

Marian Studies

Volume 34 *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth
National Convention of the Mariological Society
of America held in North Palm Beach, FLA.*

Article 15

1983

Towards a Theology of the Body Through Mariology

Frederick M. Jelly

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jelly, Frederick M. (1983) "Towards a Theology of the Body Through Mariology," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 34, Article 15.

Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol34/iss1/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Studies by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact mschlangen1@udayton.edu, ecommons@udayton.edu.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF THE BODY THROUGH MARIOLOGY

Reflections upon a Workshop

Almost an entire year has elapsed since a workshop was held January 14-17, 1982, at the Josephinum School of Theology, Columbus, Ohio, on the topic "The Implications of Mariology for a Theology of the Body." As one of the eight participants, I should like to share with you some reflections upon our tentative and exploratory discussions. This paper, therefore, does not attempt to present a complete report of the workshop, but only certain of its aspects presumed to be of special interest to the members of our Mariological Society.

The workshop was convened under the sponsorship of the Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (ITEST) centered in St. Louis. Its Director, Fr. Robert Brungs, S.J., and I began to prepare for the workshop about two years in advance. Along with the other six participants, we represented the various disciplines of biblical, historical and systematic theology combined with science and technology, especially in the field of genetics. Each participant, in accepting the invitation, committed him/herself to submitting a paper at least three months before convening so that all might come ready to discuss our mutual contributions. Besides myself, the members of the workshop included two others of our Mariological Society, Fr. Eamon Carroll, O. Carm., and Fr. James Heft, S.M. The interdisciplinary dialogue proved to be productive of many provocative ideas which still require much further reflection. This presentation is at least a step in that direction.

Fr. Brungs' task was to raise some doctrinal questions to help focus the workshop. In his presentation,* he asserts:

* None of the papers from the workshop has yet been published, since we are still in the process of refining them in light of our dialogue.

The whole meaning of redemption, and, therefore, of the New Kingdom, is contained in the union of the God-man and a woman; in other words, the meaning of God's final union with his creation is to be found in a masculine-feminine union. Is this a too-radical statement? Can it be otherwise, namely, that the relationship (union) between Christ and Mary does not contain and express the meaning of God's relationship to his creation? If that union does express God's relationship to all things, then it is here we must look for the eschatological meaning of masculine and feminine. If we can begin to penetrate the eschatological meaning (mystery), then we can begin to understand the mystery of our bodiedness. This, in turn, will aid us in the beginning of our approach to those "body-issues" mentioned early in this paper. If the masculine-feminine union of Christ and Mary is the essential and fullest possible expression of the Father's relation to creation, then our state in glory demands the maintenance of, and the enhancement of, our masculinity and femininity. Certainly, then, any of the modern (or future) developments in "human engineering" that disenhanse masculinity or femininity would be out of place.

Among the body-issues and developments in human engineering to which he makes reference earlier in his paper is *in vitro* fertilization which is already a fact, a scientific and technological accomplishment of our era. And it is just a portent of gestation techniques and recombinant DNA techniques yet to appear. We have all read about them: developing offspring outside the womb; self-reproduction without males; cloning; self-alteration, e.g., breeding a race of legless mutants with prehensile tails or feet for space travel, etc., etc. Admittedly these latter possibilities go far beyond the genetic engineering of *in vitro* fertilization, but possibilities they nonetheless are, and we must not complacently relegate them to the realm of pure fantasy.

We Christians, especially those of us called to the ministry of doing theology in the service of the Church, are being challenged as never before to preserve and promote the true dignity of redeemed human flesh! Certainly this in no way means that we of the new creation are to be antiquarian in our stance before the world, opposing authentic progress. But we are to be ever constructively and charitably critical when hominization, scientific and technological progress, is antithetical to or incompat-

ible with humanization, the development of human dignity. If science and technology reign supreme in our hierarchy of values, then truly the human personality will be reduced to a mere means or become manipulated for the sake of some social function. It simply does not follow that what is scientifically and technologically possible is necessarily morally justifiable or for the genuine good of persons made to the image and likeness of the triune God and redeemed by Christ in their total personhood, body and soul.

