

## THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IN MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY: PROLEGOMENA

What does the Immaculate Conception have to do with the mystery of the Church? How can it help us to evaluate some recent directions in ecclesiology?

These initial questions can be taken in two senses. (1) How does the *definition* of the Immaculate Conception illuminate the Church's charism of truth? How does the papal deed of 1854 help us to evaluate certain recent theories of dogma, tradition and magisterium? (2) How does the *grace itself* of the Immaculate Conception clarify the "new being" to which all men are called in the Church of Christ? How does the Marian privilege serve as a criterion for an adequate ecclesiology?

In the first sense of our initial questions, the Immaculate Conception raises no unique problem; along with the Assumption and, perhaps, a number of other Catholic teachings, it poses just the general problem of definability. So I propose to take our questions in the second sense. I take the question about the Immaculate Conception and recent ecclesiology to be a special case of the question about Mary as type of the Church. I take "modern ecclesiology" to refer primarily to post-Conciliar treatments, although we shall quickly find that pre-Conciliar controversies are the indispensable keys to what came afterwards.

It has always been difficult to speak of Mary as a type of the Church because of the multiplicity and complexity of the relevant comparisons between the two, as well as between the first Eve and both of them, and between the Christian soul and both of them. This difficulty is intrinsic to the biblical, patristic and liturgical data of the problem. It is compounded by a second source of difficulty, namely, the existence of theological controversies regarding the nature of the Church, on the one hand, and the nature, structure or purport of the Marian mysteries, on

the other. This second source of difficulty is in turn compounded by a third, namely, the current meta-theological controversy over the nature and method of theology.

To the first source of difficulty I shall return eventually. Let me say a word meanwhile about the second. Up through Vatican II, theological opinion was sharply polarized over two points of immediate relevance to our topic. On the one hand, Journet and Congar headed opposed schools of thought on whether one could speak of the Church as *sinful*, and behind this debate lay radically different options on how the invisible aspect of the Church was to be conceived in its relation to her visible members and structures.<sup>1</sup> In Journet's view, this relation was transcendental, like the relation between act and potency: the invisible things of Christ were a kind of formal cause or *actuation* of the visible Church *as* Church. Hence the sinlessness of Christ excluded sin from the visible Church just insofar as this latter, as a kind of material cause, was truly informed by His gifts and so was truly Church. In Congar's view, the relation was categorical, causal, like the relation of an instrumental cause to its effect, and went the other way: the institutional Church instrumentally-ministerially *produced* the invisible reality of communion in Christ in a mixed bag of men, and this *production* itself, this meeting point of agent and patient, was a third thing, namely, the concrete, historical condition of the Church at any given epoch. This third thing was the fully visible Church, and from *it* sinfulness was not excluded, any more than it is excluded from the minister and *de facto* recipients of a valid sacrament. (One can also see how short a step it was from Congar's early position to the Church-as-sacrament ecclesiology of Semmelroth

<sup>1</sup> C. Journet, *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*, II (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951), especially pp. 893 ff.; "Réforme dans l'Église et réforme de l'Église," *Nova et Vetera* 27 (1952): 148 ff.

Y. Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1950), especially pp. 94 ff., 128.

For a fine and brief comparison of the two views in the context of our present topic, see R. Laurentin, "Sainteté de Marie et de l'Église," *EtM* 11 (1953): 12-17.

and Rahner.)

The difficulty which this dispute creates for our topic is obvious. If Journet is right, the Church is basically *one* Reality, a kind of mystico-moral "substance," in which Christ's graces, charisms and offices are the formal cause ("created soul") and human persons ("members of the Church") are the material cause, informed to one or another degree ("living" or "dead" members); whereupon, Mary can be a type of this one Reality precisely *in* her personal sinlessness-from-conception and even in her total dependence on Christ's mystery in existing at all.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, if Congar is right, the Church is the visible friction of *two* Realities causally related: a Christ-founded institution (the cause) and a partially sinful, partially Christ-conformed community (the effect); whereupon, Mary might be taken as a type of either, but on different bases. In her spiritual maternity, she might be a type of the first Reality but not of the second; in her personal sinlessness-from-conception, she might be the peak of the second Reality but not of the first.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, meanwhile, M.-J. Nicolas and O. Semmelroth typified two rival factions of Mariologists. The immediate debate was over Mary's role as corredemptrix, but behind this debate lay radically different views on how far Mary's personal mystery was irreducibly different from the mystery of the Church. In the view of Nicolas and many others, the Blessed Virgin transcended the order of grace, to which the Church belongs, since she brought the Church's divine Head into the world and so pertained in some way to His own hypostatic order.

<sup>2</sup> On the point that Mary, if she had not been predestined to a role in the Incarnation, would not have existed at all, see my "Critique of Marian Counterfactual Formulae," *MS* 30 (1979): 131 ff.

<sup>3</sup> If one goes to the Sacramental "model" of the Church, things will be more complicated still, since one might well have three Realities to contend with. There might be the Christ-founded visible institution (*sacramentum tantum*), the Christ-conformed visible community of explicit Christians (*res et sacramentum*), and the invisible process of the salvation of mankind, including even well-disposed pagans or "anonymous Christians" (*res tantum*). Of which of these is Mary Immaculate a type?

