Université de Montréal

Mary as Model of the Church and the Tradition
of the Black Virgins

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Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieures

en vue de l'obtention du grade de

Licence en théologie (L.Th)

avril 2000

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Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures

Ce mémoire intitulé:

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of the Black Virgins

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Mémoire accepté le:

25 mai 2000

SOMMAIRE

The idea of Mary as model of the Church has its roots in the second century and made its first appearances in the fourth century. The theologians who carried the marian debate at Vatican II and whose thought shows through in the document *Lumen Gentium* laid the foundation for this to be developed as the place for Mary. This place would not place her above the Church, but in it as the first and exemplary member. The purpose of this *mémoire* is to re-examine certain medieval images of the Virgin Mary in order to clarify the concept of Mary, model of the Church as presented during and after Vatican II. It is my goal to show how these images, which held important theological significance in their time, may take on relevance when they are seen from the point of view of modern marian thought.

The 12th and 13th centuries have a rich tradition of art and literature which depict Mary as earthy, active, and loving. The images examined in this *mémoire*, the Black Virgins, are also full of the symbols which identify Mary with the Church. It is thus the hypothesis of this *mémoire* that these medieval images can be used to represent Mary as model of the Church as she has been understood since Vatican II.

The Council did not provide iconography for their vision of Mary. I have

found a possible iconography in the art of the Middle Ages. One reason I look back there is because the images which come afterward are often not useful. After the Middle Ages, the 13th century specifically, mariology became dominated by questions such as the Immaculate Conception, the nature of Mary's mediation, and the Assumption.

For my method I looked to Bernard Lonergan's statements that methodical theology "builds the bridges between the many expressions of the faith" and that "truths can be revealed in one culture and expressed in another". After reading the history of the idea of Mary as model of the Church, and seeing how the Black Virgins were indeed meant to be illustrative of this idea as it was imagined at the time, I was able to conclude that Black Virgins and their attendant miracle stories could indeed be used to represent Mary as model of the Church even today.

It can be argued that Mary, model of the Church is a potentially powerful symbol that has been under-utilized. It may be what is needed to show Mary's correct place in the Church while serving as inspiration to the laity and a reminder of humility to the hierarchy. It also is a reminder that we as Catholics are blessed to have a rich 2,000 year tradition to which we should not hesitate to turn when searching for meaning.

RÉSUMÉ

Jusqu'à un passé récent, les catholiques avaient une profonde et constante dévotion à la Vierge Marie. Point n'est besoin d'être âgé pour se souvenir des processions, des neuvaines, et des autres dévotions qui honoraient la Mère de Dieu. Mais, après Vatican II, tout a changé. Il semble que Marie soit presque disparue des églises et de la conscience des catholiques.

Ces changements d'attitudes ont été précipités par Vatican II. Une controverse entre les mariologues *maximalistes* (ceux qui cherchent plus de grandeur pour la Vierge, avec plus des titres, des fêtes, sans égard pour les réactions des autres chrétiens) et les *minimalistes* (ceux qui cherchent une position pour la Vierge orientée par la Bible et la patristique) a résulté en un compromis qui se retrouve au huitième chapitre de *Lumen Gentium*.

Le paragraphe 65 de *Lumen Gentium* situe Marie parmi les croyants, comme l'exemple parfait d'une chrétienne. Elle est aussi *figure* de l'Église "dans l'ordre de la foi, de la charité, et de l'union parfaite avec Christ." L'Église la regarde aussi comme l'exemple de la vierge et de la mère. L'Église est vierge et mère comme Marie quand "elle engendre à la vie nouvelle et immortelle des fils conçus du Saint-

Esprit et nés de Dieu."

Lumen Gentium utilise des citations scripturelles et patristiques, notamment Irénée, Ambroise, et Augustin. Mais les auteurs qui formaient le concept de Marie comme modèle de l'Église sont nombreux. Afin d'établir un paralèlle entre Marie et l'Église, ils ont utilisé les symboles de la nouvelle Eve et de la mariée du Cantique des Cantiques. Pour joindre Marie et l'Église en des rôles comparables, ils montraient que Marie est porte-parole pour toute l'Église, le modèle d'une vierge-mère, et la membre la plus parfaite de l'Église.

Les papes Paul VI et Jean-Paul II examinent l'idée de Marie comme modèle de l'Église dans les lettres encycliques *Signum Magnum, Marialis Cultis,* et *Redemptoris Mater.* Pour Paul VI, Marie est le modèle de l'Église d'abord en vertus et en prière. Pour Jean-Paul II, Marie est le modèle de l'Église parce qu'elle enseigne à l'Église *comment* être l'Église. Il fait référence non seulement aux exemples de foi, des vertus, et des prières, mais aussi à la maternité partagée par Marie et l'Église. Malheureusement, l'idée de Marie et de l'Église comme mère est ici colorée par des images romantiques de maternité.

On ne peut pas commenter sur Marie dans les écritures modernes sans reférence aux théologiennes féministes. Les féministes débattent de la signification de Marie. Quelques-unes croient que Marie est démodée et que les images de Dieue-Mère sont le chemin du futur. D'autres appellent à la *libération* de Marie, parce qu'elle a besoin de liberté comme toutes les femmes. Dans le cadre du féminisme, Elizabeth Johnson est l'une des théologiennes qui utilise le concept de

Marie comme modèle de l'Église en tant que Marie représente tous les membres de l'Église.

Pour montrer comment Marie, modèle de l'Église, est représentée dans l'art et dans la littérature médiévale, nous analysons d'abord le Trône de la Sagesse, les statues de la Vierge Noire. Elles sont peut-être les images les plus prisées du monde médiéval. Elles montrent l'enfant Jésus assis sur le giron de sa mère avec un livre dans la main gauche, la main droite levée en bénédiction. L'enfant et la mère ont un air de majesté, et non pas de tendresse. Souvent Marie porte les vêtements d'un évêque.

Selon Ilene Forsyth, Marie y est le symbole de l'Église, le trône vivant du *logos* incarné. La Vierge Noire a des liens avec deux symboles qui lient Marie et l'Église, discutés plus haut: la nouvelle Eve et la Mariée du Cantique des Cantiques.

Les liens entre l'âme, l'Église et Marie sont renforcés par des motifs artistiques médiévaux tels *Le Triomphe de la Vierge* et *Le Mariage entre Dieu et Israël* dans les manuscrits juifs. *Le Triomphe* et *Le Mariage* sont des images presque identiques qui partagent l'iconographie avec les Vierges Noires, mais dans *Le Triomphe*, Christ est adulte. L'image était tellement connue qu'elle était adoptée par les juifs. Ainsi, l'iconographie de la Vierge Noire, obscure et mystérieuse pour nous, était populaire et sans doute bien comprise par les gens du Moyen-Age.

Mais si la Vierge Noire montrait le lien entre Marie et l'Église, elle avait aussi une signification plus humble. La couleur impliquait aussi la terre riche et

féconde, et plusieurs légendes racontent comment des Vierges Noires ont été trouvées dans la terre, dans les caves ou dans les fontaines. Les Vierges Noires avaient pouvoir sur la fertilité de la terre et des femmes. La Vierge Noire de Chartres était appelée "Sous-Terre" et était invoquée par des femmes infertiles ou par les mères des enfants mis en danger.

Notre-Dame de Rocamadour, une autre Vierge Noire très populaire, était une destination sur le chemin à Compostèle, l'Église de St Jacques. Elle était invoquée par les rois et croisés, mais ne perdait jamais son influence sur la fertilité ou sur la protection des enfants. Elle entendait aussi les prières des marins et des prisonniers.

Notre-Dame de Chartres et Rocamadour sont les sujets de beaucoup d'histoires et de miracles, suffisamment pour en faire des livres dans lesquelles les histoires étaient colligées. D'autres Vierges Noires, comme celles d'Arras et de Soissons, avaient leurs propres histoires de miracles. Les miracles racontent des guérisons d'enfants ramenés à la vie et des gens délivrés du pouvoir du diable. Si l'on considère les Vierges Noires comme images de l'Église, les histoires de miracles montrent les Vierges Noires en action, et par extension, l'Église en action.

Les légendes mariales comme telles étaient rédigées par le clergé pour être utilisées comme sermons ou présentées comme amusements édifiants. Les légendes originèrent de l'Église orientale, et entrèrent en occident avec Paul le Diacre (9ème siècle) et sa traduction de "La Légende de Théophile". Mais la collection des légendes la plus connue et la plus renommée fut écrite par Gautier de Coincy (1178-

1236).

Gautier, un moine qui travaillait aussi à Soissons, a rassemblé les légendes de plusieurs sources pour raconter *Les miracles de Nostre Dame*. Il a inclu quelques miracles d'autres saints, les légendes de Chartres et Rocamadour, et des vieilles légendes populaires comme celle de Théophile. Sa collection est utilisée dans ce mémoire pour sa popularité et son universalité.

Dans les histoires, Marie possède les qualités que l'Église doit posséder. Elle sert comme modèle concret de foi et de charité. Elle apporte justice et miséricorde. Elle fait des guérisons du corps et de l'âme. Elle protège les droits des humbles. Dans le cours de ces actions, elle administre souvent les sacrements, un thème qui souligne les images de Marie vêtue comme prêtre ou évêque.

Dans l'histoire de "L'abbesse que Notre-Dame délivra d'une grande angoisse", Marie fait preuve du justice et de miséricorde. Elle sauve et pardonne une abbesse enceinte. L'abbesse, sur qui pèse une malédiction mise par ses ennemis pour cause de péché, implore Marie de la sauver. Marie apparaît et écoute la confession de l'abbesse. Elle lui pardonne et confie l'enfant à un ermite. La pénitence de l'abbesse fait suite à l'intervention et au pardon.

Dans l'histoire de "Théophile", Marie sauve un prêtre qui a vendu sa propre âme au diable. A nouveau, elle écoute sa confession et obtient le contrat du diable. (Dans quelques versions, elle doit même combattre le diable pour le parchemin!) Théophile meurt d'une mort sainte, peu après.

Marie défend les humbles. Elle remplace l'Église quand l'Église échoue.

Dans l'histoire "Le miracle de l'homme riche et de la pauvre vieillette" une petite veuve est rejetée par le prêtre, qui attend la mort d'un homme riche. En revanche, Marie elle-même attend la mort de la femme et l'assiste au ciel.

On peut voir Marie comme modèle de l'Église dans la Bible. Mais ce mémoire montre que les images prisées du Moyen-Age en sont aussi des illustrations fascinantes et pertinentes.

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CHAPTER TWO
BLACK VIRGIN STATUES AS REPRESENTING MODELS OF THE

ABBREVIATIONS

LG.....*Lumen Gentium*. In *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*. Austin Flannery, ed. Northport: Costello; Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996.

MC....*Marialis Cultis*. Paul VI. Montréal: Éditions Paulines, 1974.

NRSV...*New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition*. Ottawa: 1993.

RM.....*Redemptoris Mater*. John Paul II. *La mère du Rédempteur*. Montréal: Éditions Paulines, 1987.

SM....*Signum Magnum*. In *Sainte Marie: mère de Dieu, modèle de l'Église*. Robert Ackerman, ed. Paris: Centurion, 1987 (1964).

DEDICATION

To Guadalupe, the *madre morenita* of my people, whose image hangs above my desk and who listened to my pleas for inspiration.

To Steve, of course, and to Badira who demands no less.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *mémoire* is to re-examine certain medieval images of the Virgin Mary in order to clarify the concept of Mary, model of the Church. I selected this subject out of a general interest in the Virgin Mary, who seems to be experiencing an identity crisis of sorts.

Until Vatican II, devotion to Mary the mother of Jesus was a part of every Catholic's life which was taken for granted. Novenas, ceremonies to crown statues, medals, and organizations such as the Legion of Mary and the Blue Army were common. Catholic women theologians such as Marina Warner, Mary Gordon, and Mary Daly have all written about the influence of the Virgin in their young lives.

After the Council, devotion to Mary seemed to drop off in places, particularly in the North America. The theology surrounding Mary no longer

focused on finding her new titles or on expounding her virtues. Public

practices honouring Mary became uncommon for any but the most

conservative or reactionary Catholics. Vatican II had been interested in

making Scripture as valuable to the Church as Tradition, and Mary seemed to

lose status as a result.

Vatican II underscored the accessibility of Jesus by translating the

mass to the vernacular and turning the altars around to face the people.

Participation by the congregation increased, including tasks formerly only

carried out by the clergy such as reading the Scriptures. This met the

emotional needs formerly fulfilled by marian devotions carried out by

laypeople.

If the image of Mary did not speak to the average Catholic very much,

it did so even less among feminist theologians. Much feminist scholarship,

such as that of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,

became interested in finding the motherly side of God. Others sought to

liberate Mary, or to consider her the fourth Person of God, or to remove her

from Christianity entirely because of irrelevance.

In contrast, reactionary Catholics still turn to Mary as protection

against the modern world. They take the approach to Mary that was

abandoned at Vatican II, as in the case of a 1997 petition circulated to have

John Paul II declare Mary Co-Redeemer. This petition was begun by the right-wing Catholic television station Eternal Word Television Network. The founder of this television station, Mother Angelica, is quoted in a 1997 article in *Newsweek* as saying that declaration of Mary as Co-Redeemer would "save the world from great catastrophe" (Woodward 1997, 51).

The theology of this statement is obviously doubtful, but it has adherents. Mother Angelica and her network have a website (www.ewtn.com) to express their views. Mother Angelica has also founded a mens' religious order, and one of its priests operates a separate website (www.marymediatrix.com), where one can sign an on-line petition for this proposed dogma.

Another site (www.fatima.org) while not focusing mainly on the Co-Redeemer issue, is a fine example of marian maximalization in the 1990s in that it prescribes recitation of the rosary for a reversal of all things modern.

A contrasting approach, favoured by the proponents of liberation theology, puts Mary forth as a subversive figure, a poor pregnant teenager living in occupied territory who sings of the overthrow of the rich and powerful.

Which of these is the "real" Mary?

She is the one New Testament woman about whom we know the most.

She is the woman who said "yes" to God, allowing the Incarnation to happen. This is the position of Lumen Gentium, the only Vatican II document that directly addresses Mary, by invoking her as model of the Church.

While it is true that one cannot please all of the people all of the time, I believe that Vatican II's approach to Mary has the potential to build bridges between the Catholic left and right. I turned to Bernard Lonergan for the source of my method, because he defines the task of the theologian is being to interpret and re-interpret the truth for each generation. He advocates connecting different expressions of faith, and showing how what is revealed in one culture is expressed in another

Lonergan's method, stated briefly, has observations leading to a problem, which is solved by discoveries. The discoveries are expressed by a hypothesis. Experiments are performed on the hypothesis, which yields new data and new observations, beginning the process again.

The problem of how to understand Mary as model of the Church was solved by discoveries found in medieval art and literature. Research about Black Virgins and miracle stories caused me to believe that they were representative, even in the Middle Ages, of Mary as model of the Church. This became my hypothesis. Further research into the theology and symbolism of the Black Virgins and the miracle stories confirmed this.

The problem arose out of questions about the significance of Black Virgins. A reading of *Lumen Gentium* and subsequent papal writings raised other questions about the idea of Mary as model of the Church and whether the Black Virgins might represent this idea. It revealed itself that the Black Virgins were based in scripture and patristics used to explain Mary as model of the Church while the miracle stories demonstrated how the Church should act.

This *mémoire* is set out in three chapters. The first explains the concept of Mary as model of the Church, how it was conceived of at Vatican II, and the history behind it. The second describes Black Virgins, their theological meaning, and how they represent Mary as model of the Church. The third chapter is about the marian miracle stories which showed the Virgin Mary in action, and how these actions are examples to the Church of how it should act.

The Virgin Mary is too important to the Church, both as a member and as an object of theology, to ignore. The fact that she is controversial confirms this in showing that Catholics who think about her hold their opinions on her tightly. Lumen Gentium pointed us towards the future, but it would be tragic to lose touch with 2,000 years of theology and tradition.

If Mary is model of the Church through her being the first and best

member, ideally she should be someone around whom the believers can gather. She should be a point of unity rather than division. It is my hope that by looking to our ancient tradition in order to enliven the modern Church, that this will become somewhat possible. The Virgin Mary who was venerated in the Middle Ages was noble and earthy, loving and powerful, so perhaps unity around her can be envisioned.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF MARY AS MODEL OF THE CHURCH

Current marian devotion may have been formed by the past, but now it

exists in the atmosphere resulting from Vatican II. Vatican II did not intend

to diminish the honours given to Mary. However, the council did move to

restrict a certain kind of mariology which existed to exalt her rather than to

examine her place in Scripture and in relation to Jesus.

