

THE USE OF MARIAN IMAGERY IN CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY SINCE
VATICAN II

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by

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Abstract

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The Second Vatican Council linked mariology and ecclesiology in its promulgation of *Lumen gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. While it was clear from the time of the council that mariology would be tied to ecclesiology, the reverse is less obvious and has not been examined systematically. This dissertation asserts that there is a mariological element to some contemporary Catholic ecclesiologies, an element that has been poorly understood. Through an analysis of the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Elizabeth Johnson, and U. S. Latino/a theologians, this study examines the mariological and ecclesiological contributions of these thinkers, whether these contributions dovetail with the goals of the Second Vatican Council, and what they say about the struggle for identification in the Catholic Church today.

After examining the debate surrounding the mariological schema at Vatican II, this dissertation analyzes the aesthetic mariological ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. By making Mary the cornerstone of his reflection on the Church, specifically the Church's "marian character," Balthasar ties his mariological ecclesiology to his

theological anthropology. This is among the first significant attempts to link mariology and ecclesiology in the wake of Vatican II. However, Balthasar's problematic anthropological assumptions call for critique, and do not fully engage the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council.

The next approach studied is the critical feminist approach of Elizabeth Johnson. Her desire to return Mary to her proper place within the communion of saints, a symbol Johnson uses to describe the Church, forges a new direction in the link between mariology and ecclesiology. Johnson's vision of a historical communion of equal disciples living out holiness in ordinary ways both broadens the idea of holiness in the Church and returns Mary to a human status ignored in the excesses of marian maximalism.

The last approach is that of U. S. Latino/a theologians, in particular their reflections on Mexican-American devotion to Guadalupe. While this study does not confront the questions of historicity surrounding this apparition, it contends that the reflections on Guadalupan devotion constitute an incipient ecclesiology, one that holds promise for the self-identification of the American Church.

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INTRODUCTION

On October 29, 1963, after a long and bitter debate, bishops at the Second Vatican Council voted by the slimmest majority—a mere 40 votes—to include the proposed schema on Mary in the planned conciliar document on the Church. Rather than produce a separate document outlining Mary’s place in the devotional and liturgical lives of Catholics or even pronounce a new marian dogma as 300 bishops had suggested in the year before the Council, the bishops at Vatican II deliberately decided to refocus the Church’s attention on Mary through the lens of ecclesiology by including her in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*.

Feminist theologian Anne Carr claims that Vatican II marked a change in thinking about both Mary and the Church.¹ It moved away from static, idealized notions of perfection (the Church as perfect society, Mary as the perfect woman) and toward a more realistic articulation of the struggle to follow the Gospel amid the ambiguity of history (the Church as the pilgrim People of God, Mary as the preeminent disciple). Thus, Mary serves as an interesting test case in the study of the general tendency of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Though some may differ with Carr’s reading of the Council,

¹ Anne Carr, “Mary in the Mystery of the Church,” in *Mary According to Women*, ed. Carol Frances Jegen (Kansas City: Leaven Press, 1985), 25.

she clearly discerns something about a tie between the use of marian imagery and the Council's image of the church as People of God.

While it is clear from the Council's inclusion of Mary in *Lumen gentium* that mariology after the Council would be tied to ecclesiology, the reverse is less obvious. Indeed, a number of ecclesiologists fail to treat Mary in a sustained or systematic way. Thus the reception of mariology into ecclesiology has been rather sporadic.

Many major figures have made the connection between mariology and ecclesiology that came into focus at Vatican II, but the secondary research that has concentrated on the function of Mary in ecclesiology has been rather sparse. Initially, commentaries on the documents of Vatican II served as a way to begin mapping the impact of texts like the eighth chapter of *Lumen gentium*.² In addition, theologians at the Council published works on Mary and mariology.³ The years following the Council saw the emergence of various approaches to this topic, including those scholars who take a more dogmatic or devotional tack,⁴ those who propose ecclesiologies in which Mary figures prominently,⁵ and those scholars, particularly feminist and other liberationist

² See Otto Semmelroth's "Chapter VIII" in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 285-296. A more succinct commentary, focusing on the new direction in mariology and its impact on ecumenism, was written by Cardinal Bea, "Mariology and Ecumenism" in *Commentaries by Cardinal Bea*, (Peekskill, NY: Graymoor Press, 1962), 51-63.

³ See Leon-Jozef Suenens, Otto Semmelroth, Paul VI, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, among others.

⁴ Contemporary scholars of mariology include Rene Laurentin, Leonardo Boff, George Tavard, among others. Leonardo Boff has written extensively on Mary, as have other Latin American and U.S. Latino theologians including Virgilio Elizondo, Timothy Matovina, Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, among others. Elizabeth Johnson most recently completed a book on Mary entitled, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Crossroad, 2003).

⁵ The ecclesiology of Hans-Urs von Balthasar features Mary and Peter in important symbolic-aesthetic roles. See his *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, trans. Andr  e Emery, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986). A recent commentary on Balthasar's use of Mary is Brendan Leahy's *The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2002).

scholars, who wish to reexamine Mary's role in Catholic theology in light of new hermeneutical strategies including analyses of gender and difference.⁶ Furthermore, there exist many works by Protestant and Orthodox authors on Mary, which were also fomented by the ecumenical movement that grew vigorously after Vatican II. Indeed, most of the work that has been done on the intersection between mariology and ecclesiology has been approached from the ecumenical angle and with an eye toward ecumenical goals.⁷ However, because this dissertation will focus on marian imagery in Catholic ecclesiology, and the impact of gender and cultural analyses done by various Catholic theologians on that imagery, these ecumenical efforts will figure less prominently.

Research focusing on Mary's function in ecclesiology has appeared periodically since Vatican II, at times included in collections published on the anniversaries of the Council's beginning or end. Anne Carr's 1985 article on Mary in ecclesiology is a rather thorough examination of the role of Mary in the Church and at the Council through feminist eyes.⁸ Stefano De Fiores also published a comprehensive look at Mary since Vatican II in the first of three volumes edited by Rene Latourelle entitled *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*.⁹ In it, he attempts to synthesize the Church's reaction to

⁶ See especially Rosemary Radford Ruether's work on this, along with Mary Daly, Marina Warner, Kari Børensen, Catharina Halkes, Elaine Storkey, Sarah Coakley, and, most recently, Elizabeth Johnson.

⁷ See William McLoughlin and Jill Pinnock, eds., *Mary is for Everyone* (Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 1997), Alberic Stacpoole, ed., *Mary and the Churches*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1987), H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford and Joseph A. Burgess, eds., *The One Mediator, The Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1992).

⁸ See Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church."

⁹ Stefano De Fiores, "Mary in Postconciliar Theology," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. Rene Latourelle (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 469-539.

the inclusion of Mary in *Lumen gentium* immediately after the Council. De Fiores contends that the ten years following the Council (through 1974) amounted to a “crisis in mariology,”¹⁰ a period in which most scholars were still struggling to take account of the Council’s understanding of the relationship between Mary, Christ, and the Church. In order to grasp how postconciliar mariology overcame this crisis, De Fiores identifies three paths, or streams of thought, in postconciliar mariology: the paths of renewal,¹¹ of recovery,¹² and of cultural encounter.¹³ Although his work is not located at the intersection of mariology and ecclesiology, his categories remain quite helpful if one hopes to account for the different paths in mariological reflection since 1965.

What previous research on the intersection between mariology and ecclesiology lacks is a consideration of the ecclesiological impact of the mariological reflections it examines and the ecclesiological presuppositions that undergird these reflections. This dissertation will survey the ways this marian imagery functions in the work of prominent theologians both immediately after Vatican II and today. Aspects of their ecclesiologies, implicit at times, can be made explicit, and in some cases fleshed out, by what they

¹⁰ De Fiores, 474.

¹¹ Ibid., 477. De Fiores identifies the stream of renewal with the Council itself; it was inaugurated by the bishops’ treatment of Mary at Vatican II. Within this stream he includes the “metadogmatic” approach of Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng, as well as Christocentric mariologies found in Karl Rahner, Jon Sobrino, and Orthodox theologians like Vladimir Lossky and Nikos Nissiotis. Also included here are ecumenical approaches to mariology favored by Jürgen Moltmann and Henry Chavannes.

¹² This second path for postconciliar mariology, which De Fiores calls the “complementary” path of recovery, includes those scholars who perceive a pneumatological vacuum in mariology after Vatican II (H. Mühlen) and those who stress the lack of attention to popular piety (H. Cox and various sociologists). The term “complementary,” used by De Fiores is not meant to denote the theories of gender complementarity utilized by H.U. von Balthasar and others.

¹³ De Fiores’ third path, that of cultural encounter, is the most disparate and the most interesting. In this stream, he locates the theological-aesthetic approach of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the inculturated approach of Latin American and U.S. Latino Mariologies, and the complex relationship of Mary and feminism.

emphasize in their mariological reflections. The intersection between mariology and ecclesiology that was endorsed at the Second Vatican Council serves as a basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each in light of various criteria, including ecclesiological criteria gleaned from the Council and its commentators, as well as those of feminist and liberation scholars.

De Fiores' categories serve as an important starting point for this dissertation, but rather than characterize the mariological/ecclesiological approaches by their relationship to the Council and the period following it, my analysis will focus on authors whose attempts at coming to grips with Mary are significant in light of the situation of the Catholic Church in the United States. What began with Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* has spilled over into the reflections of theologians and theological schools for which Mary is a central locus, and it is this author's contention that mariological reflection reveals much about the struggle for self-identification in the contemporary Catholic Church in the United States. Moreover, because these mariological reflections have ecclesiological impact, they can serve as a place of encounter and dialogue, where the interpretation and the implementation of the Second Vatican Council can continue in creative ways into the twenty-first century.

This dissertation contends that there is an ecclesiological dimension to mariology that has too often been neglected by theologians, or in some cases, poorly or inadequately understood. Furthermore, a proper understanding of the relationship between mariology and ecclesiology can provide the basis not only for a better understanding of both entities, but also of the Church's ongoing struggle for self-identification in the Catholic world at large and particularly in the Church in the United States, including its large Latino

component. While the main task of this dissertation is an analytical one, the conclusion will also point to some constructive ways forward in the relationship between mariology and ecclesiology. It will analyze how several theological schools or “streams” construct their mariological reflections, revealing both the ecclesiological presuppositions and the ecclesiological impact of these reflections in an effort to account for how Mary is currently functioning, and how she could function, in Catholic notions of Church.

The dissertation will be organized according to the schools of ecclesiological thought being treated. After an analysis of the debates about the marian schema during Vatican II (Chapter 1), the first approach that will be covered is the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar, where Mary figures prominently in the ecclesiological “constellation” (Chapter 2). Chapter Three examines Elizabeth Johnson’s feminist reflections on Mary. Lastly, Chapter Four considers figures that concentrate on the inculturated marian reflections of the U.S. Latino context, especially Virgilio Elizondo, Orlando Espín and Roberto Goizueta.

Chapter One begins with the history of the marian schema at Vatican II, emphasizing how one of the hardest fought battles during the Council was waged. The goal of the chapter is to sketch how the conflicts over Mary’s place at the Council mirror, to many commentators, the conflicts over the ecclesiology the Council would adopt. The chapter will include a close reading of Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* and Paul VI’s 1974 apostolic exhortation on marian devotion, *Marialis Cultus*. The guidelines for marian devotion set out by Paul VI in this encyclical—that it be based in biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological studies—will reappear at the end of the dissertation and

serve as some criteria by which the general strengths and weaknesses of the mariological reflections can be judged.

The second chapter, entitled “A Feminine Ecclesiology: Mary as Archetype of the Church” analyzes the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar on Mary and ecclesiology. This stream represents one of the first attempts after the Council to focus on Mary’s difference—in this case her gender—as the basis of an ecclesiological construct. His analysis of Mary’s role in ecclesiology does something the bishops at Vatican II did not, a form of gender analysis where Mary’s femininity serves as the cornerstone of her function in his ecclesiology. By focusing on Mary’s womanhood, her femininity becomes the symbol of the Church as it stands before God: obedient, receptive and open. Mary’s role as an exemplar of the faith is tied intimately in particular to her motherhood of Jesus and, symbolically, of all the faithful. Thus she serves as a model for the whole People of God vis-à-vis the Trinitarian God. Mary, the perfect woman and perfect example of faith is obedient to God’s will, receptive to God’s initiative, and open to God’s plan for her life.

Critics of this ecclesial understanding note the problematic anthropological assumptions that ground it. Moreover, the question of the enduring receptivity (which some interpret as passivity) of Mary vis-à-vis God, when extrapolated onto the contemporary ecclesial situation, seems to contradict the basic equality of the People of God regardless of gender, especially given the hierarchical organization of the Church, and its all-male citizenry. Perhaps the biggest question critics pose to this view is the validity of the rigid gender constructs that ground the ecclesiology elaborated by von Balthasar and those who are influenced by him.

The third chapter turns its attention to the positions of various Catholic feminist theologians, their ambiguity toward mariological reflection on the whole, and their attempts at articulating an image of Mary that is liberative for women and attentive to diversity. This section will focus on the most recent feminist theologian to publish on Mary, Elizabeth Johnson. It will include an analysis of her critics, especially those who criticize her anthropological assumptions, like Nancy Dallavalle and Mary Aquin O'Neill, which will point to the diversity of viewpoints within feminism, while underscoring new and creative ways in which feminist theologians couch their mariological reflections. Using Johnson's earlier work, *Friends of God and Prophets*, as a locus of her ecclesiological reflections, this section will also examine how Johnson's own mariological and ecclesiological reflections relate to each other and complete each other in various ways.

The fourth chapter outlines to U.S. Latino writers and their reflections on Mary, particularly the reflections of various Latino/a theologians on the Mexican virgin of Guadalupe. The analyses of how Guadalupe has been viewed as patroness, mother, companion and even goddess of the Americas addresses yet another angle that was not fleshed out at Vatican II, the role of popular piety in marian imagery. As Latinos have demographically shifted the Catholic Church in the United States over the past few years, it becomes crucial to examine how mariological reflection, so central to the U.S. Latino context, functions as an ecclesiological starting point for this community. U.S. Latino theology has blossomed recently, particularly its focus on Guadalupe and her fundamental role in the piety of U.S. Latino Catholics, especially in the Southwest. Pioneers in this field include Virgilio Elizondo, Orlando Espín, and others. Latina

theologians in the United States, such as Jeanette Rodriguez and Ada María Isási-Díaz, have begun to examine how Guadalupe has galvanized Mexican American women in their struggles for justice. Their work, along with that of Espín and Elizondo, will be featured in Chapter Three. Although these theologians have yet to elaborate a coherent ecclesiology, their focus on Guadalupe provides an interesting ecclesiological starting point, as Guadalupe is viewed by various Latino/a scholars as a church-founding event.¹⁴ The status of U.S. Latinos as the majority of Catholics in the U.S. makes the ecclesiological impact of their reflections critical in the self-identification of the U.S. Catholic Church.

The dissertation concludes by bringing the three approaches into conversation, probing how each approach contributes to an attempt at self definition in the Catholic Church in the United States, and examining how Mary could function in fostering new ecclesiological insights—a way forward for the Catholic Church. This section includes a brief constructive proposal for imagining Mary for the Church in a way that promotes the full human flourishing and baptismal dignity of both men and women.

The goal of the conclusion is to point toward some ways in which the use of mariological reflection in an ecclesiological context may help adjudicate the differences, even the clashes, that occur in the Catholic Church in the United States. Additionally, by bringing the Latino voice into the conversation, the hope remains that their self-understanding, which is now an essential part of the Catholic Church, can be integrated into the self-understanding of that Church.

¹⁴ This is particularly true if, as Elizondo notes in *Guadalupe, Mother of the New Creation* (New York: Orbis, 1997) that, “the Virgin Mother is asking not just for a building but also for a way of being church that is truly in conformity...with the early apostolic movement.” 73.

CHAPTER ONE

A CHRISTOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL SHIFT: THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND PAUL VI

After the slimmest majority at the Second Vatican Council approved the inclusion of a proposed schema on Mary in the planned conciliar document on the Church, Mariology can no longer operate independently of ecclesiology. Because the bishops at Vatican II joined reflection on the Virgin Mary to reflection on the Church's nature and mission, Mary and the Church are intimately tied. Though it was not a sweeping victory for those reformers who wished to curb the proliferation of Marian titles and pronouncements, the Council sent a message about the proper place of Mariology—as part of the study of the Church. However, could Mariology contribute some insight to ecclesiology?

This chapter will trace the history of the vote to include the Marian schema in *Lumen gentium*. After a short note on the use of Mary in pre-Vatican II ecclesiology—the focus on Marian dogmas and privileges, and the general distancing of Mariology from Christology and ecclesiology, the chapter outlines the history of the Marian schema at Vatican II, with an emphasis on how one of the hardest fought battles during the Council was waged. A close reading of Chapter 8 of *Lumen*

gentium and Paul VI's 1974 apostolic exhortation on Marian devotion, *Marialis Cultus*, will follow. The guidelines for Marian devotion set out by Paul VI in this encyclical—that it be based in biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological studies—will reappear at the end of the dissertation and serve as some criteria by which the general strengths and weaknesses of the Mariological reflections can be judged.

Mariology is that branch of theology which focuses on the person and role of Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, in the Church and in the work of redemption. Though one could not describe the references to Mary in the New Testament as constituting a Mariology, the Fathers of the Church did draw upon the scriptures as a source for their own incipient mariological reflections, particularly after the Council of Ephesus (325) proclaimed, against Nestorius and his followers, that Mary was indeed the mother of God (Theotokos/Deipara), and not merely the mother of Jesus the man. Aquinas and his contemporaries treated reflection on the mother of God as an appendix to Christology.

The study of Mary as a branch of theology separate from Christology began in the 17th century. This trend intensified in the 19th century, with the proliferation of Marian apparitions and miracles, chief among them the Miraculous medal (1830), and the apparitions at LaSalette (1846) and Lourdes (1858). Pius IX's definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception occurred in the midst of this re-flourishing of the marian movement. In the early 20th century, the study of Mariology became more standardized, as societies of Marian study were founded to scrutinize the theological bases for various marian devotions beginning in 1934, with the most important of

these, the International Marian Academy, being founded in 1950 during the peak of the marian movement, the pontificate of Pius XII.

The decade immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council witnessed the culmination of the flourishing of mariological maximalism in 1950, when Pope Pius XII published *Munificentissimus deus*, which solemnly defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Four years later, Pius XII celebrated the centenary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception with the encyclical *Fulgens corona*, which included declaration of a second marian year (1954—the previous one was 1950, and this one would be followed by another, 1958, marking the centenary of the apparition at Lourdes). That same year, his encyclical *Ad caeli reginam*, established the feast of Mary’s queenship. The pontificate of Pius XII, then, marks the climax of marian maximalism, that moment in a mariological trend of study which Rene Laurentin described as a general distancing of Mary from her Christological and ecclesiological roots. He cautioned in 1967 that “Mariology is often not sufficiently penetrated by that profound requirement of which the First Vatican Council spoke: the double relationship of theology to the whole of the mystery and to the salvation of men.”¹⁵ Mariology’s isolation led, in turn, to certain excesses, including the proliferation of marian titles, and the growing concern to increase the privileges and honors adorning the Mother of God.

Laurentin notes that the dominant characteristics of the marian movement began to take shape from the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the main stream of the Counter-Reformation. The impetus for this movement “came from a will to

¹⁵ Rene Laurentin, *The Question of Mary*, trans. I.G. Pidoux (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 17.

make reparation for the insult done to...the Virgin Mary by the reformers.”¹⁶ Thus, Laurentin outlines four basic impulses of the movement in the seventeenth century: to avenge the honor of the Blessed Virgin, to reinstate her in her rightful high place, to find “new jewels for her crown,”¹⁷ and to consecrate her privileges through solemn definitions. Much like the Eucharistic movement which also found its roots in the Counter-Reformation, the mariological movement set about to further the goals of the Council of Trent—to reproach the reformers for their perceived invective against aspects of the Church that were truly Roman Catholic. By the 1940’s, however, renewal movements such as the liturgical and ecumenical movements had begun to take shape in the Roman Catholic Church. These movements grew out of a different orientation toward the Counter-Reformation, a desire to compensate for it, to make amends, to draw together the Christian churches.

While the marian movement in the seventeenth century had originally focused on the promotion of certain marian dogmas, it eventually split into two factions. The first took as its starting point the definition of Mary’s assumption, as an exemplar for promoting a further series of dogmas extolling Mary’s privileges, paralleling them with those of Christ himself. This branch of Mariology is described variously as Christological Mariology (because of its Christological model), and as marian maximalism (because it promoted Mary’s exceptional honors, privileges and attributes). The main proponents of this latter vision were based in Spain and Latin America, and they stressed the glories of Mary, her transcendence over the Church,

¹⁶ Laurentin, 40.

¹⁷ Laurentin, 41. Laurentin describes this impulse as a completely new preoccupation in the seventeenth century.

the image of the whole Church contained in Mary. The second faction of mariological study saw the need in Mariology not to augment her privileges, titles, and dogmatic definitions, but “to situate marian doctrine in its true perspective, in the whole picture of dogma.”¹⁸ This current, known as either the ecclesiological or minimalist current, was based mainly in Germany and France. The themes of marian minimalism included Mary’s membership in the community of the redeemed, her poverty and humility, her place within the Church, rather than above it. In its extreme form, marian maximalism turned reflection on Mary into a carbon copy of Christology, striving for the perfect association and assimilation of Mary with her son. Minimalism, in its extreme form, made marian reflection a carbon copy of ecclesiology (excluding the hierarchical aspects), to show how Mary is in every way the first, exemplary realization of the gifts which are bestowed on the Church; how she is, in short, a type of the Church.¹⁹

It is easy to see why the subject of Mary became such a crucial debate at the Second Vatican Council, hundreds of years after the start of the mariological movement, but only a decade or so after its peak. Before the start of the Council, views of Mary ran across the spectrum—from maximalism to minimalism, from ecclesiological to Christological Mariology, from high to low Mariology. In view of this diversity, and the prospect of all the world’s bishops (with their theological advisors) converging in Rome at the start of the council, Mariology had become the lightning rod that would polarize the debate about the identity and purpose of Vatican

¹⁸ Laurentin, 50.

¹⁹ Laurentin, 75.

II. It would challenge many bishops' ideas about the purpose of the council, and usher in a shift—during which Vatican II, and the bishops participating in it, came into their own as shapers of the Church to come.

The shift in thinking that the bishops underwent during the Council can best be illustrated by examining their suggestions to the ante-preparatory commission, whose task it was to set the agenda for the Second Vatican Council. Of the approximately 2,150 future fathers of the Council who made suggestions, 570 expressed a desire to see marian topics included in the agenda, in the form of a document to be produced by the Council which would clarify “the standing and role of the Virgin Mary.”²⁰ The university faculties of the Antonianum, the St. Bonaventura, and the Marianum submitted similar requests to the commission. A majority of the fathers who asked for marian topics, 382 of them, asked for a statement about Mary's mediation, and 266 requested a dogmatic definition of marian doctrine.²¹ The preparatory theological commission planned to include Mary in one of the four original proposed schemas, namely the one concerning the deposit of faith; however, at a meeting in October of 1960 they decided to move the marian schema to the preparatory document on the Church.²²

The marian schema was composed in November of the following year (1961) and, after undergoing several revisions, the completed text was sent to the theological

²⁰ Jan Grootaers, “The Drama Continues Between the Acts: The “Second Preparation” and its Opponents” in *The History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, English version edited by Joseph A. Komonckak, translated by Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press; Leuven: Peeters, 1995-2006), 480.

²¹ Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., “The Theological Context of and Introduction to Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*,” in *Marian Studies* 37 (1986), 45.

²² Jelly, 45.

commission in January of 1962. It was this theological commission that originally decided to make the marian schema a separate document. In November of 1962 this schema was distributed among the bishops with the title “Mary Mother of God and Mother of Men.” This initial schema was very different, “in structure, sequence of thought, and emphasis”²³ from what the Council finally approved as Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* two years later. With six sections, three of which focused, respectively, on marian titles, privileges, and devotion,²⁴ the initial schema reflected the christotypical, privilege-centered, marian maximalism, and focused on Mary’s transcendence over the Church.

Jan Grootaers describes the difference between the original marian schema and the one the Council finally approved as that between two “irreconcilable approaches.”²⁵ The first approach, reflected in the initial schema, consisted of defenders of Mary’s privileges whose starting point lay in the glorious marian titles described in the encyclicals of recent popes. The second approach belonged to a group consisting mainly of adherents to positive theology, who tended to start with the earliest mariological documents and trace her role in the history of salvation. It would prove to be quite a battle to reconcile these two visions of Mariology. Indeed, “the road Vatican II would have to travel in order to move from one approach to the other would be long and strewn with ambushes.”²⁶

²³ Jelly, 47.

²⁴ Grootaers, 481.

²⁵ Grootaers, 481.

²⁶ Grootaers, 481.

For the purposes of this dissertation it will suffice to highlight the major debate over the location of the marian schema, and the evolution of the text itself. In both cases, the mariological debates reflect the larger ecclesiological issues disputed by the bishops at the Council.

1.1 The Inclusion Debate

Martial language and imagery are particularly useful when trying to describe the behavior of some bishops in their efforts to sway the council majority to accept their view of the marian schema. Xavier Rynne describes the battles for the marian schema, waged largely by what turned out to be the minority opinion of the marian maximalists, as “excessive propaganda.”²⁷ The lobbying took place everywhere, on the steps of St. Peter’s, in the bishops’ mail, in the Italian press. One bishop even used the services of the Vatican press to print his leaflet, making it look like an official document distributed to the bishops.²⁸ The most contentious battle over the marian schema, and indeed in the course of the Council, centered on the placement of the marian text, and it was in the course of this debate that the questions about the identity of the Council, its purpose and mission, became clear. The fundamental question was whether the schema on Mary be a part of the Council’s treatise on the Church, or whether Mary merited a document devoted entirely to her. Several bishops, some speaking for national groups (the Chileans and the French), asked that

²⁷ Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis Press, 1969, 1999), 212.

²⁸ Cardinal Balic, according to Rynne, 212. cf. Alberto Melloni, “The Beginning of the Second Period: The Great Debate on the Church” in Giuseppe Alberigo ed., *History of Vatican II*, vol 3, 93-94.

the marian schema be included with that on the Church.²⁹ Others, however, were against this, including Cardinal Bali_, Cardinal Arriba y Castro, Cardinal Santos, and others, who argued that the marian schema should remain a separate document so as not to diminish the importance of the Blessed Mother. At issue were concerns about ecumenism, the role of Mary in relation to Christ and the Church, the call for a clearer definition of Mary's mediatory role, and concern about a loss of emphasis on Mary's role in Catholic piety.

The Doctrinal Commission selected Cardinals Franz König of Vienna and Rufino Santos of Manila to take part in a public debate on the placement of the marian schema, which was held on October 24, 1963. Santos spoke first, outlining ten arguments in favor of the separate schema—some pastoral, some theological, some practical. On a pastoral level, Santos argued that the inclusion of the marian schema in the document on the Church would be interpreted by the faithful as a “reduction and a loss.”³⁰ While he felt that most of the bishops agreed upon Mary's special role in the Church and the honor due her as Christ's mother, he asserted that the most appropriate way to make plain her “singular preeminence and dignity”³¹ would be by means of a separate document. This document should, of course, be closely connected to the one on the Church, but the bishops should not allow their concerns, ecumenical or otherwise, to prevent them from explaining the entirety of Catholic dogma and doctrine to the faithful as well as the separated brethren.

²⁹ Jelly, 50.

³⁰ Melloni, 96.

³¹ Jelly, 51.

Santos' theological arguments centered on Mary's place in the Mystical Body. While he acknowledged that Mary was a part of the Church, she remained a "preeminent and entirely singular member"³², who had received a "preservative redemption"³³ before all other members in the Church. He noted St. Bernard's maxim that Mary "stands between Christ and the Church."³⁴ Because of her assent to the Incarnation, her role as a willing instrument made her a cause of the Mystical Body, and not merely one of its members. "Mary's soteriological function, flowing from her intimate association with the Redeemer and his grace, is in the order of objective redemption and so differs essentially (not merely by degree) from the role that others have in the work of salvation."³⁵ Santos also highlighted Mary's role in Jesus' upbringing, particularly her role in initiating his public ministry by requesting the miracle at Cana.

On a practical level, the Cardinal cautioned that incorporation of the marian schema into the schema on the Church could lead to either an incomplete explanation of the marian question or an excessively wordy document whose marian section would be longer than, for example, the section on the Trinity. He further argued that the revisions required to fit the marian schema as it was currently worded into the schema on the Church would be considerable, possibly leading to an awkward text, even more confusing than the one currently being considered. There seemed to be no fitting place for the marian question in the schema on the Church, which focused on

³² Santos, as cited by Jelly, 51.

³³ Jelly, 51.

³⁴ Jelly, 52.

³⁵ Jelly, 53.

the nature and mission of the Pilgrim Church on earth, its members and its hierarchical constitution. On the other hand, the changes required to make the marian schema into a separate constitution would be far less complex, allowing more space for a fuller presentation of marian doctrine. Within the span of a marian constitution, the bishops could present a balanced view, overcoming the notions that one theological style or camp of Mariology was endorsed by the Council over another. According to Santos, the proposed marian schema, if incorporated as part of the schema on the Church, could give the opposite impression—that the Council had endorsed an ecclesiotypical Mariology over against a Christotypical one.

Speaking for the other side, Cardinal König presented four kinds of reasons for including the marian schema in the schema on the Church: theological, historical, pastoral, and ecumenical. Together, these reasons would “prove that the dignity and importance of Mary would be more suitably conveyed by placing the Council’s teaching about her within the setting of its teaching on the Church.”³⁶ After reminding the bishops that the majority of the members of the theological commission, which met on October 9, 1963, had requested that the Council’s teaching on Mary be integrated into the schema on the Church, König launched into the theological warrants for this inclusion. First, he noted that the Church was the central theme of this, the second session of the Council and that it was the general theme of Vatican II as a whole. Mary should therefore be part of this theme. Even Cardinal Santos’ argument for a close connection between an independent marian document and the document on the Church attested to the fact that the marian

³⁶ Jelly, 55.

question should be treated as part of the Council's general theme. A separate document would reinforce the separation of Mariology from the rest of theology, an isolation which had led "so some unfounded and false theological excesses."³⁷

König's second theological reason held that integration of the two texts avoided promoting the false impression that the Council intended to define some new marian dogma, when this was clearly not a matter under consideration. The third part of the theological argument addressed Cardinal Santos' concern that it would be awkward to address the marian question in the context of a document focused on the pilgrim church. On the contrary, argued König, the inclusion of Mary into this schema would integrate the eschatological dimension of ecclesiology with Mariology. He noted that this would serve two goals: it would complete the ecclesiological vision of the pilgrim Church on earth with the vision of the eschatological fulfillment that awaits it as prefigured in Mary, and simultaneously it would avoid the objection that the Council's concept of the Church was overly institutional or hierarchical. König's argument essentially asserted that "an integral ecclesiology and an integral Mariology are interdependent and mutually complete each other."³⁸ Thus, the ecclesiological component would keep the Mariology in check, protecting it from isolation and excesses, and the mariological component would keep the ecclesiology in check, by presenting the eschatological fulfillment of the whole People of God, prefigured in Mary, while keeping the communal dimension of the Church in full view.

³⁷ Jelly, 56.

³⁸ Jelly, 56.

König's fourth point addressed the issue of Mary's role in salvation history. He argued that Mary's place and role in the economy of salvation are based entirely upon her relation to Jesus the sole Mediator, since Mary conceived him both *corpore* and *corde*, that is to say, bodily and also in her heart through her faith and her obedience to the word of God.³⁹ It is in this way that she is the type of the Church, which is the fruit of redemption but also the means of redemption. Thus the marian and ecclesial doctrines would best be explained in one schema. Lastly, König addressed the fears of Santos and those who agreed that including Mary in the schema on the Church would be interpreted as a downgrading of marian doctrine or devotion, that the Council would be seen to endorse one style of Mariology over another. Within the one schema on the Church, Mary would be portrayed as the sublime cooperator with Christ (not the coredemptrix) in "the accomplishment and the application of the fruits of redemption,"⁴⁰ which rather than denigrate the Virgin, enhances her dignity. This exceptional role, moreover, would highlight the christotypical aspects of marian doctrine, such that this component would not be overshadowed by the ecclesiotypical aspects underlined by the placement of the text.

The historical portion of König's argument began with his observation that marian devotion had arisen out of what was, essentially, an ecclesiological theme: contemplation of the Church as mother. In particular, the titles given Mary in marian litanies originally belonged to the Church. "Mary's privileges were portrayed in an

³⁹ Jelly, 56.

⁴⁰ Jelly, 56.

ecclesiological perspective.”⁴¹ The ecclesiological source of much marian language clearly showed that to include the marian schema in the document on the Church was in no way a debasing or a degradation of Mariology or marian devotion, but rather a kind of mariological *ressourcement*. While the marian titles express personal privileges of the Blessed Mother, they have “an ecclesiological meaning, i.e., they are *in* and *for* the Church.”⁴²

After noting that Pope Paul VI had recently⁴³ hinted at this relationship between Mary and the Church, König summoned the additional witness of the International Marian Congress of 1958, the theme of which had been “Mary and the Church.” This, König argued, was a sign that the tie between Mariology and ecclesiology was a sign of the times and in tune with both popular devotion and the *sensus fidelium*. As a pastoral reason for integrating the schemas, he claimed that the Church had a responsibility to nourish the devotional life of the faithful with orthodox instruction, in order to keep these popular devotions from falsehood or exaggeration. “The integration of both Mariology and ecclesiology in the single document would enrich both doctrines.”⁴⁴ König’s ecumenical reasoning reached out to both the Eastern churches and the Protestant churches, arguing that the inclusion would tie in more clearly with the Eastern notion of Mary as Theotokos, and would concretely ground marian devotion, so often a stumbling block for non-Catholic Christians, in scripture and Tradition.

⁴¹ König as cited in Jelly, 57.

⁴² Jelly, 58.

⁴³ In a homily October 11, 1963. See Jelly, 58.

⁴⁴ König, in Jelly, 58.

Anne Carr notes that the question of where to place the marian schema became one of the most emotionally charged questions at the Council.⁴⁵ Though one could easily caricature the positions—Santos as the less theologically sophisticated, König's the less devotionally sensitive or pious—it is important to remember that this would turn out to be the closest vote in the Council. The slim margin of victory was jarring for many, and painful for those bishops for whom consensus and unanimity were key to getting the Council's points across. How convincing would it be to the world that the desire of the Council was to intimately link Mariology and ecclesiology if the motion to link the schemas had passed by only a few votes?

