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MARY IN THE DOCTRINE OF BÉRULLE ON THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST

Two monuments Bérulle left the Church, *aere perennina*: more enduring than bronze, are his writings and his Congregation of the Oratory. He took part in the great controversies of his time, religious and political, but his figure takes its greatest luster with the passing of years because of his spiritual work and the influence he exerts in the Church by those endowed with his teaching. From his integrated life originated both his works and his institution; that is why both his writings and the Oratory are intimately connected. His writings in their final synthesis—and we are concerned above all with the culmination of his contemplation and study—center about Christ, and his restoration of the priesthood centers about Christ.¹

Neither his doctrinal synthesis nor his foundation can be separated from his personal experience or charism. It is not strange that his original purpose in founding the Oratory was not directly the reform of the clergy, but to consecrate its members to the contemplation of the mysteries of Jesus and Mary. His own life, of course, was just that: contemplation of the mysteries of the Incarnate Word and his Blessed Mother, with an extraordinary emphasis on the Incarnation itself. In the Incarnation he contemplated all the mysteries of Jesus, and his Oratory he devoted to the same work. When he dealt with authorities Bérulle stressed the reform of the clergy; but when he addressed the theologians he stressed the mysteries, above all the Incarnation. The following passage shows how in his life and thought the mysteries of Jesus and Mary link both his doctrine and his Oratory: Jesus and Mary never separated. The priests of the Oratory

¹ *Oeuvres de piété* (henceforth O.P.) CXCI, especially 2 and 6, in *Oeuvres complètes de De Bérulle* (ed. Migne, Paris, 1856), cols. 1268-69.

make profession of piety and a special devotion towards Jesus and Mary, his Mother, who ought never to be separated from him in honor of the connection (*liaison*) she has with the Son of God as his Mother. They are priests and slaves of Jesus and Mary; therefore they give all to them.²

Bérulle compares this gift Oratorians make to Jesus and Mary with the gift religious make of poverty and obedience. His sons are to consider themselves as belonging to Jesus and Mary, "Pars mea, Deus in aeternum" (Ps. 72:26).³ He proposes their relation to Jesus and Mary as a marriage (*alliance*). To symbolize externally what the Oratorians are and their *raison d'être*, he wanted every room in their houses to be dedicated to some mystery of the Son of God; it was not enough that the house itself should be dedicated to some mystery of Jesus Christ. So, for example, he commanded that a house should be devoted to the Jesus languishing on the Cross.⁴

When he welcomed an elderly priest into the Oratory, Bérulle resumed in a few words the ideal of the Oratory:

In honor of the eternal filiation of Jesus and also of that which he wants to have on earth with regard to the Virgin his Mother, I receive you to be one of the children of the Congregation, which he willed to be founded in this century to honor in a special way his deified humanity and his humanized divinity and also her in whose womb this great mystery was realized. It is the spirit and purpose of

² O.P. CXCI, 1, 2, 3, col. 1272.

³ O.P. CXCI, 3, col. 1270; O.P. CXCI, 1, col. 1272.

⁴ Lettre (henceforth L.) 133, in *Oeuvres complètes* . . . , col. 1468; O.P. CXCI, 4, cols. 1272-73. M. Dupuy, *Bérulle et le sacerdoce* (Paris, 1969), pp. 348-49. A. George, *L'Oratoire* (Paris, 1928), pp. 111, 113, so defines the purpose of the Oratory as: "to have special devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation; to give oneself entirely to Jesus Christ, the principle and end of his actions. Such is the language of the Constitutions of the Oratory" (p. 111). "And to keep before the minds of the Oratorians this end, each one should have a room which is consecrated to a mystery of Jesus or of Mary" (p. 111). . . . "All strive to find Christ in community (as Jesus and Mary); all is reduced to Jesus Christ. From this centering on Christ proceeds the accent given to Christ priest, to adoration and the importance given to the study of the Gospels" (p. 113).

this small Congregation to dedicate itself to the special homage of this Man-God and his worthy Holy Mother. Dedicate yourself, then, to Jesus and Mary, and dispose yourself to serve, honor and love them among us . . .⁵

A number of times in the course of his correspondence, Bérulle has occasion to come back to the purpose of the Oratory. So he says that the Son of God and his most Holy Mother ought to be "the principal objects of our Congregation."⁶ In writing to a community engaged in the service of pilgrims frequenting a shrine of our Lady, he recalled to them that their work and service ought to be an expression of the special honor and devotion that the Oratory owes her and in memory of all the services Mary rendered Jesus Christ, Our Lord when he was on this earth.⁷ In a word, the Oratorian belongs not to himself but to Jesus and Mary.⁸ Collectively, too, in all the concerns of the Congregation, the members should look to Jesus and his most Holy Mother.⁹

Long before the foundation of the Oratory, as a young student of the Jesuits at Clermont, he joined the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin and he nourished a deep Marian devotion which was to dominate his entire life. This early devotion to Mary grew at the time he introduced the Carmelites into France. It is said that his so-called Copernican revolution took place at this time. His concentration on the Word Incarnate began to lessen his Platonic Rheno-Flamand spirituality, which had held center stage up to that point. He had gone into Spain to negotiate the establishment of the Teresian Reform in France. He brought back from Spain not only Carmelites—who had the influence of St. Teresa and were Incarnation-oriented—but also the knowledge that certain old confraternities lived there in dependence on Mary, an idea that was to become central in his Mariology, a concept which harmonized so well with the dependence of the Word Incarnate on Mary shown in his conception and dwelling in her womb for

⁵ L. 173, col. 1509.