In the only Vatican II document which discussed Mary, the authors

chose to show how Mary typified Christians. This document, chapter 8 of

Lumen Gentium, was soon the basis for papal writings describing Mary as

model of the Church. This is the term that best describes how Mary is

presented in the Middle Ages, and which is clarified in turn by the imagery to

be discussed further on.

The chapter will trace the history of Mary as model of the Church in

theological tradition. It begins by explaining the trends in mariology at the time of Vatican II and the forces which shaped *Lumen Gentium*. The chapter continues to show how Mary has been identified with the Church since its early history. Initially, they were joined through shared symbolism, with both Mary and the Church envisioned by early Church writers as the New Eve. In the Middle Ages, theologians used the image of the Bride from the Song of Songs.

Mary and the Church further merged, as opposed to being joined through shared symbolism, through three means. First, Mary is seen as the representative or speaker for all the Church. Second, Mary and the Church are virgin mothers, with Mary teaching the Church how to serve in this role. Third, Mary is the supereminent member of the Church, the one who teaches individual members how to be a Christian.

The popes Paul VI and John Paul II both wrote about *Lumen Gentium* and these historical ways of thinking about Mary. The resulting encyclicals served to formalize the idea of Mary as model of the Church as well as to open the discussion as to what the idea meant. At the same time, feminist theologians were also thinking about Mary. This chapter ends with a brief overview of how Mary is a controversial figure among feminist theologians because of the ways she has been used as a tool of oppression against

women. Debate exists as to whether Mary can or should be "liberated" and if so, what purposes she could serve afterwards.

I am using the inclusive-language translation of *Lumen Gentium* edited by Austin Flannery in his 1996 edition of *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*. Other sources in this chapter are numerous, but I particularly relied on Giuseppe Alberigo's *History of Vatican II*, published between 1995 and 1997.

1 Mariology at Vatican II

Mariology is defined by the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* as "the part of dogmatic theology that concerns the Blessed Virgin Mary in her relation to God and to her fellow creatures under God" (Carroll 1972, 223-227). Before Vatican II, this often meant demonstrating how Mary was different from all other human beings and certainly elevated above all other women (hence Marina Warner's title for her 1976 book *Alone of All Her Sex).*

The century before Vatican II has sometimes been called "golden age of Mary". Two infallible proclamations had been declared about her: the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption (1950). Much mariological thought had been directed towards these two subjects, and the

field was very static. With much mariology based on speculation as opposed to scripture, it was a point of division between Catholics and Protestants.

By Vatican II, even some mariologists were opposed to this approach. Because of this, and since the Council intended to open up the possibilities of ecumenism, the one document on Mary produced there is based strongly on the Bible and early Christian writings. As *Lumen Gentium* is the beginning of current approaches to mariology, it is necessary to situate it within the mariological thought of its time.

1.1 20th Century Mariology

A devotional book from the beginning of the 20th century gives an example of how far theologians could take Mary from the rest of humanity. In *The Mother of God and Her Glorious Feasts*, originally published in 1908, the author writes of Mary on the day of her birth:

> "We may justly reflect on this child on the day of her birth[...]The beauty of the soul of Mary was as much superior to that of Eve as the sun surpasses the moon in splendor. The perfect understanding of Mary's intellect from her infancy was the delight of the Blessed Trinity and the wonder of the angels" (O'Laverty,1987,10).

Further on, O'Laverty also writes of mothers whose children die of

illness: "These sorrows endured by mothers at the loss or at the sufferings of their children are certainly faint resemblances of the sorrows of Mary while she stands beneath the Cross" (ibid, 85). Sally Cunneen devotes chapter 8 of her 1996 book *In Search of Mary* to stories of women recovering Mary for themselves from extreme examples like this.

Much mariological thought before Vatican II was devoted to finding her new priveleges, defined by Henri-M Guindon as "exceptions in favour of Mary" (1971, 8). These included the Immaculate Conception, the perpetual virginity, and the Assumption (ibid). Often the reason for this was anti-Protestant polemic, defending Mary against her non-Catholic detractors (Laurentin 1977, 31).

According to Étienne Fouilloux, this was motivated not only by a desire to protect Mary's honour, but also because Marian devotions were a fortress of Catholic identity in the face of modernism and science (1996,48-49). This kind of reactionary mariology is often referred to as mariology "from above" or "maximalization" because it emphasizes Mary's superiority and near-divinity. It is contrasted with mariology "from below" or "minimalization" which emphasizes her humanity (Tambasco 1984,8).

Other priveleges were debated but never enshrined in doctrine. Pius XII rejected the idea of bestowing upon Mary the titles of Co-Redeemer or

Mediatrix since it would be a seeming contradiction to St. Paul's teaching of Jesus as sole Redeemer (Fouilloux 1996, 48-49). Mariology "from above" was being contested by such theologians as Otto Semmelroth, Charles Balic, and René Laurentin well before the council. Their writings proposed turning away from marian "maximalization" and basing mariology more firmly on Scripture and the work of early Church fathers, rather than reactions against ecumenism and the modern world (ibid).

At the Vatican council, Mary was extremely controversial (Tambasco 1984, 9). Many bishops present did not think a statement on Mary was either necessary or appropriate, given the strong interest in pursuing ecumenicalism. Detailed coverage of the proceedings are beyond the scope of this work. Nonetheless, by the end of November 1962, Charles Balic had produced the requested working document, known as a schema (Alberigo 1995, 258) under the simple title of *De Beata Virgine* (Laurentin 1965, 9). It was heavily debated for fear of compromising ecumenism. Yves Congar feared it would be a "trampoline for the acrobats of an exaggerating and maximizing Mariology" (Alberigo 1995, 260).

There was also a separate schema called "Mary the Mother of God and Mother of Men" presented by the reactionary Cardinal Ottaviani which was strongly rejected (Fouilloux 1996, 52). A second attempt to pass it

under the new title of "Mary, Mother of the Church" was likewise rejected (Laurentin 1965, 12).

The title "Mother of the Church" was a favourite of the marian conservatives and had been proposed initially by the Polish episcopate (Borresen 1983, 103), but it was rejected by a majority of the Doctrinal Commission for its lack of theological and historical basis (Fouilloux 1996, 55). Nonetheless, Paul VI declared Mary to be mother of the Church on December 6, 1964 (Alberigo 1997, 480-481n) both because of his own fondness for the title and as a conciliatory move towards the conservatives.

The first schema was discarded and by a narrow vote of 1,114 to 1,074. The council fathers decided to produce a third schema that would show a minimalist methodology based more strongly on Scripture and the writings of early Church fathers than on deduction or papal writing (Tambasco 1984, 9). This schema, which was a version of the one written by Charles Balic, would ultimately become chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium.*

1.2 *Lumen Gentium*

The unspoken question about Mary at the council was whether to treat her as equal to Jesus, or as one of the faithful, among whom she was

admittedly unique (Guindon 1971, 15). The years between the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the Assumption in 1950, and Vatican II were dominated by discussion of these two priveleges for Mary (Carroll 1972, 225-226). However, there was an interest at the council in not further alienating other Christians, which had happened with these definitions, as well as re-discovering the Church's scriptural and patristic roots.

Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* outlines a transition between post-Tridentine mariology "from above" and a new tendency to place Mary within the Church (Laurentin 1966, 236). It clearly does not assign Mary any new titles. While it acknowledges her Immaculate Conception, Assumption, and Queenship, it emphasizes her subordinate role to Christ. Charles Balic's first objective had been to situate Mary within the Church. The second objective was to show her how her exalted position is in connection with the Church, and the third was to bring about Council unanimity (Laurentin 1965, 18).

Since new methodologies in mariology placed Mary in relation to christology or ecclesiology, the document is careful to do both while leaning on Scripture and the writings of the early Church fathers for support instead of papal pronunciations. In an exhortation about the Virgin Mary on February 2, 1974, Paul VI himself stated that piety towards Mary must be relative to Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church (Laurentin 1977, 33).

Briefly, chapter 8 says this. Mary is prophesied in scripture where "as they (the scriptures) are read in the church and are understood in the light of full revelation bring the figure of a woman, mother of the redeemer, into a gradually clearer light"(LG:55).

Relevant to this *mémoire* are the three ways in which Mary exemplifies the Church. First, she is the speaker for Church. She is the one who gave her "yes" to God on behalf of all Christians, allowing Jesus to be born and the Church to begin. This will be discussed in section 3.1.

Second, she is called the exemplar of virgin and mother whom the Church imitates in faith and obedience, producing children by preaching and baptism (LG:63-64). This role will be discussed in section 3.2.

Third, she is the exemplar of the Church in that she is the member who has already reached perfection. As such, the whole Church looks "to Mary who shines out to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues" (LG:65). This role will be discussed in section 3.3.

Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* states that the Council does not "wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not fully decided" (LG:54). While this probably refers to topics such as whether or not Mary died or the nature of her perpetual virginity, it also reminds us that *Lumen Gentium* was bound to raise new questions. One of these new

questions is the significance of Mary as type or model of the Church.

A word must be said about the decision to use the term "model of the Church" in this *mémoire*. Comparing the French translation of *Lumen Gentium* presented by Paul-Aimé Martin, the English translation presented by Flannery, and the Latin version in Garrone's French-Latin version reveals that the term is almost arbitrary.

The Latin word "typus" is used frequently in *Lumen Gentium*, but translations often use other terms. In LG:53, *model* and *modèle* are used for "typus" in both the English and French. In LG:63 and 65, "typus" is translated as "exemplar" in English and "modèle" in French. In the last sentence of LG:65, "model" and "modèle" are again used for "typus".

In the English version of *Lumen Gentium* used most often in this work, Flannery refers to Mary as the model of faith and charity (LG:53), model of virtues (LG:65), and as model of motherly love. She is also called exemplar of the Church (twice; ibid), and exemplar of both virgin and mother (LG:63). This English version of *Lumen Gentium* thus uses "type" once, and "model" and "exemplar" three times each.

Martin's and Garrone's French translations of *Lumen Gentium*, "modèle" is the term that is used most frequently. Ultimately, my choice to use "model" was based on my own judgement. The *Oxford English*

Dictionary gives more than 25 definitions for the noun "model", some of which are specific to certain trades. "Model" is ultimately derived from the Latin "modus", meaning a measure, size, limit of quantity, or method (vol. 9,1989, 939). "Typus", the other word commonly used, is derived from the Greek "tupos", meaning impression, figure, or type. It is in turn derived from "tuptein", meaning to beat or strike (ibid, vol. 18, 786).

One definition given for "model" is particularly pertinent: "A person, or a work, that is proposed or adopted for imitation; an exemplar." Another is, "A person or thing eminently worthy of imitation; a perfect exemplar of some excellence." Since in English "model" contains within itself the ideas of type and exemplar, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* gave more relevant definitions for it than "type", I have chosen to use "model" over other terms.

The identification of Mary with the Church or the conflation of Mary with the Church is not new, having begun in the patristic era. The two are linked through various symbols and merge through parallel roles in grace and redemption. *Lumen Gentium* makes reference often to these symbols and roles, as do the statues and legends I will discuss further on.

2 Symbols linking Mary and the Church

For centuries, Mary and the Church have been identified with each other through the use of common symbols. The symbol which appears repeatedly in *Lumen Gentium* is that of New Eve.

Lumen Gentium says that Mary is "prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent which was given to our first parents after their fall into sin (see Gen 3:15)" (LG:55). "The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of a predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in bringing about death, so also a woman should contribute to life" (LG:56). This was achieved when "the daughter of Adam, Mary, consenting to the word of God, became the Mother of Jesus" (ibid). In contrast to Eve's (and Adam's) disobedience and lack of faith, Mary gave birth to Jesus "in the manner of a new Eve who placed her faith, not in the serpent of old but in God's messenger without wavering in doubt" (LG 63).

Mary and the Church are also seen in the Bride from the Song of Songs. Although this image does not appear in *Lumen Gentium*, it is a symbol which they share, and is critical in establishing the merging of Mary and the Church, as will be shown in section 3.

This section discusses Mary as New Eve first, beginning with early Church writers in the second and third centuries, and continuing with the Middle Ages. It then makes a jump to the middle of the 20th century to discuss Otto Semmelroth, for whom the idea of New Eve contributes to his mariology.

The Bride is discussed next. She is particularly important in the study of medieval theology because she is the subject of many sermons from that time. She is also particularly important to the interpretation of the artwork which shall be discussed further on. The idea of Mary as Bride was introduced in the 4th century, and became more popular in the Middle Ages, where Bernard of Clairvaux and Amadeus of Lausanne dedicated series of sermons to her.

2.1 New Eve

While Mary is mentioned in the other synoptic gospels, it is not until the gospel of Luke that we hear the story of Jesus's birth from her own point of view. In Luke 1:26-56, Mary hears Gabriel's announcement that she is chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. Mary probes to make sure that this announcement is true, and on hearing that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is

six months pregnant, agrees to this divine motherhood, calling herself the servant of the Lord. She promptly departs for the hill country without consulting her fiancé Joseph and remains until Elizabeth's baby is born. Mary complies with the wishes of God, although she is wise enough not to act on hearsay, even if that hearsay comes from what appears to be an angel.

The early church writers took this story and identified Mary as the new Eve, the first image through which Mary and the Church touch. Eve, the first woman, represented disobedience to God, the disobedience that led to the downfall of all humanity. Mary on the other hand was the woman whose obedience to God led to salvation.

In the second century, Justin Martyr (100-165) became the first to draw the Eve-Mary comparison. "He is born of the Virgin, in order that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same manner in which it had originated" (MacKenzie 1978, 70-71).

Irenaeus of Lyon (130-200) echoed Justin when he wrote the influential words: "So it was that the knot which Eve's disobedience had tied together was unravelled by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound fast by her refusal to believe, the Virgin Mary has unbound by her belief" (ibid, 71). The virginity emphasized here would soon extend to include the Church, which is described as a virgin mother.

In the east, the deacon Ephrem of Syria (c.306-373) continued the Eve-Mary contrast. In Hymn 17 on the Nativity, he writes that if Eve dressed in "leaves of ignominy", Mary "has clothed herself in her virginity with the garment of glory, which is sufficient for all. A piece of clothing she has given to him who clothes all" (Cunneen 1996, 127).

In his *Hymnes sur le Paradis*, Ephrem further conflates Mary, Eve, and the Church, writing:

> "Adam nu était beau:
> Sa femme diligente
> Peina à lui tisser
> Un habit de souillures:
> Le Jardin le voyant
> Et le trouvant hideux, dehors le repoussa.
> Mais pour lui par Marie
> Fut faite une tunique neuve.
> Vêtu de cette parure et selon sa promesse,
> Le Larron resplendit:
> Le Jardin, revoyant en son image Adam,
> L'embrassa" (Hymnes sur le Paradis IV,2,6, translated by Lavenant, 1968).

In his poem *De Azymis*, Ephrem used the Eucharist to connect Eve, Mary, and the Church. He sees Jesus as the Bread of Life, provided by his mother. "Mary gave us the living Bread instead of the bread of trouble, which Eve gave." In the *Nisibene Hymns* he continues the theme, "And he took and broke a bread, another, unique one, the symbol of that body, the unique one, from Mary." Finally, in poems on the Crucifixion Ephrem describes the

Eucharist as "Bread from the praised sheaf [...] grape from Mary" (Graef 1985, 62).

The Venerable Bede (d.735) also wrote about Mary as New Eve, contrasting Mary's humility with Eve's pride, with no innovations on the idea (ibid, 163). Peter Damian (d.1072) saw a connection between Eve, Mary, and the Eucharist which was similar to that of Ephrem. "Through the food which Eve ate we were punished by an external fast; but the food brought forth by Mary has given us access to the heavenly banquet" (ibid, 206-207).

The famous 12th century abbess, composer, theologian and visionary Hildegard of Bingen was also intrigued by the connection between Eve and Mary and used it often, using it to parallel Mary with the Church. In her song "O Virga ac Diadema" she writes:

> "Oh how surpassingly must it be mourned and lamented
> that in a crime, at the serpent's persuasion,
> sadness flowed into a woman.
> For that woman whom God ordained to be mother of all
> lacerated her womb with wounds of ignorance
> and bore the fullness of pain for her progeny.
> But out of your womb, you dawn,
> a new sun came forth
> that effaced all Eve's crimes
> and, through you, bore a blessing
> for mankind bigger than Eve's harm" (translated by Dronke, 1989,21).

In contrast to Eve's giving bloody, painful birth to sinners, Mary gives painless birth to the Son of God. She gives birth by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Church does as well. "The Holy Spirit illumines the Church, the happy mother of believers" (Cunneen 1996, 165).

After the 13th century, there was little advance in mariological thought until after the council of Trent, when defense againt Protestantism led to the defensive mariology described earlier on (Carroll 1972, 224). The concept of New Eve was utilized again to develop the iconography for the Immaculate Conception, which portrayed Mary standing serenely upon a serpent. This came from a misreading of Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, and you will strike his heel," where "the woman" was assumed to be Mary, striking at the snake's head. Pius IX canonized this misreading in his declaration of the Immaculate Conception as dogma.

