

Mary: Co-redemptrix, mediatrix of all graces, and advocate of the people of God: An interdisciplinary exposition and evaluation of the proposed fifth Marian dogma

Author: Flynn M. Fernandes

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MARY: CO-REDEMPTRIX, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES, AND ADVOCATE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
An Interdisciplinary Exposition and Evaluation of the Proposed Fifth Marian Dogma

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology Degree
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By: Flynn M. Fernandes

Co-Mentors: Margaret E. Guider, O.S.F.
Michael Simone, S.J.

Boston College School of Theology and Ministry
Brighton, Massachusetts

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PREFACE

A study on the proposed fifth Marian dogma that assigns to Mary the tripartite appellation “Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate of the People of God” has many underlying themes: faith, virtues, the Immaculate Conception, virginity, motherhood, the Assumption, liberation, and theodicy to name a few. Though it may seem premature to look for invocations of these titles in the Gospels where the primary focus was Christ, the many questions that elicit inquiry into this proposed dogma necessitate a quest for the historical Mary in Scripture and the Apocrypha. At the same time, one should not expect to trace contemporary Marian thought back to Scripture, mainly because the evangelists and other writers of the biblical canon were not thinking in a mariological sense. The paucity of references to Mary in the Bible might surprise today’s reader given the proliferation of contemporary literary works on the Blessed Virgin. Mary of the Bible is to be read from an interchange of evangelistic and communal christologies because the evangelists of the first-century Christian movement wrote from the perspective of their specific communities. To understand the Mary of salvation history we may need to read Scripture backward from the Gospel to pre-Gospel times. The first background segment for this study presented below is a chronological tracing of the Miriam of Nazareth in Scripture and the Apocryphal literature.

Mary of Salvation History

In Old Testament Prophecies

According to Scripture, the “first good news” of the mention of Christ and his Mother, the Woman and her seed, is to be found in Genesis 3:15 (“I will put enmity between thee and the

woman...”). Most likely an interpretation from the *Protevangelium of St. James*,¹ the woman referred to has been a subject of exegetical debate. Some biblical scholars argue that she is the first Eve according to the Septuagint (LXX), while others favor a Second Eve (Mary) interpretation according to the Vulgate which had an error in its initial translation from the original Hebrew. Contemporary theologians and scholars have struck a compromise that the “woman” refers to Eve in a literal sense but without excluding Mary. J. Coppens, author of the article “Le Protévangile. Un nouvel essai d’exégèse,” prefers a generalized interpretation that includes Eve as more literally representing all other women with Mary envisaged indirectly as Mother of the Savior, as in the later New Testament veiled reference to her in Revelations 12.² As this first text alluding to Mary and Jesus is understood to be prophetic and messianic,³ Hilda Graef deduces that there is an expectation that the Mother of the Lord should remain hidden.

The second important Old Testament prophetic text that alludes to Mary and the birth of her son is found in Isaiah 7:14 when Yahweh instructed the prophet to assure King Ahaz of Judah of his divine assistance during the threatened invasion of Judah by Syria and Israel (ca. 735 BC). The text reads: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and she shall call his name Emmanuel.” It is the translation of the Hebrew *almah* to ‘virgin’ that led to debate and controversy. Contemporary theologians like R. Laurentin and J. Steinmann have a two-fold

¹ A translation based on Papyrus Bodmer 5 by Oscar Cullmann in *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1: *Gospels and Related Writings*, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991) can be found in the Appendix of *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus*, Beverly R. Gaventa (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 133-45.

² Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion; With a New Chapter Covering Vatican II and Beyond* by Thomas A. Thompson, S.M. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 1-3.

³ Luigi Gambero, S.M., *Mary in the Middle Ages: The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 67. Rabanus Maurus (d. 780), a Benedictine monk of the Early Middle Ages, paid special attention to scriptural texts that alluded to Mary in messianic prophecy. He interpreted the woman who is destined to crush the serpent’s head in Genesis 3:15 to represent both the Church and the Mother of God. It is the virtuosity of the members of the Church that will overcome the devil, but ultimately it is Christ, Mary’s Son, who will wipe away all sin and evil. Rabanus wrote that some understood the woman to be Mary because the Lord was to be born from her and he was the one who would vanquish the enemy and destroy death.

interpretation—the first is that Isaiah 7:14 literally refers to Hezekiah’s birth, and the second, owing to its eschatological and messianic tone, foretells of the birth of Jesus whose mother is Mary. The messianic interpretation is interpreted literally by J. Coppens, finding further support by its import in Matthew 1:22 and Micah 5:2f.⁴ Other Old Testament texts (Wisdom, Canticles, and Psalms) and types (the Ark of the Covenant) have been applied to Mary in an indirect sense.⁵

In the New Testament

It is not with ease that we can locate Mary in the Bible. There are more references to her in the Holy Quran than in the seventeen instances of the biblical canon. In fact, we hear of Mary’s voice or suffering only four times in Scripture (the Annunciation, the Visitation, at Cana, and at Calvary). That the primary interest of the evangelists and the Apostle Paul was Jesus, not Mary, is one of the explanations for this apparent dearth. Offered below is a summary of direct references and allusions to Mary in St. Paul’s letters, the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, the Acts of the Apostles, and Revelations.

None of the letters of the Apostle Paul⁶ mention Mary by name. In Romans 1:3-4, Philippians 2:6-7, and Galatians 1:19; 4:4-5, however, he does refer to Jesus’ royal descent from the seed of David, and to his being “born of a woman,” as well as to a mode of birth in Galatians 4:28-29 “according to the Spirit.” Romans 1:3-4 and Philippians 2:6-7 are possible pre-Pauline witnesses to an earlier Christian tradition.⁷ In his letters, Paul appears primarily concerned with addressing specific communal issues, not Christ’s birth or his Mother.

⁴ Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 3-4.

⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

⁶ Ibid., 6. When Christianity spread among the Jewish communities in the first century, Paul wrote letters (around the fifties) emphasizing one God, incarnate in Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Romans he stressed salvation through Christ alone and brought faith to Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, centers of pagan immorality.

⁷ Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann, *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 33-49.

The earliest references to Mary by name can be found in the Gospel of Mark.⁸ In Mark, Mary appears in one scene (3:31-35), she is mentioned in another in reference to the carpenter, the “son of Mary” (6:1-6a), and possibly in a series of incidents that scholars think are references to Jesus’ mother (15:40, 47; 16:1). The issues raised in Mark concern virginal conception, and virginity. Though these were times of extended (not nuclear) families, Mark’s Gospel raises questions of whether Mary had other children.⁹

In the quest for Mary in the Gospel of Matthew¹⁰ there are unique references to her in the conception, birth, and infancy narratives of the first two chapters, and in texts that parallel Mark. Matthew 12:46-50 parallels Mark 3:31 (the constitution of Jesus’ family), and Matthew 13:53-58 parallels Mark 6:1-6a (rejection of Jesus in his own country). Matthew 1:2-17 is concerned with Jesus’ genealogy; 1:18-25 with the Annunciation (cf. Isaiah 7:14); and 2:11 is the manifestation of Jesus’ birth to the Magi. Matthew focuses on the birth of Jesus, not the mother. He mentions Joseph to maintain harmony with Jesus’ Davidic lineage as well as to remind the reader that Mary was Jesus’ mother through the Holy Spirit.¹¹

Mary features prominently in the Gospel of Luke¹² in two categories of verses. The first category includes the infancy narratives: 1:26-38 (Annunciation); 1:43 (Visitation); Magnificat (1:46-55); birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (2:1-20); the Presentation in the Temple (2:22-40); and the

⁸ Contemporary theologians agree that Mark’s Gospel was the first of the four Gospels written in the sixties of the first century. It emphasizes Jesus’ public ministry, his messianic identity and messianic secret. See James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002) for details.

⁹ Brown *et al.*, *Mary in the New Testament*, 51-72.

¹⁰ Matthew’s Gospel was written during the seventies in the first century. Matthew frames the ongoing debate between Jesus and the Pharisees as a debate between the scribal legal system and God’s era of mercy and peace. For more details, see Herbert Bassler and Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-based Commentary* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2015), chapter 12.

¹¹ Brown *et al.*, *Mary in the New Testament*, 73-103.

¹² Luke’s Gospel (written around the eighties in the first century) shifts early Christian emphasis away from the immanent *parousia* to the concerns of the Christian community in the world. Luke still believes that the *parousia* will come unexpectedly, but is more concerned with presenting Jesus as the model for Christians in the period between the Ascension and the *parousia*. For details, see <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/0>.

Finding of Jesus in the Temple (2:41-52). The second category pertains to the public ministry of Jesus. The four passages in the second category include: 3:23 (the genealogy that indicates that Jesus is only the “supposed” son of Joseph); 4:16-30 (the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth, cf. Mark 6:1-6a; Matthew 13:53-58); 8:19-21 (those who constitute Jesus’ family, cf. Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50); and 11:27-28 where the blessedness of Jesus’ mother is proclaimed by a woman in the crowd, a feature unique to Luke.¹³

Mary appears only once in the Acts of the Apostles (1:14) in the listing of those who had gathered to pray in Jerusalem soon after the Ascension, but before the Pentecost. Raymond Brown *et al.* confirm this to be the last chronological reference to Mary in the New Testament; its import is to remind us of her determination to care for her adopted children, a charge given to her by her dying Son on the cross according to John, the last Gospel to be written.¹⁴

Two kinds of verses are pertinent to the study of Mary in the Gospel according to John which was likely written in the nineties at the conclusion of the first century. The scenes at the wedding feast of Cana (2:1-11, 12) and at the foot of the cross at Calvary (19:25-27) are particularly poignant to this study and will be expounded upon in the theological exposition in Chapter 3. The second set of verses are a combination of pertinent to less significant Marian questions for this research—virginal conception (1:13; 6:42; 7:41-43; 8:41), and on the brothers of Jesus (2:12; 7:1-10).¹⁵ In John’s Gospel, Mary appears at the start of Jesus’ public ministry initiating the first sign of wonder when her Son turned water into wine at Cana, and again at the end of his earthly ministry, at “the hour” of his cross at Calvary, as witness along with Jesus’

¹³ Brown *et al.*, *Mary in the New Testament*, 105-06.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

beloved disciple. It is at Calvary that a new family is inaugurated, one that expands Mary's role from Mother of Jesus to Mother of the immediate community and eventually of all humanity.

Lastly, Revelations 12:1-6 is a vision of a woman giving birth to the Messiah which scholars believe is a primary reference to the people of God, Israel and the Church. It is also argued that the woman is a reference to the mother of the Messiah, who is Mary. There are objections to this latter argument because mariological interpretations did not begin till the fourth century; therefore, early Church writers would not have interpreted Revelations 12 with a mariological lens. In addition, it is argued that Mary is not explicitly identified by name and the birth description does not fit the infancy narrative at Bethlehem. A secondary interpretation of Revelations 12 as a reference to Mary, though uncertain, lends itself well to a later Christian community because the combination of the Gospels of Luke and John and the various images of the virgin who gave birth to Jesus and the woman at the cross appear to reinforce each other.¹⁶

In Apocryphal Literature

The *Protevangelium of James*¹⁷ probably written in the mid-second century is the most influential apocryphal text on Mary. Here, for the first time, we are introduced to Mary's parents, her mother, Anna, who is barren and the cause of much embarrassment to her husband, Joachim. However, Anna conceives after the visit by an angel and Mary is born. The girl is shielded from any form of temporal defilement during her early childhood before she is brought to live in the temple. At puberty she is given to the care of Joseph, a widower with two sons who are the solution to one exegetical interpretation that Jesus had other brothers, but more importantly, for the preservation of Mary's perpetual virginity. The *Protevangelium* is the earliest articulation of

¹⁶ Ibid., 235-39.

¹⁷ Beverly R. Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 133-45.

Mary's holiness and her virginal state before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.¹⁸ The silence of the canonical Gospels concerning Mary is surprising especially when one notes the preoccupation in the *Protevangelium* with Mary's birth, youth, and pregnancy taking up more than half the text and that even during Jesus' birth the focus remains on Mary and her virginity.¹⁹

Other Apocrypha that either allude to Mary or refer directly to her include *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. This gospel does not refer to the mother of Jesus by name when she enters the text in section 11. It describes Jesus' childhood and how his mother gave him chores to do. In one particular instance, she sent her six-year old son to draw water from the well, but he broke the pitcher and used his cloak to bring back the water. Mary witnessed the miracle and pondered this and other mysteries of the child Jesus in her heart. *The Gospel of the Hebrews* was made known by Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Origen, and Eusebius in the third and fourth centuries. Together with *The Gospel of the Ebionites*, it referred to the Holy Spirit as Christ's mother. The gnostic *Gospel of Philip* (ca. third century) refers to the Holy Spirit as the heavenly mother of Christ. It identifies Mary as one of the three Marys who were part of Christ's life. In the *Gospel of Bartholomew*, Mary speaks to the apostle about Jesus' birth. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Mary speaks to the risen Christ about his childhood. *The Discourse of St. John the Theologian about the falling asleep of the Mother of God* (fifth century) and its earlier Syriac versions arose in

¹⁸ Sarah J. Boss, ed., *Mary: The Complete Resource* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39-40.

¹⁹ Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus*, 109, cites *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 32-33, where author Marina Warner attributes this silence largely to Mary's virginity. It was considered abhorrent and sacrilegious for a young girl to be dedicated to God's service and live in proximity to the Holy of Holies in the care of the high priest. Virginity itself in Jewish tradition was not considered a holy course within the temple because of the possibility of defilement of the sanctuary when the girl reached puberty. It was considered pagan, not Jewish, to have a virgin priestess; in pagan worship virginity of the priestess was a ritual requirement, not an ascetic statement about morality or corruption of the flesh. At the time, young girls of exceptional beauty and family background served their god until the onset of puberty when they were married off after first mourning the departure from their divine bridegroom. Christian commentators, from the laments of women in the Bible, associated virginity with the stigma of barrenness and spinsterhood and that it is unlikely that a Jewish girl like Mary would make a vow of definitive or perpetual virginity.

connection with the liturgy celebrating Marian feasts; they describe the legends about the death of Mary—of her *dormition* (‘falling asleep’), or *transitus* (‘passing’) or *assumption* (‘being taken up’). Lastly, the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* (sixth century), the Latin *Liber de Ortu Beatae Mariae et Infantia Salvatoris* or *Pseudo-Matthew* (early seventh century) and the *Latin Infancy Gospel* narrate birth and childhood stories of Jesus that include his mother often drawing their inspiration from the *Protevangelium*, a work though not included in the biblical canon, has found a place in Catholic tradition in the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple and in the doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity. It was the first text to draw attention to Mary’s parentage, her early life, holiness, and virginity. These issues along with her death (or dormition) and Jesus’ childhood have engaged the curiosity of biblical scholars and theologians through the centuries.²⁰

In the Postscript, I present a developing theology of Mary that does not simply restate the “what” of Mary’s role in co-redemption, mediation, and advocacy, but attempts to articulate “how” she carries out these functions on behalf of humanity eschatologically from her heavenly abode. This mariology is not conceived in isolation, but draws on Scripture, Tradition, reason, and experience to articulate that Mary cooperates in Christ’s mission as a Model of faith and virtue, as Liberator of the oppressed, and as Comforter in theodicy. The notion of redemption can be expanded beyond the narrow religious sense of the Christ-event to include liberation and theodicy for they are grounded in the faith of God’s abiding presence. These themes encapsulate the many questions this study raises concerning the proposed dogma. They are also included because of personal witness to indescribable suffering of men, women, and children, and their “poverty of spirit” in a Mother Teresa’s home in Mumbai, India. The second segment of the background to this study begins with a reflection on these themes in the *Magnificat*.

²⁰ Ibid., 41-44.

The Magnificat

The *Magnificat*, also known as the *Canticle of Mary*, or in the Eastern Church as the *Ode of the Theotokos*, is Latin for “[my soul] magnifies.” It was either sung or spoken by Mary when she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, who, in her advanced age, was pregnant with the future John the Baptist, after being barren for many years. It was recorded in Luke 1:46-55 as follows:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.²¹

The *Magnificat* is significant for both Mary’s obedience and faith, as well as her disposition of service and desire for solidarity with the poor, the excluded and the oppressed. In the very act of her Visitation, we should note Mary’s desire to tend to her cousin, Elizabeth, who in this gospel narrative, we often read of as being pregnant “in her old age.”²² Just before the *Magnificat*, Elizabeth celebrates Mary stressing that her response to the angel at the

²¹ Luke 1:46-55, *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989. In different settings today, more inclusive language is used in the *Magnificat*, replacing the male pronoun with the gender-neutral “God.” I choose to keep the patriarchal language in this version intact because I imagine Mary responding in this way reminiscent of her historical times.

²² Péronne Marie Thibert, V.H.M., transl., *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal: Letters of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988). In the early seventeenth century, Saints Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal co-founded the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary modeled after Mary’s Visitation of Mercy to her cousin, Elizabeth. The order, through its practice of humility and gentleness, seeks to welcome older, frail, and less assertive women.

Annunciation was one of faithful obedience to God's word. This prompts Mary to respond in praise that God "has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant." However, one must not only think of this as Mary's humility and meekness to conform to the image of a pliable acquiescent young female, as it loses the connotation of a social situation. Mary must be understood by her Jewish roots as Miriam of Nazareth. In the Septuagint (LXX, or Greek Old Testament), "lowliness" or "low estate" refers to the objective state of the poor, not to humility.²³ Gail O'Day notes that it is often used to describe personal and national distress, occurring frequently in the Lamentation Psalms of the afflicted.²⁴ By referring to her "lowliness," Mary is making a statement of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, and not of her meekness. She wants all to know that God did not choose a woman of great wealth or high rank, but one of low status to give birth to the savior of Israel, one who stands by the poor and the marginalized. Her identification of the "lowliness of Israel" becomes the "lowliness of the poor" advocated.²⁵

By acknowledging herself as "the lowliness of his servant," Mary is affirming that she is not the one in control of her destiny. That God has done "great things" for her is imagery that links Mary's personal situation to God's mighty acts of liberation during the Exodus in the Old Testament (Ex. 6:1, Deut. 3:24, 26:8). Later she says that God alone has the power to bring down the mighty from their thrones affirming that this sovereign God alone is the one who makes true liberation possible by dismantling and transforming the world's standards of power. God's great acts are not only *for* the poor, but also *against* those who have made themselves powerful and

²³ Gail R. O'Day, "Singing Woman's Song: A Hermeneutic of Liberation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 12, no. 4 (August 1985): 207.

²⁴ Ibid. See Gen. 31:42, 1 Sam. 1:11 for personal, and Dt. 26:7 for national distress, and LXX Ps. 21:22, 27; 24:18; 30:6-8; 118:50; 132:23 for references to "lowliness" or "low estate" of the poor and afflicted.

²⁵ Elizabeth Johnson says that the word "lowliness" in the *Magnificat* has implications for women in the church. As women have not been treated equally in churches either in theory or practice, they count among the lowly. The *Magnificat* calls for greater efforts for change in this regard in light of what God reveals through *Mary's Song*. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 258-59, 271-74.

rich at the expense of the poor.²⁶ Therefore, God's mercy²⁷ falling on those who fear him from "generation to generation" is an expression of Mary's trust in God grounded in her generation's and prior generation's experience of God's faithfulness; this becomes a concrete way of speaking of God's abiding presence among God's people. In the song, there is a movement from the particularity of God's actions toward Mary to a particularity of God's actions towards the people. O'Day says that the *Magnificat* establishes a classic polarity between oppressed and oppressor, noting that the prideful imagination of the oppressor can be constructed in two directions: "to have as one's basic concern the accumulation of more wealth, falsely imagining that such wealth brings real power, and to follow false gods or idols, to whom one appeals for legitimization, falsely imagining that such a move removes the demands of justice of the one true God."²⁸

Mary's song, then, is not about meekness, but of her faithful obedience and desire to be in solidarity with the oppressed, depending completely on God's help to liberate. "There can be no true liberation theology which does not acknowledge the sovereignty of God and the power of God to transform and liberate."²⁹ The *Magnificat* is an assurance of Mary's desire to accompany the afflicted in their journey of theodicy. Pope John Paul II said of this assurance that the Church "renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that the truth about God who saves...cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the *Magnificat*, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus."³⁰ I expand on the themes of faith, liberation, and theodicy to broaden an understanding of Mary's cooperation, mediation, and advocacy later in the Conclusion and the Postscript.

²⁶ O'Day, "Singing Woman's Song," 208.

²⁷ Ibid. God's *hesed* (mercy) is used to establish connections with the covenantal faith of Abraham and Sarah and God's relationship with David.

²⁸ Ibid., 209.

²⁹ Ibid., 208.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1987), 37.