⁶ L. 117, col. 1457.

⁷ L. 121, col. 1459.

⁸ L. 123, col. 1460.

⁹ L. 124, col. 1461.

nine months. Mary, was *pur regard vers Jesus*, that is completely and perfectly oriented towards Jesus; *ad Iesum*, was to deepen with time. Mary, he noted, introduced these Spanish devotees into a supernatural intimacy with Jesus. These confraternities proclaimed themselves *esclavos de Maria*. Experts in the matter trace this practical dependence on Mary back to St. Ildefonsus (d. 667) of Toledo. Bérulle was already disposed to this dependency by his adoption of Dionysius' theory of hierarchic mediation. Bérulle united the two ideas, stemming from the confraternities and Dionysius, and spoke of Mary's choir or court.¹⁰ From her court, her devotees moved to the Court of Jesus. In this atmosphere of dependence of consecrated persons on Jesus and Mary, his vow of servitude to Jesus and Mary took root. Logically, the vow of servitude to Mary should take place first; the vow to Jesus should come after. In fact, Bérulle introduced the two vows about the same time; the first consecration or vow of service was made to Mary and then a vow of service to Jesus, to respect the due hierarchy in accord with Dionysian categories.¹¹

Nothing strange—that Bérulle should consider the Virgin as his intermediary hierarch—for, he considered his own vocation as that of an hierarch with the duty of leading his subjects to a share in Mary's mystical graces and then, through the Virgin, to a participation in the mysteries of Christ, and, finally, through the mysteries of Christ to the life of the Trinity. To summarize his thought: *per Mariam ad Iesum; per Iesu mysteria ad Trinitatem*. Both his theology and his apostolate are tributary then of Bérulle's own personal charism.¹²

¹⁰ The order of Bérulle is Mary, Christ, Trinity. L. Cognet writes in *La spiritualité moderne*, Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne, 3 (Paris: Aubier, 1966), p. 318: "Logically the composition of the vow of servitude to Mary should precede the vow to Jesus. The degrees of the hierarchical initiation presuppose that one is first admitted to the court of Mary, *chorus Mariae*, before belonging to the court of Jesus, *chorus Jesu*."

¹¹ Cf. the letter of Bérulle, addressed to the Carmelites of Bordeaux in 1623, where he speaks of the hierarchical mediation of Mary in Dionysian language (Cognet, *La spiritualité moderne*, p. 341). Original as the presentation of Bérulle is, the mediation idea, on which the Dionysian hierarchy is built, is thoroughly Catholic.

¹² Cognet, *La spiritualité moderne*, pp. 317, 346.

Bérulle published his two *Elévations* on the Mystery of the Incarnation in 1611-13. Because of their publication, he was destined to suffer innumerable attacks. The irony of his situation was that he had composed the works for private circulation for the benefit of chosen souls. The texts became known by others who lost no time in assailing their author. Bérulle himself recounts the story of his sufferings in consequence of the divulgation of the writings. For ten years he kept silence and finally answered with his masterpiece, *Discours de l'état et les grandeurs de Jésus*. The Church can well rejoice that God brought such great good out of the evil precipitated by the publication of the *Elévations*, containing Bérulle's genial intuitions on the Incarnation.¹³

The *Elévations* center on the Sacred Mystery of the Incarnation, just as do practically all his works; he characterizes Jesus' Incarnation as "the fundamental mystery of all other states and mysteries, the center and the circumference of his glory, the origin and the basis of all his wonders."¹⁴ The *Elévations* were meant to contemplate Jesus in the mystery of the Incarnation, to honor him as Son of God. Such contemplation had to include Mary because she is His Mother. Both Son and Mother, inextricably united in this mystery, have to be honored together. He speaks enthusiastically of "their sacred mysteries." For the contemplation of the mysteries, he places—as does St. Paul—no other foundation than Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Bérulle found occasion, too, to defend his *Elévations* by a Memorial which he submitted to the examination of Fathers Cotton and Souffron, well-known and accomplished theologians. He received their approval of his teaching and practice.¹⁶

¹³ *Voeux à Jésus et à Marie* (henceforth *Voeux*), in *Oeuvres complètes* . . . , cols. 595 ff. *Elévations*, in *Oeuvres complètes* . . . , cols. 567 ff. The reason for breaking his silence and writing *L'état et les grandeurs* was, *inter alia*, to render a service to those who honor Jesus' *grandeurs* and mysteries, who want to belong to him forever by a special homage. Bérulle showed he was convinced of the usefulness of the mysteries by working out special homage toward Jesus, by applying the mysteries of Jesus to a life of Service. See *Discours de l'état et des grandeurs de Jésus*, I, 5, in *Oeuvres complètes* . . . , col. 153. All in all, the treatise is a discourse on Jesus' mysteries: *ibid.*, I, 6, col. 155.

