



## Mary-- Heart of Theology -- Theology of the Heart by Cardinal Christoph von Schoenborn, OP

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Is the title exaggerated? Can theology have another "heart", that is, another center than Christ, the Logos Theou? Or, if we remain with the image of the heart, is not the Holy Spirit the "heart" of the Church and consequently of theology, as Christ is the head? A Protestant theologian writes: "When I began to study Catholic theology, I came upon Mary every time I expected to find a treatment concerning the Holy Spirit: they attribute to Mary what we unanimously consider to be the proper work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

The reproach is not simply unjustified, as Father Yves Congar has shown by means of examples.<sup>2</sup> And yet, if one takes the Church's doctrinal tradition as norm, it misses the point. If one sees theology as the quintessence of the "God speaks" of the Logos Theou, then only Christ can be its center, the Holy Spirit its "Heart". But if theology also embraces the creaturely answer to God's Word, then our title presents itself in a different light; then Mary has her place in the "heart" of theology, of that theology which "conserves all these words and ponders them in the heart". (cf. Lk. 2:19). Theology, as reflection on the word of God, finds its standard in Mary since here "Fiat" represents that spirit-effected answer to God's word, which embraces all creaturely answers. But Mary has her place in theology not only because her "fiat" represents the permanent form that stamps its imprint on all theology as reflection on God's word, but also because her role places her in the midst of the central contents of theology. "For". affirms the Second Vatican Council, "Mary figures profoundly in the history of salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of faith."<sup>3</sup> Both shall be treated in what follows: a form of theology stamped by Mary, which can only be a theology of the heart, and a theology which considers its essential contents in their relation to Mary and therefore sees in Mary the heart of (responding) theology. But in connection with this, a further point should be noted. The privileged addressees of the word of God are "the little ones": to whom God reveals what he has "hidden from the wide and understanding" (cf. Mt. 11:25). Hence they are also the privileged responders to God's word. Therefore, as word of God and a meditative answer of man, theology has its preferred place among the "simple".<sup>4</sup> But once again, this means that Mary has her place in the heart of theology, as the one on whose "lowliness" God has looked with favor, and who has answered as "his handmaid". (cf. Lk 1:48).

This sketch of Mary's position at the center of theology will be developed in what follows. However, in order to proceed along this path, we will first take up a preliminary task which has received little thematization in theology, but which has struck deep roots in "popular piety", the devotion to the Heart of Mary. Fr. Leonardo Boff writes: "Theology is more than a matter of sheer

knowledge. Theology is also concerned with confirming men in their piety and with deepening what they previously possessed in faith as completely self-evident."<sup>5</sup>

### ***1. The Devotion to the Heart of Mary as Question addressed to Theology***

Parallel to the devotion to the Heart of Jesus, there has developed in Catholic Christianity, especially since the 11th century, the special devotion to the Heart of the Mother of Jesus. This devotion grew from meditation on the life of Mary, especially as the Mother of Sorrow. It gradually found entrance into the liturgy and was finally taken up and confirmed by the Magisterium of the Church.

The message of Fatima gave a strong impetus to the devotion of the "Immaculate Heart of Mary." In accordance with this message Pius XII and recently John Paul II have consecrated the world to the Heart of Mary. The "sensus fidelium" has received this devotion and approved it through its witness of faith, at least in those lands in which a strong popular religiosity prevails. The Church's Magisterium has also accepted and approved the matter. In theology alone has the theme until now found little response. One may object that such forms of piety do not belong in theology but are the affairs of "spirituality." This objection is too hasty, for also that which arises in the spiritual, religious life of the People of God makes a claim on theology. Is it rather a certain "temporal disjunction" ("Ungleichzeitigkeit"), that theology only takes up with some hesitation what has already sprung up in the hearts of the faithful?

Valentin Tomberg has remarked with respect to Marian dogmas that these truths of faith lived "first in the hearts of the faithful, then they influenced more and more the liturgical life of the Church, in order to finally be solemnly proclaimed as dogmas. Dogmatic theology is only the last stage of the road to dogma, which begins in the depths of the life of souls and ends in the solemn proclamation." And Tomberg adds, alluding to Pascal: "Just as it is said that the heart has its reasons, which the mind does not know, it can also be said that the 'heart has its dogmas' which the theologizing reason does not know."<sup>6</sup>

The Heart of Mary -- is it a "dogma of the heart", to which the theologizing reason--still--scarcely gives consideration? When a theme like that of the heart of Mary is pondered for a long time in the hearts of the faithful, then we may assume that it also has something to say to the "theologizing reason." Before we venture to attempt a theological interpretation, there are first certain objections to be discussed, which are more or less expressly raised against devotion to the heart of Mary.

