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MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH: VATICAN COUNCIL II Anne Carr, BVM

Contemporary Interpretations of Mary

A 1982 newspaper article headlined "Woman Quits in Virgin Mary Fuss" reported that the leader of a Catholic women's organization in West Germany aroused a storm of protest when she claimed that "the traditional image of the Virgin Mary contributes to sexual frustration in German marriages." The woman resigned her post because of the controversy following a televised discussion program in which she questioned the virtues historically ascribed to Mary by the church. "The picture of Mary as 'an example of purity, chastity, and virginity' is inaccurate," she said. It contributes to tensions and breakdowns in marriage "when Catholic women try to reconcile their sexual behavior in marriage with the model of abstinence embodied by the Virgin Mary." Further, she objected to the "traditional image of Mary as a 'meek and submissive' woman" when in reality she must have been an "active, self-assured, plucky woman . . . rational, questioning, able to debate."¹

About the same time, an article by Mary Gordon, author of *Final Payments* and *The Company of Women*, elaborated on the problem Mary is for Catholic women. "In my high school days," she wrote, "Mary was a stick to beat smart girls with. Her example was held up constantly: an example of silence, of subordination, of the pleasure of taking the back seat.

For women like me, it was necessary to reject that image of Mary in order to hold onto the fragile hope of intellectual achievement, independence of identity, sexual fulfillment.

Yet we were offered no alternative to this Marian image; hence we were denied a potent female image whose application was universal. There were a few saints one could, in desperation, turn to: Teresa of Avila, who was reported to have a fresh mouth ('If this is the way you treat your friends, Lord, what do you do to your enemies?') Henny Youngman in Carmel. Who wouldn't like her?), talked back to bishops, reformed her order, had visions whose power and authenticity were unassailable. But any saint, however celebrated, is venerated out of choice, only by some. The appeal of Mary is that devotion to her is universal, ancient. And she is the Mother of God."²

Gordon notes that, with the emergence of the feminist movement, some women rejected Mary in favor of her son, but that now sophisticated female thought is attempting to retrieve the history of women, to search for the female past that is often anonymous and uncredited. "To look for new values that are not simply male values dressed for success . . . is leading women back to Mary."³

But this is problematic, since most of what Christian history tells us about Mary is seen through men's eyes—the misogynist eyes of the Fathers of the Church, for example, who exhibit an aversion to female sexuality and who set Mary apart from the rest of her sex. "She was only acceptable because she did not share the corruption that was inevitably attached to the female condition." In a favorite patristic image, Mary was set against Eve, the symbol of flesh, sin, and evil who was cursed to bear children; Mary is the happy or blessed virgin, opposite to Eve in her purity. And women generally were identified with Eve. Chrysostom writes, e.g., "If you consider what is stored up behind those lovely eyes [of woman] . . . you will agree [that she] . . . is merely a whitened sepulcher." For Gordon, it is difficult to understand the horror and disgust of the Fathers for the physical nature of women symbolized by Eve, and their veneration for the Virgin Mary.

Studying the Eve/Mary relationship in the patristic literature, Rosemary Ruether shows that the Fathers believed that only in ascetic virginity could woman transcend her sinful and corrupt female nature—symbol of the flesh as evil—and become like a man—symbol of the spirit. The emergence of Mariology, in the fourth-century writings of

the Fathers with their praise of Mary as the epitome of spiritual womanhood, does not prevent their despising "all real physical women, sex, and fecundity and wholly etherealizing women into incorporeal phantasms in order to provide love objects for the sublimated libido and guard against turning back to any physical expression of love with the dangerous daughters of Eve."⁴

Thus the recovery of Mary for contemporary women must include awareness that her place, as a religious symbol, is part of the history of human thought (mostly male thought) about women, "a history of errors" as Gordon says, that is not unique to Christianity. She calls for a "forgiving vigilance."

One must forgive, or one must give up history; one must be vigilant to ensure that the tendencies [to denigrate women] so inbred in all human beings—ourselves as well as men—are passed on as little as possible. For they are in all of us, blood and bone; we cannot expect them to disappear in a lifetime. Those of us whose hearts are moved by those who have gone before us, who wish to keep the connection alive, must reject the temptation of historical romanticism. We must not forget the history of woman has been a history of degradation, oppression, the idealization whose other side is tyranny. But we must resist as well the temptation to reject the lonely, the exalted, the resonant life built up for centuries by living men and women.⁵

Gordon's "forgiving vigilance" is not shared by another contemporary feminist writer who has studied the powerful symbol of the Virgin and its effects on the lives of women. Marina Warner's detailed historical treatment of Marian myth, cult, devotion, art, and symbol, concludes that Mary represents, not religious paradox, but ideology. "The Catholic religion . . . binds its female followers . . . on a double wheel." Mary is the symbol of the ideal woman, translated into a moral exhortation that, on the one hand, extols motherhood as the fulfillment of woman's purpose and, on the other, asserts, in the words of the Council of Trent, that "virginity and celibacy are better and more blessed than the bond of matrimony." Since Mary represents an impossible ideal, Warner believes, "the Virgin will recede into legend. . . ;

the legend will endure in its splendour and lyricism, but it will be emptied of moral significance. . . ."⁶

Mary Daly, for all her rage against Christianity, offers an analysis of Mary that is more subtle. She notes the autonomous power of Mary's image, discovered, for example, by Henry Adams. Traveling in Europe at the turn of the century, he noticed that the great cathedrals were not dedicated to God, but to Mary:

Symbol of energy, the Virgin had acted as the greatest force the Western world ever felt, and had drawn men's activities to herself more strongly than any power, natural or supernatural, had ever done.⁷

Daly does not believe there is any demonstrable connection between the Mary symbol and the historical mother of Jesus, but that the power of her image, its "sometimes God-like status," may really be a "foretelling image, pointing to the future becoming of women 'to the image of God.'" On the surface, according to Daly, Mary by her inimitability functions in Catholicism to put all ordinary women in a caste with the sinful Eve and to reinforce sexual caste with the message that women are holy only in relation to men. Beneath the surface, however, there are prophetic sub-intended meanings in the image of Mary that point to the independence of women. The doctrine of the virgin birth (Mary's virginity before, during, and after the birth of Jesus) indicates that "the woman who is defined as a virgin is not defined exclusively by her relationships with men"; virginity can be a symbol of female autonomy when sifted out of its patriarchal setting as "the vision of the free and independent woman who stands alone."⁸

While for Daly the power of the Mary symbol has been co-opted by men in order to domesticate, cloister, and subordinate the power of women, the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption can also be read for their unintended, or double, meanings. Thomas Aquinas and many other theologians rejected the Immaculate Conception because Mary's exemption from original sin seemed to detract from the dignity of Christ and his redemption. When the dogma was promulgated in 1854, the resistance of some Catholics and the shock of Protestants, writes Daly, "indicate that they dimly glimpsed the unintended threat to male supremacy" in the affirmation of Mary's singularity in freedom from original sin. The Assumption of Mary was hailed

by psychologist Carl Jung because it symbolizes Mary as the "fourth person" of the Trinity, raising the feminine (often projected as a symbol of evil) to the level of the divine. While Daly knows this specific meaning would never be accepted by the church, she believes that the fulness of the Mary symbol bears important prophetic possibility for women.