The broader ecclesiological change evidenced in the decision to include the marian text in the schema on the Church was taking place within the group of bishops. The mere event of the Council allowed bishops to come together, to talk with one another, to meet with theologians. These contacts and encounters made the bishops aware, for example, of the great progress in the biblical, liturgical and ecumenical movements. It allowed them to share their anxieties, frustrations and ideas with their brother bishops and with prominent theologians. "The bishops discovered by assembling and communicating that new and previously unheard of attitudes were created."⁴⁶ This communication begins to account for the vast discrepancy in what was originally expected of the Council (in content and in ethos) and what eventually emerged in the documents and the spirit that overtook the

⁴⁵ Anne E. Carr, "Mary in the Mystery of the Church," in *Mary According to Women*, ed. Carol Frances Jegen (Kansas City, MO: Leaven Press, 1985), 10.

⁴⁶ Andrea Riccardi, "The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council" in Giuseppe Alberigo, ed. *The History of Vatican II* vol 2, 76.

bishops at Vatican II. Guiseppe Alberigo refers to it as the “maturation process” of the Council; a process which the bishops, theologians, and entire Church were undergoing throughout the Council’s four sessions.⁴⁷ Bishops came into their own.

The contact with their brother bishops shifted their self-understanding and their mode of operating. Andrea Riccardi describes this phenomenon as the “evolution” of the bishops who, aided by their theologians, updated themselves “on the general progress of theology, from Christology to ecclesiology.”⁴⁸ This progress was evident among the theologians as well, as men who had just years earlier been silenced or disciplined by the Roman Curia became prominent contributors to the Council debates and eventually the documents produced by the Council.⁴⁹ The vote to root the council’s marian reflections in ecclesiology and Christology, and base them on biblical and ecumenical foundations, reflects the sea change that was brought about at the Council through the openness and communication among bishops and theologians that characterized the event.

1.2 The Evolution of the Marian Schema

After the close vote to include the document on the Blessed Virgin in the schema on the Church, the bishops had to press on with the business of the Council, which included looking at the language and content of the marian schema itself. The text that eventually became Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* underwent no fewer than 17

⁴⁷ Guiseppe Alberigo, “The New Shape of the Council” in *The History of Vatican II*, vol 3, 512.

⁴⁸ Riccardi 76.

⁴⁹ Yves Congar is a prime example of such a theologian. See Yves Congar, *Mon journal du concile* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 2 vols., for a firsthand narration of this sea change.

revisions, title changes, and modifications before its promulgation on November 21, 1964.

The earliest drafts of the schema, composed by the council's Preparatory Theological Commission, initially included the marian text in the document on the Church, but then the Preparatory Commission chose to present it as a separate schema.⁵⁰ This newly re-separated draft, after being revised by the Central Commission, was distributed to the Fathers on November 10, 1962⁵¹, in the same fascicle as the first schema *De ecclesia*, which would eventually become *Lumen gentium*. At the first debate on the schema on the Church (which occurred during the council's second session), four bishops introduced the idea of reintegrating the marian text into that document.

The schema was redistributed to the bishops in April of 1963, with a new title, "The Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church." At this point Cardinal Raul Silva and several other Chilean bishops circulated a new text on the Church, where the marian text was placed last, as a summarizing chapter of the document on the Church.⁵² Instead of giving the bishops a new text from which to work, the net effect of Silva's document was to provide a "point of departure in dispelling anxieties about the

⁵⁰ Gerald Fogarty makes an oblique reference to this initial draft, which was defeated, as one composed by Cardinal Ottaviani: "The Pope's invocation of the Virgin Mary may have been a gesture of peace toward Ottaviani, whose separate schema on Mary, the Mother of God and the Mother of Men, had so recently failed." See Gerald Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway," in *The History of Vatican II*, vol 2, 106. This is the same title Semmelroth associates with the "original" chapter: "On the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men" *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, 286.

⁵¹ Jorge Medina Estevez, "The Blessed Virgin," in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966). Medina Estevez has the date as November 23, 1962.

⁵² Medina Estevez, 303.

composition of a new text.”⁵³ Various manuscripts emerged during the course of the Second session of the Council, none of which were adopted as the new working copy of the marian text. Instead, a special subcommission was formed and charged with the composition of a new document, after the vote on the placement of the text. The commission included Cardinals Santos and König, as well as the Marionite M. Doumith and Msgr. P. Théas, the bishop of Lourdes. These bishops handed the work over to two theologians of different camps, Balic, who had favored (and to a large extent authored)⁵⁴ the original schema, and Gérard Philips, “who was to be the author of the text that was definitively submitted to the Fathers.”⁵⁵ The commission instructed the theologians to find a harmony between the two tendencies in the bishops’ assembly, and to provide the Council with a text that would be “as satisfying as possible for all the fathers.”⁵⁶

Philips quickly composed a text, revising his own working copy by incorporating important themes brought out in the debates on the marian schema: broadening the biblical basis of marian doctrine, explicating Mary’s place in salvation history, and expanding the notion of the relationship between Mary and the Church.⁵⁷ After submitting the text to Balic and other theologians a number of times, navigating the criticisms of theologians and mariologists on both sides of the debate, a process

⁵³ Medina Estevez, 303.

⁵⁴ Evangelista Vilanova, “The Intercession” in *The History of Vatican II* vol 3 369.

⁵⁵ Medina Estevez, 305.

⁵⁶ Vilanova, 369

⁵⁷ Vilanova, 370.

described by one historian as “an irritating back and forth,”⁵⁸ the two eventually reached enough of a compromise on the language to pass it on to the Theological Commission for examination in March of 1964. After two successive revisions ordered by the Theological Commission, the text was approved by the Theological Commission and distributed to the bishops the first week of June, 1964.⁵⁹

The public debates on this text began in mid-September 1964, at the beginning of the Council’s third session. The bishops had much praise for this schema, which clearly represented a compromise, as did so many of the Council documents. As Cardinal Silva remarked on the first day of the public debate, the text proposed things that were “clearly traditional, avoiding new definitions, without obscuring or lessening what undoubtedly belongs to Catholic doctrine.”⁶⁰ The effort at compromise was evident even at the beginning of the text: “while the fundamental principle in the preparatory schema had been the single predestination of Christ and Mary, in the new text Mary was seen in relation to the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church.”⁶¹ Moreover, the new text “presented the relationship of Mary to the Church not only as one of precedence in glory but also of participation in the common Christian condition, that is, faith, obedience and the search for the will of God.”⁶² It emphasized cooperation as Mary’s specific contribution in her relationship

⁵⁸ Vilanova, 370.

⁵⁹ Vilanova, 371.

⁶⁰ Medina Estevez, 306.

⁶¹ Vilanova, 427.

⁶² Vilanova, 427.

with Christ, while mediation was reserved to Christ alone.⁶³ This new text also avoided granting Mary too high a place, on a par with Christ's, choosing instead to "locate Mary at the heart of the People of God as it makes its pilgrimage in faith and patience."⁶⁴

1.3 The Text of Chapter Eight

The title and structure of the marian chapter of *Lumen gentium* are more complex than almost any other chapter of the sixteen official council documents. The chapter is entitled "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church." The five subsections of the document bear their own subtitles, another highly unusual characteristic of this chapter, which begins with article 52 of *Lumen gentium* and continues through the end of that document, article 69. After a brief preface (articles 52-54), the chapter discusses Mary's role in the economy of salvation (articles 55-59), the relationship of Mary to the Church (60-65), the Church's devotion to Mary (66-67) and closes with an reflection on the eschatological significance of Mary for the Church (68-69). This section will trace the important themes of this document, and show how the mariological shifts mirror some ecclesiological shifts that occurred at the Council.

The document's approach is twofold. It can be described as a task engaged from above and then from below. From above, the text seeks to clarify how Mary functions in a unique way in the mystery of our salvation, thus it was appropriate to

⁶³ Vilanova 427. The term *mediatrix* was applied to Mary in the final draft of the document, but this was done in a liturgical sense and phrased in such a way that it unambiguously does not detract from the sole mediatorship of Christ.

⁶⁴ Vilanova, 428.

include her in the document on the Church, which is the vehicle of Christ's ongoing salvation. From below, it hopes to clarify why the Church honors Mary in a special way, by examining her special place as the Church's preeminent member and archetype. In this way, Mary's role is examined, but the Council avoids a full explication of marian doctrine, and it further escapes the need to decide mariological questions which were being debated by theologians.

The introduction to the text sets out its difficult middle path in regard to Mary's place in the life of the Church. After a reference to the allusion to Mary in the epistle to the Galatians, the text explains how Mary is both intimately tied to the Trinity as the "Mother of the Son of God, therefore also beloved daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit,"⁶⁵ and united to all humanity as one of the "race of Adam." While acknowledging that the Blessed Virgin "far surpasses all creatures both in heaven and on earth," the text is also careful to note that Mary is a member of the redeemed, as well as that her exaltation stems from the gift of sublime grace given her through the "close and indissoluble tie" she has with her Son, beginning at the Annunciation.

It is in this first section that the document refers to Mary as the "preeminent and wholly unique member of the Church, and as its type and outstanding model in faith and charity." Even in this preliminary acknowledgement of the Church's reverence for Mary, we see the bishops' desire for balance between a desire to see Mary as one set apart from or above the Church, and a view of Mary as a member of

⁶⁵ LG 53

the Church.⁶⁶ This place, particular to Mary, was described by Pope Paul VI as “a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and also closest to us.”⁶⁷ One goal of the document, which did not seek to elaborate new marian dogmas or even to explicate the whole of marian doctrine, was to strike a balance between what Otto Semmelroth called the “two poles of Catholic devotion to Mary,” her singular place as the privileged daughter of God and the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, and her fundamental solidarity with humanity, which is not diminished by her exalted state.⁶⁸ The document acknowledges that Mary is a member of the community of the redeemed, and indeed herself redeemed by the merits of her Son, while simultaneously lauding her as a wholly unique and preeminent member of the Church.

The next article, number 54, is of particular importance because it sets out the document’s goals, and sets the parameters of the Council’s marian statement. While explaining the doctrine on the Church, the vehicle through which Christ brings salvation, the Council “intends to set forth painstakingly both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate word and the Mystical Body, and the duties of

⁶⁶ This is the only explicit attribution of the title “member of the Church” to Mary in this document. While “mother” and “type” are the basis of the two major sections of Chapter Eight, Mary’s membership, though presumed, is not clearly explained. See Charles W. Neumann, “Mary and the Church: *Lumen gentium*, Arts. 60 to 65” in *Marian Studies* 37 (1986), 96-142.

⁶⁷ Paul VI, Allocution to the Council December 4, 1963. See Austin Flannery, O.P. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, New Revised Edition (Collegeville, IN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 414 n4.

⁶⁸ Otto Semmelroth, “Chapter VIII” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol I, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 287.

the redeemed toward the mother of God, who is the mother of Christ, and the mother of men and most of all of those who believe.”⁶⁹

The text goes to great lengths to assure theologians of all mariological schools, as well as the laity at large, that the Council will not settle any issues still under debate. It makes a point of allowing opinions “which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning [Mary]”⁷⁰ to continue to be held until such issues are clarified by the work of theologians. Semmelroth emphasizes this point in his commentary on Chapter 8, noting that though the caveat might seem out of place, it “does not come amiss here, since advocates of one side [of Mariology] are inclined to appeal to Church pronouncements as if they refuted the other side.”⁷¹ Clearly, this chapter is a work of compromise that sought to remain, as much as possible, outside the fray of theologically controversial issues.

1.4 Mary's Role in Salvation History

The chapter's second section, entitled “The Function of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation,” traces all scriptural references to Mary to outline her role in Christ's life and ministry. Themes that figure prominently in this section include the Council's reliance on the parallel between Eve and Mary (an extrapolation from the Pauline notion of Christ as the new Adam), as well as the importance of Mary's free cooperation, her faith and obedience, and the union between Mary and Jesus. Article 55 begins by pointing to the foreshadowing of Mary's role in salvation in the Hebrew

⁶⁹ LG 54.

⁷⁰ LG 54.

⁷¹ Semmelroth, 288.

Scriptures, particularly in Isaiah (7:14) and in what is known as the proto-gospel of Genesis (3:15). The text identifies Mary as an outstanding member of “the poor and humble of the Lord who confidently hope for and receive salvation.”⁷² The fact that Jesus took his human nature from Mary points to the intimate union between the two.

The next article (56) includes two important themes in the Council’s treatment of Mary: the emphasis on Mary’s assent, and the parallel drawn between Eve and Mary. Locating Mary’s assent in the will of God the Father, as an essential part of God’s plan for the Incarnation, the authors conclude that a woman fittingly has a crucial role to play in “contribut[ing] to life”, just as “a woman had a share in bringing about death.”⁷³ However, Mary is not portrayed as completely passive in this soteriological cooperation, since she “was enriched by God with the gifts appropriate to” bringing eternal life into the world, from the moment of her conception.⁷⁴ Furthermore, she was actively involved in this cooperation, “committing herself whole-heartedly...she devoted herself totally” to her son. This does not mean that Mary’s role in salvation is in any way equal to Christ’s, as the document repeatedly reminds readers of the handmaidenly role of Mary’s cooperation, her place “under and with”⁷⁵ her son in serving the mystery of redemption.

Through numerous references to patristic authors, the bishops note that the “Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God but as freely cooperating

⁷² LG 55.

⁷³ LG 56.

⁷⁴ LG 56.

⁷⁵ LG 56.

in the work of man's [sic] salvation through faith and obedience."⁷⁶ Thus, while she is not completely passive, her activity is characterized mainly by obedience and servitude to the work of her son. Semmelroth describes her role as "not the assent of someone or other, but in a (literally) receptive sense it enters as a true cause" of redemption.⁷⁷ This understanding of Mary's role in redemption, like many of the conciliar statements, inhabits a strange middle-ground, attributing to Mary a singular, important, even crucial, role which is at the same time one of complete service, of receptivity, and of assent.

Articles 57 through 59 continue the scriptural look at Mary's life. By demonstrating the interweaving of Mary's life with Christ's, the scriptural selections help the document combine "the receptive faith in which she [Mary] shares the life, work and sufferings of her son, and the meaning this share of hers has for the rest of" humanity.⁷⁸ Moreover, these scriptural references draw attention to Mary's unwavering faith, in addition to her service to Christ's mission. It is in this unwavering faith that she is the archetype of the "community of those who hear the word of God and keep it,"⁷⁹ the People of God.

In another passage which emphasizes Mary's activity, article 58 highlights the fact that Mary "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" throughout her life, providing thus a worthy model for the pilgrim People of God which is the ecclesiological focus of *Lumen gentium* and of the council on the whole. This article begins the transition

⁷⁶ LG 56.

⁷⁷ Semmelroth, 289.

⁷⁸ Semmelroth, 289.

⁷⁹ Semmelroth, 289.

to the next major section of the document, concerning Mary's relationship to the Church. It points to the episode in John's gospel where Mary is given by Jesus to his disciple as a mother (Jn 19:26-27). This is followed by a reference, in the following article, to Mary's presence at Pentecost, specifically her "prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit," which she had already received at the Annunciation.⁸⁰ Thus, "Mary's connection with the mystery of Christ introduces her connection with the mystery of the Church."⁸¹

1.5 Mary's Role in the Church

The third section of Chapter 8 is of particular importance in analyzing the connections between Mariology and ecclesiology. It is entitled simply "The Blessed Virgin and the Church." Commentators, like Semmelroth, see this section, articles 60 to 65, as the centerpiece of the Council's marian text. "These six articles contain the distinctive teaching that probably first comes to mind when the question is asked, What did Vatican II say about Mary?"⁸² Rather than trace the chronological unfolding of salvation history, and Mary's role in it as the previous section had done, this section takes a thematic approach to Mary's function in the Church, which can be described as a double role: a motherly role of intercession and a more generalized role of exemplar, as the type of the Church and a model for all members of the People of God.

⁸⁰ LG 59.

⁸¹ Semmelroth, 289.

⁸² Neumann, 96-97.

Article 60 begins by addressing what was perhaps the most controversial point in the marian schema, in terms of its content: the form and function of Mary's mediatory role in the Church, and the use of the title Mediatrix. There was much concern among the bishops not to obscure the sole and unique mediatorship of Christ, while at the same time affirming Mary's continuing intercessory role in the dispensation of grace in the Church. Moreover, many bishops wanted the Council to include the title Mediatrix for Mary in the schema. It was with great difficulty, then, that this section on Mary's mediation was elaborated. It opens with the only direct scriptural citation in the six articles on Mary and the Church: 1 Timothy 2:5, referring to Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity.

Charles Neumann describes the text this way: "It seems almost that on mediation and especially on 'Mediatrix' the document is being clearly defensive, toward non-Catholic Christians and even toward many of the Council Fathers themselves. One half of the text of these three articles [60-62]...is taken up with the cautionary reminder that Mary's mediation does not obscure or threaten or impinge upon Christ's."⁸³ Ultimately the title "mediatrix" is included in a list of titles under which "the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church"⁸⁴, including Advocate, Auxiliatrix ("helper" in the Flannery translation), Adjutrix ("Benefactress" in Flannery). But even this list is surrounded by statements qualifying Mary's mediation as subordinate to and wholly dependent upon Christ's.⁸⁵

⁸³ Neumann, 104.

⁸⁴ LG 62.

⁸⁵ LG 62.

The Council chose to elaborate Mary's mediation under the rubric of her spiritual motherhood to all humanity, a much less controversial way of expressing what was essentially the same marian function. This spiritual motherhood, according to Semmelroth, consists of two elements: the "historical, objective, existential connection with Christ's work of redemption", by virtue of her closeness to her son while on earth, and (secondly) "the continuance beyond history of Mary's motherly spiritual care for all..."⁸⁶. In a similar way, Neumann names these two aspects of Mary's mediation as that in "the past during her life on earth and the present in her existence and activity in the communion of saints."⁸⁷

The way the bishops spoke of Mary as mediating graces in the present was by describing her role as motherhood "in the order of grace."⁸⁸ "She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ...[I]n a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior..."⁸⁹ By not limiting Mary's cooperation with Christ to her assent and obedience, but adding her active participation in Christ's upbringing—she nourished him—the document acknowledges Mary's own discipleship in article 61. Neither her mediation nor her exemplarity, then, are merely symbolic. While it is beyond doubt that her cooperation came about through God's initiative, Mary's role in the Church and in salvation history was an active one, a true discipleship.

⁸⁶ Semmelroth, 291.

⁸⁷ Neumann, 109.

⁸⁸ LG 61.

⁸⁹ LG 61.

Beginning at the Annunciation, the event that originates Mary’s mediating task, through the present, Mary “cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home.”⁹⁰ This paragraph the first in article 62, alludes to the eschatological nature of the Church, the subject of Chapter seven of *Lumen gentium*, and a crucial perspective from which to understand Mary’s role in the People of God. Mary’s motherhood continues until all the elect reach salvation—thus her function in the Church is inextricably tied to the final perfection of the whole People of God, a theme which will recur when the document considers Mary’s function as a type of the Church.

After considering Mary’s role in the Church “from above”—her participation in the unique mediatorship of her Son and thus in the work of salvation, though in a subordinate role, the section on Mary and the Church sets out to consider her function in the Church “from below”—as a type of and example for the People of God. This notion of Mary as the archetype of the Church, first introduced by St. Ambrose, is qualified in article 63—she is the “exemplar both of virgin and mother” to a Church which is itself called virgin [bride of Christ] and mother [who gives new life to the redeemed].⁹¹ Here the ecclesiological origin of mariological language noted by Cardinal König in his address serves as an interesting way to tie Mary’s function in the Church to different aspects of the ecclesial reality. As Semmelroth notes, the “twofold mystery of Christ’s virgin mother is also the mystery of Christ’s bride, the

⁹⁰ LG 62.

⁹¹ LG 63.

Church.”⁹² As Mary gives birth to the Son of God by grace, the Church gives new birth in baptism to its members. Semmeroth describes the Church’s virginity as its “unshakeable attachment to faith, renouncing affection for heretical error.”⁹³

Mary’s exemplarity in her obedience, faith, hope and charity are, furthermore, not “presented as if they were some fixed and static ornament...in Mary’s character.”⁹⁴ This is in stark contrast to the mariological maximalism, which focused on Mary’s privileges, with which she was endowed at her Immaculate Conception, thus giving the impression that her life in discipleship was ontologically different from the rest of the People of God, as she was born without sin. The formulation as it stands in the official text,⁹⁵ particularly in light of the description in articles 56-58 of Mary advancing on her pilgrimage of faith, is meant to imply that Mary’s faith, hope, charity and total obedience grew and increased in perfection until she achieves perfect union with her Son in the Assumption.⁹⁶ In this way, the verisimilitude between Mary’s discipleship and that of the People of God is undeniable, though of course the document makes clear that the People of God continue to struggle against sin.

As Mary was faithful to God’s word beginning at the Annunciation and thereafter, the Church is faithful to Christ, the Word until it is united to him in

⁹² Semmelroth, 294.

⁹³ Semmelroth, 294. One wonders if a better understanding of the Church’s character as Christ’s bride might give rise to a different understanding of this unwavering devotion to Christ. The marital analogy can be retained, but the image of virginity would be replaced by marital fidelity, which is equally resolute in its unwavering devotion to the spouse, but allows for intimacy between the Church and Christ that is proper to a marital relationship.

⁹⁴ Neumann, 137.

⁹⁵ “Seeking after Christ the Church becomes more like her type, continually progresses in faith, hope, and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things,” LG 65.

⁹⁶ Neumann, 137.

eschatological perfection. In Mary's post-Assumption image, the Church sees itself, with its final perfection fully achieved, fully united to Christ. This eschatological typology gives Mary a place in the Church that is at once the exemplar and the beacon of hope—the way and the goal. However, the fact that Mary serves as a model for Christian life does not in any way replace Christ's preeminence in that role. Rather, through its imitation of Mary's striving to hear the word of God and keep it, the Church encounters Christ and is "more and more transformed into his likeness."⁹⁷ Nor is Mary merely to be considered a model for women, or even for women in a special way, "although some interventions asked for this..."⁹⁸ Instead, Mary is a model for all Christian discipleship, just as Christ is not merely a model of masculine or male discipleship, but of what it means for all people to be children of God.

1.6 Marian Devotion

Articles 66 and 67 constitute the fourth part of Chapter 8, which focuses on devotion to Mary in the Church. Mary's prominent place in salvation history and in the Church calls for a response, most appropriately veneration.⁹⁹ This section points out some guidelines governing the Church's response collectively in the liturgy and individually in the personal devotions of the People of God. The function of the section seems to be similar to how George Lindbeck describes the function of doctrine—to draw a fence around what is appropriate and sanctioned by the religious community, and to exclude what is deemed inappropriate. Thus, the fourth section is

⁹⁷ LG 65.

⁹⁸ Neumann, 135. Neumann does not elaborate on why the authors of Chapter 8 chose to leave this out, but it is significant that women are not mentioned in a special way in the official document.

⁹⁹ Semmelroth, 295.

riddled with reminders, exhortations, and warnings. At the same time, it summarizes succinctly some major themes running through *Lumen gentium* and the Council as a whole.

Article 66 stresses the christocentric character of all marian devotion, as Christ is its root, and Mary refers us to Christ. The ultimate purpose of all marian devotion is the adoration of Christ and the Trinity. While diversity in devotion is acknowledged and encouraged, it must all occur “within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine.”¹⁰⁰ While the text exhorts the faithful to participate and foster the cult of Mary, it warns against two extremes in marian devotion: “snobbery and narrow-mindedness acting as sober practicality, and exaggeration”¹⁰¹ or “vain credulity.”¹⁰² The return to sources characteristic of Vatican II appears here as well, urging the faithful to nourish their devotion at the fonts of sacred scripture, as well as the fathers, doctors and liturgy of the Church.¹⁰³ It is important to note that private revelations are not listed as one of the sources of faith. Moreover, the ecumenical concerns that are a hallmark of *Lumen gentium* are mentioned as a warning against devotional exaggerations: “Let [the faithful] carefully refrain from whatever might by word or deed lead the separated brethren ... into error about the true doctrine of the Church.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ LG 66.

¹⁰¹ Semmelroth, 295.

¹⁰² LG 67.

¹⁰³ See *Dei Verbum* 8 for the Council’s understanding of the ways authentic Tradition is transmitted.

¹⁰⁴ LG 67.

Chapter 8 concludes with a section entitled “Mary, Sign of True Hope and Comfort for the Pilgrim People of God.” These final two articles take on a prayerful, emotive tone. Article 68 reiterates Mary’s status as a beacon of hope, as a sign and precursor of the perfect union the Church will achieve with Christ in the eschaton. The final article of Chapter 8 expresses joy at the devotion to Mary that exists among the separated churches, particularly the eastern churches, and invokes Mary’s intercession for the cause of Christian unity.

1.7 The Mariological “Crisis”

The years following the Second Vatican Council were, understandably, a time of great flux in the Church. The assessment of many people was that the council had reduced the importance of Mary in Catholic theology and piety. In truth, by resituating Mary in the People of God as the eminent member and exemplar of the Church, the council refocused Mary, relating her more clearly to the Church and to Christ. This section will take account of the aftermath of the Council’s reorientation of Mariology, particularly the decade between the end of the Council and the promulgation of Paul VI’s *Marialis cultus*, known as the period of mariological crisis.

It would be a gross oversimplification to think that the Second Vatican Council in itself, through its writings or its tone, undermined marian devotion. Indeed, the roots of the decline in marian devotion trace back to the decades preceding the Council. Examples of this include more general cultural trends, as well as the liturgical and ecumenical movements, and the general trend toward a return to the sources (*ressourcement*) of theology—to scripture and tradition. Furthermore, the marian movement itself was, in the time leading up to Vatican II, increasingly

creeping toward abuses that included, according to Cardinal Suenens, a major figure at the Council, a perspective that was “too essentialist, deductive, abstract and concentrated on [Mary’s] privileges, in a context that was not Christological.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the marian devotion that existed before Vatican II depended heavily on private revelations, and tended to view Mary in a private way, isolated from God, Christ, and the Church. The biblical and liturgical movements, which Rene Laurentin identified as opposed, in impulse, to the contemporaneous marian and Eucharistic movements in the Church, were taking hold well before Vatican II.¹⁰⁶ So it can be said that the marian movement, as it stood in the early 1960s, was vulnerable to decline due to exterior forces (such as the cultural climate, and the various ecclesial and theological movements), and interior forces (its increasing isolation from other theological and ecclesial sectors).

Clearly, though, something happened at Vatican II that changed the marian movement. For some, Vatican II had an “atrophying and stagnating effect...on mariological development,”¹⁰⁷ it “acted as a great damper on Mariology.”¹⁰⁸ One mariologist even proclaimed “the marian movement is finished.”¹⁰⁹ But not every theologian perceived the same hostility toward marian devotion in the Council or its documents, for some, the marian crisis was brought about by the dissonance between

¹⁰⁵ Leon-Josef Suenens, *A New Pentecost?*, trans. Francis Martin (New York: Seabury, 1975), 196.

¹⁰⁶ Laurentin, 56.

¹⁰⁷ De Fiores, 474.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Molard, quoted by DeFiores, 474.

¹⁰⁹ Laurentin, quoted by DeFiores, 475.

the preconciliar and postconciliar Church. Vatican II marked a shift in ecclesial perception—from non-historical orthodoxy to openness, from static, idealized perfection to human, historical struggle, from the Church as perfect society to the Church as People of God, from Mary and her heavenly crown of privileges to Mary’s functionality in salvation history and in the Church.¹¹⁰ These shifts can be grouped into two categories, general shifts, referring to the changes in attitude or orientation ushered in at the Council and which are reflected throughout its documents, and shifts specific to the Church’s perception of Mary, which are a consequence of the Council’s document on Mary, Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*. A brief analysis of the shifts can illuminate why, as Thomas Thompson notes, some people simply “had difficulty relating the traditional marian devotion to the post-conciliar Church.”¹¹¹

The biblical, ecumenical, and liturgical movements that had their beginnings in the decades before Vatican II were eventually bolstered by the bishops’ consensus at the Council, and the goals of these movements are reflected in many of the changes ushered in after the Council. This is especially true of the liturgical renewal.

The revision of the liturgical calendar, mandated by Vatican II, included three kinds of changes for marian feasts that were once part of it. Some were renamed, in order to tie them more closely to the life of Jesus (the Annunciation of the Lord, the Presentation of the Lord). Other feasts that had previously been obligatory were downgraded to optional feasts, such as the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and other

¹¹⁰ See M. Novak, *The Open Church*; also Anne Carr, “Mary in the Mystery of the Church,” 25.

¹¹¹ Thomas A. Thompson, “The Virgin Mary in the Liturgy, 1963-1988” *Marian Studies* 40 (1989), 81.

feasts were dropped entirely, such as The Holy Name of Mary and Our Lady of Ransom.¹¹² One Italian scholar, appalled at these changes, commented ironically: “Six feasts have disappeared....Seven have been reduced to an inferior degree....We have regressed by a thousand years.”¹¹³ It was just such a return to the theological roots of marian devotion that the Council, and later Paul VI, encouraged.

While the liturgical renewal provided a very visible reorientation of marian piety, it does not explain completely the post-conciliar “marian crisis.” There was a deeper, attitudinal rift between pre-conciliar and post-conciliar piety, ushered in perhaps by the shift in perspective on the Church, Christ, and God. Where previously Mary had been viewed as the approachable mediator between humanity and an angry Christ (not to mention a further removed God), the renewed focus on Christ as the sole mediator as well as on the merciful, approachable reality of God obviated the need for this marian mediation. Moreover, the scriptural emphasis that was so central to many of the conciliar documents shifted the perception of Jesus away from that of a harsh judge that metes out punishment to the more human messiah reflected in the Gospels. As God became more approachable, Mary receded in her mediatory role.

The ecumenical movement also flourished at the Council. There was a desire, according to Suenens, to lay stress “on what is common to all Christians...expressions likely to give rise to controversy were played down.”¹¹⁴ Mary’s role in the Church, particularly the proliferation of marian dogmas, had been a

¹¹² Thompson, 80.

¹¹³ Girolamo Morreale, cited in Thompson, 80.

¹¹⁴ Suenens, 196.

roadblock to ecumenism, and ecumenical concerns were often cited in the debates about the language of Chapter 8, particularly the use and context of the title “mediatrix” to describe Mary. As these ecumenical concerns took hold, Mary’s prominence in Catholic theology diminished.

At the theological/ intellectual level, a twofold dynamic was at work: a backlash against the excesses of preconciliar marian theology, coupled with a renewed interest in the more central theological themes: theology of God, Christology, ecclesiology, and others.¹¹⁵ When the bishops at Vatican II voted to include Mary in the schema on the Church, and later approved a text which viewed Mary not in isolation, but in her role in salvation history, in relation to Christ and to God the Father, they voted to put Mary “firmly on the human side of the human-divine equation.”¹¹⁶ When we look at Mary in her function in the whole of salvation history, she becomes a creature who, though important, is nevertheless a creature, necessarily subordinate to the divine. Moreover, this is faithful to both biblical and patristic insights into Mary’s role in the plan of salvation. The shift from Mary in isolation to Mary in relation (to Christ, to God), mirrors the shift in the Council’s ecclesiology—from the Church in isolation (the perfect society) to the Church in relation (to the world, in *Gaudium et spes*, to other Christians, and to other religions).

The subordination of Mary to Christ and to the divine generally has implications that also contributed to the “marian crisis” in the immediate post-

¹¹⁵ See Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 131; also Mary Hines, *What Ever Happened to Mary?* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2001), 47.

¹¹⁶ Mary Hines, *What Ever Happened to Mary?* 45; also Anne Carr, “Mary in the Mystery of the Church,” 15.

conciliar period. “In the hierarchy of truths pride of place is given to God, Christ, the Church, and man; interest in Mary, therefore, tends to be pushed into the background....”¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Johnson describes the change in theological focus and spiritual focus that followed the Council. Theology was occupied with themes like God, Christ, and social and moral issues, while spirituality, too, shifted away from marian devotion to a more scriptural, Eucharistic focus.¹¹⁸ Mariological teachings were viewed as a secondary level of doctrine,¹¹⁹ particularly when compared to Christology, ecclesiology, and liturgical studies. The placement of the marian schema, moreover, seemed to indicate that Mariology would be considered, theologically, if not as a corollary to ecclesiology, at least in relation to it. But, as Stefano DeFiores notes, “the absence of any reference to Mary ... in the large treatises on Christology and ecclesiology” after the Council testifies to the marginalization and parenthetical status of Mariology during the period of “crisis.”¹²⁰

It was at this moment of crisis, which was not entirely a product of the Council, though it cannot be understood without grasping the important theological shifts that occurred at Vatican II, that Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation, *Marialis cultus*, in an effort to encourage right devotion to Mary in the post-conciliar era.

¹¹⁷ De Fiores, 475.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *Truly our Sister*, 131.

¹¹⁹ Hines, 47.

¹²⁰ De Fiores, 475.

1.8 Pope Paul VI's Contributions: "Mater ecclesiae" and Marialis cultus

Pope Paul VI's involvement in the mariological issue began at his closing address at the end of the final session of the Second Vatican Council, on the occasion of the promulgation of *Lumen gentium*. In the speech, he proclaimed Mary "*mater ecclesiae*," or the "mother of the Church," a title that had been proposed for inclusion in *Lumen gentium* by the conciliar minority, which was defeated and excluded from the final text.¹²¹ By fully endorsing the title that had "embodied the hope and now focused the bitterness of the minority,"¹²² Paul VI revealed his pontifical style—that of peacemaker. Though it could not be heard over the thunderous applause of the crowd upon hearing the title "mother of the Church" endorsed by the Pope, Paul VI qualified his use of the title at length in his address. But,

by accepting a marian title that had been suggested by the rejected minority represented by Cardinal Ottaviani, who was chiefly responsible for the original and discarded draft on Mary he [Paul VI] made a gesture of peace that was calculated to obtain the desired consensus. Politically, this functioned as a compromise between the two sides that had divided the Council [at the inclusion vote], 1,114 to 1,094.¹²³

The pontiff had indeed built a bridge that united the Council's factions by using the title in his address. He would later use those skills to connect marian devotion with

¹²¹ Though, as noted above, the document speaks of Mary's mediation in terms of her motherhood of all persons, and her typological relationship to the Church is also based on her physical motherhood of Christ, which is analogical to the Church's spiritual motherhood of Christians. Still, the title was never used, because it was deemed non-traditional and extra-biblical.

¹²² George Tavard, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1996), 205.

¹²³ Tavard, 207.

the post-conciliar Church in *Marialis cultus*, his apostolic exhortation promulgated February 2, 1974.

Marialis cultus was prepared between 1970 and 1974, at a critical point in the marian crisis, and it was crafted as a response to this crisis. Because Paul VI largely blamed the falloff in marian devotion on cultural forces that were present before the Council,¹²⁴ he set out to encourage marian devotion in the context of the post-conciliar liturgical reform.¹²⁵ While it seems logical that this apostolic exhortation would take Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* as its starting point, since that is where the Council directly addressed marian devotion, *Marialis cultus* takes more of its cues from the document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, than *Lumen gentium*. This is because *Marialis cultus* focuses on the Church's prayer, which is centered in the liturgy.

