

2-9-1968

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Recommended Citation

Cochrane, Arthur C. (1968) "The Theological Basis of Liturgical Devotion to Mary Re-Examined," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 19, Article 8, Pages 49-69.

Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol19/iss1/8

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THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF LITURGICAL DEVOTION TO MARY RE-EXAMINED

That from very early times there has existed, and still exists, a devotion to Mary in the liturgies of the Church in the East and the West is an undeniable fact of Church history which has been ably documented by two of the papers prepared for this convention of the Mariological Society of America.¹ That millions of Christians consciously, deliberately, and joyfully venerate and invoke the mother of the Lord in the public worship of God is an impressive fact that challenges the millions of other Christians to ask whether they may and should also share in such devotion to Mary. On the other hand, the fact that millions of Christians do not venerate and invoke the name of Mary in their Church services doubtless challenges the devotees of Mary to ask whether their devotion to her may and should be integral to their worship of the Triune God. I am asked by my brother about my faith and obedience, and he is questioned by me about his faith and obedience. We are challenged to listen to one another, and to take each other's liturgical devotion with utmost seriousness.

Nevertheless, I would contend that we need not take our respective pieties with *absolute* seriousness. That is to say, we will not arrive at an answer to the question about what we may and must do or not do in obedience to God by a comparative study of our respective traditions. We cannot play the religious consciousness of one segment of Christendom over against another, as Schleiermacher seemed to think—a Protestant *consensus fidelium* over against a Roman Catholic *consensus fidelium* and vice versa. The divergence in our respective liturgies drives us to inquire about the *theological* basis of liturgical devotion, to what René Laurentin has called "a return

¹ Dayton, Ohio, January 2-3, 1968.

to the one source, Christ the Revealer, by a long and patient investigation of the 'sources' of our faith in Scripture and tradition."² We are not to ask about our traditions as such, but about God's Word *in* Scripture and *in* the traditions of the Church.

Note that I said that we have to ask about God's revealed Word which is Jesus Christ as attested in Scripture and tradition. For we do not have the revealed Word apart from the written Word of the prophets and the preached Word of the Church. It is the fallacy of Biblicism to think that we can go directly to God's Word in the Bible apart from the Church's exegesis and exposition of Scripture. Again: when we ask about the *theological* basis of liturgy we are asking about the faithfulness of the Church's reflection upon the divine revelation attested in Scripture. Protestants have been on shaky ground when they have rejected the so-called privileges of Mary solely on the ground that there is no explicit mention of them in Scripture. Even the dogmas of the Trinity and the hypostatic union cannot be lifted out of Scripture; they were formulated by the Church during the first five centuries following the time of apostolic witness to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. This is not to say that these dogmas are contrary to the revelation attested in Scripture. It is to insist, however, that they are not the revelation itself, but a transcript of revelation. They are the fruit of the Church's understanding of revelation—usually called forth by what the Church believed were heretical or erroneous teachings about Christ.

Now perhaps the most hopeful aspect of contemporary theology, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, is the return to christology and, to a lesser degree, to pneumatology. The starting-point is not theology or anthropology, not an abstract, metaphysical view of God or an abstract empirical view of man, but the Person and work of the God-Man Jesus Christ—what

² *The Question of Mary* (New York, 1965) p. 114f.

God concretely did in Jesus Christ. Again: the starting-point is not the individualistic or collective spirit of man: not man's reason, will or feeling, but the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God the Father and the Son. In both Catholic and Protestant contemporary theology the attempt is being made to understand all doctrines—the doctrines of God, election, creation, providence, the Church and its ministry—christologically. There is a common agreement that the great Trinitarian and christological affirmations of Nicaea and Chalcedon must be the preeminent, ecclesiastically authoritative guides for such a re-thinking of the Church's whole doctrine, liturgy, life and work in the world.

And so it is most heartening to find both Catholic and Protestant theologians re-examining the place of Mary in the light of christology. As I read Catholic writers today I find them insisting upon subordinating Mariology to Christology and refusing to give to Mary any independent role in the work of salvation. A strenuous effort is being made to interpret the "privileges" of Mary—her Immaculate Conception and Assumption—in the light of the hypostatic union, that is, in the light of what befell human nature in the event of the Incarnation of the Son or Word of God. Mary's "privileges" are presented as redounding not to her glory, but to the glory of her Son who redeemed her. Accordingly many Catholic theologians warn against excesses in the devotion of Mary, against elevating her to the status of the fourth person in the Godhead. Indeed, I would say that the tendency to understand Mary's role christologically is so strong that the slogan *ad Jesum per Mariam* must now be reversed to read: *ad Mariam per Jesum*.