Other contemporary writers also see prophetic possibilities in the symbol of Mary. Rosemary R. Ruether interprets Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other Marys of the New Testament, Jesus' disciples and friends, as representing the "feminine face of the church." Placed in a context of authentic reciprocity, the balance of activity and receptivity in the fully human person (no longer stereotyped as male and female) might be fostered by a new appreciation of Mary in the church. If the symbols of Christ and Mary can be freed from models of male dominance and female passivity, a humanizing of the church might occur in which "Christ represents the emptying out of a divine power . . . at the service of others and Mary, or the church, represents liberated humanity."⁹ Andrew M. Greeley believes that the centuries of Marian symbolism—madonna, virgo, sponsa, pieta—reflect the femininity of God and respond to important human and religious experiences.¹⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza holds that Catholicism's traditional devotion to Mary is significant because of the central place of a woman in its religious horizon. As the figure of Jesus became more transcendent and divinized, Mary expressed the qualities of tenderness, compassion, and mercy of the biblical God. And as the figure of Mary became more transcendent and divinized in Catholic devotional life, she reflected the feminine side of God, of Christ, and of the church.¹¹

This overview of contemporary interpretations of Mary—both negative and positive—may set the stage for our discussion of Mary in the mystery of the church, as she is described by the Second Vatican Council. These interpretations alert us to the power of the symbol of Mary, a religious symbol that, as Rahner and Tillich have shown, opens us to participation in the very mystery to which it points.¹² They warn us to be vigilant in our interpretations of Mary, to be watchful of the way a symbol can be used, its positive and negative effects on the lives of people. No symbol in itself is simply oppressive or liberating: its uses, whether religious, political or social, must be considered as we discover

its effects on the lives of people and as we offer new interpretations. For it is new interpretations, in dialog with tradition and with contemporary questions, and not mere repetition that make tradition a living and always new truth—authentic revelation.¹³ And as Paul Ricoeur has demonstrated, new interpretation of the multi-valent levels of a symbol in its excess of meaning must include both suspicion and restoration—suspicion of its regressive possibilities, restoration of its progressive meanings.¹⁴ The doctrine, image, and symbol of Mary have had both negative and positive import, especially for women in the church. What, then, are the effects of the teaching about Mary of the Second Vatican Council?

Vatican II: Historical Background

Chapter 8 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church," presents material for an intriguing historical study. From the preparatory phase in 1962 until the promulgation of the finally approved text on November 21, 1964, the document went through some sixteen revisions.¹⁵ "The decision to include the chapter on the Blessed Virgin Mary in *this* Constitution (instead of in a separate schema) was the closest of all votes taken in St. Peter's."¹⁶ Clearly, Mary was a controversial issue at the Second Vatican Council. Why was she the source of such extended debate and eventual compromise? In the language used at the time, so-called "maximalist" and "minimalist" positions on Mary were held by opposing groups among the Fathers of the Council and their theologian advisers. These catch phrases came to bear an extra burden of meaning: one who was "maximalist" was understood to be less theologically rigorous, especially in favoring a separate council document devoted to Mary alone that, from the side of the opponents, represented a detachment of the discussion of Mariology—a certain independence—from the rest of theology. One who was a "minimalist," on the other hand, could be reproached for having little love for Mary, of being so ecumenically sensitive to the feelings of Protestants (disturbed by what appeared to be near equation of Mary with Jesus Christ) that they were willing to

sacrifice Catholic doctrine for the cause of church union. "Should we give in," wrote one commentator, "to the impulse to enrich the glorious titles of the Mother of God, or should we maintain a safer exposition of her role in the plan of salvation, safeguarding thus the homogeneity of theology as a whole?"¹⁷

Thus Mary, and the question of a special separate text devoted to her place in Catholic life, became an emotionally charged issue among the bishops at the council during its second session in the autumn of 1963. On the one side, Cardinal Henriquez of Chile, speaking for some 44 Latin American bishops, requested on October 1 that the text on Mary be included in the document on the church, pointing out that in Latin America, devotion to Mary is sometimes too isolated from the central devotional life of the church. Several days later, a Spanish bishop, representing 66, mostly Spanish, bishops, spoke against the inclusion of the text in the church document "because the mystery of Mary is greater than the mystery of the church."¹⁸ The issue was drawn, interestingly enough, between Latin bishops on either side of the Atlantic, the old world and the new.

While the theological commission of the council had itself voted, by a two-thirds majority, for inclusion of the text on Mary in the church document, it decided to ask for a general vote on the question from the council fathers. The commission named Cardinal Santos of Manila to speak for a separate text and Cardinal Koenig of Vienna to speak for inclusion. Santos argued that the text on the church was too short to allow for inclusion of the schema on Mary "without her dignity and place in the church thereby suffering. . . ." that "Mariology should not be reduced to ecclesiology." Koenig argued that the church was the central topic of the council and that "a separate schema would give the impression that new dogmas are being proposed"; that the present trend in theology was to link Mary and the church, using both scriptural and patristic sources, in a way that both Protestant and Eastern Christians find more acceptable. Five days later the vote would be taken. There was real fear that this issue might split the council. Five different documents on Mary were being circulated, and implications of heresy—for example, denial by omission of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption—began to appear in the press, as well as vicious accusations that equated inclusion with all that was evil

and dangerous in so-called "progress" (*progressimo*). Michael Novak reported that the week before the vote on Mary was taken was "the blackest . . . of the council," that "the winds of forward motion had dropped, and storms were forming in the dark."¹⁹

