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THE SPIRIT AND THE HEART OF MARY¹

RECENT BACKGROUND

Introduction

At the International Symposium held in Fatima in September, 1986, sponsored by Cardinal Sin and the Philippine Hierarchy, and with formal approval of Pope John Paul II, who sent a written message and received the participants with another formal address in the Vatican, when they presented him with their findings, the subject was *The Alliance of the Two Hearts*, that is, of Jesus and Mary. I mention the fact for two reasons. All the participants in the symposium were agreed that the heart as a symbol, highly meaningful in the religious domain, is utterly acceptable in the modern world. The bond between the two hearts, eagerly sought by the theologians who had amassed a very impressive documentation on every aspect of the problem – scriptural, patristic, medieval, seventeenth century, nineteenth and twentieth century, liturgy, teaching authority, mysticism, speculative theology – is the Spirit of God. The great Marian theologian, René Laurentin suggested this and his suggestion awaits analysis.

Do the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate Heart of Mary realize the golden idealism that is theirs? What others have had to grope their way

¹ *The Ecumenical Review*, 2 (1965), *The main ecclesiological problems in the Second Vatican Council and the position of the Non-Roman Churches facing it*, 31-62, esp. p. 48; a concerted effort was made to put teaching on the Holy Spirit in the texts still to be drafted and approved, notably The Constitution on Divine Revelation, The Decree on the Priesthood and especially The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church: for bibliography cf. art. *Spirit of God* in my *Theotokos*, 332, 33 and in *Trinitas*, 206,7: the proceedings of the French Society of Marian Studies, for 1968, 1969, 1970 are very valuable, *Le Saint Esprit et Marie, Etudes Mariales*, Lethielleux, Paris.

towards has been presented to them with total clarity. Since the Second Vatican Council there has been an immense stirring of intellectual and prayerful interest in the theme of Mary and the Holy Spirit. The reasons for this development are beyond the scope of my essay; the public comment made by an Orthodox theologian were not insignificant – they were made in an article which appeared in the official review of the World Council of Churches by the editor, N. Nissiotis. The author deplored the absence in the documents so far known from the Council of an adequate teaching on the Holy Spirit. Some attempt to make amends was evident in the fourth session. After the Council other factors were operative. We have now almost *un embarras de richesses*.

The Sources

We begin with a look at the sources of divine revelation, Sacred Scripture and Tradition, keeping in mind the Teaching Authority of the Church. In St. Luke's infancy narrative we have the most explicit reference to the Heart of Mary in the Bible: "As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" Lk. 2 : 19 with the echo "and his mother stored up all these things in her heart", *ibid.*, 51. The first text ends the story of the birth of the Saviour and the visit of the shepherds, the second completes the narrative of the finding in the Temple.

Why, one may ask to introduce a suitable comment on the action of the Spirit in each of these moments, does the evangelist not say about any of Mary's spoken words or actions in these early events that she was "filled with the Holy Spirit" as were Elizabeth, Lk. 1 : 41 and Zechariah, *ibid.*, 1 : 67, or "inspired by the Spirit" as was Simeon, *ibid.*, 2 : 27?

The answer is given by the greatest Marian theologian of the Orthodox Church in the present century, Sergius Bulgakov:

"Thus the descent of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation was not merely related to the divine conception and child-birth; and after it had been accomplished, the human essence of Mary was not deprived of grace (which constitutes the principal heresy of Protestantism, strangely lacking in awareness of the mystery of the

Mother of God). The Virgin Mary remained, even after the birth of Christ, in the force of the Annunciation, that is, of the Holy Spirit's presence. She was not a mere instrument in the hands of Providence for the purposes of the redemption, but, being a human personality, she was the subject of the divine conception, to the degree that she participated in it. The Holy Spirit did not abandon her after the birth of Christ but remained forever with her in the full strength of the Annunciation"².

This, be it said in passing, anticipated, by twenty years, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in *Ad Gentes*, the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*, art. 4. What follows from the great Russian theologian's thesis is that St. Luke found it unnecessary to make further mention of the Spirit in Mary's regard after the story of the Annunciation: She was constantly one with him, guided by him.