The purpose of this paper is not to propose specific and definitive answers to such questions as: is *in vitro* fertilization compatible with Christian values? Rather it is intended to explore further that aspect of the workshop which sought possible implications of Mary's concrete motherhood of Christ for a theology of the body, which might form a dogmatic foundation for responding to such ethical issues. My presentation then will be principally in three parts: 1) some basic Christian convictions about human bodiliness; 2) a synthetic summary of Mary's motherhood of Christ as concretely realized and revealed in salvation history; and, 3) some tentative conclusions about the possible contributions of Mariology to a theology of the body in the context of contemporary ethical questions.

Elements in a Christian Anthropology of Bodiliness

For our purposes we might identify at least five basic convictions concerning our corporeality which are the products of both philosophical and theological reflection and which, therefore, have been impacted by the Christian Tradition. First of all we must affirm that "man is really and truly corporeal in all his dimensions."¹ The human being is a body-person whose body is not merely his/her object to be used or to be inhabited by him/her, but something which the person *is*. What the "body" experiences as pleasure or pain, the person experiences. This truth is really expressed in the scholastic axiom, *actiones et passiones*

¹ Jorg Splett, "Body," *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. by Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 158.

sunt suppositorum. Our bodies render us present to the world and make the world available to us. And, indeed, it is *our* world, not just our bodies' world. Although there is a real distinction between our self and our world, between our bodies and our world, still we must affirm a radical unity between them. We are incarnate intellects in that the most basic manifestations of our human spirit are totally embodied — *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensibus*, and we must always have recourse to the sense images whence our concepts originated.² Our affective responses to reality and our conative drives to accomplish things in the world about us are also a marvellous unity of the spiritual and the corporeal which we are. Just as there is no such thing as an imageless thought for us, so too our deepest desires give rise to feelings and efforts towards fulfillment. Difficult to conceptualize and to formulate, the mysterious unity within the body-person's complex being avoids both the dualism of Cartesian angelism and the monism of Feuerbachian materialism. It is intrinsic to our very personhood that we be incarnate.

Secondly, human bodiliness is essentially related to other bodies and, most especially, to other body-persons.³ "No man is an island" is verified on several levels of human existence. The human being is constituted in total personhood by corporeality from within and from without. For a human person to be, he/she must be intersubjective or interpersonal in principle. Not to relate is to disintegrate. Human consciousness requires that the body-person never degenerate into an isolated self. The very relationship to existence that is the ontological structure or formal constituent of personality as such is a being towards others that are also corporeal for the human body-person.

Thirdly, one's sexuality permeates one's body-person in every aspect of his/her mode of being present to the world, particularly to other body-persons. The human being is really and truly sexual in all of his/her dimensions, as has been affirmed of corporeality in the initial proposition. Sexuality, as a much broader notion than that of genitality, necessarily belongs to every man

² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part I, Question 84, Article 7.

³ Cf. Splett, "Body," pp. 160-161.

and woman, since their bodiliness would not be an actual existent without masculinity or femininity as the two ways of being body-persons in the world.

The fourth proposition for our purposes is a further specification of the second about the necessary interrelatedness of body-persons in the context of sexuality, namely, ". . . man senses himself to be a man through a woman, and vice-versa."⁴ This is not predicated on the basis of a simplistic model of complementarity, as though each individual man were endowed with merely masculine characteristics and so needed the otherness of a woman with only feminine personality traits for his fulfillment and vice-versa. This basic sort of complementarity is perceived on the level of the mutual sharing in the marital act. But psychological differences, while doubtless rooted in somatic differences in the various members of both sexes, do not exist in an unalloyed state of masculinity in a man, or of femininity in a woman. The interpersonal relationships between the sexes, whether in the very special friendship of marriage or not, ought to be supplementary if not complementary in our self-understanding about the characteristics of the opposite sex found in each one of us. And this, indeed, is mutually enriching of human personhood!