Novak's analysis, "Politics and the Blessed Virgin Mary," written during the second session of the council, offered an interpretation of Mary as the key symbol in the conciliar struggle between "non-historical orthodoxy" and Pope John's vision of an "open church." He described non-historical orthodoxy as an other-worldly piety that "seems more pagan than Christian," that ignores the social and political implications of the gospel in separating personal devotion from public life. He wrote:

Non-historical orthodoxy is essentially masochistic. The prophecy of imminent doom is its *raison d'être*. It needs to feel attacked. It needs to profess the very items of its belief most calculated to arouse the ire of non-Catholics, in order to have the assurance that the world is still at war with it (It) is a retreat from the responsibilities of living in history, and of remaining faithful to Christ under the stresses of changing circumstance.²⁰

Within the piety of non-historical orthodoxy, Novak argued, "popular devotions, especially Marian devotions, loom very large" because they "are ordinarily a refuge from the conflicts of history." To a focus on Mary—symbolized in the council by a separate schema for her—Novak linked withdrawal from the problems of the world, focus on personal sins or misdemeanors, intellectual ignorance of the biblical and liturgical foundations of Christianity, fear of change, and anti-communism. This spirituality was especially prevalent in Spain and Italy, he wrote, countries that had not experienced social revolutions, whose class structures remained rigid, and whose political power groups have a great stake in keeping "the energy of the church involved in private devotions to Mary and the saints."²¹

On the other hand, those who urged the inclusion of the text on Mary in the document on the church represented "Catholic scholars who labored at a theology of the Word of God, of the liturgy, of social action, of the return to the earlier traditions of Christianity." They represented, in the council, the forces for genuine renewal, the open

church of creativity and historical fidelity to God's word, and to the church's intellectual tradition, in short, the activity of the Spirit. When the important and symbolic vote was taken on October 30, the council voted for inclusion of the Mary text in the Constitution on the Church by a vote of 1,114 to 1,074, the small margin of 40 votes demonstrating a fundamental and potentially serious split in the historic gathering.²² Nevertheless, the closest vote of the entire council went with the forces for change.

Before we turn to the text on Mary that was included in *Lumen Gentium*, we might well ponder a bit, from the perspective of 20 more years and the varied interpretations of Mary with which we began, what might have been at stake for women in the fiercely emotional conciliar debate about Mary. Novak is again an instructive contemporary source. In his discussion of the other-worldly Marian piety of non-historical orthodoxy, he wrote:

The man of history has little time for such devotions, such attitudes. This form of piety attempts to womanize the world, according to the spirit of an earlier century. In effect, it insists that men withdraw from the real, concrete daily work of human progress. Not by accident does non-historical orthodoxy have a stronger hold on women than on men, especially in the lower classes; these are the ones whose lives have changed least since the late Middle Ages.²³

Novak also reported that on the morning of the vote, journalists were invited to attend the council Mass. Some 20 did so, and as they went forward to receive communion, a male functionary motioned to the one woman journalist, Eva Fleischner, that she should stop. As she moved ahead, the man gestured violently, then physically prevented her from approaching the communion rail. On the next occasion when journalists were invited to the council Mass, "women were expressly excluded."²⁴ In what way, we will ask next, was another woman, Mary, included at Vatican II?

Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Economy of Salvation

Commentators on the council point out that all of its documents were honed through debate over different points of view, but that a few texts

were debated with particular intensity: the text on Mary was one of these.²⁵ At issue were a variety of Mariological themes put forward by different schools and thinkers. One was the question of a fundamental principle of Mariology, in which theologians sought for a single, unifying center from which everything significant about Mary could be deduced. Another was the question of whether Mary should be discussed in a "Christo-typical" or an "ecclesio-typical" focus. Yet another was whether emphasis should be on Mary's function or her privileges—function stressing her closeness to human beings, privilege stressing her closeness to God.²⁶ Because of the variety of technical themes, in addition to the diversity of popular piety with its various local expression, the impression was often given of fundamental disagreement throughout the debates. Nevertheless, after 16 drafts, the final text was finally produced and approved.

The first and central theme one notices is that Mary is placed within the wider framework of the whole economy of salvation. Where the concern had been expressed, especially from Latin America, that Marian devotion was tending to become isolated and detached from the central life of the church, in *Lumen Gentium* Mary is integrated into the whole of Catholic theology, in clear relationship both to Christ and to the church. The chapter boldly cites I Timothy 2:5-6: "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself, man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Immediately after the first citation, it adds:

The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. For all the saving influences of the Blessed Virgin on men originate, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. They flow forth from the super-abundance of the merits of Christ, rest on His mediation, depend entirely on it, and draw all their power from it. In no way do they impede the immediate union of the faithful with Christ. Rather, they foster this union.²⁷

This remarkable passage is strong in its assertion that Mary is not to be understood in isolation but rather in relation to God and to Christ. It follows a preface that relates Mary to the mystery of salvation and a long section in which Mary's role is described in biblical terms: in a

traditional interpretation of Old Testament prophecies, with a focus on Mary's active consent to God's saving initiative in Christ, "in subordination to Him and along with Him, by the grace of Almighty God she served the mystery of redemption."²⁸ Traces of Mary in the New Testament are cited in which she is described in her special position but always in relation to Jesus. And there is clear reaffirmation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.²⁹

What is significant about these opening sections of the chapter on Mary is the inclusion, in brief space, of all the controversial issues: Mary is subordinated to God and to Christ, yet she is elevated in the plan of salvation. She is described in biblical terms, yet in readings that include traditional especially patristic exegesis. She is clearly placed in relationship to the fundamental mystery of the church, and yet the church's later dogmas about her special character are reaffirmed. Compromise worked to produce "a balanced text," in the eyes of many Catholics, but an "uneasy juxtaposition of salvation history and dogma," according to one Protestant commentator.³⁰

There is important ecumenical significance in the diminishment of what were called "Marian excesses," by the document's sober restraint in placing Mary in auxiliary relationship to Jesus Christ. Thus might be allayed Protestant Christians' fears about Catholic tendencies to divinize Mary, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the statements of Pius IX, X, XI, and XII, and so to remove her from salvation in Christ alone. There is a minimum number of citations of papal pronouncements and an abundance of biblical and patristic references, especially from the Greek fathers, thus recognizing Eastern Christianity's ancient and continuing devotion to Mary as the Mother of God. Yet nothing truly Catholic is left out: the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are affirmed and devotion to Mary is encouraged.³¹

More than ecumenical concern, however, lay behind placing Mary in relationship to the centrality of Jesus Christ. The pastoral character of Vatican II meant that it was concerned to provide orientation for Catholics within the church. Placing Mary within the wider economy of salvation in Christ by affirming her redemption in Christ, Christ's unique work of salvation, and the direct union of Christians with Christ was meant to restore the harmony of Catholic devotional practice

within the church's liturgical and sacramental life. Where Marian devotions—the rosary, various novenas, for example—had come to be placed on a par with (or even as more important than) the Eucharist and the other sacraments, the intent and effect of the conciliar treatment were to place Mary and devotions to her in relation to Christ and the Eucharist.

