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## MARY AND THE HOLY TRINITY, AS REFLECTED IN THE LITURGICAL YEAR

Too often authors describe a trinitarian relationship simply on the basis that the terms Father, Son and Spirit are used, or even on the basis that there is a generalized three-fold enumeration. In the renewed rite for the sacrament of penance, for instance, the prayer of absolution is called "trinitarian," for it mentions the three persons:

The prayer is trinitarian and essentially biblical. Father, Son and Spirit are invoked in the context of their actions in salvation history. God is the Father of mercies from whom all things proceed; reconciliation comes to us on the initiative of the Father. The Father's love and mercy is concretized in the saving death and resurrection of the Son who sent the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>1</sup>

In this view, the fact that Father, Son and Spirit are mentioned, in connection with salvation history, provides the basis for calling the prayer trinitarian. From a theological standpoint, this can only be considered somewhat shallow, more a passing allusion to the Trinity, rather than a deep and well-grounded connection with solid trinitarian thought.

This particular approach to the Trinity is also found on many occasions when the topic is Mary, the Mother of God. In the *Raccolta* we find, for instance, a prayer entitled: "The Crown of Twelve Stars." In this prayer we are asked to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity who has shown us the Virgin Mary.

<sup>1</sup>*Rite of Penance*, Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Study Text no. 4 (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1975), 31.

Let us praise and thank the divine Father, . . .  
who elected her for His daughter . . .  
who predestined her to be Mother of His divine Son . . .  
who preserved her from all stain in her conception . . .  
Let us praise and thank the divine Son who chose her for His  
Mother . . .  
Who was born of her and was nourished at her breast . . .  
Who in His childhood willed to be taught by her . . .  
Let us praise and thank the Holy Spirit, who took  
her for His spouse . . .  
Who revealed first to her His Name of Holy Spirit . . .  
By whose operation she was at once Virgin and Mother.<sup>2</sup>

One wonders, in all of this, whether the mere recitation of the triune names in connection with a prayer of absolution or with the veneration of Mary truly makes the situation trinitarian. Is there not something more profound than these kinds of association to Father, Son and Spirit? It is this deeper level of trinitarian thought that I would like to explore with you, and, on the basis of this exploration, to point out in what ways this more fundamental approach to the Trinity might enhance mariological theology.

The material is divided into the following subheadings:

1. The doctrine of Trinity in Christian thought in comparison with the doctrine of God in world religions;
2. The beginnings of trinitarian thought in the Christian community;
3. The four approaches to the Trinity which are found in medieval thought;
4. The relationship of mariology to trinitarian theology;
5. The liturgical implications of this approach to both Mary and the Trinity.

## 1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

When we consider the major religions of the world, we do not find a Trinity. In Islam, for instance, the monotheism

<sup>2</sup>*The Raccolta: Preces et Pia Opera*, ed. J. P. Christopher and C. E. Spence (Boston: Benziger Brothers, 1943), 216-217; the prayer is attributed to St. Joseph Calasanctius.

of God lies at the very core of the Koran. In Buddhism even the idea of "God" which we find in the West has little to no application. In Old Testament Judaism we find nothing that opens us directly to trinitarian thought. Only in Christianity is God believed to be triune.<sup>3</sup> In many ways, this lack of a trinitarian God in religions other than Christianity should raise a question for us: why do we Christians have a doctrine of the Trinity, while other religions do not? What is there within our Christian approach to God that would require trinitarian theology?

This kind of question becomes somewhat acute when we consider both the Old and the New Testaments. In the Old Testament there is surely no trinitarian thought. John L. McKenzie, some years ago, in his essay, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought,"<sup>4</sup> pointed out that a constant throughout the varying theologies of the Old Testament was the unicity of God. McKenzie writes:

The question was not whether there is only one elohim, but whether there is any elohim like Yahweh. To the question put in this way the Israelites never gave any answer except a categorical denial.<sup>5</sup>

Again he writes:

If the Israelite idea of the essential note of deity can be summed up in one word, it is the word "holy," felicitously para-

<sup>3</sup>Cf. on this topic R. Schulte, "Die Vorbereitung der Trinitätsoffenbarung," in *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1967), 2:49-82, but particularly pp. 73-82. Older authors, e.g., J. Brinktrine, "Von der göttlichen Trinität," in *Die Lehre von Gott* (Paderborn, 1954), 2:183-212, discuss non-Christian religions, but in a deprecatory way. R. Schulte and K. Rahner ("Das Christentum und die nichtchristlichen Religionen," in *Schriften zur Theologie* [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1964], 5:136-158), for their part, have a much more open stance to world religions. Still, in all of their openness, these authors present us with only the possibility of a trinitarian revelation, not with any trinitarian doctrine as such in these world religions.