Certainly the emphasis upon a christocentric interpretation of the place of Mary by Catholic theologians is a great gain for ecumenical relations and for the unity of Christ's Church on earth. Certainly a Protestant can no longer accuse the Roman Catholic Church of Mariolatry. Certainly I must acknowledge that my Roman brother does not *intend*, does not *want* to deny by his devotion to Mary that Jesus Christ is the one Lord, the

one Savior, and the one Mediator between God and Man. I must concede that he *intends*, he *desires* to obey the apostolic injunction: "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (*I Cor.* 1:31) "So let no one boast of men" (3:21). True, I may still have misgivings as to whether in his Mariology he has succeeded in realizing his manifest intention and desire. But I cannot deny that he wants to obey Christ above all else and to "compel every human thought to surrender in obedience to Christ" (*II Cor.* 10:5 N.E.B.). By the same token I am persuaded that a Roman Catholic theologian will grant that his Protestant brother *intends* and *desires* to exalt Christ alone when, after his christological investigation, he believes he may and must reject the Roman dogma of Mary even in its more recent and more evangelical form.

Nevertheless, granting that we are agreed that theology must be christological, and granting that we are united in our *intention* and *desire* to make it so, we are bound to record the distressing fact that so far our christological reflections have not resulted in agreement concerning the person and work of Mary. On the contrary, we are still far apart. What does this mean? It means that our disagreement is in the area of *christology itself*! It means that, although we both affirm that Christ alone is Lord and Savior, we disagree in our understanding of His Lordship and Saviorhood. We both confess that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, but we are divided in our understanding of the work of reconciliation in Christ. We both concur in the *unio*, *communio* and *communicatio* of the two natures in Jesus Christ, but we are by no means agreed about what has taken place in that *unio*, *communio* and *communicatio* for Mary and for all men. We must not go on concealing from ourselves and from our peoples that we are disagreed only with respect to a doctrine of Mary; *we are disagreed in our doctrine of Christ*! Jesus puts to us a question He asked of the Pharisees: "What do you think of the Christ?" So far we have come up with different answers. We

simply do not think alike about the Christ. This is a hard, a painful statement to make, especially when so much progress has been made toward a rapprochement between Catholics and Protestants. I venture to make it, however, in the interest of genuine unity; to induce us to come to grips with the root cause of our unhappy divisions; to encourage us to think much more strenuously, much more objectively, yet much more passionately, about Him Whom we confess *Deum verum et hominem verum*. For as christology has already brought us, by God's grace, closer together, so, again by God's grace, it will lead us into a more perfect unity in the faith until the day dawns when our imperfect knowledge will have passed away and, seeing face to face, we shall understand fully (*I Cor.* 13:8-12).

In the remainder of this paper, therefore, I will attempt to document the thesis that the root cause of our differences concerning the person and work of Mary lies in our differences concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. I will do this by comparing and contrasting two contemporary christologies—those of the two Karls, Karl Rahner and Karl Barth. I will confine myself to two works by Rahner: *Theological Investigation*, Vol. 1, "God, Christ, Mary and Grace," and *Mary Mother of the Lord*, and to one by Barth: *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, 2.

* * * * *

Rahner sets out to see how Mary may be "made intelligible in terms of the whole of Revelation" and insists that

Mary is only intelligible in terms of Christ. If someone does not hold with the Catholic faith that the Word of God became man in Adam's flesh so that the world might be taken up redemptively into the life of God, he can have no understanding of Catholic dogma about Mary either. It may indeed be said that a sense of Marian dogma is an indication of whether christological dogma is being taken seriously, or whether it is being regarded (consciously or unconsciously) merely as a rather outmoded, problematic mytho-

logical expression of the fact that in Jesus (who is basically just a religious man) we undoubtedly feel God (here again a cipher for an unexpressed mystery) particularly close to us. No, this Jesus Christ, born of Mary in Bethlehem, is at once, as One and indissoluble, true man and true God, consubstantial with the Father. And so Mary is in truth the Mother of God. It is only to someone who truly and unreservedly confesses this that the Catholic Church can continue to speak meaningfully about her other Marian dogmas. And if anyone protests against further Marian dogmas, either explicitly or by passive indifference, he must expect to be asked whether he believes and confesses what the Church solemnly confessed at Ephesus in 431 as the faith of the one and undivided Church.³