Finally, the familial experiences enjoy a certain primacy as the *locus* of self-understanding of body-persons, particularly in their ability to relate as adult men and women.⁵ The primary relationships between spouses, between parents and children, and between the growing children themselves, provide the paradigmatic experiences for relating as mature males and females in the world. Despite some attempts to do so in the contemporary world, no other social structure can adequately substitute for the traditional family in some form. Of course, there have been many modifications in the modern family unit. As the primordial community within society, it is bound to be affected and conditioned by cultural changes in history. Married couples to-

⁴ David Burrell, "Complements," *Communio* (Fall, 1981): 282.

⁵ Cf. Michael Novak, "Man and Woman He Made Them," *ibid.*, pp. 229-249.

day, for instance, frequently far removed from the extended family of the past, are going to be much more dependent upon their interpersonal relationships. This, however, not only does not do away with the basic familial structure, but only intensifies the primary relationships to be experienced within it.

These five convictions of the Christian Tradition about human bodiliness have received contemporary ecclesial endorsement in the four general themes developed by Pope John Paul II in his weekly addresses at the Wednesday audiences from September 5, 1979 to May 6, 1981.⁶ First, the human body is the expression of the human person which can never be expressed in a non-human body. And so Adam was ecstatic with joy when he awoke and found Eve: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23), since, after his experience of naming all the animals, he finally encountered another body revelatory of a human person. Secondly, the bodies of men and women equally express human persons, but the sexual differences allow a man and a woman to become a gift for one another. As the body is the "sacrament" of a person, so the physical gift of a man and a woman is the "sacrament" of a communion of persons reflecting the Communion of Persons in the Trinity. This capacity of the body to communicate the self in love is called by the Holy Father the "nuptial meaning of the body." Thirdly, the entrance of sin into the world, along with its whole tragic history, has radically diminished both the capacity of the body to express the person and that of the body to give the self to another in true love. But the "nuptial meaning of the body" was not entirely eradicated by concupiscence. Finally, the Holy Spirit imparting the grace of Christ makes it possible for us fallen human beings to return to the original will of the Creator without recapturing the state of original innocence, which is not possible in this life for those conceived with original sin. Jesus Christ, however, in assuming a complete human nature in the virginal womb of Mary at the Incarnation, has redeemed us in our integrity as body-persons and not just our "souls," although

⁶ Cf. Richard M. Hogan, "A Theology of the Body," *Fidelity*, 1, no. 1 (December, 1981): 10-15, 24-27.

we still do experience the consequences of sin even after our justification.

The Concrete Meaning of Mary's Motherhood

My own specific contribution to the workshop on "the implications of Mariology for a theology of the body" focussed upon the main Marian idea of Mary's motherhood of the Lord. For this would appear in the Tradition to be the most fertile source of making connections between Mariology and other parts of the single science and wisdom of theology. An eminent theologian of the Orthodox Church has taught: "Properly understood, Mariology is . . . the '*locus theologicus*' *par excellence* of Christian anthropology."⁷ It is my task in this particular portion of the paper to get at the meaning or proper understanding of Mariology in this context of a theology of the body which is a part of theological anthropology.

My thesis in this paper is that the proper interpretation of Mary as the *Theotokos* can make a profound contribution towards a theology of bodiliness. Mary was called by this marvellous name at least as early as the first part of the third century by the Roman theologian Hippolytus.⁸ And, in my opinion, we have yet to come up with a better one to express more aptly and succinctly the revealing word of God about Mary's predestined place in salvation history. She is uniquely the *Theotokos*, which might be rendered into the vernacular as "God-bearer" or "Bringer-forth-of-God."

The extremely early testimony to this wondrous title in the patristic tradition bears witness to its deep roots in the biblical revelation and the faith-consciousness of the early Church. The holy and learned genius behind the use of the term, the concrete term, *Theotokos*, to express the mystery of Mary's motherhood of Christ has indeed come down to us under the guidance

⁷ A. Schmemann, "Mary, the Archetype of Mankind," *The University of Dayton Review*, 11, no. 3 (Spring, 1975): 83.

