between Church and artists. The tragedies of contemporary history (G. Rouault, *Miserere*, 1916 ff.), the conversion and religious vocation of artists (Alfred Manessier, Willibrord Verkade), the foundation of schools and periodicals dealing with sacred art,²⁷ and the pioneer work of people like Pie Raymond Régamey and Marie-Alain Couturier²⁸ were among the more important indicators of rapprochement.
- 3) Famous artists, in conjunction with new developments in church architecture, decorated churches and thereby attested to a newfound harmony between art and religion. Crowning examples of this period—marking also

²⁶See W. Haftmann, *Emil Nolde* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959).

²⁷See Maurice Denis, *Histoire de l'art religieux* (Paris: Flammarion, 1939).

²⁸M.A. Couturier, *Art et liberté spirituelle* (Paris 1958); P.R. Régamey, *Art sacré au XX^e siècle en France* (Paris 1952); F. Debuyst, *Le renouveau de l'art sacré de 1920 à 1962* (Paris: Mame, 1991), 17-35.

the end of it—were the two French museum-sanctuaries of Vence (H. Matisse)²⁹ and Plateau-d'Assy (A. Richier, J. Lurçat, M. Chagall, F. Léger, P. Bonnard, G. Rouault, et. al.)³⁰ in the late forties and early fifties.

The heyday of the artistic Marian image came to an end with the death of the great religious artists of the first half of this century, and the rise of a new functionalism so prominent in post-conciliar mentality. Aesthetic endeavors waned or were incorporated into new church constructions, often devoid of any iconographic theme or limited to the architectural structure itself. While artistic images of the prior period represented authentic iconography or sacred art, subsequent realizations of artistic imagery during the late seventies, eighties and early nineties attempted to retrieve the spiritual dimension of art in a more generic sense. Marian images were thus no longer reflective of a theological message but of the existence of the spiritual in general and of transpersonal values such as fertility and wholesomeness. More recently, the artistic image partially converged with the liturgical and devotional image for the creation of new "images of unanimity" (as will be subsequently explained).

2. *The Liturgical Image*

During much of the first half of the century, the liturgical Marian image coincided largely with the devotional image of that time. The liturgical image is by definition related to church and worship. Many churches of the old and new world were built during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Liturgical images of that period were marked by pre-Raphaelite art. New realizations in church architecture at the beginning of the century (Notre Dame du Travail, Paris, 1901; Notre Dame du Raincy, 1922)³¹ led to the retrieval of the

²⁹A. H. Barr, *Matisse: His Art and His Public* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1951), 170 ff.

³⁰William S. Rubin, *Modern Sacred Art and the Church of Assy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

³¹J. Pichard, *Les Eglises nouvelles à travers le monde* (Paris: Ed. des Deux-Mondes, 1960), 19 ff.

stained glass window, which became one of the major forms of liturgical images all through this century (e.g., in the work of A. Cingria, M. Chagall).³²

The same can be said of church architecture in general. It has produced monuments of great beauty and originality all over the world, from Gaudi's *Sagrada Família* in Barcelona to Botta's cylinder-shaped cathedral of Evry, as well as Frank Lloyd Wright's Unitarian Chapel in Madison, Wisconsin, Marcel Breuer's Abbey of St. John in Collegeville, Minnesota, and Le Corbusier's Chapel in Ronchamp.³³ Some sanctuaries are better known for the artist who decorated them than for the name of their patron saint (e.g., Léger in Courfaivre, Cocteau in Villefranche-sur-Mer, Gleizes in Chantilly and the Rothko Interfaith Chapel at Brandeis University).³⁴ In the sixties, liturgical images were frequently sacrificed to a liturgical treatment of space and structural elements. As liturgical images disappeared, churches devoted to Mary were left without Marian images, or they were fixed on a lateral wall and incorporated as mere decorative elements in the overall design of the church. There are signs that the liturgical image is about to resurface as focal image, intended to direct the attention of the congregation on a common iconographical message.

3. *The Devotional Image*

The devotional image is, without doubt, most immediately representative of Marian images in popular religion. We would like to retrace some of the characteristic phases of its development in this century.

- 1) The foundational type of Marian devotional representation in the twentieth century is what we might call the autonomous figure, so called because of its origin in the post-tridentine image of Mary, Queen of Heaven, modified subsequently and refined under the influence of

³²J. Bony, "Le Vitrail de 1920-1940," in *L'art sacré au XX^e siècle en France* (Thonon-les-Bains: Société Présence du livre, 1993), 72-80.

³³D. Pauly, *Ronchamp—Lecture d'une architecture* (Paris: éd. Ophrys, 1980).

³⁴F. Debuyst, *Le renouveau de l'art sacré*, 48 ff; Diane Waldman, *Mark Rothko, 1903-1970: A Retrospective* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1978).



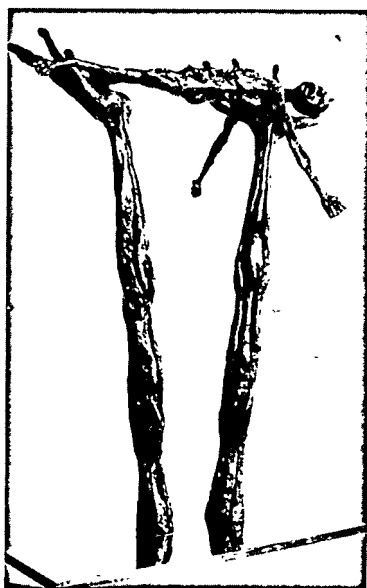
1. G. Rouault, *Notre Dame de la fin des terres vigilante, Miserere*, 1922-27



2. R. Lebrun, *Shell of Mary*, Cornell University, 1948



3. A. Servaes, *Maria Middelaars (Orval style)*, 1933



4. A. Fabbri, *Fructus ventris tui*, bronze, 1969



5. E. Nolde, *Holy Night*, 1912



6. *Our Lady of Lourdes*, ink



7. *Immaculate Conception*, holy card, early 20th century



8. *Mother and Child*, postcard

9. *Mother and Child*, clip art10. *Mother and Child*, clip art11. A. Grünwald, *Mother and Child*, 196212. *My Queen, My Mother*, illustration from pamphlet