INTRODUCTION

The end of the twentieth century witnessed a grassroots international lay movement known as Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici or “Voice of the People for Mary Mediatrix” calling for then Pope John Paul II to exercise papal infallibility in proclaiming a fifth Marian dogma that would give Mary the tripartite appellation of “Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate for the People of God.”³¹ By 1998, the Vatican received over four million signed petitions from 157 countries asking for a papal definition of a new dogma.³² Since then, however, there has been much debate between Marian maximalists who wish to see a theological elevation of Mary, and Marian minimalists who are not in favor of such a definition.³³ The latter claim that erstwhile arguments in favor of the three Marian dogmas that followed the first one on Mary as *Theotokos* or ‘Mother of God’ (proclaimed at Council of Ephesus in 451) were not settled as divinely revealed even though papal infallibility was exercised in the case of the latter two. Between the first and the proposed fifth dogmas, we have three: Mary’s Perpetual Virginity first supported by fourth century Church Fathers and later explicitly explained at the Council of Lateran in 649; the promulgation of her Immaculate Conception by Pius IX’s Apostolic Constitution, *Ineffabilis Deus* of 1854; and of her Assumption into heaven by Pius XII’s Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus* of 1950.

The purpose of this study is to provide an exposition and evaluation of the proposed fifth Marian dogma more comprehensively from historical-critical, socio-cultural-political, and theo-

³¹ Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici (www.voxpopuli.org), the organization rallying worldwide support in its petition to the Holy Father, is headed by Dr. Mark Miravalle, layman and professor of Theology and Mariology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. He has written volumes of papers and published books that propose that this dogma is definable and that the timing (then, the advent of the new millennium) for such papal proclamation was a suitable occasion.

³² Donal Flanagan, “A New Marian Dogma?” *The Furrow* 49, no. 1 (January 1998): 15.

³³ It should be noted that in the 1920s, Cardinal Désire Mercier spearheaded a movement for the dogmatic proclamation of Mary as Mediatrix of Graces, but it was the dogma of the Assumption that came to the fore two decades later. See Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 401.

philosophical standpoints, perspectives that in part have laid the groundwork for developing a mariology concerning the Blessed Virgin as cooperator, mediator, and advocate in the redemptive mission of Christ. The objective of this study is not to confirm whether, based on research, this proposed teaching is part of divine revelation or whether it should be universally accepted if declared by a future council or synod or by papal infallibility, but rather to use a multi-disciplinary approach to instruct and inform a wide audience across the Marian maximalist-minimalist spectrum about the predominant mariological views of historians and theologians through the centuries in the Latin as well as the Eastern Orthodox Church. The cosmic mystery of Mary (referred to as the *mysterium Marianum*) will be reviewed in the context of the cosmic mystery of Christ particularly the christological and apocalyptic messages in the surge of Marian apparitions and manifestations that have occurred globally, and in the particular contexts that compel different cultures to gravitate toward devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Much of the debate between Marian maximalists and minimalists centers on providing definitional clarity on the titles—Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate of the People of God—and what they mean theologically, philosophically, and evangelically. The proposed fifth dogma claims that Mary is:

Co-Redemptrix because she cooperates in Christ's salvific work of redemption.

Mediatrix of All Graces because any and all graces merited by Christ's glorification on the cross are bestowed on us through her mediation.

Advocate of the People of God because she acts as principle intercessor on our behalf before Christ.³⁴

Minimalists make a significant contribution to this study by eliciting inquiry into the theological, philosophical, evangelical, and ecumenical implications of these claims. If a papal definition

³⁴ Peter S. Dillard, *The Truth about Mary: A Theological and Philosophical Evaluation of the Proposed Fifth Marian Dogma* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009), x.

concerning this high dogma comes to fruition in the foreseeable future it would officially have threefold significance: that Mary participates in Christ's act of redemption on the Cross, that the graces that flow from Christ are bestowed on us through Mary's mediation, and that as principal intercessor before Christ, Mary is our Advocate.

This study seeks to clarify three concerns posited by maximalists. First, the difference between Mary's role in the economy of salvation and that of Christ as the one and only Redeemer. As Co-Redemptrix, Mary is to be understood as *co-operating* with Christ in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. She did not bring about redemption by herself but participated in her Son's suffering as she stood at the foot of his Cross, and in this way acquired the graces of redemption merited by Christ. Her role as Co-Redemptrix in no way diminishes Christ; rather her cooperation enhances his mission. Second, granting Mary the title of Mediatrix of All Graces is not intended to contradict what 1 Timothy 2:5 teaches that "there is one God and one mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus." Third, this dogma is not intended to create confusion with respect to the doctrine on the Trinity, so as to suggest that Mary is elevated or assumed into the Godhead as the fourth person in One God.³⁵ Instead, as *Mater Dei* and *Filium Filiae*, she continues to co-operate with a Trinitarian monotheistic God in mediating between humanity and Christ. Mary is to be understood as a figure of the Church itself and because of her participation at the foot of the Cross, her role as Co-Redemptrix reaches fulfillment at Calvary.

This study also presents the questions elicited by minimalists. What is the exact nature of Mary's cooperation with Christ, and her participation in his redemption? What is the role of the *sensus fidelium* and can it take the place of inadequate theological arguments in defining matters

³⁵ Iconography that communicates this visually is the Jungian typology of the Quarterinity. See Gerhard Adler and R.F.C. Hull, eds., *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung Volume 9, Part I: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Bollinger Series XX (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 142.

of faith? What are the ecumenical implications of calling Mary ‘Co-Redemptrix’? How does this dogma enhance faith as well as individual and communal responsibility for seeking salvation?

The three chapters in this study are an exposition and evaluation of the proposed dogma. Chapter 1 is a historical survey of the thought and writings of theologians that refer to Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, or Advocate from the Early Christian era to the Modern Period. This is followed by a summary of magisterial documents that invoke Mary by these titles.

Chapter 2 attempts to demonstrate “how” Mary cooperates with Christ in the concrete reality of the economy of salvation by addressing the socio-cultural-political contexts where Marian piety and devotion have thrived and some of the attribution theories as to why this flourishing may have occurred. This chapter begins with a section on the cosmic phenomena of Marian apparitions and manifestations as one of the reasons for the increase in devotion because these supernatural events were often accompanied by messages of blessing and matters intrinsic to faith, as well as prophecy, apocalypse, secrecy, and miraculous healing. Consequent to Mary’s cosmic mystery, new forms of Marian iconography and devotion (novenas, prayers, poems, pilgrimage, etc.) have taken on vernacular expression, and an appropriation of Mary in different cultural contexts emerged. Personal witness to Marian devotion in a church in Southeast Asia is described. There have been reports that excesses of Marian piety has sometimes led to devotion that blurs the line between honoring Mary and worshipping her. How has the Church reacted to this distortion of devotional practice?

The socio-cultural perspective examines the differences in the importance given to Mary in Western and Eastern cultures, and between the affluent and poorer cultures. In evaluating the sociocultural-political contexts, this chapter also will attempt to answer three questions: Does Mary’s message empower women as well as resonate with men? Why do poor people from

diverse cultural contexts gravitate toward Mary? How does Mary participate in Christ's preferential option for the poor? The sociocultural-political view is evaluated in conjunction with the *mysterium Marianum* introduced as Mary's cosmic mystery earlier in this chapter and whether it has value for Christian faith and life of prayer beyond intrigue and fascination. Does her cosmic mystery offer a way of assessing of Mary's sociocultural influence to advance her position not only as Mediatrix and Advocate of humankind, but also in her redeeming function as Co-Redemptrix where she plays a healing role by reconciling the human race with God?

Chapter 3 that begins with three foundational aspects of the Doctrine of Redemption is a theological and philosophical exposition that draws on some of the key historical contributions of Chapter 1 and the sociocultural-political questions of Chapter 2 to support or weaken the case for each of the three titles of this proposed dogma, treated separately and in tri-unity.

In the Conclusion I discuss the theological and the contemporary pastoral significance of this study for Christology, Mariology, and ecclesiology as well as present my views on the proposed fifth Marian dogma based on this research. Some of the questions explored are the balance between reason and faith in evaluating the proposed new dogma, and its value in advancing faith. Is this dogma needed at this or any point in history? Finally, the Postscript presents a theology of cooperation and intercession, on how Mary cooperates with Christ in his mission and intercedes on our behalf in the concrete reality of the economy of salvation in three sections: Mary as a Model of faith and virtue, Mary as Liberator, and Mary as Comforter in the journey of theodicy. This study would not be complete without addressing some of the recent Marian controversies concerning Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mary and the Trinity, and Mary and human liberation. Despite their controversial doctrinal and dogmatic positions, their proponents do have something of value to add to the theological discourse of the Postscript.

Chapter 1: HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION

This chapter is a selective synoptic survey of the origins of Mary's redemptive role in the economy of salvation, and her intercessory role as Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate on behalf of the People of God in the thought and writings of theologians from the Early Christian era to the Modern Period. Included in this exposition is also a summary of the magisterial documents from tradition that explicitly invoke these Marian titles.

1.1 *The Virgin Mary in Early Christianity*

The Early Church was preoccupied with addressing heresies arising out of Adoptionism, Apollinarism, Arianism, Docetism, Donatism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Montanism, Marcionism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, etc. The main controversies concerning Mary were the virgin birth of Christ and her status as *Theotokos* or ('Mother of God'). By this time, Mary's perpetual virginity was a claim that had already evolved, and with the exception of Nestorian's opposition to the title of *Theotokos* for Mary (his preferring *Christotokos* instead), all other heresies centered on Jesus' humanity and divinity. Discourse on Mary's contribution to the economy of salvation was either non-existent or appears to be limited to her giving a human nature to the Son of God. The Council of Ephesus in 451 proclaimed Mary as *Theotokos*, the first of four Marian dogmas. Mary as the Mother of God will be a recurring theme and reason for establishing that in the Incarnation Mary cooperated with God's redemptive plan, and after her Assumption continues to mediate humanity's salvation, and advocate on its behalf before Christ. Mary was either described as *Theotokos* ('God-bearer') or *Christotokos* ('Christ-bearer') in the early Christian Church. Terms like Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate did not find their way into theological parlance until the Dark to Late Middle Ages.

1.2 *The Cult of Mary in the Dark to Late Middle Ages*

As devotion to Mary as the Mother of God grew in the Early Middle Ages, churches in the East and West were adorned with images, icons, statues, and other art forms depicting the life of the Blessed Virgin. Local bishops, theologians, and future saints wrote, taught, and preached about Mary. Veneration of the various Marian art forms provoked concern over what appeared to be Mariolatry. This segment focuses on the sermons and teachings of many key theologians of the Middle Ages whose writings seem to have had already long established a tradition of referring to Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate. Two points should be noted—that not all theologians wrote or preached about all three titles simultaneously, and those that did often considered them in a unified tripartite form. Presented here are the theological contributions of Marian doctrine and devotion during four key periods of the Middle Ages: the Dark Middle Ages of post-Roman Western Europe (476-1084); the Golden Period (twelfth century); the Age of Scholasticism (late twelfth-thirteenth centuries); and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that gave rise to new expressions of Marian faith and devotion.

During the Dark Middle Ages, three key historical figures known for their Marian devotion are the seventh-century Bishop Ildephonsus of Toledo, the tenth-century John the Geometer, and the tenth-eleventh century Bishop Fulbert of Chartres. Ildephonsus of Toledo (ca. 610-667) often invoked the intercession of Mary for his own sanctification from sin, for her maternal grace, and for the strength to speak in defense of the truth and of his faith in her divine Son. As a sign of his own consecration to the Blessed Virgin he associated “fidelity to God with fidelity to Mary, service to God with service to the Mother of God, obedience to God with obedience to Mary,” and called her “cooperatrix” in her own redemption.³⁶ For Bishop

³⁶ *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae* I; PL 96, 105B, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 31.

Ildephonsus, Mary is *cooperatrix* because through the Incarnation, she became united with her Son not only in the flesh, but in mind and mission as well. Mary's divinized union with her Son, as the *Protevangelium* suggests, likely happened even before the Incarnation and prior to the Annunciation, at the time of her own Immaculate Conception in the womb of Anna, her mother. In his *De virginitate sanctae Mariae*,³⁷ Ildephonsus' words of consecration to Mary speak of this unity and of his faith in Christ.

John the Geometer (d. ca. 990), the most important exponent of Byzantine Mariology in the tenth century, said that just as Christ endured his passion for us, Mary, too, suffered for us "so that the memory of her sufferings endured for us might always procure our salvation and she should love us not only because of [human] nature, but also because she remembers all she has done for us throughout our life."³⁸ His devotion to Mary found expression in the poems he composed in her honor and in his *Life of Mary*.³⁹

Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028) often interpreted the woman in Genesis 3:15 as a prophetic reference to Mary, a woman free from concupiscence who triumphed over evil by the example of her life and personal virtues, especially in the oblation of her virginity and humility to God. The bishop of Chartres also interpreted Aaron's rod in Numbers 17:6-24 with the help of the oracle of Isaiah as pointing to the Blessed Virgin. When his hearers asked him what he meant by Isaiah 11:1, the prophet replied, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Fulbert preached that Mary was marked by exceptional holiness and

³⁷ Some historians believe that the authorship of the homilies specific to Mary's Assumption in *In Assumptione* must be restored to Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865). See Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 75. Gambero cites H. Peltier's *Paschase Radbert, abbé de Corbie: Contribution à l'étude de la vie monastique et de la pensée chrétienne aux temps carolingiens* (Amiens, 1938), 190.

³⁸ "L'Assomption de la très-sainte Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI^e au X^e Siècle," *Archives de l'Orient chrétien*, 59 (1955) in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 154.

³⁹ Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 154.

spiritual beauty from the moment of her conception. God ordained that her arrival be preceded by prophecies and prefigurations, and that her life would be filled with supernatural events.⁴⁰

During the Golden Period of Marian doctrine,⁴¹ Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) did not speak of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, but of her participation in the restoration of creation by Christ the Redeemer. He called her the “parent of salvation” and of those saved. Through her participation Mary links her maternal motherhood and her motherhood of justification. Anselm preached a true Marian piety in which the mother of the justified brings about reconciliation between humanity and Christ. During this period, Eadmer of Canterbury (d. 1124), an Anglo-Saxon monk and disciple of Anselm, produced two important works on Mary—her conception and her excellence, centered on her holiness and merciful intercession. It was Eadmer of Canterbury (d. 1124) who first uttered the Latin words “*potuit deuit, ergo fecit*” (translated “He could; it was fitting; therefore, he did it!”⁴²) words that were later repeated by the Franciscan, John Duns Scotus. “He” is God and “it” refers to the Immaculate Conception. Eadmer’s principle makes the following claim: The Son of God was able to create Mary without original sin. It was fitting and decent that the Son of God would honor his Mother in this way. Therefore, God made his Mother without original sin.

Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) emphasized Mary’s virginity and humility as the foundation of her existence in his poems and sermons on Mary. He praised her virtues and interior disposition and understood her greatness as a reflection of God’s greatness. He located her mediation between Christ and the faithful using the aqueduct metaphor in his homily on the

⁴⁰ *Sermo 6 in Nativitate B.V.M.*; PL 141, 326C, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 82-84, 86.

⁴¹ See Theodore Koehler, “Storia della mariologia”, in NDM, 1394. The twelfth century came to be known as the ‘Marian century’ or the Golden Period of Marian doctrine because Mary, as Mother of Christ, became the center of attention with respect to doctrinal and exegetical research and development as well as within liturgical worship and popular devotion, creating a theological foundation for Marian teaching. For additional details, see Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 105-08.

⁴² Eadmer of Canterbury, *Tractatus De Conceptione Sanctae Mariae*, 1141, possibly documented after his death.

Blessed Virgin, *De aquaeductu*, to preach that it was the Lord himself who arranged that we should receive everything from God through Mary's intercession.⁴³

The twelfth century began to witness a shift from Mary the Mother of God at the Annunciation to Mary the Mother of humankind at Calvary. Rupert of Deutz (d. 1130) used a bridal analogy to explain how Mary and the Church both possess a fruitfulness arising out of the mysterious action of the Spirit. He presents a departure from prior interpretations that limited Mary's role to the Annunciation-Incarnation.⁴⁴

Arnold of Bonneval (d. ca. 1156) is believed to be the first Latin writer to articulate Mary's cooperation in the salvation of the human race. He preserves her role in the Incarnation, but in developing a doctrine on her role in salvation he appears to have placed Mary at the same level as Christ like two altars on Calvary, one in Christ's body, the other in Mary's heart. The cooperation between Mother and Son is so complete that there is not two, but one bodily oblation to God for humanity's salvation, with Mary's actions focused on moral collaboration. Her cooperation with humanity did not end at Calvary, but from heaven she continues to collaborate with her Son in saving souls through the many miracles worked by her intercession.⁴⁵

For Amadeus of Lausanne (d. 1159), Mary occupies a place where the Old and New Testaments converge, one foretells while the other reveals God's plan through her in the action and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Her "fear of the Lord" brought about her justification and her intervention, delivering wicked persons from sin and from eternal suffering.⁴⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx

⁴³ *De aquaeductu* 4-5; PL 183, 400, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 135.

⁴⁴ *De operibus Spiritus Sancti* I, 7; PL 167, 1577D; CCM 24, 1829, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 126-27.

⁴⁵ Bonneval reflects on several verses of *De laudibus B.M.V.*; PL 189, 1726C, 1726D, 1727A, and 1733A, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 149-51.

⁴⁶ Amadeus of Lausanne applies certain verses of the *Song of Songs* to the Mother of God. Cf. A. Molina Prieto, "Interpretación mariológica del 'Cantar de los Cantares' en las homilías de San Amadeo de Lausana," *EphMar* 41 (1991): 207-45, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 156-57, 161.

(d. 1167) saw in Mary's fullness of grace the drive to restore the order of salvation. As the Mother of Christ, her merciful feelings for humanity made her the way that leads to him.⁴⁷

Philip of Harveng (d. 1183) used the "neck" metaphor⁴⁸ for Mary as the powerful and effective Mediatrix in that she connects the Body (the Church) with the Head (Christ). Her mediation, once descending in which through the Incarnation the Savior came to us, is now ascending in which those saved are raised to heaven. Gambero writes "it is precisely in the mystery of salvation that Philip sees the Mother of the Lord at work."⁴⁹

In the age of Scholasticism, we encounter St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Blessed John Duns Scotus who wrote, taught or preached about Mary's mediation and her role in redemption. Anthony of Padua (d. 1231) spoke of the Virgin's mediating mission beginning in the mystery of the Incarnation, calling her "a sign of the covenant, of reconciliation and peace...between God and sinners."⁵⁰ He praised her humility, spiritual beauty, her poverty and virginity, her obedience, her spirit of justice, and invited the faithful to contemplate her life and imitate her virtues.⁵¹

St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) developed a profoundly deep theology on Mary's mediation and spiritual motherhood in the mystery of salvation going back to the Eve-Mary parallel and leading to a corresponding Fall-reparation parallel. He said the Fall began in the woman (Eve) and was completed in the man (Adam). Likewise the reparation began with the woman's (Mary's) faith and conception that conquered darkness in secret and ended on the Cross where

⁴⁷ *Sermo in Annuntiatione Dominica*; Talbot, 90, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 165.

⁴⁸ *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2, 7; PL 203, 260D, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 181.

⁴⁹ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 181.

⁵⁰ *In Annuntiatione* 6; 2:113, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 201.

⁵¹ *In Assumptione* 3; 2:144ff; *In ramis palmarum* 3; 1:191; in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 202-03.

the Man (Christ) openly triumphed over sin.⁵² He said that God bestowed on Mary's soul special protection against sin allowing her to function as Mediatrix between us and Christ just as Christ is Mediator between us and God. Mary plays her role as Mediatrix passively accepting God's will and acting on it. Christ on the Cross is the only Redeemer for he alone restored God's honor. Bonaventure also used St. Bernard's aqueduct metaphor to emphasize Mary's role in sanctifying us from heaven with all the graces that flow to her from her Son.⁵³

Albert the Great (d. 1280) limits Mary's collaboration with God on behalf of individual petitioners to the level of saints. He underscores her mercy toward sinners, but is not of the opinion that judgment and condemnation belong only to Christ and mercy and intercession fall only to Mary (as noted in the reflections of some theologians) because Christ himself is love and mercy. Albert holds a special place for Mary's cooperation in salvation history. As the Mother of God in the mystery of the Incarnation, the fullness of humanity and divinity dwelled within her body making her the source and conduit of grace during her earthly life and after her exaltation to heaven as well. For this reason, Albert the Great frequently used the term 'Mediatrix' for Mary. Albert did not refer to Mary as Mother of the Church, but following St. Ambrose, called her the Church's model and type. Yet, Albert also proposed limiting devotion to Mary. Devotion to Mary must not be confused with worship or *latria*; a kind of veneration known as *hyperdula* is appropriate for Mary. He urged the faithful to emulate her life of virtue and faith, and not simply to reduce devotion to praise and invocation.⁵⁴

⁵² Bonaventure follows up the Eve-Mary parallel with the Eve-Church parallel. See Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 212. Just as Eve came forth from the side of Adam, the Church was born from the side of the Redeemer who himself came forth from the womb of Mary. In this parallel, Bonaventure offers us Mary's spiritual motherhood.

⁵³ *Sermo de Purificatione* 2; Quaracchi, 9:646, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 212.