Yet one today may question the effect of this move to subordinate Mary in relation to Christ, especially as she represents the figure of the woman in the church. Was the effect—intentional or not—also to diminish her importance in some absolute sense and so to diminish the importance of the female in the church? Was the intention—conscious or not—using Novak's words, to de-womanize the church? It is a complex issue, as we look back from the vantage point of the contemporary women's movement in the church and its impetus to restore the powerful and prophetic aspects of Mary in contemporary life. Before attempting to answer that difficult question, we should examine a second central theme in Second Vatican Council's treatment of Mary: the discussion of her as Mother of the Church. Was this a new title for Mary?

Mary, Mother of the Church and the Cult of the Virgin

The title *Mater Ecclesiae* is not in fact explicitly used in the chapter on Mary in *Lumen Gentium*, although it is implied in several passages. It is foreshadowed in the earlier section on scriptural evidences of Mary in the life of Jesus, especially the stories of Cana and Calvary in the gospel of John. The Calvary account vividly suggests her maternal relationship to the church:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. John 19:25), suffering grievously with her only begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth. Finally, the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross gave her as a mother to

his disciple. This he did when He said: "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19:26-27).³²

The inclusion of the chapter on Mary of course indicates at once that she is to be seen in reference to the mystery of the church. Mary is a type of the church itself and exercises a maternal role within the church. Typologically, she represents the perfection of the church as the model of faith, hope, and love—the perfect disciple, as theologians are saying today—and in her Assumption, a sign of the future fulfillment of the church.³³ Mary also exercises an active, maternal function within the church toward all its members. The *Constitution* links Mary's eternal predestination to be the Mother of God with her active faith at the Annunciation and her faith beneath the cross. "In an utterly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace."³⁴ What does this motherhood mean?

According to the text, it consists in "the influence Mary exercises on the attainment of the new life" to which Christians are called. This influence is twofold in character. On the one hand, her power is shown in her motherhood of Christ, both as a physical reality and as her reception of God's word (at the Annunciation) in faith. On the other hand, her motherhood continues "without interruption" until the end of history because she continues to win eternal salvation for us by her " manifold acts of intercession." This particularly active role of Mary is dependent on the overflowing abundance of Christ's salvation and receives all its power from his mediation. The council goes no further in describing this influence and intercession. What are we to make of this? At least this much: that in its most recent authoritative and ecumenical gathering, the church speaks of the "maternal charity" of Mary for the "brethren" (and, one may hope, the sisters) of Christ who "journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties until they are led to their happy fatherland." The sexist language of 20 years ago is disturbing today, but the amazing thing is Catholicism's affirmation that a woman, Mary, is an authentically religious figure on our spiritual horizon, and that the titles of Advocate (usually reserved to the Holy Spirit), Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix are reaffirmed, understood of course in relation to "the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator." The

more controversial title, *Coredemptrix*, is not used at all. An analogy is suggested about the relation of Mary to Christ in the way that the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful are related to the priesthood of Christ, which "does not exclude but rather gives rise among creatures to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this unique source."³⁵ Mary is to Christ as human priesthood (both ordained and lay) is to Christ's priesthood. Thus she is firmly placed on the human side of the divine/human relationship.

Like Mary, the church itself is understood as both virgin and mother, a powerful patristic theme. The council draws on the traditional Eve/Mary symbolism in several places to highlight Mary's active faith and obedience. Eve and Mary are contrasted in terms of disobedience and obedience, unbelief and faith, death and life: Mary is "the new Eve, who put her absolute trust not in the ancient serpent but in God's messenger." It is for this reason that Mary brought forth Christ as the first-born of many faithful: "In their birth and development she cooperates with a maternal love." The church, like Mary, is a mother in accepting God's word, bears children by its preaching and baptism, children who are "born of God." The church is also a virgin in fidelity to Christ; in the purity of its faith, hope, and love it becomes more like its exalted model in the search for holiness and apostolic mission.³⁶

This ecclesial framework is carried over in the way Christians approach Mary: "The council insists on the pre-eminence of the liturgical cult of Mary, which again accentuates her relationship to Christ and the Trinity . . . without interfering with traditional extra-liturgical devotions."³⁷ Mary's significance is her special relation to the mysteries of Christ: This is the source of ancient devotion to her as "God-bearer," the one to whom Christians have turned for protection. Thus she is the object of devotion, and such devotion should be encouraged in the church, though always with awareness of its distinction from the adoration that is due to Christ and to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Exaggeration and narrowmindedness, emotionalism and credulity are to be avoided, as well as anything that might be misinterpreted by non-Catholic Christians. Mary's cult is meant to lead to faith; through love for her as a mother we are to imitate her virtues.³⁸

Thus Mary's motherhood is related to the mystery of the church and devotion to her is to be integrated in liturgical and apostolic life. The

title *Mater Ecclesiae*, controversial because of ecumenical concerns, was eventually proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, in November, 1964, the same day that *Lumen Gentium* was promulgated. Mary is "mother of the church, of the whole Christian people, both of the faithful and of pastors." This declaration makes it clear that Mary's motherhood is of persons and not of the institutional elements of the church; it is a motherhood in the realm of personal grace.³⁹ Mary is the model of spiritual receptivity to God's grace, not of hierarchical power.⁴⁰

This spiritual focus is confirmed when the text describes her as summoning "the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice, and to love for the Father." The church is to seek after the glory of Christ and so to become like Mary, its model, in continual growth in faith, hope, and love, "searching out and doing the will of God in all things." Thus Mary is also the model of the church in its apostolic work: as she brought forth Christ, the church's work is the birth of Christ in the hearts of the faithful; her maternal love should animate all who participate in the mission of the church.⁴¹

