

Mariae Advocatae Causa: The Marian Issue in the Church Today PETER DAMIAN M. FEHLNER, F.I. (1931-2018)¹

I have chosen to entitle this final, concluding conference of our symposium, the “Cause of Mary, Advocate”. Etymologically, cause is a legal term. If its use to summarize our discussion of the mystery of Mary Immaculate and of her unique place in the divine counsels governing the economy of salvation retains a legal scent, that is quite intentional. For the cause of Mary in the economy of salvation: the place she occupies from eternity in the divine counsels of salvation and the crucial role she fulfils so perfectly in bringing these counsels to pass at the Incarnation, on Calvary and in the Church, as well as the recognition of the part she plays by the Church and by every soul redeemed and delivered from sin by her Saviour-Son, viz., by those whose salvation in fact hinges upon the successful prosecution of that cause, are very much today a matter of intense dispute. Those who would promote her cause and those who, either violently oppose it or who just as adamantly want to hear nothing of it, are locked in battle.

That battle for souls is very much at the centre of what is commonly called the “crisis of faith” in the Church, in times past, what was called her “falling into ruin”. “Crisis of faith”, like the older phrase “falling into ruin” is used analogically, not univocally. From the point of view of the “enemy” the crisis of faith is the fruit of that cause understood as the case (the original sense of *causa* in Latin) of Mary and of her children: viz., of putting Mary and her supporters on trial. From Mary’s vantage point as Advocate that crisis is but an aspect of a process of discernment, sorting out “the thoughts of many hearts”: for or against Christ in view of their willingness to be or not to be children of Mary, above all at the foot of the Cross, therefore children of the Immaculate Coredemptrix (cf. Lk 2: 34-35).

Apropos a very similar situation at the time of the Protestant reform the great English convert and apologist, G. K. Chesterton, made this

¹ Father Peter Damian M. Fehlner, O.F.M., Conv. (1931-2018) delivered this address at the 2005 International Symposium on Marian Co-redemption, held in Fatima, Portugal. At the time, Father Fehlner was a member of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculata, an institute of pontifical right. He would return to his community of Conventual Franciscan in 2016 before his death in 2018.

observation: When in the midst of all the din of controversy, with rights and wrongs on all sides, there was heard the mocking and demeaning of the “Virgin Mother mild”, at that moment one distinctly began “to hear the little hiss that only comes from hell”. (cf. his *A Party Question: Collected Works*, vol. XI). In one form or another the entire history of the Church has always been marked by this controversy, an aspect of the battle between the Woman and the dragon, sketched so accurately in the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse. Recalling that heavenly scene revealed to the beloved disciple and apostle especially consecrated to Mary as her child by the Saviour Himself should remind us of another aspect of this cause of Mary. She is not in the first instance an object of legal disputation either in the Church or outside. She is rather in her own right and before all others an Advocate, our Advocate in the final settlement of all claims bearing on who owns us: Christ or the anti-Christ. And her intervention or less is the decisive factor. Against that Advocate the Prince of this world and his brood, heavenly or earthly, avail nothing.

That aspect of the enmity between the Woman and the serpent foretold in the Protoevangelium reveals in a special way both the distinctive tactics and weak points of “the liar and murderer from the beginning” (cf. Jn 8: 44). He has a certain sophisticated cleverness enabling him to excel in prevarication and seduction of men and so take charge of this world, but he has neither the courage nor the means to confront directly the invincible Woman, the Mother of Truth, which will make you free, viz., from sin (cf. Jn 8: 32; Mt 1: 21). The dragon can only attack the Woman to the extent he can persuade her children, the “rest of the brethren of her First-born” (cf. Apoc 12: 17), therefore His friends (cf. Jn 15: 12-17), that she is not the *Mater et Magistra Veritatis*, and so her “cause” is either irrelevant or downright counterproductive: respectively the position of those indignantly indifferent to it or violently opposed to it.

If, to the contrary, her children are convinced that she is just this: “Pre-eminent Member of the Church” because “super-eminent” as the original Latin of the Council indicates (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 53), the dragon’s anti-cause is finished. For, other than sensational “bluff”, the dragon has no other effective means of blocking her, but these, so long as She makes our cause Hers. The last great miracle of the sun here at Fatima, 13 Oct., 1917, should be more than enough to prove beyond argument: 1) that real control of the “forces” of nature is in the hands of the heavenly Woman, the Immaculate Virgin, the Queen of the Angels, with Michael

commanding the hosts of heaven in her service, and 2) that the actual powers of the common enemy: of Her and of us, do not extend beyond the theatrical, or perhaps not even the melodramatic, of producing a great deal of noise, of smoke, of unpleasantness, effective only as a means to “convince” us we ought to accept his “philosophy of life”, the one peddled to our first parents and in every seduction to sin, especially against chastity and humility. Mary is indeed the strong Woman foretold in Proverbs 31. She is indeed the courageous Mother “joining a man’s heart to a woman’s thought” (cf. II Mach 7: 21) sustaining her sons in their victorious martyrdom, as she once supported her first-born Son on Calvary. On Oct. 17, 1917, St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe with six confreres founded the Militia of the Immaculate in Rome. About two weeks later the arch-enemy of the Immaculate made his counter-move and set up an anti-Marian militia in the once Marian Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin. In this flash, in this opening of the heavens, we are able to glimpse the true state of affairs in the Church and in the world: the Woman is always ahead of the dragon. All his plans and tactics are constrained within limits closely defined by the systematic intervention of this mysterious, but for us so wonderful personage.

One might ask: 1) why, and 2) how is her cause bound up with ours? The answer to the “why” is: because she consented to be and is the Theotokos, the Mother of God on whom she imposed the name, Jesus: God (Yahweh – He Who Is) Saviour-our Salvation. Therefore, the answer to the “how” is: because in making God’s will hers, She has made our cause Her cause (cf. Lk 1: 38): our salvation, our liberation from the prince of this world is her cause, because that is the Father’s will, this is how he has loved the world so much that he could not love it more: he commanded his Son to be born of the Woman to save us in the most perfect way possible in any possible world, however perfect, viz., in sacrificing Himself for Her and at Her request and so through Her for us who are her children. Or with St. Maximilian we might also say: God has saved us because this is what Mary asked him to do (cf. Jn 2: 1-12). In a word, she is “Our Advocate”, our Defender at the bar of eternal justice, and the Defender of our faith in *via*. Since Pentecost the Church has always believed this, because in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, she is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, the other Paraclete (Advocate), “incomparably” beautiful. This is why Bl. John Duns Scotus calls her the “perfect fruit of a perfect redemption by a most perfect Redeemer” (cf. III Sent., d. 3, q. 1). This is

why St. Thomas (cf. S.T. I, q. 25, a. 4) calls the Divine Maternity (together with the Incarnation and our Salvation) one of the three “quasi-infinites”.

How the Church on this Marian basis is constituted so as to operate efficaciously and fruitfully to the parousia, is definitively portrayed in the Cenacle on Pentecost: the Mother of Jesus in the midst of the Apostles and the faithful awaiting the promised Spirit of holiness and truth. There is a clear parallel here with the scene in the holy House of Nazareth on the day of the Annunciation, where the Virgin full of grace and of the Spirit is shown to be the key conduit whereby that Spirit will anoint the flesh to be assumed hypostatically by the Son of God. So, too, throughout that historical process whereby the Church, the People of God and Body of Christ is anointed in preparation for her final glorification on the day of Christ’s final coming, the same Mediatrix of all graces: because Theotokos and victorious Coredeptrix, occupies centre stage. Any deviation from this structural arrangement necessarily tends to paralyse the Church. Or any “decentralizing” of the Spouse of the Holy Spirit in the Church, any minimizing of her role as Immaculate Mediatrix because Mother Coredeptrix must necessarily initiate a process of deconstruction and crisis within the Church and world. She is so effective an Advocate, because like the Holy Spirit she not only intercedes with her Son, but intervenes directly in the economy of salvation to realize that holiness made possible to the Church by the redemptive sacrifice of her Son.

The reason why the Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit can exercise such a mediatory role in the Church and so make possible the multiple forms of ecclesial mediation (institutional-sacramental and charismatic) of the Church as a kind of extension of the Virgin-Mother in the order of grace is to be found in that sanctificatory mediation exercised by her in the Incarnation: she made (in the words of St. Francis) the Lord of majesty our brother (St. Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, 3; 7; 9). In giving birth to the Son of God, viz., in bearing a divine person, the Immaculate Virgin made the Word, eternally consubstantial with the Father consubstantial with us (cf. Leo the Great, Letter 31), and so that nature was sanctified in Him and in each of His members sanctified by a rebirth similar to His Birth of the Virgin. This dual mediation of the Virgin (respectively in the objective and subjective redemption) makes possible both 1) the victimhood of that Son (in actu primo et secundo) and 2) our rebirth as adoptive, but truly sons of the Father. That is why her maternal presence at the heart of the Church, as the recently deceased successor of St. Peter,

Pope John Paul II, said, is more crucial than that of the Pope himself. That presence is nothing else but her maternal mediation. She can thus mediate because as Virgin-Mother and Co-redemptrix actively sharing her Redeemer Son's victory of the Cross she has been assumed body and soul into heaven and there gloriously crowned Queen. All this, because she is the Immaculate Conception.