<sup>4</sup>J. L. McKenzie, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, R. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 736-767.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 739.

phrased by R. Otto as “wholly other”; the essential note is that God is totally unlike any of his creatures.<sup>6</sup>

This wholly otherness of God, the center of Israel’s doctrine of God, prevented Old Testament theologies from considering anything like an incarnation, much less an incarnation which involved a dying on the cross. Ben Meyer, in his recent volume, *The Early Christians*, phrases it this way: “Where in the orthodoxy of the Torah was there room for a crucified Christ? Nowhere.”<sup>7</sup>

Given a doctrine of God which stressed otherness, which stressed no entry into our human life by way of incarnation, much less crucifixion, the early followers of Jesus, almost all Jewish, found that their belief in Jesus as Lord required a rethinking of this Jewish doctrine of God. In other words, the resources which the Jesus-people had at their disposal, immediately after the resurrection, were all Jewish resources. In these Jewish resources—and by these I mean the Old Testament writings themselves, the intertestamentary apocalyptic literature and the intertestamentary rabbinical literature—the Jewish understanding or theology of God as the totally other stood contrary to any belief that Jesus, the one born of Mary and the one who died on the cross, was God incarnate. The task of the first followers of Jesus, then, was to reconsider their very understanding of God in a way which would allow for the incarnation of God, even an incarnation which involved a crucifixion. The early followers of Jesus faced a God-problem, not a problem entailing the existence of God, which is the contemporary God-problem, but one entailing an incarnation and a crucifixion.

Too often, when contemporary theologians discuss the resurrection kerygma, they stress that the newness of the resurrection message, which the disciples proclaimed, revolved around Jesus, as an individual person, rising from

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 737.

<sup>7</sup>Ben F. Meyer, *The Early Christians: Their World Mission and Self-Discovery* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1986), 162.

the dead. Scholars stress this aspect of the Easter kerygma as the significantly new Jewish aspect of resurrection theology. At the time of Jesus, there was a small but to some degree significant group within Judaism who believed that there would be a resurrection, an afterlife. "A doctrine of resurrection does not appear to have been one of the tenets long established in Judaism by New Testament times, but rather a comparative newcomer to it."<sup>8</sup> They believed, however, that those who would share in such an afterlife would do so on the "last day." There would be a general resurrection of the dead. Nowhere in the Jewish literature of that time—not in the Old Testament writings themselves, in the intertestamental apocalyptic writings, nor in the intertestamental rabbinical writings—can be found a single individual rising from the dead. When the early followers of Jesus proclaimed that Jesus had already risen, this was indeed new. But there is more to the newness of the Easter message than merely this resurrection of a single individual. These early Jewish followers of Jesus proclaimed that this man, who had died on the cross and had risen, was no other than the Kyrios, the Lord, the incarnate God. This aspect of the primitive kerygma demanded a rethinking of the then-current Jewish theology of God. This aspect of their preaching required as well a new understanding of a theology of God, besides a new understanding of the meaning of resurrection.

## 2. THE BEGINNINGS OF TRINITARIAN THOUGHT IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

These early Jews for Jesus experienced the risen Lord and they believed. Then they began to theologize. They did not start from a doctrine or theology of God and then accept Jesus as Lord and Savior on the basis of that particular

<sup>8</sup>C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 11.

theology. Rather, they began with a profound personal and communal religious experience of the risen Jesus. When they moved from their experience to the theology which they themselves as Jews had been taught, they found that the inherited doctrine of God almost disallowed the acceptance of Jesus as the Lord. They began, then, in a gradual way, and not in any academic way, to restructure the doctrine of God, and this initial restructuring is the beginning of our teaching on the Trinity.

Certain issues are pivotal here.