### ***2. Solvuntur Objecta (Objections)***

(1) A first, so to speak, surface difficulty concerns the forms of expression of their piety. Language-and-image world often have an aesthetically poor effect, are rejected as too mawkish, too

sentimental or simply as tasteless. Hardly anything is to be opposed to this objection on its own level. But the counter question is, whether with the aesthetic verdict, something either unconsciously or consciously is being rejected, which has more to say than the awkward forms of expression in which it more often encounters us. The theme "Heart of Mary" is certainly not disposed of with the reference to the popular non-aesthetic images.

(2) The embarrassment before such images and their popularity point to a more profound difficulty, which today affects not only wide segments of theology, but equally, enlightened western society: the deficient integration of the affective. Dietrich von Hildebrand treated this deficiency in his subtle work "Über das Herz", ("About the Heart")<sup>7</sup>. He shows the heavy consequences caused by the devaluation of affectivity by Greek philosophy, especially in its modern reception. The "heart" is denied objectivity, the affective is as a whole devaluated as sentimental and subjective in contrast to distanced, coolly neutral "objectivity." Von Hildebrand's sensitive phenomenological analysis shows that here we are dealing with a deep-seated and dangerous misunderstanding. Precisely, "the voice of the heart", as it manifests itself in joy, happiness and similar experiences is not simply a subjective expression of feeling, but a full and entirely human, personal response to an objectively valid situation which is the reason for joy and happiness. "What is not decisive is not whether we feel happiness, but whether in view of the objective situation, we have reason to be happy. The truly affective person, the man with an attentive heart is precisely he who understands that it depends upon the objective situation, upon whether there is cause to rejoice, to be happy. The great, overflowing affective experiences are born from taking the situation seriously, from being filled with the question, whether this hour demands an answer of joy, or happiness or of sorrow."<sup>8</sup>

Von Hildebrand calls this attitude "tender affectivity"<sup>9</sup> and defines it in contrast to sentimentality (which remains subjective) as the truly "objective" (because corresponding to objective reality answer to a situation which addresses the person in his depths, in his heart.

In the light of this briefly sketched explanation of Dietrich von Hildebrand, we can, in relation to our theme, distinguish in the devotion to the heart of Mary between that which is only subjective preoccupation with one's own feelings and reactions, and that which is expression of the response to the objective, valid impact of the figure of Mary (even if these two aspects can never be neatly separated). The justified criticism of the excessively individualistic or temporally conditioned expression of emotion in the Marian devotion may not lead one to question the validity of feelings, which are awakened by the living contact with the mystery of Mary. Theology should listen to this voice of the heart, when it reflects theologically on the devotion to the heart of Mary, and in the process should distinguish the time-conditioned secondary tones from the real heart-tones.

Precisely this capacity to understand with the heart and thereby to penetrate into the heart of that which is to be understood, has always characterized the creative thinker and scholar, who is, so to speak, "the man with the brain of a lion and the heart of a child"<sup>10</sup>. The same is true of the great

theologian. Many examples present themselves. Let us mention one briefly. Matthias Josef Scheeben's first work (1860) was an anthology of Marian texts from all centuries<sup>11</sup>, concerning which Martin Grabmann said that it was "a fruit of his pious heart and his tender Marian devotion." With Scheeben, as with other great theologians, how greatly such tenderness is grounded in the objectivity of the venerated figure is shown by the following text (very time-conditioned, certainly, in its linguistic expression): "Oh what rapture ought not fill our souls at this thought and how must our heart not tremble for joy in the sublime consciousness that we are so closely related to the Mother of God and with full right may call the Queen of Heaven and Earth our mother. -- How tenderly ought we not love and honor her."<sup>13</sup>

Not subjective sentimentality but rather being touched and moved by the woman who is Jesus' Mother is the objective foundation for the fact that in her presence the affectus cordis awakens and seeks expression. "Popular piety" has no other source than this theological cordis: the consciousness that we are so closely related to the Mother of God." This nearness to the "Queen of Heaven and Earth" is the reason why, since earliest times, men have confidently come to her, why her figure, from the beginning, has touched hearts. It is likewise this nearness which, through all centuries, has turned great theological thinkers into poets; which enabled them to express their theological reflections in the "language of the heart", in hymns and prayers. This nearness therefore always united the theologians with the "faith of the simple" and helped both find a common language without which theology and "popular piety" would have drifted apart to the detriment of both.

