

Marian Library Studies

Volume 10

Article 3

1978

Preface: Transcendence and Immanence

Théodore Koehler

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_studies

Recommended Citation

Koehler, Théodore (1978) "Preface: Transcendence and Immanence," *Marian Library Studies*: Vol. 10, Article 3, Pages 16-25.
Available at: http://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_studies/vol10/iss1/3

This Editor's Preface is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Library Studies by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu.

PREFACE

Transcendence and Immanence

Marian Library Studies Vol. 10 presents a series of studies about Marian doctrine and devotion throughout diverse periods of the history of the Church. Each research work is evidently very particular—restricted in space and time—and it concerns strictly the writer or the epoch chosen by the author of the article. Thus, the interest of this collection is first of all, historical: to lay out, through new research works, a doctrinal and devotional evolution which is far from being well known; it leads us to an ever more nuanced understanding of the history of Christianity. The bibliography of ongoing or recently published research works is given in English, every year, by Eamon R. Carroll in his "Survey of Recent Mariology" at the convention of the *Mariological Society of America*, and published in the Bulletin of this Society¹.* This type of bibliography is also given in French, every two years, by R. Laurentin in his "Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie" published in the *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*²; a precise and complete *Bibliografia Mariana* is published by Fr. G. M. Besutti, at the MARIANUM of Rome³.

The works that we treat concern very dissimilar periods and problems. Chromatius, bishop of Aquilea († 407) had received a short notice in the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* of 1961⁴. Other works were edited afterwards; thanks particularly to the studies of J. Lemarié, in *Sources Chrétiennes*, two volumes of sermons were published⁵. V. Vasey, professor of Law at the University of Dayton and of Patristics at the IMRI, analyzes the texts where Chromatius shows how the Church, for him, is related to the mystery of Mary. Chromatius' formulations help us understand the importance of Patristic symbolism: "Ecclesia, domus Mariae," "Ubi Ecclesia, ibi Maria," "Intacta ovis, sancta Maria"; on the other hand, Saint Joseph, like Mary, is our model: "palatium Christi," "templum Dei," "habitaculum spiritus"⁶. The study of Patristic vocabulary requires new works such as the lexicon based on

* The notes refer to the French preface.

Hesychius of Jerusalem that M. Aubineau will publish at Olms⁷. The index of Hesychius' vocabulary will be a priceless tool for the study of the period before and after Ephesus (431): it is the first specialized lexicon for this period. Similar, though less specialized works, limited to the patristic Marian texts, will be made possible by the publication of the *Corpus Marianum Patristicum* of Rev. Sergio Alvarez Campos, O.F.M., of which four volumes, for the first centuries, have already been published (vols. I and II: 1970; vol. III: 1974; vol. IV/1: 1976) by Ediciones Aldecoa, Burgos, Spain. The following volumes will appear: vol. IV/2: *Scriptores graeci qui saeculis VI-VII fuerunt*; vol. V: *Scriptores orientales qui a Concilio Epheseno usque ad finem saeculi VII fuerunt* (contains mainly the Marian works of James of Saroug and of Philoxenes as well as numerous apocryphals on the Assumption, translated from several languages into Latin); vol. VI: *Scriptores latini qui a Concilio Epheseno usque in finem saeculi VII*; with several indexes: Marian, biblical, word index, virtues of Mary, authors' index, apocryphals' index, theological index, poetic index . . .

The Latin Middle Ages present similar problems; however, that period and the content of Marian devotion had become considerably diversified. There are two studies dedicated to the development of Medieval spirituality under the influence of Marian devotion⁸. The *misericordia* vocabulary⁹, used in our knowledge of God and for our moral life, comes directly from the Bible: in the angelic invitation of Luke 6:36, for example. In Marian devotion, Mary is a mother full of *mercy*, in the sense of a virtue or of a beatitude that she possesses most excellently, like God or Christ, for her personal glory and for the salvation of us all. We realize that tradition is expressed by *dramatization*: a tendency mental / category which is already manifest in the Biblical text, as in all literature, and that gives rise to ambiguities, reductions, exaggerations, in the evolution of spirituality, of preaching, of theology itself. The West attempted, especially during its time of suffering in the 15th century, to express its faith in a God who is both merciful and just; both Marian devotion and faith in the mediation of Christ were subjected to simplistic interpretation that reduced God to a mere judge and forgot the basic rules of a good analogy between God and us. Philosophical Nominalism is at the origin of an univocal sense of justice or pardon that places God and Mary on the same level and thus tends to divide the work of Redemption into two "camps": the justice of God and the mercy of Christ, or even more simply, the Divine Judge and a merciful Mary.