From this lengthy quotation we perceive that Rahner, too, recognizes that the root of the problem lies in christology. If his question were to be put to Karl Barth, it would be put to one who does in fact accept the Creed of Ephesus and who does teach that Mary is the Virgin mother of God, and yet who in turn asks, as we shall see later, whether those who affirm "further Marian dogmas" believe and confess "what the Church solemnly confessed at Ephesus."

Rahner proceeds to explain that the divine Motherhood is "a free act of the Virgin's faith. . . . She is Mother personally, not just biologically. Looked at in this way, her personal divine Motherhood precedes—this is rather a bold way of putting it, admittedly—her Son's divine Sonship. It is not as though some biological process in her reached its term in a divine Person, without her having taken any part in it."⁴ At the same time he insists that Mary's "obedience in faith, without which she would not be Mother of God, is itself a pure grace of God." "Mary is the perfect Christian" because she exemplified "the

³ *Theological Investigations*, Vol. I, p. 202f. Hereinafter referred to as T.I.

⁴ T.I. p. 203. Note that Rahner seems to be saying that the Incarnation of the Son of God, the hypostatic union, would be merely a biological fact apart from Mary's faith.

pure acceptance of the salvation of the eternal triune God that has appeared in Jesus Christ.”⁵ Rahner reiterates: “Mary’s act of unconditional faith was “God’s grace and Christ’s and only so of saving significance for her and for us. . . . Her word is pure answer in the strength of the Word directed to her: nothing else but this wholly. That reception in acceptance of the grace of the world is itself grace. As her act, her conception of the Word is just as much as what was so received and conceived.”⁶

Through the acceptance of the saving Word through her faith by divine grace, “Mary is she who is most perfectly Redeemed;” but also “because Mary stands at that point of saving history at which through her freedom the world’s salvation takes place definitively and irrevocably as God’s act.”⁷ Rahner is aware that these propositions may seem to take away from the significance of Christ’s death. He explains that “the descent into the flesh is already the beginning of the descent into death, because the flesh assumed is dedicated to death.”⁸ Thus, because Mary “stands precisely at that point at which Christ began the definitive and victorious redemption of mankind . . . the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the holy Virgin belongs to the doctrine of Redemption, itself, and stands for the most radical and perfect form of redemption.”⁹

In *Mary Mother of the Lord* Rahner explains that the perfect redemption of Mary was in no sense a private affair. For “the consent she gave in faith and obedience belongs not only to her private life-story, but to the public history of redemption.”¹⁰ Consequently, “the redemption of us all which comes to us in

⁵ *Mary Mother of the Lord*, p. 36. Hereinafter referred to as M.M.L.

⁶ T.I. p. 206.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 206.

⁸ *Ibid.* This statement, of course, is quite correct. But it is difficult to see how the flesh God’s Son assumed was “dedicated to death” if He assumed the sinless and immortal flesh of Mary.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 211ff.

¹⁰ p. 38.

and through her, must be fulfilled and realized in her perfectly, at the absolutely decisive point in the history of salvation."¹¹

From this also follows, Rahner argues, that "Mary is one of us."¹² Although we honor and praise her and know that in a true sense "she is a mediator on our behalf with Jesus Christ . . . she is all that as one of us."¹³ Although Rahner does not say that Mary is a sinful, mortal creature like us, he does say that she belongs entirely with us. "She must receive God's mercy just as we must, for she lives and typifies to perfection what we ourselves are to be in Christ's sight. . . . We too are to become what she is. She comes before God with us—like us and as one of our company—in the innumerable host of mankind. By doing this she is our mediatrix."¹⁴ That Rahner does not mean that Mary "belongs entirely to us" to the extent of sharing our sin becomes clear in his explanation of the meaning of the Immaculate Conception, namely, that "from the first instant of her existence in view of the merits of Jesus Christ her son, that is, on account of the redemption effected by her son . . . she never knew that state which we call original sin."¹⁵ She was adorned by God with sanctifying grace from the beginning of her life. Sanctifying grace does not mean, Rahner tells us, some *thing*, not even some "mysterious condition of our souls!" (Here Rahner meets and refutes a common Protestant misunderstanding!) Grace "means God Himself, his communications to created spirits, the gift which is God Himself. . . . Grace means freedom, strength, a pledge of eternal life, the predominant influence of the Holy Spirit in the depths of the soul, adoptive sonship and an eternal inheritance."¹⁶ But, be it carefully noted, "Mary does not differ from us because she possessed these gifts. It is her possession of them from the beginning, and