Mary as Sign of Hope for the Pilgrim Church

The final brief section of the chapter on Mary recapitulates the theme already apparent in earlier parts, of her bodily and spiritual glory in heaven, not as removed from our lives but as continuing "in this present world as the image and first flowering of the church as she is to be perfected in the world to come." Emphasizing the unity of Mary's bodily and spiritual glory in heaven, the council affirms the central Christian idea of the resurrection of the body, the flesh as the sacrament of human spiritual life. In her Assumption, Mary is a sign of the church's final hope and a comfort to God's pilgrim people. Christians are urged to pray that Mary as "the Mother of God and of men" intercede with Christ, as she did at the beginnings of the church, "until all the peoples of the human family," whether Christians or not, "are happily gathered into the one People of God for the glory of the Most Holy . . . Trinity."⁴²

In this short section, the major themes of the whole document on the church are drawn together—the church as the people of God on pil-

grimage in the solidarity of the whole human community, the final goal of the human journey in the life of the triune God. And "by anticipation Mary stands out alone as the perfect church, the perfected community of the faithful."⁴³ In a century that has experienced terrible wars, massive destruction of human life and of centers of civilization (one thinks of the Jewish Holocaust, the fire-bombing of Dresden, the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and our current situation of nuclear threat), there is affirmation of the final dignity and exaltation of the human body. In a time in which a widespread philosophy emerged of the meaninglessness and absurdity of life, of human existence as a being-toward-death in final nothingness, the Catholic Church affirmed that in a *woman*, the Mother of God, ultimate meaning for the whole of the human, matter and spirit, is already realized.

Finally, the council expresses joy and comfort in the devotion to Mary as virgin and mother of Eastern Christians, of some separated Christians, and implores her intercession "in the fellowship of all the saints," "until all the people of the human family," whether Christian or not, are "gathered together in peace and harmony into the one People of God" for God's glory.⁴⁴ Mary is thus seen as a symbol of a human community united in peace and harmony. A woman is the sign of a human-kind fully transformed.

Reflections on the Significance of Vatican II and Mary

The major import of the chapter on Mary in the *Constitution on the Church* can be seen in its effects both outside and inside the Catholic Church. Outside, the brief and restrained document served to allay Protestant fears about the Marian excesses of Catholics. The text placed Mary in a biblical and traditional context as a special figure, but one who was clearly on the human side of the divine/human relationship. Her special or privileged character lies in her significance not only as mother of God but as mother of the church. As such she is clearly human, not divine. She is herself redeemed by Christ and her maternal role in our lives is entirely dependent on Christ, relative to his work of redemption. Though Mary is special in God's plan of salvation, it is her faith, hope, and love that warrant her unique place in the devotional life

of the church. That devotion is fostered and encouraged, but always in relationship to worship directed toward *God*: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Marian text, placed in the context of the church document and other major texts on revelation and the liturgy, made it clear that Mary was not a rival to Christ or his equal in the economy of salvation. At the same time, the traditional veneration of Mary in Eastern Christianity is reaffirmed in the use of patristic themes—the mother of God, for example—and the sparing use of citations from papal pronouncements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Inside the church, however, the result was a diminishment of Marian devotion and spirituality. Not simply the brief chapter on Mary, but also the other major themes of the council served to focus attention elsewhere: on biblical and liturgical renewal, on the church as the whole people of God, and on the enormous social questions of the church in relation to the contemporary world. Gradually—or was it overnight?—Mary seemed to disappear from public Catholic consciousness. Rosaries and novenas dropped out of sight in the emphasis on the new vernacular liturgy that inspired a biblically oriented community worship and celebrated salvation in Christ in a trinitarian and eucharistic framework. The recovery of the Bible for Catholics after Vatican II was a momentous event that, not without some pain, loss, and nostalgia, reoriented and integrated the church's liturgical and spiritual life. And in the Bible, Mary plays a rather minor role. The chapter of the church document on Mary uses biblical material, but in the "uneasy juxtaposition of salvation history and dogma" alluded to earlier, and with an interweaving of the patristic Eve/Mary symbolism that stresses Mary's perfection in contrast to Eve's sin. We might examine the use of scriptural material, and the Eve/Mary symbolism, in order to form a critical appraisal of the text from the perspective of 20 years.

Recent biblical scholarship on Mary is quite tempered in comparison with some past theological treatment of her. In Mark's gospel she is described in very human terms as, at one point, standing outside the group of Jesus' followers: "she did not follow Jesus about as a disciple during the ministry."⁴⁵ Luke softens this negative picture by affirming that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary "shared the faith in Jesus of the earliest Christian community" (Acts 1:14) and he reads back her later faith to the time of Jesus' conception. "Her faith does not

include clear understanding of all these events, yet . . . she seeks to penetrate their meaning."⁴⁶ Luke and Matthew both affirm the virginal conception of Jesus and Luke portrays Mary, in the Magnificat, as one favored by God, blessed because of what God has done to her and because of her faith. Luke does not exalt her as daughter of Zion or the Ark of the Covenant but "as the spokeswoman . . . of the *Anawim*, the poor of Israel, with all the connotations of humble obedience to God . . . implied thereby."⁴⁷ John's gospel, a major source for the Vatican II text, contrasts Mary's imperfect faith at Cana with the Calvary scene where she becomes "a model of belief and discipleship." Thus the synoptic gospels suggest a pattern of human growth from doubt to faith while John's symbolic treatment of Mary provides an opening for the "process of further Marian symbolizing within the church."⁴⁸

In comparison with the New Testament evidence about the historical Mary in Scripture, it is apparent that the Mary chapter of the *Constitution on the Church*, for all its softening of Marian excesses and its ecumenical sensitivity, still tends to romanticize and idealize her. It presents a totally positive, somewhat ethereal view of the woman who, in the gospels, is fully human in the growth of her faith—a growth from doubt to belief—as she pondered the meaning of the events surrounding Jesus' birth, ministry, death and resurrection. The chapter introduces dogmatic themes of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption into the biblical material in a way that conflates scriptural testimony and later, nineteenth- and twentieth-century dogmatic development. The human, historical character of Mary's life tends to disappear in the symbols of her perfection.

