

**APPARITIONS OF THE VIRGIN MARY
IN MODERN EUROPEAN ROMAN CATHOLICISM
(FROM 1830)**

Volume 1

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Abstract

Apparition phenomena, particularly those that claim Mary as their object, are still very influential in modern Roman Catholicism. The first half of this thesis is concerned with the context of these visions in their European form, and how the Catholic Church promotes some of them into the heart of its devotional life. On the whole, this first part takes a phenomenological view, simply looking at this process in its own right, although there are also some sociological insights and critical remarks.

The author, as a Catholic devotee of the marian cult himself, is attempting to write a theological critique of the visions as a member of the pilgrim community, using a broader range of academic tools than is usually employed in such a task. In the second half of the thesis, therefore, a theoretical model is constructed that provides a new understanding of the phenomena.

This model has four elements: firstly, the humanistic psychological, in which marian apparitions are compared with other such phenomena and considered from the view of depth psychology. The major factors which distinguish them are the intensity of the experience and the ecclesial context. Secondly, ecclesiological: the visions cannot be considered as extras or alternatives to the everyday life of the Catholic Church, but as its own 'epiphenomena'.

Thirdly, mariological: the apparitions show evidence of 'high' mariology, although this is qualified because of Mary's apparent powerlessness in the face of God's judgement. In the modern era, the orthodox christocentric emphasis is more pronounced, but this does not appear to

be a wholly spontaneous feature. Fourthly, and finally, biblical: the Christian revelation is rooted in history, and it is this which must be primary and not the archetypal, universal patterns of the psyche. Therefore the objective element in apparitions, if such exists, is, from a theological perspective, the Mary of history and her part in the events at the heart of the Christian understanding of salvation.

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Personal Preface

It is my personal opinion that writers on theology and religion should make clear their own beliefs and presuppositions as far as they are able, at least when these relate to the subject matter. Gender, social and cultural background, denomination and religious orientation within it, as well as the other groups to which one belongs - all these form the backdrop to a piece of research or theological investigation, and it is necessary that the reader should know them. If there is any such thing as truth, it does not stand as spoken or written word apart from a speaking or writing person (or people) with a context in history.

Perhaps this last statement will give a clue as to my own chosen denomination within Christianity, ie Catholicism. Indeed, this thesis is presented as a contribution to Catholic theology (in particular, mariology), but the reader will be aware that the research that has enabled the work to be written was undertaken within the ecumenical and part-secular environment of the Theology and Religious Studies Department at Leeds. No-one will be surprised to learn, therefore, that I consider myself a 'liberal' Catholic, who believes that the theological endeavour necessitates stepping beyond the confines of the hierarchical priestly view, while making good use of the insights, approaches and methods of the social sciences and of biblical criticism.

The thesis, being from a liberal standpoint, is critical of authoritarianism and its neglect of other perspectives, and this reflects my attitude vis-a-vis the Catholic hierarchy, despite my own aspirations to become a priest in the Roman Church. I have also a great deal of

sympathy with the writers of various 'liberation' theologies - hence my liking for the works of such people when they touch on mariological issues. Yet, in addition to all this, I myself remain an ardent devotee in the Catholic cult of Mary, and it is my living relationship with Mary that has inspired me to write about her apparitions. The thesis certainly starts with the assumption that Mary may speak to us through apparition phenomena. Nevertheless, I strongly suspect that I am far from being a typical member of the marian religious world.

Of course, I am yet another male writing about Mary. However, I would like to feel that I was a kindred spirit to the several women writers who feel that the figure of Mary will ultimately aid, rather than hinder, the process of women's liberation. In order for this to happen, Mary has to be recognised as a powerful and autonomous figure, just as many Catholics through the centuries have suggested in their stories and beliefs about her. This thesis is dedicated to this work. I hope that it might play a modest part in the move towards more liberating perspectives on all of those disadvantaged in our churches and society: women, the poor, ethnic groups, the laity.

I have lived in an ecumenical community throughout the period of my research. The final aspiration for this work that I would like to express here is that it will present Mary, together with her cult and the attendant phenomena, in a way that will interest non-Catholics, and help them to find something of value in it. I am not sure whether I shall succeed in this, as my work is certainly centred on the Catholic world and its writers. However, I do sense a growing interest in Mary across the denominations, and an increasing ability to distinguish devotion to her as a

popular expression of faith from a wholesale acceptance of the Catholic authority structures which propagate her cult.

It is a rather bitter irony that the country whose major shrine first inspired me to start this work - Yugoslavia - is on the brink of civil conflict in the month that I finish it. It would appear, too, that the Yugoslavian bishops are beginning to publish directives on Medjugorje just as I close my research. Obviously, the contemporary issues surrounding both shrine and federal nation are far from settled at this moment in history, and so I would like to dedicate this thesis to the peoples of Yugoslavia and the hope for a lasting peace among them. 'Kraljice Mira' - 'Queen of Peace' - is Mary's Serbo-Croat title at Medjugorje and it could not be more appropriate as an expression of Christian hope there.

Introduction

NOTE: Throughout the work, the word 'apparition' of necessity appears many times in the text. In order to minimise the repetition, other words, like 'vision' and 'phenomenon', are used. All of these are used synonymously, and no implications about distinctions between them should be drawn despite the fact that, in some literature elsewhere, they are sometimes used to mean different things. The same point applies to the pairs of words 'visionary' and 'seer', 'event' and 'case', which are also used synonymously. In addition, the word 'Church' may sometimes be used, and it will be clear that there we mean the Roman Catholic Church. This is for brevity only, and should not be interpreted as implying anything about the special nature of the Roman Church over and against other denominations. In fact, the author prefers to regard the Christian denominations together as the Church of Christ in today's world.

1 Research methodology

Apparitions of Mary have been reported throughout Christian history, certainly since the 5th century and possibly before (1/1). There have been many such claims in the last two centuries, occurring on a worldwide scale among Roman Catholics (1/2). With such a large field of data in view, we must make a start by delimiting the range of this thesis: beyond these limits, the sheer weight of data is prohibitive. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that, from the (limited) data, it is possible to come to conclusions about the phenomena which have general applications.

(i) We will have to confine ourselves to apparition phenomena reported by Roman Catholics and within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Roman Church. Other Christian denominations, notably the Orthodox and Coptic, do have traditions of such apparitions (1/3), but the relevant information is rather scarce and, anyway, research into these extra-Catholic phenomena would open up a vast area of Eastern literature in theology, ecclesiology and mysticism. In the Roman Church, the apparition shrines and cults form a recognisable and familiar religious entity, in which procedures and developments are diverse but yet manageable in a work of this size.

(ii) Our period is to begin with the year 1830. Catholic marian devotees themselves identify a "Marian Age" beginning at this date (1/4), the year of the visions reported by the then anonymous and now canonised Catherine Labouré, of the Rue du Bac convent, Paris (1/5). The apparition events after this date have seen the founding of new and very influential shrines such as Lourdes in Pyrenean France, Fatima in Portugal and, more recently, the very striking case at Medjugorje, in Croat Hercegovina, Yugoslavia. The period from 1830 is still 'fresh', as it were, in the Catholic mind - the cases within this modern age being regarded in a way that pre-1830 visions are not (1/6).

(iii) We shall deal predominantly with European cases, even though, occasionally, apparitions outside Europe will be referred to. It is true that there have been many cases outside Europe and, recently, Africa and Latin America have seen interesting explosions of visionary events (1/7). However, by restricting the field to Europe, it is possible to gain an adequate understanding of context that would just not be possible without this limit. For the

Roman Church, Europe means primarily Western Europe and, actually, all those phenomena which have become the most famous in the modern period have occurred within what is now the European Community, except for Medjugorje. Of course, the boundaries of Roman ecclesiastical jurisdiction reach into Eastern Europe, and there are Catholic majorities in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Lithuania, and sizeable Catholic communities in Yugoslavia and the Ukraine (the latter Uniate or Eastern-Rite Catholics), with smaller groups elsewhere. However, there is very little data on apparitions in these countries, except for a recent case at Hrushiw, Ukraine, which has created some interest.

I have followed what I like to describe as a 'hippopotamus' method in researching this thesis over four years, ie I have 'wallowed' in the material, seeking out and reading as many newspaper cuttings, articles and pamphlets as possible, however seemingly bizarre the phenomena they reported or championed (1/8), interviewing people involved with the histories of the apparitions, and with the ongoing cults (1/9), and visiting most of the major shrines in Western Europe, in France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Italy and Yugoslavia. The impressions and interview information gained form a backdrop to the research and arguments of the writing of the thesis; they are not direct sources, but they were nonetheless invaluable.

There are not many visionaries among the interviewees: it is not easy to contact them except in obscure cases where they have received little other publicity. Most of what they have to say is, anyway, included in the literature already available. In all my research, I uncovered no 'plot' or case in which the published details failed to match the local sources (which is not to say that none

existed). The major apparition events are better documented than I had anticipated, and the literature, especially in French, is more extensive than it was possible to acquire in total with my limited resources.

Although the source material, especially for the later chapters, goes beyond the apparitions and their cults themselves, it was, nevertheless, very important to have a thorough knowledge of the phenomena before undertaking the reading of the psychological, sociological, ecclesiological and mariological works which are applied to them. These latter disciplines were, however, researched in a selective way due to the limitations of time - of the four, the mariological research was the most extensive. The sections on psychology, sociology and ecclesiology are based on a few major writers, who seemed to be the best fitted to provide a frame of reference for dealing with the important issues. The biblical studies references are largely confined to those scholars who have written specifically about Mary.

2 Aims, approaches and assumptions

Very many apparitions of Mary and other Christian figures are claimed to have been seen by people in Catholic areas but, despite this, few gain official approval. When this occurs, a shrine becomes a major pilgrimage centre, sometimes popular on an international scale. Many other cases are ignored; several condemned. Popular acclaim is important, but ecclesiastical authentication is everywhere the final court of appeal, without which a shrine and its visionary cannot hope to pass into the folk memory of the Catholic Church. The reason why these few have become such an important and well-known part of modern Catholicism will form a central focus for investigation in this thesis. Is it true that, on these special occasions, Mary

honoured the world with her presence, while elsewhere those who claimed to have seen her were suffering hallucinations? Or can we understand the phenomena in a different way, yet one which still does justice to the theological possibility that there are such phenomena which originate with God in a specific way?

The overall aim of the thesis is to provide a model for understanding the apparition phenomena, especially within the logic of Catholic theology, but without abandoning a critical approach. Underlying this is the assumption that it is possible that the Virgin Mary may speak to modern people through these 'charismata'. The thesis claims to be theological, and by that I mean that it attempts to express the belief system of a community of faith, in this case the 'community' of persons within the Catholic Church who believe in the communication of Mary through apparitions. However it does this by:

- (a) utilising the tools of academic criticism;
- (b) looking beyond the limitations of the current situation, and not being tied to the 'consensus' of the believing group;
- (c) remaining open to ideas and interpretations which may seem at first to jeopardise some cherished notions of the past.

For these reasons, the work very often goes beyond what would be expressed or accepted by devotees of the 'marian cult'. Nevertheless, it tries to do this without circumventing the logical implications of what the believers themselves might accept, ie the Catholic theological tradition. So the thesis is written in the context of Catholic thought, and most of the scholars referred to in the theological sections are Catholics, although from all spectra of the Catholic community. Fortunately, this encompasses a broad band of thought, and

includes a strong tradition of critique of visionary phenomena.

Outside the theological sections, the thesis is more open to non-Catholic influence. The model-building aim of the work is thus facilitated by a synthesis between, on the one hand, Catholic theological approaches to apparitions and, on the other, phenomenological approaches such as the psychoanalytical work of Carl Jung and research into 'psychical' phenomena from a non-religious standpoint.

A second, but major, aim of the thesis is to allow the phenomenon to 'speak' beyond the limitations of the Catholic authority structures, despite the fact that the hierarchy often seems to want to exercise a monopoly in regard to acceptable academic approaches to mariology. The personal preface will make it clear that my own presuppositions are that both women and the laity in general are undervalued in the Catholic Church (and elsewhere). My approach to mariology is therefore sympathetic to the liberationist view that the figure of Mary challenges the world to take more account of women, the powerless and the poor. I hope that, by the time we reach the conclusion, this approach will be vindicated without thereby disregarding the apparitions (or some of them) as genuine manifestations of this same figure of biblical history.

3 Outline of the thesis

Throughout the work, the question of context is all-important. There are several dimensions to context, of course. In the first part of chapter 1, we simply outline the historical, ie socio-political and ecclesiastical-political background to the most famous cases, surveying countries in which apparitions have become quite an issue

in the modern period: France, Ireland, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Yugoslavia. The first chapter concludes with a survey of the developing major themes of the apparition tradition, in particular its apocalyptic tendency.

Chapter 2 asks the question as to whether there is a common factor in the social situation behind notable apparition cults. While it is true that apparitions occur in all times and all places, only in some cases do we find:

- (a) visionaries that attract a great deal of attention, locally and then nationally;
- (b) a whole series of extraordinary visionary phenomena in one country over a short period of time;
- (iii) ecclesiastical authorities that are prepared to investigate the phenomena seriously with a view to raising them, if they are found worthy, to a high status within the Catholic devotional system.

Although the ecclesiastical enquiry procedure is not outside these considerations of context, it does claim to have dynamics of its own which can be applied to any case. Chapter 3 looks at the criteria for investigation which have been applied in the modern period, identifying those features that favour recognition of a case of visions and those which tend to disqualify one. To better understand the basis for such procedures, notable Catholic commentaries on the visions and their authenticity are surveyed in chapter 4. However, we cannot avoid the critical questions which emerge when we consider the enquiry and authentication process as a whole, and the second half of this chapter is devoted to such a critique. Then chapter 5 applies the questions raised in the previous two chapters to the famous recent case at Medjugorje, where the apparitions continue to date. The

validation process is not yet complete for these visions, and neither has anything 'official' and finalised been published, and so the work done here may be seen as a contribution to the current debate about Medjugorje.

The thesis reaches a watershed in chapter 6, where we begin the task of the second part of the thesis, ie building an ecclesiological and mariological model for visions of Mary. Up to this point, the work of the first part has been confined to the socio-political context and the ecclesiastical dimensions of this, including the critical question as to whether Church politics plays its part in forming the marian apparition cult. Now a wider critical point is considered: are these visions not wholly subjective? If so, the complex investigations into them are almost irrelevant from a theological perspective. The question of context therefore becomes more personal and individual, and the psychological dimension becomes paramount. The spectrum of visionary cases is extended to include non-religious visions and the experiences of the medieval mystics.

And here we discover something important: that the factor that radically distinguishes the marian apparitions from other kinds of visions is their ecclesial context. For this reason, the theological question is no longer concerned with the individual charismatic and becomes an ecclesiological one. This is explored in chapter 7. The critical reflections that were made in earlier chapters concerning the official authentication process, and centred on the question of socio-political context, will be remembered here. The theological model that we build in order to understand these visionary charismata must be ecclesialogically-based, but it must also be critical (in the positive sense of that word).

It seems quite natural, considering that Mary is regarded in Catholicism as the archetype or prototype of the Church, that we move on from ecclesiology to mariology in chapter 8. The visionary is an individual within an ecclesial community, and mariology represents a community expression about the woman that it holds in such high regard. Mary is the focus for the visionary experiences, but what kind of mariology do they suggest? Does this change with time? Are there any explanations for these mariological expressions from a socio-psychological perspective?

The problem that is so often encountered in this work, namely, that so much about the apparition phenomena can be 'explained away' by considerations of context, is tackled in chapter 9. Here we seek a mariology that can be grounded in something firmer than the subjectivity of individual and community, and the objective element that we suggest is Mary herself, an historical figure who is discovered in the New Testament. Our mariology must be biblically based.

Finally, in chapter 10, all the threads are drawn together, and we attempt to answer the all-important questions: what are apparitions?; why Mary and why now? The conclusion is an attempt to give some tentative answers, and to make some final remarks on the core experience of the visionary phenomena.

PART ONE: THE PHENOMENA AND THEIR CATHOLIC CONTEXT

Chapter 1: An Introduction to the History and Major Themes of the Modern Marian Apparition Tradition

1.1 Introductory remarks

In the first part of this introductory chapter, the countries where modern apparitions have contributed a great deal to the marian cultus will be surveyed briefly. This will serve as an historical introduction to the subject. The text will focus on the main religious and ecclesiastical aspects of the various cases in their context, but the greater part of the historical detail (on issues such as: Church and State, background of the relevant bishops, developments in ideology, national shrines before the modern period, and extra details about the apparition cults themselves) will be found in the notes, which are quite extensive for this chapter. This basis will allow the development in later chapters to refer back to these notes for the historical detail. There are also appendices which give brief details of each case for which some information is available, with bibliographical references and an additional survey of the commissions of enquiry in those cases where they are well documented.

This first, historical, perspective on the apparitions is organised according to national boundaries. Despite pilgrimage and fame on an international scale, most issues relevant to our topic are decided in the national arena, although often the Vatican is asked to make decisions or provide advice when the case is not clear at the episcopal or national level. On the whole, though, hierarchical decisions at the highest level are sensitive to popular

movements in the countries concerned, and will only occur in special circumstances.

Among Western European countries with large Catholic populations, Germany, Austria and Switzerland have not been included as far as the history in this section is concerned. This is because no major modern apparition cult has emerged from these countries, and this section serves as an introduction to the modern international marian movement based on famous shrines. However, many visions have been reported, especially in Germany. The lack of success of these cases has resulted in a dearth of information on German, Austrian and Swiss apparitions, and so the more detailed historical analysis is restricted to the Mediterranean countries, Ireland and Belgium. The reasons for the non-emergence of modern apparition shrines in the German-speaking regions would require research that goes beyond that possible within the limits of this thesis.

The second part of the chapter concentrates on the thematic structure of the apparition cult, as a whole and in part. There are some basic themes, of course, very often apocalyptic in nature. The apparitions engender an atmosphere of expectation and urgency, which is used as a basis for polemic aimed at restoring the extent and depth of Catholic devotion. On the other hand, the different cases (which rarely refer to one another) display varying themes, and there seems to have been a change of emphasis after the visions at Fatima in 1917. Of course, the 'history' will rely on the records and writings that are allowed to be published by the hierarchy (restrictions were lifted in 1966). It is possible, therefore, that the likelihood of information available to research increases with time, especially in the last twenty-five years. For this reason, we cannot claim that the thematic development

represents anything other than that which is visible because it has been allowed to be publicised. Nevertheless, this visible tip of the apparition 'iceberg' (there may be very many unknown cases) does represent the history of the apparition cult as it is widely known to its adherents, and recording this will be valuable for its own sake.

Because this is an introductory chapter which lays the foundations and sources for work later on in the thesis, it will not have, unlike other chapters, a conclusion. It already consists of a summary of a much wider area of information and reference material which is available in the notes and appendices.

1.2 Historical background

1.2.1 France

The periods during which the ecclesiastically-approved apparitions of nineteenth-century France gained their initial fame are very different to each other with regard to major socio-political and ecclesiastical contextual factors: the 1830s, late 1840s, 1858, 1871, 1876. The most distinctive emphasis of the cult in each case bears the stamp of national religious issues very much in the air at the time. For the Rue du Bac (origin 1830), healing from disease and devotion to Mary with a special regard for her Immaculate Conception were prominent, although the former aspect was not contained in the original message, and the latter one made up only a part of it (1/10). The minting of the "miraculous" medal coincided with the 1832 cholera epidemic; hence its use as a healing talisman in the early years, although it became famous most of all for cases of religious conversion (1/11). Emphasis on Mary's Immaculate

Conception, on the other hand, was a pet project of the archbishop of Paris (in company with some other French and Spanish bishops), as part of a programme of re-establishing traditional Catholicism after the lean years following the Revolution (1/12).

This first apparition cult in the modern series demonstrates the way in which the popular and official 'halves' of French Catholicism could be brought together. There was a need for reassurance that heavenly powers could be invoked to cure ills - this had been an important element in the marian and saint cults; however, much popular religion of this type was of a magical, superstitious quality, much disliked by the clergy even before the nineteenth century (1/13). On the official, i.e. clerical, side, the sacramental liturgy was of paramount importance: eg masses and feast days, for which theological concepts like the Immaculate Conception served as foci (1/12). Both the popular desire for healing and official concern for liturgical order were satisfied by the Rue du Bac or miraculous medal cult of the 1830s.

The 1840s saw an increase in mission to the countryside by the larger numbers of clergy; this generated a high level of the characteristic tension between traditional rural Catholicism and seminary theology (1/14). One area of rapprochement between these forces was the organisation, under the leadership of priests, of pilgrimages to national or local shrines, many connected with apparitions and miracles of earlier centuries, and often associated with Mary under a particular title (1/15). La Salette (origin 1846) was not the first reported apparition or miraculous prophecy of the 1840s (1/16), yet this event became famous, predominantly because of its effectiveness in encouraging rural people to orthodox religious practice (1/17).

However, there was strong opposition to La Salette: from the State, on the one hand, wary of the political and social implications (1/18), and from many clergy, on the other, who felt that the rustic nature of the message demeaned the reputation of the Virgin, and also threatened the respectability of the Church in an age when the State (under Louis-Philippe) was more likely to encourage Enlightenment philosophy than traditional Catholicism (1/19). Thus, over a relatively short period of time, the original context of the La Salette apparition - the 1845-7 famine - was superseded by wider political and ecclesiastical issues. Nevertheless, the original message of religious practice as a means to stave off natural disaster became enshrined in an emphasis on penance and reconciliation with God (1/20).

While the apparitions at the Rue du Bac convent and La Salette occurred at times of major national crisis, this cannot be claimed of Lourdes (1858). These Pyrenean visions occurred at a time of confident optimism in the French State and Church under Napoleon III: relations between them were comparatively good at the national level (but not after the events of 1859 (1/21)), and it was the emperor himself who ended local government restrictions on the shrine (1/22). Lourdes became famous at the end of a decade during which the ultramontane lobby in the French Church triumphed ideologically: miraculous phenomena and pilgrimages were encouraged and accepted more readily by all classes of Catholics despite several embarrassments (1/23). The mood was right, therefore, for the claim by the Lourdes visionary, Bernadette Soubirous, that her vision identified herself as "the Immaculate Conception", echoing the papal dogma declared in 1854.

Although there were many reported apparitions and miracles in the wake of the national disasters (the French defeat

at the hands of Prussia, and the Paris commune) of 1870-1 (1/24), only Pontmain (January 17, 1871) gained ecclesiastical approval and lasting fame. Here the message was brief and straightforward - God would intervene to stop human misery in answer to prayer - and contained nothing of the politics or apocalyptic of other phenomena (1/25). This neutrality with regard to political matters has been essential for the acceptance and promotion of an apparition by the hierarchical Church (1/26).

The 1870s was a time of increasing interest in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, connected in the French mind to the time of the Bourbons and thus a focus for legitimist sentiment (1/27). Pellevoisin's apparitions (1876) generated messages which included a request that a new scapular of the Sacred Heart be distributed. As with the Rue du Bac, it was this topical and orthodox feature which was promulgated by the hierarchy without any parallel support for the detail of the visions themselves (1/28). The healing of the visionary Estelle Faguette, the central feature of the case, was not recognised canonically for 107 years (1/29)!

Pellevoisin was the last of the French apparitions to receive some measure of both episcopal approval and national fame. The apparitions at Tilly-sur-Seulles during the late 1890s were unlikely to gain respectability, because of the bizarre nature of the happenings and the notoriety of the town, home of the prophet Eugene Vintras condemned by the Church in the 1850s (1/30). Of the many cases between 1937 and 1947 (1/31), only L'Ile-Bouchard seems to have enjoyed any hierarchical recognition, this being merely the presence of the archbishop of Tours at the annual pilgrimage in recent years (which takes place on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, also the anniversary of the first apparition in 1947). This is

another example of how the clearly orthodox and non-sensational features of a popular phenomenon are taken over into its evolution under ecclesiastical control (1/32). Other recent cases include that at Kerinzen in Brittany (1938-65) which was rejected by the Church authorities (1/33). In the 1980s, apparitions were reported at La Talaudière and gained some following, but this generated a minor news item only without any widespread national repercussions (1/34).

The French marian cult, therefore, was established in the nineteenth century; no new shrines of any national importance have emerged since the 1870s. The nineteenth century in rural France was a period of modernisation, with the growing influence of urban and industrial life over the erstwhile peasantry, and much improvement in transport and media links (1/35). Before the Second Empire, a period of immense growth in officially-organised pilgrimages, the marian cult had been diversified in local customs and devotions (1/36); increasingly, the modernisation process resulted in a standardisation of cultic images, such as statues of Mary represented as Our Lady of Lourdes, or of La Salette, or as Notre-Dame des Victoires (1/37). This 'nationalisation' of the marian cult was intensified by the middle-class Catholic revival during the Third Republic, in which urban-dwellers used the railways and media to participate in the cults of the 'respectable' or 'official' shrines, those which had been authorised by the hierarchy (1/38).

On the whole, the bishops approached the apparition phenomena with a good deal of caution and reservation but, in the notable cases, they were swayed by popular opinion before supporting what was claimed to be a divine answer to secularism and a corresponding decline in religious practice (1/39). It was perhaps religious orders, in

particular the Assumptionists, who were sharper in their use of marian phenomena in the propaganda war against the growing power of antireligious politicians in the last third of the century (1/40). In such an atmosphere, both La Salette and Lourdes gained full national pilgrimage status during the organised revival of the "Moral Order" in the early 1870s (1/41). Yet Lourdes, with its railway link completed in 1866, and without the "secrets" scandal associated with La Salette (1/42), became the greatest of the nineteenth-century shrines, although threatened briefly during the Church-State antagonism at the turn of the century (1/43). It continued to grow in international status and is still visited by millions per year at the present time.

1.2.2 Ireland

Only one modern apparition shrine in Ireland has gained widespread approval: Knock, in Co. Mayo (1879). The apparition occurred at a time when the land issue was paramount: the year of origin of the Land League, founded in Mayo to protect tenant farmers. At Knock itself, there had been many evictions (1/44). Priests, often from farming backgrounds, played a leading part in land agitation, and were often (including the local archbishop, Dr MacHale of Tuam) involved in the politics of land and of Home Rule. Yet the local priest at Knock had fallen foul of the secret societies formed as part of the campaign for land reform, because of his criticism of the leaders of such societies (1/45).

Despite several factors: the timeliness of the apparition, coming during a period of tension within the local community, widespread pilgrimage from Ireland and afterwards abroad, approval from overseas archbishops, and

international publicisation, the ecclesiastical norm in Ireland with regard to Knock was disapproval. The initial positive reaction by Dr MacHale and his commission was not continued by the episcopate after his death in 1881 (1/46). Nevertheless, pilgrimage remained constant during the following years, and the shrine became more universally popular in the 1930s, when eventual episcopal recognition was followed by a new commission which interviewed the surviving witnesses. Papal honours from 1954 established Knock as an authenticated shrine, although there has never been an official statement to this effect (1/47).

Knock is unquestionably Ireland's national marian shrine, and has been since the 1930s, at least. Like other apparition shrines, its success is due in part to a modern national religious awareness helped by the mass media, coupled with the increasing influence of the personalised devotions of the urban middle class (1/48).

From 1985, there has been a renewal of Irish interest in marian apparitions. This began with the 'moving statues' well-publicised in the media, and continued with cases of apparitions, notably at Carns, Co. Sligo, Inchigeela, Co. Cork, Mount Melleray, Co. Waterford, and Bessbrook, Co. Armagh. This movement is largely centred on the concepts made famous at Medjugorje (e.g. "Queen of Peace", importance of constant prayerfulness, danger to the world due to lack of spirituality); Medjugorje has been famous in Ireland since before 1985. These phenomena have occurred during a decade which many Irish Catholics perceived to be a period of decline of traditional Catholicism in the face of modern 'secularism'. In addition, the national context was one of economic difficulty and a resultant increase in emigration, especially of young people (1/49).

1.2.3 Portugal

It is clear that a direct parallel cannot be drawn between all five famous and officially-authenticated French nineteenth-century cases and the periods of most acute national crisis. Nor was 1879 demonstrably the most critical year in Ireland's nineteenth-century history. Yet Portugal's one modern apparition shrine, Fatima (origin 1917), does have its beginnings during a time of extreme difficulty for Catholics in that country. This was under the rule of the several republican governments (1910-26), with their unstable attitudes towards the Church (1/50). Although 1910-13 was the most oppressive period of anticlericalism, national turmoil and uncertainty was greatly increased after March 1916, with the entry of Portugal into the First World War (1/51).

The central emphasis in the dramatic events at Fatima seems to have been the prophecy that the War was shortly going to end. The background problem of a republican government sometimes hostile to the Church, and particularly so in the local area, was not a feature in the messages themselves, although it did affect the progress of the monthly apparitions (1/52). Shortly after these had ceased, a Catholic-backed coup founded the "New Republic" under Pais, re-establishing the status of the Church somewhat, but this survived for only one year (1/53).

It is difficult to assess the role played by Fatima in the history of the "New Republic", or in Catholic attitudes to republican governments up to 1926. Hostility to antireligious ideology among the pilgrims was certainly aggravated further by aggressive acts against the shrine (1/54). Yet the Portuguese episcopate did not support

Fatima at the outset, and took control in a typically cautious way because its popularity was too great to ignore (1/55). The apparitions and cult were not authorised by the bishop of Leiria until 1930, when the pro-Catholic government under Salazar had held power for four years; thus it is unlikely that the Church in its hierarchical, official aspect used Fatima explicitly in any ideological struggle before 1926.

However, the shrine and its story became an extremely important national centre for Catholic pilgrimage during the "Estado Novo" regime of the Salazar years and beyond (1/56). It also served as a focus for anti-communist (but not anti-socialist) feeling at the time of the 1974-5 revolutions (1/57).

The "miracle of the sun" on October 13 1917 at Fatima helped to promulgate the fame of the shrine, nationally at first and later internationally (1/58). Revelations published from 1936 onwards by the surviving visionary, Lucia Santos (by then in a convent), sensationalised the Fatima story further and provoked a response from all levels of the Church up to the papacy (1/59). The most important elements were now devotion to the Immaculate Heart (1/60) and the need to consecrate Russia to it in order to convert its militant atheism to Christianity (1/61). This was claimed by Lucia to have been revealed in 1917, but the years of silence and divergence of theme from the original message have caused many Catholics to doubt this testimony (1/62).

Fatima has become an international cult, not least due to the efforts of its missionaries in the background of the worldwide encounter between Catholicism and communism (1/63). Yet the ingredients of the original message are wholly derivable from the local village context: the

rosary, concern about the War, questions about heaven and hell, different titles for Mary, requests for a chapel and processions (reminiscent of Lourdes and the French tradition, but also a common theme in medieval Spanish apparition phenomena) (1/64). The penitential "Hearts" tradition, alluded to by Lucia only after 1927, is more particularly French in origin (1/60). Thus we may notice that the migration of French revolutionary and republican ideas to Spain and Portugal (1/65) seems to have been matched by a corresponding export of devotional ideas popular, particularly in the 1870s, in the Catholic response to French anticlericalism and national uncertainty.

1.2.4 Belgium

Like Ireland (before the explosion of phenomena in the 1980s) and Portugal, Belgium's modern marian apparition cult has its origin during one short period of time. However, Belgium differs from those other two countries in that there was an outbreak of apparition phenomena between November 1932 and the autumn of 1933 (1/66), of which only the first two cases survived the Church's verification process and gave rise to shrines known nationally and internationally. Participants in the second (Banneux) had some knowledge of the first (Beauraing) (1/67).

The messages given to the children at Beauraing and Banneux are simple and non-controversial. At Beauraing, the manifestation of a golden heart by the Virgin suggests a link with Fatima and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but the visionaries probably knew nothing of Lucia's revelations, and any inspiration for this detail will have come from religious pictures in the French "Hearts" tradition (1/68). Banneux has clear links with Lourdes

(1/69); however, the new international awareness of the twentieth century comes across with the visionary's insistence that the spring was "for all nations, to heal the sick".

The fear of foreign invasion was a feature of apparitions to adults at Beauraing and Onkerzele in the summer and autumn of 1933 (1/70). Indeed, the Belgian right-wing nationalist movement, with its roots in lay Catholic organisations, was committed to publicising the phenomena (1/71). Yet only the original Beauraing case (November 1932 to January 1933) and Banneux (January to March 1933) were deemed worthy of further consideration by the national episcopal commission of 1934, which had been set up because of both the epidemic of visions and the controversy surrounding the apparitions at Beauraing (1/72).

After the War, these two shrines gained the full status of international marian sites as a result of the canonical validation process which, however, ignored many negative findings in the various commissions considering the cases between 1933 and 1945 (1/73). Their success was due in large part to the initiative of the bishops of Namur and Liège and publicity efforts by lay organisations (1/74).

The Wallon half of Belgium, in which Beauraing and Banneux are situated, had seen a growing electoral support for the communist party, and a comfortable lead for the socialists over the Catholic party, after the introduction of universal male suffrage from the end of World War I (1/75). Anticlericalism and antireligious feeling existed in many Wallon localities, especially after the end of the Second World War (1/76). The 1933 apparitions took place in a period of economic decline and religious indifference but, clearly, such problems were widespread in

contemporary Europe, and it is not possible to prove that Belgium represents a special case in this respect.

1.2.5 Italy and Spain

Italy and Spain are notable for many reported apparitions in the modern period (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), none of which have gained full ecclesiastical backing (1/77). It is not clear why no modern marian shrine has replaced the ancient ones in these countries. One might posit the loyalty to non-marian pilgrimage in Italy, especially to Rome or Assisi, or the continued strength of local traditions in Spain, but there is no proof that these factors have prevented the emergence of a new official apparition shrine. It is possible that a hostile attitude at the episcopal level, especially in Spain, may account for this lack of approval for apparition cults.

In post-Second World War Italy there was an epidemic of visionary experiences (1/78), the best-known case being that at Tre Fontane, near Rome, 1947, where the cult but not the apparitions has been approved officially (1/79). For this period, we may note the very real threat of a socialist-communist electoral victory (e.g. in 1948) as a background factor. However, the Italian Church, committed as it was to political influence (1/80), did not employ the apparition cults by making them official, and it may be that they were regarded as an embarrassment (1/81). In the 1960s, the apparitions at San Damiano caused controversy and were eventually suppressed by the Church (1/82). Today visions of Mary are still being reported, e.g. at Schio and Oliveto Citra, and interest in Medjugorje is one feature in a recent trend of Italian apocalypticism (1/83).

In Spain, too, there have been many reported visions since the last War (1/84). However, the main apocalyptic interest has centred upon apparition cults at San Sebastian de Garabandal (1961-5), and Palmar de Troya (1968-date). Like Portugal, Spain's republican period saw a dramatic apparition case, at Ezquioga (1/85), which was condemned; it thus stands in the long Spanish history of repression of popular phenomena since the sixteenth century - likewise Garabandal and Palmar have been rejected and denounced by the episcopate (1/86). Nevertheless, in the case of Garabandal, there are signs that the hierarchical frost is melting, as the present bishop has lifted restrictions on visiting priests and initiated a new commission of enquiry (1/87). Palmar's cause is unlikely to gain headway in view of a schismatic movement that has grown up around the apparitions there (1/88).

The Garabandal cult has provoked much interest on an international scale. It appears to continue the Fatima theme of anti-communism and, for this reason amongst others, is popular in the United States (1/89); Garabandal publicity is widespread (1/90). The apocalyptic strain, in which a miracle and chastisement are foretold (1/91), foreshadows Medjugorje and echoes many other postwar cases.

There are also apparitions being reported at El Escorial, near Madrid, at the present time (1/92). Like Palmar, this case is continuing over several years: often now, as at Medjugorje, articulate adults are involved in the visionary experiences which last over a long period of time. This generates regular periodicals and publications: the resultant writings resemble, to some extent, those of religious visionaries, especially nuns, over the centuries. The promulgation of such material has been made

easier since 1966, when publications on miraculous phenomena were freed from the need for episcopal permission (1/93).

1.2.6 Yugoslavia

The apparition phenomena at Medjugorje have emerged from a Catholic religious environment with a strong marian tradition. Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina have shrines originating in reported apparitions of previous centuries (1/94), and pilgrimage has continued to be popular during the twentieth century. Immediately after the Second World War, at the very beginning of the communist period, there was an outbreak of visions and miracles in both Catholic and Orthodox Yugoslavia (1/95).

At Medjugorje, the Croatian pilgrimage tradition of confession, eucharist, and fasting has been continued. The recitation of the rosary there is, of course, a familiar aspect of the marian apparition history as a whole (1/96), and the title ascribed to Mary's own initiative, "Queen of Peace", is also to be found in the universal Catholic tradition (1/97). However, unique to Medjugorje is the importance of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross: the large concrete cross on the nearby mountain, built in 1933, has become a focus for pilgrimage (1/98).

Medjugorje has inherited two patterns of regional conflict: one political, the other ecclesiastical. The State authorities regarded the new apparition cult with much suspicion from its outset, as they were concerned about the possibility that Croat nationalism lay behind the developments (1/99); thus they adopted obstructive measures (1/100). Yet the situation improved when the obvious apolitical and internationalist mood of Medjugorje

helped the authorities to take a more lenient view. The desperate economic situation of recent years in Yugoslavia means that tourism and pilgrimage are much encouraged; the government is now supporting the modernisation of the shrine, a process to which it was opposed in the first few years.

The ecclesiastical conflict has its roots in the takeover of Turkish-ruled Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austrians in 1878. The Austrian Catholic hierarchy wished to transfer the local parishes, run by Franciscans during the difficult centuries of Muslim power, to the control of the secular clergy: this was a part of an Austrian policy of annexation of the area (1/101). Yet it has caused resentment among parishoners and Franciscans up to the present day.

The present bishop of Mostar, Pavao Žanić, had wished to further the gradual transfer of Franciscan parishes when he was assistant to the previous bishop; on his promotion in 1980, he took measures to continue this process (1/102). Therefore his early defence of the visionaries against State antagonism turned into open hostility against them when it appeared that their Madonna supported Franciscan resistance to the scheme (1/103). His objections to the apparition cult at Medjugorje have been utilised by other (foreign) critics, some of whom dislike Medjugorje's postconciliar spirit, others its continuation of the Catholic tradition of the miraculous and traditional (1/104).

Medjugorje's future will rely in part on the resolution of the ecclesiastical "Herzegovina problem" between Franciscans and diocese, and it will also be affected by the development of federal unity within Yugoslavia in the post-Tito years (1/105); very recent developments, which

have threatened the peace and unity of the country (1991), make the Medjugorje call for peace even more poignant. On the ecclesiastical side, the canonical investigation is now in the hands of the national episcopal conference, removed from the jurisdiction of the local bishop by the Sacred Congregation for the Defence of the Faith in Rome (1/106). The fame of the shrine is becoming an important aspect of relationships between Christianity and communism in the national media (1/107).

1.3 Features of the apparition tradition: patterns of imagery and apocalyptic

1.3.1 The apocalyptic element

Now that we have outlined the histories behind the most famous cases of apparitions, ie those that have, in the main, generated what we could call the apparition 'cult' (and this is not a derogatory word), we will consider next the major themes of this cult. On the whole, there is a tendency for the messages and ideas promulgated in the marian apparition movement to be apocalyptic, in other words, to claim divine revelation which contains references to future divine intervention, either conditional on improvements in religious and moral behaviour, or inevitable. This is the way in which we will define apocalyptic here.

The apocalyptic element is not the only one, however. The shrines also serve as great pilgrimage sites, carrying out all the functions that one would expect of them: refuge for the sick and hope of healing, opportunity for people to escape the routines and demands of everyday life, centres for religious conferences, festivals, processions, and other activities for large numbers, etc. Many of the

visionaries report that it was Mary herself who requested the turning of the site of the visions into a shrine.

Nevertheless, the apocalyptic ethos of the cult is paramount. Those who propagate it suggest that the visions form a series with a certain 'thread' of prophecy. On the whole, the pattern is derived from the phenomena by Catholic writers, without being an obviously identifiable aspect of the original messages themselves. Each apparition case has its own peculiar context. Despite this, there are some common themes, as we shall see.

As we have defined 'apocalyptic' messages as referring to divine intervention, then it follows that there are many non-apocalyptic messages without this reference. However, it is not easy to refer to cases of visions without apocalyptic as 'non-apocalyptic', because in almost all cases the visionary claims to have received a secret from the vision of Mary which she or he perceives. When the secrets are revealed (eg La Salette, Fatima) or a clear indication is given as to their substance (eg Medjugorje), then they can be seen to be apocalyptic in character. Where they are not (eg Lourdes, Beauraing, Banneux), there is no apocalyptic message left to posterity. Then again, there are apocalyptic messages which were never secret, but revealed immediately and without reserve (original message of La Salette, Garabandal).

Consequently, when we refer to a 'non-apocalyptic' event, we mean one where no apocalyptic message was promulgated as a direct result of the visions there. This is not to imply that the 'secret' was not in itself apocalyptic, nor that the presence of a secret did not suggest apocalyptic themes to the pilgrims and later devotees.

1.3.2 Mary and the millenium

The 17th century writer and canonised saint, Louis Grignon de Montfort, referred to a future time when Mary would be glorified where once she was hidden in humility, when once again she would bring forth her Son, although this time not in body, but in spirit.

"By Mary was the salvation of the world begun, and by Mary it must be consummated"; she is "the dawn which announces the Sun of Justice" (1/108).

Many Catholics see the well-publicised and extraordinary manifestations of Mary since 1830 as the sign that this period of glorification of Mary and second Advent has begun, the process passing through two focal points in the declarations of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and Assumption (1950) (1/109).

The link between the figure of Mary and the Second Coming is extremely common in Catholic writings; Derobert's book on the apparitions propounds this theme. For Derobert, Mary is she who prepares us for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ -

"the Christ-King will only come into the Kingdom prepared by the Queen" (1/110).

Although many visionaries, like those at Garabandal and Medjugorje, refer only to an end of an age, rather than to an eschaton (1/111), there are still allusions to the Second Coming, for example at Palmar de Troya and Kibeho (1/112).

The Vatican has taken up the general theme of new Advent in marian Catholicism, but with a different slant: the renewal of the Church is associated with that symbolic turning-point, the millenium, the twentieth centenary of Christ's birth. The papal writing on the millenium establishes Mary as the symbol of the Advent period leading up to it: hence the Marian Year of 1987-8 (1/113).

This expectation is heightened by the thousandth anniversary of Christianity in the Ukraine, a republic in the Soviet Union with a large Catholic population; the present Pope, the Polish John Paul II, writes of Mary as a great hope for ecumenism, with a special accent on East-West (Catholic-Orthodox) relations (1/114). The consecration to the Immaculate Heart in 1984 as a result of the Fatima promise that Russia would be converted (1/59), and the recent events in Eastern Europe (1989-90) have made this accent on the East and the millenium more poignant.

Even Nostradamus referred to the millenium - 1999 is the only twentieth-century date which is given in his sixteenth-century prophecies, and it is there connected with apocalyptic events (1/115). The ingredients of millenarianism are most certainly present in the marian apparitions, most of which since the Second World War have referred to some aspect of apocalyptic - secrets, warnings, prophecies of doom, promises of great miracles and threats of chastisements, urgent calls to repentance (1/116).

There is in the apparition tradition a sense that the Lord is about to intervene to restore things to their rightful place, and to re-establish proper religious devotion (1/117). Traditionally (in particular, biblically) there have been three ways in which such divine judgement may be enacted. These are by the three means of nature, humanity, and direct heavenly intervention. Coming in the form of nature, the judgement may be storm, flood, or today perhaps ecological disaster, or even cosmic accident; whereas, through the means of humanity, we may anticipate perhaps a new and powerful militarism which destroys elements of our civilisation, just as in the Old Testament the Babylonians led Israel into exile. However, the more

recent marian apparitions suggest that the major aspect of the miracles, warnings and chastisements will be of the divine intervention type, although environmental disasters (eg Chernobyl) and wars may also play their part (1/118). Yet, as in the Bible, this cataclysm will be followed by peace and justice established through the conflict (1/119).

Mary is a maternal figure who cares for those who choose to seek her protection, and who transforms them so that they are prepared for the day of judgement (1/120). She is an Advent figure, representing the period of preparation for the coming of the Saviour, once in her womb, and figuratively so again, as in the writings of Montfort (1/121). This idea is reminiscent of the Medjugorje phenomenon where Mary calls people to renewal and guides them through the process, whilst warning them of future catastrophe which might be averted by prayer and fasting (1/122). Whilst the symbol of the womb as a place of rebirth for the believer is not in the Medjugorje imagery, it is represented in the Catholic writings of various centuries (1/123).

1.3.3 Identifying the strands of the modern marian visionary tradition

However, the apparition tradition is not a monolithic exposition of the apocalyptic or millenarianist theme. The apparition cases differ from each other in quality, although it is true that certain themes are repeated and evolve through the tradition. Let us now pick out the major components of this process.

(i) Firstly, Rue du Bac and Notre-Dame desVictoires: establishment of the devotion to the Immaculate Conception in France, a process which led to the papal declaration of

1854 (1/12). Lourdes stands in this tradition, although it comes after the declaration, and was seen as a confirmation of it. The Rue du Bac imagery contained two other older themes shown on the reverse of the Medal, and which continue in various forms throughout the apparition tradition: (a) the association of Mary with the cross, and (b) the two hearts of Jesus and Mary.

(ii) Secondly, La Salette, which follows Rue du Bac in being a manifestation of the weeping Madonna. The image of the prophetic, weeping Madonna is a common one in the tradition, and has perhaps become more prominent in apparitions since the Second World War. The revelations of Mélanie some years later than her apparition at La Salette (1/20; 1/124) are in the tradition of global apocalyptic, not at all unknown in nineteenth-century France (1/125), and very much a feature of the Fatima and post-Fatima tradition, with its culmination in the warnings, miracle, and chastisement of Garabandal, and similar forebodings at Medjugorje. Almost all of the known post-World War II cases contain some element of global apocalyptic sometimes including, as in Mélanie's "secret", references to persecution of, and apostasy from, the Catholic Church.

(iii) Thirdly, the Lourdes healing tradition: although the Miraculous Medal was a healing talisman, and La Salette too had a spring with miraculous waters, the image of the spring in the Lourdes grotto is a very memorable one. Grottos with statues of Mary and Bernadette were built all over Europe: many of the recent marian phenomena in Ireland are associated with them (1/126). Banneux, most of all, stands in the Lourdes healing spring tradition - the Virgin was dressed in the Lourdes style there. Yet at Banneux, the spring was not in a grotto, but at the side of the road a hundred metres or so from Mariette's house. The Madonna of Lourdes and Banneux smiles rather than

weeps, although she does have her serious side, and there is certainly an emphasis on penance in all of the apparitions.

(iv) Fourthly, the idea of prayerful hope: certainly, Pontmain was not the first case to embody this idea (Rue du Bac, La Salette, and Lourdes included comforting messages (1/127)), but it is perhaps the only one to be all hope. The star and candles in the image of Pontmain appears to be quite unique.

(v) Fifthly, the Fatima tradition - Fatima marks a new departure in the apparition tradition, and has left its mark on it. The French-speaking tradition (1/128), with its nineteenth-century origins, continued beyond Fatima but, with the exception of Beauraing's image of the Immaculate Heart, seems to continue the themes of the older French cases. In particular, this tradition includes:

- (a) the style of apparition distinguished above in (i) to (iv);
- (b) an emphasis on the Immaculate Conception and its feast day (both Beauraing and L'Ile-Bouchard made much of the latter);
- (c) the presence of healing springs (eg La Salette, Lourdes and Banneux).

However, the ideas that characterise Fatima are:

(a) peace - implicit in the Pontmain case, but a more definite and explicit theme at Fatima, and continued in the Medjugorje tradition.

(b) Devotion to the Immaculate Heart - continuing the 'Hearts' tradition, but now emphasising Mary's heart. Beauraing has no specific tradition of its own, but seems to echo this Fatima theme.

(c) The dance of the Sun - strange lights are a feature of apparitions, but the Sun miracle seems to originate with Fatima, and has been repeated during the apparitions at Bonate, Heede, San Damiano, Medjugorje, Kibeho and Oliveto Citra. This phenomenon occurred in response to the visionaries' request for a miracle to prove that their testimony was true - a request repeated at Garabandal and Medjugorje, where the response appears to be the great 'miracle' that has been promised by the visionaries at these two sites.

(d) Apparitions of Jesus which, although common in the Catholic tradition, do not occur within the modern marian apparitions until Fatima. There he was seen during the last apparition as a child and as an adult. Strangely, there are no reports of the Madonna and Child between Rue du Bac and Fatima, except for the little-known and questionable case at Mettenbuch (1/129). Yet after Fatima the Child was seen at Ezquioga, Bonate, Garabandal, Palmar de Troya, Medjugorje, Saint-Nicholas, Schio, Oliveto Citra, Melleray, Inchigeela and Hrushiw, and Jesus perceived visually or audially as an adult at Kérinzen, Heede, San Damiano, Medjugorje, Kibeho, Melleray, Inchigeela, Bessbrook, Gortnahedra, and Ballinacolla (1/130).

(e) The idea of an angel foreshadowing the apparitions of Mary, as reported by Lucia after 1936. Garabandal echoes this theme, and angels are commonplace in modern apparitions (eg L'Ile-Bouchard, Medjugorje and in Ireland), but do not seem to figure in the nineteenth-century cases or at Beauraing and Banneux.

(f) Miraculous communion: again a feature of the later revelations of Lucia, but repeated at Garabandal and Palmar de Troya in more vivid and public fashion (1/131).

The Fatima visions also contain more traditional themes, such as the appearance of Mary on a tree, her luminous appearance, and requests for a chapel and processions.

These, then, are the main elements in the tradition, although each case has its unique characteristics. Other very common themes throughout the phenomena are the importance of publicising devotion to Mary in some form (especially Pellevoisin, Fatima), Mary as Queen and as Mother (1/132), images of the cross or crucifix, the rosary, phenomena of light. There are some images repeated only occasionally: the globe and serpent at the Rue du Bac (1/133), the lamb at Knock, and many titles of Mary revealed only at particular places (eg "Virgin of the Poor" - Banneux, "Virgin of the Revelation" - Tre Fontane, "Our Lady of All the Peoples" - Amsterdam, "Mother of the Word" - Kibeho). Some titles are old ("Our Lady of Mount Carmel" - Garabandal), and some controversial in the battle for declarations about Mary in the Church (eg "Co-Redemptrix", "Mediatrix" (1/134)).

Chapter 2: The Social and Political Context of the Apparitions in the Modern Era

2.1 Introduction: the question of context - specific and general

The preceding chapter has, hopefully, set the scene for the modern apparition cult, its historical context and the outline of its general thematic features. In this chapter, we will attempt to answer two questions. The first addresses itself to the specific context for each case of apparitions: is there an identifiable link between the cult and its context that makes outbreaks of visionary phenomena predictable under certain conditions? The second asks whether there is a general socio-historical environment that helps to explain the tendencies and concerns of the cult as a whole.

There are two ways of understanding the first question.

(i) We could investigate whether, in any particular case, the visionary phenomenon itself has a recognisable context which causes or gives rise to it. On the other hand, (ii) we might wonder whether the context is responsible, not so much for the apparitions themselves, but for the reactions to them, ie popular pilgrimage, ecclesiastical interest, publications in both the Catholic and secular media. Actually, it is only in sense (ii) that we can really address the question of context. This is because visionary phenomena are very common and it is very difficult to find patterns in their occurrence. There are, however, 'outbreaks' of visions in certain countries at certain times, eg Spain (1931), Belgium (1933), Italy (1947 and afterward), France (1937-1947), Yugoslavia (1945) (2/1).

Nevertheless, it cannot be ascertained with any certainty that the phenomena themselves were more numerous during these times or, alternatively, whether the number of reports depended on a greater interest and responsiveness in the public and media at large. Such responsiveness, and the repeated fame of one case after another, may induce persons who experience apparitions, or their intimates, to come forward; during quieter times, however, they may be persuaded to remain silent. For these reasons, the main focus of interest vis-a-vis apparitions and context is rather more on the cult, ie pilgrimage, interest, media, etc., than on the phenomena themselves.

The second major question of this chapter is rather easier to elucidate and tackle. This is the issue of a general social context for the modern apparition phenomenon as a whole. The Turners suggest that:

"visions appear at the point of major stress between contrary cultures and their major definitions of reality" (2/2).

This means that, in the visionaries' and pilgrims' social environment, there is an ideological and religious struggle of some kind. The most obvious one in the modern period is that between traditional Catholicism and the 'secular' culture, with the latter libertarian, republican, socialist, communist, humanist and/or atheist in various measures. This struggle has replaced earlier ones: eg Catholic versus Muslim or Protestant, which also engendered visionary phenomena and pilgrimage (2/3). Yet these issues, though by no means dead, are no longer at the centre of the stage, and do not divide communities in the same way as the Catholic-'secular' opposition has in modern Europe since the 18th century.

The times of most extreme pressure in this respect occur when anti-Catholic feeling is institutionalised in

government policy (2/4). However, these periods do not necessarily coincide with outbreaks of apparition phenomena that become famous. The experience or threat of war is a more prominent contextual factor and yet this too is far from providing a universal or near-universal link between phenomena and background.

There is no doubt, however, that the reaction to apparitions is more marked in various times and countries than others. Without a positive or, at least, liberal ecclesiastical response, no apparition event survives for long in Catholic lore, and so it is this 'official' reaction, albeit contributed to by popular pressure or features in the cases themselves, that is the most decisive. So we are left with the possibility that apparition cults are used as pawns in an ecclesiastical political game in the struggle against 'secularism'. Once again, this may be true as a general point, but it does not answer the question as to why a specific apparition is so utilised. Anyway, while some clergy regard visions as useful in an ideological struggle, others consider them a liability - this we discover when looking more closely at the ecclesiastical response to apparitions in chapter 3.

So, later in this chapter, we turn to the marian apparitions as a whole - mainly apocalyptic in nature, though this is not the full story. We consider the cult that has grown around them from a sociological perspective, as a response to (a) deprivation and (b) the modern secular environment. It is in this general area that the clearest links between the phenomena and their context may be identified.

2.2 Cult and context: historical and political considerations

2.2.1 Overview of contextual factors

The apparition cults have retained the specialised religious language familiar in Catholic devotions (of the type accused of threatening the ecumenical movement of this century (2/5)); on occasion the messages from, and communications with, the Virgin Mary are considered by some churchmen to be so trivial and/or rustic as to scandalise Catholic credibility (2/6). This shows that there are two ways in which the apparitions are considered in the ideological struggle between Catholicism and secularism: as aids or as liabilities. Of course, support for the apparitions has very often been synonymous with a stand against modernising and secular philosophies (2/7), and thus the cults promote a missionary zeal for the winning of converts from secularism. This is seen most clearly in the call to 'conversion of sinners', a universal feature of the marian apparition cult, and which is taken to mean the sincere adoption of the Catholic faith, in all of its sacramental aspects, by lukewarm or lapsed Catholics or even non-Catholics, especially atheists and agnostics.