(3) Against the objectivity of the "tender affectivity" (von Hildebrand) affirmed here, there stands, of course, as a weighty objection the suspicion that the strong affective relation to Mary is determined by I projections, by transferences of one's own wishes and longings upon the simple woman from Galilee, elevated for this purpose. Moreover the suspicion is nourished by the early, popular, close union of mother and child as it encounters us in representation art.

It could not fail that this image of most intimate mother-son-bond be exposed to the suspicion of wish-conditioned projection. Sigmund Freud has already tried to expose the Christian presentation of the relation of Jesus to God-Father as an oedipal conflict, in which the Son, by means of his self-sacrifice, simultaneously tries to appease and to set aside the Father. Freud sees Christianity as "religion of the son", as rebellious elimination of the father-god. Freud's disciple, Ernst Jones, undertook to shed light on the "family novel" of the holy family with the psychoanalytic lantern and to stretch the representation of the virginal conception on the framework of the Oedipus conflict.<sup>15</sup> In the popular Freudian perspective, the following thesis is advocated to some degree even today: The virgin-mother is the phantasm of an exclusive mother-son relationship, in which the mother means everything to the son, and the son to the mother and in which both enter into a symbiosis --- of a neurotic kind --- whereby both mother and son renounce relationships with other persons in order to belong entirely to one another. The virgin-mother corresponds, therefore, to the virginal son, whereby of course, this symbiotic relationship is purchased at the price of the

renunciation of other relationships. Interested in this mother-son-unity is above all a celibate and power-oriented priesthood which, in the image of the virgin-mother and her son, has created for itself a phantasm of legitimization. This is clung to all the more emotionally, as the unconscious wishes, which betray themselves in this image, have to be repressed.<sup>16</sup>

In this undifferentiated form the thesis can hardly be taken seriously. Nevertheless it contains a question which should not be ignored. The neurotic form of exclusive mother-son-bond described here undoubtedly exist, with all the frequently tragic biographical constriction which characterizes it. One will not be able to dispute that such symbiotic mother relationships also occur occasionally with priest living a celibate life. Of course it would be a short-circuited conclusion to simply trace the devotion to the Madonna with the child back to projections which are fed from such turbid sources.

(4) A further objection closely related to the preceding one, obtrudes itself. The spareness of New Testament statements about Mary stands in sharp contrast to the apparently boundless expansion of Marian devotion in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions; the timid discretion of the gospels is opposed to the "de Maria nunquam satis" of this tradition. This contrast becomes accentuated even more when, on the one hand, it is observed: "all the statements of Jesus concerning his Mother are, at first hearing, marked by a strikingly austere reserve"<sup>17</sup>; and on the other hand are found expressions of an unsurpassable intimacy between the Mother of God and her Son. Scripture and tradition appear to come into conflict here.

(5) A final objection is immediately dogmatic in nature. It radicalizes all the preceding devotions. In its parallel development to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the devotion to the heart of Mary appears to place Mary on the same level as Christ. Now, against the background of the other objections, the question posed at the beginning presents itself anew: can there be any other heart and center of theology than Jesus Christ? In the question concerning the correct determination of the relation between the Heart of Jesus and heart of Mary there is involved the question embracing all the areas of theology: what role does the creature have in the economy of salvation?

The last two objections demands a rather detailed response. We will therefore first address the contrast between biblical spareness and later exuberance, and then finally establish that which is expressed in the title of this essay.

### **3. ". . . and with all your heart . . ."**

The contemplation of Mary, both in Marian devotion and in Mariology, usually sees Mary primarily in her relation to her divine Son, sees the mother with her child. This perspective is the spontaneous reaction of the heart. It is the reaction of that woman from among the people who called to Jesus out of the crowd: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you" (Lk. 11:27). The picture of the mother with the child, of the mother beneath the Cross of her

Son immediately touches hearts. These pictures inspire the simple prayer ("nos cum prole pia..."), the compassionate lament ("at the Cross her station keeping...").<sup>18</sup> Jesus' answer appears to rebuff this call of the heart: "Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). This brusque attitude characterizes all Jesus' words relating to his mother: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?... Whoever does the will of God, he is to me, brother and sister and mother" (Mk. 3:33-35). And even more clearly, in the words which Jesus addresses directly to his mother: "Why have you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49), and "What would you have of me, woman? My hour has not yet come" (Jn. 2:4).