¹¹ p. 38.

¹² p. 39.

¹³ p. 39.

¹⁴ p. 39f.

¹⁵ p. 43.

¹⁶ p. 48.

incomparably, that is the sole difference between her and us. As for the content of this gift, its nature and intrinsic meaning, the eternal Father could not intend anything for the mother of his incarnate Son, without intending it for us, and giving it to us in the sacrament of justification."¹⁷ The difference is that whereas Mary received this grace at the beginning of her existence in virtue of being the mother of the Lord by faith, "it was only effected in us after the beginning of our earthly, temporal life."¹⁸

Rahner makes much of "the interval of time between the beginning of existence and the commencement of justification" —a point that seems to me to be absolutely crucial in a debate between him and Karl Barth. "What becomes visible here is the fact that man may not in general be regarded even in the Regime of Christ as simply one redeemed, predestined, as someone who is absolutely and unconditionally taken into God's grace simply because God's mercy has become, absolutely and unconditionally, an irrevocable and victorious fact in the world in the flesh of Christ."¹⁹ Mary is an exception among all men in that she was taken into the predestining and redeeming grace at that point in history in which the Redeemer of the world appeared in her child.

Turning now to the other "privilege," namely, that Mary, after completing her earthly course, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory, Rahner grounds it even more emphatically in christology. He teaches that two articles of the Creed belong together: the 'descent into the kingdom of death' and the 'resurrection of the dead.' If I understand Rahner rightly he perceives a twofold movement in Jesus Christ which is in fact one and inseparable: the descent of the Son of God into "the 'hellish' depths of human existence" which is the presupposition for the resurrection and ascent of the creature from the

¹⁷ p. 49.

¹⁸ p. 49.

¹⁹ T.I. p. 212f.

dead. Moreover, the Son of Man did not rise alone. "'Even now' he is not the firstborn among the dead in the sense that he is even now the only human being to have found the complete fulfilment of his whole human reality."²⁰ On the contrary, "this very world thus achieves even now a new mode of being by means of its history in Christ."²¹ We need not go into Rahner's re-interpretation of Christ's physical ascension into heaven. Suffice it to say that this spatial picture which "today we can no longer use," speaks of a complete transformation of the reality of the world and of the mode of being corruptible and mortal 'flesh and blood.' "Christ's resurrection includes not only his Resurrection but that of the saints as well."²² What this means for Mary is that, if she is "the ideal representation of exhaustive redemption because of her unique place in saving history, then she must 'even now' have achieved that perfect communion with God in the glorified totality of her real being ('body and soul') which certainly exists even now."²³ "She who by her faith received salvation in her body for herself and for us all, has received it entire . . . Mary in her entire being is already where perfect redemption exists, entirely in that region of being which came to be through Christ's Resurrection."²⁴ Rahner adds: "When we speak of 'Mary's Assumption' into heaven, the 'privilege of the Blessed Virgin' implied here is simply that she has a special 'right' to this Assumption in virtue of her divine Motherhood and her unique position in saving history. It is also possible to speak of a special privilege here in so far as the temporal interval between death and bodily glorification in Mary's case must clearly be thought of as being shorter than in the case of those 'saints' in Mt. 27:52s., 'who had seen corruption'. . . . But a 'privilege' is implied here not in the sense that Mary alone enjoyed it or that what is involved

²⁰ T.I. p. 219.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 222.