1. It has become imperative to study and restudy the Jewish base of Jesus himself, of his immediate followers, and of the New Testament writings. James H. Charlesworth's recent book, *Jesus within Judaism*,<sup>9</sup> presents both a survey of this contemporary research and his own discussion on its christological implications. The Jewish theological way of thinking is vitally necessary to understand the scriptures: we must read them with Jewish eyes and hear them with Jewish ears. In the matter of trinitarian thought this is imperative.
2. The connection between trinitarian thought and christology is paramount. Too often, one might even write an entire book on the Trinity and only in passing allude to Jesus. It was the Jesus event which gave rise to the theologizing on God as Trinity. A trinitarian God (not the unicity and otherness of the Jewish understanding of God) allows for the incarnation of God. Trinity and christology: the one explains the other.

<sup>9</sup>James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988); pp. 9-29 of this volume offer us a brief overview of the recent research on the historical Jesus. Since the 1940s we possess hundreds of documents that are pre-70 and Jewish. This material, new to the scholarship on Jesus, compels us to rethink the Jewishness of Jesus: his own history, his thinking, his preaching, his life.

As we know so well, the rethinking of the Jesus event in Jewish terms came to a rather abrupt halt, particularly with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70. Both the rabbinic Jewish leadership and the Jewish leadership of the Jesus movement left Jerusalem at this time; the rabbinic leadership moved to Jamnia, on the coast, and Antioch became, for a while, a major center for the Jewish Jesus movement.

When the Jesus community moved out to the Hellenistic world, the theologizing which they had begun tended to become—gradually of course—less and less Jewish and more and more Greek. However, the Jesus community encountered in the Hellenistic world a situation similar to the one which they had found in their own Jewish world. The Hellenistic doctrine of God stressed the otherness of God and, in a very strong and philosophical way, the total spiritualness of God. From Platonic, Neo-Platonic and Stoic sources, the varying religions of this Hellenistic world perceived that God was totally spiritual (*logos*) and that matter (*hyle*) was more a prison, a cave, a source of invalidity.<sup>10</sup>

Plotinus, who lived later of course, represents a sort of apogee of this kind of thinking. For Plotinus, God was totally other, the silence, the completely spiritual. In this view of God, any incarnation can only be seen as a return to a prison, to a cave, to an invalid existence. No wonder, as we read in Acts (17:32), that the Greeks laughed at Paul when he spoke about the resurrection of the body. A resurrection of the body was, in their minds, a reincarnation into the drudgery of this life. Only a *logos*-life, devoid of matter, was, in their mind, worth living.

Our early followers of Jesus, called more and more—after

<sup>10</sup>Cf. J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969); A. D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1964); R. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1982); Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1983); and W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).



the year 70—"Christians" and "Church," were caught between a rock and a hard place: on the one hand, their own Jewish teachings on God left no room for an incarnation of Jesus, and on the other hand, the Hellenistic teachings on God left no room for such an incarnation either. Once again, it was their task to rethink the very notion of God in a way that would allow for the incarnation of Jesus, and it was this process of rethinking God against the background of Christology that resulted in the third-, fourth-, and fifth-century teachings on Trinity. The task was clear: to formulate a concept or theology of God open enough to allow for God-made-man. If this could not be accomplished, the very center of the Christian faith was invalidated.<sup>11</sup>

At first, as we know, there was at times a twofold presentation of God, which one finds, for instance, in the Logos-Christology of the apologists, in which the *logos* of Jesus (*logos* being a basically Stoic term) was not a human *logos* but the divine Logos, the *Logos hegemon*. With these apologists, however, the Spirit's role was quite vague. It would be hard to say that the Spirit was necessarily considered divine. In Spirit-Christology, Jesus was theologically presented as one filled with the Spirit of God. This conjunction of God (the Creator-Father) and Spirit in the humanity of Jesus maintained the incarnation but not quite in a trinitarian way. Only with Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Chalcedon (451), do we truly have an official, orthodox teaching of the Trinity.

Up to the year 500, most of the Fathers of the Church developed their thinking on the Trinity within this christologi-

<sup>11</sup>Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (3d ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965), 87: "The doctrine of one God, the Father and creator, formed the background and indisputable premiss of the Church's faith. Inherited from Judaism, it was her bulwark against pagan polytheism. . . . The problem for theology was to integrate with it, intellectually, the fresh data of the specifically Christian revelation. Reduced to their simplest, these were the convictions that God had made Himself known in the Person of Jesus, the Messiah, raising Him from the dead and offering salvation to men through Him, and that He had poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Church."