This is our great good fortune, that she who was so loved by the Blessed Trinity, should also have loved us. That is why we have a Redeemer and a perfect redemption.

Now, this is why we should quite consciously and deliberately make her cause our cause. It is what Our Lord expects, as he made so clear to the seers of Fatima. The triumph of the Immaculate Heart must be a primary goal of the Church. That triumph is the only way the victory over the serpent can be made total and final: in the immaculatizing of the Church: *sine macula et sine ruga* as that is clearly formulated by St. Paul (Eph 5: 27). At the request of His Father and His Mother Christ died that the Church might share, not just any level of holiness, but the most perfect level, that of the superabundance of grace (cf. Rom 5: 15) in that Virgin whose name is "Full of grace" (cf. Lk 1: 28; Eph 1: 4) But it is also true that when Catholics fail to believe this enthusiastically and Church policy fails to be articulated about this absolute Marian priority, the devil is well on his way to sowing the bad seed successfully and harvesting a bumper crop.

This is also the point where we note how the cause of Mary, instead of being the Saviour's primary, active instrument of our salvation, has been made an object of acrimonious debate, the moment when instead of the axiom: *de Maria numquam satis*, the life of the Church is conducted as though the axiom read: *de Maria numquam*, the moment when, with the wisdom of the Cross (cf. I Cor 1-2) and the prudence of the little ones who have made themselves children of Mary (cf. Mt 11: 25 ff.), the "little hiss that only comes from hell" can plainly be discerned. This is how the efficacy of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus in souls and in the Church is negated. This is also why the cause of "Our Advocate" must in theory and in practice enjoy absolute priority for the entire Church, for all the baptized, for all who yearn for salvation, because only thus is the primacy of Jesus rendered absolute in our hearts and works. Instead, her cause seems presently, in theory and in practice, to be on trial, the object of doubt, and the subject of censure by theologians and of silencing by ecumenists,

precisely under her title of Immaculate Coredeptrix and Mediatrix of all grace.

This hardly corresponds to the normative vision of the Church presented to us at Pentecost and in the first assemblies of the believers to celebrate the Eucharist, “one heart and soul” (Acts 4: 32) about the Mother of God, Super-eminent Member of the Church (Lumen Gentium, n. 53), because Immaculate, preservatively Redeemed and so Mother Coredeptrix.

Hence, to the degree that the serpent can successfully persuade us to continue to debate the issue: whether the Church and all her members should publicly acknowledge the universal mediation of Mary, rather than resolve it in her favour, to that degree he has staved off final defeat. Only this, absence of a positive conclusion in the form of a dogma, not a negative judgment, is all he needs.

Conversely, once such a public acknowledgment has been made, the entire tide of battle will be reversed from what looks like an advancing crisis in the Church with no end in sight, to what not only looks like, but is what St. Paul describes as “being snatched from the jaws of hell and transported into the kingdom of light” (cf. Mt 16: 17; Col 1: 13). *Roma locuta, causa finita*. The cause “finished” will be that of Mary as total victory of the Church; but the cause finished will also be that of the devil in total defeat.

Obviously, such an analysis supposes that the mystery of Marian mediation in the Church is basic to an understanding of her history. St. Bonaventure says as much in his famous *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, c. 14, n. 17, when he writes: “In paradise there were two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thus is signalled how in all the mysteries of Scripture are explained Christ with His body [the Church] and the anti-Christ with his body [the anti-church]” The conflict between Cain and Abel, says the Seraphic Doctor citing St. Augustine (*City of God*), typologically describes the battle, initiated in the garden of Eden over the absolute primacy of Jesus and His Immaculate Mother, but continued in virtue of the redemptive dispositions of the Lord manifested in the prophecy in Gen 3: 15 of a Redeemer and Coredeptrix, possible because of the joint predestination of Jesus and Mary. This is the battle consummated on Calvary, perpetuated in the Eucharistic sacrifice, with the

offering of the Last Abel by the New Eve, the Real Isaac by the First Believer, prefigured by Abraham, “our father in faith”.

In this regard the Seraphic Doctor tells us (*Collationes in Hexaemeron*, c. 13, n. 20) that in one way or another Mary is to be discovered in every verse of Scripture because of the unique role she plays as *Mediatrix* in this great drama: in giving birth to the price of our redemption, in offering on Calvary the price of our redemption, in being in the Church absolute proprietress of the price of our redemption (*protulit, persolvit, possedet pretium redemptionis nostrae*: cf. *Collationes in septem donis Spiritus Sancti*, c. 6). If not verbally, in fact the Seraphic Doctor has here described the universal mediation of Mary in virtue of her Immaculate Conception at the moment of the Incarnation (divine Maternity), at the moment of redemption consummated on Calvary (coredemption), in the time of the sanctification of the Church and believers (mediation of all grace).

The victorious prosecution of the struggle in the glorification of the Church is accomplished in a certain order and according to a certain arrangement of the persons involved: of Christ, of Mary, of the Church and of her members. St. Bonaventure formulates this order thus: the Virgin Mother is our *Mediatrix* with Christ as Christ is our *Mediator* with the Father (cf. *III Sent.*, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2). This is because our only way to the Saviour is through her by whom He first came and continues to come to us (cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae I*, 70). For the Saviour-God she is “gate to earth”; for us sinners, singly and assembled, she is “gate to heaven”. Or still more practically the Seraphic Doctor tells us that the praises of Mary during Our Lord’s public ministry, when he was accused of being in league with Beelzebub, prince of devils, both by that good woman and by our Lord, are intended to reveal to us how the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Mary are in net contrast with the opposite seven vices of Satan in the enemies of Christ leading them to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. From this horrendous slavery there is no liberation except through the Virgin full of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*, II, 58-63).

Practically, this translates thus: we can only know and understand Jesus and the Church and participate efficaciously in the battle between Christ and the anti-Christ to the degree that 1) the Immaculate Coredemptrix-Mediatrix of all grace is operative in the Church and in the lives of each of us; and that 2) we consciously and willingly and deliberately and unconditionally cooperate with her. This is what is meant by total

consecration to the Immaculate Heart. The attempt to serve the Church and to “know the surpassing love of Christ Jesus” (cf. Eph 3:19) with neglect of the second condition and worse with grudging acknowledgment or even express repudiation of her maternal mediation can only aggravate an already advanced crisis of faith and introduce those so living more and more, not to Christ, but to the anti-Christ and his body.

We have enjoyed hearing over the past few days a wonderful overview of the mystery of Marian coredemption in theology and in the history of theology. This stupendous mystery of the Immaculate Coredemptrix on Calvary and at the Altar (Arnold of Chartres) is the very centre on which turn all her other activities as Mediatrix in the Church: Advocate and Mother in so unique and powerful and indispensable a way. In a comprehensive way this overview is a description of the Immaculate Virgin’s precise place in that fundamental strategy designed in heaven to make possible our effective cooperation in that plan of battle. In a word her preservative redemption in view of the foreseen merits of her Son and Saviour is the active, personal instrument of our liberative redemption and cooperation. The coredemptive mediation of Mary Immaculate, foretold by Simeon in the prophecy of the sword to pierce the Mother’s heart enables us to discern “the thoughts of many hearts” (cf. Lk, 2: 35), viz., of their faithful cooperation or want of cooperation in filling up what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ for the Church (cf. Col 1: 24). What is true of individuals is true also of communities.

Filling up what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ for the Church might be summarized in a single phrase: total consecration to the Immaculate Heart. The grounds for this observation are to be found in the New Testament as well as in many private revelations accorded to the Saints, precisely in two shining examples: St. Joseph (cf. Mt 1: 18-25) and St. John the Evangelist (cf. Jn 19: 25-27). The virginal spouse of the Immaculate illustrates what that consecration to the Immaculate Heart means in reference to the Mediatrix of all grace as Theotokos. The beloved disciple represents what that consecration or filling up what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ for the Church means in reference to the Mediatrix of all grace as Coredemptrix. In both cases consecration centres on the redemptive sacrifice of the Son of God become the Son of Mary and so Son of Man (Adam), as the Redeemer pointed out on the night before He died (cf. Jn 17: 1-25). Consecration to Him and so through Him to the Father on our part is conditioned by consecration to the Immaculate and so

through Her to Christ. This is what St. Bonaventure means when he tells us that Mary is our Mediatrix with Christ as Christ is our Mediator with the Father. This, it may be noted is one of the earliest ways of recapitulating in a few words the entire theology and spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi.