Interestingly Paul VI concurs, being explicit on the Spirit's action on the Heart of Mary. In his remarkable letter to Cardinal Suenens, Legate to the 1975 International Marian Congress, he wrote:

"It will therefore be a source of great comfort for us to pause in joyful contemplation of the principal works of the Spirit of Christ in the chosen Mother of God. It was the Holy Spirit who filled Mary's person with grace at the first moment of her conception and thus redeemed her in a more sublime way making her immaculate in view of the merits of Christ, the Saviour of mankind. It was the Holy Spirit who came upon her, and inspired her to agree, on behalf of mankind, to the virginal conception of God's Son. He made her womb fruitful so that she might give birth to the Saviour of her people, the sovereign of an everlasting kingdom (Lk. 1 : 35-28). Again, it was the Holy Spirit who inflamed her spirit with joy and gratitude, impelling her to burst into the

² *Le Paraclet*, tr. C. Andronikif, 239; Bulgakov cries out for recognition; Orthodox, expatriate for his faith, a dedicated ecumenist, he refused to compromise on Marian doctrine or devotion. At the Fribourg meeting of the French Society for Marian Studies in 1970 his great disciple, Paul Evdokimov, told me that he conceived it his mission to maintain the Marian idea and ideal in the ecumenical movement.

Magnificat praising God her Saviour (Lk. 1 : 45-55). It was likewise the Holy Spirit who gave the Virgin the good counsel to keep faithfully *in her heart* all that was said and done about the birth and childhood of her only Son, in which she had taken so intimate and loving a part". (Lk. 2 : 19, 33, 51)³.

Elsewhere the same Pope dealing with the early "Fathers and writers" of the Church, wrote:

"In exploring the doctrine of the Paraclete they recognised that he was the spring from which flowed the fullness of grace (cf. Lk. 1 : 28) and abundance of gifts that adorned her. Hence they attributed to the Spirit the faith, hope and charity that animated the *Virgin's Heart*, the strength that maintained her obedience to God's will, and the fortitude that upheld her as she suffered at the foot of the Cross"⁴.

If we move forward into the age of the Fathers and look for some enlightening intuition on our subject, we shall get it principally in the dictum of St. Augustine which echoes through the ages after him: this was the opinion expressed by the great Henri Barré, our own confrère, the giant of medieval Latin Mariology⁵. "One should not forget" wrote Fr. Barré "that Mary was a virgin in mind and body and that she welcomed the Word in her heart before conceiving him in her womb, *prius concepit mente quam corpore*". The exact words of St. Augustine are: "Quae cum dixisset angelus, illa fide plena et Christum prius mente quam ventre concipiens, 'Ecce, inquit, ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum'"⁶. The idea is taken up almost literally by St. Leo the Great⁷.

³ Text in excellent work, *Pope Paul and the Spirit* by E. D. O'Connor, C.S.C., Notre Dame, 1978, p. 220 ff.

⁴ Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, AAS 66 (1974), 136-39; English ed., *Osservatore Romano*, 4 April, 1974.

⁵ *Etudes Mariales*, 1951, p. 75.

⁶ *Sermo 215*, PL 38, 1074; critical ed. Fr. Verbraken, *RevBen* 68 (1958), 5-41.

⁷ *Sermo in Nativitatem Dni*, 1, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 22, 69-71; PL 54, 191; for the explanation of these texts (i.e. of St. Augustine and St. Leo) cf. J. Pintard, *Etudes Mariales*, 1970, 26-37.

St. Augustine draws far-reaching doctrinal conclusions from this fundamental principle. Let us remember that when we speak of mind in Our Lady's case, we are practically speaking of her *Heart*, the centre of her personality, that which constitutes the focus of her spiritual aspiration, energy, dynamism, that which makes her mighty, the woman for whom John could see no lesser symbols than the sun, moon and stars. For some strange reason the Heart of Mary is sometimes used to belittle her, to reduce her to a being of soft, superficial sentimentality. But no woman ever had the heroic temperament as she had it.