cal and apologetic framework. This is true both for Basil of Cappadocia, who presented the Trinity from the standpoint of *perichoresis*, and also Augustine, who presented the Trinity from a rather psychological way. In these patristic discussions on the Trinity, we find again and again confrontations with christological heresies: docetism, arianism and sabelianism. Or we find a struggle again macedonianism, which was a heresy that denied the divinity of the Spirit. In this centuries-long argument with heretics, the very words we today use so easily for trinitarian thought were developed: *persona*, *hypostasis*, *natura*, *physis*, *substantia*, *hypokeimenon*, *essentia*, *ousia*. None of these terms were ready-made or ready-to-hand; most of them were not acceptable terms at first, but only as the early Church struggled to maintain the divinity of Jesus did these terms come to be seen as "orthodox." This long and complicated history of Christology provided the Church with its trinitarian terminology. Again, in the theologizing of the first five hundred years of Christian thought, the link between Christology and Trinity is evident.

### 3. THE FOUR APPROACHES TO TRINITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Between 500 and 1500, however, there were four different, though interrelated, emphases which theologians used to formulate their ideas on the Trinity.<sup>12</sup> These four *foci* are:

- a. The Trinity explained to combat heresy—a continuation of the earlier patristic approach;
- b. The Trinity explained as God *ad intra*;
- c. The Trinity in creation and history *ad extra*;
- d. The Trinity and the human natural mind: whether the Trinity can be known by natural reason or only by revelation.

<sup>12</sup>See my article, "Trinitarian Doctrine [500-1500]," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (N.Y.: C. Scribner's Sons, 1989). The material in the succeeding paragraphs is based on the research developed in this article.

*a. The first approach: the apologetic approach*

The formulation of the Trinity in an effort to combat christological heresies, which was already the approach to the theology of God in the patristic period, continues on in the early and late middle ages and can be found in such authors and works as Fulgentius of Ruspe (532), the so-called sixth-century Athanasian Creed; the sermons and letters of Columban (615), Boniface (754), Leander of Seville (600) and Isidore of Seville (633); plus in many more. The Trinity, in their writings, disproved any adoptionism, particularly that early medieval form of adoptionism which had been spread by Martin of Braga (578/580) and Felix of Urgel. Even the controversy with Photios over the *filioque* clause of the creed was christological at root. Many of the medieval scholars were brought into this discussion: Ratramnus of Corbie (868), Hrabanus Maurus (856), and Anselm of Bec (1109). The list could go on, but throughout this strand of medieval writing, Trinity and Christology go hand in hand. Key terms, such as adoptionism and *filioque*, clue us into this connection between trinitarian thought and christological thought.

*b. The second approach: the Trinity in a theology ad intra*

This particular strand of thinking was begun in a strong way by Boethius (542) with his *Liber quomodo Trinitas Unus est Deus ac non tres dii ad Quintum Aurelium Memmianum Symmachum* and his other volume *Utrum Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus de divinitate substantialiter praedicentur?* In these volumes, Boethius argues philosophically and sets the stage for a more profound appreciation of the Trinity than one finds in the apologetic approach. Already, Aristotle, who had described God as the unmoved Mover, asked the following questions: How is there something other than God? How is there creation? What moved God, the unmoved Mover, to create? (We see, in the very posing of these questions, the spiritual otherness of God, so prevalent in both Hellenic and Hellenistic thought.) To answer them, Aristotle had taught that creation of material things occurred from all eternity. There was an eternity of matter, not in the

sense that matter itself was divine or of itself eternal, but that God eternally created material things. In this way Aristotle was able to allow for both movable things as well as for God, the immovable Mover.

Boethius presented this more philosophical line of thought and, on the basis of both creation and incarnation, asked: what is there in God—who is totally happy, totally perfect, totally unneeded of anything else—which might allow for both creation and incarnation? Creation, as we know from Genesis, was not eternal; the incarnation, itself, took place at a specific period of time. We have, in all of this, the issues of the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the temporal, the necessary and the contingent.

This philosophical line of thinking, namely a consideration of God *ad intra*, was continued by Richard of St. Victor, by Peter Abelard, by Gilbert de la Porée, by Alexander of Hales, by Bonaventure, by Duns Scotus, by Albert the Great and by Thomas Aquinas.