13. Sr. Mary Grace, *Mary*, postcard



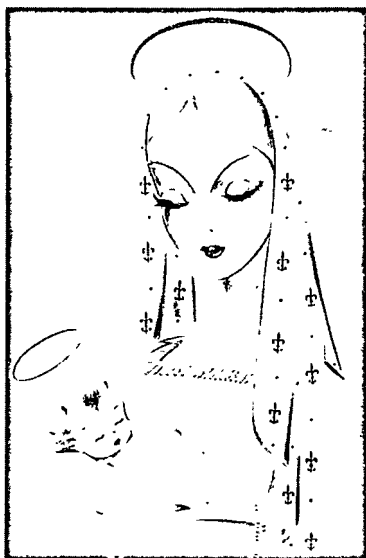
14. Mary Lou Sleeve, *Mary of Nazareth*



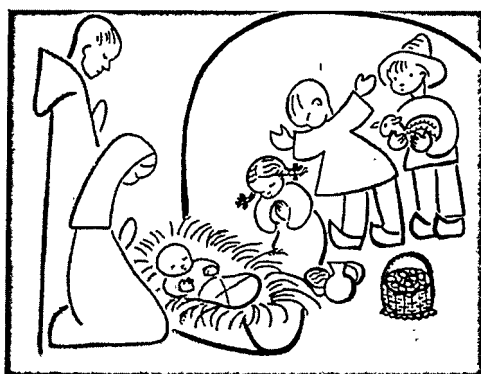
15. *Mother and Child*, Christmas card



16. Frankie, *Mother and Child*, Christmas card



17. *Mother and Child*, postcard



18. *Nativity and Children*, Christmas card



19. Kees de Kort, *Cana*, 1972



20. Sr. Anjelica Ballan, *Mother and Child*, 1982



21. Raimundo de Oliveira, *Flight into Egypt*, 1955



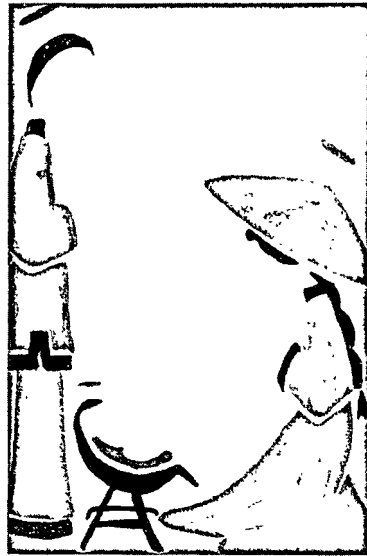
22. Paul Gauguin, *Ia Orana*, 1891



23. Tokyo Carmelites, *Mother and Child*, watercolor



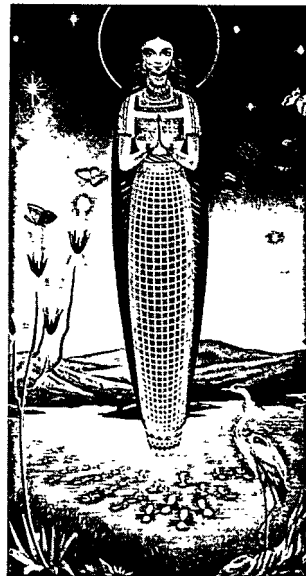
24. Paul Siaka, *Our Lady of Africa*, wood carving, 1986