²² *Ibid.* p. 225.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 225.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 225.

is in a very real sense an 'anticipation' of a perfection which in every respect and in every instance could only 'really' emerge later. On the contrary: salvation has already advanced so far historically that since the Resurrection it is completely 'normal' (which is not to say 'general') that there should be men in whom sin and death have already been definitively overcome."²⁵ Christ's "entry into the eternal glory even of his body does not open up an 'empty space,' but institutes a bodily community of the redeemed."²⁶ "The Church too is already redeemed totally, not in all her members certainly, but already in reality in some of them."²⁷ Nay more, "the world is already in transition to God's eternity. . . . Even now there belongs to the reality of the entire creation that new dimension which we call heaven and which we shall also be able to call new earth once it has subjected all earthly reality to itself."²⁸

It is at this point that Rahner suggests that

perhaps the deepest reason why Protestantism rejects the new dogma is because really it is only aware of a theology of the Cross as a formula for reality here and now, and not a theology of glory; for Protestantism this is ultimately only a promise and not something which exists "even now," although it has not embraced everything yet and for us here below has not yet become apparent. But for anyone who believes that counter to all appearances the forces (powers?) of the world to come have already seized hold of this world, and that these forces do not consist merely in a promise, remaining beyond every sort of creaturely existence, for a future still unreal; for such a one the "new" dogma (i.e. of the Assumption of Mary) is really nothing more than a clarification, throwing light on a state of salvation already in existence, in which he has already believed. That this state of salvation should be attributed to Mary in its entirety and fullness will not seem an impossibility to someone who knows that this salvation was born of her in virtue of the

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 225f.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 226.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 226.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 226.

consent of her faith and in consequence has had its most perfect effect in her. The "new" dogma has significance not only for Mariology, but also for ecclesiology and general eschatology.²⁹

Perhaps having given Rahner's doctrine for the most part in his own words, I may now venture to summarize his position in my own. Mary, from among all creatures, is singled out as the one in whom, that is, in whose person, is directly and immediately fulfilled and realized that salvation from sin and death which was accomplished in Jesus Christ, in His descent and ascent, His humiliation and exaltation, for the Church and indeed for the world. Her Immaculate Conception at the beginning of her life and her Assumption at the end mark her whole being and existence as one freed from the power of sin and death, and hence as a being and existence that is not only sanctified but already glorified. Mary enjoys this unique, perfect and entire redemption in her own person from the beginning in virtue of the fact that, as the mother of God, she is historically contemporaneous with Jesus, that is, she "stands at that point of saving history at which through her freedom (her consent) the world's salvation takes place." In all others, not enjoying the historical and spatial proximity of the Mother and Child, the redemption is effected only after the beginning of their earthly life in the sacraments of baptism and penance. Thus Mary represents and typifies that sanctification and glorious redemption which is promised as our future.³⁰

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We turn now to the theology of Karl Barth. As I indicated at the outset, I do not propose to review all that Barth has

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 226f.

³⁰ Cf. the chapter, "Assumed Into Heaven" in M.M.L.: "We can only say of Mary what we proclaim as our own hope for ourselves: The resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting. . . . The Church looks on high and greets in Mary her own type and model, her own future in the resurrection of the body" (pp. 30, 92).

written about Mary pro and con.³¹ Instead I propose to sketch the christological principles set forth by Barth in Vol. IV, Pt. 2 of the *Church Dogmatics*. I will do so, not only because this particular volume deals with "The exaltation of the Son of Man" and with "The sanctification of man," but because in the preface Barth states:

The content of this book might well be regarded as an attempted Evangelical answer to the Marian dogma of Romanism—both old and new. I have nowhere mentioned this, let alone attacked it directly. But I have in fact shown that it is made superfluous by the "Exaltation of the Son of Man" and its anthropological implications. I can hardly expect that my Roman Catholic readers—to whom I turn more and more in the *Church Dogmatics*—will accept this, but I am confident that they will at least see that there is a positive reason for my Evangelical rejection. The fact that the man Jesus is the whole basis and power and guarantee of our exaltation means that there can be no place for any other in this function, not even for the mother of Jesus. I have not made this particular delimitation in the text, but I hope that in relation to Roman Catholic theology some contribution has been made to an understanding of what is there called "sanctifying grace."