⁵⁴ *In 3 Sententiarum*, dis. 9, a. 9; ed. Borgnet, 28:132, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 228-31.

St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) had accepted that Mary was filled with the fullness of grace in her mother, Anna's womb before her birth, a sanctification that was also conceded only to Jeremiah and John the Baptist.⁵⁵ However, Aquinas exercised prudence on the theme of Mary's participation in the mystery of human salvation and her role as Mediatrix. The fullness of grace Mary received was to be distributed to all of humanity for their salvation. Thomas viewed her fullness of grace in relation to her soul to conquer evil; in relation to her body to conceive the Son of God; and in relation to other human beings. Like Christ, Mary possessed fullness of grace and the two together cooperate in the salvation of souls. Aquinas expresses Mary's mediation as "indirect" in relation to her being the Mother of God and as a representative of humanity.⁵⁶

John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, *Ordinatio* (also known as *Opus oxoniense*), defended the Immaculate Conception of Mary, that she herself was conceived without sin, a subject of tremendous controversy at the time. He invoked Eadmer of Canterbury's principle, *potuit, decuit, ergo fecit* ("He [God] could do it, it was fitting; therefore, he did it!"). He argued that as a human being, Mary needed to be redeemed, but through the merits of her Son's sacrifice on the Cross, she was bestowed with this grace in advance of her own birth and was conceived without Original Sin.⁵⁷

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries deeper questions concerning the source of Mary's suffering during the Paschal Mystery surface. Reflecting on the words of John 19:26 "Woman, behold your son," Ubertino of Casale (d. ca. 1325) said Mary in that moment experienced a "disproportionate and disturbing substitution" for her divine Son in the disciple, John. Her sorrow is expressed in tears, signs, and physical collapse which are not signs of

⁵⁵ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 27, a. 2, corpus, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 238.

⁵⁶ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 30, a. 1, corpus, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 240.

⁵⁷ John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d.3, q.1.

Mary's weakness, but the effect of her burning desire to be united with her Son in his suffering. In inheriting John, Mary's maternal charity now extends to all, including those who were responsible for her Son's crucifixion. Therefore, just as John who felt the sorrow of Jesus' death and his mother's compassion, so, too, we must share in the grace of spiritually experiencing Mary's sorrow so that if we share in his suffering, we will share in his resurrection as well (2 Corinthians 1:7). Ubertino notes that Mary was not the first to see the risen Christ, but through a special intuition was the first to be informed of and to partake in his glorious Resurrection.⁵⁸

The Marian doctrine of St. Bernadine of Siena (d. 1444) was profoundly influenced by St. Bernard. Gambero notes that St. Bernadine came to be known as one of the great masters of Marian doctrine at the close of the Middle Ages. While still affirming Christ the Redeemer as the one and only Mediator, his enthusiastic devotion to Mary led him to call her the 'Tabernacle of God' (*in sole posuit tabernaculum suum*) after Psalm 18:6. He founded Mary's Queenship in heaven after the Assumption, on her role as Mother of God, a role that conferred on her the right as Mediatrix to govern all that was given to the Son in the workings of grace and mercy, and the riches of the Spirit because "the Paraclete is one of the gifts that Jesus gave to the Church."⁵⁹

By the end of the Middle Ages, two themes seemed to be reflected in the theological writings of Antoninus of Florence (d. 1459), Dionysius the Carthusian (d. 1471), and Bernadine de Bustis (d. ca. 1515) among many others. First, Mary and Christ are seen in cooperation with each other because they shared a unified divine mission of service to God. As Christ placed himself wholly at God's disposal, Mary obediently placed herself at the Son's service. Second, their existence was marked by a tragic destiny, but one filled with eschatological hope.

⁵⁸ *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu*, (1485), p. 351, col. 2 through p. 352, col. I, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 269-71.

⁵⁹ *De gratia et gloria beatae Virginis*, sermon 61, a. 1, c. 8; *Opera Omnia*, 2:379, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 296-97.

Antoninus attributes a priestly status to Mary calling her *sacerdotissa iustitiae* (‘priestess of justice’) because she offered her Son as an oblation to the eternal Father’s will for humanity’s salvation.⁶⁰ The bishop of Florence used the expression *mater spiritualis* (spiritual Mother) because as a consequence of her cooperation with Christ in our salvation she was christened as the Mother of our spiritual rebirth. Beyond her role as our spiritual Mother, Antoninus says Mary is Mediatrix by which he means she stands in the middle (*media*) between God (Christ) and humanity, but he can also be read as the only one to attribute extraordinary power to the Blessed Virgin in that through her Son, she absolves us of our sins and their consequences. She carries out her role of mediation especially for sinners so that “she may be called the great Mediatrix and their Advocate.”⁶¹

Dionysius the Carthusian not only called Mary ‘Mediatrix,’ but in subscribing to the First Eve-Adam, Second Eve-Adam parallel, called her “the woman who redeemed the world” because “a man cannot redeem the world without a woman’s collaboration.”⁶² Her power of intercession is derived from the Redeemer’s generosity that his Mother’s assurance of his assistance will lead to eternal salvation. In his commentary on the *Song of Songs*, Dionysius emphasizes that through Mary, the Church as “the universal Bride of the incarnate Word” participates as the faithful soul in the mystery of salvation. Bernadine de Bustis called Mary ‘collaborator in our redemption’ because through her bestowed grace the faithful are justified and saved in Christ.⁶³ At the end of his *Mariale*, he accords to Mary these titles:

O Spring of supernatural grace! O Armory! ...O Artery of our salvation! ...O Redeemeress [Redemptrix] of the universe! ...O Mediatrix between God and [humanity]! O Foundation

⁶⁰ c. 3; eVerona, cols. 926-27, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 303.

⁶¹ c. 5; Verona, col. 937, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 305.

⁶² *Opera* 35, 516. R. Laurentin, *Le Titre de Corédemptrice* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1951), in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, III. Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 311.

⁶³ *Mariale*, 7.4.2, c. 3; eVerona, cols. 926-27, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 310, 323.

of our faith! ...O most faithful Advocate in the presence of the judge! ...O Dispenser of God's gifts! ...O Treasure of the Most High!"⁶⁴

1.3 *Mary from the Reformation to the Nineteenth Century*

Martin Luther, the architect of the Reformation, perhaps best underscores Mary's role in redemption beginning with the Incarnation in his Christmas Day sermon on Luke 2:1-14 in 1530. Luther seemed vexed that the angel's proclamation: "I bring to you good news of a great joy; for to you is born this day the Savior" (Luke 2:10-11) does not bring out the glory and honor that are due to the mother. Mary became mother of the Child Jesus in unflinching obedience to God. Luther preached that we must not accept only the child and his birth and forget the mother for "where there is a birth there must also be a mother."⁶⁵ Not only does this reveal Luther's deep devotion to Mary, but his words honor all women, especially mothers and the vocation of motherhood. Unlike most mothers, however, Mary's motherhood is sealed with God's Word.

In Jesus, Luther says, we have more than the mother's estate for he is more than Mary's son. We ought to thank the Lord when the angel said "to you is born the Savior" for the son was born not so that we might only honor the mother or so that we might praise her because of his virgin birth. His purpose was much greater; he was born for the benefit of the sinner in each one of us as Mary herself sang in the *Magnificat*: "He has helped his servant Israel" (Luke 1:54). If we have this second faith that we not only believe in Jesus as Mary's Son, but also that he is our Lord and Savior, then we "shall not fail to love the mother Mary, and even more the child, and especially the Father."⁶⁶ Luther continued his sermon critical of his erstwhile Catholic tradition adding, "Our papists...retain the Mass, the invocation of saints...play their organs...The text

⁶⁴ *Mariale*, 12.2.1, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 324

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 51: Sermons I*, eds. John W. Doberstein and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 213.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

says that he is the Savior. And if this is true, then let everything else go.”⁶⁷ Sally Cunneen interprets this as Luther’s diminution of Mary because it denies the feminine dimension of the sacred.⁶⁸ Cunneen’s view that Luther’s words may be interpreted as a dismissal of any form of exaltation of Mary is unconvincing because Luther wrote an entire commentary on the *Magnificat* soon after his excommunication by Leo X in 1521 wherein he reaffirms his belief in Mary as *Theotokos*. He wrote, “She is the foremost example of the grace of God...It needs to be pondered in the heart, what it means to be the Mother of God...was not hers a wondrous soul?”⁶⁹

Francis Suarez (d. 1617) incorporated his Mariology in the context of Christology. Following John Duns Scotus, he said that Mary was elected to become the Mother of God even before God foresaw the fall of humanity. He argued that the mysteries of Mary’s graces cannot be measured by ordinary laws and after her sanctification, her every single act merited an increase in charity, grace, and glory. In *Disputatio* 18, he wrote, “The blessed Virgin Mary frequently merited more by her single acts than individual saints by all the acts of their life...it is certain that she merited nothing *de condigno* which is the proper privilege of Christ, but by meriting the Incarnation *de congruo* she merited a great good for us, and while she lived she could also merit many other good things.”⁷⁰

The *Mariale* of the Capuchin Lawrence of Brindisi (d. 1619) praises and invokes the Virgin Mother of God. He boldly claimed that Christ the Man and the Mother of God were alike in nature, grace, virtue, dignity, and glory. His interpretation of the *Magnificat* and his sermons

⁶⁷ Mary C. Athans, *In Quest of the Jewish Mary: The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology, and Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2013), 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., n.42.: Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther*, trans. A.T.W. Steinhauser (Philadelphia: Holman, 1930), 139.

⁷⁰ Francis Suarez, *Disputatio*, 18, 4, 14, in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 294.

on the Immaculate Conception made similar claims, and following Duns Scotus asserted that Mary “has reached the sanctity of Christ.”⁷¹

In the eighteenth century, the Flemish Dominican, John Baptist van Ketwigh produced *Panoplia Mariana* (*Full Marian Armor*) in which he defended the title of Co-redemptress because Mary had given birth to the Redeemer, offered him hanging on the Cross for our redemption, and prayed that the merits of Christ’s Passion be applied to all men. He insisted that all good things flow through Mary, and that the prayers of the saints merit us nothing unless they are joined to those of Mary. He said that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is “necessary for salvation, a sign of eternal predestination, and neglect of it is a sign of eternal damnation.”⁷²

In a letter to E.B. Pusey (1866) who objected to Mary as mediatrix of all graces and Co-Redemptress, her intercession, that she produces Christ in souls, and so forth, John Henry Newman (d. 1890) responded that Catholic belief is premised on early Christian teaching of Mary as the Second Eve, supported by St. Justin, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. Mary’s prayers are entirely dependent on her Son because it is he who makes them known to her. Mary, even in her exalted state, remains external to us, and we can turn to her without fear because she does not judge us with divine power.⁷³

Matthias Joseph Scheeben (d. 1888), a professor of dogma at a seminary in Cologne, rejected the idea that Mary had maternal authority over Christ, but claimed that Mary as the secondary principle of the supernatural life of grace “may even be called the mystical head of humanity in a relative sense, insofar as she is not regarded as one Body with Christ but as the Bride of Christ opposed to him.”⁷⁴ She is the spiritual Mother of humanity because she “has a

⁷¹ *De Reparatione Gratiae*, 9, 5, in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 298.

⁷² *Panoplia Mariana*, 3, 3, 5f, in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 332.

⁷³ Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 362-69.

⁷⁴ *Maria*, n.1626, in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 374.

share in the peculiarly transcendent and immanent position of Christ” and shares in his position as Mediator between creatures and God. She must be considered as Mediatrix in an analogous sense to Christ, but Scheeben is careful to stress that her mediation is wholly dependent on that of Christ. For him, Mary is “*co-operatrix Redemptoris*, but not *coredemptrix* because by her action she in no wise gives or pays herself the price of redemption.”⁷⁵ Christ’s redemptive sacrifice is independently effective whereas Mary’s sacrifice is a purely affective.

1.4 Mary in the Magisterial Documents of the Roman Catholic Church

This section is an overview of magisterial documents of the Roman Catholic Church that invoke Mary by one of the three proposed titles. In 1854, Pius IX closed his Apostolic Constitution, *Ineffabilis Deus*, invoking Mary as the Mediatrix and Conciliatrix of the whole world. Leo XIII spoke of access to Christ through his Mother in his 1891 encyclical, *Octobri Mense*. In his 1896 encyclical, *Fidentem Piumque Animum*, Leo affirmed that Mary has contributed more than anyone else in service to God toward humanity’s salvation; she should justly be regarded as *Mediatrix to the Mediator*.⁷⁶ Pius X wrote, “It has been allowed to the August Virgin to be the most powerful Mediatrix and Advocate of the whole world with Her Divine Son,”⁷⁷ without referring to Mary as Co-Redemptrix. He taught that Mary’s mediation as the dispenser of Christ’s gifts is dependent on her role in Redemption.

The pontificate of Pius XI was in the age of National Socialism, communism was well-established, and the world was on the brink of the Second World War. The Supreme Pontiffs from Pius XI to Pius XII accepted Mary’s direct cooperation in our objective Redemption. On June 26, 1913, the Congregation of the Holy Office welcomed the practice of adding to the name

⁷⁵ *Maria*, n. 1793, in Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 376.

⁷⁶ Paul F. Palmer, S.J., *Mary in the Documents of the Church* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1952), 90-91.

⁷⁷ Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1904), 13.

of Jesus, the name of his Mother as “Co-Redemptrix” and six months later included an indulgence prayer that referred to Mary by this title for her participation in humanity’s redemption.⁷⁸ Pius XI portrayed Mary as offering her Son on Calvary and publicly invoked her as “Co-Redemptrix,” an idea that was subsequently repeated by Pius XII in *Mystici Corporis*.⁷⁹

Benedict XV, for his part, was perceived as the most ardent advocate of the doctrine of Co-redemption.^{80,81} Paul Palmer cautions that though Mary is associated with the offering of her Son at Calvary, it Christ alone who is both Priest and Victim. Therefore, it is only Christ who paid the ultimate price for our redemption and therefore merited our justification (*de condigno*) whereas Mary merited our redemption congruously (*de congruo*).⁸²

Prior to becoming pope, Pius XII made statements referring to Mary as “Corredentrice.” In 1935, in Lourdes at the close of the Jubilee Year in honor of the Redemption, he referred to Mary as “Coredemptrix,” once in Latin and a second time in French, that in a strict sense, Mary is not merely a dispensatrix of graces, but is cooperatrix in their acquisition. He explained that the one economy of salvation had two parts: the application of the merits of Christ and their acquisition, and Mary cooperated in both. At Calvary, though Christ offered himself for us, Mary, too, offered her Son for our universal redemption.⁸³

By 1960, during the preparatory phase of Vatican II, Cardinal Tardini had received about six hundred requests for some Marian statement during the Council of which 382 requested a statement on Mary’s mediation, about 280 for a dogmatic definition of Mary as Mediatrix, and about 100 for no dogmatic statement.⁸⁴ The Second Vatican Council affirmed the Mother of the

⁷⁸ Palmer, *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, 96-97, n.7.

⁷⁹ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1943), 110.

⁸⁰ David Baier, “Mary at the Foot of the Cross,” *Franciscan Studies*, New Series 2, no. 1 (March 1942): 7-9.

⁸¹ Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1918), 181.

⁸² Palmer, *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, 97.

⁸³ Baier, “Mary at the Foot of the Cross,” 9-10.

⁸⁴ Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 407.

Redeemer “conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son’s suffering as he died on the cross. Thus, in a singularly way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls.”⁸⁵ At the Annunciation, Mary appeared not to fully understand everything that was happening to her, but her faith in God through the Holy Spirit led her to accept everything. Her consent, according to Jacques Bur, was an immediate commitment to the work of redemption in the Incarnation and its bias towards the cross.⁸⁶ *Lumen Gentium* (LG), the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of 1964, after undergoing several revisions because of ecclesial tension among the delegates, settled on devoting the eighth and final chapter to Mary. It was entitled “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church” and included the terms ‘Mother of the Church’ and ‘Mediatix.’

The addresses and writings of three popes since Vatican II—Paul VI, John Paul I, and John Paul II, refer to Mary as Mediatix, Co-Redemptrix, or Advocate. A sermon “Our Lady of the People” by Albino Luciani (later John Paul I) honors Mary with these titles (see Chapter 2). In his 1974 Apostolic Exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*, Pope Paul VI attempted to give life to the ideas proposed in Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* in order to enhance the lines of Marian devotion and doctrine into the future.⁸⁷ Recalling Mary’s instruction at the wedding feast of Cana in John 2:5 (‘Do whatever he tells you’) Paul VI wrote that the pastoral value of devotion to the Virgin Mary is in her leading people to Christ. “If Cana symbolizes the beginning of a new covenant, a new dispensation, then we see that Mary has an active mediative role between the servants and

⁸⁵ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1964), 61.

⁸⁶ Jacques Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 12.

⁸⁷ Flanagan, “A New Marian Dogma?” 19.

her Son.”⁸⁸ Mary’s instruction tends to the immediate uncomfortable situation of the wine running out at the wedding in Cana, but “the perspective of the Fourth Gospel are a voice with a resonance of the formula used by the people of Israel to ratify the Covenant of Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:8; 24:3:7; Dt. 5:25) or to renew the commitments (Cf. Jos. 24:24; Ez. 10:12; Neh. 5:12) and are in accord with the Father’s voice in the theophany of Tabor: ‘Listen to him’ (Mt. 17:5).”⁸⁹

In 1987, John Paul II, referring to the Blessed Virgin as Mediatrix, said “the Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary.”⁹⁰ The pope, however, was also known for his frequent reference to Mary as “Co-Redemptrix” during his general audiences. Peter Dillard points out that during a general audience on September 8, 1982, the pope said, “Mary, though conceived and born without the taint of sin, participated in a marvelous way in the suffering of her divine Son, in order to be Co-Redemptrix of humanity.”⁹¹

In summary, this chapter covered a selection of theologians that described Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate from the cult of Mary in the Middle Ages to the magisterial documents of the Church in the modern age. Though these titles are not part of the deposit of faith, many of the works reveal an established tradition of affirming Mary’s role in the economy of salvation centuries before the late twentieth call to define the fifth Marian dogma. These writings also reveal the restraint that some theologians exercised in the use of these titles.

Chapter 2 discusses the sociocultural-political contexts in which Marian devotion thrived, the inculturation of Mary, the increase in Marian piety consequent to her cosmic mystery, and the theological perspectives on Mary’s cooperation with Christ in his work of salvation.

⁸⁸ Juan Alfaro, “The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel: Mary and the Struggles for Liberation,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (Jan 1980): 9.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Alfaro, quoting *Marialis Cultus* 57.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, *General Audience*, October 1, 1997.

⁹¹ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 4, referring to *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, I/3 (1982), 404.

Chapter 2: SOCIOCULTURAL AND POLITICAL EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION

The mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century came to be known as the Marian century because of the widespread apparitions and manifestations of the Blessed Virgin around the globe. This chapter begins with an evaluation of the cosmic mystery of Mary and its theological and pastoral implications. The second section describes the social contexts in which Marian devotion thrived, the inculturation of Mary, the increase in Marian piety consequent to her cosmic influence, and how the Mother of God has cooperated with her Son in the work of salvation in concrete reality. The socio-cultural-political context assists in a later evaluation of some of the recent Marian controversies. The final section looks at Mary as a woman for all people.

2.1 *The Cosmic Mystery of Mary*

In the fifty years since Vatican II it appears that there has been a resurgence of interest among Protestants in the biblical Miriam of Nazareth, particularly in the women of the Bible and Mary's role as disciple. There has also been a resurgence of interest in Mary among pockets of Catholics. For these Catholics, it is possible that one of the more compelling attributions for this resurgence is the cosmic mystery of Mary, a *mysterium Marianum* that is always read and understood in the context of the cosmic mystery of Christ.⁹²

Events of Mary's cosmic mystery draw attention to her reign from heaven. Medieval paintings have aesthetically depicted her adorned with a halo of twelve stars, attended to by angels, saints, patriarchs, and prophets, all sharing in the grace that she mediates. At times she is linked to Sophia, the Hebrew manifestation of Divine Wisdom, and is depicted as the Seat of Wisdom. She is Maria Sophia at the center of the universe. At other times, she is pictured as a

⁹² Charlene Spretnak, *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-Emergence in the Modern Church* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 88. When Jesus was born, a star led the magi to the stable where he was born to Mary. When he died on the cross, darkness covered the earth from noon till three o'clock. There was an earthquake at the precise moment of his death, and Mary was there standing at the foot of his cross.

large cosmological figure sheltering the multitudes inside her cloak. She has been encased in a vertical almond shape known as mandorla, evoking her vaginal heavenly gate through which Christ the Redeemer entered the world turning her womb into a symbolic Holy Grail. Medieval hymns have referred to her as the “glow of dawn” and “loveliest moon.”⁹³ One of the most popular cosmological titles bestowed on Mary is *stella maris* or Star of the Sea (derived from St. Jerome’s toying with the idea that her name Maryam felt like ‘a drop of the sea’) to harmonize the glorified Mary with a stellar association. In the twelfth century, St. Hildegard of Bingen composed sixteen pieces of liturgical music dedicated to Mary (mostly antiphons, hymns, and responsories) known as the *Symphony of the Concord of Heavenly Revelings* that complemented her theological writings on the Blessed Virgin. She used ecological and cosmological metaphors in Psalm-like style to depict Mary as verdant and fruitful.⁹⁴

Mary’s cosmology extends to her numerous apparitions and manifestations around the world from the early Christian era when she appeared to Gregory the Wonderworker before he became bishop of Neocaesarea in the third century to her appearances in the Croatian village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the post-modern period.⁹⁵ A panorama of apparitions have occurred worldwide, most noteworthy among them are Mexico (1531), Paris (1830), La Salette (1847), Lourdes (1858), and Pellevoisin (1870) in France; Knock, Ireland (1879), Fátima, Portugal (1917), and Beauraing (1932) and Banneux (1933) in Belgium. In the latter half of the twentieth century there have been a number of alleged apparitions: Akita, Japan (1973); Betania, Venezuela (1976); Cuapa, Nicaragua (1980); Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina (1981 and after);

⁹³ Anonymous 4 program notes, ‘*Aurora velut fulgida*,’ trans. Susan Hellauer, in Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and the Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 275.