¹⁴ *Voeux*, 1, col. 597.

¹⁵ I Cor. 3:11; *Voeux*, 2, col. 597.

¹⁶ *Voeux*, 3, col. 597.

Bérulle saw no incongruity in proposing the vow of servitude to Mary and then to Jesus or, rather, in proposing both of them at the same time. For him, nothing could depend on Jesus if it did not depend on Mary at the same time. The basis of the vow of servitude to Mary is her sovereignty, which is connected inextricably with her role in the Incarnation and her association with Jesus. Bérulle expected perfect submission to the universal sovereignty of Mary. He was surprised, to say the least, that others should fail to see the connection of Jesus and Mary and the inferred necessity of submission to her. "Are there minds," he asks, "so small in understanding of your mysteries and so insensitive to your grandeurs, O Virgin Mary, that they object to this your domination and to this kind of servitude, which contemplates and honors your domination?"¹⁷ Needless to say, Bérulle did not entertain high esteem of such people. He says that those who do not acknowledge this servitude vis-a-vis Mary and refuse to enter into it are weak souls, people who entertain low thoughts.¹⁸

Mary's sovereignty Bérulle envisioned as honor and glory re-doubling to her Son Jesus. Her sovereignty renders homage to the supreme authority of Jesus as well as to his mother.¹⁹ As part of her sovereignty, Mary enjoys the power to dissipate the clouds which oppose the works of God's Son on this earth.²⁰ It is in his contemplation of the supreme authority of Mary that Bérulle was leader among all the authors of the French School who later expressed the same conviction, holding that Mary is destined in modern times to overcome all heresy. "It appears," he wrote,

that it is pleasing to God that the triumph of the Church over modern heresy should begin by his most Holy Mother and be fought by her. She will move on, laying low modern heresy everywhere; whence comes it that so many Churches and miracles of the Virgin

¹⁷ *Elévation III, A Dieu en l'honneur de la Ste. Vierge*, in *Oeuvres complètes . . .*, cols. 528-29.

¹⁸ *Discours XI*, 12, col. 387.

¹⁹ L. 115, col. 1455.

²⁰ L. 135, 4, col. 1473.

are appearing in so many places in our time. The Virgin has this gift of God, to defeat all heresies. She must be invoked against this one which attacks her directly in her cult, in her honor, in her supreme authority as Lady and Queen of Heaven and Earth.²¹

He reaffirms this conviction elsewhere, writing more explicitly: "Perhaps, a ray of light will come from her part to dissipate the clouds that surround you and to reunite you with her Son and with all that her Son has ordained for your salvation."²²

In the *Elévations* written about the time of the vows of servitude to Jesus and Mary, Bérulle explains Mary's sovereignty in this way. Mary loves and possesses Jesus her Son. She enjoys the right of property over him, which she shares with the Father. In both the Father and in Mary this right over Jesus stems from the relationship of sonship; he is son of the Father and of Mary.²³ This so-called possession of Jesus, this right over him which Mary has, is not a juridical possession and right, but both the possession and right are characterized, in more fluid and vague terms, as mystic and exemplary.

Another aspect of this sovereignty of Mary is her compassion. The Father's compassion is expressed by the obscuring of the sun when Jesus was dying on the Cross. Mary's compassion was expressed by the vibrations of her heart.

It follows then from her possession and compassion that she has a right and the power to give Jesus to souls. She is sovereign of creatures because she is mother of the Creator.²⁴ It is to be noted that Bérulle's creation theology carries over into his Incarnation theology and his Mariology. Her title of sovereign shares in nature because of creation and in grace because of Redemption. Such is the foundation of his vows of servitude.

True it is that Bérulle exerted a powerful influence on the spirituality of the Carmelites in France, but the influence was not merely in one direction. He himself received from them.

²¹ O.P. XCIII, 1, col. 1102.

²² L. 225, col. 1571.

²³ *Elévation III*, col. 526.

²⁴ *Elévation III*, col. 528.