In order to see why Barth believes that the Marian dogma is "superfluous," we must first look at the section on christology entitled, "The Exaltation of the Son of Man." In CD IV, 1, Barth had discussed the doctrine of reconciliation from the standpoint of the Son of God who humbled Himself and journeyed into a far country in becoming flesh for our sakes. He is the Lord who became a servant, the Judge who was judged in our stead. Reconciliation was considered as God's mighty movement from above, as the humiliation of the Son of God even unto death on the Cross. The "other problem of the doctrine of reconciliation" concerns the man who is reconciled

³¹ For such a review I might refer readers to a recent article by L. Gordon Tait, *Karl Barth and the Virgin Mary*, that appeared in the 1967 Summer issue of *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 406-425.

with God, the movement from below upwards, the ascension and exaltation of the Son of Man.

The Son of Man returns home! But who and what is *verus homo*? The humanity of Jesus Christ is like that of all other men and wholly unlike it. He is like us in that He partakes of our creaturely and sinful nature. He is unlike us, not simply because He is also the Son of God, but because in Him humanity is exalted. Barth is careful to insist on numerous occasions that the raising of humanity in Christ did not signify a removal or alteration of His humanity. He does not cease to be like us. His humanity differs from ours in that He alone is raised to the side of God. His humanity becomes true humanity, but it is not deified. It goes too far to say of the humanity of Jesus Christ, with Irenaeus, that God became what we are in order that we might become what He is, that is, divine.

Having stated in a general way that the homecoming of the Son of Man is the exaltation of human nature that has taken place in Jesus Christ, Barth discusses the humanity of Jesus from three standpoints: (1) its ultimate ground in God's gracious election, (2) its historical realization in the event of the incarnation; (3) the source of its revelation in the resurrection and ascension of the man Jesus.

(1) The first of these three points has been dealt with fully in the doctrine of election (CD, II, 2). According to Barth, the true humanity of Jesus Christ was, is and remains the content of God's eternal decision, the execution and revelation in time of God's eternal will and purpose.

(2) The historical realization of the true man took place in the hypostatic union, the *unio personalis*, the event in which God's Son became man. In this event he did not assume "a man" but the human being and nature of all men in the one man Jesus of Nazareth. By the hypostatic union is meant a union of the divine and human natures accomplished by God in the hypostasis (that is, in the mode of existence or being) of the Son. It is important to realize, first, that the hypostatic

union is *sui generis*: it can be understood only in terms of itself and not from other kinds of unions. For example, it is not to be identified or confused with a *unio essentialis*: the incarnation is not a particular instance of the way in which God or the Logos is present in and with all things; for it is one thing to say that God is *with* man, and quite another thing to say that God *is* this man. It is not to be identified or confused with a *unio mystica*. That is, the Son of God and the Son of Man are not united in the way in which Christ or grace dwells in believers. When there is confusion here, the danger arises of conceiving God in Jesus in terms of God or of Christ in the experience of the believer, rather than understanding the Christian life in the light of the hypostatic union.

Secondly, it is important to realize the *effect* of the hypostatic union. The effect is the elevation of human nature in Jesus Christ: the justification, sanctification, calling and redemption of sinful, mortal man. Barth develops this point along three lines: (1) The communion of the two natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ; (2) The *communicatio idiomatum* or *communicatio gratiarum*, that is, what especially was imparted to human nature in virtue of the *unio* and *communio* of the two natures; (3) The *communicatio operationum*, the joint realization of human and divine nature that occurs on the basis of this communication. For the purpose of this paper the second of these aspects of the *effect* of the *unio* is obviously of supreme importance.

In keeping with the christology of the Reformed theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries, as opposed to the Lutherans, Barth prefers to speak of the *communicatio gratiarum* rather than of the *communicatio idiomatum*. The former signified that the human nature of Jesus Christ was determined wholly and exclusively by the grace of God imparted to it by the divine nature in the hypostatic union. "It is, then, a matter of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' (II Cor. 13:13) to the extent that the divine grace particularly addressed to him as man, and

therefore the particular determination of his essence, is the determination on the basis of which, as very God and very man, He is gracious to us all; the determination which in His person can be and is the divine grace addressed to all men."³² This grace is at least fourfold:

(1) It is the grace of "the origin of His being as the Son of Man, of His human existence. It is not a matter of the Virgin birth. This does not constitute, but only indicates, the grace of His particular origin."³³ Here Barth affirms "the *enhypostasis* or *anhypostasis* of the human nature of Jesus Christ." However, "this grace of His origin does not improve or effect any alteration in His human essence as such." What it effects is "the exaltation of His human essence. Exaltation to what? To that harmony with the divine will, that service of the divine act, that correspondence to the divine grace, that state of thankfulness, which is the only possibility in view of the fact that this man is determined by this divine will and act and grace alone."³⁴