Together with her Son at the foot of the Cross, she entered into the objective redemption in a way in which the rest of the Church, *pure* recipients of that redemption, did not and could not enter. Hence, although she is a type of the Church in many ways, Mary's integral mystery is irreducible to that of the Church. On the contrary, in Semmelroth's view, Mary, as the greatest beneficiary of the grace of Christ, is simply the type and apex of ecclesiality. As a recipient of redemption, she is corredemptive only in the sense in which the whole Church is corredemptive, *i.e.*, she receives and helps distribute the graces acquired by Christ alone. Indeed, Mary's ecclesiotypicality is the key to every aspect of her mystery.<sup>4</sup>

The difficulty which this dispute creates for our topic is again obvious. If Nicolas is right, the intrinsic corredemptiveness of Christian existence is a participation in *Christus patiens* which, in Mary's immaculate heart, is invited to share in Calvary itself; but if Semmelroth is right, this intrinsic corredemptiveness falls infinitely short of such participation.

The Vatican Council itself did not profess to resolve either of these theological disputes, yet two aspects of the Council's work

<sup>4</sup> M.-J. Nicolas, O.P., "L'appartenance de la mère de Dieu à l'ordre hypostatique," *EidM* 3 (1937): 145-181; "Marie et l'Église dans le plan divin," *ibid.*, 11 (1953): 159-169; "De transcendentia Matris Dei," in *MEccI* 2 (Rome, 1959): 73-87; *Théotokos, Le mystère de Marie* (Tournai, 1965), pp. 48 ff., 85 ff. See also J. B. Carol, O.F.M., *De Corredemptione B. V. Mariae Disquisitio Positiva* (Vatican City, 1950); C. Boyer, "Réflexions sur la Corédemption de Marie," in *ASC* 2 (Rome, 1952): 1-12; R. M. Gagnebet, "Difficultés sur la Corédemption: principes de solution," *ibid.*, 13-20; J. M. Bover, "Redempta et Corredemptrix," *Marianum* 2 (1940): 39-58; A. Deneffe, "De Mariae in ipso opere redemptionis cooperazione," *Gr* 8 (1927): 3-22.

O. Semmelroth, S.J., *Mary, Archetype of the Church* (New York, 1964), especially pp. 89 ff.; "Heilsgeschichtliche Sinnendeutung des Marienheimes und der Marienverehrung," *Geist und Leben* 23 (1950): 115 f. See also H. M. Köster, *Unus Mediator* (Limburg, 1950); *Die Magd des Herrn*, 2nd edition (Limburg, 1954); "Quid iuxta investigationes hucusque peractas tamquam minimum tribuendum sit B. M. Virgini in cooperatione eius ad opus redemptionis," in *MEccI* 2 (Rome, 1959): 21-49.

A good and recent synopsis of this debate is Candido Pozo, S.J., *María en la obra de la salvación* (Madrid: BAC, 1974), chap. 1.

have been widely perceived as altering the status of the questions. First, the Council's stress on the Church as a community or "people," together with the recognition of ecclesial "elements" in non-Catholic communions and the attendant opening towards ecumenical dialogue—these things have been perceived as a general vindication of Congar's approach to ecclesiology. Second, the Council's decision to treat of Mary within the framework of *Lumen gentium*—and to say no more about her than what both factions of Mariologists could agree upon<sup>5</sup>—has been widely perceived as vindicating the ecclesiotypical approach, especially since such Mariology has been thought more consonant with the Council's ecumenical interests. Both perceptions are quite clearly false,<sup>6</sup> but that does not alter their historical importance. Thanks to these perceptions, the whole stream of self-consciously "post-Conciliar" ecclesiology has moved through and beyond the position of Congar, while things in Mariology have moved towards an ecclesiotypical minimalism so complete that, in many cases, theologians have abandoned Marian questions altogether.

I shall take a stand on these matters—on these theological tensions which are a second source of difficulty for our topic—in due time. But not yet. It would be premature to resurrect a Journet-style ecclesiology or Nicolas's "Christotypical" Mariology before confronting the third and most profound source of difficulty, the crisis over the nature and method of theology itself.

<sup>5</sup> On this "compromise" character of the conciliar text, see the literature cited by Pozo (See n. 4 above.), pp. 54 f.

<sup>6</sup> Vatican II, even more explicitly than previous general Councils, said that it intended to leave legitimate theological disputes untouched (e.g., *Lumen gentium*, #54). The most that can be said is that Vatican II gave certain theological opinions greater "probability" or greater *droit de cité* than the hitherto regnant "Roman theologians" had been prepared to give them. This is very different from *closing* the disputes in anyone's favor. Note, also, this oddity: the same "liberal" theologians were re-reading Trent in such a way as to *let stand as much as possible* of pre-Tridentine theology and were reading Vatican II in such a way as to *exclude as much as possible* of pre-Conciliar theology. Very strange.