Richard of St. Victor (1173) in many ways set the tone for the medieval approach, particularly for the Franciscan school of medieval thought. For Richard, God was seen as love, but he went on to say that self-love at its highest provides for an *alter ego*. Mutual love at its highest and most unselfish level requires yet a third. Mutual love which includes a third is neither private nor jealous but gladly invites others to share whatever is loved. In other words, real love can go beyond self, beyond an *alter ego*, to a third, a fourth, a fifth, etc. Mutual love, the *ad intra* love, is capable of an *ad extra* love. It can be a creating love. Of its very nature, *ad intra*, it is an outgoing love. Even if God never created, God would be this kind of love. Even if there had never been an incarnation, God would have been this kind of love. God would have been Trinity even without creation, even without an incarnation. We may say this rather facetiously today, but it was and is not an easy position, either logically or philosophically, to reach.

What these authors are attempting to grapple with is this: the Trinity cannot be applied to God simply because of

something external, such as creation or, even, an incarnation. This would make the Trinity merely an economic Trinity, not an immanent Trinity. Rather, one must consider God in relation to God alone for the key to trinitarian thought. This key, Richard of St. Victor—and after him many others—found in the very understanding of God as love, *summa caritas*. It is only on this basis that one then moves to God *ad extra*.

*c. The third approach: God or Trinity ad extra*

Rupert of Deutz (1129), in his *De sancta Trinitate et operibus eius*, represents the most comprehensive effort in this line of thinking. Not since Augustine's *City of God* had the Christian world seen such a panoramic theological work. His approach to the Trinity influenced other medieval scholars as well, particularly in the medieval doctrine of divine exemplarism. If God is Trinity in the very nature of God, then the reflection of a triune God within all of creation and each and every aspect of creation, including the incarnation, should be present. One should be able to find the trinitarian mark of authorship in every creative endeavor. This is exemplarism. But in itself it makes no sense, unless first we are able to see God as Trinity *ad intra*. For Christians, however, one does not begin with creation, but with the incarnation, which is the greatest *ad extra* aspect of God. One moves from Christology to creation, to God. This is simply the preliminary movement. Once a Christian theologian has studied both the incarnation and creation, he or she must ask: how is an all-perfect God able to create and to become incarnate? This second movement is far more profound, and it is a movement from the Trinity *ad intra* to the Trinity *ad extra*.

*d. The fourth approach: the Trinity and natural reason.*

This discussion came at the end of the medieval *ad extra* discussion, almost on the eve of the Reformation. It originates from the notion of exemplarism: If God as Trinity can be seen in creation, then can one not say that human rea-

son by itself, without revelation, can come to some understanding of the Trinity? It was from this discussion that Unitarianism, at least in its roots as a visible group, began to arise. For our present purposes, this fourth approach need only be mentioned but left untreated.

This has been a long and meandering historical exposition, but it tells us clearly that we cannot simply call something trinitarian because we name Father, Son and Spirit. To go back to our initial examples, the prayer of absolution in the renewed rite of penance is not trinitarian simply through its naming of the Father, Jesus and the Spirit. It is trinitarian because it speaks of God, who can love even outside the very nature of God. Not the naming of three persons, but the particular way of understanding of God as love makes this prayer of absolution, and the forgiveness of sin which it celebrates, trinitarian.

In the second example, that of the prayer exalting Mary, again we must say that it is trinitarian, but not just because the prayer mentions Father, Son and Spirit. Even with all its poetry, the prayer is not trinitarian merely in and through this naming. If one does not see Mary exemplifying a particular way of love which belongs to God alone, then Mary is not connected to the Trinity. Mary can be called trinitarian, if we see in her not just God but also a particular approach or doctrine or theology of what God means.

#### 4. THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARIOLOGY TO TRINITARIAN THOUGHT

When one considers the theology of Trinity, one realizes that it is not adequate to call a marian work or a marian title trinitarian simply because Mary is named as the daughter of God the Father, the mother of God the Son and the spouse of the Holy Spirit. Rather, what one says about Mary from a theological standpoint is, first and foremost, a statement about God. It is a *theological* statement. *Magnificat anima mea Deum*. My soul magnifies God. In every mariological doctrine—Mary's motherhood, the immaculate conception,

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the assumption—the primary statement is a God-statement. Calling Mary *theotokos* is making a statement primarily about God and secondarily about Mary. When one speaks of the immaculate conception, one is speaking primarily about God's action, secondarily about Mary. When one professes belief in the assumption of our Lady, one is professing belief in God, and only in a secondary and relative way is one making any kind of statement about Mary.