(2) Included in this one grace is the grace of the sinlessness of His human nature. The human nature assumed by the Son of God was not sinless in itself. If it were, how could it be our human nature? Sinless means that while he existed as man in our sinful human nature, He did not sin. His sinlessness was not a state, a condition or quality added to His human nature so that He could not sin as a man, but consisted in the fact that "He did not will to sin and did not sin."³⁵ "He did not sin, because from this origin He lived as a man in this true human freedom—the freedom for obedience—not knowing or having any other freedom."³⁶ And this, then, is "the exaltation of our human nature in Jesus Christ . . . an exaltation to sinlessness, to freedom from sin . . . yet we cannot say that in this freedom

³² C.D., IV, 2, p. 89.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 90.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 91f.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 92.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 93.

He is not like us, our Brother. On the contrary, it is in this *non peccare* and *non posse peccare* that He confirms His brotherhood with us, the fellowship with our true human essence which we for our part continually break with our *peccare* and *posse peccare* and *non posse non peccare*."³⁷

(3) Another form of the one grace bestowed upon human nature in Jesus Christ is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and completely. If Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit "without measure" (Jn. 3:34), He is distinguished not only qualitatively but quantitatively from all other men. But this is just the elevation, not deification of human nature in Christ.³⁸

(4) The grace imparted to the human nature of Jesus Christ is His qualification to be the Mediator and Reconciler. The older dogmatics called this the *Potestas officii*. It is power in the sense both of capacity and authority or control. "Because and as He is the Son of God, the Son of Man has freedom of action in this twofold sense."³⁹ But this empowerment and authorization are not reasons to dispute the humanity of Jesus Christ. For all power in heaven and on earth is given to Jesus Christ, not to His human nature as such. His human nature communicates, attests and serves the divine power and authority. It is the bearer, the organ of power. The endowment to serve is man's exaltation.

Barth stresses that the resurrection and ascension were not Christ's exaltation, as an earlier theology had thought, and as Rahner still appears to think. Resurrection and ascension are two distinguishable but inseparable elements of the one and the same event of revelation of the exaltation of man in Jesus Christ in virtue of the humiliation of the Son of God in the Incarnation. What the resurrection and ascension added was that Jesus could be seen to be what He was and is. Actually the entire history of Jesus was His exaltation to the right hand of

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 94f.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 96.

God the Father, especially when He was raised up on the Cross, as John's Gospel clearly teaches (3:14, 8:28; 12:32f.).

In the last christological sub-section entitled, *The Direction of the Son*, Barth inquires about the significance, or rather about the power of Jesus' existence for other men. "His being as the Son of Man is *per definitionem* His being with us and His action is as such His action for us. For it to be His being with us or His action for us no addition or completion is necessary. As the Son of Man Jesus is already within our anthropological sphere and already embraces and encloses it."⁴⁰ The history of the Son of Man who returned home was not a private affair; it was a representative history that took place for the reconciliation of all other men. The Christmas message relates what is objectively real for all men in this one Man. We *are* first and last what we are in Him. "In Him" means that while we are like Him and are His brothers we participate in that wherein He is so unlike us—in His fellowship with God and in His obedience to God. Not in ourselves but in Him! We are indirectly exalted in the exaltation of the lowly servant of God. Christ alone is our justification and sanctification. At the same time we do not live in a way that would demonstrate our being in Him. Rather our being contradicts our being which is "hid with Christ in God" (*Col.* 3:3). Yet it is not so much our sinfulness that conceals our being in Christ as the fact that it depends upon the mystery of His Cross. For what does it mean to see our being in Christ when its very reality consists in His death? Consequently, His resurrection is not only the unveiling of Christ's new being but also of our being in Him who was exalted in His dying.

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We have come to the end of our survey of Barth's teaching concerning the exaltation and sanctification of man in the human nature of Jesus Christ in virtue of its union, communion and communication with the Son of God. It is precisely *this*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 265.

exaltation which Barth believes renders the Marian dogma "superfluous" and apparently believes that, when rightly perceived, renders a refutation of the Marian dogma superfluous. Am I altogether mistaken in observing that even for Roman Catholic theologians there is a certain non-essentiality about the dogma of Mary, especially for those who recognize that the so-called "privileges" of Mary are entirely from Christ?