⁹⁴ Spretnak, *Missing Mary*, 91-92.

⁹⁵ Michael O’Carroll, CSSP., “Apparitions of Our Lady,” in *Mary is for Everyone: Essays on Mary and Ecumenism*, eds. William McLoughlin and Jill Pinnock (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1997), 290.

Kibeho, Africa (1981); San Nicholas, Argentina (1983); Mount Melleray, Ireland (1984); Naju, South Korea (1985); Souphanieh, Syria (1986); Cuenca, Ecuador (1988); Scottsdale, Arizona (1988); and Mayfield, Ireland (1988), of which Akita and Betania have been approved. Mary has also appeared in Zeitoun and Shoubra, near Cairo, Egypt to members of the Coptic Church in a series of apparitions from 1968 to 1970, and approved with minimal delay.⁹⁶ Though this is an incomplete listing of apparitions it points to a phenomenon that has had an impact on the life of the Church and in particular to Marian devotion and piety.

The social turmoil and stress in the periods when these apparitions took place have given the visions political significance, but do not rule out a positive association with the particular social or political event. The apparition to Catherine Labouré that led to a devotion to the Miraculous Medal took place during the revolution of 1830 in Paris. Bernadette Soubirous had visions of Mary at Lourdes during the Second Empire in the autocratic rule of Napoleon III when France was engaged in the war of Crimea (1854-1856). The apparitions to the three shepherd children occurred in the quiet hamlet of Fátima in 1917 when World War I was in its third year. The apparitions in Beauraing (1932) and Banneux (1933) in Belgium took place during the Great Depression when Hitler was rising to power in Germany.⁹⁷ All this being taken into consideration, how has the phenomenon of Mary's cosmology impacted the life of the Church?

Tom Zaniello writes that in nineteenth-century Europe the cult of saints of peasant Catholicism began to be replaced by the cult of apparitions of the Blessed Virgin leading educated Catholics to develop a two-tier perception of Catholic popular culture that "peasants worship primitively and superstitiously while the upper classes and the intelligentsia practiced

⁹⁶ O'Carroll, "Apparitions of Our Lady," 286.

⁹⁷ George H. Tavad, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 179.

their religion intellectually.”⁹⁸ In many instances, reports indicate that Mary appeared to not particularly religious folk and spoke to them in the local dialect,⁹⁹ confided secret messages, as well as communicated her wishes, especially a need for prayer, penance, and conversion in times of war, economic need, or some other crisis. Her messages began to take on an apocalyptic tone. At Fátima in the early twentieth century and at Medjugorje in the latter part she issued warnings that atheistic communism will have dangerous effects both nationally and internationally. While apparitions in the past have been reported from places where the poor live, in our era there have also been reports that Mary has appeared in locations inhabited by the working middle class.

Today, a Marian sub-culture tied to marian cosmology exists as a “church within a church” (Sandra L. Zimdar-Swatz, *Encountering Mary*, Princeton Press, 1991) and has transformed peasant Catholicism into a New Age mysticism about the end times, the roots of which are not found in Catholicism. This sub-culture consists of conservative and fundamentalist ardent devotees of Mary in both rural and suburban shrines built to landmark the exact location of her appearances. They are traditional Catholics in every respect who feel a sense of privilege because they live in the vicinity of these shrines. Another trend in this New Age channeling is “private revelation” to a lay person with a message for the benefit of that person or for that person to be the witness through whom a more large-scale warning is to be spread, creating and sustaining an ongoing intrigue of apocalypse within Catholic and non-Catholic religious groups as long as they did not contravene faith and morals, or create the perception of “new doctrine.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Tom Zaniello, “Cyberspace and the Virgin,” *Studies in Popular Culture* 18, no. 2 (April 1996): 81.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 82. At La Salette in France, Mary switched from French to the local patois when she realized that the two shepherd children could not understand her.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 82-83, 85-86. Today’s age of technological innovation makes possible the spread of these messages by email, facsimile, web pages, newsletters, cheaply-produced pamphlets, etc. much more rapidly, even instantaneously, than in previous centuries. The authority to spread these messages is taken from the Catholic Church’s decision under Paul VI to abolish codes 1399 and 2318 of *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law* as long as the messages and their publication do not contravene faith and morals (*Apocalyptical Ark* 9/92.1).

A sensus fidelium with respect to these apparitions creates a paradox in church life because on one hand people are advised not to accept apparitions until they are approved by the Church and on the other, people know that there will be no church ruling unless they manifest their belief.¹⁰¹ Tavad projects a dismal outlook concerning supernatural manifestations. He writes that bishops and popes by visiting places of Marian pilgrimage out of deep personal piety have nonetheless encouraged trust in apparitions, visions, and private revelations in ways that seem complementary to faith, but this is in contradiction to Scripture which appears to be becoming increasingly marginalized in the Church's theological tradition.¹⁰²

While the modern mind might find it difficult to reconcile a cosmic Mary with post-modern reality, there are parallels that can be drawn between contemporary cosmic science and the theological and pastoral relevance of her cosmology. Four scientific concepts—molecular kinship, omnicentricity, nonlocal causality, and compassion as evolutionary achievement help explicate what the Blessed Virgin represents.¹⁰³ *Molecular kinship* means that everything in the universe consists of molecular particles with a common origin that gave birth to the stars and planets, life on Earth, mountains, rivers, vegetation, livestock, and natural processes. As a parallel, Mary is depicted in medieval paintings as the Mother of God gathering God's children inside her cloak reminding us that all of creation is kin. *Omniceentricity* refers to the many focal points in creation from where the universe expands outward. A parallel image is that of Mary, Queen of the Universe, who is centered in cathedrals, basilicas, shrines, and churches throughout the Catholic world to which devotees flock seeking her maternal indulgence and then returning to their lives in the mainstream. *Nonlocal causality* describes the quantum wholeness of the

¹⁰¹ O'Carroll, "Apparitions of Our Lady," 288.

¹⁰² Tavad, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*, 186-87.

¹⁰³ Spretnak, *Missing Mary*, 98.

universe. Prayers to Mary for her mediation have resulted in miraculous cures around the world. This is an example of “eliciting ‘action at a distance’ through communion with the cosmological Matrix, who is a conduit for Divine grace.”¹⁰⁴ Lastly, *compassion as an evolutionary achievement* can be traced to the bond long-observed in mammals between mother and child creating a new power in the unfolding story of creation. The bond between mother and child later extended to other forms of human kinship and animal species indicating that such bonding increased the chance of survival. As no one is outside the compassionate, outstretched arms of Mary, no one is beyond the reach of the grace that flows from her to the world.

The cosmic mystery of Mary complements the cosmic mystery of Christ in that she offers a grand context for our religious expressions of the human and the divine. The cosmic mystery of Christ and Mary are understood to have sacramental import, a line of thought supported by Otto Semmelroth, Karl Rahner, and Edward Schillebeeckx, that the seven sacraments of Catholicism are derived from Jesus in his humanity (the “primordial” sacrament) and the Roman Catholic Church (the “foundational” sacrament).¹⁰⁵ Marian apparitions have been redemptive in two ways. First, many appearances were accompanied by messages calling for prayer and repentance, rejection of sin, an end to war, peace in the world, and the conversion of peoples. Amidst the sociopolitical chaos of the region, Medjugorje, has become a center of spiritual revolution. Years ago it was estimated that more than ten million pilgrims including 20,000 priests and over 100 bishops from all continents have visited the shrine built there. Many conversions and miraculous healings have been recorded. During the Sacrament of Penance, at times, more than 150 confessors are needed. Numerous books and periodicals have been written to instruct, explain,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 100. There has been theological disagreement with this line of thought because Mary has never been granted sacramental status; therefore, if the Church is granted this status, Mary must have sacramental presence as well.

and edify these apparitions.¹⁰⁶ There have also been reports of personal transformations after encountering Mary, two classic examples of which are the apparitions at Guadalupe and Fátima.

Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe

Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican farmer, had no awareness of his self-identity as a human person until he encountered *la Morenita* (Mary) on Tepeyac hill.¹⁰⁷ The Spaniards were active agents of history manipulating and exploiting the local indigenous population treating them as raw material to be molded. As a result, Mexican peasants like Juan Diego perceived themselves as passive objects incapable of entering into human relationship with their conquerors. After Mary appears to him, Juan Diego begins to discover his own identity and dignity as a person with a particular history, with intrinsic self-worth, and that his identity is not something that can be subsumed within Spanish history. It was reported that Juan Diego was no longer a passive object of someone else's intentions, but fully capable of interacting one-on-one with the local bishop (who he was reluctant to meet earlier) or another human being.

Lucía, Jacinta, Francesco, and Our Lady of Fátima

From May to October 1917, Mary appeared six times to three shepherd children—Maria Lucía dos Santos, and her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, from the quiet village of Fátima, promising a miracle through the divine intervention of her Son during the final apparition. During these visions, Mary asked the children to do penance, to make personal sacrifices, and to perform acts of reparation for the salvation of sinners. They were to pray for peace because World War I was in its third year at the time. Mary revealed three secrets to the children.¹⁰⁸ Mary

¹⁰⁶ O'Carroll, "Apparitions of Our Lady," 290.

¹⁰⁷ Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 72.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Caccia, *The Wonders of Fátima* (New York: Vatican City Religious Book Co., 1948), 26. The first vision was of hell and included a promise to take all three children to heaven after they died. The second vision included instructions to save sinners from hell and for the conversion of the world, especially Russia, to Christ. The third vision depicted the death of a Pope when climbing a hill with clergy, religious, and the faithful. After a series of

had a triple message of penance, the Rosary, and devotion to her Immaculate Heart that the seers of Fátima had to practice and propagate on her behalf in the world.¹⁰⁹ Concerning penance, not only did people have to repent for past sins and to expiate them faithfully, and but they also had to change their lives for the better. The Rosary, the central message of Fátima, was to be recited with a feeling of contrition. Mary wanted the world converted to her Immaculate Heart for the salvation of souls, for peace in the world, and for repentance and reparation for the insults and blasphemies inflicted against her Immaculate Heart by practicing the First Saturday devotion.

Mary could have chosen any place and anyone in the world to make known the devotion to her Immaculate Heart, but her choice of three shepherd children in a poor hamlet can be interpreted as her solidarity in Christ's preference for the poor. The children of Fátima are transformed by their encounter with Mary; they are unrelenting in their commitment to her, unphased by local gossip and ridicule, and no longer vulnerable to the deception of the authorities.

After these cosmic events, churches, basilicas, and shrines were built to mark the location of the apparitions. Pilgrims flock to these places. Pilgrimage tours today are a rapidly growing business. The vicinity of these destinations are crowded with shops selling religious souvenirs, prayer books, rosaries, and medals, leading to a commercialization of Marian piety and devotion.

2.2 Sociocultural Contexts of Marian Piety and Devotion

By the Golden Period of Marian doctrine (twelfth century), the Augustinians, the Benedictines, the Cluniacs, and Cistercians had already included Mary in their spirituality and

communications between Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone (Vatican Secretary of State) and Sister Lucia, the oldest of the three seers and the only one to survive, the Holy See disclosed the third vision (secret) as a reference to the assassination attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981 in St. Peter's Square. Later, Benedict XVI said that the Third Secret of Fátima "has a permanent and ongoing significance. Its significance could even be extended to include the suffering the Church is going through today as a result of recent reports of sexual abuse involving the clergy." See Phoebe Natanson, "Pope Benedict XVI and the 'Third Secret' of Fátima," Fátima, Portugal, *ABC News*, May 14, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 161-178.

liturgy. Prayers of praise and invocation were widely used under the influence of the Akáthistos hymn, as were the *Stabat Mater* and the *Planctus Mariae*. In 1135, the *Salve Regina* was used as a processional hymn in the monastery in Cluny.¹¹⁰ In the composition of their liturgical Office of the Presentation, the Carmelites did not rely on the biblical canon, but on established apocryphal literature for inspiration. The Carmelites, like the Franciscans, promoted and accepted into their liturgy the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Mary at the general chapter of Toulouse in 1306. Also included in one of the antiphons of the Office is Mary nursing at the breasts of Anna because of its broader spiritual significance: “Mary takes milk at the breast of her mother and then will later nurse Jesus who, as God, is the giver of milk in the first place.”¹¹¹

It is worth noting an example of Christian appropriation in the legend of Guadalupe. Mary assumes those symbols that are useful for Christianity and rejects those that have the likelihood of misidentifying her with an old religion, or perhaps even hint at her appearing to condone it.¹¹² Though devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe spread over the course of almost five centuries among a vast majority of the Americas, particularly among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, she was immediately claimed to belong to the poor because the rich and the educated had their symbol in the Virgin of Remedios.¹¹³ This emphasizes two aspects concerning Mary of Guadalupe—she has always been perceived “as a tender mother, always compassionate,

¹¹⁰ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 106.

¹¹¹ James Boyce, “The Office of the Presentation in the Carmelite Liturgy,” in *Land of Carmel: Essays in Honor of Joachim Smet, O.Carm.* (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1991), 242-44. Boyce notes that the *gesta* of Philippe de Mézières, crusader and chancellor of the Duchy of Cyprus, that included apocryphal themes like Anna’s pronouncement, also inspired the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat* antiphons in the Carmelite lauds service.

¹¹² Orlando O. Espín, *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 74-75. At the time it was sometimes assumed that instead of Mary, Juan Diego saw the Nahua goddess, Tonantzin (who was linked in myth to the serpent high god), because of striking resemblances in dress, motherhood, and appearance. However, unlike Tonantzin who was known to inflict disease, disgrace, and cruel punishment on her worshippers, the woman that Juan Diego saw appeared kind and tender and exuded a sense of peace. She was called *Tecoatlaxope*, a title that indicated opposition to the serpent. We see here how Mary is appropriated through religious symbols of motherhood and of the reconciliation of opposites.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 75.

accepting, supportive, and forgiving,” and “as protector, identified with her people...with the weakest and most in need. She procures justice for the oppressed and takes up their cause.”¹¹⁴

Orlando Espín says that the inculturation of Mary through religious symbols of ancient religions and practices does not make it *Christian* inculturation. In this instance, Mary herself must become the symbol in explaining the meaning of Christ and his unique role in salvation. This can be affirmed with relative ease by pneumatology and ecclesiology today, but would have been quite a challenge in pre- and post-Tridentine Mexico. At the same time, there is the assumption that Mary is a semantic, cultural analogy of some dimensions or attributes that Christians have discovered (through the gift of the Spirit) in God. Could she then be a reference for God in Christ in the Catholic theology of the Church today?¹¹⁵ If Mary can be this referent for certain attributes or dimensions of God, must revelation of God be exclusively communicated through Christ? Though Scripture teaches us that Christ is the “final and definitive” revelation of God, it does not affirm that *only* through Christ does God reveal God-self; this has been the constant experience in the Orthodox Christian Tradition. Espín presents this argument with the overriding claim that the uniqueness and finality of revelation in and through Christ is the impossibility of the unrepeatable character of the resurrection event. It does not exclude other means of revelation as long as they never compete with or add something new to the fullness of revelation in Christ. In light of this argument, then, can the devotions to Our Lady of Guadalupe be regarded as cultural “embodiments” of the *sensus fidelium* in that religious symbols as appropriated through Mary in a given historical and cultural context might lead to the expression of certain contents of revelation?¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 77.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 75-76.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 77.

Intense Marian piety has often found papal support leading to the perception that Mary has become a substitute for the Spirit. She guides and inspires, is a link between believers and Christ (*ad Jesum per Mariam*), and is described by functions that the bible teaches belong to the Paraclete (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Mary is called “intercessor, mediatrix, helper, advocate, defender, consoler, and counselor”¹¹⁷ In *Iucunda Semper Expectatione* 5, Leo XIII wrote, “Every grace granted to human beings has three degrees in order; for by God it is communicated to Christ, from Christ it passes to the Virgin, and from the virgin it descends to us.”¹¹⁸ In instances where Catholic theology speaks of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Protestant observers claim there is also an attribution to Mary. What Marian piety and papal teaching attribute to Mary, Protestants believe to be the action of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of God’s personal engagement and empowering presence in the past, present, and into the future. Contemporary Catholic theologians make a weak attribution of this to an undeveloped pneumatology in post-Tridentine Latin theology.¹¹⁹ There is a desire among believers to preserve the feminine dimension of the sacred and Mary is the one symbol that most wholly embodies it.¹²⁰ Father John Bolton preached that praying to Mary does not mean greater confidence in her than in God. Instead it is an expression of greater confidence in the efficacy of her prayers than our own.¹²¹

There can be no excess of true devotion to Mary, but certain excesses present the difficulties of false devotion: viewing Mary as separate from Christ as though Christ did not love us through her; saying private prayers to Mary during the Mass forgetting that she is always

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 129.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 293, n. 12. Leo XIII, *Iucunda Semper Expectatione*, in *The Papal Encyclicals: 1740-1981*, ed. Claudia Carlen (Wilmington: McGrath, 1981), 2:356-57.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 130-31.

¹²⁰ Athans, *In Quest of the Jewish Mary*, 33.

¹²¹ Michael S. Winters, “Marian Spirituality in Early America,” in *American Catholic Preaching and Piety in the Time of John Carroll*, ed. Raymond J. Kupke (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 96.

continuing her role at Calvary; making prayer to her as a means of escape from duty; indulging in sentimental effusions that are not an imitation of her virtues; failing to note that Mary raises our gaze toward Christ in the Eucharist, etc.¹²² There is always the danger of the law of prayer founding the law of belief (*legem credenda lex statuat supplicandi*) to use the axiomatic expression of Prosper of Aquitaine. However, true devotion to Mary means loving Christ with her Immaculate Heart in union with his own. Imitating Christ in the *fullest* sense means acknowledging his Mother, Mary, as our own as well as our complete dependence on her intercession for the grace merited by Christ alone.¹²³ The power of Mary's mediation is the witness of the reality and efficacy of her intercession. Sinners were reminded by Fulbert of Chartres in his sixth sermon on Mary to take comfort in her intercession:

The more you see yourselves as guilty before the majesty of God, the more you should look to the Mother of the Lord, for she is full of mercy. You have an advocate with the Father: the Son of the Virgin himself, and he will be so kind with regard to your sins (cf. 1 John 2:1-2) that you may hope for forgiveness from him and from his Mother.¹²⁴

There has been concern that devotion to Mary has often been in excess and even distorted. Pope John XXIII warned, "The Madonna is not pleased when she is put above her Son."¹²⁵ In *Marialis Cultus*, Paul VI cautioned against the tendency to separate devotion to the Blessed Mother from Christ.¹²⁶ Chapter 4 of *Lumen Gentium* advises theologians to refrain from false exaggeration of the special dignity accorded to Mary as Mother of God, and instead to stress the duties and privileges accorded to her by Christ himself.

What is the ecclesial significance of devotion to Our Lady? At the heart of the Mary-Church archetype stands the patristic notion of the New Eve in reference to the Blessed Virgin.

¹²² Ian Dommersen and John Moley, "News and Views," *The Furrow* 14, no. 3 (March 1963): 198.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 197-198.

¹²⁴ *Sermo* 6; PL 141, 331B; TMPM 3:857, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 86.

¹²⁵ John XXIII, as quoted in Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion; With a New Chapter Covering Vatican II and Beyond* by Thomas A. Thompson, S.M. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2009), v.

¹²⁶ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1974), 38.