So, too, with the Trinity. When one conjoins trinitarian thought to a marian concept, the primary focus and statement is about God, not about Mary. In this case, we are saying that in Mary we are able to see an *ad intra* Trinity exemplified in an *ad extra* Mary. In saying this, we are marvelling at the fact that God is *summa caritas*; the fact that God loves Mary is relativized. We are proclaiming in this trinitarian expression about Mary a truth about God, one which we will find exemplified as well in the incarnation and in all of creation.

All the official doctrines and dogmas of the Church are article of faith, but Christian faith never finds its conclusion or its focus in a creature. A dogma of the Church must center one's faith on God and God alone. The dogmas of the *theotokos*, of the immaculate conception and of the assumption are basically theological and only secondarily mariological. René Laurentin's book, *The Question of Mary*, forthrightly addresses the crest or crisis of contemporary mariological thought.<sup>13</sup> Early on, Laurentin mentions the maximalists and the minimalists, but he sees this kind of categorizing as superficial. The divergence, he concludes, seems to center on those who, in his language, are "dominated by love" and those who are "dominated by a concern not to falsify the true facts."<sup>14</sup> I would suggest that the major issue lies in a

<sup>13</sup>R. Laurentin, *The Question of Mary* (trans. I. G. Pidoux, Pref. by H. Graef; N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), esp. pp. 57-65, in which the author presents, title by title, the various statements about Mary. Nowhere, however, does he really come to grips with the issue of God as the basis of these statements.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

different sector than Laurentin proposed. The major issue is to see the God-statement as clearly as possible. Once this is done, one will see—again, as clearly as possible—the mariological statement.

Another question related to dogmas of the Church, that is, to major faith statements of our Christian faith, is this: When we profess a dogma of faith, we are indeed saying something about God—this is the primary focus; but are we not saying something as well about ourselves? Is there not an anthropological aspect to every dogma? Karl Rahner notes that when we pick up the scriptures to find out about Mary, we are really picking up a Church book. We are reading and hearing the scriptures out of the context of the Church community. Other human beings, other Christian generations of men and women, speak to us through these scriptures. Even the reading of the old and new testaments has something anthropological about it. Rahner, however, continues:

Before we can ask in detail, however, what the Church tells us about Mary, in her preaching based on her own understanding of her belief, we can and must ask first, how it is that Mary figures at all in our faith, in the mind of the Church, and the preaching of the faith. Has faith anything at all to say about Mary?<sup>15</sup>

Faith speaks about God. Everything else—no matter how beautiful, how fascinating, how mysterious, how exciting—is marginated. Everything else exists on the margin of the creed. Given this, Rahner notes, we must ask about theology and man/woman.

Only when we have answered this question [about the theology of man/woman] can we boldly, confidently and joyfully enter the domain of faith and theology, in order . . . to say something about the human being who is the holiest, most au-

<sup>15</sup>K. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord: Theological Meditations* (trans. W. J. O'Hara; N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1963), 22.



thentic, and happiest being, to say something of her who is blessed among women.<sup>16</sup>

As we know, Rahner proceeds to talk about both the humanity of Jesus and that of the Virgin Mary as exemplars of all that God intended when God created human life. "A doctrine of God involves a doctrine of man, and, as part of it, a doctrine of Mary."<sup>17</sup> Even more than this, he writes, when we praise her as blessed and holy, we are also, ultimately, saying something about ourselves.<sup>18</sup> When he proceeds to discuss the fundamental idea of mariology, Rahner asks first of all: What is Christianity? From our Christian revelation, we learn what humanity really is, and it is precisely this ideal of the perfect human, the perfect Christian, which helps us to see Mary.

Perfect Christianity must consist in receiving this gift of the eternal God, God himself, in grace-given freedom, with body and soul and all the powers of the whole being, with all a man is and has, all he does and suffers, so that this receiving of God takes up his entire nature and his whole life-history into the eternal life of God. Perfect Christianity must mean that our public and our private acts, what appears publicly before the world in its history, and what takes place in the inner depths of conscience, perfectly coincide and correspond.<sup>19</sup>

If all of this is what perfect Christianity means, then one must say that Mary is the actual realization of the perfect Christian. And in this precise way she is an image of what we, too, should be. A statement about Mary says something primarily about God, that is true; but secondarily, every statement about Mary says something about us as well. Her immaculate conception says something about God, on the one hand, and about each of our conceptions, on the other; her virginal birthing says something about God, on the one

