

Retrieving the Tradition

THOUGHTS ON THE PLACE
OF MARIAN DOCTRINE
AND PIETY IN FAITH
AND THEOLOGY AS A WHOLE

• Joseph Ratzinger •

“The ‘biological’ and the human are inseparable
in the figure of Mary, just as are the human and
the ‘theological.’”

*1. The background and significance of the Second Vatican Council’s
declarations on Mariology*

The question of the significance of Marian doctrine and piety cannot disregard the historical situation of the Church in which the question arises. We can understand and respond correctly to the profound crisis of post-Conciliar Marian doctrine and devotion only if we see this crisis in the context of the larger development of which it is a part. Now, we can say that two major spiritual movements defined the period stretching from the end of the First World War to the Second Vatican Council, two movements that had—albeit in very different ways—certain “charismatic features.” On the one side, there was a Marian movement that could claim charismatic roots in La Salette, Lourdes, and Fatima. It had steadily grown in vigor since the Marian apparitions of the mid-1800s. By

the time it reached its peak under Pius XII, its influence had spread throughout the whole Church. On the other side, the inter-war years had seen the development of the liturgical movement, especially in Germany, the origins of which can be traced to the renewal of Benedictine monasticism emanating from Solesmes, as well as to the Eucharistic inspiration of Pius X. Against the background of the Youth Movement, it gained—in Central Europe, at least—an increasingly wider influence throughout the Church at large. The ecumenical and biblical movements quickly joined with it to form a single mighty stream. Its fundamental goal—the renewal of the Church from the sources of Scripture and the primitive form of the Church’s prayer—likewise received its first official confirmation under Pius XII, in his encyclicals on the Church and on the liturgy.¹

As these movements increasingly influenced the universal Church, the problem of their mutual relationship also came increasingly to the fore. In many respects, they seemed to embody opposing attitudes and theological orientations. The liturgical movement tended to characterize its own piety as “objective” and sacramental, to which the strong emphasis on the subjective and personal in the Marian movement offered a striking contrast. The liturgical movement stressed the theocentric character of Christian prayer, which is addressed “through Christ to the Father”; the Marian movement, with its slogan *per Mariam ad Jesum* [through Mary to Jesus], seemed characterized by a different idea of mediation, by a kind of lingering with Jesus and Mary that pushed the classical Trinitarian reference into the background. The liturgical movement sought a piety governed strictly by the measure of the Bible or, at the most, of the ancient Church; the Marian piety that responded to the modern apparitions of the Mother of God was much more heavily influenced by traditions stemming from the Middle Ages and modernity. It reflected another style of thought and feeling.² The Marian movement doubtless carried with it

¹Cf. on this point J. Frings, *Das Konzil und die moderne Gedankenwelt* (Cologne, 1962), 31–37.

²Typical of the contrast between the two attitudes, which extends far beyond the domain of Mariology, are the questions posed in J. A. Jungmann’s book, *Die Frohbotschaft und die Glaubensverkündigung* (Regensburg, 1936); the passionate reaction to this work, which at that time had to be withdrawn from the market, likewise sheds a very clear light on the situation. Cf. the remarks on this episode

certain risks that threatened its own basic core (which was healthy) and even made it appear dubious to passionate champions of the other school of thought.³

In any case, a Council held at that time could hardly avoid the task of working out the correct relationship between these two divergent movements and of bringing them into a fruitful unity—without simply eliminating their tension. In fact, we can understand correctly the struggles that marked the first half of the Council—the disputes surrounding the Constitution on the Liturgy, the doctrine of the Church, and the right integration of Mariology into ecclesiology, the debate about Revelation, Scripture, Tradition and ecumenism—only in light of the tension between these two forces. All the debates that we have just mentioned turned—even when there was no explicit awareness of this fact—on the struggle to hammer out the right relationship between the two charismatic currents that were, so to say, the domestic “signs of the times” for the Church. The elaboration of the Pastoral Constitution would then provide the occasion for dealing with the “signs of the times” pressing upon the Church from outside. In this drama the famous vote of 29 October 1963 marked an intellectual watershed. The question at issue was whether to present Mariology in a separate text or to incorporate it into the Constitution on the Church. In other words, the Fathers had to decide the weight and relative ordering of the two schools of piety and thus to give the decisive answer to the situation then existing within the Church. Both sides dispatched men of the highest caliber to win over the plenum. Cardinal König advocated integrating the texts, which *de facto* could only mean assigning priority to liturgical-biblical piety. Cardinal Rufino Santos of Manila, on the other hand, made the case for the independence of the Marian element. Only the result of the

penned by Jungmann in 1961, in *J. A. Jungmann. Ein Leben für Liturgie und Kerygma*, ed. B. Fischer—H.B. Meyer (Innsbruck, 1975), 12–18.