Mary's reaction to this rebuff is, at the same time, non-understanding ("and they understood not the saying": Lk. 2:50) and assenting submission ("Do whatever he tells you": Jn. 2:5). Both attitudes, the repelling attitude of Jesus and the accepting attitude of Mary only show themselves in their true light, if they are understood in a strictly theological way. The first "point of reference" of the Heart of Jesus is not his mother but "the will of my Father." The first point of reference of the heart of Mary is not her maternal love for her Son, but the will of God. To see this is the prerequisite for avoiding the "oedipal" misunderstanding mentioned above. Jesus' "home" is first of all (in a radical sense which allows no restrictions) his Father: the "bosom" of the Father is his living space (cf. Jn 1:18); the will of the Father is his food (Jn. 4:34). No other bond, not even that of the fourth commandment, can occupy this position. Consequently, to live the first commandment in its full extent is also the first demand made on the heart of Mary: to love God "with her whole heart" in undivided devotion to his will," with all you soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Dt. 6:4f; Mk 12:29f). If this theocentricity of the heart is given too little attention, then all too easily the danger arises of projecting the unpurified of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary. Then all too easily will people speak of the "power of the heart of the Son" in a sense which Jesus in the Gospel clearly rejects. Blessed is Mary, because she has "believed" that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord (Lk. 1:45); blessed is she, because she "has heard the word of God and kept it" (Lk. 11;28). The word of Augustine is well known: "Materna propinquitatis nihil Maria profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde, quam carne gestasset", and also that other statement: "Quia fide concepit, et fide suscepit"<sup>20</sup>.

Does this disavow the praise of Mary, which through all generations declares her blessed (Lk1:48), ever since Elizabeth, as the first, intoned her praise? The *theologia cordis*, the "tender affectivity" was not led astray here. Like the first and greatest commandment, is the second: "... and your neighbor as yourself". Where God is loved "with all one's heart," there this love can only love everything that God loves with all its heart. The love of God is not a detour to love of neighbor, it is the most direct way to it. Of course only a complete purification and transformation of the heart makes it possible to walk this path. Under the primacy of the love of God "with all one's heart," this transformation of hearts is accomplished. This human drama has always moved the hearts of men: the mother and Son each in their own way "learned obedience through what they suffered" (cf. Heb. 5:8). In the process, each one, again in their own way, formed and left an imprint on the heart of the other.

In this simple, penetrating manner Cardinal Journet contemplated the formation of the heart of Mary by means of her way with Christ from the Annunciation to the Passion<sup>21</sup>. The Church meditates on this way as the way of the seven sorrows of Mary, in progressive fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon ("you own soul too a sword shall pierce": Lk. 2:35). It is inseparably linked with the way of her Son, who "is set...as a sign which will be contradicted" (Lk. 2:34). The severity of Jesus toward his mother, with which, step by step, he breaks down the elemental reactions of maternal love, is in reality "a hidden dissociation of his mother"<sup>22</sup> in the full dimensions of his own mission: "at the instant of the Incarnation, she bears within herself the one who comes to teach the unknown demands of love. He demands of her more than from all the others, and it is in this way that he will make love grow in her ... He himself is going to undertake to direct her. It will not be here, as elsewhere, the mother who first of all gives and the infant who receives. It is the infant who is the teacher of love".<sup>23</sup> "The ever more painful trials which are demanded of her do not have as their goal to purify her from the imperfections of her love; there was no shadow of imperfection in her. Their only purpose is to associate her with the redemptive suffering of her Son."<sup>24</sup>

If one considers the apparent brusqueness of many words of Jesus about Mary in this perspective, then they show themselves to be, not heartless dissociation, but signs on the way of the formation of her heart according to his own. This assimilation occurs in a veiled, hidden manner; it does not evade the obscurity of faith; Mary "traveled the pilgrim-path of faith."<sup>25</sup> She, as the first, followed it totally; she pursued it with the furthest, up to the perfect harmony of her heart with the heart of her Son, of her desire with this: the desire for the salvation of all men. Precisely in this, in the surrender of all spontaneous inclinations of the heart toward her own Son, in the total "release" of the Son to his mission, is her heart wholly united to his, does her heart become as wide as his mission. At the Cross since he gives his life for all men, she becomes the mother of all men.

However, there is also the inverse formative influence: in a certain manner the Heart of Jesus was formed on the pattern of the heart of his mother. The Second Vatican Council says of Christ: "He worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin".<sup>26</sup> The human heart with which he loved was formed according to the model of the heart of Mary. Christ received his human nature from her. Mary has been drawn into the mystery of the Incarnation. This forming influence does not remain limited to the moment of the Incarnation. It continues to have its effect through the long hidden years, in which Jesus "was subject to them" (Lk. 2:51) in the non-obtrusiveness of daily life. That Mary "deeply influenced the human development of the Son of God" in this way "is one of the most expressive perspectives in terms of the mystery of the Incarnation."<sup>27</sup>

"The obedience, which the Son will now exercise for more than twenty years, is an incarnate obedience, one bound into human society, but always flowing from his obedience to the Father,

whose will plants him in this human obedience. They may and must command him. Here in Nazareth it is provided that these commands too result from the knowledge of the divine will."<sup>28</sup> Jesus' obedience to his parents does not stand in the way of his obedience to the Father. The Incarnate Word encounters the will of his Father in the simple form of the Fourth Commandment. The obedience of Jesus in Nazareth becomes, thereby, "a tangible image"<sup>29</sup> of the obedience of Jesus to his Father. It anticipates the ultimate obedience in Gethsemane.