25. *Nativity*, Christmas card



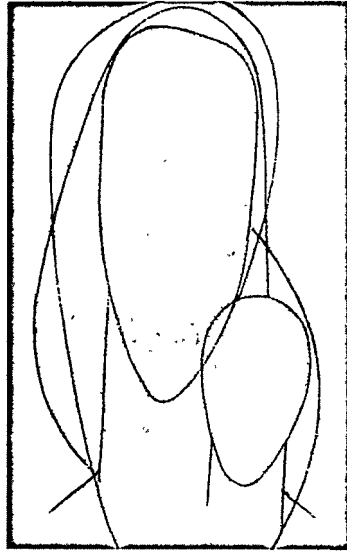
26. *Mother and Child*, postcard



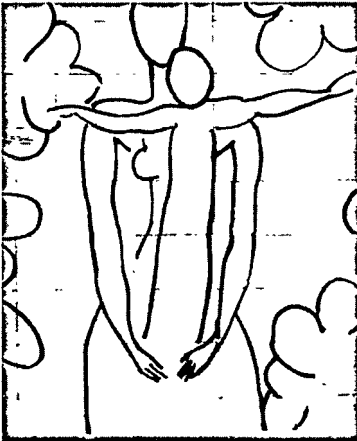
27. *Madonna*, postcard



28. Raphael (1483-1520), *Madonna of the Field*



29. M. Timoleonthos, *Madonna*, pencil



30. H. Matisse, *Vierge et l'enfant*, ceramic



31. *Nativity*, Christmas card



32. G. Nelson, *Epiphany*, 1982



33. *Mother and Child*, stained glass



34. E. Gill, *Our Lady of Lourdes*, woodcut, 1920



35. G. d'Aboville, *Mère du Créateur*



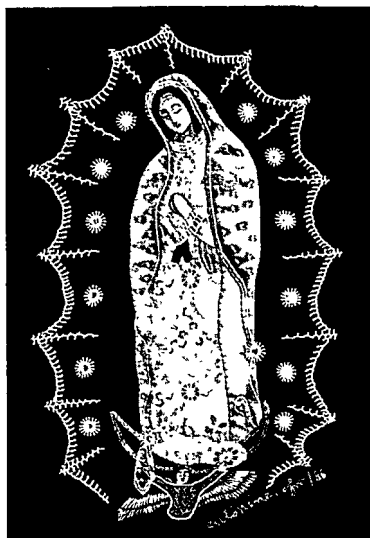
36. *Mother and Child*, Christmas card



37. M. Keane, *Madonna and Child*, 1963



38. *Our Lady of Medjugorje*



39. A. Correa, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, applique and embroidery on fabric, 1986



40. *Madonna del Buon Consiglio*, ink



41. *Maria Pötsch*, ink



42. L. Cranach, *Mariabild*, ink



43. Th. Stravinsky, *Et erat mater Jesu ibi ... (Pentecost)*, colored chalk on cardboard, 1988

- Lourdes and Fatima (*illus. no. 6*). This is a powerful and remote image, close to God and also present to humans. It can be divisive in the way it marks people: for some it represents the ideal of the eternal woman, for others an impossible ideal. There is a certain tendency to represent Mary without the child, concentrating more on her privileges than on her role as mother of the redeemer.
- 2) Influenced by Jugendstil (Germany), St. Sulpice (France) and pre-Raphaelite artistic style (Dante Gabriele Rossetti), the foundational type achieves in the early twentieth century a quality of "abstract sensuality" which is suggested by predominantly pink and blue pastel colors, the sweet shallowness of its design and quasi-ethereal femininity (*illus. no. 7*). This idealized rendering has a strong emotional appeal, not least because of the impression of simultaneous presence (colorful, subdued sensuousness) and absence (remote, abstract, untouchableness) of the Mary figure.
 - 3) This pictorial expression of Marian devotion still exists and thrives. But, due mainly to the influence of religious films since the thirties and forties, a new devotional type emerged. It was largely a product of what we like to call "Hollywood realism." The representation of Mary is cast in historical or modern-day settings and posture; facial expressions are those of an actress and correspond to the aesthetic canons of the times, especially those of the movie industry (*illus. no. 8*). Hollywood realism succeeds in bringing Mary down to earth. By making her into an object of our leisure culture, it also transforms her from the unreachable ideal of the past into a glamorous and artificial idol.
 - 4) In the fifties and early sixties, the artistic creed of expressionism caught up with devotional art and provoked a rupture. The various expressions of devotional art were labeled as *Kitsch* (i.e., artificial, hollow and affected). Religious reform called for new authenticity, honesty, and truth. Not unlike the artistic and, in part, the liturgical images, the new devotional art developed a strong reactionary component. Personal traits, sweet and colorful

elements were eliminated to retain only stark and elementary lines and contours. In this type of devotional art, Mary is signified more than she is represented (*illus. no. 9*). The iconoclastic character of this harsh geometricism attempts to rediscover the essential elements of Marian representations. However, disassembling and reassembling the figure of Mary does not always foster a deeper theological understanding. There is a risk of emptying the figure of Mary of its content and reducing it to a mere decorative element.

- 5) During the next phase, the harsh geometric rendering of Mary's image was softened and retrieved, in part, its figurative or natural characteristics. This development reflected the combined influence of pop art, folk art and the ever-growing presence of eastern iconography. Pop art is the result of the thriving graphic arts of the sixties and seventies. It stands for slick surfaces and soft but clear lines and clean forms. With their characteristically huge black eyes, these new Marian images bore a resemblance to Coptic icons (*illus. no. 10*). They conveyed an overall cheerful and childlike innocence similar to that found in folk art.
- 6) Religious and Marian art in the recent past has come a step closer to a convergence of artistic, liturgical and devotional images. The artistic image has become a new type of religious representation, an "image of unanimity" and "focal image" in liturgy (*illus. no. 11*). Similar patterns can be detected in recent developments of the devotional image. Increasingly reflecting the qualities of both artistic and liturgical images, the devotional image has attained a higher artistic quality and a greater variety of iconographical expression.

VII. THE TYPES OF MARIAN POPULAR IMAGERY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

After describing the evolution of the devotional image of Mary in this century, we now address the question of its representation in the present. In other words, which are—based

on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of about two thousand images of North Atlantic origin—the most typical and representative devotional representations of Mary in the present? Are there specific types, groups or clusters of these images?

It seems possible to distinguish six distinct groupings of Marian representations. Some of them correspond to the various developmental stages outlined previously; others are of different cultural origin or have been with us over an extended period of time reaching back beyond this century.

1. *The Naturalist Image*

This image has a strong cultural identification and represents in a general way the desire to bring Mary down to earth. It reflects human proximity and suggests that Mary is like us. The naturalist image is plain, easily readable, and may stress cultural developments more than religious contents. It frequently has a narrative dimension and reproduces either event or existential situation.

The naturalist image tends to be a reaction against pre-Raphaelite depictions of Mary. It reflects a thematic parameter which reaches from Hollywood realism to more or less explicit ideological representations of Mary. It ranges from the romanticized glamour image inspired by religious film to sober and austere renderings, culminating in Marian images which carry a socio-political message.

The following illustrate the thematic parameters of the naturalist image, using three groups of images:

- 1) The first group represents Mary according to the style promoted by Hollywood realism, for example, the contemporary representations of Joseph W. Little's *Mary, Queen of All Nations*, Barbara Barth's *A Mother's Day Greeting*, or the depiction of *My Queen, My Mother* by an unknown artist (*illus. no. 12*).
- 2) The second group marks the shifting toward a more sober realism. Without necessarily stripping the image of its beauty, the flowers and birds surrounding Janine Wolderan's *Mother and Child* poetically enhance the re-

alism of the painting. Similarly, Sister Mary Celeste's *Italian Madonna* balances the noble and sweet expression of the madonna with a sober and naturalistic setting. Sister Mary Grace depicts Mary with strong and determined features which convey a visionary character with a generous capacity for giving (*illus. no. 13*).

- 3) The third group translates specific concerns and conveys an ideological undertone. Robert Lentz's *Protectress of the Oppressed* is an example; this African-American Marian icon makes a social statement. It challenges the stereotype of an exclusively white madonna and child. Mary represents protection for the oppressed. In a different vein, Ben Long's *Pregnant Virgin*, an earth-goddess type of Mary, suggests a variety of women's concerns and feminist themes. In *Women of the Word* (Ave Maria Press, 1989), Mary Lou Sleevei deals with these concerns. As can be seen, Mary shows the wear of age and the aging process (*illus. no. 14*).

2. The Poetic Image

The major characteristics of the poetic image are soft-bright colorfulness, poetic stylization, and a miniaturized representation of the human figure. Facial traits underline the disproportionate importance of the eyes, creating thus not only the impression of eye contact with the onlooker but also an atmosphere of wonderment, innocence, and spontaneity. The salient psychological quality of the poetic image is childlikeness. This image, with its miniaturized forms and huge eyes, is about children and for children or for those cajoled into the spirit of childhood, perhaps spiritual childhood. The core motif and message is that of the nativity scene.

Reminiscent of the German Jugendstil and pre-Raphaelite sweetness (e.g., Hummel images), the "poetic" representations of Mary can be considered as a softened and mellowed version of essentialist imagery. We find in the poetic image influences of pop art, various types of folk art (e.g., *santos* and *retablos* of Spanish-American religious art), and eastern iconography. The poetic image is frequently used in clip art and illustrations of religious literature for children.