The Middle Ages

All this comes out in the first prayer addressed directly to the Heart of Mary, critically edited by Fr. Barré⁸. The author was the twelfth century mystic Ekbert of Schonau (d. 1184). With him we are just into one of the great ages of Marian doctrine and devotion; it will culminate in the late thirteenth century, the age of the great doctors, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, of the noble cathedrals built to honour Our Lady, of the first great hymns of the western Church taking their place with those of the East, among these the latter incomparable *Akathistos* Hymn. In this age too there would be, among the great mystics of Helfta, principally St. Gertrude the Great (1266-c. 1302), an unfolding of the theology of the Heart, the Heart of Christ and the Heart of his Mother Ekbert of Schönau spoke briefly of the Holy Spirit in these terms: "Hail, Sanctuary unique, which God consecrated to himself in the Holy Spirit"⁹. As is well known, Vatican II spoke of Mary as "Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit". St. Gertrude was once inspired by the Holy Spirit, "unctione Spiritus Sancti edocta" to offer the Heart of Christ to his unsullied Mother. Another passage relates her experience of the Heart of Mary at the very centre of the Holy Trinity:

"Vidit tres rivulos efficacissimos procedentes a Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto, cor Virginis Matris suavissimo

⁸ *Une Prière d'Ekbert de Schönau au Saint Cœur de Marie, Ephemerides Mariologicae* 2 (1952), 409-423.

⁹ Op. cit. p. 412.

impetu penetrare, et de corde ipsius rursus efficaci impetuositate suam originem repetere, et ex illo influxu sanctae Trinitatis hoc beatæ Virgini donatum fore, quod ipsa est potentissima post Patrem, sapientissima post Filium et benignissima post Spiritum Sanctum”¹⁰.

This Trinitarian perspective was not unknown to another medieval writer, Richard of St. Laurent (d. after 1245) who spoke of the Heart of Mary as the “tabernacle and resting-place of the whole Trinity”. We shall meet the idea presently in later writers. Meanwhile it is important to note that Hugh of St. Victor, prominent among the Victorines (d. 1141), advancing on an idea of St. Bernard¹¹ taught a direct link between the Heart of Mary and the Spirit, fittingly in the moment of the Incarnation:

“Conceptit ergo Maria de Spiritu sancto, non quod de substantia Spiritus sancti semen partus acceperit, sed quia per amorem et operationem Spiritus sancti ex carne virginis divino partui natura substantiam ministravit. Nam quia in corde quo amor Spiritus sancti singulariter ardebat, ideo in carne ejus virtus Spiritu sancti mirabilia faciebat. Et cujus dilectio in corde illius non susceperit socium, ejus operatio in carne illius non habebat exemplum”¹².

This sends us back again to St. Augustine, author of the marvellous sentence: “Materna propinquitas nihil Mariæ profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset”¹³.

St. John Eudes

We move forward to the great seventeenth century apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, St. John Eudes (1601-1680). His work, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, published a year after his death, was the first substantial book on the subject. He used the previous literature according to the degree of accuracy possible in his time – for example he attributes

¹⁰ *Legatus divinæ pietatis, Sources Chrétiennes*, 139, p. 334-35.

¹¹ *Super missus est*, IV, 6, PL 183, 82B.

¹² *De B. Mariæ Virginitate*, 2, PL 176, 871C-872A.

¹³ *Sermo* 215, 4 PL 28, 1074.

Ekbert of Schönau's prayer to another author. But the ground-plan of the work is most impressive. The three foundations of devotion to the Heart of Mary are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: the saint has a distinctive anthropology of the heart. What interests us here is his teaching on the Spirit:

"The Holy Spirit is the consummation and accomplishment of the adorable mystery of the most Holy Trinity. The Heart of the Mother of God is the consummation, the summary and the perfection of all the works of the most Holy Trinity in purely created reality, since it contains pre-eminently all that is great, all that is rare in all creatures. For this reason we can say with Hesychius, Bishop of Jerusalem, that it is *complementum Trinitatis (sermo de Laudibus B. Mariae)*, the accomplishment of the most Holy Trinity, and as we have already seen, it contributed the Godman by the mystery of the Incarnation. In this work all the power, wisdom, goodness and all other perfections of the Deity must have been used, and, as it were, exhausted, since God can do nothing greater".