³Cf. the magisterial presentation of R. Laurentin, *La question mariale* (Paris, 1963). Significant, for example, is Pope John XXIII’s warning against certain practices or excessive special forms of piety, even of veneration of the Madonna (19). Such forms of piety “sometimes give a pitiful idea of the piety of our good people.” In the concluding allocution of the Roman Synod, the Pope repeated his warning against the sort of piety that gives the imagination free rein and contributes little to the concentration of the soul. “We wish to invite you to adhere to the more ancient and simpler practices of the Church.”

voting—1114 to 1071—showed that the assembly was divided into two almost equally large groups. Nevertheless, the part of the Council Fathers shaped by the biblical and liturgical movements had won a victory—albeit a narrow one—and thus brought about a decision whose significance can hardly be overestimated.

Theologically speaking, the majority spearheaded by Cardinal König was right. If the two charismatic movements should not be seen as contrary, but must be regarded as complementary, then an integration was imperative, even though this integration could not mean the absorption of one movement by the other. After the Second World War, Hugo Rahner,⁴ A. Müller,⁵ K. Delahaye,⁶ R. Laurentin,⁷ and O. Semmelroth⁸ had convincingly demonstrated the intrinsic openness of biblical-liturgical-patristic piety to the Marian dimension. These authors succeeded in deepening both tendencies towards their center, in which they could meet and thanks to which they could at the same time preserve and fruitfully develop their distinctive character. As the facts stand, however, the Marian chapter of *Lumen Gentium* was only partly successful in persuasively and vigorously fleshing out the proposal these authors had outlined. Furthermore, post-Conciliar developments were shaped to a large extent by a misunderstanding of what the Council had actually said about the concept of Tradition; this misunderstanding was given a crucial boost by the simplistic reporting of the Conciliar debates in the media coverage. The whole debate was reduced to Geiselman's question concerning the material "sufficiency" of Scripture,⁹ which in turn was

⁴H. Rahner, *Maria und die Kirche* (Innsbruck, 1951); id., *Mater Ecclesia. Lobpreis der Kirche aus dem ersten Jahrtausend* (Einsiedeln—Cologne, 1944).

⁵A. Müller, *Ecclesia-Maria. Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche* (Fribourg, 1955).

⁶K. Delahaye, *Erneuerung der Seelsorgsformen aus der Sicht der frühen Patristik* (Freiburg, 1958).

⁷R. Laurentin, *Court traité de théologie mariale* (Paris, 1953); id., *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* (Paris, 1957).

⁸O. Semmelroth, *Urbild der Kirche. Organischer Aufbau des Mariengeheimnisses* (Würzburg, 1950); cf. also M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik. V: Mariologie* (Munich, 1955).

⁹I have tried to show that in reality Geiselman's formulation of the question misses the core of the problem in: K. Rahner—J. Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Freiburg, 1965), 25–69; see also my commentary on Chapter 2 of *Dei Verbum* in *LthK*, Supplementary Volume II, 515–528.

interpreted in the sense of a biblicism that condemned the whole patristic heritage to irrelevance and thereby also undermined what had until then been the point of the liturgical movement itself. Given the situation of the contemporary academy, however, biblicism automatically became historicism. Admittedly, even the liturgical movement itself had not been wholly free from historicism. Rereading its literature today, one finds that the liturgical movement was much too influenced by an archeological mentality that presupposed a model of decline: What occurs after a certain point in time appears *ipso facto* to be of inferior value, as if the Church were not alive and therefore capable of development in every age. The result of all of this was that the kind of thinking shaped by the liturgical movement narrowed into a biblicist-positivist mentality closed in a backward-looking attitude that thus left no more room for the dynamic development of the faith. On the other hand, the distance implied in historicism inevitably paves the way for “modernism”; since what is merely past is no longer living, it leaves the present isolated and so leads to self-concocted experimentation. An additional factor was that the new, ecclesio-centric Mariology was foreign, and to a large extent remained foreign, precisely to those Council Fathers who had been the principal upholders of Marian piety. Nor could the vacuum thus produced be filled out by Paul VI’s introduction of the title “Mother of the Church” at the end of the Council, which was a conscious attempt to answer the crisis that was already looming on the horizon. In fact, the immediate outcome of the victory of ecclesiocentric Mariology was the collapse of Mariology altogether. It seems to me that the changed look of the Church in Latin America after the Council, the occasional concentration of religious feeling on political change, makes sense when placed against the background of these events.