We illustrate here the thematic parameters of the poetic image with six groups of images:

- 1) The artistic style of this first group is still imbued with the sentimental realism of nineteenth-century religious art, but already suggests Hollywood realism. Among the numerous representations of this trend, we find many postcards and holy cards whose artists are often unknown or difficult to track down, not least because their works paraphrase some famous originals. Thus, the Christmas card here shown fits the genre and helped make it popular (*illus. no. 15*).
- 2) The second group reinforces the idea of poetic stylization. By losing some of its naturalist characteristics, the art gains a childlike quality which enhances the poetic dimension. Frankie's *Mother and Child*, another Christmas card without the presence of Joseph, reinforces the childlike character with bright red, blue, yellow and white coloring and so fosters stylization (*illus. no. 16*).
- 3) The images of the third group are reminiscent of "abstract sensuality," while at the same time further stylizing the poetic form. The following example illustrates both progressive stylizing and abstract sensuality. The line drawing is very economical, mostly vertical and hieratic, but the overall impression is one of contained sensuousness. This is expressed in details such as distinctive eyelashes, curved brows and pouted mouth (*illus. no. 17*). In images of abstract sensuality, the childlike quality tends to lose some of its innocence.
- 4) The fourth group follows the canons of essentialist art and accentuates the graphic simplification of the pictorial form. *Nativity and Children*, by an unknown artist, retrieves the childlike characteristics because of its "essentialist" rendering (*illus. no. 18*). Two-dimensional and mainly decorative, its visual impression is one of careful balancing between the restful and contemplative pole, composed of Mary and Joseph, and the joyous movement of the children. The sometimes pronounced austerity and stiffness of essentialist art is counterbalanced by the poetic dimension of this Christmas card.

- 5) The fifth group presents examples of a softer and more colorful poetic form, in some ways reminiscent of pop art and its relation to graphic art. Some of the best examples of this art can be found in children's books and religious textbooks. It combines the need for simple and clear information with sometimes undeniable aesthetic qualities. Kees de Kort, in his rendering of the Cana episode (1972), creates a children's world filled with poetry, without diminishing the accuracy of the biblical message and its catechetical impact (*illus. no. 19*).
- 6) The last examples of poetic imagery, while following the same graphic canons as the fifth group, underline the variety of concrete expression. Raimondo de Oliveira and Sister Anjelica Ballan are worlds apart. The sweet and childlike traits of Sr. Anjelica's terracotta sculptures are counterbalanced by the sobriety and warm harshness of the unpainted clay (*illus. no. 20*). Oliveira's highly poetic and graphic art draws its childlike appeal from the numerous and diminutive figures, frequently aligned in decorative arrangements (*illus. no. 21*).

3. *The Exotic Image*

The exotic image of Mary has been with us for the whole of this century. Its exotic character is not attached to a particularly strange or unusual pictorial form or style. An image may be designated "exotic" because it is literally out of the ordinary. The exotic image draws its appeal not from some bizarre or freakish rendering of Mary's likeness, but from its novelty and originality for a given culture. It has the effect of positive alienation. The poetic image has the ability of temporarily uprooting the onlookers' attention from habitual schemes of perception in order to confront them with a new or fresh representation of familiar contents of knowledge.

The first to succeed in this endeavor for Marian art of this century was Paul Gauguin with his Tahitian interpretations of the Marian theme (e.g., *Ia Orana*, 1891). The heightened missionary efforts of Christian churches in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century enriched us with many and varied examples of missionary art. More recently, the growing interest in spiritualities has produced new

kinds of exotic images (e.g., one using the canons of native American art). However, the most classical of all exotic images of Mary are from the late Renaissance. Marian images of Filippo Lippi and Raphael are exotic, because they portray both the present (by their adherence to the canons of classical human beauty) and the absent (through their historical and geographical estrangement and idealistic humanism), so that, with respect to contemporary culture, they deserve the label "poetic."

We would like to illustrate the thematic parameters of the exotic image with samples from a variety of cultures. For some of these groups, we will point out the difference between authentic and non-authentic indigenous art.

- 1) Paul Gauguin created the foundational images of the "exotic" type of madonna representations. His well-known *Ia Orana* (1891), marked a radical departure from the classical madonna representations of the past (*illus. no. 22*). This Tahitian Mary typifies both a secularization and resacralization of Marian iconography. By transposing the madonna into a radically new culture with its characteristic traits, Gauguin not only withdrew from the traditional canons of sacred art, he also reinvented them for a new cultural setting. Simultaneously, he created the epitome of the exotic madonna. *Ia Orana* and the many other Gauguin madonnas are not only different from western representations of Mary, but, through their power of positive alienation, they also exert a powerful attraction on the western mentality.
- 2) A second Marian image is from Japan. One of many representations of Mary produced by Carmelite nuns in Tokyo, this watercolor has the makings of inculturated art; it reproduces, in setting and posture, characteristic aspects of Japanese culture (*illus. no. 23*). In contrast, Sadao Watanabe, the world-renowned Japanese artist, attempts a synthesis between western art form and the Japanese tradition.
- 3) The third image represents African culture. While missionary art is still widespread in Africa, there exist a growing number of art schools in various parts of the

continent to foster the talents of indigenous artists and encourage their cultural expressions of Marian iconography. Paul Siaka's wood carving of *Our Lady of Africa: Mother of All Grace* (Abidjan, 1986) brings together the religious message of Mary's divine motherhood with a culturally accurate African rendering (*illus. no. 24*).

- 4) Although the next image again reflects the Asian pictorial style, it bears, in its more recent forms, the unmistakable signs of western influence. The essentialist pattern somewhat diminishes the delicate and intimate touch of oriental artistic sensitivity. For westerners, this Christmas scene (by an unknown artist) belongs to the category of exotic art (*illus. no. 25*).
- 5) In a similar way, the following images convey a cultural message couched in partially western art form. The contemporary rendering of *Mother and Child* (1971), highlighted by the essentialist and decorative elements of the stylistic approach, captures some of the austere beauty and dignity of native American culture (*illus. no. 26*). The smooth and mellow impression created by the East Indian madonna is typical for a culture in which cosmology is part of its world consciousness (*illus. no. 27*). The ethnic portrayal of the madonna and the generous use of nature symbols heighten the exotic character of the picture.
- 6) The last image shows a postage stamp reproduction of a Raphael madonna (*Madonna of the Field*); it illustrates that the exotic image does not necessarily coincide with geographic alienation and escapism (*illus. no. 28*). Renaissance art, in a sense, combines historical suggestion with the evasion of imagination; this holds a power of exotic attraction at least equal to that of geographic dislocation.

4. The Essentialist Image

The word *essentialist* indicates that this image of Mary is concerned with the foundational elements and the elimination of secondary and unnecessary features or adjunctions. The essentialist image in Marian art represents the equivalent of

deconstructionism in expressionist art at large. The reduced pictorial form does not have to be indicative of theological reductionism. However, there is little doubt that the essentialist image presents a reactionary form of Marian art. It reacts against the hypertrophic outgrowth of Marian images and statues of the first half of this century. Given the essentialist (i.e., reductionist) character of this type of Marian representation, its array of graphic and thematic possibilities remains limited.