Yet in placing the fundamental meaning of Mary within the context of the church, in stressing her faith and her redemption in Christ, the council did not stray far from the biblical picture. Pope Paul VI's declaration of Mary as "Mother of the Church," picking up the main conciliar theme, chose an apt symbol in relation to the biblical material. If the immediate effect of the council was a diminishment of Marian devotions and sentimental tendencies, its long-term result allowed for a more balanced retrieval of Mary in contemporary interpretations. For Mary remains a powerful symbol in the Catholic tradition. Centuries of reflection and prayer are bound into her many local, regional, and universal characterizations. The Second Vatican Council's treatment

allows for contemporary interpretations that are biblically based, in faithful dialogue with tradition, and theologically sound.

With regard to the Eve/Mary contrast that is interwoven in the text, it is not biblical scholarship but recent feminist criticism that comes to the fore. We have seen some of the effects of the Eve/Mary symbol in the interpretations of Mary with which we began. An expert on Marian theology, Donal Flanagan, summarizes the issue:

The Eve/Mary comparison is one of the basic themes of the Marian tradition. This has had a double impact. It singled out Mary as the new Woman, the one in whom man could see perfect womanhood embodied. A price had to be paid for this singling out and the price was the identifying of all other women with the first Eve as fickle, unreliable, morally inferior beings in their natural condition. This dichotomization . . . the process by which the male divides woman by projecting two separate and contradictory symbols of her, did not begin with Christianity. Rather, the Christian Marian tradition in due time produced its own dichotomization in Eve/Mary terms. This allowed the Christian male to project all his respect, honour, love onto one ideal, other-worldly woman, Mary, and thereby to salve his conscience for the actual subjection and low estate he allowed to real women in his patriarchal male-dominated world. We can see here a certain deep and negative element in the Marian tradition. The exalted place accorded to Mary here is accorded in some degree at the expense of woman-kind. To say that Christianity exalted woman in Mary is true, but it is only telling half the story.⁴⁹

The other half of the story is that history of degradation and oppression to which Mary Gordon referred and in light of which she called for our forgiving vigilance. The Eve/Mary symbolism is adapted from and easily parried with the Adam/Christ symbol of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (5:12-21). But the male pair has seldom been used in the church with such negative effect. Adam has been seen rather as the symbol of human solidarity, a sign of the universality of Christ's redemption. As all have sinned in Adam, all are redeemed in Christ. The Eve/Mary symbol, by contrast, according to recent patristic schol-

arship, served to identify all real women with Eve while upholding in Mary an impossible ideal (virgin and mother, both terms linked with women's sexuality), an ideal no real woman can fully emulate. As Flanagan suggests, this traditional symbol is the creation of male theologians who have projected both their negative and idealized images of woman onto these symbolic figures.

This symbolism is used in the Vatican II text with precisely the double effect pointed out by both female and male critics. It is used to express Mary's active faith and obedience; she "was used by God not merely in a passive way, but as cooperating in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience," the council states. Then, quoting Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and Jerome from among the Fathers, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience. What the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, Mary loosened by her faith." Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her 'the mother of the living,' and still more often they say: 'Death through Eve, life through Mary.'"⁵⁰ On one hand, the text stresses the human activity or agency of Mary—an important aspect for our understanding her as fully human, not merely a passive instrument—and on the other, the disobedience and unbelief of all ordinary women in Eve.

Nevertheless, by placing Mary on the human side of the divine/human relationship in the context of the whole document, she is implicitly placed *with* Eve and with all of us as human, as active recipients of God's redemption in Christ. If recent biblical scholarship has shown the originally imperfect, and gradually growing, faith of Mary—her true humanness—feminist perspectives claim Eve as well as Mary in the solidarity of all human women. There is no need to stigmatize one figure in order to idealize the other. The harmfulness of such dualist thinking—traditional in the Eve/Mary contrast—has been amply shown by feminist thought. It generates a whole series of dichotomies, placing God against or in competition with human beings and the world, humans against and exploitive of the earth, Christ against the church as male over female, husband over wife, spirit over flesh, clergy or religious over laity, etc. If the solidarity of Eve and Mary is affirmed by contemporary women, it is as part of another series of non-competitive, nondominating modes of relationship projected by feminist theological vision. One does not need to denigrate any part of the

human or the earth in order to idealize the other. While women today seek to overcome the images of female inferiority of the past Christian tradition, they are just as concerned to deny any romantic idealization—the pedestal image—in the search for genuine equality and mutuality, a new vision of the integrally human.

It is a misunderstanding on the part of Catholics to believe that the Second Vatican Council and the declaration of Mary as the Mother of the Church meant to diminish the place of Mary in the theological and devotional life of the church. This error was made especially clear by the papal document *Marialis Cultus*, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1974. This text tries to move beyond the submissive, dependent, passive model of Mary entailed in the domestic or conventual portrayal of the recent popes up to Pius XII. It explicitly refers to the changed circumstances of contemporary women in home, politics, employment, social, and cultural contexts. It suggests that the model of Mary as the perfect disciple—one who hears the word of God and acts on it—provides a more biblically based and attractive portrait for today. She is a woman of active and responsible choice. Mary's virginity is as purposeful as her motherhood: availability for God's purpose as it was gradually revealed in the context of her life. Nevertheless one wonders, as Flanagan puts it, if it is enough for the church simply to "preach decisiveness where submissiveness reigned" without explicitly examining the oft-repeated piety that the church's traditional devotion to Mary has always meant honor for women. The Eve/Mary contrast is one illustration among many that this was not the case.⁵¹ There remains such inequality in the church's view of women, much of it rooted in ancient symbolisms which associate women with evil, pollution, sexuality—Eve as the seductive temptress.