Before Vatican II, mariology, and theology in general, had become fairly static and repetitive, in the form of manuals of theology (Tambasco 1984, 4).

Nonetheless we may here turn to the German theologian Otto Semmelroth researched and published his book entitled *Urbild der Kirche* in the early 1960s. It was reprinted in English as *Mary, Archetype of the*

Church in 1963. Semmelroth was present at Vatican II, and many of his arguments filtered into *Lumen Gentium*. Anthony Tambasco cites Semmelroth as being one of the most influential mariologists of recent years (Tambasco 1984, 35).

Semmelroth begins his argument by discussing many of the images which identify Mary and the Church and which serve as points of convergence between the two. In her role as archetype (his choice of word), Mary lives in her very person all that the Church lives, and is in this way archetype for the Church as Redeemed (Semmelroth 1963, 145).

As the new Eve, Mary represents the humanity that is the Church. She proclaims a new humanity which is redeemed and conceived without sin just as the Church as mystical body of Christ is born without original sin (ibid, 147-148). As second Eve, Mary and the Church are both universal mothers (ibid, 38-39). In both Eve and Mary, creation is new again while in Mary and the Church, a new kind of humanity is born of the Spirit. Birth of the Spirit suggests that a marriage has taken place, which leads to the next symbol by which Mary and the Church are joined.

2.2 The Bride of the Song of Songs

The next image used for both Mary and the Church is that of the bride who is the subject of the Song of Songs. According to mariologist Bertrand Buby, Ephrem of Syria in the 4th century was the first to refer to Mary as Bride of Christ. "Your mother she is, she alone, and your sister along with all; she became your mother, she became your sister. She is also your Bride, along with the chaste" (Buby 1996, 313). It should be noted that even this early in mariological thought, the mother of Jesus was seen as being able to occupy different family roles which would be impossible, if not immoral, for ordinary human women.

Through this hermeneutic of the Song of Songs, Mary was seen as being the bride of each member of the Trinity, though one at a time rather than polygamously . In 740, Andrew of Crete wrote that all passages in the Old or New Testaments which were applied to the Church could equally be applied to Mary (Graef 1985, 151-152). This shall be discussed further on.

Rupert of Deutz (died c. 1135) made extensive use of the eighth chapter of Proverbs to show Mary's pre-existence. Proverbs 8:22-23: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth," would

refer to Mary via the figure of Holy Wisdom. Chosen at the beginning of the world, Mary now reigns in heaven as Christ's sister by faith, his spouse by love, and mother of the Church (Graef 1985, 227).

Hildegard identified Wisdom as the bride in Songs. In a somewhat complicated relationship, she identified Mary as the "sister of Wisdom" because she is "the mother and consort of the true Wisdom, Jesus" (Cuneen 1996, 164). This relationship suggests the motif in sculpture known as the Throne of Wisdom, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The author who wrote the most influential work about Mary was the abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Although his mariology accounts for only 3% of his work (Graef 1985, 235), his marian thought dominates the late Middle Ages because of the beauty of his writing and his famous opposition to the idea of the Immaculate Conception. He is the writer best known for tying together Mary and the Bride from the Song of Solomon, through which we can connect Mary and the Church (Butler 1996, 97).

Bernard was not a theologian who drew his exegesis from imagination, as had many of the earlier writers about Mary. Rather than rhapsodize about the beauties of Mary, or her miraculous childhood, Bernard based his work firmly on Scripture. Perhaps his most interesting usage of Scripture is what he does with Sg 1:3-4: "Your anointing oils are fragrant,

your name is perfume poured out; therefore the maidens love you. Draw me after you, let us make haste". In Sermon 21, he uses this verse to show Church as Bride, longing to be drawn along behind Christ.

However, in Bernard's first sermon for the Assumption, he uses the same verse quite differently: "Notre Reine nous a précédée et a reçu un accueil si glorieux que nous, ses petits serviteurs, suivons avec confiance les traces de notre Souveraine, en nous écriant: *Entraînez-nous à votre suite, nous courrons à l'odeur de vos parfums!*"(Aubron 1935, 117).

Bernard continued with the idea of Mary's perfume by writing about this perfume being seductive to God. In the fourth sermon for the Assumption, he sees a parallel between Mary's words in the Magnificat: "He has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant" with Sg 1:12, "While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance". To Bernard, nard symbolizes humility and perfume symbolizes beauty (ibid, 128). Mary thus continues to be identified with the ambiguous royal Bride by God's attraction to her humility.

Bernard of Clairvaux used the symbol of the Bride in the Song of Songs for Mary, the Soul, and the Church. This merging of symbols also became established in images such as the Triumph of the Virgin in which a formerly ambiguous Queen and Bride was now consistently interpreted as

Mary. The merging also showed in the artistic motif of the Throne of Wisdom, also known as the Black Virgin. It is very possible that it is not coincidental he has a fascination with the black-skinned Bride in the Song of Songs since Bernard's mystical encounters with Mary usually involved a Black Virgin (Aubron 1935, 2).

Amadeus of Lausanne (d. 1159) was particularly interested in the bridal image. A student of Bernard of Clairvaux, Amadeus wrote eight sermons in praise of the Virgin Mary which are noteworthy for showing how the image of the Bride is a bridge between the Church and Mary.

Like Bernard, Amadeus uses the Song of Songs to praise Mary. In Sermon 1, she is described as the bride of the Holy Spirit, through whom she becomes ancestor to many, like Abraham:

> "She calls herself the garden of the beloved, she whom the Savior's springs water, the streams of his gifts inebriate, so that being wedded she rejoices in the love of the Spirit and, made fruitful by the drops of his dew, she exults in the birth of many sons, as it were, in the profusion of her progeny" (Saïd & Perigo 1979, 62-63).

In Sermon 2, Amadeus describes the progress Mary made in life. Before anything else, she was granted all virtues. Secondly, "She was united to the Holy Spirit in a bond of wedlock" (ibid, 69). In Sermon 4, Amadeus begins to write explicitly of this: "go forth, for already the bridal couch has

been placed and the bridegroom comes to you, the Holy Spirit comes" (ibid, 84).

Later on in Sermon 6, he takes the symbol of the Bride which he has been consistently using to describe Mary's beauty, and applies it to the Church. For instance, he takes Song of Songs 8:10, "My breasts were like towers" and explains how these breasts are the source of milk with which the Church nourishes the faithful (ibid, 112-113).

The identity of the bridegroom also becomes unclear at this point in sermon 6 (ibid, xxxix-xl), and this lack of clarity continues until the end of the sermons. It is difficult to tell who is speaking to whom, the Spirit to Mary or Christ to the Church, in the verse: "The spirit calls you, God says to you, 'Arise, hasten, my love, my dove, my fair one and come [...] My love by wedlock, my dove by union, my fair one through your beauty and elegance' (ibid, 116).

The ambiguity takes an unexpected turn when Amadeus depicts Christ quoting Song of Songs 2:10-12: "Arise my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," to Mary at the Assumption. We have seen that Amadeus does conflate Mary and the Church via the imagery in the Song of Songs, and this brings to the forefront the question of how to interpret the idea of Mary being equated with the bride of

Christ.

One may ask if seeing Mary as the Bride of Christ through her association with the Church suggests an incestuous relationship. My answer is no. We do not after all expect the Church to have more than a metaphorical "marriage" to Christ. Mary as "exemplary member" of the Church can be expected, indeed required, to participate in this metaphor. *Lumen Gentium* paragraph 68 states: "In the meantime the Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come." As Otto Semmelroth writes, the Church is the Bride of Christ and also the New Eve who will conceive a new humanity by the Spirit. Mary is the first member of the Church to attend that wedding.

New Eve and Bride are the images by which Mary and the Church meet in the Christian tradition. However, identification of Mary with the Church, with no symbolism used to imply that this was a metaphorical comparison, began with St. Irenaeus and continued with St. Augustine into the present and as such, has a respectable history.

Something should be said briefly about the symbol of the Woman of Revelation 12:1-6. This image of a woman in labour, dressed in the sun with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head, has been

identified with both Mary and the Church. Before the fourth century, the Woman was seen as being the Church alone (O'Carroll 1983, 375). In the fourth century, Epiphanius (d.403) identified this passage with Mary at the end of her life, being carried into the desert (ibid). In the fifth century a disciple of Augustine's named Quodvultdeus said the Woman signified Mary, "who herself showed forth the figure of the holy Church" (Graef 1985, 132). The Woman continues to be significant in Catholicism for providing the iconography of the Immaculate Conception, which shows Mary standing on the moon with a crown on her head, crushing the snake from Genesis 3:15. While this symbol is not directly relevant to this *mémoire*, it is nonetheless mentioned here as another symbol shared by Mary and the Church.

3 Merging of Mary and the Church

In mariological tradition there are three ways in which Mary and the Church are one, without benefit of symbolism, and this section will elaborate upon them. First, Mary is often seen as being a speaker for the Church. In this capacity, she is the Church before the Church existed, speaking and acting on its behalf, giving its obedience to God. *Lumen Gentium* refers to

this when it explains, "For, as St. Irenaeus says, she 'being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race' (LG:56).

Second, Mary and the Church both share the role of virgin mothers. Mary is here the example which the Church follows, both being brides of Christ who bear children through the Holy Spirit. It is by imitating Mary's virtues that the Church is able to receive the word of God and become a mother (LG:64).

Third, Mary exemplifies the Church by being the supereminent member. Just as she demonstrates to the Church as a whole how to be productive, she demonstrates to each member of the Church how to be a Christian. She is thus not only the first member of the Church but the most perfect member, a model to which both each individual Christian and the Church as a whole can look for teaching. "In the most Blessed Virgin the church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle" (LG:65). In Mary, the Church can see what it is truly meant to become.

3.1 Speaker for the Church

In *Against the Heresies*, Irenaeus of Lyons describes Mary as the "sein

pure qui a régénéré les hommes en Dieu" (CH:IV,33,11). Her "Magnificat",

sung after saying "yes" to becoming the regenerator of humanity, associated

her with the Church. According to Irenaeus, the Magnificat is a prophecy,

spoken by Mary on behalf of the Church when she sang, "My soul magnifies

the Lord". "C'est pourquoi, dans son exultation, Marie s'écriait, prophétisant

au nom de l'Église: 'Mon âme glorifie le Seigneur' (CH:III,10,2). This

example introduces a theme which becomes more common in the 20th

century, that of Mary being the speaker for the Church.

Jacob of Sarug (451-521) is a Syrian theological poet like Ephrem.

According to him, Mary speaks for the Church when she asks how she is to

bear a son, and then agrees to it (Graef 1985, 122).

Otto Semmelroth uses the concept of Mary and the Church as brides

of Christ in order to show Mary as speaker for the Church. Mary's *fiat* made

her the Bride of the Logos, or alternatively the Bride of the Father from

whom she receives the son (ibid, 126). However, the Church could not give

its bridal *fiat* except through Mary (ibid, 44-45) whereupon it began its work

in salvation. Mary is thus the speaker for the Church which she personifies,

and of which she is first and exemplary member.

3.2 Virgin Mother

For St. Ambrose (339-397), the motherhood of Mary and the

motherhood of the Church was one and the same. Mary's work in

redemption is her motherhood, through which she is the "type" (Ambrose's

choice of word) of the Church:

> "We have learned about a number of things worthy of belief, we have
> learned what these things advise, now let us learn the mystery. It
> means that (the Church) is espoused, and yet a virgin; because it is the
> type of the Church which is immaculate yet espoused. The Virgin
> conceives us by the Spirit and bears us without birth-pangs.
> Therefore, perhaps, holy Mary was married to someone, and yet
> fulfilled by another. Likewise each one of the churches is fulfilled by
> the Spirit and by grace, despite that each one is governed by a mortal
> pontiff" (citation in Buby 1996, 124).

Ambrose is credited as the first early theologian to see in the Virgin

Mary the type of the Virgin Church. *Lumen Gentium* makes several

references to this theme as presented by Ambrose and also Augustine.

Augustine, who was a student of Ambrose, continued the theme of

Mary being the type of the Church through their mutual motherhood:

> "Consider how the church, obviously, is the bride of Christ; and, what
> is more difficult to understand, yet true, how she is the mother of
> Christ. As her type has the Virgin Mary preceded her. Whence, I ask
> you, is Mary the mother of Christ, if not because she gave birth to the
> members of Christ? [...] let the members of Christ give birth in mind,
> as Mary, as a virgin, gave birth to him in her womb; and thus you will
> be mothers of Christ" (citation in Graef 1985, 97).

The 8th century abbot of Benevenuto, Ambrose Autpert, is the earliest

known Westerner to have written sermons solely in praise of the Virgin Mary

(ibid, 165-66). In these sermons he described Mary as mother of the Church

while being the member of it *par excellence*:

> "Whether we therefore sometimes say that the virgin mother Mary,
> sometimes that the virgin mother Church has born or is bringing forth
> Christ, we shall not stray from the truth. For the one gave birth to the
> Head, the other brings forth the members" (citation in Graef 1985,
> 168-169).

Mary gives birth to Christ the Head of the Church while the Church

gives birth to Christ the Body by producing believers. *Lumen Gentium*

paragraph 64 says:

> "By receiving the word of God in faith [the Church] becomes herself a
> mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth daughters and
> sons, who are conceived by the holy Spirit and born of God, to a new
> and immortal life."

Further on, paragraph 65 continues: "The church, therefore, in its

apostolic work also, rightly looks to her who gave birth to Christ, who was

thus conceived by the holy Spirit and born of a virgin, in order that through

the church he could be born and increase in the hearts of the faithful."

The idea of the Virgin Mary as inspiration for the apostolic work of

the Church is one which is used by Otto Semmelroth in his discussion of

Mary as supereminent member of the Church. There are patristics behind

this idea, which are examined below.

3.3 Supereminent member

Both Ambrose and Augustine promote a teaching which is central to

Vatican II mariology, and which appears at length in *Lumen Gentium*. This

is the idea that Mary is not above the Church as later theologians would

imagine, but the first and best member of it.

Lumen Gentium chapter 8, paragraph 54 states explicitly, "She is

hailed as pre-eminent and as a wholly unique member of the church and as

its exemplar and outstanding model in faith, hope, and charity." This is

comparable this to a later statement, "For as St. Ambrose taught, the Mother

of God is a type of the church (lower case in original) in the order of faith,

charity, and perfect union with Christ" (LG:63).

The introduction to *Lumen Gentium* chapter 8, (paragraph 53)

paraphrases Augustine when he writes, "Mary is a part of the church, a holy

member, an excellent member, a supereminent member - yet but a member of

the whole body" (Graef 1985, 97).

Mary is the one to whom members of the body of Christ should look for instruction. As member, she demonstrates the moral attitude of the Church's members. "She represents [the Church's] innermost essence [...] and the united multiplicity of the Church is contained within her [...] But if Mary is removed from this ontological relationship, it is hard to see how a person of whose life we have so few details, can serve as an example for the formation of Christian life" (Semmelroth 1963, 31-32). This idea of Mary as teacher shows itself later in papal writings after Vatican II, and is demonstrated in popular medieval literature, namely the anthologies of miracle stories to be discussed in Chapter 3.

The key to Semmelroth's argument has interesting implications. Mary assumes the work of Christ, as does the Church, by what Semmelroth calls receptive co-redemption, which is not to be confused with the type of co-redemption requested (and consequently refused) in 1997. Rather than being an equal worker with her son, according to Semmelroth Mary receives the fruits of Christ's work for the Church. Graces, *even sacramental ones*, are part of Mary's mediatorship (ibid, 108). "Mary received fullness of grace on behalf of a Church which did not yet exist. Thus she also received grace of sacraments, which flows to the individual" (ibid, 109). If one considers that the fullness of grace which Mary received would thus include ordination,

the implications are noteworthy.

Mary as speaker for the Church, virgin mother, and supereminent member are roles that establish her as the first and best Christian, entrusted with the task of teacher.

Mary's agreement to bear the son of God was spoken on behalf of the whole Church, thus beginning the Church's work of salvation. It also placed Mary in the position of virgin mother, a role in which the Church in its most universal sense follows her.

Mary's *fiat* can be seen as spoken on two levels. According to Semmelroth, the Church could not give its own *fiat* except through Mary. This *fiat* began Mary's career as virgin mother, in which the Church follows suit.

For the individual believer, it establishes Mary as "model of virtues" (LG:65), as described by Sts. Ambrose and Augustine. Mary's position of speaker for the Church and virgin mother show her as a supereminent member of the Church, living most perfectly in faith and hope. These are the qualities for which Mary is praised in papal writings after Vatican II

4 Mary, model of the Church in post-Vatican II writings

Paul VI and John Paul II have both treated the concept of Mary, model of the Church, using that precise term, in certain of their encyclicals. Both men wrote these particular works as responses to Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* while referring back to the themes and writers discussed above.