2. The positive function of Mariology in theology

A rethinking was set in motion above all by Paul VI’s apostolic letter *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974) on the right form of Marian veneration. As we saw, the decision of 1963 had led *de facto* to the absorption of Mariology by ecclesiology. A reconsideration of the text has to begin with the recognition that its actual historical effect contradicts its own original meaning. For the

chapter on Mary (VIII) was written so as to correspond intrinsically to chapters I-IV, which describe the structure of the Church. The balance of the two was meant to secure the correct equilibrium that would fruitfully correlate the respective energies of the biblical-ecumenical-liturgical movement and the Marian movement. Let us put it positively: Mariology, rightly understood, clarifies and deepens the concept of Church in two ways.

a) Contrarily to the masculine, activistic-sociological “*populus Dei*” (people of God) approach, Church¹⁰—*ecclesia*—is feminine. This fact opens a dimension of mystery that points beyond sociology, the dimension wherein the real ground and unifying power of the reality Church first appears. Church is more than “people,” more than structure and action: The Church contains the living mystery of maternity and of the bridal love that makes maternity possible. There can be ecclesial piety, love for the Church, only if this mystery exists. When the Church is no longer seen in any but a masculine, structural, purely theoretical way, what is most authentically ecclesial about *ecclesia* has been ignored—the center upon which the whole of biblical and patristic talk about the Church actually hinges.¹¹

b) Paul captures the *differentia specifica* [specific difference] of the New Testament Church with respect to the Old Testament “pilgrim people of God” in the term “body of Christ.” Church is not an organization, but an organism of Christ. If Church becomes a “people” at all, it is only through the mediation of Christology. This mediation, in turn, happens in the sacraments, in the Eucharist, which for its part presupposes the Cross and Resurrection as its condition of possibility. Consequently, one is not talking about the Church when one says “people of God” without at the same time saying, or at least thinking, “Body of Christ.”¹² But even the concept of the Body of Christ needs clarification in today’s context lest it be misunderstood: It could easily be interpreted in the sense

¹⁰[In what follows, Ratzinger uses the word “Kirche,” Church, without the definite article. The reader should bear in mind that he is talking about “Church” in its personal, Marian reality—Tr.]

¹¹Cf. on this point the fundamental presentation of H. U. von Balthasar, “Wer ist die Kirche?,” in *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1960), 148–202.

¹²Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Kirche als Heilssakrament,” in *Zeit des Geistes*, ed. J. Reikerstorfer (Vienna, 1977), 59–70; see also my *Das neue Volk Gottes* (Düsseldorf, 1969), 75–89.

of a Christomonism, of an absorption of the Church, and thus of the believing creature, into the uniqueness of Christology. In Pauline terms, however, the claim that we are the “Body of Christ” makes sense only against the backdrop of the formula of Genesis 2:24: “The two shall become one flesh” (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). The Church is the body, the flesh of Christ in the spiritual tension of love wherein the spousal mystery of Adam and Eve is consummated, hence, in the dynamism of a unity that does not abolish dialogical reciprocity [*Gegenübersein*]. By the same token, precisely the eucharistic-christological mystery of the Church indicated in the term “Body of Christ” remains within the proper measure only when it includes the mystery of Mary: The mystery of the listening handmaid who—liberated in grace—speaks her *Fiat* and, in so doing, becomes bride and thus body.¹³

If this is the case, then Mariology can never simply be dissolved into an impersonal ecclesiology. It is a thorough misunderstanding of patristic typology to reduce Mary to a mere, hence, interchangeable, exemplification of theological structures. Rather, the type remains true to its meaning only when the non-interchangeable personal figure of Mary becomes transparent to the personal form of the Church itself. In theology, it is not the person that is reducible to the thing, but the thing to the person. A purely structural ecclesiology is bound to degrade Church to the level of a program of action. Only the Marian dimension secures the place of affectivity in faith and thus ensures a fully human correspondence to the reality of the incarnate Logos. Here I see the truth of the saying that Mary is the “vanquisher of all heresies.” This affective rooting guarantees the bond “*ex toto corde*”—from the depth of the heart—to the *personal* God and his Christ and rules out any recasting of christology into a Jesus program, which can be atheistic and purely neutral: the experience of the last few years is an astonishing contemporary verification of the legitimate core carried in such ancient phrases.