The devotion of the Carmelites, impregnated with principles and practices inspired by Teresa of Avila, centered around the Incarnate Word. Teresa herself had tried during some years to go directly to God, bypassing the sacred Humanity of Jesus. She lived to learn how stupid this approach was, and how un-Catholic.²⁵ The Carmelites transplanted into France gave an impulse and a new direction to their Superior's devotion towards a deeper appreciation of the Incarnation. Bérulle's influence on the Carmelites continued after his death, occasioning the faithful expression of his Mariology in the writings of Fr. Gibieuf, author of a work whose very title is reminiscent of Bérulle, *Les grandeurs de Marie*, and composed at the request of Carmelite Sister, Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, who requested this book to explain to the Carmelites:

" . . . that among all creatures and holy souls, they are all obliged to love our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Humanity taken of the pure and Holy Virgin; to have a continual *application* to his most holy life, his qualities and his Mysteries . . . they ought to imitate the love she [his Mother] had for him and the honor she rendered him." The Carmelites have an obligation "to go to the Son through her, to enter into him by her and to be consecrated to him by her hands, . . ." ²⁶

Gibieuf dedicated to the Carmelites his *La vie et les grandeurs de la très Sainte Vierge Marie, Mère de Dieu* (1637). Of this work it can be said that Bérulle taught better there than by any of his own writings. This work of Gibieuf is a splendid example of the writings of Bérulle's many disciples who popularized their master's doctrine, and perhaps thereby proved it more influential than he did by his own writings.

Bérulle did not come immediately to the full possession of his doctrine on the mysteries of Jesus and Mary. Only in his final writings do we discover the perfection of his ideas on the association of Jesus and Mary. He grew into the plenitude of this doc-

²⁵ Cf. remarks of Teresa of Avila: *Vida*, p. 22; *Obras completas* (ed. Isidoro de San José, Madrid, 1963), pp. 170 ff.; *Castillo interior*, VI, 7, pp. 720 ff.

²⁶ P. Cochois, *Bérulle et l'école Française* (Paris, 1963), p. 151.

trine by his personal charism, so personal is Bérulle's presentation of the mysteries of Jesus and Mary.

Bérulle's Mariology an Integral Part of His Charism

Since Bérullianism is a system representing the personal synthesis that Bérulle made of his vast readings and studies, the general lines or principles that outline that synthesis appear over and over again, whether he is speaking of the One Triune God, the Incarnate Word, his Mother, or creatures—be they angels or saints or the hierarchy of being—the spiritual, animal, vegetable, mineral orders that part from God in a descending order of being and participation.

The philosophical background to this theological thought is Neo-Platonism. That he was inspired by the exemplarism of Plato is another way of saying that Bérulle's thought is imprinted by Patristic thought, Greek Fathers, of course, and in particular St. Augustine, who was for him "the eagle of Doctors and the great teacher of the prince of the School, St. Thomas Aquinas."²⁷ Unfortunately for us, Bérulle does not always cite the Fathers as he goes, as he generally does in his controversial treatises against the Protestants, but the Fathers are never far from him and his thought. His doctrine is nourished by them and, what is more important, their thought is his atmosphere.

The impact of Neo-Platonism on the conversion of Augustine and of his theological development is well-known. So, too, Neo-Platonism penetrates Bérullianism. Dominating Bérulle's synthesis is the transcendence of God; from this dominance comes his insistence on religion and adoration. The admirable study by Dupuy brings out the point that Bérullianism centers on that section of theology which is comprised in the old division *De Deo Trino et Uno*, and no matter how far Bérulle goes in his Christological developments and important principles of the tract on God enter into his considerations.²⁸

Neither his eclecticism—his immense grasp of the authors he studied—nor his Thomism interrupts his Neo-Platonist concep-

²⁷ *Discours X*, 7, col. 346.

²⁸ M. Dupuy, *Bérulle, une spiritualité de l'adoration* (Tournai, 1964).

tion of the universe. Even though the *Summa* of St. Thomas was for him an oracle and miracle of Scholastic Philosophy,²⁹ and he said, "we follow St. Thomas," still his Neo-Platonism—stemming through Dionyus the Areopagite and the Rheno-Flamand spiritual writers—constitutes the backbone of his synthesis. The Neo-Platonism belongs not only to the early Bérulle, to that so-called abstract theology or the contemplation of God without images, but to his Mariology as well. His intellectual devotion to Mary receives its particular coloring from the Neo-Platonism of his synthesis.

What is capital to and distinguishes Neo-Platonism is exemplarism. This word evokes the world of ideas as contrasted with the world in which we move and have our being:

The Ancients, when they spoke of God, distinguished two worlds, a material or sensible world and an intelligible one, a world of archetypes. By this world of archetypes they understood divinity, which is a perfect model of all things that God made and produced outside of himself, by contemplating himself and imitating himself.³⁰

Starting then from this perennial philosophical question of Unity being the source of diversity and plurality of beings in the world, Bérulle passes immediately to the creation of the Church, imparting to it a diversity of ministries. The origin of the Divine Persons in the unity of the Godhead models the unity of the Church. Christ willed that the unity he imparted to his Church should hold an analogical place on earth vis-a-vis grace, ecclesiastical functions and ministries to the unity and procession of Persons in the Trinity.

When Bérulle treats the spiritual life, he does not lose sight of this great principle of exemplarism. Thus, exemplarism in the spiritual life leads a person to imitate God, motivates the person in his efforts. By progressing in spiritual life, those living in grace honor God by becoming more and more like him. Inde-

²⁹ *Voeux*, col. 610.