Paul the VI was particularly concerned with the correct place of Mary in the prayer life of the faithful. Since he had approved the title "Mother of the Church", he also justifies this in connection with *Lumen Gentium*, showing that Mary's motherhood is what makes her the model of the ideal Christian. He also wrote about Mary's place in the liturgy, discussing four ways in which Mary is a model for the Church at prayer.

John Paul II also writes about Mary as exemplary Christian, the leader we follow on the journey of faith, and in doing so draws heavily on *Lumen Gentium*. Mary guides Christians by being the one who demonstrates perfect union with her son, and perfect belief in him. John Paul II though has a strange preoccupation with motherhood which makes his works on Mary somewhat troubling to some writers rather than inspiring.

This section examines the more significant marian works of both popes, followed by a brief discussion of feminist theologians and their

reactions to Mary.

4.1. Pope Paul VI

In 1964, Paul VI wrote Signum Magnum (Grand Signe) on the theme of veneration and imitation of Mary. A predominant theme in *Signum Magnum* is Mary as mother of the Church. Paul VI's interpretation is that as mother, Mary is both model and teacher of virtues, showing Christians how to live. She is the one who leads in the pilgrimage of faith. In the version edited by Robert Ackerman, Mary is "exemplaire des vertus qui rayonne sur toute la communauté des élus" (SM 1:1, cf LG:63).

Mary's motherhood is influential on her teaching of virtue because it makes imitation of her more attractive. "La douceur et le charme qui émanent des très hautes vertus de la Mère de Dieu immaculée, incitent irrésistiblement les âmes à imiter le divin modèle, Jésus-Christ" (SM 1:3). Furthermore, "Jésus [...] l'a tacitement présentée comme le modèle à suivre. Il est en effet naturel que les enfants aient les mêmes sentiments que leurs mères et qu'ils reflètent leurs mérites et leurs vertus" (SM 2:5).

Mary is owed respect through imitation of these virtues (SM 2:1). She is also worthy of honour because of her position as first Christian:

"Nous la verrons resplendir à nos regards comme la *Nouvelle Eve*, la sublime Fille de Sion, le sommet de l'Ancien Testament et l'aurore du Nouveau, dans laquelle s'est réalisé *la plénitude des temps* [...] C'est donc en Marie que l'Église du Christ nous indique l'exemple pour recevoir le Verbe de Dieu dans nos âmes de la manière la plus digne" (SM 2:3, cf LG:56).

In his 1974 encyclical *Marialis Cultis* (Le culte de la Vierge Marie), Pope Paul discusses "sane and orthodox" Marian devotion as well as Mary's role in the liturgy and formal prayer life in the Church after Vatican II. The idea of "Mary, model of the Church" is again part of his discourse. Section 2 is significant in again depicting Mary as supereminent member and as the one who teaches believers how to be Christians.

Paul VI finds the beginning and end of the Church in the two marian doctrines of 1830 and 1950. He calls the Immaculate Conception the prefiguration of the Church, pure spouse of Christ. In the Assumption he sees what the Church as an ensemble must accomplish. In this he describes Mary as the Church itself (SM:11).

Pope Paul refers to Mary as being the *Virgo Auriens* or the Virgin who hears, the *Virgo Orans* or praying Virgin, the *Virgo Pariens* or Virgin Mother, and *Virgo Offerens* or offering Virgin. All these are ways in which the Virgin Mary represents the Church, and the follow the roles of speaker, virgin mother, and supereminent member.

As the Virgin who hears, Mary is the one who hears and welcomes the word of the Lord, just as the Church does, spreading the Word like the bread of life (MC 1:17). As the Virgin who prays, she is seen singing the Magnificat, which Pope Paul says along with Irenaeus, is the first prayer in the name of the Church (MC 1:18). As the Virgin Mother, Mary brings Jesus to the world through her faith and obedience while the Church brings children into the world by baptism (MC 1:19).

As the offering Virgin, Mary offers her own son on Calvary as he offers himself. Likewise, the Church offers the sacrifice of the Eucharist every day (MC 1:20). Pope Paul does not mention Ephrem of Syria, but this is reminiscent of his poetry (see page 18).

4.2 Pope John Paul II

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (La Mère du Rédempteur), John Paul II discusses both symbolic comparisons and the ways through which Mary and the Church merge. This encyclical is noteworthy because it is concerned primarily with *Lumen Gentium,* to the extent that half of the endnotes make reference to Chapter 8. It uses Chapter 8 to further discuss the place of Mary in the mystery of Christ and in the Church, and to look

towards "la perspective de l'an 2000" (RM:3).

The images of Mary as New Eve and Bride, are used in this encyclical. Pope John Paul once again cites Irenaeus about Mary undoing by her obedience what Eve tied by her disobedience. He underscores the concept of Mary becoming bride of the Holy Spirit (RM:26) and that Mary's fidelity to this Spouse teaches the Church to be faithful to Christ (RM 2:43).

John Paul uses Biblical images to unite Mary and the Church, keeping them separate rather merging the lines between the two. "C'est pourquoi Marie, par sa nouvelle maternité dans l'Esprit, englobe tous et chacun *dans* l'Église, englobe aussi tous et chacun *par* l'Église. En ce sens, Marie, Mère de l'Église, en est également le modèle [...] Ce lien spécial qui unit la Mère du Christ à l'Église permet *d'éclairer* davantage *le mystère de la <<femme>>* qui, depuis les premiers chapitres du Livre de la *Genèse* jusqu'à *l'Apocalypse,* accompagne la révélation du dessein salvifique de Dieu à l'égard de l'humanité" (RM 2:47). The *femme* discussed here is Mary alone as opposed to *la femme* in the sense of meaning all women.

John Paul II develops the idea of Mary as model of the Church using a wide source of information. As mentioned earlier, the encyclical draws heavily on *Lumen Gentium*, but it also harkens back to theologians throughout history.

John Paul II discusses the historical basis of devotion to Mary, beginning with her role in scripture, using the medieval hermeneutic which assumes that Mary is foreshadowed throughout the Bible, beginning with Genesis 3:15 (RM:11). She and Jesus are the new Eve and Adam whose obedience counters that of the original first humans (RM:19). He describes Mary as the eschatological sign of the Church (RM: 6) and the shining model of virtues (ibid). Mary is the leader of the pilgrimage of faith who guides us towards the Eucharist (RM: 44).

The pope writes in the very first paragraph of the encyclical that the Church hails Mary as its commencement because through the Immaculate Conception it sees "la grâce salvifique de la Pâque" and because "en prononçant le premier *fiat* [...] (elle) préfigure sa condition d'épouse et de mère" (RM:1). Mary carries throughout herself the beginnings of the New Covenant as well as the Gospel (RM:17).

Mary is model of virtues, and the Church follows her lead. She is the role model in faith, and John Paul echoes Bernard somewhat when he writes: "[L'Église] progresse en suivant l'itinéraire accompli par la Vierge Marie qui <<*avança dans son pèlerinage de foi*>>" (RM Intro:2). Further on, the pope writes, "Le pèlerinage de la foi n'est plus ce qu'accomplit la Mère du Fils de Dieu [...]. Marie a désormais franchi le seuil qui sépare la foi de la vision

<<face à face>>"(RM Intro:6). Mary in the Church is not only "happy because she has believed" but also because she believed first (RM:26).

However, this lesson from Mary is not as important to Pope John Paul as Mary, model of the Church as virgin mother. "Vierge et mère, Marie demeure pour l'Église un <<modèle permanent>>" (RM:42). "L'Église apprend de Marie ce qu'est sa propre maternité: elle reconnaît la dimension maternelle de sa vocation, liée essentiellement à sa nature sacramentelle [...] en accomplissant fidèlement la volonté du Père" (RM 3:43). "Marie est donc présente dans le mystère de l'Église comme modèle" (RM:44).

John Paul's preoccupation with motherhood is well known. I cite his writing about Mary, model of the Church not to validate his interpretation of this idea, but to demonstrate that there is a need for further study of it, if Mary is to be seen as more than just a cliché.

At first, John Paul's acknowledgement of Mary as model of the Church to englobe all members of the Church sounds very close to my own interpretation of Mary, model of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* 68 says that Mary "in the glory which she possesses 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." Mary has come into this glory through her Assumption, which is explained by the *Catechism* as "a singular participation in her Son's

Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians"

(paragraph 966). Consequently, I view Mary as universal, the image of what

we will all become in the Resurrection of the Dead.

However, when John Paul II writes about Mary as model of the

Church, there is a suggestion that Mary exemplifies female believers more

than male believers. In the *Letter to Women*, the Pope describes the "mystery

of woman" (LW:1) and the "genius of women" (ibid, 9). Mary is seen as

"the highest expression of feminine genius" (ibid,10), which means that she

was "at the service of others [in] a service of love" (ibid).

Service to one another is at the heart of the Christian message. Yet

further on, John Paul writes, "When we consider the 'iconic'

complementarity of male and female roles, two of the Church's essential

dimensions are seen in a clearer light: the 'Marian' principle and the

'Apostolic-Petrine' principle" (ibid: 11). Ministerial priesthood, he explains,

is restricted to men because Christ "entrusted only to men the task of being

an *'icon' of his countenance as 'shepherd' and 'bridegroom' of the Church*

through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood'" (LW:11; emphasis John-

Paul's).

To me, this conclusively undermines the concept of Mary as model of

the whole Church. She would appear to be model of the female Church, or at

most the laity only. The "masculine principle" applies to the hierarchy. Even more troubling is the idea that women cannot represent Christ, only his mother.

So when John Paul begins to rhapsodize about the "eternal mystery of woman" as he does here and in his *Letter to Women*, I must object. When Mary is turned into the model of the ideal woman she loses her universality and stops being model of the Church. This is ignoring the fact that if one views Mary as literally a virgin and mother, no woman can fully emulate her. As model of the Church it does not matter if Mary lives the contradictory roles of virgin, mother, and spouse. Instead, she is every Christian, her contradictory nature being indicative of her universality.

For too long, women have been identified with Mary while men have been identified with Jesus. It is time to have men identify with a woman for a change, and that Mary as model of the Church shows how this is possible. If we are all the Church and as such, we are all the Bride of Christ.

4.3 Critique from feminist theologians

Feminist theologians are of course not all of one mind about Mary. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza writes about a bitter "debate among sisters"

between radical goddess feminists and Christian liberationist feminists (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995,176). All agree though that the way Mary has been presented to women over the centuries has served as a tool to enforce obedience to male authority and surpress female sexuality.

Fiorenza herself refers to this as "malestream" mariology. An image of Mary that emerges from such origins cannot be an inspiring or liberating model for women when it places "virginity over sexuality, equates true womanhood with motherhood, and shows obedience, humility, passivity, and submission as womens' virtues" (ibid, 165).

In her opinion, the left has provided images of Mary that are just as wrong as those of the right:

> "Even an astute theologian such as Leonardo Boff [...] theologically re-ascribes the bourgeois-romantic and cultural-archetypal myth of femininity. In modern times, this myth has legitimized not only the otherness, inferiority, deficiency, and second class status of all women but also that of oppressed men, who are categorized as 'feminine' (ibid, 167).

Yet in the end, Fiorenza opts for a Mary who is not only devoid of power but not representative of all people. "Rather it is the young pregnant woman, living in occupied territory and struggling against victimization and for survival and dignity. It is she who holds out the offer of untold possibilities for a different christology and theology" (ibid, 187). This is a

disempowered Mary who stands as the polar opposite of the co-redeeming

Mary favoured by many in the Catholic Right.

Rosemary Radford Ruether complains about the presentation of Mary,

who represents the Church, as a queen. To her, the image of Mary, assumed

into heaven and seated at the right hand of Jesus as his bride and co-ruler,

symbolizes the Church triumphant as it rules over kings and emperors on

earth. "Mariology becomes a tool of ecclesiastical triumphalism," she writes

in *Sexism and God-Talk* (1983, 144).

Sidney Callahan disagrees, pointing out how Mary the medieval queen

of heaven was approachable, an exalted Everywoman concerned with the

daily needs of men and women (1993, 8).

Elizabeth Johnson is an example of a feminist theologian who

believes that Mary's role in salvation demands that she be relevant to

Catholics. So does Mary's constant presence as the persistent Christian

female symbol (1985, 129-130). She agrees with *Lumen Gentium* in that

Mary represents all members of the Church by being a disciple who hears the

word of God and keeps it. Mary's own socio-cultural conditions cannot be

duplicated, so true imitation of her is impossible. Instead, she needs to be

seen as not just one saved woman, but all the Church (ibid, 131-132).

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the theory of "Mary model of the Church" has been present in theology for centuries. Both she and the Church are envisioned symbolically as New Eve and the Bride from the Song of Songs. Mary is viewed as the one who spoke for the whole Church before it existed, as the Virgin Mother who teaches the Church to also be a virgin mother, and as the supereminent member to whom all the others look for instruction.

Yet how does one make this theory significant to the everyday Catholic? If she is virgin, mother, and wife simultaneously, how can any woman possibly emulate her? If she represents all believers, how is a man, especially if he is a priest, to relate?

As stated previously, it is necessary to see Mary's contradictory nature (virgin, mother, spouse, humble, glorified) as a sign of her universality rather than as being someone who is impossible to follow. As Elizabeth Johnson has said, it is impossible to emulate her because the times and conditions in which she lived were long ago. Mary encompasses as many states of life as possible: spouse, parent, celibate, widow. It could be argued that she is the ultimate role model for priests because like them she brings forth the Bread of Life.

Identification of Mary with the priesthood also would cause her to cross gender lines. It would contradict John-Paul II's "Marian and Apostolic-Petrine principle" theory, which sets women and men into "iconic" gender roles. It would also perhaps remind the male clergy of they are members of the body of Christ, not Christ himself.

The question arises of how to envision the concept. If one looks to the literature and art of the Middle Ages, one will find ample depictions of Mary which make the theory reality. French art of the 12th and 13th centuries served as illustration of the ideas about Mary, model of the Church as presented in the first chapter. Statuary and literature about Mary were the most accessible and prominent types of art about her. The art in medieval books frequently showed related themes, but were available only to the upper classes and seen in private.

I wish to show that particular styles of statuary used in medieval France represented the symbols used to link Mary and the Church. At the same time, the legends used to teach piety showed Mary acting in her role of model of the Church, that is, teaching how the Church should act.

CHAPTER TWO

BLACK VIRGINS AS REPRESENTING MODELS OF THE CHURCH

The most striking type of Marian statuary from the 12th and 13th centuries is the *sedes sapientiae* or Throne of Wisdom. The most popular Thrones were the famous "Black Virgins", madonnas known for their dark colour. Sometimes even statues made with Caucasian skin tones were later painted black because people preferred them that way (Forsyth 1972,43). Possible reasons for this preference will be dealt within this chapter.

These Black Virgins were noteworthy for being the subject of miracle stories, for being the goal of pilgrimages, and for being passionately loved. They are often still objects of devotion, as with the statue of Notre-Dame de Rocamadour. Through the Black Virgin, Mary is made present to the viewer in a way that is particularly intimate. The viewer is able to enter into a relationship with Mary with the statue as her representative (ibid, 45). Her

equation with the Church through the symbols of New Eve, the Bride in the Song of Songs, and as Virgin and Mother, are experienced in a concrete fashion.

Black Virgins are found across western Europe in the 12th to 15th centuries, but this *mémoire* will limit its scope in the interest of focus to the ones found in France in the 12th and 13th centuries. This section will show that these statues have a consistency in their appearance and details which suggest that medieval people understood meaning even though to us it may now seem obscure.

Part of this meaning connects to the concepts of New Eve and Bride of the Song of Songs. The statues show symbolism of both. Furthermore, Bernard of Clairvaux serves as a witness to what the Black Virgins meant to a medieval theologian.

The miracles attributed to the Black Virgins speak to what the statues may have meant to the average medieval Christian. They express the fears and hopes of the pilgrims who visited Black Virgin shrines to invoke Mary there. These miracles stories were often collected into anthologies, and are the subject of the third chapter.

This chapter first defines Black Virgin statues: what their common attributes are, how they were used in the Church, and theories as to why they

are black. Second, it examines the ways in which Black Virgins are symbols

of the Church, referring especially to the images of the New Eve and the

Bride from the Song of Songs. Third, it looks at the types of miracles

credited to Black Virgins, emphasizing the kinds of people to whom the

Black Virgins especially appealed.