Spirituality has other images that stem from the life and the conditions of life in the Middle Ages. The comparison of the spiritual life of the soul to

a castle with its many rooms has been illustrated by the title given by St. Teresa of Avila to one of her masterpieces on mystical life: *The Interior Castle*¹⁰, published in 1588, six years after her death. In the 14th century we find a work entitled *Le Chastel périlleux* (The Perilous Castle), where Frère Robert, a Carthusian, teaches his cousin Rose, a religious of Fontevault, how to make "her heart into a castle, so strong and so beautifully decorated inside, that the sweet King Jesus-Christ, true spouse of the holy souls and of the good religious, would deign to inhabit it and to reside in it delightedly; for as it says in Scripture, it is his delight to be and to reside with the sons of men"¹¹. Thus Frère Robert wrote a kind of treatise on spiritual life for contemplative religious of this time.

The comparison with a castle comes from Biblical images: "Emmanuel" (God with us), the House of God (Israel), the temple of the Holy Spirit (the Christian); this comparison is also inspired by the Johannine texts about our union with Christ: "Remain in me and I in you" (Jn 15:4). It concretizes the spiritual tradition of God's inhabiting the soul of the just man and places this doctrine within reach of medieval readers. Moreover, the work of Frère Robert is presented as a letter of moral-ascetic counsel for life in a cloister. It is interesting to note how, from the very first chapter, the author gives Mary, the Mother of God, as an example of this religious life. He quotes Luke 10:30, which began the Gospel used for the feast of the Assumption during many centuries: "Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum." He translated *castellum* as *castle*, an image that designates the Virgin: "for it was a castle very well adorned with the moat of humility, the wall of virginity, the privilege of all virtues and the abundance of all graces. The King found this glorious castle so pleasant and so delightful, that he had a great desire to take shelter and to reside in it, and to send his message in advance in the manner of a king or of a great lord, to take his lodging"¹². This example dominates the whole work even though—according to medieval tradition—sin was strongly stressed; but the resort to Mary is precisely a defense against sin. Thus, Frère Robert wrote an original work. Undoubtedly, his counsels reflect the current medieval asceticism: the importance of peace, of the battle against sin and temptations (with contemporary examples where chastity was greatly misused, as in the "miracles"), of the role attributed to humility, to fear of God, etc. However, the allegory of *The Perilous Castle* and the demonstration of Mary's role in religious life mark an original contribution to spiritual literature. It is not a description of the mystical graces of a Teresa of Avila nor the Marian graces of a Marie Petyt († 1677). It is a testimony of a little-known period,

an instructive preparation for the development of ascetic and spiritual literature. Although the manuscript was published only in 1974, it was widely distributed, since we have 18 extant copies, two of which are in Portuguese.

Savonarola is known, above all, as the rebel against the authorities, who was burnt at the stake in the public plaza. Therefore, it is useful to make him known under a different aspect: the spiritual man, the preacher-brother from whom Christians, particularly religious women, demanded the true doctrine of the Church on the ways of God. The Belardetti edition¹³ of Rome published two volumes of his "Spiritual Works"; their critical edition was prepared by Mario Ferrara, an expert on Savonarola. The Italian title *Operette spirituali* seems to minimize the value of these writings as of little spiritual worth, in some unconscious concession to the idea that the great Savonarola is great only as a rebel. Today, since a canonization is sought for him, the spiritual aspect takes on its importance; and this requires study. The publication of his commentary on the *Ave Maria*—in the original, in modern Italian, in an English translation—will make known his Marian teaching. Here, too, one discovers a remarkable witness to the place of Mary in Western spirituality at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries.