Let us see how the current situation of the Church appears in the light of this mystery and in the light of the history of the Church and of the human family interpreted as St. Augustine and after him St. Bonaventure understand the guiding principle of all history embedded in the prophecy of Gen 3: 15. In the light of this approach we shall see why the counsels of those who would wish to silence all promotion of this mystery because equivocal or because something purely marginal to the Church today are erring counsels and why active promotion of this mystery must become part of the present agenda of the Church.

The fact of a Marian issue in the Church Today

I do not think very many people would seriously attempt to deny that the Church, particularly in what for many centuries has been known as the Christian West, is in a state of crisis. One may argue over the choice of term to describe a condition not exactly ideal or normative. But that the word “crisis” does describe the present condition with some degree of accuracy is generally conceded. Since most of us here are quite familiar with the components of what makes up this “crisis” it will suffice merely to list a number of the more important of these, and then go on to some more precise considerations drawn from the mystery of the Church and of its history, to enable us to go on to a second consideration: the centrality of the Marian issue as coredemptive.

Crisis as a fact of life

Whatever the formulation, an accurate delineation of what is meant by crisis in the Church (in the west) today would include the following elements:

- crisis of faith: Satanism; atheism, syncretism (“new-age”), false ecumenism, denial of truths of faith; chaotic theological formation; poor and sometimes bad catechesis and preaching;
- crisis of vocations: loss of priests, absence of new vocations, closing of seminaries, chaotic religious life; sale of monasteries and

convents, feminization of the Church and especially the clergy; use of church administrative organs to subvert belief and discipline;

- crisis of prayer and of penance: plummeting figures for Sunday Mass attendance, for confession, for praying rosary; unauthorized liturgical innovation; closure and razing of church edifices (or sale for profane use), hedonism, consumerism and Sunday commerce;
- crisis of morals: loss of sense of sin; widespread practice of contraception among Catholics; higher divorce rate among Catholics than among non-Catholics, pansexualism, nudism, pornography, filthy language, abolition of public moral standards
- crisis of social order: legal positivism, prioritisation of commerce and industry, disintegration of family, legalization of “same sex marriage” hunger, economic discrimination;
- crisis of family: infidelity, separation, divorce, co-habitation, homosexual marriage, pre-marital sex;
- crisis of life: abortion, contraception, euthanasia, war, genocide, terrorism;
- crisis of youth: drugs, sexual indulgence, pre-marital sex, sodomy, aids, pedophilia.

One may be tempted to remark that this resembles the typical laundry list of the professional moralist or apocalyptic preacher. But closer examination will bring to our attention a single factor in a sense linking all these disparate phenomena and providing the starting point not only for understanding how so tragic a situation should have come to pass in what was not so many decades ago a still flourishing part of Christendom, but also for perceiving the key to a happy resolution of the crisis. That factor is the mystery of Mary. Whether we consider the crisis of faith, or the crisis of vocations, or of prayer and penance, of morals, of the family, or of any of the many other areas that might be added, the crisis in the Church always occurs wherever and whenever the faithful, clerical and lay alike, abandon devotion to Mary, not only ritually but practically in the abandonment of chastity and humility. The recent clerical scandals afflicting the Church in the United States abundantly illustrate this observation.

Or in other words: crisis is a consequence of failure to marianize the Church, souls, and indeed the whole of human culture: not merely of the failure as a fact of life, tragic as this is especially among the clergy, but of an attempt to rationalize that failure by downgrading Mary Immaculate. Surely reflection of this kind prompted Pope Paul VI to once remark that

one can smell the smoke of Satan within the Church, a thought akin to Chesterton's about "the little hiss that only comes from Hell". In one way observation of the crisis confirms this insight. Everything has been tried for 40 years or more to resolve the situation for the prosperity of Holy Mother Church and the salvation of souls, everything but prioritising marianization, or *Totus tuus* as key to the solution: not merely by one person (the Pope) or a few religious orders, but by the entire Church, formally, consciously, deliberately, with a *Fiat* matching that of the Immaculate.

Does not this tell us something? The smoke of Satan cannot be expelled except with the support and under the direction of Mary Immaculate. But with Her that purgation can be accomplished quickly and expeditiously. We may also confirm the principle still more clearly, and in the process understand why the mystery of the coredemption today is that Marian mystery germane to this particular moment of the crisis linked to the on-going battle between the Woman and the serpent in view of the rest of His brethren (cf. Apoc 12: 17).

Historical Perspective

One of the most effective ways of testing the validity of this kind of observation on a current situation is to test it historically. Have there been in the past similar periods of crisis and was the Marian factor the crucial one in these, for better or for worse? The answer to both questions is affirmative.

Let us begin a brief survey with the rise of Christian culture in western Europe (whence the name Christian west to denote any culture anywhere organized along those lines) and the gradual leading role Latin Christianity assumed within the Church. That began not on the day of Pentecost, but long after, viz., after the conquest of the Christian-Catholic peoples of the near and middle east and north Africa by the Mohammedans and the beginning of the great schism of east and west in 1054, consummated with the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Before this period the centre of Catholic life was not in the west, but in the east and in Africa, where devotion to the Panhaghia understood as uniquely immaculate from her conception was already flourishing, but only in this form began to flourish in the west after St. Anselm of Canterbury and his secretary Eadmer. It is not unreasonable in this context to regard the well-known

Oratio 52 of St. Anselm in honour of the holiness of the Virgin “greater than which none could be in any possible world” (IDEM, *De Conceptu Virginis*, 21) as a providential statement of the key to any christianisation: the Fiat of the All Holy Theotokos. Fully expounded the Panhaghia is personally defined by her first moment, her Immaculate Conception. We need not be concerned that St. Anselm himself did not see or work out all the implications. In synthesizing the Marian tradition of the west and of St. Benedict in particular at this juncture of history, he also laid down the principle by which theoretically and practically the unique role of the Immaculate Mediatrix would come to be acknowledged or challenged in the history of the second millennium.

What brought about the shift in the religious-cultural axis from east to west? In the east a negative factor, which we might sum up in one word, the triumph of iconoclasm in the Islamic conquest of the Christian east, a conquest facilitated by the popularity among Christian believers of monophysitism, or what today we might call a Christus solus soteriology, or more exactly, a form of the “anti-Marian” syndrome, the little hiss from hell.

But that by itself would not have translated into the rise of the Christian west, even with the success of the Frankish empire in resisting the Muslim advance from Spain, or of the crusades later in halting the advance of the Muslims into Europe from the East. That required not only a completion of the work of evangelization of Europe, but also of a two-pronged renewal and consolidation of the Church in relation to the state (read “empire”) or civil power and in relation to her own holiness.

The first was carried out with striking success by a series of Popes between St. Gregory VII and Innocent III, and made the difference between a Christian order and what today is called “secularisation” (of which perhaps the Emperor Frederick II is an exceptional symbol, to be followed by Philip the Fair of France inaugurating a reversal of direction ultimately culminating in exactly this). And yet precisely during the Pontificate of Innocent III Christ himself, ordering St. Francis from the Crucifix of San Damiano in Assisi to “repair His Church because it was falling down”, would describe the condition of the Church as one of imminent collapse, viz., in crisis. Whatever did He mean? The external, or social, institutional aspect of the Church was imposing. But within that social order there existed critical situations, which if not corrected, would

lead to a rapid collapse of the entire edifice, as was made clear to Innocent III in his dream showing St. Francis holding up Lateran. The crisis of faith (Puritanism, or a western version of false soteriology) centring on a denial of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, in Italy and southern France was acute. It involved a heresy whose immediate consequences in the moral order were disastrous and according to St. Bonaventure inhuman: the radical denial of the nature of matrimony and the identification of blessedness with self-indulgence of the ego. It was already clear to the Popes that the mind-set fueling this crisis was radically anti-clerical, thriving on the publicity given to clerical scandals and clerical materialism.

That mind-set at its root was anti-Marian, more exactly specifically anti-Marian mediation. The contrast is nowhere so plainly reflected as in the confrontation of St. Bernard with Berengarius over the mystery of the Eucharist and then with Abelard over the relation of faith and reason in theology. In both instances the mysteries of faith are characterized primarily by a Marian mode because Mary is Mother of the Church, whereas denial of these mysteries turns on the rejection of this premise. The collapse of the Church threatened precisely by the failure to deal with the essential point in a practical way: the anti-Marian mentality in many places was overtaking the Marian. When St. Francis addresses the Mother of God, the fore-chosen of the Father, consecrated by him with the Son and the Holy Spirit, to be the “Full of grace”, in whom is “all Good”, he salutes her (a kind of gloss on the original Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum) as “His palace, His dwelling, His tabernacle, His vestment, His handmaid, His Mother”, this should signal to us what makes the difference between a house of God standing or falling down: the degree of identity or lack thereof with the Immaculate Temple of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s presence or absence in the Church and the life of her members is absolutely the Issue in every phase of the Church’s history.