There are still few books and fewer articles written on the topic of the

Black Virgins. Some modern "sources" on them take an occult or New Age

interpretation of them. Noteworthy among this genre are Jacques Bonvin's

Vierges Noires: La réponse vient de la terre (1988) and Ean Begg's *The Cult*

of the Black Virgin (1996). Nonetheless, Begg's book contains a gazeteer of

Black Virgins that is very useful. The one solid recent book is Sophie

Cassagnes-Brouquet's *Vierges Noires: Regard et Fascination* (1990). Her

sources were the books by Marie Durand-Lefebvre (1937) and Emile Saillens

(1945). There is also much useful information in Ilene Forsyth's *The Throne*

of Wisdom (1972). Peggy Schine Gold's book *The Lady and the Virgin*

wrote about artistic developments relevant to Black Virgins.

1 Definition of Black Virgin statues

Black Virgins are statues that share a common construction,

symbolism, and appearance. They are a subset of the motif called the "Throne of Wisdom", which depicts Jesus sitting on Mary's lap. Thrones may or may not be dark in colour, but this *mémoire* is concerned only with the dark ones because of their extra layer of symbolism.

Black Virgins served as altarpieces and reliquaries, but were primarily created in order to serve as the centrepieces of processions, which were a popular form of religious activity in the middle ages. These processions, as will be discussed further on, brought these images of Mary into the life of the community, a community which included both the noble and educated as well as the poor and illiterate.

The images share not only symbolism but origins which are concealed in mystery and legend. Stories about the statues being miraculously discovered are common, as are stories of their being carved by Biblical figures. They are famed for being the refuge of the sick, the dying and dead, the infertile, and those in captivity. Their darkness adds an aura of mystery even while having a probable theological explanation tied to the Song of Songs.

This section discusses the appearance and defining details of Black Virgins, their role in medieval worship, and presents some of the prevalent theories for why they are dark in colour.

1.1 Composition

As mentioned above, Black Virgins almost all belong to the genre of Romanesque artwork called the Throne of Wisdom. This type of statuary is made of wood, can be viewed from all angles, and shows Mary sitting on a throne with the child Jesus on her lap. The child usually holds a book in his left hand with his right hand raised in benediction. Both Mary and Jesus are shown in a dignified royal manner as opposed to a tender or playful one. Mary's dignity as Mother of God is emphasized, as is Jesus's role as Wisdom made flesh.

Art historian Ilene Forsyth writes of the images:

> "Christ must also be understood as the Logos incarnate on his mother's lap. The Virgin is not simply the mother of a child, she is the god-bearer or *Theotokos*. Her maternity is human and divine at one and the same time [...] The Word of God was incarnated in man. Mary was the agency of that Wisdom, to be regarded as *sedes sapientiae*, the Seat of Wisdom" (24).

She also states, "The Throne of Wisdom 'expresses clearly and simply the profound meaning of the Incarnation'" (2).

Peggy Schine Gold describes the Thrones as showing both "intimacy and hieratic aloofness", with Mary and Jesus existing as a symbiosis. Mary is important as mother of Christ, and with the disproportionately large hands

common to the Thrones she presents her son to the world. The statues thus have clear christological meaning: Jesus is the focus (Gold 1985, 49-50).

With a few exceptions such as the smiling Black Virgin of Meymac with her gold turban and peasant shoes, most Thrones do have a rather forbidding aspect. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet quotes art historian Emile Mâle as calling them "la Vierge des théologiens, majesteuse comme une pure idée, [qui] parut trop loin de l'homme" (1990, 113). The very name Throne of Wisdom indicates a seat endowed with power and dignity (Forsyth 1972, 1), and the most frequent word used to describe them is "hieratic", meaning "priestly" (Forsyth 1972, 9; Godin 1989, 29 et al). Yet despite these descriptions, the Black Virgins were far from unapproachable to the medieval commoner.

Although the glamour of their mysterious origins and miracles often distracts from their theological significance, it appears that Black Virgin statues, and Thrones of Wisdom in general, were intended to be understood as symbols of the Church. Forsyth says quite frankly that:

> "the royal Christ holds a book with one hand and makes the gesture of benediction with the other, an attitude which reflects his priestly character, related again to Mary as symbol of the Church. He is head of the institution which she personifies. Her sacerdotal nature is often accentuated in turn by her garb, the priestly chausuble and pallium which she wears in many examples" (1972, 23-24).

Forsyth is able to produce 19 photographs in her book, yet does not elaborate further on the fact that the pallium which Mary wears is the mark of an archbishop. Her only comment on it is that Mary represents the Church. However, a reflection of this priestly Mary appears in the miracle stories which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Symbolism in the Middle Ages was predictable and taken for granted, hence the lack of written evidence about it. Peggy Schine Gold comments that medieval art relied heavily on repetition of traditional representations, leading to many copies of important images, a phenomenon found often among Black Virgins. Major changes in sculptural style represented major developments in theology (Gold 1985,44).

Even though literature about what artistic representations meant can be scarce, there are clues that point conclusively in certain directions. The details of the images themselves, their colour, the postures of the two figures, the clothing their wear, support this observation.

It is thus rather ironic that such Virgins have come to be equated with superstition and devotion from peasants when in fact they are rich in theological symbolism with which we have lost touch. Nevertheless, despite their often intimidating appearances and obscured meanings, Black Virgins inspire great love in devotees, largely because the very fact that they are

statues invites the viewer to enter into prayer or other activity with them. "The desire to render such figures as Mary and Christ in freestanding form was induced by the desire to make them experiential, an almost essential precondition for the realization of their beneficence," writes Forsyth (1972,7). The statue was the representative of the Virgin herself, manifesting her presence and authority (ibid, 45).

1.2 Uses

The Black Virgins are small, usually around three feet tall, constructed primarily during the 12th and 13th centuries. Since they are made of wood, they are fairly light. Occasionally they served as reliquaries; the Black Virgin at Aix was used to hold their relic of a tunic believed to be the Virgin's (Durand-Lefebvre 1937,80). Ilene Forsyth writes that after 1200 some of the older Thrones were modified to contained relics although this was not always the case (1972, 37-38).

However, the main reason that they were built light and to be seen in the round was because they were the starring attractions in liturgical processions. They could thus *participate in the life of a religious community* (ibid., 8). The priest Bernard of Angers wrote in 1013 about just such a

procession, which featured an image of the Virgin Mary (ibid.).

A photograph in the 1989 guidebook to Rocamadour shows Notre-Dame de Rocamadour being carried in a modern procession (Godin 1989,43). There is an opening at the back of her throne that may have been for relics, although I have found no mention of what these might be. On the other hand, Robert Didier and his colleagues theorize that a similar opening in the back of the Vivegnis madonna exists so the statue could be mounted on an altar, as the central figure of a tabernacle (Didier et al 1988-89, 53). Notre-Dame de Rocamadour resides over a tabernacle in just this manner when not in use in a procession.

Laura Spitzer theorizes that the Black Virgin formerly venerated at Chartres was carried in processions in order to draw attention away from a more popular cult focused on the healing wells in the crypt which dated to pre-Christian times (1994, 141). This theory does not seem sound to me, from reasons to be discussed further on (see page 63), but it begins to weaken when one considers the fact that such processions enjoyed great popularity throughout the medieval world and were not unique to Chartres. Processions featuring Notre-Dame de Puy are documented from 1254 but had no doubt begun long before then (Forsyth 1972, 43).

1.3 Theories on Blackness

The obvious question arises as to why the most popular Thrones were, and often still are, black. The reasons seem to stretch into archetype and pre-Christian religion.

Art historians Cassagnes-Brouquet, Saillens, and the earlier historian Louis Bréhier subscribe to the theory that some Thrones were originally made in a dark colour because they were fashioned after bronze-coloured eastern images (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 29; Saillens 1945, 11). Cassagnes-Brouquet in particular theorizes that Black Virgins are the result of Mediterranean influence. She points out that dark goddesses such as Isis and Artemis of the Ephesians were worshipped in Marseilles under Roman rule (ibid.). Thus, creation of statues of the Mother of God as black may be an archetypal memory of similar figures in the past. Forsyth shows two statues of European mother goddesses for comparison to Throne statues (figures 11, 12).

Emile Mâle has speculated that it is possible, though uncertain, that peasants unearthed old goddess statues which came to be revered as images of Mary (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 158). Certainly this would not have troubled the medieval worshipper. Medieval artists were not averse to using

parts of pagan statues in their creations; the famous reliquary of St. Foy and the Herimann crucifix in Cologne both have heads that were taken from Roman statues (Forsyth 1972, 85).

The legends which surround the Black Virgins give at least mythological explanations for their being dark. The statues are found in bushes or trees by shepherds, or people are led to them by bulls or oxen. Streams, fountains, and other sources of water are very common (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 43-44) as at Chartres and Err. Underground origins in caves or tombs are common, as with the Black Virgins of Arles, du Romigier, and du Marthuret (ibid., 50). Blackness is an earthy colour, and it is possible that legends of discovery in the earth are meant to explain why a statue is dark.

While it is possible that some Black Virgins are unearthed pre-Christian statues, it is difficult to be sure. Firm dates on the images, even when they are known to be medieval, are rare. Ilene Forsyth dates most of them to before 1200, however, after which they were seldom produced (1972, 4).

Forsyth subscribes to the opinion that these statues have been made black through buildup of smoke and grime or by chemical reactions in the paint (1972, 22). This is certainly the case with Notre-Dame de Rocamadour, who is covered with silver that has now tarnished (Godin, 29). Notre-Dame

de Puy was possibly dark due to the custom of washing her annually in wine, but since the statue was destroyed during the French revolution, this cannot be proven (Cassagnes-Brouquet, 1990 173). The copies of this statue which are still extant have been deliberately made black. However, if smoke and grime are what has blackened most Thrones, it must be asked why this phenomenon did not occur with images of other saints, or with the clothing worn by some Thrones (ibid., 138). In the end, even Forsyth must admit that deliberate blackening was frequent, with the dark colour maintained with paint if necessary (1972, 21-22).

2 Black Virgins as Symbols of the Church

As shown in the last chapter, Mary and the Church are theologically linked through the symbols of new Eve and the Bride from the Song of Songs. Iconography suggests that Black Virgin statues were carved to represent one or more of these symbols, reminding us of the connection of Mary with the Church.

The darkness of the images is a unifying factor in their symbolism. As New Eve, the statues recall passages from Ambrose, which will be discussed in the section below, which describe the Church as being dark from sin yet

beautiful from the redemption.

The most strongly documented purposes for the darkness of the statues comes from the Song of Songs, with its black-skinned Bride. As discussed earlier, the image of the Bride was used to symbolize both Mary and the Church, sometimes rather indiscriminately. Bernard of Clairvaux used the imagery from the Song of Songs to discuss both the Church and Mary, as did certain themes in medieval art which are contemporary with the Black Virgin and which share many of the Black Virgin's attributes.

Finally, in an unexplored parallel between the Black Virgins and the Church, the legends surrounding certain Black Virgins give them the same origins as the Church: Brought to faraway places by the Apostles, created by those who knew Jesus.

This section discusses the symbolism of New Eve and Bride from the Song of Songs as found in Black Virgins, and the theological writings which explain this symbolism. It will also discuss a parallel between the Black Virgins and the Church which occurs through the legends that explain the origins of the statues.

2.1 New Eve

As discussed before, one of the first ways in which Mary and the Church were equated was through their being called New Eve. Some Black Virgins show this identification by the use of fruit in their symbolism. When Mary or the infant on her lap holds fruit, it is very often meant to represent their roles as new Eve and new Adam. This is not consistently the case: examples hold grapes when the statues were carved in areas that produce wine (Begg 1996, 174).

One French Black Virgin from the 12th or 13th century in the Royal Ontario Museum shows Mary holding the baby Jesus on her lap while with the other she holds a round fruit. A plaque describing the statue makes reference to this gesture being symbolic of new Eve and new Adam. The Vivegnis madonna holds an apple in her hand, and Didier comments, "la pomme n'évoquant pas ici le fruit défendu de l'Arbre de la Science du Bien et du Mal mais l'Arbre de Vie" (Didier et al. 1988-89, 54).

Some other Black Virgins that contain the motif of Mary and Jesus with fruit are Our Ladies of Albendorff (13th century), Chipiona, (12th century), and Los Arcos (14th century) (Begg 1996, 163, 240, 252).

Marie Durand-Lefebvre quotes Ambrose again, citing him as joining

the Church, Mary, and Eve through darkness. "Fusca sum quia peccavi, decora quia jam me diligit Christus. Quam relagaverat enim in Eva, recipit in Virgine, suscipit in Marie." (I [the Church] am dark because I have sinned, beautiful because Christ now loves me. For whom he had rejected in Eve, he receives in the Virgin, he takes up from Mary.) (Durand-Lefebvre, 1937, 160. Translation by Dr. J. Mark Sugars).

Dr. Sugars, a classical language scholar at the University of California,Irvine, makes the observation:

> "I think the use of the verb 'suscipere' is rather significant. A Roman father 'took up' a newborn child from the ground and thereby acknowledged his paternity and intention to rear the child [...] 'Ex Maria' could mean 'on account of Mary,' i.e. thanks to Mary's intercession and whatnot, but it could also refer to this old ceremony of taking up a child *from* a woman to acknowledge it as one's own"(E-mail to the author, 16 September, 1999, used with permission).

This use of the word *suscipere* would thus emphasize the idea of Mary and the Church being the true mothers of believers. If the children of Eve are rejected, they are yet able to be received in the Virgin and acknowledged as God's own. The darkness of the Black Virgins and the fruit that occasionally is seen in their hands no longer means sin and death but redemption and life.

2.2 Bride

While New Eve is one symbol brought to the Black Virgin, the symbol

of the Bride is far more prominent. There is enough evidence available to

show that the Black Virgins were deliberately designed to evoke the image of

the black-skinned Bride in the Song of Songs:

> "I am black and beautiful,
> O daughters of Jerusalem,
> like the tents of Kedar,
> like the curtains of Solomon.
> Do not gaze at me because I am dark,
> because the sun has gazed on me" (Sg 1:5-6, NRSV).

The Offices for the feasts of the Purification, Visitation, and Nativity

of the Virgin as they were celebrated at Arras, le Puy, Montserrat, and

Rocamadour commonly featured this verse (Durand-Lefebvre 1937, 96-97).

Furthermore, there is often there a carving near the statue that contains the

verse, thus providing an explanation to the viewer as to why the statue is dark

(Begg 1937, 256, 277, et al).

Bernard of Clairvaux gave legitimacy to both Black Virgins as well as

the concept of Mary and the Church both being the black-skinned Bride. He

venerated Black Virgin images often during his life and preached about the

significance of the Bride throughout his long series of *Sermons on the Song*

of Songs.

The first Black Virgin which was significant to Bernard of Clairvaux
was the one at Châtillon. This statue featured in the vision which inspired
him to become a monk. Bernard saw Jesus coming from the *seins* of his
mother, and viewed this as a divine call (Aubron 1935, 10). Many years
later, it came to life in a vision and fed him with drops of her milk (ibid).

This statue is described as being "faite d'un bois que l'âge a plus
noircy que le soleil. [...] le visage est long, les yeux grands sans excès, le nez
long, les joues ni trop enflées, ni trop abattues, la couleur brune et par l'art et
par l'âge; elle est assise et tient avec les deux mains le petit Jésus sur son
gyron" (ibid, 2-3).

The statue thus appears to have been dark brown or black. While the
dark colour may have increased with age, its original darkness was apparently
deliberate on the part of the artist.

In another incident, the statue of Mary at Affligem Abbey in Belgium
returned Bernard's "Je voue salue, Vierge vénérable" with "Je te salue,
Bernard" (ibid, 10). It is possible, though uncertain, that this statue was a
Black Virgin.

Bernard preached the second Crusade at Vézelay where there was
definitely a Black Virgin (Begg 1996, 234). Thus, at least two such images

had impact on his personal life.

The darkness, Bernard wrote, is merely exterior, representing the sorrows of Mary. He made reference to Isaiah 50: 3 as an example (Durand-Lefebvre 1937, 161-162): "I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering" (NRSV). As discussed in the first chapter, the Church, the Virgin, and the soul are brought together by Bernard through the image of Solomon's Bride (Butler 1996, 114).

Bernard's equation of the Church, the Virgin, and the Soul found expression in an artistic motif called the Triumph of the Virgin, discussed in the book *The Lady and the Virgin* by Peggy Schine Gold. This motif is mentioned here because of the way its symbolism helps explain the symbolism of the Black Virgin. The Triumph is related to the Throne of Wisdom by being made in the same Romanesque style at the same period of time, and sharing several important details.

The first form of the Triumph was usually found in manuscript illustrations. It depicted a crowned Christ and a crowned woman who was not always identified. She was left open to interpretation as being a soul, the Church, or Mary (Gold 1985, 57). However, her crown indicates that she is conclusively a bride.