"The explanation given by the Reverend Father in Christ, Brother Jerome Savonarola of Ferrare (Order of Preachers) to the prayer of the glorious Virgin—An explanation that he has given in the common language at the request of some pious religious women of Ferrare": this title indicates the purpose and the method of the author who comments on the *Ave Maria*¹⁴ word by word. At the beginning, he quotes the prayer according to the formula that includes the second part, the invocation: *Holy Mary . . .* (with the exception of precisising "nostrae" after "hora mortis.") We have here one of the first formulations of the *Ave Maria* in its two parts. The text of this writing of Savonarola was published in 1496; it is, therefore, the most ancient printed evidence that we have of the entire *Ave*¹⁵, and the first commentary of this complete prayer. Let us remember that at that same time, the complete *Ave* appeared in acrostic form, in a poem of the Servite Gasparino Borro († 1438): "*Ave di castita . . .*" that was part of his "Trionfi, soneti, canzoni e laude della Vergine Maria" published in 1498¹⁶. This is the first poetic commentary on the *Ave*.

Ecumenism, especially after half a century, gives rise to continual efforts in order to find a true unity among divided Christians. At the recent international congresses—Mariological and Marian—in Saragossa (October 3-12, 1979), a committee of thirteen Catholics and twelve non-Catholics formulated a common declaration that was signed by all. There

one can note, among other things, the importance attributed to our common faith in the Communion of Saints:

The problem of invocation and intercession of Mary was examined anew at this Congress. We have considered it within the background of the communion of saints. As a Christian may and must pray for others, we think that the saints who have already attained the plenitude in Christ, and among whom Mary occupies the first place, may pray and do pray for us sinners who struggle and suffer on earth. By that, the one and only mediation of Christ is not affected. There remains to clarify the direct invocation to the saints that live in God, a kind of invocation that is not practiced by all the churches.

Rev. A. M. Allchin, who was part of this committee, in his article "Prayers of the Saints: Two Seventeenth Century Views," studies the position taken by two Anglicans of the "Caroline divines" group: William Forbes († 1634), Archbishop of Edinburgh, for the first half of the 17th century; Herbert Thorndike († 1672), for the second half. This study proposes to illustrate a problem important not only for the dialogue among Christian denominations but also for all our human communications. It is necessary to know the vocabulary used by the diverse parties, for instance, the meaning given to "invocation," to "prayer," either in the cult to God or in the communion of saints, and that meaning, within the evolution of languages, from the 15th century to our days. W. Forbes and H. Thorndike concentrated on the language difficulties in the 17th century, at two stages of its evolution: at the beginning and at the end of the century. However, they sought the answers in the practice of the Church, in Tradition, more than in linguistics. Their remarks remain important for us today; they accept, for example, the Church usage in the prayer addressed to saints, but they criticize a piety that would be contradictory to the will of God. This invites us to avoid any artificial and reducing dramatization that opposes God and the saints in their relations with us, and not to exaggerate (in the controversial stage) the signification given to the vocabulary of piety.

Concerning modern times, *Marian Library Studies* 10 publishes a discussion and an article about certain problems that arose with the development of shrines and Marian pilgrimages, during the 19th and 20th centuries. Theology as well as the pastorate of pilgrimage centers (Marian and others) demand serious studies based on the documents (history of the shrines within their cultural and social context) and inspired by the doctrine, the prayer, and the life of the Church throughout its twenty centuries of existence (Bible and Tradition; pontifical, conciliar teachings; liturgy; approved prayers; local

Transcendence and Immanence

traditions . . .); also needed are Sociology, Psychology and other human sciences. These studies are now in progress¹⁷. The discussion that we publish deals with several questions raised by faith in the supernatural: faith in apparitions, faith in miracles, prayers and other behavior of believers. "Natural Realities and the Supernatural" is thus a general title that includes the diversity of viewpoints of each participant at our round table. Thomas A. Kselman, who is presently a professor at the University of Notre-Dame, is the author of a recent doctoral thesis on "Miracles and Prophecies: Popular Religion and the Church in nineteenth-Century France"¹⁸. He presents an anthropological point of view and in his conclusions he estimates that after the Revolution, the French people experienced new relations between the institutional Church and popular religion; he sees the proof for this in the favor granted to miracles, to apparitions (at Lourdes, for instance), in the creation of shrines that channeled the fervor of the masses. Why this belief in miracles, despite the advance of our scientific and technical knowledge and a socio-economic environment that is contrary to such beliefs? The author thinks that "Marian apparitions, healing cults, and prophecies focusing on a millennium to be achieved by the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, were an integral part of French religious life with important social and political implications" (see *Abstract* of the thesis). Thus, he analyzes the social drama of belief in a miraculous cure, the renewal (romantic, nationalistic) of the fascination for miracles and prophecies, its institutionalization in the nineteenth-century Church of France.