Mary formed the Heart of Jesus. Because she turned her heart over entirely to the Father in her "fiat" she could become for her Son the "representative of the Father's will." Cana, the first "sign" of Jesus, will testify to this. It is from Mary that the request is presented with reserve to the Son: "They have no more wine" (Jn. 2:3). Jesus' reference, that his hour had not yet come, is bridged over by himself: he fulfills the unspoken wish of Mary. At her request "heaven and earth are set in motion", the "hour" of Jesus, in a certain sense, is "moved up." Journet comments: "Nothing as great has been said, nothing as great will ever be said, concerning the Virgin's power of intercession as the gospel narrative of the miracle of Cana. It is the hour of the power of Mary. The Virgin can do everything with the heart of her Son. She has done his will too profoundly for him not to do her will in return."<sup>30</sup>

The *theologia cordis*, the faith of the simple, therefore, does not go astray, it does not miss the deeper sense of the sparse words of Scripture when it ascribes "power over the Heart of Jesus" to the heart of Mary. Of course this "power" is something different than the perverted will of a mother to dominate her son. "My hour has not yet come": Jesus' first reference is to the will of the Father, to whom alone it belongs to know and to determine the day and the hour (Mk. 14:32; Acts 1:7). For her petition, Mary has no other reference than this very same will of the Father. For this reason, the words of Jesus apply to her as to no other human being: "whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk. 3:35). This is the opposite of the oedipal situation; it is its complete sanction. Just as Jesus has not come to dethrone the Father<sup>31</sup>, so his conduct toward his mother is not that of an exclusive and possessive mother-relation. Jesus' repeated reference to the will of the Father shows the source of the community between Son and mother: the "fiat" to the Father. The "fiat" of the eternal Son is the very ground of his Incarnation; the "fiat" of Mary is the ground of her divine motherhood. In this "fiat" their hearts are united.

The "tender affectivity" in the devotion to the two hearts of Jesus and Mary remains "objective" and, therefore, authentic, provided it does not lose sight of this strict theocentricity. Where this is not overlooked, there also no opposition exists between the harshness of the words of Jesus concerning or to Mary and the tenderness of mother and Son, which the *theologia cordis* ponders and venerates.

#### ***4. Mary-Heart of Theology***

Why it is that theology finds the center of its heart in the heart of the woman who is Jesus'

mother? The answer can only be sketched here, the center indicated, and the lines, which lead out from it into all areas of theology, only briefly suggested.

(1) Mary is the guarantor of Christian realism: in her becomes manifest that God's word was not only spoke but also heard; that God has not only called, but that man has also answered; that salvation was not only presented, but also received. Christ is God's word, Mary is the answer: in Christ, God has "come down from heaven"; in Mary the earth has again become fruitful. Mary is the seal of perfected creatureliness: in her is illustrated in advance what God intended with creation.

(2) In order to prevent misunderstandings: this human heart from which the perfect creaturely "Yes" to God has gone forth, does not stand to some extent as an autonomous center of arbitrary will alongside the heart of the God-man. God's word and human answer does not stand on the same level. In her simple and real stance of faith, Mary is, as no other creature, the demonstrative of *sola gratia*. Her attractiveness consists in this: that everything in her is praise of grace. And the more the greatness of her response is seen, the more manifest it becomes that everything about her is grace. This absolute gift of grace is also the meaning of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>32</sup>

(3) But now in Mary it becomes apparent that grace is given with respect to consent. Never was grace so "dependent" upon the consenting "Yes"; for it is a question of that "Yes" for which "the whole captive world" is waiting.<sup>33</sup> "expectebatur consensus virginis loco totius humanae naturae."<sup>34</sup> "The Word is to become man; the entire event of salvation is no inner divine reality. To become man means to become child of a mother who in the receiving of the seed of God must give her full human consent. In no way and respect does God overpower and do violence to man. In no way can and may anything be done to man without his agreement in advance, to the possible consequences, even when he does not know them."<sup>35</sup> In order to be able to give her consent in this way, Mary must already receive a share in the "Yes" of God, which is his eternal Son and who through her "Yes" becomes her Son. Thus Mary gives her consent already in the attitude of her Son who as God's eternal Word is always also response. "This quality can only be given to her in advance by God, not as something foreign, but as capacity for the most profound self-realization. For God is the eternal freedom; in giving himself, he can only liberate the creature for freedom."<sup>36</sup>