1.9 The Text of Marialis Cultus

The document is divided into three main parts, with an introduction and a conclusion in addition. The three parts are entitled: "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Liturgy," "The Renewal of Devotion to Mary," and "Observations on Two Exercises of Piety: The Angelus and the Rosary." It is clear from part one that Paul VI wants to refocus marian piety in the post-Vatican II context—the liturgical reform. In the introduction, Paul VI refers to his desire to foster marian piety, in conjunction with the promotion of the liturgical reform. The first reference in the text to a conciliar document is to *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Sacred Constitution on the

¹²⁴ De Fiores, 476.

¹²⁵ Tavard, 207.

Liturgy.¹²⁶ Marian piety is referred to as a genuine part of the Church's piety, because it originates and points toward the Trinity.¹²⁷ This makes clear that only God is to be worshipped. In the third paragraph of the introduction, Paul VI makes reference to his understanding of the cause of the marian crisis: "Certain practices of piety that not long ago seemed suitable for expressing the religious sentiment of individuals and of Christian communities seem today inadequate or unsuitable because they are linked with social and cultural patterns of the past."¹²⁸ This modern piety, characterized by an interiorization of religious sentiment (De Fiores calls this phenomenon a falloff in affective piety), and conflicting with the piety of the past, causes confusion among the faithful which this exhortation seeks to remedy. It will do this "in a sort of dialogue" attempting to articulate the place Mary occupies in the Church's worship.¹²⁹

1.10 Devotion To The Blessed Virgin Mary In The Liturgy

Part one is itself divided into two sections. The first deals with Mary in the revised Roman liturgy, and the second with Mary as the exemplar of the Church at worship. Paul VI begins this section by reviewing the changes in the liturgical calendar, beginning with Advent (articles 3-7). After this chronological survey, he points to the possibility for diversity in feasts commemorating Mary throughout the world (articles 8-9). The following section examines themes in the Roman Missal

¹²⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Marialis cultus* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis, 1974), 7.

¹²⁷ Paul VI, 9.

¹²⁸ Paul VI, 10.

¹²⁹ Paul VI, 11. This methodology of dialogue also reflects the legacy of the Council.

(articles 10-11), the lectionary (12), the Liturgy of the Hours (13), and the other revised liturgical books (14). At the conclusion of this sweeping look at the revised liturgical texts, Paul VI expresses “the comforting observation that the postconciliar renewal has, as was previously desired by the liturgical movement, properly considered the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of Christ, and, in harmony with tradition, has recognized the singular place that belongs to her in Christian worship...”(15). Moreover, the veneration accorded to Mary in the postconciliar era “is a derivation from and an extension and unceasing increase of the devotion that the Church of every age has paid to [Mary], with careful attention to truth and with an ever watchful nobility of expression” (15). Postconciliar devotion to Mary, though improved by its re-contextualization of Mary in relation to Christ and the Church, remains nevertheless in continuity with the piety of the Church. This continuity serves as an essential part of the bridge Paul VI is striving to build in this document.

The second section of Part One, “The Blessed Virgin as the Model of the Church in Divine Worship”, returns to one of the themes of Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*—Mary’s exemplarity. This exemplarity is a central theme of Paul VI’s marian teaching as well.¹³⁰ Articles 16 through 23 review many of the scriptural citations of Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*, highlighting how Mary serves as an example for the Church throughout her earthly life. She is “the most excellent exemplar of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ, of that interior disposition with which the Church...invokes Christ and through him worships the Father” (16). Mary in her person manifests “absolute union with Christ

¹³⁰ Thompson, 90.

which is the heart of worship.”¹³¹ Mary is the “attentive Virgin” (17) who exemplifies listening, accepting, and proclaiming the word of God in faith (after “she received from the angel the answer to her doubt”) for the Church. In the following article, Mary is the Virgin at prayer, particularly in the Magnificat, at Cana, at Pentecost, an example to the Church whose function it is to present to God the needs of the faithful, praises God and intercedes for the world’s salvation¹³² (18). Article 19 describes Mary’s motherhood, mirroring the Church’s motherhood of Christians through baptism. Next, Mary is portrayed as the “virgin presenting offerings” at the temple (20), putting her in continuity with the self-offering of Christ, and with the eucharistic offering of the Church.

But Mary is not simply an exemplar for the Church in its communal aspect, she is “a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians” (21), in particular “of that worship that consists in making one’s life an offering to God.” She is, thus, an example of discipleship. This theme recurs various times in the document, and is a cornerstone of Paul VI’s understanding of Mary and her function in the Church.

1.11 The Renewal of Devotion To Mary

The first section of this second part of the document is entitled “Trinitarian, Christological, and Ecclesial Aspects of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.” The first three articles of this section reiterate Mary’s subordinate place in relation to the Trinitarian mystery and to Christ (25), as well as to the Holy Spirit, although Mary and the Holy Spirit share a special “hidden” relationship (26-27). The section’s final

¹³¹ Thompson 91.

¹³² These words are taken from *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 83.

article restates Mary's rightful place in the Church, as it was formulated in *Lumen gentium*: "the highest place [in the Church] and the closest to us after Christ" (28).

Here the text highlights the close relationship between the Church and the mother of Christ, the link between love for the Church and love for Mary, but most importantly, the fact that Mary is included in the Church: "The Church therefore cannot be referred to as such unless it includes Mary..."(28).

The second section of Part two is the most important for this study, as it lays out four criteria for devotion to Mary: biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological. Article 30 recognizes that "every form of piety should have a biblical imprint," and this must not exclude marian devotion. Therefore, pious texts should draw inspiration and wording from scripture, and devotion to Mary should be "imbued with the great themes of the Christian message." Next, in article 31, we learn that marian devotion should also derive inspiration from the sacred liturgy, the public worship of the Church. Here Paul VI makes reference to the abuses that had crept in to preconciliar marian piety: while exhorting the faithful to accept devotional guidelines drawn from the true nature of Christian worship, he states that "this sometimes makes it necessary to change long-standing customs wherein the real nature of this Christian worship has become somewhat obscured" (31). Devotions should be harmonized with the liturgy and not suppressed as the Council noted, but hybrid ceremonies where liturgy and devotional practices are mixed are discouraged, for fear of reducing the Eucharist to an occasion for devotional practices. Once again the political, mediating talent of Pope Paul is evident here, and the tone of this article is reminiscent of the compromise documents of Vatican II.

The ecclesial character of marian devotion means that marian piety should reflect the preoccupations of the Church, including and in a special way, ecumenism. Here, the text issues its sternest warning with respect to marian devotion: “every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church” (32). While seeking Mary’s intercession and even praying to her for Christian unity is encouraged, those devotional practices opposed to correct Catholic practice “should be eliminated.” A better understanding of Mary, rather than being a stumbling-block to communion, can become a path to union (33).

Paul VI’s preoccupation with articulating a marian piety that was intelligible to a new ecclesial and cultural reality is manifested most clearly in his fourth criterion for marian devotion—the findings of the human sciences, particularly anthropology. It is here that the pope is at his most prophetic in relation to the cultural changes of the time. “The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today’s life style, especially with the way women live today” (34). Women’s lives are changing in the home, in the political, social, and cultural spheres of reality. Thus it becomes “difficult to take as an example Mary of Nazareth because the horizons of her life....seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today” (34).

While he urges theologians to examine these issues carefully, Paul VI offers his own anthropological observations in articles 35 and 36. First, he notes that Mary’s exemplarity lies “not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less [in] the socio-cultural background in which she lived.” Rather, she is an example “for the way in

which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God....she was the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples" (35). Thus her exemplarity is universal and lasting, not tied to the particular circumstances of her life. The notion of Mary's exemplarity, then, "consists in more than the imitation of specific virtues or a particular way of life"¹³³; Mary is an example of one who heard the word of God and did it, a disciple in the truest sense. Another implication of this insight is that Mary is not merely a model for female Christians, but for all who would be followers of Christ, male and female.

Paul VI's second observation is that the problematic picture of Mary is rooted in certain aspects of popular writing and not in the gospels. Reflecting some awareness of the exegetical tools being used by theologians at the time, he writes "it should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing socio-cultural contexts to have expressed their sentiments about [Mary] in a way and manner which reflected their own age" (36). While the Church has historically venerated Mary as Virgin, Wife, Mother, outstanding type of womanhood, and other images, it is not bound by any of these, "or the particular anthropological ideas underlying such expressions." Thus, the future of marian devotion can be elaborated using hermeneutical tools, including the input of the human sciences. All of this, of course, should be done in conjunction with and with reference to scripture. Paul VI's own ideas for future images of Mary are detailed in article 37, including Mary the giver of active and responsible consent, Mary the bold woman who proclaimed God's vindication of the poor, Mary the woman of strength,

¹³³ Thompson, 91.

and others. This new image of Mary is one of a disciple, a perfect model for women and men of an active witness of Christ's love in the world (37).

Article 38 lists those attitudes of piety which were denounced as incorrect at Vatican II, including the extremes of excesses in maximalism and minimalism—the exaggeration of the form and content of marian piety such that it distorts doctrine, and the exaggeration of minimalism, the small-mindedness that minimizes Mary's function in salvation history and the Church. The document warns against vain credulity which focuses only on external practices and on a “sterile and ephemeral sentimentality” which contradicts the demand of the Gospels for active discipleship. Part two concludes with a reminder that the ultimate purpose of marian devotion is the glorification of God and the motivation of Christians to a committed life of discipleship.

The final section of *Marialis cultus* has to do with two specific marian devotions, the angelus and the rosary. The point of this section is to encourage the practice of these devotions, especially the rosary with its scriptural inspiration (44), Christological orientation (45), contemplative element (47), and liturgical connection (48). The structure of the rosary is outlined and analyzed (49-50), along with variations in the devotion (51), particularly its use in family prayer (52-54). The document's conclusion is entitled “Theological and Pastoral Value of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.” Marian devotion, according to *Marialis cultus*, is an intrinsic element of Christian worship, reflecting the Church's norm of prayer and of faith, which is rooted in scripture. The devotion is also rooted in the unique status and singular place of Mary in the Church, as its preeminent member, example and

Mother. But the devotion ultimately finds its origin in the freely given love of God (56). Mary's exemplarity does not overshadow Christ's, but is subordinate to it, but in this subordinate place still has "great pastoral effectiveness," providing the faithful "the opportunity for growing in divine grace" which is the goal of pastoral activity (57). Though the historical moment is one characterized by ambiguity, and perplexity even typifies the ecclesial moment to some degree (58), the work of explicating and promoting marian devotion in the context of the liturgical reform will yield "an ever more lively and adoring worship of God."

Paul VI's teaching in *Marialis cultus*, particularly his emphasis on marian exemplarity, provides a guide for continuing mariological reflection. The guidelines set out in the document for marian devotion—its compliance with biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological norms—complements, and in many ways, completes the teaching of Vatican II on the Mother of God.

1.12 Conclusion

De Fiores identifies as one of the tasks of postconciliar ecclesiology the "reflection on the understanding of mary in an ecclesiological key and of the Church in a mariological key" (482). The following chapters represent one attempt at carrying out this task. Mariology before Vatican II focused on Mary's privileges, viewed her in isolation from the rest of theology—christology, ecclesiology, liturgy—and was dependent on private revelation. Moreover, the Council itself changed at the vote to include Mary in *Lumen gentium*—it was a vote to view her in relation to Christ and the Church, to return her to her scriptural and patristic understanding, and to shift the Church's understanding of Mary from a mystery in

isolation to a person with a continuing function in salvation history. That role centers on Mary's exemplarity and her mediation. This vote, and the change in Mariology that followed it, mirrors the change in ecclesiology at Vatican II, from perfect society to People of God, from Church in isolation to Church in relation to the world, to other Christians, to other religions. With it, the Council moved the Church from non-historical orthodoxy to true openness, *aggiornamento*.

The fate of Mary and the fate of the Church are linked at Vatican II. However, the linking of the two can be beneficial or harmful, and moreover it can be done in a variety of ways. The next three chapters of this dissertation will analyze three attempts to link Mariology and ecclesiology in the years after the council.

CHAPTER TWO

A FEMININE ECCLESIOLOGY: MARY AS ARCHETYPE OF THE CHURCH

The work of Hans Urs von Balthasar represents one of the first attempts after the Council to focus on Mary's uniqueness—in this case specifically her gender—as the basis of an ecclesiological construct. His theological aesthetics and the prominent role played by Mary in his ecclesiology operate as an important source for the role Mary plays in the ecclesial reflections of John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI. Although Hans Urs von Balthasar did not take part in the Second Vatican Council, he considered the work of the Council, particularly its reflections on the Church, to be an important starting point for his own theology, and his Mariology/ecclesiology in particular. He takes seriously the inclusion of the Marian schema in *Lumen gentium*, but finds some fault with the Council's general treatment of Mariology.

Balthasar's work is at once deeply mystical—his ecclesiology is mostly concerned with the concept of the Church as mystery—and political, since his reflections on Mary as the prototype for the Church bring with them profound implications for the theology of the sexes and of ministry. At times, Balthasar's work reflects a somewhat esoteric quality, focusing for example on the inner workings of the Trinity at length. Nevertheless, his work, particularly his ecclesial reflection, has important, concrete implications for the Church today. The focus on sexual difference as a centerpiece of his theology makes Balthasar's work particularly vulnerable to quick interpretation, to facile

utilization by groups waging the culture war in the US Catholic Church. This chapter will look closely at Balthasar's ecclesiology, which, I judge, is based on his theology of the sexes and his interpretation of Mary's role in salvation history.

Balthasar's focus on Mary's womanhood makes her femininity the symbol of the Church as it stands before God: obedient, receptive and open. Mary's role as an exemplar of the faith is tied intimately to her gender, particularly to her motherhood of Jesus and, symbolically, of all the faithful. Thus she serves as a model for the whole people of God vis-à-vis the Trinitarian God. Mary, the perfect woman and perfect example of faith is obedient to God's will, receptive to God's initiative, and open to God's plan for her life. Balthasar's church is feminine and his ecclesiology, like the rest of his theological reflection, hinges on the fundamental polarity of human life as he understands it: sexual difference.¹³⁴

Balthasar's theological project, which centers on a theological aesthetics, is elaborated in the trilogy of his major works: the seven-volume *Glory of the Lord*,¹³⁵ the five-volume *Theo-Drama*¹³⁶, and the three-volume *Theo-Logic*.¹³⁷ He is also the author of many more pastoral texts, including various articles for the journal *Communio*. These

¹³⁴ For an exposition of von Balthasar's writings, see the work of David Schindler, especially, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Theology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996); also Brendan Leahy, *The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000). Von Balthasar took part in the creation of the journal *Communio*, and his work and that of his expositors can frequently be found there. See especially vols. 17 (W 1990) and 23 (S 1996) for Balthasar's ecclesiological reflections.

¹³⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, eds. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

¹³⁶ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994).

¹³⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000).

pastoral texts will figure prominently in this chapter, because it is here that the implications of Balthasar's mariological ecclesiology are most clear. However, parts of *Theo-Drama*, particularly those sections of the work that deal with his theology of the sexes, will also appear in the chapter. This chapter begins with a section analyzing Balthasar's relationship to and reception of the Second Vatican Council. Then, after an analysis of his theology of the sexes as it appears in *Theo-Drama* and other sources, the chapter analyzes Balthasar's ecclesiology including the themes of nuptiality, femininity and masculinity, as exemplified in Marian receptivity and Petrine office.

Critics of this ecclesial understanding note the problematic anthropological assumptions that ground it. Moreover, the question of the enduring receptivity (which some interpret as passivity) of Mary vis-à-vis God, when extrapolated in the contemporary ecclesial situation, seems to contradict the basic equality of the people of God regardless of gender, especially given the hierarchical organization of the Church, and its all-male citizenry. Perhaps the biggest question critics pose to this view is the validity of the rigid gender constructs that ground the ecclesiology elaborated by von Balthasar and those who are influenced by him.

2.1 Balthasar and Vatican II

Hans Urs von Balthasar, a Swiss theologian most well-known for his voluminous works on aesthetics and theology, did not participate in the Second Vatican Council. He was not invited by any bishop as a personal *peritus*, nor was he an observer. Still he considered the work of the Council important for his own thought. Particularly influential was the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, and its eighth chapter on Mary. Balthasar did not think, however, that the Council had adequately

addressed the theme of Mary, protesting the ambiguous placement of Mary in the Church as a lacuna in the Council's work. He set out to correct this oversight with his own interpretation of Mary's role as the archetype of the Church, an interpretation based heavily on his theology of the sexes.

The notion of the Church as a mystery, or a sacrament, appears first in *Lumen gentium* and can be said to underlie the council's description of the Church. This image also serves as the guiding notion of Balthasar's theology of Church. Indeed, much of his writing on the Church centers around the desire to explicate, or reflect upon, the mystery at the heart of the Church. In his introduction to "Spouse of the Word" an ecclesiological treatise, he states: "The Church, insofar as she is the bride of Christ, remains enshrouded in mystery....The Church is a mystery of love, to be approached only with reverence. Many windows have been opened for us to see into the center, but in the most secret chamber the Church remains hidden."¹³⁸ For Balthasar, then, ecclesial reflection should not focus on the outward form of the Church, its presence on earth and its structure and mission, but rather on "the inmost essence of the Church, and if this cannot be expressed in words, ...the outward form of its manifestation."¹³⁹

Because Balthasar depends greatly on the image of the Church as Christ's body¹⁴⁰ and even more on the image of Church as Christ's bride, the intimate tie between Christ and the Church means the Church originates where Christ does, in the Trinity. The

¹³⁸ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology II: Spouse of the Word*, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 7.

¹³⁹ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ See Balthasar, *Spouse*, 21.

Church is then “the outflowing love of the Lord (and through him, of the Trinity).”¹⁴¹ The inmost essence, the secret mystery, shares its origin and life in the life of the Trinity, and is, to an extent, inscrutable. Balthasar’s ecclesiology, then, represents a spiritual reflection on the ultimately unknowable inner mystery of the Church. It is this genre of spiritual reflection on ecclesial reality, that gives Balthasar’s work its “starkly idiosyncratic”¹⁴² tone.

Balthasar found the Second Vatican Council’s inclusion of the theme Mary in *Lumen gentium* to be a significant step toward understanding Mariology and ecclesiology as deeply intertwined, and as a reuniting of the mystical element in the Church (which he describes as “marial” and “feminine”) with the more mundane, outwardly visible element. He proposes this intertwining as the original ecclesiological understanding of the medieval Church, an understanding Balthasar wishes to reintroduce. This matters greatly to Balthasar, who writes that “a Church stripped of this all-embracing [maternal/feminine] sphere is in danger of being reduced to a purely sociological entity or, at best, is far more vulnerable to sociological criticism than a Church conceived in terms of the ancient *mysterium* vision.”¹⁴³ For him, the medievals understood the Church correctly, through “prereflectively.” “[In the High Middle Ages] great art could reproduce the mystery [of the innermost essence of the Church] in its imagery, on the basis of an as yet *undisputed aesthetic and religious correspondence between the inward*

¹⁴¹ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 22.

¹⁴² These words were used by Lucy Gardner to describe Balthasar’s treatment of Mary, but can also be applied to his understanding of the Church. See Gardener, “Balthasar and the Figure of Mary” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge, UK, The Cambridge University Press, 2004) 65.

¹⁴³ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 184.

and the outward, mystery and form.”¹⁴⁴ As a result of the cleavage of form and content perpetrated by the Enlightenment, with its focus on ideas and rationality, the aesthetic as a vehicle of symbolism has been reduced, according to Balthasar, to the realm of the mythical, which does not do it justice. It is his desire to return to, or recapitulate and reformulate for our day, the “medieval, nonreflective aesthetic system of correspondence between the inner nature of the Kingdom of God and its outward appearance”¹⁴⁵ that drives his reflection on the mystery of the Church.

Balthasar’s emphasis on the notion of Church as mystery leads him to disparage the Council’s choice of ecclesiological image, namely the Church as “people of God.”¹⁴⁶ “Nevertheless, the Church is first of all a *mysterium* (as Jesus is God’s only-begotten son first of all and not as an afterthought), and as this *mysterium* she is Christ’s Body and Bride. And only by being this *mysterium* does she become the “people of God,” a socio-psychological reality.”¹⁴⁷ Here it is clear that while the Council opted for “people of God,” Balthasar retains his preference to the images of body and bride, which, though mentioned in *Lumen gentium*, do not have the same prominence. Still, he does not reject the symbol outright. Instead, Balthasar implies that the image of “people of God” is more suited to the people of Israel, the Old Testament, and is superceded by the new covenant established in Jesus and begun in Mary’s virginal conception of Christ. He likens the

¹⁴⁴ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 16-17.

¹⁴⁵ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ The term “People of God” appears 47 times in *Lumen gentium*, while “Bride,” Balthasar’s preferred image for the church appears a mere 16 times.

¹⁴⁷ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 24.

image of “people of God” to the synagogue,¹⁴⁸ notes that “people” does not refer to the Church described in Ephesians 5 as a pure entity “without spot or wrinkle”, but rather to an amalgam of persons, including sinners.¹⁴⁹ “It is the mystical, marial element in the Church which distinguishes it from the People of God in the Old Testament.”¹⁵⁰ With Mary, then, in particular with the Annunciation and Mary’s conception of Jesus, the Church gains an intimate relationship with the Trinity that the image People of God cannot convey.

Clearly for Balthasar, People of God is deficient because it does not account for the inmost truth of the Church, namely its mysterious grounding in the Trinity and therefore its pure holiness, which exists on earth, though in a way that is not completely understood. One notes Balthasar’s wistful tone when, decrying the medieval relegation of the “spotless” Church to the eschatological realm, he states that “this was a Church that had already resigned herself to not being spotless and was already on the way to the ‘sociological’ Church of the present day. There could be no going back to the patristic ‘hypostasis’ of the pure Church....”¹⁵¹ Balthasar believes that the Church on earth somehow remains the spotless bride of Ephesians 5. His foregrounding of the Church as utter mystery allows him to break away from the understanding of the Church as People

¹⁴⁸ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 7.

¹⁴⁹ “The early Church fathers refer as a matter of course to Mother Church as the ‘bride without spot or blemish’. We encounter this wholly loving, all-holy Church in Augustine too, who inclined more and more to locate the reality of this immaculate Church in eschatological time. This, however, throws a critical light on the certitude (never doubted, thought never reflectively explored) which was based on the data of Scripture and the contrast between the (never altogether spotless) synagogue and the Church wholly cleansed by Christ’s blood.....” *Office of Peter*, 191.

¹⁵⁰ Balthasar, *Prayer*, 72.

¹⁵¹ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 195.

of God envisioned in Vatican II, focusing his attention instead on recapitulating that mysterious hypostasis of the earthly Church and the spotless bride he finds in patristic writing.

However, Balthasar claims that the patristic notion of hypostasis cannot simply be reinstated in the present in the same way it existed in the patristic period, due to the different historical context of the present. In order to reinvigorate it, Balthasar points to historical factors that he believes point to the abiding truth of the hypostatic Church. The most important of these is the phenomenon of marian devotion. He writes “it must be generally acknowledged that in the very period when the alleged ‘hypostasis’ of the (pure) Church is losing its previously unchallenged credibility (roughly from the Carolingian period), the historical person of Mary begins to come into greater prominence as the Realsymbol of the (pure) Church.”¹⁵² Balthasar points to the rise in marian devotion and mariological interest as evidence of the continuation of the pure center of the Church, the spotless bride. It is in this way that Mary is the archetype of the Church. He refers to Mary as the Church’s “particular mirror”¹⁵³ in which the Church can see the relationship between itself and the virgin mother as a dialectical one. The Church, in honoring Mary, recognizes the difference between itself and Mary, namely that the Church’s spotlessness is an eschatological reality it cannot realize on earth and Mary’s spotless virginity is the prefiguring of that eschatological ecclesial reality. As it comes more closely to resembling Mary, whom Balthasar sees as perfect and completely

¹⁵² Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 196.

¹⁵³ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 24.

ignorant of self-reflection, the Church is less subject to the temptation of seeing itself in the spotless virgin Mary.

The elaborate and at times excessive marian devotion that flourished in the time prior to Vatican II served an important role, according to Balthasar, in allowing Vatican II to once again relate the Church and Mary. The excesses of marian devotion were due in part to the desire to conceptualize “the delicate *mysterium* of Mary”¹⁵⁴, and were rightly corrected by the magisterium. Still, Balthasar believes they were indispensable in preserving the core of the Church: “The essential thing is that, in the history of the *ecclesia immaculata*, the core, i.e., the *Realsymbol*, Mary, came into prominence at the right time to prevent that idea of the Church from disintegrating into mediocrity and ultimately into sociology.”¹⁵⁵ Marian devotion was at heart devotion to the immaculate core of the Church, and therefore profitable. The bishops at Vatican II, in deciding to include Mary in the ecclesiological treatise, recapitulate the relationship between the Church and spotlessness, virginity, holiness, and perfection.

Balthasar, in accordance with Vatican II, believes strongly that Mary is the Church’s archetype. Her life is the perfect model of obedience, openness and disponibility to God; “the preeminent example of a prayerful obedience, an existence wholly conformed to Christ, utterly directed to God and to the salvation of the free world, perfectly receptive to, accepting of, and compliant with God’s will.”¹⁵⁶ In truth, she is the ideal disciple, and as Christ’s mother, holds a unique place in the Church because of her

¹⁵⁴ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 202.

¹⁵⁵ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 202.

¹⁵⁶ Gardner, “Balthasar and Mary” 65.

singular relationship to Jesus. Her motherhood of Jesus relates her directly to the trinitarian God, and thus the center of the Church, the pure, immaculate one whose symbol is Mary is enfolded, however indirectly, into the trinitarian life. “Mary is given to us as a prototype so that the Church may never forget the trinitarian dimension of her nuptial mystery.”¹⁵⁷ Mary, for Balthasar, is at the very center of salvation history, the mother of the Church who gives birth, not only to Jesus, but to his followers in faith. This conflation of Mary’s motherhood and the Church’s motherhood of all believers, an identification first made by Irenaeus, grounds Balthasar’s mariological and ecclesiological reflection.

The archetypal function of Mary for the Church, her modeling perfect discipleship and openness to God’s will, her exemplifying utter conformity to Christ are not insights unique to Balthasarian reflection.¹⁵⁸ What sets Balthasar’s Mariological assertions apart from those of other thinkers is that he grounds Mary’s qualities of openness, availability, receptivity and obedience in her being a female. For Balthasar, Mary’s gender determines her place in salvation history.

For this reason, Balthasar was not entirely pleased with the Council’s work. He points to the mariological sections of *Lumen gentium* as deficient, failing “to give attention to a number of themes that...seem essential,” chief among these, the “man-

¹⁵⁷ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 163.

¹⁵⁸For the patristic understanding of Mary-Church parallelism, see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. T. Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999); Hugo Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*; Alois Müller, *Ecclesia–Maria: Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche*, Paradosis: Beiträge zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur und Theologie, ed. O. Perler, (Freiburg/Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1953²); Joseph C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia: An inquiry into the concept of the Church as Mother in early Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1943).

woman aspect.”¹⁵⁹ He describes as minimalistic the Council’s treatment of the relationship between Mary and the faithful, understood in moral terms rather than symbolic prototypical terms. While Balthasar agrees with the Council’s acknowledgment of Mary as the archetype of the Church,¹⁶⁰ for him the relationship between Mary and the Church hinges on his understanding of the relationship between the sexes. Thus, it is impossible to understand Balthasar’s Mariology, which is rooted in his ecclesiology, without first examining his theology of the sexes on which his concept of Mary draws heavily.

2.2 Balthasar’s Theology of the Sexes

Balthasar holds that there is no more fundamental truth of human existence in the created order than the polarity between the two sexes.¹⁶¹ From the physical differences between man and woman Balthasar argues that women and men are ontologically distinct, though, he insists, equal in dignity before God. He privileges the second creation story in Genesis, claiming, almost as a matter of fact, that “both [man and woman] are created by God, but the woman is made from the man.”¹⁶² Extrapolating from his understanding of sexual relations “in all times and cultures,”¹⁶³ where the man

¹⁵⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama, Volume III The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 317.

¹⁶⁰ LG 53, 65.

¹⁶¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, 283.

¹⁶² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, 340. See also 286, referring to Eve’s “procession from Adam” and 289 where the text of Ephesians 5 is said to refer to Genesis 2:24, “that is, man and woman are ‘one flesh’ because the woman comes from the man.”

¹⁶³ Corrine Crammer, “One Sex or Two: Balthasar’s Theology of the Sexes” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge, UK, The Cambridge University Press, 2004), 99.

initiates sexual activity, Balthasar ascribes action, initiative, responsibility and leadership to males, calling these masculine features. In a complementary way, he attributes openness, availability, receptivity, and obedience to females, calling these traits feminine, or womanly.

Balthasar devotes a great deal of time in his work to the task of defining woman. She is man's answer, the gaze that meets his in a responsive manner, she is also man's helpmate and home. Woman is also, according to Balthasar, "the vessel of fulfillment specially designed for him."¹⁶⁴ Here again he clearly privileges the second creation story in Genesis, specifically when, in Genesis 2:18, God sets out to make Adam a "helper as his partner."¹⁶⁵ In the story, after creating every animal and finding it an unsuitable partner, God creates Eve from Adam's body and in her he finds a suitable companion. This account of creation greatly informs how Balthasar describes the relationship between the sexes. Woman as man's answer, his fulfillment and even his glory are all images rooted in this second story of creation.

Also informing Balthasar's understanding of the relationship between man and woman is his perception of the reproductive act. Based on this, he judges that it is woman's role to be "receptive and open," responding to man's initiative "through reproduction," that is, by giving the child back to the man as a response.¹⁶⁶ Here Balthasar relies on the assumption that women conceive "from" men, that the man's contribution in reproduction is the generative one, whereas the woman's role is one of

¹⁶⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 285.

¹⁶⁵ Genesis 2:18, New Revised Standard Version.

¹⁶⁶ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 286.

passive nurturing.¹⁶⁷ This is rooted in the notion that the man's sperm is the sole source of life, which is nurtured by the woman in the womb. In this understanding the woman's role cannot be described as generative, except in a passive way. Thus, Mary's physical role in the incarnation was one of "purely womanly...surrender"¹⁶⁸ where her body (her womb) is used as the vessel of the incarnation. Womanliness is characterized not only by surrender and receptivity, but also by a lack of understanding, which Balthasar also names lack of self-knowledge.¹⁶⁹ Femininity is not "dominance and comprehension...but...humble and handmaidenly following and service."¹⁷⁰ Woman's lack of comprehension as implied here is ontological, in her nature. All these womanly characteristics derive from Balthasar's understanding of sexual reproduction, where the woman is merely passive and the man both initiates the sex act and provides the life that the woman merely fosters. In this interpretation of the reproductive act, priority and even privilege is given to the man, in whom the power of life resides. The woman is merely secondary, a home or vessel in which the life generated by the man resides. Consequently in Balthasar's understanding of the sexes, he gives priority to the man.

¹⁶⁷ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 184. While he does not use the word "passive," it is difficult to see how Balthasar contrasts the man's "generative" role to the woman's in procreation without her being a passive recipient of what is being generated by the man. Balthasar seems to deny this in *Theo-Drama*: "Nor is she [woman] simply the vessel of *his* fruitfulness; she is equipped with her own explicit fruitfulness." But he betrays this egalitarian impulse when he continues: "Yet her fruitfulness is not a primary fruitfulness: It is an answering fruitfulness, designed to receive man's fruitfulness (which, in itself is helpless) and bring it to its 'fullness'." Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 285. An ability or gift, in this case "fruitfulness," that is secondary and "answering" cannot be initiatory, and because it is relegated to reaction, in this case through the nurturing environment of the womb (which a woman does not actively cultivate) I interpret woman's role in reproduction, and a central feature of femininity, as passivity, despite Balthasar's words.

¹⁶⁸ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 163.

¹⁶⁹ "Her [Mary's] faith, with its love and hope, in its womanly openness to the divine...is coextensive with the masculine principle...even though it is not part of its womanly character to comprehend totally, in the manner of the Bridegroom...." Balthasar, *Spouse*, 161.

¹⁷⁰ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 165.

Despite this subordination of woman to man, Balthasar goes to great pains to underscore the fundamental equality between men and women. It is only because woman is equal in rank with man that she is a suitable helper, that she is truly man's fulfillment. Clearly Balthasar, influenced perhaps by the first creation story of Genesis 1, wants to hold it in tension with the deductions he makes about men and women from Genesis 2. However, his reliance on the second creation story as a cornerstone of his understanding of human sexual difference biases his thought in favor of this account. He asserts that the woman comes from the man, and that femininity is "latent within him."¹⁷¹

Fewer pages in Balthasar's corpus are dedicated to defining the nature of man and maleness than he devotes to defining woman. Deductively one can gather that man's nature is to initiate, to lead, to comprehend, to master. Maleness is synonymous with activity and generation, creation and dominance. Perhaps the only deficiency in maleness is man's need for woman. Balthasar describes man as a word that calls out, incomplete without an answer. Woman is the answer and simultaneously the gaze that looks at the man while he looks around.¹⁷² Man needs woman for completion, though Balthasar refers to the man as primary, "the primary remains unfulfilled without the secondary."¹⁷³ So, the woman remains secondary, reacting to man's initiatory action, answering man's call. She waits on the man, her gaze fixed firmly on him, until his call comes forth, to which she responds. Thus while the man seems to need a woman, it is for the purpose of self-fulfillment—finding something that is latent within himself—and not a true

¹⁷¹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 284.

¹⁷² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 285. Corinne Crammer questions the notion of equality underlying this assertion: "It is also unclear why, if woman is the man's answering gaze, he is not in turn her answering gaze," 106.

¹⁷³ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 284.

encounter with an equal. “The primary needs a partner of equal rank and dignity for its own fulfillment.”¹⁷⁴

In stating that one sex, man, is primary and in need of something for fulfillment, he relegates the counterpart to a state of inequality. This inequality would not exist, of course, if Balthasar were to suggest that woman needs man for her own fulfillment and that masculinity is latent within the feminine, two assertions he avoids. Moreover, if for Balthasar woman is “essentially an answer,” this is incompatible with equality.¹⁷⁵ The necessity of woman does not imply her equal status, this is obvious. The nature of an answer is secondary—an answer cannot initiate, and is therefore less, than the proposition or question which summons it.

Although Balthasar repeatedly asserts that woman and man are equal before God, much of his language and imagery belie this. Despite their equality before God, for Balthasar, man, though incomplete and needing woman for fulfillment, is described in terms that make him dominant, primary. In addition, Balthasar’s entire schema of a polarity between man and woman separates the sexes, while attempting to maintain their equal status. But this is merely simulated equality. By affirming their status as polar opposites, Balthasar creates an unbridgeable gap between the sexes, which cannot be linked with only the word “equal.” The difference in the roles of man and woman, the man’s status as primary, belie the equality Balthasar asserts. Man is in need of woman, but for his fulfillment, the fulfillment of woman, it would seem, is in answering the man. Man’s attention is directed toward the world, while woman’s gaze is fixed on the man.