This crisis, too, flows historically, but not logically, from Vatican II.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the Council, most theologians “did theology” in substantially the same way, though they quarreled intermittently over how to *describe* what they were doing.<sup>8</sup> Yet profoundly different ways-of-doing the thing were waiting in the wings. On the one hand, certain aspects of the *Nouvelle Theologie* raised the possibility of starting theology over, almost “from scratch,” by removing the Greek, ontological concepts appearing in dogmatic formulae and replacing them with concepts and categories more congenial to “modern man.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Catholic theologians were finding historico-critical exegesis of the Scriptures more and more indispensable, and the *Bibeltheologie* of Protestant exegetes—from Cullmann and Jeremias on the right, to Bultmann on the left—was appearing more and more attractive. Moreover, this *Bibeltheologie* had already shown how to eject “Greek concepts” from the New Testament by finding there only “Semitic concepts,” which turned out to have an odd resemblance to the favorite concepts of modern German metaphysicians (especially Dilthey and Heidegger).<sup>10</sup> Thus the aims

<sup>7</sup> The following two paragraphs are lifted from my appendix, “Theology of Liberation,” in *Reasons for Hope*, J. A. Mirus, ed., Revised Edition (Christendom College Press, 1981), pp. 219 ff. My thanks to the publisher for permitting me to re-use this material.

<sup>8</sup> I have in mind the debates between Marin-Sola, Schultess, Bonnefoy, Charlier, and others, over such questions as whether theology was primarily a deductive “science of conclusions” or had the rather more complex structure of a reductive “science of the revealed data.” It was also debated how far the scholastic method should be considered normative, as opposed to the characteristic methods of positive theology or the rich, kerygmatic-rhetorical style of the Fathers.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 117 f.; Henri Bouillard, “Notions conciliaires et analogie de la vérité,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 251-271; *Conversion et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris, 1944), pp. 220 ff. See also the critical remarks in my “Criteria for Doctrinal Development in the Marian Dogmas: An Essay in Meta-theology,” *MS* 28 (1977): 91 ff.

<sup>10</sup> For a magnificent analysis and critique of this aspect of the “Biblical the-

of Biblical resourcement and modern relevance could be made to seem compatible, even identical. At least, the efforts of speculative theologians to “modernize” and the efforts of positive theologians to “biblicize” could be kept in fruitful contact by something like Paul Tillich’s “method of correlation.”<sup>11</sup>

Again, Vatican II said nothing about these matters, but certain aspects of the Council’s work were perceived as revolutionary. Pope John’s speech at the opening of the Council was perceived as rehabilitating the *Nouvelle theologie*.<sup>12</sup> The demand of the Council fathers for a “more Biblical” tone and content in the successive drafts of the Council documents was perceived as an endorsement of the Biblicizing program, which also had ecumenical implications. Lastly, the Council’s resolve to address the problems of the modern world (“signs of the times”) in *Gaudium et spes* was perceived in some quarters as a use and legitimation of Tillich’s method of correlation.<sup>13</sup> As a result of these perceptions, wildly different notions of what theology is and of how to do it—involving widely different attitudes towards past statements of the Magisterium, towards classical metaphysics, and towards the authority of the Scriptures and the Fathers—have been in active use since the Council, e.g., to provide new theories of the Church.

Now, it is hardly news that, when men do not agree on how to “do” ecclesiology, there is little hope of resemblance among the ecclesiologies they produce. But the real problem is deeper

ology” movement, see James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961).

<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1951-63), 1:69 f. Here is his short statement of the matter: “In using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answer to these questions” (ibid.).

<sup>12</sup> Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 715; Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma*, p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> Thus, for example, Richard P. McBrien, *Church: The Continuing Quest* (New York: Newman Press, 1970), chap. 2.

than that. One can celebrate “variety” and “pluralism,” so long as there is some *one kind* of thing (e.g., ecclesiology) which is showing the variety; one can enjoy the wide variety of dogs, so long as “dog” remains a univocal term. But when “dog” is used analogously, the variety disappears; all the breeds collapse together, and *en bloc* they contrast to another analogate, e.g., disagreeable people. It would be distinctly odd to point to one’s pet and to one’s worst enemy as showing a healthy pluralism in dogs. In the same way, it is preposterous to put together a Belarminian ecclesiology, a Barthian ecclesiology, a Bultmannian ecclesiology, and to celebrate the trio as “pluralism” in ecclesiology. Where there is deep, meta-theological disagreement, the name of any particular theological tract becomes an analogous term. We can all say that one’s ecclesiology is one’s “doctrine about the Church,” and we can keep the referent of “Church” constant, but the word “doctrine” means radically different things to a Catholic, a Barthian, and a Bultmannian—things which are only analogically alike. You might think: No, they are different species of a common genus. I ask in reply: What genus? Where is the common methodological element, the shared and univocal minimum required to posit a true genus? Put David Tracy, Cardinal Siri, Hans Küng, Richard McBrien, and Jerome Hamer all together around a table; ask them to draw up a list of all the points on which they *agree* about how to do good theology (e.g., rules which, they all agree, *must* not be broken), taking care that not a single word is used ambiguously or equivocally in their joint statement. Does anyone think that the list would be long, or that it would contain anything beyond the most useless banalities?

This is the point which, after some delay, struck me most forcibly about Fr. Avery Dulles’s survey, *Models of the Church*.<sup>14</sup> I thought it natural to use Dulles’s book as a jumping-off point for this paper, a convenient classification of recent ecclesiologies, whose Marian implications I could then investigate. For a long time, I was merely annoyed by Dulles’s oddities and omissions.

<sup>14</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974).

Instead of dealing with concretely given ecclesiologies, Fr. Dulles compares entities called "models," which are in good part his own invention, and some of which are arbitrarily isolated *fragments* of pre-Conciliar ecclesiology. His "institutional model" is an obvious strawman, and the quasi-substance or Mystical Body "model" is not separately presented; there is precious little about Congar, and Journet's work is never even mentioned. For a long time I thought: What a pity that Fr. Dulles has not written as good a survey as he could have written. Then it struck me. The fatal weakness is in the breadth of the survey itself. One might as well compare toy soldiers, human beings, chess pieces, and portraits in a survey of "men."