According to numerous scholars the Protestant reformation would have occurred three centuries earlier leaving western Christian culture still born, had it not been for the stupendous work of two Marian saints, Dominic and Francis, in renewing the Church from within, and expanding it without via dynamic missionary work throughout the world. According to St. Bonaventure the mystery of Mary, our Mediatrix with Christ, as Christ is our Mediator with the Father, stands at the heart of Francis’ theology, spirituality and missionary zeal. The 13th century may have with a certain exaggeration been described during the neo-scholastic revival of

the last century as the greatest of centuries. But there is no doubt that the turn-about in the fortunes of the Church in the west during that century, and the almost unique golden age of theology is something more than a merely natural accomplishment. The hand of the Mother of the Church is evident here. It is she who made it possible for Francis to be perfectly conformed to Christ and so support the Church, for St. Dominic to be so effective a preacher and catechist among heretical factions. Her involvement will become even more so in subsequent events.

At the beginning of the next century, the 14th, we may note a series of interesting coincidences. Bl. John Duns Scotus launched his now famous theological explanation and defence of the Immaculate Conception, radical metaphysical basis of Mary's mediation as Mother of God-Coredemptrix and as Mother of the Church. And while he was in a sense risking his theological reputation for the sake of the Mother of God, he also was courageously witnessing the truth of the petrine primacy against the first serious challenges since the resolution of the investiture crisis two centuries earlier. Signs of the times! Opposition to the Immaculate Conception, at first theological, soon took a more subtle form, in the emergence of nominalism, both at the level of metaphysics (doubts about the possibility of creaturely cooperation in the work of redemption) and at the level of politics (doubts about the common law of Christian civilization and about the primacy of the Pope versus conciliarism during the great western schism).

This sketch, even if brief, is enough to enable us to put both the tragic success of the Protestant reformation and the relatively incomplete successes and losses of the so-called Catholic counter-reformation in Marian perspective. Without the slightest doubt Church reform was in order, because the crisis to which Our Lord referred in His conversation with St. Francis in 1206, had recurred. But the Protestant version of reform was a false version, precisely because organized around the systematic rejection of Marian mediation, and therefore of any other form of cooperation, either by the Church (hierarchical-sacramental) or by believers (good works) in the subjective redemption. Wherever protestant reformers, especially Calvinistic, succeeded in persuading a nation to abandon Marian-Catholic spirituality based on the mystery of her unique cooperation or mediation in the work of redemption, there they succeeded in detaching permanently a local Church from Rome. Where the defenders of Catholic tradition organized their efforts, in theory and in practice, around the

mystery of the Immaculate Mediatress, there they succeeded in keeping whole nations loyal or in bringing them back to the unity of faith. Not only, but in the new missions opened in Mexico and the rest of the Americas, the intervention of the Immaculate at Guadalupe in 1531 guaranteed a success far out-weighting the losses in northern Europe. The further victory at Lepanto, fruit of the intervention of Mary Immaculate in response to who knows how many Rosaries, guaranteed the external structures of Christian civilization in the west to the recent present.

If only briefly, I wish to call attention here to the providential role of Bl. John Duns Scotus in readying the theological basis of Catholic response to the challenge of the enemy, viz., the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, in conjunction with his contribution to Eucharistic theology and to the place of petrine primacy in ecclesiology. Calvinists in particular recognized the significance of this contribution in their violent efforts either to exterminate his memory in England or vilify his scholarly reputation beyond redemption, as in the caricature of his name still heard wherever English is spoken, a “dunce” and a “dunce’s cap”, only to be matched by the parody on the words of consecration of the host: “hocus-pocus”, and the epithet of derision for traitorous Catholics, viz., “papist”, or “papalotrist”. There are indeed questions other than the Marian involved in the split of western Christianity during the 16th century, but the controlling issue, particularly in relation to ecclesiology and to the theology of grace and justification, is the Marian. Resolve that and the reformation will be over.

No serious student will contest the facts recounted here. It is otherwise with the “reconstruction” of the facts along the lines of a history of the Church articulated on a Marian axis. Yet there is one curious fact about what appears to date to be in fact the lasting success of the Protestant reform and the lasting influence it continues to exert within the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox churches. That success in great part is due to the rapid and unanticipated defection of England from Rome in 1534 to become in adopting the most virulently anti-Marian, iconoclastic and most systematic (speculatively and institutionally) version of Protestantism, the Calvinist, the prime historical agent of a world-wide impact of the Reform. Cardinal Newman rightly perceived the anti-Marian character of that impact as the radical solvent of faith in the divinity of Mary’s Son, in His redemptive sacrifice, and hence the prime instrument for what that great Cardinal in his Biglietto Address on being notified of his elevation to the

Cardinalate (1879) called the greatest success of Satan ever: the secularisation of western Christendom. That “success”, consisting in the formal repudiation of the dogmatic principle as the basis of western culture was obtained, not so much by direct promotion of a repudiation of the dogmatic principle as by a subtle manipulation of a pragmatic mind-set prioritising the socially relevant as the essence of sanctity. The distance from this to a humanly speaking irreversible, radical secularisation and the legitimacy of a dogma-free virtue, that is to say, ethics without the faith of Mary Immaculate in the Incarnation and Redemption, and without her mediation, is a very short and easy step. After all dogma, the rosary are so useless, and philanthropy so relevant. This tragedy, the good Cardinal remarked, will only be reversed by a miracle, one he could not describe exactly, but one he was sure would be coming. We may add one which will be Marian in mode.

On the eve of the reformation no other country of the Catholic west was in such good condition, spiritually and culturally, as Mary’s Dowry (cf. E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, New Haven 1992). How was so radical a change accomplished as it were “over-night”? The answer is: the master-liar, the enemy of the Woman who owned England, cleverly manipulated, and those manipulated let themselves be manipulated because they did not consult their true “Advocate and Queen”. At the crucial moment, 1534, the moment the English Bishops (except for St. John Fisher, like St. Thomas a Becket nearly four centuries earlier, who suffered martyrdom for his refusal to participate in the tragic event fatally compromising the future of the Church and Catholicism in England) signed an “agreed statement” for the sake of peace, three examples of an attempt to live the faith in a non-Marian or minimally Marian way: in Cardinal Wolsey, King Henry VIII and Archbishop Cramner, coalesced to permit, both in the religious and in the civil spheres, the complete reversal of that original entrustment of England to Mary.

At the risk of oversimplification (factual documentation can easily be found in any good history of the English reformation) such a non-Marian life of faith manifested itself under four attempts at integrating God and mammon: a greedy faith (in the Cardinal Chancellor Wolsey); a lusty faith (in King Henry VIII, who for the sake of a woman separated England from the Pope and rationalized divorce); a heretical faith (in Archbishop Cramner, secretly a Lutheran who believed in a future without the Mediatress of all graces); and finally a political faith (in the bench of

Bishops who trusted more in diplomacy than the Rosary). In one way or another each one of these very talented actors in the play justified his role by an appeal to practicality, the need of the moment. And in the midst of all this “utilitarianism” can be clearly discerned “the little hiss that only comes from hell.” And so piety in England no longer enjoyed the Virgin as “defender or advocate of the faith”, but only a politician, symbol of a philosophy of life without Mary. Do we not also discern a certain parallel with the pragmatism rampant in all sectors of the Church today?

This is how England was successfully transformed from being Mary’s dowry to being a major instrument for the Prince of this world in its secularisation, particularly with the founding and promotion of modern freemasonry in 1717, whose potential for confrontation with the Woman was realized actively in a new, more intense key in 1917. The great 19th century English Cardinal and scholar, Newman, in his aforementioned Biglietto Address tells us that during his lifetime he witnessed just this: the final consummation of this process of secularisation begun with the capitulation of the bishops to the politicians. Newman tells us that in externals at least, at his birth in 1801, England was still a Christian nation (even if not a Marian one), observing a great many of the pre-reformation conventions of a Christian society. At the time of his reception of the red hat in Rome (1879) all this had disappeared. Such are the consequences of attempting to be Christian without being fully Marian. To be Christ-like, one must first be Mary-like (Pope Paul VI, at Bonaria-Cagliari, 1970).

The Woman has made this clear, here in Fatima, how the confrontation would end with or without her, and what both she and her Son expected of the Church and of all believers: not a faith conditioned by academic fashion, by greed, by lust, by political security, by personal preference, but a faith matching the Fiat of the Virgin: at Nazareth, on Calvary, in the Church. Such a faith is a faith lived in the spirit of prayer and penance-reparation, that is, in a coredemptive spirit. Satan’s success rested neither on superior power, nor on clever conspiracy, but on convincing key players at the right moment so to govern as to make in theory and then in practice the rejection of such a coredemptive spirit, rooted in the rejection of the mystery of the Immaculate Coredemptrix, the operative factor for advancement in the cultural, social-political and even religious dimensions of human existence.