"The Holy Spirit has been sent into the world to light the darkness, to kindle the fire of divine love in hearts, to accomplish what is lacking in the works, the sufferings and the Passion of the Son of God and in all his mysteries. What is wanting? That the fruit be applied to souls. But the heart of the Mother of God is a sun which sheds its light and its fire on all the world. And the very ardent desire it has that the Son of God should not be denied the effect of his designs, and that all that he did and suffered in this world for the salvation of men should not be vain and useless, compels this Heart to busy itself incessantly so as to procure, in every possible manner, that the fruit should be applied to their souls" ¹⁴.

The Trinitarian perspective was also developed by another seventeenth century spiritual writer, the Italian Jesuit, Fr.

¹⁴ *Le Cœur admirable de la très sacrée Mère de Dieu*, Caen, 1681, Bk V, ch 12.

G. Pinamonti (1632-1703). It is found too in a remarkable sermon on the Heart of Mary by the nineteenth century Jesuit, Irish-born, who lived in France, Nicolas Tuite de MacCarthy (1769-1833). His sermon was preached at a time when Marian doctrine and piety were coming slowly out of the pitiful decline which marked the end of the eighteenth century. He introduces reflections on Mary and the three divine Persons thus:

“The Lord had decreed, in his eternal counsels, that the world would be saved by the incarnation of his Word, and that this ineffable mystery would be accomplished in the womb of a virgin, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Thereon it was to the glory of the whole adorable Trinity that nothing would be lacking in the perfection of a creature called to so sublime a destiny. The Father adopted in a very special manner the one who was to be the Spouse of his Spirit and the mother of his only Son”.

It is clear that the theme which drew the attention of Fr. de MacCarthy was Mary as Spouse of the Spirit. This image has rarely been presented, with such eloquence and, at the same time, such sobriety:

“It is here again, in this virginal Heart that the ineffable marriage of the Holy Spirit will be celebrated. Come down, O divine Spirit, the spouse is ready; she is robed with chastity, humility, love, with the whole variety and magnificence of virtues which form the richest wedding dress, and one most worthy of you. *In vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate* (Ps 44 : 10). Come to accomplish in her the prodigy awaited for ages, this mystery, incomprehensible even to angels, which will unite her to you by indissoluble bonds and will give her a title and rights to which it did not appear possible that any creature could ever aspire. How shall we convey an idea of the favour which Mary received? The Spirit of God visits her. Is it enough to say this? Has he not visited others before her? How many souls have tasted the sweetness of his divine caresses, been intoxicated with the chaste delights of loving union with him! Mary, from her early childhood had been familiar with all these graces; she had not ceased to live in the most intimate intercourse

with the Spirit of the Lord; her days had been spent in the raptures and faintings of love; even sleep did not interrupt her converse with her well-beloved; and while her senses were dormant, her Heart was watchful for him: *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat* (Can 5 : 2). Did nothing more happen at the moment announced by the angel, when the divine majesty encircled her on every side, and the power of the Most-High surrounded her with his shadow: *Virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi* (Lk. 1 : 35), when the Holy Spirit who had always dwelt in her and had for a long time overwhelmed her with his gifts, came in an extraordinary and new manner: *Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te* (*Ibid*); when he filled her, so to speak, with his fullness; when, by an unheard-of prodigy, he rendered fruitful the virginial womb, producing a fruit of benediction, who is sanctity itself, and who will be called Son of the All-Powerful? *Ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum vocabitur Filius Dei* (*Ibid*). Ah, if this same Spirit descending on the Apostles, changed them into new men; if he raised them above nature, above mankind, taught them all knowledge, and made them suddenly, by the power with which he clothed them, as it were the gods of the earth, what must he have operated in Mary? With what light, with what unction, with what supernatural strength must he have filled her, when he came, not now as a tongue of fire, but as a torrent of divine flames to burn, consume whatever human remained in her, to renew her whole being already so perfect, to consecrate and divinize her womb, making it conceive a God! Ah! if such were the favours granted to simple servants, what must have been the presents given to the spouse! What purity, what beauty must the immortal Spouse have imparted, by his divine embraces, to a Heart which he deigned to attach to himself by ties so close and so new! . . . I stop, for I feel that words do not match my thought, and that my thought itself is too much beneath the wonders about which I have to speak to you".