(4) Thus in Mary the relation of infinite and finite freedom becomes "prototypically" visible not as idea but reality, in the heart of history. Mary's freedom has from the very beginning transferred itself into the spacious sphere of infinite (freedom) based on grace and thus perfected itself. It did this once and for all, however much it may have been assailed again and again in its temporal destiny... Her free "Yes" is required by the utterly determining absolute freedom -- "you shall conceive, bear, name: he shall be Son of the most High; the Spirit shall overshadow you"..., as free, it is already hidden within God's central decree of salvation, so that the question whether Mary could have said "No" lags far behind this union of fulfilled finite freedom and infinite freedom. No

finite freedom can be freer from limits in its agreement with infinite freedom.<sup>37</sup>

(5) Grace opens the space of the collaboration of the creature. The "theologia cordis" reflects by preference upon the collaboration of Mary in the salvific work of her Son, in his life and in his mission: from the consent to the conception until the standing near the Cross. By that Mary becomes the prototype of all collaboration of creatures in the work of God. Her collaboration in the work of Christ leads her, as no other creature, into the midst of the drama of sin and redemption, into the center of the history of salvation.

Conversion, penance, atonement for sin: these are the themes which always recur in the "great" Marian apparitions of the last 150 years. In the message of Fatima, they are besides, closely connected with the call for the veneration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A brief consideration of this message can clarify the meaning and the mode and manner of creaturely collaboration in the work of redemption.

"Do you want to give yourself to God?" -- This question of Mary to the children gives the keynote from the very first apparition. Dedication to God, total and unconditional: it is the attitude which befits the creature as creature. It is the attitude of Mary. For man there is nothing more joyful than such dedication. It is fully "connatural" to us. This is the reason why despite seriousness, joy is dominant in the message of Fatima, just as Mary's surrender to God bathed her life in the light of "unspeakable joy" (1 Pet. 1:8).

The "Yes" to dedication however, is also a "yes" to everything that God wills to send. "Are you ready to offer every sacrifice and to accept every suffering which he will send you?" The second question to the children introduces them into Mary's attitude of readiness. The "Yes" to dedication leads into the darkness of suffering. This suffering is not meaningless. It is participation in the work of redemption: "Are you ready.. to accept every suffering... as atonement for the many sins through which the divine Majesty is offended?" Sacrifice and suffering as atonement for sins. The theological core of this message, which has largely grown strange to us, is permanently valid. Presupposed is the elemental sense for the holiness of God ("the Divine Majesty") and linked with this, the deep horror over the nature of sin, "nondum considerasti quanti ponderis sit peccatum!"<sup>38</sup>. Is that also the meaning of the vision of hell during the third apparition? Shortly before, the children were told: "offer yourselves up for sinners." Atonement does not mean here "work-righteousness" of men; it grows out of the dedication to the holy God, out of the pain over the deadly nature of distance from God. "Atonement", not out of fear before God's punishment, but as sharing in the mercy of God who does not will the death of the sinner.<sup>39</sup>

In this way, we also get an inkling why the idea of atonement is connected precisely with the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; indeed why there is mention even of atonement for the "offenses to this Heart." Sin as the power of death always affects the heart of the Mother of life. The devotion to this heart becomes the exercise of the dedication, the glorification of God and

his mercy which has found an undying echo in this heart.<sup>40</sup> Thereby this heart becomes the sign of hope: "I will never abandon you; my Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God." Mary is experienced here as a real and personal sign for the certitude of faith that grace has irrevocably conquered. Thus the message of Fatima terminates in the promise: "In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph." Again it is important to pay heed to the theological core of this message: the victory of grace is "personified" in Mary. She is the first of the redeemed; she remains the first-redeemed -- as mother of all the redeemed.<sup>41</sup>

(6) The image of the "cor immaculatum" refers to the Church. The Constitution of the Church of the Second Vatican Council says of Mary: "In the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle." (cf. Eph. 5:27).<sup>42</sup> Mary is the guarantor that the Church rightly bears the attribute "holy" not only as promise, as horizon of what is hoped for, but already as presence of what has been given. In her, the Church is already holy, perfect Church in advance; in her, the Church is already the bride who with the Spirit calls "Maranatha" (cf. Apoc. 22:17). The "real symbol" for this is the cor immaculatum of Mary: in this heart God has inaugurated for himself in advance the sphere of pure, unconditioned assent; it is the very "essence of the church, as the adorned bride (cf. Apoc. 21:2) and as the mother" (cf. Apoc. 12:17). In order to be able to love the Church, it does not suffice to see her as idea, as organization, as vision of the future. "An abstraction needs no mother."<sup>43</sup> The power of the image of the Mother-Church vanishes, when it is not seen as realized in Mary.<sup>44</sup>