¹⁷⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 284.

¹⁷⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 284.

But woman is not ordered solely toward the man. What Balthasar calls “the sphere of the feminine in all her essential characteristics: Virgin, Bride, Mother”¹⁷⁶ reveals the second orientation of woman—to the child. In many ways, woman is dyadic and man is monadic. She is man’s answer and the fruit of their relationship;¹⁷⁷ she is both his personal answer and answer that transcends the relationship with man, when she bears a child that is more than the seed given her by man in sexual relations;¹⁷⁸ she is spouse and mother. Balthasar roots this duality in woman in the sexual sphere, as he states in a note: “As a sexual being, man is explicitly monadic, whereas the woman is dyadic: the area of woman that interests the man sexually is not the same that the child desires for its sustenance.”¹⁷⁹ Presumably, Balthasar here refers to woman’s breasts, of interest to a child for nourishment and to a woman’s sex organs, of interest to the man for intercourse. The dyadic nature of woman means makes her difficult to define, in some sense murky or mysterious. The man on the other hand, can be defined simply, he has only the task of initiating, naming and awaiting the woman’s answer.

But Balthasar does not only give priority to the male only by making him the initiator, the generative force in the created order. By equating man with singularity and woman with duality, Balthasar, perhaps unintentionally, makes the man inherently more God-like, since God is one and simple. Moreover, man’s role, which includes act, initiative, leadership, origination are necessarily more compatible with God’s own being than woman’s role, which is passive, reactive and subordinate. Although Balthasar

¹⁷⁶ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 183.

¹⁷⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 287.

¹⁷⁸ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 286.

¹⁷⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 290, n.7.

cautions against equating man with spirit and woman with earth,¹⁸⁰ the manner in which he defines femininity and masculinity unavoidably prioritizes man at the expense of woman. This apparent subordination is not assuaged by the fact that he extrapolates these roles into the God-human relationship, so that “the creature can only be secondary, responsive, ‘feminine’ vis-à-vis God.”¹⁸¹

The attribution of sexual difference to the Trinity, in the form of a “suprasexuality,”¹⁸² grounds Balthasar’s reflections on the importance of sexual difference, in God’s own nature and justifies the subordination of femininity to masculinity.¹⁸³ Ultimately for Balthasar, God is necessarily male. This fact is supported by Christ’s incarnation as a man: “the One who comes forth from the Father is designated, as a human being he must be a man if his mission is to represent the Origin, the Father, in the world.”¹⁸⁴ Because he is God in the world, Jesus must be a man, since God must be generative and initiatory vis-à-vis the world. However, even within the

¹⁸⁰ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 286.

¹⁸¹ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 287.

¹⁸² Crammer, 94.

¹⁸³ Balthasar also attributes feminine qualities to the Holy Spirit, particularly when describing the role of the Spirit in the Annunciation: “that Spirit who, as Divine Person, ever active but ‘hidden’, discreetly yields to the mutual love of Father and Son...Mary...appears as the temple of the Holy Spirit who breathes through her whole being and who, without drawing attention to himself, initiates her...” *Office of Peter*, 208. The qualities of hiddenness, discreetness and humility all belong to the feminine sphere. Thus, Balthasar, while maintaining the maleness of God vis-à-vis the world, introduces sexual characteristics to the divine persons, based on their relationship to one another. It is unclear whether within the Godhead the feminine remains somehow less than the masculine.

¹⁸⁴ Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 284.

Trinity, the Son has a “quasi-feminine” role,¹⁸⁵ because he is sent, and the Father (presumably the masculine role) sends.

Woman, then, as vessel (an image which connotes emptiness), as answer (which requires a question), as fulfillment (which requires need) is ultimately not a subject at all.¹⁸⁶ Man remains the primary, solitary subject who acts first. Woman reacts. It is difficult to see how this dependence does not signal subordination, or how it is compatible with equality, since the man is not similarly dependent on the woman. Man, who is an actor in need of a woman for fulfillment and happiness, differs greatly from woman whose being, essentially, is defined as an answer, one who reacts, a means or vessel of fulfillment.

2.3 Nuptiality in Balthasar's Ecclesiology

A foundational element of Balthasar's theology of the sexes, as well as his ecclesiology, is the nuptial metaphor for the relationship between the Church and Christ. Understandably, it plays a prominent role in Balthasar's writing. In this analogy taken from Ephesians, with roots in the Hebrew Scripture's depictions of a bridal relationship between Israel and Yahweh, Christ is depicted as the bridegroom with the Church as his bride. The metaphor powerfully presents the intimate, personal relationship between God and the Church. It is meant to illustrate a relationship of fidelity, unity, and familiarity with Christ. However, the nuptial metaphor, when used ecclesiologically, hinges upon Balthasar's theology of the sexes, the inequality between men and women, and the

¹⁸⁵ “For if the Logos proceeds eternally from the eternal Father, is he not at least quasi-feminine vis-à-vis the latter?” Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, 283.

¹⁸⁶ This conclusion is debated among Balthasarian scholars. See Corinne Crammer “One Sex or Two;” also David Moss and Lucy Gardner, eds. *Balthasar at the End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999).

superiority of the man in particular. Susan Ross notes that the use of the bride/bridegroom metaphor originated in the inequality between men and women that characterized their relationships.¹⁸⁷ That is, the spousal relationship was deemed an adequate parallel for the relationship between Christ and the Church because like Christ, men were charged with leading, being the head of the household, initiating, acting. Women, on the other hand, were to be responsive, receptive. Balthasar, though not ignorant of this cultural legacy, is less bothered by it: “Hence the simile of nuptial and bridal fidelity applied to Yahweh and Israel, which, despite the Oriental subordination of the woman to the man, is the product of a genuine relationship between two persons.”¹⁸⁸ His focus lies in the interpersonal relationship signified by marriage, demonstrating the closeness and intimacy in the God-human relationship. This is a worthy aspect of the nuptial metaphor. Balthasar attributes the subordination of woman to man to a dissimilarity which occurs in any analogy: “In the supernatural sphere of the Church one cannot assume and encounter, on equal terms, between two partners for the imparting of the seed, as one can in the natural order.”¹⁸⁹ Here it seems that Balthasar genuinely believes in the equality of women and men in the created order, and that he does not employ the inequality inherent in the cultural metaphor as a lynchpin for his utilization of the nuptial metaphor. He seems to be referring solely to the supernatural relationship when he says: “In the great text of Ephesians 5, the comparison between husband and wife on the one hand and Christ and the Church on the other obliges us to take the image

¹⁸⁷ Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 111.

¹⁸⁸ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 97.

¹⁸⁹ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 158.

of head and body in a nuptial and personal sense. In this setting, ‘head’ means the ruling partner, the lord, in a marriage; ‘body’ means completion and unification in the physical, nuptial order.”¹⁹⁰ Still, he identifies the ruling partner as masculine, the “lord,” and echoes his notion of woman as man’s completion, also identifying the feminine partner with the body. Furthermore, Balthasar’s comments on the nature of woman as receptive, open, essentially passive being belie the apparent equality he wishes to preserve.¹⁹¹ His use of Mary as the archetype of the Church and of the individual Christian, both of which are essentially feminine before God, testify to his reliance on the inequality latent in the spousal metaphor to substantiate his mariological and ecclesiological claims.

¹⁹⁰ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 147.

¹⁹¹ While Balthasar never explicitly uses the term “passive” or “passivity,” it is difficult to avoid in his understanding of the sexes, where woman is completely dependent on man’s initiating activity. Woman is an answer or response to, and the complement of, the man. These images are reactive. To my mind, Balthasar sees women as necessarily passive, as well as the church, in particular because God for him must be masculine (and therefore active, initiatory, and generative in creation). See also Corinne Crammer’s remarks on Balthasar’s description of masculine characteristics, which “involve activity (men are doers and makers)” 99.

2.4 *The Feminine Sphere: The Marian Church*

Masculinity and femininity function as important categories for Balthasar, particularly for his ecclesiology. He describes the Church as a masculine-feminine polarity, embodied in the persons of Peter and Mary respectively, with John as a mediating principle within the polarity. Paul also figures in the Christological constellation, as the representative of “the mission to the Gentiles.” Balthasar opposes Paul to James, “who plays opposite Paul, embodying the principle of ‘tradition’ in the infant Church.”¹⁹² However Balthasar mentions neither Paul or James when discussing the fundamental identity of the church, which for him is female. Balthasar refers to these characters alternately as a constellation, the different spheres in, or pillars of the Church. He first makes reference to the constellation in an essay, “The Real Christ in his Constellation,”¹⁹³ in the context of elaborating a christology. Because human beings cannot be understood apart from the community of which they are a part, one must take account of those persons surrounding Jesus who are most important. For Christology, the constellation serves as an “inner determinant” of Jesus being and acting in the world.¹⁹⁴

The theologically significant community surrounding Jesus includes John the Baptist, Mary, Peter, John, James and Paul. John serves as a mediating figure between Peter and Mary in the Church, the force for unity between the marian Church of love and the Petrine Church of office. At the foot of the cross in John 20, “he who at the beginning of the Acts is always shown together with Peter becomes ‘son’ and guardian of the

¹⁹² Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 279.

¹⁹³ Balthasar, *Office*, 131-182.

¹⁹⁴ Balthasar, *Office*, 136.

Mother. Thus he is shifted into a discrete but totally indispensable central position (mediating between Peter and Mary, between the official, masculine Church and the feminine Church) which alone can give these two dimensions of the Church's *mysterium* their place and proportion."¹⁹⁵ John's place in the mystery of the Church, which is interestingly neither masculine nor feminine but somewhere between these, both unifies the Church and makes the Church which is utter mystery for Balthasar more intelligible.¹⁹⁶ For ecclesiology, Balthasar contends that Peter, Paul, James and John are the most influential figures, but all are "undergirded by another, more fundamental person...his Mother, Mary."¹⁹⁷ As with his anthropology, and some would argue his entire view of reality, Balthasar understands the church as part of a male-female polarity. Peter, who signifies the masculine element in the Church and therefore the official, institutional aspect will be discussed in more detail below. For now, Mary as the feminine principle in the Church will be the focus of this section.

Mary is essential for Balthasar. Her role in his ecclesiology is difficult to underestimate. Because Mary is a woman, Balthasar can unite his understanding of femininity to his understanding of the Church.

The Church flowing forth from Christ finds her personal center in Mary as well as the full realization of her idea as Church. Her faith, with its love and hope, in its womanly openness to the divine, the Divine-human

¹⁹⁵ Balthasar, *Office*, 145.

¹⁹⁶ The fluidity of gender in the symbolism of John is an interesting contrast to the rigid gender roles assigned to Peter and Mary. Paul does not receive attention in Balthasar's description of the marian/feminine church, but he is entrusted with a masculine, public role, that of mission. It is interesting to note, however, the Paul's charismatic mission is not tied to the petrine role of office, indicating that grace may be available outside the clerical sphere. Paul's role remains masculine, though, since Balthasar did not choose, for example, Mary Magdalene for the charismatic or apostolic part.

¹⁹⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 279.

Bridegroom, is coextensive with the masculine principle, embedded in the Church, of office and sacrament, even though it is not part of its womanly character to comprehend totally, in the manner of the Bridegroom, the objective spirit there contained. She is not the Word but the adequate response awaited by God from the created sphere and produced in it by his grace through the word.¹⁹⁸

Mary, the *Realsymbol* of the Church, imparts all the qualities of womanliness—openness, receptivity, lack of comprehension and response, as seen in the citation above—to the Church. The Church as realized in Mary is characterized by love, hope, and faith, the vessel for God's (masculine, decisive, knowing, initiating) grace. Balthasar declares Mary's fiat the pinnacle of femininity and consequently of a human person's right relationship with God. In Mary's fiat Balthasar finds the cornerstone of both femininity and discipleship. Her virginal motherhood mirrors that of the Church, which gives birth to believers in faith. Moreover her motherhood of Christ prefigures her motherhood of the Church, the birth of which Balthasar identifies with the moment when Jesus' side is pierced on the cross, with Mary standing at the foot of the cross. In this sense Mary is Christ's mother but also his daughter—she gave birth to him but is a member of the Church which his death brought about. Through her obedience, her virginity, and her motherhood, Mary typifies the Church to such an extent that for Balthasar, there is nearly an identity between the two.¹⁹⁹

For Balthasar, Mary's discipleship lies in one paradigmatic act: her fiat, or her affirmative answer to the angel who comes to her at the annunciation. Balthasar constantly refers to Mary's acceptance of the angel's offer as a moment of utter receptivity, perfect surrender to the will of God. This, for him, is the perfect human

¹⁹⁸ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 161.

¹⁹⁹ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 334.

response to God's initiative. He credits Mary's reaction to her capacity for "letting be" and for "making room for another within herself."²⁰⁰ These images invoke Mary's pregnancy to illustrate the role of the human being in relation to God. But these roles for Balthasar are necessarily feminine ones. Still, she is a model for the whole Church: "The Marian *fiat*, unequalled in its perfection, is the all-inclusive, protective, and directive form of all ecclesial life. It is the interior form of *communio*, insofar as this is an unlimited mutual acceptance..."²⁰¹ The whole Church, male and female is feminine, for Balthasar, because it is essentially receptive to God's masculine activity. In Mary's consent to the angel, she not only participates in the birth of Christ in the world, but also, indirectly, in the birth of the Church he founded. Mary thus has a share in the birth of the Church and continues to exert a maternal influence upon it, which mirrors the Church's own motherhood.²⁰²

2.5 The Masculine Sphere: Office in the Church

While the entire Church is feminine in character when viewed in relationship to God, the historical, institutional Church requires something more, and so the clergy exists in order to ensure Christ's presence with the Church on earth. "So it is entrusted to men who, though they belong to the overall feminine modality of the Church, are selected from her and remain in her to exercise their office; their function is to embody Christ,

²⁰⁰ Balthasar, *Office*, 206.

²⁰¹ Balthasar, *Office*, 208.

²⁰² The notion of the Church as a mother who gives birth to sinners into eternal life through the waters of baptism is quite ancient, finding its biblical roots in references to the Church as a mother in Galatians 4:26 and Revelation 12, and elaborated by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5) and Cyprian (*The Unity of the Catholic Church* 23), among others.

who comes to the Church to make her fruitful.”²⁰³ Thus the clergy represent God for the Church, and since God is fundamentally masculine (active, initiating) in character, men serve as images of this God. Elsewhere he writes: “...the Church is perceived as the sphere of the feminine in all her essential characteristics: Virgin, Bride, Mother. By contrast, a distinctly masculine character is ascribed to office. This is a matter of historical knowledge.”²⁰⁴ Presumably, Balthasar is here referring to the tradition of the all-male priesthood in the Church. However, the exact “matter of historical knowledge” is unclear in this text. According to Balthasar, the sphere of office, the hierarchy, carries on Christ’s mission in a symbolic way, bestowing graces on the Church. Peter, whom Jesus appointed the head of the Church during his time on earth, leads the Church through his successor the Pope. To properly understand this masculine, Petrine aspect of Balthasar’s ecclesiology, it is important to look at his biblical hermeneutics.

For Balthasar, scripture is self-interpreting. By this he means that with faith and because of God’s grace, the interpreter should attempt to grasp God’s intended meaning of a scriptural text. Balthasar considers the Bible to be christocentric in its entirety, reading the Old Testament as preparing the way for the incarnation, and the New Testament in light of the incarnation.²⁰⁵ The centrality of aesthetics for his theology manifests itself in Balthasar’s understanding of the biblical text. Scripture represents a locus of God’s self-revelation, and is thus marked by the beauty, completeness and perfection of God’s self-disclosure. The text is an intentional piece of the aesthetic

²⁰³ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, 354.

²⁰⁴ Balthasar, *Office*, 183.

²⁰⁵ W.T. Dickens, “Balthasar’s Biblical Hermeneutics” *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 182.

structure of creation and should be interpreted as such. While historical-critical analysis yields much information about the origins of a text, this cannot be confused with meaning—origin and meaning, for Balthasar, are distinct. Thus, according to W. T. Dickens, for Balthasar “the Bible is a self-glossing, christologically focused story, the proper interpretation of which is enabled by the Holy Spirit and nourished by regular liturgical worship.”²⁰⁶

Balthasar draws many of his biblical references from John’s gospel, prizing especially the image of Mary at Cana and of Mary at the foot of the cross. Despite references to the annunciation as portrayed in the Lucan narrative, elsewhere in his writings Balthasar seems to prize John’s gospel. In his writings Balthasar refers to John, the beloved disciple, as the author of the text: “From the end of the second century, the tradition of the Church has held that the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved,’ mentioned in the fourth gospel, is the author of that gospel and identical with the John ‘Son of Thunder’ found in the synoptics.”²⁰⁷ Elsewhere he refers to John as “the last hagiographer of the New Covenant” and claims that “John was present with Jesus from the beginning. He was the first literally to accomplish the walking to Jesus and then with him (Jn 1:35-39 is undoubtedly autobiographical....).”²⁰⁸ This literal approach is consistent because for Balthasar, John plays an indispensable role in the aesthetic structure of the Church, mediating between the Marian, feminine, sphere of obedient discipleship and the Petrine, masculine sphere of office.

²⁰⁶ Dickens, 175.

²⁰⁷ Balthasar, *Office*, 222. Biblical scholars have disputed the fact that John was the “beloved disciple.” See Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1999) 38-41.

²⁰⁸ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 90.

Even looking beyond his acceptance of the biblical figure of John as the author of the gospel written 100 years later, we can say that Balthasar reads the scriptures in a somewhat ahistorical or naively narrative way, culminating in what Frederick Cwiekowski would call a “blueprint approach” to his ecclesiology: the notion that Jesus established the Church, as it is today, during his ministry.²⁰⁹ Balthasar all but says just that in the third volume of *Theo-Drama*: “Every institutional aspect of the Church was prepared by Jesus during his public ministry.”²¹⁰ He leaves little room for historical development of the Church, particularly of the hierarchy as evidenced in the *Didache*, the letters of Clement of Rome and those of Ignatius of Antioch.²¹¹

Because of his aesthetic interpretation of the biblical text, it is easy to see why Balthasar’s Peter remains Jesus’ definitive choice to lead the Church, and why Peter must have historical successors to continue this task, whereas Mary and John do not require such successors. “[T]he form of the Marian faith (consenting to God’s activity) is offered to the *catholica* as the model of all being and acting, while the catholicity of Peter’s pastoral care, though all-embracing in its object, is not communicable in its specific uniqueness.”²¹² Balthasar’s belief that Jesus specifically appointed Peter as the first pope endows Peter’s office with divine intent, but more importantly, specificity. This specificity requires the continuation of Peter’s role in history in a specific office,

²⁰⁹ Cwiekowski, *The Beginnings of the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

²¹⁰ Balthasar, *Theo-Drama III*, 354.

²¹¹ “Didache” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman, Reprint, (Boston: Harvard University Press/Loeb Classical Library, 2003), and “The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch,” in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, Library of Christian Classics, (New York: Collier Books), 1970.

²¹² Balthasar, *Office*, 206.

where Mary's faithful discipleship (surely also the product of divine intent) serves as a more general model for the whole Church.

As a crucial member of the constellation surrounding Jesus, the one to which Jesus himself entrusted authority over the Church, Peter's role in the Church is complex and indispensable. While Balthasar portrays Peter sometimes as a sinner, occasionally as a weak man, the normative nature of Jesus' "promotion" of Peter to visible head of the Church is emphasized.²¹³ Peter's main task, and that of his successors, is to maintain the unity of the Church. Balthasar places Peter's authoritative role in contrast to the purely loving role of Mary. "The keys' that Peter holds can open or close: this demands discretion, discernment, examination of the particular case and the giving of judgment. Peter must be concerned with the sinner that stands outside the Marian center of love..., and thus must exercise a purely paternal role."²¹⁴ In this way Balthasar's theology of the sexes colors his understanding of the roles of Peter and Mary. Peter's concern moves outward, while the Marian center knows nothing of discernment, examination and judgment, only love. Indeed, while Peter's office, which is one of service and obedience to Christ out of love for him, is characterized by pastoral care in the service of unity, the Petrine office cannot apply in a universal way to the whole Church, the way the Marian role of loving self-surrender characterizes the entire Church in its feminine response to God. Balthasar repeatedly asserts that office in the Church is not the same as the priesthood of all believers.²¹⁵ Furthermore, those men in office have a role that is

²¹³ Balthasar, *Office*, 154.

²¹⁴ Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 209

²¹⁵ "...ecclesial ministry (which is completely misunderstood if viewed merely as the 'common priesthood of all the faithful') is established within the all-embracing, holy, immaculate, truly loving Church." Balthasar, *Office*, 183.

somewhat “eccentric” insofar as their role is one of judgment through law.²¹⁶ The clergy in their role as confessors and absolvers of sin, for Balthasar, stand outside the Marian center of the Church (eccentric) because they must rule authoritatively, which requires judgment. This judgment is based on Christ’s role as Judge, and is thus a continuation of his ministry.

Although Balthasar argues that clerical ministry finds its source in Christ, he stresses that all such ministry is service, even calling it slavery, and that “the higher the office the more it should be this.”²¹⁷ Furthermore, Balthasar speaks eloquently of the consequences of entrusting a sinner like Peter with such authority in the Church, particularly for Peter’s successors, who are fallible human beings. He cautions that in the modern world, “naturally, Peter too must be continually learning; he must not think that he can carry out his office in isolation (which could easily tempt him to overvalue it).”²¹⁸ Office in the Church is not a position of unlimited power; the pope does not stand alone at the top of the “pyramid” of the Church—this place belongs to Christ.²¹⁹ Yet for Balthasar, the hierarchical makeup of the Church is indispensable because Christ established it while on earth.

These comments make clear that Balthasar does not advocate a Church where the pope serves as some kind of dictator, wielding power indiscriminately. Nor does he seem to endorse a Church where everyone must agree with the pope on all counts or where the pope is infallible in all his pronouncements. Nevertheless by endowing all office in the

²¹⁶ Balthasar, *Office*, 209.

²¹⁷ Balthasar, *Office*, 210. Other references to ministry as service *Office* 141, 185, 214

²¹⁸ Balthasar, *Office*, 314.

²¹⁹ Balthasar, *Office*, 308.

Church with a specifically, necessarily, masculine role, Balthasar places the clergy somehow above the (always described as feminine) laity in the Church—the clergy gives gifts and the laity receives them: “Considered in the terms of Church law, it is true that the representative of the ‘office’ has the masculine function of the one who gives, and the ‘laity’ the feminine one of receiving, but it does not follow that the clergy are ‘more,’ the laity ‘less,’ the Church.”²²⁰ The whole (feminine) Church accepts and nurtures the gift referred to above, God’s word, in order to more adequately resemble the virginal Church purified by Christ the Bridegroom.

Even though the clergy belong to the feminine mode of receiving the Word, since the word does not belong to them, their role is to represent God, and is therefore a masculine role. Earlier in the same essay Balthasar makes a clearer distinction between the masculine function of the clergy and the feminine Church to which it ministers: “It is to such a Christian womanly role that the creature is educated by the structural, sacramental Church: the office and the Sacrament are forms of communicating the seed; they belong to the male aspect, but their end is to lead the bride to her womanly function and fortify her in it.”²²¹ Office and sacrament are the prerogative of the clergy and in this sense they stand apart from the Church as the ones who give the Church sacramental grace. This notion is similar to Balthasar’s claim about Peter’s eccentric role: as judge, Peter must stand outside the Marian center of love in order to judge and to deal with those sinners who also stand outside that center.

²²⁰ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 158.

²²¹ Balthasar, *Spouse*, 158.

Despite his claim that the clergy belong to the feminine aspect of the Church, because their role involves imitation and representation of God's masculine presence to the Church, the clergy stand outside the feminine modality of the Church in some way. Once again, because he associates masculinity with divinity and femininity with creatureliness, the clergy's masculine role cannot but be more important, more godlike, than the feminine role of the laity.²²² Still, one wonders if the laity are, indeed, necessary. If those in office are fundamentally feminine with respect to God, who is utterly masculine, then the work of the church could transpire between these two poles, and the masculine-feminine polarity Balthasar prizes would be intact. Ultimately, this ecclesiological scheme results in a double form of hierarchical dualism: the superiority of the male over the female is intertwined with the superiority of the clergy over the laity.

2.6 Conclusion

Balthasar constructs an ecclesiology based on an aesthetic interpretation of scripture, and an imaginative understanding of how sexual difference plays a key role in salvation history. From an anthropological assumption about Jesus, namely that the community surrounding him is important to understanding Jesus more fully, Balthasar makes mariological and ecclesiological claims about the roles two in Jesus' community play: Mary and Peter. Mary, the prototype of woman and therefore of the Church's relationship with God, fits perfectly with Balthasar's understanding of woman as secondary, responsive, open and obedient. "Unquestionably, Mary, as Mother, has the

²²² A further question arises about the church's activity in the world. If the church acts in order to improve the world, is this only the official, sacramental, and therefore masculine church that acts? In this scenario, the world would be feminine, receiving the gifts of the witness of the church. But the entire church cannot be masculine, as that is reserved for God. Yet Vatican II called the church to deeper engagement with the world in *Gaudium et spes*. For a Balthasarian response to these questions, see Schindler's *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*.

precedence that belongs to the all-embracing element. She bore and reared Jesus, and she maintains the same maternal relationship to his work in all its aspects. But she does this self-effacingly, humbly making room for others; she decides nothing, commands nothing, she is a ‘handmaid,’ hoping that others will understand her attitude.... She is womb and earth, from which the divine seed can draw whatever it needs.”²²³ It is difficult to imagine women as full human beings when they neither decide nor command anything, and when Balthasar reduces real women to their reproductive abilities. Mary’s womanhood determines her place in salvation history, and the extent of her example rests on her feminine capabilities. Thus, her gift is to be self-effacing, humble, hopeful of being understood but not commanding or deciding, merely being a passive player in God’s dramatic action.

By contrast, Peter, though a creature and therefore primarily feminine in relation to God and Christ, is according to Balthasar appointed by Christ to a masculine position in the Church. By selecting Peter as the head of the twelve apostles, Christ was ensuring his presence with his bride, the Church, through his representatives, those who minister in the Church. “Peter is the office: untiring activity of the whole person purely for the name and the intentions of the Lord, who needs someone, anyone, though whom his authority....can become concretely manifest.”²²⁴ Peter stands as the quintessential man—acting, deciding, judging, able to stand outside the center of the Church in order to rule with authority. Through him and his successors, activity, initiative, and law remain with the Church, uniting it under God’s will.

²²³ Balthasar, *Office*, 291.

²²⁴ Balthasar, *Office*, 292.

But this ecclesiological reflection is not without some faults. Balthasar's uniting of Mary, the Church and femininity, complemented by his belief in God's utter masculinity, represented and to some extent continued in Peter and his successors, ultimately undermines the goals of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the Council's desire for the laity's full participation in the mission of the Church. Despite his claims that the clergy are not more and the laity less, this cannot but be true given the anthropological-ecclesiological typology he puts forth. For Balthasar, who adheres strongly to Cwiekowski's "blueprint approach" to ecclesiology, the masculine/feminine polarity in the Church (between clergy and laity) was intended by Jesus (and, ultimately, by the Trinity) and is a direct consequence of Jesus' actions. Consequently, the laity is relegated to the role of the woman—passive, open, obedient. The clergy, who must be male in order to represent God's masculine relationship to the world, are the only ones who can act in the Church. The laity can only react, as can woman.

In truth, although he spends much time attempting to define woman, Balthasar does not do so. As the vessel of man's fulfillment, his answer, the reaction to his action, woman cannot be a subject. Instead, she is, as Corinne Crammer notes, "an undifferentiated plenum" with no center, no initiative, truly no subjectivity. This is the picture Balthasar paints of the laity, both male and female, as well—not only in relationship to God, but also in relationship to those who represent the masculine aspect of the terrestrial Church, the clergy and especially the hierarchy. Balthasar's is not a Church where the pilgrim people of God all take active participation in the liturgy and the life of the Church. Instead, Balthasar's Church, the virginal bride, awaits God's action (communicated through God's representatives) and reacts to it. Thus, he returns to an

earlier conception of the laity, one where their apostolate is to assist the clergy in their work. Moreover, extrapolating his notion of the Church as feminine into the relationship between the Church and the world, Balthasar's theology advocates a Church that cannot be an actor or an initiator on the global scene on behalf of justice. Instead the feminine Church merely reacts in the world, and ceases to be an initiating force for good.

Balthasar's Church is more *societas perfecta* than people of God or even *communio*. His theology of the sexes, when coupled with his understanding of Mary/Church as feminine and God/Peter as masculine, ultimately undermines the goals of Vatican II, the integration and maturation of the laity, and prize a hierarchy without oversight, assuming the clergy channels God's masculine authority transparently.

CHAPTER THREE

MARY IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS: A FEMINIST CRITICAL APPROPRIATION OF MARIOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY

While the previous chapter and this chapter both take sex and gender seriously, Elizabeth Johnson's feminist critical understanding of Mary and of the church differs greatly from Balthasar's emphasis on Mary's female sex. Johnson is one of the most influential theologians of her generation. Her reflection on feminism in the Catholic context has consistently refreshed Christian theology, and her fidelity to the Catholic tradition with an eye to the full human flourishing of men and women has set the tone for rigorous and creative Catholic thought. More importantly for this dissertation, Johnson has reconstructed the figure of Mary and the communion of saints through the lens of feminist theology. Her most recent work, *Truly our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* builds upon her earlier study of the ancient Christian notion of the church as a holy communion.²²⁵ Johnson's understanding of Mary is intimately tied to her notion of the communion of saints, in particular her use of the communion of saints as an ecclesiological title, as I will argue. Because she roots Mary firmly in the communion of saints, Johnson explicitly affirms the tie between Mary and the church. In

²²⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

this way, she is one theologian who explicitly follows in the Mariological and ecclesiological footsteps of the Second Vatican Council. Although Johnson hesitates in calling Mary an ecclesiological paradigm, or a paradigmatic figure in any way, the attention she gives Mary testifies to the importance of this figure in the Christian tradition. This chapter seeks to explore the relationship between Johnson's ecclesial reflections as seen in her work *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*, and the image of Mary put forth in *Truly Our Sister*. Along the way, it will examine an issue at the heart of Johnson's methodology, and of debate in contemporary feminist theological reflection: the understanding and lasting value of the category "women's experience." For Johnson, "women's experience" is central—not just to her Mariology or ecclesiology, but to her entire approach to theology. Some feminists object to Johnson's use or interpretation of the term, and this chapter will highlight two such critiques, those of Nancy Dallavalle and Mary Aquin O'Neill.

3.1 Johnson, *Feminism and Mariology*²²⁶

For Elizabeth Johnson, theology is “a reflection on God and all things in light of God.”²²⁷ Because she is a feminist theologian, Johnson’s interpretation of the Christian tradition is rooted in her commitment to the full human flourishing of women. While she is committed to Christianity, she is not blind to the sexism that pervades the Christian Tradition. She strives to be faithful to her goal of women’s flourishing, which has been stunted by years of sexism. Johnson’s feminist theology begins with an analysis of sexism as dehumanizing to women both theoretically and practically, and as sinful in the Christian sense of that term. That is, the status of the male as superior to the female in thought (androcentrism) and in action (patriarchy) is a perversion, and not the will of God.²²⁸ Sexism in all its forms, for Johnson and other feminist theologians, removes or denies women’s baptismal dignity, their coequality with men: “Women are created equally in the image and likeness of God, equally redeemed by Christ, equally sanctified by the Holy Spirit; women are equally involved in the ongoing tragedy of sin and the mystery of grace, equally called to mission in this world, equally destined for life with God in glory.”²²⁹ The goal of feminist theology, then, is to speak a liberating word at a

²²⁶ The subtitle of this section is misleading, as there is no monolithic reality known as “feminism.” There exist, instead, various kinds of feminisms that differ in their contexts, ideals, values, goals, and generational makeup. For a description and analysis of some different varieties of feminism, see Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson, eds., *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996); also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland, eds., *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts* (London: SCM Press and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

²²⁷ Here Johnson borrows one of Aquinas’ definitions of theology. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 8.

²²⁸ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 22-24.

²²⁹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 8.

time in history when women are clamoring for justice, reclaiming the Christian tradition from the debilitating sexist overlay it wears to this day.

Johnson elaborates a three-step method for her work in *She Who Is*, a method she follows in her other writings as well. She begins by deconstructing patriarchal images, like the image of Mary is the perfect woman, which limits women's flourishing to the (unattainable) role of virginal motherhood. Johnson's next step is to scour the Christian Tradition for alternatives, frequently finding them in scripture or in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Johnson wishes to foreground those aspects of Tradition that promote women's full human flourishing and baptismal dignity. The final step in her method is to reconstruct the image in a liberating light, one that fosters women's thriving. The results of this process are neither matriarchal nor a reductionistic sameness for men and women. Instead, Johnson's hope is for transformation throughout the entire Christian community, ultimately, the blossoming of a communion of true mutuality and shared responsibility.

One key element of Johnson's reinterpretation of the Christian Tradition is what she calls "women's interpreted experience."²³⁰ She defines this broad category thus: There is no stereotypical norm. Yet living within patriarchal systems does forge among women recognizable experiences of suffering along with typical patterns of coping and victoriously resisting, strategies that enable women to survive."²³¹ In this statement, Johnson seems to be defining women's experience primarily as a feminist experience,

²³⁰ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 61.

²³¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 61.

with the notions of coping and resistance amid a patriarchal culture.²³² Yet she is clearly also taking into account women's historical and culturally conditioned experience, as she acknowledges that there is no wide-ranging norm for all the experiences of diverse women. She also makes a point of recognizing her own socio-historical standpoint, highlighting that she is but one voice in the "international spectrum" of women's voices.²³³ Johnson also uses phrases like "women's ways of being in the world," "the content of women's lives," "women's relational way of being."²³⁴ These references point to women's historical or socially conditioned experience. Johnson also utilizes the bodily experience of women, such as birth, to ground God-talk in *She Who Is*.²³⁵ It is evident that Johnson uses the category of "women's experience" in a variety of ways, a feature of her theology that her critics question. Because women's interpreted experience figures prominently in Johnson's feminist reinterpretation of Mary, the end of this chapter will analyze two critics of Johnson's work, Nancy Dallavalle and Mary Aquin O'Neill.

Johnson's reflection on Mary situates Mary within the communion of saints, the topic of *Friends of God and Prophets*. Her feminist marian reflections culminate in her book *Truly Our Sister*. This chapter will examine Johnson's concept of the communion of saints as an ecclesiological symbol. The chapter will consider Johnson's understanding

²³² Theologian Anne Carr identifies several types of experience utilized by feminist theologians, some of which I allude to in this section. She speaks of bodily, socialized, feminist, historical, individual, and Christian experience, all of which are used by different feminists who employ the term "women's experience" in their work. See Anne Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology" in *Freeing Theology*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco), 22-23.

²³³ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 11.

²³⁴ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 252-259.