Eamon Carroll writes that “the New Eve theme is a mine of possible development for the understanding of Mary, for ecclesiology and for a positive theology of womanhood.”¹²⁷

However, there are some feminist authors who view the New Eve concept as a diminishment of women other than Mary herself. Their position is weakened by the fact that as early as Irenaeus the New Eve concept was invoked to counter gnostic denigration of woman’s dignity. There is wider ecclesiological significance of Mary as the New Eve:¹²⁸ not only does she bring forth Life (Jesus) in faith and obedience to God’s invitation, but as the archetype of the Church she renders the Church herself the New Eve, the true mother of the living and spouse of the New Adam who is Christ.¹²⁹ Eve was the old mother of the living (Genesis 3:15.20), but the Fourth Gospel, that refers to Mary only two times (and in both instances addressing her as ‘woman’), presents her as “a new Eve, a new woman, who *becomes mother of the truly living, the disciples who have received the gift of life which Jesus brought from the Father.*”¹³⁰

Edward Taylor writes that the scene at the Cross has ecclesial significance in that Jesus commits “John to Mary’s care and Mary to John’s loving service as a symbol of Mary’s motherhood of the Mystical Body...brought forth in painful spiritual birth. Then she would begin her work as Co-Redeemer and Mediatrix of all graces.”¹³¹ For this reason, Mary is the Mother of all Christians. As the “Bride of Christ,” she represents the collective Christian community, an image that came to be included in Western medieval artistic expressions of the Madonna.¹³²

¹²⁷ Eamon R. Carroll, “Revolution in Mariology: 1949-1989,” in *Land of Carmel: Essays in Honor of Joachim Smet, O.Carm.* (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1991), 458.

¹²⁸ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 285. In the fifteenth century, Jean Gerson (d. 1429) reflected on the Eve-Mary parallel in that the first Eve induced the first Adam to sin that was now expiated by the Second Adam calling the Second Eve to cooperate in his mission of reparation of humanity’s evil. Mary agrees to do her part in obedience to the Lord’s will.

¹²⁹ Carroll, “Revolution in Mariology,” 458.

¹³⁰ Alfaro, “The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel,” 13.

¹³¹ Taylor, “The Woman of Cana,” 307, 309-10.

¹³² John B. Carman, *Majesty and Meekness: A Comparative Study of Contrast and Harmony in the Concept of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 286.

2.3 *Mary is for Every One a Woman of All Seasons*

The Fourth Gospel of John brings Mary to the fore at the start of Jesus' public ministry when he performs his first miracle at Cana, a miracle that leaves some awestruck, and others threatened by what unfolds. It is Mary's insistence that leads to Jesus' first miracle marking the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. She is not simply a witness to the wedding at Cana, but presents the occasion to Jesus for his beneficent action by presenting the needs of the wedding guests and especially her unmentioned desire to save the wedding hosts from embarrassment. She directs those responsible for the food and drinks to receive his graces by following his instructions.¹³³ Conrad of Saxony (d. 1279) affirmed Mary's intervention at Cana as a tabernacle of Christ, that she is the Mother of the Head of the Mystical Body.¹³⁴

Like her Son, Mary does not have an identity except in relationship. Her relationships are not simply spiritual; they are mediated by physical presence and accompaniment. She is our mother, sister, companion, comrade, friend, and most importantly, the Mother of Jesus.¹³⁵ These relationships leave an indelible mark of the scene at Calvary where Mary is seen kneeling at the tomb of her dead son and the community is sharing in her experience of profound desolation and dehumanization akin to the isolation and abandonment which her Son had just experienced.

It was Odilo, the abbot of Cluny (d. 1049), who first spoke of Mary as a model not only for female virgins who consecrated themselves to the Lord, but also for monastic monks. He emphasized her poverty when he spoke of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Mary was so poor that she could not offer even a lamb for the remission of sin (cf. Leviticus 12:8), but she was so rich that, without the loss of her virginity, she gave birth to the Lamb who takes away the

¹³³ Edward K. Taylor, "The Woman of Cana," *The Furrow* 12, no. 5 (May 1961): 306.

¹³⁴ An interpretation by Gambero, in *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 219.

¹³⁵ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus*, 70.

sin of the world (John 1:29). It is not Mary's material poverty that Odilo highlights, but her "poverty of spirit" because he was convinced that Mary's poverty was not incompatible with her birth family's social disposition and her descent from the royal lineage of David; her poverty was an interior disposition that endowed her soul with spiritual riches.¹³⁶ Even when Mary lay in dormition, Odilo argued that her spirit remained in a state of watchfulness.¹³⁷

Two authors closely linked to St. Benedict of Nursia who have written about the place of the Virgin Mary in the life of nuns are monk-bishop, Caesarius of Arles, and Pope Gregory, though the Rule of Benedict itself offers no hints of Marian devotion.¹³⁸ In June 524, Saint Mary's basilica in Arles was consecrated and designed to be a burial place for nuns. The first abbess Caesaria, sister of Caesarius of Arles, was the first nun to be buried here. Upon her death, her nephew, deacon Teridius concluded a letter to the second abbess, Caesaria the Younger, reminding her of what Caesarius of Arles had earlier desired, that "the gathering of virgins around [Mary] in heaven implies, as Caesarius has told us, that every virgin here below should consider Mary as a model to her."¹³⁹ The abbess of Arles and her nuns were on occasion needed to come out of solitude to interact with the secular world and were reminded to do so mindful of the model of obedience and service set by Mary's "virginal decorum" at the Annunciation and Visitation, counsel that was also affirmed by Bishop Ambrose of Milan. In these writings, Mary becomes a rallying symbol for all virgins binding them together in life, in their earthly resting place, and in their resurrected glory around the Queen of Heaven.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 91.

¹³⁷ What the Latin Church calls Mary's Assumption is known as her Dormition in the Eastern Rite. In *Mother Teresa: In My Own Words*, comp. José L. González-Balado (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 1996), 61, Mother Teresa expresses Mary's watchfulness over those in priestly ministry in a section on Mary.

¹³⁸ Adalbert de Vogüé, O.S.B., "Mary and the Virgins of the VI Century in Caesarius of Arles and Gregory the Great," *Word and Spirit* 10 (1988): 38.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39-44, 46-47. Among many accounts concerning virgins, the *Dialogues of St. Gregory* recounts a dream that a little girl named Musa had in which the Virgin Mary asked her if she wanted to join a group of young girls all

Still earlier it was Augustine who, following the Matthean parallel, ‘Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother,’ wrote that “all holy virgins are, with Mary, mothers of Christ if they do his Father’s will.”¹⁴¹ In this sense Augustine does not limit his advice to virgins alone; he includes married women of faith and virgins who consecrate themselves to God as spiritual mothers of Christ because they do the will of the Father. Augustine’s concept of Mary’s blessed motherhood is rooted not in the fact that in her the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, but in her faith. This notion of motherhood led the Second Vatican Council to propose Mary as the model apostle: “The Virgin Mary in her own life lived an example of that maternal love by which all should be fittingly animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church on behalf of the rebirth of men” (*LG*, 65).

An elevation of Mary raises the important question of women’s ordination and their elevation to priestly rank within the Church. If contemporary issues of gender, race, and class within the Roman Catholic Church are not addressed, it would be difficult to sustain an honest discussion of order and ministry from a globalized perspective.¹⁴² Curtailing the discussion on women’s ordination to the priesthood on the grounds that Jesus only selected men to be his apostles or that Mary was never called to be a priest goes against the memory of Christ because his ministry was consistently concerned with reaching out to women and men marginalized by society. It counters the idea of Christian fellowship as described by Paul in Galatians 3:26-29.

Mary is for everyone a woman of all seasons. She is truly Our Lady of the People. What is it that makes ordinary citizens of the world gravitate toward her? In my native land, India, she

dressed in white and to be in her service. When Musa replied in the affirmative, the Blessed Virgin asked her to give up her childish ways for (it was known to Mary that) Musa was to enter into her service in exactly thirty days and die on the thirty-fifth day after. Her parents were astonished by Musa’s transformation to a life full of spiritual gravity. Musa is invited through the demands of her heavenly Mother to progress spiritually through a kind of monastic conversion adapted to childhood before her death.

¹⁴¹ Carroll, “Revolution in Mariology,” 454, 456.

¹⁴² Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M., *Orders and Ministry: Leadership in the World Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 81.

is revered not only by Christians (who are predominantly Catholic), but by Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Parsees, and by followers of almost every religion who flock to St. Michael's Church in Mumbai for one of sixteen novenas to Our Lady of Perpetual Succor every Wednesday. They come with marigold garlands, candles, wax molds of afflicted body parts, and donations in cash and kind, placing their offerings in baskets and boxes below her icon. One might speculate that they see in Mary the feminine expression of the divine as well as a human mother who knows the grief of losing a child. She is sister, friend, guardian, protector, companion, and comforter before whom devotees offer their petitions for intercession before Christ. The efficacy of her role is the guarantee of protection that Mary offers to all in Christ's Mystical Body.

Albino Luciani, who succeeded Paul VI as Pope John Paul I in 1978, gave a homily at the conclusion of a novena to *Madonna del Popolo* (Our Lady of the People) in Verona on the occasion of the feast of the Nativity of Mary, September 8, 1970. He called Mary, not only our Mother because she is the Mother of Christ, but also our Sister.¹⁴³ He preached:

As a Mother, she is higher than we are. She was preserved from Original Sin through the merits of her Son applied in anticipation. She conceived miraculously and, intact in her virginal glory, radiates eternal light on the world. She was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. From up there she is constantly helping us. The council [a reference to Vatican II] stressed that Christ is the sole and unique mediator between God and humanity: He alone gives graces and works miracles (*LG*, 60). But he has made for himself, in a way, this law, to make use... of his Mother, who becomes for us (in a secondary way), an advocate, helper, aid, and mediatrix (*LG*, 62).¹⁴⁴

In his homily, Luciani recalled that the council taught that Mary is our sister because she lived a life on earth "a life common to everyone, full of family cares and work" (*Apostolicum Actuositatem*, 5). He underscores that as mother and sister she shared humanity's common

¹⁴³ Athans, *In Quest of the Jewish Mary*, 87. Athans reflects on Elizabeth Johnson's *Truly Our Sister* where Johnson finally places Mary within the Communion of Saints, calling her "friend of God and prophet" (Wisdom 7:27). Though Johnson would regard Mary as queen, empress, Nordic virgin in every way, she prefers to refer to her as a Jewish woman who is "truly our sister."

¹⁴⁴ Raymond Seabeck, and Lauretta Seabeck, *The Smiling Pope: The Life and Teaching of John Paul I* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2004), 159.

concerns of everyday life. She swept floors, prepared meals, washed dishes and clothes, and all this in obedience to God's will and with a humility that helped her become the greatest of saints.¹⁴⁵ Even her faith journey was one of progress (*LG*, 58) filled with an attitude of listening, seeking, self-sacrifice, not much unlike our own development and formation. When she and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, they failed to understand his words (*LG*, 57). Even though Mary may have at times encountered an initial lack of understanding of revelation, she is seen as the model of faith largely because of her obedience. The Council said that "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary!" becoming the cause of salvation for herself and for humankind (*LG*, 56).¹⁴⁶ Mary reveals that faith requires unquestioning obedience because not every part of revelation can be explained.

This chapter addressed the cosmic mystery of Mary through which she carries out her discipleship acting as Mediatrix of her Son's message of repentance for the redemption of souls and beckoning believers to pray the Rosary while contemplating the mysteries of Jesus' life. A look at Marian piety that resulted from a proliferation of apparitions and manifestations has led to an appropriation of Mary by different cultures. Excessive and inauthentic devotion has inadvertently caused the One Mediator Jesus Christ to recede into the background. At the same time, a sociocultural and political evaluation of the Marian phenomenon reveals how Mary is viewed as a model for everyone—the lay, the ordained, the religious, those in consecrated life, the poor and affluent, and Christian as well as non-Christian, always cooperating in her Son's mission in the economy of salvation as Mediatrix and Advocate of the people.

Chapter 3 offers a theological and philosophical exposition and evaluation of the proposed fifth Marian dogma.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 160-61.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 161-62.

Chapter 3: THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITION AND EVALUATION

This chapter instructs, informs, and elicits inquiry into the theological and philosophical debate concerning the titles of the proposed fifth Marian dogma—Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate of the People of God. The brief presentation of the doctrine of the Redemption provides the background for the theological and philosophical claims in favor of and in opposition to a papal definition. An evaluation of this dogma must entail an integrated exposition and assessment of all three titles for Mary.

3.1 *The Doctrine of Redemption*

Historically, the term redemption was applied to the deliverance of people from communal distress by a redeemer, typically the king, but even a prophet. Moses led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. The Book of Ezra (3:1-13) used the theme of redemption for the freeing of Jews by Cyrus the Great during the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE. As kingdoms collapsed, people looked to God for redemption. With the exception of Psalm 130:8, the metaphor of redemption was almost never used in the context of freedom from sin. Gradually, it took on spiritual significance and by the first century was understood as liberation from sin for the eschatological fulfillment of God's reign, the locus of the Christ-event in the New Testament.¹⁴⁷

There are several aspects to the doctrine of the Redemption.¹⁴⁸ First, Christ is the Representative who died for the love of all human beings. Second, Christ is the Victim whose Redemption forgives the punishment that human beings should have endured. Here, Redemption is also seen as expiation or payment of debt. When Christ died, we were expiated by his blood and through his sacrifice received our faith and received justification by his grace as a gift. Third,

¹⁴⁷ For details on the development of this doctrine, see H.E.W. Turner, *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption: A Study of the Development of Doctrine during the First Five Centuries* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

¹⁴⁸ Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2004), 189-90.

Christ is the Priest and Mediator in which Redemption is mediated as physical and mystical solidarity with humanity in a way that heals it through the obedient death of Christ.

3.2 Arguments in Support of the Proposed Fifth Marian Dogma

It is argued by proponents that Mary, in a way particular to her, participates in all three aspects of the doctrine of Redemption. However, a distinction must be drawn between objective and subjective Redemption. Objective Redemption is what Christ accomplished at Calvary. Subjective Redemption is what Mary, through the admittance of Christ, achieves in the distribution of the graces and forgiveness merited by her Son to all humanity in all ages after the Crucifixion. That Mary also cooperates in objective Redemption as Co-Redemptrix has no foundation, Paul Haffner notes in *The Mystery of Mary*. As co-priest her cooperation is physical and immediate in that it assigns the possibility that she persuaded Christ to offer the sacrifice that was needed for our Redemption. This would not address the physical aspect, but would in part be the immediate effect of Mary's moral cooperation with Christ. The supreme degree of her receptivity and compassion together with Christ's sacrifice on the Cross constitutes the total price of Redemption.¹⁴⁹ In the past two centuries the Ordinary Magisterium has supported the claim that Mary's cooperation was immediate in objective Redemption. Pope Leo XIII remarked how Mary progressed from handmaid of the Lord to sharer in his expiation for humanity:

Hence we cannot doubt that she greatly grieved in the soul in the most harsh anguishes and torments of her Son. Further, the divine sacrifice had to be completed with her present and looking on, for which she had generously nourished the victim herself. . . There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary his Mother...of her own accord she offered her Son to the divine justice, dying with him in her heart, transfixed by the sword of sorrow.”¹⁵⁰

Mediatrice as a title for Mary first appeared in Eastern theology where she was addressed as “the Mediatrice of law and of grace.” It came into Latin usage by the end of the eight century,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 190-91.

¹⁵⁰ Leo XIII, *Iucunda Semper* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1884), 178, in Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 195.

and received widespread acceptance in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁵¹ Jaroslav Pelikan notes the two aspects of Mary's mediatorial position: she was the means through which the Savior came to humanity in the Incarnation and the Redemption, and she was also the means by which we ascend to him who sent her to us. There is also an irrefutable claim that the Incarnation and Redemption would not have been possible if the Son of God was not born of a virgin. The title of Mediatrix is not only applied to Mary's place in salvation history, but also to her continuing intercessory role between Christ and humanity. It is this Mediatrix whose virginity is praised, humility is admired, and mercy is embraced.¹⁵²

John Saward says that "to describe the beauty of Our Lady's cooperation with her Son's saving work" some popes have called her 'Co-Redemptrix' because her 'Yes' to God is co-redemptive.¹⁵³ Jacques Bur writes that Mary's 'Yes' to motherhood at the Annunciation was also a 'Yes' to the redemption of the human race harmonizing, in the words of John Paul II, her maternal 'yes' with the priestly 'yes' of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas said, "Through the Annunciation, the consent of the Virgin given in place of the whole human race was awaited."¹⁵⁵ Leo XIII cites this text of Aquinas to affirm that the grace and truth that come through Jesus Christ (John 1:17) come to us because he willed that these be channeled through Mary so that "just as no one can have access to the Father Most High except through the Son...no one can have access to the Son except through the Mother."¹⁵⁶ Many studies maintain that Mary had a "receptive mediatrix" role via Christ's salvific work rather than a productive one. A significant

¹⁵¹ Jaroslav J. Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 130-31.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 131-32.

¹⁵³ John Saward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty: Art, Sanctity and the Truth of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 140.

¹⁵⁴ Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary*, 12.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 1.

¹⁵⁶ Palmer, *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, 91.

address by Alois Muller at the International Mariological and Marian Congresses at Lourdes in 1958 declared Mary the prime receiver of redemption, but a move by the International Pontifical Marian Academy, to declare her role as mediatrix failed because the proposed matter had not reached maturity and passage by popular enthusiasm was deemed not to be the right approach.¹⁵⁷

Mary's mediatory role is one of intercession,¹⁵⁸ but her mediation must not be equated to "ordinary" human mediation because hers is "maternal" mediation related to Christ who continues to renew the world. Her mediation represents the "feminine" dimension in salvation history. A motherly and female dimension of the Church resides forever in Mary because her motherhood extends beyond the unique physical birth of Christ in that it is constantly giving birth to Jesus in the hearing, keeping, and doing of his word (Luke 11:28). Luke shows that Mary's motherhood is not a singular biological event. As a mother in her total being she becomes the Church. According to Venerable Bede, Mary and the Church are united in a single mystery in that she prefigures the Church that then imitates the mysteries of the Mother of God in her own life.¹⁵⁹ She is the link between Christ's Incarnation by the power of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church at Pentecost by the same Spirit (*Redemptoris Mater* (RM), 24).

Through her Divine maternity there is no question that Mary at least remotely cooperated with Christ in the work of saving humankind. It was Eadmer of Canterbury, a disciple of Anselm of Canterbury, who proposed a solution to the difficulty theologians have in reconciling Mary's preservation from Original Sin with the universal Redemption of Christ in that the former does not make Mary exempt from the latter, but that it became the most perfect form of the latter.¹⁶⁰ David Baier questions the extent of this cooperation by which Catholic theology distinguishes

¹⁵⁷ Carroll, "Revolution in Mariology," 456-57.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁵⁹ *In Lucam*; PL 92, 330B; CCL 120, 48-49, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 39.

¹⁶⁰ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 107.

between subjective and objective Redemption.¹⁶¹ David Baier speculates that one could affirm that Mary participated in the objective redemption of humanity, but only in a way that is *dependent on* Christ and *subordinate to* him. Though there is difference of opinion concerning her role in the redemption of the whole human race, Mary, nevertheless merits the title of ‘Co-Redemptrix.’ To her should be ascribed John Duns Scotus’ principle of *quod est excellentius* because she as ‘Co-Redemptrix’ she is “excellentius.”¹⁶² A *principium consortii* in the doctrine of Mary’s Divine Maternity teaches that the free will (not the necessity) of God associated Mary with Jesus wholly in the work of human Redemption. At Calvary, she was not a passive witness but suffered on behalf of her Son’s crucifixion, perhaps renouncing her maternal rights and making an oblation of her Son to God. It is through her offering that Mary redeemed the sins of the world, meriting grace and glory *de congruo* (in equity) with, but dependent on Christ.¹⁶³

The final moments at Calvary, writes Joseph Cacella, make clear Jesus’ desire to have his Mother associated with him in his work of redemption and salvation after his earthly mission was complete. Though Jesus gave us his resurrection, his doctrine, grace, as well as instituted the Sacraments and many other ways of sanctification, he wishes to dispose of what remains with him as a lasting testament of his love for humankind. His final acts were forgiveness of the repentant thief and those who betrayed him into the hands of his executioners. His last will are his words “Behold thy Mother” bequeathing his Mother to us and “Mary most holy, the Virgin pure, the Treasure of Heaven and earth, the *hand-maid of the Lord*, receives us as her children, brought forth in the immense pains of Calvary!”¹⁶⁴ Mary just lost her Son, but gained

¹⁶¹ Baier, “Mary at the Foot of the Cross,” 4.

¹⁶² Ibid., 4,6. Subjective Redemption is the application of the graces merited by Christ’s suffering and death to individual souls and in this activity Mary cooperates proximately with her Son and for which she is called ‘Mediatrice of all graces.’ Objective Redemption means Christ, through his agonizing suffering and death conquered humankind’s sin and satisfied God’s justice, meriting the redemption of the whole human race.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶⁴ Cacella, *The Wonders of Fatima*, 248.

humankind. At Calvary, Jesus' words make Mary not only the mother of John, but of all humanity. She goes about fulfilling Christ's bequest. She waited with the Apostles for the descent of the Holy Spirit, she prayed with the early Christians, and offered compassion in their suffering. Chronologically closer to the modern age, she called humanity (at La Salette and at Fátima, for instance) to repentance for its ingratitude to her Son and for their sins.