(7) As Marina-Ecclesia, Mary is "guarantor" of perfected humanity, the new creation. The dogma of the Assumption reminds us of that: "the Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possess in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come."<sup>45</sup> For this, also, the heart of Mary is the real-symbol: at the point of intersection of body and soul, of material and spiritual cosmos, her Immaculate Heart is the locus in which the new creation is already realized.



May we therefore call Mary "Heart of Theology?" The "theologia cordis" is not deceived when it places Mary at the center of theology, not to dislodge Christ from the center, but in order to see him all the more clearly in the mirror of Mary.

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Text translated from German. The original in German appeared in the Melanges offered to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the occasion of his 60th anniversary [("Weisheit Gottes-Weisheit der Welt"), EOS, Verlag, St. Ottilien, 1987].

The footnotes which follow were translated by Ms. Mathilde Beckers of Notre Dame de Vie, Mother of Life Catechetical Institute, Novaliches, Quezon City, Philippines.

#### FOOTNOTES

1 Elsie Gibson, "Mary and the Protestant Mind", in Review for Religious, 24 May 1965, quoted in L.J. CARDINAL SUENENS, Une nouvelle Pentecote, Paris 1976, p. 230f.

2 Je Crois en l'Esprit Saint, Bd., I. L'experience de l'Esprit, Paris, 1979, p. 224f.

3 Dogmatic Constitution LUMEN GENTIUM, Art. 65.

4 Cf. The book of H.U. VON BALTHASAR, Christen sind einfaltig. Einsiedeln, 1984, and our study: Einheit im Gluaben, Eisiendeln 1984.

5 Ave Maria, Das Weibliche und der Heilige Geist, Dusseldorf, 1982, p. 27. In this interesting book, BOFF even seems to go as far as affirming -- as a personal hypothesis -- a quasi-hypostatic union between the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Mother (cf. p. 51, 62f., 69, 74, 94, 120). Through such a "divination" of Mary he runs the risk of failing to recognize the difference between her and Christ, God and man. Strange "maximalisme": "What is due to a Mother whose Son is God? It is only just and right that she be placed at the same divine standing as He." (p. 97)

6 In this anonymous work (Anonymous d'Outre-Tombe) Die Grossen Arkana des Tarot, Basel, 1983, p. 603. This work is a mine that is as yet, hardly exploited.

7 UBER DAS HERZ. Zur menschlichen un gottmenschlichen Affektivitat, Regensburg 1967.

8 Ibid., p. 90.

9 Ibid., p. 81ff.

10 Thus H.U. VON BALTHAZAR described the philosopher Gustav Siewerth (Rechenschaft 1965, Eisiendeln 1965, p. 36).

11 Marienbluthen aus dem Garten der heiligen Vater und christlichen Dichter zur besonderen Verherrlichung der ohne Makel empfangene Gottesmutter, Schaffhausen, 1860: in the new edition under the title: Marienlob in den schonsten Gebeten, Hymnen und Liedern aus zwei

Jahrtausenden, Olten, 1946.

12 In the Introduction (p. XXVII) to the Complete Works of SCHEEBEN, vo. 1.

13 Die Herrlichkeiten der gottlichen Gnade, Gesammelte Werke, vo. 1, 53.

14 FREUD has developed this concept in his critical writings on religion: Totem und Tabu, Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: cf. vol. IX of the study edition, Frankfurt, 1974, p. 435-437; p. 532-537; p. 580; cf. on the other hand the texts of Ch. PEGUY, A. 29 and 31.

15 Zur Psychoanalyse der christlichen Religion, Frankfurt, 1970, esp. 44 ff.

16 Brief resume of the dissertation of J. POHIER, La conception virginale de Jesus. De quoi s'agit-il? In: G. BESSIERE and J.P. JOSSUA, Dossier Jesus. Recherches nouvelles, Paris, 1977, pp. 24-27; cf. on the other hand, the remarks of H.U. VON BALTHASAR in his Theodramatik II, 2, Einseideln, 1978, p. 298, A.19.