The work of René Laurentin is well known. His books on Lourdes, Pontmain, and the Miraculous Medal place him among the best experts on the history of these pilgrimages, their origins, their development within their social-cultural context¹⁹. R. Laurentin is, furthermore, a journalist, a correspondent to *Figaro* on religious matters. He knows well the advantages and disadvantages of our "mass media": their rapid transmission, their pluralism of interpretation, their slogans and their routine treatment of religious news. He knows, especially for Lourdes, how certain themes will always appear in the articles written about such subjects: the sick, the healings, the commercialization of religious places. For him the essential is elsewhere; it is accessible to the eyes of faith. The prayer of the masses, however, leaves traces of information : statistics, diverse accounts; it involves the whole problem of the supernatural, of the impact of the divine in our world. R. Laurentin indicates the kind of research to be done, a research whose religious purposes cannot be restricted to those of human sciences. Those scientific methods particular to each field cannot serve to deny the authenticity of

religious facts. For instance, in comparing the healings at Lourdes with those of the Charismatics and those of African witch-doctors, he invites us to study the difference between the methods for healing and the prayer of faith. Such prayer is first of all thanksgiving to God, a praise of his Love, which may lead to petitions and healings.

Father J. F. Byrnes (see p. 159) presents a sociographical point of view in his article where he studies the ideas and political attitudes of the editors of *La Voix de Notre-Dame de Chartres*, a bulletin of this shrine, published from 1857 to 1969. It was first a monthly publication to which was later added a weekly "supplement" dealing with practical indications about pilgrimages, calendar of events, etc. The author does not write to inform us about the doctrine or spirituality in this pilgrimage center during the 113 years of existence of the bulletin *La Voix*. He seeks only to trace a *limited sociographical profile*, following the evolution of a clerical literature in France after 1857 to beyond the Second Vatican Council (1962/65). It is a monograph that makes us understand more the peaks and valleys of devotional literature. In the nineteenth century, pilgrimage to Chartres experienced a renewal as reported from 1857 on by *La Voix*. The tendencies of the French Catholic press are evident: a press of action with no scientific pretensions in the real sense of the term (for instance, few statistics about the pilgrimages). The editors of *La Voix* follow the ultramontanists, who intended to fight against the modern world and who advocated the union of state and religion, considering Catholicism as the only religion of the nation. But 1870 was also the time of the Commune which was violently anti-clerical. Nevertheless, the new National Assembly of 1871 voted for public prayers of reparation for the evil committed in France. *La Voix* also had its own goals: to show Mary's place in the religious renewal; to restore the cathedral of Chartres, its pilgrimage; and to foster priestly vocations (work of the "Maîtrise"). 1873 was a year of pilgrimages. *La Voix* showed that Chartres was the center of patriotism for French Catholics; it was a means to forming a united front against the enemies of the Church, of offering reparation to God for the Revolution, the Commune, and finally to close the parenthesis on the Revolution in the history of France. Later on, *La Voix* joined the political battle of *La Croix* and *Le Pèlerin* for the victory of Catholics, giving rise to diverse controversies. In 1914, the war promoted the union of all against the common enemy, Germany. After the war, *La Voix* reflected a new interest: that of the young intellectuals who were inspired by Charles Péguy. The bulletin exalted a patriotic Marian devotion which appeared as the soul of France, a soul Christian from its beginnings. Chartres was the Christian memory

Transcendence and Immanence

of the country; its tradition of art, of beauty, invited union of the natural and the supernatural rather than their dissociation. With 1935 began the pilgrimages of students, which took on unexpected proportions and a whole new mentality. With 1939 and World War II, *La Voix* went through a difficult period. The post-war period, however, was marked by the growing importance of the Parisian student's pilgrimages. Then the Marian Year, 1950, also gave rise to a renewal. In 1969, *La Voix* disappeared. It was replaced by a *Bulletin diocésain* and by the excellent magazine *Notre Dame de Chartres*, which, under the direction of Fr. Lemarié, explores the artistic/spiritual riches of the Cathedral with a renewed scientific approach.