⁸ Hugo Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 37.

of her Son's Holy Spirit. In the living Tradition of the Church — that of faith, of worship, and of Christian experience — generally, it came about as a *concretum*, a dynamic development or growing together of trajectories from the plurality of New Testament Christologies which formed the foundation in the constitutive phase of revelation history for the interpretation in the solemn teaching of Ephesus (431). The conciliar fathers at this third ecumenical council of the Church concretized the Pre-existence and Conception Christologies from the New Testament revelation and expressed in a single word the mystery of the Incarnation, of the Word made flesh *ab initio* in the virginal womb of Mary.⁹ *Theotokos*, therefore, truly brings together or concretizes the paradox of the mystery of Christ — of wedding, without admixture, divinity with humanity in the Person of the Word within the womb of the Virgin-Mother Mary.

Theotokos is the traditional term that communicates the concrete meaning of Mary's motherhood of Christ.¹⁰ My particular purpose in the workshop was to propose a systematic reflection upon its significance today for a Christian theology of interpersonal bodiliness in light of the triune God revealed in the Redemptive Incarnation. By exploring the possible implications of Mary's "concrete motherhood" in this context, I hoped to avoid a reductionist abstractionism that tries to reduce a single aspect of her maternity to the fundamental principle of Mariology or to the main Marian idea. Such an artificial and ideological attempt at theological systematization is reminiscent of Karl Rahner's response when he had been asked why he thought a decline was taking place in devotion to Mary: ". . . the special temptation that affects Christians today, Catholics and Protestants alike, is the temptation to turn the central truths of the faith into ab-

⁹ Reginald H. Fuller, "New Testament Roots to the Theotokos," *MS*, 29 (1978): 46-64.

¹⁰ Cf. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., "The Concrete Meaning of Mary's Motherhood," *The Way Supplement—Mary and Ecumenism* (Papers of the 1981 International Congress of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary), no. 45 (June, 1982): 30-40.

stractions, and abstractions have no need of mothers."¹¹ Now I do not interpret such an observation as a denial of the validity of and even the necessity for abstract terms and concepts in our systematic reflections upon reality as we encounter it. Rather, it calls us to heed the warning of René Laurentin about the "temptation to rationalism" in trying to award a single aspect of any mystery the status of a primary principle whence all its other related truths might be logically and rigorously deduced.¹² This does not take with sufficient seriousness the contingencies of salvation history as the medium of divine revelation and which is subject to infinite and finite freedom.

Theotokos in the Tradition, based upon the prophetic interpretation of God's mightiest deed in history (the Christ event), would seem to be well endowed to enlighten and inspire us to proceed from abstract analyses towards concrete syntheses in our contemplation of the mystery of Mary's motherhood of the Lord today. For, while denoting the very center of the mystery which is her unique relationship with Christ, it still connotes the other aspects of the Marian mystery. Awarding a certain centrality to the *Theotokos* within the "hierarchy of truths of Catholic doctrine" pertaining to Mary does not impoverish our Mariological concepts, but does permit us to contemplate Mary through them in her most theological, most Christological, most ecclesiological and even most anthropological light.¹³

Bearing these remarks carefully in mind, let us now turn to the question of formulating Mary's motherhood of Christ in its concrete sense. This is really the same as the perennial quest for the main Marian idea or the primary principle of a systematic Mariology. The most significant step in the process of arriving at a formulation of the central concrete and connotative conception about Mary is to determine which truth about her sheds the greatest light upon the mystery of her Son (Christocentric Mariology) as well as upon the mystery of his Church (ecclesiotypical

¹¹ Quoted by Leon Cardinal Suenens, "Mary and the World Today," *OssR*, English Edition, June 15, 1972.

¹² Cf. René Laurentin, *The Question of Mary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

Mariology). Both of these characteristics, as well as their intimate relationship in the mystery of the *Theotokos*, are clearly and crisply expressed in chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, the Marian teaching of Vatican II:

By reason of the gift and role of her divine motherhood, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with her unique graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church. As St. Ambrose taught, the mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar of both virgin and mother. Through her faith and obedience she gave birth on earth to the very son of the Father, not through the knowledge of man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, in the manner of a new Eve who placed her faith, not in the serpent of old but in God's messenger without wavering in doubt. The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29), that is, the faithful, in whose generation and formation she cooperates with a mother's love.¹⁴