³⁰ *Oeuvres de controverse I*, 24, in *Oeuvres complètes* . . . , col. 673.

pendently of the industry of God's servants in striving to model themselves on God, as most dear Children, by their very existence as creatures they honor God by reflecting a divine perfection; nay, not only those in grace, nor creatures endowed with spiritual faculties, but all creatures—insofar as they exist and are in their own state—honor God by being examples, reflections of him. Spiritual beings who imitate God, it goes without saying, honor God, according to the common saying that the highest homage, or even flattery, is imitation. In a word, creatures mirror God and the more they realize their end the more they reflect their exemplar, God.

Creation puts the creature in *relation* with God. This simple truth recurs in Bérulle who works out the implications of the relation. Not only is the idea of relation important in creation, but the notion of relations, from the time of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, has also been basic in theological discussion of the Three Persons of the Trinity. Relations, then, loom large in Bérulle's meditation on the Incarnation, which brings a Sacred Humanity of Jesus into relation with the Word and with the Trinity.

The first operation of God is a regard of himself which produces the Son, and the first operation of the Son is a regard towards his Father, and from this mutual gaze of the persons is produced the personal love which is the Holy Spirit, the place and the unity of the Father and the Son . . . by the relation and connection of our life with this life, let us offer each day of our life to this Being and this Life.³¹

Mary, the Word's mother, is thrown, by her divine maternity, into relations not only with the Word Incarnate, the redeemer, but with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Creation implies a fundamental relation of *dependency*; the correlative of dependency is *sovereignty*. The two contrasting ideas come over and over again, whether Bérulle is meditating the association of consecrated persons through the double vow of servitude to Jesus and Mary or the dependence of the Sacred Humanity vis-a-vis the Word. Considered from another angle,

³¹ O.P. CLV, cols. 1198-99.

the principle of dependency implies first of all the sovereignty of God, but, in the hierarchical scheme of Dionysius—through the various orders of creatures according to their superiority, it implies the exercise and influence on dependent orders. The creature man, as intellectual being, in a special way needs God; man's need of God, on the other hand, constitutes him in great personal dignity. Paradoxically, his personal need, his poverty of God, constitutes him in great dignity, which is the result of God's creating man for himself. One might say this urge or need to be satisfied, another Augustinian theme, is at borrom really a homing instinct toward Him.³² Although the need imparted to man to move him, orient him, and direct him to God appears as something negative, yet it is really and truly a capacity for God. So that, if we were to sum up all the expressions to describe man (and in lesser degree inferior creatures), participation in God—a capacity for God, a dependence on God—are synonymous with the condition of creature. All these expressions attempt to suggest man's capacity for God and his condition of servitude. All these expressions aim, too, at imparting an idea of God's transcendence and absolute sovereignty.

Creation goes on and the state of dependence is continual. Creation itself, in its conservation of creatures, mirrors forth the continual life going on in the Trinity. What is asserted here of creation counts, too, for the New Creation. God sustains in existence in the supernatural world those elevated by grace just as he sustains his natural creation.³³ Hence, the obligation to remain entirely dependent on God and to follow the penchant of nature by striving to go to God. All of these ideas lead inevitably to the establishment of religion as the duty arising from baptismal consecration. Such is the response to the disposition God has made and implanted in each one; this is the answer to the state or condition of being. It is the substance of the Incarnation which then functions *in actu secundo*; it is the state and condition of the Mother of God which accounts for her psychological response to the reality of her condition.

³² M. Dupuy, *Bérulle et le sacerdoce*, p. 272.

³³ O.P. CLVII, col. 1190.

From the transcendent God, absolutely sovereign, who is above all, it follows in an absolute way that whatever is not God is not being. Applying this principle to the Mystery of the Incarnation, Bérulle was fascinated by the so-called annihilation of the human personality in Christ, not that he in any way wanted to suggest that at some time there existed a separate human personality. Bérulle speaks in such terms as to convey the idea that the Human Nature of Christ did not have its own subsistence, but subsisted in the subsistence of the Word. Within this "annihilation" of the human personality, Bérulle found an example of complete mortification of self, renouncing all one has for God.

Mary was not only in relation to the Father who made her the Mother of his Son, she was also in a unique relationship with the Son as His Mother. The very state and nature of the Virgin seems founded upon and fused (*fondé et fondu*) into this disposition of relation. Those among the philosophers who have treated the subject of relations speak of relations even in the least realities of nature or the least efficient of working things. They produce nothing, and their relations are merely consequences and realities of other beings. They do not change or alter without the change and alteration of another (nothing inherent or intrinsic), for example, by means of a little change in the correlative term or in the foundation of the relation, without any change in the other term.

But in God, relations constitute persons; what could you expect greater? They are the origins of the Divine Persons. What could you expect more powerful? There is no subsistence in the Divinity except through relations: what could you expect that is more important?³⁴

. . . Jesus Christ, the Father's Incarnate Son, is the substance of the Father as uncreated grace; our grace consists in relation to him as being in a certain fashion accidents of this substance, which accidents are only through him and for him and in Him. They are of no importance except they are something of him.³⁵

³⁴ O.P. CXIX, 2, cols. 1144-45.