The preacher having already spoken of the relations between the Heart of Mary and the Father, next turns to the divine motherhood. He ends his trinitarian reflections thus: "Finally, to put things briefly, what must have been the Heart,

whose sentiments answered the sublimity of these incomprehensible relations with the three divine Persons, and were worthy in everything of the daughter, spouse and Mother of a God" ¹⁵.

Fr. Joseph de Gallifet, S. J. (1663-1749) the great apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, added to his book on the subject a lengthy chapter on the Heart of Mary. He sought to establish a parallel between the two from different aspects, while clearly stating the difference between the Man-God and his creature. On our subject, the Heart of Mary and the Holy Spirit, he wrote thus; "It (the Heart of Mary) is the sanctuary par excellence of the Holy Spirit, sanctified in an extraordinary manner by the operations of this divine Spirit and by the instilling of his most excellent graces and gifts" ¹⁶.

To these inspiring texts we may add one from an unsuspected quarter. Few people know that the great Newman, the imperial intellect of his age, a future Doctor of the Church in the opinion of Pius XII, found a special place in his spirituality for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This led him logically to the kindred devotion which he marked by composing a Litany of

¹⁵ *Sermons du R. P. MacCarthy*, Vol. II, Paris, Lyon, 1840, 101, 108; I reproduce here what I wrote in "La dévotion au Cœur de Marie dans l'histoire de la Congrégation du Saint Esprit et du Cœur Immaculé de Marie in *Marianum*, 46 (1984), in answer to the question: Where did Francis Libermann get his devotion to the Heart of Mary, which is found for the first time in his writings in a letter dated 23 October, 1830. Not from the Eudists whom he did not yet know, not from the Miraculous Medal, which was not revealed until some months later in that year, not from Abbé Desgenettes whose great moment occurred in December, 1836. "Il faut tenir compte d'une influence venue de deux autres sources. Un Jésuite française, prédicateur très célèbre, le P. de MacCarthy, parla à plusieurs reprises en public du Cœur de Marie. Parmi ses *Sermons* se trouve le texte de celui qu'en 1829 il prêcha pour la première fois (en public) sur la dévotion au Saint Cœur de Marie, dans l'Eglise des Sœurs de la Visitation. Nous savons que l'Abbé Desgenettes, encore séminariste, l'avait entendu prêcher sur ce thème, mais il avoua plus tard qu'il n'avait rien senti de particulier. Il est possible que Libermann ait, de façon directe ou indirecte, subi l'influence du Jésuite. Ce qui pourrait être plus décisif, c'est le mandement publié par l'archevêque de Paris en 1827 pour recommander fortement cette dévotion; l'année suivante, il ordonna la célébration d'une Messe en l'honneur du saint Cœur de Marie. Il ne faut pas oublier que le culte du Cœur de Marie s'alliait à Saint Sulpice avec la dévotion, caractéristique de cette Société, à "l'intérieur" de Marie, p. 248.

¹⁶ *Le cœur admirable de Jésus*, Paris, Nouniol, 1866, p. 265.

the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Two of the invocations are relevant to us: "Heart, the vessel of the Holy Ghost; Heart of Mary, shrine of the Trinity"¹⁷.

Eastern and western theology

We have thus far pursued our inquiry in the context of the Heart of Mary. On the more comprehensive subject of Mary and the Holy Spirit, which forms the doctrinal background to our subject, guaranteeing its theological validity, there is much to recall and ponder. Among many, two great names should not be overlooked, the fourteenth century Orthodox theologian Theophanes of Nicaea (d.c. 1380) and the giant of nineteenth century Catholic theology, Matthias J. Scheeben (1835-1888). An extract from each will indicate their thinking: "After this Prodigy and Gift truly worthy of God", writes Theophanes, "chosen before the ages and consecrated to serve the venerable mystery of the Incarnation had come to life in a manner altogether new, the Holy Spirit was her guardian and leader, her judge and guide, the beautifier, as it were, of one espoused, who prepared the Virgin as the spouse of God, one most pleasing as the Mother of his beloved Son".