To come to the point: the topic assigned to me—to investigate the Immaculate Conception in recent ecclesiologies—is impossible to pursue, unless we make some hard decisions in meta-theology about what is to count as an ecclesiology.

Such decisions involve quite abstract discussions in hermeneutics and methodology, so that to make and defend them in what is supposed to be a Mariological paper is hardly appropriate. It is fortunate, therefore, that there is another approach which will accomplish some of these decisions for us and which proceeds "from below," as it were, from a concretely Mariological problem.

I have said that the question about the Immaculate Conception and recent ecclesiology is a special case of the question about Mary as type of the Church. Let us observe, however, that the question about Mary and the Church is itself a special case of the still broader question about how salvation-historical *individuals* (and their particular deeds) relate to permanent salvific structures.

On the question of this *general relation* there are three basic views, and each one more or less necessitates a corresponding methodology for theological reflection.

The first view is that this general relation is one of *identity*. The individual persons and concrete events portrayed in the Scriptures *are* the structures of salvation history. Everything Christ does He *has done*, once and for all. His Cross and Resur-

rection are the only structures that matter. To *them* our faith must cling, and to nothing else. Through *them* comes our salvation, and through nothing else. This view puts historico-critical exegesis at the absolute center of theological method. Necessarily so, because what is decisive for faith, in this view, is unique, unrepeatable events (and persons) *in their very historicity: wie sie eigentlich gewesen.*

This view does not logically exclude a high regard for the historical Mary. Her *fiat* of faith, her virginal conceiving and divine maternity may be taken as salvation-historical events of the first importance, obviously; and so nothing prevents them from being exalted and celebrated as acts of salvation. So, it is not Mary who has to disappear in this view but rather the Church. Far from being a permanent *structure* of salvation history, the Church becomes merely the set of persons who rightly believe, preach and celebrate *these past events* (Luther) or else the set of persons who inwardly and invisibly benefit from these past events (Calvin), or else the Church becomes the set of secondary events, always contingent and ephemeral, in which "two or three gather together" to remember and celebrate these past events (Barth). In this perspective, it can be in some sense an "exemplary" thing that Mary accepted in faith the angel's message, but in no other, deeper, more structural way can she be a "type" of the Church or of the Christian soul.<sup>15</sup>

Now this first view is hard to maintain in its purity, even for those who have come closest to holding it (e.g., Luther in his preface to Galatians). It requires an elimination of man's *ontic* sanctification so radical, that even the act of faith becomes purely intentional: everything salvific remains on the side of the intended object, and nothing salvific attaches to the intending subject. Only in that way can there be absolutely nothing, outside of the Gospel events themselves, which needs to be mediat-

<sup>15</sup> Traditional Protestant exegesis marginalizes Mary as a "dienende Nebenfigur" and thereby excises Mariology as "eine Wucherung, d.h. eine krankhafte Bildung des theologischen Denkens," to borrow Karl Barth's way of putting it (*Die kirchliche Dogmatik* I-2 [4th ed., Zurich, 1948], p. 153).

ed to men and so might require a mediating structure. No, the position of Evangelical and of Reformed thinkers has generally been far less pure. They have generally had to admit the ontic-salvific character of some recurrent, repeatable *sort* of event in man (e.g., acts of faith, warmings of the heart, charismatic seizures). But these salvific events-in-man could be taken in two ways. They could be looked at sacrally, or they could be secularized. The sacrall option is pointed back to the Catholic conception of grace and to a very different kind of theology, as we shall see in a moment. But the secular option has led to a genuinely new position.

This second position on the general relation between NT individuals and salvific structures makes that relation to be one of hermeneutical correlation. Biblical persons and events are *indispensable catalysts* for man's self-interpretation. There are real, repeating structures of salvation history, in this view, but they are human structures, and the Biblical narratives are made to be *about* them (*anthropologische Wendung*). This view comes in many varieties, depending on what the real structures of salvation are taken to be. Sometimes human progress, brotherhood, or the construction of a just society is made the objective mediation of salvation (Teilhard, Ritschl, Gutierrez); sometimes it is mankind's evolving mystical experience (Tyrrell); sometimes it is the individual's own *act* of self-interpretation, his own resolution to exist authentically (Bultmann). In any case, some *historically recurrent sort* of real event is the "how" of how-salvation-comes-to-us and not an unrepeatable event in the past. Those past events—whether in Mary's womb or upon the Cross or at the tomb—are finally immaterial in their mere historicity, because salvation does not come to us through *their* historicity but through *our* historicity, that is, through events in our own lives which we are able to *interpret* as salvific, thanks to the *narratives* of those past events.<sup>16</sup> The Biblical narratives are the orig-

<sup>16</sup> Look again at Tillich's statement, quoted in note 11. Observe that what theology "analyzes" is a *human* situation; out of that situation, *human* questions arise which are potentially religious in nature but need not be explicitly

inal-Christian descriptions *both* of what God did in Jesus *and* of what God does in us—yes, but in this precise sense: that what God did in Jesus was *not other than* (indeed, was nothing but) what He did and does in the disciples. The record of the first disciples' own self-understanding is *therefore* an indispensable guide to how we ought to go about theologizing our own experiences, decisions, politics. Hence this view necessarily puts a "method of correlation" at the absolute center of theological procedure.