The 'opponents' in the ideological conflict are very varied with regard to their specific political and religious policies. Nevertheless, the link between the nineteenth-century republicans and twentieth-century communists, as perceived enemies of the apparition cults, is that they sought to pour scorn on 'popular' Catholicism, even to the point of political suppression. In a sense, they became paradigmatic representatives of a

particular attitude, rather like the Pharisees in the gospels.

We might postulate that this ideological conflict is based on the polarity between town and country, with the apparition messages supporting the retention of traditional Catholic language against the secularism of urban life. Indeed, at first sight, it would appear that the famous apparition cases began from a rural environment where secularisation had begun to reach but had not transformed the local consciousness - this approaches the truth in many instances, but cannot serve as a paradigmatic model. The gradually increasing influence of urban and industrial life over the countryside began to transform rural life in France most markedly after 1870 (1/35). Thus the apparitions at La Salette, Lourdes, and Pontmain occurred before the climax of this process, and no new apparition cults gained any noteworthy fame after 1876, despite many reports of visions, especially during 1937-47. Admittedly, Lourdes was a town, although not yet touched by the railway or heavy industry - here there lived the 'enlightened' men of the cafes, i.e. usually professional or bureaucratic people, who were sceptical of the miraculous (2/8).

At Fatima, there was an ideological battle between rural Catholicism and the republican authorities (2/9). However, in the Belgium of the 1930s, it would not be accurate to say that we were dealing with a countryside not yet transformed by modern secular consciousness. Although Beauraing was a small town and Banneux a village, both in the Ardennes, the nation was already in every sense a modern industrial one. (We could, however, note that accounts of the apparitions remark upon the hostility of socialists and communists locally to Catholicism, and upon

the religious indifference of the area (1/75; 1/76; 2/10)).

Thus a model for the famous modern apparition cults in which the context is always a rural environment with a dawning consciousness of secularisation is convincing to a point, but does not really stand rigorous scrutiny. The apparitions in Belgium occurred too late for this, and those at La Salette were rather early (what differences are there, in this respect, in this Alpine region between 1846 and, say, 1806?). Nevertheless, observations on Garabandal and Medjugorje reinforce the model, with the rapid modernisation of recent years being so striking in these villages. It is possible, however, that a romantic notion of the countryside held by urban Catholics may be in part responsible for the massive popularity for these shrines and some of those before them.

Nevertheless, it is true to say that antagonism between modernising political programmes and traditional Catholicism certainly features large in the context for the apparition cults and, to some extent, the migration of secular ideas such as those associated with the French and Russian Revolutions has been repeated in that of the most important ideas in the marian movement (1.4.3; 1/65; 2/11).

All in all, the data on apparitions and their histories in chapter 1 does not yield a 'paradigmatic apparition event' (2/12). Although one could speculate that the Church is likely to be favourable during a 'crisis of secularisation', and that therefore Fatima is the 'apparition par excellence', there are too many loopholes to such an hypothesis: eg (i) Fatima's main concern was originally the First World War; (ii) why did the 19th century not see well-known cults in Iberia, Italy or

Belgium?; (iii) how does the Belgium of 1933 fit into the argument? This leads us to suggest that each nation has its own contextual features which may not fit into an overall pattern.

The crises during which notable apparition events have taken place are predictable and yet varied: war (2/13), national political upheaval (2/14), the threat of invasion (2/15), famine (2/16), break-up of the community (2/17), decline of religious practice (2/18); not all of the famous apparitions occur in times of general crisis - more personal factors for the visionaries include illness (2/19) and poverty (2/20). Nearly all of the visionaries have expressed concern for the religious community, i.e. its strength in numbers (2/21) and in ideology (2/22). These background factors may be compared with some medieval parallels, and many similarities are found (2/23).

As the twentieth century has progressed, there has been a new awareness of the international situation evident in the messages. For example, there is the Fatima concern for World War, and Lucia's revelations which concerned wars and Russia (1/59). Banneux has a spring "for all nations" and gave rise to an "International Union of Prayers" (1/74). This is not wholly a new development: the nineteenth-century secrets of La Salette were eventually concerned with the European international situation beyond France. Mélanie's publication of her secret in 1879 contains all kinds of references to international crises across Europe (1/21; 1/42). The pope is supposed to have remarked on reading the original secrets in 1851:

"These are scourges with which France is threatened, but she alone is not culpable. Germany, Italy, all Europe is culpable and merits chastisement" (2/24).

However, the concept of "world war" is a twentieth-century one, and this is echoed in the development of the apparition messages. Postwar apocalypticism has sometimes dwelt upon the possibility of nuclear war (2/25). The postwar period is marked with apparitions to adults and thus to persons more educated than the famous illiterate child visionaries of the past (2/26). There is an even greater tendency to rebellion against episcopal authority, perhaps due in part to the urgent apocalypticism of many messages (2/27). The involvement of urban and often middle-class Catholics in pilgrimage to the shrines appears to have increased from the mid-nineteenth century (1/38; 1/48; 2/28).

The circumstances in which the marian apparition cults grew in France in the nineteenth century can be compared to the international horizon in which the twentieth-century cults have flourished. The standardisation of the French marian cult, brought about by the national (and thence international) distribution of histories, medals, and statues (1/37), and the worldwide fame of the Miraculous Medal and Lourdes serve as forerunners to the more recent internationalisation of the shrines, especially Fatima, and to interest in marian messages, including prophetic secrets, in their twentieth century global context. This has been encouraged by the international possibilities for media and travel (2/29). The concerns for peace and religious health in France have now been superseded by speculation on the state of international relations (2/30).

The growth of the cults in nineteenth-century France represents one national model for the marian movement. Here the troublesome nature of the local healing and apocalyptic cults was alleviated somewhat by the official takeover of the marian apparitions with the most popular

appeal and least danger of heterodoxy (1/13; 1/38). In this way popular religion became official, and the apparitions became a Catholic focus of national importance in the same way as the Sacred Heart devotion (2/31). They were incorporated into the devotional and liturgical life of the Church, a process begun in France during the period 1830 - 1880, but extended well beyond it (2/32).

Another national model is Portugal: in a time of pressure on the Church, a pilgrimage centre at Fatima began to grow which, being a symbol of defiance against antireligious ideology, was elevated into a national shrine under a pro-Catholic regime (1/56). It is not clear, due to a lack of information, whether Ezquioga may have been worthy of becoming a parallel to Fatima in Spain, originating as it did during the republican period (1/85).

Belgium is different yet again, with the year 1933 - a time when economic depression and fear of invasion were both in the air - seeing many cases of apparitions and two whose shrines became official, mainly because of the efforts of local bishops (1/70; 1/74). In Ireland, too, a year of crisis (but again not the only one) left a region with a major shrine, at Knock; this became the official and national shrine from the 1930s. Only from 1985, a time of waning interest in Catholicism in Ireland, have new smaller shrines emerged because of reports of apparitions (1/48; 1/49). These cases have been linked to an increase in the impetus of the secularisation process (2/33), although it is strange that the year 1985 was so extraordinary; we might rather expect a gradual increase of visions over several years (2/34). Like the Belgian outbreak of 1933, it suggests that apparition excitement catches hold like an 'epidemic', but without a specific reason for the exact date of starting.

In France, Ireland, Belgium, and Portugal, the new apparition shrines eclipsed old national marian centres of pilgrimage (2/35). This renewal process was aided and encouraged by the Church (2/36), but the same thing did not occur in Spain, Italy, and Germany, despite the number of phenomena in those countries (1/77; 2/37).

William Christian's interest lies predominantly in Spain and, to a lesser extent, Italy; in both countries, there was a dramatic increase in reports of apparition phenomena between 1947 and 1954 (this period saw the greatest number of reports received by official observers from all Catholic regions (2/38)). Christian shows how the 1940s saw an explosion in the Fatima cult, and in the marian cult in general, with the Fatima statue being carried around the Iberian countries from 1947 onwards (2/39). The anti-communist and war-centred messages of Fatima made a great impact in a time of the newly-emerging Cold War: the Cold War itself is Christian's 'context' for the importance of visions during the post-1947 period, whilst in the U.S.A. there was an explosion of 'U.F.O.' sightings, perhaps because of the same underlying tension (2/40). The context of the 1940s, notes Christian, made visions more believable, giving them a meaning and pertinence not so obvious before (2/41). He also refers to the trans-national locus for these visionary phenomena and their messages, although he points out that there are parallels to this in the late medieval period (2/42).

The Cold War explosion of apparitions did not find favour in the Church in the long term (2/43). Nevertheless, they are a powerful example of the link between cult and context. It is, however, not accurate to postulate some atmosphere of tension that lies behind all cases over the modern period from 1830. There is no identifiable and specific state of tension, for example, that accounts for

the most famous apparitions of all, those at Lourdes in 1858. Each case must be measured against its own context: local, national, and international; ecclesiastical and secular (2/44).

2.2.2 The political use of the marian cult

Catherine Labouré's Mary wept over the 1830 revolution, and promised that the Vincentian communities, of whom Catherine was a member, would survive the difficult times ahead for the Church. Future troubles for the Church in the era of revolutions were foretold by the Virgin, according to Catherine's prophecy and her interpretation of it (2/45). The shrines at Lourdes and La Salette became the focus for pro-monarchist rallies during the 1870s (1/27). The Fatima cult originated during the time of the Portuguese Republic, and has become the focus for Catholic anti-communism (1/63). Beauraing was publicised by the quasi-fascist 'rexists' (1/71). Many apparitions condemn the ills of the modern world, the loss of reverence for God in general, or for Catholic sacraments in particular (2/46).

Catholicism is not always conservative - witness eg the liberal or even socialist French Catholics of the nineteenth century (1/14). Yet there has been, perhaps, a general trend at papal level, of which the 1864 Syllabus of Errors is a good example, to resist modernity and the sweeping changes it brings (2/47), although Leo XIII's activity in the early 1890s and Vatican II are examples of the Church at its highest level coming to terms with the modern world (2/48). On the whole, it is fair to say that the apparition cults have been associated with the conservative trend in Catholicism (2/49).

The most forceful statement of the conservative and authoritarian nature of the marian cult in general is Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverría's Under the Heel of Mary. Their thesis is based on their observation that

"with the obvious exception of papal supremacy, no cult or devotion in Catholicism has contributed more to the consolidation of authority and institutional growth than the ever-expanding Marian faith."

In addition, "the apparition - the nucleus of Marianism in the absence of scriptural 'facts' - has invariably been an instrument of conquest, 'evangelization', revival and agitation. Laying the foundations of a vast doctrinal edifice inimical to the potentially subversive Christ of the Gospels, visions of Mary infuse the Church with the zeal and asceticism needed to preserve the ecclesiastical order - monarchial and celibatarian" (2/50).

Perry and Echeverría's work relies on a large amount of data, the reading of which is quite depressing for anyone of a liberal persuasion with any sympathy for the marian cult. Again and again the link between the figure of Mary and pro-papal policy is made clear, from counter-Reformation Jesuits through to modern-day charismatics. The groups which most favour Mary in the Catholic world include the forces of anti-revolution (2/51) and pro-fascism (2/52); more recently, pro-'New Right' (2/53), anti-modernising and anti-liberation theology and, although the authors accept that progressives are trying to utilise Mary and her symbolism, they conclude that the marian cult is

"likely to remain rooted in apparitions and at the service of manipulative power" (2/54).

Under the Heel of Mary is clearly the most comprehensive statement on conservative marianism, and suggests that there is very little in the cult that is not geared toward the supremacy of papacy, authority of Church and pro-Catholic State. It is rather one-sided in places, eg when it describes Lourdes in the 1940s as a bastion of pro-Nazi sentiment (2/55) without mentioning that a Jewish writer,

Franz Werfel, wrote the famous Song of Bernadette (later dramatised on film) on the apparitions at Lourdes because he was able to remain in safety there for a few days before escaping to the U.S.A.. While Perry and Echeverría may have evidence for the fascism in Lourdes (and it is a fault of the book that very little primary evidence is cited), no argument on the politics of Lourdes can be complete without a reference to the case of Werfel who contributed so much to Lourdes' modern-day fame.

Here we accept that the marian cult has been utilised and subscribed to by the predominantly conservative, authoritarian wing of Catholicism over the centuries. Yet it is true that there is much about the apparitions and their context that lies outside this domain, and that makes them interesting from a theological point of view. In addition, there is no shortage of writers willing to view visions of Mary as potentially subversive (2/56). Nevertheless, these insights belong to the fields of sociology and theology. The strictly historical perspective shows that conservative Catholicism has viewed the marian phenomena as important ammunition in the battle against change and a corresponding decline in power. This sobering fact must always be borne in mind in a critical appraisal of the apparitions and their contribution.

Having accepted the general point that the apparition cult has often been pressed into the service of conservative and authoritarian Catholicism, we should therefore stress two qualifications. One is that there is a great deal more to each case than ecclesiastical politics: on the individual and group level, the shrines and their messages inspire many people, not all of them fully supportive of a reactionary position. There are many issues at the local level that are addressed, and fears eased (2/57). Secondly, recognising the conservative tendency of the

marian cult does not answer the question of context for each apparition. We have already observed that conservative clergy sometimes ignore or repress popular phenomena on principle: they are perceived to be a threat to the balance of power between hierarchy and laity. Where the hierarchy do favour apparitions, there does not seem to be any identifiable pattern to this. All in all, the apparition phenomenon seems to have other dynamic contextual factors than the purely political.

2.3 Cult and context: sociological considerations

2.3.1 Apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic phenomena

It would be the very opposite of the truth to suggest that apocalyptic prophecies were absent from nineteenth-century French life with all of its social and political anxieties (2/58). In the marian apparitions, too, the French cases of this period contained apocalyptic material, although usually with clear mundane references (eg political upheaval in France, famine, plague, security for visionaries and their community) until Mélanie's notorious 'secret', which took up the theme of international chaos, the battle between God and the Devil played out in Church and world, and the suffering of the Pope, standing alone at the head of a divided Church (2/59). The apparition shrines, such as La Salette and Lourdes, became centres for the expression of French national Catholic feeling focussed on divine judgement visited in political and military terms (2/60).

Somehow, however, the classic French apparition image is that of Bernadette and the grotto: no miraculous spectacle except for the seer herself and the reported healings, no apocalyptic prophecy made public, no nationalism in the

messages themselves. There is nothing in the words of Mary as reported by Bernadette of Lourdes which could be interpreted in these terms, and the secrets which she claimed to have received remained hidden. The Belgian apparitions continue this 'quiet' tradition: gentle and private messages, no great discourse on Church and world, no sun dances (even though some lights were seen at Beauraing (2/61)), no promised miracles (although some healings were requested as elsewhere (2/62)).

Does the compelling and quiet image of the grotto stand out above the noisy apocalyptic of nineteenth-century France because the hierarchical Church willed it so? The Church, it is true, tends to prefer messages without any political content (2/63); Fatima was authenticated before the secrets were revealed. Would the Portuguese hierarchy have been so positive about Fatima in the late 1920s and 1930s if the prophecies of the second war had been known before 1941? Will the fantastic prophetic claims of more recent cases disqualify the associated apparitions from the approval of a cautious hierarchy?

There is something in this view, although it is not clear that it could ever be established that Lourdes would have been a run-of-the-mill local visionary phenomenon if it were not for the blessing of the local clergy pleased with its political quietism. The cult of La Salette, after all, developed in anything but a quiet way before its authentication in 1851, a fact which alarmed some of the clergy (2/64).

It is unlikely that the difference in tone between the famous French-speaking child apparitions of 1846-1947 and the post-Fatima visions of the twentieth century (1/128) could be ascribed purely to local ecclesiastical preference. Lourdes' popularity with the clergy is

probably due more to the mention of the Immaculate Conception there than any positive appraisal of its quietism, and the sheer weight of popular approval is usually the most powerful factor in clerical acceptance (2/65). Beauraing and Banneux may have been the gentlest cases among the Belgian epidemic of apparitions, but they can also claim to be the first, and are probably those that survived the period for that reason.

For some reason, child visionaries trigger the 'sensus fidelium' of the modern era more effectively than their adult counterparts. The personality of the child and the tenacity with which they adhere to their story is a factor every bit as great as the content of the message (2/66). One could suggest, quite plausibly, that Lourdes would have been just as famous had Bernadette referred to a coming time of chastisement for France (which would not have been terribly inaccurate in 1858, if twelve years are allowed for the prophecy to be fulfilled). Yet she did not. These considerations lead us to conclude that the relative quietism of the famous French-speaking apparitions is a phenomenon better identified as being rooted in the popular psyche than in ecclesiastical politics.

Therefore, we are suggesting that the common religious response to social and political anxiety, ie prophecy and millenarianism, is more consonant with the post-Fatima apparitions than with the French-speaking ones. In the French cases, the nationally-famous apparitions at La Salette and Lourdes were absorbed into the atmosphere of Catholic nationalist expectation with its two dimensions: apocalyptic (expecting catastrophe and divine intervention on a national or international level) and political (seeking divine legitimation for political solutions to contemporary problems). Yet there was nothing in the

original messages, except for unsurprising references to famine and plague and the unpublished secrets at both shrines, to encourage this process (2/67).

This is not true, however, of the post-Fatima non-French tradition. The miracle of the sun at Fatima in October 1917 was itself sufficient to engender apocalyptic speculation. As far as the messages are concerned, Fatima is not unlike La Salette, ie the main apocalyptic thrust emerged from revelations some years after the event, except that the ensuing cult was more respectable than Mélanie's in the eyes of the hierarchical Church (2/68). After Fatima, however, apocalyptic and sensational messages were often promulgated at the time of the apparitions themselves.

So, overall, Catholic millenarianism based on apparitions arises in and from a tradition which is composed partly of visions and messages which encourage and inform it, and partly of those which add nothing to it, and may be interpreted only as 'signs' of the prophetic messages expounded elsewhere. For this reason, the 'quiet' phenomena and their shrines are more popular with Catholics who dislike any tendency to fanaticism (2/69). Of course, for the apocalypticists, the tradition is accepted as a whole, often including many non-authenticated and even suppressed cases (2/70).

It cannot be denied that the apocalyptic element seems to have grown more prominent over the period that we are concerned with. The French-speaking tradition among child visions, from 1846 to 1947, may perhaps be extended back to include the young adult visionary, Catherine Labouré, in 1830. Yet even her prophecies were mundane in nature, and did not identify a divine hand in the disasters foretold (2/71). It is with the secret of Mélanie that the

idea emerges, in this tradition at least (it is also illustrated in the "Moral Order" of the 1870s), that earthly disaster is a punishment from God, albeit as a result of the loosing of Satan (2/72). This more apocalyptic mood for the apparitions is established in earnest with the Fatima phenomenon, particularly with the 'signs and wonders' at the time of the visions themselves (1/58). Whether or not this can be interpreted as a feature of the Iberian context does not change the fact that this is the direction which the marian apparition cult took after the Second World War, when it seemed that the prophecies of Fatima had been fulfilled, and apocalyptic speculation on the end of the world and the coming of the antichrist seemed to have become more plausible because of the very real possibilities of nuclear war and the triumph of communism (2/73).

The 'quiet' (or 'non-apocalyptic') and 'apocalyptic' expressions of Catholic marianism therefore stand side by side in the apparition tradition, integrated by some, distinguished by others. When considering the tradition in its general context, and as a response to this context, we must not forget its two dimensions. Beside the heightened expectation of the millenarianists is the other and earlier strand of apparition phenomena which includes the powerful and intimate relationships between child visionaries and the object of their vision, the running of the healing springs, and the stillness of the grotto.

2.3.2 The sociological bases of millenarianism

A perusal of the sociological analysis of millenarianism shows that this kind of religious expression is very often a response to deprivation, of which several types are suggested by writers such as Glock and Stark: economic,

social, organismic, ethical, and psychic deprivation, ie lack of, respectively, wealth, power, good health, willingness to conform to general social norms, and values of one's own (2/74). A further sociological conclusion by some researchers is that millenarianism as a response to deprivation is close to, and may be a precursor of, political revolutionary consciousness (2/75).

This serves as a reminder of the crucial nature of the battle between Catholicism and Communism for the hearts and minds of the deprived. Do Catholic forms of millenarianism provide outlets for the expression and alleviation of anxiety that are alternatives to revolutionary sentiments, or which may become revolutionary themselves in time? Certainly, it is often assumed, and not without justification, that the Marxist objection to religion as a diversion from political consciousness is vindicated in the Catholic case (2/76). This is partly due to the fact that, even in the modern period, the Church has retained a good deal of political power in many countries and thus prefers the course of political quietism and/or complicity with the State (2/77). Often, of course, the Church itself condemns apocalyptic revelations which threaten the delicacy of its political diplomacy (2/78). On the other hand, apocalyptic Catholicism has not been far from political revolutionism in countries and periods when anti-Catholic elements have gained power, notably in France and Portugal (2/79). (Nevertheless, one could distinguish between popular Catholicism and attempts to forge it into a political force (2/80)).

The main ideological enemies identified by the modern marian cult come under the general heading of secularisation, whether understood as the loss of Catholic power over social norms and public education, the

breakdown of traditional Catholic social structures and relationships, active antagonism to the Church at all levels of society, or the 'desacralisation' of world views (2/81). We could also call this process the emergence of a new cultural ethos called 'secular modernity' (2/82). It would appear that marianism contains an explicit and negative response to certain aspects of the modern world, just as Catholicism in general has a conservative dimension which has rejected the prominence of scientific technology in matters of conception and birth and modern ideologies that appear to threaten the power of the Church (2/83). Modernity itself creates the types of deprivation that are identified above as 'ethical' and 'psychic', as has been the conclusion from many sociological studies, including Durkheim's famous reference to 'anomie' (2/84). Of course, the secularisation process may mean that Catholics loyal to the papacy experience a kind of collective 'social' deprivation too, ie a perceived loss of political and social power.

New religious movements, some of which may be renewals of older traditions, apparently spring up in greater profusion in periods of "rapid social change", and as a response to modernisation, and many date from the 19th century, although the most marked increase in conversions to such movements has occurred since the Second World War (2/85). Marian apparitions, the new age for which began in the 19th century, have also been in evidence in increased number and apocalyptic tone in this period. So this apocalyptic mood may be regarded as part of a wider context of spiritual upheaval.

Perhaps the relationship between 'deprivation' and religious expression makes some sense of the division that we have identified between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic apparitions. The shrines concerned with the latter appear

to service the need for a religious response to 'organismic' deprivation, ie ill-health and, in their origin, to 'economic' deprivation as eg Bernadette Soubirous and Mariette Beco came from families noted for their poverty (2/86). The apocalyptic messages seem to originate and be sustained in the climate of 'social' and 'ethical' deprivation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the greater majority of adult visions have the apocalyptic tone, as it is adults who will perceive these kinds of disadvantage. 'Organismic' deprivation still exists as a contextual factor for the beginning of visions (eg Rosa Quattrini at San Damiano), but it is perhaps true that the 'economic' form of deprivation is not so pronounced among the modern visionaries as it once was for their predecessors. Warfare, of course, causes deprivation in the categories considered above and adds some more peculiar to it, eg deprivation of confidence in the well-being of one's kin. This was the original context for Fatima, although its message was later revealed to be wider in scope (2/87).

All in all, we can identify deprivation as a contextual factor for many apparitions. However, the types of deprivation vary from case to case, and they are not necessarily extreme, so that we could not predict religious phenomena of this type occurring, as the visionaries suffer what is common elsewhere. There are other contextual factors - the personality of the visionary, the receptivity of the local community, for example - that come into play, and in certain circumstances result in deprivation being expressed in visionary phenomena. In addition, there are cases where it is difficult to identify deprivation clearly - eg Beauraing, Garabandal, Medjugorje (2/88). Thus deprivation, although important as a contextual factor, cannot be considered, in general, a causal one.

2.3.3 General context: secularisation

Now we are going to try and find general principles that will elucidate the link between the marian apparition cult as a whole and its context. There is a danger here: that of finding neat patterns which are violated in particular cases - the material in chapter 1 suggests that a uniform relationship between visions and context does not exist. Yet this difficulty can be overcome by dealing with the phenomena in general, and not going down the blind alley into explanations that rely on causality. To do this, we must firstly ask about the general context of Catholicism in Western Europe over the last 200 years. This is the so-called 'revolutionary age' (2/89), the age of an overthrow of an old order and the relatively rapid emergence of the secular culture. The process that sociologists call 'secularisation' is a reality in the Catholic mind, at least. The cult that has grown around the apparitions bears witness to the fact that many Catholics regard the developments of the last 200 years as a decline in the prestige and power of the Church, and thus in the moral and religious fibre of the societies in which they live.

There is no doubt that there has been a period of social change, from the 18th century at least, which could be described as a process of secularisation. Quite apart from the issue of whether secularisation can be sociologically defined and identified or not (2/90), the fact that it is recognised as a threat by marian and conservative Catholics persuades us that it is a general contextual factor to be taken into account. For this reason, we shall examine the different 'modes' of secular government, and their place behind the development of the apparition cult, in a brief but helpful way. Although the application of the term 'secularisation' to the religiosity of

individuals is difficult to establish, it is clear that there has been secularisation in the sense that institutionalised religions have experienced a considerable decline in power over primary institutions, ie government, education, the media and law, in modern industrial nations and consequently across the modern world (2/91). The process at a political level has its roots in times many centuries past, but it became an overt and critical issue with the French Revolution of 1789, in which, for the first time, anti-religion became central to the revolutionary ethic (2/92).

Marx and Engels charted the evolution of the revolutionary ethic, and saw, in the French Revolution, the final triumph of the bourgeoisie and the consequent abandonment of feudal religion by this class, which had begun this process before, during, and after the Reformation (2/93). Marx, as is well-known, foresaw the second great revolution - that of the proletariat: the socialist revolution would see the end of religion which had survived the rising of the bourgeoisie in private forms disestablished from the State (2/94).

For many exponents of both official and popular Catholicism, the successive revolutions of modern Europe have been a succession of nightmares resulting in the loss of a way of life in which Catholic religion and the structures of society were interwoven (2/95). The separation of Church and State or the domination of Church by non-religious State, the loss of power over primary institutions, especially those over which the Church had a traditional hold, eg marriage, education and public holidays, the control of the secular clergy, including reduced stipends and military conscription for priests, censorship of the religious press, banning of processions and the persecution of the religious orders - all

constituted a serious threat to the very existence of the Church, as perceived by its supporters (2/96). Many French clerics died violently following the 1789 Revolution; new republics in Portugal (1910) and Spain (1931) seemed to follow the French pattern (1/65); in France itself, there were successive measures against the Church during the Third Republic, culminating in the separation of Church and State in 1905 (2/97). Meanwhile, the creation of the modern nations Italy and Germany saw loss of Church dominions and anti-Catholic measures from the highest quarters (2/98). There is little doubt about the anti-religious sentiments of Marxist revolutions in general, although the Sandanista takeover of Nicaragua may be considered an exception, and perhaps provides a different Church-State model for present-day revolutions in the Third World.

An historical overview suggests that the terrors of the 1790s in France showed the Catholic world the possibilities of life under a republican government, and the memories of this played into the hands of monarchist Catholics during the 19th century, especially as archbishops of Paris were murdered in the 1848 and 1871 uprisings (2/99). Later, the year 1870 proved to be a landmark in Catholic history, with the declaration of Papal Infallibility, the interruption of the First Vatican Council, and the inauguration of regimes in Rome, Berlin and Paris which pursued anticlerical policies. The French Republic once again encouraged revolutionary republican movements in Spain and Portugal (2/100). The next landmark was 1917, the coming to power of the communists in the Russian empire, with the resultant support for communist revolutionaries in Catholic countries in the years following.

The complexity of historical facts contends against a simple categorisation, but for our purposes here, we shall suggest that there are three primary models for the republican systems which emerge from the process of revolution and national unification by which Western Europe has become 'modernised'. Before we consider them, let us be reminded that the 'old' world before 1789 may be divided into two models: a Catholic state, in which the Catholic Church was recognised as the established and privileged, if not the only, denomination, and a Protestant one, in which Catholicism was treated with varying degrees of suppression and toleration. Most countries were ruled by a monarchy. However, the Catholic state posed its own problems for the Roman hierarchy in that Catholic monarchs, in particular Louis XIV of France and Joseph II of Austria, were prone to seek ever-increased power over the affairs of the Church, and they and other rulers officially decided on the matter of episcopal appointment (2/101).

We may now divide the more modern states, republics which emerged from revolutions which threw off the yoke of monarchy, into three types:

(i) the U.S.A. type: the state is fundamentally religious although, because of its pluralist constitution, churches and state are separate and all religious opinions tolerated (2/102);

(ii) the French Third Republic type: the state is formally neutral on the question of religion, and does not set out to be anti-religious, but anticlerical elements threaten to gain the upper hand with disastrous consequences for the Church (2/103);

(iii) the U.S.S.R. type: the state is formally anti-religious, and strict state control is the best the Church can hope for - persecution is likely (2/104).

The threat of (ii) becoming positively anticlerical, and of (iii) existing at all, forms an historical background to the concerns of the greater number of devotees of the marian apparition cults. The secularisation context does not cause apparitions - their contexts are varied, and in many ways they have parallels in the medieval or post-Reformation periods with their different threats (2/23). The one major link, however, is the danger of irreligion, whether this be indifference within the Catholic community or an attack on it from outside. Clearly, an anti-Catholic or anti-religious state is the extreme case of such a condition.

Type (ii) has the potential to become tolerant, even supportive, of the Catholic religion, although there is always the danger of state control over church matters. There is also the possibility, as happened in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, that republicanism will provoke a backlash, a modern state (monarchy or not) ruled by a dictator who sees Catholicism as integral to the culture and ideology of the nation (1/56; 1/80). Yet the greatest anguish occurs when communists threaten to take control, as in many Western European countries in the aftermath of both world wars, and in Spain during the Civil War of 1936-9, ie the possibility that type (iii) will emerge.

Of course, type (i) is the most-preferred of the three options for the Catholic Church in the modern world, and the way in which the anti-communist Fatima cult gained many supporters in the U.S.A. during the cold war years (who are committed, to some extent, to the 'American way of life'), demonstrates the importance of this in the

struggle to avoid the worst aspects of (ii) or (iii). The comparative peace with which those Catholics in a country with a Protestant or no overall majority live does not mean, however, that the conditions therein are perfect for the conflict between faith and 'irreligion' or 'secularism' to be resolved without loss to the strength and self-identity of Catholicism (2/105). Indeed, American Catholicism has presented many unique problems for the conservatives and centralists of Catholicism in its tendency to accept secular and/or Protestant tendencies (2/106). Yet, the best and most realistic hope, from the point of view of preservation of the traditional elements of Catholicism, is that majority Catholic countries under secular governments, as well as those with a Catholic minority, will adopt a policy of religious toleration on the U.S.A. model, one that will allow the Church a powerful voice in moral and social issues, as would be guaranteed by its size of membership.

The overall context for the apparition cults as bulwarks against secularisation has always included some notion of the enemy within as well as without. The way in which the "third secret" of Fatima and the apparitions at Garabandal have been interpreted show that, for many, the Second Vatican Council made Catholicism more vulnerable to the dangers of apostasy and weakening of rigour of the traditional Catholic faith (2/107). This is another aspect of the fear of secularisation, one which is bound to cause anxiety because of the 'aggiornamento' policy at a time when contemporary culture is associated with secularism.

Thus we conclude that the general context for, but not cause of, the modern Catholic apparition cults is secularisation, and the consequent fear of irreligion, both by means of:

(a) the outer threat - a hostile secular state which limits the Catholic media and education programme, thus encouraging people to apostasy under both explicit and subtle pressures;

(b) the inner threat - the Church allowing secularism to penetrate its own policies, rites and beliefs, in a way which is perceived, by some, to weaken the Catholic world as a faithful community (2/108).

At the same time, some visionaries and devotees show concern for moral issues in the wider non-Catholic society in which they live, feeling some anguish because of perceived immorality in various practices, usually concerned with sexuality and reproduction (2/109). This immorality is, once again, associated with the liberalism of the secular state, with its legalisation of divorce, registry office marriage, homosexuality, abortion and contraception (2/110).

2.4 Summary and conclusions

There are many different crises in which apparitions occur, but there is no identifiable pattern to them - therefore we cannot discover definite causal contextual factors for apparitions, nor even for their popularity. What is clear is that the modern context - an ideological struggle between Roman Catholicism and its rivals for the hearts and minds of ordinary people - shapes the cult which results from this popularity. Two factors: (a) official dislike for overtly political messages as prophecy and (b) the greater popularity for child visionaries with little knowledge of public issues - these ensure that, on the whole, there are few explicit references to specific ideological themes in the cult, at

least where it is approved and encouraged by the hierarchical Church.

The most striking exceptions to this rule are the prophecies of Catherine Labouré at the Rue du Bac - woes predicted for the Church during times of revolution - and Lucia dos Santos of Fatima - Russia spreading her "errors". Prophetic messages are, however, the element in apparitions not publicly acknowledged by the Church, which has preferred to support instead devotional themes: in these cases, respectively, the Miraculous Medal (and Immaculate Conception) and the Immaculate Heart. Nevertheless, support for these latter implies, in the minds of many devotees, tacit approval of the prophecies associated with them (2/111). In addition, there are many members of the clergy who are directly involved in the publication of the prophecies and interpretations of them.

The apparitions arise within, and contribute to, a world view which abhors the non-religious, or sometimes anti-religious, ethos of much of modern culture (2/112), just as earlier Catholicism reacted to the Protestantism of parts of Europe in the preceding centuries. All of the features of secularisation then present themselves as threatening to this world view: in particular, the loss of temporal power of the Catholic Church (especially in property, law and education), and the increasing numbers of people in Catholic areas who espouse a non-religious or anti-religious philosophy. 'Modernising' revolutions, especially those that are republican or marxist, have therefore been perceived as being very dangerous for the Church.

Yet the marian cult is not alone as a fervent religious response to the 'modernisation' of culture: there are many new and renewing religious movements which have emerged

during the past 200 years, a time of rapid change. Religious movements in the West since the last World War have been ever more numerous and anti-secular, while the marian apparition cult has been more urgent and apocalyptic than before. The Cold War has been the single most explicit contextual factor for apparitions since the 1940s, as it gives their apocalyptic flavour a new relevance, especially since the 'enemy' has been officially anti-religious.

This internationally-aware and fearful mood of the apparitions emerged with the suppressed secret of Melanie, published in 1879 and claimed to have been revealed in 1846 (1/21). It became more definite with and after Fatima and the First World War, although there are exceptions to this, especially the Belgian cases Beauraing (until Côme arrived there (1/70)) and Banneux (except for the reference to the healing spring: "for all nations" (1.4.4)). The twentieth century has seen a proliferation of the apocalyptic-type apparition (2/113); even cases which begin with children are soon taken over by adults with a greater awareness of the international political or ecclesiastical situation (eg Palmar de Troya, Oliveto Citra, Hrushiw). There are also those which become more sophisticated and aware as the children grow older (eg Garabandal, Medjugorje (2/114)).

The apocalyptic vision seems to arise more often in the context of what Glock and Stark refer to as the 'ethical' (antagonism to society's general norms) and 'social' (frustration of access to power) types of deprivation. Ill-health and poverty seem to be the setting for cases with little or no emphasis on apocalyptic. Again, we have to stress that there is no conclusive pattern to this observation, but perhaps it is not surprising that a reduction in extreme poverty in Europe has coincided with

an increase in the proportion of apocalyptic cases, while in Latin America, there still seem to be some notable visionary phenomena without the apocalyptic dimension (2/115). Above all, though, war, the threat of war, and the threat of irreligion seem to be the most prominent contextual themes (2/116).

Overall, the modern marian cult has seen a modernisation of the network of shrines, and a standardisation of devotional themes and images. This process began with the encouragement of the nineteenth-century French hierarchy, notably bishops (or archbishops) de Quelen, de Bruillard, Laurence, Wicart, and de la Tour d'Auvergne and their supporters. These bishops were, it could be said, conservative, although this will mean something different for each one (2/117). They all wished to strengthen and restore Catholic devotion and hence Catholic authority and influence. In the twentieth century, bishops from other countries have followed their lead, and have thus affected similar changes elsewhere (2/118). So, in such a programme, the marian cult has been much-utilised: indeed, it is central.

Postwar apparitions, however, have proved more troublesome, at least in Europe (2/119). The period of reluctance at Vatican level started a few years before Vatican II, during the pontificate of the pro-marian Pius XII, although the anti-'popular religion' tendency among the Catholic hierarchy is a centuries-old phenomenon (2/120). Apocalyptic promises of miracles and chastisements are difficult for the clergy to accept without risking ridicule if they fail to occur (2/121). The ecclesiastical programme for investigating apparitions is crucial for the development of apparition cults, and we will address this question soon in chapter 3.

So, finally, the lack of a socio-historical patterning of apparitions may lead us to suppose that the series is a near-random one, with certain popular and non-controversial cases picked out for approval by bishops wishing to utilise popular devotion in their pastoral programme. On the other hand, we could speculate that there is perhaps a theological or depth-psychological rationale behind the phenomena (2/122). Yet again, the answer might lie between or in a combination of both of these answers. It is actually quite difficult to tell whether popularity - the 'sensus fidelium' - or ecclesiastical manoeuvring is the most decisive factor behind lasting fame for visionary phenomena, and again, whether popularity is based on anything more profound than fear, boredom, or the seeking of legitimation for religious and political viewpoints.

What is certain, however, is that these questions are from from being easily answerable. Therefore we will distance ourselves from those who feel, either from a standpoint of pro-apparitions or against (and the latter may be Catholic or anti-Catholic), that the 'reasons' for, or 'causes' of, these phenomena are clear: either powerful divine intervention, manifested in popular response, but untrammelled by social, political or ecclesiastical concerns and machinations or, conversely, wholly due to the power of the reactionary wing of the Catholic Church, engineering, manipulating and publicising cases of hysteria for the sake of ideological gain and control (2/123). Simple solutions like these do not do justice to the complexity of the historical data. We must undertake a model-building task which is more subtle and balanced than either of these one-sided positions.

Chapter 3 The Authentication Process: Examples and General Features

3.1 Introduction: the status of apparitions in the Roman Catholic Church

It is the general understanding in the Catholic Church that apparitions are to be regarded as private revelations, i.e. they are given to certain individuals, and members of the Church universal are not constrained to believe in them even when the episcopate gives its approval to a particular case (3/1). Almost as an established matter of principle, the literature publicising the authenticated apparition phenomena declares the freedom of the Catholic to reject the supernatural claim for any case, but many books will add some kind of echo of Rahner's statement that the Church's judgement

"deserves to be respectfully obeyed by the faithful" (3/2).

We could reformulate this principle as follows: assuming that one does not deny the possibility of apparition phenomena out of hand (an un-theological position, according to Rahner (3/3)), it would be churlish not to consider seriously, at least, the carefully-researched judgement of the Church, even though one is not constrained to accept it.

The status of private revelations in official teaching is thus one of subordination to that of public revelation, i.e. the disclosure of the salvific nature of Christ's mission handed down by the apostles and entrusted to the Church. Messages and visions experienced by Christians after the apostolic period are to be judged with reference to this core of truth, and do not add anything to it;

rather, if at all profound, they direct the hearer back to the fundamentals of belief. Schillebeeckx has this principle in mind when he states that the Church's charismatic element

"is always subordinate to the normal moral and religious life of grace which is informed by dogma" (3/4).

In addition, the Church's positive judgement in favour of an apparition does not formally guarantee the divine origin of the whole message passed on by a visionary (3/5).

Rome's stand on apparition phenomena over the last 150 years could be regarded as somewhat vague or inconsistent. Pius IX seems to have treated the secrets of La Salette with respect in 1851 (2/24; 2/111), yet in 1877 the Sacred Congregation of Rites declared that the magisterium neither believed nor disbelieved in apparitions; much the same sentiment was echoed by Pius X in 1907 (3/6). These statements coincided with papal favour shown to Lourdes: the crowning of the statue there by a papal legate (1876), and the establishing of a feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on February 11th in 1907 (3/7). Certainly, the hierarchy prefers to stay out of the decision-making process so as to allow the local bishop to take responsibility for such phenomena in his diocese (3/8). In practice, however, the bishops are obliged to give Rome the final say (3/9).

The Church at all levels encourages devotion at the accepted shrines (and thus belief in their founding stories) by official pilgrimages, indulgences, feasts, etc. This process has grown more prominent from the nineteenth century into the twentieth (2/118). Whereas the main show of papal approval in the nineteenth century was the crowning of statues by the papal legate (3/10), in recent years popes have made frequent personal visits to the apparition shrines (3/11). From 1899, popes have

carried out public consecrations in response to requests from visionaries (1/59; 3/12). So it is difficult to accept the 1877 statement as a norm for the twentieth-century hierarchical Church, which does appear to believe in certain apparitions. The latter have a prominent public life beyond the "private" tag with which they are described, even if this adjective is a useful device for distinguishing them from dogma (3/13).

The Church, in practice, chooses promising movements which have emerged in popular piety, and integrates them into the structure of orthodox liturgy and devotion. The method of selection in this regard is governed by the authentication procedure, usually in the form of a commission of enquiry, which looks at, in particular, morality, orthodoxy, and the popular reaction. In this way, the hierarchical Church appears to support popular movements without guaranteeing the divine origin of the content of messages, descriptions, prophecy; instead, it focusses upon those elements already established in the Catholic faith (3/14). Of course, the hierarchy's approval (which occurs in gradual stages up to and including the episcopal authentication statement and beyond (3/15)) encourages mass acceptance of a shrine, and gives it an official status. Thus the hierarchy's role changes from cautious non-commitment to encouragement and leadership in an approved case.

The apparitions and cult are distinguished: the latter may be validated as a worthy element in the life of the Church without the former being accepted as a genuine manifestation of the divine (3/16). So there are three 'tiers' of the phenomenon identifiable in the acceptance process: cult, i.e. pilgrimage and devotions which may name the site, the visions themselves with or without a divine origin, and the actual content of the visionaries'

descriptions of their experience. The latter is never fully authenticated, although it will become part of the cult and shrine, in books, illustrations, on plaques and statues (3/17).

We now move on to the authentication process itself. In practice, as we shall see, Church investigations include positive tests with regard to the 'fruits' of the phenomenon, i.e. mass (orthodox) devotion and pilgrimage, religious renewal, increased attendance at the sacraments, and miraculous healing. The commissions of enquiry often reach their verdict after work has already begun on the building of shrines and catering for the pilgrims by local priests and lay-people (3/18). The negative tests are to confirm that no untoward aspect of the case exists, e.g. heresy, mental illness, fraud, and that there is no 'natural' explanation for the experience (by this we mean that the phenomenon may not be explained in its totality by natural rather than supernatural causes), e.g. hallucinatory states, natural phenomena causing illusion, etc..

The commissions use theological, moral, medical and scientific factors into account in their evaluation. Of course, a critical appraisal will also have to consider the predisposition of the commission members and any external pressures on them. (The apparition cult of modern times has clearly developed within an historical context which has helped to fashion the enquiry process, a critique of which is undertaken in chapter 4.)

The framework of our account of the authentication procedures will be as follows:
firstly, a resume of the ecclesiastical response to reports of marian apparitions at the pre-commission stage;

then a look at the criteria used by the official commissions of enquiry set up with the intention of reaching a verdict;
finally, the main reasons for the failure of a case to receive approval.

We will end this introduction by noting that the commissions of enquiry to date have been wholly in the hands of the episcopate, usually diocesan, sometimes national and/or international. The bishops normally choose priests and doctors to help them in their task (3/19). This is likely to remain the case in the foreseeable future; any pressure for changes in the procedure has been to the end of overruling the local bishop by recourse to the hierarchy, rather than a transferral of decision-making to the lower clergy or laity. The latter option is not really in question at the present time. Yet it remains to be seen whether rejection of a particular apparition event by the highest level in the Church will provoke a rebellion on any scale more appreciable than the schism that has already occurred at Palmar de Troya.

3.2 Ecclesiastical responses to the phenomena

3.2.1 Overview

Bernard Billet recorded 210 cases of apparitions reported to the Catholic Church between 1928 and 1971 (3/20). There have been many since (3/21). Therefore, if we say that about five notable visionary events occur per year, we will not be far wrong in presenting an approximate overall picture of the continuity of the developing marian cult (3/22) (and this will re-enforce our view that no specific context or crisis can be deduced as a constant background factor). Such a large sample is, of course, unmanageable

when looking for detail in order to build a picture of how the Church authorities react to, and take control of, apparition phenomena.

Therefore, an overview will have to be selective, and here we will choose the cases that are at least reasonably well-known, and where a research visit to the shrine was possible in order to pick up detailed literature and carry out interviews. The list is (France) Rue du Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain, Pellevoisin, Tilly-sur-Seulles, L'Ile-Bouchard, (Ireland) Knock, Inchigeela, Carns, Melleray, (Portugal) Fatima, (Belgium) Beauraing, Banneux, (Italy) Sant'Andrea delle Frate, Tre Fontane, San Damiano, Schio, Oliveto Citra, (Spain) Garabandal, (Yugoslavia) Medjugorje (3/23).

Of these, eleven have given rise to shrines with official status. Eight are sites of apparitions authenticated by the hierarchical Church: La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain, Knock (1/47), Fatima, Beauraing, Banneux, Sant'Andrea delle Frate. Three have seen the devotions centred upon them accepted: Rue du Bac, Pellevoisin (where the healing is now recognised as miraculous), Tre Fontane - although the apparition is not authenticated, the official approval for the cult lends the founding vision much respectability. The emergence of these eleven from the plethora of cases over the last one hundred and sixty years is due to special circumstances in two main levels of response: (a) popular, and (b) ecclesiastical. Seven of these gained a great deal of popular support without which the Church authorities would not have considered them so carefully. The other four were given the impetus of hierarchical backing from the earliest stages (3/24). Ecclesiastical responses, and reactions among Catholics in general, have varied widely across the eleven cases.

Of the remaining ten listed above, Tilly-sur-Seulles stands condemned to near-oblivion because of time and the questionable nature of the event (1/30; 3/25). The others are post-1960, and thus it is possible that there may be further developments despite the strictures on Garabandal (1/87) and San Damiano (1/82), both of which incurred unpopularity at episcopal level during the 1960s and 70s. In Ireland, ecclesiastical indifference seems to be the norm (a feature discussed in chapter 7), and we can say little more about Carns and Melleray, although Inchigeela attracted a definite negative statement from the local bishop. In Italy, too, the episcopate has not been very encouraging, although there (eg Schio, Oliveto Citra), they are prepared to investigate more formally than is the case in Ireland. L'Ile-Bouchard also merited investigation and some encouragement, but it has remained a rather low-key affair (1/32). Medjugorje has its own problems, and these will be the subject of chapter 5.

Before we identify specific cases, let us be aware of general features: the ecclesiastical response may be divided into five categories according to five different groups: (i) the local priest(s) and religious; (ii) the lower clergy in general, particularly in the local diocese; (iii) the local bishop; (iv) the national episcopate (and occasionally foreign bishops (3/26)); (v) religious orders. Reactions among Catholic intellectuals and writers may have occasionally affected the form of ecclesiastical response (e.g. at Beauraing), but not usually its result (3/27).

(i) The local clergy and religious may be sceptical at first, but are usually swept along by the force of the popular reaction. Sometimes the priest has been one of the first to be converted by the story, and has thus helped the promulgation of its fame. (ii) The presence of other

clergy encourages the pilgrims to claim some measure of ecclesiastical support - for this reason, bishops sometimes place restrictions on visits of priests to new shrines (3/28). Clerical opinions within a diocese may carry some weight, but usually such influence is confined to the enquiry process (3/29). (iii) The local bishop's attitude is decisive, and he may be swayed by other clergy to a large or small extent (3/30). Bishops are traditionally cautious, but their concern for the pastoral dimension will make them susceptible to popular pressure (3/31).

(iv) The opinions of fellow bishops do influence the bishop who has jurisdiction, and often give him a firm base on which to make a decision (3/32). Yet archbishops feel themselves obliged to consider the reputation of Catholicism at a national level with respect to the wider picture, e.g. politics or philosophy; for this reason, they have been known to display an obstructive attitude to growing cults, and attempt to gain control of them (3/33). (v) Religious orders are not normally involved in the decision-making process (3/34), but either originate in or utilise a particular shrine, and thus come to be associated with it (1/40).

The State's reaction varies from indifference to hostile obstruction, but is not usually decisive (3/35). Opposition of the State usually occurs because of a perceived threat to law and order due to the large pilgrim crowds, or to the group in power by means of political propaganda linked to the shrine (3/36). However, only Fatima has emerged as a shrine with importance at the national political level (3/37). Thus the establishment of a shrine usually results in State indifference as long as Church control guarantees good conduct among the pilgrims - this is normally the case, one exception being the

crowds at Paray-le-Monial and Lourdes in the 1870s (1/27). The Church does not promote politicised apparition cults (those which have political messages as a central feature) as a matter of principle (3/38); political emphases at shrines tend to be secondary phenomena, even the anticommunism of Fatima (3/39).

The local bishop's concern is to encourage the growth of orthodox faith, while suppressing any new movement which threatens the order and unity of the Church, locally or on a wider scale. The balance between these factors will be different in individual cases (3/40). If orthodox elements which act as a regulating focus for the whole cult - eg devotion to the Immaculate Conception or Sacred Heart - can be picked out, then this will encourage the bishop to a positive decision (3/41). In general, the Church prefers to maintain fruitful shrines of the past than to risk the novelty of new phenomena (3/42), as the bishop likes to keep control over religious developments in his diocese; therefore he will attempt to incorporate new shrines and cults into the diocesan structure (3/43).

3.2.2 Specific instances (3/44)

Now we shall consider individual cases which illustrate different ways in which the relationships between various elements in Church and society may function. The words of Gamaliel in Acts 5.38-9 (3/45) are often quoted in the apparition literature, and they do serve as the paradigm for the model reaction of the priesthood when first presented with reports of an apparition. We have already noted that bishops, in particular, are cool and distant, keeping themselves informed without declaring an interest publicly until it appears to be absolutely necessary. However, this is not always true of local priests, more

liable to be caught up in popular feeling, and often having some knowledge of the principal characters involved. There are also other priests who visit the site at an early stage, having been commissioned to, or privately wishing to, make enquiries.

Here are the main categories of the reaction of local priests (bearing in mind that such categorisation does no justice to the difference in detail for each case, but helps us gain a general picture):

- (i) accepting the case as genuine immediately, encouraging devotion - La Salette, Knock, Pontmain, Pellevoisin, San Damiano (the priest in the last three cases was a witness to events);
- (ii) cautious but willing to make enquiries from the outset, thus soon coming to believe in the apparitions - Banneux, Garabandal, Medjugorje;
- (iii) keeping aloof from events, gradually impressed by developments - Rue du Bac (3/46), Lourdes, Beauraing, Tre Fontane, Schio, Oliveto Citra;
- (iv) disturbed, but setting enquiries in motion immediately - Fatima, L'Ile-Bouchard (3/47);
- (v) remaining aloof from events - Inchigeela, Carns, Melleray (3/48);
- (vii) local priest not directly involved - Sant'Andrea delle Frate.

In all cases except the Rue du Bac, the bishop was informed within a short time of the local priest's becoming aware. The bishops' reactions may be categorised thus:

- (i) positive, encouraging publication of the case and/or the devotions recommended by visionaries - Rue du Bac, Sant'Andrea delle Frate, Pellevoisin, Tre Fontane;
- (ii) setting enquiries in motion and taking control fairly quickly with a positive predisposition - La Salette, Pontmain, Knock (but see (1/46)), Lourdes, Beauraing, Banneux (3/49);
- (iii) soon setting up a commission but, on the whole, discouraging events and not coming to any positive conclusion - Garabandal, San Damiano, Medjugorje, Schio, Oliveto Citra (3/50);
- (iv) taking an interest, but no definite action, leaving enquiries to the local priest and taking some time to set up enquiries - Fatima, L'Ile-Bouchard (3/47);
- (v) no formal enquiry, keeping aloof - Carns, Melleray;

(vi) no formal enquiry, condemning events - Inchigeela
(3/51).

From this it can be seen that the reactions vary from case to case, but that the bishops are more likely to be negative than the local priest. How do apparition events finally come to be accepted as internationally-approved phenomena, then? The thorough documentation of most of the famous and approved apparitions in Belgium and France allows a full research effort into ecclesiastical activity at the pre-commission stage. There are four specific 'models' for the process: (1) La Salette, (2) Lourdes, (3) Pontmain, and (4) Beauraing and Banneux (see also 1.2.1; 1.2.4). All of these cases finally gained approval; unsuccessful cases will be considered in section 3.4.

(1) La Salette: the early developments within the Church took the form of an argument which continued through the commission process and beyond. The clerical opponents of the cult were concerned that their colleagues had been over eager to accept the apparition as genuine. For the supporters, the religious renewal was all-important (1/19; 3/52). Vision: 19 Sep 1846; commission in agreement as to authentic nature of case: Dec 1847; official declaration in favour: 19 Sep 1851.

(2) Lourdes: the Church played a passive and reactive role in the face of State antagonism to the cult, and the commission took place after this battle was won. The State asserted itself as the proper investigator, and the authorities attempted to suppress the shrine because of their concern for established Catholicism. However, an absence of clear scientific explanations for the events favoured the Church. An explosion of visionary phenomena at the shrine caused the bishop to suppress all interest in visions other than those of Bernadette Soubirous, the first visionary (1/23; 3/53). Visions: Feb-Jul 1858; commission in agreement: 1860; declaration: 18 Jan 1862.

(3) Pontmain: the Church reached a decision without conflict or doubt. The local and diocesan clergy were in favour from the very beginning, due to the circumstances of the 1871 armistice following very soon after the vision; the enquiry was a formality (3/54). Vision: Jan 17 1871; declaration: 2 Feb 1872; new commission: 1920.

(4) Beauraing and Banneux: the diocesan authorities lost the right to judgement for several years due to procrastination and controversy. There was a vitriolic debate amongst Catholics over Beauraing, and the outbreak of visions in Belgium in 1933 caused the archbishop of Malines to take control. The bishops with responsibility over the shrines fought for their cause against hierarchical uncertainty and through several commissions of enquiry, and did not succeed until after the War (during which the shrines were popular). In the case of Banneux, the local bishop effectively overruled the last commission by instituting further investigations (3/55). Beauraing: visions: Nov 1932 - Jan 1933; commissions: 1934, 1935-6, 1935-8, 1942; authorisation of cult: 2 Feb 1943; declaration on visions: 2 July 1949; Banneux: visions: Jan-Mar 1933; commissions: 1934, 1935-7, 1935-8, 1942-5; authorisation of cult: 1942; declaration on visions: 22 Aug 1949.

These five cases yield some important points to consider before we consider the criteria used by the commissions of enquiry. La Salette illustrates the kind of pastoral questions that predispose clergy to be for or against apparition cults: the encouragement of religious piety versus the wider reputation of Catholicism. At La Salette, clergy claimed to represent the latter but, at Lourdes, civil authorities took this position: they tried appealing to science in their stand against popular pilgrimage, but this essentially failed them. For the Church, the healings and the character of the visionary were decisive.