²³⁵ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 101, 171-172, 175, 179-180, 185, 255-256, 259.

of Mary as disciple, particularly how Mary relates to the church as a preeminent member of the people of God. It will conclude with an analysis of two scholars' critiques of Johnson's use of the category "women's experience," as well as these critics' proposals for integrating feminist mariological and ecclesiological reflection.

Johnson's style of feminist theology takes sex and gender seriously, like Balthasar's theology, without making sexual differentiation the foundational aspect of humanity or anthropology. Rather, Johnson's critical correctives to the theory of complementarity that pervades the work of many Catholic theologians including Balthasar provide a different avenue for understanding the human being as *imago dei* and the church as a community of the People of God.

The similarities with Balthasar don't end with the importance of sexual differentiation to Christian theology. Johnson also takes the work of the Second Vatican Council seriously in her work. Of particular importance to Johnson are *Lumen gentium*'s call of the whole church to holiness and the inclusion of the marian schema as chapter eight of the same document. Also, similarly to Balthasar's reflection, Johnson's work has mystical and political foci. She devotes much of her work to re-imagining traditional theological concepts, but these re-imaginings take seriously the category of "women's experience" which, according to Johnson and many other feminists, has been ignored in mainstream patriarchal theology. By taking into account the experience of women as mothers, sisters, daughters, wives and partners, Johnson hopes to give a fuller, more accurate account of God's work in the world.

For the purposes of this dissertation, Johnson's work on the communion of saints and on Mary specifically will frame reflection on her use of marian imagery in ecclesiology. Like Balthasar, though with vastly differing conclusions, Johnson's understanding of the church as a communion of saints affects her understanding of Mary, a woman within that communion. While the reverse, that Johnson's Mariology intimately affects her ecclesiology is more difficult to prove, it is significant that Johnson admits, in the introduction to *Friends of God and Prophets*, that her book on the communion of saints began as a facet of a mariological project she was researching.²³⁶ The progress of her work prompted a book on the communion of saints, which I will argue is the operative ecclesiological title in Johnson's work. If the dangers of a mariologically-shaped ecclesiology can be seen in Balthasar's reflections on the church as receptive bride, perhaps the promise of a marian church is evident in Johnson's work.

3.2 *A Communion of Saints, Prophets, Friends: Johnson's ecclesiological reflections*

Though Johnson has yet to produce an explicitly ecclesiological work, some of her work has unmistakable ecclesiological implications. Johnson's 1998 volume *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* presents the most comprehensive outline of Johnson's ecclesiological thought. In contrast to Balthasar, Johnson develops her ecclesiology "from below." She highlights the human, historical, and even sinful, dimensions of the church. To use Avery Dulles's categories, she speaks of the church as sacrament, herald, servant and disciple, but de-

²³⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 1.

emphasizes the dimensions that Balthasar emphasizes--mystery and institution.²³⁷ The portrait that emerges is of the Church as the People of God, a community of ordinary and equal disciples called to holiness and gifted by the Spirit with diverse gifts and roles. This community of mutuality is non-hierarchical and inclusive of all, including the dead. The goal of this communion of saints is to embody the Spirit of God, sacramentally, in the world, through mutuality, compassion, and especially action for justice in active anticipation of God's kingdom to come.

By analyzing the eschatological concept of communion of saints, Johnson wishes to reclaim the symbol from its otherworldly connotation and resituate it in a more pragmatic light that emphasizes the holiness of the entire Christian community. To do this, she cites biblical evidence to include living Christians in the term “saints,” and then refocuses the holiness of sainthood to include the whole of the people of God. Johnson’s reflections on the features of the communion of saints, then, represent at least a “schematic ecclesiology.”²³⁸ This comes into focus in the first chapter of *Friends of God and Prophets*: “the whole church is a communion of saints.”²³⁹

Another source of evidence for the ecclesiological character of Johnson’s consideration of the communion of saints are her goals in reconstructing the image. Johnson speaks of hoping to “transform the church into a community of mutuality among

²³⁷ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

²³⁸ Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, “Our Companions Enfolded in the Love of Spirit-Sophia: Mariology and the Communion of Saints in the Theology of Elizabeth Johnson,” in *Things New and Old: Essays on the Theology of Elizabeth A. Johnson*, ed. Phyllis Zagano and Terrence W. Tilley (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 82.

²³⁹ Johnson, *Friends*, 60.

equal persons.”²⁴⁰ She expresses her desire for “a renewed Christian community...a society of mutuality and compassionate respect.”²⁴¹ When Johnson sets out to rehabilitate the image of the communion of saints, she also revitalizes the image of the church as a holy community. Whether or not this is intentional, Johnson’s goals for the image of the communion of saints are undoubtedly ecclesiological, because her underlying understanding of the communion of saints is ecclesiological.

When read in conjunction with her mariological monograph, *Truly our Sister*, it is clear that Johnson’s ecclesiological work serves as a framework for her Mariology, which clearly situates Mary of Nazareth within the communion of saints. Johnson thus represents another view, different from Balthasar’s, of the correlation between Mariology and ecclesiology begun in the modern era at Vatican II. What Johnson says about the communion of saints, for her a synonym for the church, must be applied to Mary because for Johnson Mary is undoubtedly a member of this communion. Thus the features of Johnson’s ecclesial reflection limn her portrait of Mary of Nazareth. Similarly, Johnson’s early reflections on Mary, especially her desire to emphasize Mary’s humanity and ascribe any divine attributes that accrued to the image of Mary over the centuries to God who should be imaged in male and female metaphor, are reflected in her feminist reconstruction of the communion of saints, a decidedly human community of which Mary is a part.

²⁴⁰ Johnson, *Friends*, 26.

²⁴¹ Johnson, *Friends*, 40.

This section of the dissertation will analyze the ecclesiological features of Johnson's communion of saints, which are rooted in biblical evidence, the documents of Vatican II and contemporary women's experience. The treatment of the church as a communion of saints spotlights holiness because of the notion of sainthood at its core. The ecclesiology implicit in *Friends of God and Prophets*, however, situates that holiness and refocuses it. Far from being a community of esoteric, mysterious individuals, the holiness prized by Johnson is an egalitarian holiness that, in the spirit of *Lumen gentium* is the shared by all members of the church regardless of state of life; a theo-centric holiness that has its foundation in the Holy Spirit; an active holiness that calls Christians to respond to God's initiative, and a far-reaching holiness that is inclusive, even of those who have died. Johnson's vision of the church, then, is human and historical, but also diversely charismatic and eschatological.

Even a cursory reading leaves it clear that Johnson understands the term "saints" in the Pauline sense, to refer to the whole Christian community.²⁴² Johnson wishes to recover the collective sense of the word "saints" utilized in the Pauline epistles to refer to the young Christian communities at Philippi, Corinth, and others. Contemporary Christians understand the notion of sainthood as a heroic society of those mostly men the church has elevated to the official status of saint through the process of canonization. Furthermore, they associate the communion of saints with the feast of All Saints, "that feast of splendid nobodies," all of whom currently enjoy the beatific vision that is their

²⁴² Johnson, *Friends*, 60. For examples of Paul's use of "saints" as a greeting for the early Christian communities, see Romans 1:7; Philippians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 1:1.

heavenly reward.²⁴³ Rarely does the average Christian understand himself or herself to be a part of that “cloud of witnesses” during their time on earth. In fact, Johnson notes that many Christian women’s self-awareness is precisely the opposite of this, as evidenced in the common assertion, “I’m no saint.”²⁴⁴ This self-perception is theologically problematic and runs against the earliest biblical understandings of sainthood.

Implicit in the notion of saintliness is the cornerstone of Johnson’s assertions about the communion of saints, her understanding of holiness. Holiness can refer to personal holiness, as is traditionally attributed to canonical saints, but it also applies collectively, as one of the four marks of the church. The worship and admiration of specific persons in the Christian community arose in the age of martyrs, where early Christians viewed the narratives of people’s faithfulness to Christianity unto death as paradigmatic and inspirational.²⁴⁵ Previous to this, however, saintliness or holiness was a characteristic of the entire people of God, an echo of the biblical notion of the holiness of God’s covenanted people. The bishops at Vatican II chose this biblical image, people of God, as the primary image for the Catholic Church.²⁴⁶

The holiness of the church does not belong to Catholics or Christians cumulatively, as the sum of the individual holiness of the church’s members. Rather, the church’s holiness exists through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the people of God.

²⁴³ Johnson, *Friends*, 8.

²⁴⁴ Johnson, *Friends*, 29.

²⁴⁵ For a Johnson’s treatment of sainthood in the age of martyrs see *Friends*, 71-94.

²⁴⁶ LG 6.

Thus it is God's holiness which belongs to the church as a community of covenanted people, and it is in this communal respect, and not personally, where Johnson identifies the primary definition of holiness.²⁴⁷ The church's holiness is prior both in time (because the Holy Spirit descends on the community gathered at Pentecost) and in importance, as holiness first belongs to the entire Christian community, by virtue of the Spirit of Christ. This community-wide holiness is a baptismal gift, shared by the whole church.

The communal holiness highlighted by Johnson, also emphasized by *Lumen gentium*, is wide-ranging and egalitarian. "Called by God, baptized in Christ and empowered by the gifts of the Spirit, the whole community enjoys a radical equality of relationship with the Holy One and, as sacred, each and every person has equal standing."²⁴⁸ Johnson's description of the Christian community echoes once again the bishops at Vatican II: "all have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God."²⁴⁹ Johnson builds on the Council's assertion of the equality of believers, incorporating the notion of the same holiness present throughout the community, and all share equally in the holiness of God.²⁵⁰ While this last point seems obvious in light of the text and spirit of *Lumen gentium*, the equality of holiness in the people of God has not translated into a structure of governance in the Catholic Church that takes this equality into account. Johnson states, "lamentably, the exclusion of women from the public

²⁴⁷ Johnson, *Friends*, 69.

²⁴⁸ Johnson, *Friends*, 63.

²⁴⁹ LG 41.

²⁵⁰ Johnson, *Friends*, 221.

culture of the church has resulted in a official memory that has erased a good part of the history of women's discipleship, giving the communion of saints a largely male face both in heaven *and on earth* [emphasis mine].²⁵¹ The sin of sexism pervades the public face of the church, and for Johnson this lack is not solely an injustice, but also and perhaps more importantly, a distortion of the nature of the communion of saints.²⁵²

In her study of the communion of saints, as in her Mariology, Johnson wants to clarify a negative point in order to highlight a positive characteristic of the communion of saints. Thus, the holiness proper to this communion is not a differentiated holiness, one for clergy or heroic saints and the other, lesser holiness for ordinary Christians. "The church is not divided into saints and non-saints."²⁵³ Instead, the whole church is saintly, the whole people of God partakes in God's holiness. Johnson pushes further than the bishops of Vatican II when she states that "considered both as an institution and a people, the historical church is a sinful church.... But the community of sinful yet redeemed men and women, justified by grace is the church and testifies...that the Spirit still moves in history."²⁵⁴ While the conciliar documents and papal statements stop short of attributing sinfulness to the church as an institution, Johnson does not hesitate to highlight the

²⁵¹ Johnson, *Friends*, 234.

²⁵² For Balthasar, of course, ministry is related more closely to masculinity than to holiness. The issue of Mary's holiness, for example, is never questioned. Her superiority in holiness to Peter is asserted. This has no effect on the masculine character of office in the church, because it is essential for Balthasar that the clergy represent Christ the Bridegroom to the church, the bride. See Balthasar, *Office of Peter*, 131-182, 227-265.

²⁵³ Johnson, *Friends*, 222.

²⁵⁴ Johnson, *Friends*, 228.

humanity of the *ecclesia semper reformanda*.²⁵⁵ The whole people of God, and the church as an institution, participate in the sinfulness of the church's actions just as they participate in the holiness of the Spirit of Christ. The historical church, argues Johnson can very obviously be sinful, but this does not mean that the Spirit has abandoned the church, because holiness continues to "spring up" even now.²⁵⁶

Johnson strives to explain that certain members of the people of God do not possess "more" holiness than others. Johnson emphasizes that the everyday lives of Christians have "a sacred character" which needs not be canonized to be considered saintly.²⁵⁷ The process of canonization has resulted in a truncated understanding of sainthood and, more importantly, of holiness. Johnson wishes "to highlight that the disjunctive, solitary, dramatic achievement, and in that sense the heroic [typical of the requirements for canonization], is characteristic of only some people's way to God and has traditionally reflected the experience of male elites."²⁵⁸ Women, who because of patriarchy were traditionally relegated to the private sphere, have been given historical short shrift in regards to sainthood. The process of canonization, centralized in the hands of the all-male clergy, has led to a distorted canon of saints, many of whom resemble the men in charge of canonization.²⁵⁹ Johnson highlights the sanctity of the everyday as a

²⁵⁵ The problematic nature of attributing sinfulness to the church is attested to in the writings of Karl Rahner. See Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations VI: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 253-294.

²⁵⁶ Johnson, *Friends*, 228.

²⁵⁷ Johnson, *Friends*, 229.

²⁵⁸ Johnson, *Friends*, 230.

²⁵⁹ Johnson, *Friends*, 102.

corrective to this over-emphasis on the heroic individual act of discipleship. In doing this, she hopes to broaden the understanding of holiness to include countless unnamed Christian men and women.

This broader understanding of holiness underscores another ecclesiological feature of Johnson's communion of saints, its non-hierarchical and egalitarian character. The communion of saints, for Johnson, includes the many unnamed saints who led holy, if ordinary, lives. But because there are not different kinds of holiness in the church, Johnson simultaneously expands the notion of holiness and makes the church more horizontal, in the sense that she reminds us of the essential equality of the whole people of God. Johnson's analysis of contemporary women's experience especially fuels this egalitarian re-imagining of the communion of saints. She draws on what she terms "women's practices of memory" in which the remembrance of women saints (even unnamed) subverts patriarchal images of women as subservient and simultaneously spurs contemporary women to lead lives of creative fidelity.²⁶⁰ "Practices of memory then release hope for women as a group by breaking the patriarchal silence about the vast heritage of female witness...."²⁶¹ Women's remembering enriches the whole church, not just female Christians, and promotes action on behalf of justice. Johnson sifts through the Christian theological tradition and combines her findings with her gleanings from women's practices of remembering to reconstruct the image of the communion of saints in a liberative way.

²⁶⁰ Johnson, *Friends*, 169.

²⁶¹ Johnson, *Friends*, 169.

The reconstructed image of the communion of saints is inclusive, not only of men and women, but of rich and poor, famous and unknown. Johnson also includes the dead in her understanding of the communion of saints. This makes sense, because for most Christians the notion of the communion of saints is confined to those unnamed Christians who led holy lives. Johnson, instead, positions those Christians who have died as both inspiration and impetus for action on behalf of justice and “a company of friends whose destiny shines as a beacon of hope” for the Christian church on earth.²⁶² This is possible because of the common baptism shared by all believers. Baptized in the same Spirit, all Christians on earth are empowered by those who have gone before. The church on earth ceases to be the only arena of solidarity, as Johnson extends this notion beyond the reach of death, and into the embrace of God, as she poetically describes the destiny of the saints in heaven. Their destiny spurs action in the contemporary church on behalf of justice. In addition to the eschatological nature of the church that Johnson is emphasizing here, she also highlights the egalitarian nature of the communion of saints. By including the dead with the living, and the well-known and heroic saints with those who lived in ordinary, but obscure holiness, Johnson paints a radically egalitarian picture. This inclusive, egalitarian community represents Johnson’s vision for the church—a diverse, inclusive communion where sanctity is celebrated and recognized in all its forms.

The presence of those members of the communion of saints who are no longer living gives Johnson the opportunity to analyze how the system of sainthood operates within the church. She outlines two models: companionship and patronage. The earlier

²⁶² Johnson, *Friends*, 214.

model, that of companionship, flourishes during the persecution of Christians, where the Christian communities looked to the martyrs as paradigmatic figures whose courage was to be emulated. With time, that model receded and was replaced by the patronage model, in which the saints functioned much like feudal lords, interceding before the king (God) on behalf of the powerless petitioners. Adulation replaces emulation in the patronage model, and saints' lives appear so heroic as to be inimitable. However, evidence shows that the earliest Christian communities, saints were viewed as "companions in hope" who encouraged those who remained on earth to fight for justice.²⁶³ Moreover, "from a feminist theological perspective, the symbol of the communion of saints understood through its historical development becomes ripe for retrieval within the companionship model."²⁶⁴ The companionship model fits the earliest Christian witness and with the inclusive model of the contemporary church which Johnson wishes to propose. It therefore corresponds perfectly to Johnson's feminist theological method of deconstructing, searching the tradition for alternatives, and reconstructing in light of contemporary experience.²⁶⁵ At the same time, it opens the door to Johnson's mariological reflection, which will be examined in detail below.

A final important ecclesiological feature of the communion of saints for Johnson is its profound pneumatological character. Throughout *Friends of God and Prophets*, Johnson makes reference to the Holy Spirit, particularly when discussing the indwelling

²⁶³ Johnson, *Friends*, 203.

²⁶⁴ Johnson, *Friends*, 105.

²⁶⁵ For a more thorough description of her method, see Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Continuum, 1996) 17-41.

of God in the church, the emulation of the saints as an activity fueled by the Spirit, and the notion of companionship common to the cult of the saints and the Holy Spirit. Johnson's list of characteristics of the communion of saints (and the church) includes "theocentric community."²⁶⁶ The communion of saints, like the church, is a community founded by and centered on God. The lifeblood of this communion is the "vibrant, life-giving Spirit" of Christ.²⁶⁷ The Holy Spirit acts in the church to inspire the kind of communion Johnson describes as ideal: mutuality, compassion, and action for justice. She notes the charisms of the Holy Spirit that empower the saints, and repeatedly describes the work of the Spirit as life-giving, vivifying. The Holy Spirit gives abundant life, so wherever patriarchy is truncating the lives of women, keeping them from the holiness that is their "birthright," the Spirit is lacking. A goal of the communion of saints is to embody this vitalizing Spirit, sacramentally, in the world.

This sacramental embodiment of the Spirit cannot be a merely passive idolizing of the saints, nor can it be relegated to the realm of prayer where the Christian community entreats the saints for blessings in the model of patronage. Rather, the gifts of the Spirit, for Johnson, are evidenced in action. The lives of the saints call for a response to God's grace, and all who respond to God's grace are members of the communion of saints.²⁶⁸ It is not enough to hope or pray for holiness. The Spirit of God empowers Christians to act out their faithfulness. "The summons to remember and to act because of the lives

²⁶⁶ Johnson, *Friends*, 61.

²⁶⁷ Johnson, *Friends*, 40.

²⁶⁸ Johnson, *Friends*, 224.

cherished in memory resounds as an integral part of contemporary women's spiritual journey and as a liberating paradigm for the ekklesia as a whole."²⁶⁹ Memory, for Johnson, does not remain a faculty of the mind, but provides an incentive for action, especially compassionate action on behalf of justice for the disenfranchised.

By their example and with the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints on earth happily accepts the "lessons of encouragement" offered by those who have gone before.²⁷⁰ It is the same Spirit which binds the Christian saints on earth to those in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the source of the hope shared by the whole communion of saints, as well as the bond of companionship that unites the church militant and the church triumphant. In her depiction of the communion of saints, Johnson reunites these two images of the church into one inclusive, egalitarian and eschatological community.

Johnson's ecclesiological understanding of the communion of saints highlights the image of the church as a sacrament of holiness in the world—through the actions of ordinary people, many unknown, the Spirit is made manifest in the world, especially through solidarity with those on the margins and action on behalf of justice. The church is egalitarian, because by virtue of baptism all Christians share a common call to holiness and a common source of empowerment to live out that holiness, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Along these lines, Johnson's vision of the church can also be said to be profoundly pneumatological—hinging on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the communion of

²⁶⁹ Johnson, *Friends*, 170.

²⁷⁰ Augustine, Sermon 280.6 in Johnson, *Friends*, 234.

saints. Perhaps most importantly for her mariological reflection, Johnson insists that the church is a profoundly human and historical institution, just as she will assert Mary's utter humanity by attempting to reconstruct Mary's historical context. The church is made up of ordinary and equal people who are all called to holiness, each in a particular way. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the church is prompted to act by those Christians whose lives have already ended, from their heavenly triumph they offer encouragement to those who struggle for holiness in an unjust world. In many ways, these characteristics of Johnson's ecclesiology also describe her image of Mary—historical and holy, ordinary and blessed.

3.3 Mary of Nazareth, Companion in Hope: Johnson's Mariology

The relationship of feminist theology to Mariology is one fraught with ambiguity. Women scholars, coming to consciousness of the profound sexism in dominant Catholic theology, viewed Mary early on as a symbol complicit in women's oppression in the Catholic Church. Rosemary Radford Ruether offers one example: "Mary is not the model of woman as an autonomous person but a fantasy by which celibate males sublimate their sexuality into an ideal relationship with a virgin mother, while projecting the hostility caused by this sexual repression into misogynist feelings toward real women...."²⁷¹ The Mary of much prior Mariology, for Ruether (and to some extent for Johnson) is an empty symbol, a placeholder where the sexism latent in sectors of the all-male hierarchy was

²⁷¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Alienation of Women from the Church" in *Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?*, ed. Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 282.

allowed, and possibly encouraged, to flourish. For Mary Daly, Mary in the theologies elaborated by men resembled “a Christmas tree, killed though apparently alive.”²⁷² In the male-dominated field of theology, Mariology served as an outlet for idealized images of the “ideal” woman, without any relation to the lives of real women. Many times, Mary was viewed as the great exception, the one woman blessed by God, the counterpoint to Eve who remained the model for all other women.²⁷³ Faced with this impossible, and hostile, ideal, many feminist theologians like Daly rejected completely the image of Mary as a fruitful source for their theological reflection. Mariology was viewed as a vestige of patriarchal theology that could be redeemed for contemporary women only with great difficulty.

Johnson exemplifies one approach of feminist theology to Mariology in an early essay, “The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women.”²⁷⁴ In it, Johnson attempts to analyze the future of Mariology after the Second Vatican Council and in light of the “sea change occurring in our society in the self-perception and self-definition of women.”²⁷⁵ Twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, and after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Johnson compares the Mariology of the preconciliar era to what she terms the reality of contemporary women. The reality of feminist theologians like Johnson is

²⁷² Anne Loades “The Virgin Mary and the Feminist Quest” in *After Eve*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 162.

²⁷³ See Elizabeth Johnson’s discussion of the “Madonna-whore” complex in *Truly Our Sister*, 23-25, see also Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, especially the Prologue and p. 50-67.

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Johnson, “The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women” *Horizons* 12/1 (1985), 116-135.

²⁷⁵ Johnson, “Marian Tradition,” 116-117.

marked by an increasing awareness of the marginalization of women in society and church, a desire to plumb the Christian tradition in search of liberating alternatives, and a hopeful reworking of traditional symbols, like Mary, with the goal of men and women's full flourishing.

Upon analyzing the figure of Mary in the dominant Christian theology of 1985, Johnson finds that the symbol of Mary, and Mariology as a whole "Has legitimated women's subordination, has presided over the evil rather than challenging it."²⁷⁶ The focus on Mary's consent, her subordination to her Son, and her submissive response to God's initiative results in a Mariology that keeps women subordinate and submissive, and prevents them from autonomous personhood. Additionally, the impossible ideal of Mary as both virgin and mother thwarts women's flourishing; Mary's utter dependence on her male son and a God exclusively imaged as male undermines women's active, adult participation in the church. Because Mary alone was viewed as blessed by theologians like Augustine, Jerome, Tertullian and Aquinas, women through the centuries were equated with Eve, on whom sole blame for the Fall was placed. Patriarchal theology claims that in Mary, "the great exception," the dignity of women is celebrated, but Johnson adamantly disagrees. "Instead of seeing Mary as a type, a symbol of the capacity of women it [the marian tradition] has exalted Mary as the great exception in comparison to whom all other women are denigrated."²⁷⁷ Women were viewed as submissive, passive recipients of God's (and men's) initiative.

²⁷⁶ Johnson, "Marian Tradition," 120.

²⁷⁷ Johnson, "Marian Tradition," 124.

Much traditional Mariology was (and is, as in the case of Balthasar) supported by a theory of gender complementarity, where the difference between the sexes implies a dominant-subordinate relationship. Here the male is viewed as having initiative, power, and public influence while the female is responsive, passive, and destined for the private sphere. This notion of complementarity, when inscribed with the parallel of the relationship between Christ and the church, necessarily prioritizes the male (equated with Christ's divine role) to the detriment of the female (the human church). This notion of complementarity, for Johnson, "is a mask for an ideology which places woman in a stereotyped role where she is praised for living at less than full capacity."²⁷⁸ Mary is exalted precisely because she is less than, and obedient/submissive to, her son and a masculine God.

In addition to the views of Mary as the great exception among sinful women and the use of Mary's fiat to bolster the notion of gender complementarity, Johnson critiques the marian tradition with its ideals of Mary as handmaid, virgin, and mother, for contributing to the infantilization of women in the church, the denigration of female sexuality, and the elevation of domesticity as the main vocation for women. These problems have permeated the Christian tradition, to the extent that some feminist theologians see no value in the symbol of Mary. But Johnson's view differs in that while she recognizes the profound problems within the marian tradition, she is unwilling to let go of "one of the few female-focused symbols which has persisted in the Christian

²⁷⁸ Johnson, "Marian Tradition," 125.

community.”²⁷⁹ Instead of disregarding Mary as a hopelessly sexist aspect of the androcentric Christian tradition, Johnson seeks to rehabilitate the symbol of Mary, in this essay and in much of her later work. The Mary Johnson seeks to reflect upon is the poor peasant Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus whose path to holiness is marked by courage, strength and intellect. As a preeminent member of the communion of saints, which I will argue is the theological symbol that most closely resembles Johnson’s understanding of the Christian church, Mary represents for Johnson one of the countless women disciples whose life should be emulated and whose example encourages the present-day people of God.

Johnson took several years to elaborate a full Mariology. She published the end result of her years of research in 2003. Entitled *Truly our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*, Johnson’s Mariology situates Mary squarely within the communion of saints, a symbol which Johnson makes coextensive with the church. For Johnson, Mary is a member of the communion of saints, the church. Though Johnson describes Mary as a paradigmatic figure in the communion of saints, Mary’s life helps bring into relief the lives of the myriad nameless women who lived lives of holiness in obscurity and who today are part of the same communion. Johnson’s Mariology makes three main assertions, one of which is a methodological point, complemented by two descriptive, and I will argue ecclesiological, points about Mary. Johnson first highlights the things that Mary is not, in an effort to return her to a status of “normalcy” devoid of the paradigmatic overlay that patriarchal theology has used to make her the great female

²⁷⁹ Johnson, “Marian Tradition,” 130.

exception. After this deconstruction, Johnson emphasizes Mary's ordinariness. It is precisely this ordinary character of Mary's life that makes her holiness extraordinary, for Johnson. Like the church, Mary is called to holiness in the ordinary, and also like the church, Mary is suffused with the Holy Spirit.

Johnson devotes much of the first half of *Truly our Sister* to deconstructing the image of Mary in patriarchal theology. She pays particular attention to theological systems which idealize Mary, such as that of Balthasar and Leonardo Boff.²⁸⁰ Neither mariological option proves palatable for Johnson, whose feminist goal of the full human flourishing of men and women is paramount. Both these options fall short. Balthasar idolizes a Mary in the image of the ideal woman for him: a submissive, receptive, asexual creature who completely lacks agency. Boff's image of Mary is no less idealized. Both he and Edward Schillebeeckx call Mary the feminine face of God, but in both cases, femininity is reduced to motherhood, sweetness and tenderness. This image not only mistakes male fantasies of motherhood for the reality of motherhood which involves courage, initiative, stamina and strength, they reduce femininity to one, albeit tender, aspect of what remains an overarchingly male God.²⁸¹ But Mary for Johnson is nothing of what these theologies describe.

²⁸⁰ Johnson, *Truly*, 47-70 discusses Balthasar's notion of Mary as the ideal woman, 71-92 analyzes Boff's concept of Mary as the maternal face of God. See also Elizabeth Johnson, "Mary and the Female Face of God" *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 500-526; Johnson's "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women" *Horizons* 12/1(1985), 116-135.

²⁸¹ Johnson, *Truly*, 86. See also "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female" *Theological Studies* 45 (1984), 441-465.

Part of Johnson's deconstruction involves theological images laden with patriarchal ideology that only serve to alienate real women from the church and truncate their flourishing. Consequently, when it comes to Mary, Johnson says the following:

First and foremost Mary is not a model, a type, an archetype, a prototype, an icon, a representative figure, a theological idea, an ideological cipher, a metaphor, a utopian principle, a feminine principle, a feminine essence, the image of the eternal feminine, an ideal disciple, ideal woman, ideal mother, a myth, a persona, a corporate personality, and everywoman, a cultural artifact, a literary device, a motif, an exemplar, a paradigm, a sign or in any other way a religious symbol.²⁸²

Johnson wants to strip Mary of the symbolic overlay the Christian tradition has consigned to her, in order to strip away the expectations of women that underlie this image. It is interesting that Johnson includes that Mary is not an ideal disciple. Some contemporary theologians, drawing on the Magnificat in Luke chapter 2, like to highlight Mary's faithful following of her Son as an example of discipleship. Here Johnson points to this as yet another fallacious understanding of Mary. What Johnson objects to, more than the use of Mary as a symbol for Christian reflection, is the prescriptive nature of these symbolic marian images.²⁸³

But the problem of Mary as a paradigm is not easily overcome. For if Johnson really believes that Mary is not paradigmatic, what is the value of marian imagery at all? In devoting a monograph to Mary, Johnson is acknowledging the importance of this

²⁸² Johnson, *Truly*, 100.

²⁸³ Johnson even contradicts her own earlier understanding of Marian dogmas like Theotokos, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption as symbolic statements about the entire church, so convinced is she that turning Mary into a symbol sacrifices the historical particularity of Mary, and of all women, while at the same time overestimating the symbolic purity of a church whose sinfulness is evident. See *Truly*, 98-99, also Elizabeth Johnson, "The Symbolic Character of Theological Statements about Mary" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22 (1985), 313.

figure for Christians, in particular for the Christian church. But how, then, is Mary paradigmatic without being “a paradigm”? The answer, I believe, is in the elevation of Mary, and concomitant denigration of women, that comes from promoting Mary to the status of paradigm. The image of Mary the great (immaculately conceived) female exception who pleased God with (virginal) submission maligns historical women everywhere, who cannot physically live up to these expectations. Moreover, to place Mary in some symbolic liminal space removes her from history, and from reality. That Mary is a hollow shell, a placeholder for fantasies, a dead Christmas tree. In *Friends of God and Prophets*, Johnson addresses the issue of paradigmatic figures. “Paradigmatic saints are one vector of the larger reality of the communion of saints. To interpret them in such a way that diminishes the discipleship of others, we must return them to the whole company of the friends of God and prophets.”²⁸⁴ This is precisely what Johnson strives to do in her Mariology.

Johnson’s denouncing of all marian symbolism has two effects. First, it reveals the prescriptive undercurrent of much marian theology. By lifting up Mary as the ideal woman, women were asked to emulate her when the ideal of virginal motherhood is a physical impossibility. The notion of submission to God’s will, often translated to mean a man’s will, has contributed to the emotional and even physical abuse of women throughout the centuries. If Mary was submissive, quiet, perfect, and virginal, women were held to that standard. This devalues the divinely-created nature of female sexuality, relegating it to sinfulness and shame. Moreover, as women were to find in Mary a role

²⁸⁴ Johnson, *Friends*, 239.

model, the notion of women imitating Christ or God, while present in liturgical and eschatological theology, was discouraged. By removing the symbolic overlay of marian imagery, Johnson eliminates Mary's complicity in the subjugation of women.

In addition to exposing the prescriptive reality of marian symbolism, Johnson wishes to denounce the idealization of Mary for a second reason. By doing this, Johnson creates space within which to construct a "real" Mary with historical particularity, concreteness and context. In short, Johnson wants to make Mary human again. No person exists outside of an embodied, historical self and Johnson wishes to return this to Mary by reconstructing the social, political and religious context of Nazareth.²⁸⁵ Far from being the feminine face of the divine, the maternal face of God or the ideal woman, Johnson wants Mary to reclaim her ordinary humanity. This makes sense in light of Johnson's reconstruction of the communion of saints and her celebration of ordinary holiness.

Mary, for Johnson, is another member of the community of the saints, all of whom traveled the path of their holiness in a particular time and place, many of whom did so in obscurity. The dearth of biblical witness to Mary's life makes her one of the many saints whose lives remain generally unknown to the church. By reconstructing her historical context, Johnson does not wish to recreate or reinscribe Mary's life with a particular meaning, only to highlight the stage on which Mary's ordinary life of holiness took place. While this exercise necessarily involves interpretation (even the Gospel narratives represent the interpretation of a community), Johnson's point "is not that we

²⁸⁵ Johnson, *Truly*, 137-206.

can dispense with symbolic construal, but that because we are dealing with an actual person...her historical reality should tether down insight at every point.”²⁸⁶ To return to Mary her historical reality is to make Mary human again, to bring her back to being a companion of the church as she was in the upper room at Pentecost, and to recognize that she does not stand like a wealthy patron between the church and God. Johnson, like the bishops at Vatican II, makes Mary a part of the church.

In returning Mary to her place within the church, Johnson also reconstructs the prescriptive or exemplary aspect of marian imagery. Rather than the impossible ideal or the great exception, Mary becomes a paradigmatic figure in the best sense, an example of the companionship model of sainthood explained by Johnson in *Friends of God and Prophets*. Rather than alienating women (and men) who will never live up to the perfect life led by Mary, Johnson uses Mary as an example that lifts up the ordinary holiness of the majority of the church. Thus, rather than replace one impossible ideal with a more manageable ideal, Johnson utilizes the figure of Mary to highlight the holiness of lives lived in obscurity, the holiness of the church.

Like the communion of saints, Johnson reconstructs a Mariology with a pneumatological character. Mary is pneumatological not because she is somehow hypostatically united to the Holy Spirit or because she is the incarnation or apparition of the Holy Spirit on earth, but instead because she is a member of the communion of saints. In this way, Mary is ecclesially pneumatological, she participates in the holiness of the church which has its roots in the Holy Spirit. In a special way, Mary’s life shows how

²⁸⁶ Johnson, *Truly*, 101.

the life of Christians can be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. As a member of the communion of saints, Mary is full of grace, but also historical, as well as being a companion on Christians' pilgrimage of faith. These characteristics could well apply to the church which, as a sacrament of God's presence in the world is grace-filled, but is also a historical reality. Moreover, Johnson repeatedly refers to the communion of saints, and to Mary, as companions of those on the journey of faith that is life. Because Mary's historical life has ended, she forms a part of the "cloud of witnesses" who "struggled to be faithful, leaving an imprint on the heritage of life in the Spirit we inhabit."²⁸⁷ Mary, one of the saints whose name is known, is a companion on the journey for women and men who currently struggle on earth to live lives of faithfulness. No longer is Mary the unreachable patroness, interceding before her stern Son on behalf of those who begged the "mother of Mercy" for help. Using the companionship model of sainthood, Johnson relocates Mary from a place between God and humanity to a place alongside the rest of Christianity, a member of the communion of saints.