3. The place of Mariology in the whole of theology

¹³Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, “Wer ist die Kirche?”; see also the fine interpretation of the annunciation to Mary in K. Woytyła, *Zeichen des Widerspruchs* (Zurich—Freiburg, 1979), 50f.

In light of what has been said, the place of Mariology in theology also becomes clear. In his massive tome on the history of Marian doctrine, G. Söll, summing up his historical analysis, defends the correlation of Mariology with Christology and soteriology against ecclesiological approaches to Marian doctrine.¹⁴ Without diminishing the extraordinary achievement of this work or the import of its historical findings, I take an opposite view. In my opinion, the Council Fathers' option for a different approach was correct—correct from the point of view of dogmatic theology and of larger historical considerations. Söll's conclusions about the history of dogma are, of course, beyond dispute: propositions about Mary first became necessary in function of Christology and developed as part of the structure of Christology. We must add, however, that none of the affirmations made in this context did or could constitute an independent Mariology, but remained an explication of Christology. By contrast, the patristic period foreshadowed the whole of Mariology in the guise of ecclesiology, albeit without any mention of the name of the Mother of the Lord: The *virgo ecclesia* [virgin Church], the *mater ecclesia* [mother Church], the *ecclesia immaculata* [immaculate Church], the *ecclesia assumpta* [assumed Church]—the whole content of what would later become Mariology was first conceived as ecclesiology. To be sure, ecclesiology itself cannot be isolated from Christology. Nevertheless, the Church has a relative subsistence [*Selbständigkeit*] vis-à-vis Christ, as we saw just now: the subsistence of the bride who, even when she becomes one flesh with Christ in love, nonetheless remains an other before him [*Gegenüber*].

It was not until this initially anonymous, though personally shaped, ecclesiology fused with the dogmatic propositions about Mary prepared in Christology that a Mariology having an integrity of its own first emerged within theology (with Bernard of Clairvaux). Thus, we cannot assign Mariology to Christology alone or to ecclesiology alone (much less dissolve it into ecclesiology as a more or less superfluous exemplification of the Church).

Rather, Mariology underscores the “*nexus mysteriorum*”—the intrinsic interwovenness of the mysteries in their irreducible mutual otherness [*Gegenüber*] and their unity. While the conceptual pairs bride-bridegroom and head-body allow us to perceive the

¹⁴G. Söll, *Mariologie* (Freiburg, 1978).

connection between Christ and the Church, Mary represents a further step, inasmuch as she is first related to Christ not as bride, but as mother. Here we can see the function of the title “Mother of the Church”; it expresses the fact that Mariology goes beyond the framework of ecclesiology and at the same time is correlative to it.¹⁵

Nor, if this is the case, can we simply argue, in discussing these correlations, that, because Mary was first the Mother of the Lord, she is only an image of the Church. Such an argument would be an unjustifiable simplification of the relationship between the orders of being and knowledge. In response, one could, in fact, rightly point to passages like Mk 3:33-35 or Lk 11:27f and ask whether, assuming this point of departure, Mary’s physical maternity still has any theological significance at all. We must avoid relegating Mary’s maternity to the sphere of mere biology. But we can do so only if our reading of Scripture can legitimately presuppose a hermeneutics that rules out just this kind of division and allows us instead to recognize the correlation of Christ and his Mother as a theological reality. This hermeneutics was developed in the Fathers’ personal, albeit anonymous, ecclesiology that we mentioned just now. Its basis was Scripture itself and the Church’s intimate experience of faith. Briefly put, the burden of this hermeneutics is that the salvation brought about by the triune God, the true center of all history, is “Christ and the Church”—Church here meaning the creature’s fusion with its Lord in spousal love, in which its hope for divinization is fulfilled by way of faith.

If, therefore, Christ and *ecclesia* are the hermeneutical center of the scriptural narration of the history of God’s saving dealings with man, then and only then is the place fixed where Mary’s motherhood becomes theologically significant as the ultimate personal concretization of Church. At the moment when she pronounces her Yes, Mary is Israel in person; she is the Church in person and as a person. She is the personal concretization of the Church because her *Fiat* makes her the bodily mother of the Lord. But this biological fact is a theological reality, because it realizes the deepest spiritual content of the Covenant that God intended to make with Israel. Luke suggests this beautifully in harmonizing 1:45

¹⁵On the title Mother of the Church, see W. Dürig, *Maria—Mutter der Kirche* (St. Ottilien, 1979).