The immediate consequences of this diabolical success, the radical repudiation of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception in the western land most responsible for the cultivation of this mystery in the rest of western Europe, especially France, were not long in appearing in England: stripping of the altars and icons, or violent repudiation of the Mass and Real Presence by transubstantiation and profound hatred of the Vicar of Christ as the harlot and beast of the Apocalypse, the three mysteries most defended by Scotus. Newman in his *Apologia pro vita sua* tells us that without subscription to these three points, no one can be a complete Protestant, and if one retains from youth a profound devotion to the Immaculate, as he did, he must end within the Catholic Church. Let no one be so foolish as to imagine history cannot repeat itself, if Mary is not acknowledged for what she truly is in God's sight: the Immaculate Coredeptrix. She is the only one who can salvage the situation, and make all the other useful programs fruitful. And it should not require many degrees in theology to realize that if the Church does not want her to help her way, she may not help.

Superficially, apart from the foregoing, the 17th and 18th centuries might seem to represent a kind of stand-off in the battle between the Woman and the Serpent for the heart of the western world. Reality in these centuries, however, is quite different. Beneath the surface on both sides preparations were being made for another confrontation, at first restrained, then violent in the French revolution and aftermath continuing to our days.

Here are some of the pointers to this jockeying for position. The loss of England, Mary's dowry, to the Church: from being one of the most Marian of lands England became not only one of the most anti-Marian, but perhaps the most effective agent rendering the Calvinist organized Protestantism a permanent feature of large segments of the west, often considered in the past as the immediate preparation of radical socialism. On the other hand the revival of the Church in Spain and France, in particular the Marian mysticism and theology throughout Spain and the Spanish speaking world (Latin America and the Philippines) and in the French school of spirituality culminating in the Marian apostolate of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries served the cause of the Immaculate qua Immaculate in the same way as England in the 12th and 13th and 14th centuries served that very same cause.

Paradoxically, however, the Roman inquisition during the first half of the 17th century imprisoned Franciscans for preaching the Immaculate Conception. Later in that century the anti-Marianism of Adam von Widenfeld, an older German Catholic contemporary of St. Louis, taken up by L. A. Muratori, effectively rebutted by St. Alphonsus and his *Glories of Mary*, and not to be taken up again publicly within the Church until after Vatican II, revealed a subtle, but no less active presence of these currents of Marian minimalism within the Church after Trent. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the success of St. Alphonsus among the masses of Catholics throughout the world and reflected in the 20th century movement of Cardinal Mercier to promote a solemn definition of the universal mediation of Mary Immaculate (including the coredemption), within Church governing circles there remained a hidden presence of Marian minimalism. Witness the recently revealed proscription of the term “Coredempstress” by the Holy Office in 1747, analogous to the 17th century proscription of the Immaculate Conception. That continued presence contributed not a little to the impotence of the Church in preventing or recouping losses consequent on the Protestant reform, and more significantly effectively countering new secular ideologies taking the place and exercising the influence of Christian metaphysics in the minds and hearts of the faithful, indeed of large numbers of the Catholic clergy. All this severely weakened the Church on the eve of the French Revolution and favoured the complete secularisation of European (and North American) culture. Newman is an excellent witness to all this. In the wake of the relative success of the neo-scholastic revival after the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception memory of this situation has faded almost to the point of oblivion. This is a reminder that the Immaculate is not merely one of many objects of theological reflection, she is after Her Son the teacher of our theology, without whose active involvement enthusiastically seconded by her students Catholic theology literally dies.

The explosion that was the French Revolution, preceded by the growth of freemasonry (founded 1717 in England) in France and rise of the “enlightenment”, and its codification by Napoleon as the new common law of the entire world, meant not merely the fall of an ancient political regime, grown decrepit, but the installation of a culture and civilization based, not on the mysteries of faith as celebrated through the faith of Mary in the Church, but on a thorough-going secular regime in all the dimensions of human life. Catholicism was reduced to the level of a purely private, individual option. Heroic efforts to restore the Church were made after the

end of the Napoleonic era. Only after our Lady's direct intervention at Rue de Bac and then at LaSalette was the courage found to do the only thing that could reverse the fortunes of the Church after 1815: solemnly define the Immaculate Conception, a move followed by the apparitions at Lourdes and elsewhere, and then despite the loss of the Papal States, was followed by a marvellous renewal of the Church in all aspects of its existence until the recent crisis began. Some have called this the Marian era par excellence.

The serpent, however, did not disappear entirely. In the rise of modernism, then the opposition to the Marian titles of Mediatrix of all grace and Coredemptrix, especially the latter, the "little hiss" could still be heard. This brings us to the importance of the theme discussed in so many conferences during this symposium: the mystery of the Coredemption. On the eve of Vatican II and since, willy-nilly, it was and has remained the issue of theology. It remains only to suggest why of all the aspects of Marian mediation, this one should during this particular crisis become the central one.

In all this the principle shaping the course of history, from Adam to the final blast of Gabriel's trumpet, laid down by the Seraphic Doctor, viz., the conflict between Christ and the anti-Christ, between the Church and the anti-Church or synagogue (in the patristic, allegorical sense of brood of the viper – St. John Baptist: Mt 3: 14) is shown to have, as the Seraphic Doctor teaches throughout his writings, a Marian or anti-Marian mode. Newman saw this most clearly [cf. "The Glories of Mary for the Sake of Her Son", in *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, London 1899, pp. 342-359, here 348]. The Arian-Nestorian denial of the divinity of the Son of Man, viz., the Son of Mary and so of Adam, "consubstantial" with us in time, as in eternity "consubstantial" with the Father (cf. Leo the Great, Letter 31), could only be resolved by confessing the Theotokos, which is exactly what happened at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Failure to do this could only lead to a victory of the Prince of this world. The same thing is true at the time of the Reformation and in its immediate aftermath: denial of the title Immaculate Mediatrix ensured defeat of the Church.

Conversely, its enthusiastic and practical affirmation led to the victory and prosperity of the Church. Let us not be ashamed to say: victory. For in this struggle success is very much a sharing in the victory of Christ over Satan on Calvary. That participation is via the mediation of Mary, or it is NOT! What we must further observe here is this: at Trent the

Immaculate Conception was not denied and its possibility expressly allowed. But it was not affirmed solemnly. Only when this was done three centuries later did some of the finest fruits of the Catholic reformation mature. In a word Trent's conciliar teaching without its ultimate completion in a solemn definition, was not sufficient to realize the full blessings of genuine reform so accurately sketched by this Council.

The same thing happened at Vatican II: Marian mediation, including the coredemption, logical doctrinal corollary of the Immaculate Conception, was not only not denied, but positively allowed, indeed set forth in a kind of paraphrase. Thus, in one of the introductory paragraphs of chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, n. 53, Mary is described as *intuitu meritorum Filii sui sublimiori modo redempta*. The reference here to the Immaculate Conception is perfectly obvious. There immediately follows a reference to the joint predestination of Christ and Mary Immaculate: *arcta et indissolubili vinculo unita*, in view of her being *Genitrix Dei Filii*, *ideoque praedilecta filia Patris necnon sacrarium Spiritus Sancti*, by which grace she is set incomparably above all other creatures, heavenly as well as earthly. And then there follows a veiled, but clear reference to the coredemption: notwithstanding her exalted, incomparable state, she is nonetheless conjoined to the race of Adam, in the words of Augustine cited by the Council, *plane mater membrorum (Christi)...quia cooperata est caritate ut fideles in Ecclesia nasceretur, quia illius Capitis membra sunt*. Therefore, because she cooperated in the "objective" redemption on Calvary, Mary is rightly regarded as *supereminens prorsusque singulare membrum Ecclesiae, viz., Maternal Mediatrix of all graces*. That this is not a merely personal interpretation is clear from the repeated reference to the joint predestination of Jesus and Mary in n. 61: *Beata Virgo ab aeterno una cum Verbi divini incarnatione tamquam Mater Dei praedestinata*, followed by a brief, but concrete description of her active part in the consummation of the sacrifice of the Cross, or the "objective redemption": *Filioque suo in cruce morienti compatiens, operi Salvatoris singulari prorsus modo cooperata est...* Nonetheless, there is a hesitation on what I maintain has been for nearly a century the theological issue of our time: the doctrine of coredemption, in view of which on the eve of Vatican II theologians were divided into maximalists (those in favor, a majority) and minimalists (those who insisted the doctrine was inopportune). Vatican II left the question open, like Trent with the Immaculate Conception, teaching the mystery of coredemption, but not dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's". Is this why the crisis continues, and why the hoped for fruits of the Council have not

been realized, above all the resolution of the ecumenical question (division among the baptized) and the problem of a genuine, and radical renewal of theology (confusion, even in the Roman schools)?