This Marian doctrine of the most recent ecumenical council concretizes very clearly both aspects of Mary's motherhood that are centered upon Christ as well as upon his redeemed-redeeming body the Church. The *Theotokos* is, always was, and ever shall be essentially and primarily a Christological dogma. This does not mean that it fails to predicate any truth-content about Mary, but does emphasize the very important point that it does so in total relationship to her Son who is at the very center of the Christian faith in the "hierarchy of truths of Catholic doctrine."¹⁵ At the same time, in the faith-understanding of the ancient Church, the *Theotokos* was never disassociated from her special relationship with the Church's own mystery. Cardinal

¹⁴ Austin Flannery, O.P., Gen. Ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), pp. 419-420, n. 63.

¹⁵ Cf. F. M. Jelly, O.P., "Marian Dogmas within Vatican II's Hierarchy of Truths," *MS*, 27 (1976): 17-40.

Newman, after his prayerful and scholarly careful meditation upon the witness of the Fathers, summed it all up beautifully when he preached: "Her glories are not only for the sake of her Son; they are for our sakes too."¹⁶ They are for the sake of Christ and of us his Church.

In their Pastoral Letter on Mary, the American Bishops taught: "The Church saw herself symbolized in the Virgin Mary."¹⁷ The New Eve image, which reflects the most ancient meditation of the Church upon Mary after the biblical revelation, was also attributed to the Church herself. Mary, as the Archetype of the Church, was never far from the minds of the Fathers. They contemplated in her grace-filled reception of the Word of God, and in her generous response of faith and loving obedience to Redemption, the model *par excellence* of what it means to be a Christian disciple, a member of the Church. And so, we hear over and over again the common patristic patrimony about Mary's conceiving Christ "*in corde priusquam in carne*" or "*in mente priusquam in ventre*," i.e., she bore Christ spiritually in her heart and mind through faith even before doing so physically in the flesh and in her womb. This particularly points to the fact that the spiritual (not disembodied) aspects of her concrete motherhood of Christ were never severed from the physical aspects which constituted their *sacramentum* or outward manifestation.

The Christocentric and the ecclesiotypical characteristics of *Theotokos*, and of contemporary Marian doctrine and devotion generally, are mutually complementary and cannot really be in conflict on account of their reciprocity as revealed in and through salvation history.¹⁸ For, how can Mary be related to Christ without being at the same time intimately associated with his ecclesial body that he received through his redemptive activ-

¹⁶ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The New Eve* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1952), p. 89.

¹⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, U.S.A., *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith* (Washington, D.C.: USCC Publishing Office, 1973), p. 15.

¹⁸ Cf. Otto Semmelroth, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (5 vols.; H. Vorgrimler, Gen. Ed.; New York: Herder and Herder, 1967-69), 1, 286.

ity? Simultaneously, how can she be the Archetype of the Church unless her unique relationship with Christ becomes the Exemplar for the Church's own response to and share in his redeeming work. Consequently, to concentrate upon the ecclesio-typical aspects of *Theotokos* should not distort its basic Christo-centric character and vice-versa.

Systematic Mariologists today are more inclined to include the Mary-Church analogy and typology within the main Marian idea. In so doing, they avoid the formulation of the primary Mariological principle in such terms as might appear to be an artificial abstraction of biological motherhood isolated from Mary's conception in holiness, her virginity, her role in Redemption, etc. Such an interpretation does not do justice to any experience of human motherhood, let alone Mary's unique motherhood of God Incarnate. For to conceive and to bear a child is essentially a human action and not merely the expression of the vegetative-reproductive and animal-sexual dimension of a woman's nature. St. Thomas Aquinas, while awarding centrality to Mary's true motherhood of God, personalized the relationship most profoundly by showing that human maternity terminates in the person conceived and born of a woman. In the case of Mary's Child, the Person conceived in her womb and born of her flesh is the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the Son of God Incarnate. And so she is truly the *Theotokos*, since the relationship of her motherhood terminates in a divine Person. "Since a human nature was assumed by a divine Person at the very moment of conception, it must follow that God was truly conceived and born of the Virgin."¹⁹