The special role of Mary in the Church is fully developed in John's Gospel in the scene at Calvary when the Crucified Christ says to Mary and his beloved disciple John: "There is your mother," and "Woman, there is your son." Hans Urs von Balthasar points out that Mary's faith is perfectly united with Christ's deepest self-humiliation, perhaps the deepest kenosis of faith in salvation history (*RM*, 18-19).¹⁶⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger said, "Here, at the very center of the paschal mystery, Mary is given as mother to all humanity. Mary's motherhood receives a new dimension, the consequence of her untainted love come to perfection at the foot of the Cross."¹⁶⁶

Mary is *Mater Dei* (Mother of God), but also *Filium Filiae* (Daughter of the Son) making the leap from her physical motherhood to her spiritual motherhood with which there has been theological and ecumenical difficulty in the past.¹⁶⁷ Unlike all of humanity, her redemption was not from the stain of sin. She was after all *full of grace*. Paul Haffner says that her redemption was sublime in view of the merits of her oblation of the Son in obedience to God, and as the merits of the Son himself first flowed to her she became "the first fruit and the greatest fruit of Redemption" making her "the icon and model of redeemed humanity."¹⁶⁸ Juan Alfaro informs

¹⁶⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, *Mary: God's Yes to Man: Pope John Paul II Encyclical Letter 'Mother of the Redeemer'* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 167.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹⁶⁷ Carroll, "Revolution in Mariology," 451, explains spiritual motherhood along these lines: "Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ; but Jesus is Head of his mystical body, the members of his Church; therefore, on the presumption that this was God's design, as witnessed by the conviction of the Christian faithful, Mary must be held to be mother also of the members of Christ. To be the mother of the Head without being also mother of the members would violate the unity of the Body of Christ."

¹⁶⁸ Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 17.

the reader that Mary's spiritual maternity must not be understood as something that stands in parallel to the spiritual paternity of God. There have also been some misinterpretations that intense Marian piety has created a new community apart from that of Christ.¹⁶⁹ The theological role of Mary's motherhood unfolds a two-fold pastoral significance: to present the needs of believing petitioners before Christ, and to guide and direct Christians to live according to the revelation of her Son.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, not only does Mary *not* create a new community, she constantly shifts humanity's focus on her back to Christ. Alfaro affirms that Mary "comes to remind the faithful to do whatever her Son told us, to affirm and focus more sharply on the function and mission of her Son. Mary is part of the Christian community born at Calvary and in a special way she contributes to reinforce the unity centered in Christ."¹⁷¹

John's Gospel associates Mary's link to Cana and Calvary with some of the sacraments. Cana symbolizes Baptism, or the Eucharist, or Matrimony, while Calvary symbolizes Eucharist and Baptism. Before Jesus died, he is known to have expired his Spirit to Mary and his beloved disciple John. The Fourth Gospel likens this to the sacrament of Confirmation, though Luke's Gospel reserves the coming of the Holy Spirit for the fiftieth day after the resurrection (Pentecost), once again an occasion when Mary was present with the Apostles. Mary's instruction: 'Do whatever he tells you' (John 2:5) is a way of bringing people back to her Son. As the 'Refuge of Sinners' she has been associated with the sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) herself becoming an agent of evangelization and conversion of sinners.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Alfaro, "The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel," 14. Alfaro does not attribute this to anything, but this possibly stems from the two dimensions of Mary's spiritual maternity reflected in almost all her apparitions: her invitation to come to her in danger and need, or her call to conversion, Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fátima being specific examples, and referred to by Alfaro later in his text.

¹⁷⁰ Alfaro, "The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel," 14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 16.

Ian Dommersen and John Moley claim that Mary's Co-Redemption is not as Co-equal or in competition with the Christ, but is "the supreme example of perfect communion" with him because devotion to her under this title unites the liturgical and apostolic aspects of the mystery of Mary that are not yet fully united. Mary as Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces draws to the fore the Age of Christ, the Priest.¹⁷³ In fact, "Mary could be called a perfect expression of His Will."¹⁷⁴ A reader reflecting on Reverend D. Forristal's article "Thoughts on Sunday" in the January issue of *The Furrow* writes: "[Mary] cannot be parted in union of love from the priesthood of Christ and he is the sacrament of that priesthood. Mary is Spouse of the Holy Spirit he has received; but he speaks for people whose difficulties he knows."¹⁷⁵

There are Christians, according to Haffner, who while acknowledging the existence of God wish to maintain exclusive personal contact with him without any mediation between their conscience and God. He says this error of understanding the inseparability of Christ and his Church stems from the Protestant Reformation.¹⁷⁶ An apologetic by Dave Armstrong for the claim that by exalting Mary the Catholic Church detracts from the glory of her Son is one of the many instances in Scripture where God uses Mary and others as intermediaries for his saving grace. God enlisted the cooperation of Mary's human mediation and biology to bring the Savior of humanity into the world through the Incarnation, an event that in itself required Mary's consent to the later sacrifice of her Son on the Cross. Therefore, Mary is Mediatrix of all graces. It does not raise her to be a co-equal to Christ, but that God chose her be a Refuge of Sinners in their salvific journey. Does this mean that Jesus' death was not good enough to save us? No. Once again Scripture (2 Corinthians 4:10-12, 15); Revelations 1:4) provides evidence that God

¹⁷³ Dommersen and Moley, "News and Views," 198.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 197.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 198.

¹⁷⁶ Paul Haffner, *Mystery of the Church* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2010), 24.

uses human “mediators” as conveyors of his saving grace in a way that does not detract from his unique mediation, but depends on it. Mary’s intervention is an extraordinary example of how God chooses to save the most beloved of his creation.¹⁷⁷ By seeking Mary’s maternal aid, believers begin to live in deeper communion with Christ, following her model of faith.¹⁷⁸

According to Peter Dillard, there is strong reason to prefer that Mary is a universal Advocate rather than a non-universal Advocate because is she the Mother of humanity in its fullest sense. Mary’s Advocacy would not be truly maternal if she granted graces only on some of her children and not on others. However, it is not necessary that all recipients who seek her maternal aid receive the needed grace. This leads to an understanding that God may withhold requested graces and transform the suffering of some petitioners of Mary’s mediation to a greater good in the fullness of time. The *Salve Regina* and the *Memorare* have something to say about Mary’s Advocacy in that it assures the believer of the graces if these prayers are invoked.¹⁷⁹

Dr. Mark Miravalle, president of Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici, the organization spearheading the international petition for a papal definition, has written books and articles and has given many lectures in support of this dogma. He argues that all Christians are called to be co-workers and co-redeemers “with” Christ¹⁸⁰ and Mary, as Mother of God, has a special role in that vocation. Only Mary can claim to have been “with Jesus” from the moment of her *fiat* to Calvary and for this she merits the title “Co-Redemptrix.”¹⁸¹ The “Co-” in Co-Redemptrix is derived from the Latin *cum*, meaning “with.”¹⁸² It does not mean co-equal in that Mary is elevated to the status of Christ, but that she cooperates “with” him “in the restoration of grace for

¹⁷⁷ Dave Armstrong, *The One-Minute Apologist: Essential Catholic Replies to Over Sixty Common Protestant Claims* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 2007), 116-17.

¹⁷⁸ Haffner, *Mystery of the Church*, 44.

¹⁷⁹ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 70-71.

¹⁸⁰ Mark Miravalle, “Mary Co-Redemptrix: A Response to 7 Common Objections,” Published April 4, 2009.

¹⁸¹ Mark Miravalle, *“With Jesus”: The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 9.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 11.

the human family.”¹⁸³ Dr. Miravalle also addresses the ecumenical question that this dogma is likely to protract the existing tension with other Christian churches. He argues that Catholic theologians must follow the cue of other Christian theologians by bringing the full body of ecclesial teaching to table of dialogue which includes a holistic teaching about Mary.¹⁸⁴

Other proponents of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate among the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits are: Alonso de Vargas, O.F.M., John Serrano, O.F.M., Jerome de Guevara, S.J., Salvatore Cadana, O.F.M, Peter de Tevar y Aldama, O.F.M., Francis Poiré, S.J., Ferdinand de Salazar, S.J., Angelus Vulpes, O.F.M. Conv., Bernard Robert a Crypta Minervae, O.F.M. Cap., Ivan De Quirós, O.F.M., Luke Wadding, and Eusebius Niernberg, S.J.¹⁸⁵

3.3 Arguments against a Papal Definition

In response to the worldwide petitions spearheaded by Vox Populi Mediatrix Mariae in the United States and other countries, the Vatican requested the twelfth international congress on Mariology held in August 1996 in Częstochowa, Poland, to place on its agenda a discussion of the proposed fifth dogma, its possibility and advisability supported by theological writings. As a result of this request, a special Commission of fifteen Roman Catholic theologians selected based on theological competence and geographical diversity was formed. The Commission concluded that the proposed titles were ambiguous; their teachings required further theological investigation in light of the Trinitarian, ecclesiological, anthropological, and ecumenical questions of Vatican

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Miravalle, “Mary Co-Redemptrix A Response to 7 Common Objections.”

¹⁸⁵ J. B. Carol, “Our Lady’s Part in the Redemption According to Seventeenth-Century Writers,” *Franciscan Studies* New Series 3, no. 1 (March 1943): 3-20.

II.¹⁸⁶ The Council itself used titles like ‘Mediatrice’ and ‘Advocate’ restrictively, and ‘Co-Redemptrix’ was not used in any of the conciliar documents.¹⁸⁷

The definition of “Co-Redemptrix” has acceptable and objectionable assertions as defined by Fr. John A. Hardon in the following way:¹⁸⁸

A title of the Blessed Virgin as co-operator with Christ in the work of human redemption. It may be considered an aspect of Mary’s mediation in not only consenting to become the Mother of God but in freely consenting in his labors, sufferings, and death for the salvation of the human race. As Co-Redemptrix, she is in no sense equal to Christ in his redemptive activity, since she herself required redemption and in fact was redeemed by her Son. He alone merited man’s salvation. Mary effectively interceded to obtain subjective application of Christ’s merits to those whom the Savior had objectively redeemed.¹⁸⁹

Peter Dillard lists the apostolic writings that include passages focusing on Mary’s cooperation with Christ in the work of human redemption: Pius X’s *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (14) in 1904; Benedict XV’s Apostolic letter *Inter Sodalica* (181) in 1918; Pius XII’s encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (110) in 1943; and John Paul II referred to Mary as “Co-Redemptrix” on several occasions during his pontificate.¹⁹⁰ In order to disambiguate the use of ‘Co-Redemptrix’ in papal documents and general audiences, Dillard attempts to get to the precise nature of Mary’s cooperation with Christ in the work of human redemption. “In cooperating with Christ, did she co-merit with him our salvation?”¹⁹¹ Can Mary be considered Co-Redemptrix in an *instrumental* sense or *meritorious* sense, both, or neither? Mary’s co-redemption can be considered “instrumental” in that her mother, Anna, conceived her without the penalties of Original Sin (Immaculate Conception). By freely consenting to become the Mother of God, Mary conceived

¹⁸⁶ Flanagan, “A New Marian Dogma?” 17-18.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 18-19. At Vatican II, the Council Fathers voted to include a chapter at the end of its document, *Lumen Gentium*. Chapter 8 “The Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church” makes clear the Council’s intention to always project Mary in the context of Catholicism’s dependence solely on Christ as One Mediator. Restricting Mary to a single chapter rather than devoting an entire document to her was seen as the Council’s way of slowing down the dominant line of Mariological development in the decades preceding Vatican II.

¹⁸⁸ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Taken from *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 94, in Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 1.

¹⁹⁰ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 2-4.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 4.

by the power of the Holy Spirit, gave birth to Jesus who in his body is also free from this stain, a body that he then used to carry out his work of redemption. This is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, a dogmatic truth defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854.

Her co-redemption can be considered “meritorious” in that she co-merited human redemption by psychologically participating in the physical suffering and death of Christ.¹⁹² Dillard concludes his systematic and methodological assessment that Mary *is* instrumental Co-Redemptrix not only because the Immaculate Conception is already an element of the deposit of faith, but also because she raised Christ in holiness, assisted him in his public ministry, accepted that he was to suffer and die a violent death, and maternally suffered on his behalf, all of which is taught by Scripture and tradition. However, there is, according to Dillard, not a need to have a formal definition attributing to Mary the title of “Co-Redemptrix” in an instrumental sense.¹⁹³

Though a number of papal statements by Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XII, and John Paul II establish Mary as meritorious Co-Redemptrix, Dillard argues that their teaching is theologically inadequate and that not all statements are unambiguous.¹⁹⁴ For him, “‘Co-Redemptrix’ does not mean ‘one who assists another who redeems’ but one who redeems with another.”¹⁹⁵ According to Dillard, it is not sufficient that Mary, as Co-Redemptrix, only cooperate with Christ in his work of human redemption; she must also bring about human redemption on her own merit.

Another theory puts forth the claim that some of the merits earned by Christ in his suffering and death are first applied to Mary’s preservative redemption.¹⁹⁶ Her maternal suffering

¹⁹² Ibid., 5.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, David Baier, regards these papal declarations as assurances that though a doctrine of Co-redemption may not be infallible and may always be subject to disagreement, they are “to be received with reverence as coming from the highest teaching authority of the Church.” See Baier, “Mary at the Foot of the Cross,” 10.

¹⁹⁵ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 16.

¹⁹⁶ Also known as ‘preventive’ redemption. See Jacques Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary*, 38. Bur says that the whole human race contracts Original Sin and grows without the grace of the divine life and only receives it later. Mary, however, was redeemed in a preventive way because she was preserved from Original Sin from the moment

on Christ's behalf then earn her some merits that together with Christ's merits redeem every human being besides her. Even in this proposition the merits earned by Mary's suffering would be less than that those earned by Christ's suffering because she is subordinate to Christ who is the principle Redeemer.¹⁹⁷ Here again, Dillard argues that Mary's redeeming merits are not sufficiently infinite as those of Christ and so it would be impossible to claim that she co-merited *de digne* with Christ the ordinary human redemption. So while Mary is *instrumental* Co-Redemptrix, a claim that her co-redemption is meritorious would be inadequate.¹⁹⁸

One of the main objections Marian minimalists have to a papal definition of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate is ecumenism. During the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century in England, E.B. Pusey objected to the title 'Mediatress of all graces' because he denied a need for any intercession for salvation and called Mary's mercy "opposed to Christ's vengeance." He also denied that Mary should be called 'Co-Redemptress' because that would mean she has authority over Christ and that she produces Christ in souls.¹⁹⁹ The main argument against Mary's Co-redemption, according to Donal Flanagan, is the difficulties it poses for the doctrine of One Redemption through Our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Virgin Mary was herself one of the redeemed she cannot be "redeemed and redeeming" at the same time.²⁰⁰ At a time when Christian churches are finding ways to heal past wounds and mend fences, another dogmatic proclamation on Mary has the potential of widening the Catholic-Protestant rift of the past instead of bridging the gap with the Catholic Church. Michael Hurley, writing about an address by Father Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., at an annual convention of the Mariological Society of

of her Immaculate Conception. By the merits of Christ, her redemption was preservative while that of the rest of humanity is reparative. For this reason theologians opine that Mary was redeemed *meliori modo* ('in the best way').

¹⁹⁷ Dillard, *The Truth about Mary*, 19-20.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 25-34.

¹⁹⁹ Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 365.

²⁰⁰ Flanagan, "A New Marian Dogma?" 20.

America, affirms three main problems that reflect the difference between the Mary of Scripture and Mary of Catholicism that Catholic theology must address: the theory of doctrinal development, the nature of revelation, and the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.²⁰¹ In addition, Hurley identifies the Catholic propensity to emphasize the negations and not the assertions of the Protestant attitude to Mary. Catholic theology lacks an appreciation of the “truly religious” positive character of the Protestant protest to the ecclesiological dimension of Catholic mariology. The Protestant belief is rooted in the Gospel that Jesus Christ, not the visible Church and its sacraments, is the sole Mediator. According to Father Gregory Baum, who Hurley cites, the directness of such an encounter with the Lord is jeopardized through Mary and through the Church. Protestants feel that Catholicism professes the constant need for mediation between the soul and its Creator; they reject a Church that promotes such mediation.²⁰²

Hurley points out that another obstacle to an ecumenical understanding of Mary is an imperfect understanding of what Christian witness entails. Protestants have often quoted mariocentric passages from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux that suggest that Catholic theology lacks christocentric focus, and that Mary’s humanity has somehow replaced Christ’s humanity. The fact that stands steadfast is that Saint Bernard is himself universally acknowledged for his christocentric spirituality. As both sides hold their ground, an ecumenical understanding of Mary’s role may still be a distant horizon. The modern Catholic, Hurley says, “will bear effective witness and promote mutual understanding between Christians” only if Catholic devotion to Mary is seen as not detracting from its understanding and worship of Jesus Christ.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Michael Hurley, “Ecumenism and Mariology,” *The Furrow* 14, no. 4 (April 1963): 215.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 215-216.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 220-223.

Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., an American Jesuit scholar, once gave a lecture at Fordham University in New York, expressing his apprehension that a new Marian dogma would potentially create confusion among the Catholic faithful concerning the unique mediation of Christ and the sufficiency of his redemptive act, add to ecumenical tension, and possibly even lead to a misinterpretation that Mary is being exalted to be a fourth person in the Godhead.²⁰⁴ Mark Miravalle, on the other hand, believes that rather than cause confusion, this new dogma will clarify for Christians of the Reformed tradition Catholic teaching on Mary.²⁰⁵

Though Dillard concludes that Mary is at most partially efficacious addressed Advocate, the *Memorare* suggests that she is fully efficacious addressed. This means that if the believer directly addresses Mary for the bestowal of graces, the petitioner's requests will be fully granted. Dillard also affirms that a dogma that offers a definition of Mary as guaranteed efficacious addressed Advocate would be redundant because through prayers like the *Memorare*, Mary's Advocacy is already being taught by the ordinary magisterium.²⁰⁶

Despite Mark Miravalle's vigorous support for a new Marian dogma issues have been articulated with his claims. First, Mary's devotion to Jesus was no different than that of the disciples and other women of the time. Second, this dogma is likely to conflate Mary's status to the level of Christ which might become the source of confusion for the Catholic faithful. Third, that this dogma will be an affirmation of women as equal partners in the plan of salvation, though something we must aspire to, is a weak proposition. Fourth, this doctrine would make believers find a crutch in Mary and less responsible for their own salvation. Lastly, Miravalle

²⁰⁴ Flanagan, "A New Marian Dogma?" 21.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 20-21.

²⁰⁶ Dillard, *The Truth About Mary*, 70-74, 81.

claims that the *sensus fidelium* has already affirmed their belief in Mary as Co-Redemptrix and that Mediatrix and Advocate have long since been part of the theological discourse.²⁰⁷

In a conversation with Peter Seewald, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI) commented on Mary as Co-Redemptrix and a conflation of Mary's status to the level of Christ:

I do not think there will be any compliance with this demand...what is signified by this [title] is already better expressed in other titles of Mary, while the formula "Co-redemptrix" departs to too great an extent from the language of Scripture and of the Fathers and therefore gives rise to misunderstandings. Because Mary is the prototype of the Church as such and is, so to say, the Church in person, this being "with" must not lead us to forget the "first" of Christ: Everything comes from Him, as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians tell us; Mary, too, is everything she is through Him. The word "Co-redemptrix" would obscure this origin. A correct intention is being expressed in the wrong way. For matters of faith, continuity of terminology with the language of Scripture and that of the Fathers is itself an essential element; it is improper simply to manipulate language.²⁰⁸

Another argument against the "Mary as Co-Redeemer" line of thought is that Mary's humanity only allows for mediation to the level of any other human person. Salvatore Perrella, O.S.M., had this to say: "she who is wished to be proclaimed co-redeemer is, in the first place, one who is redeemed, albeit in a singular manner, and who participates in Redemption primarily as something she herself receives. Thus we see the inadequacy of expressing a doctrine which requires, even from the lexical standpoint, the proper nuances and distinctions of levels."²⁰⁹

This chapter represented some of the prevailing theological and philosophical claims of theologians who have taken positions in favor of or against a papal definition. There is clearly an impasse in contemporary theological thought even though the use of these titles for Mary, as has been demonstrated by history, can be traced as far back as the seventh century. The Conclusion of this study offers a discussion of its pastoral implications for Christology, Mariology, and ecclesiology and an opportunity for the writer to present a position based on research.

²⁰⁷ Miravalle, "Mary Co-Redemptrix: A Response to 7 Common Objections."

²⁰⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002), 306.

²⁰⁹ Salvatore M. Perrella, O.S.M., "Mary's Cooperation in the Work of Redemption: Present State of Question," *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 2, 1997.