In this view, left-over sacral institutions, such as the existing denominational churches, are marginalized, and the real Church tends to become the world or, at least, one's own historical situation in the world, while Mary tends to become a piece of Matthean or Lucan theology. As such, she *may be found relevant* to one's self-understanding, but in no other, more historically-objective way can she be a "type" of the Church.

These two views on the general relation—identity or hermeneutical correlation—between Biblical particularities (like Mary) and on-going salvific structures (like the Church) are the two poles, each difficult to maintain in purity, between which post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment thought have tended to oscillate. Hence the historical *spiral* from Protestant orthodoxy to liberalism, to neo-orthodoxy, to neo-liberalism, etc. There

so; theology attempts to answer these questions (whatever their content) not by appealing to the real past of Calvary, nor by appealing to a living Church in the present, but to the "symbols" contained in the Christian "message." Whatever Tillich's own intention may have been, it is easy to see how his method can be taken to mean that man's changing questions *determine* the meaning of the Christian symbols as answers to them. Richard McBrien, at least, endorses such a reading; he writes: "As the theologian perceives changes in the spiritual-cultural environment, he begins to recognize certain new questions which have relation to the message. *And as he reinterprets the message in the light of the changed situation*, he confronts this new situation with the *renewed* symbols of Christian faith" (*Church: The Continuing Quest*, p. 12, emphasis added). Gregory Baum is equally explicit, if not more so; see *The Credibility of the Church Today* (New York: Herder, 1968), p. 153. One will find substantially the same stance in E. Schillebeeckx, *God the Future of Man* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), chap. 1.

are various ways in which Catholics have tried to join the spiral as well; but if we are to understand where they have been coming *from*, as Catholics, we must look at a third position altogether.

In the first two views, the general relation has been a relation of reason. Identity is a *relatio rationis ratiocinantis*; hermeneutical correlation is a *relatio rationis ratiocinatae*. But in the third view, the general relation is *real* and is based on ontological continuity. We may call it ontological correlation. The unrepeatable events and personages of NT times are *not only* historical and salvific realities in their own right but are *also* archetypal signs—signs of the permanent structures through which salvation continues to occur, and signs of the eschatological structures in which salvation will be perfected. St. Augustine put it in three words: *facta Verbi verba*. Indeed, out of all the things God did in the patriarchs and prophets, in Mary, Jesus and the Apostles, God has inscripturated the merest handful, and each of those is written up precisely because of its typological value and reality. When Jesus cleansed the ten lepers, it was not only an historical event, a real miracle, but also an epiphany of what He does now, for converts and penitents, in His Church. When He opened the eyes of the man born blind, He manifests baptism. And as He took flesh from the womb of Mary, so He takes flesh from the propagation of the Church. These are not *our* comparisons; they are not mere similitudes, *ratiocinatae*. They are real continuities, ontological correlations. Therefore this view, found everywhere in Patristic exegesis, is nevertheless not a matter of exegesis. It is not a hermeneutical decision but a pre-given reality determinative for hermeneia. We may say, therefore, that what this view puts at the absolute center of theological method is not exegesis, not even typological exegesis (which is a by-product), but an ontology of this continuity. Such an ontology is necessarily an ontology of participation in Divine Persons, an ontology of grace.

In this view, both the visible, unrepeatable Mary and the visible, ever-repeated Church are sacred *mysteria*, which connect with each other not only visibly but also invisibly, through the

structure of the soul-in-grace. Therefore it is in this view, and only in this view, that Mary can be a "type" of the Church in some non-trivial and non-sentimental way—in some profound and structural way.

Identity, hermeneutical correlation, ontological correlation—three positions inside theology and even inside Mariology (taking both "-ologies" as analogical terms); centrality of historico-criticism, centrality of Tillichian correlation, centrality of ontology—three positions in meta-theology: to the extent that what has been said above is correct, we have found a mirror, inside theology, of the main options in meta-theology. As Gödel found inside mathematics, indeed inside arithmetic, a way to model meta-mathematics (and so to refute Hilbert's formalism), so also we have found in theology a way to model certain meta-theological positions and to see how they necessarily reduce to triviality any claim that Mary is type of the Church. In the first position (centrality of historico-criticism), Mary is inevitably and at best a "*dienende Nebenfigur*," a person who by her willing consent provides an important service for Jesus; the same could be said about Joseph of Arimathea. In the second position (centrality of the method of correlation), Mary is inevitably a figure whose importance in "salvation history" changes from epoch to epoch, or even from situation to situation, since it depends upon the *relevance* of certain Gospel pericopes to one's own *Existenz*, to one's political struggle, to the signs of the times.

We now know what to do with two of Fr. Dulles's "models" of the Church. Chapter V of his book is devoted to the "model" of the Church as Herald.<sup>17</sup> He finds this to be the key model for the ecclesologies of Karl Barth and Hans Küng, hardly a surprising combination of names. We already know what Barth thought of Mariology. We turn to Hans Küng's book, *The Church*, to see if there is anything there about Mary as its type. We turn to the subject index: Mary is not mentioned. We turn to the author index: the chief theoretician of Mary as type of the Church, Fr. Semmelroth, is mentioned (See p. 29.); hope rises.