³⁵ O.P. CXIX, 2, col. 1145.

But all—the Incarnation, the Divine Maternity, the sanctifying grace of the redeemed, all share and reflect the divine life in different orders, degrees and perfections as relations and various illustrations of exemplarism.

Bérulle's thought is rather descending than ascending, that is, he preferred to start from God and then to consider all things in God, although he admitted the validity of a contrary method of beginning from created things and arising to a knowledge of God. He preferred to know things through knowledge of God. In this respect, it is to be noted that he changed the prayer of Augustine found in the *Soliloquies*, "Lord that I may know myself and know you" (*Noverim me, noverim te*).³⁶ In Bérulle, the prayer is: that I may know *thee* and know *myself*. His preference for beginning with God reinforces what has just been said about the penetration of *De deo uno et Triuno* throughout his theology, even in his Christology. Convinced that first of all one must look to God, he wanted to know each category of being by reflecting on God and God's perfections. His fundamental principle was that the Word—Light, in the words of the Nicene Creed—proceeds from light. God expresses himself and this is the first order, apart from all others. In his expression of self he produces an image or resemblance in his creature, that is why the first order gives real understanding of all others. To put it in another way: the investigator should begin with God, that is the Triune God, and go on to effects. Such a conception is one that begins from faith and not reason; it is not that described by Paul to the Romans, and canonized by Vatican Council I, that God can be known by reason and his attributes too, through the revelation of creation. Bérulle certainly never denied such a procedure, he merely preferred his own as a superior procedure.

The Trinity itself is an ecstasy of love. The processions take place in God and the Incarnation initiates this ek-stasis, or movement towards creation, when the Son of God becomes man.³⁷ The movement of God, his action in us, the superiority

³⁶ *Soliloquia II*, 1: PL 32, 885.

³⁷ J. Guitton, "Philosophie de la Vierge d'après Bérulle," *EphM* 25 (1975): 327.

of the knowledge which he inspires are all sublimely explained in Bérulle's commentary on the text *Deus scientiarum dominus*.³⁸ The created mind proceeds from the uncreated mind and therefore should refer everything to God. Bérulle calls attention to God's purpose in creating man that man should be consecrated to God in virtue of the primitive act of God consecrating man. This consecration by God continues just as God continues to conserve man in existence. But as noble as this conception of man and his duty towards God is, Bérulle concerns himself more with the supernatural order, the spiritual life which God creates in man, by which God is really the Father of minds or spirits according to St. Paul. Man, then, must not only elevate self to God in virtue of the primitive consecration but also in virtue of this new life communicated by the Father in Christ. All of this doctrine becomes concrete and practical for individuals and for institutions, such as schools. God must be served by humility of spirit.³⁹

All of these considerations lead to the conclusion that Bérulle's synthesis is theology, that is concerned with God, even when he is speaking of the Incarnation and the role of Mary in the Incarnation. The great experts of Bérullianism, like Fr. Cognet and Fr. Cochois, emphasize the principle of exemplarism in Bérulle's system. Fr. Cognet makes much of exemplarism and insists that this must be applied to the mysteries:

The importance of Trinitarian ideas of Bérulle is tied to his exemplarism which is found already at the beginning of his career, the principle about which he organized his thought. The concept of exemplarism was very varied . . . the Trinitarian relations, which are identified with God's intimate life, constitute the fundamental ontological schema, which is repeated at each level of God's work, analogically, of course, and not identically.⁴⁰

In his turn, Fr. Cochois insists that exemplarism is the key to Bérullianism.⁴¹ And indeed, what shines through the *Gran-*

³⁸ II Kgs. 2:3.

³⁹ O.P. CLXXXII, cols. 1230-47.

⁴⁰ Cognet, *La spiritualité moderne*, p. 334.

⁴¹ Cochois, *Bérulle et l'école Française*, p. 85.

deurs and elsewhere is the continuous preoccupation with God the Creator on the one hand and the creature on the other. God the Creator is the exemplar of all being, the source, the model and the end of all creatures both great and small.

The incomparable Mystery of the Incarnation itself, which is the source and the prototype of every Christian's spiritual life, finds its exemplar in the bosom of the Trinity. The Word comes forth from the Father, *ex patre*, as the Word proceeds from the Father in eternal birth. Thus, the Exemplar, type, or model of the Incarnation is the Eternal Generation. When the Word is born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, he enters into a second, a new birth, which reflects his eternal birth of the Father. Christ, in virtue of the hypostatic union, is divinized; thus, the Incarnation is the exemplar and prototype in turn of the divinization that is worked in sanctified souls. What is the ideal and model of the mystical experience but the hypostatic union itself?