Cross-cultural art suggests that to medieval people, the image of a

crowned woman brought to mind a bride rather than a queen. Pictures that are nearly identical to the Triumph of the Virgin appear in Jewish prayer books (mahzorim) of the same time. Naomi Feuchtwanger has written an article entitled "The Coronation of the Virgin and of the Bride" wherein she suggests that Jewish art actually borrowed the image of the crowned Mary to depict Israel as the Bride of God.

Feuchtwanger's article is a history of crowns in Jewish weddings, but early on in the article she says:

> "The iconographic similarity between the Jewish and Christian themes calls for further study. Moreover, the recurrent portrayal of the crowned bride in Ashkenazi manuscripts raises the question of how extensive was the borrowing from Christian sources and to what degree were these models adopted by or adapted into Jewish contexts" (1987, 214).

As proof, Feuchtwanger provides illustrations of mahzorim that portray God and Israel looking almost exactly like Jesus and Mary in the Coronation or the Triumph of the Virgin (ibid, 213-214).

Gold uses the "Triumph of the Virgin" found at Senlis as her particular example of this art style. The Senlis Triumph dates to 1170-1175, and unlike the "Coronations" found later, where Jesus is placing a crown onto Mary's head, in the "Triumph" she is already crowned and sitting beside Jesus as an equal. The Triumph of the Virgin and contemporary Jewish

illumination shed light on the Thrones of Wisdom in that they contain the same elements, with only the age of Jesus being different. He is an adult man, and thus sits beside his mother rather than on her lap. Mary is revealed conclusively as the royal Bride of the Song of Songs, holding the book and sceptre which are medieval attributes of the Church (Gold 1985, 62) and which Jesus usually holds in the Throne of Wisdom.

It is perhaps useful at this point to remember Rosemary Radford Ruether's critique of this imagery, and how it can mean the Church triumphant with all rulers of the earth bowing their knees to her (Ruether 1983, 144). At the same time, Sidney Callahan makes the counter-argument that while Mary was like a great and powerful queen, she was also an approachable Everywoman concerned with the needs of ordinary men and women (Callahan 1993, 8).

2.3 Connections to the Apostles

One parallel between the statues and the Church, which has not been explored as such, is that the Black Virgins connect the contemporary world with that of the Apostles (Durand-Lefebvre 1937, 86-87). Among the legends told about the statues' origins are some about the statues' creation by

St. Luke or another biblical figure.

Rocamadour is sometimes said to have been carved by St. Luke (Begg 1996, 216), and it has a further connection to the New Testament through Zaccheus, the tax collector who Jesus called down from the sycamore tree. The story has it that Zaccheus came to France with other disciples of Jesus. He lived as a hermit, nicknamed Amadour, and replaced the local statue of Cybele with the Black Virgin (Begg 1996, 118-120 and Godin 1989, 24).

The Virgin of Chartres, was popularly believed to have been commissioned by the prophet Jeremiah or Isaiah. Montserrat, the most famous Black Virgin in Spain, is reputed to have been brought there by St. Peter, then hidden at a later date to be re-discovered in a cave by shepherds (Warner, 1976, 275). Notre-Dames de le Puy and Orcival were also believed to have been carved by St. Luke.

The significance of this continuity with the world of the New Testament is that the Black Virgins, like the Church, is also a connection with the Apostles. In a sense they are also like the priesthood, in that they connect us back to hands which once touched those of Jesus.

3 Miracles of the Black Virgins

The Black Virgins were imbued with Scriptural symbolism and a mythology which claimed that they originated with people from the New Testament. However, this was not the appeal they had for the common people of the day, most of whom were not theologians, or even literate for that matter.

Black Virgins were known for working miracles. Mary in the aspect of Black Virgin was a good listener, a mother who cared about common concerns. While Bernard of Clairvaux was inspired by the Black Virgin to found religious orders and preach crusades, ordinary men and women turned to the Black Virgin for protection and cures.

In an agricultural area such as medieval France, the fertility of the earth was perpetually a concern. Terrible diseases terrified people. In a time and place where women risked their lives to bear many children because mortality was so high, their own personal fertility, safety in childbirth, and protection of those children was a source of anxiety. The Black Virgin was there to assuage all those fears, and people made pilgrimages to ask for her assistance.

This section treats the miracles of the Black Virgins, which commonly

effected fertility, protection of children, and healing. It also shows how
Chartres and Rocamadour were noteworthy for these kinds of miracles.

3.1 Typical miracles

It cannot be denied that images of the divine mother and child pre-date
Christianity. This does not mean that because Black Virgins (and Thrones of
Wisdom in general) resemble pagan statues then devotions to them are in fact
pre-Christian religion in disguise, but that statues of Mary and Jesus may
meet similar emotional needs that their predecessors did. As long as there are
humans, they will suffer from anxieties.

The greatest concentration of Black Virgins is found in south-central
France, in Auvergne. This is a rural area, so good harvests and the fertility of
humans, fields, and animals have always been a central concern. The Black
Virgins are believed to be particularly effective over fertility both of fields
and humans. Notre-Dame de la Daurade is invoked against both drought and
difficult childbirth (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 217).

Other Black Virgins are invoked against invasion (Montserrat), illness
(Chartres), stillbirth (La Daurade), and protection on the sea (Rocamadour).
While each site is considered effective against the problem in question, the

prayers are still for the intercession of the Virgin (ibid), as in the miracle stories about which more will be said.

Marie Durand-Lefebvre makes mention of a Black Virgin of Arras which was taken in procession on the feast of the Visitation (1937, 96-97). There was an Office of the Feast of the Assumption unique to Arras. Judging by the story "The Woman of Arras", which will be discussed in the next chapter, it can be concluded that prayers to Mary in the presence of this statue were considered particularly effective against the medieval disease known as the *mal des ardents*. This disease, caused by eating infected rye, caused sharp burning sensations and gangrene. It is often mentioned in the context of marian miracles.

Chartres and Rocamadour can be described as typical Black Virgin sites. Both have or had statues with legendary origins of the type discussed earlier. Both were famous enough that anthologies of miracles stories were produced about them. Most importantly, both were and are the sites of pilgrimage by people who are threatened by the kind of fears that have plagued humans for centuries.

3.2 Chartres

The primary Black Virgin of Chartres was destroyed at the

Revolution, although a second, more recent one still exists in the nave.

Notre-Dame de Sous-Terre was associated both with the earth and with a

healing well. We know what she looked like because pilgrims received

badges for making the journey which bore her image. Widespread devotion to

her also led to copies of her being made (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 29-30).

Sous-Terre was called *Virgo Paritura*, which means, "The Virgin Who

Will Give Birth". Legend had it that this statue had been made by Druids

according to the instructions of Isaiah or Jeremiah, depending on which

version of the legend one hears, whom they had visited in Jerusalem (Forsyth

1972, 105-106). This statue was kept in the crypt church by a holy well until

the 17th century. At that time, the cathedral management decided the

devotions in the crypt were distracting pilgrims away from the upper church,

so they moved the statue upstairs and walled up the grotto (ibid, 107).

The age of Notre-Dame de Sous-Terre at the time of her destruction

was unknown. Laura Spitzer has written an article on the details of the cult of

the Virgin that took place in the crypt when the cathedral was new, although

she pays little attention to the history of the statue there. In fact, Spitzer does

not attribute much medieval devotion to the Black Virgin of Chartres. While it may be true that the statue was placed by the holy well in order to "christianize" it, it does seem, going by the number of pilgrim badges that have survived and the hatred the statue inspired at the Revolution, that the image itself was more than just a cosmetic measure.

Spitzer concludes from the art of the west facade of Chartres, and from the miracle stories told about the church, that the cult in the crypt was not concerned so much with Church dogma than with "the social and psychological establishment of a family" (1994,139). The capital frieze of the west facade depicts the Life of the Virgin in a way that emphasizes the incidents in Mary's life which would resonate with the average viewer, such as the infertility of Anna and Joachim and the massacre of the innocents (ibid, 140).

Spitzer identifies the miracles at Chartres as being particularly associated with the resuscitation of dead children and cures for the *mal des ardents* (ibid, 142). The wells in the crypt were the site of such cures, as sick pilgrims were to stay there for nine days, awaiting an answer from the Virgin (ibid, 143). Thus for Spitzer, Mary is a healer with a special interest in women and children when she is invoked at Chartres. Besides the *mal des ardents* she cures women who cannot bear, which was the burden of her

mother Anne, and comes to the aid of women who have lost their children.

This interpretation is seconded by Kathleen Nolan in her own article about the Chartres frieze. Her work deals largely with the question of if an illiterate audience would be able to read the imagery in a narrative fashion. She answers that the audience would have been reminded of stories that they already knew. The scenes involving such stories as the massacre of the innocents and the flight into Egypt may have been chosen to speak particularly to women, because they would counterbalance the masculine emphasis on the Apostles in the south half of the frieze (1994,64).

This and the structure of the frieze as *paralleling the experience of liturgical processions* helps confirm the use of Chartres as a shrine particularly significant to women, whose ceremonies intentionally focused on processions. It is thus significant that the tympana which is part of the frieze does contain a central carving of the Throne of Wisdom (Spitzer 1994, 132).

While peasant women may have come to Chartres in greater numbers than nobility, this does not mean that it was a "peasant cult". The capital frieze whose art reflects womens' concerns for their families also shows scenes from the life of Christ. Furthermore, if Nolan is correct and the frieze parallels liturgical processions, then Chartres could not have instituted these processions as an afterthought in order to distract from devotions in the crypt.

The Prior of Sauxillanges, in charge of a pilgrimage site himself, said of Mary, "She is the sovereign remedy for the sick, for she can obtain from her son all that she desires. She is merciful on our sins and relieves us in all our troubles" (Sumption 1975, 75). Mary as source of maternal comfort appealed to all classes and both sexes, so it is both classist and sexist to dismiss the desire for Mary's motherly care as being specifically for "peasant women".

3.3 Rocamadour

Another great pilgrimage site of the 12th century was Rocamadour, which was often part of a longer pilgrimage to Compostela in Spain. Forsyth gives this statue, which other writers consider very important, little attention. She dates it to around 1166 and comments on it being the cause of "extraordinary" miracles (1972,185). Like Chartres, Rocamadour was a place of healing, but Notre-Dame de Rocamadour had a wider range of areas over which she had power.

The *Book of Miracles* of Rocamadour holds accounts of healings, prisoners being released, and sailors being saved from shipwreck (Godin 1989, 29 & 32). She is also known, as most Black Virgins are, for restoring fertility and protecting children (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990,199).

Conversions are one miracle attributed to Rocamadour that are not associated with other Black Virgins (Durand-Lefebvre 1937, 83-84). Pilgrimages to her shrine was a common penance imposed upon Cathars who returned to Catholicism (ibid, 32) and it was also imposed on those convicted of certain assaults, participating in vendettas, and obstructing justice (Sumption 1975, 106).

Rocamadour is also a site where nobility did travel to give thanks for favours granted to them. In 1170, Henry II of England made a pilgrimage there in thanks for a cure, as did Simon de Montfort in 1211 (Curé de Saint-Sulpice 1863, 49-53), St. Louis-de-France and St. Dominic (Godin 1989, 32).

It may be that Rocamadour was more frequented by nobility than Chartres because it took money to reach Rocamadour. Nonetheless, this shows that devotion to Black Virgins was not a kind of parallel religion running alongside "true" Catholicism as has been suggested by authors such as Bonvin, Begg, and Spitzer. Furthermore, as I will show in the next chapter, miracle stories were not peasant tales, but distributed by and among the hierarchy and used to teach catechism. They are thus part of the wider Christian tradition to be re-examined by theologians, not local tales to be analyzed by folklorists. Notre-Dame de Rocamadour, with her miracles grouped around the themes of healing, life-saving, and freedom, is a

particularly universal mother.

CONCLUSION

The Black Virgins of the 12th and 13th centuries reflected theological thought and piety of their time. They showed, in symbolic form, a unity between Mary and the Church through the imagery of New Eve and the Bride from the Song of Songs. As the Church, Mary was shown as being priestly, often to the point of showing her in a bishop's pallium, and presenting her son to the world. Despite her regal bearing, the Black Virgin was open to the most earthly concerns, concerning herself with good harvests, human fertility, and the safety of children.

In the 13th century, artistic styles changed. The Thrones of Wisdom, black or not, gave way to girlish smiling Marys who were princesses rather than queens (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 113). The related imagery of the Triumph of the Virgin, which showed Mary and Jesus as both being adult co-rulers gave way to the Coronation of the Virgin which showed Mary as more subordinate, being crowned by Jesus rather than sitting at his side as co-ruler (Gold 1985, 63-64). At this time, the theology about Mary was moving away from discussions of her as dignified Mother of God and Seat of Wisdom.

The new topics were her perpetual virginity and immaculate conception, both examples of a supernatural purity which had little connection to the real needs of human beings.

Still, blackness remained a factor in many peoples' devotions. The Parisian Notre-Dame de Bonne Delivrance is deliberately black, even though she was made in the 14th century in a much more refined style than her predecessors (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990,116). There are many examples of images being kept black because parishioners preferred them. In the 19th century, the parish priest of Arfeuilles decided to replace the black virgin with a golden one. Outcry was such that he had to remove the new statue to the brothers' salon and bring the black image back (Saillens 1945, 36-37).

While the Black Virgins could inspire passionate love, they in turn could inspire hate. Notre-Dame de Puy, Notre-Dame de Liesse, and Notre-Dame de Sous-Terre were all casualties of the French Revolution.

A census of Black Virgins conducted in 1550 counted 186 examples. Emile Saillens counted 250 in 1945, but most of them were copies of older images that had been stolen or destroyed (Cassagnes-Brouquet 1990, 17). Today, attrition is due to theft. Three prominent examples were stolen in 1983 alone (ibid, 229).

The Black Virgins still inspire fascination and devotion. There has

also been a renewed interest in them from the esoteric movements. This has

been shown in the books by Ean Begg and Jacques Bonvin and most recently

by a 1998 episode of the Fox Network television show "Millenium" in which

a Black Virgin featured prominently. The premise of Begg and Bonvin is

that the Black Virgins are connected to the Cathars, the Merovingians, the

Templars, and Mary Magdalen. A full explanation of their conspiracy theory

is beyond the scope of this research.

Cults that honour the Black Virgin are still in evidence, although often

through copies. Rocamadour, for instance, is still the object of pilgrimage.

Notre-Dame de Liesse is still honoured through similar statues. A copy of

her is venerated in the Notre-Dame de Bonsecours chapel here in Montréal.

This statue continued the tradition of protecting sailors, shown by the

numerous silver votive ships in the chapel. Unlike her namesake though,

Notre-Dame de Liesse de Montréal has a history of being resistant to fire.

The cult of Notre-Dame de Puy also continues through copies.

The 1995 Catechism of the Catholic Church features this quote from

Bernard about the Church:

> "Oh humility! O sublimity! Both tabernacle of cedar and sanctuary of
> God; earthly dwelling and celestial palace; house of clay and royal
> hall; body of death and temple of light; and at last both object of scorn
> to the proud and bride of Christ! She is black, but beautiful, O
> daughters of Jerusalem, for even if the labor and pain of her long exile

may have discolored her, yet heaven's beauty has adorned her!"
(paragraph 771).

It is intriguing that this quote, in which Bernard describes the

Church, is equally descriptive of the Black Virgin.

CHAPTER THREE

MARIAN MIRACLE STORIES

As mentioned in the previous chapter, certain sites that possessed (and often still do possess) a Black Virgin were promoted through miracle stories. Rocamadour has its own collection of legends, as does Chartres. Soissons, about which Gautier de Coincy writes, was known primarily for its relic of the Virgin's shoe, but does appear to have a few minor Black Virgins (Forsyth 1972, figure 190).

Statues of the Virgin Mary feature prominently in many of the miracle stories discussed in this chapter, even when a location is not mentioned. In "The Abbess who Our Lady Delivered from a Great Anguish", "The Jewish Boy who Converted to Christianity", "The Nun Who Left her Monastery", "The Woman of Arras", and "Two Women Who Mary Converts", statues of Mary come to life and take action. It should be noted however that Arras

very possibly had a Black Virgin.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the miracle stories were usually available in collections collated and edited by one person. The collection which proved the most helpful for this work was *Les Miracles de la Sainte-Vierge* by Gautier de Coincy, specifically the edition by Abbé Poquet of the manuscript housed in Soissons, with commentary by Poquet on the stories and the illustrations. Originally published in 1857, the book was reprinted in 1972. Other manuscripts of the same work have been studied by the French literary scholar F. Koenig in his book *Les miracles de Nostre Dame, par Gautier de Coincy* (1955), and Pierre Kunstmann in *Vierge et Merveille, les miracles de Notre-Dame* (1981). Francois Suard also presents an interesting collection by Francois-Jérome Beaussart in translation in his book *Miracles et mystères* (1989).