This is especially true for its beginnings in the fifties and early sixties with the so-called contour or empty shell depictions of Mary. Due to the self-imposed and limited range of the graphic program, the thematic expressions are normally limited to mother-and-child line drawings. Over time, influenced in particular by pop art style, the graphic as well as the thematic program is enriched and, at times, almost overlaps with the more sober expressions of the poetic image. Promoted by clip art, the essentialist image plays an important role as carrier of functional aesthetics and popular interpretations of complex iconographical themes (e.g., Pentecost, the woman of the Apocalypse). Ultimately, there exists a strong similarity in meaning, graphic expression, and content between the unbiased essentialist image and the icon. In both instances, we find deep concern for unperturbed visibility and permanence of the theological message. In a sense, old and new icons of Mary may be regarded as forming a high point in the recent history of essentialist Marian images.

Again, we would like to illustrate the characteristics and evolution of the essentialist image:

- 1) The first image demonstrates both the reactionary function of the essentialist image and its graphic consequences. Facial expressions and typical cultural elements, such as clothing, are eliminated so as to be able to concentrate on contours and posture. This may entail, but not altogether and necessarily, a loss of expression and expressivity. Mel Meyer's *Madonna and Child* (pressed paper, 1989) admirably conveys the protective gesture of Mary's motherly care and concern. Similarly,

the highly stylized faces of Mary and Jesus in Michel Timoleonthos' *Madonna* are not devoid of a noble sentiment of intimacy between mother and child (*illus. no. 29*). In fact, the absence of individual characteristics highlights abstract meaning. However, the primary purpose of essentialist art remains reactionary and avoids exaggerated individualization.

- 2) A further development shows the positive aspects of essentialist images. By achieving a synthesis between graphic and thematic essentials, they remind us of their affiliation with expressionism. There are numerous examples to point out the convergence of essential graphic and thematic elements. Because of their character, essentialist art works tend toward a static rather than dynamic composition and express attitudes rather than events. With its typical vertical hieratic composition, J. Ammann's *Madonna*, a beautiful enamel piece, is a contemporary version of the well-known Theotokos motif. Matisse's "Virgin and Child" for the Dominican chapel of Vence visualizes the same motif; it has the same demonstrative character drawing the viewer to it (*illus. no. 30*). However, Matisse's line drawing has an amazingly soft and rich touch, counterbalancing the stark hieratic style of the Theotokos motif.
- 3) A third selection reveals some of the decorative possibilities and popular appeal of essentialist art; its proximity to some of the poetic renderings of Mary is blatantly apparent. This depiction of the nativity (artist unknown) is representative of this widespread genre. It is essentially commercial art, with little artistic ambition. Its primary purpose is to present the nativity event. The harshness of the black and white reproduction is softened in the colorful original, in which the bright hues add a poetic aura to this representation of the nativity (*illus. no. 31*).
- 4) A clear affinity exists between specific techniques, such as papercutting and clip art (which originated from woodblock cutting), and essentialist style. Papercutting, contrary to the other expressions of essentialist art, un-

derlines the dynamic characteristics of a figure or event (e.g., the silhouette of Dan Paulos' *Apache Madonna* reinforces the movement of planting). Clip art, on the other hand, remains more specifically within the context of essentialist art. It has a strong documentary character, easy to read and understand. It is attractive because of the added decorative elements and the childlike expression of the faces (*illus. no. 32*).

- 5) The fifth group highlights the connection between essentialist image, stained glass art, and the icon. Stained glass renderings of the madonna are yet another example of the relation between specific techniques and essentialist art. This unpretentious example (artist unknown) clearly points out the affinity between stained glass art and the icon (*illus. no. 33*). Both draw their power of attraction and impact from a highly contained canon of expressions and explicit religious thematic.

5. *The Abstract Image*

Misleading as the term *abstract* may be, it nonetheless reminds us that this kind of Marian representation largely abstracts from ordinary human reality. Its purpose is to insist on the difference between Mary and other human beings. Mary is exceptional in her way of being for God and with God. Her extraordinary status is illustrated in her privileges and intercessory power.

The abstract image originated with the foundational type of the Queen of Heaven and gradually evolved to a more spiritualized and ethereal form (e.g., Our Lady of Lourdes, Fatima). All through this century the diaphanous, remote, and otherworldly Marian image has been very present in popular imagery. It may have lost some of its influence because of naturalist images, and it may have been temporarily eclipsed in the heyday of reactionary essentialism, but it has become adaptable. It has adopted traits of the poetic, exotic, and other images. In recent years, it has retrieved many of its original characteristics (such as those found in images associated with Lourdes and Fatima), because of a great number of alleged apparitions, especially those of Medjugorje.

The following images retrace some of the great variety of abstract Marian images in this century.

- 1) Whatever the styles and techniques applied, the representation of Mary Immaculate marks the foundational type of the abstract image. An example is the woodcut of Our Lady of Lourdes (1920) by Eric Gill (*illus. no. 34*).
- 2) The ethereal and diaphanous artistic rendering recalls some of the canons of feminine beauty in vogue at the turn of this century—a spiritualized, languishing fragility. These traits do not exclude Mary's actively helping presence. Geoffrey d'Aboville's *Mère du Créateur* combines the characteristics of remoteness with an active presence among persons through her son (*illus. no. 35*).
- 3) The next image points out how reactionary essentialism (possibly also the so-called Beuron style)³⁵ transformed the abstract image, depriving it somewhat of its "abstract sensuality." The curvilinear drawing (artist unknown) still echoes some fragile languor, but the overall impression is one of reductive artistic expression and psycho-spiritual remoteness (*illus. no. 36*).
- 4) A further variant occurs through the confrontation with pop art, which puts the abstract image in the stylistic neighborhood of the poetic image. Margaret Keane's *Madonna and Child* (1963) owes much of its playful graciousness to a combination of fragile beauty and innocent poetic inspiration (*illus. no. 37*).
- 5) The fifth group retrieves the foundational type of the Immaculata. It owes its resurgence mainly to the alleged apparitions of Medjugorje. Among the various attempts at representing these apparitions is a painting by an unknown artist (*illus. no. 38*). The image of Our Lady is rendered following the type of the Immaculata, but it has lost some of its ethereal and hieratic characteristics. The movement of the hands and the expression of Mary's face are redolent of artistic realism.

³⁵Inspired by religious art of the past, the Beuron School attempts unity of form and solemn "hieraticism" (see Peter Lenz, *Zur Aesthetik der Beuroner Schule*, 1912).