The Coredeemptive Nature of the Marian Issue in the Church: the Ratio Facti

This brief historical review has sought to make clear why the Marian issue in the Church today, speculatively and practically (truth and opportuneness of the question), is that of the coredeemption. Paraphrasing Newman in his famous discourse on the glories of Mary for the sake of her Son (christo-typology of the highest kind), we may say: failure to confess the coredeemption concludes rapidly in violent denial and repudiation of the Redeemer and redemption, of the Mass and of the Church, of heaven in favour of hell and the gulag. In this anti-marianism the failure to glorify God and give thanks (cf. Rom 1: 18-32) in an expressly Marian mode (cf. the Magnificat, Lk 1: 46-55), because these are in principle regarded as anti-secular and so anti-human, transforms the world almost over-night into an anti-chamber of hell, a kind of universal gulag.

Let me state immediately why I believe this to be so. The prime principle of modern secularism is not its pretended religious neutrality. Rather, its “neutrality” consists in the formal, deliberate, a priori repudiation (in principle, therefore, and not merely in fact) of the absolute primacy of Jesus, the Word Incarnate, and Mary Immaculate – uno eodemque decreto (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 8, nn. 53, 61) in respect to all creation, and the same in respect to that same mystery as basis for the redemption of a fallen world, without which redemption no other created or human value can be other than vanity (*Ecclesiastes: vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas: what Proverbs 8 and Ecclesiasticus 24 affirm positively concerning the joint wisdom of Jesus and Mary, Ecclesiastes affirms negatively*).. Satan’s prime agent (but not sole agent) for the effective incorporation of this mind-set everywhere is freemasonry: not in the sense everyone or even a majority or even a large minority are to be inducted into the lodge, but in the sense that once this is legitimated in all nations, then the atmosphere of those lands becomes that of hell, because it is no longer a Marian atmosphere (Hopkins). Once this occurs, the Church and all believers are on the defensive and in perpetual retreat toward permanent defeat. That is the ratio of the present crisis. This powerful mind-set is what is known as secularism. This secularism,

the temporary triumph of the Prince of this world, can only be consolidated to the degree the maternal mediation of the Virgin Mother in the Church is rendered ineffectual and all memory of it utterly erased from the consciousness of the Church. That means in terms of the contemporary situation to persuade Catholics at every level to forget, or at least downplay the mystery of the Immaculate Coredeptrix, what this means here and now: theoretically in terms of a solemn definition, practically in terms of total consecration to the Immaculate Heart.

There is obviously only one remedy. Either solemnly confess the Theotokos is Coredeptrix for the same reason she is virginal Mother of God, because the Immaculate, or get ready for total enslavement to sin. Secularism: the systematic repudiation of the dogma of the Redemption needed above all because of the disaster of original sin, like the systematic denial of the divinity of the Word Incarnate, can only be overcome by publicly and solemnly affirming the Theotokos to be Coredeptrix, both titles based on her being the Immaculate Conception, the Woman preserved from all taint of original sin and so able to take effective action to overcome it and its effects. Mary is the first believer, because perfect believer, perfect because Virgin of Virgins or Immaculate, one who offers not only her Child, but herself with Him for the life of the world. Only with such virginal faith centred on the Eucharist can all other problems of the Church be resolved; without it ecumenical dialogue and theological renewal will produce only more division and worse intellectual chaos. The first priority of the Church must be Mary Immaculate-Coredeptrix, and that alone. All other priorities must turn about her.

Total enslavement to sin as a consequence of refusing to affirm the Immaculate Coredeptrix (Immaculate to be Coredeptrix – Bl. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*) is what makes it impossible to resolve the twin problems of division and intellectual chaos in the Church. Or somewhat differently, but essentially the same thought: without Marian orthopraxis, viz., *sine Maria nihil de Jesu*, or *De Maria numquam satis*, or again with St. Bonaventure: *Mariae nemo nimis potest esse devotus* (III Sent., d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4: no one can be too devout in relation to Mary). Recently it has been affirmed, even in semi-official organs of the Vatican, that the ecumenical question has absolute priority over all others in the Church today. It has been affirmed for some 8 years in what is claimed to be an official “position-paper” of the Vatican, that the coredeption cannot be considered as a possible subject of dogmatic definition, until it is shown (if

possible) to be in accord with the directions taken by the new “post-conciliar” theology (whatever these are). And within the last year a high official of the Vatican has gone so far as to declare in a public interview that the title *Coredemptrix* is un-redeemably equivocal, that even the humble effort to show its theological relevance, let alone promote its dogmatic definition, is counter-productive and a disservice downright harmful to the Church, an obstacle to ecumenism and a retreat into a theological superficiality.

Now I shall be equally frank. The currently oft heard arguments: the title *coredemptrix* obscures that of Redeemer, and explanations to justify this exercises in word manipulation, should logically induces their proponents to say the same of the divine maternity: Mother of God obscures Son of God, exactly as Nestorius and company argued a millennium and half ago. Theological logic demands just the opposite conclusion: Mother-*Coredemptrix* does not obscure the unique role of the Redeemer in the work of redemption, but reveals it for the same reason *Theotokos* reveals, not obscures, the divine filiation of her Son. This logic is rooted in the fact that Christology and soteriology are inseparably linked, and alike, simultaneously, are signed by the same Marian coefficient, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, at the moment of the Incarnation revealed in the virginal Maternity, at the consummation of the work of Redemption in the mystery of the *Coredemption*. An affirmation of the exclusive *solus* at either point necessarily requires it at the other. Denial of the *coredemption* inevitably leads to denial of the divine Maternity, and denial of either, as Newman so clearly saw, stands behind total indifference to the Incarnate Redeemer and His great work, at its commencement, and in its consummation, in Himself and in His body, the Church. Such was the fruit of the initial Protestant excluding of the mediation of Mary from soteriology after three centuries (1517-1847). Or in the title of *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 8, the presence of the Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, and so in theology, postulates just this logic and just this fruit of its rejection.

Division among Christians and among Christian communities, and theological chaos, then, are the consequence of formal repudiation of the spiritual maternity and maternal mediation of Mary in the Incarnation and at the consummation of the Redemption on Calvary, therefore at the heart of the Church in the sacramental order culminating in the Eucharist and among all potential members of the Church. This sin (if not formal, then at

least material – the consequences are the same a parte rei) is the root cause of the division and of the chaos. Only by its pardon with consequent healing can anything practical be done about the other two. Division and theological chaos are bad, are indeed key issues. Unfortunately, Mary has come to be regarded by large numbers of believers and non-believers as a part of these problems in the sense that she constitutes a block to the first and an embarrassment to the second. So to regard her is to buy into the major premise guaranteeing the triumph of the serpent's warped Weltanschauung. Mary is not a "part of the problem", best and most quickly resolved by minimizing the Coredemption. She is the solution. She is the Mother of Unity and the Mistress of Theology: for ecumenism not the obstacle and for theology not merely one of many and lesser parts. The priority of the Marian issue is absolute, that of the other two relative to the Marian. These will be solved overnight, as it were, if everyone would absolutely and publicly confess the Immaculate Mediatrix: Mother of God and Coredemptrix, glorious Queen of heaven and earth (and I mean not honorary, but real: Omnipotentia supplex, to which the last great miracle of Fatima is witness).

No doubt a good many current practitioners of the theological trade and ecumenists would strongly disagree with this position and perspective. Nonetheless, "agreed statements" resting on consensus building rather than truth, however much they promise a realization of the long-desired oikumene just beyond the horizon, never reach that horizon. The illusion is fostered by describing religious pluralism and dogmatic indifferentism as diversity within unity, especially in reference to the maternal mediation of Mary Immaculate and a right to "de-dogmatize" the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, and by describing secular progress and a bene esse consisting in this-worldly prosperity as "eschatological fulfilment" or salvation.

But none of this will change a very simple fact (et contra factum non datur argumentum): the crisis, including above all its ecumenical and theological dimensions, will not only continue, but will worsen, until the Church confesses publicly the absolute priority of the cause of Mary Coredemptrix. This is, to adapt a famous Lutheran axiom, the articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiae. Only thus can the root of secularism be exorcised and the new evangelization of the west, and the renewed civilization of love be genuinely, successfully initiated. In the meantime it is quite possible that the centre of gravity of Christianity will shift to those

parts of the world where the Catholic Church is enthusiastically promoting the Immaculate Coredemptrix: like India, the Philippines, Mexico, etc, just as a millennium ago the centre of gravity passed from the Near East-North Africa to western Europe.