<sup>17</sup> Dulles, *Models*, pp. 71-82.

But, on page 29, we find him mentioned only in a footnote which is an omnium-gatherum list of works in “systematic ecclesiology,” and the work for which he is cited is *Church and Sacrament* rather than *Urbild*. We turn finally to the long and elaborate “Index of Scriptural References”: practically every chapter of the NT is cited repeatedly, except one—Apocalypse 12. Why be surprised? Küng’s meta-theology has never been very clear, but it has been obvious for most of his professional career that his heart goes out to the music of the identity theory, to the thunder of Luther and Barth: God’s *Nein!* to ontic grace, to all the works of men; God’s one and only, last and definitive *Ja!* in the *hapax* of Christ. No room here for a serious, typological Mariology.

Chapter VI of Fr. Dulles’s book is devoted to the Servant “model,”<sup>18</sup> and here the chief theologian to be interrogated is Fr. Richard P. McBrien, who has expressed his mind in *Church: The Continuing Quest*. As we read this latter, we discover two things: first, that Mary is mentioned nowhere in the book; second, that Fr. McBrien has embraced wholeheartedly the theory of hermeneutical correlation and its attendant, quasi-Tillichian meta-theology.<sup>19</sup> God’s real work of salvation is a work He does in the secular, in the promotion of the world’s well-being, which McBrien calls His “Kingdom.”<sup>20</sup> The institutional Church is at the margin; its main job is to stay out of the way of the real Church, which is the set of those who promote the world’s progress as its poor and humble servants. Thus, the *Sitz im Leben* of the community organizer, the social worker, etc., is the real *datum* for theology; the Scriptures are re-read, re-interpreted for relevance to *that* datum. The Infancy Narratives do not look very relevant, nor Genesis 3, nor Romans 5—least of all Apocalypse 12—unless, perhaps, you make the dragon the Salvadoran army. No room for a serious Mariology here.

We are tempted sometimes to dialogue with men like Küng

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-96.

<sup>19</sup> McBrien, *Church: The Continuing Quest*, pp. 12-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12 f.

and McBrien on their ecclesiology, without paying attention to the meta-theology from which they work. As Mariologists, we are tempted to see their omissions of Mary as remediable lacunae. Mary “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart”; does that not make her a model of the Herald-Church, Fr. Küng? Mary was one of the *anawim*, a poor and humble servant of the world’s salvation; does that not make her a model of the Servant-Church, Fr. McBrien? And in either view (to mention for once our assigned topic), could her Immaculate Conception not be seen as the key to her perfection in those roles?

Well, of course. The theologian can always keep the Immaculate Conception around as a piece of furniture he somehow inherited, and he can always find something nice to say about the Blessed Virgin, if pressed. But let us be serious. A theology has no right to inherit as antiques dogmas it can no longer derive or justify. A theology like Küng’s, stamped through and through by the centrality of historico-critical exegesis in its meta-theology, cannot produce the Immaculate Conception. Küng has thrown away the tools for that kind of work. So has McBrien. Sentimentality aside, a “type” in these theologies can only be a role-model, and the “type” of the Herald-Church has got to be St. Paul. The “type” of the Servant Church has got to be some up-dated Martha.

We have seen that our assigned topic is *a priori* impossible in two of Fr. Dulles’s ecclesial “models.” Let us quickly eliminate, on quite other grounds, a third.

Chapter IV of *Models of the Church* is devoted to the position that the Church is a Sacrament.<sup>21</sup> This position succeeds in holding one’s attention only by playing on the ambiguity of “sacrament.” In the Fathers and early scholastics, as we all know, “*sacramentum*” just meant Mystery, like the Greek “*mysterion*.” In the Fathers, any visible reality, any visible event, was a *sacramentum*, provided only that it contained an invisible aspect acknowledged by Christian faith, different from the visible aspect

<sup>21</sup> Dulles, *Models*, pp. 58-70.

which even unbelievers could see.<sup>22</sup> Thus baptism was a *sacramentum*, but so was the Incarnate Lord Himself, and the solemn profession of monks, the coronation of kings, the ritual washing of feet, the symbolical pages of Holy Scripture. In this sense, the Church is a sacrament. Christians believe that there is more to it than pagans are able to see. But taken in this sense, the claim that the Church is a sacrament is just the statement of an obvious fact; it explains nothing. It is not an ecclesiology but one of those agreed facts which any ecclesiology is supposed to explain. On the other hand, there are certain "sacraments" in this broad sense which are also "Sacraments" in a later, technical sense. The gist of the technical sense was defined when Peter Lombard combined the notions of sign and cause of grace.<sup>23</sup> The seven Sacraments defined to be such by the Council of Trent are visible, ritual events, in which a naturally meaningful material or gesture is specified in its meaning by spoken words which accompany it. Word and gesture together ("form" and "matter") thus comprise a complete ritual event which clearly signifies an invisible event (e.g., a cleansing from sin) and also causes (somehow) what it signifies.<sup>24</sup> Now the claim that the Church is a Sacrament in this technical sense, *or in some important part of this technical sense*, would be a highly informative claim. It would certainly be an ecclesiology. But, alas, it would be transparently false. The Church fails to meet a single basic aspect of the technical definition. The Church uses many rituals, some

<sup>22</sup> "There is a *mysterion*," says St. John Chrysostom, "when we consider things other than those which we see . . . The believer's judgment is one thing, and the unbeliever's is another. As for me, I hear that Christ has been crucified, and at once I admire His love for men . . . The unbeliever hears of it, too, and thinks it was folly . . . The unbeliever, seeing baptism, thinks it is only water, whereas I, considering not only what I see, think of the purification of the soul worked by the Holy Spirit." *In 1<sup>am</sup> epist. ad Cor.*, hom. 1, n. 7: PG 61, col. 55.