6. *The Miraculous Image*

Little-mentioned in this study so far, we will now deal with the oldest and most widespread form of popular Marian imagery. This type of image is closely linked to apparitions of the past, to famous sanctuaries and pilgrimages. Since healings and other miracles are frequently attributed to these images, they have been named "miraculous" images. They comprise classic holy images which have been invoked and venerated for centuries.

A miraculous Marian image is resistant to change: the iconographic message remains strictly identical, and the various styles of its artistic rendering are always subordinate to the original image. Invested sometimes with social and political meaning, the miraculous image may foster national and cultural identity and promote social change. However, its primary purpose is to secure and assure the active divine presence in this world through Mary.

The following are some of the better known miraculous images.

- 1) The first kind are the universally acclaimed and sought-after miraculous images. For example, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, best known and venerated in the Americas, comes in many variations. Here it is represented on fabric, the work of Bro. Antonine Correa, O.F.M. (1986) (*illus. no. 39*). Its principal appeal is that it is perceived as a miraculous image, not unlike that of the Miraculous Medal. Other examples could, of course, be added, such as Lourdes and Fatima.
- 2) A second group includes miraculous images once disseminated and known all over the Catholic world, but which have less influence today. For example, this applies to the miraculous images of the *Madonna del Buon Consiglio* (Genazzano) (*illus. no. 40*) and *Our Lady of Perpetual Help* (Candia, Crete). Once present in Catholic households the world over, these images have lost some of their impact, in part because they are no longer recognized as miraculous images.
- 3) Other images may still enjoy local renown but have lost universal appeal. For example, the well-known image of

Our Lady, *Salus Populi Romani*, was universally venerated when Rome was more significant geographically and psychologically to the Church than it is today. A similar case is the miraculous image of *Maria Pötsch* (Vienna) (*illus. no. 41*).

- 4) Finally, there are miraculous images whose artistic notoriety tends to override their miraculous character; they could be regarded as artistic masterpieces rather than as objects of devotion. There are few religious houses, churches, retreat or conference centers which do not have at least one reproduction of the Vladimirskaja (12th c., Tretjakov, Moscow). It is—in the eyes of many westerners—the epitome of what an icon is and should be. The miraculous character of this holy image may thus be of lesser importance than its documentary value. In the case of Lukas Cranach's *Mariabilf* (St. Jakob, Innsbruck, 1537) a similar shift occurs: here, it is the artistic value rather than the documentary value which tends to override the miraculous character of the image (*illus. no. 42*).

These six categories of devotional Marian images do not represent the final word on the subject. Their empirical importance is, in spite of the great number of images evaluated, not necessarily representative of the whole phenomenological spectrum involved. More documentation is needed in order to refine some of the types of Marian images presented. We have observed convergence and overlapping for some of the six categories mentioned. In spite of the limited character of this study, if we attempt to target the most popular and prominent Marian images of the present, the following specific categories could be singled out:

- 1) The first is the icon-type image of Mary as it develops from the essentialist representations or, on the contrary, is imitated and/or adopted from the eastern iconographic tradition. The icon-type image incorporates three major characteristics found in the six categories studied. It is based on the aesthetic canon of essentialism: it has a simple, expressive form and eliminates insignificant par-

ticularities in order to serve more readily the theological message it carries. Most icon-type images can be assimilated with the miraculous image. They represent a direct relationship with the sacred and an actively helpful presence for the believer. Simultaneously, the icon-type image evokes the positive alienation of the exotic image. Icons, still new to this culture, challenge the more typical expression of what we called "abstract sensualism." The icon-style mixture allows for a balanced coexistence between theological message, spiritual commitment and (new) cultural expression.

- 2) A second prominent image of the present is, generically speaking, the apparition image. Evocative of either old or new apparitions, it comprises the characteristics of the abstract, exotic, and miraculous images. The apparition image stresses otherworldliness and simultaneously evokes—given its potential of fascination—a certain exotic estrangement. Its most powerful feature is the recognized or alleged miraculous character.
- 3) The third prominent image is of a more pervasive and volatile nature. It may be described as the image of Marian publicity. It is highly decorative in a sober but attractive way, and it serves to illustrate books, pamphlets and leaflets. It could also be called a "catechetical" image. Its theological message is easy to grasp, and it easily imprints itself on the religious imagination of children and adults. It comes closest to what we designated as poetic image, particularly in its sober graphic rendering of clip art.
- 4) The fourth prominent image of Mary is more content-oriented than the previous one. We call it ideological, although the term may be misleading. Ideological here means that a specific image of Mary carries a thematic content which is not necessarily related to its primary signification. Social, racial and feminist concerns are graphically superimposed on Mary. Frequently, there exists complementarity or affinity between the theological Mary and a socio-cultural cause (e.g., issues of social justice). Discrepancies must be avoided.

VIII. THE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MARIAN POPULAR IMAGERY

These four prominent images are rooted in one or several of the categories elaborated. We enumerate them here to expose them to more thorough scrutiny with regard to their importance for religious education and evangelization. We would like to further explore the psycho-spiritual significance of the six types of Marian representation: naturalist, poetic, exotic, essentialist, abstract and miraculous images. The image informs religious imagination and gradually shapes a specific image of Mary. This image is of psycho-spiritual nature, that is—since we are talking popular religion—a composite of theological, spiritual and cultural (individual and collective) elements. If each one of the six types imprints upon our religious imagination a corresponding image of Mary, what would be the distinctive characteristics of each one of the psycho-spiritual images of Mary formed in our religious imagination?

1. *Proximity and Similarity*

The *naturalist image* of Mary conveys the experience of proximity and similarity with Mary. The figure of Mary is approached from a human point of view; the psycho-spiritual transfer operative between graphic expression and mental representation is primarily marked by similarity or proximity. In the process, theological contents are not necessarily eliminated, but relegated. Because of the ambivalence of any image, it becomes dangerously easy to invest affectively this proximity/similarity image of Mary with idolizing and/or ideologizing characteristics. What this means is a conscious elimination of Mary's dissimilarity (she is like us!), but, simultaneously also, an unconsciously operated elimination of her similarity (she is, fortunately, not like us!), because we need to project ourselves (personally and/or our needs) onto her powerful dissimilarity.

Concretely, this means that a Marian image based on proximity and similarity necessarily remains incomplete. It seeks a complementary image (e.g., the abstract or miraculous image) with a stronger theological investment. On the other hand, the experience of proximity and similarity remains indispensable

for a humanly motivated access to the theological dimension, and it is equally important for the formation of a healthy and solid spiritual commitment to Mary. Last, but not least, Marian images reflect in some way our experience of God. Religious images predicate not a simple but a twofold mediation: there exists similarity between the signifier (Mary) and what is signified by her (proximity and similarity). There exists a similar proximity/similarity between her and God, with God as the ultimate signifier. The naturalist image, if adequately understood, suggests—*mutatis mutandis*—the experience of closeness between God and us (*imago Dei*).