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 36.

hand, and about our human birthing, on the other; her assumption into heaven says something basically about God, on the one hand, but also about our dying and rising as well. So, too, when we speak about Mary and the Trinity, the statement speaks about the very nature of God *ad intra* and the way God loves, with no relationship at all either to creation or to incarnation; it also speaks about the way such an *ad intra* triune God might love *ad extra*. In this secondary way, the Trinity tells us something about Jesus, the incarnate God; about creation generally; about Mary, a most beloved creature; and about us. In Jesus, in Mary, in creation—we begin to see (a) what God is in his internal nature and (b) what we are and might be.

## 5. LITURGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Frank Norris mentions that in the eucharistic liturgy, when we praise God for the holy men and women who have preceded us, the saints, we list in a place of primacy, Mary, the Virgin Mother of God: "first member of the Church, model of Christian discipleship and model of worship through and with and in her son."<sup>20</sup> Mary in the liturgy is an ecclesial person, that is, a person united to a community of Christian men and women gathered to bless God for God's action (*berekah*), to thank God for God's action (eucharist), and to proclaim God to one another (*kerygma*).

In the introduction of *Marialis cultus*, we read that devotion to Mary is "rightly called 'Christian,' because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father."<sup>21</sup> At this stage of the document, the mentioning of Father, Son and Spirit is more perspectival than theological. However, Paul VI does place devotion to Mary (a) within the Church, (b) in connection with Christ and (c) fo-

<sup>20</sup>F. Norris, "Mary in the Liturgy," in *Menlo Papers: Mary* (Menlo Park, Calif.: St. Patrick's Seminary, 1981), 16.

<sup>21</sup>Paul VI, *Marialis cultus* (Eng. trans; Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1974).

cused on God. Both polarities, God and human beings, are involved in the Church's devotion to Mary. In section one of this document, the pope enumerates the honoring of Mary in the revised Roman liturgy. He begins with the Advent/Christmas cycle, a cycle which focuses on the incarnation and which is only understandable, as we have mentioned above, on the basis of a God who is *ad intra* trinitarian. The fundamental focus of this season is not on Jesus nor on Mary, but on God (nos. 2-5). Two solemnities of Mary are connected to this cycle: the Immaculate Conception and the Divine Motherhood (no. 6). In his discussion of both of these, Paul VI mentions the two poles: the feast of the annunciation, as "a culminating moment in the salvific dialogue between God and man," and the feast of the assumption, which "sets before the eyes of the Church and of all mankind the image and the consoling proof of the fulfillment of their final hope, namely, that this full glorification is the destiny of all those whom Christ has made His brothers [and sisters]" (no. 6). These four solemnities "mark with the highest liturgical rank the main dogmatic truths concerning the handmaid of the Lord" (no. 6). It is, therefore, in these feasts and their celebration, both at eucharist and in the hours, that one should see the depth of statements about Mary, and in those statements, the depths of the Church's teaching about God and about men and women.

In part two of this document, the Pope mentions that devotion to Mary should clearly express the "Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them" (no. 25). Worship is offered to God, but not to an understanding of God as one might find in the Old Testament or in Hellenistic religions. Christian worship is offered to an all-perfect and all-loving *ad intra* God who is, nonetheless, able to create and to become incarnate. Because of the centrality of Jesus, the christological plays a major role, but one that is secondary and derivative, in many ways, to the inner life of God. A very similar stress is found in Paul VI's emphasis on the role of the Spirit (no. 26). This presence of the Spirit indicates that what one primarily celebrates and

bles in any and every liturgy is the action of God, in these instances the action of God *ad extra*.

It might also be noted, but only in passing since this is not the major theme of this study, that Paul VI makes mention of the feminine dimension of our anthropological pole (nos. 34-37). Mariological devotion and mariological presentations must speak not only to human beings, but also to "sexuated" human beings, and, in particular, must address today the meaning and vocation of women.

In his conclusion, which can make our own, Paul VI says that Mary indicates to us God's own plan in Christ for the salvation of all men and women. To some degree this has already taken place in her (no. 57). Like a new Janus, she points to her origin: a trinitarian God who is able to create and become incarnate; and she points to all men and women, for she shows us what perfect Christianity is all about. Mary is then both an image of a trinitarian God and an image of an incarnated creation, marked intrinsically by this same trinitarian God.

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