Even the contemporary model of Mary as the perfect disciple, whose responsive and active faith is the central significance of both her virginity and her motherhood, can be put in terms that remove her from the experience of ordinary women.⁵² The language of perfection, whether applied to the church as the "perfect society" in an older ecclesiology or to the humanity and knowledge of Jesus in an older Christology, is problematic today. The older model of the church as the perfect society has been replaced by contemporary interpretations of the pilgrim church, even a church of sinners, a sinful church that must struggle to

respond to God's word in the obscurity and complexity of its ever-changing circumstances.⁵³ Similarly, the question of Jesus' knowledge has undergone reinterpretation because the idea of perfection which it entails is quite foreign to contemporary Christians, formed as we are by notions of evolution and development. The doctrine of the true humanity of Jesus, according to recent theology, suggests that Jesus' human knowledge was like ours: a gradual coming to awareness of who he was and what his mission demanded, including the possibility of spiritual struggle in a truly human response to God.⁵⁴ Likewise, it might be suggested that we need not strain to argue for the perfection of Mary's faith and discipleship from the beginning of her life; rather we can see her as our model in a faith and discipleship that grow and and develop through spiritual struggle in changing circumstance. She is not the superhuman being created by the exaggerations of past, idealizing Mariologies, but the woman of faith who walked in the obscurity and mystery of life much as we do.⁵⁵

In this way she is the mother of the church, an exemplar of human faith, hope, and love, whose full discipleship came to fruition through her own history of trial and suffering, as she faced agonizing difficulties, even as she endured a dark night of faith in the cross of Jesus, her son. Only through her fidelity is she made a sign of our human destiny in the glory of Jesus' resurrection.⁵⁶ Contemporary political and liberation theologians argue that Jesus' death was a consequence of his faith, his style of life, his ministry and message; his resurrection was won as a consequence of the pattern of his life and death. A similar pattern can be discerned in Mary's life and in the life of the church for whom she is a model of humankind in service of the kingdom. The Second Vatican Council together with Paul VI's further statements point to her as an exemplar of discipleship, of Christian commitment, and as a sign of our destiny as participation in Jesus' resurrection. Today, Christology and ecclesiology "from above," from God's point of view, are rightfully being balanced by focus on the human Jesus and the human church, "from below" in the tangle of human history. So too Mary, mother of Jesus and mother of the church, is seen in her humanness as our sister in faith. She is fully human woman in her receptivity and her agency—demystified, restored to our human history as a sign of an integral and transformed humankind.

Thus she continues to exert her power over the Catholic imagination, especially for women but also for men in new interpretations that emphasize her as the one in whom God does great things, in her identification with the poor of Israel, with the Eves of this world, and with the church's responsive and liberating tasks in this world. Virgin and mother need not be an inimitable ideal, an impossible double bind, but a universal sign of autonomy *and* relationship, strength *and* tenderness, struggle *and* victory, God's power *and* human agency—not in competition but cooperation. She *is* a utopian figure, a mystery, but one who enables us to imagine a healed, reconciled, finally transformed humankind. While it is God who works our salvation in Christ and the Spirit who inspires our active response, it is Mary, a fully human woman, who is the sign of its final completion.

The theology of Mary and her image in the church may ultimately tell us more about the church than about Mary. The theology of Mary may present us with the way the church understands itself and individual Christians, a view always colored by culture and, in this case, by cultural and religious ideas about women. If this is so, then the treatment of Mary in the Second Vatican Council, its focus on her as mother of the church and model of Christian life, witness an important transition in ecclesial self-understanding. It is a transition from an idealized, divinized, absolute model of static perfection—the church as a perfect society that has all truth in advance—to a dynamic image of the earthly, human struggle from unbelief to faith in the ambiguities of history—a pilgrim people in solidarity on their journey toward final transformation in God.

Our historical sketch of the conciliar debate on the chapter on Mary has shown the focus of controversy as a choice between emphasis on Mary's unique privileges, her differences from us, her transcendence or emphasis on her humanness, her likeness to us, her closeness to the church in pilgrimage. The choice to emphasize her as model of the church, her human character as both an historical person of faith and symbol of the church's human journey was and is immensely significant for the church's image of itself. The transition is surely not complete, but an important turn was taken in orientation for a church inclined toward triumphalism, toward claims of perfection here and now.

The issue is important in another way because Mary is also Catholic-

ism's central image of woman. As the church tended toward an unreal idealization of Mary, it tended toward denigration of all other women as Eve and toward the subordination of real women in the church. Thus the ambivalent reaction of thoughtful women today toward the symbol of Mary. Is she a model of subservience, passivity, dependence? Or is she a symbol of prophetic, liberating agency and autonomy in relation to God and God's realm on earth?

Novak's analysis of the political significance of the conciliar debate in 1963 is a fairly accurate reading of the situation of women and the symbolic status of women in the church at the time. Women did represent the private sphere and its concerns and did symbolize religion as private, personal devotion, removed from the historical and political struggles of society. Recent biblical and theological scholarship had demonstrated the historical, public, and political significance of Christianity, and thus Novak argued against a womanization of the church in relation to the world, that is, against the church's inward concentration on privatized religion. In so doing, he also witnessed to the cultural and religious appraisal of women—as inferior, backward, privatized. And thus we can see the important small turn registered in the Mary chapter's inclusion in the *Constitution on the Church*, and the major transition of the later *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*) to a church facing outward toward the world and its struggles. What Novak missed at the time—or only momentarily glimpsed as he reported the contradiction in barring women journalists from the conciliar masses—was the potentially explosive, indeed subversive, significance of women, popular religion and the lower classes in the church.

The women's movement, in both society and the church, was just beginning to gain momentum in the early 1960s. (The year 1963 saw the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, as well as the conciliar debate on Mary.) Just emerging, too, were other religiously oriented movements for liberation, especially in Latin America, but also in Europe, reflected in the writings of liberation and political theologians with their critiques of Christianity's traditional other-worldliness and their affirmation of popular movements in the "Church-from-below." When both impulses—movements of peoples toward economic, political, and cultural liberation and movements of women

toward their own cultural and religious liberation—were joined, a powerful new social force was generated. And within the process, the Mary symbol was shown to have important new potential for the liberation of peoples and for the liberation of women.