2. *Acceptance and Loving Care*

The second type, the *poetic image*, shapes a mental representation of Mary which can be described as acceptance, dependability, security and loving care. This representation of Mary has a powerful psycho-spiritual significance. Because it echoes some of the most basic human needs, it may therefore reflect one of the most influential and widespread mental images of Mary. The mother-child relationship indicated in this type stresses the human need for original and lasting unity with the source of our life. Mary is not herself the source of life, but she leads or points to that source of life. This differentiation between "being" and "referring" is important in order to avoid regressive identification with Mary as mother figure and to allow for true spiritual sublimation of the primarily psychological representation. Regression, on the other hand, means a fetal religious attitude, characterized by emotional overdependence and unhealthy spiritual attachment. Spiritual spontaneity, wonderment, and creativity—the appanage of true spiritual childhood—will be attainable only in transcending a fixation on the maternal character of Mary. Further, this mental image of Mary mediates God. It facilitates the experience of God where creatureliness is a lived and loving dependence which is the source of human wholeness.

3. *Fascination and Alienation*

The mental image of Mary which is based on the third type, the *exotic image*, oscillates between fascination and alien-

ation. The exotic image is not so much concerned with theological content as it is with visualization and perception. Underlying the exotic experience is the need for novelty, for breaking out from familiar patterns, and for the discovery of a different image from which to reconquer the familiar theological and spiritual message. The positive estrangement from habitual and routine perceptions of Mary engenders and actuates fascination, one of the most powerful components of religious experience. Fascination tends to be more psychological than spiritual, and it has a primarily propaedeutic function. It facilitates a new understanding of the figure of Mary. It also helps us to perceive her as non-threatening—*fascinosum* as opposed to *tremendum*—and as psychologically and spiritually attractive and rewarding. Fascination thus has a bridging function. It helps one overcome obstacles to spiritual communication with Mary and gives one's relationship with her a new immediacy. Where this propaedeutic function becomes an end in itself, the exotic image is reduced to sensationalism or alienation. The image of Mary (e.g., *Navajo Madonna* or Raphael's *Dresden Madonna*) is dissociated from its theological and spiritual content, and the onlooker is estranged from the true figure of Mary.

The exotic image, understood as an aid to a deeper and better understanding of Mary, has another important significance. It helps to deepen our incarnational understanding of Christian revelation. Indian, Korean, and African madonnas reflect some of the many valid ways in which the Christian message is received and expressed. Thus, the exotic image fosters a more catholic (universal) way of perceiving Mary. It prompts sharing and facilitates the realization that neither Lourdes nor Fatima (i.e., no single image) possesses a monopoly on the ultimate Marian image.

The exotic image of Mary suggests a particular or typical experience of God. Aside from pointing to the incarnational reality of our God, it stresses the "fascinating" character of the divine, which highlights the goodness and mercy of God. The exotic image of Mary helps to keep in check oppressive and apocalyptic representations of religion.

4. *Authenticity and Secularization*

The *essentialist image* of Mary presents and safeguards the fundamental theological and spiritual aspects of our mental image of Mary. Although tending toward reduction, the essentialist image represents the most potentially theological representation of Our Lady. As such, it may correct cultural and psychological unilateralism and exaggeration. It recaptures the spiritual attention of the onlooker and so clarifies the true purpose of Marian images. Mental representations tend toward simplicity: the essentialist image concurs and thus facilitates the apprehension of the fundamental theological message. However, the ambivalence of this psycho-spiritual representation of Mary may lead to undue reductionism, Marian minimalism, or even secularism. The essentialist image easily tips over and either depersonalizes the figure of Mary or sometimes unconsciously promotes its secularization.

As far as the mediating capacities of the essentialist Marian image are concerned, it may be said that their main purpose is to encourage and safeguard the transparency of Marian representation toward God. By avoiding overidentification and distraction, and by showing Mary's relation with God, the authentic essentialist image leads its viewer to him.

5. *Admiration and Separation*

The *abstract image* of Mary imprints upon religious imagination the realization that Mary is different from us. It suggests excellence and grace, a special closeness to God which is beyond our reach. Probably the most frequent psychological reaction triggered by this image is an admiration composed of pride, joy and awe. Mary is the object of delight and praise. However, difference means separation or otherness. The abstract image oscillates between admiration and rejection. In the latter situation it may provoke the syndrome of the "impossible ideal." Where admiration is dominant, the abstract image suggests a relationship between Mary and us which is made of hope, expectation, receptivity and dependence on our part, and help, mercy, and intercessory power on Mary's part. The abstract image is the typical representation of mediation. Its negative or detrimental features are a tendency toward spir-

itual flight from reality, the projection of a *dea ex machina* image (i.e., a universal provider in all needs), and the suggestion of ambiguous religiosity as documented by what we called "abstract sensuality."

There is no doubt that this Marian image reminds us of the dissimilarity between God and ourselves. He is the totally other, and Mary's grandeur exists only in and through him. She is a constant referent to God, and her otherness and separation from us helps to bridge somewhat the even greater and more radical otherness and separation between God and ourselves.

6. *Active Presence and Miraculous Mediation*

The psycho-spiritual impact of the *miraculous image* is similar to that of the abstract depiction of Mary. In addition to the characteristics already mentioned, there is the miraculous quality considered as a fact, experienced and documented. The difference from the abstract image is that the miraculous image comes with the warranty of success attached to it. It has and tells a history of Mary's and God's active presence among the people. This may be, then, the most cultural of all Marian images, not so much because of its culturally adequate visualization, but because of the psycho-spiritual (and sometimes physical) impact of this image on the lives of individuals and groups in a given cultural configuration. The ambiguous character of this image of Mary lies in its vulnerability to sensationalism (e.g., apocalyptic mania) and to the culture of instant spiritual gratification. As Marian image, it stresses the mediating character of God's presence among us.

IX. ELEMENTS TOWARD A GENERAL CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the way in which the six typical popular images impact on religious imagination gave us the opportunity to highlight a number of specific facets pertaining to a comprehensive image of Mary. It also allowed us to conclude that none of these images holds the totality of the traits mentioned. At this time, the following general observations may be added:

1. Ambivalence of Images

Each one of these images, understood as psycho-spiritual representations of the figure of Mary, has its own ambivalence. They can have a positive or negative connotation (e.g., fascination or alienation). As a rule, a strong link between the psychological and the spiritual dimension of the mental image warrants balance between theological message, spiritual commitment and cultural expression.