CONCLUSION

I draw the reader's attention to first read the Postscript for a clearer understanding of this Conclusion. Though I consider myself a Marian maximalist, as this study draws to a close I locate myself somewhere in the middle of the Marian maximalist-minimalist spectrum with respect to the proposed fifth Marian dogma because theologians representing both extremes have made very compelling arguments to support their positions. The questions raised by Marian minimalists have enriched the theological discourse by eliciting questions that maximalists appear to have overlooked. The terms Mediatrix (or variations of it) and Advocate have long been used for Mary in an intercessory sense. The title that remains controversial is 'Co-Redemptrix.' I support the claim of the Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici movement and of many theologians that Mary as 'Co-Redemptrix' is to be understood as 'cooperating' with Christ in his plan of redemption and that there is only One Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Theologians agree that Mary cooperates in Christ's mission even if they make varying claims with respect to her role as Co-Redemptrix. At the same time it should also be noted that the Person of Jesus Christ and his mission exercises an impact on Mariology casting a light on Mary who "furnishes a true[r] understanding of the Mystery of Christ and of his Church."²¹⁰ Paul Haffner says that Mary's unique witness as the *Theotokos* has not only guaranteed Christian orthodoxy, it has helped the Church more fully understand Christ's *kenosis* on the cross.

A review of the theological thought and writings of a selection of theologians has indicated that terms like Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate have long since been part of the theological appellations for Mary since the High Middle Ages though to varying degrees at different points in history. With a few exceptions, Roman Pontiffs over the past two centuries

²¹⁰ Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 17.

have invoked Mary by the title ‘Co-Redemptrix’ frequently and without hesitation that together with Mediatrix and Advocate, gives the impression that the proposed fifth dogma is not an issue of developing new doctrine, but one of elevating existing theological and functional aspects of Mary to the status of dogma. What might be keeping the Church from defining this dogma?

If the issue is ecumenism, I am unconvinced that this dogma will widen the rift between the Catholic Church and other churches of the Reformed tradition. A 2008 *U.S. News and World Report* article “A Warm Protestant Welcome for Mary”²¹¹ indicates that more and more Protestants are welcoming Mary back into their lives. Beverly Gaventa, author of *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995) and co-editor of *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), says in the article that Mary “is a wonderful example of divine grace that Protestants have neglected. It was seen as Catholic territory, but now the lines between denominations are dropping.” Protestants are witnessing a resurgence of interest in Mary’s discipleship and in the women of the Bible, particularly among the women faithful. The overriding concern that Protestants have is that Marian devotion has the tendency of shifting the focus away from Christ.

If the concern is around timing that now may not be the appropriate time for dogmatic declaration (for ecumenical and other reasons) or that perhaps a later time in ecclesial history might be right is not an assessment of revealed truth itself, but a position taken on whether the time is opportune for its definition.²¹² At the same time, based on this study one could even make the claim that the first four dogmas on Mary have already led to a vocalized belief in Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate, and, therefore, the definition a fifth dogma would be

²¹¹ Richard Covington, “A Warm Protestant Welcome for Mary,” *U.S. News and World Report*, January 25, 2008. <http://www.usnews.com/news/religion/articles/2008/01/25/a-warm-protestant-welcome-for-mary>

²¹² Flanagan, “A New Marian Dogma?” 17.

unnecessary. Flanagan says that it is more important to project Mary's importance in a new context rather than rebuild the Mariology and devotion of the past as a way out of the present ecumenical tension. Paul VI attempted to do this in *Marialis Cultus* emphasizing the need to view Marian doctrine and devotion in the context of the Trinity, and of anthropology, as the Mother of God through whom the Spirit works.²¹³

An insight from this study is that we must address concrete ways in which Mary makes deeper theological contributions beyond her intercessory role. As Mediatrix, she channels the graces that flow from Christ to have a transformative effect on human beings as reported in the case of Juan Diego, and the children of Fátima. In *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II emphasized Christ as sole mediator, but according to him this mediation is not to be misinterpreted as exclusive. Christ's mediation allows for other forms of participation including our own on behalf of each other. Our interconnectedness makes us responsible for each other; "nobody stands in the Faith all alone, everybody depends on human mediation for a living faith."²¹⁴ With this general principle, Mary's mediation is seen as a subordinate participation in Christ's mediation and "flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it" (*RM*, 22; *LG*, 60).

Mary has been bestowed with a panorama of laudatory titles, more than anyone inside and outside Christendom, but her honorarium of appellations have much broader significance for Christology, Mariology, and ecclesiology. Mary's faith journey preceded chronologically the founding of the Church at the time of Christ's glorification on the Cross, at his resurrection, and at Pentecost, as well as spiritually in that her living faith became the model for Church life and whose perfection will never be equaled. "Mary's faith, embedded in the Church's apostolic

²¹³ Ibid., 21.

²¹⁴ Balthasar and Ratzinger, *Mary: God's Yes to Man*, 31.

witness, continues to become the faith of the pilgrim People of God, the faith of individuals and communities in the Church” (*RM*, 28).²¹⁵ In the Incarnation Mary brings forth the Head while the Church brings forth the members of the Body. Mary, through her everlasting Motherhood “cooperates in the development of both the sons and daughters of Mother Church” (*RM*, 44), effecting a personal relationship between the faith of each member and her motherhood.²¹⁶ She is not only the first among saints, but her Son’s first disciple always participating in the apostolic mission from the time of the Church’s inception on the Cross. She continually refocuses our gaze on her back to the Eucharist. She is the greatest Advocate of all humanity and for all eternity.

In addition to evaluating the titles of the proposed dogma from historical, theological, and philosophical perspectives, the sociocultural themes of liberation and theodicy in Mariology enrich an understanding of the *Mater Dei*. She is more than the devotion-of-the-Rosary Mary. She is a complex woman, and a revolutionary partner of Christ in the economy of salvation. She is our mother, sister, friend, prophet, co-redeemer, mediator, and advocate. Feminist writers like Elizabeth Johnson, Ivone Gebara, and María Clara Bingemer, in particular, have shown how the figure of Mary upholds human dignity and liberation. No matter what our state in life, Mary accompanies us in our salvific journey “praying for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” Though certain themes of this study such as liberation and theodicy have centered on the historical Mary and her humanity, they do not deny her divinity. She is an outpouring of the grace of the Spirit as announced by angel Gabriel at the Annunciation. At the Visitation, we hear Mary’s voice of solidarity with the marginalized. The *Magnificat* celebrates God’s liberation by inserting this prophetic song of salvation into the mosaic of tradition. Mary’s song is the prayer of a poor woman to whom God has shown mercy. She is a young woman subjected to economic

²¹⁵ Ibid., 171. This insight is also found in the writings of St. Augustine.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 172-73.

exploitation by the powerful, afflicted by outbreaks of violence, and negatively valuated by the powers-that-be of society. God's preferential option for the poor is evident in the precise calling on Mary to become a partner in the task of redemption and toward whom God has turned divine countenance. The poor in every culture have found the solace of blessing in this canticle because Mary empowers the meek and humble of heart.²¹⁷

Often forgotten in mariological discourse is Joseph and his role in making God's plan of salvation work. We may think of Joseph, a carpenter by trade, and foster-father to Jesus, as a person marginalized by the selective memory of the gospel writers, as well as the biblical scholars and theologians of today. Joseph's cooperation with God is similar to Mary's faith and obedience. Joseph is a vital member of the incarnation story bringing to it another dimension of faith, discipleship, spousal relationship, and fatherhood.

Many visions of Mary have been more than apparitions. They are encounters. Paul Haffner helps extend this notion of encounter to all of Mariology. A theological study of Mary can be understood to be a *meeting point* and an *area of synthesis* for other theological disciplines.²¹⁸ Mary is a link to the Trinity because through her we find a perfect orientation to the Father for Whom she is the servant and beloved daughter, to the Son for whom she is the true Mother as well as generous and devoted disciple, and to the Holy Spirit who filled her with grace from the moment of her own conception, accompanied her through life, and finally during her Assumption into heaven. For the Church, she is the purest expression of the first fruits of redemption and of eschatological fulfillment. Haffner affirms: "Humanity of all times and in all places is to be seen in her light as she is the finest and most perfect realization of all peoples."²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Elizabeth Johnson, "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," *U.S. Catholic* 68, no. 12 (December 2003): 12.

²¹⁸ Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary*, 20.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Daily family recitation of the Rosary makes possible a time of day to contemplate the Glorious, Joyful, Sorrowful, and Luminous mysteries of the life of Christ with the maternal help of his Mother. The Rosary served as one of the sources of inspiration for this work. At the time of this study there is no indication from the Holy See on the future of this proposed dogma and whether it will come to fruition. What remains almost as certain as a deposit of faith is that Mary *is* every title recited in the Litany of the Rosary. She is the most faithful Mother of God, of Our Creator and Savior. She is the Mother of mercy, Virgin of virgins, Mirror of justice, Seat of wisdom, Refuge of sinners, Comforter of the afflicted, Help of Christians, Health of the sick, Queen of angels, of martyrs, of families and of peace. She, like Christ, is the Cause of our joy!

As a prayerfully fitting way to bring this study to a close, I choose the words of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, words she expressed in a letter to Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix supporting the petition for a definition of the proposed fifth Marian dogma ‘Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Advocate for the People of God’ by then Pope John Paul II. Blessed Teresa’s letter is dated August 14, 1993, the feast of St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Mary is our Coredemptrix with Jesus. She gave
Jesus his body and suffered with him at the foot of
the cross.

Mary is the Mediatrix of all grace. She gave
Jesus to us, and as our Mother she obtains for us
all his graces.

Mary is our Advocate who prays to Jesus for us.
It is only through the Heart of Mary that we come to
the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

The papal definition of Mary as Coredemptrix,
Mediatrix, and Advocate will bring great graces
to the Church.

All for Jesus through Mary.

God bless you.
*M. Teresa, M.C.*²²⁰

²²⁰ Mother Teresa, M.C., Letter in Support of the Proposed Fifth Marian Dogma to Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix, Hopedale: Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrix Archives, Aug. 14, 1993. Also, referenced as the closing in Mark Miravalle, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix* (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 229.

POSTSCRIPT

A Developing Mariology

The Preface provided a background of the Mary of salvation history in the concrete reality of biblical times. An exegetical and theological evaluation of the *Magnificat* was also presented as *Mary's Song* is a recurring theme in the ensuing three chapters of this study. Miriam of Nazareth and her *Magnificat* also serve as background for developing a mariology that is founded on Mary's faith and life of virtue, Mary as a symbol of liberation, and Mary as the Comforter of the afflicted in their journey of theodicy. Together these themes expand the traditional idea of Mary's role in redemption and salvation by focusing on how she continues to cooperate with Jesus Christ eschatologically in very relevant ways in contemporary context.

Mary the Model of Christian Faith and Virtue

Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his commentary on *Redemptoris Mater*, writes that Mary lived a life of faith in complete surrender to the mind and body of God. Her faith spans the whole of salvation history and her role can be understood by faith alone (*RM*, 38). Her faith is uncalculating obedience, self-effacing, living humility, and the complete acceptance of God's will.²²¹ Her faith is resolutely directed toward God in her dependence. "She is the most perfect image of freedom and liberation of humanity and of the universe" (*RM*, 37).²²²

It can be said that Mary is not only the exemplar of the infused or theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity, but the embodiment of the cardinal virtues of temperance, prudence, justice, and fortitude as well. The saints also exemplify Christian virtues, but among them we elevate Mary because of the unique position she occupies in God's plan. Though there is much

²²¹ Balthasar and Ratzinger, *Mary: God's Yes to Man*, 168.

²²² Joseph Ratzinger, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (Rome: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986), n.97.

silence on Mary in the Gospels, there are incidents that draw out the monastic virtue of humility in the Mother of God. Her exemplification of the virtues gives her psychological significance a pedagogical dimension.²²³ The line from her *Magnificat*: “For he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant” (Luke 1:48) has often been misinterpreted as a sign of her humility and, according to Pelikan, has become the occasion for profound exploration of this virtue, but O’Day points out that it is an exegetically more appropriate reference to Mary’s condition of poverty.²²⁴ The *Magnificat* in its totality, however, is an expression of the inherent humility in Mary’s faith.

Why is Mary’s humility significant? Humility, according to John Saward, reasserts order. It was St. Bernard who corresponded the spotless virginity of Mary’s body with the childlike humility of her soul because without humility, her virginity would not have pleased God. Her humility and virginity coincided her self-emptying to the will of God.²²⁵ The Byzantine Akáthistos hymn praises the receptiveness of Mary’s virginity; it is “good earth made ready by God to receive the seed of His Word.”²²⁶ To understand how Mary is a model of Christian faith and virtue, Fulbert of Chartres recalled her strength of spirit, her prudence in discernment of justice in her observance of the justice meted out by God’s law, and the temperance with which she allowed her virginity to blossom in humility. By preserving her virginity she extinguished the concupiscence of the flesh; by conserving her humility she extinguished the concupiscence of the mind.²²⁷ Mary was not only bestowed with certain virtues from the moment of her immaculate conception, she practiced them to perfection and in doing so became a model for the faithful and for discipleship.

²²³ Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries*, 220-21.

²²⁴ O’Day, “Singing Woman’s Song, 207.

²²⁵ Saward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*, 134.

²²⁶ Ibid., 135.

²²⁷ *Sermo* 6; PL 141, 320C-321A; TPM 3:848-49, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 86.

According to Luke's gospel, Mary's discipleship is more valuable to Jesus than Mary as mother. Patrick Bearsley raises the question whether this could be difficult to reconcile for the Church that seeks to venerate Mary precisely because she is the Mother of God. "This question can be resolved by placing Mary's perfect discipleship as a paradigm with which to view and explain her divine maternity"; her motherhood should be understood in light of her discipleship, and not the other way round. This approach is consistent with scriptural evidence and the Church's teachings on the primacy of discipleship, Mary's motherhood and her personhood.²²⁸

As Mary is also an embodiment of mercy,²²⁹ Catholic Christians turn to her in the *Salve Regina* recited immediately after the five decades of the Rosary:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears! Turn, then, O most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary.²³⁰

St. Albert said that "Our Lady joined herself to the Father of mercies in His greatest work of mercy when she shared in the Passion of her Son and 'thus became the helper of our redemption and the Mother of our spiritual regeneration.'"²³¹ Seward says that according to St. Antoninus, Mary "stands by the Cross in devotion (*pietas*) not only toward her natural Son but also towards her adopted sons, for by her consent she is cooperating with their redemption."²³²

²²⁸ Patrick J. Bearsley, "Mary the Perfect Disciple: A Paradigm for Mariology," *Theological Studies* 41, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 473, 478. Here discipleship is not to be confused with being one of the followers of Jesus who accompanied him in his ministry. There is no scriptural evidence to prove that Mary was chosen by Christ to be a disciple nor is there evidence to the contrary. With respect to Mary, discipleship should be understood as an attitude attuned to the heart and mind of Jesus.

²²⁹ The Jubilee Year of Mercy promulgated on April 11, 2015, by the Papal Bull, *Misericordiae Vultus*, of Pope Francis, offers the Church the opportunity to reflect on Mary's mercy in the context of Christ's justice and forgiveness.

²³⁰ Originally composed in Latin during the Middle Ages by Hermann von Reichenau (d. 1054), a German monk.

²³¹ *Mariale sive quaestiones super Evangelium Missus est*, q. 29, no. 3; *Beati Alberti Magni opera omnia*, vol. 37 (Paris, 1989), 62, in Seward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*, 140.

²³² Seward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*, 140. This is an interpretation of St. Antoninus' *Summae sacrae* (379) by Seward.

As the New Eve, Brian Mullady, O.P., says that Mary exemplifies the human cooperation of the whole Church in receiving faith and grace in her catechesis and her loving obedience. She conceives the Word, in faith, in her mind and then in her body. Mary's Immaculate Conception and virginity are to be seen "in faith, and obedience, fidelity and charity" in light of her spiritual connection to the Cross of Christ and with the Church for they are not given to her apart from her relation to Christ the Redeemer.²³³ As the New Ark of the Covenant, she brings the Covenant, Jesus, to perform an act of charity to her cousin, Elizabeth, during the Visitation. Upon hearing the voice of the Mother of Our Lord, the baby (the future John the Baptist) leapt and was cleansed of Original Sin. Through the *Magnificat* that Mary then sings she evangelizes Elizabeth (and us!) in the mercy that God has shown his people, becoming a true catechist of the faith.²³⁴

I bring to the fore in the Jesus-Mary story of faith and obedience, Joseph, who has often been relegated to the background, but whose cooperation and obedience to the will of God offered silent support and served as an important link to Mary's initially maternal and eventually co-redemptive mission. As husband to Mary and foster-father to Jesus, Joseph fashioned a secure home for his family by carrying out his (carpenter's) trade with patience and self-effacing devotion. As "a man who protected his bride-to-be and embraced and nurtured a child he had not engendered"²³⁵ he offers an excellent example of faith, obedience, and humility to Jesus, and to modern-day nuclear families. By taking Mary to be his wife, Joseph protects Mary from accusations and penalties of adultery (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:24, John 8.1-11) and Jesus from malicious gossip during his childhood. One might ponder how Joseph's influence might have played a vital role in Mary's life of faith, and in his foster-son's adult ministry.

²³³ Brian Mullady, O.P., *Light of the Nations* (New Hope: New Hope Publications, 2006), 128, 131.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

²³⁵ Jenny Robertson, *Mary of Nazareth* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 87-88.

Mary the Liberator

It is surprising that very little has been written about the theme of Mary as liberator of the oppressed even though the majority of her apparitions and manifestations have been reported to have occurred in poverty-stricken contexts. With the exception of Leonardo Boff, other theologians, alluding to the *Magnificat*, have referred to her as the personification of the poor. John's Gospel highlights that "Mary has a primary role in the liberation of the oppressed."²³⁶

Throughout history women have been considered "doubly" oppressed by virtue of their gender that became consequential to their socio-economic dependence on men. Though Mary was born into a patriarchal context that considered woman a man's possession, Christian Scripture may have attempted to reveal women on equal footing with men. Women are not inferior beings, but active subjects standing shoulder-to-shoulder with men assuming the same tasks of proclaiming the Good News.²³⁷ At times Scripture has been successful in portraying women as equal partners in *oikonomia* while at other times it has fallen short.

The Annunciation, Virgilio Elizondo notes, settled Mary's destiny of total involvement in her son's salvific work. Under a "veil of faith" she cooperated with her Son even though she may not always have understood what was going on in his mind and in his life.²³⁸ She always lived at the service of God, Christ, Church, redemption, and of the ultimate meaning of history. "When we speak of Christ, she is there as the Mother of that Christ, Co-Redemptrix and Co-Mediatrix with her Son and Savior, in whom the work of human deliverance has been fully realized."²³⁹

²³⁶ Alfaro, "The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel," 15.

²³⁷ Ivone Gebara and María Clara Bingemer, "Mary," *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, eds. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (New York: Orbis, 1996): 168.

²³⁸ Mary De Cock, "Our Lady of Guadalupe: Symbol of Liberation," in *Mary According to Women*, ed. Carol F. Jegen, B.V.M. (Kansas City: Leaven Press, 1985), 124.

²³⁹ Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God and Its Religious Expressions*, trans. Robert R. Barr and John W. Diercksmeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 13.

There are concrete situations in which Mary has shown her solidarity with men and women. At the Annunciation, her ‘yes’ bound her to God’s task of human liberation. Leonardo Boff notes that the backdrop of the *Magnificat* is a world ordered by injustice, a problematic for God’s plan for human beings and society. By her ‘yes’ Mary has understood that the One she carries in her womb is the principle and agent of all salvation and liberation.²⁴⁰ At the Visitation, she shows solidarity with Elizabeth in everyday affairs and basic needs. At the Nativity, she gives birth to Jesus in poverty, in a stable surrounded by animals with only a crib for her babe. In the Flight to Egypt, she shares in the fears of fugitives and persecuted victims of history. After the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, she and Joseph experience what all parents fear when they lose sight of their child. At Cana, Mary shares in the joy of a wedding and comes to the aid of the hosts and saves them from embarrassment when the wine runs out by prompting Jesus to perform his first miracle. During the Passion, she accompanies her Son, suffers at his side, and encourages him to carry his Cross. At Calvary she offers herself along with her Son to the divine mercy, in solidarity with all human beings for their redemption, making her the Co-Redemptrix of the human race. At the moment of Redemption, she becomes the Mother of the Church. After the Resurrection, she maintains her solidarity with Jesus’ disciples and is present with them at the birth of the apostolic Church. Finally, even after the Assumption, she did not abandon humanity. She has appeared to numerous persons around the world demonstrating her solicitude for their needs.²⁴¹ Leonardo Boff says, “Assumed into heaven, she intercedes constantly for her children, drawing the feminine in all of us toward its eschatological divinization.”²⁴² In cooperating with Christ’s preferential option for the poor, Mary expresses her solidarity with

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 196.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 183-86.