"Ista (panis et calix) ideo dicuntur sacramenta," says St. Augustine, "quia in eis aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur, fructum habet spiritualement," *Sermon #272: PL* 38, col. 1246.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Lombard, *Liber IV Sententiarum*, d. 1.

<sup>24</sup> *D-Sch*, 1601 ff. (old numbers: 844 ff.).

sacramental, most of them not, but the Church itself is not a ritual. The Church uses many forms of words, some to confect sacraments, some to teach solemnly, some to address monsignori, but the Church itself has no constitutive form of words thanks to which it is validly Church. The Church can be regarded as a vast assemblage of events—some visible, some invisible—but the Church itself is not an event. Without being a ritual event, a gesture specified by a form of words, the Church cannot begin to meet the definition of a Sacrament in the required sense. It cannot *signify* anything in the required, strong and precise sense of “signify.” Nor is the case any better if we turn to the aspect of causality. The Church contains grace, of course; it contains people in the state of grace. And, of course, the Church causes grace — but only through the seven ritual Sacraments, none of which singly, nor the set of which collectively, *is* the Church! Apart from these seven rituals, there is no way or respect whatsoever in which the Church *causes* grace. To be sure, there are myriad other ways in which the Church conduces to grace, but the same can be said of printed Bibles, wayside shrines, pious rulers, and every other *external* grace. Are they all sacraments? Even the good moral advice of one pagan to another can conduce to grace. Is good advice therefore Church or Sacrament?

No, with all due respect to Fathers Semmelroth and Rahner, their ecclesiology is preposterous to the precise extent to which it is not a platitude.

However, there is more to be thought about here. Is there not some important sense in which the Church is a *sign*? Yes, any reality or event in which Christian faith acknowledges more than the eyes can see is a “sign” in this sense, namely, in that it has to be “read.” One has to “make something of it,” and in order to do so properly, one has to “get it.” Jesus of Nazareth was such a sign. Men said about Him, “How do you read this Jesus?” “What do you make of Him?” “I don’t know; I don’t get him.” In the same way, men talk about the Church. So, to be a *sacramentum* in the broad, Patristic sense is a sufficient condition for being a *sign* in the sense just discussed, but it is not a necessary condition: being a *sign* in this sense is not a sufficient condition

for being a *sacramentum*. This is clear from the signs of the times. Christian faith discerns in certain current events the providential hand of God; we discern an importance which unbelievers do not see. Are the signs of the times therefore Sacraments?

Moreover, in each of the seven Sacraments, the form-of-words makes it quite clear what the Sacrament is a sign of. A strong indication that the Church is not a Sacrament in any but the broad sense is the lack of clarity about what the Church is a sign of. One may go through Fr. Dulles's chapter IV and count the number of different things the Church is said to be a sign or Sacrament of. I counted sixteen. A reader who is less of a stickler might feel that many of these significata are only verbally different, but surely not all. The list ranges from "Christ" to "the world," from "redemption" to "dialogue" (Yes, dialogue: the idea is attributed to Fr. Schillebeeckx.).<sup>25</sup> This cleavage between sacred and secular answers is interesting. The sacred answers (Christ, His grace, God's salvific will, etc.) make a certain amount of sense; for in just this way the deeds of Jesus are a sign (*sacramentum*) of His divinity. But the secular answers (the world, dialogue, the "coming" unity of mankind, etc.) are themselves a sign that the Sacramental "model" of the Church has become a mere vehicle for the introduction of some quasi-Tillichian correlations. To that extent, the Sacramental "model" will fall under the same structures as the Servant "model."

I presume that I am exempted from the task of trying to find the relevance of the Immaculate Conception in an ecclesiology which, so far as it tries to say anything interesting at all, succeeds in saying nothing coherent. So I have done with the Sacramental "model."

That leaves just two of Fr. Dulles's "models" remaining to be considered. These are the institutional "model" and the communion-or-community "model," which occupy chapters II and III respectively. Fr. Dulles's presentation of the Church as institution is a blend of fiction and distortion so gross, that a Cath-

<sup>25</sup> Dulles, *Models*, p. 69.

olic will find it hard to analyze the chapter without great sorrow. I am spared the task, since its Bellarminian content will hardly be considered recent or post-Conciliar ecclesiology. I will remark, however, that the attempt to isolate the institutional "model" from the Church as communion or community is untenable, no matter what one means by a "model." It is hard to think of an institution (no matter how large, cold, rigid, or impersonal), of which informal community, friendship and conviviality are not an immediate, inevitable and spontaneous by-product. It happens among the employees of a corporation. It happens even in the GULAG archipelago. The pretext of having two "models" ought not to divorce what human nature has joined together. Now, if the problem with Dulles's chapter II is an artificial exclusiveness, the problem with his chapter III, devoted to the communion "model," is its equally artificial inclusiveness. The proponents of this "model" seem to include everybody from Aquinas to Bonhoeffer and from Irenaeus to Herbert Mühlen.<sup>26</sup>

Here, again, ecclesiologies are being "typed" together without regard to sundering differences at the meta-theological level. When Congar, Hamer, and Mühlen place community at the center of their ecclesiology, they are working within a framework of *ontological* correlation and continuity between Christ and us. When certain disciples of Bonhoeffer stress that Church is community, they mean by "community" something unashamedly secular (even banal), whose only correlation with Christ is hermeneutical. Thanks to this difference, these ecclesiologies do not look at all alike to a Mariologist. Mary can be a *real* archetype for Congar, Hamer, and Mühlen, so that one could interrogate their community-ecclesiologies for the relevance of her Conception. But it would be a waste of time to look for that relevance in community-ecclesiologies according to which a smile and a warm handshake all around is the *koinonia* which Christ died to give us.