Pontmain is an example of the powerful effect of the combination of successful prophecy, simplicity, and reputable witness. For Beauraing and Banneux, the arguments over 'natural explanations' re-emerged. Here the national hierarchy intervened to allay the conflict, but the attitudes of the local bishops were decisive (as they so often are (3/56)). The theories put forward to explain the phenomena were not convincing enough to divert the pastoral policy of the bishops (3/57), for whom the new pilgrimage centres were important. In an absence of wholly

natural explanations, the Church will look to the 'spiritual fruits' of the phenomena.

3.3 Criteria used by commissions of enquiry

(The chronology and details of the better-documented commissions of enquiry which returned definite verdicts on apparitions are to be found in the appendices, where source references are given. For ease of reference in this section and in its notes, commissions will be referred to as simply *Grenoble (La Salette), *Tarbes (Lourdes), *Laval I (=1871-2) and II (=1919-20) (Pontmain), *Bourges (=1983) (Pellevoisin), *Leiria (Fatima), *Namur I (=1935-6) and II (=1942) (Beauraing), *Liège I (=1935-7) and II (=1942-5) (Banneux), *Interdiocesan (Belgian cases, 1933), and *Malines (Beauraing and Banneux).

Before 1978 the document most used by commissions of enquiry into apparitions was Lambertini's (later Pope Benedict XIV) eighteenth-century treatise on causes for beatification and sanctification (3/58). Lambertini quoted from the major Catholic scholars of tradition, notably the medieval mystics and other important theological writers like St Thomas Aquinas, Gerson and Suarez. This was not primarily an innovative work, but one which accumulated, summarised and presented the tradition as it stood thus far in Lambertini's day.

However, official Catholic attitudes on miraculous phenomena vary from period to period, and from country to country. We have seen that France, 1830 - 1876, was a fruitful place and time for hierarchical approval of apparitions, while Italian and Spanish clerics have preferred not to make new shrines the centre of universal devotion (1.2.1; 1.2.5). The two foremost Belgian shrines

founded in 1932-3 struggled to obtain official sanction, however: a process which was not complete until 1949 (3.2.2). Laurentin considers the 1930s to have been the beginning of a period of official disapproval, especially due to the influence of Cardinal Ottaviani at the Holy Office. Ottaviani was instrumental in the suppression of the phenomena in general, and helped to delay the cause of Beauraing; he was able to utilise restrictive canons in the Canon Law of 1917 not finally abolished until 1970 (3/59).

Cardinal Seper was the head of the Holy Office in 1978 (by then known as the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith), and he decided that the vagueness of rules about investigation into apparition phenomena necessitated some new procedures. The 1960s and early 70s had seen the suppression of two very popular and well-publicised cases at Garabandal and San Damiano, where the enquiry procedure was not very satisfactory (1/87; 1/82). Seper's document, for which Laurentin was consulted, was entitled "Norms of the Holy Congregation for the Teaching of the Faith concerning the procedure for judging presumed Apparitions and Revelations". It has been published 'sub secreto', ie only available for reading by bishops who ask for it, but Laurentin has, fortunately, revealed its contents without reproducing it in full (3/60).

The main points of the document concern positive and negative criteria, centred on four main areas:

- (i) the fact that an apparition has occurred;
- (ii) the personal character, honesty and morality of the seer(s);
- (iii) the orthodoxy of the pronouncements;
- (iv) the morality, devotion and fruits of the new cult as a whole (3/61).

There are also guidelines for ecclesiastical

investigation, pressing upon the episcopal authority the need to enquire and observe, and permitting both encouragement of related devotions and intervention if and when abuses occur. The involvement of the Church at higher levels (national, international) is allowed, either at the request of the local bishop or by direct decree; the national or international bodies may set up their own commissions, independent of those at the diocesan level (3/62).

The cult, ie "certain forms of public worship or devotions" related to the phenomena, may be permitted while the judgement on the apparitions themselves is still in progress (the enquiry procedure looking for more evidence of spiritual fruits). In recent years, this has been the policy of the bishop with responsibility for Kibeho (3/63); in the past, such a policy has been associated with the apparitions at the Rue du Bac, Pellevoisin and Tre Fontane.

Three options are open to the judging authority with regard to the authenticity of the apparition phenomena themselves: they will either be established as supernatural, not established as supernatural, or established as non-supernatural. In recent years, Cuapa's visions have been (non-formally) recognised as supernatural, while Garabandal's were concluded to be non-supernatural - both by diocesan authorities - although neither decision precludes the possibility of further enquiries and a change of decision; Medjugorje's apparitions are at present not established as supernatural (3/64).

The fact that Laurentin's disclosure of the contents of the 1978 document came later than the work done for this chapter is actually quite helpful, for two reasons:

(a) it ensures that the criteria identified here arise from the historical data of the commissions of our period (1830 onwards), and not from the guidelines of the document;

(b) all the considerations and arguments referred to here arose from the enquiry procedures of cases before 1978.

The episcopal and archepiscopal commissions have taken many factors into account: we can identify and consider twelve distinct phenomenological headings. Note that the different apparition cases have an individual emphasis with regard to the type of proof accepted in favour of a divine supernatural manifestation. At Lourdes, for example, the major factor is healing; at Fatima, the solar phenomenon perceived by so many pilgrims and the growth of devotion. Nevertheless, all of the commissions of enquiry will have touched upon most of the areas listed below.

Firstly, here are six major and preliminary topics which have been important in the work of the commissions:

(i) Catholic tradition. Lambertini's work is often mentioned (he is usually referred to as Benedict XIV, which he became a few years after completing the work). Lambertini noted that the Council of Trent (session XXV, December 1563) gave the authority for judgement over such phenomena to the bishop (who should consult theological advisers and others in his enquiry, and share problems with his metropolitan and other bishops; any new devotion should be referred to the pope before acceptance) (3/65). Lambertini's (or Benedict XIV's) principles were usually considered as authoritative by the commissions (*Grenoble, *Tarbes, and *Laval I at least).

(ii) The possibility of a supernatural provenance for visions. Mgr Laurence stressed this against the

"unbelieving philosophy of the last (18th) century" in his declaration opening *Tarbes. One objection might be raised by those who agree with Hume's principle that a supernatural intervention is the least likely of all explanations, so that the simplest (natural) solution is the best (*Namur II countered the use of Hume by Dalbiez by insisting that the simplest explanation for Beauraing was a supernatural one!).

(iii) The possibility of a diabolical origin. There are two possibilities for a supernatural (or 'preternatural') case: divine or diabolical. Sauvé dismissed the latter as a possibility for Pontmain in a lengthy note for *Laval I in eleven parts; Derselle drew on the idea for the title of his anti-Beauraing booklet, Et si c'était le diable?. Most investigators of marian apparitions have had this issue in mind, but usually the piety, healings and conversions involved were conclusive proof against a diabolical influence as far as they were concerned, and this line of thinking draws support in the gospels by Jesus' reference to Beelzebub and the casting out of devils.

(iv) Caution and reserve in the mystic writings. St John of the Cross' reserve about visionary experiences was referred to by Bruno de Jésus-Marie in his refutation of Beauraing (3/66), but *Namur II considered that his reading of St John of the Cross was not accurate; the writer on Banneux, van Houtryve, mentioned St John of the Cross, but felt that the tradition from St Margaret-Mary Alacoque to Fatima demonstrated the vitality of apparitions in the life of the Church, and thus Banneux was worthy of attention (3/67).

(v) The distinction between human (or natural) faith and divine faith. 'Divine faith' is exercised only with a

supernatural saving reality, as everything necessary was provided in the public (apostolic) revelation (3/68); it is reserved for faith in the saving revelation of God in Christ, while 'human faith', although edifying, is the term used only for belief in an event where divine revelation cannot be guaranteed, such as marian apparitions, and which is not part of the apostolic tradition. Mgr Kerkhofs wrote of Banneux (1947) that the supernatural nature of the events were considered to be "of a serious probability, worthy of a human faith" (3/69). Laurentin suggests, referring to points made by Congar and K Rahner, that such a distinction is debatable, as the end of devotion evoked by apparitions is still faith in the Triune God, even if the fact of the apparition is illusory (3/70).

(vi) The status of the witnesses. *Grenoble felt the need to establish "moral certitude", i.e. the very great probability of the divine supernatural character of the event, so as to make a positive declaration for pastoral reasons, as an "absolute theological certainty" was impossible because of the immaturity of the visionaries. During *Laval I the need for "juridical proofs" was expressed, i.e. the existence of a full and acceptable testimony by mature witnesses (so Sauv 's notes on Pontmain: although always loyal to the bishop, he felt that the lack of such a juridical proof - the visionaries were children - rendered a canonical judgement impossible).

Here now are the twelve main criteria used by the commissions of enquiry:

(1) character of the visionaries: main criteria for authenticity: (a) good character and religious development; (b) clear and consistent testimony; (c) no

financial or other material benefit; (d) no possibility of being duped or tricked (3/71).

(2) Health and perception of the visionaries: the following must be discounted: hallucination, illusion, suggestion, hysteria (3/72).

(3) Conformity of the accounts: usually members of a group of visionaries are interviewed separately (3/73).

(4) The message: must be orthodox, and worthy of its origin (ie the Virgin Mary), and eg wise, homogeneous and appropriate (3/74).

(5) The site of the phenomena: must conform to the claims and descriptions of the visionaries (3/75).

(6) The visionaries' community: the following must be discounted: (a) pressure of local clergy in encouraging visionaries; (b) hypnosis by persons unknown; (c) visions due to, or substantially fashioned by, the emotional excitement of crowds in attendance; (d) superstitious and heterodox beliefs conditioning the visionaries into their experiences (3/76).

(7) Catholic belief in the apparitions: if a substantial number of Catholics believe, this is in favour, although the discord in some cases has not necessarily deterred the commissions (except *Malines) (3/77).

(8) Subsidiary phenomena during the apparitions: which increase the number of witnesses to unusual events (3/78).

(9) Form and impact of the main visionary phenomena: the conduct and appearance of the visionaries during their trances is taken into account, and must be worthy of communication with the Virgin Mary (3/79).

(10) Healing of visionaries or pilgrims: a central feature for *Tarbes and *Bourges, healings must be instantaneous, complete, durable, unforeseen medically, and transformative (3/80).

(11) Spiritual fruits: eg pilgrimage, conversion, attendance at the sacraments, and therefore a major factor in all cases (3/81).

(12) Prophecy: three kinds possible: (a) that pertaining to the internal dynamic of the phenomenon; (b) that foretelling apocalyptic events; (c) that foretelling mundane events. Category (b) has not usually been involved in the work of the commissions, but (a) and (c) have both been used as support and, when doubts arise, as arguments against apparitions (3/82).

3.4 Reasons for failure to receive approval

Here we are dealing with negative criteria likely to invite episcopal stricture of some kind, and we will compare the suppressed cases with those that have been approved. Obviously, the positive criteria in 3.3 are relevant to this topic. Before moving on to that part of the discussion, however, we can identify five major reasons for ecclesiastical rejection or condemnation of an apparition case.

3.4.1 Direct threat to the Catholic hierarchy

The first and foremost negative criterion is outright criticism of some aspect or person in the Church. Bayside's denunciation of specified cardinals, and the suggestion that an imposter had taken the place of the pope, offends both politically - as an invitation to schism and paranoia - and theologically - making the doctrine of apostolic succession uncertain, and also being too specific to be a reiteration of the gospel message for our day. The "Little Pebble" also names a satanic cardinal as well as suggesting that he himself is the rightful future pope. Palmar de Troya's anti-conciliar schism is somewhat different from these in that it did not occur until well after denunciation by the Church. Yet any hopes for its rehabilitation will not be realised while these 'bad fruits' remain (3/83).

The idea that corruption exists in the highest quarters of the hierarchical Church, but does not reach the papacy itself, has featured at Amsterdam and Garabandal (3/84). In the latter case, this followed episcopal rejection of the supernatural basis of the apparitions by three years. The visions at Amsterdam forecast a great battle in the

Church, with the core of beliefs surviving sweeping changes before the year 2000. They also emphasised the importance of belief in the Real Presence at the Eucharist. Those at Garabandal, too, tried to re-establish traditional respect for the Eucharist and priesthood (3/85).

The secret of Melanie Calvat is a famous nineteenth-century precedent for prophetic criticism of priests. This was, as we have seen, suppressed without this harming the cause of the apparition at La Salette (1/42). Like the visionaries at Amsterdam and Garabandal, Mélanie did not allow her scorn for lukewarm priests to extend to the papacy; on the contrary, she had great fears and concern for the pope as a lonely and besieged figure in a persecuted Church, as did Lucia Santos in her revelations of 1936-42 (although Lucia's message did not criticise the priesthood) (3/86).

3.4.2 Involvement in mundane politics

Mélanie's secret (referring to nations and the emperor of France) was suppressed; Lucia's (in which Russia was the origin of error and persecution) appeared after approval of Fatima, and has been neither accepted nor condemned officially (3/87). Clear references to political matters at the time of an apparition event do not help its cause. Neuholz' anti-Prussian slant was ignored by the Church and suppressed by the authorities. Visions at Necedah and Bayside were clearly pro-American, with more than a hint of nationalist paranoia. Palmar de Troya's conservatism in religious matters was matched by a reactionary mood as regards Spanish politics.

The visionary at Kérinzen spelt out marian favour for France and the danger from Russia and communism, while at

Amsterdam the enemies of the Church were named: modern humanism, realism, socialism, and communism, echoing the 1864 Syllabus of Errors, but not helping the cause of the visionary around the time of Vatican II. Penablanca, in Chile, is suspected of a pro-Pinochet bias.

The traditional claim of the Church to be above politics does not make it easy, even for the most partisan of bishops, to endorse an apparition which makes a definite political statement. This is especially true of the post-war period in which Catholic nationalism has become less acceptable than ever. The Virgin grieved for France at the Rue du Bac convent in 1830 because of impending civil strife (3/88); this was acceptable to the Church at that time, but an allusion to similar political concerns discouraged the archbishop of Tours from encouraging the new shrine at L'Ile-Bouchard in 1947 (3/89).

3.4.3 Bizarre nature of the visionary phenomena

Thurston described much of the phenomenon at Tilly-sur-Seulles as being "characteristic of certain forms of hysteria". People had fits, and some of the visionaries were unpleasantly contorted while in trance. As to the content of the visions,

"some of the figures seen were ostensibly edifying and religious, but there were others which were horrible and altogether horrifying" (3/90).

The hierarchy are unlikely to accept anything threatening to religious order and inner peace; this is characteristic of Christian authorities throughout the ages when faced with phenomena that could be described as an extreme form of "enthusiasm".

Thurston referred to Ezquioga as a place of "fanatical scenes" (3/91); it was disowned quickly by the hierarchy.

Thirty years later in Spain, Garabandal was rejected by a commission within sixteen months of the first apparition. Here the four visionaries made a dramatic impact with the ability to walk backwards at speed, to apparently gain weight during the ecstasies, to almost defy gravity with strange backward-leaning poses, and to identify the owners of mixed-up objects given to them. In addition, a 36 year-old priest visiting the site died the night after having himself perceived a vision, and the children reported having spoken to him after this (3/92).

Laurentin suggests that the visionaries of Garabandal took up poses which resemble those of hysteria, but he does not feel that this was manifested otherwise in their lives (3/93). It is not clear whether these phenomena contributed to the negative attitude of the bishops of Santander during the 1960s; there is no clear explanation for the conclusion of the 1961-2 commission in finding a "natural" explanation for Garabandal (3/94). The possibility of mental disturbance is the most obvious natural reason for such occurrences, and it would not be surprising if a suspicion of this formed the basis for the decision.

3.4.4 Retractions

At Mettenbuch, the bishop reported that the child visionaries had retracted their statements under questioning. The visionaries at Garabandal went through a period of doubt after both main periods of apparitions, and Conchita Gonzalez admitted her change of mind to the bishop of Santander in 1967. Yet since this short period, three of the four visionaries, including Conchita, have regained their belief in the authenticity of their experiences although they now avoid public scrutiny (3/95). Jeanne-Marie Lebossé's retraction in 1920 was not decisive against Pontmain because the other visionaries

kept to their original story (3/96).

3.4.5 Problems with pilgrimage and devotion

If the local bishop decides that the cult at a new apparition shrine is unedifying, or based on an error, then he may prohibit pilgrimage there. There is no known case where the crowds have continued to gather for any appreciable time at a shrine suppressed in this way. Mettenbuch and Veyziat were nineteenth-century apparition sites condemned by the local episcopate; the latter case was causing much scandal in the polarised political atmosphere of the early 1870s.

The movement that follows pilgrimage may cause concern for the Church, especially when it becomes vigilant in its desire to spread messages and consequently ignores the strictures of the local bishop. The letter on Garabandal from the SCDF to the archbishop of New Orleans in 1970 stated that

"the Holy See deplors the fact that certain persons and institutions persist in fomenting the movement in obvious contradiction with the dispositions of ecclesiastical authority, and thus disseminate confusion among the people, especially among the simple and defenceless". Yet the SCDF was not concerned about the status of the apparitions themselves, having "always striven to abstain from any direct declaration on the question, precisely because it did not consider it necessary to do so after the clear and express decisions of the bishop of Santander", who denied the possibility of the supernatural (3/97).

The point about Garabandal is that the movement had overstepped the boundaries of respect for the local bishop; this was a 'bad fruit', and could not help the cause. However, pressure brought to bear on the hierarchy by pilgrims and devotees might have a telling influence in time. New bishops with jurisdiction over Garabandal (1/87)

and San Damiano (1/82) have attempted to introduce pacifying measures to ease the situation years after episcopal prohibitions.

Other cases where some aspect of the cult (messages, pilgrimage or the erection of buildings) has been suppressed are: Balestrino, Kérinzen, and Pescara. Another common policy of the bishop, as we have seen with regard to Beauraing, is to prohibit priests from attending the site; this was imposed at Garabandal and Pescara, amongst other shrines (3/28).

3.4.6 Remarks on cases suffering episcopal prohibitions

The lack of careful and critical documentation on most of these cases does not make it easy to assess them. Some writers champion them as causes, attempting to smooth over embarrassing detail in a way that scarcely hides predispositions: Derobert looks with favour on events which are regarded elsewhere as having been condemned and manages, on the whole, to overlook or diminish contention and conflict within the Church (3/98). Others follow the official Church line and stress those negative elements which are most likely to gain the reader's agreement with the episcopal decisions taken (3/99). Laurentin has tried to be objective and fair, but he does not give much space to each individual case (3/100).

The most difficult and yet important question that arises is: can one discern a clear qualitative difference between phenomena approved by the episcopate and those condemned? We have seen how crucial the approval of the local bishop proves to be in most cases. Is this decision an arbitrary one, or is the bishop really appealing to clear and distinct principles that can be applied universally? Are the positive and negative criteria outlined here and in

3.3 above applied in retrospect after a subjective decision made by a bishop or a hand-picked commission?

For the most part, the answers to such questions are lost to history. Yet, drawing on our work so far, especially on the better-documented cases, we may here note the following speculative conclusions, which will form a basis for our critique in 4.3.1:

(a) the bishop's reaction is based almost wholly on pastoral concern rather than a purist attitude to apparitions per se - this pastoral policy may incline a particular bishop to a positive attitude (because of popular religious renewal) or a negative one (because of the possibility of conflict within the Church or between Church and State, of a threat to Church order, or of a loss of credibility for Catholicism) (3/40);

(b) the subjective feelings of the bishops have tended to mirror local and contemporary moods within the Church, such as eg attitudes to modernising programmes within the Church, national periods of popularity for apparitions (eg France, 1830-1880) or repression of their cults (eg Spain, sixteenth century - date) (1/19; 1/86; 2/32; 3/101);

(c) the more wordy or complex the messages, the less likely the event is to receive the hierarchy's approval (2/121);

(d) the bishop does have control over the personnel making up the commissions, and thus ultimately over judgement (3/102).

3.4.7 Comparisons with authenticated phenomena

On reflection, however, we can be a little more definite than the above suggests in noting that the approved cases do display a lack of contentious output. In the main, there is no distinct reference to Church or secular politics: the content is confined to doctrinal or devotional issues. The possible exception - the revelations of Lucia Santos twenty or more years after the apparitions at Fatima - is qualified by the refusal of the papacy to reveal the "third secret", even though the other secrets gained implicit approval with the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart (1/59; 1/63). Perhaps the Church regards this case rather differently as it appears to deal with the threat of militant atheism rather than any specific national interest.

The approved cases contain messages which are short, clear and (with the possible exception of La Salette) were recorded accurately, as far as can be assessed, at the time of their original promulgation. Note that the apparitions at the Rue du Bac and Pellevoisin, which may transgress this rule, were never authenticated although the devotions based on them gained universal favour. Here we might perceive a difficulty in that the approval of a cult encourages a general belief in the accounts of its origin. There is certainly a lack of clarity in the official position on this point (3/103).

The authenticated apparitions (if we exclude the resulting 'copycat' visions (3/104)) took place in a spirit of relative calm and prayerful awe, and gave rise to an orderly and orthodox pilgrimage cult which persevered over time (3/105). Of course, the hierarchical Church played a major part in the survival of the shrines. Yet there was nothing untoward that can be uncovered in the period

before the commissions of enquiry - the curiosity about the secrets of La Salette gained momentum with the national crisis of 1848, the commission having already reached a positive verdict (3/106).

In recent times, three apparitions in Latin America have gained some measure of approval (3/23; 3/93). The bishop of Los Teques, Venezuela, carried out enquiries of his own into the visions at Betania, where the religious revival and healings impressed him. The apparitions having ceased in 1984, he gave his official approval in 1987, after first notifying Rome. The apparitions at Cuapa were encouraged by the bishop of Juipalga, Nicaragua, without a formal declaration; the messages there portrayed an interesting balance between Catholic renewal, warnings for the world, the need for peace and forgiveness, and the importance of the person over and above the trappings of religion. The bishop of San Nicolas, Argentina, formed a commission there to investigate local visionary phenomena: this came to a positive conclusion in 1986 having discounted doctrinal error or mental instability in the seer. Official recognition has not occurred, but there is episcopal encouragement for the shrine.

There is also a report that the apparitions at Kibeho have been regarded with some favour by the bishop of Butare, Rwanda; this is not authentication, but approval of the shrine and confirmation that no part of its messages is contrary to Catholic faith or morals (3/107). It is true that nothing in the reports of these favoured cases presents a difficulty for the criteria above. The bishop in each case was satisfied that he had carried out the positive function of the Church - to support fruitful popular religious renewal - and its negative counterpart - to ensure the absence of error. Yet, on the face of it, these cases are longer in time and more wordy than the

older approved ones, in keeping with recent parallels. They also contain the apocalyptic warning now so familiar (3/108).

Note too the positive episcopal reactions to accounts of weeping statues since the War: Syracuse (Sicily), Akita (Japan), Naju (South Korea). In addition, there is the Coptic recognition of two apparition events in Cairo, Zeitoun and Shoubra. These were unusual because of the apparent ability of everyone present to see the luminous silent figure identified as Mary, many of the seers being Muslims.

We cannot, of course, preclude the possibility that an equally deserving apparition event faded into obscurity because the local Church refused to sanction it. However, many rejected apparitions for which some records exist display negative features which can be identified clearly, even if it cannot be guaranteed that these have been recorded from an objective standpoint. Suffice it to say here that the productive aspect of a survey such as this consists not so much in judgement on cases in the past, but in methodology and criteria which may serve a useful purpose in the immediate future.

3.5 Summary and conclusions

Chapter 3 is similar to the first chapter in that it consists mainly of data, even if this has been categorised somewhat. Therefore our conclusions will merely be a summary of the facts. Although there are at least five cases of apparitions reported per year, over the period 1830-1980 only eleven have been given official approval. In eight cases, the apparitions themselves have been recognised as divine and supernatural, although this does

not oblige anyone to believe in them as such. In a further three, the cult and devotions associated with the visions have been authenticated, which lends some measure of approval to the apparitions themselves. The 1980s promise a resurgence of official encouragement, with four cases already having received some degree of approval, although these are outside Europe: Cuapa, Betania, San Nicolas, Kibeho. These figures do not include the 'weeping statues', of which three have been approved, nor approved apparitions in Cairo under Coptic ecclesiastical legislation.

There are also shrines which suffered the negative mood of the pre-1980 period, but the cults of which still thrive in opposition to the official position: most notably, Garabandal and San Damiano. It is possible that a more positive enquiry may rehabilitate these. There are also several recent cases, especially in Italy and Ireland, but so far the episcopate has tended to ignore them unless forced to make a pronouncement. The most famous of all recent apparitions, those at Medjugorje, still await a decision (which is now in the hands of the Yugoslav national episcopate (3/109)).

Ecclesiastical attitudes to apparitions vary according to period and country, and are swayed by contemporary moods within the Church universal. On the whole, local priests are more receptive to popular phenomena than bishops, whose concern is wider than the immediate locale. However, all the approved cases of the last two centuries have enjoyed the support of at least the local bishop, even if after a brief period of reserve at the outset of the phenomena. This is not surprising, as the bishop has control over the personnel chosen for the enquiry, and has even been known to ignore negative findings (eg especially Banneux).

The clearest criterion for the discernment of apparitions at the episcopal level is pastoral: ie the bishop asks whether the events add to, or detract from, religious devotion which is ordered and under the control of the Church hierarchical. Thus complicated or political messages are much-disliked, as they threaten to divert the attention of people from regular, ordered piety. Phenomena that are in themselves bizarre or highly enthusiastic are therefore also discouraged, in addition to those that generate unruliness or disobedience to the Church. Equally important is that the messages and claims of the seers should be doctrinally and morally orthodox.

We might ask the question as to whether there are any 'pure' criteria for apparitions that are separate from such pastoral considerations. Even the good character and mental health of the seers is necessary for the reputation of the Church (were it to encourage the phenomena) to remain intact. It is, of course, unlikely that any aspect of the judgement will be free from the pastoral concerns of the bishop. However, there is the criterion of 'signs' (3/110), which could in theory be independent of the desire for control of the bishop, even if not in practice. These include prophecies, healings and subsidiary phenomena (the latter experienced by persons who are not the main seers).

Nevertheless, we can confirm that (assuming the documentary evidence to be sound) the hierarchical Church is at least consistent with regard to applying its own criteria to those apparitions that have been authenticated (yet see (3/108)). The one possible exception to this is the support given for the later revelations of Lucia dos Santos of Fatima, although even here, the hierarchy has been careful not to become too involved with the more political and apocalyptic aspects of the message. On the

whole, the approved cases have manifested non-contentious messages, short, clear and properly-recorded, relative calm during the apparitions themselves and an orderly, orthodox cult. The Church has soon suppressed any element that threatened the original order of the case, especially new visionaries that lacked the poise and calm of the originals (eg Lourdes, Beauraing).

The 1978 Vatican directive clarifies the discernment criteria and pastoral policy but, unfortunately, it is not widely available, and we will be glad that Laurentin has chosen to 'leak' its contents (3/111). It gives four main headings for discernment criteria: the fact, the character of seers, orthodoxy and 'fruits' (ie the resulting cult and devotion). These headings, by and large, with the addition of signs, include the twelve main and five negative criteria that we have distilled from the commission histories here. Elsewhere, Laurentin suggests seven major criteria for believers when judging an apparition event: sufficiency of information, orthodoxy, transparency, signs, expert opinion, good fruits and the attitude of Church authority (3/112).

Although Laurentin uses the outline of the 1978 document in setting these as the main criteria, he is adding some of his own thoughts and observations. As a commentator on the business of apparitions, he stands outside the actual application of the criteria in historical circumstances, ie he has not sat on a commission of enquiry. However, his opinion as an expert is of great help to the Church's experience of apparitions as it evolves and expands. In the first part of chapter 4, we consider several such Catholic experts who have contributed to the debate, so that we can begin the task of building a model that allows us to understand these phenomena.

One final point: von Hügel's division of religious matters into the three 'elements' - institutional, intellectual, and emotional-mystic - is very useful for understanding the basis of the Catholic debate about apparitions. The hierarchy either encourage them (and, conversely, the cults are usually supportive of the Vatican) or discourage them from an intellectualist standpoint (thus Berthier, de Bonald et al - see (1/19), (1/23), (3/52)). Sometimes members of the priesthood clash with Catholic intellectuals (like de Jésus-Marie, Derselle et al - see (3/55)). Occasionally the cults enter into conflict with the hierarchy (3.4.1; 3.4.5).

Von Hügel's concept is thus appropriate to marian visions, especially when he notes the ever-present possibility of conflict between the three elements of religion, and also when he remarks on the fact that two of them often ally against a third, particularly the institutional and emotional-mystic against the intellectual (3/113). The emotional-mystic element in such a scenario may be represented by the visions and their cults.

Chapter 4: The Authenticity Criteria: Analysis and Critique

4.1 Introduction

Each commission of enquiry took some, perhaps not all, of the criteria identified in 3.3 into account when evaluating the visionary phenomenon under their jurisdiction. However, certain of the criteria are always high on the agenda and cannot be overlooked by the commissions: the first four (character and health of the seers, conformity of their accounts and content of their message) and the last three (healings, impact on general spirituality, and prophecy). The governing principles for authentication have always included the two main negative criteria: (i) that natural explanations (i.e. those that explain the phenomenon in its totality by natural causes) should be eliminated and (ii) that the visionary experience as a whole, doctrine and morals, should not deviate from orthodox Catholic teaching.

Lambertini, later Benedict XIV, as we have noted, was often referred to by investigators seeking rules for discernment. His eighteenth-century synopsis of the Catholic tradition on saints, ecstasies, visions and revelations laid much of the groundwork for later considerations of any of these questions. He too was interested in basic principles. Under 'natural causes', he listed eg sickness, delirium, melancholy, mental or physical illness in general, excessive abstinence and old age. In his opinion (not an unusual one for its time), the most susceptible to illusory phenomena were women and children, although he was very concerned to add that, despite this tendency, many women had been authentic

visionaries and great saints in the history of the Church (4/1).

On the second main negative criterion, ie the absence of heterodoxy, Lambertini was also adamant (3/58). In this connection, he referred to the figure of Mary directly (his thesis was not on marian apparitions, but Mary is so often the object of visions and revelations in the Catholic world). Propositions about Mary's uniqueness, he wrote, that were 'revealed' to people but which had no scriptural or reasonable foundation, were heretical: one could not simply 'suppose' them to be true (4/2). This suggests an important extension for the criterion of orthodoxy, and one which is considered in discernment of apparitions: the figure of Mary must herself conform to Catholic tradition based on scripture.

The major positive criterion is, of course, that there should be 'spiritual fruits': for example, good morals (especially of the visionaries themselves), devotions, conversions, healings, correct prophecies. Lambertini wrote a good deal about positive signs such as these (3/58). Later on, we use the concept of 'transformation' derived from the writing of Karl Rahner on this subject, but which is implied in many other works. This will be a major step forward in our understanding of what an apparition event might be, and how it could be valued.

The first part of this chapter is an attempt, much more humble and considerably briefer than Lambertini's, to draw on relevant Catholic writers, and see what they contribute to the question of authenticity criteria. Of course, what they have to say mirrors the data on the commissions somewhat, but there are several new insights as well as attempts to build theological models for understanding the phenomena. Mary herself is also considered in this

literature: is the Mary of apparitions really the biblical Mother of Jesus?

Having reached a basic understanding of how we might, theologically, judge an apparition event, we could not develop the subject further without asking the question: do the commissions make the most of the Catholic teaching and tradition on the subject? Do they succeed in reaching an objective judgement? Therefore, the second half of the chapter is a critique of the authentication process as it has been carried out thus far in our selected period by the commissions that we referred to in chapter 3.

4.2 An analysis of the authenticity criteria in the light of Catholic commentaries

4.2.1 The criteria

It is clear from the available documentation that, in the approved cases at least, we should discount any suggestion that the visionaries were guilty of fraud - they sincerely believed, or came to believe, that they had seen the Virgin Mary. Equally unlikely is the possibility that the visionaries were duped or hypnotised, despite theories to this effect by opponents of La Salette and Beauraing. More serious is the plausibility that we are dealing with a medical or natural 'psychic' phenomenon. The commissions considered that they had ruled out the former; it would seem that medical investigators were unable to diagnose hallucinatory illness in the visionaries (4/3) (it is, after all, a common enough mental problem elsewhere). David Doyle remarked that vagueness was a telltale sign of hallucination, and that authentic visionaries would be precise as to details of time, place, and content - a

quality which may be applied to seers in accepted cases, he felt (4/4).

The doctors at Lourdes resorted to a hypothesis of illusion sustained by intense emotional pressure. Yet, as a general possibility, this has not really proved convincing even to those sceptical of the divine origin of apparitions. This is in part due to the unlikelihood of a group of visionaries persevering in such a false perception undetected by careful observation and interrogation (hence Derselle and de Greeff made much of the fact that not all of the Beauraing children saw and heard all of the visions (4/5)). The Jesuit Herbert Thurston, a member of the Society for Psychical Research (4/6), therefore preferred to seek the answer in a psychic ability enjoyed by certain persons irrespective of "holiness" (4/7). He wondered whether such people could "exercise a telepathic influence" on those around them, causing them to see subsidiary phenomena (4/8). Thurston was not against the possibility of an authentic apparition per se - he accepted Lourdes as a supernatural phenomenon ("we are well assured"), but not La Salette (because of its "bizarre prophecies") (4/9).

Thurston did not accept that there was a 1:1 correspondence between the good character of the visionary and the divine origin of the vision. Just as non-believers sometimes perceived strange phenomena (we should note that this happened at Fatima), so pious people could experience false visions, eg Marie Courrech at Lourdes (4/10). Marie's experience was of the 'copycat' type, coming soon after the ecstasies of Bernadette Soubirous; Thurston noted that the copycat visions of Belgium in 1933 were a national-scale version of those at Lourdes, made possible by more modern means of communication (4/11). Bernard Billet agreed that a multiplication of apparitions in the

same place and time should be treated with suspicion (4/12). This factor weighs heavily against authenticity, and Banneux's visions were doubted because of their proximity to those at Beauraing; nevertheless, Banneux did not fall foul of the charge of mimicry, a clear disqualifying feature (4/13).

Tilman Côme followed the children in experiencing visions at Beauraing; as at Banneux, Côme's accounts contained enough new material to avoid the charge of mimicry. However, Côme's case presented another negative feature as well as its proximity to other phenomena: the self-centredness of some of the messages (4/14), a trait not usually applicable to child visionaries. Here we return to the theme of character. Mélanie Calvat could be said to have been an egotist, but this is not obvious at the time of the apparition at La Salette. The apparition stands as authentic in the eyes of the Church, but Mélanie's later revelations do not (1/42). Doyle, like Thurston, put the lack of egotism as an obligatory characteristic of an authentic apparition: the true visionaries are

"devoid of an appetite for sensation and self-aggrandisement" and, although sometimes they have manifested "self-importance, argumentativeness, emotionality, diffidence, stubbornness, indirection and human failure... none became unstable, immoral or uncatholic; none took credit for what befell them" (4/15).

So, although we might accept Thurston's point that holiness is not a necessary qualification for some kind of visionary experience, it would have to be conceded that the Catholic tradition demands a test of character for an authentic (ie 'divinely-inspired') visionary even if only after the experience (4/16). William Christian noted how Jeanne d'Arc's stubbornness caused some churchmen to dismiss her visions on the grounds of her lack of character and comportment (4/17). (These criteria and a

consideration of emotional response were used in late medieval Spain (4/18).) In the fifteenth century, Catholic writers such as Gerson and Bouille, in commentating on Jeanne's case, listed five "virtues of Mary" likely to be displayed by a seer: humility, openness to counsel, patience, accuracy, and charity (4/19).

Lambertini stressed that visions and revelations were no proof of sanctity: rather, sanctity helped to prove the genuine nature of visions and revelations (4/20). Hilda Graef's work on the stigmatist Therese Neumann also insists on this principle. Her verdict on Neumann is that she was ignorant of the Gospel message, unenlightened, not contrite, not above accusing others, egocentric, uncontrolled while in ecstasy, and her 'miracles' had no charitable end. Thus, in Graef's opinion, morality is central to the question of whether a supernatural miracle has occurred or not (4/21). Graef adds that natural explanations would account for Neumann's 'miracles' nowadays, where once diabolical agencies would be suspected: from a medical point of view, Graef concludes, Neumann was an hysteric (4/22).

Now, although the visionaries' local environment may be conducive to their experience, it should not, as we saw in 3.3, be wholly responsible for it. Thurston pertinently remarked that visions and dreams would be repressed by the visionaries themselves in a milieu which did not value them, whereas Catholics are more likely than others to make their experiences public (4/23). (He wondered, too, whether local conditions could have a 'psychic' influence, e.g. the bizarre phenomena at Tilly-sur-Seulles which occurred some fifty years after the apocalyptic and condemned prophecies of Eugène Vintras in that same town (4/24).) Doyle pointed out that, statistically, modern Catholics living in the post-war period of mass-literacy

and radio were more likely to have visions than their rural predecessors (4/25)!

Karl Rahner felt that positive characteristics such as piety, honesty, sound mental and physical health, personal integrity, transformation during ecstasy, even parapsychological powers, did not guarantee the authenticity of visions (4/26). The conclusive criterion was the connection of the vision with

"a proper and original mystical phenomenon belonging to the realm of infused contemplation" (4/27).

This experience should produce a transformation of the seer (4/28). Much of the experience is for the individual visionary alone; for other people, meaningfulness is a matter for free judgement. For Rahner, a physical or moral "miracle" is required if a prophecy is to make demands on the Church as a whole - the miracle must be connected with the prophecy (4/29).

In general, we can observe that miracles will be those of healing and conversion, and will be subject to tests for 'naturalness' in the same way that the visions are. Prophets were verified by signs and miracles in the middle ages (4/30). The most enduring 'sign' of all, however, is the perseverance of the faithful in their orthodox devotion to the apparition and its shrine: a true statement of the 'sensus fidelium' (4/31). Thus the opponents of La Salette tried to show that the cult had become aberrant in its early years (4/32).

Rahner conceded that it was very difficult to demonstrate that the content of a visionary experience exceeded a seer's sensible and intellectual faculties (4/33). The vision and any attendant ecstasy were the echo of the deeper (mystical) spiritual process, and this echo was influenced by the subjective disposition (4/34). Thurston

observed that, in a crowd of people experiencing some kind of visionary phenomena, different people recounted different details as to the content of their vision (4/35); thus he too assents to the considerable subjective element in the apparitions. Laurentin conceded that there was an element of "relativity" in apparitions, but asserted that no opposition existed between 'subjective' and 'objective': this was a naive dilemma (4/36). The apparitions were a "sign from heaven", and should neither be reduced to subjective experience, nor credited with an absolute character (4/37).

Both Rahner and Thurston felt the need to stress the limitations of the Church's judgement in such matters. For Rahner, the judgement was not infallible even if deserving to be obeyed (4/38). Thurston's view was that an episcopal judgement was not final or irreformable, even if worthy of respect locally (4/39). Nevertheless, there was a growth of the control of the Church over apparitions and prophecies during the middle ages, according to Doyle (4/40). Christian noted how apparitions came to be perceived as threatening in Spain after the sixteenth century (1/86; 4/41). Perhaps this was due to the validation of

"the local as opposed to the governmental or bureaucratic"

that he identified in visionary phenomena (4/42), as he added elsewhere that the theology contained in them was normally orthodox (4/43).

Of course, wrote Christian, ultimately

"power structures... assume control of the sacred enterprises they first refused to accept" (4/44).

Thus there is no doubting the important influence of judgement, whether or not finally infallible. Now, however pious the visionary, it is the message that affords the

best vehicle for integration of a new shrine into the institutional structure of the Church. The move to control the phenomenon occurs most markedly at the level of meaning - a matter for free judgement, according to Rahner (4/29), but in practice a crucial issue subject to ecclesiastical regulation.

So, the test for a natural or medical explanation for the visionary phenomena and subsequent confirming miracles having proved negative, the criteria for authentication must also devolve on a consideration of the message given, and of its 'heavenly' giver. Doyle believed that links between authenticated apparitions show a Mary in keeping with the New Testament picture - simple and direct in her language, God-centred in the content of her communications, motherly in her attitude. In addition, according to Doyle, her messages are evangelical on the whole, calling people to conversion and prayer; they rest both on the firm ecumenical doctrine of the early Church and on the development of official Catholic doctrine and teaching, often reiterating contemporary papal initiatives (4/45).

Doyle further noted the need for the authentic visionary to be non-schismatic in character, and he remarked on the strange inability of the visionaries of more recent times to report "clearly, simply and distinctly orthodox" statements - for him, this was a striking fact given the clear teaching of the catechism (4/46). Doyle does not appear to have drawn definite conclusions from this, except to point out that such a feature disqualifies the recent cases from the authentic list. Perhaps, with Derselle's Et si c'était le diable? in mind, we could ask whether such a phenomenon suggests a diabolical origin rather than a natural one (yet here we should bear in mind

that even medieval Spaniards preferred to avoid such explanations! (4/47)).

Billet pointed out the absurdity of messages (eg those at Kérinzen, France, 1938-65) which preached unconditional fidelity to the Church, while the devotees refused to accept episcopal prohibition on publications about the apparitions (4/48). Such contradictions, either within the messages themselves or between message and praxis, are clear disqualifying factors even when, as at Kerinzen, there appears to be genuine conversion to religious faith in the wake of the phenomena (4/49). For Billet, the crucial positive criterion is transparency: the message should be clear and not open to polarised interpretations (such as given to those originating from Amsterdam, 1945-59 (4/50)). Yet even this favourable quality can be spoilt by a total emphasis on the negative (eg punishment and sin) rather than the positive (God's love and salvation), or on the inessential (eg special devotions). In addition, the devotees ought to display humility, discretion, and respect for the Church (4/51). Billet considered Garabandal to fall foul of these criteria because of its apparent stress on the inessential, negative and marvellous, and also because of the conduct of its propagandists (4/52).

This onus on transparency recalls Derselle's criticisms of Beauraing, among which he called upon Ribet's distinction between the divine and either human or diabolical: the meaning of the former is quickly and clearly discerned (4/53). Derselle did not consider that Beauraing's messages passed this test; however, on this point many Catholics including the bishop of Namur disagreed with him, and Thys refuted his use of Ribet (4/54). The official ecclesiastical judgement as to whether a message,

or set of messages, is 'transparent' rests with the episcopate.

We can now sum up the most important criteria used by the commissions and analysed by the commentators thus:

- (i) the experience of the visionaries cannot be explained in any wholly natural way, e.g. by cunning, error, or medically-diagnosable conditions;
- (ii) the phenomena do not constitute a clear mimicking of preceding cases, or appear to have been brought on by other visions close in time or space;
- (iii) the visionaries' character is perceptibly strengthened at the time of the visions, and there is no self-centredness with regard to the experience itself;
- (iv) the visionaries' environment does not provide a full explanation of the experience (an indeterminate part of which, however, will be subjectively determined by environmental factors);
- (v) 'signs' such as subsidiary visionary phenomena, physical healing, or sudden conversion must be free of wholly natural explanations if they are to be used in support of the case (and normally some such support is necessary);
- (vi) the picture of Mary presented in the accounts of the seers, and reflected in their change of lifestyle, conforms to the gospel image of her;
- (vii) the messages and 'visual' detail are orthodox, in keeping with Catholic tradition, and not schismatic, self-contradictory, unclear, open to polarised interpretation, totally negative, nor concentrated on the inessential or marvellous;
- (viii) for the cult to be used in support of authenticity, its devotees should not contradict the messages in their actions, but should remain humble, discreet, and respectful of the wider Catholic community; in addition,

pilgrimage must persevere over a lengthy period while remaining orthodox in character and devotion.

The prophetic element in divinely-inspired messages is, according to Rahner and Schillebeeckx, simply repeating the core of the Christian revelation of salvation through Christ, but in a specific context. Post-apostolic prophecies tell us nothing new beyond scriptural perspective, but are

"timely imperatives for our day",
wrote Rahner (4/55). Schillebeeckx's analysis was that:

"Apparitions and private revelations are, therefore, a divine inspiration providing a guide or support which will show Christians the path to salvation in a definite spiritual situation and at a definite point of time" (4/56).

Therefore prophecy needs to be measured against scripture; it becomes meaningful only within the context of apostolic revelation.

"Divine prophecies will warn us against worldly optimism (and)... constantly announce a dark future" - so Rahner. "True prophecies call us to penance, conversion, prayer, trust in the victory of Christ, hope in God eternal". The future "is always forfeit to death (from a worldly point of view) and yet is profitable for the salvation of those who believe and love" (4/57).

4.2.2 The dynamics of the apparition phenomena

The above criteria are, on the face of it, a sensible set of guidelines for the would-be believer and canonical investigator alike to judge whether an apparition case is worthy of attention. The crucial question might be put thus: by means of a particular visionary phenomenon, do we encounter, in a definite and special way, the God who is fully revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? The assumption of the past has been that a 'miracle', a divine intervention not explicable naturally, must be clearly perceived as the basis of such an

encounter. Rahner identified two types of divinely-inspired vision: firstly, an action which transforms nature without suspending its laws and, secondly, a miracle which suspends them. The latter is the common explanation for 'authentic' visions, yet both elements may contribute to one case without ease of distinction (4/58). Rahner added that God may make use of natural laws alone; the Church's acknowledgement does not imply a literally miraculous intervention of God, as the wholesome effect of a vision comes from God without necessarily being miraculous (4/59). Therefore it is sufficient to distinguish 'natural causes' from this divine use of and transformation of nature in order to separate non-authentic visions from authentic ones respectively. The difficult matter of identifying a miraculous suspension of natural law (which can never be total anyway) is then a hurdle unnecessary to clear (4/60).

This, of course, raises the issue of what we mean by 'authentic'. In Rahner's model, the 'fruits' are the primary sign of authenticity, and so the phenomenon must be understood to be much wider than the visions themselves which (usually) stand at its detectable historical beginning. The visions are stimulated through the "intrinsic structure of the seer's spiritual faculties", and indeed, the whole phenomenon could be 'natural' but engendered by the divine agent in authentic cases (4/61).

So following Rahner, whose insights seem quite sound for the purpose, we seek criteria for distinguishing a transformation of nature as the basis for the divine encounter. Thus the compelling impact of Bernadette's ecstasies, the religious renewal in the diocese after the vision at La Salette, the revival of Catholicism in Portugal in 1917 - all factors which have convinced people of the divine origin of apparitions - might be seen as

examples of such transformation. So too, perhaps, are the many healings (the miraculous, ie non-medically explicable, nature of which would confirm the authenticity of the vision to which they are linked (4/62)).

The sensational 'dance' of the sun at Fatima could be explained, it might be thought, only by recourse to a suspension of natural laws. Yet not everyone in Fatima or its environs on October 13th 1917 experienced this spectacle; therefore we conclude that those who saw it fall into the same category as visionaries themselves, ie they experience visual and audial stimuli not perceptible to others at the same location. Thurston noted that cases where it seemed that everyone saw the vision (eg the cross at Migné, France, 1826) were almost certainly of the Fatima type, where only a part of the crowd (even though a large number) saw anything, but this fact was covered over because the more compelling memory of unanimous witness was left to posterity in its stead (4/63).

Therefore anyone who perceives anything inexplicable by natural means and undetectable by others is a 'visionary' of sorts and thus, referring to Rahner again, the kernel of their experience might be a mystical process echoed in the imaginative object which can be called a vision (4/64). Is the visionary experiencing a suspension of natural laws? This is difficult to evaluate, especially as they are not 'suspended' for everyone present; furthermore, we might follow Thurston in seeking to postulate a latent 'psychic' (and thus natural) ability in some people, so that they are able to glimpse 'mystical' truths. So the only satisfactory criterion that remains is that there should be a transformation of nature, while we leave the possibility of the suspension of natural laws open.

The next difficulty in evaluating the criteria is that we might have to accept circumstances which seem to fall short of a convincing 'transformation of nature'. This might be necessary because the accent on transformation puts the onus quite heavily on the persons involved in the encounter. At La Salette, it has been argued, the character of the visionaries as the years passed disqualifies this case. Whereas Bernadette of Lourdes and Lucia of Fatima entered the convent, remaining always humble and obedient, and the visionaries of Beauraing married and had families without ever disturbing the Church and its people, Maximin and Mélanie of La Salette became infamous (4/65). We will play the devil's advocate: Mélanie did not display any proof of being transformed for the good by her experience. Yet does this fact overshadow the revival of faith in the alpine area from 1846, or the healings, or the 140-odd years of pilgrimage?

Bernadette Soubirous gave posterity a useful metaphor for the importance of the visionary, likening herself to a broom put back in the corner after the room had been swept (4/66). The visionaries are, by this reckoning, under scrutiny only for as long as it takes for their news to be accepted on a wide scale. As soon as the Church authorities and Catholics generally are satisfied that the visionaries were worthy of their experience, then further developments in their careers, good or bad, are no longer relevant to the case unless a new testimony incontrovertably casts a different light on the original circumstances of the visions.

The dramatic impact of a phenomenon as a whole therefore begins with transformation (albeit temporary or intermittent) of the visionaries, which then spreads through the pilgrims and devotees. Perhaps the best criterion for the evaluation of this transformative

process is the medieval one, ie the virtues ascribed to Mary herself. Here, in passing, we might recall the virtues recorded by Doyle and given above: humility, openness to counsel, patience, accuracy, and charity, which in themselves imply the absence of negative attributes dealt with, such as self-centredness and tendency to schism and contradiction. The positive characteristics are inferences from the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity and Childhood accounts in Luke chapters 1-2; in addition, we could cite the references to the Magnificat and Mary's pilgrimage to the cross in John Paul II's recent encyclical, Redemptoris Mater (1987) (4/67).

The transformation model allows for the subjective element that is clearly integral to the visionary phenomenon, even as far as the appearance and words of the Virgin as they are reported by the seers. Any attempt to suppress the subjectivity which clothes the experience with local and temporal detail is a denial of the facts. The 'objective' element in the apparition experience may be that which Rahner identifies as a

"mystical phenomenon belonging to the realm of infused contemplation" (4/27),

of which the vision is an echo. This mystical and contemplative objectivity has no characteristics of form, but only those of quality - the quality is presumably that of the historical Mary, whilst the form is provided (unconsciously) by the seer from his or her own experience (and we might leave open the possibility of a 'psychic' element to this, eg 'knowledge' of the marian tradition and papal initiatives beyond what could have been learned locally).

Any suggestion that the seer perceives the glorious, assumed body of the Virgin Mary as real and objective in

the visionary experience will not find favour in Rahner's reading of the mystics St Theresa of Avila and St John of the Cross (4/68). Nevertheless, it is striking that a group of visionaries tends to see the same figure; here again, we seem to have the interplay of 'psychic' and subjective elements (according to locality). Perhaps the above observations will lessen the demand that a group of visionaries conforms completely in its reporting of the content of the experience. It is notable that, in the recent case of apparitions to a group at Medjugorje, much audial communication seems to be private (4/69). So perhaps the investigator should really be looking for a convergence of visionary testimony that goes beyond the appearance and words of the Virgin to a general quality, either a set of virtues or an overriding spirit behind the directives.

Such observations may be drawn from, and are relevant to, the criteria of authenticity used in the marian tradition as well as commentaries upon them. Hopefully, they will serve as an introduction to some of the topics dealt with later in the thesis. It will be sufficient to conclude this section with a reiteration of the two central aspects of our comments on the criteria so far:

(i) the main task of the commission of enquiry is to establish the occurrence of a divine transformation of people, visionaries, pilgrims and devotees, religiously, morally, and sometimes physically, over and above a purely natural explanation for the phenomena;

(ii) the commission must also be assured that the dynamic of this transformation and, in addition, the descriptions of Mary and her message conform to the scriptural image of

her, viewed in the light of traditional Catholic christocentric doctrine.

4.3 A critique of the authentication process

4.3.1 Episcopal and ecclesiastical policy

Here we may summarise the conclusions drawn in the previous chapters, i.e. that pastoral and general ecclesiastical pressures have an important influence on the bishop with jurisdiction over any particular case. These factors play as large a part as any 'objective' criteria (1/19; 1/28; 1/86; 2/32; 2/121; 3/40; 3/52; 3/101). Diocesan bishops appear more likely to be impressed by a local outbreak of religious renewal and pilgrimage than the metropolitan archbishops, whose concern is wider, reflecting the relationships between Church and State and the struggle for the credibility of Catholicism in modern culture (4/70). Furthermore, the bishop needs the encouragement of some local clergy in his pursuance of the cause of a new shrine (4/71). Of course, the remarks here on factors which sway bishops one way or another do not preclude the possibility that personal spirituality in many cases may have a large influence on the commitment made.

In addition to general predispositions to visionary phenomena, there is also the possibility that certain ideas are more likely to be popular than others. Bernadette's reference to the Immaculate Conception was a major factor in the favour shown her by the Church (4/72). In the same way, Catherine Labouré reported the revealed words "O Marie conçue sans péché..." at the time that Mgr de Quélen was attempting to re-establish devotion focussed on the Immaculate Conception (1/12). This is, as it were,

a second 'layer' of subjectivity that cannot be discounted when considering episcopal reactions.

The bishops' total control over the commissioning of investigators (3/102), coupled with their tendency to a subjective pastoral view according to contemporary factors, makes sense of the Council of Trent's advice to the effect that metropolitans and fellow bishops should be consulted in the event of difficulty (4/73). Yet we have seen that some bishops have persevered in the face of opposition or indifference at the metropolitan level (4/70). Then there is also the extraordinary case of Banneux, when the bishop ignored the commission that he himself had instituted (3/55).

This may make us sceptical of the process of authentication with regard to collegial decision-making and commissions of enquiry. Nevertheless, it is important pastorally that justice is seen to be done, and so the work of the commissions must be well-documented and seemingly based on objective and universal criteria (4/74). Mgr Kerkhofs did not override the second Liege commission without recourse to further scholarly reports (4/75). At Garabandal, however, the Santander commission was disregarded by local people and devotees because of a perceived lack of objectivity and clear procedure (4/76).

The proceedings at Santander do not seem to have been influenced by the careful pastoral policy of the sort envisaged by Mgr de Bruillard at Grenoble in 1847. His commission admitted that they were lacking in absolute certainty that Mary had appeared at La Salette, but they felt that the overwhelming "probability" of this in the face of the testimonies and religious renewal forced them to some kind of judgement. They therefore called upon the concept of "moral certitude"; in other words, they opted

for a pastoral judgement based on the 'sensus fidelium' (4/77). Pastoral concern is at the heart of every judgement, positive or negative, but the way in which this is perceived varies from case to case.

Yet the 'sensus fidelium' is, of course, subject in its turn to clerical pressure and encouragement; priests themselves participate in the new cults, including Garabandal (4/78). The balance of the dynamic relationship between clergy and laity is always hard to assess (4/79); one must conclude that a certain part of the Church, in which priests and people act together, is predisposed to accept certain apparition cases, while another part, also composed of clergy and laity, is liable to suppress or ignore them. The papacy has fallen into the first category during most of our period (4/80). A third group accepts most or all kinds of 'miraculous' phenomena uncritically (eg 3/98).