Exemplarism is a philosophical doctrine which Bérulle used in his elaboration of spiritual teaching; it takes as starting point an ideal world which exists in itself or in the divine mind. Of course, for Bérulle this ideal world is not a conglomeration of ideas, as Plato would have it, but God himself. It is based on God's causality, insofar as he himself expressed himself and is the mode in which all things participate, not only the Efficient Cause of all things. Exemplarism is taken in its ontological metaphysical sense and—what is dependent on this—reflects how the mind knows this order. According to Plato, if we are to believe Aristotle, separate ideas form the real world, and what we live in and are associated with are mere imitations (*mimesis*) and participations (*methexis*). This Platonic concept influences very much the Stoic idea of the logos as instrument of creation and the exemplary cause of the world. The Stoics exploited the notion of logos and later on, in the Christian era, the pagan philosopher Plotinus gave new life both to the exemplarism of ideas and the logos. The ideas generated in the *noûs* become the exemplary cause of all creation. All of this appealed to Augustine who became the great influence of theological and philosophical thought in the West, in whose writings the themes of exemplarism, participation, and illumination in the theory of

knowledge were Christianized. St. Bonaventure in his time took up the Augustinian teaching, and even St. Thomas, though dissociating himself from the theory of illuminism, accepted the eternal ideas in the divine mind, the deduction of these ideas in exemplarism, or the exemplary causality of all created things.⁴²

Bérulle's writings constitute a veritable synthesis, a summa of doctrine that is coherent, articulated, and, despite its apparent speculation, eminently practical. The key word in evaluation of Bérulle is synthesis. Jean Guittou called Bérulle "a genius of synthesis."⁴³ Guittou, of course, is not a great expert on Bérulle, but Paul Cochois is and he uses the same word "genius" in speaking of Bérullianism: "The religious genius of the Oratorian has been the master-craftsman of an effort to produce a synthesis, perhaps pushed as far as has been possibly done, and that worked out between two poles."⁴⁴ The two poles refer, of course, to 1) the fusion of the mystic of essence stemming from Dionysius and to 2) a profound devotion to the Humanity of Jesus. The result of this synthesis is an incomparable sounding of devotion to the Mystery of the Incarnation and, at the same time, a new understanding of the Mystics of the North.

A synthesis is not worked out in a short time; it is the fruit of a life's endeavour. It issues from a point of departure and concentrated application to the principle of the synthesis. Bérulle began with what has been called theocentricism and ended up Incarnation-minded. A synthesis implies that something has been retained of the principle and this something has been integrated into another vision. There is no complete renunciation of what launched the master of the synthesis on his adventure, but nevertheless great change has taken place. One can say of this development or synthesis what John Henry Newman said of perfection: "To become perfect, is to have changed much." A serious and profound study like Dupuy's *Bérulle, une spiritualité de l'adoration* traces this central theme of Bérullianism from the brief *Discourse on Interior Abnegation*, 1597, through his *Con-*

⁴² *SuTh* I, 45, a. 5.

⁴³ Guittou, "Philosophie de la Vierge d'après Bérulle," p. 325.

⁴⁴ Cochois, *Bérulle et l'école Française*, p. 81.

troversies and *Collationes* to the final works—in a word, from theocentricism to Christocentricism.

Such studies are really detective works. The unpublished material of Bérulle is considerable;⁴⁵ precious indications to help follow the development of the synthesis can be found in obscure places, in unpublished works, known only to those who frequent archives. Bérulle is one of those authors, like Tertullian, that requires attention to chronology. But this essay is not concerned with the journey of Bérulle to the Mysteries of Jesus and Mary, rather with the Bérulle of maturity, his *terminus ad quem*. Studies on the Gospels abound today; but—whether affirming the so-called acquired positions on the *Formgeschichte* and accepting dates usually given for the composition of the texts that we have today, or the new theses on the Hebrew originals of the texts which overturn acquired positions—what is important for the spiritual life and the Christian interested in imitating and following Christ is the text as we have it today.

When Bérulle reached his synthesis, he realized that he had wrought a Copernican revolution, to use a comparison which had special appeal for him. Indeed, traces of Incarnation theology can be seen as far back as 1607, however, his consciousness of a Copernican revolution is clear only in 1622. No doubt that it had its center elsewhere, but certainly not in Christ. The group that gravitated about Madame Acarie and Bérulle at this time gave the Rheno-Flamand mystics an abstract interpretation, in contrast to the concreteness of the later Bérulle. That group sought to put the soul in direct communication with the Divine Essence, without intermediaries. They proposed a union that was not conceptual; they wanted to bypass the Sacred Humanity of Christ to meet God alone. All of this was linked with a mysticism of annihilation. Carmelites, schooled in the doctrine and practice of their sainted Reformer St. Teresa, could well be shocked. They had no need to repeat the experience of Teresa who had described her own attempt to reach God without the Sacred Humanity of Jesus.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Dupuy, *Bérulle, une spiritualité de l'adoration*, pp. 9-12.

⁴⁶ Cf. L. Cognet as cited by P. Cochois, *Bérulle et l'école Française*, p. 22.