Johnson's Mary is neither idealistic nor idealized. She is not symbolic in any way for the church. Instead, this picture of Mary highlights Mary's ordinariness, her scriptural obscurity, which also helps bind her to the majority of the communion of saints whose holiness was lived out (or continues to be lived out) in anonymity. Rather than being paradigmatic in a symbolic or metaphysical sense Mary is exemplary in her compassion and solidarity. And rather than being a "vessel" of the Holy Spirit, Johnson's

²⁸⁷ Johnson, *Truly*, 311, 313.

Mary is thoroughly permeated by the Spirit, her actions guided by the Spirit, her life lived in response to the Spirit, as all in the church are called to do.

Johnson frames her interpretation of Mary with her conclusions about the communion of saints, because for her Mary is undeniably a part of this communion, the church. Like the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Johnson's ecclesiology and Mariology are intimately united. Mary functions paradigmatically in both ecclesiologies and her place in the church is important for both Mariologies. But for Johnson, unlike for Balthasar, Mary is "first and foremost, herself."²⁸⁸ Johnson makes Mary immensely human by describing the minutiae of her historical particularity. Rather than a Mary who is larger than life and inimitable, Johnson presents Mary's as a life of paradigmatic holiness that does not exhaust the picture of saintliness. Unlike Balthasar's symbolic woman, Johnson's Mary is awash in historical ambiguity, because she is human like us. And consequently, rather than a church exempt from the vicissitudes of history, Johnson presents a church mired in historical ambiguity that is forced to forge a way of holiness, like Mary did, amid the messiness of reality. The resulting ecclesiological picture is one that prizes solidarity and compassion over maleness and obedience, the beauty of reality over the abstract notion of the beautiful. Johnson does this because she values women's experience and strives for the full human flourishing of men and women, but also because she is faithful to what she understands as the message of the Second Vatican Council: the call of the whole church to holiness.

²⁸⁸ Johnson, *Truly*, 100.

3.4 An Anthropological Critique: Nancy Dallavalle

Johnson's style of reinterpreting traditional Christian symbols, in this case Mary and the church, through the use of the category "women's experience" has been met with some criticism from other feminist theologians.²⁸⁹ Two examples, Nancy Dallavalle and Mary Aquin O'Neill, find Johnson's use of "women's experience" problematic because it replaces the false ideal "woman" with another false ideal, "women's experience" which is as difficult to systematize as the original term. Just as Johnson tries to avoid turning Mary into a symbol for the church, these thinkers argue that Johnson turns the idea of women's experience into a symbolic ideal that has no correlate in reality. As is the case with "woman," the term "women's experience," for Dallavalle and Aquin O'Neill, masks the true diversity present in the experience of women from different social, racial, and class contexts. Just as there is no single definition of what it means to be female, these critics assert, there can be no single reality termed "women's experience," because this reality is also variegated and complex. If their critiques hold true they may reveal a "fatal flaw" in Johnson's methodology, which brings the Christian Tradition into dialogue with women's interpreted experience. Dallavalle and Aquin O'Neill do not approach their critiques in the same way, nor are their correctives to Johnson entirely parallel. Although these criticisms are based on Johnson's anthropology, which is not a focus of this chapter, it is important to analyze the work of Dallavalle and particularly of Aquin O'Neill,

²⁸⁹ See also Serene Jones, "Women's experience between a rock and a hard place : feminist, womanist, and mujerista theologies in North America," *Horizons in Feminist Theology*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 33-53, 234-235; and Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61-65. Other critiques of Johnson's work appear in *Horizons* 26 (Spr 1999), 116-135; and *Horizons* 31 (Spr 2004), 160-174.

because they point to a foundational methodological category in Johnson's work, and because both Dallavalle and Aquin O'Neill raises the question of Mariology specifically.

Dallavalle finds Johnson's use of "women's experience" as a category for understanding and reinterpreting traditional Christian symbols to be an ontological error. While agreeing that Johnson rightly does away with the "false essential, woman," Dallavalle finds that Johnson merely replaces this with "another false essential, 'women's experience'."²⁹⁰ The experience of women across races, classes, and cultural divides, for Dallavalle, is too diverse to contain in the single category "women's experience." In doing this, Johnson commits the very crime with which she faults androcentric theology—essentialism. For Dallavalle, it is no less dangerous to make blanket statements about women's experience as it is to make stereotypical claims about woman's nature. Neither is an adequate foundation for societal change, because both ignore the vital truth of difference.²⁹¹

But Dallavalle's critique of Johnson extends to include ecclesiological notions as well. Dallavalle, whom I would characterize as a part of feminism's "third wave," objects to the notion of justice or liberation as the driving force of feminist theology.²⁹² Without doing away with justice or liberation as a goal of feminist theology, Dallavalle

²⁹⁰ Nancy Dallavalle, "Neither Idolatry nor Iconoclasm: A Critical Essentialism for Catholic Feminist Theology" *Horizons* 25/1 (1998), 28.

²⁹¹ I use the word difference here, though Dallavalle does not utilize it in the way, for instance, that the French feminists use difference or that North American feminists use difference. Dallavalle wishes to highlight sexual differentiation as foundational for theological anthropology, but she does not use the category "difference" in the aforementioned ways.

²⁹² Nancy Dallavalle, "Toward a Theology that is Catholic and Feminist: Some Basic Issues" *Modern Theology* 14/4 (October 1998), 535-553.

seeks to expand the view of feminist theology to include what she deems other equally worthy goals. “Feminist theology’s emphasis on justice is problematic not because it is wrong but because it is too narrow a bottleneck” between feminist theory and the variegated reality that is Roman Catholicism.²⁹³ Instead, Dallavalle wishes for feminist theology to emphasize, not only the injustice latent in Catholicism, but the theological deficit that results from the exclusion of women in the public face of the church.

To remedy the deficiencies of contemporary feminist theology, Dallavalle suggests both a new anthropological approach and a new methodological approach. From an anthropological perspective, Dallavalle’s proposal is a recovery of the foundational aspect of sexual difference, pejoratively called essentialism, through a critical lens. This “critical essentialism” ameliorates the problem of “women’s experience” as a faulty category, because it frees feminist theologians to take sexual difference seriously, which they already do, while keeping their reinterpretations consistent with their stated methodological goals. In other words, if feminist theologians claim that women’s experience, because it is different from men’s (thus the need for feminist theology), must be attended to, it is contradictory to then espouse a single-sex or androgynous anthropology.²⁹⁴ How can feminist theologians who prize women’s experience advocate, as Johnson does, that sexual difference is just one difference among myriad others like class and race? For Dallavalle this is problematic. Instead, she

²⁹³ Dallavalle, “Theology,” 548.

²⁹⁴ It is important to note that when Johnson refers to her anthropology as single, she always includes the phrase “with a multiplicity of differences.” See especially “The Maleness of Christ” in *The Special Nature of Women? Concilium* 1991/6, ed. Anne Carr and Elisabeth Schuessler-Fiorenza (London: SCM Press, 1991) 107-116.

suggests an anthropological critical essentialism, which holds “that male and female are to be retained as appropriate foci for theological reflection with an understanding that such reflection may be revised.”²⁹⁵ With the provision that sexual difference does not necessarily entail relationality, much less complementarity, Dallavalle wishes to keep the difference between male and female a foundational precept of theological anthropology.

One point where Dallavalle and Johnson’s reflections seem to converge is traditional marian piety. Dallavalle claims, “Marian piety, for example, clearly has been shaped by the romantic fantasies of male clerics and bears the marks of a social ideal designed to control women’s sexuality.”²⁹⁶ Also like Johnson, Dallavalle does not wish to ignore or discard the marian tradition entirely. But Dallavalle’s critique seems to have Johnson’s re-imagining of Mary in mind, particularly the aspects of liberation and justice contained in the Magnificat and the value of reconstructing the socio-historical world of Mary of Nazareth, both points that Johnson makes emphatically in her Mariology. “While a refashioned piety may be suggested in its [traditional marian piety’s] place...it [refashioned marian piety] must also deal with the powerful sexual resonance generated by the Virgin Mother, a question that Catholic feminism especially should address.”²⁹⁷

Dallavalle’s second antidote for theologies like Johnson’s is directed at the more fundamental goals of second wave Christian feminism, its liberationist impetus. Dallavalle’s warrant for critiquing this aspect of feminist theology is a more broadly

²⁹⁵ Dallavalle, “Idolatry,” 36.

²⁹⁶ Dallavalle, “Theology,” 548.

²⁹⁷ Dallavalle, “Theology,”

theological, and to my eyes ecclesiological, problem. What Dallavalle seems to be advocating, then, is a feminism that is unafraid of female sexuality, including the sexual power of the female, especially as symbolized in Mary. More than being unafraid of sexuality, Dallavalle encourages feminist theologians to engage sexual difference as a matter critical for Catholic orthodoxy. Justice on behalf of women is an insufficient end for feminist theology. The whole of the Catholic Tradition can be, and should be, enriched by feminist thought, as the whole of Catholic Tradition has been impoverished by the absence of feminist voices. Dallavalle calls this vocation of feminist theology a mystical correction to the prophetic character already present in feminist theologians like Johnson: “while the prophet necessarily calls the powers to account for their exclusion of the excluded and the marginalized, the mystic ‘makes room’ of another sort, allowing difference to speak its own incommensurable truth.”²⁹⁸ Her characterization of Johnson as a mere “prophet” in feminist theology misses the point of much of Johnson’s work, which seeks to do exactly what Dallavalle prescribes: enrich the Christian Tradition through feminine imagery and experience. Ultimately Dallavalle’s critical essentialism and Johnson’s understanding of the complexity of women’s interpreted experience are not altogether different.

Dallavalle also seeks to protect difference without the need for a relational character to this difference. Male and female can, in her view, differ without the need to subordinate one sex to the other. Instead, utilizing the postmodern thought of David Tracy and others, Dallavalle wishes to plumb sexual difference for the complexity latent

²⁹⁸ Dallavalle, “Theology,” 550.

within it, a complexity that has given sex and gender a challenging place in the Catholic tradition.²⁹⁹ Dallavalle calls feminist theologians to embrace the complexity of sex and gender without hesitation and in so doing to enrich Catholic theology on the whole.

But Dallavalle's suggestion for the broadening of feminist theology's scope, while true, mistakes the blossom of feminism for the root. For the true catholicity of the Catholic tradition, the true orthodoxy that comes from women's contributions to theology, cannot bloom without the fertile ground of justice, of equality, and of mutuality that allows women to be viewed as equal partners in the church. While justice alone is truly an insufficient goal for feminist theology, it is unrealistic to expect women to go about the task of theology without attention, or without righteous anger at the injustice of the non-ordination of women and the powerlessness of women in the ranks of the official church. In many ways, Dallavalle's vision has already begun to take shape, as the contributions of women are already enriching the theological landscape. But women's full flourishing, and the recognition of women as fully participatory adults in the church, remains a foundational goal even as women continue to play a part in constructing Catholic theology.

3.5 An Alternative Vision: Mary Aquin O'Neill

Mary Aquin O'Neill's critique of Johnson also begins with Johnson's anthropological foundation. In a 1995 essay, "The Nature of Women and the Method of

²⁹⁹ Dallavalle, "Theology," 549.

Theology,”³⁰⁰ Aquin O’Neill classifies feminist theological method according to the anthropological suppositions that ground them. Some authors, like Johnson, espouse a one-nature anthropology—that is to say, an anthropology that claims human nature is the same in males and females. Sexual difference is one difference among many like class and race and should not be understood as in any way foundational. The goal for humanity in this anthropological framework, then, is a kind of androgyny, a unisex ideal. Men and women, who enjoy the same humanity, should seek to cultivate those qualities which in patriarchal cultures have been relegated to the opposite sex.

This androgynous goal presents problems on several theological fronts for Aquin O’Neill, most importantly for Christians, in Christology. The Jesus of the one-nature anthropology gathers within himself all the aspects of male and the female persons.³⁰¹ The result is a “featureless” Jesus, a savior relegated to the role of “ethical nice guy.”³⁰² This bland rendition of Christ reduces the ordination of women to a question of justice, rather than a matter of the health of the church as a whole. “For if Jesus represents all of humanity, including women, before God, why can male priests not do the same?”³⁰³ Like Dallavalle, Aquin O’Neill sees women’s contributions to ecclesial life to be more than a matter of justice, a matter of ecclesiological necessity. Aquin O’Neill even calls into question the role of Jesus as the sole mediator: “Let me say this as boldly as I can:

³⁰⁰ Mary Aquin O’Neill, “The Nature of Women and the Method of Theology” *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), 730-742.

³⁰¹ Aquin O’Neill, “Nature,” 734.

³⁰² Aquin O’Neill, “Nature,” 735.

³⁰³ Aquin O’Neill, “Nature,” 735.

...Jesus alone could not accomplish the redemption of all humanity.”³⁰⁴ As heterodox as this statement sounds, Aquin O’Neill has clear anthropological, as well as ecclesiological and even mariological reasons for this move.

Aquin O’Neill finds one-nature anthropologies problematic because the both creation accounts in Genesis point to the creation of humanity as male and female.³⁰⁵ In the creation story of Genesis 1, God creates humanity in God’s image as male and female. In the second account, more traditionally problematic for feminists because the woman’s being is taken from the man (Adam’s rib), the man’s is incomplete without the woman. There is some aspect of his humanity which remains unknown until he is known by the other, in this case, woman. “It is only in the presence of this other that the ‘lonely’ being discovers, in fact, certain potentialities of being.”³⁰⁶ Aquin O’Neill understands this to mean that the image of God is made manifest in human relationship. Humanity needs community in order to be in the image of God.

While to some this may sound like the complementarity of von Balthasar and his proponents, in fact it differs greatly. Aquin O’Neill does not believe that the fundamental nature of sexual difference, its presence in both creation accounts, necessitates the vision of male and female human nature as essentially related in a complementary way, an arrangement which too often has led to the denigration of women and their definition/oppression by men. On the contrary, the fundamental sexual difference,

³⁰⁴ Aquin O’Neill, “Nature,” 736.

³⁰⁵ Mary Aquin O’Neill, “The Mystery of Being Human Together: Anthropology” in *Freeing Theology*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 139-160.

³⁰⁶ Aquin O’Neill, “Mystery,” 141.

present in both accounts, has different implications in the narrative of Adam and Eve, implications which come into relief in the account of the events in the garden.

Aquin O'Neill looks to the narrative of the fall in Genesis 3 and finds it remarkable that Eve, a woman, is punished for disobeying God.³⁰⁷ Her punishment, which includes pain during childbirth, also claims that the woman's "longing will be for your husband and he will rule over you."³⁰⁸ As a consequence of sin, the man's domination of the woman cannot be part of the original created order. Instead, like shame, pain, and hard work, it is a subsequent development, one for which humanity when initially created was not intended, but a result of human disobedience.

However, by the time of the writing of the New Testament, sexism as a consequence of sin has been replaced by the notion of male domination as part of God's original intent for humanity. Thus, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, wives are urged to be submissive to their husbands.³⁰⁹ If the Christian story of redemption is about Christ's victory over sin and the return to a covenant relationship with God, why is the sexist consequence of sin retained? For Aquin O'Neill this demonstrates the "androcentric bias of the New Testament," which seeks to keep women subservient to men despite the egalitarian vision of Galatians 3:28.³¹⁰ The root of the problem, for Aquin O'Neill can be found if one looks to the protagonist of the story of redemption, Jesus, the male savior. If

³⁰⁷ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 142.

³⁰⁸ Genesis 3:16

³⁰⁹ Ephesians 5:22.

³¹⁰ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 146.

in the creation story the image of God was represented by male and female together, why does the narrative of redemption require only a male image of God, Jesus? “The creator God is imaged in the male and female but the redeemer God only in the male.”³¹¹ The exclusively male image of God in Jesus goes against the vision of creation in Genesis. Moreover, the redemption seems incomplete for Aquin O’Neill if accomplished by a male acting on his own, without need of help from a woman, when in Genesis it is clear that humans only know themselves fully in relationship to one another.

The next move, for Aquin O’Neill, is to posit her vision of a two-nature anthropology that takes both creation and redemption seriously. For her Genesis contradicts the possibility of a one-nature anthropology where the goal is androgynous individuals who have cultivated those qualities traditionally held to belong to the opposite sex as well as those of their own. A two-nature anthropology leaves behind the modern notion of the autonomous individual in favor of the biblical model of “covenanted” persons whose freedom is impossible without genuine relationship, particularly relationship with an other of the opposite sex.³¹² In place of an individualistic one-nature anthropology, Aquin O’Neill posits what she calls an “anthropology of mutuality” that takes into account the human limitation implicit in and symbolized by sexual difference. In a move that sets her apart from many other feminist theologians, she utilizes John Paul II’s theology of the body to suggest that marriage is a model of relationship founded on self-giving. While “marriage in the Catholic Church is a vocation, not an ordinance,”

³¹¹ Aquin O’Neill, “Mystery,” 148.

³¹² Aquin O’Neill, “Mystery,” 151.

Aquin O'Neill departs from John Paul II's insistence on marriage as the paradigmatic relationship for humanity and instead employs marriage as an example of a self-giving relationship in which each person comes to know himself/herself in new and surprising ways.³¹³

Being human involves community, but in the Catholic Church, this fact is not institutionalized in any way. Women need men for everything sacramental but men do not need women at all, which is anthropologically misleading and ecclesiologically deceptive.³¹⁴ Room does not exist in the present patriarchal structure of the clergy for mutuality or relationship, and Aquin O'Neill intimates that the isolation of the all-male celibate clergy harms the church greatly. This cleric arrangement cannot but truncate human development if self-giving relationship with an other of the opposite sex is essential to becoming image of God. If each person needs the other to learn the truth about self, and if the image of God lies in this self-knowledge, then relationship, mutuality, and community should permeate the church.

In addition to the problem she identifies with the clerical structure of the church Aquin O'Neill finds anthropological fault with the propagation of the belief that Jesus, in his maleness, was the fullness of the image of God without recourse to his central formative relationship, the one he certainly had with Mary, his mother.³¹⁵ This formative relationship in which Jesus developed a knowledge of self necessary for all persons.

³¹³ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 155.

³¹⁴ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 151.

³¹⁵ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 155.

Because of this, for Aquin O'Neill, Mary is undoubtedly coredemptrix, in that she helped Jesus come to an awareness of who he was. As exemplified in the scene in John's gospel at Cana, one cannot prize the actor (Jesus) without equally prizing the person who "taught him so to act."³¹⁶ Thus it is in his relationship with Mary that Jesus comes to understand himself as male/man/masculine, which is essential to being image of God for Aquin O'Neill. Without Jesus' self-understanding in this way, Christology becomes docetic, because for Aquin O'Neill Jesus could not have true humanity, which includes bodiliness, if he lacked awareness of masculinity and its necessary incompleteness. Orthodox Christology demands a female partner in redemption, Mary, and according to Aquin O'Neill centuries of marian devotion testify to this orthodoxy.

Aquin O'Neill's critique of Johnson is both more conservative and more radical than anything Johnson suggests for Mariology, Christology or ecclesiology. While Aquin O'Neill rightly points out that despite the created dignity of women that dignity is not reflected in church structure, the soteriological warrants for her position, particularly her assertion that Jesus needed Mary in order to save, risk jeopardizing the ecumenical inroads made with protestant Christians in recent decades. The notion that Jesus could not have saved humanity without help from his mother makes perfect sense in Aquin O'Neill's anthropological framework, but the threat to the sole mediatorship of Christ is too great an ecclesial price. Movements for the declaration of Mary as coredemptrix have a long history in the Catholic Church, but the marian maximalism this encourages is, to my mind, exactly what the bishops at Vatican II were trying to restrain. The answer

³¹⁶ Aquin O'Neill, "Mystery," 155.

for Mary in Catholicism does not lie in making her a demigod, competing with Christ for the role of mediator. The fact is, as Johnson points out, the vision of Mary as demigod has contributed to the subordination of women in the church.

3.6 Conclusion

The relationship of feminist theology and Mariology is replete with uncertainty, but also possibility. While the initial desire to do away with Mary altogether given her participation in the subordination of women, especially for Catholics, has waned, opinions vary on the best way to reclaim this Christian symbol in a way that will be both liberative for women and enriching for Christian theology on the whole. Elizabeth Johnson sets out a mariological-ecclesiological vision that does justice to the letter, and the spirit, of Vatican II. In re-imagining the church as fundamentally a communion of saints, Johnson brings the esoteric notion of contemporary sainthood to earth and simultaneously elevates the whole people of God to the saintliness which is their baptismal identity. Johnson follows the lead of *Lumen gentium* and situates her reflection on Mary within her vision of the church—the image of the communion of saints. Mary is one paradigmatic member of the church among many, all of whose lives should be highlighted to provide a fuller picture of the church. Johnson's Mary is not forced to carry the symbolic weight of the entire church, as the receptive maiden, the virginal bride, or the resigned, grief-stricken mother. She is free to be ordinary, grace-filled, and an eschatological beacon of hope for the whole church, without being any of these things exclusively in the church or on behalf of the church. For Johnson, Mary and the church are human and historical, oriented toward justice and Spirit-filled.

The effects of marian maximalism on the fate of real women in the historical church are plain to see. Mary, the great exception, has truncated the full human development of women in the church, sanctioning patriarchy through an excessive marian devotion that prizes woman as either submissive like Mary or defective like Eve. Because of the sexist legacy of much of marian devotion, women have been relegated to the role of petitioners in the church, begging their male patrons for sacramental grace. Johnson's vision, of a human Mary that is just "herself," a member of the communion of saints of which we are all a part, humanizes Mary and historicizes the church. At the same time Johnson's mariological ecclesiology elevates ordinary Christians to their proper place of sanctity. By humanizing holiness, Johnson simultaneously exalts ordinary life as the arena of grace and sainthood. Mary, paradigmatic figure in the communion of saints, cheers the church on in its quest for holiness.

CHAPTER 4

AN INCULTURATED MARIOLOGY: MARY IN THE LATINO/A CONTEXT

This chapter will turn its attention to U.S. Latino writers and their reflections on Mary, particularly the reflections of various Latino/a theologians on Guadalupe. U.S. Latino theology has blossomed in recent years, and a chief locus of reflection remains Guadalupe, the Mexican virgin, and her fundamental role in the piety of U.S. Latino Catholics, especially in the Southwest. Pioneers in the study of U.S. Latino Catholicism include Virgilio Elizondo, Orlando Espín, and Roberto Goizueta. Latina theologians in the U.S., such as Jeanette Rodriguez and Ada María Isasi-Díaz, also examine how Guadalupe and other Latin American images of Mary have galvanized many Hispanic³¹⁷ women in their struggles for justice.

Although these theologians have yet to elaborate a coherent ecclesiology, their focus on Guadalupe provides an interesting ecclesiological starting point, as

³¹⁷ In this chapter, I use the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino/Latina” interchangeably, though I realize this is problematic for some scholars. Roberto Goizueta’s explanation of his usage of these terms is the one I find most insightful, and closest to my own understanding and use of these terms. Like Goizueta, I use the terms Hispanic and Latino/a interchangeably and randomly. I also mean to imply “U.S. Hispanic” wherever I say Hispanic, because this dissertation deals primarily with the reality of the Catholic Church in the United States. See the first chapter of Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), especially 12-15.

Guadalupe is viewed by various Latino/a scholars as a Church-founding event.³¹⁸

The status of U.S. Latinos as the majority of Catholics in the U.S. makes the ecclesiological impact of their reflections critical in the self-identification of the U.S. Catholic Church. This chapter will argue that U.S. Latino/a devotion to Guadalupe is ecclesologically significant because it reveals the apostolic, dialogical and relational character of the Church, and because it can serve as a call for conversion in the Church as a whole.

It is important to note that the historicity of Guadalupe's apparition at Tepeyac is not the focus of this chapter. Historians such as Stafford Poole argue, convincingly, that the text of the *Nican mopohúa* came into existence at a significantly different time than devotees of Guadalupe have suggested.³¹⁹ Similarly the very existence of Juan Diego, the native who is believed to have experienced the Guadalupan apparition is questioned by many scholars, to the dismay of many Mexican and Mexican-American Guadalupanos.³²⁰ Neither of these scholarly trajectories undermines the conclusions of this chapter, however. Quite simply, the historicity of the apparition has little effect on the ecclesiological value of the devotion to Guadalupe in the Mexican-American community. Devotion to Guadalupe in this community can reveal the ecclesiological self-understanding it possesses. Moreover,

³¹⁸ Elizondo writes that the appearance of Guadalupe "is truly the birth of a new People of God with new imagery, new religious experiences, new forms of piety and social morality." See "Mary and Evangelization in the Americas" in *Mary, Woman of Nazareth*, ed. Doris Donnelly (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 160.

³¹⁹ Stafford J. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797*, (Phoenix: University of Arizona Press, 1996). See also D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition across Five Centuries*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³²⁰ See Anthony DePalma, "Chalco de Solidaridad Journal; Let the Heavens Fall, Mexicans Will Revere Virgin," *The New York Times*, 21 June 1996, final edition, A4.

by looking closely at scholarly interpretations of the *Nican mopohúa* text, this chapter will examine the attempt by U.S. Latino scholars to reflect theologically on the narrative. In particular, Virgilio Elizondo's thoughts on the Guadalupe narrative will frame the implications of U.S. Latino/a theology on contemporary ecclesiology.

The marian devotion of Hispanic Catholics has frequently been cited as one, if not the, major characteristic of this religious contingent.³²¹ As the numbers of Hispanic Catholics continue to swell in the U.S. Catholic Church, scholars of religion must turn their attention to how the religious worldview and insights of this group will shape the future of U.S. Catholicism. The goal of this section is to indicate some ways in which U.S. Hispanic marian devotion, viewed through the lens of Mexican-American devotion to Guadalupe, contains insights that are relevant to Catholic ecclesiology. Because Hispanics will make up the majority of the U.S. Catholic Church by the year 2010, their popular religious practices, including marian devotion, and the ecclesiological insights implicit in them, are crucial to gauging the *sensus fidelium* of the People of God in the U.S..

On the surface, it would seem that to focus on the marian devotion of a group of Catholics could only fan the flames of traditionalism, encourage nostalgia for baroque Catholicism, and eviscerate the gains that laypeople, especially women, have made in terms of their participation in the Church. However, as various scholars have noted, Hispanic popular religiosity differs in important ways from the Euro-American

³²¹ Orlando Espín writes: "It is difficult to find, besides the crucified Christ, another more powerful religious symbol." "Tradition and Popular Religion: An Understanding of the *Sensus Fidelium*," *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 71-72.

baroque devotionism that might lead to the aforementioned dangers.³²² Hispanic religiosity tends to be more oral, communal and lay-based than literate, individualistic and clerical.³²³ Charles Dahm, the pastor of the predominantly Mexican Pius V parish in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, describes the festivities surrounding the feast of Guadalupe in his community:

Celebration of the feast itself begins at 3:00 am on December 12 with a serenade to the Virgin organized by a radio station. Thirteen hundred people rapidly fill the Church beyond capacity, standing in the aisles and sitting around the altar. For two hours, they listen to traditional songs about the Virgin.... The birthday song, *Las mañanitas*, begins the Mass at 5:00 am. In recent years the parish has scheduled an additional Mass at midnight to accommodate the thousands wanting to serenade the Virgin on her feast day.”³²⁴

Rather than the individual acts of piety that characterized, for example, the marian devotion of those who wore the Miraculous Medal or devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the wearing of the Brown Scapular, Hispanic devotion to Guadalupe tends to be expressed in large communal festivities, vigils with singing and celebration, and communal prayer.³²⁵ These collective, festive expressions of Hispanic marian devotion serve as an interesting ecclesiological test case/starting point. When a community gathers in a liturgical space to commemorate a shared feast, they express

³²² Mark R. Francis, “Building Bridges Between Liturgy, Devotionalism, and Popular Religion,” *Assembly* 20:2, (April 1994), also Roberto Goizueta, *Caminando*, 26-28. A brief analysis of Euro-American baroque Devotionalism appears in Charles W. Dahm, OP, *Parish Ministry in a Hispanic Community* (New York, Paulist Press, 2004), 156.

³²³ These categories are elaborated by Francis, “Building Bridges,” 636.

³²⁴ Dahm, *Parish Ministry*, 164-65.

³²⁵ For a history of Guadalupan devotion and festivals, see Timothy Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); also Dahm’s description of Guadalupan festivities at Pius V, *Parish Ministry*, 161-67.

their self-understanding as People of God. It is that self-understanding that this chapter seeks to explore.

4.1 The Demographics of the Hispanic Church

According to the 2000 census, Hispanics account for 12% of the U.S. population, but 39% of the U.S. Catholic Church. By the second decade of the 21st century, over half of U.S. Catholics will probably be Hispanic. The numbers alone demand that we take account of this community's characteristics. But more importantly for this dissertation, given the growing intra-Hispanic diversity of many U.S. cities like Miami, Chicago, and New York, the Hispanic Church can provide guideposts for negotiating the intercultural relationships that characterize the Church in a context as diverse as the U.S. The Latino community is necessarily intercultural, made up of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Argentines; this Church is also interracial, with its long heritage of *mestizaje/mulatez*. This intercultural insight, along with the demographic facts of the Latino presence in the U.S., demands that theologians attend to the ecclesiological insights often implicit in the religiosity of this community. These insights frequently come couched in the multifaceted devotional life of Latinos/as, and require systematization in order to make explicit what this complex devotional life expresses implicitly—the self-understanding of the U.S. Latino/a community as People of God.

In the sections that follow, the chapter will trace the contributions of three U.S. Latino theologians, and one *mujerista* theologian, to the understanding of the relationship between marian devotion and ecclesiology. Orlando Espín's seminal work on the category and importance of popular religiosity situates the discussion of

devotional practice as a privileged locus of theology. His own ruminations on the Guadalupe event tie this devotion to ecclesiology, though not through the traditional understanding of Guadalupe as Mary of Nazareth. Nevertheless, his understanding of Guadalupe as a phenomenon denoting a popular pneumatology testifies to the ecclesiological importance of this devotion. Next, the work of Virgilio Elizondo, the father of U.S. Latino theology, will focus the chapter on the textual basis of Guadalupan devotion, the *Nican mopohua*, and its exegesis. In that exegesis, particular attention will be paid to the ecclesologically significant aspects of the story of the Guadalupan encounter. The last theologian to be featured is Roberto Goizueta, whose ruminations on Guadalupan devotion as revealing a relational anthropology at the heart of U.S. Latino spirituality help contribute to our parallel understanding of U.S. Latino ecclesiology as relational. In conjunction with Goizueta's insight, I will highlight the ecclesiological intimations of Ada María Isasi-Díaz, a *mujerista* theologian, whose focus is on the liberation of Christians, especially Latinas, from oppressive structures. Isasi-Díaz, like Goizueta, considers human subjectivity and autonomy essential features of any genuine community, especially of the Church.

4.2 Orlando Espín, a proto-ecclesiologist

One of the earliest insights Latino theology brought to the mainstream theological community was the academic study of popular religiosity, in its myriad forms. Indeed, to explore the ecclesiological intuitions of the Hispanic Church, it is necessary to examine those devotional, liturgical, home-based and public acts that characterize the faith of these cultures. Spearheaded by Orlando Espín, the study of popular religiosity serves as a cornerstone to any attempt at articulating an

ecclesiology from a Hispanic perspective, because popular religiosity intersects with such key ecclesiological insights as Tradition, the sense of the faithful, and the self-understanding of the People of God. By no means does Espín's work claim or even imply that Latinos/as are the only cultural group with popular religious practices that should be studied, but his work focuses on that community. Because the focus on popular religiosity is essentially a spotlight on the religious practices of laypeople, Espín feels he addresses a major lacuna in contemporary ecclesiology, which he claims is "unsuccessful in theologizing on the laity."³²⁶

Espín has emphasized the importance of popular religiosity as a source for theology, "a conveyor of its own form of Tradition"³²⁷ that complements what ecclesiologists have previously recognized as Tradition, because it represents a manifestation of the *sensus fidelium*. He writes:

I insist that the people's faith be taken seriously as a true *locus theologicus* and not solely or mainly as a pastoral, catechetical problem... The vast majority of Catholics in the history of the universal Church have always been and still are the lay poor. Consequently, given that Catholic doctrine holds that the Church is the infallible witness to revelation, then this *must* mean that the lay poor (i.e., the immense majority of the Church throughout twenty centuries) *are too* infallible witnesses to revelation. However, the way these millions have understood, received, and expressed their faith is undeniably "popular Catholicism," Popular Catholicism is the real faith of the real Church.³²⁸

In studying the devotional practices, public acts, and home rituals of Catholics, theologians examine how the Tradition of the Church has been received and

³²⁶ Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 4.

³²⁷ Espín and Sixto Garcia, "Sources of Hispanic Theology," *CTSA Proceedings* 43 (1988), 123.

³²⁸ Espín, *FOP*, 3.

interpreted by the People of God, and how this understanding is made manifest outwardly.

Espín notes that a full and proper understanding of Tradition necessitates a richer understanding of the *sensus fidelium*, the sense of the faithful, or “intuitive grasp on the truth of God that is possessed by the Church as a whole, as a consensus.”³²⁹ Here Espín builds upon Congar’s elaboration of the difference between Tradition and traditions, as well as the Second Vatican Council’s understanding of the relationship between scripture and Tradition.³³⁰ What Espín adds to the notion of Tradition is the aspect of popular religiosity. Like many theologians, Espín understands one aspect of Tradition to be represented in the decrees of the ecumenical councils, interpreted in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and communicated and witnessed by the magisterium of theologians.³³¹ This dimension of Tradition is what most theologians understand by the term. However, Espín’s notion of Tradition is expanded to include the living witness of the faithful throughout history, as embodied in the practices, beliefs and devotions held by the majority of the People of God and reflected in their public prayer, their worship, and their artistic expression.

³²⁹ Roger Haight, “sensus fidelium” in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard P. McBrien (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 1182.

³³⁰ Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: the Biblical, Historical, and Theological Evidence for Catholic Teaching on Tradition* (Irving, TX: Basilica Press, Reprint ed. 1997). Also Vatican II, *Dei verbum*, [Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation], 10. On the sources of Espín’s notion of Tradition, see also J. Geiselman, *The Meaning of Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966); R.P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1962); J. Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972).

³³¹ Espín, *FOP*, 65.