What really was and is lacking in the episcopal enquiry procedures is a healthy sense of self-criticism. The argument often centres on all kinds of complex, even trivial, detail (4/81) without anyone at any level asking searching questions about the predispositions of those who are reaching conclusions. In addition, we have noted that criticism of the clergy is a feature unlikely to aid the cause of visionary prophecy in a particular case (3.4.1). The apparent inability of the hierarchy for public self-examination in a collegial atmosphere does not lend conviction to the claim that an objective judgement is being made on visionary phenomena.

So we are left to reflect on what might be the reasons for a bishop being so inspired as to support the cause of an apparition event against clerical opposition. Furthermore, we might wonder why the Vatican finally gives its approval

in such cases. Here we are referring to de Bruillard and La Salette, Heylen and Beauraing, and Kerkhofs and Banneux. From the bishop's point of view, there is the local battle against religious indifference to consider - the miraculous is an aid to 'conversion' while pilgrimage affords an opportunity to establish a focal point for popular piety (4/82).

Let us speculate beyond these general points to specific observations for each case. De Bruillard did not have a famous shrine in his diocese, while the neighbouring bishop of Gap, in whose locality the well-known shrine Le Laus was situated, became quite wary of La Salette (4/83). Heylen and Kerkhofs were bishops in the somewhat anticlerical Wallonie area of Belgium, with depression and then military invasion disturbing the status quo and furthering the cause of left-wing politics (1/75; 1/76). As to the papacy, support for La Salette, Beauraing, and Banneux came during times of acute crisis and from popes whose interest in the marian movement is well-known (4/84).

The devotees of Garabandal have looked to papal favour to establish their shrine against episcopal opposition, just as the above-mentioned bishops did in their day (4/85). They have hoped that John Paul II will continue the tradition of papal support for large-scale popular apparition cults - a tradition that seemed to have waned under John XXIII and Paul VI (4/86). This issue is re-surfacing at Medjugorje, with the local bishop of Mostar opposing the cult, and international forces removing the case from his jurisdiction (4/87). Just how far the Vatican will agree to overturn the principle of local episcopal authority remains to be seen.

It is clear, then, that success for the apparition cults has so far depended on the climate in high ecclesiastical circles: firstly, the local bishop and his perception of pastoral policy and, secondly, the Vatican, which has been normally favourable to new cults since 1830 if and only if the local bishop champions them (4/88). Whether any cult could survive for any substantial length of time without episcopal approval is debatable, and recent cases like Garabandal, Palmar de Troya, and Medjugorje might serve as yardsticks for the future in this respect.

4.3.2 Descriptions of the phenomena

What is the Church actually saying about the apparition phenomena? De Bruillard declared that La Salette bore

"within itself all the characteristics of truth, and the faithful have grounds for believing it certain" (4/89).

Similar words were used by Laurence about Lourdes, but he took a bolder step in judging that the Virgin Mary "actually appeared" (4/90). The bishops Wicart and Charue followed this line in stating the appearance of Mary as a fact; Kerkhofs was hardly less definite with his recognition

"without reserve... (of) the reality of the eight apparitions" (4/91).

The authentication document by da Silva returned to the more cautious de Bruillard approach with a declaration that the visions of Fatima were "worthy of belief" (4/92).

This last statement is nearer to Kerkhofs' words in 1947, to the effect that the supernatural nature of Banneux was "of a serious probability, worthy of a human faith" (4/93).

As opposed to "human faith", "divine faith" and "catholic faith" are universal for, as Rahner said,

"God is prepared to grant everybody the graces of light and strength which are necessary for such acts of faith"

(4/94).

Everything necessary for the religious task of humanity was provided during the public revelation of Christ, wrote Schillebeeckx (4/95). The Holy Spirit is available to all, although the prophetic, charismatic element in apparitions may be a "concentration" of the Spirit, supporting the Church's public revelation (4/96). Therefore the apparitions, as "private revelations" that are "worthy" of "human faith" (4/97), fall in the same category as any other events of private enlightenment centred upon the Christian revelation; when declaring them worthy, the Church is merely removing any obstacle for the widening of the circle of those who believe in and are edified by them. But does this square with the statement that Mary "actually appeared"?

In fact, this widening of the circle, so to speak, comes to include the highest level of the Church as regards the eight major shrines of our period. Papal pilgrimages, endorsements of the cults, and references to the apparitions instituting them leave one in no doubt that popes themselves may be included among those considered as believers (4/98). So the Catholic Church at all levels participates in and encourages the cults. Misconceptions as to what kind of judgement the Church is making have been aggravated by the kind of theoretical leap made by Mgr Laurence in making a definitive statement in addition to recognising the "worthiness" and "characteristics of truth" of apparitions. The words "actually appeared" have the ring of dogma about them, the feel of an authoritative public revelation such as those of St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 (4/99). Yet this is not, as we have seen, the official position on these phenomena, belief in which is left to private discretion (3/1; 3/4; 3/5).

The fact that awe and devotion evoked by a literal understanding of apparitions was so mistrusted by the like of the Spanish contemplative and doctor of the Church, St John of the Cross (4/100), contributed to the reaction against popular marianism in Belgium in 1933. Yet Bruno de Jésus-Marie, the Carmelite and biographer of John who criticised the excitement over Beauraing (4/101), paid the price for publishing his arguments in co-operation with the Louvain academics who seemed to discount the possibility of apparitions as supernatural manifestations per se.

"The danger of a pious sentimentality supported by the doubtful extraordinary", as perceived by de Jésus-Marie (4/102),

might have seemed the lesser of two evils to Mgr Charue of Namur, contemplating the rising strength of secular, rationalist culture after the Second World War (4/103).

Thus, for the latter,

"the Queen of Heaven appeared... to show us her maternal heart..." (4/104).

Therefore the modern marian movement, even and especially at the level of episcopal statements, very often fails to draw on Catholic studies on visionary phenomena from past centuries (4/105). This making literal popular formulations of belief has the tendency to provoke a reaction against the worth of apparitions per se. We have noted above how notable writers admit that the subjective or relative element in visionary phenomena plays a large part, the objectivity therein being described as a "mystical phenomenon" (i.e. one without form to the corporeal senses), which becomes a "sign" by means of impact upon the subjective faculties (4/27; 4/36; 4/37; 4/68). If, perhaps, qualifications of theological subtlety resembling this had been included prominently in statements of authentication, then an understanding of

apparitions acceptable to different factions in the Church might have been fostered.

4.3.3 Criteria for transformation

We concluded in 4.2.2 that the dual task of a commission of enquiry was establishing the orthodoxy of an apparition and its cult with regard to faith and morals, and showing that a transformation of people had taken place in accord with the divine origin of the phenomenon in question. This second aspect of the commission's research, referred to as evaluating the 'fruits' of the event, is important for the Church in that it rules out two possibilities other than a divine origin for the visions: a natural explanation and a diabolical one (as the devil is supposed to be able to appear as an 'angel of light') (4/106).

The idea that a special divine manifestation will produce a positive transformation seems perfectly reasonable and in accord with biblical principles. Yet what kind of transformation? Healing, mental and physical, conversion to Christ, a greater depth of religious piety - these have all been cited (4/107). Here again we might perceive the possibility of one-sidedness in the authentication process. St John of the Cross' teaching on apparitions included the insistence that the soul

"must set its eyes only upon the spirituality which they produce, striving to preserve it in its good works and to practise that which is for the due service of God" (4/108).

Thus the importance of what we have referred to as transformation (following Rahner). However, have the commissions exhausted the possibilities for "good works"? Are these to be limited to religious and sacramental piety?

Gerry Hughes, on visiting Medjugorje, talked of his uneasiness about some pilgrims who tended to dilute the Virgin's message into certain limited forms: concerned only with religious piety, non-ecumenical, not bothered about social or political justice (4/109). This lack of what has been called "social praxis" conforms to the ideals of a Church which remains closed to wider socio-political issues, jealously guarding its own domain (4/110). The commissions of enquiry have tended to confine their observations on the effects of the visionary phenomena either to the religious sphere or to physical healing (4/111).

Perhaps this is all that is practicably possible, but it might be as well for the Church in this matter to stress the wider implications of 'transformation'. The point is that the authentication procedure, in this area as well as those relating to pastoral policy and theology, is prey to the subjectivity of time, place, and prevalent models of ecclesiology. The marian cult, if it is not to be rejected by many because of its being old-fashioned and indifferent to the issues of social justice, must develop along with other issues in Catholic thinking. Thus Neame can write:

"the crumbling of integrism at the Second Vatican Council opens the way to a newer understanding of Aquerd [i.e. Our Lady of Lourdes], liberal humanist madonna" (4/112).

There is already an example of social praxis at the shrines and within the marian cult. This is the respect and care given to the sick and handicapped, a tradition that has been centred on Lourdes, but which has emerged at all the other shrines too. For this reason, many clergy who dislike the marian cult make an exception for the case of Lourdes because of the spiritual and psychic health associated with pilgrimage there and the fact that there is no apocalyptic prophecy in the Lourdes message (4/113).

This tradition of care for the sufferers clearly satisfies one aspect of the criterion of transformation with regard to praxis. The difficulty is that the growth of such practices takes time, and many of the commissions of the past have completed their enquiries as quickly as possible, for the sake of answering the demands of pilgrims for a positive judgement (4/114).

In addition to the changing interpretations as to what might constitute spiritual transformation, there is also the problem of the widening horizons of science. The analyses made at Lourdes suggested the possibility that there could be a time when medical science would be able to explain the apparent miraculous healing properties of the grotto water. If this were possible, of course, the case for a supernatural agency would be liable to collapse - healing would be due to 'natural causes'. The ever-changing boundaries of science therefore present the Church with a potential dilemma, in that citing the absence of natural explanation as a criterion of authentication for apparitions and the associated phenomena leaves the demarcation lines unclear (4/115). The Church refers to experts in contemporary science, and thus cannot claim that its verification process is independent of the vicissitudes of the secular disciplines (4/116).

The search for medical and physiological norms for 'authentic' apparition phenomena is likely to continue (4/117). The alternative policy is to concentrate on the messages and 'spiritual fruits' alone, but it is unlikely that people in general will cease to look for 'miraculous' confirmation of spiritual truths that come from a 'charismatic' source, even obviously profound ones. That said, general respect for science will necessitate a clear understanding of what is meant by 'miracle'.

4.3.4 Summary

So, in summing up, we can confirm that there are good grounds for being critical of the authentication process as used so far by the ecclesiastical authorities - while respecting the soundness of most of the criteria used - because of the apparent lack of recognition by the episcopal Church that the enquiry procedure is, to a large extent, highly subjective. For example, as we have observed:

(i) the clergy are likely to have presuppositions about visionary phenomena based on their understanding of pastoral policy; the commission process is not always respected by the episcopate; popes with strong marian leanings have been supportive of bishops who wish to establish shrines against ecclesiastical opposition;

(ii) the tendency to promote a popular literal understanding of apparitions to the status of definitive authoritative statement does not suggest a subtle and far-sighted understanding of some useful elements in the Catholic theological tradition, and compromises the claim that believers have the right to personal judgement;

(iii) the accent on religious conversion does not take into account enough the wider issues beyond the purely religious sphere, i.e. Christian actions in the world at large outside Church and shrine.

4.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have drawn up a second set of 'authenticity criteria'. Where those in chapter 3 were derived directly from the historical data, namely, records

of the episcopal commissions of enquiry, the latter were assembled from the observations of Catholic writers. From these we set out to construct a model of what an 'authentic' apparition should look like from a Catholic theological point of view: it should result in a 'transformation' of a good number of the people concerned, so that they are spiritually and morally, sometimes even physically, 'healthier' than before. This transformation, and its claim to have Mary at its centre, should conform to Catholic orthodoxy.

So far, so good. Yet, in practice, it is possible that those responsible for discerning such a process have a subjective, partial approach to the pastoral questions involved, that they do not utilise the subtlety of the tradition of past centuries, and that they might have a limited, devotion and miracle-centred model of what a divine transformation should be. For these reasons, we must be aware that the discerning authorities may not be wholly objective, nor broad enough in their understanding of the phenomena, when attempting to decide whether the 'ideal' model for a divinely-inspired visionary event has been fulfilled in actual historical circumstances.

Judging visions and their associated cults is not an easy task, of course. In chapter 5, we move on to consider a now-famous apparition event in progress, and one which has experienced many difficulties in the discernment process - Medjugorje in Croat Yugoslavia. There we see, in contemporary events, the problems of subjectivity and partiality which, we have suggested, might hinder the authentication process in general.

Chapter 5: Medjugorje considered in the Light of Chapters
3 and 4

5.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we have considered the criteria used by ecclesiastical authorities, and Catholic writers in general, when they assess those visionary phenomena which have evoked considerable popular interest. We have also sketched responses to the phenomena, eg by priests and officers of the State. So far, we have looked at the issues from the position of a general historical overview, occasionally dipping into particular cases at greater depth when the available literature allows us to do so.

Medjugorje affords us an opportunity to look in more detail at a current case which has provoked a re-emergence of many of the points of contention and examination covered before in the marian apparition tradition. It has possibly attracted the greatest numbers of pilgrims that have been seen in Europe; they can be counted in terms of several million since its beginnings in 1981 (5/1). It stands in the tradition of cases like Garabandal and San Damiano, where pilgrimage has continued, including many priests in its numbers, despite the discouragement of local bishops, and where the messages have been frequent, sometimes quite specific in type (referring to exact names, places, etc.), and apocalyptic in character. Yet it far surpasses previous cases in the sheer volume of pilgrims and their status (including archbishops). Another complicating factor is the support of the local Franciscans.

We have covered the basic local and national context of Medjugorje in 1.2.6. This context ensures that Medjugorje will not be without its controversies and its interest (5/2). The one most striking factor that makes Medjugorje more compelling to many Catholics, however, is the nature of the apparitions themselves. They have continued on a daily basis since the first one on the 24th June, 1981, and the visionaries enjoy their ecstasies wherever they go in the world (5/3). Between March 1984 and January 1987, a special weekly message from Mary was given out, and this has become monthly from 1987 on (5/4). In addition, Mary, as described by the visionaries, seems to have taken a special interest in the Medjugorje parish as a model for the world at large, and has encouraged, guided even, prayer groups within it (5/5).

Therefore, it has seemed to many that Mary is leading the community in a more intimate and direct way than in any previous apparition phenomenon. Allied to the claim that these are to be the last visions of either Christ or Mary, this fact makes Medjugorje seem to be a very special intervention of the divine favour through Mary. It also heightens the apocalyptic flavour of the event, made more dramatic by the promise of future miracle and the gradual revealing of the ten 'secrets' to each of the visionaries, which will not be generally known until an unspecified later date.

The controversial circumstances surrounding the commissions of enquiry have added to the general intrigue and interest generated by this event. Now that the enquiry has been removed from the jurisdiction of the local bishop, who is antagonistic to the apparition cult, into the hands of the national episcopal conference at the orders of the SCDF (5/6), there is reason for the

supporters to feel that the issue is gradually turning in their favour (5/7).

In this chapter, we consider Medjugorje in the light of the previous two, ie we appraise the responses to the phenomena, the resulting pastoral policy, and the criteria that are being cited for and against authenticity.

Finally, we ask: is it possible that Medjugorje could be considered a case of 'divine transformation' according to the principles already outlined? Who would be able to accept such a claim?

5.2 Responses to Medjugorje

5.2.1 The State

The police observed the events at Medjugorje from the beginning, because of fears that the crowds were coming to Medjugorje for anti-government nationalist demonstrations (5/8). The mass gatherings on the hillside were prohibited (5/9); the visionaries were diverted from their daily rendez-vous (5/10); their adult mentor was arrested and interrogated (5/11); they were medically examined as early as June 27th by an officially-appointed psychiatrist (5/12). Yet, as at Lourdes, these tests were unable to prove any mental illness or disturbance (3/53). Local communist leaders then questioned the character of the visionaries' families (5/13).

The communist press attacked Zovko for his support of the apparitions (5/14). In August 1981, he was imprisoned together with two Franciscans who had reported the events of Medjugorje in a local Franciscan publication (5/15), and served eighteen months.

Yet, during the years that followed, the government's attitude has gradually changed. Now the authorities, at first obstructive in many small ways (5/16), prefer to take advantage of the large pilgrim movement, e.g. by taxing hostelry (5/17) - not a surprising tactic in a country with crippling economic problems and dependent on tourism. The communist regional government became convinced that Medjugorje is a totally religious and not at all political phenomenon (5/18).

5.2.2 The Church

Medjugorje is in the diocese of Mostar, the area of which has just over 200,000 Roman Catholics in a population of $\frac{1}{2}$ million; there are twice as many Franciscan priests as secular in the diocese (5/19). The apparitions began on the 24th June 1981 (5/20): by the 27th, the local curate, Fr Čuvalo, had begun to investigate the affair (5/21). Both he and the parish priest, Fr Zovko, were sceptical and worried at first about the numbers of people attending the hillside site of the visions, but Zovko was converted to believing in the apparitions on 1st July, when in prayer he heard a voice telling him to protect the teenage visionaries from the State authorities (5/22).

An opponent of Medjugorje, Fr Michael de la Sainte Trinité, has objected to Zovko's attitude, pointing out that his 'conversion' was rash and not made with discernment and care (5/23). By the 2nd and 3rd July, de la Sainte Trinité adds, pilgrims were flocking to the parish church, a fact which helped to legitimise the apparitions (5/24). This echoes the claim that the La Salette clergy were not objective but overwhelmed by popular pilgrimage (3/52): at Medjugorje there were a

reported 15,000 pilgrims by the third day of apparitions (5/25).

The bishop of Mostar, Mgr Žanić, made his first visit to the parish (ie after the beginning of the apparitions) on 25th July; he adopted the circumspect attitude which is normal for the hierarchy (5/26). Yet he was moved to make a statement in August defending the visionaries from State propaganda, asserting that the event was not being used by the Church for political reasons, ie Croat nationalism, and recording his view that the visionaries were honest (5/27). There was no commitment in this statement to a supernatural origin of their experiences, but Žanić ended by quoting Acts 5.38-9 (3/45). The bishop was under much pressure at the time: press, secular authorities, some priests, and even the Franciscan provincial curia reproaching him for appearing to support the apparitions (5/28).

The arrest of Zovko turned out to be the first of many changes over the years in the Franciscan parish personnel, and heralded the arrival of Fr Vlašić, who had first made enquiries about the case on the 29th June (5/29). The Medjugorje Franciscans, and Vlašić in particular, became the target for attacks made by Žanić on the apparition cult after he had become persuaded that it represented a threat to his authority (5/30). He came to regard the visions as "collective hallucinations" manipulated by the Franciscans (5/31). The commission formed under his jurisdiction was not therefore likely to consider the case with favour (5/6).

However, Žanić had a powerful opponent in Mgr Franić, archbishop of Split, who was convinced of the fruits of Medjugorje (5/32). The situation at La Salette and

Beauraing was here reversed, with the archbishop's different viewpoint lending him to a positive opinion (5/33), although in this case we are not referring to the metropolitan archbishop, as Mostar comes under the archdiocese of Sarajevo and not Split. A rather hostile relationship between Žanić and Franić resulted (5/34); later, the archbishop spoke at the Yugoslav episcopal conference in 1985, supporting the apparitions and refuting the bishop's allegations (5/35). The Yugoslav bishops eventually condemned Žanić's propaganda campaign against Mejugorje (5/36). Franić also wrote to Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the SCDF (5/37).

The responsibility for canonical enquiry was removed by the Vatican from the jurisdiction of the diocese of Mostar in May 1986, and now rests in the hands of the Yugoslav episcopal conference (5/6; 5/38). As at Beauraing, the perceived inability of the local bishop to deal with controversy has caused a takeover of the case at national level (3.2.2). Medjugorje has become an object of international Catholic interest, not least because of visits and support from foreign bishops (reminiscent of Knock (1/19)). However, the national episcopal conference has prohibited pilgrimages organised by clergy (ie they are free to accompany them), because of the unofficial status of the shrine before authentication (5/39).

5.2.3 Controversies within Catholicism

As we recorded above, the bishop has come out against the apparitions, referring to them as "collective hallucinations" manipulated by the Franciscans (5/31). Many of his objections have been used by other opponents from outside Yugoslavia. As we shall see, their different viewpoints display certain predispositions; of course, the

defenders of Medjugorje are no less disposed to particular attitudes.

Fr Sivrić is a Franciscan living in the United States, but he is a native of Medjugorje and his family still live in that area. He does not accept marian apparitions at face value - he asks whether they are merely fulfilling the need for a loving mother, especially in the postwar period, and wonders why there have been no such apparitions to Protestants (5/40). In addition, he is scornful of the Fatima cult, and calls for reason in the face of the miraculous and prophetic (5/41). Sivrić claims to have access to the original Medjugorje tape-recordings of apparitions and interviews supposedly suppressed by the local supporters of the phenomena (5/42). In particular, he is insistent that the visionaries had been given a copy of a book on Lourdes before the apparitions (5/43). His allegations are refuted by Fr Rupčić, a Medjugorje Franciscan, who claims that Sivrić's incentive to attack Medjugorje's apparitions is that his family are alienated in the neighbourhood because of their negative attitude to the shrine - thus he has, according to Rupčić, manipulated his sources and fabricated the details about the Lourdes book (5/44).

Bé langer, a Canadian layman, has agreed to co-write with Sivrić although, where the latter posits a well-intentioned fraud and dismisses the strange phenomena seen by many in the Medjugorje area (5/45), the former looks to geomagnetic activity in the locality causing the phenomena of light, and suggests that they are then misinterpreted by visionaries and pilgrims (5/46).

Fr Michael de la Sainte Trinité is a member of the "Contre-Réforme Catholique", a French group led by the

Abbé Georges de Nantes who reject the reforms of Vatican II (1/103; 1/104). De la Sainte Trinité is not at all in agreement with Sivrić because, unlike the latter, he is a devotee of Fatima, and feels that Medjugorje is quite literally a diabolical plot to force the Church to forget Fatima (5/47). For him, Medjugorje is absolutely different from the apparitions authenticated by the Church in the past: it is a phenomenon orchestrated by the "charismatic renewal movement" (5/48). Sivrić does not agree with this conclusion (5/49). De la Sainte Trinité dislikes the 'modern' aspects of Medjugorje, in particular ecumenism and charismatic prayer. He is convinced that the bishop's observations would have buried the shrine forever if it had not been for the support given it by the internationally-famous mariologist Laurentin (5/50).

Fr Laurentin has spent many years writing on the history of the marian apparitions, and he is therefore delighted to be a witness to a famous shrine in the making (5/51) - this may predispose him to believe in Medjugorje, where he has been on many visits. His goal has been to establish the apparitions as a genuine case using theological criteria and also medical and scientific tests (5/52). These, it is claimed, prove that hallucination, hysteria, neurosis, catalepsy or pathological ecstasy are not responsible for the phenomena (5/53). Laurentin cites positive statements by scientists, doctors, charismatic and spiritual experts, representatives of other faiths and denominations, and Catholic bishops (5/54); he has also entered into open debate with the bishop of Mostar, refuting his charge of "hallucination", and asking him to be more discerning (5/55).

Laurentin describes how the left and right wings of the Church combine to denounce Medjugorje for opposite reasons

(5/56). Those against the conciliar developments in the Church dislike the activities at the shrine which reflect such contemporary trends (5/31). As to the left, Laurentin cites Gramaglia who dislikes the traditional devotionialism of the Church as supported by the hierarchy; Gramaglia therefore claims that Medjugorje is a psycho-medical phenomenon induced by the charismatic Vlašić and exploited by the present anti-conciliar trend (as he sees it) in the Vatican (5/57).

Two other observations deserve mention: these come from sources which do not have, at first sight, any clear reason to support the shrine. Ramet's perspective is "functionalist": he claims that it is not nationalism that lies behind Medjugorje's initial success, but instead a general crisis of confidence and the need to relieve stress by recourse to pilgrimage and religious devotion (5/58). Reimer, writing in the ecumenical IRF magazine, is a non-Catholic who refutes theories of political subterfuge or psychological hallucination for marian apparitions in general, and instead insists that marian devotion may help social reform as encouraging a critique of socialism and capitalism alike (5/59). His conclusion is that people still long for "reconciliation with the mystical ground of human experience" (5/60).

Therefore we may distinguish five clear objections to the visions at Medjugorje, and also three distinct statements which support the shrine:

Against:

(i) Medjugorje is a fraud which has gone out of control helped by the suppression of early material (Sivrić);

(ii) its phenomena are due to natural geomagnetic causes which have been exaggerated and misinterpreted (Bé langer);

(iii) it is a plot, with a diabolical origin, to promote the charismatic movement and postconciliar reform (de la Sainte Trinité);

(iv) it has come about due to manipulation by the Franciscan Vlašić and encouragement by the anti-conciliar, pro-devotionalist Catholic hierarchy (Gramaglia, as summarised by Laurentin);

(v) it is a collective hallucination exploited by Franciscans eager to subvert episcopal authority (Mgr Žanić).

For:

(i) it obeys theological, scientific and medical criteria for marian apparitions (Laurentin and others (5/61));

(ii) it eases the tensions of modern society (Ramet);

(iii) it confirms that people need mystical experience in the modern world, a fact which implicitly criticises the ideologies of left and right (Reimer).

5.2.4 The responses: conclusions

Attitudes to Medjugorje are subjective in a clearly-demonstrable way, based in personal concerns and predispositions. Many of the arguments and problems observed at Medjugorje have precedents in the marian apparition tradition, eg the quick allegiance of local clergy (La Salette and others), the opposition of the

State including attempts to discredit the visionaries (Lourdes), spectacular phenomena seen by many but not all of those present (Fatima), a split between bishop and archbishop (La Salette, Beauraing and Banneux), tension between pilgrims and the local bishop (Garabandal), doubts cast on early testimonies (La Salette, Beauraing), transfer of the canonical enquiry from diocesan to national level (Beauraing and Banneux), reported healings, theories of natural explanation, accusations of fraud, hallucination and diabolical influence.

The chief elements that are peculiar to Medjugorje and distinguish it from earlier approved cases are: its context, ie postwar communist Yugoslavia, the post-conciliar mood of its message, its apocalyptic and long-term daily visionary phenomena, the presence of modern medical and scientific devices, the opposition between bishop and the religious order responsible for maintaining the shrine, and between bishop and higher clergy where the bishop is the opponent of the cult.

The precedents show that many of the objections to Medjugorje need not be an obstacle to authentication, as even with them the case would be consistent with the marian apparition tradition. However, the new circumstances demand special care and much thought in the canonical procedure. This will also need to take into account the established criteria for authenticity, and we may now turn to an examination of these using the literature for and against Medjugorje.

5.3 Criteria for authenticity

We will here consider nine headings which emerge from the discussion in previous chapters: 3.3, 3.4 and 4.2.1 in particular.

5.3.1 Character and health

Supporters of Medjugorje claim that scientific and medical tests have ruled out various forms of mental illness or self-deception in the visionaries (5/53; 5/62). Therefore, it is concluded, the ecstasies are "authentic" (5/63). In addition, it is observed that the group of six visionaries had no ordinary reason to exist: there is no particular bond between all of them, nor a special leader (5/64). They are not fanatical (5/65), but as normal and healthy as any other young people (5/66), and their perseverance in daily apparition experiences with all the attention of pilgrims and media is a sign of their sincerity (5/67) - thus runs the argument for authenticity.

Opponents, on the other hand, point to signs of ill health among the visionaries: for one, a weak heart (5/68), for another, mysterious headaches which come and go (5/69). We have seen that the bishop regards the case as one of hallucination (5/30; 5/70). Tincq, a writer in Le Monde, has pointed out that the supporters choose their own doctors to carry out the tests (5/71). Sivric claims that one visionary experiences visions and voices which are questionable medically as well as theologically (5/72).

Just as the communist authorities attempted to question the character of the visionaries' families in the early days (5/13), so the Catholic opponents pick out possible character deficiencies: the first apparition occurred

while the two visionaries there on the hillside were having a secret cigarette-smoking session, for example (5/73); the personality of the visionaries is not so pure and honest as is imagined, and the group tested the supposed Virgin Mary by changing the site of the visions and seeing if she would appear (5/74). Here we have the objections to the criterion of good character. One might observe that the latter suggestion by Sivrić does not square with his claim that the whole phenomenon was invented by the visionaries in order to encourage a renewal of piety in the area (5/75).

So it is not easy to build up a clear case based on the character and health of the seers; each observer will carry his or her own conclusions which may or may not be determined by predisposition.

5.3.2 Form and impact of the phenomena

Medjugorje supporters record the impressive features of the ecstatic trances: the simultaneity of the seers' response to the coming of the apparition (5/76), absence of abnormality during the period of trance (5/77), apparent near-immunity to external stimuli (5/78), the lack of contradictions in the accounts afterwards (5/79). Those favourable to the apparitions are not afraid to pass on claims by the visionaries which might appear bizarre to many: the Virgin disappearing because of someone "blaspheming" nearby (5/80), her dress being "blackened" by the touch of sinners (who reached out but could not see her) (5/81), Ivanka Ivanković's mother coming down from heaven to kiss and embrace her (5/82), two of the visionaries being taken, quite literally, to heaven, disappearing from the earth at the time (5/83). As at Garabandal (3/92), certain abnormal features are cited in favour of the case, eg the incredible speed of the

visionaries' run up the hill to greet the Virgin in the first few days (5/84). Angels are often seen attending the Virgin, and the visionaries claim to be able to kiss her (5/85).

On the other hand, opponents cannot agree that the ecstasies are dignified (5/86). The apparitions, especially in the early days, are said by de la Sainte Trinité to be unworthy of the "gentleness" of past cases (5/87), with rough and familiar language (5/88), and strange laughing reported of Mary (5/89). The case of 'the handkerchief' is a particularly repellent one to those who dislike the phenomena (5/90).

In addition to this, the curate Fr Čuvalo reported that the early conversations with the Virgin were "flat and boring" with "no sense of the numinous" (5/91); he was sceptical of the apparitions at first, but came to respect them (5/92).

We can conclude that some accounts of the phenomena at Medjugorje will have an effect on their hearers according to taste and theological outlook. They are very much based in a rural Catholic context where such things are perhaps not so strange to the local people (5/93).

5.3.3 The message

Here are the main elements of the message as recorded by those who support Medjugorje: a stress on peace, the cross (with Mary often standing or praying before it), prayer, penance, fasting, conversion, a return to God, a diagnosis of the ills of the world (due to lack of the above) (5/4; 5/94). Greater time spent in reading scripture is important (and Matthew 6.24-34 on eschewing anxiety is emphasised) (5/95), as is the Mass, confession, and other

traditional sacraments (5/96). The danger of Satan is often mentioned, but also the power of the Holy Spirit (5/97). The marian tradition is continued with the use of the Rosary (5/98), and exhortations to consecration to the Immaculate Heart (the Sacred Heart is also featured) (5/99). There are visions of Christ, suffering during the Passion or as a baby, and also symbolic visions such as a cross, heart, or sun (5/100).

Laurentin claims that all of the messages of Medjugorje are doctrinally orthodox (5/101). Features that are new include the placing of Mary's birthday (traditionally celebrated on September 8th) on August 5th (a novelty disliked by Mgr Žanić and de la Sainte Trinité) (5/102); the fact that Medjugorje is the last series of apparitions of either Christ or Mary (5/103); an ecumenical flavour with a message to the Pope telling him to be a "father to all people and not just to Catholics" (5/104).

The main objection to the message, as is admitted by its supporters, is that it is rather lengthy and complex because of the daily apparitions, numbering more than ever before (5/105). Fr Kraljević suggests that this is due to the modern mentality, which would have hastily overlooked a phenomenon of the five month duration of Lourdes or Fatima (5/106). Opponents to Medjugorje point out that the early words of the Madonna, before the event was regulated by the Franciscan clergy, were most unworthy of her (5/107), and that the message is negative, a return to the theology of fear and punishment as opposed to hope (5/108). The catastrophic, in this view, is emphasised too much (5/109).

5.3.4 Copying from previous apparitions?

The bone of contention in this respect is whether the visionaries had a book on Lourdes before or a few days after the first apparition; they themselves claim to have had no specific knowledge of any previous case, not even Fatima (5/110). Holy water was thrown at the vision to test whether it was divine or diabolical on the third day of apparitions - this re-enacts Bernadette's action at Lourdes, but the seers claimed that, because of local custom, it was a natural thing to do (5/111). Within a week, the visionaries had certainly read of Lourdes, as this caused them to foresee a premature end to their experiences, based on the number of apparitions at Lourdes (eighteen) (5/112). There has been a furious argument over whether the visionaries had the book before June 24th or not, and it is difficult to judge the truth of this claim (5/113).

As the event has progressed, familiar elements such as the Immaculate Heart have emerged (5/114). Yet most of the detail does not seem to owe much to previous apparition cases. The bishop of Mostar stated that there were forty-seven other visionaries in the diocese at the time that Medjugorje began to emerge, thus seeking to devalue it, but outbreaks of visions also cast doubt on Lourdes and Beauraing without being finally decisive against these cases (1/70; 3.2.2; 5/115).

5.3.5 Environmental influences

There are two main issues of disagreement with regard to the influences on the visionaries at the time that the apparitions began. The first is the more important: the question as to whether some of the local Franciscans, adherents to the modern Catholic 'charismatic renewal'

movement, engineered or induced the phenomena as a boost to that movement. De la Sainte Trinité, the anti-conciliar conservative, is convinced of this: Medjugorje is, for him, "a great charismatic project" (5/116). The Franciscans Vlašić and Zovko were already charismatics, disappointed about the lack of progress for the movement in the Medjugorje area (5/117); Sivrić, not a supporter of the "charismatic project" theory, adds the information that Vlašić had lamented the "abortion" of many marian apparitions (5/118). Thus the background materials are there for the suggestion that someone, and Vlašić has usually been the target for this claim, has perpetrated a fraud using the apparitions (5/119). However, Vlašić and other supporters of Medjugorje like Archbishop Franić, once of Split, see the apparitions as a divine blessing upon the charismatic movement rather than emerging from it (5/120).

The second point made by the opponents is that the visionaries come from a rural environment with a "culture of folklore and exaggeration" (5/93), not worthy of a universal understanding of Mary (5/107; 5/121). Once again, we are reminded of La Salette and its rustic seers.

Therefore the uncomfortably old (superstitious rural Catholicism) and uncomfortably new (charismatic renewal) are both cited against Medjugorje. There is no proof that the latter was part of the original phenomena, but certainly it has become a feature of the development of the events under Franciscan and visionary guidance. It is not clear that this disqualifies Medjugorje under the normal criteria of authenticity concerning influences, unless fraud could be definitely proven.

5.3.6 Signs and healings

As with all marian apparitions, healings have been regarded as a sign which validates the phenomena as divine initiatives (5/122). Many healings at Medjugorje are claimed to be free of wholly natural explanations (5/123). Opponents, on the other hand, dismiss them as fraudulent (5/124). Furthermore, there are the strange phenomena reported - lights in the sky and on the mountain, the word "mir" ("peace") seen in the sky, the sun spinning in a way reminiscent of Fatima (5/125). Photographs have been taken which support the testimony that the mountain cross has, on occasion, changed into the form of a woman of light (5/126).

Laurentin and Joyeux have included a section on the phenomena of light in their scientific and medical studies (5/127). They admit to not having provided an academic study - clearly, such things depend on subjective testimony by multifarious witnesses (5/128). Sivrić claims that the miraculous phenomena disappeared when the investigating commission arrived and that, anyway, some unusual phenomena were seen in the area before 1981; furthermore, he adds that the earliest known journal kept at Medjugorje during the apparitions does not contain any record of them (5/129).

These 'signs', especially the healings, will be the subject of canonical enquiry and, due to the elusive nature of much of the evidence, it is obviously important that the investigators are seen to be as objective as possible. They must be satisfied that such things actually occurred and have no wholly natural explanation: at present, writers are swayed by their predispositions or personal experience.

5.3.7 Effects among Catholics

The 'spiritual fruits' of the Medjugorje event is the most important reason singled out by the supporters of authenticity (5/130). Archbishop Franić has referred to the apparitions achieving more than forty years pastoral work (5/131). O'Carroll cites the "sensus fidelium", i.e. the opinion of the laity, as a decisive factor in favour (5/132). Laurentin mentions the exemplary pastoral approach of the local priests in dealing with the great numbers (5/133); as early as June 28th 1981, there were a reported 15,000 pilgrims present at the new shrine, and the numbers have grown since then (5/134). Other favourable comments have included observations on the number of confessions (5/135), the families in the area that have turned back together to religion (5/136), and the idea that Medjugorje is a "model parish" (5/137).

Sivrić does not doubt the fruits of Medjugorje, and recognises that it has gained support from priests because of the many confessions, but he feels that this does not change the fact that all of this resulted from "pious dishonesty" (5/138). He adds, however, that most of the fruits are reserved for pilgrims, but that many local people are, according to him, unhappy because of the large-scale invasion (5/139). De la Sainte Trinité, on the other hand, is not convinced that the count of pilgrims is always accurate (5/134; 5/140). He cannot accept that prayer and penance at the shrine is a proof of a divine initiative at its origin (5/141).

The most serious result of the apparitions to the detriment of the shrine is the opposition of the local bishop, Mgr Žanić (5/142), who took this stand because the Virgin appeared to support two Franciscans who had rebelled against episcopal authority (5/143). He became

convinced that the visionary Vicka Ivankovic had recorded the Virgin's criticism of him in a diary, and that she then lied, in company with Vlašić, by denying that the diary existed (5/144). Supporters of Medjugorje are careful to remain deferent to the bishop, and to obey his restrictions on activity there (5/145), but defiance of his authority is implicit in outspoken support of the apparitions and, as a factor which has sown disagreement and dissent amongst Catholics, will therefore be regarded as a negative feature of the case.

5.3.8 Prophecy

There are three problems with the prophecies of Medjugorje that cast doubt on them as contributing to the case for its authenticity:

(a) the visionaries appeared to have forecast the end of the apparitions for July 3rd 1981, and later claimed that this was a misunderstanding (5/112) (this is reminiscent of a complaint made about Beauraing (3/ 82)).

(b) The prophecy of a "great sign" at Medjugorje (foreseen as visible to all and clearly divine) originated as a response to requests, as early as the second day, for a miracle that would convince those not believing in the visionaries' claims (5/146) - one is reminded here of Fatima, Garabandal, and Palmar de Troya (2/121).

Furthermore, opponents say that the great sign was postponed, as it was expected to occur in the first months following the beginning of the apparitions (5/147). One visionary, Ivan Dragicević, revealed details of this sign which were clearly false, claiming to have written this down under duress (5/148). It is now suggested by the visionaries that the delay of the sign is due to God's patience in awaiting wholesale conversion (5/149).

(c) Some of the prophecies could easily weaken the claims of Medjugorje if they failed to occur, eg insisting that this is to be the last apparition of Mary presents problems if further cases follow (5/150). In addition, the visionary Mirjana Dragicević will reveal, apparently, the fulfilment of each of the ten secrets ten days in advance (5/151). Secrets are familiar in the marian apparition tradition, but at Medjugorje they are more systematised (ten revealed one at a time to the visionaries individually), and the future of the whole world comprises their subject (5/152). Mirjana has also referred to the Virgin's mentioning the famous visionary prophecy reported to be that of Leo XIII in 1884, in which God allowed the devil one century of power (5/153), but de la Sainte Trinite dismisses this because he is convinced that the original was a legend (5/154).

The sensational nature of the sign and the secrets do not make official Church approval on Medjugorje an easy matter (2/121). If these prophecies were fulfilled at the time specified by one or more of the visionaries, then the authentication process would be almost irrelevant, one feels, because of the worldwide interest that would follow; otherwise, premature approval before the non-fulfilment of the prophecies would jeopardise the credibility of Church pronouncements. There are, however, more mundane prophecies concerning modern nations which might aid the Church in its appraisal of Medjugorje: victory for justice in Poland after a time of difficulty, and widespread religious practice in Russia (5/155).

5.3.9 Political implications

We have already noted that explicit references to mundane politics is a negative feature of apparitions that will discourage the Church from approval (3.4.2). At first, the

events at Medjugorje were suspected, by the regional government authorities, of being a cover for Croat nationalist activity, but this is no longer a problem (5/18; 5/156). De la Sainte Trinité actually regards the events as being beneficial for marxist propaganda, because the authorities now appear to have adopted a liberal policy (5/157). He is angry that the Madonna of Medjugorje

"up to then traditionalist in religion, legitimist in politics - finally changes sides",

a curious reading of the marian apparition tradition (5/158). Laurentin, on the other hand, sees Medjugorje as a "peaceful subversion" of marxism, as evidenced by the government reactions in the early days (5/159).

One must conclude that there is no clear political or nationalist emphasis at Medjugorje, despite the obvious joy in the area when the non-communist party won the Croatian elections in 1990 (5/160). Lourdes and Fatima suffered some amount of State opposition too, and nothing in this latest case goes beyond the political implications of these apparitions of the past, which contain nothing more than a general challenge to anti-religious ideology.

5.4 Ecclesiastical issues with a major bearing on the Medjugorje case

5.4.1 Episcopal policy

Bishop Žanić of Mostar's attitude to the apparitions at Medjugorje is shaped by his concern for order within the Church structure rather than by mass religious renewal and devotion (3/40). He has ignored the principle of 'sensus fidelium', according to O'Carroll, a supporter of Medjugorje (5/161). For Sivrić, on the other hand, Zanic has been put under intolerable pressure (5/162).

Clearly, Žanić's position is based on his perception of how Medjugorje contributes to the "Hercegovina problem" (1/101; 1/102). His tactics - cautious but helpful to the visionaries at first (5/163) - changed because of a minor incident within the event as a whole, ie one visionary's concern for two rebel Franciscans, not a surprising thing considering local history and feeling (5/164). Yet Žanić sees in this a Madonna who is subversive to his authority and consequently a fraud (5/165).

Therefore his policy has been to restrict the apparition event, placing restrictions on the use of the parish church (5/166), campaigning in the media against Medjugorje (5/167), and trying to inhibit pilgrimage (5/39; 5/168). He has accused Archbishop Franić, his main opponent in the Yugoslav episcopate, of being predisposed to Medjugorje because of his being a 'charismatic' (5/169). Despite there being a diocesan commission working on Medjugorje under his jurisdiction until May 1986, he made public, during that period, his negative opinion giving his objections in detail (5/170).

Mgr Žanić's pastoral policy has not been successful or outwardly impressive for the following reasons:

- (a) he has not prevented the diocesan enquiry procedure from appearing subjective;
- (b) he has attempted to suppress the shrine and its growing pilgrimage in the face of powerful and international opposition (5/171);
- (c) devotees on a national and international scale regard the "Hercegovina problem" as trivial or irrelevant to their own concerns, for which the message of Medjugorje is urgent and universal.

Thus Žanić's concern for Church order at the local level is in tension with a wider viewpoint held by many Catholics, in which Medjugorje is considered good for the Catholic Church as a whole.

5.4.2 Vatican involvement

Difficulties with the local bishop have forced Medjugorje's protagonists to look to the Vatican for an act of approval which would override the bishop's opposition (5/172). The priests of the Medjugorje parish wrote to Rome in 1985, pointing out that the bishop was attempting to destroy the cult before the commission had finished its work (5/173). Both Franić and Žanić have been in touch with Rome (5/174); there have been many petitions to the Vatican from other interested parties (5/175). In addition, Franić revealed that John Paul II had made approving comments about the religious devotion at Medjugorje (5/176). Finally, apart from support by many clergy on an international scale (5/1; 5/177), the famous Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (now deceased), berated the bishop of Mostar for his attacks on Medjugorje (5/178).

So the rumour circulates that the Vatican supports Medjugorje, especially in view of the transfer, by Rome, of the canonical enquiry from the Mostar diocese to the national episcopate (5/6); de la Sainte Trinité ruefully comments that Rome prefers Medjugorje to Fatima (5/179). Another rumour, to the effect that the Vatican has prohibited pilgrimage, has been debunked: the truth is that the Yugoslav episcopal conference prohibited clerically-organised pilgrimages (not those accompanied by clergy) in view of the fact that an official decision had not yet been reached (5/180).

Thus Medjugorje's devotees look to the traditional support of the papacy for orthodox and popular marian apparitions, and hope that the bishop's opposition can be overcome from above. A report by a visionary that the Virgin kissed the John Paul II's picture has become well-known, as have her instructions to the Pope to encourage ecumenism (5/181). Another of the visionaries has had revelations which seem to refer back to a prophecy attributed to Leo XIII (5/182); a dream of Pius XI is supposed to be behind the building of the large concrete cross which stands on the mountain overlooking Medjugorje (5/183). In these ways, Medjugorje claims a place in the history of the universal Church which may help to lift it out of the restrictions of local ecclesiastical conflict.

5.4.3 Contemporary Catholic movements

We have seen that the bishop's opposition to Medjugorje stems from local conflict. Yet the support of Archbishop Franić and other observers like Laurentin depends on the very factor that provokes the opposition of the arch-conservative de la Sainte Trinité: Medjugorje is a post-conciliar phenomenon (5/184)! There are two major aspects of the argument between these two camps: firstly, the stress on ecumenism and, secondly, the importance of prayer groups in the 'charismatic' mould.

Ecumenism is clearly a feature of the messages themselves, and there are even reports that pilgrims have included Protestant, Orthodox, and Muslim representatives (5/185). This is particularly important in a multi-denominational country like Yugoslavia, with its history of violent religious conflict (5/186). Thus de la Sainte Trinité derides Medjugorje as "pluralist" (5/187) but, for supporters, the ecumenical dimension is currently in tune

with Catholic orthodoxy and therefore something to boast about (5/184; 5/185).

Supporters are also happy to admit the charismatic influence (5/188). Mary and Jesus are "charismatics par excellence", says Franić (5/189). Kraljević refers to the Madonna encouraging spiritual renewal in prayer groups, and notes that the visionaries describe her hands raised in prayer "like a charismatic" (5/190). Vlašić, accused of manipulating the children (5/31; 5/57), and a friend of Sr Brierge McKenna, a notable figure in the charismatic renewal movement (5/191), is quite keen to link this renewal with the Mary of Medjugorje (5/192). Of course, for some opponents of Medjugorje, the charismatic element is all the more reason for doubt (5/193).

Moving briefly to a different aspect of the case, it is interesting to note that the pilgrims at Medjugorje are identified by some as being the same, or in the same tradition, as those who visit other (comparatively recent and not authenticated) apparition shrines, like Kérinzen, Garabandal, and San Damiano (5/194). For de la Sainte Trinité, this is because they are ultra-modern (5/195); for Tincq, because they are old-fashioned (5/196).

So, as we noted in 5.2.3, attitudes to Medjugorje do reflect opinions on important contemporary trends in the Church. The reasons for the support of some are the same as those for the opposition of others - this at least helps to 'fix' the Medjugorje cult as having a particular place in the traditions of modern Catholicism. Its message is postconciliar, ie ecumenical, with an emphasis on prayer and scriptural reflection outside the liturgy of the Church in addition to the traditional sacraments. It is, in part, a 'charismatic' phenomenon (yet we must use this term carefully (5/197)), and therefore hierarchical

blessing on Medjugorje will not be easily separated from encouragement for the charismatic movement in general.

Finally, we have seen, using several examples, how supporters and also opponents of the 'left' and 'right' (5/198) perceive the message of Medjugorje: it is, for nearly all of them, the epitome of those attitudes and trends which they like or dislike. In conclusion, we will cautiously suggest that the supporters of Medjugorje, in addition to believing in the possibility of divine initiative by means of apparitions of Mary, are likely to be pro-papist, ie accepting the teaching of Vatican II in so far as they can assimilate it, while rejecting radical ideas which question traditional structures of hierarchy and liturgy retained by the Council, eg papal authority, the role of the priesthood, the role of women, interpretations of scripture. As far as one can tell in reading the literature, listening to tapes and videotapes, and visiting the shrine, the Madonna of Medjugorje does not challenge the beliefs of this broad party in the Church but, on the whole, confirms them. From an official point of view, therefore, she is likely, at least in the current climate (ie the primacy of John Paul II, widely regarded as reinforcing traditional Catholicism against more radical interpretations of Vatican II), to be considered orthodox. Mgr Žanič's main concern is that she has questioned his authority but, as this is such a small element in the messages as a whole, it is unlikely that a strong case for Medjugorje being a focus for an anti-authority tendency could be argued.

5.5 Possibilities for Medjugorje as a divine initiative through Mary

5.5.1 Transformation

According to the criteria elucidated in 4.2, when seeking an answer to whether a genuine marian phenomenon might be under consideration, we must first establish that a transformation has taken place among firstly the visionaries, then the local people, and finally the pilgrims. Certainly the visionaries appear to have become prayerful without being over-pious or fanatical (5/199) yet, as we saw in 5.3.1, it is not easy to establish their good character when depending on reports from sources committed one way or another.

As to be expected, and noted in 5.3.7, supporters of Medjugorje claim a spectacular transformation of the parish, with new and committed prayer groups (5/30; 5/200), a heightened sense of religious community within families (5/201), and the development of peaceful relationships in an area previously fraught with hostilities (4/111; 5/202). The hospitality of the villages in the early days when there was no special facilities for the pilgrims became famous (5/203). The clergy and religious of the parish, from the imprisoned Zovko to the besieged Franciscan priests and nuns, underwent suffering and inconvenience worthy of a Christian vocation (5/204). It is also claimed that religious barriers fell: Orthodox Christians and Muslims joined in the pilgrimage on occasion, a remarkable occurrence in a country with a history so marked by denominational strife (5/205).

Yet again, opponents claim the opposite, and even the apparently uncommitted voice doubts about the trends in

Medjugorje. De la Sainte Trinité may agree that a transformation has taken place but, as we have seen, he regards this as a diabolical one, a charismatic phenomenon against the true pre-conciliar Church,

"a pretence of Satan to make us forget Fatima" (5/206). Sivric claims that the village is generally unhappy, overwhelmed by foreign pilgrims (5/139; 5/207). Tincq feels that Medjugorje ignores the Vatican II spirit of human rights (5/208); Hughes voices uneasiness about a "cheap and false peace" gained by charismatic individualistic devotion, and perceives a lack of obvious ecumenism, and a diluting of the Medjugorje message among pilgrims (4/109).

Other observers have pointed out the positive fruits of Medjugorje: Ramet, while not positing a divine initiative, regards the shrine as a place of relief of stress (in itself, likely to give rise to a fruitful transformation) (5/209), and Reimer sees such marian devotion as an aid to social reform (5/210). Furthermore, the title "Queen of Peace" is a helpful concept in an age of gradual disarmament (5/211).

The extraordinarily wide range of the views on Medjugorje as a transforming influence makes a decision on this matter very difficult. The debate labels it anti-conciliar, therefore questionable (Tincq); pro-conciliar, therefore diabolical (de la Sainte Trinité). It is considered an aid to social reform (Reimer); individualistic and lacking in social awareness (Tincq, Hughes). The place is either hospitable and renewed religiously (various), or unhappy and overwhelmed (Sivrić). Which of these ideas emerges as decisive in the canonical enquiry process may depend to some extent on the current mood within the Yugoslav hierarchy, e.g. which

emphasis they lay on progress within the spirit of the postconciliar age (5/212).

5.5.2 Mary

The appearance of Mary as reported by the Medjugorje visionaries is a familiar one in the marian apparition tradition: a beautiful young girl in a long garment and veil, with a crown of twelve stars, sometimes carrying the infant Jesus (5/213). She does, however, look and speak like a Croatian, just as the visions of the past have taken on contextual features; her special title at Medjugorje is "Queen of Peace" (1/97). The Immaculate Heart has been mentioned again (5/214); details of Mary's life are being dictated to one of the visionaries, as they have been to nuns in other centuries (5/215). In Medjugorje, she has even more of a guiding role than in previous cases - instructing in prayer and liturgy, encouraging and cajoling the uncommitted, appearing on a daily basis, and giving regular messages (5/5).

The important question arises as to whether Medjugorje is centred on Mary or has an orthodox christocentric basis. It could be argued that the apparitions only developed a christocentric basis (5/216). The apparent initiative of Mary at Medjugorje has to be explained by supporters, like O'Carroll, by referring the observer to the Christ-centredness of many messages, and the greetings and prayers used by the Virgin (5/217). The old marian problem of an opposition between the will of Christ and the mercy of Mary crops up at least once (5/218). Sivrić feels that this is a problematic feature of the marian apparition history in general (5/219). Mgr Žanić cannot see how Mary could be against ecclesiastical authority (5/220).

Once again de la Sainte Trinité emerges as a joker in the pack: for him, Medjugorje does not overstress the Virgin's role, but underplays it, i.e. its message is minimalist as Mary is not really credited with power (5/221). This is an example, in his opinion, of how the Medjugorje phenomenon is underlining conciliar moves towards ecumenism and away from a 'high' view of Mary (5/222), as well as a more open attitude to socialism (5/223).

5.5.3 Conclusions on Medjugorje as an authentic encounter with Mary

Thus it emerges that Medjugorje will probably satisfy the criteria of transformation and an orthodox view of Mary for those who:

- (a) agree that a new peacefulness has taken the place of old conflicts in the Medjugorje locality;
- (b) see in religious renewal centred upon prayer, scripture and the sacraments a divine transformation;
- (c) do not regard the opposition by various Catholics, including the bishop of Mostar, as an overwhelming difficulty, but concede that even the local bishop directly responsible for investigating apparitions may be mistaken about them;
- (d) accept that the ecumenical note in the Virgin's messages is generally put into practice by the pilgrims;
- (e) do not feel that any heterodox mariology - eg to the effect that there is an opposition between the judgement of Christ and the mercy of Mary, or that Mary is an independent figure of divine initiative - presents itself in a problematic way at Medjugorje (5/224);

(f) accept the conciliar view of Mary rather than an extreme form of the maximalist 'high' mariology, and agree that the messages of Medjugorje are ultimately christocentric (5/225).

5.6 Conclusions

Despite the writer's positive personal experiences of the shrine at Medjugorje, it is impossible for this thesis to come up with a final answer as to the authenticity, in terms of traditional Catholic criteria, of the apparitions there. The event is very impressive, with many obvious 'spiritual fruits' based on a deepening prayer and sacramental life. Yet Medjugorje also suffers from the dilemmas of previous cases (4.3): (a) the subjective pastoral attitudes of clergy, (b) an eagerness to regard the visions as either, on the one hand, a literal and objective divine intervention or, on the other, wholly non-divine in nature, and (c) (possibly) a lack of regard for wider issues of Christian praxis than devotional fervour and local neighbourliness.

The supporters and opponents, on the whole, do not seem able to detach their conclusions about Medjugorje from their opinions on wider issues which presuppose them to one view or another about the visions there. The opponents, in particular, do not impress as a group because their objections are often in extreme opposition to one another! The supporters are, in the main, advocates of a pro-papal post-conciliar but non-'progressive' Catholicism (5/226), although to their number we may add non-Catholics who are positive about 'proof' that the divine still has a voice in our modern world (5/227). At the local level, the Franciscans have been quite zealous

in their support for the visionaries (5/228), while the bishop's pastoral policy has been decidedly questionable.