St. Thomas' theological reason of fittingness for our faith in Mary as the *Theotokos* rests principally upon the revealed truths expressed in the dogma of Ephesus and in Chalcedonian Christology, and secondarily upon his realist metaphysics of personality according to which the *esse* of any subject follows upon its subsistence. And so, as the relationship of human motherhood terminates in the *esse humanum* of the human person conceived and born, so Mary's divine motherhood terminates in the *esse*

¹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Question 35, Article 4, Body of the Art.

divinum of the divine Person conceived and born of her in his humanity whose *esse* is formally divine due to the hypostatic union.²⁰

Along with the preservation of our Christian faith's realism regarding the mystery of the unique relationship between mother and Son, the Angelic Doctor is also concerned with attributing to her *fiat* at the Annunciation its own proper spiritual significance.²¹ His theological reasons of appropriateness for this aspect of the mystery include her faith, her free obedience to God, her witness to the revelation of the Incarnation, and her representative role of giving consent on behalf of the whole human race to the spiritual wedding between the Son of God and human nature.

The very best in our Tradition, therefore, would seem to favor the following formulation of the main Marian idea which I am adopting from Fr. Schillebeeckx: "Her concrete motherhood with regard to Christ, the redeeming God-man, freely accepted in faith—her fully committed divine motherhood—this is both the key to a full understanding of the Marian mystery and the basic Mariological principle, which is concretely identical with Mary's objectively and subjectively unique state of being redeemed."²² Both the Christocentric ("Mary's fully committed divine motherhood") and the ecclesiotypical (her "objectively and subjectively unique state of being redeemed") are embraced within the single concrete organic principle as the main Marian idea. Mary's unique vocation in salvation history to be the *Theotokos* must be contemplated in close connection with the gifts that reveal her calling to be the Archetype of the Church. As the first fruits of her Son's Redemption, Mary is uniquely redeemed *objectively* (the Immaculate Conception). In responding with complete openness to God's word at the Annunciation and the various events throughout her pilgrimage of faith, she is uniquely redeemed *subjectively*. Having welcomed the Re-

²⁰ Ibid., Question 17, Article 2, Body of the Art.

²¹ Ibid., Question 30, Article 1, Body of the Art.

²² Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 106.

deemer into her own life by appropriating the grace of his redeeming love, Mary, at the same time, cooperated maternally in Christ's objective redemption of the human race. While Christ alone is our Redeemer, her "fully committed divine motherhood" has bestowed upon her graced and free act of identification with his objective redemption a truly salvific meaning and value for all the members of his redeemed-redeeming body, the Church, which is potentially every single body-person.

The concrete meaning of Mary's motherhood of Christ is both bridal and virginal which also possesses rich ecclesiotypical symbolism.²³ Her relationship as spiritual bride of the Redeemer is based upon her representative function in giving the free consent of her vocal *fiat* to the wedding of divinity and humanity at the Annunciation as well as her silent *fiat* at the foot of the cross, when her compassion freely accepted the fruits of her Son's sacrifice for herself and the whole world. Mary's bridal motherhood must also be virginal since, had she been made fruitful by man's power instead of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, her bridal relationship with the *Logos* Incarnate would have been obscured. Likewise, her perpetual virginity typifies complete commitment and continuous fidelity to Christ and his mission. It is important to note here that Fr. Eamon Carroll's contribution to the workshop, "Mary as the New Eve: Notes on a Theme," makes the following remarks regarding Mary's bridal motherhood in the Tradition:

. . . Epiphanius makes an even more interesting application of Genesis to Mary, namely, that the "two in one flesh" was realized in the unique Son-Mother relationship of Jesus and Mary. This too would recur in Carolingian times, again in the Middle Ages, and sporadically since, although theologians are divided about both its meaning and its legitimacy. M. Scheeben (d. 1888) proposed a theory of "bridal motherhood," revived by Feckes, Druwé and a few others in the thirties and afterwards. . . .

Although there has been some nervousness about this clash of symbols, particularly among some French theologians, still

²³ Cf. O. Semmelroth, *Mary, Archetype of the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), pp. 117-142.

enough have attributed the complex symbolism of bridal motherhood to Mary's relationship with Jesus to apply it to the Mary-Church analogy and typology. Mary, then, is the Archetype of the Church who is also the bridal and virginal mother of Christ and so is called to be constantly faithful to his word and to share his life of redeeming love with all.