Mary, the author tell us, was so formed spiritually by the Spirit that when Gabriel came to her with the "blessed news of our salvation, he found the Paraclete dwelling more in her than in heaven. . ."

Theophanes fills pages on the wondrous union between Mary and the Spirit in the mystery of the Incarnation. This perfects her relationship with each Person of the most Holy Trinity, now that she is "susceptible of receiving the entire divine fullness".

"Wherefore, as the Son is the natural image of the Father, and accordingly an image of total likeness, and as the Paraclete in the same way is the image of the Son, thus also the Mother of this Son is the image of the Paraclete, not the natural image, but one by participation and grace, so that nevertheless more than any creature she should show forth her prototype, and that

¹⁷ *Meditations and Devotions*, London, Longmans, 1894, p. 334.

from her all the graces and splendours of the Spirit related to her Son should shine and be seen far and wide; in reality there was one appearance and beauty common to both; whence she is a stele manifesting the hidden treasures of the Spirit, who himself is the power manifesting the secrets of the divinity" ¹⁸.

Here is the profound wealth of eastern theology on the *Theotokos*, set in the characteristic doctrine of the "image" which we, in the west, are beginning to rediscover.

Scheeben

Scheeben seeks to integrate his theory in his overall opinion of Mary as Bride of Christ, endowed with a sponsal motherhood.

"This power of Mary (he is writing of her supernatural activity) must not be traced to the fact that her activity simply proceeds from and belongs to a divine Person. It remains that of a created being united with Christ and God as his bride. But from that particular relationship it draws a distinctive power and dignity . . . The distinguishing mark of her person as bride of Christ is conceived fully in her capacity of bearer and temple of the Holy Spirit. Likewise the foundation for this special power and dignity of her activity must be traced to this capacity of her person. Thus it must be found formally in the fact that Mary is the organ of the Holy Spirit, who works in her in the same way that Christ's humanity is the instrument of the Logos. And this in a more complete and distinctive sense than can be the case in other created beings. After the conception of the Son of God, Mary appears as a dynamic and authoritative organ of the Holy Spirit, in the physical influence she exercises upon the formation and constituting of Christ's body and his corporal life through the natural strength of her heart and soul. This influence is moved and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. She cooperates

¹⁸ *Sermo in Sanctissiman Deiparam*, ed. M. Judie, A. A., Lateranum, Nova series, 1, Rome, 1935, XIII, p. 193.

in the birth of the Son of God *ad extra* when he is given to mankind, or helps to realize the effusion of the eternal light into the world.

"In this respect, to the exclusion of all other creatures, Mary alone cooperates in this most sublime and supernatural work of God and she does this in a manner superlatively more perfect than the cooperation of any other creature in the supernatural works of God, as for example the dispensers of the Sacraments. For, in union with the Holy Spirit Mary exercises an intrinsic influence upon the substance of the supernatural product by her own natural strength. She communicates the supernatural gift of God to the world as a gift which is given to her first, or coproduced by her"¹⁹.

The views of these mighty theologians will reassure those who may think that all that we can say about Mary and the Spirit remains on the surface or at the periphery of theology. We here look into the depths of the mystery of God's dealings with his creatures. For those who wish to pursue the subject further one may recommend the study of St. Maximilian Kolbe's writings. The Polish martyr has written some wonderful things on the general theme of Mary and the Spirit²⁰. I shall speak presently of St. Grignon de Montfort.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion one may tentatively answer some questions of more immediate interest. How does the whole theology of the heart have a place in Catholic theology? In modern times, with increasing consciousness among the faithful of its relevance, in theory and practice, to their lives, it

¹⁹ *Mariology*, Vol. II, tr. T. L. M. J. Geukers, London, St. Louis, 1953, p. 185 f.