2. Psycho-spiritual Traits of Marian Images

The major psycho-spiritual traits of Mary suggested by the six types were assessed as follows:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Psycho-spiritual traits</i>
1) Naturalist image:	proximity/similarity
2) Poetic image:	union (loving acceptance and dependability)
3) Exotic image:	fascination (newness and immediacy)
4) Essentialist image:	fundamental characteristics (authenticity)
5) Abstract image:	difference and distance (admiration and awe)
6) Miraculous image:	mediation (power and active presence).

3. Qualities of the Comprehensive Marian Image

All of the traits mentioned belong, in some way, to the comprehensive Marian image. Some are of more central importance: the essentialist and the miraculous images. Others have a more complementary function: naturalist and abstract images tend to complement each other. Still others have a primarily psychological function, insofar as they facilitate the approach to Mary (e.g., the poetic and exotic images). It may be suggested that a comprehensive image of Mary—if such image exists at all!—should allow for the following:

- 1) experience of easy access (attraction) to Mary (poetic, exotic images),

- 2) focal characteristics (essentialist, miraculous images),
- 3) corrective complementarity (naturalist, abstract images).

The comprehensive image would thus be propaedeutic, focal, and corrective. This can be psychologically achieved only through primary and secondary identification, in other terms, through the hierarchization of the various contents of our psycho-spiritual representation of Mary.

4. *Parallelism between Images of Mary and God*

The study of various types of Marian images also suggests that there may exist a certain parallelism between the way in which we view and experience Mary and God. This parallelism seems to be an important criterion to determine the legitimacy of our Marian images. Transparency, dissimilarity and similarity, incarnational and eschatological dimensions, loving experience of creatureliness, and mediating character are among the most important psycho-spiritual traits of a God-centered Marian imagery, one capable of facilitating the formation of an accurate image of God.

5. *Images and Types of Relationships*

Some of the categories denote a predominantly ego-centered relationship with the image. These images reflect a stronger subjective character, because ordinarily the *self* invests the image and not the other way around. This happens to be largely the case for the naturalist image (similarity), the poetic image ("original unity") and the exotic image (fascination). The other three categories are more object-centered, that is, the *image* now invests the self. In the case of the essentialist, abstract, and miraculous images, the attention is focused primarily on the image and its content or meaning.

6. *Iconographical Contents of Images*

Still another conclusion concerns the iconographical contents of twentieth-century Marian popular imagery. The overwhelming majority of images refer to the *Orante*-type representations of Mary, the Mother-Child combination and

the Nativity scene. More elaborate themes—from Mary at Cana to her role as Mother of the Church—are less numerous or less visible.³⁶ A new convergence between artistic image, liturgical image and devotional image may change this situation and make the devotional image more liturgical, and the liturgical image more artistic.

The balance or harvest of this century's Marian popular imagery is more psychological (expressive figure) than iconographical (growing poverty of biblical contents until recently), more spiritual (reflecting sometimes vague spirituality) than liturgical, and more devotional than theological.

7. *Privacy and Communality of Images*

It was not possible to determine with accuracy the extent to which twentieth-century Marian images are private or communal. We assume that after a certain dominance of the public or communal image during the first half of this century, the private or personal image became more important and literally exploded into a multitude of subjective interpretations of Mary. The more unified and official character of older popular images is due in part to the greater mobilization of the masses (devotions, movements, pilgrimages), whereas the more diversified imagery since the late fifties and early sixties is a reflection of the privatization of popular religion, which now appears to be waning. This new trend has given us the *image of unanimity*.

X. THE IMAGE OF UNANIMITY

In the future, images of unanimity may be an important vehicle for Marian images of popular art. They reflect a certain convergence of artistic, liturgical and devotional traits. In an

³⁶This is what a survey about Marian images, conducted by the International Marian Research Institute and University of Dayton's department of psychology, corroborated. A Tukey test indicated that the "Birth of Jesus" was preferred over approximately 45% of the remaining images ($p < .05$), whereas the second-most-preferred image, the "Annunciation," was ranked significantly higher than approximately 25% of the other images ($p < .05$).

attempt to bridge the distance between official worship and private religion, images of unanimity insist on readability, iconographic variety, contemporary graphism, and common but beautiful materials. They stress the idea of a multitude of people sharing in the same theological and spiritual values. Using classical thematic and stylistic motifs, they also illustrate the continuity of past to present.

An illustration of unanimity is found in a series of maquettes which were prepared for the decoration of a church in southern Switzerland (1988), but were never executed. The artist is Theodore Stravinsky, the son of Igor; the media used is colored chalk on cardboard. The iconographic theme of the series is Marian, illustrating the major articulations of Mary's mission³⁷ (*illus. no. 43*).

These images may not rank among the most common expressions of popular art. As images of unanimity they are an expression of convergence between artistic, liturgical, and devotional images. They link past and present, individual and liturgical piety, sacred and secular aspects of reality. Most important, they present a program of what popular religious art should never forget to be or try to achieve. Popular Marian art, more than ever, must incorporate the following qualities—

- 1) Instructional: *Biblia pauperum* or not, popular art must instruct. The Marian image is also a catechetical image, where contents pertaining to the history of revelation play an important role. Thus, theological contents cannot be eliminated.
- 2) Identifying: Popular religious images serve the purpose of self-identification. We need to be accepted as we are, and thus the Marian images must be a psychological safe haven. At the same time, religious and Marian images reveal something of our religious identity (creature, saved, graced). Finally, popular religious art normally promotes or confirms cultural, and thus social, identification.

³⁷G. Zaccheo, *Théodore Stravinsky: Icone Mariane* (1988): five "maquettes" (Annunciation, Nativity, John and Mary at the Foot of the Cross, Pentecost, Assumption), colored chalk on cardboard, for the Catholic church in Cusio, Switzerland (never executed).

- 3) **Inspirational:** The popular Marian image encourages spiritual commitment. Images engage and involve. A happy coordination of aesthetics and theology (as seen in a correspondence between message and graphic expression) will have lasting impact on our religious imagination and make inroads in our heart. Inspiration establishes a spiritual dialogue between ourselves and the image.

The Marian image, to be truly popular, should concern and touch the whole person—as child, adolescent, adult, and member of society. Since we include within ourselves all of these facets, the Marian image should communicate affective security to the child in us, knowing (and, if possible, knowledgeable) admiration to the adolescent in us, active challenge (Mary as spiritual model) to the adult, and a sense of religious and cultural solidarity to the social being in us.