It is important to note that Espín does not equate popular religion with the *sensus fidelium*. Rather, he avers that popular religion is a manifestation of that faithful intuition of the People of God. “It is important to remember that what is the infallible bearer of revelation is the discerned, intuitive sense of the faith and not the many symbolic and historical ways employed as its inculturated expressions.”³³² As a manifestation, it must be subject to interpretation, much like any attempt to articulate an intuition. “The main problem with the study of the *sensus fidelium* as a necessary component in any adequate reflection on Tradition is...its being a sense, an intuition. This sense is never discovered in some kind of pure state. ...It is always expressed through the symbols, language, and culture of the faithful and therefore is in need of ...interpretive processes and methods similar to those called for by the written texts of Tradition and scripture.”³³³ Thus the symbolic expressions of the *sensus fidelium* that make up popular religion must be subject to criteria of adequacy, in order to judge how congruent these expressions are to the whole of the Christian tradition. “If a sense of the faith is to be discerned as a true or false bearer of the Tradition, it must be capable of promoting the results expected of the Christian message and of Christian living.”³³⁴ The insights of popular religiosity do not hold

³³² Espín, *FOP*, 71. One should also bear in mind the distinction, made at Vatican II, between the *sensus fidei*, and the *sensus fidelium*. The *sensus fidei*, or sense of faith, refers to the intelligibility of the content of faith, the knowability of God by the faithful; the bishops at Vatican II refer to it as “the supernatural appreciation of the faith” (*Lumen gentium* 12). The *sensus fidelium*, or sense of the faith, is the sense of the community of the faithful, which “cannot err in matters of belief” (*Lumen gentium*, 12). Some, like Herbert Vorgrimler, use the terms *sensus fidelium* and *consensus fidelium* interchangeably, but clearly Espín does not. See Herbert Vorgrimler, “From *Sensus Fidei* to “*Consensus Fidelium*,” *The Teaching Authority of the Believers, Concilium* 180, ed. J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1985), pp. 3-11

³³³ Espín, *FOP*, 66.

³³⁴ Espín, *FOP*, 67.

true, then, if their fruits are not borne out in lived commitment to Christian discipleship.

Here it is helpful to recall the distinction between the *sensus fidelium* and the *sensus fidei* mentioned in the documents of Vatican II, specifically *Lumen gentium* 12. Francis Sullivan distinguishes between the *sensus fidei* as a subjective sense and the “objective meaning” of the *sensus fidelium* which refers to the content of the belief held by the faithful.³³⁵ The bishops of Vatican II, in using the term *sensus fidei*, are thus focused on the ability of the faithful to recognize the Gospel by “connaturality.”³³⁶ Espín identifies popular religiosity as an outlet for the *sensus fidelium* but, because of the diversity of these often culturally conditioned practices, it is important not to equate the *sensus fidelium* with the *consensus fidelium*, which is the universal agreement of the whole church on certain matters of faith. Instead, by indicating that popular religious practices express the *sensus fidelium*, Espín implies that the insights or sense of faith expressed in these practices may differ among cultures with different customs. However, the widespread nature of these practices in a variety of cultures, not all of them Hispanic, highlights the capability and willingness of a wide swath of the laity to engage their faith publicly.

The process of discerning the authenticity of the expression of popular Catholicism involves, according to Espín, three confrontations: With scripture, with the written texts of the Christian tradition, and with “the historical and sociological

³³⁵ Francis A. Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 21-23.

³³⁶ “Connaturality” is a Thomistic term. For a fuller treatment of these terms and how they are distinguished, see Richard R. Gaillardetz’s *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), especially 121-132.

contexts in which the faithful intuitions and their means of expression occur.”³³⁷

Thus, popular religion does not become a *norma non normata*; it too must cohere with and be regulated by the whole of Tradition, even as it enriches that very Tradition.³³⁸ At Vatican II, the bishops affirmed that the role of regulating, interpreting and communicating the Church’s Tradition was proper to the magisterium.³³⁹ However, Espín stresses that the magisterium, though responsible for interpreting and communicating the Church’s Tradition, cannot be the sole arbiter of Tradition. He writes “obviously, to claim that only the theologians or the bishops really understand revelation and, as a consequence, that only they should speak and express the faith in order to avoid deviations and error is to dismiss the *sensus fidelium* outright...”³⁴⁰ Here again, Espín’s unwillingness to surrender interpretation to cultural or religious elites comes through. He clearly wants to create space for a genuine *sensus fidelium* that is both authoritative and egalitarian.

In looking at marian devotion, then, Espín’s methodology for approaching popular religiosity seems to mesh with that of Paul VI, examined in the previous

³³⁷ Espín, *FOP*, 66.

³³⁸ The bishops at Vatican II expressed the relatedness of Tradition in this way: “Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.” *Dei verbum*, 10.

³³⁹ *Dei verbum* continues: “But the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone.... Yet this magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith. It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others,” 10.

³⁴⁰ Espín, *FOP*, 81.

chapter. Theologians must attend to popular religious devotions, but these devotions, in turn, must be subject to critical interpretation and evaluation by the scripture and Tradition of the Church. Insofar as it expresses one aspect of the *sensus fidelium*, that infallible intuition of the People of God, we must attend to Hispanic marian devotion and the insights it offers about the self-understanding of that people.³⁴¹ Because it both coheres with and enriches the Tradition of the Church, we must look to marian devotion as a locus of ecclesiological insight.

Since the case has been made for popular religious practice as a locus for theological reflection, and particularly important for ecclesiological reflection, we now turn to two different interpretations of the Guadalupe event. Espín, the proto-ecclesiologist, links Guadalupan devotion to pneumatology, an ecclesologically significant category. His colleague Virgilio Elizondo links Guadalupan devotion more clearly to marian devotion, but with deep ecclesiological implications. Interestingly, both theologians approach Guadalupan devotion with ecclesial categories in mind. Thus, both interpretations offer necessary insights in the attempt to articulate a Hispanic ecclesiology.

4.3 The Pneumatological Guadalupe: Espín's Proposal

In the introduction to his *The Faith of the People*, Espín outlines in a brief excursus his thoughts on the relationship between Mary of Nazareth, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the Holy Spirit. Like Leonardo Boff, with whom he studied, Espín's

³⁴¹ Of course, popular religiosity cannot itself be called infallible, since it is an amalgam of practices which Christians utilize to express their intuition of the faith. Espín himself claims this: "Even if difficult to discern in actual practice, it is theoretically possible (and even necessary) to affirm that the 'faith-full' intuitions of Christians are not co-extensive or equal to the expressions they employ as vehicles for those intuitions." *FOP*, 80.

curiosity is piqued by the relationship between Guadalupe, the Mexican virgin, and the Holy Spirit. Because many traditionally pneumatological characteristics (pervasive presence, for example) and functions (accompaniment, enlivening) are attributed to Guadalupe by devotees, and since an indigenous/popular link between Guadalupe and the historical Mary is lacking, Espín suggests that Guadalupe represents a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Espín does not go as far as Boff, who suggests that the virgin and the Holy Spirit are united hypostatically, neither does he claim that Guadalupe and the Holy Spirit are one and the same. Rather, his is a different tack. He writes, “I am convinced that it is *not* the Jewish woman Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, whom most Latinos speak of when they refer to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*.”³⁴² Espín argues that Guadalupe and the biblical figure of Mary do not seem to overlap. For him, Guadalupe is not Miriam of Nazareth with Native American features. Guadalupe and Mary of Nazareth are two separate beings fused by cultural and religious elites eager to appear to conform to the norms of seventeenth century Spanish Tridentine Catholicism. Because the elites of the day knew only one feminine religious figure through whom to channel the newly converted Nahuas’ awareness of an indwelling, caring and protective divinity, these elites fused Guadalupe’s reality with Mary’s. Moreover, with Europe awash in the Reformation debates, the colonial Catholic elites were reluctant to describe a pneumatological foundation for Guadalupan devotion.

Espín wishes to peel back the mariological overlay that conceals the true meaning of Guadalupe for Latinos/as. If it is not evident in the Guadalupan narrative

³⁴² Espín, *FOP*, 7.

tradition, then it certainly exists in the popular religious awareness of Guadalupe. “The ecclesiastical establishment convinced itself that Guadalupe is Mary of Nazareth,” says Espín. He adds, “Instead of an inculturated Mariology, don’t we have here a superbly inculturated pneumatology?”³⁴³ Over against a methodology which focuses on the written accounts of Guadalupan devotion, which Espín regards as elitist and exclusive of the majority of the People of God, Espín proposes popular pneumatology as the foundational epistemology for the Guadalupe event. If, instead of the marian piety so favored by theologians, what occurs in Guadalupan devotion is an expression of orthodox pneumatology, as Espín suggests, then an understanding of this aspect of the popular religiosity of Hispanics has yet to emerge. Espín also fails to mention specific aspects of Guadalupan devotion that indicate its pneumatological character. While many contemporary Latino/a theologians have referred to the Guadalupan encounter as a church-founding event, Espín does not specify if this is at work in his pneumatological understanding of Guadalupe.

Espin proposes an intriguing understanding of Guadalupan devotion, particularly for ecclesiology. The link between the Holy Spirit and the Church has its roots in the scriptures, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of the New Testament. *Lumen gentium* affirms that the Holy Spirit “dwells in the Church,” a notion with profound biblical foundation.³⁴⁴ In Acts, the Spirit is everywhere in the Church, directing, guiding, filling Jesus’ disciples with courage and present at the

³⁴³ Espín, *FOP*, 9.

³⁴⁴ LG 4, see also John 4:47, 7:38-39; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19

baptism of new members.³⁴⁵ In the Pauline epistles the Church is “sealed with the Spirit,” endowed with gifts of the Spirit.³⁴⁶ In Paul’s letter to the Romans, the Spirit makes all Christians into the adopted children of God, a familial metaphor for the Church.³⁴⁷ The Orthodox Churches continue to emphasize the dependence of the Church on the Holy Spirit.³⁴⁸ Moreover, the Holy Spirit has been associated with the feminine, or maternal aspect of God in patristic studies and other theological works.³⁴⁹ The maternity of the Holy Spirit, an attribute which eventually came to apply to the Church, soon merged with the motherhood of Mary in an interesting amalgam of femininity, maternity, and sanctity.

It is not surprising, then that Espín would complete the circle, displacing the marian aspect of Guadalupan devotion in favor of a pneumatological understanding. The Pauline notion of the Spirit’s maternity was joined to the figure of “Mother Church,” and subsequently the Church’s own feminine, maternal aspects were fused with the figure of Mary. In 1965, Paul VI referred to Mary as the “Mother of the Church,” a title which the bishops at Vatican II declined to apply to Mary. Now Espín wishes to return the maternal character displayed in Guadalupan devotion to its pneumatological roots. To identify Guadalupan devotion, which so suffuses the

³⁴⁵ Acts 1:4-5; 5:3, 9; 10:19; 13:2, among others.

³⁴⁶ Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:4; Galatians 5:22.

³⁴⁷ Romans 8:12-17.

³⁴⁸ See, for example, the work of John Zizioulas, most notably *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).

³⁴⁹ Though some theologians have embraced this turn toward feminine pronouns in reference to the Holy Spirit, many find it problematic. For analysis of this, see Elizabeth Johnson, “Mary and the Female Face of God” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 500-526.

Mexican-American community, with a popular pneumatology indicates that Espín understands this contingent of Catholics to be particularly aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives, albeit implicitly, since their devotion is not directed to the Holy Spirit *per se*. The intimacy with which they call upon Guadalupe and their understanding of her closeness to their lives, her maternal influence, her pervasive accompaniment all recall the role of the Holy Spirit in vivifying and sanctifying the People of God.

It makes sense that the pneumatological understanding expressed, for Espín, in Guadalupan devotion would have an impact on the ecclesiological intuition of these devotees. Through their understanding of the Holy Spirit as a nurturing, life-giving, maternal presence to whom each has access and in which each participates through popular devotional practices, such as the Guadalupan celebrations which surround her feast, these Christians are expressing a notion of Church that is open to all, nurturing, and life-giving in its own right. Given the relationship of the Holy Spirit as the source of and vivifying presence in the Church, a pneumatological understanding of Guadalupe calls the Church to be enlivened by a female face that is different, racially, and that invites the Church to embrace such difference with openness as an integral part of its mission.

However, Espín's proposal is not without flaws. It would be difficult to substantiate an original, fundamentally pneumatological awareness in the earliest (possibly orally transmitted) accounts of the Guadalupan encounter. The interference of so-called religious or cultural elites cited by Espín as malicious remain the only records of Guadalupan devotion available to scholars, and the lack of

pneumatological imagery in the texts cannot be remedied. Perhaps Espín brings a modern (or post-modern) awareness of the pneumatological foundations of the Hispanic church, an awareness influenced by the rapid spread of Pentecostalism in Latin America, that may exist in contemporary Guadalupean devotion but does not necessarily have its roots in the Guadalupean tradition. It cannot be denied that for Mexican-Americans, Guadalupe is a mother, specifically the mother of Jesus their brother and of the Mexican nation as a whole.³⁵⁰ The Pauline understanding of the maternity of the Spirit does not appear to be present in this devotion. While it is true that Guadalupean devotion empowers Hispanic communities to act on behalf of justice, this alone is not sufficient, to my mind, to describe it in pneumatological terms. Moreover, if those who practice Guadalupean devotion do not understand it pneumatologically, but mariologically, it is inappropriate to superimpose a pneumatological overlay on Guadalupe at this time.

Perhaps what Espín is trying to express in his pneumatological thesis is an ecclesiological insight present in Guadalupean devotion. The connection between the Holy Spirit and the church may be reflected in Espín's hypothesis, but the Marian element of contemporary Guadalupean devotion should be incorporated. It is possible that Guadalupean devotion has an ecclesiological significance and not a pneumatological one. Because Guadalupe empowers people to action on behalf of justice, because the narrative includes important ecclesiological insights, and because the devotion is framed in Mariological terms, it may be that Guadalupean devotion demonstrates the close tie between Mary and ecclesiology. If this is the case, popular

³⁵⁰ For an overview of Guadalupe's function as a national symbol, see D.A. Brading's *Mexican Phoenix*.

religiosity, in the form of Guadalupe devotion, both anticipates and continues to support the close tie between Mary and the church that was emphasized at Vatican II.

4.4 Elizondo, A Guadalupe Theologian

It cannot be doubted that Virgilio Elizondo, founder of the Mexican-American Cultural Center in San Antonio, Texas, has pioneered the study of Latino Catholicism. Since the 1970s Elizondo's work has explored seminal topics in the now-blossoming field of so-called "contextual" theologies: the import of race, particularly *mestizaje* in religious experience, the role of popular religiosity, the various devotional styles among U.S. Latino Catholics, particularly the Mexican-American experience in the Southwestern U.S. Together with Espín, these theologians' focus on popular religiosity as a locus of theology paved the way for scholars to look to religious practices, devotions, and other forms of material culture to discern the theological insight of a community. Inspired by this work, this section seeks to delve into the Guadalupe devotion of Mexican-American Catholics. In particular, this section diverges from Espín's strict adherence to lived practice and oral tradition, by devoting attention not only to devotional practice but also to the text that spurs Guadalupe devotion, the *Nican mopohua*, in an attempt to discover what ecclesiological awareness lies implicit there. Here I will attempt to interpret, as Espín suggests, three overlooked aspects of the faithful intuition of the People of God which I think are present in Hispanic devotion to Mary in general, and to Guadalupe in particular: its catholicity, its emphasis on dialogue, and its apostolic character.

The first part of the intuition centers on the breadth of marian devotion. In a nationwide survey of Hispanic Catholics conducted in 1995 by the North Eastern

Pastoral Institute, more respondents believed “strongly” that the Virgin Mary is the mother of God than that Jesus died on the cross, rose, and saved us. The survey administrators concluded that this demonstrates the intensity of marian devotion in the Hispanic community as well as Hispanic Catholics’ attachment to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, marian devotion often serves as the cornerstone of the Hispanic parish. One example would be the December celebrations in many Mexican-American parishes, where Guadalupe’s feast, celebrated December 12, far overshadows the liturgical festivities surrounding Christmas. It has led some theologians to inquire whether Guadalupe should be the principal feast of the Advent season.³⁵¹

If we look specifically at the history of Guadalupan devotion of Mexican-American Catholics, which has been traced by historians and theologians, it is clear why the devotion spread so quickly at the outset—through blossoming urban networks, migration during the Mexican war of independence, and association with patriotic and social heroes like Zapata, Hidalgo, and Cesar Chavez. In addition, historians like Timothy Matovina have chronicled the popularity and staying power of the Guadalupan devotion, in his case in San Antonio. His research further shows how, in the mid nineteenth century, this devotion blurred societal gender divisions, since women took an active and visible role in both the planning and the execution of the devotional rituals.³⁵² In more recent times, Jeannette Rodriguez has argued that for Mexican-American women faced with a sense of loss or distance from their

³⁵¹ See Elizondo and Matovina, eds. *Mestizo Worship* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1998).

³⁵² See Matovina, “Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrations in San Antonio, Texas, 1840-1841” in *Mestizo Worship*.

cultural heritage, Guadalupe “functions in a restorative manner. She is a central religious and cultural symbolic memory and attachment for many Mexican-American women. For these women, she is a tool by which they make meaning of their assumptive world.”³⁵³ Guadalupe’s availability and accessibility historically to a wide swath of the Mexican-American population cannot be doubted.

In practice, this translates into laywomen and laymen, young and old, taking part in the preparations, planning, and activities surrounding Guadalupan devotion. Virgil Elizondo has repeatedly emphasized that Guadalupe is the cornerstone of Mexican-American Christianity, and indeed, of Mexican-American culture in general. He frequently reminds students that although not every Mexican-American can tell you the same version of the Guadalupan apparition narrative, most know at least some version, and for many Mexican-American Catholics, Guadalupe serves as their sole contact point with the Church—the source of their involvement, the lure that brings them to liturgy, their draw to the institutional Church.

What does this mean for the U.S. Catholic Church? What are the popularity and the accessibility of Guadalupan devotion saying about current structures and practices? According to Elizondo, popular religious practices are activities engaged in by the People of God “with, without, or despite the clergy.” The fact that so many Hispanic Catholics participate, especially women, indicates not only their desire but in many cases their competency to take active roles in ministry.³⁵⁴ Initially we might

³⁵³ Jeannette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1994), 125.

³⁵⁴ “For us liturgy is an intrinsic part of *mujerista* theology...Liturgy is a powerful means for us to understand and articulate our religious beliefs and practices. Liturgy provides us with opportunities to express and strengthen our values as a community of faith struggling for liberation.” Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, “On the Birthing Stool: *Mujerista* Liturgy” in *Women at Worship*:

say that laypeople, and especially women, are looking for ways to take an active role in the Church. Secondly, the staying power of the Guadalupe devotion reveals much about how devotions, and how the Church itself, can change in order to stay relevant. The present popularity of bilingual services for the Guadalupe festivities testifies to the growing need for multi-lingual parish ministry. The USCCB's Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs cites increased intergenerational tensions as one of the main challenges facing Hispanic Catholics in the 21st century. Younger Hispanics may feel less comfortable with Spanish, but need not be excluded from participation in Guadalupe devotion because of this. As Elizondo has noted, the meaning of the *mestizaje* in the Guadalupe image is that no race, no person is excluded from her message or her welcome. That is certainly a lesson the Hispanic Church, and the Catholic Church generally, try to project, but could certainly project more clearly.

Perhaps the appeal of Guadalupe devotion can be traced in part to elements of the apparition itself. The symbolism of the imagery, especially the way in which it marries European and indigenous symbols, the fact that the image itself can be read as a narrative of the melding of two cultures, though important, will not be my focus here. Rather, elements of the story of the *morenita* (little brown one), in particular the importance and effects of listening and being heard in the story, function as the ecclesiological significant categories for me. In the apparition narrative, the *Nican mopohua*, Juan Diego, to whom the Virgin appears, first becomes aware of a strange happening when he hears a variety of songbirds in and around Tepeyac—the bird in Nahuatl culture is a symbol of mediation between heaven and earth. When he hears

Interpretations of North American Diversity, Marjorie Proctor-Smith and Janet R. Walton, eds. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 193.

this celestial song, his initial question to himself is “Am I worthy of what I am hearing?” Upon focusing on the source of the music, he hears Guadalupe before he sees her, and her first word to him in their encounter is “listen.”

When Guadalupe delivers her message to Juan Diego, and sends him to the bishop’s house, he goes without hesitation. When he arrives, though, the bishop who is “very busy” gives him a standard response, come back later when I can listen to you more closely. Juan Diego’s second meeting with the bishop includes a lengthy series of questions by the bishop, just to be certain he has heard Juan Diego correctly, but still the Virgin’s message is not received. Still Juan Diego is not heard, because he is not believed. When, before his third encounter with the virgin, Juan Diego tries to elude her by taking a different route, her first words of comfort to him are “Listen and hear well in your heart,...that which troubles you is nothing.”

So he goes back to the bishop. It is only after the third visit, the third long wait outside the bishop’s door, the third time enduring the ridicules of the bishop’s staff gathered outside his office, that Juan Diego’s message, and Guadalupe’s is truly heard, once the image on his tilma is revealed. Only after this does the bishop offer hospitality, first to Juan Diego and then to his uncle, who had been miraculously healed. It is only then that they are received.

While the story of Guadalupe is typically associated with the conversion of the Indians, Elizondo notes that in truth the converts in the narrative are the bishop and his household—“theologians, catechists, liturgists, canonists and others.”³⁵⁵ They convert “from confident religious ethnocentrism” to something new, exciting,

³⁵⁵ Elizondo, *Guadalupe Mother of the New Creation* 95.

and in many ways beyond their control. “The beginning of this great miracle was that the bishop finally came to listen to the voice and call of the poor, ridiculed, crushed, and often ignored.”³⁵⁶ The narrative demonstrates two kinds of “hearing”—Juan Diego’s faithful listening of the heart, filled with trust and belief in the Virgin’s message, and the bishop’s superficial listening, lacking in trust for many reasons, not least of which was the socio-cultural status of the messenger. Guadalupe’s message converts the Church to the poor, the colonized, and the ostracized.

At the center of the conversion of the Church that takes place in the Guadalupan narrative stands the missionary, the apostle, Juan Diego. He, the neophyte native with little education and no meaningful status in a brutally colonized society, brings the good news of hope to the missionaries who were charged with doing God’s work in the New World. Just as Juan Diego was sent by the Virgin, the entire Church is sent out, in the narrative, after the conversion of the bishop and his household. Rather than build a Church in the center of the city, the typical procedure in the colonies, the institutional Church itself must go out, to Tepeyac, a hill outside the city, near various Indian villages. The Church is forced to go out to the poor, the center of Catholicism gets pushed to the marginal location in the city, and thus the marginal becomes the center. All this is brought about by the message of the insignificant one, Juan Diego. Thus, Juan Diego’s own experience of being called and sent transforms the entire Catholic Church and community. Indeed, it changes the religious landscape in a very physical way. Guadalupe sends Juan Diego out, and Juan Diego sends the Church itself out, to the margins of the society. This radically

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.

active apostolicity—Juan Diego’s true going-forth to share the good news—models how Guadalupe devotion can and should transform the lives of Hispanic Catholics, and all Catholics.

The apostolic thrust of the Guadalupe story calls to mind the apostolic character of the Church. More importantly, it reminds us that apostolicity does not reside in the hierarchy alone—the whole People of God is gathered and sent, as stated in *Lumen gentium* 17: “[e]ach disciple of Christ has the obligation of spreading the faith to the best of his ability.” The whole People of God inherit the evangelical legacy of the apostles,³⁵⁷ the capacity and responsibility to spread the good news and foster conversion intra-ecclesially and extra-ecclesially. Part of this conversion requires a turn toward the margins, a vulnerability and an openness that is willing to risk uncertainty for the sake of the Reign of God. This turn involves solidarity with the marginalized; it is not just a turning-toward the margins, but a going out, an acting on behalf of the marginalized.

4.5 Roberto Goizueta, a theology of accompaniment and relationality

In his *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*, Roberto Goizueta also reflects on devotion to Guadalupe in the Hispanic community. He grounds his reflections in his experience of the community of Mexican-Americans that make up the parish at San Fernando Cathedral, in San Antonio, Texas. For all Hispanics, but especially for Mexicans, “no other popular

³⁵⁷ I do not mean to imply that the notion of apostolic succession should apply to the whole People of God in the same fashion as it applies to the episcopacy. For more on this issue, see the work of Edward Schillebeeckx. See also Daniel Thompson, *The Language of Dissent: Edward Schillebeeckx on the Crisis of Authority in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), especially chapters four and five.

religious devotion is as closely linked to a people's self-identity, or socio-historical context, as is the Mexican devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe."³⁵⁸ Goizueta's goal in the book is to outline the contours of this Hispanic self-identity, while elaborating a renewed vision of praxis that takes the aesthetic dimension of reality seriously. In the process, he elaborates a theological anthropology from a U.S. Latino standpoint: an anthropology which he describes as relational. This anthropological point is closely tied to his observations about popular religious devotions to Jesus and Mary that he witnessed in San Antonio.

Goizueta's articulation of the Guadalupan narrative, the *Nican mopohúa*, and its central place in the devotional life of the cathedral community, reveals not only the particular practices of one community, but also the implicit self-understanding at work in that community and in the broader Latino community in the U.S.. "One cannot understand the significance of Guadalupe for popular religion—and for U.S. Hispanic self-understanding—without understanding how this narrative reveals to us who God is, and, simultaneously, who we are."³⁵⁹ By fleshing out the understanding of the Guadalupan encounter implicit in the narrative and devotion, Goizueta is simultaneously sketching a theological anthropology from a Latino perspective. The characteristics of this anthropology indicate important characteristics of the Latino Church as well, for theological anthropology and ecclesiology share a common subject: the Christian as s/he exists in the world.³⁶⁰ Goizueta's ecclesiological

³⁵⁸ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 38.

³⁵⁹ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 39.

³⁶⁰ While it is true that for ecclesiology the community to which the individual belongs, the Church, serves as the primary object of investigation, this cannot be divorced from a theological understanding of the human person as created and redeemed by God. Many theologians endorse a

contribution can be summed up in three parts: the U.S. Latino Church is relational, sacramental, and nurturing of authentic subjectivity.

To begin, Goizueta notes that the human person, for U.S. Hispanics, is constituted by relationships, is inherently relational. “Each person...is defined and constituted by his or her relationships, both personal and impersonal, natural and supernatural, material and spiritual.”³⁶¹ Over and against what he calls liberal modern individualism,³⁶² the Latino understanding of humanity rests on this notion of relationality. “I am a particular, concrete, and unique embodiment of all those relationships; when someone encounters me, they also encounter my parents, relatives, friends, community my people....”³⁶³ The human person, for Goizueta, is always already part of an intergenerational, involuntary community. He affirms “the centrality of human relationships as constitutive of our identity as human persons.”³⁶⁴ What Goizueta identifies here, in part, is the Hispanic notion of family, that community which no person chooses but is necessarily constitutive of identity.

relational component to humanity that cannot be overlooked when reflecting on ecclesial issues. For a sample of some feminist relational anthropologies, see *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

³⁶¹ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 50.

³⁶² In the third chapter of *Caminemos*, Goizueta analyzes “modern liberal individualism”, which he deems characteristic of the U.S. culture. Modern liberal individualism is expressed politically, religiously, and economically. It finds its roots in the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous self. Community is reduced to a “collection of individuals” (55), religious belief is divorced from community, and the market represents the sole arbiter of value. This individualism leads ultimately to isolation, since any and all relationships are engaged by the individual on a voluntary basis. The cleavage between the individual and community characterizes the anthropology of modern liberal individualism. This is the anthropology in contrast to which Goizueta elaborates Latino (relational) anthropology. See *Caminemos*, 53-60.

³⁶³ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 50.

³⁶⁴ Goizueta, “Resurrection at Tepeyac: The Guadalupan Encounter” *Theology Today* 56 (3 October 1999, 336-45), 344.

Goizueta also claims that Mary, for Hispanics, is never just Mary, but also always the mother of Jesus. Mary symbolizes the “preexistent involuntary community which defines and constitutes the individual person we call Jesus” and this is one reason she is so central to the devotional lives of Hispanic Catholics.³⁶⁵ Mary is important because she is Jesus’ family, but also because she is experienced as part of each person’s family. It is not just that Guadalupe or Mary existed, but that she exists today in the lives of the members of the community. This is evident when Goizueta looks to the devotions surrounding the feast of Guadalupe at San Fernando Cathedral. The reenactment of the Guadalupan encounter, which is a fairly common practice, makes the encounter real to those present in the Church. Thus it is not merely a memorial, but a reliving of the experience of encounter with Guadalupe each year.³⁶⁶ As the story is made real again each year, so the encounter with the statue of Guadalupe, with her mantle, are real, tactile experiences, that function as sacramentals, if not sacraments, in that they mediate the supernatural by means of their natural physical presence.³⁶⁷ Thus, when the bishops at Vatican II refer to the Church as a “sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and

³⁶⁵ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 66.

³⁶⁶ Goizueta, *Caminemos*, 45.

³⁶⁷ Richard McBrien identifies these three theological foci of Catholicism: sacramentality, mediation and communion in *Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994). A sacrament can be defined as a “principal liturgical rite of the Church through which participants experience the love and power of God (grace) that flows from Christ’s Passion, death, and Resurrection.” A “sacramental” is a “sacred sign instituted by the Church, similar to the seven major sacraments in that they ‘signify effect, particularly of a spiritual kin, that are obtained through the Church’s intercession. They dispose people to receive the chief effect of the sacraments and they make holy various occasions in human life.’” (*Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 1148) See also Goizueta’s notion of sacrament as relational, *Caminemos*, 48-49.

of unity among all men [sic],” they affirm the sacramental nature of the Church.³⁶⁸

The essence of the Church, as sacramental, is both to signify and to bring about unity with God and communion with others.

For Goizueta, the U.S. Latino understanding of the cosmos as inherently interrelated and interconnected, which bypasses the modern cleavage of form and content, underlies this rich understanding of the marian symbols and images truly recreating the experience of encounter in the present. Interestingly, Charles Dahm cites the audible gasp in the community during the reenactment of the Guadalupan encounter on December 12. Dahm notes that the play re-presents the moment when the image of Guadalupe appears on the *tilma*, and it is as if the congregation lives the awe-filled experience anew each year.³⁶⁹

This notion of encounter, which Goizueta believes is more suited to the Guadalupan event than the more traditional ‘apparition,’ presupposes the existence and mutual recognition of two subjects (an object cannot take part in an encounter as such). An apparition implies a passive recipient and an agent—the one appearing. Guadalupe, says Goizueta, “invites [Juan Diego] into a profound relationship, in and through which he experiences his own humanity and, therefore, his own liberation.”³⁷⁰ While the events at Tepeyac begin as an apparition, when Guadalupe appears to Juan Diego, throughout the course of the narrative he develops, from “a

³⁶⁸ LG 1.

³⁶⁹ Dahm, *Parish Ministry*, 166.

³⁷⁰ Goizueta, “Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Heart of Mexican Identity” in *Religion and the Creation of race and Ethnicity*, ed. Craig R. Prentiss (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 146.

passive object of others' actions to...active subject of his own future."³⁷¹ This encounter between historical subjects who are fully capable of acting and, as Juan Diego did, of evangelizing and converting, serves as a model for relationships both within the U.S. Catholic Church, and extra-ecclesially, between the Church and the world.

Just as Juan Diego comes to an understanding of his humanity through his relationship with Guadalupe, who treats him with dignity, so we come to know ourselves as free individuals through relationships. "A central theme of the narrative is the affirmation of community as the birthplace of authentic human personhood and freedom."³⁷² Because of this freedom, Juan Diego feels free to disobey the Virgin and go to his sick uncle instead of the bishop, as she had asked.³⁷³ This disobedience, however, is a hallmark of genuine community: true autonomy. Authentic community allows for dissent, difference, and criticism. It is one goal of an authentic community to foster the subjectivity and individuality of its members. As Goizueta remarks, "authentic individuality and authentic community are not contradictory but mutually inherent."³⁷⁴ Implicit in subjectivity is the notion of autonomy, thus Juan Diego must understand himself as an agent, one who determines his own destiny, in order to disobey the Virgin.

Ecclesially, the relational anthropology elaborated by Goizueta is significant. It presents a notion of the People of God that is truly communal and interrelated. His

³⁷¹ Goizueta, "Guadalupe," 146.

³⁷² Goizueta, "Resurrection," 343.

³⁷³ Goizueta, "Guadalupe," 147.

³⁷⁴ Goizueta, "Guadalupe," 148.

understanding of agency, autonomy and subjectivity coming about through relationship, in this case through Juan Diego's encounter with Guadalupe, models authentic relationships, between two subjects, not between a subject and an object. For the Church, this might help reconsider what the true relationship between, for example, clergy and laity, or the college of bishops and the pope, should look like. Moreover, it speaks to the universal Church, which spans space and time, through its network of intergenerational (and involuntary) relationships. Most importantly perhaps, Goizueta's understanding of the authentic community as being both constitutive of identity and the nexus of true freedom describes what the Church as People of God could truly be.

4.6 Ada María Isasi-Díaz: A *Mujerista* Approach

In her work on *mujerista* liturgy, Cuban-American theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz echoes many of the ecclesiological themes presented in this chapter, especially the notion of subjectivity and the relocation of the sacred to the margin as an act of solidarity. Isasi-Díaz defines *mujerista* theology as a “liberative praxis.”³⁷⁵ Thus, this type of theology is not the product of the ivory tower for her, but an ongoing activity of liberation for and solidarity with those most oppressed—Hispanic women. Isasi-Díaz ties liturgical practice to *mujerista*'s self understanding as a community of resistance:

For *mujeristas* our liturgies are communal celebrations, rituals that actively enable us to forge empowering relationships and at the same time help us to have control over our lives. Our liturgies are hope-

³⁷⁵ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “On the Birthing Stool: *Mujerista* Liturgy” in *Women at Worship*. See also Isasi-Díaz's *En La Lucha = In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

providing moments in the daily struggle for survival; they are signs of rebellion, for when the oppressed celebrate, we are telling the oppressor that we have not given up, that we have not been conquered.³⁷⁶

Isasi-Díaz, like other U.S. Latino/a theologians, sees her work as part of the legacy of liberation theology, in her case an expansion of the Latin American liberation theology which ignored the plight of women and did not translate well to the U.S. context. Her theology attempts to ground reflection in the experience of working-class Hispanic women, whom she argues experience the church as more marian than Christological.³⁷⁷ Consistently in her interviews with Hispanic women, the figure of Mary functions as the central ecclesiological figure. She adds that “a noticeable number of Hispanic women either do not believe that Jesus was divine, or they do not consider him or his divinity something relevant in their lives.”³⁷⁸ If this is true, and it is supported by the statistics about marian and Christological beliefs noted earlier in this chapter, this statement supports the notion that marian devotion is a central locus of ecclesiological reflection for the U.S. Hispanic community.

Isási-Díaz has written a great deal about the function of liturgy in *mujerista theology*. Clearly liturgy is particularly relevant when examining the ecclesiological implications of *mujerista theology*. In *mujerista* liturgies, women take an active role in planning and executing ritual. The communal exercise of the liturgy, a term Isasi-Díaz also applies to *mujerista* theology, enables women to establish themselves as

³⁷⁶ Isasi-Díaz, “*Mujerista* Liturgies and the Struggle for Liberation” in *Concilium: Liturgy and the Body*, ed. Louis-Marie Chauvet and Francois Kabasele Lumbala (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 104.