There is another important difference glossed over in Dulles's

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-57.

community “model.” It is between *community* (a distinctively social and multi-personal idea) and *communion* (a more analogical, perhaps metaphysical idea). It is only by eliding these two ideas together that Fr. Dulles is able to work the miracle of treating Émile Mersch and Heribert Mühlen under the same “model.” For men like Mersch, the Church is understood in depth only insofar as it is seen as Christ’s Mystical Body, i.e., a mystical continuation of the Incarnation, so that our ontological tool must be a mystical extension of body/soul hylomorphism. The Church is then *communion* with Christ in the same sense (proportionally) in which bodily members commune with the head through a common substantial form.<sup>27</sup> To a man like Mühlen, all of this is totally wrong-headed. The “Mystical Body” is not a privileged metaphor, and the attempt to see the Church as a quasi-substantial *Ausdehnung* of the Word Incarnate is hopeless.<sup>28</sup> Rather, the Church is pluripersonal *community*, which we have with each other and vis-à-vis Christ, through the Person of the Holy Spirit. Our ontological tool is Mühlen’s remarkable new account of the procession and hypostatic *proprium* of the same Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

Again, to a Mariologist this difference is very wide. But this time, both sides invite attention. Without denying that Mary in some ways transcends the Church, standing with Christ over-against the Church, I want to hold that she is nevertheless also *within* the Church as a unique member and type of it. But if Mühlen is correct, I cannot do this. In his ecclesiology, for her to be a member of the Church requires that she not transcend the Church in any way; for in Mühlen’s Church, *no one* can stand *with* Christ; Mary must stand wholly *with* us, over-against Christ. For it is the very essence of the Church to be the “We” over-

<sup>27</sup> E. Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: Herder, 1958).

<sup>28</sup> H. Mühlen, *Una Mystica Persona. Die Kirche als das Mysterium der Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1967), secs. 7.03-7.07.1.

<sup>29</sup> H. Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person in der Trinität, bei der Inkarnation, und im Gnadenbund* (Münster, 1966), sec. 5.103.

against Him, as ransomed bride to ransoming groom.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Mühlen's ecclesiology *entails* the reducibility of Mary's mystery to that of the Church, in the same manner as Semmelroth's does. By contrast, the Mystical-Body ecclesiology of Mersch, Journet, and others carries no such entailment. Instead of being based on the image of marital *community* (bridal *Gegenüberstehen*), it is based on the image of bodily *communion*, which is far more supple and suggests the possibility of different levels of participation. It seems to leave open the possibility that Mary's communion with Christ in the Mystical Body is fundamentally like ours in some ways and yet fundamentally unlike ours in other ways—a *singular* communion with Christ, as Eve's communion with Adam was singular vis-à-vis us, their descendants.

With this alternative, then, between ecclesiologies of bridal community and ecclesiologies of bodily communion, we have reached a conflict into which it makes sense for the Mariologist to enter. We may say that we have found at last the Promised Land in what is otherwise the desert country which fills Fr. Dulles's post-Conciliar map. And frankly, we have been led squarely back to the tension recognized and debated before the Council—a tension from both sides of which *Lumen gentium* drew magnificently, without in any way closing, breaking, or resolving it. The fruitful debate, the fruitful ground, is right here, where it was seventeen years ago, where it always was. We have been led home.

And what has led us? In a presence of silence, the mystery barely mentioned in these pages, the mystery wrought in silence, the Immaculate Conception, is what has led us. Mystery of the silent fullness of grace, the Immaculate Conception is a mystery of ontological correlation, of real continuity between Mary, the overflowing measure, and us, the thirsty but partly full. It has led us back to those ecclesiologies at the heart of whose method is the ontology of grace. Left behind are the Egyptian fleshpots of hermeneutical correlation and the burning

<sup>30</sup> Mühlen, *Una Mystica Persona*, secs. 11.87.1 and 11.95.

sands of faith without ontic grace. This is the first and fundamental service of the Immaculate Conception to an adequate theology of the Church.

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I believe, of course, that there are further services. I believe that the Immaculate Conception is the key which will resolve an ecclesiotypical Mariology into a Christotypical ecclesiology. I believe that the Immaculate Conception will tell decisively in favor of the sinlessness of the Church, in Journet's sense. And, returning at last to the first source of difficulty investing our topic, I believe that the Immaculate Conception will bring into stunning harmony the otherwise baffling welter of Patristic comparisons between Mary and Eve, Eve and the Church, Mary and the soul, the soul and the Church, Mary and the Church. But these are topics for future papers.

WILLIAM H. MARSHNER  
*Christendom College*  
*Front Royal, Virginia*