As bridal and virginal mothers, both Mary and the Church are intimately and indissolubly united with the Holy Spirit. Among the redeemed People of God, Mary is the masterpiece of the new creation by her Son's Holy Spirit who uniquely touched Mary and fashioned her to be the *Theotokos* and perfect disciple of Christ. In our contemplation of the concrete meaning of Mary's motherhood, we come to believe more firmly that the Pentecostal Spirit touches each one of us members of the Church in order to actualize what is best in the personality of each one of us for the sake of building up the whole body of Christ in love. Mary is the Exemplar of what the Church is called to be and to become in all her members as the fullness of grace and glory (the Assumption).

Conclusions about Possible Contributions of Mariology to a Theology of the Body

On the basis of the anthropology of the human body generally inspired by the Christian Tradition and of the Pope's addresses on the "nuptial meaning of the body" as well as our theological reflections upon the *Theotokos*, we now propose for your consideration and discussion some implications of Mariology for a theology of the body in the context of contemporary ethical issues. Again we wish to reiterate that our conclusions are tentative and exploratory, even though they are being seriously drawn to help provide a dogmatic foundation for moral convictions concerning such questions as the limits of genetic engineering.

In Mary, we contemplate the clearest revelation of the "nuptial meaning of the body" among all those redeemed by her Son. The fact that the modality of her redemption is unique, i.e., anticipatory and preservative by reason of the foreseen

merits of Christ, does not exempt her from the need for God's redeeming love. A true daughter of Adam as a member of our human race, she was liable to the sin of our fallen nature. But, predestined from all eternity to be the *Theotokos*, Mary in her Immaculate Conception received a body that would never be diminished by any form of sinfulness in its capacity to express her undivided personality and her uninhibited freedom to love God and neighbor. Like her Son and because of him, she lived in a fallen world without being infected by its continuous history of sin and alienation. Like him, Mary did suffer from it and for its redemption, but she was never contaminated by any of its sinful consequences such as concupiscence. She was never alienated from the original will of the Creator for body-persons. In her the "nuptial meaning of the body" was completely free to reveal itself.

At the "nuptials" which transpired during her religious experience of the joyful mystery of the Annunciation, Mary was fully free to give her graced consent to the wedding between divinity and humanity through the Word made flesh in her virginal womb. The Holy Spirit, who unites the Persons within the bosom of the triune God from all eternity, in time transformed the body-person Mary by overshadowing her in the unitive action of the Incarnation. The most intimate relationship between a divine Body-Person and a human body-person ensued between this mother and her Son who is also God's own Son. Such is what appears to be meant by those in our Christian Tradition who favor enriching Mary's concrete motherhood of Christ with bridal symbolism and imagery. Not to be interpreted literally in its sexual connotations, still it does emphasize the intimate union between the divine and the human which took place within Mary's body. Most highly favored by God, she was able to give through her graced freedom the required consent to the wedding of divinity and humanity in the Person of the Word Incarnate. And the unique gift of her calling to be the immaculate and virginal *Theotokos* would become the Archetype for the trinitarian transformation of all redeemed body-persons who are called to receive Christ into their lives and to become "spiritual mothers" in helping bring him forth in the lives of others.

We should here reflect a bit further upon the unique relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit who made her the *Theotokos*, with all that is implied in the vocation of her concrete motherhood of Christ. This motherhood, with all the graces preceding the Annunciation and subsequent to it in her spiritual odyssey and "pilgrimage of faith," is precisely what reveals to us most clearly the Spirit of God at work in her and in our fallen world. For, again, what the Holy Spirit accomplishes from all eternity in the bosom of the triune God, as the Love of God in Person sealing the unity of the Father and the Son, the same Holy Spirit brings about in time within the womb of Mary at the virginal conception of Christ in whom our human unity as body-persons is sealed. As Louis Bouyer expresses the mystery:

The divine life of the Son in eternity implies the inherence in him of the Spirit of the Father, and the recapitulation of the Son in the Father by the Spirit. Likewise the inclusion of the Son in the humanity of his mother, and our final inclusion in the humanity of the Son received from Mary, imply a participation in this inherence of the Spirit and in that recapitulation in the Father of the whole Trinity which the Spirit effects by the very fact of his procession . . . Consequently the divine motherhood of Mary as regards her Son, her motherhood of grace in regard to us, and the motherhood of the Church which is the fulfillment of both these, are, one and all, the *Seal par excellence* of the Spirit on the world of man. Nowhere else is so clearly affirmed the conjunction of the creature, precisely as creature, with the Spirit.²⁴

And the Spirit of our risen Lord, still Mary's Son today and forever, seals or anoints each one of us to be redeemed body-persons which is to be interpersonal on the basis of the trinitarian model manifested most perfectly among us redeemed in Mary. The "nuptial meaning of the body" revealed so clearly in and through her has fundamental spiritual significance for all the members of Christ's Church called to be persons in community. Whether our witness of Christian discipleship is "eschatological"

²⁴ Louis Bouyer, *The Seat of Wisdom* (Chicago: Regnery, 1965), pp. 183-184, 187.

as in the case of consecrated celibates and virgins, or "incarnational" as in the case of the married and dedicated single persons in the world, the Spirit works in us only as body-persons called to build up the Mystical Body of Christ in love.

By way of conclusion, therefore, I should like to submit that what seems to be implied for all of us redeemed body-persons in the unique relationship between the *Theotokos* and her Son is the need for expressions of love in mutual giving and receiving *through our very bodiliness*. This is ultimately based upon the perichoresis or circumincession, i.e., the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father through the Holy Spirit of divine Love. The mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation as it took place in Mary apparently confirms a Christian anthropology according to which corporeality is not only essential to humanness, but also pervasive of every dimension of human existence and experience. Only by reason of their bodily being can humans in this life relate to others and to the Other. Whatever might distort the integrity of this bodiliness, whether in its inception or its gradual development, must be radically questioned by the Christian who takes the implications of the Redemptive Incarnation seriously.

A theology of the body based upon Mary as the perfectly redeemed body-person would seem to emphasize the "nuptial meaning of her body" precisely in her totally uninhibited graced freedom to give and to receive in authentic love. Although the "*una caro*," the "one flesh" of the New Adam and of the New Eve, transcends that of the marital union, which possesses its own special incarnational witness to the trinitarian perichoresis or mutual indwelling of the divine Persons in each other, there does appear to be an implicit exemplarity for the special mutuality between men and women in the relationships of Mary's concrete motherhood of Christ and of the Church. According to the older creation account in Genesis, the first Adam calls the first Eve "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (2:23) prior to any evident experience of the marital act. This could be interpreted as implying the priority of partnership or friendship in marriage which makes the sexual union one of communion in love. Might not Mary's ability to say of Christ at that first Christ-

mas, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" have reference to the total experience between spouses in marriage as a way of salvation, along with its meaning for committed celibates in her Son's Church?

It is probably most fitting that the tentative and exploratory conclusions of this paper terminate with a question mark as a grammatical symbol of their real character. In no way do I wish to convey the impression that what has been communicated in this paper is sufficient to give dogmatic grounding to a Christian moral theology that will be able to resolve the ethical issues of *in vitro* fertilization, etc. At the same time, I am convinced that the central mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption, *contemplated through Mariology*, do cause us to take a very careful look at what is going on today and at what are the prospects for tomorrow, in the science and technology of human genetics especially. Such a theological reflection should enlighten and inspire us not to oppose genuine progress, but those specious developments contrary to the bodily integrity necessary for the true dignity and fulfillment of the children of God and of Mary. "Her exemplarity . . . will help us preserve and develop the personal dignity, freedom, responsibility and physical integrity worthy of God's children in any society."²⁵

VERY REV. FREDERICK M. JELLY, O.P.
Priory of St. Albert the Great
University of Dallas

²⁵ F. M. Jelly, "Mariology and Christian Anthropology: Mary and the Meaning of Redeemed Humanity Today," *CTSAP* (1979): 219.