This chapter first presents the origins of these miracle stories, how they were used, and by whom. The stories had their origin in the eastern church, but spread to the west where they became very popular. It will give details on the life of Gautier de Coincy and the purpose of his work. Second, this chapter explores the qualities of justice and mercy which Mary demonstrates in the stories, as well as her support of the humble, identifying her as a model of charity. Finally, it discusses how these miracle stories are

examples of Mary serving as model of the Church, showing the Church how it should act.

1 Place of marian miracle stories in the Middle Ages

Miracle stories were an important part of medieval faith and belief. These tales are narratives written in Latin or the vernacular, in poetry or prose or plays, telling the story of how Mary or some other saint comes to the rescue of a person. In the time about which I am writing this was a vast body of literature; 2,000 miracles still exist in Latin alone (Kunstmann 1981, 20). These stories began circulating in the west in the 9th century and continued to be popular into the Renaissance, when they were most commonly presented as plays.

Many of the stories show Mary as model of the Church in a different, equally important light than just New Eve or Bride. To quote from *Lumen Gentium*, she is depicted in miracle stories as a "model of faith and charity" (LG:53), the "mother of the members of Christ" (ibid). If the Black Virgin depicted Mary as model of the Church, the miracle stories were models of the Church in action.

1.1 Miracle stories in the western church

The western Church had its share of miracle stories before the 12th and 13th centuries which were generally associated with the relics of saints. Since Mary was assumed into heaven, she left no bodily relics behind, so the same type of story could not be written about her. Even though in the middle ages there were some alleged relics of her clothes, miraculous images of Mary, which began to appear in the 11th century, took the place of physical relics in her cult (Phillipart 1996, 567-568).

Legends about saints and legends about Mary could intersect, as in the story of the pilgrim who commits suicide on his way to the shrine of St. James at Compostela (Kunstmann 1981, 39-45). Both St. James and Mary appear in this story. Legends about St. Bernard of Clairvaux contributed to the popularity of stories about the Virgin because she often played a role in them. The story about her feeding Bernard with her milk is a well-known example (ibid, 17).

Gregory of Tours (d. 594) compiled a collection of five stories about Mary which later spread to the west. Paul the Deacon of Naples was the first to bring miracle stories to the west when he presented the translation into Latin of a Byzantine miracle story in the 9th century (Gripkey 1969, 10). The

story translated was the miracle of Theophilus.

The Theophilus story found such popularity that it is found in many diverse collections of Marian miracles. It is carved in the north portal of Notre Dame de Paris. This remarkable depiction includes a sculpture of a warrior Mary attacking the devil with a sword in order to snatch the deed to Theophilus' soul from his hand (Warner 1976, 324).

Flodard of Reims (894-966) produced the metrical work *De Triumphis Christi et SS. Palestinae* which contained his version of five Marian miracles taken from Gregory of Tours (Gripkey 1969,14). However, Gregory and Flodard did not produce the only books of miracle stories. Large collections of stories that were specifically about Mary began to appear at the end of the 11th century (Phillipart 1996, 565). These collections were often oriented around the miracles which occurred at shrines such as Coutances, Fécamp, St. Pierre sur Dive, Soissons, Chartres, and Rocamadour (Kunstmann 1981, 16-17) and are referred to by Gripkey as "local collections".

Later collections were not concerned with one particular shrine and were often written in the vernacular. These collections are also noteworthy for their wide use of miracles found in other sources, especially the Theophilus legend and the saving of the Jewish boy.

1.2 Purpose of miracle stories

While miracle stories were popular in that everyone knew them and that they could be presented as entertainment, according to Beaussart they had their origin in the church hierarchy, not the laity. They were written by clergy for use by the Church, organized around a moral (Beaussart 1989, 241-257).

Phillipart believes that miracle stories were not taken as having the weight or seriousness of even a sermon (1996,586). He writes that their purpose was to promote catechism (ibid, 587). My research does not support this. The authors of the collections were important clergy, and obviously educated. Gabriela Signori, whose article appears immediately after Phillipart's in the collection *Marie: le culte de la Vierge dans la société médiévale,* also disagrees with him and writes about how miracle stories were written to promote pilgrimage.

The Dominican Vincent of Beauvais (d.1264) shows a definite ecclesiastical motive in the story of a seamstress who desecrates the feast of the Assumption by going to work. When she tries to thread her needle, the thread sinks into her lips and tongue. She goes to the cathedral to repent and is healed by Mary (Gripkey 1969, 68-69). The moral is a clear warning

against breaking divine order, in this case the rules set by the Church governing holy days.

Legends provided the material for sermons. Gripkey cites examples by the Augustinian priest Jacques de Vitry (ca. 1180-1240), Vincent of Beauvais, and two other Dominicans, Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1280) and Jacobus de Voragine. Jacobus de Voragine compiled what is perhaps the most famous collection of medieval religious legends, the *Legenda Aurea* (ibid, 63).

Local collections, notably miracles associated with Chartres and Soissons, were sometimes intended to show the superiority of one shrine over another (Signori 1996, 603). Signori cites Jean de Coutance's stories about pilgrims who are berated or denied healing for going to a shrine other than their local shrine at Bayeux (ibid, 604). Stories that feature certain pilgrimage destinations such as Arras and Rocamadour thus also served as advertisement as well as instruction.

In the interest of focus, I am concentrating on *Les miracles de Nostre Dame* written by Gautier de Coincy. I have chosen Gautier's work because it is expansive (two books), draws from a wide range of influences, and was perhaps the most popular collection of the Middle Ages (Koenig 1955, vii). The fact that no less than 80 copies of his work are still in existence attests to

this (ibid, xxxiv).

1.3 Gautier de Coincy and his work

Gautier was born in 1178 and became a monk at St. Medard de

Soissons in 1193 (ibid, xxi). He studied at the University of Paris and was

ordained a priest at the age of 23 (ibid, xxii). He was chosen as prior of Vic

in 1214, which made him the caretaker of the relics of St. Leocade (ibid,

xxiii). He began writing his miracles in 1218 and continued up to his death

in 1236 (ibid, xxx).

The circumstances under which Gautier lived refutes Phillipart's

contention that no educated person took miracle stories seriously. As

caretaker of the relics of St. Leocade, he was a witness to miracles in his own

life. One of the stories recounted in *Miracles de Nostre Dame* is a narrative

of how the relics were stolen and restored during his own lifetime (ibid xxiii-

xxix).

Gautier's old monastery at Soissons owned a relic that was believed to

be one of Mary's shoes. This shoe had the reputation for being effective

against ergotism. (Sumption 1975, 75). Many pilgrimages to marian shrines

were specifically against this disease, which at Arras led to a traditional

Grand Procession (Signori 1996, 617). This disease features prominently in Gautier's collection of stories, largely because he drew on the Soissons local collection. Gautier's own comment on this is, "Que Dieu m'assiste aujourd'hui et demain car je lis tant de miracles superbes dans le grand livre d'où je les tire que je ne sais vraiment plus lesquels choisir" (Beaussart 1989, 32)!

Gautier begins his work with the verses:

"A la loenge et à la gloire
En ramembrance et en mémoire
De la roine et de la dame
Cui je commant mon cors et m'ame
A jointes mains soir et matin,
Miracles que truis en latin
Translater vueil en rime et mettre
Que cil et celes qui la lettre
N'entendent pas puissent entendre
Qu'à son servise fait boen tendre" (Poquet 1972, 3).

Gautier thus gives in his own words a purpose of the miracle stories; to educate and inspire people to serve Mary as he, the writer, serves. To this end, he is translating other stories from the Latin and setting them in verse.

Gautier's material was drawn primarily from a Latin text at St. Medard which is now lost. Other sources were the aforementioned book of Soissons miracles, and a collection by Herman of Laon. He also included a translation of the miracle of Theophilus (Koenig 1955, xxxi). In total, Gautier's book is 58 stories, plus a collection of pious songs and prayers.

For my purposes, I selected only stories where Mary appears to a supplicant and takes action. I ruled out stories in which someone prays to her and is healed in their sleep, or stories about statues which do miraculous things such as moving or bleeding but do not otherwise take action. One further story which I excluded was a re-telling of a Roman myth, with the goddess Venus changed to Mary. After this process of elimination I was left with 23 stories.

As stated above, I relied heavily on the Soissons manuscript published by Abbé Poquet. One story which does not appear in this manuscript, but which is in two manuscripts used by Kunstmann (Bibliothèque Nationale 22928 and manuscript XIV 9 at the Hermitage) is that of the pregnant abbess. Since I found this story striking when thinking about Mary as model of the Church, I chose to include it.

Beaussart comments on the structure of Gautier's stories, saying "la structure narrative doit être d'une grande simplicité: toute transgression, toute atteinte corporelle, toute rupture de l'ordre social suscite le miracle. Ce dernier pouvant être interprété comme un processus de réintégration de la victime" (Beaussart, 'Les miracles de Gautier de Coinci', 243). This will be seen in stories about Mary bringing justice and healing.

2 Mary's qualities in the miracle stories

If the statues of Mary described in the previous chapter showed Mary as the Church, many of the miracle stories demonstrated what this could mean on a practical level.

According to *Lumen Gentium*, Mary is the exemplar of virtue, notably faith and charity. She is "model in faith and charity" (LG:53), imitated by the Church in maintaining "intact faith, firm hope, and sincere charity" (LG:64), "model of virtues" (LG:65) and "type of the church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ" (LG:63). In the miracle stories, Mary demonstrates charity by showing love for and on behalf of God, for the simple and poor.

Francois-Jérôme Beaussart writes that Mary appears in Gautier de Coincy's stories to bring justice and/or recompense, heal or save, or punish or menace ("Les miracles de Gautier de Coinci", 248-253). I would clarify this by saying that in the 23 stories that I ultimately chose, Mary does not come to menace or punish. Instead, she is a model of virtues for the Church by doing three major things. First, she shows justice and mercy. Second, she rescues and heals. Third, she protects the rights of the poor and humble.

2.1 Mary, justice, and mercy

The first of Mary's primary functions in the miracle stories as I see

them is to bring justice and to show mercy. Mary enforces justice which is

merciful, and mercy which is likewise just. In this capacity, Mary saves

souls from supernatural danger, or creates a miracle in order to do so. She

assists people who are essentially good, but who have fallen under an evil

otherworldly influence, or assures that people who have separated themselves

from the Church are re-integrated into it.

Possibly the most famous story of Mary acting for justice and mercy

on behalf of someone under a supernatural influence is "The Pilgrim Who

Killed Himself By the Advice of the Devil" (Beaussart, 76-79; Poquet 1972,

287-295; another version appears in Kunstmann, 38-45). A pilgrim on his

way to Compostela has illicit sex, possibly with a prostitute. The Devil

comes to him in the form of St. James, whose shrine is in Compostela, and

tells him to castrate himself and commit suicide. The real St. James demands

that the man's soul be released and the Virgin is called upon to judge the

case. She rules that because the man killed and mutilated himself out of

ignorance, his soul must be restored to his body. The man becomes a monk

and lives out his life in penance.

The sinner in question is not completely out of order. He is on his way to a shrine when he sins, and kills himself only because he thought a saint was telling him to do so. Mary's power to judge is something delegated to her by God. When St. James tells the Devil that Mary will be judging this case, the Devil complains:

> "Tu sais parfaitement que ses sentences nous ravissent de nombreuses âmes qui devraient normalement nous revenir. Elle juge de telle façon que ce qui est devant se retrouve derrière! Mon sentiment est qu'elle nous fait tort, car on ne peut être à la fois juge et partie. S'il ne tenait qu'à elle, il n'y aurait plus une âme en enfer, crois-moi. Dieu écoute tout ce qu'elle dit; c'est une bien grande tristesse qu'il lui fasse pareillement confiance alors qu'elle déploie tout son art pour nous causer du tort" (Beaussart, 78).

As we shall see, Mary can also exercise grace as the Church does, by means of the sacraments. In the story "The Abbess who Our Lady Delivered from a Great Anguish," (Kunstmann 1981, 64-83), Mary listens to the sins of a penitent and grants both absolution and a penance.

In brief, a good abbess is hated by her nuns out of jealousy. The Devil hates her goodness as well, and arranges for her to fall in love with a male servant. The abbess succumbs and becomes pregnant. Her nuns are delighted to see this and call the bishop. The abbess turns to Mary for assistance, saying, "Ah! mère de Dieu, quoi que j'aie fait, j'implore ton pardon pour mon crime" (Kunstmann 1981, 69). Mary appears with her

angels to say, "En raison des services que tu m'as rendus, le roi du ciel, par ma prière, te pardonne tes crimes et t'envoie sa grâce" (ibid, 71).

Mary and two angels serve as midwives to the abbess and the angels take the baby to a nearby hermit. Mary warns the abbess that nonetheless, she must face the interrogations of the bishop as her penance (ibid). As Mary has given absolution, the imposition of a penance continues the idea of Mary as confessor.

A famous tale of Mary saving a man's soul is the legend of Theophilus (Cunneen 1996, 147: Koenig 1955, 50-175: Kunstmann 1981, 191-218; Poquet 1972, 26-75). According to the tale, Theophilus is an administrator in the diocese of Cilicia who is known for his goodness and charity. Nonetheless, he is either denied a promotion, passed over as the next bishop, or removed from his post, depending on the version of the story. Angry, he sells his soul to the devil in exchange for the desired position.

Even after selling his soul, Theophilus does not stop being a moral person, and continues to be honest and compassionate. Finally realizing the gravity of his sin, Theophilus prays and fasts for forty days, at the end of which Mary appears to him. She asks Theophilus why she should intercede for someone who has denied her son. Theophilus reminds her of the great penitents of the Bible: the city of Nineveh, Rahab, David, and Peter who

denied Christ not once but three times (ibid).

Seeing his faith, Mary tells Theophilus to recite the Credo, which he does. Mary then assures him:

> "Tu iez entrez en bones voiez
> Quant ton pechié as tant ploré
> Et tant veillié et tant oré
> Tant m'as prïee et tant requise
> Que grans pitiez m'est de toi prise.
> Ma douceur m'as tant recordee
> Qu'à toi sui toute racordee
> Et se ferai toute t'acorde
> Au douz roi de misericorde" (Kunstmann 1981, 126).

The striking thing about this whole exchange between Mary and Theophilus is because once again in effect she hears his confession and grants absolution, which is one of the functions of a priest.

Gautier explains that Mary is, like the Church, the refuge of sinners. In the story which is summarized in its title "The Bandit Who was Hanged, but Our Lady Supported for Two Days (Beaussart, 27-28)", he finishes by saying, "C'est pour soigner les pécheurs que Dieu a voulu faire de Notre Dame sa mère" (ibid, 28). In the story of the pregnant abbess, when Mary appears she introduces herself: "Je suis la mère de Dieu, Marie, qui prie mon doux fils sans arrêt, nuit et jour, pour les pécheurs" (Kunstmann 1981,71).

Philippart describes Mary as a "figure of usurpation, intervening in

divine order, placing her views in the judgement of a soul, and refers to Mary as the maternal protection against the masculine power of God and the devils" (1996,575, 576). An examination of the stories suggests rather than usurping God's power, Mary extend's God's mercy to good people who are out of order and need help to be reintegrated into order.

In the story of the robber who was hanged, the robber is very pious, does not harm people in the course of the theft, and gives generously to the poor (Beaussart, "Les Miracles de Gautier de Coinci", 27). Mary saves him so that he may retire to a monastery to do penance. The thief is partially in line with divine order, and Mary's intervention places him there fully.

Re-integration into the Church is, as stated above, a way in which Mary's merciful justice works. The reader can find several examples in Gautier's book of people wrongly denied the means of being fully in the graces of the Church, brought in by Mary's efforts.

Two stories with almost identical themes are "The Clerk of Chartres In Whose Mouth Were Found Five Roses When He Was Buried In A Pit" and "The Clerk Found With A Rose In His Mouth." Both of these men were lesser clergy who fell into a sinful lifestyle that included not observing holy days (Poquet 1972, 298) and living in lechery (ibid, 363). Both died repentant, but without having confessed, and were buried in profane ground,

that being the practice at the time. Mary appears to the priest to whom both men reported, and have them exhumed. The roses found in the mouths of both corpses proves that they died holy deaths, and they are given the burial they deserve.

In "The Miracle of the Excommunicate Who Could Not Find Assistance" (Poquet 1972, 574-594) Mary uses her heavenly powers in order to reverse an injustice perpetrated by the Church which has separated a man from it. A penitent man who has been excommunicated is sent to the bishop, who does not lift the excommunication, but sends him to the Pope. When even the Pope refuses to see him, he wanders the desert for seven years, looking for a hermit who will hear his confession.