There is something of an impasse at Medjugorje. Final rejection of the phenomena by the hierarchy would throw into doubt the very 'fruits' that they would normally encourage: prayer, pilgrimage, attendance at the sacraments, support for the papacy. Acceptance, however, would not help the cause of respect for local bishops in general, as the conviction of Mgr Žanić would then be utterly overlooked. In addition, acceptance would mean an espousal of the strange prophecies and claims of the visionaries. Yet the practice of the Church in the past, coupled with the expectations of the pilgrims, seems to demand that a decision is made in the not-too-distant future.

The problems caused by the discernment process at Medjugorje are even greater than those of its most contentious precedents, eg La Salette and Beauraing, where at least the local bishop was supportive. In Medjugorje, we have the most contemporary important apparition event in Europe, and one of the most famous of all, probably on a par with Lourdes and Fatima. For these reasons, it would seem that the pastoral and theological theory on marian apparitions is still in need of work and improvement. In short, a theoretical model must be constructed which allows of a flexible and balanced understanding of these phenomena: this is the task that we now undertake in the second part of the thesis.

**PART TWO: BUILDING AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND MARIOLOGICAL
MODEL FOR APPARITIONS OF MARY**

**Chapter 6: Understanding the Apparitions as Human
Phenomena**

6.1 Introduction

In the famous cases recognised by the Church, visionaries have not, on the whole, been suspected of suffering mental ill health; critics usually suggest that they are victims of quite natural, understandable psychological outbursts (6/1). Yet the apparently small number of people who experience such phenomena might lead us to wonder whether certain persons, although not suffering from a diagnosable mental illness, have a special tendency or faculty for visionary experience. Children, in particular, are supposed to be more likely to possess an ability to imagine very realistic pictures of remembered objects, a trait that is marked among the 10 - 15 age group. This faculty, called 'eidetic', may cause the imagined object to appear external to the child, and thus give rise to illusions or hallucinations (6/2).

So, critics of the modern marian cult usually question whether the divine or miraculous nature of the phenomenon is quite what its devotees claim: perhaps a purely natural psychological explanation could be found (6/3). Even the most celebrated medieval mystics, it is said, had some experiences which derived wholly from their own psyche and its problems as well as those attributed to a contemplative encounter with the divine (6/4).

Therefore, in this chapter we will seek to understand the apparitions as 'human phenomena', asking how far they

could be explained from a psychological (or 'psychical') viewpoint (6/5), and to come, hopefully, to some conclusions (yet ones which do not require an in-depth knowledge of mental illness). The first possibility to consider is that certain psychological factors predispose persons or situations to visionary experience. The second is that the marian visionaries may not be radically different from other people who claim to have had comparable experiences. Thus we will attempt a categorisation of marian apparitions: are the marian visionaries like their non-religious counterparts? Or do they rather stand in the tradition of the Christian mystics? Is the apparition ecstasy akin to meditation?

Psychological or psychical models have been offered as ways of understanding the problem of subjectivity and objectivity in such phenomena. This provides an important step in the building of a theological model for apparitions. If either they are wholly subjective and/or cannot be distinguished in kind from non-religious visions, can they really be considered to have value in a theological sense? How can we identify what is objective, if anything?

Depth psychology and psychical research have their origins in the last years of the 19th century (although psychological considerations have been an important aspect of theological and philosophical thought since ancient times). The psychology of the unconscious, and its relevance to religion, has its main exponents in Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung; yet Jung was indebted in part to William James. James himself referred to the embryonic theories of Frederic Myers, one of the pioneers of the Society for Psychical Research, which emerged in the 1880s. The society wished to understand 'supernatural' phenomena, such as visions, ghosts, and telepathy, from a

scientific standpoint. Here we will make use of the findings of the SPR on apparition phenomena, which were developed in particular by Tyrrell and, later, the Institute for Psychophysical Research. The Jesuit Herbert Thurston was also a member of the SPR, and he considered Catholic phenomena such as apparitions and weeping statues from a psychical perspective.

Before we begin, one note of warning: our references to James and Jung and their explorations of spontaneous religious phenomena do not imply that we regard such things as the only, or most important, source of religious knowledge or experience. This would appraise the visionaries and mystics as a kind of elite among religious people. Nicholas Lash has questioned this tendency in James' work (6/6). He referred to criticisms of James made earlier this century by Baron Friedrich von Hügel. In the view of these writers, James overlooked the fact that all religious experience is rooted in tradition and context, ie he was wrong to suggest that there can be such a thing as 'pure' experience which transcends the spheres of religious institution and intellectual rigour (6/7). Von Hügel would rather see the world of the mystic as interrelating in harmony with those of institutional-traditional and intellectual-critical modes of religion (6/8).

We have not yet decided that marian visionaries are mystics within the normal usage of that word, but the same issue applies to their case, and hopefully, by the end of this chapter, it will be obvious how highly we must regard tradition and context; indeed, without them, the marian apparitions vanish into the great morass of apparently arbitrary hallucination experiences. The more dramatic and unusual outpourings of the subconscious human psyche, through which the apparitions are mediated, is not, we

would agree, the sole source of religious experience. Nevertheless, we would also agree with James that unusual phenomena are, and have been for as long as religion has existed, reckoned a special mark of divine presence and favour.

So, in the chapter that follows, we begin the task of building a theoretical model for apparitions by considering the apparition phenomena from the standpoint of what is claimed to be empirical, namely, psychic research and depth psychology. This work is neutral with regard to the relative standing of apparitions among religious experiences in general.

6.2 The possibility of 'psychic' faculties and comparisons with non-religious apparitions

6.2.1 Psychic research

Whilst in this thesis we are concerned with religious visions in a particular context, we cannot overlook the fact that there has been research made, in Britain, into visions in general. The Jesuit Thurston, who as we saw suggested a psychic faculty independent of religious piety, and possibly linked to telepathy (4/6; 4/7; 4/8), was also a member of the Society for Psychical Research, which has had an interest in apparitions of all kinds since its inception in 1882 (6/9). The apparent verifiable nature of some apparitions, in particular those - hereafter referred to as death-crisis cases - of persons dying or recently dead to others who were unaware of the fact until after the apparition, led the SPR to test them for possible evidence of telepathy (6/10). Indeed, the whole issue of 'ghosts' and 'haunting' (6/11) interested

the SPR, who felt that scientific research into the subject was possible.

The census of the SPR suggested that 10% of people (in the 1890s, at least) experience apparitions, referred to as "hallucinations", ie images or voices that appear to be wholly external to the percipient (6/12). The word "hallucination" is one that must be defined carefully. For modern psychologists it means a false perception originating, not in some external object (then it would be illusion), but in either the imagination or the organic processes (6/13). It is therefore, in this view, a subjective, psychopathic phenomenon, ie one which originates in and derives from the psychological history of the person concerned. In marian apparitions, the conclusion that a vision was an hallucination would disqualify it from being authentic as a divinely-originated case. Laurentin & Joyeux, in their medical studies on Medjugorje, write that

"collective hallucinations are normally encountered among drug addicts...We did not observe hallucinatory type behaviour in any one of the visionaries", meaning behaviour originating in drug abuse or diagnosable illness (6/14).

Yet for the SPR, "hallucination" was used in the census as a neutral word meaning simply perception of something not physically present by the normal standards of sense-perception. As we shall see, they left open the question of objectivity, ie the possibility that it is projected into the visionary's field of perception by an external agent.

Tyrrell, a late president of the SPR, recorded the observation that most subjects of "hallucinations" had only one such experience; more than two for any one person

was rare (6/15). Of both visual and auditory hallucinations, one third of cases where more than one person was present were collective, ie seen or heard by more than one person (and drugs were not involved). This is one type that suggests some kind of objectivity (6/16), the other being the coincidence of apparition with an external event, eg the death-crisis case (and we could add to this the prophetic case (6/17)). Such cases appear "veridical", ie their objectivity is difficult to refute (6/18). 1 in 43 of the hallucinations recorded by the SPR presented a death-crisis coincidence (6/19).

The work of the SPR, and of the Institute of Psychophysical Research (6/20), provides an interesting parallel to study of marian apparitions. The apparitions they record are non-religious in content, but there are elements common to marian cases as well, eg (6/21):

- (i) the different ways of appearing in 'space' (which range from appearing within a special 'space', like an oval or square projected onto the normal environment, to apparently existing in the normal environment);
- (ii) the fact that there is no physical basis for the apparition, despite its apparent life-likeness (including response to touch);
- (iii) the existence of subsidiary phenomena besides the central figure (6/22) (marian apparitions often include angels, Jesus or Joseph, various kinds of dress for the Virgin, etc);
- (iv) the possibility of collective phenomena (some seeing while others do not, or all present seeing);
- (v) feelings of cold or wind accompanying the phenomena (6/23);
- (vi) the life-likeness of the vision is usually qualified by certain signs that confirm its non-physical nature (eg vanishing slowly, not graspable, unable to be photographed

or recorded (6/24), luminous, suspended in mid-air, transparent).

Notable differences exist, however, between the 'secular' and marian cases:

(i) the SPR recorded that the apparitions did not indulge in long conversations (6/25);

(ii) repetition of the phenomena was rare in the SPR cases.

Many marian cases do not match these latter findings (6/26).

The SPR and IPR research is carried out without any religious emphasis (and there is very little in the way of religious comment in the descriptions recorded by them (6/27)). The Alister Hardy Research Centre, on the other hand, which collects descriptions of religious experience, has files which record several cases of visionary phenomena amongst other types of experience. The fact that the AHRC's subjects are British, and the majority Protestant, may account for the fact that, amongst a sample of 73 visions found among 500 descriptions of religious experience, 17 were of Jesus, 3 of God the Father, 4 of Heaven, and only 1 of Mary (seen by a Catholic convert). These visions were neither communicative nor often repeated, in accordance with the SPR sample (6/28).

The statistics and records of the SPR, IPR, and AHRC show us that, in studying marian apparitions, we are dealing not with a distinct phenomenon, but with one which lies within a range of visionary phenomena. This range could be categorised according to several characteristics:

(a) perception collective, part-collective, or individual;

(b) apparition of person(s) living or dead, generally well-known, known to one or more visionary, or unknown;

(c) phenomenon public or private; (d) phenomenon realistic, blending with environment, or not, in varying degrees; (e) the presence or lack of links with external events, eg death-crisis or prophecy, that suggests objectivity or subjectivity; (f) phenomenon linked to previous wish, fear, or expectation on behalf of one or more visionaries or totally unexpected; (g) visionaries all mentally healthy or some degree of mental ill health diagnosable in one or more.

Could the ability to see an apparition, ie a 'psychic' or possibly 'telepathic' faculty, be universal? Von Hügel suggested that the 'mystic' faculty (which is not exactly the same thing necessarily) is universal even if "slight" in some (6/29). Yet he conceded that the ecstasies have a "peculiar psycho-physical organisation" (6/30). Thurston implied that the psychic faculty was only enjoyed by certain people, possibly more than these being telepathic and able to perceive some aspects of psychic vision if present at its occurrence (6/31).

The SPR cases suggest a 10% chance that someone will at some time experience a visual apparition or auditory locution; if it occurs with others present there is a 33% chance that some of them will see something. Yet the famous marian cases, apart from being communicative and repetitive in a way not common to the 'secular' cases, are often sensational and public in a way that is rare. This might suggest that receptivity to apparition phenomena (or hallucinations, using the word in its neutral sense, implying neither objectivity nor subjectivity) is common, but that the intensity of the experience is inversely proportional to the number of people able to perceive it. This bears out von Hügel's observation (above) without the religious connotations; thus there may well exist a universal faculty to perceive apparitions, very slight and

undeveloped in most, sometimes activated in others, whilst some have an unusual psychological make-up that renders them liable to trance, ecstasy, and powerful experiences of apparitions.

6.2.2 Dynamics of 'psychic' phenomena

How could such a universal faculty be described? One of the founders of the SPR, Myers, in the 1880s introduced the concept of the "subliminal" areas of personality, and also the possibility of "automatisms", actions or experiences with a subliminal origin. James expanded on these ideas in his study of the varieties of religious experience (6/32). For James, the notably religious personality had a

"strongly developed ultra-marginal life" leading to "incursions from it of which the subject does not know the source",

ie impulses, inhibitions, obsessions, automatic speech or writing, and hallucinations (6/33). James' inference was that, while everyone has a subliminal or subconscious side to their personality, certain persons have this active and developed so that they are prone to strange phenomena which mark them out as being strongly religious and therefore of interest. James suggested that almost all religious leaders experienced automatisms, which convinced themselves and others of their special religious calling:

"beliefs are strengthened wherever automatisms corroborate them. Incursions from beyond the transmarginal region have a peculiar power to increase conviction. The inchoate sense of presence is infinitely stronger than conception, but strong as it may be, it is seldom equal to the evidence of hallucination" (6/34).

James remained open on the theological question of whether God effected such phenomena (6/35), observing their 'objective' appearance (6/36) and sometimes their 'saving' quality (6/37). Yet, in James' view, not all such

phenomena were equally profound: subliminal activity could be either a "nerve storm" or useful and rational lending itself to a "more mystical and theological hypothesis" (6/38). For this reason, some authors distinguish "subconscious" and "superconscious": the former being identified with the instincts and mental activity during a lowering of consciousness (eg dreams), whereas the latter is attributed to mystic experience as being of a transcendent higher consciousness and a greater awareness (6/39). This distinction is not in James' work, and indeed Jung later rejected it, as he had a positive view of the contents of waking reverie and dreams, perceived during a lowering of consciousness (6/40). For Jung, as well as for James, the distinction between valuable experience arising from the non-conscious on the one hand, and neurotic outbursts suggesting ill health on the other, is drawn on an evaluation of the content and effects of the experience and not by envisaging different spheres of consciousness as the origin (6/41). The writers on mysticism, on the other hand, put transcendent consciousness above the imagination, although accepting that the content of the experience provides important evidence for its profundity and value (6/42).

James suggested that full consciousness was a bar to the spiritual (6/43). This opinion is akin to psychological conclusions drawn from research into meditation (6/44); the heightened consciousness of the meditative state appears to be due to the release of energy normally directed to task- and time-oriented activity. Thus the mind is opened to the unity of things rather than their distinctiveness, and to stimuli other than those useful for the purposes of ordinary existence (6/45). Underhill pointed out that contemplative passivity gave rise to a higher awareness of the divine by stopping the working of the imagination (6/46).

In the same way, visionary ecstasy such as that at Medjugorje is, according to Laurentin and Joyeux,

"manifested as a functional state in which ordinary sense perception is suspended...it is not pathological, (but) a coherent state that is beneficial to the visionaries...(and) has the effect of transferring the visionaries into another special duration, a duration that is sui generis, that differs from our realm of time as measured on the clock" (6/47).

This description is very similar to the observations made by psychologist researchers on mysticism and meditation (other than that generated by hypnosis or sensory deprivation) (6/48). These find that the meditative state has affinities with mysticism in its sense of unity, ineffability, reality, fruitfulness and value (6/49).

Now we may identify five specific categories of consciousness other than that of normal sense-perception, although some of them may result in similar effects:

- (i) contemplative, deliberately seeking unity with the divine through suspension of both the imagination and the sensual perception of the environment (mysticism);
- (ii) meditative, deliberately seeking to gain a greater awareness of the environment through suspension of normal consciousness which distinguishes and prioritises things (meditation);
- (iii) awake, but involuntarily focussed on an hallucination (visual or auditory) (the first experience in marian apparitions is usually unsolicited, but subsequent apparitions are often expected (6/50));
- (iv) consciousness altered by drugs including anaesthetics (6/51), hypnosis or sensory deprivation;
- (v) asleep, dreaming (lucid or otherwise (6/52)).

All four awake categories may include apparitions, but the involuntary, unsolicited nature of apparitions in category (iii) puts them nearer to the dream-state (v) than to mysticism (i). (Nevertheless, Laurentin and Joyeux

emphasise that the apparitions

"are not sleep or dream or hallucination in the medical or pathological sense of the word. This is scientifically excluded by the electro-encephalogram and by clinical observation (6/53)."

Jung categorised apparitions along with dreams as spontaneous psychic events; whether they are 'nothing but' (ie subjective) hallucinations or not does not alter their spontaneity and thus their usefulness as manifestations of the unconscious (6/54). The usually unsolicited nature of apparitions (6/55) distinguishes them from charismata such as glossolalia, which are usually voluntary (6/56).

So we may conclude this section on the possibility of a 'psychic' faculty by making the following remarks:

- (a) a special faculty for hallucination, ie perception of a non-physical object external to the self, seems to exist in people who do not necessarily suffer from mental illness (although the line between mental illness and health is not an easy one to draw) - children may be particularly likely to experience them;
- (b) telepathy is posited by some observers because of cases which display something of the objectively verifiable, eg death-crisis cases, instances of prophecy;
- (c) the faculty for apparitions, telepathic or not, is probably common although usually undeveloped, with the intensity of the experience inversely proportional to the numbers of people liable to perceive it;
- (d) psychology has suggested that the "subconscious" (or "unconscious") personality is the ground of unsolicited religious experience;
- (e) the tendency to unusual phenomena, including apparitions, has for ages past, and up to the present day, strengthened the individual's claim to religious authority (so James);
- (f) the involuntary nature of many apparitions and locutions distinguishes them from mysticism and

meditation, and puts them, to some extent, closer to dreams as "spontaneous psychic events" (using the Jungian insight and parlance);

(g) apparitions may be categorised in a 'continuum' of such phenomena, and may be religious or not, collective or not, etc;

(h) marian apparitions are like other types except that, in the notable cases at least, they are both often accompanied by a long conversation with the Virgin and often repeated in a series over varying periods.

6.3 Conceptualising the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity

6.3.1 Models in psychic research

We have noted that two aspects of apparitions could suggest an objective source of the experience: (a) collective cases, and (b) coincidence with an external event. The early theories of SPR members on collective apparitions split into the following types:

(i) "inter-subjective", ie there is no object external to the whole group involved with the apparition, but telepathy is operating between them and possibly also the person seen (so Gurney);

(ii) "extra-subjective", ie the group have a shared faculty to see something which is really present in some way (so Myers) (6/57).

Broad noted that the problem with (i) is that telepathy theories have to be complicated to fit the facts (eg a belief in survival after death is necessary, or at least a delay in the telepathic process, as many death-crisis visions occur after death, and the delay would have to be equal for the whole group) (6/58). Yet Broad also saw

that, on the other hand, (ii) introduces two problems: the existence of an extra entity (ie the apparition itself), and the existence of the faculty to see it (6/59). Broad's treatment of these difficulties led him to choose a representative model for perception as opposed to a prehensive one, ie he decided that ultimately we perceive not because there is something to perceive (although there usually is), but because our bodies are in the right state for perceiving. Our brains and nervous systems, therefore, if in the correct state for 'seeing' a lamp will see one even if there is not a lamp to be seen, and this occurs in the case of apparitions (6/60).

Tyrrell's theory of apparitions followed a similar path (6/61). Although he rejected the Gurney telepathy theory because of the 'delay' problem (mentioned above) and because of the necessary existence in the theory of a main 'receiver' of the telepathic message who then affects the others present (6/62), nevertheless he chose something like an "inter-subjective" perspective. He could not see what the objective non-physical entity occupying space in the Myers theory could possibly mean (6/63). His own hypothesis accepted telepathy, but went into greater detail as to the subconscious forces at work (6/64). All those who see something hallucinatory do so because subconscious elements in them cause this to happen, suggested Tyrrell (ie subconscious elements affect the sensory nervous system in the manner appropriate for vision or hearing (6/65)). The objective 'something' that causes this is not present in space but is an "idea-pattern", which is able to be transmitted telepathically. The idea-pattern (which could be eg a dying person's wish to communicate to friends) is conditioned by the subconscious faculties of the visionaries according to the needs of the "drama" (6/66). People hear and see things because it is appropriate for them to do so in the

dramatic manifestation, eg those - or some of those (the problem of varying degrees of faculty remains in the Tyrrell theory (6/67)) - accompanying the individual receiving an idea-pattern from a dying friend may see the latter, even if they do not know him or her. This drama will be set up to the last detail, eg people will see the apparition according to their respective positions in space (a fact noticed in SPR research) (6/68).

Tyrrell could not avoid the probability that his evidence pointed to survival after death in cases of death-crisis apparitions and hauntings: if these are purely inter-subjective to the persons living, then theoretical difficulties arise, such as the fact that, then, this type of apparition would be very different from other cases (eg of the living) (6/69).

These are, then, Tyrrell's conclusions on the SPR apparition debate. As we can see, the concept "inter-subjective" is used in this debate to mean that the image is entirely generated by the human mind, but it does not mean that there is not an external agent involved. There is, in fact, a good measure of objectivity in Tyrrell's model: the idea-pattern is objective, as all the seers perceive it in a demonstrably similar way. Tyrrell allowed for the possibility that the subconscious factors involved worked together in a collective apparition in order to forge the drama in a way that made sense to the group as a whole (6/70). Yet where Tyrrell departed from Gurney and Myers is that he postulated an active subconscious (even if collective) creating the apparition. Even though the whole vision may be 'sent' telepathically (eg the exact details of the dying person's environment), only the idea-pattern is sent voluntarily (ie many details would have been unnoticed by the sender!). This is because the subconscious of the sender works in common with those of

the recipients; time and space distances are annulled (6/71).

Idea-patterns, according to Tyrrell, may be purely subjective, eg complexes, hopes, and fears resulting in dreams or subjective visions (6/72). The idea-pattern theory is extended by Tyrrell to include collective ideas in local tradition:

"collective and telepathically endowed idea-patterns would also explain epidemic appearances, for example, of the Virgin and the Saints in Catholic countries", or of the Devil and witches in medieval times (6/73). For the idea-pattern generated, according to Tyrrell, does not have to produce an hallucination of the person sending it telepathically as in death-crisis cases, but may be of other persons, or objects. These two applications of the idea-pattern theory have affinities with the depth-psychologies of Freud (subconscious wishes fulfilled in dream and hallucination fantasy) and Jung (the collective unconscious giving rise to traditional visions based on universal patterns). We will discuss Freudian and Jungian models in more detail as we go through the chapter.

More recent research on apparitions by Green and McCreery of the IPR obviously owes much to Tyrrell, but the authors stress that it is likely that the whole environment seen by the visionary is hallucinatory (even when some of the objects seem normal) (6/74). Yet they presuppose the Tyrrell thesis that the subconscious of the seer is somehow responsible for this (6/75). The hallucination is real enough to have an impact, yet deliberate clues are left by the subconscious in the images formed to let the conscious mind know that an hallucination is taking place (6/76).

Tyrrell's theory has some affinities with Underhill's conclusions on mysticism. She suggested that mystical visions and locutions were not objective, but symbolic: creative results of thought, intuition and direct perception like art (6/77). Here the element external to the visionary is not an idea-pattern as such, but the soul's contact with the divine (at least, in the most profound cases) (6/78). The subconscious creates the vision as a result of this encounter.

6.3.2 The Jungian model

The "subconscious" or "subliminal" of Myers and James, which approximates to the ideas of the subconscious in the work of Underhill and Tyrrell (6/79), is similar to the concept of the "unconscious" used by the depth-psychologists Freud and Jung, but it is not identical. In the former, the conscious and subconscious are viewed as parts of a continuous chain of personality, but for the latter, the unconscious is a polarised 'other' to consciousness (6/80). For Freud, this 'other' was a repository of repressed, often painful, memories, but in the Jungian model, a more positive complement containing both potential for growth in the maturation of the personality and a balance to correct the over-emphases within ego-consciousness (6/81).

Jung developed the concept of the "collective unconscious", deep layers of the psyche, inherited by each individual in the same way as the morphology of the human body. Where the personal unconscious contains repressed memories and complexes (as in Freudian psychology), the contents of the collective unconscious are "archetypes", constellations common to humanity and expressed in motifs, legends, dreams, etc (6/82). As opposed to the contents of the personal unconscious, derived from memories of

experiences,

"the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity" (6/83).

The archetypes are autonomous (ie not directed by the conscious will) and dynamic elements of the unconscious psyche, according to Jung, having a great effect on human affairs, especially when their existence remains unknown (6/84). Jung based his research into archetypes on comparisons between individual expressions and comparative religion, looking for themes and motifs that seemed to be common and for psychological effects that could be categorised (6/85).

This appears similar to Tyrrell's idea of the collective "idea-pattern", existing through telepathy in a particular culture. However, there are major differences. The Jungian archetypes are not transmitted telepathically, but are inherited constructs of the psyche; they are universal to humanity, and may be ancient. In another way, too, Jung's archetypes are radically different to Tyrrell's idea-patterns. For the proof of the working of an archetype is its 'otherness' to the contents of consciousness, as it exists in the collective unconscious, polarised to, and strange to, the conscious ego (6/86). Jung wrote that archetypal visions contain material beyond the individual's own life experience (therefore not due to anamnesis, ie forgetting) (6/87), and so they may well disagree with established tradition: visions that agree with dogma, however, are

"visualisations of conscious contents, evoked through prayer, autosuggestion, and heterosuggestion. Most spiritual exercises have this effect..."

and the visions thus produced are not spontaneous and autonomous like archetypal ones (6/88).

An example of a vision that may be archetypal is, according to Jung, the Unidentified Flying Object (UFO). The round shape suggests a mandala, although the tendency of modern people to think in technological, rather than mythological, terms gives the UFO its characteristics of an alien space-travelling device (6/89). This example helps us to understand the difference between archetypal contents (in this case round, light, strange) and those that are to a greater degree subjective and belonging to a particular era (technological, transport).

The Jungian archetypes most relevant to this thesis are the "anima" and "Great Mother". These are not totally distinguished from one another, as they both inform images of woman: the former, woman seen as a partner by the male, and the latter, the universal mother figure (6/90). In Jungian terms, the Virgin Mary is an instance of the "Great Mother" clothed in Christian garb (6/91); as a Great Mother, she has affinities with goddesses of other cultures. This has been illustrated in comparative studies, by Jung himself but also by, for example, Preston, who suggests that such goddesses (including Mary) are symbols of integration against a common enemy, both unifying a society and fragmenting it (as protectresses at different levels of society (6/92)), of fertility, nurture, mediation, justice, ethnic identity, healing, spiritual purity, punishment, rebirth, transformation, and finally syncretism: cementing old and new, folk and classical (6/93). Preston insists that the ideology of the goddess includes an element, which is sui generis and not subjective (reminiscent of Jung's concept of the archetype):

"symbolic forms, such as deities, are somewhat shaped by life experiences and conceived in familiar terms. But the ideological realm cannot be explained simply as a projection of other domains of human experience. Though ideology is informed by social and psychological

factors, it has an independent, self-perpetuating mode that resists reductionist interpretations" (6/94).

The part that socio-political factors play in religious imagery and concepts can be identified to some extent, eg Campbell finds that the mother goddesses are dominant where secular male and female roles are polarised, with the female status low (6/95). Warner regards the figure of Mary as a tool of the patriarchal moral and family code promulgated by the hierarchical Catholic Church (6/96).

The comparative and depth-psychological approach suggests that the psychic charge attached to Mary derives, not from this particular instance of the feminine that is Mary, but from the universal archetype of the mother goddess, more ancient by far than Mary (6/97). This viewpoint has obvious implications for marian apparitions, which we will explore in more depth later on in this chapter.

So, finally, we should recall that, in chapter 4, we concluded that there were elements of objectivity and subjectivity in marian apparitions as viewed in the Catholic tradition. We wondered whether the 'quality' of the vision was objective, the form subjective (4.2.2). In this section, we have considered different models for objectivity and subjectivity, of which two are of particular interest. For Tyrrell, the apparitions are created 'subjectively' by an individual or group as an appropriate dramatic effect; an idea-pattern acts as an agent in this process - it is either internal or external to the individual or group perceiving the apparition. In the Jungian model, the archetype acts apparently externally to the individual as a universal residue in the collective psyche, while the subjective experience of the individual clothes the archetype with recognisable and traditional material; thus Mary is an instance of the

Great Mother archetype. However, the true spontaneous archetypal vision (as opposed to autosuggestion) is, in Jungian thought, recognisable by its content (strange to the personal ego) and also by its features that are common to human representations across time and space. Thus Mary's archetypal qualities are identified as those which have elements in common with the goddesses of other religions.

So Tyrrell's and Jung's ideas qualify an hypothetical polarity between objective 'quality' and subjective 'form' in apparitions by suggesting that:

(i) (Tyrrell) the element external and objective to the seer (nominally the "idea-pattern") may include some details of form (eg the telepathic image of the 'sender's' environment);

(ii) (Jung) some elements of the visual and audial content may be archetypal as opposed to others which are subjective and personal.

These suggest that we should not draw a hard-and-fast line between quality and form as objective and subjective, as some elements of the form may be included in that part of the experience which is termed objective.

6.4 Analysis of visions in Thomism and mysticism

White, and others such as Bryant, are concerned to show that modern depth-psychology, especially that of Jung, does not contradict the mainstream of Catholic theology which accepts that God works in and through the natural faculties of the psyche rather than acting independently of them: Aquinas is particularly important in this regard. White compared Thomist conceptions with modern psychoanalysis, and noted how Aquinas' view of prophetic revelation stressed its illogical, overpowering and

intuitive nature, standing over against the conscious ego and will, which accords with Jung's descriptions of symbolic forms presented by the collective unconscious (6/98). Underhill and von Hügel, in their analyses of mysticism, suggested that there is a danger in overlooking the 'human' part of the equation when explanations are lacking: they call this tendency "supernaturalism", and condemn it for playing into the hands of its opposite, rationalism, where the divine is 'nothing but' the human psyche (6/99).

So we are reminded of our conclusions in 4.2.2, where we suggested that the only workable model for judging the action of the divine was one of transformation, ie the change in human living and well-being discloses the divine working. Thus to investigate the visions from a psychological angle is not to discount the possibility of a divine origin (6/100).

White did not accept a hard-and-fast distinction between subconscious and superconscious, suggesting that, in Thomist psychology, the "super-rational" is brought to consciousness through the "sub-rational" (6/39; 6/101). The imagination, which is for Aquinas the vehicle par excellence of the prophetic vision, is influenced by biological and biochemical factors, which may, in their turn, have been acted upon by angels or devils (6/102). Angels, after all, cannot overrule psychology and biology but, from Old Testament times, had to use the human faculties (6/103). Aquinas also stressed the active participation of the prophet, who chooses images and words to express the super-rational (6/104). Von Hügel noted that, in mysticism, God does not supplant the human agent, but stimulates and supports; the soul being not wholly passive in the encounter (6/105). He added that it was

difficult to distinguish the subjective and objective in the mystical encounter (6/106).

Aquinas' analysis of prophecy had rejected the possibility that visions enhanced it (6/107). Visions have a subordinate role in the struggle for prophetic expression. This is also the role accorded to visions in the mystical tradition: the Spanish mystics St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross were very cautious about visionary phenomena, being aware of the dangers of pride, over-sensationalism, diabolical agency, and unfortunate encouragement by superiors (4/68; 4/102; 6/108).

For the mystics, visions were an aid to encouragement and expression, given to the mystic for the sake of implanting a spirit of devotion, nothing more (6/109); as Rahner observed, the central feature of the mystic experience was mystical contemplation itself (4/26; 4/27). This might suggest that the only visions of value are those occurring as subsidiary to the process of mystical development, but Rahner did not take this position dogmatically, accepting modern visions to unprepared peasant children, independent of orthodox mystical practice, as prophecies of worth (4/55). Aquinas had judged that prophecy needed neither a special disposition nor high moral standards (and prophecy could be divine, diabolic, or neither); Caiaphas is an example of a disreputable man speaking divine prophecy (6/110).

As we have seen (4.2.1), however, the Catholic tradition does insist on the principle that sanctity proves the divine nature of charismata rather than vice versa, ie mystical phenomena do not in themselves establish special divine favour (4/20; 4/21; 4/38). Yet marian visionaries are not always 'saintly' people, despite the tests on their character (3.3). Poulain sensed this ambiguity in

Catholicism, and tried to do justice to the mystic tradition and priestly support for apparitions. He accepted that the visionaries of La Salette were not morally or mystically advanced, but also that their experience was a divine one: this vision to people in "ordinary prayer" was "unusual" (6/111).

The answer to this problem may be, as implied above, to distinguish the modern apparitions from mystic visions as they are spontaneous rather than induced by contemplative technique. Yet they do not easily fit into the category of Thomist prophecy either, because of the importance of judgement in the prophetic role: it is not the visions that are primary in prophecy, but the judgement (6/112). In the marian cases, the prophecy is usually repeated verbatim from the lips of the vision, rather than elicited eg from symbolic material. This puts the marian visionary nearer to the category of conscious 'medium', ie someone who passes on prophecy without a contribution arising from personal experience and ability (6/113).

Karl Rahner divided prophecy into five types: (a) fortune-telling, (b) the "parapsychological" (dreams, clairvoyance, etc), (c) use of philosophy and theology of history (intellectual usually, but also possibly parapsychological and even divinely-inspired), (d) political fabrication, (e) supernatural divine revelation, in which the parapsychological and supernatural may be intermingled (6/114). This last case, the one relevant to an 'authentic' marian apparition, occurs because God uses the psychic potentialities of the seer(s) (4/61; 6/115). As we have seen, Rahner and Schillebeeckx accept the marian apparitions as genuine cases of prophecy (4/55; 4/56; 4/57).

The marian cases do not contradict Lindblom's definitions of prophecy:

"Common to all representatives of the prophetic type here depicted is the consciousness of having access to information from the world above and experiences originating in the divine world, from which ordinary men are excluded...Such an influx into a human soul from the divine world we call inspiration, and the power to receive such influences we call the inspirational predisposition" (6/116). The "prophet may be characterised as a person who, because he is conscious of having been especially chosen and called, feels forced to perform actions and proclaim ideas which, in a mental state of intense inspiration or real ecstasy, have been indicated to him in the form of divine revelations" (6/117).

This latter definition indicates Lindblom's particular concern (the Old Testament prophets), and so the performing of actions is emphasised (not common in the marian tradition, with the possible exception of Bernadette's digging for the spring (6/118)), together with the mental state of inspiration as opposed to explicit words from a vision. Old Testament prophecy, which was the basis of Aquinas' treatment (6/119), is mostly characterised by objects or visions giving rise to interpretation and action (6/120).

So the marian visionaries may be designated 'prophets', but not in the full sense of the Old Testament prophets as Aquinas and Lindblom, respectively, understood and understand them.

What of the dynamics of the visionary phenomenon itself? Aquinas allowed for the possibility of an extra-subjective vision (applying SPR terminology) and also of a subjective but yet valuable one (6/121). He treated the case of apparitions during the eucharist: the host may actually change in its accidents (especially in cases where several see this change) or it may not, the change taking place only in the eyes of the beholder. Yet the latter type may

still be representing truth, according to Aquinas, as it could be effected by the angels (6/122). Here of course the agent is divine and not human as in SPR cases - this is due to the context and content of the vision (the SPR were mainly interested in telepathy rather than theological explanations).

Both of these kinds of vision identified by Aquinas are termed "corporeal" in the mystic tradition (6/123). The corporeal (external to the observer, seen with the eyes) is to be distinguished from the "imaginative" (seen in the mind's eye like a dream image) and "intellectual" (no image at all, only an inner awareness (6/124)). These are graded in order of merit: the intellectual highest, then the imaginative, and finally the corporeal. According to Teresa of Avila, the intellectual and imaginative vision often occur together, and the image produced in such a dual vision is not purely the product of the subjective imagination, being too beautiful and its effects too fruitful (6/125). However, the corporeal or exterior type of vision is inferior and most open to delusions caused by the Devil (6/126).

Underhill suggested that the corporeal vision was of little value to mysticism, being very often merely regurgitation of previous knowledge:

it "is little else than a more or less uncontrolled externalisation of inward memories, thoughts, or intuitions - even of some pious picture which has become imprinted on the mind - which may, in some subjects, attain the dimensions of true sensorial hallucination" (6/127).

She distinguishes the mystical from the popular vision: those which bring wisdom, calm, a new light, conversion, commands at times of indecision - these

"belong to another and higher plane of experience from the radiant appearances of our Lady", and other visions of Christ's sufferings wholly "traceable to the subject's religious enthusiasms or previous knowledge"

(6/128).

We are reminded here of Jung's remarks on 'regurgitated' visions (6.3.2); however, he did not denounce the 'corporeal' type as such, but the non-'archetypal'.

We have noted that, for Poulain (6/111), the marian apparitions with which we are dealing are of the corporeal type (indeed, marian visions, like the hallucinations recorded by the SPR, often have tactile as well as visual and audial properties (6/129)). The corporeal visions can be divided, according to Poulain, into (a) 'objective' (only the living, and Christ and Mary, are able to exhibit their own bodies, although the body might not appear in its true form (4/68)); (b) 'objective borrowed' (the angels, being bodiless, need to 'borrow' a body in which to appear); (c) 'semi-objective' (light producing the appearance); and (d) 'subjective' (image formed on retina, but no external image - unlikely in cases of collective vision) (6/130). (a) and (d) coincide with the Aquinas two-fold division of visions seen during the eucharist.

Poulain cannot be sure which of the types best fits the typical marian apparition like that to Bernadette at Lourdes (6/131). The general marian case includes the ability to touch the vision, and so we would have to conclude that it would be included under (a) if any at all. Were we to accept something like the Tyrrell model for apparitions, then these categories could be discounted, as Tyrrell rejected any notion that the image was actually 'there' in space. (d) is the nearest to his conception, yet it does not do justice to the way in which the whole of the sensory nervous system may be attuned to 'perceiving'. The hallucinatory environment suggested by Tyrrell, Green and McCreery (6/75) is a model for apparitions which goes further than the mystic psychology

reproduced by Poulain as, for the latter, the image is external to the observer's subconscious psyche.

Rahner, surprisingly, suggests that visions in general are of the "imaginative" type (6/132), drawing this conclusion from the fact that there is no external object (6/133). There is some confusion in his use of words here: surely he does not mean imaginative as opposed to corporeal, and thus contradict Poulain? What he is probably trying to make clear is that the mystical notion of corporeal vision implies an external object, even if this is only an image formed on the retina and that, even in the cases of very lifelike apparitions, this is not the case: the apparition is formed through the psychic faculties of the seer (4/61; 6/115). Yet the danger with this terminology is that it might confuse those apparitions which appear external and those which are clearly formed in the 'mind's eye'. The type which most closely corresponds to the marian apparition is the corporeal - Lindblom describes the corporeal vision as one in which

"the visionary believes that he sees and hears by means of the natural senses, with all the characteristics of normal sensation" (6/134),

surely the case with the marian apparitions. Nevertheless here, with Rahner and in dialogue with modern psychology (6/135), we prefer a re-interpretation of the usual explanation for this occurrence, ie attributing it to the psychological sphere (which does not exclude the possibility of a 'supernatural' object) rather than to any object of sense-perception external to the observer.

Let us sum up by reiterating the main points of the discussion in this section:

(i) the Catholic tradition is quite comfortable with the notion that the divine works through human faculties, and that a study of these faculties (including psychology) is

to advance the state of theological insight - also the seer is an active co-participant in the visionary process, whether consciously or unconsciously;

(ii) the mystic tradition tended to play down the importance of apparitions, especially of the exterior or corporeal type, and saw them as useful only for encouragement to devotion;

(iii) the undeveloped moral and mystical state of marian visionaries, and the unsolicited nature of their experiences, suggests that the mystical category is not the correct one for this phenomenon; the category of prophecy is nearer, although the phenomenon is not like that in the Old Testament, as judgement of that kind is seldom utilised by the visionaries;

(iv) the Thomist and mystic categories of subjective and objective do not make as much of the creative powers of the visionary subconscious as the modern psychological models, suggesting rather that something is really 'there', or that the image is formed fully on the retina.

Despite the observation in (iv), the natural theology of Aquinas has the potential to allow for the fact that the image is 'created' by the subconscious, as the divine may still work through this creative capacity. Jungian psychology in particular confirms the autonomous nature of the psyche through which God may work (6/136). The main difficulty with Jungian psychological theory is that Christ and Mary may be seen as 'nothing but' contextual images of archetypes (6/98). The possibility that Christ or Mary is an instance of a greater and universal symbol is obviously contradictory to Catholic theology, unless it is emphasised that they are the final and definitive embodiment of it; therefore, as an alternative reading of the Jungian theoretical framework, one should perhaps suggest that the archetypal foundations of the collective

psyche allow us to apprehend better the spiritual reality that is Christ or Mary. This is quite plausible given that Jung insisted that he was an empiricist, uncommitted on theological questions (6/137). We will develop our understanding of the relationship between Jungian psychology and apparitions of Mary in the next section.

6.5 Applications to marian apparitions

Whereas religious apparitions are not specifically treated in the SPR and IPR literature, they are important in Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis, in which the symbolic forms of the vision give important clues as to the state of the unconscious psyche. As there has been an important attempt to understand the marian cult and its visionary phenomena from a Freudian perspective, by Carroll, we will confine our consideration of the possible applications of Freud to this one work. The Jungian application, however, is more complex and ultimately more interesting, because of Jung's treatment of collective traditions and comparative religion, and also because his is a phenomenological approach to the psyche, non-reductive and thus respecting the sui generis nature of religious concepts and images (6/138).

6.5.1 Freud (Carroll)

Carroll, in The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins, subjects the marian cult to a socio-psychological critique, looking at its geographical spread within Europe (6/139). He suggests that it has been prominent in Latin Europe (particularly Italy, Spain and Portugal), areas where family life is characterised by the father-ineffective family and the 'machismo' complex (6/140). In his application of Freud's psychological thought, he

suggests that this family situation intensifies the son's sexual attachment to the mother, which is repressed because of the incest taboo (6/141).

"The unconscious desires that give rise to religious devotions, obsessions, dreams, and hallucinations must be disguised because to allow them to enter the conscious mind in an obvious way would be to defeat the whole point of repression" (6/142).

This shapes the Mary cult, according to Carroll, because of the necessary dissipation of this sexual desire in sublimation of the mother-complex (6/143); in addition, identification with Mary

"allows women to experience vicariously the fulfillment of their desire for sexual contact with, and a baby from, their fathers" (6/144).

This is the central point in the first part of Carroll's book, which also seeks historical origins for the Mary cult, and finds them in the imposition of Christianity, at the end of the fourth century, on a pagan world which worshipped the Great Mother (in particular, Cybele) (6/145). However, the second part of the book is concerned with applying the Freudian model to apparitions.

Carroll approaches his study of marian apparitions

"on the premise that they are produced by natural causes",

i.e. that they are either illusions or hallucinations (6/146). He suggests that some "sets" of what he calls marian hallucinations were preceded by illusions, when people other than the visionaries saw something on the first instance of the apparition experience (he cites Banneux, Fatima, and Medjugorje) (6/147). Furthermore, Carroll goes on to say that a group of seers is characterised by the prominence of one particular member, who experiences the initial hallucination; the others have hallucinations which begin with unconscious simulation in imitation (as in van Gehuchten's analysis of Beauraing)

(3/10; 6/148). Thus Carroll explains the divergence between the visionaries which increases over time because they are unable to compare stories as the numbers of onlookers grows: they are not seeing the same object.

Carroll then outlines the importance of the prevailing local religious worldview and of imitation from one apparition case to another in the unconscious formation of a visionary experience (6/149). Stories of the Virgin appearing to young shepherds provoke similar occurrences in rural children of later generations, and so on. Given this background, it is left to Carroll to explain the individual circumstances which determine why that particular seer (either alone or as a member of a group) unconsciously shapes these factors into a vision.

A closer investigation of particular "hallucinations" - Rue du Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, and Guadalupe - is introduced in Carroll's next section by a statement to the effect that

"the content of the apparition does appear to have been influenced by some of the idiosyncratic wishes and desires that characterise the particular seer" (6/150).

He accepts that the Freudian model allows for all kinds of infantile desires, not just Oedipal ones, to be expressed in hallucinatory perceptions; indeed, none of his proposed solutions to the above cases includes an explicit instance of Oedipal repression, despite his emphasis on this in the first part of the book.

Naturally, the possibility that there are subjective elements in apparitions allows for the fact that the Catholic milieu helped to shape them. Yet this does not prove that the origin of the experience in all cases was repressed wish fulfilment rather than the divine supernatural. Here Carroll's thesis stands or falls. All

of his other observations: the occurrence of unusual phenomena at the outset of an apparition event, the existence of a principal visionary and the fact that some in a group see and hear more or differently than others, the fact that Catholics are predisposed to believe that Mary visits the earth (although, despite this, remarkably few claim to see her, according to Doyle (6/151)), the subjectivity of much of the visual and audial content: these do not trouble the thesis that a supernatural cause is acting through the subjective faculties of the visionary group, transforming them in some, possibly temporary, way and subsequently reaching other pilgrims in their turn.

Carroll uncovers a human person in the life of the sole or prominent seer who is represented by the mysterious figure of the vision, which is, he remarks, very often identified as Mary by popular belief rather than in the opinion of the seer. Maximin Giraud of La Salette was thus seeing a representation of his hostile stepmother whom he unconsciously wished to harm; Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes her kindly aunt; Catherine Labouré of the Rue du Bac convent her dead mother; Lucia Santos of Fatima her motherly elder sister; Juan Diego of Guadalupe (Mexico, 1531) his dead wife (6/152). The other visionaries (at La Salette and Fatima) were thus unconsciously hallucinating in imitation of their companion, constructing the same story afterward. This theory fits the Medjugorje apparitions too, according to Carroll, as the first visionary to see the Virgin, Ivanka Ivanković, had lost her mother two months previously (6/153).

The reasons that Carroll gives for these identifications are fascinating and ingenious. Yet they do not take enough account of the Catholic tradition. The inability of the La Salette lady to hold back the heavy arm could be a

creation of Maximin's desire to beat his stepmother as Carroll suggests (6/154), but it could also reflect the long-standing belief in the mercy of Mary as opposed to the justice of Christ (6/155). Furthermore, considering the psychoanalytic solution in the terms of its own logic, one must ask why the hallucination did not include an image of the woman actually being beaten, bearing the marks of such a beating or, at the very least, a more explicit reference to this occurring. Carroll admits that

"after-the-fact psychodynamic explanations are notoriously easy to construct and next to impossible to falsify" (6/156)

yet, although impossible to falsify, they do not stand up as convincing arguments when there are better alternative explanations. It is easier to account for the details of the La Salette apparition within the context of the Catholic tradition as learnt by Maximin and Melanie rather than by recourse to family relationships and repressed desires, although this fact does not prove of itself a supernatural origin for the phenomenon. The weeping of the Virgin can be accounted for by the date—the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows—and her words by local preaching and the sad fact of the famine. As the relationship of Maximin to his stepmother is able to be treated as an incidental detail, it is surely better to leave it as such.

Moving on briefly to Lourdes, we can make similar criticisms. Why should Bernadette have associated "immaculate conception" with an unmarried mother (her aunt was such a woman), as Carroll suggests (6/157)? The term was well-enough known within Catholic France for it to have purely religious connotations in the subconscious minds of the visionary. Is this not an easier solution than Carroll's (in which Bernadette had a powerful and unsatisfied unconscious desire for a loving mother for whom the best candidate was her aunt)? As for the Rue du

Bac, Carroll identifies the two hearts and the M of the Miraculous Medal as shaped by the loss of two mother figures in Catherine Labouré's past (6/158). Here again, we can ask why the tradition of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary in French religious history and the M denoting Mary on icons (often MR) are not enough to explain the origin of this symbolism in an apparition to a young woman in a convent.

Carroll is attempting to overlay the obvious Catholic symbolism with Freudian interpretations, and is motivated to do this partly because several notable visionaries (eg Maximin, Mélanie, Bernadette and Lucia) did not identify their vision as Mary until inspired by popular opinion (6/159). There are many other cases, however, where the Virgin is instantly recognised as such (e.g. Medjugorje). Those where this did not occur might point the observer favouring a psychoanalytic approach toward a Jungian answer, where the strange lady is an archetypal image of an unnamed great goddess, rather than a Freudian one in the way that Carroll suggests. The latter explanation begs the question as to why such hallucinations do not happen in large numbers to abused and unhappy Catholic children with the intensity capable of inspiring large-scale pilgrimage. In addition, there is the further difficulty of fitting the apparitions at Beauraing and Banneux into the mother-deprivation theory.

The Carroll explanation for the hallucination-type experience requires only one visionary in a group to be the subject of the repressed desires necessary for the vision to occur; it requires commonplace religious symbolism to express very particular, individual circumstances; it is based on arbitrarily-selected pieces of historical information; it fails to explain why the image takes the shape it does (when alternative images

would more directly express the repressed desires); it does not suggest any reason for the special intensity of the notable cases. It is not that we reject the observation that several of the visionaries may have had good individual reasons for desiring contact with a loving other-worldly mother, but this does not of itself rule out the possibility of supernatural involvement. Indeed, the loss of a mother as suffered by Ivanka Ivanković may make a person more open to the visionary experience. Yet the idea that many apparition events are the result of hallucinations experienced by a mother-deprived personality (who is then unconsciously imitated by a group of other people) is not convincing enough to stand as an explanation of the apparitions as natural phenomena.

Elsewhere, Carroll treats as illusions those cases where everyone saw at least something. He cites Pontmain, Knock and Zeitoun (Cairo), pointing out the pressure on people brought about by local or national circumstances (6/160). Although he admits that the lights seen are mysterious and inexplicable, he attributes the religious interpretations that are made concerning them to predisposition, anxiety, and suggestion by someone present that an apparition of Mary is occurring; this is then interpreted as a sign of divine favour (6/161).

Here again, while we can accept that the contextual factors do shape the apparition experience in such instances, it is not clear that these totally explain the apparent false perception that attaches itself to "mysterious lights". The shrines at Pontmain and Knock have origins in very detailed visions seen by more than one person; the factor of group suggestion building up a collective illusion does not seem to do justice to them. It is easier to put Pontmain into the Fatima category as an apparition of the Carroll-designated hallucination

type: one with accompanying phenomena seen by other observers. Knock seems to stand in a category by itself, because of the universal witness to the images by all present, with only onlookers at some distance seeing a vague light. The mystery of Knock is perhaps not best explained by the term "illusion" as Carroll uses it (ie as a misperception) (6/162).

It may seem to the uncommitted reader that we have criticised Carroll's arguments because of our presupposition that a marian apparition with a divine origin is possible, as opposed to his own starting-point that a psychological explanation is adequate. However, it would seem to be enough, in answering this objection, to demonstrate that Carroll has not succeeded in providing a convincing alternative to the supernatural explanation. His research has the feel of facts being made to fit the theory and is unlikely to become the lynchpin of a 'natural explanation' approach to the marian tradition, or the key to its psychological origins.

6.5.2 Jung

There is no single comprehensive treatment of marian apparitions from a Jungian perspective. However, Jung referred to Mary many times in his works; perhaps his most famous remarks are those that refer to the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption in 1950 by Pius XII. Jung saw this as an acknowledgement of the equality of spirit and matter (Mary representing the latter as creature, earthy mother, and female), in an age when spirit's domination (rationalism, science) caused a "chthonic revolt", ie matter threatening to destroy through the fruits of the scientific spirit, in the shape of the nuclear bomb (6/163). The 'Quaternity', the addition of Mary to the

Father, Son, and Spirit, is a more 'complete' symbol than the Trinity, in Jungian terms (6/164).

Thus Jung was delighted with the declaration of the Assumption, which also signified, for him, the 'hieros gamos', ie the marriage of bride and groom in 'heaven' which symbolised the reconciliation of opposites (6/165).

"The logic of the papal declaration cannot be surpassed and it leaves Protestantism with the odium of being nothing but a man's religion which allows no metaphysical representation of woman" (6/166).

Thus Jung supported 'sexual equality' in the Christian understanding of the divine: while Mary had not

"attained the status of a goddess..as mistress of heaven...and mediatrix, she is functionally on a par with Christ, the king and mediator" (6/167).

We saw in 1.3 how Mary may be considered an Advent figure, raising the expectation of the 'Parousia'. Carl Jung's almost mystic vision of the popular psyche agrees with this scenario, except that it is seen by him as a process in the collective unconscious. Jung saw something stirring in the collective psyche: a yearning for a heavenly Woman, raised to the status of the divine, thus bringing forth the divine Prince of Peace to sooth the troubles of the modern world.

The desire for the resolution of the opposites which brings peace is a universal one for Jung:

"...the expectation of divine intervention arises in the collective unconscious and at the same time in the masses. The papal declaration has given comforting expression to this yearning" (6/168).

The visions of Mary

"which have been increasing in number over the last few decades"

(Jung was writing in 1952) expressed this need (6/169), which was characterised by a deep longing for an intercessor and mediatrix (6/170).

"The fact, especially, that it was largely children who had the visions might have given pause for thought, for in such cases, the collective unconscious is always at work" (6/171).

Elsewhere, Jung wrote that the miracles of the Virgin precede the

"anonymous Catholic movement behind dogma" - they are "genuine and legitimate experiences springing directly from the unconscious psychic life of the people" (6/172).

So these visions, according to Jung, are spontaneous and archetypal, preceding dogma, and (if we assume Jung to be consistent on this) not like those which agree with dogma, which are "visualisations of conscious contents" (6/88). Yet we must remember that, as intimated above (6.3.2; see also 6.6.1), a series of visions may contain both archetypal and subjective material, using the Jungian model.

The fact that, as Carroll noted, in many cases the vision is not identified as Mary in the early stages of a series of apparitions, supports the contention that this identification occurs by a process of assimilation with the religious tradition of the visionaries and their environment (6/159). Instances where the vision is immediately identified as Mary (eg Medjugorje) may be due to the fact that this conforms to the expectation of the seers, who might feel that a strange and beautiful visionary lady must be Mary.

Yet can we identify archetypal material as distinct from marian, traditional contents of the vision? Begg suggested that, in marian apparitions, the "eternal feminine" warned humanity of disaster and called to repentance (6/97). One might feel that Begg is drawing a rather arbitrary line (6/173): if this warning is a genuine manifestation of the archetype, why not also the vision's self-identification

as the Virgin Mary, albeit as a response to prompting (6/174)? Yet it would be quite coherent to conclude that lines can be drawn, as this is done by Catholic writers who suggest that visionaries (i) have both divine and valueless visions (6/4), and (ii) report both prophecy and subjective error (6/175). So perhaps the message in a particular series of visions could be divided into archetypal and subjective: the vision, in this model, warns and calls to repentance as the "eternal feminine" more ancient than Mary - archetypal material although clothed in traditional language - and identifies herself as Mary - subjective material.

One apparition case where archetypal material might be identified is that at the Rue du Bac (1830). The vision, as noted above, occurred after the visionary, Catherine Labouré (now canonised) had desired it, and it was therefore not strictly spontaneous (6/55; 6/176). There were three apparitions in all: during the last two, the 'Miraculous Medal' was revealed. Much of the material was traditional; the figure on the medal was struck with a "classical" motif except for the rays coming from the Virgin's hands (6/177). Yet in 1876, the year of Catherine's death and the revealing of her identity, she insisted that the Virgin had held a globe, and had offered it to "Our Lord" - this detail had been deliberately omitted by her confessor, Fr Aladel (6/178), the man who commissioned the medal in 1832 with the permission of Mgr de Quélen, who desired a classical representation (6/179). Aladel's choosing the traditional figure proved a sensible move in that, when the held globe was incorporated in a new statue in the 1880s, Rome refused permission for it to be displayed for four years before yielding to pressure (6/180).