17 H. SPAEMANN, Drei Marien. Die gestalt des Glaubens, Freiburg 1985, p. 15

18. Christian MURCIAUX in his new Andalusian "Saeta pour Ponce Pilate," has shown in a masterly way the identification of a simple woman with the people in the joys and pains that Mary felt for her Son: Einsiedeln, 1956 (translated into German by H.U. Von Balthasar).

19 De virg. 3; PL 40, 398: quoted in St. THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologica, III, Q. 30, a.1; shortly before, St. Augustine said: "Beatior est Maria percipiendo fidem Christi, quan concipiendo carnem Christi."

20 In Joh. ev. tract IV, 1, 10:PL 35, 1410

21 CHARLES CARDINAL JOURNET, Mater Dolorosa - Notre dame des sept douleurs, Stein am Rhein, 1974, 3.

22 H.U. von Balthasar, ibid. (A.16), 304, A.9

23 Cardinal Journet, ibid., 8.

24 Ibid., 68

25 Lumen Gentium, Art. 58.

26 GAUDIUM ET SPES, Art. 22

27 JOHN PAUL II, General audience of 4.1 1984, in: Osservatore Romano, dt. Wochenausgabe 1984, Nr. 2,S.2: cf. also C. Spicq: Ce que Jesus doit a sa mere selon la theologier biblique et d'apres les theologiens medievaux (Conference Albert-le-Grand 1959), Montreal-paris 1959.

28 H.U. VON BALTHASAR, Der derifache Kranz. Das Heil der Welt im Mariengebete, Einsiedeln 1976,

p. 39.

29 cf. the admirable text of Charles PEGUY in his work, *Un Nouveau Theologien*, M. Fernand Laudet, # 111 (Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, p. 920): "The obedience, the submission of Jesus to his foster father and mother, so perfect in itself and with an eternal teaching, was still only an earthly image, a carnal representation of the eternal filial obedience, of the eternal perfect filial submission of Jesus to his Father who is in heaven. The obedience, the everyday submission of Jesus to Joseph and Mary announced, represented, anticipated the frightening obedience and submission of Holy Thursday."

30 Ibid. (A.21), 91f.

31 Charles PEGUY has expressed this in "Durel" in an impressive manner: "(Jesus) is not the son of a king who came to dethrone his father but on the contrary to bring back rebel subjects to him. All the action and the movement of Jesus Christ has been to bring back man and take away sin away from man to throw them both at the foot of the throne of his Father" (*Oeuvres poetiques*, Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, p. 1527).

32 JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER points out in: *Die Tochter Zion. Betrachtungen über der Marienglauben der Kirche*, Einsiedeln 1977, pp. 61-71.

33 Ambrosius AUPER, PL 39, 2105; cf. H.U. von Balthazar, *ibid.* (A.16), 283.

34 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III, q. 30, a.1.

35 H.U. von Balthasar, *ibid.* (A.28) 15f.

36 *Ibid.*, 17.

37 H.U. von Balthasar, *ibid.* (A.16), 275f.

38 St. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY to his student Boso in, *Dialog Cur Deus Homo*, I, 21.

39 Fr. Adrian SCHENKER, O.P. has shown in an impressive series of articles the biblical aspect of atonement as "instrument of divine mercy: "Versonhnung und Suhne. Wege gewaltfreier Konfliktlösung im A.T. Mit einem Ausblick auf das N.T." (*Biblische Beiträge* 15), Freiburg (Schweiz), 1981; "Das Zeichen der Blutes und die Gewissheit der Vergebung im A.T." in *Mthz34* (1983) 195-213; "Substitution du chatiment ou prix de la paix? Le don de la vie du fils de l'homme en Mc10, 45 par. a la lumiere de l'Ancien Testament" in *La Paque du Christ, Mystere du Salut* (FS F.-K.Durrwell) (Le Div.112), Paris 1982, 75-90.

40 The "oldest prayer to Mary" attributed already to the Blessed Virgin this eusplachnia, a specifically divine attribute (cf. Eph. 4,32; 1 Peter 3,8); cf. O. STEGMULLER, *Sub Tuum praesidium* Bemerkungen zur ältesten Urberlieferung, in: *Zkth* 74 (1952) 76-82.

41 Cf. L.SCHEFFCZYK, *Verheissung des Friedens. Theologische Betrachtungen zur Botschaft von Fatima*, Vienna, 1985.

42 Lumen Gentium, Art. 65.

43 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Zur Lage des Glaubens. Ein Gespräch mit Vittorio Messori, München 1985, 109.

44 Cf. H.U. von Balthazar, Der antiromische Affekt, Freiburg 1974, 153-169; Katholisch, Einsiedeln, 1975, 55.

45 Lumen Gentium, Art. 68.

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