²⁰ Cf. in particulier *La Mariologia di S. Massimiliano M. Kolbe*, ed. F. S. Pancheri (Proceedings of the International Congress, 8-12 October, 1984), Rome 1985, Peter D. Fehlner, O. F. MConv. *The Immaculate and the mystery of the Trinity in the Thought of S. Maximilian Kolbe, The Holy Spirit*, pp. 391-403.

nonetheless seemed to have no clear place in the academic systems or syntheses current. But simultaneously it has been noted that formal Catholic theology, held together in tight systems, seemed cut off from the life of the Church.

A very great biblical scholar, my former professor at Fribourg, Francois Marie Braun, O. P., said to me some time before he died – he was in his nineties or thereabouts – that some ultra scientific biblical exegetes were talking to themselves and had lost contact with the faithful who did not know what was going on! The rupture in one case and the other between the professionals and the general body is regrettable. In regard to theology it may be due to too rigid adherence to the mental categories of the Graeco-Roman world. I am not advocating “dehellenization of dogma”, merely sympathetic understanding of divine phenomena: a comprehensive re-think.

Secondly, what is the place of Francis Libermann in the general sequence we have considered? Fr. Gilbert has given the evidence which, I suggest, will support my thesis. Libermann is the supreme existentialist in this area. Jacques Maritain once spoke of St. John of the Cross as “un praticien de la contemplation”, his life one prolonged case-history of the divine action in a created human spirit. Libermann was a unique “praticien” of a doctrine at once simple and complex in its meaning: faithful response to the joint action of the Spirit and the Heart of Mary in a human life releases mighty spiritual power.

It was an intuition of genius, which is code for direct inspiration, to see the Heart of Mary in its apostolic dimension. Libermann was first in the field in this. His spiritual children are prone to forget him entirely! He once said that he had not met, in the life of any saint, the equivalent of the thing God had done in his own soul. Now that statement is either monstrously false or sensationally true. We must take it for the truth because this man was highly intelligent, as honest as the day and totally free from ego. The mighty things that had been accomplished in him were under the sign of the Heart of Mary, source of apostolic zeal, model of docility to the Holy Spirit.

At the international symposium in Fatima, to which I have referred, I suggested to the participants that those studying the question of Fatima and the conversion of Russia should consider the experience of Libermann. He undertook the con-

version of Africa under the sign of the Heart of Mary. Many others were to cooperate, but his was the first intuition. To-day after less than a century and a half the African mission is unexampled in growth in the entire history of the Church. It did not occur by a stroke of magic, but at the cost of immense sacrifice in life, toil and suffering. Thus it may very well be with Russia. But Our Lady's request must be met.

There is the final, painful question for members of the Holy Ghost Congregation. Do we make the inestimable treasure we have received available to those willing to receive it? We should profitably listen to a great voice encouraging us in this matter, the voice of one bound by ties of friendship with our first founder, St. Grignon de Montfort. I reserve an analysis of his masterly work on the Holy Spirit and Mary for another time. It is known that John Paul II wishes to declare him a Doctor of the Church. His teaching thus recognised by the Church practically belongs to our spiritual patrimony. His book which has had such immense influence in the Church, should be known to us.

To end these reflections I shall quote a text of Fr. Libermann's associate, Frédéric Levavasseur. He preached the French Provincial Retreat in 1877, and on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary he gave the points for meditation. One of those present took them down and they are reproduced by Mgr. Le Roy in his biography of Levavasseur:

"The Holy Heart of Mary

From all eternity it was willed, prepared, loved by the Holy Trinity, and from the beginning of its creation the Holy Spirit filled it and gave it an abundance of all his graces. And this Heart is ours!

Alone among human hearts it remained free from all sin, rich with all the of God. And this Heart is ours! From it was formed the adorable body of the Saviour, whose blood redeemed the world. And this Heart is ours!

Given to all men from the height of the cross, as of a Mother, it kept a special place for us. For this Heart is ours!

Through it all the favours of the Almighty pass. And this Heart is ours. We shall see it full of mercy and of tenderness when we shall appear before the sovereign Judge. For this Heart is ours!

Let us then go to Jesus through it, let us love it, serve it; let us avoid saddening it by our offences, our indifference, our omissions. Since this Heart is ours!"

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