The globe was seen at that time to represent the earth in the hands of Mary (6/181). (Laurentin remarks that this portrayal is not unknown in tradition, even if rare (6/182).) This is the kind of detail that could be identified as 'archetypal' in a Jungian analysis: neither clearly traditional nor familiar, but yet not without parallel in history. Jung used a comparative religious approach to establish the existence of archetypes. He recorded, for example, that the snake in antiquity became a symbol of the earth (6/183) - on the Miraculous Medal, the Virgin Mary is standing on a serpent coiled about a globe beneath her feet (the image of Mary crushing a serpent is common in the Catholic tradition, based on Genesis 3 and Revelation 12, although the latter suggests a crescent moon beneath Mary's feet rather than the globe of the earth (6/184)). Thus Catherine's vision as a whole contains archetypal material which suggests the interpretation that Mary is triumphant over the world and offering it to Christ.

Jung, in Psychology and Alchemy, recorded a series of dreams and visions which occurred to one man: Jung interpreted the meaning of the sequence of these dreams, and identified the archetypal content in them. One such vision was:

"A globe. The unknown woman is standing on it and worshipping the sun" (6/185).

This woman had appeared in previous dreams and represents the 'anima' (the female which in turn represents the unconscious within a man's psyche), according to Jung; the globe is the earth and a mandala symbol (6/186), while the sun is a symbol of the source of life and of wholeness. The book also contains three alchemical illustrations of figures standing on globes: Christ, Mercurius and Hermaphrodite (the last two drawings include an image of a

serpent or dragon: these are symbols of the transforming substance of alchemy, uniting the opposites (6/187)).

Therefore the woman standing on a globe (where a crescent might have been expected) could well be identified as archetypal material. It is outside the limits and competence of this thesis to go deeper than this. Other unexpected details of marian apparitions include the revelation at Medjugorje of Mary's birthday as the 5th of August (5/102) - this was also an important date for Tilman Côme, who attracted many thousands of pilgrims to Beauraing on this date in 1933 (6/188). It is in fact the feast of Our Lady of the Snows, the anniversary of the dedication in the fifth century of the West's oldest church dedicated to Mary, the basilica of St Mary Major in Rome.

Would Jung have made something of the fact that Our Lady's birthday, if we are to accept this revelation, thus moves from the astrological sign of Virgo to Leo at the same time as the aeon changes in the opposite signs from Pisces to Aquarius (Jung was interested in the collective psychic value of the astrological ages) (6/189)? Perhaps, too, there is something of interest for the Jungian observer in the visionary contents common at Medjugorje, and many seen by persons other than the main group of visionaries: a cross, a feminine figure seen in place of the concrete cross on the mountain, Christ, a heart, the sun, and hosts seen in the place of the sun (4/115; 6/190). All of these signs imply the idea of the source, and of wholeness - perhaps they are the expression of a collective unconscious urge for renewal and reintegration (6/191).

In the Jungian view, Mary is an instance of a universal mother figure. The contrast in the marian tradition between Mary as she who guides, warns and prepares, on the

one hand, and Christ as he who brings judgement, on the other (1.3), also has its echoes in the Jungian tradition. The biblical foundation of the new order of peace occurs through the power of the Lord, a male figure, an illustration of what Jung called an 'archetype', a collective psychological complex represented by images familiar through their being established in human history. We might observe that, as males have been responsible for judgement, law, order and punishment, so the archetype too is represented by a male Redeemer or Saviour (6/192). Potent female symbols, however, are associated with the womb, child-nurture, and concomitant ideas, such as nourishment, care, gentleness, transformation, lineage, group identity, qualities identified by Preston (6/93). Warner's history of the cult of Mary shows how she represents certain universal feminine qualities, such as fertility (6/193). Whether such a demarcation of function between female and male images in the collective psyche survives the modern period and its tendency to greater equality remains to be seen.

The desire for peace, central to the Jungian understanding of marian apparitions, is certainly a major feature of the 20th century marian tradition: the title "Queen of Peace", famous at Medjugorje, is especially associated with the First World War and Fatima (1/97). It was at Fatima that visionary experiences focussed on the sun began (1/58) and, on the eve of declaring the Assumption dogma (31st October 1950), Pius XII is said to have seen the miracle of the sun as it was seen in 1917 at Fatima (6/194).

All of these observations taken together suggest that a Jungian analysis of the modern visions, from the Rue du Bac to Medjugorje, would conclude that they express the desire in Catholicism for a triumph of the faith in the world (Jung said that

"the dogma of the Assumption is a slap in the face for the historical and rationalistic view of the world" (6/195)),

for peace and for renewal. Warner suggests, from a critical point of view, that the apparitions of the last two centuries

"represent a rearguard action against the forces of "progress" and "reason" that deny God and religion" (6/196); "the confidence that Catholics place in the visions of children like Bernadette and the others who were mostly illiterate and neurasthenic brutally reveals the desperate thirst believers have for assurances that the faith is still credit-worthy" (6/197).

Thus her historical appraisal parallels Jung's psychological one, except that it is seen from a negative standpoint.

Jung's interpretation of the unknown woman in the dreams referred to above was that she represented

"a personification of the animated psychic atmosphere...If some personal figure appears we may be sure that the unconscious is beginning to grow active" (6/198).

Thus it would seem that the threat to Catholic beliefs in the last two centuries has coincided with, or resulted in, an animation of the collective Catholic psyche in which there is a yearning for peace in the face of ideological (and sometimes military) struggle at local, national, and international levels. As we concluded in 2.2, it is difficult to pin down specific apparitions to specific crises of ideology in a way that confirms a general theory of crisis and response, but the series overall may be seen, if a Jungian model is accepted, as a deep psychological and spontaneous response to conflict with rationalism, republicanism, and communism. Whether this psychological activity has any ethical, moral or political lessons for Catholicism is a matter for theological debate, and is not the concern of Jungian psychology. For the Jungian, the apparitions are the

collective 'dreams' of a section of the Catholic community: symbols and dramas occurring to a few, but relevant to the whole.

6.6 Categorising the marian apparition

As we approach the conclusion of this rather long chapter, we shall discuss three critical questions that come to mind when considering psychological and mystical applications to marian apparitions. They are:

- (a) what distinguishes a marian apparition from a non-religious case?;
- (b) what categorises a marian apparition amongst religious visions in general?;
- (c) how does the existence of a 'continuum' of apparition cases relate to the question of official decisions on authenticity?

6.6.1 Distinctions between marian and non-religious visions

"Before me was a woman - in a black cape and cowl...what lovely brown eyes she had, nice white teeth and a particularly beautiful face".

This description forms part of a visionary phenomenon recorded by the IPR; if the subject had any religious insight into the experience, it is not included (6/199). Would a Catholic aware of the apparition tradition have surmised that the woman was Mary? What would this same Catholic have made of the ethereal nun seen by many at Trondheim Cathedral (6/200)? Then there is the vision of a beautiful 18 year-old girl in a gingham gown with a blue sash, unrecognised by the seer (6/201): the sash is reminiscent of Our Lady of Lourdes. Elsewhere in the records, there is an apparition of a woman of 20 with a baby, not dressed like the traditional Mary, but the

Madonna motif might be brought to mind (6/202). Finally, there is the reassuring woman dressed in Edwardian style appearing in the dawn hours but vanishing as daylight increased (6/203).

These cases have been cited in order to raise the question of whether one can distinguish them radically from, say, the lady seen at Lourdes or Fatima and unidentified at the outset of the series of visions. The SPR and IPR research suggests, at first sight, that Thurston may not have been wholly accurate in concluding that non-Catholics suppress apparition experiences (4/23): after all, 10% of respondents admitted to having had hallucinations in the SPR census. However, it is possible that they had kept this fact quiet before revealing it confidentially to the researchers. Thurston is certainly right in suggesting that the Catholic milieu is more likely than the Protestant or secular to view these experiences as being of religious value. It is this that could help to build up the experience and sustain it through the emotions of the watching crowd, just as the three doctors at Lourdes suggested (6/1).

So we could reconstruct a plausible hypothesis for 'demythologising' the marian apparitions thus: a Catholic, usually young, has a strange visionary experience (they share the faculty necessary for this with a percentage, perhaps as many as 10%, of the population). The female person that they see is unknown as is the case in many SPR and IPR records, but their report stirs interest which inevitably leads to their own or others' conclusion that the lady is Mary. Autosuggestion takes over - their 'eidetic' ability to reconstruct the vision mentally but realistically (6/2; 6/204), combined with their religious fervour, causes them to begin a series of conversations with a subjective vision in which they regurgitate known

and/or half-forgotten religious material (6/88; 6/128). The more adult and educated the visionary is, the more complex (and possibly political) the messages reported.

This model makes no attempt to find a meaning for the initial experience, just as the hallucinations in the SPR and IPR literature seem to bear no particular interpretation. (We shall refer to models in which there is no meaning posited for the initial experience as 'random'). The Freudian and Jungian psychological models do attempt to make sense of the initial phenomenon. We have suggested above that much of the material analysed by Carroll in his Freudian interpretation is better viewed as regurgitation of the Catholic tradition. A Jungian interpretation would regard the initial experience as the expression of an archetype of the collective unconscious; in the case of visions of Mary, it would be the Great Mother (or 'eternal feminine' or perhaps the 'collective anima' given the youthfulness of many visions of Mary (6/205)). This holds even if later visions are the result of autosuggestion. The archetypal interpretation has more than a subjective meaning, as energetic movement in the collective psyche is indicated.

The Jungian model escapes one fundamental objection which can be made to the Freudian and 'random' interpretations: why are the most sensational cases in modern times nearly always visions of a woman, usually young, and dressed in a way expected of Mary? In the Catholic tradition, visions of Christ and male saints have been common throughout the ages, and would probably cause a stir today if the experience was charismatic enough. Apparitions of angels have occurred in notable cases (eg Fatima and Garabandal), but only as a prelude to visions of Mary. Why not visions of a man? For the Jungian, however, the femininity of the majority and most notable of the

Catholic apparitions is purposeful, as suggested above. The Jungian and the devotee of marian apparitions can both agree that we are living in the so-called "Marian Age".

One problem for the Jungian is the need to explain why the explosion of manifestations of the Great Mother or 'eternal feminine' archetype is confined to Catholicism: is it only Catholicism in which it is appropriate for this to occur, or is it the only community in which such a preponderance is noticed? The latter does not seem to be the case: psychical research has catalogued thousands of cases without discovering the overwhelming occurrence of visions of an assuring female. The third alternative, and the one probably nearest to Jung's own thought (6/206), is that the archetype is manifested in Catholicism because this is the one religious milieu sensitive and receptive to it, in which Mary (the feminine) is venerated in the appropriate way for the archetype to be expressed. Yet here we enter the realm of wider speculation - could not the visions occur in Hinduism? Do they? Do they 'need' to?

The Catholic provenance for the visions suggests subjectivity, but it may be understood theologically in two connected observations:

(i) God may use the human social and psychological spheres to certain ends (6/95; 6/98; 6/103; 6/105; 6/115), and thus may act through the vehicles of personal history, unfulfilled wishes, archetypes, telepathic idea-patterns, and tradition, whichever model is chosen for the phenomena;

(ii) the phenomena themselves are tested ultimately by the fruits, ie the extent of the divine transformation of human individuals and society - this observation will relativise the personal circumstances of the apparitions themselves (4/59).

Nevertheless, from this discussion, we must conclude that caution is necessary in the analysis of messages passed on because of the visionary phenomena: are they autosuggested or spontaneous? Is it possible for a seer to have visions with divine fruits, but also to pass on subjective material at the same time (so Rahner and Schillebeeckx (6/207))? Even though God may 'use' (i) archetypes, it is still important, surely, to distinguish archetypal from subjective, or (ii) unconscious personal wishes, to distinguish those contents universally useful from those which remain relevant only to the individual concerned.

Finally, we should ask, as a consequence of the points made so far: is it possible that Bernadette of Lourdes had a spontaneous visionary experience of a wonderful lady who showed her a healing spring (an archetypal manifestation, perhaps), and then, in response to public pressure to know the identity of the lady, regurgitated unconsciously the words "Immaculate Conception" from a half-forgotten title of a feast day, statue and dogma? If the Jungian model is in mind, this is too simplistic a view as the ancient belief, papal pronouncement, and apparition are all elements of the archetype. The phenomenon has to be evaluated as whole: tradition (including the visions at the Rue du Bac and the Miraculous Medal (1/12)), papal pronouncement, and Lourdes apparitions together. The kind of subjective material that is least likely to be spontaneous and therefore not archetypal is not the dogmatic, but the overly rational (6/208). The words "I am the Immaculate Conception" were not in themselves overly rational, but a long-winded explanation of dogma and/or support for the pope would have been. Jung welcomed the Assumption dogma as a blow to the wholly rational view which fails to recognise the autonomy of the unconscious psyche and its symbols (6/195).

So, in response to the question: "what distinguishes a marian apparition from a non-religious case?", we would answer: (i) the marian case occurs within the whole religious meaning-system of the Catholic tradition, and (ii) it is sightings of Mary rather than any other figure that give rise to the most spectacular public cases. Only a theory which emphasises the importance of the Catholic tradition as a whole (one based on the unconscious suggestions of a traditional environment, or on the concept of the collective unconscious, or even on telepathy) is able to provide a satisfactory answer for this within psychology, as the consistency of the phenomena makes models that posit a Freudian (in the way that Carroll applies it (6/209)) or 'random' interpretation implausible.

6.6.2 Categorisation of marian apparitions amongst religious visions in general

The visionaries in the Catholic tradition appear to possess a faculty for apprehending visions that are of collective interest; some modern seers claim to have had special psychic abilities during the visionary experience, eg knowledge of the details of a stranger's life, or of the ownership of various religious objects (6/210). The subsidiary phenomena that occur (especially at Fatima and Medjugorje) and the occasional wholly collective cases (eg Knock, Lempias, Zeitoun (6/211)) support the contention that this faculty diminishes in intensity as the numbers who may utilise it increases, although it is impossible to chart such an inverse relationship with any certainty. Whether the SPR figure of 10% who have experienced some kind of "hallucination" would also hold for Catholics, we cannot say (6/212).

However, the marian visionaries do not seem to be permanent 'psychics', but only have these abilities for as long as the phenomenon lasts. Evans points out that it is unlikely that a closely-knit group from one village will all have special faculties. Moreover, the group is not added to, and no-one else but the original group enjoys direct perception of the apparitions, even though many thousands of people turn up to see the ecstasies - surely some of these will be 'psychic' (6/213)? The Medjugorje case is interesting in this respect: of the six who saw the Madonna on the first day, the 24th June 1981, only four returned the next, and two new visionaries were included in the six. The original two never saw the vision again, but the group constituted on the 25th experienced visions for many years (6/214). Normally, the first marian apparition is the one that constitutes the group in the case of a series, and no new member is added (6/215).

So the marian apparition group has a temporary ability to see visions, and this ability does not seem to relate to personal faculties, but to the constitution of the group at the outset of the phenomena. Nevertheless, the group is heralded as having prophetic powers during the period of the apparitions. James' observation, that "automatisms", such as visions, aid conviction in people's attitudes to religious leaders and beliefs (6/34), is certainly borne out by the spontaneous mass pilgrimage to the sites of marian apparitions at the outset of the phenomena. The ecstasy itself convinces many who see no other supernatural manifestation (6/216). It is as well accepted in Catholicism as elsewhere in the world that, as in the words of Richard Wilhelm's commentary on the 'I Ching':

"the supreme revelation of God appears in prophets and holy men. The will of God, as revealed through them, should be accepted in humility; this brings inner enlightenment and true understanding of the world, and this leads to great good fortune and success" (6/217).

So the natural but unusual faculties of mystics, visionaries and prophets are valued in religious traditions; as Lindblom noted, these people seem to have the ability to communicate with a supernatural realm (6/116). The marian visionaries enjoy this status for a limited period (6/218). Rahner was satisfied that the phenomena of "parapsychology" could, at the same time, be the means of divine communication, and identified marian visionaries among the true prophets who show how the divine word is relevant for their time, although he qualified this by accepting the possibility that they may sometimes be in error (6/4; 6/114).

We have also seen that the marian apparitions are of the "corporeal" type, which corresponds to the "hallucination" of secular psychology (6/13), and which is the least valued in mysticism. Modern Catholic writers such as Poulain and Rahner have had to qualify this negative attitude in view of the importance of Lourdes and others in the modern tradition; critics, like Bruno de Jésus-Marie, did not wish to do so (4/55; 4/56; 4/57; 4/101; 4/102; 6/111). However, we concluded that the spontaneity of marian visions, in the early stages of the phenomena at least, puts them nearest to dreams rather than in the category of the controlled and/or induced visions of the mystic, drawing on the observations of Jung in this matter (6.2.2). It is quite possible that we should regard the daily expected visions and ecstasies at Medjugorje as having passed from the realm of spontaneity to that of mysticism; yet they remain of the corporeal type (6/50).

Indeed, it is the corporeal vision that first stimulates public interest although, once the phenomenon has been established, imaginative visions and locutions may be attributed with equal importance (6/219). In addition, as we have noted, the marian visionaries are not already

established as holy persons or mystics, but appear to be 'chosen' - in this way, their village or town is also 'chosen' (5/5). The 'popular mysticism' of the "Marian Age", from La Salette to Medjugorje, is in fact a community experience, and the ordinariness of the visionaries (even if later they are recognised as saints) is crucial to this understanding. Without the apparent corporeality of the visionary experience, it is unlikely that the seers' themselves would be so convinced of the importance of their experience, or that their reaction would attract the large following in the local community that has normally been the case because, for example, there would be no special site at which people could congregate.

Thus the marian visionaries stand in contrast to St Teresa of Avila or modern persons who are objects of devotion such as Padre Pio. In most cases, after their period of exaltation as prophets, they have settled back anonymously in the community (the exceptions are La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima (6/220)), which becomes a centre for pilgrimage and promulgation of messages.

Therefore we can categorise the marian apparition in a way that distinguishes it from mysticism:

- (i) the group is constituted according to the special circumstances of the first apparitions, rather than according to special abilities or character;
- (ii) the visionaries' prophetic status is a temporary one;
- (iii) the divine encounter is recognised as being one between God and the community rather than the individual;
- (iv) the apparitions are corporeal in a way that convinces the visionaries and their neighbours of the genuineness of the encounter;
- (v) the encounter is expressed in three ways: relevant to the locality, to the nation, and to the international

community (each shrine will vary according to its effects at trans-local levels (6/221));

(vi) the encounter results in a shrine being built as a focus for pilgrimage;

(vii) prophetic messages are promulgated.

Of course, just as the vision brings into play the psychological faculties and history of the seer, so the encounter engages the social and political history of the community. Thus the fratricidal strife and national secular and ecclesiastical tensions of 20th century Yugoslavia makes it likely that there will be, in that country, a strong collective urge for peace: thus the "Queen of Peace" could be seen as a subjective, although collective, expression of this yearning. In commenting upon Lourdes, Evans points out how, although Bernadette's visionary experiences may have been, to some extent, based on her needs, yet the popularity of her case shows that these needs are shared with many: the pilgrims recognise their own situation in Bernadette's experience (6/222). The needs giving rise to apparition experiences are collective, and the visionary group seem to form together for a limited time, irrespective of their 'psychic' gifts, in order to serve as the focal point for an encounter which meets these needs - an encounter which is perceived as being supernatural.

Hopefully, however, we have established that these observations do not diminish the possibilities of a theological interpretation. We have attempted to show that individualistic interpretations are not enough to explain the apparition phenomenon, and that the answer, as Jung suggested (6/192), has to lie in community need, experience, and expression.

6.6.3 The continuity of the spectrum of apparitions

In 6.2, we noted how studies on visions showed that there was a range of visionary phenomena with several parameters: (a) number in visionary group; (b) object perceived in apparition; (c) public or private nature; (d) realism; (e) veridical nature (ie link to external event); (f) expectation or spontaneity of experience; (g) mental health. Evans, adapting Tyrrell's idea of the subconscious "producer" which shapes the apparition image, suggests that this aspect of the human psyche is universal, but will produce the image according to contextual and psychological factors (6/223). Thus, he concludes, there is a continuum of apparition phenomena, of which the Virgin Mary, UFOs, ghosts, fairies, etc. are all examples (6/224).

The Church grades visionary phenomena according to its appraisal of them: (i) authentic manifestation of the perceived object; (ii) apparition not validated, but devotions and pilgrimage (if any) approved; (iii) case ignored; (iv) case condemned due to apparent discovery of wholly natural causes and/or the undesirability of resulting events. Yet, given the fact, as acknowledged by Rahner and Schillebeeckx, that prophetic messages are mingled with subjective elements in the conscious and unconscious psyche of the prophet (6/207), is it therefore possible to draw a clear line of demarcation between authentic and inauthentic cases? Admittedly, after applying the negative tests, ie eliminating the possibility of mental illness, delusion and heterodoxy, the Church utilises the positive criterion of divine transformation, which may be able to be measured to some extent (but see 4.3.3).

However, it is likely that degrees of 'transformation' may also lie on a continuous line, so that the boundary of authentic/inauthentic is rather arbitrarily drawn, thus the wisdom of acknowledging intermediate cases ((ii) and (iii) above). Evans asks whether the Church decision on apparitions is rather arbitrary, giving as an example the 'epidemic' of visions at Lourdes, where only Bernadette's was accepted, and the others put down to diabolic intrusion into the newly-emerging shrine. This is a rather "convenient" solution, concludes Evans, with its logic only worked out in retrospect (6/225). Could not the apparitions all be an expression of the same psychodynamic factors, with some picked out by the Church for the purposes of maintaining stability and control over the phenomena?

The problem of distinguishing the profound and authentic from the valueless or even dangerous is, of course, applicable to all types of religious experience. As Rahner observed, everything except sin is the work of God (6/226). Correspondingly, to show that a religious experience is not worthy of its claim, one must show the distinct presence of sin at the core of the phenomenon rather than confirm the absence of the miraculous. On the other hand, many of the 'secular' apparitions may display no sign of sin, many being quite reassuring and fruitful in the life of the seer (6/227). Are they therefore supernatural and of divine origin? Against this possibility, the Church views the visionary image and message themselves as the overriding positive signs, ie the figure must conform to Mary as she is known through scripture and ecclesiastical tradition (4.2.2).

On the other hand, it could be argued that a marian vision could be interpreted in a Freudian subjective way. Are the expressions of unconscious wishes necessarily sinful? We

could speculate that God could use the wish fantasies of a personality who is eg mother-deprived (yet the Oedipus complex, if considered a factor, would presumably be attributed to original sin!).

It therefore becomes obvious that notions of divine transformation and the absence of sin are not in themselves comprehensive judgements on the phenomena, because the marian apparitions may not be radically different from secular cases in this respect. They may be viewed as part of a broad spectrum of visionary phenomena as indicated in the list given at the beginning of this section. The psychological and social bases of non-authenticated marian cases or secular visions may have much in common with those of authenticated cases. We saw in section (a) that secular visions are distinguished simply because they do not occur within the Catholic tradition and are not of a figure with religious significance.

However, the distinction between authentic and non-authentic marian cases is not so easy to identify. In each, there is the presence of human sin, human history and subjectivity, traditional (perhaps archetypal) material, the image being largely due to the unconscious psyche of the seer. It might be assumed that only the authentic cases bear traces of the divine presence, ie in a divine transformation of nature. Yet is it possible to say that no spiritual fruits are produced by apparitions that are judged non-supernatural? This is as sweeping a statement as declaring that an authenticated case bears no traces of human sin.

In all cases, psychological and sociological factors are present, and varying proportions of divine transformation and human sin may also be posited. The possibility of

human error and subjectivity means that even the most obvious marks of divinity and, on the other hand, sin, may not be so radically distinguished. Perhaps we might feel that a vision that cries "kill the Prussians" is substantially different from one that calmly calls the seer to prayer and repentance. Yet we may ask, somewhat speculatively perhaps, what if a divine initiative in the former case is being stifled by the difficulties of the environment? Perhaps such examples are extreme - more realistically, what is the fundamental difference between Fatima, where three children saw a vision which resulted in an international shrine, approved by the Church and visited by the Pope, and Palmar de Troya where, eight years after four girls saw a vision, a paranoid arch-conservative elitist (by all accounts) proclaimed himself pope and instituted a new church? Is the fundamental difference there at the outset of the phenomenon concerned, or does it lie in its development? The neutral way in which many apparition cases begin (6/228) suggests the latter.

Perhaps it is rather speculative to suggest that a divine initiative could be frustrated by all kinds of socio-psychological factors. Nevertheless, to take the visionary experience as the determinant of marian apparitions is to remain subject to the kinds of objection raised in this section, ie that the phenomenon is a purely subjective psychological event, different from others of the same type only in contextual factors. It is the condition of the Church, before, during, and after the event - in particular, during the development of the shrine and its cultus - that has to be the major determinant of a Catholic theological analysis of these visions. This we may conclude from the fact that visions of Mary differ from others only in that they are

- (a) experienced in the context of the Catholic tradition;
- (b) a community rather than individual experience.

Within this tradition, apparitions such as Fatima and Palmar de Troya cannot be radically distinguished unless the whole environment and development of the case is taken into consideration. This requires that an analysis be made for each case, showing whether and how human sin corrupts the phenomenon (without which it is of God!), and in what way divine transformation is present, and through which agencies.

6.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have tried to establish that, in the case of apparitions, we do not need to leave the realm of psychological (or at least 'parapsychological') interpretations in order to accredit these phenomena with theological value. The marian visionaries' experience is a more acute version, with its ecstatic suspension of senses, of that which occurs to many others, although its two distinguishing features are that it is repeated several or many times, and that conversations with the object of the vision are reported by the seers. This suggests that they are nearer to the category of 'mystic' visions, but the three distinctions here are that the marian visionaries' faculty is temporary even if acute over a short period, 'corporeal' visions are the norm and are valued, and the individual or group stand at the centre of a community experience, public and popular.

If we are to accept a humanistic theoretical model at all, then our survey of depth psychological and psychical models suggests that the Tyrrell concept - ie that the subconscious of the visionary produces the image, even if

stimulated by an external agent - and the Jungian one - that spontaneous images are formed in accordance with a 'collective unconscious' - are both consistent with the phenomena. They take into account, respectively, the subjective trappings of the visions and the community basis of the experience, allowing, but without the authors themselves stipulating, the possibility of a divine agent. It is the Thomist theological model that allows us to posit a divine source for a phenomenon that occurs through human faculties, and the twentieth-century observations that provide an acceptable picture of the outline of those faculties.

The Jungian model posits a collective unconscious with its "movements" of the archetypes relevant to, and influential on, the affairs of the day. This 'meaningfulness' of the stirrings of the Jungian collective unconscious allows for the possibility that divine initiatives in history may be apprehended through, amongst other possible media, the expressions of these archetypal contents. The fact that Jung has been favourably treated by writers such as White and Bryant should encourage us to venture his model, or some adaptation of it, as the best available for a psychological approach that does not rule out a theological development.

What this actually means is that we have to accept the collective basis of the unconscious psyche as the ground for the action of God in the particular case of apparition phenomena, ie we are not saying that God cannot be encountered through other faculties, nor that visionaries themselves do not use other faculties in their apprehension of the phenomena.

Nevertheless, accepting a Jungian-type model does present limitations on the phenomena - in particular:

(i) spontaneous, unexpected visions would be accepted as possibly 'authentic', while rationalisations or long-winded clarification of dogma would not (which is not to say that these latter lack inspiration in some cases);
(ii) the basic elements of the vision would be those which have detail in common with images of the feminine across various cultures and traditions.

This second restriction is difficult, in that it might suggest that the Mary of the visions is an instance of a greater goddess (ie a more universal archetype) but, on the other hand, we may accept the existence of universal images concerning the feminine or mother without dismissing the spiritual reality of a particular woman or mother who is Mary, seen via such images. This question will be discussed further in chapter 9.

The collective dimension of apparitions is the one that best explains the presence of degrees of objectivity and subjectivity in them; both Tyrrell and Jung posit the collective in some way as the source of the phenomena. In other words, that which is "other" or objective to the subjectivity of the visionaries is encountered through or in the collective psyche.

Therefore, with this in mind, let us re-iterate the findings of our categorisation in 6.6:

(a) The consistency and impact of the marian apparitions of the last two centuries renders individualistic or random interpretations implausible - the Catholic tradition as a whole must constitute, to some extent, the base of the phenomenon.

(b) The marian apparitions are community phenomena as opposed to those of traditional mysticism, which are based

more on the attributes of a particular person; the history of the community is integral to the experience.

(c) Apparitions in general can be considered as being part of a continuum in which every element of human existence is most probably present in each case: good and evil, individual and collective, psychological and historical; therefore, the development of the phenomena is seen to be of paramount importance.

Therefore it is clear that the issue of ecclesial formation has become crucial to this thesis. How are these 'uprushes' of the 'collective unconscious' - this term seems appropriate even if we do not accept the whole of the Jungian hypothesis - received, dealt with, and built upon by the Church as a whole? The emphasis on the humanistic and psychological must now give way to a theological treatment, for which the key is ecclesiology, not wholly inappropriate when one considers that Mary is included under the constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium, chapter 8) in the documents of Vatican II.

Chapter 7 - Ecclesiological Considerations

Introductory note: the apparition messages are almost always concerned with prayer, penance, and conversion. In more recent times, there have been specific references to the sacraments of Penance and Reconciliation (ie Confession) and the Eucharist. These two sacraments are those concerned with everyday faith rather than 'rites of passage' or sickness (ie baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, and unction) and are also those in which the Church expresses itself as (a) sinful, and (b) universal.

7.1 Introduction: Ecclesial Context

7.1.1 A sinful Church

We have decided that the apparitions are ecclesial phenomena, occurring within a community and its socio-historical context, a community that is part of the Roman Catholic Church as well as part of the secular society with which the Church is intermingled. This Church, in whole and in part, is a sinful Church (7/1). It is sinful in so far as its members are sinful, and also in so far as the Church as a whole fails to act according to the divine mandate that it claims to have (7/2). It is sinful in so far as the sins of ecclesiastical leaders are not only private,

"but may also influence very substantially their concrete mode of action as official representatives of the Church" (7/3).

Our observations of the apparition cults so far should lead us to suspect that this sinfulness of the Church affects them in the following major ways:

(i) the experience itself from its outset may draw more on the temporal pressures of the socio-historical and political context than on the Christian gospel (most obviously in unauthenticated cases, eg the Virgin brandishing a sword at the Prussians (7/4) or denouncing the pope as an antichrist (7/5), but also, possibly, the Rue du Bac, where Catherine Labouré reported the Virgin's sadness at the fall of Charles X - which may be behind the claim of de la Sainte Trinité that the Virgin was legitimist! (5/158; 7/6));

(ii) the visionaries may be affected by such temporal pressures at some later stage of their function as prophets (eg the prophecies of Mélanie Calvat and, possibly, those of Lucia Santos, whose Virgin was more concerned with denouncing Soviet Russia than Nazi Germany (7/7));

(iii) the messages given by the visionaries may be interpreted by other Catholics either in a psychopathological way, or to serve questionable social and political ends, like the nurturing of political ambition or the preservation of injustice (eg the use of the marian cult as outlined in Perry and Echeverría's Under the Heel of Mary (2.2.2) and, possibly, some aspects of the pilgrimages at Lourdes in the 1870s (1/27));

(iv) the Church hierarchy (at episcopal or Vatican level) may suppress or encourage cults, depending on its own shortsighted view of popular religion (eg rejection of apparitions in Spain and Ireland (1/86; 3/48; 3/51)), and thus may arbitrarily divide apparitions into 'true' and 'false', overlooking either the shortcomings of the former or the potential of the latter for the purposes of ecclesiastical control (as suggested by Evans in his comments on the many visionaries of Lourdes (6/223-5));

(v) the Church hierarchy (usually at national level) may encourage apparition cults for the purpose of furthering a political position (ie supporting a party more favourable to the Church hierarchy, eg, perhaps, in France seeking a return of the monarchy in the 1870s, or in republican and post-republican, fascist Portugal (1/27; 7/8)).

Despite the difficulty in proving that the Church, represented by visionaries, laity, priests or hierarchy, has been sinful, ie unfaithful to the Christian gospel (7/9), in any particular case, the fact that human sin intrudes into an apparition event to some degree is an important general principle. Each case may be analysed on its own merits, critically and theologically (7/10).

7.1.2 A universal Church

The apparition cults occur within local contexts and will reflect this; yet, if they are to be relevant to the universal Church, the messages they promulgate will have to be understood as instances of general principles. For this reason, the Church judges the messages by the standards of orthodoxy and the lack of specific political material (3.1; 3.4.2). In addition, messages which have universal relevance tend to be remembered as being more important than those which refer to specific timebound circumstances. The shrine at Fatima is more concerned to honour the Immaculate Heart than to discuss the fate of the recently-dead girls whom Lucia asked about during the apparition of 13th May 1917 (7/11). Medjugorje wishes to be known more for its message of peace than for the Virgin's remarks about certain persons (7/12).

It is also true that the overall context of the universal Church shapes the apparition messages, eg Medjugorje's postconciliar spirituality (5.2.3; 5.4.3; 5.5.1). The

concerns or difficulties of the universal Church are sometimes taken into the local context of the visionary. In many cases, it is difficult to trace whether the Catholic media served to make this concern known or whether the visionaries only knew it intuitively or by means of the vision. For example:

(i) the La Salette seers reported exhortations of the Virgin which were akin to contemporary Church preaching on attendance at Church and not working on Sundays (1/17);

(ii) Bernadette of Lourdes identified her vision as the Immaculate Conception four years after the declaration of the dogma (1.2.1);

(iii) the Fatima visions, which ended by prophesying the end of the 1914-18 War, began just eight days after Benedict XV's pastoral letter urging Catholics to pray for Mary's intercession for peace (7/13) - in addition, the idea of the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart had been suggested by many to the Vatican before 1917 (7/14);

(iv) the Beauraing and Banneux visions included the title "Mother of God" for Mary: the corresponding feast day had been instituted by Pius XI on October 13th, 1932, to mark the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Ephesus (7/15);

(v) Medjugorje's visionaries announced the 2000th birthday of Mary as 5th August 1984 - there had been pressure for some years in the Church to celebrate such an event (7/16).

7.1.3 A sacramental Church

Increased attendance at the sacraments, ie Penance and Reconciliation and the Eucharist, is very often a crucial factor in the approval of the shrines and their cults, ie it is an important aspect of the 'fruits' (3.3). This is especially true at Medjugorje, where Confession and Mass are central to the pastoral practice of the shrine (7/17). Penance has been often requested by the Virgin, but before Medjugorje with reference only to the physical enactment of this (ie walking on the knees, kissing the ground, accepting suffering), rather than to the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation itself. This may reflect the consciousness of rural people, who may be now more aware of the importance of the sacramental expression of penance, as the sacraments are increasingly referred to in apparitions.

Here is a list of the famous apparitions, showing their references, implicit or explicit, to these two sacraments:

Rue du Bac: "But come to the foot of this altar. There graces will be poured out..." (7/18).

La Salette: much concern over low attendance at Mass (7/19).

Lourdes: "Pénitence!" (the penitential actions requested were physical and not sacramental) (7/20).

Pontmain: none.

Pellevoisin: communion healed the visionary after five nights of apparitions. The Virgin described the lack of respect for Christ in the Holy Communion as her greatest affliction (7/21).

Knock: the vision depicted an altar with a Lamb upon it (7/22).

Fatima: in the later revelations of Lucia, she told of apparitions of an angel which included miraculous communion; adoration of the Sacrament (ie Christ in the Host) was stressed, and reparatory communions of the first Saturdays. However, the reparation required was, in general, suffering and sacrifices rather than in

sacramental form (7/23).

Beauraing: none.

Banneux: none.

Garabandal: Conchita Gonzalez received a Miraculous Host from the angel; devotion to the Sacrament was important, as was also the priesthood (7/24).

Palmar de Troya: followed Garabandal in the miraculous reception of the host; cult centred on a desire for the return to the Latin, Tridentine rite for Mass (7/25).

Medjugorje: apparitions and evening Mass integrated by Fr Zovko from July 1st 1981, after the children fled to the church - this was approved of by the Virgin. Regular Mass and monthly confession are central themes at Medjugorje (7/26).

7.1.4 A sinful, universal, and sacramental Church

The emphasis on repentance at the apparition shrines has not usually been interpreted in the way that we will suggest here: that the cult itself, and its growth into the Church as a whole, draws on and is affected by the sin already present in the context, ecclesiastical, social and political. In some cases, however, messages have directly accused the Church hierarchy of being less than perfect, notably at Garabandal:

"Many cardinals, many bishops and many priests are on the road to perdition and are taking many souls with them" (3/84; 7/27).

Yet this is usually interpreted as referring to Church leaders whose opinions differ from those Catholics promoting the cult, and not to those who may agree with them (7/28).

Normally, repentance is regarded as the duty of individuals and as relevant to individual lives, and the possibility that a collective or group is in need of repentance is overlooked (7/29). It is difficult, however, from the perspective of a universal Church in which many members find apparition cults unconvincing or even

distasteful (7/30), not to conclude that the cults, as communities of persons, suffer from a share in the sinfulness that exists in the Church as a whole (7/31).

However, one would not wish to relativise the apparition phenomena to the point where they no longer have anything to contribute to the life of the Church. Just as they partake of the sinfulness of the Church which resides in its human aspect, so too they bear something of the grace that is in the Church and its members through the Holy Spirit (7/32). A theological appraisal must try to identify what is of God and what due to the sinfulness of human beings. An analysis of this sinfulness will draw on a general analysis of sin in the structures of society, in the Church, and in individual members of it.

The Catholic answer to the problem of sin is self-analysis, confession, recourse to the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, regular attendance at the Eucharist, and right practice following this process. In this chapter, we shall consider how integration of the apparition cults (as spontaneous manifestations of popular religion) into the sacramental apparatus of the universal Church helps them, or at least has the potential to help them, to avoid the worst excesses of popular religion that take root in social and political conflict.

We shall also consider the link between spontaneity and the involvement of the established Church. As ecclesial manifestations not without a subjective element, the apparitions cannot be regarded as wholly spontaneous, nor can it be concluded that ecclesiastical shaping of the emerging cult is an afterthought to the divine initiative that is supposed to be at their heart. The apparitions occur within a Church that is already endowed with divine grace (7/33). Thus formation (effected by the Church) and

transformation (effected by God) - as we define them here - are not mutually exclusive. Yet of course we must also remember that the Church is already corrupted by sin as well as endowed with grace.

The part played by the sacraments in the transformation process that is claimed of the apparitions is next to be discussed. The integration of the popular phenomena with the sacraments of the universal Church is, it will be argued, a necessary condition of the acceptance of the apparitions. In this way, the Church helps to put into effect the transformation it is looking for.

However, the original context of the apparitions is vital in an understanding of these phenomena, especially because of the fact that their emphasis changes with new circumstances. This original context with its conflict, powerlessness, sin and yearning is the very thing that must be brought into the sacramental encounter with the Church's Lord, and considered afresh in the light of his cross and resurrection.

The process of integrating the apparitions into the universal Church is in part sacramental, and also theological, and this theological work has been attempted by priests who are historians and devotees of the cults. We will evaluate this work in order to identify its priorities and emphases.

Thus we may come to an ecclesiological understanding of the apparition events. They are spontaneous parapsychological phenomena, but within the context of a sinful, universal, and sacramental Church, and are regarded by a substantial part of this Church as charisms, gifts of guidance in specific situations. What is the guidance at the heart of their messages? Hopefully, this

question will be interpreted in a fresh and creative way that will help the whole Church to discover something of worth within the visions of the last two centuries.

7.2 Integration of official Catholicism with popular phenomena

7.2.1 Parish and shrine

Apparitions take place within a community or, more specifically, within a local parish with church and priest or regularly visiting priest. The parishioners are the first pilgrims to the new sacred site, whether it be grotto, copse or house. Soon afterwards, they are submerged in a larger crowd, at first regional, then national, and finally international; yet, in the early days at least, the parish church continues to serve as the focus for the sacraments in the locality, eg for pilgrims attending Confession and Mass. Later, if accepted into the mainstream of Catholic piety, the shrine is built up, progressing from sacred spot to chapel and thence to basilica - the local church is no longer the centre for the sacraments for any but the local people and a few pilgrims who come out of curiosity to see the original buildings.

This change of locus is certainly and understandably experienced in cases where the apparition site is some distance from the parish church (eg La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, Banneux), but it also occurs when the church and shrine are very close to one another (eg Pontmain, Beauraing). When apparitions are not authenticated, the local church has to continue to cope with the liturgical needs of pilgrims (eg Garabandal, San Damiano), but there are fewer of them in these circumstances. There are also

situations where a convent or church is the apparition site itself and continues to serve as the official shrine (eg Rue du Bac, Sant'Andrea delle Frate, Pellevoisin, L'Ile-Bouchard), unless the numbers are too great, in which case the area must be extended to include a basilica (eg Knock).

Medjugorje has become a special case, in that the church and its outbuildings have become the apparition site and focus for pilgrimage, although the original hillside sites have retained their importance for pilgrims, and visionary phenomena still occur at them. The major site for the visions at Medjugorje changed in the early days at the request of the local priest, Fr Zovko: a suggestion that was apparently accepted by the Madonna seen by the young visionaries (7/26). The main cause for this was the communist government regulation that religious gatherings should be confined to licensed church buildings, but it was also facilitated by the size of the parish church, disproportionately large for the numbers of the local Catholic population, and able to accommodate a couple of thousand pilgrims (7/34). It is also true to say that Fr Zovko had felt the challenge presented by the spontaneous sites to participation in the church and its liturgy (7/35).

In fact, tension between apparition cults and parish church - analogous to that between popular and official religion (7/36) - has not been a common feature of the most famous marian visions. After a short initial period of reserve, local priests tend to support the new shrines, or at the very least they do not condemn them (3.2). The problems have tended to emerge with growing interest at diocesan or national level, as has happened at Medjugorje, with the disapproval of Bishop Žanić of Mostar. On the whole, parish clergy adopt the cause of the new shrine

because of the religious renewal it brings (3.2.1; 5/25). In Spain, the negative attitude of the clergy to Garabandal was engendered at episcopal level, with the local priest bound by hierarchical decree. Many visiting priests were sympathetic (1/86; 7/37). This is also true to some extent at Palmar de Troya, although here it does seem as if fewer outside priests took an interest than at Garabandal (7/38).

Some recent cases of underlying tension between shrine and local priesthood are to be found in Ireland, where apparition phenomena became common during and after 1985. The three most notable of these cases in the Republic, ie Melleray, Inchigeela and Carns, do not enjoy any support from the official Church; still less, the sites of the so-called moving statues (3/51). In all three apparition cases, local priests have questioned the visionaries and remained friendly with them, and priests from outside the parish have acted as spiritual directors to them, but the shrines are given no official sanction (3/48). The sites are administered by committees of local lay people. At least one parish priest has admitted being somewhat disturbed by the apocalyptic fervour and strange reports from the country shrine (7/39). In fact, at all three sites, there are any number of visionaries in addition to the children originally perceiving the apparition (7/40). The official attitude is to stand back and allow the phenomena to take their own shape, thus discerning the spiritual fruits as and when they occur (7/41).

The Irish apparition cases are influenced by Medjugorje, where many Irish pilgrims go; the Yugoslavian shrine was becoming internationally famous by the time of the Irish explosion of marian phenomena in 1985 (7/42). However, the pastoral practice of the Irish shrines is in marked contrast to that of their Yugoslavian predecessor, as the

'laissez-faire' attitude of the Irish local parish clergy in no way matches the positive and enthusiastic leadership role adopted by the Medjugorje Franciscans from the second week of the phenomena. It is this latter stance, reminiscent perhaps of the fervour of some priests over La Salette, that is at the root of the opposition of the local bishop (5.2.3; 7/43).

While one may regard the Franciscan enthusiasm with suspicion because, perhaps, it may be a causal factor in the prolongation of the apparitions at Medjugorje (5/113; 7/44), nevertheless one cannot help but observe how this priestly interest and leadership makes less likely the bizarre and possibly unedifying accounts that have emerged from other shrines. The so-called diabolic visions of Lourdes (3/53; 7/45), the epidemic of Belgian visions in 1933 (1/70; 3/55; 7/46), the schismatic events at Palmar de Troya in modern Spain (1/86; 1/88), and the strangest of the visionary accounts in modern Ireland have all taken place during a period in which the respective priests and bishops responsible were playing no decisive role in the proceedings. At Medjugorje, on the other hand, despite the many reports of strange experiences, no one is in doubt as to who the central visionaries are. The publications relating to the apparitions are written by priests and others with greater care and attention to healthy spirituality than one comes across when reading Catholic literature inspired by other unapproved cases (7/47).

At first sight, then, the integration of local church with shrine, of sacraments and liturgy with pilgrimage and interest in visionary phenomena seems to be bearing fruit at Medjugorje, a shrine that has apparently drawn approving remarks from the pope himself (5.4.2). On the other hand, it has become increasingly difficult to remember exactly who inspired liturgical and other

initiatives at Medjugorje: was it the Franciscans or the Madonna (7/48)? From the Madonna has come the addition of the Creed to the Rosary, the command to begin committed prayer groups, the greater attention to the Bible in the family home; from Fr Zovko, the decision to move the apparitions to the church, and the reintroduction of the tradition of fasting so heartily supported by the Madonna later (7/26; 7/49). Opponents of Medjugorje point out how the series of marian messages concurs with the spirituality of the Franciscans of Medjugorje, in particular those who had already espoused the Charismatic Renewal before the apparitions began, notably Frs Zovko and Vlašič (5.3.5; 5.4.3; 7/50). After all, do not prayer groups, the idea of personal 'living' of messages of spirituality, and the more 'Protestant' Christian practice that emphasises Scripture belong to the practices cherished by the Charismatic Renewal?

Thus runs the argument that denounces Medjugorje as a purely human initiative, whether or not begun spontaneously. In its early days it was, suggest the opposition, a chaotic instance of popular religious over-enthusiasm like many others in the area at the time, soon to be adopted by the Franciscans for their own purposes (7/51). However, no other famous case of lay visionary experience could be accused of priestly supervision in this way. La Salette was, after all, just one apparition not repeated even after the positive response from local priests. The usual pattern for apparitions is that they are disconnected from the local church and priest until such time as the official Church begins an investigation, possibly acquiescing at the same time to demands for a small chapel to mark the site (eg Fatima, Beauraing, Banneux). In these cases too, the phenomena were over by the time the priests became involved to any depth.

The apparitions are therefore distinctly phenomena of popular and not official religion, taken over by the latter if they are reckoned worthy. The Irish situation of the 1980s follows this pattern, except that here the local priesthood has refrained from becoming involved even after the phenomena appear to have subsided and pilgrimage becomes steady, as at Melleray. This was also the case at Knock until the revival of the 1930s, which would not have been possible but for the persistence of pilgrims (7/52), and such a reserved attitude seems to have been the approach in Spain, too (1/86). At the sites in 19th century France, Fatima, and the Belgian Ardennes, priestly interest has followed quickly on the heels of the popular phenomenon.

Yet the conclusion that might follow from these reflections is that the priesthood has an overwhelming influence in the very fruits that it judges from an 'objective' viewpoint. Bizarre happenings in 20th century Spain and Ireland: the very countries in which local priests remain reserved. Ordered, 'fruitful' pilgrimages in France and Belgium: where priests enter into the process of directing the new shrine well before the authentication is complete and the sacred site made official. Fatima is perhaps a different case in that many priests stood against the apparitions at the beginning, yet the momentum of popular pilgrimage in a time of great trouble was soon the subject of ecclesiastical organisation and control (1/55). Impressive, post-conciliar spirituality in Medjugorje, christocentric and centred on the Eucharist, where the local, modern-thinking priesthood integrated popular cult and established liturgy after just one week.

Thus we return to the subject of 4.3.1, where we agreed that the disposition of the local priesthood, and

particularly the bishop, is an important factor in the authentication process. Here we must develop this insight in the context of ecclesiology, accepting the high degree of subjectivity in the apparition phenomena which we also inferred in chapter 6, where the psychological faculties of the seers was discussed. Now we must ask: what subjective factors are involved in the spiritual fruits of an apparition cult, ie in the transformation discussed in 4.2.2. Is this self-transformation or divine transformation or both, and to what degree? What theological criteria can we apply to it?

7.2.2 Formation and transformation

We will here define formation and transformation, so as to serve the purposes of this discussion, in the following ways:

Formation is the process by which one (human) party effects a process of change in another party. Although the influencing party may be changed to some extent in the process, and may acknowledge a divine agent and/or assistance, there is no doubt that it has the training, knowledge and ability to effect the change in the other. For example, seminaries forming trainee priests to be ready for vocation, priests educating parishioners through preaching and other means, spiritual directors guiding religious on the path of prayer.

Transformation is the process by which one party appears to change practices and attitudes spontaneously without the obvious influence of another human party. Although the practices and attitudes may have been learnt in the normal process of religious and moral education, there was no sign of them having been put into practice before the

period of transformation. For example, a case of conversion, or special vocation.

Obviously it is the latter which is more likely to be attributed to divine initiative even when other influences are also apparent. Although, in an individual, the transformation of attitudes may be put down to unconscious psychological processes (7/53), this is not so easily conceived of in the case of a whole community. As we have seen in 4.2.1, when it occurs to a whole group of people in the wake of an apparition event, this provides a powerful piece of proof in favour of the divine origin of the phenomenon as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, assuming no over-riding negative features of the case.

Perhaps, however, the discussion immediately preceding this section may convince us that what appears to be transformation is, on the whole, a formation effected by the priesthood and committed lay people upon the greater population of the faithful, the opportunity for this occurring being an alleged visitation of the Virgin Mary. However, this conclusion overlooks the all-important fact that formation of fellow-believers should be a constant goal of priests and mature lay people. For the most part, it is either not seriously attempted, or unsuccessful, or simply imperceptible. Why does it succeed at times of apparitions?

So perhaps transformation is formation plus an 'X'-factor, in this case the reported apparitions and attendant phenomena. This is why it is important to have some criteria pertaining to the apparitions themselves, ensuring that they are not simply 'pious frauds' (5/43), designed to elicit the required result through people's susceptibility to the miraculous and spectacular. What if a pious fraud has a fruitful effect? All well and good,

but it cannot then be considered a case of transformation, more one of very subtle (and devious) formation.

In addition to this, we should regard the successful and dramatic formation of people by priests and others to be a case of transformation of the whole community, which includes priests and laity. As priests do not always have the energy or ability to effect formation, then their achieving this presupposes a change from the normal in themselves as well.

Thus the transformation which is sought as proof of the divine initiative of an apparition event may include a substantial element of formation without detriment to the principle. If the Medjugorje event is giving rise to good spiritual fruits, then the fact that these fruits bear the stamp of Franciscan influence does not detract from the fact that the whole community, Franciscans and laity together (not to mention pilgrims including visiting priests) has undergone a transformation. We may simply reflect on the fact that Franciscan spirituality does not normally have this widespread effect! It needed the 'X' factor of the 'miraculous' events, and it is of course important to establish that these events were and are spontaneous and healthy as opposed to being contrived or mentally unbalanced.

The fact that formation may be seen as an important part of the overall response to a 'miraculous' event, ie the unsolicited response that we have termed transformation, puts the condition of priests in those areas where the priesthood stands aloof from popular phenomena in rather a sad light. For the absence of formation may actually deprive the phenomenon of the transformation required as a criterion of authenticity. In other words, the Spirit is being extinguished, we could say (7/54). On the other

hand, those who find the transformation they are seeking may have contributed to it, rather than having the objectivity they may claim. There is something of the self-fulfilling prophecy in this.

This brings us back to the importance of establishing the criteria of transformation as previously discussed in 4.3.3. If observers of an apparition cult acclaim what has been largely effected by those with whom they are in sympathy, then there is a grave danger of self-congratulation. The criteria for what constitutes a transformation of persons due to a divine initiative will be hotly debated across different factions of the Church, and we cannot avoid the fact that this debate is necessary if we are to suggest that the apparition phenomena are important in the context of the whole Church.

So, the active participation of members of the priesthood in an event of popular religion, such as a series of apparitions, does not detract from the possibility that a divine transformation has occurred even if this transformation bears the stamp of priestly spirituality. Furthermore, in addition to asking questions about the type of transformation effected (eg is love of neighbour present in addition to fervour for prayer and sacramental devotion?), we must also ask: what process of formation does the priesthood contribute to popular religion? The immediate answer to this, of course, is the sacraments themselves, over which, in Catholic tradition, only the priesthood may preside.

Here we should perceive a possible clue to the problem of the dichotomy between formation and transformation. For the sacraments, while presided over by human persons are, theologically, themselves vehicles for transformation. So the fact of priestly involvement in the cults surrounding

popular and spontaneous miracles may not necessarily cast suspicion on the latter's divine origin but, instead, indicate that an element is included which is itself perceived in the Catholic Church as the means of encounter with the divine. This element, ie the sacraments, is of course present locally even in those cases where the priests remain aloof. Yet in these latter instances, there is no integration of sacraments and cult - they are alternatives almost, just as Fr Zovko felt at first that the popular interest in the hillside apparitions threatened the role of his own ministry in the church.

At La Salette, the encouragement of local priests for the new pilgrimage was based on one major factor above all others: the attendance of rural people in the churches, especially for the Sunday Mass. This had been the specific instruction of the Virgin Mary as perceived by Maximin and Mélanie (7/55). Thus the sacraments, priesthood, and pilgrimage cult were integrated at a very early stage, even though official recognition of the vision followed after five years and much argument. Indeed, Masses were taking place at the site of the apparition by the first anniversary of its taking place (7/56).

At other famous sites, official sanction or encouragement of some kind has been given at a reasonably early stage. By this we mean that local ecclesiastical initiatives were not suppressed by bishops. At both Lourdes and Fatima, despite official caution, arrangements for the buying of the site by the Church were made well in advance of the authentication notice (7/57). Fatima, Beauraing, and Banneux had the building of chapels approved within months of the apparitions (7/58). Bishops with jurisdiction over La Salette, Lourdes, Pontmain, Beauraing and Banneux displayed their pastoral care for the visionaries and the

shrines (3/52-55). At Fatima, arrangements were soon being made to regulate the new shrine by the re-establishment of the local diocese within a year of the apparitions (1/55). For pilgrims and parishioners at Lourdes and Fatima, the State, and not the Church, was the enemy of the fledgling shrines (7/59).

In the Spanish cases of the 1960s, however, the apparitions were totally distanced from the Church on the orders of the local bishop. The fact that the visionaries of Garabandal were not allowed to enter the parish church whilst in trance has been made famous, as an example of their obedience to the episcopate (7/60). Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that it is in the Spanish cases that the host was to appear 'miraculously' on the tongue of certain visionaries (7/24; 7/25). This bizarre occurrence was a feature in phenomena where visions and sacraments were not integrated, nor was there any encouragement that they would ever be (7/61).