Finally, he finds a hermit who is visited regularly by Mary. Mary tells them that the priest who excommunicated the man is dead by now, but invites him to look for the priest among the heavenly host. The man finds him, and the priest gives him absolution. Mary does not hear the confession herself, but she has the supernatural resources to see to it that the man's soul does not remain endangered.

2.2 Mary, rescuing and healing

In the stories, Mary is concerned with the spiritual well-being of all

persons. When someone is led into sin by deceit, or has a difficult time

being re-integrated into the Church because of circumstances outside their

control, Mary is able to bring the justice necessary to set things right. In

other stories, Mary saves people physically in order for them to be part of the

Church.

Mary not only rescues but also acts as a missionary in the story "The

Jewish Boy who Converted to Christianity" (Kunstmann 1981, 56-63). A

Jewish boy goes to school with Christians. Wishing to fit in, he gets in line

to receive communion one Easter. He is mysteriously drawn away from the

line to a statue of Mary which fascinates him with its beauty. The statue

becomes the real Mary, who takes a host from the priest and gives the boy

communion herself (ibid, 57-58). When the boy's father hears about this

later, he becomes enraged and throws the boy into a furnace, but Mary

appears in the furnace, wraps her mantle around the boy, and protects him

from the flames.

It may be noted that parents in Gautier's work are often destructive, as

in "The Woman of Arras" and one story which I did not use in which a

couple sells their child to the Devil. The Jewish father cannot be singled out for villainy.

Unlike the two examples of Mary hearing confession, this is clearly a story about Mary administering a sacrament. This task was of course forbidden to women at the time, and she chooses to give the sacrament to a non-Christian. It is worthy of note that this can be read as an illustration of the statement in *Lumen Gentium* that "all who join in the Church's apostolic mission" should be motivated by motherly love!

In the story "The Nun Who Wanted to Sin but Who Our Lady Saved", Mary protects a woman from herself. A pretty young nun is convinced by a man to run away with him, and she acquiesces because he is very rich and sends her beautiful gifts (Poquet 1972, 475). She slips away from her convent and falls asleep while waiting for him. She dreams that the pit of hell opens before her, with demons ready to drag her down. Terrified, she calls upon Mary. As in all such stories, Mary asks the nun why she should help. Before the nun can respond, the demons attack and Mary drives them off, after which she relents because the nun has previously been such a good servant. First, she gives a speech on the value of chastity:

> "Belle fille, fit Notre-dame, la luxure saisit le corps et l'âme: elle
> dégrade le corps et tue l'âme, la jette et rue en enfer. Mais la chasteté
> est de telle nature qu'elle nettoie le corps et dégage l'âme; elle honore

le corps, exalte l'âme et l'élève tellement qu'elle l'envoie droit en paradis. La chasteté est la droite voie, le droit chemin, la bonne adresse qui envoie les chastes au ciel" (Kunstmann 1981, 113, 115; Poquet 1972, 479).

The nun returns hastily to her convent and lives out her life as a model religious.

One may ask what the stories about errant nuns say about sex and the body. In the story of the pregnant abbess, she is the victim of an evil spell cast by the devil. It is not something she ordinarily would have done, and cannot be attributed to merely the flesh overtaking the spirit.

In the other story though, the emphasis does not seem to be so much on the evils of sex than the evils of breaking a vow, and of greed. Mary shows herself to be protective of her son, and does not appreciate unfaithfulness on the part of the women sworn to him. As she says to the abbess, "Elle n'est pas mal mariée qui se marie avec mon doux fils" (Kunstmann 1981, 73). In the second story, the pretty young nun does not show any signs of love towards the man who is wooing her, but she certainly is impressed by his lands and wealth. It is not sex that motivates her, but greed.

On reading Gautier's stories, it is sobering to see how little the problems of women have changed. The story of "The Woman of Arras"

(ibid, 119-140; Poquet 1972, 257-275) is particularly contemporary in the difficulties suffered by the heroine.

The woman of the title consecrates her virginity after seeing Mary in a vision. Nonetheless, her parents find an appropriate husband for her, and beat her when she objects. On her wedding night, her husband discovers that he cannot penetrate her. Gautier does not elaborate: the problem can be miraculous or due to nothing more than impotence. In frustration, the husband attacks her with a knife, wounding her horribly. The bishop hears about this, and grants the woman a divorce on the spot.

As if she had not suffered enough, the woman is then stricken with the dreaded *mal des ardents*, which attacks her breasts. She is taken to the church at Arras, which was believed to be particularly effective for cures of this disease. In what may be deliberately reminiscent of Job's complaints to God, the woman calls upon Mary, asking if the Virgin has abandoned her or played a cruel joke (Kunstmann 1981, 133). Mary promptly appears, but unlike God in the book of Job, she does not tell the woman simply to accept what has happened. Instead, she promises to cure her right away, and gives her the power to cure others by embracing them (ibid, 135).

The presence of domestic violence, divorce, and breast illness give "The Woman of Arras" a particular relevance. The ability which Mary gives

to the woman, to heal through a sign of love, is very striking. The same is true of "Two Women Who Mary Converts" (Beaussart, 94-96). A woman is praying to Mary for vengeance against the woman who has stolen her husband. She doesn't actually want her husband back because he was abusive, but she wants vengeance nonetheless. Mary appears to the wife and says about the adulteress, "Elle me sert avec tant d'ardeur que je serai bien incapable de lui causer le moindre tort" (ibid, 94).

When the adulteress meets the wife, the adulteress is stricken with remorse. She begs forgiveness on her knees and swears never to steal another woman's husband. The wife sees how she has been wrong and:

> "Les deux femmes tombèrent dans les bras l'une de l'autre en se couvrant de baisers et en se réconfortant mutuellement. Tant que dura leur existence, elles s'aimèrent et menèrent sainte vie, car celle qui sait parfaitement apaiser les conflits avait établi une paix durable entre elles" (ibid, 95).

Not only is Mary here lenient with a woman whose sexual morals are questionable, she praises her for serving her well. Furthermore, the solution to domestic violence is found to be women turning to and supporting each other. Mary's healing here is in relationships, through relationships.

In these stories, Mary rescues people who go on to become ideal Christians. She is missionary to a Jewish boy, saves a young nun from

running away with a man, and shows a divorced woman with a breast disease and two feuding women how they can help their communities. Mary models charity, and those who see her irresistible example follow in her footsteps.

2.3 Mary and the rights of the humble

Lumen Gentium paragraph 55 describes Mary as one who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him." While in this capacity Mary still shows her perfect charity, she particularly encourages the virtue of faith. These miracle stories show that Mary can stand with the poor and humble without becoming one of the disempowered herself. Instead, she appears as their strongest supporter.

The problems of old women are treated in "The Rich Usurer and the Poor Widow" (ibid 97-104; Poquet 1972, 426-442). A rich man who lends money at interest (a serious sin in the medieval church) is dying at the same time as a poor and holy widow. The priest decides to comfort the rich man, leaving his deacon to tend to the widow. Demons come to collect the soul of the rich man while the deacon finds the widow dying in Mary's arms, surrounded by Mary's virgin attendants. Mary serves as an example of what

the Church *should* be by being present at a time where the hierarchical

Church fails.

Another story with a similar theme is "The Priest Who Our Lady

Defended From the Injury His Bishop Wanted to Inflict Because He Only

Knew One Mass of Our Lady." A priest knows only one mass[1], and is

abused by his bishop for being a crazy person:

> "Devant l'évesque acusé fu.
> L'évesque dist qu'en mi un fu
> Le deust l'en par droit géter
> Et comme un fols batre et béter" (Poquet 1972, 323).

Mary appears to the bishop that night to protest the treatment of "her"

priest:

> "Ce saches tu certainement,
> Se tu bien matinet demain
> Ne rapèles mon chapelain
> A son service et à s'onneur,
> L'ame de toi a deshonneur
> Ainz xxx (30) jours départira
> De ton cors en enfer ira" (ibid, 326).

To Mary, according to Gautier, small prayers said with great devotion

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[1] Literacy was not a requirement for the clergy until the council of Trent in the 16th century. It appears this priest had a mass of the Blessed Virgin memorized, and could not perform any others.

are far more acceptable than long ones said without. Here she again corrects the Church when it has failed.

This is further shown in "The Nun For Whom Mary Shortened Her Ave Marias". Briefly, a very holy nun who has the custom of reciting a full rosary or alternatively 500 Aves has a vision of Mary. In it, Mary tells her that because she is full of genuine piety, that it's all right to recite only a chaplet.

Gautier ends by using this nun as an example for clergy who feel that reciting the Divine Office is a chore. Mary is not on the side of the rich, the bishops, or any of the clergy but with the poor and poor of heart.

CONCLUSION

It is a little more difficult to find Mary as model of the Church in the mystery stories without the foreknowledge that they were written to show what people thought and felt about the Virgin Mary, particularly when she is seen as the Black Virgin. The symbolism of Mary as New Eve or Bride are not explicitly present, for instance, and one must recall what it means for Mary to be model of the Church.

Here, it means Mary as the one who teaches the Church how to be the

Church. She educates both individual members as well as the Church as an institution. She acts as "the mother of the members of Christ" (LG:53) and "model in faith and charity" (ibid). As with the Black Virgins, Mary cares about her people like any good mother, and in the stories she comes to teach lessons to individuals on how to be better Christians. When Mary is saving a runaway nun from sin, giving a chance to repent to a suicide, or saving a man's soul from the devil, she shows that she "cares for her Son's sisters and brothers who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home" (LG:62).

Mary also teaches the hierarchical Church. Like it, Mary has use of the sacraments. She hears confessions, by which sinners are re-integrated into the Church, and distributes the Eucharist to those whom she calls. When the Church neglects the poor in favour of the rich, places intellectual knowledge over true piety, or prefers lengthy devotion without devotion over shorter prayers said with devotion, Mary is there to make it right, with sharp words to priests or bishops if necessary.

As John Paul II has written, Mary encloses all people in and by the Church. In the miracle stories, she will do anything it takes to save her people. "To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church," reads

paragraph 845 in the Catechism. These stories serve as parables to depict Mary acting as Church, drawing in those who stray.

The advantage of these stories is that they both entertaining and thought-provoking. Like Biblical parables, they take principles, in this case the statements about what "Mary, model of the Church" mean, and give examples. As with the parables, we often no longer understand some of the circumstances, or identify with attitudes expressed in them. Still, they are part of our heritage, and as they explain the Black Virgin and her times they should not be ignored.

CONCLUSION

The idea of Mary, model of the Church as found in *Lumen Gentium* was presented at Vatican II in order to create unanimity in a divided council. It is still full of potential for unifying and inspiring the modern Church, which continues to be marked by violent controversies between different political stances.

The concept originated in patristics when both Mary and the Church were identified as the New Eve and the Bride from the Song of Songs. Later on, Ambrose and Augustine showed how the Church patterned itself after Mary in its behaviour. These lines of thought continued through the Middle Ages, disappeared for a number of centuries, then were re-explored in the 1950s by theologian Otto Semmelroth.

Vatican II shows that Mary is the exemplary Christian who stands as

model of virtues to all members of the Church. To the Church as a whole she is the model of a virgin mother, for as she brought forth Christ, the Church brings forth members through preaching and baptism. Mary is also the model in that she has already completed the journey of sanctity which all the Church endeavours to follow, namely the journey towards living in heaven, body and soul, with Jesus.

The writings of Paul VI after the Council emphasizes that Mary is mother of Church, and that this is how she carries out her role as model. Her being mother makes imitating her virtues easier and more attractive, because it is natural for children to wish to imitate their mother. He also writes of the different ways in which Mary carries out the same roles as the Church, through hearing the word of God and obeying, praying in the name of the whole Church, bringing Jesus into the world, and offering Jesus as sacrifice.

John Paul II is very interested in interpreting the way Mary is presented by *Lumen Gentium*, and writes in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* about how Mary encompasses all people in the Church and by the Church, and that this is how Mary is the Church's model. She is the one who teaches the Church to truly *be* the Church.

Unfortunately, John Paul considers the idea of Mary teaching the Church how to be a mother as more important than how to be perfect in

virtues. In *Letter to Women* he goes so far as to state that the Church has two "essential dimensions", a marian one for women and a petrine one for men. Apparently, despite what he has written about Mary encompassing all people in the Church, she really only encompasses women, and into a fixed set of roles at that.

Yet John Paul's tangent into Mary as Model of Female Gender Roles is an anomaly. Overwhelmingly, in theological writings Mary is a role model for the entire Church, the "type" of a Christian. She is a member of the Christian community, though one who is presented as worthy of being followed both because of her perfect virtue and because she has perfectly completed the Church's earthly pilgrimage.

Mary as model has iconic representation in the Black Virgins of the Middle Ages and the miracle stories which are related to them. In the Black Virgin, one finds first a connection to the New Eve and black- skinned Bride, thus reminding the viewer of the symbols which early Christian writers used for both Mary and the Church. Mary's identification with the Church as its model is next shown in the way she, like a priest, presents Jesus. Sometimes Mary wears bishops' vestments to further emphasize this.

The Black Virgin is a small portable statue, and there is evidence that they were moved among the people as part of processions. In fact, such

processions still exist in places. The Black Virgin is thus among the people as one of them, although on a different level. The statue's presence in liturgies shows them as part of the community, participating in their life.

As one of the community, the Black Virgin is concerned with their needs. The miracles for which the Black Virgins are famous are related to everyday fears and concerns. The fertility of the earth and the correct amount of rain are two areas over which they have power, and it has been suggested that the colour of the Black Virgin is a reminder of good fertile soil.

The Black Virgins were also invoked by women for the lives of their children. Just as she watched over fertility of the land, the Black Virgin watched over women, helping them conceive and bear safely. She extended her protection over children, and had a reputation for bringing dead babies back to life. Mary's concern for families was emphasized at Chartres, where the art at the west facade depicted stories from Mary's own life which were meant to reflect the concerns of the women who had come there.

We can read what the Black Virgins, not to mention Mary in general, meant to medieval Christians by turning to the large number of stories told about them. These stories often showed statues of Mary, some of which are identifiable as Black Virgins, taking action. These stories were written by the

clergy for the entertainment and education of both clergy and laity. They could be read as they were, used as sermons, or presented as plays.

The most famous collection of the middle ages was the one produced in verse by Gautier de Coincy. In the stories which are used in this *mémoire*, Mary appears as an agent of God's mercy, saving people from damnation, rescuing them from their sins, healing their physical and emotional ills, and protecting the rights of the weak. Thus, Mary is modeling *how* the Church should act.

In doing these things, Mary is seen to show charity, love of neighbour as oneself for love of God. As the Black Virgin who has a place among the community, people who call upon Mary are her neighbours. Mary works to save every one of them, in some stories using the sacraments to do so. In this way, she is particularly the model of the Church.

The Black Virgin is a member of the Church while symbolic of the Church itself. She is the Virgin Mother presenting Jesus to the world, and as such she is also a priest. Her appeal was universal; laity, clergy, men, women, rich and poor turned to her with their prayers. The miracle stories concerning her showed her perfect virtue, in which she never turned anyone away.

In my opinion, what we at the turn of the millennium can take from

this is not only a model of how we can be as individual Christians, but how the Church can be as a whole. As individuals we are all called to be charitable and concerned for one another, both physically and spiritually. We are all called to participate in the will of God, just as Mary did when she spoke the *fiat* that began the church.

The Black Virgin perhaps provides a more challenging model to the institutional Church. Her episcopal vestments would not be a comfortable sight for some within it. Aside from that, she is also a reminder of who the Church is for: sinners, the sick, the oppressed, children. The Black Virgin is known for coming down from her pedestal, after all.

One unforseen side-effect of Vatican II was a seeming preference for all things new. While it is always a good thing for a religion to keep pace with the changing world, one of the strengths of Catholicism is its nearly 2,000-year tradition.

Bernard Lonergan's method calls for building bridges between the many expressions of the faith. Reading 20th century mariology while looking into medieval art and literature led me to have questions about whether a bridge could be built across the centuries between these expressions of faith. My hypothesis was that Mary as model of the Church could be represented by imagery from the Middle Ages.. The resulting experiments, in this case

further reading, led me to believe that the hypothesis held some truth. I conclude that modern mariology and medieval imagery of Mary are complementary.

While some might suggest that placing a modern idea of Mary onto a set of 800-year-old symbols is pouring new wine into old wineskins (Lk 5:37-39), perhaps a different metaphor is more appropriate. We no longer use wineskins, but age wine in casks before pouring it into bottles. Old wine can be poured out of an equally old cask, after which the cask is prepared to receive new wine. Indeed, the new wine will be made all the better for having been in the aged cask.

I would like to suggest that this is the case with the medieval imagery I have written about here. The old wine of its medieval meaning is long gone, although its flavour remains. Now the cask stands empty and ready to receive the new wine, which will only benefit from its being placed in an aged container.

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REMERCIEMENTS