There is indeed a sense in which Marian maximalism is an abuse, where it denotes an inept concept of what is most perfect in this work of God. Here the term denotes, to employ the terminology of Scotus, not a genuine, objectively valid quality capable of various grades of perfection or intensity of realization, a quantum transcendently, but a material quantum: predicamental, or mathematically. It is the latter, not the former which leads to such absurdities as confusion of the incomparably and normatively supreme realization of redemption in Mary Immaculate as the most perfect created person with the idea of a goddess. In this regard St. Bonaventure tells us Mary, who is full of Truth [her Son, the way, the truth and the life], has no need of our falsehoods: ...non oportet novos honores configere ad honorem Virginis, quae non indiget nostro mendacio, quae tantum plena est veritate (III Sent., d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, ad 3). The problem here (in a discussion of the Immaculate Conception, which Bonaventure admitted might be true, but personally did not hold, partly because some theological defenders of the privilege erroneously defined it – cf. the classic 1960 study of J.-F. Bonnefoy, *Jean Duns Scot et l’Immaculee Conception*) is not Mary’s incomparable excellence as the Immaculate, but either 1) our inability to grasp it and consequently mis-formulate it, or 2) our tendency either to misconstrue her as a goddess equal to her Son or to treat her merely as another woman equal to us, or perhaps not even as good as us. To say that she is subordinate to her Son, even if He was subject to her as His Mother, does not mean that her position in the Church as “Super-eminent Member (Lumen Gentium, n. 53) is conditioned by equality with us, so making her incapable of being Immaculate Coredemptrix.

Therefore, it is not at all true that we can ever conceive mentally, or much less effectively realize the maximal praise due the Mother of God from the Church on objective grounds, because she is the incomparable Immaculate, whom God alone can fully grasp (cf. Bl. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*). Hence, we can never match the praise her own Son bestows on His Mother. That praise reflects the mystery of the virginal Maternity summarized by the Seraphic Doctor thus: non decebat Virginem habere Filium nisi Deum, nec Deum habere Matrem nisi Virginem (*Collationes in septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*, c. 6, n. 4: it was not fitting that the Virgin

should have a Son unless God, nor God have a Mother unless the Virgin). This explains why Bonaventure also says (in the same distinction where he criticizes an abusive maximalizing: *Mariae nemo nimis potest esse devotus* (III Sent., d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 4, ad 4), why Scotus insists (III Sent., d. 3, q. 1, n. 10) that the surpassing excellence of the mystery of Mary requires absolutely ascribing to her whatever is objectively more excellent (the quasi-infinite of St. Thomas in describing the maximal perfection of the divine Maternity). St. Francis tells us why he surrounded with indescribable praises the Mother of God who made the Lord of majesty our brother (cf. St. Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, 3, 1; 7, 1; 9, 3; II Celano 198). Here is St. Francis himself speaking: *non est tibi similis nata in mundo in mulieribus* (Antiphon, *Officium Passionis*: there is none like you born in the world among women). The happy mean between abusive maximizing and minimizing of Mary might better be stated thus: minimizing is always wrong, false maximizing is always wrong, but maximizing after the fashion of St. Francis and Bl. John Duns Scotus is to be commended.

The Church with every believer must outdo herself in praising Mary with Christ. Not to do so is to begin to fall into ruin. What the presentations here have made clear is that the mystery of the coredemption belongs to that order of objective perfections constituting the incomparable (St. Francis), quasi-infinite (St. Thomas) beauty of Mary Immaculate. Not to confess this at a time when the Church appears paralysed by the momentary triumph of secularism to my way of thinking is the height of foolishness. And the profoundly learned overviews of the doctrinal issue presented by highly qualified prelates and theologians in this symposium make it clear beyond any doubt, that acknowledging the Immaculate Virgin as the Mother Coredemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces is not an exercise in pious fantasy, but is based on revealed fact: this is an integral part of that maximal perfection-purity willed by the Father for the Mother of his Son and of the Church redeemed in His blood, freed precisely via the preservative redemption of that Mother.

The Sense of the Primary Questions concerning Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate

The learned speakers at this symposium have given us an excellent overview of the doctrine of coredemption across the centuries, from the foundation of the Church, and of the role this doctrine has played in speculative and practical Mariology and theology. Even if this mystery is not a solemnly defined dogma, its truth as a component of the deposit of

faith, to be assented to with firm faith by every believer, is beyond question: if not an article of faith *modo definitivo*, it surely is that of a truth *definitive tenenda* (Cf. recent revision of Canon 1364 of the Code of Canon Law), and so in the true sense is *proxima fidei*, or definable. It is, therefore, a startling oddity that for nearly half a century, despite solemn counsels from the highest ecclesiastical authority about never garnishing truths of faith for the sake of ecumenical dialogue (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 67), Marian truths, this one in particular, have been down-played or silenced.

Of a mystery so central both to the birth of the Saviour and to the consummation of His mission on Calvary and to its continuance in the Church as is the maternal mediation of the Virgin Mother there can hardly be a long-term reason justifying silence. We must say here what Sts. Peter and John replied to the rulers of the Jews who ordered them to be silent about “that man, the son of Mary”: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, decide for yourselves. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4: 19-20). What we have heard both of the birth and of the death and resurrection cannot be proclaimed apart from Mary. The ultimate sign, on earth and in the heavens of our Saviour and salvation is the Virgin Mother (cf. Is. 7: 14).

But it is even more than strange to encounter theologians, even in high places in the Church, 1) who cast doubt not only on the fitting character of a solemn definition of this mystery, but on the validity both of the title and of the doctrine that title has connoted for over half a millennium, or 2) who insinuate, if not expressly affirm, that the content either a) was not easily recognizable under earlier titles, *viz.*, from apostolic times, such as the Eve-Mary typology, or b) that the distinction “objective-subjective redemption” was unknown before Scheeben’s use of it in the 19th century. Indeed, it was already in use (c. 1640) by the 17th century Neapolitan Scotist, Fr. Angelo Vulpes (golden age of Spanish and post-tridentine Mariology). His usage is but an adaptation of an earlier one found in the 13th century (1257) *Breviloquium* (p. IV, c. 10) of St. Bonaventure (and so already very traditional, for Bonaventure is the quintessence of the theologian faithfully echoing the traditions of the Fathers): *redemptio quoad sufficientiam* and *redemptio quoad efficientiam*.

The fact is: even the most rigid Marian minimalists no longer dare to assert in so many words that the coredeemption is false. The most they attempt is to question the validity of the title for this doctrine and the

precision of its formulation in terms of objective-subjective redemption, or a unique participation of the Virgin Mother, because Immaculate, both in the acquisition of redemptive merit and founding of the economy of salvation through the sacrifice of the Cross, and in the distribution of those merits in and through the Church, such that the second is a consequence of the first, and on the second depends directly the correct and fruitful functioning of all other forms of mediation in the Church: sacramental-institutional as well as charismatic, those in the Church in pilgrimage and those in the communion of saints. In a word the mystery of Mary Mediatrix makes possible the functioning of the Church as virgin-mother who integrally preserves her faith (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, c. 8, n. 64) and identifies her Fiat with that of the Immaculate (cf. Eph 5: 27), above all in the celebration of Holy Mass: *Communicantes et memoriam venerantes, in primis, beatae Virginis et Genetricis Domini nostri Jesu Christi* (and only thus all the others, beginning with St. Joseph, key to the epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit); and therefore key to the eucharistic fruit of her womb: *hostiam puram, sanctam, immaculatam, panem sanctam vitae aeternae, et calicem salutis perpetuae* (profound ancient Christian Latin mutilated in most current English translations; the subsequent references to Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech are to types of Jesus as victim, to Mary as Coredeptrix offering herself with her Isaac, first believer making possible our active participation in His sacrifice, and to Jesus as High Priest-Redeemer offering himself as Victim).

The most commonly heard “speculative” objection to the coredeemption (and even occasionally today) was this: one cannot be both redeemed and redeeming at the same time. The answer has long since been given in the definition of the Immaculate Conception: one redeemed liberatively in no way can be active in the acquisition of salvific grace; one redeemed preservatively, like the Immaculate, cannot merit her own grace of salvation, but she can actively cooperate in the deliverance of all others, both as Theotokos and as Coredeptrix. More common today is the objection that the title Coredeptrix is equivocal, that it confuses two distinct personal roles, that of the Redeemer with that of His co-operators, and so such titles as Lamb, Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator should be reserved only to Him to avoid confusion. The point seems very plausible, until we pause to reflect on the logical consequences of its major premise: we should not refer to parents as procreators, but only as breeders, and still less to a mere creature baptized as a sharer in the divine nature, much less one creature as Mother of God. What is true is that personhood as such, above

all divine personhood, cannot be participated. What makes me, me, is incommunicable. But my personal role, even though it distinctively reflects me, can be shared by another without in any way necessarily downgrading the sufficiency of mission. So even more in the case of titles for Christ's various roles: Master, Priest, King and Lord. Indeed, from ancient times Mary is called the Ewe-Lamb (Melito of Sardis, cited in the liturgy of the Sacred Triduum), Salvatrix, Mediatrix, Redemptrix, Queen, and indeed Lady. Co-redemptrix in such a tradition can hardly be faulted as "equivocal" beyond repair. Use of such titles to indicate joint participation in a single work, as in the case of Jesus and Mary, predestined *uno eodemque decreto*, is perfectly legitimate, so long as use of the same root title clarifies precisely the distinction within the unity decreed by the Father. This is exactly what titles such as Mother, Mediatrix, Coredemptrix, Advocate do.