Beyond a few statements in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council failed to deal with the question of women. But it did represent an important transition, by no means yet complete, toward acknowledgement of women in the church in its decision to cast Mary as the central symbol of the human church on its way toward redemption and transformation. For the ambiguities of history and the human struggle of God's lowly ones are aptly joined in the figure of the woman of faith. In ways the council fathers could not foresee, she is being reclaimed by women as a symbol of prophetic possibility for themselves and for the church as a whole. Yes, certain forms of devotion to Mary have diminished—although the rosary has not disappeared as a form of contemplative prayer. Yes, there is a continued ambivalence on the part of Catholics, especially women, toward Marian devotion. There must be, given the passivity, submission, and romantic idealization with which Mary has been endowed. But there is also a restorative side to contemporary interpretations of Mary which show the ancient image as newly provocative in its possibilities for women and for the church today. The Second Vatican Council's depiction of Mary as truly human in her faith, at the heart of the human church, model of the church's final goal and transformation, is open to surprising interpretations today, as Mary is seen in new ways as Seat of Wisdom, Queen of Peace, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mirror of Justice, Comforter of the Afflicted, symbol of our final freedom in God in her Immaculate Conception and Assumption, as Mother of the Church. Mary is being reclaimed today, especially by women, as a critical symbol in a world where patriarchal models of domination, global warfare, militarism, and hostility are challenged by Christian feminism's personal and political vision of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, autonomy in relationship—a love active in the struggles of history. As we interpret the meaning of Mary for our times, in the always new appropriation that is our response to God's living revelation, we participate in the reality to which her symbol points, and we newly discover our relation to her in the mystery of the church.

Footnotes

- 1 *Chicago Sun Times* (January 25, 1982)
- 2 Mary Gordon, "Coming to Terms with Mary," *Commonweal* (January 25, 1982), p. 11
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12; Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed.) Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 150-183, 179
- 5 Gordon, *ibid.*, p. 12
- 6 Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), pp. 333-339
- 7 Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918), pp. 388-389, cited in Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 91
- 8 Daly, *ibid.*, pp. 91, 82-85
- 9 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary—The Feminine Face of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), p. 86
- 10 Andrew M. Greeley, *The Mary Myth: On the Femininity of God* (New York: Seabury, 1977)
- 11 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Spirituality, Christian Identity, and Catholic Vision," *Womanspirit Rising* (eds.) Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 136-148
- 12 Karl Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," *Theological Investigations IV* (tr.) Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 221-252; Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, (ed.) Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 53-67
- 13 See Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), section 2 of Part II, pp. 235-344 and Supplement II, pp. 491-498; cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), pp. 9-12, 39-95
- 14 Paul Ricoeur, *Friend and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 3-56, 494-551; *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), pp. 9-12, 39-95
- 15 Rt. Rev. Jorge Medina Estevez, "The Blessed Virgin," *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, (ed.) John H. Miller (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 303-305. Msgr. Estevez was substituting at the Notre Dame conference for Msgr. Gerard Phillips, one of the principal authors of the chapter on Mary in *Lumen Gentium*
- 16 Albert C. Outler, "A Response," *The Documents of Vatican II* (ed.) Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (tr. ed.) Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher (New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966), p. 103
- 17 Estevez, p. 302
- 18 Michael Novak, *The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 172
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 176

- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 181
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 184
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 201
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 182
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203
- 25 Estevez, *ibid.*, p. 303; others were chapter three of *Lumen Gentium* (on the hierarchy and collegiality), the *Declarations on Religious Liberty and on Non-Christian Religions*, and the first phase of discussion on the *Constitution on Revelation*
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 302; cf. also Patrick J. Bearerley, "Mary, the Perfect Disciple," *Theological Studies*, 41:3 (September, 1980), 461-504, 461-463
- 27 "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," *The Documents of Vatican II*, #60, pp. 90-91
- 28 *Ibid.*, #56, p. 88
- 29 *Ibid.*, #57, #58, #59, pp. 89-90
- 30 Estevez, p. 306; George Lindbeck, "A Protestant Point of View," *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, p. 222
- 31 "Constitution on the Church," #56, #59
- 32 *Ibid.*, #58
- 33 *Ibid.*, #55, #58, #65
- 34 *Ibid.*, #61
- 35 *Ibid.*, #62. For an analysis of the recent history, issues, and formation of the texts dealing with the questions of Mary's function, see Michael O'Carroll, "Vatican II and Our Lady's Mediation," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 37 (1970), pp. 24-55
- 36 *Ibid.*, #56, #63, #364
- 37 Estevez, p. 309
- 38 "Constitution on the Church," #66, #67
- 39 Estevez, p. 310
- 40 Henri de Lubac, S.J., "*Lumen Gentium* and the Fathers," *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, p. 166
- 41 "Constitution on the Church," #65
- 42 *Ibid.*, #68
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Mary in the New Testament* (eds.) Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 284, 286
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 285
- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 285-286
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 287-289
- 49 Donal Flanagan, *The Theology of Mary* (Hales Corners, WI: Clergy Book Service, 1976), p. 97
- 50 "Constitution on the Church," #56
- 51 Flanagan, *ibid.*, pp. 89-97
- 52 Cf. Patrick J. Bearerley, "Mary, the Perfect Disciple" (note 26, above), presents an excellent analysis of the theme in relation to the NT evidence, but finds it necessary to deny any growth, development, or historical change in Mary's perfection.
- 53 Cf. e.g. Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 33 ff; Karl Rahner, "The Church of Sinners" and "The Sinful Church in the Decrees of Vatican II," *Theological Investigations VI*, tr. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), pp. 253-269, 270-294

54 Cf. Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ," *Theological Investigations* V, tr. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), pp. 193-215

55 Richard Kugelmann, "Presenting Mary to Today's Catholics," *Marian Studies* 22 (Dayton: Mariological Society of America, 1971), p. 53

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 52

MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM, REFLECTION OF THE FEMININITY OF GOD

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Searching for the origins and meaning of the mystifying title of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, is a challenging task. Neither the theme of wisdom nor the association of Mary with wisdom has been popular in theological, devotional, or historical works in the Roman Church. One medieval artistic representation of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, commands a Golden Portal to the Cathedral of Chartres¹ and holds special significance for our present consideration of Mary's role in the intellectual life of the church. This image of Mary is surrounded by seven feminine figures representing the liberal arts and by seven other figures representing the most learned men of ancient times.

In our own times writings on Mary, particularly the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, *Marianis Cultis*,² encourage the study of cultures contemporary to primitive Christianity, along with the art and devotional works of the early Christians. These studies indicate that, even though the Wisdom literature presents convincing evidence, Christianity has consistently rejected the concept of wisdom as the femininity of God, despite some few sound theological writings that supported it, and in so doing have limited Mary's significance for the People of God. In the early '60s, Louis Bouyer wrote a beautiful treatise on wisdom entitled *Mary, Seat of Wisdom*,³ but the feminine identification of wisdom in the Old Testament was as problematic to him as it seems to have been to most scripture scholars. Henri de Lubac, recently made a cardinal of the church, commented on this in *The Eternal Feminine*:

Perhaps the weakness of most of the current Catholic