(“blessed is she who believed”) and 11:27 (“blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God and keep it”). We can therefore say that the affirmation of Mary’s motherhood and the affirmation of her representation of the Church are related as *factum* and *mysterium facti*, as the fact and the sense that gives the fact its meaning. The two things are inseparable: The fact without its sense would be blind, the sense without the fact would be empty. Mariology cannot be developed from the naked fact, but only from the fact as it is understood in the hermeneutics of faith. In consequence, Mariology can never be purely Mariological. Rather, it stands within the totality of the basic Christ-Church structure and is the most concrete expression of its inner coherence.¹⁶

4. Mariology—anthropology—faith in creation

Pondering the implications of this discussion, we see that, while Mariology expresses the heart of “salvation history,” it nonetheless transcends an approach focused solely on that history. Mariology is an essential component of a hermeneutics of salvation history. Recognition of this fact brings out the true dimensions of Christology over against a falsely understood *solus Christus* [Christ alone]. Christology must speak of a Christ who is both “head *and* body,” that is, who comprises the redeemed creation in its relative subsistence [*Selbständigkeit*]. But this move simultaneously enlarges our perspective beyond the history of salvation, because it counters a false understanding of God’s sole agency, highlighting the reality of the creature that God calls and enables to respond to him freely. Mariology demonstrates that the doctrine of grace does not revoke creation, but is the definitive Yes to creation. In this way, Mariology guarantees the ontological independence [*Eigenständigkeit*] of creation, undergirds faith in creation, and crowns the doctrine of creation, rightly understood. Questions and tasks await us here that have scarcely begun to be treated or undertaken.

a) Mary is the believing other whom God calls. As such, she represents the creation, which is called to respond to God, and the

¹⁶See on this point I. de la Potterie’s impressive “La mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu. Etude de théologie johannique,” *Marianum* 40 (1978): 41–90, esp. 45 and 89f.

freedom of the creature, which does not lose its integrity in love, but attains completion therein. Mary thus represents saved and liberated man, but she does so precisely as a woman, that is, in the bodily determinateness that is inseparable from man: “male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27). The “biological” and the human are inseparable in the figure of Mary, just as are the human and the “theological.” This insight is deeply akin to the dominant movements of our time, yet it also contradicts them at the very core. For while today’s anthropological program hinges more radically than ever before on “emancipation,” the kind of freedom it seeks is one whose goal is to “be like God” (Gn 3:5). But the idea that we can be like God implies a detachment of man from his biological conditionedness, from the “male and female he created them.” This sexual difference is something that man, as a biological being, can never get rid of, something that marks man in the deepest center of his being. Yet it is regarded as a totally irrelevant triviality, as a constraint arising from historically fabricated “roles,” and is therefore consigned to the “purely biological realm,” which has nothing to do with man as such. Accordingly, this “purely biological” dimension is treated as a thing that man can manipulate at will because it lies beyond the scope of what counts as human and spiritual (so much so, that man can freely manipulate the coming into being of life itself). This treatment of “biology” as a mere thing is accordingly regarded as a liberation, for it enables man to leave *bios* behind, use it freely, and to be completely independent of it in every other respect, that is, to be simply a “human being” who is neither male nor female. But in reality man thereby strikes a blow against his deepest being. He holds himself in contempt, because the truth is that he is human only insofar as he is bodily, only insofar as he is man or woman. When man reduces this fundamental determination of his being to a despicable trifle that can be treated as a thing, he himself becomes a trifle and a thing, and his “liberation” turns out to be his degradation to an object of production. Whenever biology is subtracted from humanity, humanity itself is negated. Thus, the question of the legitimacy of maleness as such and of femaleness as such has high stakes: Nothing less than the reality of the creature. Since the biological determinateness of humanity is least possible to hide in motherhood, an emancipation that negates *bios* is a particular aggression against the woman. It is the denial of her right to be a woman. Conversely, the preservation of creation is just so far bound up in a special way with

the question of woman. And the Woman in whom “biology” is “theology”—that is, motherhood of God—is in a special way the point where paths diverge.

b) Mary’s virginity, no less than her maternity, confirms that the “biological” is human, that the whole man stands before God, and that the fact of being human only as male and female is included in faith’s eschatological demand and its eschatological hope. It is no accident that virginity—although as a form of life it is also possible, and intended for, the man—is first patterned on the woman, the true keeper of the seal of creation, and has its normative, plenary form—which the man can, so to say, only imitate—in her.¹⁷