Medjugorje is the supreme instance of integration of visions and sacraments, a fact that has angered the local bishop (7/26; 7/62). The liturgical setting for pilgrimage is at the centre of Franciscan involvement in the apparitions. A general and unequivocal link between 'spiritual fruits' and ecclesiastical encouragement applicable to every case is probably not provable. Yet we must consider in what way the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation, are understood as vehicles of transformation.

7.2.3 The Sacraments and unity

What, briefly, is the place of the sacraments in Roman Catholic theology? The sacraments are signs of (i) faith,

(ii) worship, (iii) the unity of the Church, and (iv) Christ's presence (7/63), the means of salvation (7/64), and causes of, signifiers of, and means of celebrating, divine grace (7/65). The imparting of divine grace by means of the sacraments requires a "right disposition" on the part of the recipient (7/66). The central role of the sacramental liturgy in the life of the Church is declared in the documents of Vatican II:

"... the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows" (7/67).

Every human person is open to the

"original communication of grace" from God, but the sacraments shape and channel this "so that the divine presence may be effective for this individual or for this group insofar as they are members of the Church and responsible for its mission" (7/68).

Central to the sacramental liturgy is the Eucharist. This is pre-eminently the sacrament of Church unity, and its first effect is a more profound incorporation into the unity of the Church (7/69). In the words of Karl Rahner, the Church is

"most manifest and in most intensive form, she attains the highest actuality of her own nature, when she celebrates the eucharist" (7/70).

The growth of the Church is dependent on the Eucharist (7/71); indeed, according to Vatican II,

"... no Christian community is built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most holy Eucharist" (7/72).

The Eucharist is celebrated in an appropriate sacred place; this is not normally outside the church building except when there is a real need, and at the discretion of the local bishop (7/73). Fr Luna, the champion of Palmar de Troya, was keen to recount the conversation in which the Cardinal Archbishop of Seville allowed him to say Mass at a small outdoor altar in Palmar, albeit a small

distance away from the sacred site (which is known as "Lentisco") (7/74). The Masses on the mountain at La Salette on the anniversary of the apparition would have needed the permission of Mgr de Bruillard (7/75).

The saying of Mass at the site of an apparition is a sign that the phenomenon is being integrated into the unity of the whole Church, represented by the priest acting on behalf of the episcopo. This is an act of what we have called formation, as it is a volitional one by a group of people (ie the priests), but, as a celebration of the Eucharist, it brings with it an element of transformation, ie the growth of the Church in this local form, and the incorporation of the participants into its unity. The divine presence is effective for them as far as they are representatives of the Church's mission.

However, it is clear that elements of the transformation of persons, required by the Church as proof of a divine miracle, occur before ever Mass is said at the shrine. There are healings, conversions, returning to religious practice (and this will include attendance at Mass wherever this is available). It would not do to claim that transformation is only effected by the saying of Mass at the sacred site. Yet here we would suggest that, at some point in the unfolding history of a shrine, the full integration of the popular phenomenon with the whole Church must take place for the future spiritual health of the cult there, as seen from the perspective of orthodox Catholic spirituality. There may be natural reasons for this, eg lack of official sanction causes the proliferation of only fringe elements of the Church to attend, but in so far as the Catholic Church posits a theological efficacy behind the episcopo of its faith and the practice of its sacraments, then our conclusion seems to have theological validity which is not separate from,

but which transcends, sociological explanations of the historical development of any particular shrine.

This necessary integration of apparitions and liturgy is an application of the Vatican II Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium 12) in its reference to charismata: the Spirit must not be extinguished, as declared in scripture (1 Thess 5.19-20) (7/55; 7/76). Laurentin is concerned at the lack of pastoral care at some of the shrines which are not favoured (7/77), and Rahner too insists that the charismatic element must be harmonised with the hierarchical (7/78). The charismatic elements here referred to are in general those of the laity. The visions are, if of divine origin, charismata, gifts given for the edification of the whole Church (ref 1 Cor 12, 14); therefore, their acceptance by the Church is sealed by a special celebration of the sacrament of unity at the site of their occurrence. This is, as we have seen, sometimes celebrated inside the parish church, as at Medjugorje where the visionaries and their messages were most definitely incorporated into the liturgical format (7/26).

We could therefore, in theory, make a distinction between 'charism-in-unity', where the visionaries are, or are on the path to being, accepted by the universal Church, and 'charism-not-integrated', where the visionary phenomenon enjoys no favour at all from the priesthood. Following on from chapter 6, where it was decided that apparition events form a continuum not easily divided into genuine and not, we could suggest that the possibility is open, as Rahner and others accept (7/79), for a 'charism-not-integrated' to have been a genuine initiative of the divine stifled by the attitude of the hierarchy. This is not a new proposition; what is distinctive about the discussion here, however, is that the sacraments, and in

particular the Eucharist, are means of the integration and transformation that would result in a 'charism-in-unity', and not just the spontaneous apparition phenomenon alone.

A third alternative, of course, is a 'not-charism', a vision or series of visions which are not in any way of divine origin, but consist purely in human sinfulness or disease. Any that do not, at least in part, are by definition partly or wholly due to divine initiative (6/226). The 'not-charism' may be recognised by the criteria listed in chapters 3 and 4, but it is not clear whether it will be distinguished clearly from a 'charism-not-integrated', because of the tendency of cases of the latter type to degenerate (eg, perhaps, the doubts at Garabandal (3.4.4), the schism at Palmar, and the dubious spirituality of some aspects of the recent Irish cases) (7/80).

What we are suggesting here is that the integration of popular event and sacraments at an early stage may make the task of distinguishing the true charismata easier, as those that are true will not degenerate, and those that are false will be changed beyond recognition or be eventually rejected altogether as inappropriate to Christian life (7/81). The transformation effected by the 'miraculous events' would then be integrated with the transformative properties of the sacraments (with the necessary qualification that this depends on the disposition of the participants). It is always the case that the content of messages is recognised to be part-subjective and not binding on the faithful, and so there should be no danger that the celebration of traditional liturgy at the new site will legitimise messages of all kinds. One cannot help but note the maturation of the Medjugorje phenomenon from a popular event into one which is well-received at the highest levels. Here is a case

where the length of the visionary event has allowed the integration of phenomena and sacraments, with Confession at the centre of the visionaries' messages as well as the Eucharist.

A major difficulty with the concept of popular phenomena being drawn into the whole church, and thus transformed, through the sacrament of unity, is that the apparition cults very often express sentiments and spirituality that are partial to one section of the Church and possibly divisive. The Palmar de Troya phenomenon is distinguished by its concern for a return to the Tridentine Mass, for example. Medjugorje seems to favour the Charismatic Renewal. It is not clear, in either of these cases, that the phenomenon at its outset had these issues on the agenda (5.3.2; 5.3.5; 6/228), but they developed in such a way as to make them prominent. The sacrament of unity, while healing the split between popular and official religion in our ecclesiological model, does not always heal the wider ecclesiastical divisions, eg those between conservative and liberal, devotion-centred and socially-active, that exist in the Church. Indeed, apparition cults, when taken into the mainstream of Church life, may seem to exacerbate conflict, La Salette and Medjugorje being examples of this.

Therefore we have to accept that harmony between charismata and sacraments, as advocated here, may be a legitimate response to a truly divine initiative, but it is still one that is partial, subjective, and context-bound according to those who make it. Just as the sacraments are mediated in a social, economic, and religious context, so too the charismata, and so too the integration of these with the sacramental liturgy. For this reason, many of the messages and special initiatives connected with the apparition cults will be regarded as

partial and subjective. However, in a thorough-going theological model, we must assume that the divine initiative behind the charismata tends to Church unity, and wills this through the means of the sacraments. The aspects of the cults that militate against a unity that is gospel-centred (7/9) must be attributed to the partial concerns of the devotees. This partiality begins with the visionary or visionaries themselves, as they are also conditioned by their environment to some extent.

The contextual and subjective setting for the apparition charismata does not mean, however, that the model for transformation linking charismata and sacraments is invalid. What we wish to establish here is that the apparition phenomena cannot be seen as either divine initiatives or human deceptions outside the ecclesiological context. Only in and through the ecclesial setting can they be considered at all. In this setting they cannot be regarded as an alternative to the central Catholic ecclesiological idea that the divine is mediated through the sacraments. Therefore they cannot be judged adequately unless the measure to which they have been integrated with the universal church through the sacraments has been assessed and taken into account.

7.3 Liturgy and its context

Schillebeeckx's view of liturgy firmly roots the transcendent dimension, the encounter with God in Christ, in the historical situation of those participating:

"For as long as salvation and peace are still not actual realities, hope for them must be attested and above all nourished and kept alive, and this is only possible in anticipatory symbols".

The Christian liturgy stands under the symbol of the cross,

"the symbol of resistance to death against the alienation of our human history of suffering.... The sacramental liturgy is the appropriate place in which the believer becomes pointedly aware that there is a grievous gulf between his prophetic vision of a God concerned for peace among men and the real situation of mankind, and at the same time that our history of human suffering is unnecessary and can be changed".

Thus, in the liturgy, the Christian is called to liberating action (7/82).

God's promise, fulfilled in Christ, is accomplished in those participating in the liturgy of the Church because they

"come, in faith, into contact with Jesus Christ, on whom the church places her hope". Schillebeeckx sees God's grace manifesting itself "in our terrestrial history in a way that is most strikingly transparent to faith in the church's liturgy..." (7/83). The liturgy cannot ignore the concrete history of the world, "which is precisely the place where the eschaton is mysteriously in the process of becoming..." (7/84).

7.3.1 Specific contexts

An understanding of liturgy rooted in historical context is of great value for the integration of popular apparition cult and sacraments. The tension between history and eschaton is a prominent feature in those apparition messages that are prophetic rather than exhortatory. It is claimed that the woeful events foretold at La Salette were prevented somewhat by religious revival (7/85). On the other hand, Pontmain's prophecy seems to have been fulfilled in history almost immediately. The triumph of the Immaculate Heart, as in the Fatima message, is set in an historical perspective, coming after war and difficulties for the Church (1/59). Many will see the recent events in Eastern Europe (1989-90) as a partial realisation of this victory. At Beauraing, the words "I will convert sinners" are prophetic, but more vague, and

cannot be attributed to any wholesale movement in Belgium, but they have been linked to the triumph of the Immaculate Heart because of the heart manifested in the vision there (1/68).

Thus the prophetic aspect of apparition messages is based on historical expectations to varying degrees. The eschatological mood of famous cases has been heightened somewhat in more recent years: Garabandal and Medjugorje are notable instances of apocalyptic prophecy, in which punishment must come because of unbelief, and miracles will be visible to everyone in the world. There is an 'end of the age' feel about these prophecies (7/86).

How are we to assess these messages in terms of the delicate relationship between eschaton and history? We can regard the prophecies in four main ways:

- (a) they are nonsense;
- (b) they are valid as subjective perceptions of an eschaton which is not to be fulfilled literally in history, at least not in the foreseeable future (something akin to St Paul's anticipation of an imminent parousia), and by claiming that the prophecies will be realised in history, the visionaries are in error, taking God's revelation too literally, and ignoring St John of the Cross' warning (7/87);
- (c) they are true, but their realisation will not be exactly as foretold, as they are symbolic prophetic glimpses of real history as it unfolds in the future;
- (d) they are true exactly as foretold (and the visionaries of Garabandal and Medjugorje will in fact reveal the dates of events a short time beforehand as claimed).

Concern for the future unfolding of the prophecies yields only half of the picture. An holistic view must take into account the actual situation at the time of the visions,

ie their context in "our human history of suffering", in which God's peace is not yet actualised. The apparition prophecies clearly reflect their context in suffering. Each of them has a context which normally generates a central part of the message publicised (just as plague, yearning for religious renewal, and military threat formed the context of medieval apparition cults (2/23)). This is not to say that apparitions only occur in a few specific contextual situations (which would be incorrect, as concluded in chapter 2), but we are here simply identifying the varying context for each of the notable cases.

Rue du Bac: Paris revolution, 1830.

La Salette: Famine of 1845-7.

Lourdes: ?.

Pontmain: Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1.

Pellevoisin: Terminal illness of visionary.

Knock (no message given): Mass eviction of tenant farmers.

Fatima: Portuguese involvement in the 1914-18 War.

Beauraing and Banneux: The Depression of the 1930s?
(Tilman Come at Beauraing: Rise of Nazism in neighbouring
Germany).

L'Ile-Bouchard: Threat of civil war in France, 1947.

Garabandal, Palmar de Troya: Changes in the Church bringing a perceived threat to traditional values.

Medjugorje: The possibility of old ethnic and religious tensions resurfacing in Yugoslavia.

IN GENERAL: Decline in religious practice, sometimes encouraged by an anti-Catholic state, and concern about individual illnesses.

Although each shrine bears evidence of its original historical context, the emphasis on this often diminishes in importance over the years as the cult and shrine develop. At Knock, for example, the folk museum displays photographs depicting the misery of the evictions of the late 1870s which gave rise to the formation of the Land

League, yet there is no anti-landlord or anti-English emphasis to the shrine (it is unlikely that there ever was) (7/88). The shrine at Pontmain did experience nationalistic feelings due to its roots in occupied France (1871), but these have been eclipsed by the shrine's main message: prayer is answered (7/89). Fatima's concern over the World War was superseded as eventually, because of the revelations of the visionary Sister Lucia Santos, the main thrust of its message became one of anxiety about the spread of communism. This change is not incongruent with the original context, in which Fatima served as a rallying-point for Catholics in a country where anti-Catholic republicans were narrowly in the ascendant; the shrine was under threat in its early years (1.2.3).

So shrines develop and the more wide-ranging features of each case are emphasised, but we cannot understand the apparitions without having some awareness of the social, economic and political circumstances in which they occurred (7/90). In this we discover the place of each event in the "history of human suffering" that is, according to Schillebeeckx's view, brought to the liturgy and considered in the light of God's purposes of salvation and peace.

It would not be profitable to try and apportion a 'right' context and a 'wrong' context, eg to claim that Fatima's context is concern over the War and not hostility to anti-Catholic authorities (and thus that the later anti-communist emphasis is invalid). Fear of republicans or communists is perfectly natural in itself, even though a deeper analysis of why the rift between Catholics and others exists, or what Catholic leaders actually hope to achieve through engendering hostility, may be missing. The apparition cult expresses and then seeks to relieve this fear. The Fatima cult mushroomed in the 1930s, in the wake

of Stalin's persecutions of Christians in Russia and the Spanish Civil War (1/61; 1/63; 7/91). However, acknowledging fear does not legitimate military action and fascism which uses the threat of communism to excuse excessive and self-preservative 'security' and oppression (2.2.2; 7/92). The Virgin does not request this worldly reaction, but one which is religious (7/93) - consecration to the Immaculate Heart (and theological work is needed to penetrate this concept (7/94)).

What do apparition messages say and what do they not say? Firstly, they promise healing, salvation and peace and also threaten disaster, often in quite a worldly way. The practice on which these things depend is always religious, and pre-eminently liturgical. Devotions (Sacred and Immaculate Heart), sacramentals (the miraculous medal and rosary), places of worship (the building of chapels), and sacraments (the Eucharist and Reconciliation) are emphasised; at Medjugorje, this has opened out into general exhortations to prayer, both individual and communal, biblical reflection, a peaceful attitude toward one's fellows, and self-sacrifice to God.

These reflections help us to see why Schillebeeckx's view of liturgy is so relevant to the issue of integration of sacraments and apparition cults. The apparitions express a yearning for better things, and also fears for the future. The Madonna answers this need by (a) directives, and (b) reassurance. If the directives are met, fulfilment of the promises follows. The apparitions are rooted in questions about history, and point the way towards an answer: religiosity. At the heart of Catholic religious life is the ongoing encounter with Christ in the sacraments, at the centre of which is the Eucharist, which provides the focus for an answer to the question of eschaton and history, ie the cross and resurrection.

Yet do apparition cults really guide the believer to this understanding of history? So often, there is reassurance that the use of devotions or sacramentals will ensure either (a) salvation for oneself or others (7/95), or (b) success for the Church in history (eg triumph of the Immaculate Heart). There is a belief that worldly events are conditioned wholly by religious practice rather than by the social praxis that comes from an encounter with Christ in word and sacrament (4.3.3; 7/96).

In dealing with this problem, we must reflect on the fact that the apparition cults are truly phenomena of popular religion, ie they emphasise the tangible and immediate, seeking foreseeable gains rather than spiritual hope based in discipleship (7/97). The practitioners of popular religion are very often those least likely to have the power to effect social change. Yet here we are far from claiming that popular religion is wrong and some other kind of spirituality right. Rather there is need for integration of the kind that has been experienced at Medjugorje (even if this be far from perfect) under Franciscan influence (7/98). This integration must occur at an intellectual as well as devotional level.

In suggesting models for this integration process, we will need to avoid two extremes:

(i) in which the Eucharist is in the service of popular religion, the former being simply an adjunct of the latter, and contributing nothing on the intellectual level (7/99), and

(ii) in which the Eucharist is above and apart from popular religion, with the hopes and fears of the latter ignored - it is simply a means of getting people to go to Mass (7/100).

Neither of these extremes does justice to Schillebeeckx's understanding of liturgy. True integration, as we envisage it here, is a process in which the context of the hopes and prophecies of popular religion are taken seriously, expressed, and reflected upon in the light of the encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ in word and sacrament. In this way, the problems and striving of part of the body of the Church are taken up into the sacrament of unity, and thus into the universal Church. Where one suffers, all suffer.

Publications and the media also have their part to play in the sharing of the news of apparitions and their context. The messages and events will draw responses from people in the Church who identify with them; to the extent that this occurs, we may say that the directives and prophecies are relevant to the universal Church (4/56; 4/57). It is even possible that some members of the Church may be in a position to meet or answer some of the contextual questions expressed by the apparition cults in a tangible way (but, hopefully, not one which contravenes the demands of Christian praxis).

This is of course an ideal, as here we are limited to making observations and constructing such models by following the logic of Catholic teaching on the meaning of the Eucharist. It may seem to many that the christocentricity of the Eucharist, with the resultant praxis and understanding of history that this implies in Schillebeeckx's theology, ie that God intervenes in history only through the loving and liberating actions of the followers of Christ (7/82; 7/101), is at odds with 'supernaturalist' mariolatry as may be perceived in such devotions as consecrations to the Immaculate Heart. In the 'supernaturalist' model, God's plan is acted out in history 'from above', as punishment or reward for human

religiosity or lack of it. The idea that Russia's 'conversion' relies on an act of consecration falls, perhaps, into this category (7/102).

For this reason, it is better to regard the messages of Fatima as prophetically-derived answers to human concern in a specific context, ie among powerless Catholics who feel threatened by communism. In this light, the idea of consecrating one's enemy in the hope of reconciliation, as a response to anxiety, appears more positive than the idea that one can force atheists to believe simply by carrying out a religious ceremony.

7.3.2 The general context

When considering the whole series of marian visions since 1830, we identified a general socio-political context, ie secularisation, and the experiences and perceived dangers of this context from one common Catholic point of view, that of most apparition devotees (2.3.2). The main fear is that, through either persecution or more subtle infiltration, faith will give way to irreligion, and morality to immorality (7/103). This is the general context which must be addressed in the sacramental liturgy, if these popular phenomena are to play their part in it.

What is the answer to this historical struggle according to the images seen by the seers? In many of the individual cases, the Virgin Mary's response to the problems of the day was to encourage various kinds of devotional religiosity. However, present in the general pattern of visionary images is the whole drama of the cross and the parallel one of the birth of the Saviour, who is raised to bring peace to the world (7/104). This is, perhaps, an

indication that the mariocentric world of apparitions and the christocentric sacramental liturgy need not be so disparate.

Mary is herself included to some extent in the liturgy of the Church. Mary's Magnificat was used as a prayer early on in the Christian centuries, and she is featured in the prayers of the Mass (7/105). She has an integral role in the great feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, and also in the Annunciation and Presentation (7/106). Advent is especially important for the marian year. Mary's own feasts were instituted from the 6th century onwards. John Paul II's Redemptoris Mater states that

"the piety of the Christian people has always very rightly sensed a profound link between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist.....Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist"; Christ's body, which is present in the eucharist, was born of her (7/107).

So, even in a devotional atmosphere where Mary is prominent, we may identify the christological and eucharistic liturgy as the appropriate celebration of hope in the face of the anxiety of modern Catholicism about secularisation and irreligion. Not surprisingly, modern marianism usually has its own perspective on this, taking its dynamic from the tension between cross and Parousia (7/108). Christ is risen, but yet still the suffering Messiah, with the images of the cross prominent and sometimes going together with a belief that Christ is perpetually crucified by sin (7/109). The end of the 'cross' experience caused by modern irreligion is not resurrection but Parousia. Herein lies a difficulty in identifying the exact theological relationship between the eucharistic liturgy, in which resurrection is so prominent between cross and Parousia, and the expectations of the marian cult. While Schillebeeckx sees the resurrection,

experienced in the liberating action of the believer, as the answer to history (7/82-4), for the marian devotee in the apocalyptic tradition, the answer to history is the Parousia.

How will this tradition cope with the delay of the Parousia? There are perhaps four ways in which an apocalyptic tendency copes with the non-fulfilment of prophecy (7/110):

- (i) explanation in terms of moral and religious success and failure and the conditional nature of the prophecies (ie no Parousia: thus failure, no chastisement: due to improvement in piety) (7/111);
- (ii) 'routinisation' of the expectation (as has happened, arguably, in Christianity as a whole) (7/112);
- (iii) re-interpretation of the prophecy as needing to be fulfilled in the lives of believers (similar to social or liberation theologies);
- (iv) 'spiritualisation' of the prophecy into an other-worldly eschatological concept never to be realised in history.

The fact that marian apocalypticism has an echo in the beliefs of the New Testament communities (7/113) holds out some hope for the discovery of ways of understanding this phenomenon theologically without failing to regard it seriously and respectfully. This means observing the marian cult as the years go by, especially when the time comes for the prophecies to be fulfilled or when they patently have not and reasons will have to be found for their non-occurrence (7/114). It also entails keeping in mind the possible application of theological understanding of the 'delay of the Parousia' to marian apocalypticism. Finally, it makes essential the need to respect and understand the social and psychological context of those who are visionaries and devotees.

The tension between what has been called 'pie-in-the-sky' soteriology, ie promising the poor a reward in heaven, and liberation theology, where the good news is realised in historical liberating action, has an echo in the apparition apocalyptic. Here the apparitions may be viewed as 'God's option for the deprived', ie those who suffer from the 'anomie' of the modern world, but there is no clear direction as to whether, in pastoral terms, one should work to remove the perceived ills, to re-educate people to accept what they formerly regarded as evil, or to simply reassure them that they are blessed anyway.

Having recognised these uncertainties, we could still proceed to an understanding of apparitions and the liturgy in which the process of secularisation, with all its uncertainties and deprivations, is identified as the general context in which the sacraments reveal God's answer to the struggle of history. In this answer, we find an integration of the marian apocalyptic contents with the christological eschatology of the New Testament. We find in this process that the poor, the powerless, the sick, the alienated, and the lost are all blessed, but at the same time come to an acceptance that the remedy for these ills is far from simple, and far from assured.

In conclusion, then, we can say that the task of integration at the intellectual level, ie of showing that there is a level at which there is no opposition between eucharistic christology and the apparent mariocentricity of popular religion, is a necessary and theological one.

7.4 Sympathetic theological interpretations of marian phenomena

We come now to consider interpretations made by Catholics, usually clergy, who have accepted the canonical decision in favour of a supernatural and divine origin for a particular apparition case. Obviously, much of the commentary of this type is concerned with explicit detail as reported by visionaries, yet there are also many interpretations which go beyond the explicit, and it is this latter group with which we are dealing here. They are attempts to place the visionary experience within the broader framework of Catholic Christianity, and in this respect they contribute to the effort to integrate the apparition cults with the universal Catholic liturgy.

Stern, the historian Missionary of La Salette, tackles one particular aspect of marian thinking resisted in many quarters: the apparent opposition between a merciful Mary and a judgemental Christ (7/115).

"If my people do not wish to submit, I am forced to let go of the arm of my Son; it is so strong and so heavy that I can no longer hold it up",

cried the weeping Lady of La Salette. The contemporary interpretation of this statement in the late 1840s was that Christ's arm would strike humanity because of offences against God. Although Stern admits the existence of harsh and loving passages side by side in the Bible, he emphasises the concept of judgement in the context of humanity breaking the divine covenant. It is not so much God who punishes, but the rupture in the salvific covenant which causes worldly disaster. Thus at La Salette, Mary said,

"If I want my Son not to abandon you, I am forced to pray to him without ceasing".

For Stern, it is the abandonment of Christ that is disastrous, not his vengeance, for the arm is raised in

blessing, and will fall away if rejected. Mary is warning people of this danger, and calling them back to the covenant.

In Stern's view, the local people of Corps and its environs played a symbolic part in hearing and obeying this call. Their role was "sacramental", like that of the biblical Israelites, as a revelation of the truth of God's relationship with humanity in general. The continuing history of La Salette therefore shows the message at its origin to be one of hope and reparation rather than of fear and judgement, as pilgrimage there with its emphasis on the sacraments demonstrates the possibility of re-acceptance of God's covenant with all its concomitant blessings.

Stern's interpretation of La Salette is an apologetic one, and it also demonstrates one approach made by theologians faced with the uncomfortable aspects of popular religion (which are sometimes the result of questionable theology from previous ages (7/116)). This is the reconciliation of the raw message with the commentator's own belief, based on his understanding of the Catholic tradition. This places Stern in opposition to the original interpretation of the message, which accepted the possibility of Christ's punishment for lack of devotion.

Most of the clerical commentators on the marian apparitions, like Stern, are anxious to show that these phenomena are firmly linked to the message of the gospel. Laurentin therefore attempts to demonstrate that the major aspects of the visions at Lourdes are poverty, prayer, and penitence - all gospel themes (7/117). Prayer includes the pilgrimage and sacramental worship central to Lourdes; penitence is one side of the conversion process, of which the other is the miraculous healing of the sick.

The apparent verification of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not, according to Laurentin, suggest a Madonna figure aloof and unable to empathise with the "sinners" who travel to Lourdes. Her biblical Magnificat shows her solidarity with the downcast and poor. Thus Laurentin provides us with an example of the second approach made by Catholic writers to apparitions: showing the message's consistency with the gospel. Here, the positive potential of the message for incorporation into biblically-based teaching is drawn out.

Laurentin and Durand also refer the message of Pontmain to the gospel, and claim that it can be shown to be relevant to the life of ordinary modern people with all the reality of their problems. In order to do this, Laurentin and Durand feel that it is necessary to avoid the esoteric, political, or nationalistic developments of interpretations of the shrine's origin, which came into being because the apparition happened at the time of the ending of the Prussian invasion (thus Mary was seen as the patroness of France as opposed to anywhere else) (7/118).

Alonso, the historian of Fatima, suggests that the Russian factor in the secrets revealed by Lucia is a temporal instance of a universal truth: the apocalyptic struggle between woman and dragon (Revelation 12), which ends in victory for the former (7/119). Thus the name "Russia" stands for any tendency to militant atheism and persecution of the Church, as a modern incarnation of the beast of the Apocalypse, once a Roman emperor (7/120). Alonso, like Laurentin and Durand, is engaged in the process of extemporisation, ie avoiding the definite historical references or context of the original message so as to show that it has universal significance. Thus, with either the ending of Prussian-French hostility or the decline of the cold war, these apparitions still have a

content that is perpetually relevant, and concerned with recourse to prayer and devotion at a time of crisis.

Vernet places the visionary of Pellevoisin, Estelle Faguet, in a role similar to that credited to the people of La Salette by Stern: her experience is a model for our own relationship with God, a special case of a general truth (7/121). Her physical healing was an outward manifestation of the spiritual healing enjoyed by her and available to everyone. The miracle was requested by the ailing Estelle in a petition taken to a local Lourdes grotto, but it was announced and prepared for by Mary in the first five days of apparitions (Estelle was told that this represented the five wounds of Christ), and effected by Christ, present in the Eucharist after which the visionary was instantaneously cured.

Thus, in Vernet's view, Estelle entered into the eucharistic mystery of Christ's Passion, and her healing was a resurrection with him. For this reason, Pellevoisin has been likened to Bethany where, by Lazarus' return to life, according to Jesus' prediction, "the Son of God will be glorified" (John 11.4). In other words, the healing of Lazarus was a revelation of the general resurrection of which Christ is the first fruits and source. Estelle's experience shows this truth in the same way. Vernet and Stern are carrying out another task in the making of popular apparition cults universally relevant: that of setting up the visionaries and their contemporaries as role models, using their stories for didactic purposes, just as biblical stories are so used.

The prominent commentators on Pontmain want to give the vision a christocentric emphasis (7/122). They wish to point out that, although Mary's image there is reminiscent of the heavenly sign of Revelation 12, it must be

remembered that the apocalyptic woman bore the Christ-child. Thus, for them, Pontmain's Mary is more a mother than a queen, and the symbols around her seen by the visionaries suggest the importance of the veneration of the cross. The efficacy of prayer and the vitality of Christian hope are the main messages; furthermore, although the instinctive recourse to prayer by the local people was on mariocentric lines, the vision referred their petitions to God:

"God will answer you in a little while. My Son lets himself be moved".

Two notable commentators on Beauraing, Wilmet and Joset, follow the familiar trend in claiming that Mary's message repeats that of the gospel (7/123). Joset suggests that the revelation to children echoes Matthew 11.25 (a point made about Pontmain too), and that the words "I will convert sinners" show that Mary is the intercessor and bearer of God's initiative to the outcast as revealed in Jesus' ministry. Bossard answers the problem of possible mariocentricity at Beauraing by comparing the tenor of the apparition messages with the Council document on Mary (Lumen Gentium 8) (7/124). He notes how her universal motherhood is rooted in her divine maternity ("Mother of God" as declared at Beauraing and Banneux), and this maternal function is therefore evident in every work of salvation (hence "I will convert sinners" is not contradictory to the pre-eminence of Christ, as it is from God as Trinity that Mary as Mother of God receives everything necessary for her maternal mission). So another tendency of Catholic interpretations of apparitions is illustrated: the attempt to demonstrate the christocentricity of the messages, and thus anticipate any objection to the effect that the cults are mariolatrous.

Leys is another writer who wishes to link apparitions to gospel: thus, for him, the epithet "Virgin of the Poor" at Banneux directly alludes to the importance of the poor in the scriptures (7/125). The Lourdes tradition of a healing spring for the sick was continued at Banneux; yet, unlike Lourdes, there was an explicit reference to healing in Mary's message (7/126). Mary's visit to Mariette's own house is different from that to the Lourdes site in the wild; the former shows more clearly God's initiative in coming to us where we stand, the limited confines of everyday life (7/127). Here we see again the attempt to show the relevance of the apparition story to ordinary faith by viewing the events in a way useful for didactic purposes.

In addition, the Catholic priest Scheuer suggests an interpretation of the spring which has become a central theme of the shrine at Banneux (7/128); strangely, it does not seem to have been applied to Lourdes. This is that the healing water of the spring is a symbol of Christ himself; thus Mary leads the believer to the source of salvation (in French, "source" = source or spring). The spring is "for all nations", and Scheuer pointed out that this is so because Christ is the saviour of the whole world. The summation of the symbolic message of Banneux is, then, that Mary comes as God's representative to the door of our own homes to lead us to the source of our salvation, which is Christ. Mariette's hundred metre walk becomes a model for the path of faith of every believer (7/129).

Scheuer's reinterpretation of the relevance of the spring is an example of the final tendency of these interpretations that we will note here. This is the symbolisation of things or events in the story so that they take on a meaning that was not apparent in the verbatim reports of the messages. Yet do the

interpretations go too far from the original message? Mariette's Mary did not make the symbolic equation of Christ and spring, yet this is now a cornerstone of the theology of Banneux. Christ as the water of life is not part of the original context of the apparitions at Banneux. The visionary messages seem to stand more definitely in the ancient tradition of healing springs with a supernatural or miraculous event at their origin. Yet, at the same time, all interpretations may claim their place within the phenomenon as a whole. The subjective element in the visions themselves necessitates a model in which the visionary's own interpretation of the experience is simply one of the whole range of theological responses.

So we have six clearly-identifiable motives in Catholic interpretation of the visionary phenomena:

(a) to reconcile the theology of the message with values that are consonant with the interpreter's own position and the likely one of his readers, for apologetic reasons;

(b) to demonstrate that the underlying currents of the messages are none other than those in the Bible and, in particular, are consistent with the Christian gospel;

(c) to extemporise the messages so as to make them accessible to believers in their existential life of faith - thus 'universal' values are uncovered;

(d) to show how the story of the visionary and the first pilgrims have a didactic value as role models, illustrating the possibilities of Christian spiritual life;

(e) to place the marian themes within a christocentric framework, thus refuting any charge of mariolatry;

(f) to show that the salient features in the events during an apparition symbolise vital aspects of Christian life and teaching.

These priestly interpretations come to conclusions which go beyond the phenomena as understood by the original visionaries, first pilgrims, and even some modern-day devotees (except for Medjugorje, where analysis of the messages seems to be an ongoing process for visionaries and theologians together (7/130)). The process of placing the apparitions in the scriptural context or making them relevant to modern theology and Christian life is a 'universalisation' of their messages, abstracting them from any original special historical circumstances. This is a very valuable task in the integration of apparition events and universal Church with its eucharistic liturgy. However, care should be taken not to forget that the original event occurred in a context, and the messages were answers to the questions being asked in the crisis of that moment. The 'universalisation' of the message is part of the integration process, but it should not be done in such a way that the suffering of the original situation should be overlooked. The message, if extemporised, should still be most relevant to those finding themselves in an identifiably similar situation to the original visionaries and their fellows.

Thus, although the threat of "Russia" may evoke the same emotion from a powerful Catholic in a right-wing military state as it does from a poor Catholic peasant under an anti-clerical regime, the context of these persons is clearly not the same. For the latter, recourse to the Immaculate Heart of Mary may be the only perceivable option; for the former, such devotion may be a convenient way of encouraging the poverty-stricken in the same country to forget their socio-economic situation. This is

why the contextual root of eucharistic participation is so important, and cannot be overlooked in an evaluation of the apparition messages and their relevance to the universal Church (7/131).

7.5 Conclusion: an ecclesiological model for apparitions

We may sum up by outlining a model that sets apparition phenomena in their ecclesial context, drawing on the discussion in the last two chapters. There are thirteen points in four sections to be considered.

(a) Charismata (7/132).

1. The visionaries have special gifts (clairvoyance, visions and prophecy) that they enjoy for a limited time - these gifts establish them as charismatics within the local community of Catholics (6.6.2).
2. The visionaries' messages are to a considerable extent subjective; they reflect aspects of the contemporary condition and programme of the Church local and universal, even if it is possible that the visionaries have an intuitive knowledge of such things (eg papal initiatives) that they did not learn from the media (7.1.2). (This particular clairvoyant ability cannot be proven in any case, as it is equally possible that the visionaries received this knowledge, albeit subconsciously, from other Catholics (7/133).)
3. Clairvoyance does not in itself prove a divine origin (7/134).
4. The visionaries' subjectivity may include attitudes and beliefs inherited from local or universal Catholic

tradition that are not above critical analysis from a Christian theological perspective (7.1.1).

(b) Ecclesial environment.

5. Pilgrims from a widening geographical region are drawn to the new shrine because of human needs (in particular: curiosity, sickness, the hope that personal and collective aspirations will be fulfilled, the need for religious renewal (7/135), the desire to be in contact with the "Holy" (7/136)). This does not guarantee the theological profundity or truth behind the claims of the respective apparition cults (7/137).

6. The dual nature of the Church local and universal as both sinful and endowed with grace is a condition inherited by apparition cults at their very root, and they, individuals and collectivity alike, are in need of the repentance that is enjoined on everyone by the messages promulgated (6.6.3; 7.1.4).

7. The response of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the phenomena may be a negative one which 'stifles the Spirit' by prohibiting any ecclesiastical involvement or, conversely, encourages and utilises questionable attitudes and aspirations in the interest of ecclesiastical control and political ambitions (7.2.2).

8. It is likely that the ecclesiastical promotion of certain apparitions to authentication and approval fails to take into account the 'continuum' of visionary events in which, as in the Church in general, sin and grace reside in varying degrees (6.6.3; 7.1.4).

(c) Liturgy.

9. On the whole, the apparition messages suggest religiosity in various forms as the solution to contextual questions about the state of society and the Church (7.3).

10. The messages and prophecies of the apparitions cannot be considered without a holistic view which includes the original context of the visionaries and their contemporary environment at all levels; thus Schillebeeckx's model of liturgy in context, where the suffering of history is considered in the light of the cross and resurrection, is a helpful one (7.3).

11. The apparent transformation of people, which is the major concern of the Church's investigation procedure, is partially, but ultimately decisively, dependent upon the integration of popular phenomena and Church universal, an integration that is brought about by the linking of apparition events to the sacraments (in particular, Penance and Reconciliation and the Eucharist): hopefully, this will occur in a way that devalues neither (7.2.3; 7.3.1).

12. This integration of the popular and universal is furthered through a theological dialectic between messages, symbols, and visions and the Christian gospel (7.4; 7/9).

(d) 'Spiritual fruits'.

13. The immediate spiritual fruits of the apparition cults are usually reckoned to be (i) a return to, or conversion to, committed religiosity, and (ii) healings of physical and mental infirmities. Yet, in addition, it is important to take into account the existence or otherwise of

spiritual fruits of the resultant religiosity, ie a praxis that follows recognisably the commands of the Christain gospel (4.3.3; 7.3.1; 7/138).

These thirteen points form an outline to an ecclesiology of apparitions, one which delimits the phenomena, but hopefully does not rule out the possibility that they are an important means of discerning divine initiatives in the contemporary Church. It is important that we stress that the apparitions are events in the universal Church, not outside it, nor occurring within a 'purified' minority of it, nor alternatives nor even complements to the sacramental life, but charismata which direct the Church to its devotional life, within which the sacraments are central.

Where there is sin in the Church, there too apparitions will be prone to exhibit distortions; where there is grace, so also apparitions will be fruitful. They do not, even in their origins, represent an extra, an 'increment' to either sin or grace, but partake of the sin and grace that already constitutes the Church. Thus, with wise guidance, use of the sacraments and critical discernment, apparition events, perhaps many more than those at present authenticated by the hierarchy, may 'take on' the positive aspects of the contemporary Church and exhibit fully the charismata which they represent; with neglect, abuse according to certain political predilections, or the keeping separate of popular religion and sacraments, such an event may degenerate into mass hysteria and/or the focus for questionable attitudes. Of course, most cases, if not all, combine these positive and negative extremes in some measure.

Therefore apparitions are 'epiphenomena' of Church life. They function as prophetic insights into that life, and

everything connected with them deserves the full creative and critical analysis of theological expertise, not forgetting its necessary connections with sociology, psychology, politics, history, and other disciplines.

Such insights help us to understand the dynamics of what is subjective about the apparitions in their ecclesial context. Yet there is a 'remnant' of objectivity too, and this resides most obviously in the figure at the centre of the visions, ie the Virgin Mary, even if this figure is shaped to a considerable extent according to subjective expectation. As we intimated in chapter 6, she represents something more than merely the fulfillment of the conscious wishes and expectations of those who 'see' her and those for whom this 'seeing' is important.

Chapter 8 - Mariological Considerations

8.1 Introduction: The conflict and development of modern beliefs about Mary

8.1.1 The ebb and flow of 'high' marianism

The contrasting attitudes to Mary in Christian thought from medieval times may be understood as a process familiar in the history of ideas: emphasis and reaction. Graef's history of marian doctrine and devotion records the Reformers' rejection of the extravagance of Catholic beliefs about Mary, and notes that, although major figures of the Reformation retained the medieval deference towards Mary, their insistence on a 'low' rather than the traditional 'high' view of her - ie considering her worthy only in so far as she was a humble servant of God's will and not as a powerful figure or object of veneration and mariological doctrines - had the inevitable consequence of the dismantling of her cult in Protestantism (8/1). The Congregationalist Dawe supports this contention in remarking that the end of the marian liturgical programme in his denomination led to a corresponding indifference in belief; she had lost her function in the liturgy, and thus devotion to her waned (8/2).

Mary and her cult have been central features in the hardening attitudes and identity preservation that have characterised relations between Catholics and Protestants over the last four centuries (8/3). Yet the reaction to excess in the Mary cult was not a Protestant concern alone. Graef lists several Catholic theologians committed to a moderate mariology against the proponents of the high view. One of these, a German layman named Widenfeld, was the subject of controversy in the 17th century and,

although his publication enjoyed official approval at first, after vilification by opponents it was condemned by Rome as part of the general campaign against Jansenism (with which, claims Graef, Widenfeld could not really be associated) (8/4). Here we condense the points made by Widenfeld and reproduced by Graef, with the intention of giving examples of the kind of 'excesses' that the anti-mariolatry campaigners were trying to remove:

- (a) Mary was not the refuge of impenitent sinners, and membership in marian confraternities did not free impenitent sinners from hell;
- (b) Mary's mercy was not opposed to, nor did it overrule, God's or Christ's justice (7/116; 8/5);
- (c) she was not an indispensable mediatrix for God and Christ, nor mediatrix and advocate in the same sense as Christ, nor divine, omnipotent, saviouress, nor co-redemptress, but an intercessor of value;
- (d) love for her had to be set within the context of charity towards God her Creator;
- (e) her so-called apparitions and revelations should not be accepted too easily;
- (f) marian 'slavery', the bedecking of statues rather than charity to the poor, and belief in many local madonnas, were all to be avoided.

These abuses of the marian cult, many of which stemmed from the middle ages (8/6), were similar to those abhorred by Newman in a letter to Pusey in the second half of the 19th century - to Widenfeld's list we may add:

- (g) God and Christ were not resigned to Mary's will;
- (h) Mary was not the advocate of sinners with God in contrast to Christ on the side of God in judgement and rejection of sinners;

(i) Mary's dwelling in the soul was not the main cause of the Holy Spirit being attracted there (8/7).

In the two centuries between Widenfeld and Newman, other Catholic scholars - eg Crasset, Bossuet, and Muratori - had also attempted to stem the excesses of marian devotion (8/8), and to oppose 'devotionalism', ie the idea that simple prayer and ritual formulas were enough to guarantee salvation (7/95). Those who encouraged the high view of Mary were not necessarily guilty of devotionalism, however, as they tended to demand total commitment to her: among them were Mary d'Agreda, St Louis Grignon de Montfort, Ketwich, and St Alphonsus Liguori (8/9).

8.1.2 The modern period up to Vatican II

A new initiative in mariology, which still forms the nucleus of official doctrine, began in the late 19th century with Scheeben and Newman. Both men insisted on the need to make use of the resources in the patristic writings in order to construct a traditional mariology; for this reason, the most important ideas in their theses were Mary as the Second Eve, which goes back to the second century apologists, and emphasis upon Mary's motherhood of God in Christ, with its roots in the 'Theotokos' declaration at Ephesus in AD 431. Thus, for Newman and Scheeben, mariological work has a strong christological basis (8/10).

The point about which Newman was careful, and on which Scheeben was nearer the high mariology of old, was the extent to which Mary's necessary participation in salvation history was due to her autonomous action (8/11). The high mariology saw Mary as a mediatrix and co-redemptrix, sometimes coming between Christ and humanity, and certainly playing a quasi-divine role in salvation

(8/12). Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, defined as dogma in 1854, had been accepted by virtually all parties - despite its popularity among high mariologists, it also affords an opportunity for a 'low' mariology in which Mary's role is not autonomous, but wholly prepared by God through her sinless conception (8/13). Newman, however, did not consider Mary as being totally passive (8/14). To sum up the standard Catholic position: Mary's active co-operation with her Creator is an exemplary instance of the Catholic emphasis on human co-operation in the process of salvation, as opposed to the Protestant divide between God and a passive, utterly sinful humanity (8/15).

For Newman, Mary was more intercessor than mediatrix whereas, while Scheeben agreed that her power was limited to intercession, he nevertheless exalted her as mediatrix, even the "universal mediatrix of grace" (8/16). Twentieth-century theologians, eg K Rahner and Schillebeeckx, retain a balance between passive/redeemed and active/co-redemptrix; also between intercessor and mediatrix (8/17). During the first half of this century, however, proponents of a high mariology, while not necessarily returning to the kind of abuses denounced by Widenfeld and Newman, promoted the cause of definitions of Mary such as Mediatrix of All Graces and Co-Redemptrix (8/18). While the 'marian' pope, Pius XII, was moved to consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1942, and to define the Assumption of Mary a dogma in 1950, he did not bow to the pressure of the 'maximalist' or high mariology school (8/19). The Assumption and Immaculate Conception have, anyway, a long pedigree in Church tradition (East and West), which is not the case with the other definitions requested (8/20).

8.1.3 Mariology at the time of Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council responded positively to the movements which urged a renewed emphasis on scripture, patristics and liturgy (8/21). In this climate, it was unlikely that supporters of the high mariology would succeed in obtaining dogmatic definitions with no basis therein. Vatican II continued the careful and balanced treatment of Mary whereby she is both mediatrix and intercessor, two titles which suggest different emphases on Mary's importance (8/22). K Rahner espouses the view that Mary is a prototype of all believers: all are mediators of grace, all are co-operators in redemption (8/23). Of course, Mary, the sinless mother of Christ, is more perfect than any other: she is the "most perfectly redeemed" (8/24). Modern Catholic mariology follows Duns Scotus' solution to the medieval dilemma in which Mary's sinlessness suggests her not needing the redemption of Christ: in Scotus' view of the 13th century, Mary was redeemed in anticipation of the saving death of Christ, but still by it (8/25).

However, for the emphasis on Mary's prototypical quality as model for believers to take hold, the Council had to correct the over-emphasis on the opposite tendency inherited from the old high mariology, ie that Mary is understood as being 'like' Christ, rather than an all-human forerunner of the believer. These tendencies, whereby Mary is thought of in terms of the Church and its members on the one hand, and in terms of Christ on the other, are known as ecclesiotypical and christotypical respectively (8/26). The Council continued the move towards the former by deciding that the tract on Mary should come within the constitution on the Church rather than having an independent place of its own; this was the result of the narrowest of all Council votes (8/27). Mary

was therefore seen, as in patristic times, not as a female 'twin' of Christ, but as the prototype and model of the Church, and thus prototype and model for the Church's individual believers. This theme had grown in popularity with 20th century theologians (8/28).

The Council also denounced the abuses of the marian cult in a general way (8/29). Once again, the tide of high (and popular) mariology had been turned back by influential theologians. Yet Mary's cult, in its more moderate and reasonable form, was still fundamental to Catholicism, and still to be fostered within it (8/30). There was no foothold in the Council document for a thorough-going Protestant model which stressed the lowly humility of Mary in such a way as to remove her from the liturgy (8/31). Finally, and surprisingly to many, Paul VI gave some comfort to the high mariologists by declaring that Mary was the "Mother of the Church", in a definite attempt to pacify fears that the Council's balanced mariology heralded the decline of the cult of Mary in the Church (8/32). Thus Mary's position - below that of Christ, but not standing between him and believers, and transcending the Church, but yet still an all-human member of it - was established as far as the hierarchy was concerned (8/33).

8.1.4 After the Council

Paul VI felt the need to clarify and expand the brief conciliar treatment of the marian cult, and published the apostolic exhortation Marialis Cultus in 1974. Here he outlined the way in which the marian movement might conform to a distinctly postconciliar spirituality. The careful exposition of devotion using the Rosary (8/34) is especially relevant to the marian shrines, where this prayer has been a central feature, since Lourdes (1858) in

particular. The use of the Rosary before and after, but not during, mass at Medjugorje echoes Marialis Cultus 48 (8/35). Paul VI also used this encyclical to respond to the emerging feminist consciousness that Mary's passivity was held up as an example to keep women in an oppressed position as passive child-bearers (8/36). Thus he stressed Mary's active, initiating role, calling her a model for the "New Woman" (8/37).

John Paul II's encyclical announcing the marian year of 1987-8, Redemptoris Mater (1987), speaks at length of the Church following Mary in her own earthly pilgrimage to the cross. Like Paul VI, John Paul II is concerned to confirm and expand the conciliar treatment of Mary; his new and original emphasis is on the "presence of Mary" (8/38), and implicit in his references to shrines is the fact that the apparitions are a special sign of her presence. He also dealt with the delicate position of Mary in salvation history, reinforcing the balanced conciliar position (8/39), while also probing the link between Mary and (a) the coming millenium, and (b) the Eastern churches (8/40).

However, in the last two decades another new debate has emerged concerning Mary. The 'balanced' mariology of the Council is being questioned by some proponents of the Latin American liberation theology. In Latin America, the high mariology is still central to popular religiosity (8/41). Three Brazilians working for a liberationist view of mariology, Boff on the one hand, and Gebara and Bingemer on the other, see Mary's high status and virtual equality with Christ as important in the struggle for women's liberation (8/42). It is not so much that Mary is divinised in this thinking as that Christ is re-viewed as an announcer of God's kingdom, ie christocentric theology becomes kingdom-centred theology. Mary too is an announcer

of the kingdom for the liberationists, especially because of the Magnificat (8/43).

Ratzinger, on the other hand, the Vatican opponent of the liberation movement (8/44), has written that Mary's thoughtful passivity is an example that helps to preserve femininity in the modern era and in face of "masculine" schemes of equating the mission of the Church with socio-political programmes (8/45). John Paul II seems also to be responding to the liberation theologians and to be taking their emphasis on the Magnificat seriously, as he puts much stress on this in Redemptoris Mater, recasting the issue within the safe confines of official teaching (8/46).

There is a feminist reaction to Boff's high mariology in the work of Johnson, who feels that Boff's position detracts from the feminist theme that the ultimate model for femininity is to be found in God rather than in Mary (8/47). On a different theme, Johnson has investigated the idea that Mary is a symbolic rather than an historical figure, a concept inspired by the Protestant theologian Pannenberg (8/48). Doubts about the literal historicity of the scriptural texts concerning Mary have also been raised by Brown and Fitzmyer, Catholic members in an ecumenical team of scholars working on this theme. The team's scriptural work leads them away from the traditional notion that the key to Mary's biblical place lies in her motherhood of Jesus; on the contrary, she is the ideal disciple, and her motherhood is comparatively incidental (8/49). Thus this work reinforces the ecclesiotypical model for mariology.

The last twenty years or so have also seen an appraisal of Mary by feminist theologians who, although agreeing that the marian image has been used to oppress women,

nevertheless accept that there are some positive features of the marian cult that can be called upon in a feminist approach to Christianity. Halkes, for example, wishes to set Mary free from patriarchy and women free from oppressive images of Mary (8/50). Daly suggests that certain aspects of the Mary cult have already broken free of patriarchy, and are thus feared by the Protestants and "harnessed" by the Catholics: these are those that show Mary as the pre-Christian Great Goddess (6/91; 8/51). This feminist perspective wishes to reconsider Mary apart from the traditional view in which she is only considered in relation to Christ (8/52).

8.1.5 Some socio-psychological observations

While some Catholics on both sides of the mariological debates have denounced their opponents for excess, lack of respect, heresy, etc., there are nevertheless others who would accept that the beliefs themselves may be traced to socio-psychological roots. If Mary has become, for some, a quasi-divine mediatrix in the place of Christ, or a refuge of mercy where Christ or God represents justice, then this could consist in a reaction to an over-masculine godhead in Christianity (8/53), or to an over-emphasis on a judgemental Christ. If Christ were not preached as being human as well as divine nor as on the side of sinners, then Mary could be called upon subconsciously to fulfil this function (8/54).

As for the belief in Mary's power to save impenitent sinners from judgement, we might suspect that this is a reaction to an over-authoritarian Church, in which repentance and obedience to God were identified with submission to the hierarchy and conformation with its demands. An over-emphasis on rationalism, too, could have

brought forth a reaction in which the 'irrational' (identified with the feminine, as opposed to the masculine 'Logos') had its champion in Mary (8/55). In this vein, there is also the possibility that she stood for popular religion against official religion, the latter too distant and intellectual for the rural and uneducated (7/36; 7/97; 8/56). The 'Hearts' tradition is an example of the marriage of official and popular religion (8/57); in this tradition, there is a tendency to see the hearts of Jesus and Mary as twinned and united - thus it is a pointedly christotypical model for mariology (8/58).

For these reasons, it is important not to lay the 'blame' for an excessive view of Mary solely at the door of those who express them; the reasons may be more complex, and involve other ecclesiastical or even secular parties. While it is not easy to draw the exact outlines for such social and psychological pressures, the principle that a movement in mariology may have its roots in a whole set of attitudes and relationships in the Church is an important one (8/59).

8.2 Fundamental principles of mariology and their relationship to apparition messages

8.2.1 Mary as archetype of the Church

Mary's place as archetype or prototype of the Church and her status as Virgin Mother of God are not mutually exclusive; indeed, they are closely complementary. It is true, however, that certain writers use one or the other as the fundamental principle for their mariological work (8/60). The Vatican II document Lumen Gentium utilises both principles, and yet places Mary within the context of Church (8.1.3).

We will need to summarise some major and generally accepted insights of Catholic ecclesiological mariology. Mary is the prototype and model of the Church, ie in her earthly life, she was the Church in origin, and in her heavenly glory, she is what the Church will become; therefore the Church strives to be like her (8/61). She is both a member of the Church (8/62), and also transcends it because of its earthly, part-sinful component (8/63). She foreshadowed the Church at the five great moments of her earthly existence: in her 'fiat', ie saying yes to God's messianic plan (8/64), in her bringing the Saviour into the world (8/65), in her commanding people to obey her Son at Cana (8/66), in her reverence at the foot of the cross (8/67), and in her awaiting the Spirit of Pentecost (8/68). Her earthly "pilgrimage", therefore, prefigures the mission of the "pilgrim Church" (8/69), as her life is a symbolic statement of the necessary actions of the Church throughout the ages (8/70).

Mary stands for the whole Church, including the hierarchy, but she especially typifies the laity, the community who receive the sacraments (8/71). Her presence at the cross personifies the reverent community at Mass (8/72). She is a figure of the Church's origin: the Church was born in her 'fiat', and also on the cross (8/73). As a Second Eve, Mary too was 'born' from the Second Adam as he 'slept' in death on the cross (8/74). She is the mother and prototype of the Church, which means that she is the mother and prototype of each believer in her co-operation and co-sacrifice with Christ in his redemption (8/75). Like the believer, she conceived the Word by faith; her uniqueness consists in the fact that she did this also in body (8/76).