²⁴² Ibid., 186.

those who suffer from social injustice, and personifies the triumph of God's preference for the humanly insignificant. In this way, God has shaped Mary's Divine Motherhood to spread its mantle in concrete and historical reality, in protection of the marginalized and despised people, the powerless, and those mired in the injustice of poverty.²⁴³

Liberation theology in Latin America, after a long period of watch by the Vatican, has led to a renewed ecclesiology that in turn has led to a corresponding renewed Mariology from the perspective of the poor. Puebla accomplished what Medellín lacked and that led to a renewed Mariology that "Mary is the sign and sacrament of the motherly mercy of God towards the poor, of the tenderness of God who loves and defends the poor (Puebla 291): Mary is the sacramental presence of the maternal features of God."²⁴⁴ At the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) at Medellín (1968), the bishops reflected on the institutional violence suffered by their people. The Puebla conference (1979) reported that even though the Church feels impotent in the face of sinfulness, it feels "inspired by the Spirit and protected by Mary, whose powerful intercession will enable the Church to overcome the 'sinful structures' in people's personal and social life and will win for it the 'authentic liberation' that comes from Jesus Christ."²⁴⁵

When we think of the mystery of Mary, we base our understanding of traditional Mariology on certain anthropological and hermeneutic assumptions. Ivone Gebara and María Clara Bingemer's essay on Mary is particularly useful in following the notions of single, realist, multidimensional, and feminist anthropology and the hermeneutics of liberation.²⁴⁶ Though they write *from* and *for* a Latin American context, the insights of their human-centered approach can

²⁴³ Bertrand de Margerie, "Mary in Latin American Liberation Theologies," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 38, Article 11 (1987): 50.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Carroll, "Revolution in Mariology," 461.

²⁴⁶ Gebara, and Bingemer, "Mary," 165-66. Gebara and Bingemer include four assumptions in a human-centered anthropology: *Single not Dualist, Realist, Multidimensional, and Feminist*, awakening women's historical consciousness, and their needs. See text for detailed explanation of each assumption.

be extrapolated to more universal experiences of oppression. For a broader perspective of the hermeneutic of liberation, it is necessary to note three assumptions with respect to Mary. First, the poor and oppressed majorities of the Latin American continent feel a deep sense of abandonment and dismay that can be overcome by a relationship of those who live in history with those who live in God. Mary lived in history and became someone who lives in God. Second, Mariology from a Latin American perspective, and more universally, requires a re-reading of the gospel that critically questions what was not accounted for, what was lost, or deliberately omitted by the selective authorship or redaction of the written word. There is very little written about Mary in Christian Scripture; therefore, relying only on the biblical canon cannot reveal the whole truth about the Mother of God. Third, concerning the Kingdom of God, liberation Mariology must go beyond the person of Jesus who made the kingdom the locus of his mission and preaching. This does not diminish Christ, but enables us to see Mary's own passion for the poor and for God's justice. It enables a recovery of the force of the Spirit acting on women of all ages and of the "subversive memory" that is capable of changing the status quo, giving shape to universal solidarity of women of the past, present, and future while keeping alive the hopes and struggles of the women of times gone by. Mary is not only the Virgin Mother of our Lord, but a woman working hard on behalf of the poor and for the Kingdom.²⁴⁷ It is worth reviewing how these anthropological and hermeneutical assumptions foster a liberation understanding of the oft-controversial Marian dogmas: Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption.

That Mary is *Theotokos* or *Mother of God* signifies that Jesus of Nazareth, her son, is the Son of God, and himself God. Gebara and Bingemer note that the anthropological vision

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 166-67.

underlying this statement is a single whole in that every mother is mother not only of the body but of the whole person of her child. The human person is not split into “imperfect material” and “transcendent spirit.” It is only in weakness, poverty, and limitations of the human flesh that we can experience the Spirit’s ineffable greatness. In the *Theotokos*, we recognize the poor and obscure Handmaid of God, and mother of the one who was condemned to death, hidden behind all the majestic and glorious titles and luxuriously exquisite iconography. The title of Handmaid of God is theologically significant in that it inspires the church to serve the poor, “for whom Jesus’ incarnation in Mary carries the Good News of liberation.”²⁴⁸

Mary’s *Perpetual Virginity* makes clear God’s preference for the poor when God became incarnate of a poor peasant woman. Her virginity is a metaphor for human inability to achieve its own salvation without God’s grace. While reflecting on the angel’s greeting at the Annunciation, St. Bede (d. 735) commented that Mary was truly *full of grace* because by this divine gift she was the first among all women to offer God “the most glorious gift of virginity.”²⁴⁹ It signifies a total surrender to God by abandoning idols and following the path of Jesus Christ toward the reign of God.²⁵⁰ Virginity and motherhood are two particular dimensions of the fulfillment of the female personality because, in light of the Gospel, these two vocations are united in Mary and in her find their full meaning and value. As a virgin, Mary became the Mother of God and in her these two vocations complemented each other. Motherhood is the fruit of marriage in which husband and wife exchange the mutual gift of self that then welcomes the gift of new life.²⁵¹

Mary is the biblical exemplar of the “woman” in the *Protevangelium* because as mother and first

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 171.

²⁴⁹ *In Annuntiatione B.M.*; PL 94, 11AB; CCL 122, 16, in Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 37.

²⁵⁰ Gebara and Bingemer, “Mary,” 171-72.

²⁵¹ M. Jean. Frisk, *Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church: Documents on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, ed. Marianne Lorraine Trouvé, F.S.P. (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 2001), 406-07.

teacher of her child she takes precedence over man. Therefore, “motherhood involves a special communion with the mystery of life, as it develops in the woman’s womb.”²⁵²

With the Church, the purpose of virginity is to enable the virgin to be undivided, holy in body and spirit, and devoted to the Lord (1 Cor 7:34-35).²⁵³ Virginity or celibacy should not be viewed negatively as a void because the Mother of God reveals that it is empty only insofar as everything receptive is empty; even a chalice is empty till it is first filled with wine that is later consecrated and transformed into the Blood of Christ.²⁵⁴ Virginity and celibacy must also not be reduced to a canonical requirement of the Church. They are “founded on the theocentric vision of the Lord being our portion of inheritance and cup (Psalm 15:5).”²⁵⁵

The *Immaculate Conception* venerated around the world is that of the poor handmaid of the Lord. Mary was a socially insignificant woman of her time, but became a confirmation of God’s preference for the humble and the oppressed, because she who, while being poor herself, conceived the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her privilege is the privilege of the poor. She is a model and stimulus for the Church to become more of a church for the poor because it is with the poor that God’s favor wrests.²⁵⁶ Even the poor no longer remain poor as life evolves and gets better. Mary shows us, and especially the poor, that we are to always show an option for the oppressed amidst life’s changing circumstances. The weak and vulnerable become the medium for propagating her message. They are not to be lost from memory.

Through Mary’s *Assumption*, women have the dignity of their bodies recognized and assured by the Creator of all human beings, male and female. No longer is it only the male body

²⁵² Ibid., 409.

²⁵³ Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 106.

²⁵⁴ Saward, *The Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty*, 135.

²⁵⁵ Haffner, *Mystery of the Church*, 101.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 173.

of Jesus that is raised and ascends into heaven, but that Mary is assumed body and soul to share in the glory of God. Both Jesus' and Mary's raising into heaven signifies the triumph of God's justice over human injustice which is a victory of grace over sin. Acknowledging Mary's Assumption as dogma is an affirmation of belief that a woman afflicted by poverty, who gave birth in a stable and suffered the violent death of her Son, was exalted. It is also a reaffirmation of God's preference for the poor and the insignificant in whom divine glory shines. Jesus' resurrection and Mary's assumption signifies eschatological hope for the church and the people of God. Mary's assumption confirms its place among the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized.²⁵⁷ In the Middle Ages, there was the recognition that faith in the Assumption also led to faith in other Marian truths concerning Mary's queenship, her power of mediation, and her intercession with the heavenly church on behalf of the earthly church.²⁵⁸

Liberation Mariology has emerged as a branch of the theology of Mary not only from the perspective of Christian Scripture and tradition, but from the concrete experiences of predominantly poor women, men, and children. Mary, like Jesus, is identified by her relationships. She is never just Mary, but also our sister, friend, and above all, Mother of Jesus and therefore, our mother, too. The act of being with and accompanying Mary as a community functions in the same way as being with and accompanying the crucified Jesus. After her bodily Assumption, Mary continued to have this relationship with humanity especially by championing the cause of the oppressed. She appeared to poor peasants like Juan Diego of Mexico (1531), Bernadette of Lourdes (1858), and Lucía, Jacinta, and Francesco of Fátima (1917). Through these apparitions she revealed that she is no passive mother, but that through her physical

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 173-74.

²⁵⁸ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 87, 107. Fulbert of Chartres preached that Christ raised his Mother to the heavens to share in his glory, and that John, the beloved disciple, also merited a share in her glory for taking care of her after the Lord's Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

identification with the community of believers, she is bound to them through a common history, a common identity, and a common source of strength. She remains an inextinguishable presence wherever God's love continues to be threatened. Wherever the poor are excluded, marginalized, dismissed, or ignored, Mary protects them under her mantle, affirming the identity and dignity of their personhood as described in Chapter 2.

Apart from Marian apparitions and manifestations that have accorded Mary more laudatory titles than anyone in history, she has been appropriated by cultures as a figure that symbolizes liberation. Mary is a projection of the God of Israel who does not stop "subverting all satanic structures of oppression, inhuman establishments of inequality, and systems which generate slavery and non-freedom."²⁵⁹ This includes those that devalue people based on caste, sex, birth, creed, color, religion, weakness, principles, and financial status. However, the inculturation of Mary in some cultural contexts has not been without controversy.

Father Tissa Balasuriya of Sri Lanka was excommunicated in 1997 after failing to reverse his doctrinal positions concerning revelation, ecclesiology, Christology, and Mariology²⁶⁰ as authored in his book, *Mary and Human Liberation: The Story and the Text*. Fr. Balasuriya, in using a human-centered approach was perceived as reducing Mary to only her historical human dimension. However, he claimed that he sought to offer a different perspective that employed Mary as a catechetical tool for Sri Lankan women suffering injustice, and as a way of understanding the mysteries of faith (Incarnation, Resurrection, Ascension, Assumption, etc.).

Eamon Carroll writes that Leonardo Boff, O.F.M., devoted his book, *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and Its Religious Expressions*, to Mary. Boff calls the *Magnificat* a song

²⁵⁹ R. J. Raja, "Mary and the Marginalized," *Vidyajyoti* 51 (1987): 223, in Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 269.

²⁶⁰ Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., *Mary and Human Liberation: The Story and the Text*, ed. Helen Stanton (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 189-195.

of liberation from the sinfulness of social injustice. Elizabeth Johnson, however, thinks that Boff's understanding of Mary in the *Magnificat* as a prophetic woman of justice and liberation is in tension with his other depictions of her silent and unassuming participation in salvation. For Johnson, defining women by the categories of virgin and mother are not adequate for describing what is possible for women's self-realization. She is supportive that Boff "is trying to give women direct access to the divine, as Christian men have always enjoyed with their physical similarity to Jesus."²⁶¹ Boff claims that the Holy Spirit appropriates the feminine dimension of God in affinity with the person of Mary, uniting her to the third person of the Trinity for the benefit of all women.²⁶²

In these and many unreferenced examples, Mary is an extraordinary model of faith for the life of the Church and for human beings. Her whole service to human beings consists in opening them up to the Gospel of Christ, urging them to obey it. The Mary-Church understanding of liberation thought also involves the popular piety of Marian prayer that shapes the faith of the believing community.²⁶³ The Church is obligated to safeguard the importance of the "poor" and of the "preferential option for the poor" in the Word of the living God because they are intimately connected with the Christian message of freedom and liberation.

Mary the Comforter of the Afflicted in the Journey of Theodicy

In Revelations 12, Mary is identified as the woman clothed with the sun and crowned with stars, in labor and fighting the dragon. Mary becomes symbolic of suffering people's

²⁶¹ Johnson, *She Who Is*, 52.

²⁶² Ibid. Boff's attempts to project the feminine side of God are noteworthy, but he may have undermined some of his presentations. Like Johnson, I do not think we can associate attributes, qualities, and metaphors of darkness and receptivity to women alone while reserving all that symbolizes light, reason, and transcendence for the masculine. As every human being has a combination of these qualities, use of limiting descriptors is deliberating rather than liberating for women.

²⁶³ John Eagleson, and Philip J. Sharper, eds., *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary* (New York: Orbis, 1979); Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Rome: Editrice Vaticana, 1975). See also the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (Rome: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986).

humble and laborious faith in a crucified savior without losing hope. She becomes the figure of a church that is persecuted by the forces of the anti-Kingdom, the powerful, and the oppressors who are identified with the dragon that seeks to devour the descendants of this woman, of the Kingdom, and all that represents life and liberty, “all that is the mature fruit of the woman’s fertile womb.”²⁶⁴ At Calvary, it is Mary who is at the foot of the Cross and to whom Jesus bequeaths his last will.²⁶⁵ Earlier the disciples were assured that they would receive whatever they asked directly from the Father, or through Jesus’ mediation. On the Cross, Jesus grants humanity through his beloved disciple, John, a third option for petition by offering his Mother as intercessor between himself and believers.²⁶⁶ Throughout history’s many crosses, humanity has clung to this third option, *ad Jesum per Mariam*, and has felt Mary standing alongside in times of uncertainty, turmoil, and distress.²⁶⁷

Bernard of Clairvaux, focusing on how the water and blood that flowed from Jesus’ wounds purified and nourished sinners, preached that the *Mater Dolorosa* was martyred not physically but spiritually, a fulfillment of Simeon’s prophecy that the sword would pierce her soul and draw forth spiritual graces for humankind. Through the Sorrowful Mother, the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and Entombment came to life in stories about the Stations of the Cross, in paintings and sculptures.²⁶⁸ The *Mater Dolorosa* offers consolation to the bereaved

²⁶⁴ Gebara and Bingemer, “Mary,” 170.

²⁶⁵ I rely here on the thoughts and examples of Juan Alfaro of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio. In “The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel: Mary and the Struggles for Liberation,” Alfaro’s theological analysis of the complementarity of Cana and Calvary in the Fourth Gospel leads to the double revelation that the disciples have “a common Father and a common Mother” (12).

²⁶⁶ Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 87, 92. This scene is also reflected in the preaching and writings of Fulbert of Chartres and Abbot Odilo of Cluny in the 11th century.

²⁶⁷ Alfaro, “The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel,” 15. During the Reconquest, a number of apparitions of the Blessed Virgin occurred throughout Spain’s struggle against the Muslims. Our Lady’s protection and intercession was sought in the Albigensian crisis, the battle of Lepanto, and other religious wars in Europe. Guadalupe became the symbol of Mexico’s struggle for independence from the Conquistadors. The Philippines declared Our Lady of “La Naval” the nation’s protectress.

²⁶⁸ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 210-11, 216. The cult of the *Mater Dolorosa* emerged in Italy, France, England, the Netherlands, and Spain

particularly those who have lost a child because she shares their sorrow. At a profound level her tears mourn her loss, but she knows of her Son's resurrection. Her tears, like the blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus, lead to cleansing and rebirth offering the bereaved assurance of life after death.²⁶⁹

Mary is the Comforter of the Afflicted, a title rooted in the prophetic (Isaiah 40:1; 49: 7-12, 51a; 50:4-9; 52:9-10) and Wisdom traditions of Hebrew scripture. It encapsulates God's dynamic relationship with humanity and describes the role of a prophet in assuming God's urgent desire to transform unjust structures into a loving presence that brings peace to a new reality.²⁷⁰ The promise of comfort inherent in the prophet's task should not imply an end to suffering; rather it reflects nurturing qualities like listening, caring, sympathizing, attending, consoling, feeding the hungry, and sheltering the homeless. Comfort should also be sought in assurance that the Spirit-Paraclete will lead those suffering to a greater truth and greater good.²⁷¹

In the journey of theodicy Mary teaches the bereaved about letting go. As one ponders over how Mary might have spent the Sabbath after Jesus' expiration one should reflect on the fact that "the hour" was not only Jesus' moment of glorification on the Cross, but the hour of a virtuous woman who approximately thirty-four years earlier had said "yes" and accepted the child God into her womb and her life.²⁷² Her hour was the culminating moment of a life that had prepared her to let go. With faith, obedience, and trust in the Spirit, she let God give the world

at the end of the eleventh century and reached full intensity in the fourteenth century when pilgrims steadily flowed to the Holy Land. Warner says that intimate devotions to the *Mater Dolorosa* made Mary an approachable, kindly figure who could be depended on for comfort and pity. "The cult of the *Mater Dolorosa* stressed her participation in [humankind's] ordinary, painful lot, and although the repercussions of the Black Death restored a degree of majesty and terror to the personality of Christ the Judge, the Virgin herself retained a common touch."

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 221-23.

²⁷⁰ Rose Marie Lorentzen, B.V.M., "Comforter of the Afflicted: Christian Pastoral Care and New Ministries for Women," in *Mary According to Women*, ed. Carol F. Jegen, B.V.M. (Kansas City: Leaven Press, 1985), 52-53.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 59, 67.

²⁷² Megan McKenna, *Mary: Shadow of Grace* (New York: Orbis, 1995), 126.

her Son's message of salvation. Her suffering anticipated the joy that the dawn of the next morning would give way to the first day of a new creation, a new covenant, and a new family of which she was mother. As in the *Magnificat*, God lifted her up and did great things for her.²⁷³

In Latin America and around the world, the shadow of the cross is long. Women, children, and the elderly suffer all kinds of abuses. Streets and neighborhoods are marked by violence. Life of poverty, insecurity, lost jobs, underemployment, drug and alcohol addiction, divorce, and single parenthood, crime, jail, and other kinds of suffering project a dismal outlook for the masses. The shadow of the cross is also found in abortion, the death penalty, the rally for physician-assisted suicide, the slaughter of communities by war and weapons resulting from nationalism, classism, and racism.²⁷⁴ Amidst these human rights violations, Mary shares her people's suffering just as she spiritually bore the suffering of her Son. We obtain the consolation of the Mother by comforting her in her own sorrow by comforting her children. "We must give birth with her and her Son to courage, to heartfelt hope in one another"²⁷⁵ in a new community of compassion and forgiveness. The *Stabat Mater*²⁷⁶ or the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother can be uplifting for parents who have lost a child.²⁷⁷ The *Stabat Mater* offers the comfort of recalling Mary's human suffering, the anguish of all sorrowful parents, and her being "with" Jesus en route to Calvary till his final moments of glorification on the Cross when he wiped away sin with

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 115-116.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 116.

²⁷⁶ Baier, "Mary at the Foot of the Cross," 3. *Stabat Mater* is a devotional hymn that recalls Mary's sorrow and tears while her Son hung dying on the cross. She agonized over his death, but knew that her sorrow and compassion were to be superseded by the joy of knowing that humankind was being delivered from sin and death by her Son's crucifixion. This hymn expresses Jesus and Mary's oneness of mind and will in the Divine Mission of salvation.

²⁷⁷ Margaret E. Guider, "On Finding Mary and Naming Mary" (lecture, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Brighton, MA, December 2, 2014). Michelangelo's Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, an enduring sculpture of the *Mater Dolorosa* holding her Son after his violent death, can be a source of comfort to parents in the journey of theodicy. It depicts Mary's capacity to recompose her faith especially when such events might have caused her to lose it.

his death, and gave birth to the Church. Her psychological suffering with Jesus in his final hour, made her a mother again in a new perspective through the expressed desire of her Son.²⁷⁸

The grief of the daughter of Zion in the book of Lamentations, the distress of the beloved in the *Song of Songs*, and the theme *Flebat igitur mater eius* (“but his Mother wept God”) in the book of Tobit refer to the Sorrowful Mother of Christ at the foot of her Son’s Cross.²⁷⁹ On the sermon *Planctus Mariae* by Michael Aiguani, Paul Chandler writes that Mary laments the failing acts of the people, reminiscent of the Good Friday passion.²⁸⁰ The sermon invites the Christian soul to conversion by being in solidarity with the pathos of Jesus’ suffering mother and to share in her sensitivity and compassion for Christ crucified. It concludes with Mary calling on the angel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth to witness “how the blessings of her life with Christ have turned to grief, contrasting the glory of Jesus’ birth with his cruel death.”²⁸¹ Even in her grief and loneliness after the crucifixion, Mary preserves faith in her Son’s promise of the resurrection; it is this faith to which we associate Holy Saturday with the Virgin Mother.²⁸² In the journey of theodicy Mary offers the potential of not only a renewing of faith, but a maturing of faith in the simple knowing that death does not have the last word.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Alfaro, “The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel,” 13.

²⁷⁹ Paul Chandler, O.Carm., “The Lamentation of the Virgin: A *Planctus Mariae* Sermon by Michael Aiguani of Bologna, O.Carm.,” in *Land of Carmel: Essays in Honor of Joachim Smet, O.Carm.* (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1991), 217.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. While Jesus in his last dialogue with his mother and the disciple John, bequeaths his final gifts faithfully honoring all his promises, the Jews, the disciples, Peter, Judas, and Pilate by contrast abandoned their loyalty, duty of gratitude, and pact with Christ as well as betray their responsibilities and obligations of office. Judas who sold his redeemer for thirty pieces of silver, is reproached for being a traitor; the apostles for abandoning their teacher and master; the soldiers for failing to recognize Jesus’ divine dignity; the Jews for being ungrateful for the many benefits received from his miracles; Pilate for being a corrupt and unjust magistrate.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 217-218.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

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