5. *Marian piety*

The connections we have just outlined finally enable us to explain the structure of Marian piety. Its traditional place in the Church’s liturgy is Advent and then, in general, the feasts relating to the Christmas cycle: Candlemas and the Annunciation.¹⁸

In our considerations so far, we have regarded the Marian dimension as having three characteristics. First, it is personalizing (the Church not as a structure, but as a person and in person). Second, it is incarnational (the unity of *bios*, person, and relation to God; the ontological freedom of the creature vis-à-vis the Creator and of the “body” of Christ relative to the head). These two characteristics give the Marian dimension a third: It involves the heart, affectivity, and thus fixes faith solidly in the deepest roots of man’s being. These characteristics suggest Advent as the liturgical

¹⁷On the unity of the biological, the human, and the theological, see I. de la Potterie, “La mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu,” 89f. On the whole discussion, see also L. Bouyer, *Frau und Kirche* (Einsiedeln, 1977). This is also the place to mention a lovely observation in A. Luciani’s *Ihr ergebener* (Munich, 1978), 126. Luciani recounts a meeting with schoolgirls who objected to the alleged discrimination against women in the Church. In response, Luciani brings into relief the fact that Christ had a human mother, but did not and could not have a human father: the perfecting of the creature as creature occurs in the woman, not in the man.

¹⁸The new missal—in conformity with the ancient Tradition—sees these two feasts as feasts of Christ. Notwithstanding this change, the feasts by no means lose their Marian content.

place of the Marian dimension, while their meaning in turn receives further illumination from Advent. Marian piety is Advent piety; it is filled with the joy of the expectation of the Lord's imminent coming; it is ordered to the incarnational reality of the Lord's nearness as it is given and gives itself. Ulrich Wickert says very nicely that Luke depicts Mary as twice heralding Advent—at the beginning of the Gospel, when she awaits the birth of her Son, and at the beginning of Acts, when she awaits the birth of the Church.¹⁹

However, in the course of history an additional element became more and more pronounced. Marian piety is, to be sure, primarily incarnational and focused on the Lord who has come. It tries to learn with Mary to stay in his presence. But the feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven, which gained in significance thanks to the dogma of 1950, accentuates the eschatological transcendence of the Incarnation. Mary's path includes the experience of rejection (Mk 3:31–35; Jn 2:4). When she is given away under the Cross (Jn 19:26), this experience becomes a participation in the rejection that Jesus himself had to endure on the Mount of Olives (Mk 14:34) and on the Cross (Mk 15:34). Only in this rejection can the new come to pass; only in a going away can the true coming take place (Jn 16:7). Marian piety is thus necessarily a passion-centered piety. In the prophecy of the aged Simeon, who foretold that a sword would pierce Mary's heart (Lk 2:35), Luke interweaves from the very outset the Incarnation and the Passion, the joyful and the sorrowful mysteries. In the Church's piety, Mary appears, so to say, as the living Veronica's veil, as an icon of Christ that brings him into the presence of man's heart, translates Christ's image into the heart's vision, and thus makes it intelligible. Looking towards the *Mater assumpta*, the virgin mother assumed into heaven, Advent broadens into eschatology. In this sense, the medieval expansion of Marian piety beyond Advent into the whole ensemble of the mysteries of salvation is entirely in keeping with the logic of biblical faith.

We can, in conclusion, derive from the foregoing a threefold task for education in Marian piety:

a) It is necessary to maintain the distinctiveness of Marian devotion precisely by keeping its practice constantly and strictly

¹⁹U. Wickert, "Maria und die Kirche," *Theologie und Glaube* 68 (1978): 384–407; here, 402.

bound to Christology. In this way, both will be brought to their proper form.

b) Marian piety must not collapse into partial aspects of the Christian mystery, let alone reduce that mystery to partial aspects of itself. It must be open to the whole breadth of the mystery and become itself a means to this breadth.

c) Marian piety will always stand within the tension between theological rationality and believing affectivity. This is part of its essence, and its task is not to allow either to atrophy. Affectivity must not lead it to forget the sober measure of *ratio*, nor must the sobriety of a reasonable faith allow it to suffocate the heart, which often sees more than naked reason. It was not for nothing that the Fathers understood Mt 5:8 as the center of their theological epistemology: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The organ for seeing God is the purified heart. It may just be the task of Marian piety to awaken the heart and purify it in faith. If the misery of contemporary man is his increasing disintegration into *mere bios* and *mere rationality*, Marian piety could work against this “decomposition” and help man to rediscover unity in the center, from the heart.—*Translated by Adrian Walker.*

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