The sociographical profile traced by Fr. Byrnes will leave many readers unsatisfied. Yet, such monographs are necessary for a more exact knowledge of religious facts; they may be useful to instruct, in a pastoral manner, those who want to take measures to overcome the difficulties of shrines and pilgrimages denounced in the past. An article by Heinrich Lützel²¹ on Chartres raises the question (used in the title) "Can the Chartres Cathedral Be Explained Sociologically?" The author analyses the construction history to discover the social groups that participated in it, and he uses, above all, their representation in the statuary, in the stained-glass windows, in the work of the cathedral itself. Three groups emerge: the clergy, the nobles, the urban population. However, the sociological study of these social classes did not suffice to explain the artistic, spiritual creation that bursts forth through the iconographical program of the builders. Certainly, the cathedral came about from the work of these three social groups. But when we observe, for instance, the South portal with its 783 personages, where the main theme is Christ at the Last Judgement, we discover how the artists followed a lesson which transcended their real social situation: under Christ's feet, a man, a woman, a servant distributing bread to the poor. The scene could have been inspired by the distribution of alms by Pierre Mauclerc after his marriage with Alice of Britain, but this act becomes the illustration of the great transformation that Christ demands from the human society of all times: we will be judged on our works of mercy. The art of Chartres is conscious of the social situation and it is also normative. Indeed, art itself cannot change a society, but it can enlighten consciences (cf. p. 152) and it can illustrate the preaching of Christ.

The various articles of *Marian Library Studies* 10 focus on the theological and philosophical theme of the transcendence and the immanence of the divine. The mystery of Mary leads to the mystery of God, especially since it enlightens us about the experience which the mystics call the pre-

sence/absence of God. The parallelism between Mary and the Church, the quest for divine mercy through Mary and the Church, the Marian praise and invocation throughout the centuries, Marian apparitions (particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries)—all these developments in doctrine and devotion come from the Revelation of God Himself in the gift of his Son, born of the Virgin Mary to be the “Emmanuel”: God in our midst. Generation upon generation, the Church continues to discover more profoundly the heart of her own mystery—in other words, in her union with Christ as Spouse and Bridegroom and in her mission to unite all the nations into one single family of the Father—Mary is given to her as an extraordinary example and as an attentive, devoted Mother. In the Communion of Saints the Church contemplates this icon-type of its own greatness and vocation. She sees how the transcendent and immanent God became presence and mystery for the Virgin Mother of God and, through her, to us, very especially with the Annunciation and Incarnation of the Son of God, but also by the Immaculate Conception through which He preserved his Chosen from every attack of Satan while leaving her immersed—though intact—in our perverted and enslaved world. Greek Patristics has bequeathed us its litanies of adoration, of praise, and of wonder before the mystery of the inaccessible God who made Himself accessible to the Virgin and, through her, to us all. The transcendence/immanence of God becomes an unshakeable paradox only in the logic of dualism or monism, good examples of a philosophical dramatization that ends in excesses. But the drama is real; the Greek Fathers admired, the Medievals suffered. Nevertheless, all discover in it the ways of salvation of the God of holiness who wants to become the sanctification, redemption, of our humanity plunged in evil. Thus, the Church receives in Mary the revelation of God, both transcending his creature and immanent in it. The transcendence of the whole Other and his creative immanence are transformed in a union of love with us. God, who is Love, fills in the gaps and creates the most intimate union between the uncreated and the created: Christ, Mary, the Church—sinful but sanctified humanity.

God outdistances us infinitely and always, but in outdistancing us He wants to show us the road, the direction. He passes and He seems absent, but He already is ahead, attracting us into his mystery of life. Mary knew God at the moment that He outdistanced her; in reality He knew her also, for she followed him in faith and love toward the absolute unknown of his ways. As with Zaccheus or the disciples of Emmaus, He tarried with her, but in a unique way. It was in the Incarnation that the

Transcendence and Immanence

inaccessible became a little child accessible to the Virgin, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, to all the poor to whom the Father was willing to reveal the secrets of His life in the Holy Trinity.

The castle is for Frère Robert an image which he uses to symbolize the indwelling of God in Mary, in any person in the state of grace; they are the temples of God. This image of the transcendence/immanence of God's love treats this divine paradox from a very medieval mentality. Our union is an "endangered castle." The enemy—sin—can destroy it. Our life with God is in danger . . . but God is our sanctification. As for Mary, the transcendent/immanent God is for us all holiness/sanctification: "Jesus Christ Son of God, Savior" (IXTHUS), who is the Truth, the Way through all the paradoxes that we dramatize, the way toward Life.