In conclusion, therefore, I would simply like to point to certain differences between the christologies and christological implications of the two Karls.

1. Rahner appears to confuse or equate the hypostatic union with a *unio essentialis* or a *unio mystica*, that is, the hypostatic union with the union of Christ with Mary in her womb.

2. Barth finds the origin of the human nature of Jesus Christ in the event of the Word become flesh, in the event of the hypostatic union itself, whereas Rahner appears to find it in the Virgin Birth through Mary's consent of faith. True, Rahner states that Mary's consent is wholly the work of God's grace. But this seems to be a special grace antecedent to and independent of the grace of the hypostatic union itself. Rahner appears to argue that unless Mary had believed, the Incarnation could not have taken place. But was not Mary's faith an assent (not a consent or permission) to an objective Word and deed to which God remains faithful though every man be unfaithful and false? (*Rom.* 3:3f).

3. Rahner grounds the exaltation of Mary's human nature in that she, as the mother of the Son of God, stands at that point of history in which the Word became flesh for the redemption of mankind, that is, because of Mary's temporal and spatial nearness to Jesus. Barth sees the exaltation of Mary and of all men at that very point of history when the Son of God assumed flesh, the humanity of all men in all times and places. In this sense Mary is no nearer to and no farther from Jesus Christ than Abraham or Peter or the two Karls themselves. It can be said that God's Son was "born of woman,"

even of Mary's flesh; but it cannot be said that God's Son became Mary or Mary's flesh. God's Son assumed the flesh of all men, including Mary's, when He was born of her. The exaltation of her human nature to which Mary assents—"He who is mighty has done great things to me"—is none other and none higher than that which befell the human nature of all men in the hypostatic union: He has "exalted those of low degree." Mary's "privileges" are the privileges of all men, namely, that from the beginning to the end of their lives they have been delivered *in Christ* from "the power of sin and death and have been sanctified and exalted to everlasting glory and blessedness. Jesus Christ is the objective or *de jure* justification and redemption of all men (*I Cor. 1:30*).

4. But what about a subjective or *de facto* justification, sanctification and redemption? The answer to this question takes us into pneumatology and ecclesiology, into the miracle of the Holy Spirit that some men believe. But we must touch upon this fourth difference between the two Karls. For Karl Rahner Mary's faith, her humble and obedient *fiat*, (albeit of divine grace) consents, permits, opens the door to, and so realizes even the objective exaltation of human nature in the birth of her Son. For Barth faith is man's acknowledgment, assent and recognition of what God has already done for him in Jesus Christ. In no sense does faith re-enact or re-present, or repeat in the lives of those who hear the Gospel what took place once-and-for-all in Jesus Christ. The truth and power of faith does not lie in man's existential decision to take up his Cross and to die with Christ to self and the world. This view of faith, which is advocated by R. Bultmann, is to be rejected because it makes the objective reality of man's exaltation dependent upon his subjective appropriation of it.⁴¹

⁴¹ The affinity between the Roman Marian dogma and a certain brand of modern Protestantism is not to be overlooked. Cf. Barth's statement: "It is only the basically non-classical character of this Protestantism which so far has prevented it from constructing a kind of Mariology of its own" (C.D. I, 2, p. 146).

It is correct to say, however, that in faith there is a correspondence (but not a repetition) to the humiliation and obedience of the Son of God in which man's exaltation occurred.⁹ It consists in the very humility and obedience exemplified in Mary's faith. Mary is preeminently the type and pattern of the true Christian and the true Church which in all *leitourgia* humbly and obediently believes and confesses that she must decrease that He might increase because she has no other and no greater exaltation than that which befell her and all mankind in the Incarnation of the Son of God; was revealed to the apostles in His resurrection and ascension; and which will be directly and universally manifested in His Parousia at the Last Day. "Behold, I am the handmaid (the liturgist) of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word."

What then, in the light of christology can a "liturgical devotion to Mary" mean? It means that the church, in the liturgy of its public worship and in its loving service to the world lets Mary be the preeminent example: "My soul magnifies *the Lord* . . . for He who is mighty has done great things for me."

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