But even at its mature stage, the Christocentrism of Bérulle still owes much to the concept of divinization of the Greek Fathers and the Scotist tradition. The theology of glory is clear in what shall be seen later when we speak of the substance and the economy of the Incarnation. The substance of the Incarnation is the God-man, two natures, divine and human, tightly gripped in the unity of the Person, but the Economy, which is sometimes translated as dispensation, is the use that the Divine Person makes of his divine-human life in all its states, functions, operations and mysteries.⁴⁷ The Fathers considered God as the subject of theology and the work of God saving mankind as economy. So too, St. Basil's management of language in his treatise on the Holy Spirit, by which he avoids an outright affirmation that the Holy Spirit is God while at the same time affirming in other terms the fact that the Holy Spirit is God, exemplifies another nuance of the word economy.

The Carmelites, whom Bérulle introduced into France with Madame Acarie, his cousin, and for whom he became the Spiritual Superior, had a hand in the evolution of his mentality. A new orientation began to appear in him about 1605-1606, or, as some think, even earlier in 1601. From that time on, he is the promoter of the Incarnation as the center of the spiritual universe, without, however, denying his theocentrism, which continues to be a directing force in his Christocentrism. It is sometimes suggested that this change in Bérulle, which was to have enormous consequences for the Church of France due to the influence the Copernican spiritual revolution had in the formation and apostolate of so many saints, exercised a nefarious influence on the Christian world. Such a judgment, nevertheless, seems to give short shrift to the incalculable contributions for good made by St. John Eudes, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, together with the innumerable founders and foundresses tributary to the French School. Bérulle made waves that are still in movement; the sea has not calmed, and, if we are to believe

⁴⁷ O.P. XVI, cols. 937-38.

Milet, has swelled into a tempest.⁴⁸ Milet suggests that the Incarnational theology of Bérulle is larger and stronger in the twentieth century than in seventeenth-century France. He proposes the challenging question, "God or the Christ?"—asserting that Bérullianism distorted the view of theology from God to Christ.

Bérulle wrote,

From all eternity there was only one God infinitely adorable. But up to that time there was no one who could offer infinite adoration. There was God worthy of being loved and served, but there was no man who was at the same time an infinite servant who could properly offer a service that was infinite and a love that was infinite.⁴⁹

The Christocentrism announced in the *Grandeurs* is affirmed in his *Life of Jesus*; anyone, however, who would pick up the life expecting a biography of Jesus, or for that matter considerations on his life, will be deceived. Emphasis on Christocentrism is surely there, but equally a Christocentrism developed about Trinitarian themes, e.g., exemplarism, analogy, so that the entire Christocentric doctrine Bérulle presents is in Trinitarian terms, without ever losing sight of his early principles of Theocentrism. The Carmelites entering into Paris in 1604 found themselves in a foreign land, a new country. They were certainly even more out of their element spiritually; they entered a Copernican world.

Conclusion

Bérulle's Mariology, which has been characterized as intellectual—it would be better described as fundamentally theological—rests in the great tradition of studying Mary, not apart, but always in relation. She is related to Jesus, to the persons of the Trinity, to the Church, to individual members of the Church. Theology has ever been defined as a study of God who is its primary object, and a study of everything else in relation to God—everything else including Mary. The criticism leveled against the

⁴⁸ J. Milet, *Dieu ou le Christ? Les conséquences de l'expansion du christocentrisme dans l'Église catholique du XVII^e siècle à nos jours*, Collection Polémique (Paris: Éd. de Trévise, 1980), especially pp. 165 ff.

⁴⁹ *Discours II*, 13, col. 183.

so-called excesses of Modern Mariology, of studying Mary for herself, cannot be leveled against Bérulle, for whom Mary ought to be found always with her Son. Contrary to what one Marian devotee once responded when it was suggested that the best representation of Mary would be a statue or some other form of art representing her with the Child—"Mary can go on her own," for Bérulle, Mary simply cannot go on her own.

J. Guitton praises Bérulle by citing the following text from Gratry, a text which has nothing to do with Bérulle, but which Guitton rightly thinks characterizes the theological enterprise of Bérulle:

No one has ever worked more to bring together all truths, illuminating each single truth by the others and the ensemble of truths illuminating each order of reality by other orders; no other took up the entirety (ensemble) in his mind, examining and comparing their total sphere, and re-discovering, by placing oneself at the center of this sphere, discovering again its lost unity and forgotten harmonies and made it all flow (descendre) from a single central universal light of the Word or of the Catholic Truth in all its circles and on all the points of the sphere, *to create a veritable encyclopedia and then to attribute and apply it to the education of spirits*—that was his goal.⁵⁰

This essay concerns itself with the Bérullian synthesis as an achieved work. It does not attempt to follow in detail the development of his thought. It draws much on the *Vie*, which is really the Mariology of Bérulle. There are two exaggerations to be avoided: the ultra-emphasis of Brémond on the theocentrism of Bérulle, and the attribution of theological deviations to Bérulle's Christocentrism as proposed by Milet. There is indeed the speculative period with its fondness for abstraction, which Bérulle never renounced, but, by the time Bérulle strikes an adequate balance in his own personal synthesis, there is an extraordinary concentration on the Incarnate Word.

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⁵⁰ Guitton, "Philosophie de la Vierge d'après Bérulle," p. 336 (italics added).