We may calmly affirm: there is no question about the truth or exactitude of the Coredemption at the present time. The only question concerns the appropriateness of its solemn definition and of the readying of those matters, ordinarily constituting the proximate preparation for the implementation of a decision of the entire Church to go forward with what is the will of her Saviour: in the language of Fatima, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart in the Church and in the world.

Is it opportune? Any mystery of faith, by that very fact, is a fit subject for definition, whenever opportune. Our conferences have shown from every key point of view that what is called the coredemption in the proper sense is true, is the precise definition of what Vatican II confesses to be the unique (*viz.*, incomparable, not duplicable) participation of the one Mother of God in the redemptive work of Her first-Born. In this sense dogmatic definition of this mystery *definitivo modo* is remotely opportune.

But when we consider the history, especially of western Christianity, and the hopes of more recently christianised lands, or those rapidly becoming Christian, then that definition is not merely remotely, but proximately opportune. Only the exact moment and the mode of definition has yet to be determined. At the very least it would seem to me that our Lord desires this definition to be as solemn as possible.

My practical suggestion in conclusion of this conference concerns not these questions (ultimately the responsibility not of theologians, but of

the Holy Father and Bishops, to whom such decisions have been entrusted by the Lord), but something prior: the need to move the discussion of Marian coredemption from the realm of mere speculation to that of the practical order, where its discussion is part of a decision taken to prepare the Church for a formal, solemn definition: to honour the Mother of the Church and to move from paralysis to effective action to resolve the crisis of faith in the Church and in the world, and so set the scene for the resolution of the ecumenical and cultural problems of our times.

From Discussion of Crisis to Resolution, or from Paralysis to Action (Dynamic Marian Advocacy)

On the basis of what I believe, on the basis of what I have heard during this Symposium in so holy and so Marian a place, and in the light of history, I would offer this suggestion for consideration as a conclusion to this Symposium. The first bears on doctrinal aspects of our Lady's "unique cooperation in the work of salvation" and it is this: That the entire Church commit itself to preparing for a definition, as her number one priority absolutely. Only thus will Christ's command to Francis "to rebuild His Church" (still valid), repeated to Sr. Lucy in slightly different form, viz., that all must work for the triumph of Immaculate Heart in the Church, that this triumph is the condition for all the blessings promised, be fulfilled. This in fact corresponds exactly to St. Paul, Eph. 5, 27: Christ gave His life for Church that she might be *sine macula et sine ruga*, that is, a reflection and extension of His Virgin Mother, the Immaculate Conception.

I would also suggest that in any discussion of this suggestion attention be given to the disciplinary or practical aspects of ecclesial life resting on the mystery defined. The point is this: that the mystery of Marian coredemption be seen as the basis for living total consecration of the Church and of every soul to the Immaculate Heart, where consecration to the Immaculate Heart means sharing in and basing one's life on the compassion of the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross and by the side of the Altar. I want to stress the word living. The late Holy Father John Paul II has consecrated the Church and all peoples to the Immaculate according to her desires. He has done his part in this, but it remains for the rest of the Church to implement this consecration in daily life: not only of individuals, but of the entire Christian community. Implementation of this consecration in daily life on the basis of the coredemptive mystery is the only adequate grounds for preparing the Church to be what Christ wants it

to be on His second, glorious, triumphant coming to judge the living and the dead, to royally reclaim His own (cf. Hopkins, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, last stanza). A solemn definition of the Coredeemption is the final guarantee that this is not a pious practice occasioned by a private revelation, but something rooted in and postulated by public revelation itself. It would, moreover, be a solemn, public expression, in the most exact of terms what the Spirit and the Bride and all who hear in faith have even since Pentecost cried out: “Come; Lord Jesus” And as the cry goes forth, even more solemnly, ever more publicly, so will the indefectible and infallible reply be heard: “I come and I come quickly” (cf. Apoc. 22: 16-21).

I would further suggest that the most effective way to begin this preparation would be the establishment (after the example of Bl. Pius IX, and after consultation with the bishops of the world) of a pontifical commission to prepare the way for a solemn definition.

Like all such definitions its purpose will be at once doxological and didactic or doctrinal. But in the present circumstances of the Church it will have positive and fruitful bearing on the ecumenical, theological and evangelical or missionary issues. Such a solemn proclamation of the mystery of Mary Coredeematrix, Mediatrix and Advocate cannot but spark a genuine renewal of the house, of the place, of the tabernacle, of the vestment, of the handmaid which St. Francis saw so clearly the Church must be for her Saviour and Founder and Bridegroom, in order that she might be the virgin-mother of the rest of His brethren. Only thus can the Church move from a state of critical paralysis to authentic growth, from a condition of advancing crisis to standing strong amidst the storms (cf. Mt 7: 24-27), of showing above all to the Saviour that we believe in the triumph of the Immaculate Heart, in her presence or absence in our midst as the *articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae*. Implementation of this proposal would do for Vatican II what the dogmatic definition of Bl. Pius IX in 1854 did for Trent, with immense blessings for the Church throughout the world, this in “hoping against hope” (cf. Rom 4: 13-23; Gal 3: 7-4:7; Heb 11: 8-13; Jn 8: 31-59) , like Abraham, our father in faith and type of the Virgin Coredeematrix, both on Calvary and in the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. Canon I or Roman Canon of Mass).

Let us conclude some reflections inspired by a poem of Fr. G. M. Hopkins, written only a few decades after the discovery and publication (1842) of the lost manuscript of St. Louis de Montfort’s *True Devotion* and

after the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Though a poem it is a powerful, theologically accurate and spiritually moving affirmation of the mystery of the Immaculate Mediatrix in the Church.

[“Again, look overhead how air is azured; O how! Nay do but stand where you can lift your hand skywards: rich it laps round your four fingergaps. Yet such a sapphire-shot, charged, steeped sky will not stain light. Yea, mark you this: it does no prejudice. The glass-blue days are those when every colour glows, each shape and shadow shows. Blue be it: this blue heaven the seven or seven times seven hued sunbeam will transmit perfect, not alter it. Or if there does some soft, on things aloof, aloft, bloom breathe, that one breath more earth is the fairer for. Whereas did air not make this bath of blue and slake his fire, the sun would shake, a blear and blinding ball with blackness bound, and all the thick stars round him roll flashing like flecks of coal, quartz-fret, or sparks of salt, in grimy vasty vault. So God was god of old: a mother came to mould those limbs like ours which are what must make our daystar much dearer to mankind; whose glory bare would blind or less would win man’s mind. Through her we may see him made sweeter, not made dim. And her hand leaves his light sifted to suit our sight.”]

Without compromise, yet so gently, the latter half of this poem, composed not many years after the definition of the Immaculate Conception, illustrates the link between that mystery and the maternal mediation of Mary. It makes perfectly clear what so many refuse to acknowledge, with consequences still more tragic than those we have remarked. Appropriately, Mary, spouse of Him who proceeds by spiration: literally the “breathing” of Father and Son, is called our atmosphere, which makes the difference between warmth and carbonisation, between sight and blindness, between conviction and despair. With hindsight it is not difficult to discern in these verses a fairly detailed explanation of the final miracle of the sun at Fatima on 13 Oct., 1917, a year so crucial for our present situation. Nor after pondering with Hopkins the historic and present fact of Marian mediation rooted in the great mystery of the Immaculate Conception is it difficult to hope for those ineffable blessings and that rocklike security in this vale of tears which a solemn definition of this mediation would bring.

Permit me, then, to adapt the final verses from the 1st person singular to the 1st person plural, so as to describe exactly what as soon as

possible we wish, with Jesus, to be the final and everlasting atmosphere of the Church and of the world:

“Be thou, then, O thou dear Mother, our atmosphere, our happier world in which to wend and meet no sin; above us, round us lie fronting our froward eye with sweet and scarless sky; stir in our ears, speak there of God’s love, O live air, of patience, penance, prayer; world-mothering air, air wild, wound with thee, in thee is led, fold home, fast fold thy child.”

Mary, help us! Maria Hilf! Maria, Auxilium Christianorum, quia Immaculata Conceptio.