³⁷⁷ Ada María Isási-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 12-55.

³⁷⁸ Isási-Díaz and Tarango, 68.

subjects, as agents in control of their destiny, over against the dominant culture which seeks to make them invisible and keeps them on the margins of society. She ties the liberative elements of *mujerista* liturgy to Hispanic popular religiosity, and so this becomes a locus of theology for her, as it is for Espín, Elizondo, Goizueta and others. But these practices are judged by their potential for liberation: “*mujeristas* recognize that popular religion has failings and ambiguities...Some of these non-liberating elements are fatalism, superstition and the glorification of suffering.”³⁷⁹ After leaving these elements behind, popular religious practices become an avenue for familiar, at times non-clerical ways, of accessing the divine.

Two positive ecclesiological outcomes of *mujerista* liturgy as elaborated by Isasi-Díaz are the relocation of sacred space, and the claiming of subjectivity by women, which Isasi-Díaz elaborates using the category “permítanme hablar.”³⁸⁰ The first outcome, the relocation of sacred space, though originally a liturgical theme for Isasi-Díaz, resonates clearly with Elizondo’s theme of the conversion of the Church to the margins in the *Nican mopohúa*. Isasi-Díaz discusses the second ecclesologically significant category, subjectivity, in the context of her theological anthropology, but is relevant ecclesially because subjectivity is crucial to an understanding of relationships in the Church.

For Isasi-Díaz, *mujerista* liturgy relocates the sacred to the world of the margins, “instead of the institutional Churches that often do little or nothing to be in

³⁷⁹ Isasi-Díaz, “*Mujerista* Liturgy,” 106.

³⁸⁰ Isasi-Díaz, “Elements of a *Mujerista* Anthropology” in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, op. cit.

solidarity with Hispanic women's struggle for liberation."³⁸¹ Like the physical relocation of the New World cathedral in the *Nican mopohúa*, *mujerista* liturgy takes the power of the Church that is usually concentrated in the center (of cities, of society) and pushes it out to the margins. In doing this, the liturgies subvert patriarchy's hold on society, for Isasi-Díaz, and the center of power ceases to hold. This is ecclesiologicaly significant, but not because Isasi-Díaz writes this as a Catholic, or because her liturgies are inspired by Catholic liturgy (though it is not a celebration of the Eucharist as such). Rather, Isasi-Díaz's understanding of *mujerista* liturgy as relocating sacred space reinforces the notion of solidarity with the marginalized that is a central part of the mission of the Church.³⁸² As for Elizondo and Goizueta, Isasi-Díaz's notion of solidarity does not consist in taking account of the marginalized or attempting to hear the voices of the oppressed, but rather in the more difficult task of relocation—for the Guadalupan narrative the task was physical and burdensome, for Isasi-Díaz, it is described as "wresting" the sacred from the powerful.³⁸³

Isasi-Díaz's second ecclesiological contribution is the notion of subjectivity and agency that is part of her theological anthropology. She claims that a *mujerista* anthropology begins with the notion of women as historical agents: "Latinas are

³⁸¹ Isasi-Díaz, "*Mujerista* Liturgy," 107.

³⁸² Despite the official Church's initial condemnation of liberation theology, John Paul II eventually came to incorporate the language of liberation theology, especially the phrase "preferential option for the poor," into his understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. See *Tertio millenio adveniente [The Third Christian Millenium]* (Washington, DC:United States Catholic Conference, 1999); also Charles E. Curran, "The Pope's Passions: The Legacy of John Paul II - in the Spirit" *Christian Century* 120/23, Nov 15, 2003 p 28-32.

³⁸³ Isasi-Díaz, "*Mujerista* Liturgy," 108.

makers of history.”³⁸⁴ To illustrate this point, Isasi-Díaz utilizes a Spanish phrase: “permítanme hablar” (allow me to speak). At first glance, the first phrase appears to be a submissive request made by someone clearly unaware of her own agency. However, this is not Isasi-Díaz’s intent. Instead it represents a reaction against the exclusion of Hispanic women from their own history and from agency in contemporary society. “Our insistence on speaking is not only a matter of making known our past; it is also a matter of participating and making present and future history, of being protagonists, of being agents in our own history.”³⁸⁵ Rather than a humble question, the phrase denotes a demand, an unwillingness to remain silent instead of a sheepish desire to have a word. Speaking is Isasi-Díaz’s marker of historical agency and of full personhood. Speaking, in an ecclesial context, implies the recognition of and respect for the whole People of God and each Christian individually as human subjects, historical agents capable of (and called to) taking part in the Church’s mission in history.

4.7 Conclusion

Hispanic Catholics in no way represent the panacea that will cure the ills of the Catholic Church in the 21st century. While we are usually singled out as a vibrant and growing sector of the Church in the U.S., I sense an undercurrent of unexpressed gratitude for tolerating non-Spanish-speaking clergy, dwindling resources, and tokenistic appointments with little or no protest. The romanticization of U.S. Latinos/as traditional Catholicism, with its strong respect for the family, can obscure

³⁸⁴ Isasi-Díaz, “Elements,” 93.

³⁸⁵ Isasi-Díaz, “Elements,” 93.

the very progressive social agenda of many Hispanic Catholics. There are some ways in which Hispanic Catholics elude the liberal/conservative categories that can so easily be applied to factions in the U.S. Church.

Nor has the story of the Hispanic Church in the U.S. been marked only by successes. Witness the problems associated with the demise of the national parish, including the establishment of parallel parishes where one is English-speaking and the other Spanish-speaking or bilingual, the basement communities where the immigrant Church prefers to maintain its own space and some measure of autonomy. Or the alternative, the blended parish, which too often includes tokenistic appointments to parish councils. Further, the importing of very conservative clergy from Latin American countries runs the risk of being a hindrance, even if they do speak Spanish.

However, when we look to the popular religious practices of Hispanic Catholics, hermeneutically as Espín suggests, it is possible to glean insights that point to a way forward for the U.S. Church. Popular religiosity is important, not only because it is such a prominent feature in the lives of Hispanic Catholics, but also because it represents a methodological contribution of Latino/a ecclesiology. As María Pilar Aquino states, because of the demographic reality of the U.S. Church, a new ecclesiology is required, “an ecclesiology elaborated not so much around topics that might interest Latino/a culture but through the methodological perspectives of U.S. Latino/a theology.”³⁸⁶ An ecclesiology that takes account of popular religious practices and values these as a faith-filled intuition of the people sees the Church as a

³⁸⁶ María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology” in *From the Heart of Our People*, ed. Orlando Espín and Miguel Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 25.

place of encounter, of true dialogue, and of egalitarian apostolicity carried out by the historical agents that make up the People of God. Mariology occupies a place in U.S. Latino/a ecclesiology, then, not because of some romanticized view of Hispanics as especially marian or traditionally devout, but because devotion, especially popular religious devotion on the level which it exists in relation to Guadalupe, is a methodological focus of U.S. Latino/a theology. In other words, since U. S. Hispanics understand the church as more marian than christological, popular religious practices like Mexican-American Guadalupan devotion, are important starting points for ecclesiology.

I have tried to show three ways in which marian devotion, as a popular religious practice, empowers the faithful and serves as an outlet for the *sensus fidelium*. Devotion to Guadalupe can be read in a way that reveals positive progressive notions of accountability and responsibility, relevant for the clergy as well as the laity. These include strategies for warding off ecclesial monophysitism, like the ecclesial conversion called for in the Guadalupan narrative and the inclusive sense of apostolicity embodied by Juan Diego. With the help of the *Nican mopohúa* and the communities that have incorporated it into their popular religiosity, we can imagine a future Catholic Church that is truly accountable, as well as catholic, apostolic, and holy.

Another key ecclesiological insight of Guadalupan devotion is the notion of solidarity, particularly with those on the margins of society. What Mexican-American Catholics see in Guadalupe may in fact be a pneumatological insight as Espín suggests, but the insight has important ecclesiological meaning. The Mexican-

American community emphasizes in its marian devotion her solidarity with the sufferings of the People of God. Revered by this community of believers as their mother, Guadalupe truly serves as the mother of the Church, a title suggested by Paul VI after Vatican II. Because Guadalupe is in solidarity with those who suffer, she points the way for the rest of the Church: where the poor are the Church should be too. Mexican-Americans celebrate the accompaniment and permanence of Guadalupe's presence with their community. In the same way, the Church called to be, and remain, in solidarity with those on the margins.

Thus Guadalupan devotion is important for ecclesiology for three reasons. First, as Espín notes, it may be a source of popular pneumatology, and may therefore yield interesting insight into how a large portion of the People of God envision the Spirit that permeates the Church. Second, Guadalupan devotion is a presence in popular religion and this is methodologically important for U.S. Latino/a theology and may be an important contribution of this "contextual" theology to mainstream thought. Third, it expresses a fundamental ecclesiological truth about the apostolic nature of the church (in respect to the participation of all in the Church's mission) and about the subjectivity of the whole People of God.

CONCLUSION

The Second Vatican Council revived the ancient tie between Mary and the church, and its importance for the interpretation of both marian imagery and ecclesiological symbolism. By including the proposed separate schema on Mary in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the bishops at Vatican II sent a clear message about the relationship between Mariology and ecclesiology. Since then, however, the links between these two branches of theology have been understood in different ways, as seen in the previous chapters. Some, like Hans Urs von Balthasar, use a symbolic approach to Mary to describe the relationship between God and the church with sexual or gendered imagery. Others like Johnson urge a thoroughly ecclesiological understanding of Mary, a de-idealization of the woman of Nazareth, and a praxis-oriented reclaiming of holiness in the church. The import of Guadalupan devotion as a locus for ecclesiological thought cannot be overlooked. An implicit ecclesial awareness lies in the popular religious practices that surround the icon of Guadalupe, an awareness of the church as charismatic and just.

The following pages will begin to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Mariologies and ecclesiologies outlined in the previous chapters. Several criteria figure prominently in this discussion. The first has to do with the function of Mary in the notion of church for these thinkers. While it is clear that ecclesiology is informing Mariology, is the reverse true in all cases? The second criterion is the question of

whether these thinkers are correctly interpreting the tie between Mary and the church endorsed by the bishops at Vatican II. At stake here is whether each thinker is in continuity or discontinuity with the decision at Vatican II to subsume the marian schema into the church in order to curb the excesses of marian devotion. The third set of criteria have to do with the images of Mary proposed by each thinker—do these representations of Mary foster the biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological goals for marian devotion set out by Paul VI? The final criterion deals with the possibilities for the self-identification of the church. What sort of a church does each thinker’s vision promote?

5.1 First Criterion: The Impact of Mariology on Ecclesiology

The introduction to this dissertation states that while the effect of ecclesiology on Mariology is relatively apparent in contemporary marian reflections, the reverse is less obvious. At times, in the case of Johnson, for example, the desire to think differently about Mary (especially Johnson’s desire to relieve Mary of the symbolic status she has had for centuries), leads to an ecclesiology that is not transparently marian. In other cases, such as Mexican-American Guadalupe devotion, there is no explicit ecclesiology in which to find a mariological dimension, and much of my work in that chapter is conducted in the subjunctive—if the specified practices and awareness exist in the various forms of Guadalupe devotion, then certain conclusions about the Latino church and the church at large follow. In the case of Balthasar, however, the intimate tie between Mary and the church, and the importance of Balthasar’s notions of femininity and nuptiality in both made the effect of his Mariology on his ecclesiology more discernible.

Of the thinkers represented in this study, Balthasar’s is the ecclesiology which is most obviously shaped by Mariology, or at a minimum by the theology of sexuality at the

root of his mariological ecclesiology. The interplay in his work between the figures of Mary and Peter, and the respective ecclesiological importance of the symbolic masculine and feminine modalities in the church, reveals a profoundly monarchical, dualistic church, patterned on his view of humanity as essentially dualistic. The resulting church is thoroughly suffused with divinity, in its foundation and in its organization. By equating Mary with the ultimate in femininity, femininity with dependence and receptivity, and the church with femininity, Balthasar creates a church that is utterly dependent on God's will. While his profoundly theocentric vision for the church should be praised, Balthasar's failure to account for the humanity of the church, and for the full humanity of women leave him vulnerable to critique, especially that of ecclesiological monophysitism. The church is so inscribed in the masculine-feminine interplay of God's dramatic activity in the world that the human component of the church is relegated to the status of audience member, basking in the glory of God's action, and taking no action itself. This imagery is not only non-biblical, it is monophysitistic. It reduces the humanity of the church to an appearance, and reduces human activity to a reaction to God's initiative.

Moreover, the type of femininity exhibited by Mary influences Balthasar's notion of the feminine church. Just as Mary was used as a vessel for Christ's coming into the world, the feminine church (which Balthasar equates at first with the whole human church, then specifically with the non-clergy) is used as a vessel for God's activity in the contemporary world. Emptiness, receptivity, and availability, all characteristics of a good vessel, come to signify the ideals of femininity, and women are made less than human in this picture, excluded from initiation, action, content, and self-knowledge.

Mary's contribution to ecclesiology is to highlight the perfect feminine creature, and thus she is what the feminine church aspires to be. This double limitation of the church—first to be only receptive, open, and submissively feminine, and then to be perpetually falling short of the marian ideal—is quite simply heterodox. It disregards the participation of all believers in the threefold office of Christ, disregards the baptismal dignity of all believers, especially women, and ultimately denies that the laity can have any task in the church except obedience.

Elizabeth Johnson, a feminist who also takes sex and gender seriously, opts to understand the church as the communion of saints, and Mary as an exemplary human being within it. This communion consists of those (mostly unnamed) Christians, living and dead, who struggled to live holy lives amid the ambiguity of history, and Mary is one example of preeminence among those lives. By exalting the sacredness of the everyday and the holiness of ordinary life, Johnson depicts a profoundly human church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit through the ambiguities of history. While in Johnson's work the ecclesial reflection on the communion of saints clearly shapes the mariological study, it is less clear that the reverse is true. Does her vision of Mary shape the way she articulates the communion of saints?

To my mind, the answer to this question is yes. It is clear from Johnson's own understanding of her work on the communion of saints that the ecclesial image is one step on the path to elaborating a coherent Mariology. If in the process of composing her Mariology, Johnson was compelled to write an ecclesiological tome, it is clear that her ideas about Mary affected how she conceptualized the church. One important function of Johnson's Mariology in her ecclesiological reflections is the important deconstruction of

the romanticized images of the church that Johnson undertakes in *Friends of God and Prophets*. She never hesitates to cite what she terms the obvious sinfulness of the church, without turning that observation into a full-scale condemnation of all the church's activity. The church for Johnson is human, historical, flawed, but also graced, holy, and capable of transformative action in the world.

It is no coincidence that Johnson's preoccupation in her mariological work, to make Mary human again, parallels the achievement in her work on the communion of saints. By resituating the idea of the communion of saints from its otherworldly position to one that includes the earthly church, Johnson is in a sense making the church human again. Similarly, by reconstructing some of the details of Mary of Nazareth's life in *Truly our Sister*, Johnson seeks to bring back Mary's human particularity, her historical context, the holiness of her daily life. Just as there is no need to relegate the communion of saints to an otherworldly community of patrons, it is unnecessary, and unhelpful to idealize Mary. Both archetypal understandings have the same negative effect—they minimize the holy that is found in the everyday, the holiness which characterizes the majority of the church in heaven and on earth. The denigration of this holiness has been felt in a special way throughout history by women, whose contributions to the church's holiness remain in obscurity, for the most part excluded from the canon of saints.

The marian aspect of Guadalupan devotion is quite clear to many thinkers, but the ecclesiological outcomes of these popular religious practices call for interpretation. The Mexican-American and other U.S. Latino/a communities that practice devotion to Guadalupe are a peculiar test case within this dissertation. While the popular devotion to Guadalupe cannot be questioned, the ecclesiological insights implicit within the devotion

remain exactly that, implicit. Still, an ecclesiology based on insights like those Virgilio Elizondo gleans from the *Nican mopohúa*, or those that can be harvested from the popular practices themselves, their widespread nature for instance, is valuable, in particular in the U.S. context where the Latino/a community demands increasingly more resources. Ideas like a more robust understanding of dialogue, conversion, and apostolicity, as well as a church that is open to insight from diverse (and at times derided) messengers holds promise for the future. Interestingly, even Espín, who does not consider Guadalupan devotion to be marian, expresses his understanding of Guadalupan devotion in an ecclesologically significant category, pneumatology. So while he cannot be said to affirm the tie between Mary and the church in *Lumen gentium*, he nevertheless believes that Guadalupe shapes the church. If people are expressing a popular pneumatology in Guadalupan devotion, then the intimacy with which so many U. S. Latinos/as call upon the Holy Spirit is significant. Moreover, the cultural achievements and movements for justice inspired by Guadalupe all speak to the influence of the Holy Spirit (and the church) in history.

U.S. Latino/a understandings of Guadalupe, reflected in popular religious devotion, function as a barometer of the ecclesial self-understanding of that community, an important facet of the Catholic Church in this country. What people are saying (and doing) in their devotions to Guadalupe, whether they understand her as Mary of Nazareth or they relate to her as they would to the Holy Spirit, matters to their understanding of themselves as people of God, as church. So the fact that Guadalupe inspires movements for justice indicates the kinds of activity the church should have in the world, for instance. The prevalence of Guadalupan devotion all over the country, both within the

institutional church and beyond it, speaks to a vision of the church that goes beyond the institution, to the family, the setting for much of this devotion. The prominent place of women in the devotional practices may also indicate an awareness of themselves as full, and active participants in the mission of the church. These are just some ways in which Guadalupe devotion may serve as an indicator of the ecclesiological contribution of U.S. Latinos and Latinas.

In each of the schools of thought analyzed in this dissertation, Mary is the portrait (in Johnson's case, one portrait) of the people of God, a figure closely associated (in some cases, the figure) with the church. Because of this, the features of these mariologies say much about what each thinker or community considers ecclesologically significant. In this way, Mariology functions like a symptom or example of a style of ecclesiological thought. As in the case of Guadalupe devotion, however, Mariology (or pneumatology) functions as a barometer, an indicator or measure of the ecclesiological awareness implicit in a community. Guadalupe devotion can drive a change in ecclesiological imagery, one that could result in a church more in line with the vision of Vatican II.

5.2 Second Criterion: Continuity with Vatican II

The importance of ecclesiology's impact on Mariology cannot be doubted. It is clear from the history of *Lumen gentium* that the bishops deliberately chose to include Mary in the church, and tie the two realities intimately. In Balthasar's thought the connection between Mary and the church is certainly present, though the results are not continuous with the spirit of the Council. In the case of Mexican-American Guadalupe devotion, if "Mariology" can be understood as reflection on this devotion as a popular religious practice, then the link between Mariology and ecclesiology exists, if only

implicitly. But it is Johnson's work that, though not completely congruent with the text of *Lumen gentium*, most closely approximates, in my view, the goal of the council.

Johnson's thought is the one most in line with the aims of the bishops at Vatican II, who chose to situate reflection on Mary within ecclesiology, as Johnson considers Mary a member of ecclesial symbol, the communion of saints.

Balthasar's ecclesiological reflection, in particular his emphasis on the hierarchical structure of the church and his disdain for the Council's ecclesiological image, people of God, demonstrates his attitude toward the conciliar reform. But beyond any disdain Balthasar may have for the council (none is expressed explicitly in his writing), his ecclesial image is more monarchical and institutional, less collegial, charismatic and historical than the church envisioned in *Lumen gentium*. One does not get the sense that Balthasar's feminine church is in need of constant purification,³⁸⁷ so replete is the church with marian virginity. Furthermore, in Balthasar's church, the call of *Gaudium et spes* to put the church in dialogue with the modern world goes unheeded.³⁸⁸ One would suppose that the feminine aspect of the church, oriented toward the masculine, awaits its initiative (that of the masculine clergy or hierarchy) in deciding what action to take, if any, in the world. This is profoundly dangerous, and a violation of the whole church's call to holiness affirmed in *Lumen gentium* 10.

Johnson's vision of the church as a community of mutuality holds promise because it remains close to the goals of Vatican II—an open church, an ecumenical community, an eschatological community of hope amid the ambiguity of history that

³⁸⁷ LG, 8.

³⁸⁸ GS, 1.

Gaudium et spes describes so clearly. Johnson deviates from the understanding of Mary in *Lumen gentium*, as she finds no use for those symbolic understandings of Mary, which the bishops clearly want to retain in calling Mary “preeminent and a wholly unique member of the Church and its type and outstanding model in faith and charity.”³⁸⁹ Johnson’s goal in removing the symbolic overlay the figure of Mary has carried for centuries is, however, very much in line with the awareness of the ambiguity of history and awareness of women’s changing roles expressed in *Gaudium et spes*, as well as with the notion of the church in constant need of reform cited in *Lumen gentium*.³⁹⁰ In Johnson’s citations one reads a familiarity with the conciliar documents, as Vatican II is clearly a source in her reconstruction both of the image of Mary and of ecclesiology in the communion of saints.

That Guadalupean devotion figures in any discussion of systematic theology is testament enough to the appropriation of the Second Vatican Council in U.S. Latino/a theology. For while *Gaudium et spes* recognizes contemporary society’s wariness of superstition and magic, *Lumen gentium* explicitly affirms the *sensus fidelium*: “The whole body of the faithful...cannot err in matters of belief.”³⁹¹ Espín builds on this notion, utilizing popular religious practices as a measure of the faith of the people, the *sensus fidelium*. The ubiquity of Guadalupean devotion is one reason to consider the belief latent in these practices an example of the *sensus fidelium*. In this way, U.S. Latino/a theology incorporates the insights of Vatican II. Because reflection on Guadalupean devotion is not

³⁸⁹ LG 53.

³⁹⁰ GS 8, 9; LG 6.

³⁹¹ LG 12, see also GS 7.

specifically Mariology, it is difficult to discern if the conciliar tie between Mary and the church is being properly understood in Hispanic theology. But, since a systematic ecclesiology is also lacking, my insights about the church as dialogical and oriented toward those on the margins begin to link up a Hispanic view of Mary with an incipient Hispanic ecclesiology.

5.3 Third Criterion: Marialis cultus

My third task involves analyzing the Mariological-ecclesiological portraits presented by each school of thought according to the criteria for marian devotion elaborated by Paul VI in *Marialis cultus*. The four criteria were as follows: marian devotion should be based biblically and liturgically, it should not impair ecumenical efforts, and it should be congruent with the human sciences, especially anthropology. The marian imagery described in each chapter above will be analyzed according to the degree to which they meet each criterion. The goal will be to illustrate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each. After this I will elaborate some insights gleaned from comparing these three appropriations of marian imagery in ecclesiology.

First is the idea of biblical basis. Article 30 of *Marialis cultus* states the need in Christian piety “that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint.” In the case of Guadalupan devotion, the direct biblical basis, obviously, is nonexistent, though the devotion is largely textually based on the *Nican mopohúa*. For the moment, then, Balthasar and Johnson’s mariologies seem the most biblically based. Both make copious use of the biblical text, including the gospel scenes where Mary appears. Indeed, Johnson devotes a relatively large part of her book to interpreting the few scenes where

Mary appears in the gospels.³⁹² Balthasar also uses the biblical text to support his claims about Mary, as well as to bolster his claims about the Petrine, Pauline, and Johannine aspects of the church.³⁹³ Balthasar also draws heavily on scenes from the gospel of John. Whereas Johnson reconstructs the life of Mary using a similar approach to that of the quests for the historical Jesus, Balthasar prefers to do a largely symbolic and literary analysis of the biblical text.

In order to adjudicate which of these two authors best complies with Paul VI's criteria of biblical basis, one must read further in article 30, where Paul VI says that the notion of a "biblical imprint" does not mean "merely a diligent use of texts and symbols skillfully selected from the Sacred Scriptures."³⁹⁴ Thus, the amount of biblical citation is insufficient. It runs the risk, in both the case of Balthasar and Johnson, of using the biblical narrative for prooftexting, sifting out what is inconvenient or contrary to the point the author is trying to make. Indeed, some of Balthasar's biblical citation seems to suffer from this, perhaps because of his florid style and his copious use of the biblical text to make his points. What Paul VI suggests in this part of his apostolic exhortation is that biblical citation is insufficient. What is needed, he says, is "above all that devotion to the Virgin should be imbued with the great themes of the Christian message."³⁹⁵ Paul VI does not go into detail about the themes specifically; it is left to the reader to interpret what he may be implying. Obvious inclusions on the list would be the incarnation, the

³⁹² Johnson, *Truly*, 209-304.

³⁹³ However, it should be noted that Balthasar's idea of "spheres" or aspects of the church based on these gospel figures is entirely extra-biblical.

³⁹⁴ Paul VI, *Marialis cultus*, 30.

³⁹⁵ Paul VI, *Marialis cultus* 30.

abundant love God shows for humanity in Jesus, salvation from sin, the coming of the Kingdom of God. For Balthasar, the Christian message is one of beauty, of the dramatic love God has for the world which is shown through Christ's incarnation in the Virgin Mary. To fit this message, he goes beyond the biblical text, formulating a mystical theology that, while beautiful and interesting, is largely distant from the biblical narrative, relying mostly on Balthasar's own symbolic interpretations of biblical figures.

For Johnson, the Christian message is one of liberation for the poor and oppressed, especially women, and of mutuality and compassionate respect. Consequently, Johnson's reflections on Mary are closely tied to the biblical text, and she takes into account contemporary hermeneutics, including feminist hermeneutics. Johnson's historical-critical hermeneutics yield theological insights that seem to resemble more closely the gospel message, as she does not rely primarily on symbolism in the text. Rather, Johnson reads the biblical narrative, particularly those passages referring to Mary, with a feminist eye. While neither Johnson nor Balthasar can be absolved of selecting passages from the gospels to make a point, Johnson is more transparent about her goal—interpreting the Christian message in such a way that it promotes the full human flourishing of women and men. Balthasar's motivations are less explicit, his hermeneutics equally ambiguous.

Interestingly, Guadalupe devotion coheres broadly with this aspect of Paul VI's devotional criteria. While it is not drawn directly from the biblical text, the devotion certainly coheres with the broad themes of God's love for the poor and oppressed, and the importance of the incarnation for Christians. It can be argued that in Guadalupe devotion, many Catholics come to know the love of Christ in an intimate way.

The second criteria in *Marialis cultus* stems directly from the liturgical reforms of Vatican II outlined in *Sacrosanctum concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Marian devotion should harmonize with the liturgical year and orient Christians toward the liturgy.³⁹⁶ All three mariologies described in this dissertation fulfill this criteria, though of course to varying degrees. The least compliant in this regard would be Guadalupe devotion, because so much of it takes place outside the context of the liturgy. Despite the lack of biblical basis for this devotion, the church has adapted; some would say it has inculturated. December 12 was declared a feast by John Paul II in 1999, a move which was confirmed in a declaration promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship on March 25 of the same year.³⁹⁷ Moreover, the feast day celebrations such as processions and reenactments often occur in liturgical contexts, and include the participation of the clergy. Still, if December 12 coincides with a Sunday in Advent, the Advent readings are to be used at the liturgy. In this way, the church hopes to focus devotion, prioritizing the Sunday Eucharist.

Balthasar and Johnson's reflections on Mary, particularly because they both occur in ecclesiological contexts, do orient Catholics to the liturgy. Balthasar's symbolic Mariology fosters reverence for the church because of its divine origin. Johnson's marian imagery, with its emphasis on Mary's humanity and on ordinary sanctity, also cohere with the liturgy in that she highlights the holiness of most Christians.

The next measure for the mariological-ecclesiological reflections is the notion of ecumenism. Article 32 of *Marialis cultus* explains that marian devotion should always

³⁹⁶ Paul VI, *Marialis cultus*, 31.

³⁹⁷ This document can be accessed at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/innews/699.shtml>.

include an ecumenical aspect, because such devotion should share the preoccupations of the church, and the ecumenical movement is prominent among these preoccupations. Guadalupan devotion has already transcended the Catholic Church. Devotion to Guadalupe is part of Mexican cultural identity, as evidenced most famously in Cesar Chavez's United Farm Worker march, where the protesters protested under an image of Guadalupe. Despite the spread of evangelical churches in Latin America, devotion to Guadalupe has not waned. Regardless of denomination, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have a connection to Guadalupe, and the devotion is spreading.

In the case of Balthasar, so much emphasis is placed on the divinely ordained structure of the Catholic Church, that it is difficult to imagine how this mariological ecclesiology might translate to a different Christian context. Ecumenism does not seem to be a central goal for Balthasar. His emphasis on the pure church of Ephesians 5, which he clearly associates at least with a small remnant of the Catholic Church, also belies any ecumenical interest. Balthasar also intimates that Jesus established the orderliness of the present church structure during his time on earth. Regardless, his symbolic association of divine masculinity with the all-male priesthood, and of divine order and beauty with the hierarchical structure of the Catholic church would stand in the way of true Christian unity.

Johnson's approach, however, seems to have ecumenical goals in mind. She cites Mary Hines' observation that many Protestant students hunger for a richer theology of Mary. When Johnson refers to the church or the communion of saints, she does not limit her comments with the word "Catholic." Instead, Johnson's ecclesiology is meant for all Christians. She draws on non-Catholic sources and comes to conclusions that seem

palatable to other Christians without being bland or overly general. Her ideal church that is a communion of mutuality and compassionate respect is a goal all any Christian could work toward. It cannot be doubted Johnson's experiences as part of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue influence her theology. Johnson's theology of Mary which places Mary squarely within a renewed (and expanded) understanding of the communion of saints, a point of doctrine shared by some non-Catholics, reflects this influence.

The most striking part of *Marialis cultus* is the anthropological criteria included in the text. This comes in articles 34-37, when Paul VI acknowledges the dissonance between the historical context of Mary and that of contemporary women. "First, the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived..."³⁹⁸ Paul VI also highlights Mary's dialogue with the angel at the annunciation and her courage in taking on the task of bearing the savior of humanity. In doing this, he provides a foundation for a thinker like Johnson who, by examining the particularity of Mary's life, free her to be "herself" and not the ideal against which all women are measured. It is clear that Paul VI was not calling for gender analysis in requiring congruence between anthropology and Mariology. But this perhaps is the greatest gift of feminist theology to Mariology and ecclesiology. Johnson clearly reads *Marialis cultus* carefully and sets out to fulfill its exhortations to the theological community to examine the anthropological difficulties of the pious portraits of Mary and reinterpret them in light of the social sciences, especially gender. This stands in stark contrast to Balthasar, who uses the term sociology in a perjorative way to denounce the

³⁹⁸ Paul VI, *Marialis cultus*, 35.

more humanized and political/institutional view of the church that began with Vatican II. It is clear that Balthasar's theology includes an operative anthropology and differing analysis of gender, namely a two-nature anthropology that subtly, but decidedly, favors the male over the female by consistently associating maleness and masculinity with God.

Johnson's theological anthropology, a one-nature anthropology which is at times criticized by her feminist peers, undergirds her call for an ecclesial structure based on mutuality. Also, Johnson's mariology takes particularity into account, and makes use of contemporary science to reconstruct the political, religious, and socio-economic worlds in which Mary lived. By highlighting Mary's particularity as the life of a privileged member of the communion of saints, Johnson also incorporates the turn to particularity and context that has occurred in theology with the rise of the so-called "contextual theologies." Johnson recreates a sketch of Mary's context and lifts Mary up not as an example to be followed in "the way she lived" as Paul VI put it, but in the ordinary holiness of her life, her hearing and acting upon the word of God.

Latino/a theologians' reflections on Guadalupe devotion also take contemporary theological anthropology and the human sciences into account. Their awareness of the importance of colonial history, culture, and context unmask the beauty of devotion to a mestiza virgin who reflects the face of the church she is believed to have evangelized. U.S. Latino/a theology seeks to contribute a post-colonial vision of the church, one that takes history, even violent and sinful history, seriously. In addition, the awareness of popular religiosity as a locus of theology and as an outlet for the *sensus fidelium* requires sociological and anthropological analysis, which Latino/a theology accomplishes expertly.

5.4 Final Criterion: The Way Forward

As the U.S. Catholic Church settles into the 21st Century, questions about its identity loom. How will the church adjudicate the role of the lay theologian? What is the status of women in the church? What to make of the growing Hispanic Catholic community, and will it continue to grow in the face of challenges from Pentecostalism? Ecclesiology struggles with images for the church that are faithful to Tradition, historically appropriate, and potentially inspirational. For centuries, the preeminent symbol of the church has been Mary, and this dissertation has tried to show different ways in which Mary can function in contemporary notions of church. Furthermore, I have tried to show how three ‘schools’ of theology interpret the bond between Mariology and ecclesiology that was reaffirmed at Vatican II. What has become clear is the connection between anthropology and ecclesiology, along with the deep connection between what a thinker says about Mary and what they believe about the church.

But not every interpretation can be considered equally valid, particularly in light of the documents of the council and the period immediately following. Using Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation on marian devotion as a guide, it is evident that some interpretations of Mary, like Johnson’s, meet the criteria laid out in *Marialis cultus* in a way that the symbolic mariological ecclesiology of Balthasar simply does not. While it may contribute to the field of aesthetics, or to the doctrine of God, Balthasar’s ecclesiology promises little for Catholicism but more of the same—the same clergy, the same structure, and inevitably, the same denigration of women.

To Johnson’s clearly illustrated vision for a church as communion of saints, we can add the insights of U. S. Latino theologians like Espín and Goizueta, who find beauty

and truth in the faith of ordinary people who, as they and Johnson affirm, make up the majority of the church. In the Guadalupan narrative, some clues about the way forward surface. The church of tomorrow must incorporate true dialogue that involves listening for all parties. The whole church must allow for the possibility of genuine conversion, as signified in the character of the bishop in the Guadalupan narrative, the call to which may be coming from the most insignificant sectors of the church. It must renew its apostolic commitment and its prophetic edge if the church hopes to stay relevant in a post-industrial, and increasingly post-Christian age. Perhaps the only hope for the church lies in the imitation of a peasant girl, powerless in her culture, who heard God's word and was unafraid to act.

In this dissertation, I sought to explore the ecclesiological dimension of the Mariologies elaborated by Balthasar, a feminist like Johnson, and several U.S. Latino/a theologians, and whether these Mariologies had an impact on their respective ecclesiological correlates. The ecclesiological dimensions of the portraits of Mary analyzed in this dissertation include insights about gender analysis that affect the equality and dignity of the people of God. A thinker like Balthasar makes the connection between Mary and the church explicitly, by placing Mary at the center of his anthropological ecclesiological reflections. For Johnson, and especially for the U.S. Latino/a theologians whose thought is presented in this study, the impact of Mary on ecclesiology, while more implicit, is nevertheless as important. While U. S. Latino/a thought is less sustained on the intersection between Mariology and ecclesiology, their methodological focus on the importance of popular religiosity, coupled with their attention to the figure of Guadalupe, lend ecclesiological insights that are particularly relevant in the contemporary U.S.

Catholic Church. It appears that the closest vote in the history of the Second Vatican Council could have the farthest-reaching implications for the Catholic Church in the United States.

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