This is a brief general summary of the Catholic position as regards Mary as archetype of the Church. In the

apparition mariology, as we will see, Mary is viewed in more of a christotypical way than an ecclesiotypical one. The 'Hearts' tradition predominates. Yet we may recognise Mary as the prototype of believers in the visionary messages, because of her 'invitation' to join her in prayer. Her power is reckoned to be that of prayer, and not judgement (although there seems to be a residue of the old tradition that she can rescue devotees from judgement (8/77)). The Medjugorje apparitions have reinforced this image of intercession because of the concrete cross on the mountain nearby, where the Madonna is said to kneel in prayer (8/78). Here the tradition of believers praying for the world with Mary, so as to forestall tragedy, has reached a new zenith; fasting, too, has been added to prayer in this case (8/79).

Mary has often carried a rosary, according to those who 'see' her, and it is this prayer that is central to the apparition cults, although the sacramental liturgy is more prominent than it used to be (7.1.3). Sometimes, she is said to omit the Hail Mary, which of course is addressed to her, leaving this part of the prayer to the visionaries and others (8/80). She is therefore in part a model and exemplar for intercessory prayer, and in part an object of veneration (although the Hail Mary includes a request for her intercessory prayer, so these are not mutually exclusive) (8/81).

The apparition messages inform believers that they do in fact have the power to change the world - through prayer and devotion. At Fatima, the hierarchy had to co-operate to satisfy the long-term prophetic demands made by the visionary (but not the short-term, where the prayer of the laity was sufficient) (8/82). At Medjugorje, the Madonna insists that lay individuals may help to change history through a prayerful and peaceful heart (8/79).

So Mary, in the apparitions, typifies and represents devotees, individually and communally, as one who prays for the world, because it is under judgement - judgement which is to be acted out in history in the near future. Here we see the Virgin as prophetess and intercessor. Yet without earthly co-operators in her programme of prayer, she claims to be powerless to prevent the catastrophes that she foretells.

8.2.2 Mary as Virgin Mother

Several Catholic writers regard Mary's motherhood as the fundamental principle of mariology (8/83). Summing up the generally accepted mariological position in this case: her motherhood of God, enshrined in the title "Theotokos", is the basis for her most exalted titles, viz Mediatrix of All Graces and Co-Redemptrix. She was the only redeemed person to co-operate objectively in redemption, as her 'fiat' was required for the divine plan to be carried out, unlike other believers after her who co-operate subjectively but cannot change the objective fact that redemption has occurred (8/84). The path for this consent of hers was prepared by her Immaculate Conception. Her 'fiat' and bringing forth of the Redeemer and Mediator is understood as a mediation of redemption (8/85). As prototype of believers, she prefigures those who mediate redemption for others by bringing Christ into their lives: this insight is an ecclesiotypical one, in that it assimilates Mary to believers rather than to Christ (8/86).

Lumen Gentium avoided the maximalist mariology in which Mary would be defined as Mediatrix of All Graces and Co-Redemptrix, and emphasised the ecclesiotypical mariology. Yet the mariology of this document does not move far from the basic constructs that allow mariologists to claim

these exalted titles: the 'anti-maximalist' position of the Council is more one of emphasis than of substance (8/87). Mary is still integral to the plan of salvation history, and signifies the divine preparation of Israel for the coming of the Messiah (8/88).

The virginity of Mary is, of course, linked with the theological fact that Jesus was the Son of God in a unique way - so much so, that it could be regarded as merely a symbolic way of describing Jesus' divine Sonship (8/89). The Calvinist Barth felt that the virginal conception established the fact that God may act without the need of human assistance, and therefore championed a literal understanding of this against his colleague Brunner (8/90). Official Catholicism has gone a step further than simply insisting on the literal truth of Mary's virginity at the time of Christ's birth, holding that she remained always a virgin (8/91).

The symbolic nature of virginity as signifying a wholehearted participation in God's mission in Jesus, as outlined by Karl Rahner, is part of the ecclesiotypical structure of mariology (8/92). Mary's openness to God's mysterious plan, her bearing the Saviour for others, her sympathy with the Passion and joy in the Resurrection: all are aspects of her virginal and maternal status as a model for believers and for the Church as a whole (8/64-68). Here we see the fundamental link between her prefiguring of the Church and her motherhood of God. She is also mother of believers and of the Church (8/93), a concept associated with being born again with and in Christ at baptism (8/94). She is the believer's 'spiritual mother', bringing her or him forth into redemption through participation in the death of the Saviour. In this aspect, she has the features of the 'Great Mother' of comparative religion (6/93; 8/95).

In the apparition messages, Mary's motherhood of Christ has been constantly stressed, the one possible and notable exception to this being Lourdes (8/96). She is usually reported to be a teenager of the age generally accepted as appropriate to a young Hebrew mother (8/97). Her motherhood of believers, on the other hand, has not been so apparent in the apparition cults before Garabandal and Medjugorje (8/98). The dogma that has been most prominent in the marian visions is the Immaculate Conception (8/99); as we have seen, this belief was high on the Catholic agenda for definition from the 1820s, the very beginning of our period (1/12). The word 'Immaculate' is integral to the apparition history, especially in the concept 'Immaculate Heart', and at Beauraing, the children referred to her as the "Immaculate Virgin" (8/100).

Mary as mother of the divine Son assures those who establish a contact with her that they have an insight into the divine mind (8/101); thus they are the privileged few who are able to do the right thing to obtain the salvation already won for them, and to warn their fellows of impending judgement. The more modern tendency for Mary to be the mother of believers in apparitions coincides with teaching that stresses the believer's proximity to her Son, ie in a more inclusive model of Sonship (8/102).

8.2.3 Mary as 'Eternal Feminine'

This is a modern innovation in the mariological process, and so it is perhaps not surprising that it finds no echo in the apparition messages. Jungian psychology is integral to Boff's formulation of Mary as the feminine revelation of God's mystery (8/103). Both Schillebeeckx and Laurentin allude to this possibility, but in a different way: for them, Mary is the revelation of the feminine in God, which perhaps devalues the feminine as Mary is creature and

Christ divine (8/104). Therefore Boff and the feminist liberation theologians Gebara and Bingemer are drawn to the conclusion that Mary is in some way equal to Christ as a revelation of God's mystery and proclaimer of God's kingdom (8/42; 8/43).

The polarisation of Mary-Jesus = feminine-masculine leads some women writers to emphasise Mary's power and initiative in the biblical texts, and also her solidarity with women (8/105). Priestly theologians like Ratzinger and Laurentin prefer to equate the feminine with the passive (8/45; 8/106), while the feminist Gray stresses the combination of vulnerability with autonomy and strength as the hallmark of the feminine (8/107).

Although the apparitions do not deal with this issue explicitly, it is clear that their social and psychological bases are directly connected with the problems of gender and power. The powerless mother pleads with an authoritarian father - this is a familiar marian motif. Therefore, if Mary is to be acknowledged as the feminine revelation of the mystery of God, we may have to conclude that this revelation has been 'distorted' by its setting in a patriarchal society (8/108). On the other hand, some would say that Christianity itself is unredeemably patriarchal because of its origins (8/109): thus the historical Mary as origin of the Church and mother of Jesus could never be anything but cast in a patriarchal mould (8/110).

The liberation theologians follow the Lutheran line that in Mary's historical humility we see her greatness (8/111). For them, she is especially blessed as a member of Israel's 'anawim', made poorer by the fact of her gender (8/112). Yet the Magnificat convinces some that she did not remain passive or oblivious to social injustice

(8/113). In this thinking, Mary saw in her bearing of the Messiah a great act of liberation of the poor and oppressed (8/114).

Here we return again to the fact that apparitions are always conditioned to a large extent by their context - this context is very often one of deprivation and powerlessness (7.3). It is Mary the woman who comes into that context, sympathising with those in it. Yet is her message liberating? The answer to this depends considerably on the image of Christ that is preached for, as we saw in chapter 7, the visionary process is not over with the message, but continues into the sacramental formation of the cult and the resultant praxis (4.3.3; 7.3).

So, as far as the famous apparitions are concerned, we are left with the bare facts of Mary's presence and her power as possible pointers to the importance of the feminine. Yet this power is always subordinate to the power of God and Christ, and indeed the outward appearances are that it is waning in a general demise of the old popular high mariology (8/115).

8.3 The role of Mary in her cult

8.3.1 A 'christotypical' mariology?

The strong influence of the 'Hearts' tradition suggests a christotypical rather than ecclesiotypical mariology for apparitions (8/116). However, as we concluded above, they also paint an ecclesiotypical portrait of Mary in that she is an intercessor, and calls upon believers to be intercessors with her for the well-being and salvation of the world.

Mary's similarity to Christ in Catholic tradition rests in her Immaculate Conception (cf the virginal conception of Jesus), sinlessness (cf "like us in all things except sin"), Immaculate Heart (cf Sacred Heart), Assumption (cf Resurrection), Mediatrix (cf Mediator), and Co-Redemptrix (cf Redeemer) (8/117). Her similarity to the believer consists upon her intercession, worship of Christ especially through the symbol of the cross, powerlessness to judge or to allay judgement except through prayer, acceptance of God's messianic plan, and anticipation of the descent of the Spirit.

So Mary conforms to Christ and to the believer; indeed, she stands in the position of tension between them. Whilst Christ wills that believers be conformed to his image (8/118), it is clear that, as a rule, they do not succeed in this. Mary, however, is considered the "most perfectly redeemed", although some writers suggest that she is not alone in her assumption 'into glory' (8/119). She is the prototype and representative of the saints, the queen of the community of saints (8/120). Clearly, her cult has been a part of a whole complex of saints' cults over the centuries (8/121).

In accepting that Mary (and the saints) have special powers to obtain favours and even the grace of salvation for others, the Catholic marian devotee affirms that certain believers are successfully conformed to Christ's image to some extent. Of course, the community of saints also fulfils the need for a distinct local patron (8/122), and for the tangible, in that certain holy persons are accredited with special powers during their lifetime, and leave momentos and memories after their death (eg Padre Pio, the Italian Capuchin who died in 1968) (7/97); the cult of relics still survives in the Catholic tradition, too (8/123).

Yet, overall, Mary does seem to fill the gap between human and divine, perhaps because of an over-emphasis on the divinity, as opposed to the humanity, of Christ. In the apparition tradition, the priesthood, which is supposed to take on the 'imago Christi', comes off rather badly (with the exception of the Pope) (8/124). They are seen as betraying the Church (Mélanie Calvat of La Salette), as leading souls to perdition (Conchita Gonzalez of Garabandal), as being in need of renewal and pilgrimage (Garabandal and Medjugorje (8/125)), and as needing to be told to build chapels and organise pilgrimages at sacred places (eg Lourdes, Fatima, Beauraing, Banneux, etc).

Thus Mary, the Church in origin, steps in to stand on the side of the believer as the only fully-human person who was ever fully conformed to the image of Christ (8/126). It would seem that, in the popular view, Christ cannot easily be on both sides at once, ie he cannot dispense judgement and pray that it might be prevented both at the same time (8/127).

Therefore we can perhaps endorse the criticism that the apparition cults seem to have lost sight of Christ's humanity and of the fact that he too prayed "Abba", although we should accept that there are probably social and ecclesiastical reasons for this tendency (8.1.5; 8/128). For the visionaries, Mary is the one who prays, although there is in fact little or no appraisal of her humanity, either. She is more exemplar than prototype, although there is a sense, especially at Medjugorje, that the events of the Incarnation are being played out again on a 'heavenly' scale (8/129).

8.3.2 A 'theotypical' mariology?

As Mother, although human, Mary has been from New Testament times a complement to the idea that God is Father (8/130). For this reason, her motherhood is seen by some feminists to eclipse the important insight that God is motherly as well as fatherly (8/47; 8/104; 8/131). Schillebeeckx suggested that she reveals God's maternal love as this was something that Christ could not make explicit (8/132). It is difficult to see how this can be squared with the belief that Christ is a perfect revelation of God. Yet it is not surprising that the human psyche seeks a motherly complement to the fatherliness of God, as Jung pointed out (6/165-7). Carroll felt that the Mary cult was sustained in the 'father-ineffective' societies of the Latin countries (6/139; 6/140), but we do not need a Freudian model to see that a merciful, maternal Mary opposed to a judgemental, paternal God may have a social base, and that the power of the heavenly mother may serve as a compensation for the position of mothers in certain societies.

Mary was more of a patroness than a mother in the apparitions we have covered from 1830 to 1947 (8/98; 8/133). The emphasis on the motherly role in recent apparitions may reflect social patterns in some way; on the other hand, it could be more appropriate to a situation in which the apparitions occur over some years (8/134). The fact that Mary's motherhood of believers is stressed more than ever in the apparitions at Garabandal and Medjugorje suggests, if there is a socio-psychological reason for it, that the need for a feminine complement to a fatherly God has become stronger in Catholic Europe.

However, we should re-affirm that the complementary position of Mary (and Church), as Mother, to God, as

Father, has firm roots in the New Testament, and should not be seen as having been added to the Christian tradition for socio-psychological reasons, even if it is maintained by them. Mary does not thereby become a 'goddess' necessarily. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the 'Great Mother' has been represented for time immemorial as human - Israel, Jerusalem, Mary - and the 'Great Father' divine. It is only when we leave the traditional patriarchal Catholic theological environment, and adopt Jungian psychology perhaps, that we may re-evaluate the appearances of the Virgin in a way that avoids the male-dominated ideas of their contextual setting. Then she may become an instance of the 'Great Mother', or a full revelation of the divine in the way that Boff suggests (6.5.2; 6/97; 8/135).

The dilemma involved in this is that, if the historical Mary is viewed as the final and definitive feminine revelation of the deity, then the patriarchal referent for this revelation remains predominant. If she is only a manifestation of an eternal, autonomous goddess, then the historical focus, so important in Christianity with its incarnational theology, is lost.

8.3.3 An 'ecclesiotypical' mariology?

The identification of Mary and Church attracted the critical attention of Karl Barth, who felt that mariology was an

"excrescence, ie a diseased construct of theological thought" (8/136). For Barth, Mary's privileges showed her as "the creature creatively co-operating in the work of God", and "the exact equivalent of this creature is the Roman Catholic concept of the Church..." (8/137).

Küng also noted the problem:

"In no case may a Church - as has happened - seek its own glorification in Mary, the humble maid. A Church, like Mary, has meaning only in adaptation and

subordination to the event which has its immovable centre, not in Mary and not in the Church, but solely in Jesus himself" (8/138).

It is not therefore the link between Mary and the Church that is at the heart of these criticisms, but the fact that the glorification of the one implies the hybris of the other in an ecclesiotypical mariology. One might see in this process an affirmation of the Durkheimian principle of the collectivity as the source of religious fervour, or of the Freudian dissociation of the real and ideal (8/139). In these models, the Church is seen to worship itself in Mary by projecting an ideal figure of itself and becoming devoted to her.

This tendency is probably best avoided by recourse to the Catholic view of Mary as origin of the Church (8/140). In this way, Mary and the Church through history are not ultimately the same thing. The distinction between them consists mainly in the Church's failure to follow the path of Mary's life. The ideal is thus concretised in Mary's history (8/141). However, Pannenberg saw the mariology of the Catholic Church as symbolic statements about itself, as opposed to christology, which is based on historical statements (8/142). For this reason, Catholic mariology has to ground its mythical and symbolic elements in history, as Boff suggests (8/143). Of course, if this could be achieved, then in effect mariology would be parallel to christology as based on the concept of an ideal and heavenly figure grounded in history. Christ too is a figure of perfect humanity whose exaltation is rooted in his incarnation. Christ too is an ecclesiotypical figure because of the Pauline concept, the "body of Christ".

Catholicism has insisted that Mary takes on the historical, ideal, and communal aspects that are also attributed to Christ without thereby taking on his divine nature (8/144). We could say that: in Mary we are perfect believers, whilst in Christ we discover the divinity that wishes to take root in us. Mary and Christ become different ideal models for understanding our humanity: as distinct from divinity (Mary), as subsisting in divinity (Christ). Here we meet again the subtle difference that characterises the ecclesiotypical and christotypical models for mariology.

The apparition messages and cults, however, do not explicitly maintain an ecclesiotypical mariology; this is something that can be read into them through the official mariology of the Church, and by observing her role as the exemplar for intercession.

(Note that, in connection with the ecclesiological issue, it has been suggested that Mary has to some extent taken the place of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic mind, especially as she is "overshadowed by the Spirit" and "full of grace" - phrases that may have helped to confuse the roles of Mary and Spirit in Catholic Christianity (8/145). The apparition messages, before Medjugorje at least, do seem to have lacked a doctrine of the Spirit, one that might have enriched their ecclesiology.)

8.3.4 Conclusions

The following mariological conclusions seem to be those most relevant to the apparitions:

(i) Mary is both venerated and identified with: she represents that part of the Church (or humanity) that most clearly reflects the initiative of the Saviour to form

people into images of himself, and which therefore comes to be venerated as the 'community of saints';

(ii) Mary is a human 'Great Mother', a concept with biblical roots, and is in this way complementary to the Father deity of the Christian faith;

(iii) the notion of Christ as divine judge alienates him from his humanity for many Catholics, and thus Mary becomes a heavenly but human person in his place, assuming his ideal and communal aspects.

Yet we must reiterate that these observations do not emerge from the apparition mariology directly, but help us to understand, perhaps, the dynamics that lie behind them.

8.4 Assessing the outlines of Catholic marian belief

8.4.1 Major issues in the mariological tradition

So that we may apply the issues of mariology to the special case of apparitions, we will here set down the various polarising tendencies that exist, noting the nuances of influential scholars as far as we can ascertain them (8/146). The three columns are (a) tends to the former, (b) balances both, and (c) tends to the latter. Yet we must be mindful of the fact that these are emphases only, and we would not exclude the probability that the writer cited achieves a balanced view and/or is a great deal more subtle and mindful of the issues than these categorisations might suggest. (NB LG8 = Lumen Gentium 8; all writers 20th century unless stated otherwise.)

- | (a) | (b) | (c) |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Ecclesiotypical v Christotypical models: | | |
| K Rahner;
H Rahner;
Schmaus;
Semmelroth;
Schillebeeckx;
Von Balthasar
(8/147). | Scheeben (19C);
Laurentin;
LG8 (8/148). | Bérulle (17C);
Eudes (17C);
Contenson (17C);
Ketwich (18C);
Liguori (18C) (8/149). |
| 2. Christocentric v Mariocentric emphasis: | | |
| Bérulle (17C);
Newman (19C);
LG8 (8/150). | Kingdom-centred
in Boff; Gebara,
Bingemer (8.1.4). | Implied in high
mariology of 17th &
18th C (8.1.1). |
| 3. Mary subordinate to Son v power over Son: | | |
| Scheeben;
John XXIII
(8/151). | | Bérulle;
Olier (17C);
Contenson;
Montfort (17/18C);
Liguori (8/152). |
| 4. A humble creature v powerful, quasi-divine: | | |
| Bossuet (17C);
Newman;
Johnson (8/153). | Vollert;
Schillebeeckx;
Laurentin;
Gebara,
Bingemer (8/63). | Bérulle;
Olier;
Eudes;
Mary d'Agreda(17C);
Liguori;
Scheeben;
Boff;
Daly (8/154). |
| 5. Spirit-filled v equal to Spirit: | | |
| Newman (8/155). | Boff (8/156). | Montfort (8/157). |
| 6. Intercessor v Mediatrix: | | |
| Muratori (18C);
Newman
(8/16; 8/158). | Schillebeeckx;
K Rahner;
LG8;
John Paul II
(8/159). | Olier;
Montfort;
Ketwich;
Liguori;
Scheeben;
Leo XIII
(8/117; 8/160). |

7. Redeemed v Co-Redemptrix:

Widenfeld (17C);	Newman;	Ketwich;
Muratori;	Schillebeeckx;	Scheeben;
LG8 (8/161).	K Rahner	Ruether (8/162).
	(8/14; 8/17).	

8. Mary's and Christ's will the same v Mary's mercy
restraining God's or Christ's justice:

Widenfeld;	Olier;
Crasset (17C);	Montfort;
Bossuet;	Ketwich;
Paul VI (8/163).	Liguori;
	Leo XIII (8/164).

9. Mary passive v liberator, initiator:

Ratzinger	LG8 (8/165).	Newman;
(8/54).		Scheeben;
		Boff;
		Gebara, Bingemer;
		Ruether;
		Carr;
		Johnson;
		Gibson (8/166).

10. Preserves passivity of feminine v demonstrates
power of feminine:

Laurentin;	Boff;
Ratzinger	Ruether;
(8/45; 8/105).	Gray (8/167).

11. Mother above all else v Disciple above all else:

Scheeben;	K Rahner;	Brown,
Newman;	Laurentin;	Fitzmyer (8/49).
Vollert;	LG8 (8/169).	
Schillebeeckx;		
Schmaus		
(8/83; 8/168).		

12. Historically based v mostly symbolic:

Laurentin	Boff (8/143).	Johnson;
(8/170).		Brown,
		Fitzmyer (8/171).

8.4.2 Apparition messages: their mariological outline

Hopefully, it will be clear by now that the discovery of certain emphases in apparition messages, even the most profound, does not 'legitimise' or 'disqualify' them at any 'objective' level. Tendencies to a certain kind of mariology may be inherited by visionaries for one or all of the following reasons:

- (i) they have been taught in this way;
- (ii) they have adopted such beliefs and wish to actively promote them;
- (iii) they live in an environment where social and psychological factors are likely to result in such beliefs, as suggested in 8.1.5 above.

The relationship of apparition messages to the mariological issues dealt with above will be investigated by fitting them tentatively into the table in 8.4.1: (RB = Rue du Bac; LS = La Salette; LSii = later revelations of Mélanie Calvat of La Salette; L = Lourdes; PM = Pontmain; PV = Pellevoisin; F = Fatima; Fii = later revelations of Lucia Santos of Fatima; BR = Beauraing; BN = Banneux; TF = Tre Fontane; IB = L'Ile-Bouchard; GB = Garabandal; SD = San Damiano; SC = Schio; OC = Oliveto Citra; PT = Palmar de Troya; MG = Medjugorje; ML = Melleray; IG = Inchigeela) (8/172)

1. Ecclesiotypical v Christotypical:

- (a)
(?) "My people" at LS and IG.
- (b)
PV: emphasis on Sacred Heart but not on Immaculate Heart.
- (c)
Hearts of Jesus and Mary: RB, MG;
Immaculate Heart major theme of Fii;
Jesus and Mary often mentioned together at MG;
BR: "Do you love my Son? ... Do you love me?"

2. Christocentric v Mariocentric (qualifying remarks, see (8/173)):

(a)

RB: reference made to the "Good Lord";
LS: many references to "my Son";
LSii: passim;
PM: prayer to "my Son";
TF: references to God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Son as agent of the Assumption;
GB: Madonna with infant Jesus, emphasis on Sacrament, "God shall be with you";
SD: references to Jesus' authority, messages from Jesus;
MG: "God's Peace", "Praised be Jesus", cross and Sacrament-centred, stress on Bible BUT Mary as Queen of Peace;
ML: Eucharist, God's anger BUT people to stop mocking Mary;
IG: God and Christ "very sad".

(b)

PV: importance of Jesus / "publish my (Mary's) glory"; (Knock: images of Mary and the Lamb);
F: prayer to Jesus, offences against Jesus, visions of the Holy Family / three different "Our Lady"s, importance of "Our Lady of the Rosary", chapel wanted in her honour;
Fii: offences against the Trinity, importance of Sacrament / centrality of devotion to the Immaculate Heart;
SC: leading souls to Jesus; omnipotence of God, emphasis on Eucharist / "Jesus wishes his Mother to be the Queen of the world...";
OC: Madonna and Child, many references to Jesus, Trinitarian formulas of blessing / many different titles for Mary, triumph of the Immaculate Heart.

(c)

L: no mention of Jesus, one reference to God;
BR: mostly Mary-centred except "Do you love my Son?";
BN: "Believe in me", "Spring reserved for me" ;
IB: construction of grotto required, prayers encouraged were the Hail Mary and Rue du Bac's "O Mary conceived...".

3. Subordinate to Son v Power over Son:

(a)

MG: Jesus "allows me", "grants me".

(c)

PV: Mary as "mistress" of her Son, "He cannot refuse my requests".

4. Creature v Quasi-divine (qualifying remarks, see (8/174)):

(a)

MG: "I am not God", God gives graces.

(b)

SD: Overall reference to Jesus as Lord BUT "I am here in your midst to confer upon you graces and heavenly blessings";

SC: As SD BUT "The world wants Mary and Mary will save the world if you listen and are converted";

OC: As SD BUT "I will bless and I will purify".

(c)

RB: "I love to pour out graces";

LS: "I gave you six days...";

L: "I do not promise to make you happy in this life...";

PV: "I pour out graces" (same verb "repandre" as RB and 16th century shrine at Garaison);

F: "I will take you to heaven", the granting of petitions;

Fii: "I promise to assist with graces necessary for salvation..." (echo of Paray-le-Monial, 17th century);

TF: "I am She who is related to the Divine Trinity";

GB: "Ask Us sincerely and We shall grant your plea";

5. Spirit-filled v Equal to Spirit:

(a)

MG: prayers for the coming of the Spirit;

IG: many echoes of MG.

6. Intercessor v Mediatrix (qualifying remarks, see (8/175)):

(a)

RB: Mary "obtains graces", "Pray for us...";

LS: "I pray without ceasing";

LSii: Mary's help and intercession;

BN: "I will pray for you";

OC: Mary praying;

ML: Mary praying with people for forgiveness of Irish.

(b)

PV: Mary obtained from Son the healing / Prayer touched her heart;

MG: "I will intercede with him for you" / "I am the Mediatrix between you and God", Son's graces through Mary.

(c)

Fii: "My Immaculate Heart will lead you to God";

SC: "Mary will take you all to the source of real joy and peace".

7. Redeemed v Co-Redemptrix:

(c)

(Amsterdam: request for the "last dogma in marian history": the declaration of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate (8/176));

SD: mention of Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

8. Mary's will as Christ's v Mary's mercy, Christ's justice:

(c)

LS: Mary cannot withhold Son's arm;

PV: as LS;

GB: "Virgin wants us to...so that God will not punish us";

SD: "I will give you the kiss of love and pardon" - "Jesus is merciful but he is also the Judge";

MG: "I beg my Son not to punish you";

OC: reference to the "arm of my Son", prayers of Mary "that God will not punish you";

ML: as above, prayers for forgiveness of Irish people.

9. Passive v powerful Liberator (qualifying remarks, see (8/177)):

(a)

LS: power of Son;

MG: as above (creature v quasi-divine), BUT she will leave the miraculous sign.

(b)

LSii: power of Christ and God / "I will be with the Pope", "I will fight with them".

(c)

RB: Mary as protectress;

PV: "I will help you", Church to have "confidence in me";

F: only Our Lady of the Rosary can obtain end of the War;

Fii: "My Immaculate Heart will triumph...";

BR: "I will convert sinners";

BN: "I come to relieve suffering";

TF: "I shall perform great miracles...";

IB: "I will heal...".

10 (passivity of feminine v power of feminine), 11 (mother v disciple), and 12 (historical v symbolic): not represented.

From this we are able to ascertain an approximate idea of how the apparition messages, in general, compare with other trends in mariology. The following table shows each of the groups and their position (a) - (c) on each issue 1-12:

(HM = high mariology of 17th and 18th centuries; R = reactions to high mariology up to Newman; VC = Lumen Gentium 8 and 20th century theologians associated with the conciliar change of emphasis, eg K and H Rahner,

Schillebeeckx, Semmelroth, Von Balthasar, Laurentin, popes John XXIII and Paul VI; FEM = modern feminist writers such as Ruether, Gray and Johnson; LIB = liberation theologians Boff, Gebara, Bingemer; APP1 = apparition messages up to 1965, ie RB, LS, LSii, L, PM, PV, F, Fii, BR, BN, TF, IB, GB; APP2 = apparition messages after 1965, ie SD, PT, MG, SC, OC, ML, IG; * = only one writer cited in support of this position, but probably representative; \$ = one notable exception to this general rule or a lone source, not necessarily representative; () = implied in these sources) (8/178)

Issue	HM	R	Scheeben	VC	FEM	LIB	APP1	APP2
1	c	-	b	a	-	b	c	c
2	(c)	a	(a)	a	-	(b)	b	a
3	c	(a)	a	a *1	-	-	(b)	a
4	c	a	c	b	b	c	c	b \$2
5	c *3	a *4	-	(a)	-	b *5	-	- \$6
6	c	a	c	b	-	-	b	b
7	c *7	a \$8	c	b \$9	c *10	-	-	- \$11
8	c	a	-	a *12	-	c \$13	c	c
9	-	-	-	a	c	c	c \$14	b
10	-	-	-	a	c	c *15	-	-
11	(a)	a *16	a	b *17	-	-	(a)	(a)
12	(a)	(a)	(a)	a	c *18	b *19	(a)	(a)

1. John XXIII. 2. Exceptions: MG (a). 3. Montfort. 4. Newman. 5. Boff. 6. Exception: MG (a). 7. Ketwich. 8. Exception: Newman (b). 9. Exception: LG8 (a). 10. Ruether. 11. Exception: SD (c). 12. Paul VI. 13. Gebara. 14. Exception: LS. 15. Ruether. 16. Newman. 17. Baum. 18. Johnson. 19. Boff.

Deviation between apparition mariology and other trends (a/c = 2, a/b, b/c = 1, a/a, b/b, c/c = 0, if "-", ie not represented, appears on either side, it is counted as 1):

APP1: HM 7, LIB 8, Sch 9, FEM 11, R 12, VC 13;

APP2: Sch 8, R, VC 9, HM 10, LIB, FEM 11;

APP2, but with the different emphasis of Medjugorje on issues 4 and 6: R 7, Sch, VC 9, HM, FEM, LIB 12.

Therefore we can deduce that, on the whole, the apparition cults espoused a high mariology up until the post-

conciliar era (8/179). This is perhaps not surprising considering the popularity, from the 19th century and into the 20th, of Montfort's The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin (rediscovered in 1842) and Liguori's Glories of Mary (8/179). Pre-conciliar apparitions were not been far, either, from the liberationists with their roots in popular religion. However, the post-conciliar apparitions are more in line with the careful christocentric references of those writers who have resisted the high mariology somewhat. Medjugorje's mariology is even more christocentric, an observation which derives from three main emphases there:

- (i) there is no suggestion that Mary has divine power, or
- (ii) power over her Son, and
- (iii) the Holy Spirit is clearly differentiated from Mary.

The move away from the popular high mariology at Medjugorje (see also (5/222) may be due to either:

- (a) Franciscan influence;
- (b) more religious education for the visionaries than was the case in the past; or
- (c) the different social, political and economic environment of the 1980s (8/180).

Overall, however, a reading of the messages suggests that the following is a fair generalisation of apparition mariology:

Mary is a heavenly figure, with a divine mandate to prophesy warnings and to bring blessings on those who respond to her. She is due something of the reverence and love that is reserved for the Godhead in the Christian faith - she is immaculately conceived, her heart is to be the object of devotion, chapels are to be built in her

honour. She is the spokeswoman for her Son, who is sometimes seen with her (as child or adult). She does not have the power to judge or to punish, as this is solely the prerogative of God as Father or Son. Her power is the power of prayer, but she cannot achieve enough on her own. Therefore she calls on the Christian (Catholic) community to pray with her, and to live devoted lives centred on the liturgy of the Church, in order to prevent the catastrophes which occur in the world at the hands of human agents and/or because of divine wrath. Part of this process is the winning of converts from unbelief to participation in this life of prayer and obedience to God's will.

As a heavenly figure with a divine mandate, she plays an integral role in the granting of salvation by the dispensing of God's grace, and by taking souls to heaven with her. In this aspect, she is a mediatrix. She is also a bountiful mother who rewards those who conform to her requests, and who prays, along with those who join her, for those who do not. Little is said about her biblical role in salvation history, although some visionaries claim to learn details about her earthly life.

Even though there is this basic thread running through the series of apparitions from 1830, we have identified a development in recent years away from the high mariology of the past, culminating in the messages of Medjugorje. This does not mean, of course, that Mary is no longer a powerful heavenly figure, but that now the theological emphasis is more christocentric, referring Mary's power over salvation and grace to the Trinitarian God. It is not surprising, therefore, that the one popular religious theme that has not diminished is that of Mary's mercy being contrasted with Christ's justice, even if Christ has

become a more approachable figure in the most recent apparitions. In the next section, we will ask some basic questions about this development from high mariology to christocentricity.

8.5 Reflections on changing mariological perspectives: is there a decline in the 'high' mariology?

8.5.1 Modern society and religious change

One major difference between the old-fashioned popular Catholic perspective and a Protestant one is that the former conceives of a hierarchical 'pantheon' of heavenly figures, while the latter refers only to the Trinitarian God as sole fount of mercy and comfort for the soul. The Catholic 'pantheon' has Mary, as the queen of saints, and then the saints themselves in a descending order between the Almighty and the believer. In medieval times, apparitions of Mary were common, but so were apparitions of saints, often patrons of particular locales. However, throughout the medieval period, Mary (and some major saints) came more and more to replace the local patrons (8/181), a process that can be also be observed in nineteenth-century Europe (8/182). Even this 'universal' Mary has been known under different titles at various places (1/64; 8/4).

In the modern period, Mary is almost exclusively the subject of the well-known apparitions (8/183). The Medjugorje case has three attributes which suggest a climax to this process:

- (i) Mary has become more motherly than patroness, more immediately available than a queen of saints might be expected to be (8/133; 8/134);
- (ii) the Medjugorje cult is more christocentric, and Mary

credited with less power, than has been the case before (8.4.2);

(iii) the Medjugorje visionaries claim that these apparitions are to be the last of their kind (8/184).

The emphasis on the nearness of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit at Medjugorje (8/185), coming as the logical development of apparition messages in the twentieth century (8.4.2), suggests that Mary's role as mediatrix may be diminishing. This tendency could be due to

- (a) the postconciliar environment for mariology;
- (b) the guidance of the priests interested in visions, eg the Franciscans of Medjugorje;
- (c) also, perhaps, more widespread changes in society and religion;
- (d) the greater emphasis on Christ's humanity in modern Catholicism.

There is a theory in the sociology of religion that the increasing complexity and differentiation of roles in modern industrial life causes an opposite reaction in moral values and religious beliefs, ie they become more universal and simple so as to contribute to the need for coherence in the face of the diverging elements of society (8/186). We suggested earlier in the thesis that Mary's role in 19th century France and Ireland became that of a national religious focus, especially through her apparition shrines, at a time when rural communities were breaking up due to increased urbanisation (1/15; 1/38; 1/48). The apparent simplifying process of the saints as major objects of communal veneration being replaced by Mary, as begun in the middle ages and accomplished in the nineteenth century, could be continuing now in the form of Mary being replaced by Christ alone, a process begun in the Reformation and encouraged by the conciliar mariology.

Another and more recent view in the sociology of religion posits a differentiation of beliefs equivalent to the individualisation of modern society, where each individual chooses a 'set' of beliefs according to taste, background, and perhaps membership of a group (8/187). This tendency is borne out in modern Catholicism in the way in which individuals continue to pray with, through or to personal favourite saints (8/188).

These sociological views are not mutually exclusive in application to the Catholic case, as the overarching simplification of Catholic beliefs to a more christocentric, non-intermediary emphasis may occur at national or international levels (and modern shrines are international), while individuals may continue to espouse a 'high' view of Mary and/or the community of saints. The main change between traditional and modern apparition cults is that the old centres of devotion, ie the local village (or small town) community, will no longer be the focus for a cult of Mary or a saint. Medjugorje may indeed be one of the last of its kind. The new foci of devotion, if this argument holds any truth, will be individuals, possibly in urban centres, who act as the centres for groups of opinion among individuals not necessarily geographically proximate. Such a phenomenon is not unknown before the modern period, of course. What is new, however, is the lack of religious cohesion in rural communities and the dearth of local cults of saints, once widespread in Catholic Europe (8/189).

The hypothesis that many apparition cults in modern industrial society will be centred on issues and individuals rather than on 'sacred' locations is borne out by observation. In these cases, the visionaries are more likely to be adults, it would seem. For example:

1940s and 50s Amsterdam, Holland (Ida Peedermans) - promoting the 'dogma' of Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate, also concern over the sins of Holland and the world and prophecies about the Church;

1950s Wisconsin, USA: Necedah (Mary van Hoof) - concerning the security of the USA in the Cold War;

1970s New York, USA: Bayside (Veronica Leuken) - as Necedah, but also against the changes of Vatican II;

1970s near Seville, Spain: Palmar de Troya (Clemente Dominguez et al, first visionaries were children) - against the changes of Vatican II;

1980s London, UK: Surbiton (Patricia) - against abortion;

1980s near Madrid, Spain: San Lorenzo del Escorial (Amparo Cuevas) - various traditional themes, including coming chastisements, a common prophecy nowadays;

1980s Alpine Italy: Schio (Renato Baron) - a movement of prayer;

1980s Southern Italy: Oliveto Citra (many adults, first visionaries were children) - Medjugorje-like messages, concern for a return to belief in God;

1980s County Cork, Ireland: Inchigeela (Mary Casey et al, first visionaries were children) - encouraging the spread of the message of Medjugorje.

The village environment and its emphasis on localised difficulties (even if these be due to international and national crises (7.3)) is becoming less the centre for apparition cults, while the urban individual visionaries

are taking on issues, which may not be felt to be important by everyone in a local community.

For these reasons, the 'shift' in mariological perspective at Medjugorje does not necessarily presage a disappearance of Mary as the mediatrix and object of visionary experiences; even the saints are still seen in modern urban life (8/190). The new circumstances are that the village or small town community will not necessarily continue to be the focus for apparitions. Thus mariology (and even hagiology) related to visionary experience is still a valid enterprise, adapted to these new conditions.

8.5.2 The question of power

The question that remains is: to what extent do believers' perceptions of their access to power structures colour their beliefs and experiences (8/191)? Mary is perceived to be on the side of the laity, and Christ on the side of the priesthood (8/71); in addition, popular religion has often been anticlerical (7/97). The problem of conflict between a conservative laity and 'modernising' priesthood is still very much alive (1/13): Bayside and Palmar de Troya provide examples of how far this can go (8/192).

The idea that marian apparitions serve to support the powerless has been voiced in the liberation theology literature. Elizondo sees the visions of Guadalupe in Mexico (16th century) as establishing the dignity of the conquered Indians and their religious beliefs, as Mary was seen by an Indian as an Indian on an Indian sacred hill (8/193). Likewise the black Virgin of Conceição Aparecida, patroness of Brazil, is viewed by Gebara and Bingemer as a divine initiative on behalf of the poor and black of the region (8/194).

The sceptic may reply that such apparitions as Guadalupe are invented by European Christians to convert the Indian population (8/195), but it is striking that the Virgins of Guadalupe and Aparecida are black or Indian, as the colonial mentality usually attempts to enforce a light-skinned Madonna or Christ (8/196). Eventually the Virgin of Guadalupe was used as a standard against the European colonisers (6/92; 8/197).

Apparitions are thus sources of power, whether this power is used on behalf of the poor, women, or black people, or against them, or for the laity to have their say in the future of the Church, or for different pressure groups within the Church. Apparition messages persuade, which is why of course they arouse suspicion, eg in Medjugorje where the communists saw the shrine as a nationalist plot (8/198), and why also the Church feels the need to treat visions with care, rejecting the weaker ones and incorporating the stronger into the life of the Church.

The shrine as a place of power is a topic well-known in religious studies (8/199). It is not surprising, then, that each interpretation of the messages treats them from a particular viewpoint, depending on the beliefs of the interpreter. Yet there always seems to be an aspect of the messages that defies such interpretations (an observation one may make about any religious writing). Behind the prophecies lie some simple statements that are directed at people rather than being concerned about situations. They are: pray (using the most immediate method, usually the rosary), repent and things will go well (healing, peace). There is also an element in which Mary directs the visionary back to herself: she is the Immaculate Conception, Queen of Peace, etc.

As we observed in chapter 6, Jung's opinion of visionary experiences is that the spontaneous ones, usually via children, are more likely to be expressions of the 'collective unconscious' than those which are rationally thought out or which agree with the rationale of the Church or a pressure group within it (6.3.2; 6.5.2; 6.6.1). Jung's psychological model assumes that an outburst from the 'collective unconscious' is more profound than subjective regurgitations of rational religious knowledge; so, if applying it, we would say that the most simple and direct aspects of apparitions - Mary's importance, ability to heal and merciful nature, her exhortations to pray and her warnings of disaster if prayer is lacking - are the most important, and these are the elements which do not justify any party or legitimate any moral or liturgical campaign.

Children visionaries, as opposed to adults, pass on direct commands and an identification of the vision. The typical childish questions are: (i) who are you?, (ii) what do you want of us?, (iii) what can you do for us?, (iv) will you prove to others that this is really happening? Fatima's original story provides an excellent example of this, so do Lourdes, Beauraing and Banneux, and also Garabandal in its early stages. Warning of disaster is not so common among children, but it is not lacking (La Salette, L'Ile-Bouchard, plus the later revelations of Fatima).

The answers to these basic questions are that (i) Mary has a special title - Immaculate Conception, Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of the Rosary, Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, etc. - which is known in the Catholic tradition; (ii) she wants prayer, repentance, devotion, the building of a shrine (in the form of a chapel and processions); (iii) healing in certain cases - success on a wider scale is conditional on prayer (the ending of wars, etc.); (iv)

a 'miracle' will follow (at Fatima, Garabandal and Medjugorje).

Thus the kernel of the visionary experience is the authority, presence, and power of the Virgin Mary. Qualifications to this (eg christocentricity) are usually part of the more long-winded messages, which include La Salette, where Mary's power is diminished by her inability to withhold her Son's arm, a common motif in the long messages. The modern cases, with their christocentric references, are also of the long, complex messages over several years type (eg San Damiano, Medjugorje (after the early period (5.3.2; 5.5.2)), Schio, Oliveto Citra). The qualifications do not seem to occur in the more spontaneous cases, especially those to children in which the details are less rational and complex.

In conclusion, we must therefore suggest that the apparitions as spontaneous phenomena support a high mariology, although they do not provide the detail and rational schemes of the high mariologists. The changing perspective of the marian tradition seems to be an eclipsing of the spontaneous childish cases in favour of complex, issue-related, sometimes urban, adult ones. The Medjugorje visionaries have also become adults since the apparitions began, and have answered questions on the future of Eastern Europe, on fasting, on the bishop's position, etc..

We do not mean to imply that this topic-related aspect of adult apparitions is inherently faulty; certainly, the Medjugorje visionaries continue to see the Madonna as they saw her at the outset of the visions, and she acquiesces in the process of expansion of these themes. Yet the evolution from child to adult visionaries that seems to be a general feature of the mainstream marian

apparition cult over the last 150 years (Rue du Bac excepted, which is of the 'discussion' type) brings with it the rationality that Jung doubted as being of the 'collective unconscious', and which is more likely to be a regurgitation of doctrines, issues and trends in the modern Church, than are direct identifications and commands.

Therefore the high mariology has not necessarily declined if one takes into account the following observations:

(a) beliefs held in private may still reflect the high mariology while the media-generated and priest-checked universal messages of the apparition cults may represent a tendency to the elimination of saintly mediators, and thus a more christocentric approach;

(b) the more direct and simple aspects of the apparitions, especially those experienced by children, and those which are held in high esteem in the Jungian tradition, reinforce a high mariology based on the authority, presence and power of the Virgin Mary.

8.6 Concluding summary

We have not attempted in this chapter to claim that one mariological perspective is right and another wrong. They all stem from a context in which various kinds of ecclesiastical, social and political factors apply. A tendency in 'official' religion may provoke a reaction in 'popular' religion, and vice versa. It has been enough for us to examine the apparitions within the issues of mariology extant in the last two centuries (some of which were legacies from an earlier period).

The apparitions have espoused what we have called a high mariology, one in which Mary has the power and authority that is usually attributed to a divinity. This has been qualified in two ways:

(i) Mary's lack of control over judgement, except in her pleading and intercession;

(ii) the modern cases, particularly Medjugorje, where a careful christocentricity is espoused.

However, the high mariology is more likely to be qualified in these ways in complex, longer messages rather than more simple and direct communication, and in apparitions to adults rather than those to children.

The Mary of the apparitions urges believers to follow her example and to pray (this is sometimes expanded so as to include specific devotions and participation in the sacraments); they must also repent (and at Medjugorje, fast). As an intercessor for the world, Mary is the model for what she expects followers to be: therefore she is an exemplar, which fits into the ecclesiotypical concept of Mary as prototype of the Church. She has titles, and asks for devotion to herself, eg to her Immaculate Heart: thus the christotypical tradition, in which Mary's privileges follow those of Christ, is represented.

She is also, and ever increasingly, the Mother of believers, which relates to the concerns of much mariological work, especially over the last century. She is the Mother of Christ, and as such has a special role in mediating between her Son and believers through prophecies and warnings, and also blessings. Her femininity and humble origins are not really a concern of the apparition messages, although some observers would like to conclude that her power and initiative have implications for issues of gender and social justice.

She stands in the vacuum that appears (whether it should or not) between Christ and humanity; she is theoretically human, albeit in glorious 'assumed' form, yet is experienced as quasi-divine. The intricate Chalcedonian christology in which Christ is fully man and fully God does not seem to have penetrated the belief environment of the apparition cults. Mary is also the motherly complement to God the Father, as she has been since New Testament times. As the ecclesial and ideal figure of mariology, she is, like Christ, a model for believers, although her corporate representative nature is not a theme in the apparitions themselves.

The main evolution in the marian apparition tradition is the change from rural community foci to those based on issues, often in urban environments: the visionaries in these cases tend to be educated adults, whose public status may contribute to their conformity with the christocentric mariology of the Church which has been more in evidence since Vatican II. This does not mean that individuals in modern industrial society do not continue to hold high mariological beliefs, in which Mary and the saints are still mediators as they were for village communities in pre-industrial times.

Applying the psycho-analytical model of Jung, in which visions are either manifestations of the 'collective unconscious' or subconscious regurgitations of personal memories, would lead one to conclude that the high mariology, especially as reported by children, is more identifiably the 'stuff' of the unconscious collective psyche, as Jung himself believed. It is Mary's authority, presence, and power that forms the kernel of children's spontaneous experiences rather than complex and rational restatements of doctrines or issues. Such power encourages interpretations of the phenomena on behalf of groups

pretending to some form of power, whether this be Catholics generally, or a particular pressure group, or the poor and oppressed. The authority, presence and power of Mary constitutes the barest minimum for apparition experiences shorn of all references to religious traditions and personal memories that may reside in the mind of the seer.

Chapter 9: A Mariology based in the Life of Mary

9.1 Introduction

Mary was an historical person, and is also a symbol for the Church as a whole. She is regarded as mother of the whole Church, of all believers. To what degree is she therefore a psychological projection, answering the need for a divine mother, for a 'perfect' woman, and for a 'divinised' community in which to feel secure? Is there a real history behind this symbolic figure? This is a crucial question to ask in our search for an 'objective' element in apparition phenomena.

In an attempt to answer this question, we shall borrow a christological methodology from Wolfhart Pannenberg, and thus take up a theme suggested by Karl Rahner, ie the possibility of a mariology 'from below', which begins with the historical Mary concerned with the real events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. If she is the prototype of the Church, then the Church has an historical origin in her.

This history, if it can be uncovered to any extent, will therefore not be simply a psychological projection, although it may attract such projections. It will stand beyond our contemporary needs and wants of Mary - in it, she will be something 'other' than an object created by the subjective psyche.

She will not be, consequently, an individual who stands alone without a context - her context will be that of the community of people who were concerned with Jesus' ministry and death, ie the nucleus of the Church-to-be. As symbol and prototype of the Church, she is also a member

of it. This community of believers is therefore integral to her history.

Yet, finally, she has her own unique perspective on the events that brought that community into being. She is maternal and female in a first-century Palestinian context, and thus not a leader in the formal sense. As a woman, she is said to represent the laity rather than the priesthood. What does this mean for the marian visionaries and their experiences? Why is it her perspective, rather than another's, which is the most common among the modern visionaries? In answering these questions, we will seek to move towards our conclusions as to the theological meaning of these phenomena in which she plays the major and active part.

9.2 Mary as historical person and symbol

9.2.1 A mariology 'from below'

Pannenberg's Jesus - God and Man outlines the need for, and development of, a "christology from below" (9/1). This issue is very relevant to mariology also. It is not that we are taking Pannenberg's christology to be authoritative, but that we consider it to be a model which addresses two important and related aspects of mariological work:

- (a) the need to base mariology in as objective a stratum as possible, ie one which minimises the problems associated with projecting subjective needs onto Mary, eg for a mother, pure virgin, pure community, etc.;
- (b) the importance of history within the Christian revelation - in particular, the historical experience of the early Christian community.

Pannenberg suggests that the historical Jesus must be the basis for christology, and not the theological statements which expressed the early Christian experience of Jesus, eg the concepts of pre-existence, Incarnation, Son of God, Messiah, etc. Many christological statements, Pannenberg observes, have as their origin the desire for salvation, ie they have a soteriological grounding (9/2). There is also the tradition of writing in which Christ is seen as the prototype of a principle, one that is associated with such figures as Kant and Schleiermacher (9/3). Thus christology has a tendency to the subjective if it is not based in the historical Jesus (9/4).

Obviously, these comments about christology could be applied also to mariology in the same way, although Pannenberg himself regards statements about Mary as symbolic and ecclesiological, ie he does not consider them to be grounded in history in the way that christological statements are (9/5). Yet we might conclude that the same principle holds. Mariology that begins from non-historical statements about Mary (which are often ecclesiological, such as Mother of believers, Origin of the Church, Prototype of the Church) are arguably based in psychological need, eg in the subjective desire for salvation through participation in a community, or in the need for a divine mother, as we have observed already (8.1.5; 8.3). The ecclesiotypical and christotypical approaches to mariology may satisfy the need to bridge the gap between humanity and Christ, on the one hand, and to provide a female counterpart to the male divinity on the other (8.3.1; 9/6).

In order to avoid subjectivity, and to answer the accusation that Mary is simply the pagan 'Great Mother' in Christian guise (6.3.2; 9/7), mariological statements, in the same way as christological ones, must take as their

starting-point the Mary of history, an insight which has implications for the 'fundamental principle' of mariology, if one is required (8/60; 8/83). Yet we come now to a difficult problem. Just what can be identified as the history of Mary? Many scholars, including Pannenberg, do not accept the historicity of the nativity stories (9/8). These accounts provide the greater part of the biblical information about Mary. In Pannenberg's view, the story of a virgin conceiving the Messiah is a 'theologumenon', expressing theological truths and, in particular, refuting the heresies of docetism (which taught that the Son of God was never really human) and adoptionism (in which Jesus became the Son of God on merit during his lifetime) (9/9). Some Catholic writers also doubt the historicity of the 'virgin birth' stories in Matthew and Luke (9/10).

For Pannenberg, the early Christian experience of Jesus which gave rise to later legendary and theological material based on the ideas of pre-existence and divine incarnation, was primarily of Jesus' unity with God, as confirmed by the events of Easter (9/11). While pre-existence and incarnation suggest that Jesus had a separate destiny from the rest of humanity, the resurrection confirmed the eschatological expectation of resurrection for all believers, and thus brings God and humanity, through Jesus, close together (9/12).

There arises the question as to whether Pannenberg, by basing his christology primarily on the resurrection rather than on the earthly life of Jesus (9/13), has constructed a 'christology from below from above' (9/14); we ask this for the following two reasons:

(a) the idea of resurrection as the ground of unity with God appears to provide a kerygmatic rather than historical basis, just as the pre-existence and incarnation christologies are kerygmatic;

(b) the fact that the resurrection confirms the universal eschatological expectation of believers suggests that this christology could itself be a soteriological construct (ie projection of the desire for salvation onto Jesus).

These observations may present some difficulty in appropriating the exact detail of Pannenberg's work, but this falls outside the scope of this thesis, as the mariological question is somewhat different, even if related. It is clear, anyway, that Pannenberg is using the historical experience of the events of Easter by the first disciples as the primary experience of the God-man Jesus, which then becomes the basis for christology. Pannenberg views the Easter events (in particular, the appearances of the risen Jesus) as events in history, although they have an eschatological dimension (9/15). This is not quite the same, therefore, as basing a christology on experiences of the risen Jesus which occur after the Ascension and on through the centuries (9/16), ie Pannenberg attempts to place historical objectivity at the centre of his christology.

So, for Pannenberg, the Incarnation and its theologumenon 'legend', the virgin birth, are retrospective projections of Jesus' unity with God, experienced through the resurrection, into his life and back to his birth, while the 'pre-existence' idea projects this into eternity (9/17). Here we cannot answer the question as to whether the nativity stories are legend. However, Pannenberg's insights into the importance of the objective and historical rather than subjective and soteriological provide an important principle for our mariological work.

Karl Rahner writes about the possibility of a "mariology from below" (9/18). He accepts that the marian narratives are, even if binding as inspired scriptural statements,

more theological than historical (8/23; 9/19). He wants to ask, in the same way as Pannenberg does about Christ, whether there is an early Christian experience of Mary from which the theological statements which involve her in the New Testament emerged. Rahner himself saw Mary as a woman of the people, a poor woman accepting her role in salvation history: this, for Rahner, must be the experience of Mary that inspired the writing about her (9/20). For this reason she became the model and mother of believers. Rahner also wishes to move away from the biological emphasis on Mary's virginity, and towards understanding this in terms of her value as role-model: her virginity demonstrates her incorporation

"with her whole body-soul existence into the historical salvific mission of Jesus" and "participation in the ordinariness and lowliness of Jesus' human existence" (9/21).

Does this mean that we may cease to believe in the literal truth of the virgin birth and see it, not only as an Incarnation theologoumenon, but also as a symbolic way of describing Mary's history of faith? Rahner would not have gone this far; his was a change of emphasis, perhaps, a greater stress on the historical behind the scriptural texts. This change of accent is also to be observed in the work of Brown and Fitzmyer, Catholic members of an ecumenical team looking at New Testament figures such as Mary and Peter (8/49; 9/22). Although they do not find adequate reasons for rejecting the possibility that Mary gave birth as a virgin, they do wish to base the gospel image of Mary more firmly in her discipleship rather than her motherhood (9/23).

The issue of the relationship between the marian motherhood and discipleship is complex, as there are several possibilities for understanding it from a historical-critical view of the texts:

- (a) Mary's maternal actions were the basis of her discipleship;
- (b) Mary's status was as disciple, and the motherhood is incidental;
- (c) Mary's status was as mother, and she was not really a disciple in a committed way;
- (d) the story of Mary's motherhood is actually based on memories of her actions of discipleship (9/24).

Even if it is difficult to come to any final conclusion about this issue, the principle remains, if a historical-critical view of biblical texts is accepted, that the real history may be behind rather than explicitly in the texts. This real history is the basis for a 'mariology from below'. If, however, a literal reading of the texts is preferred, then the mariological work will begin from these texts as they are presented, as is the norm in Catholic biblical work on Mary (9/25).

9.2.2 The historical Mary as 'Other'

Of course, the Catholic tradition in which the apparitions are important makes no distinctions between the stories in the gospels, on the one hand, and an underlying history free from theological accretion on the other. In most writings on the Mary of visions, the references to her in the New Testament are considered to be literal history (9/26). This view does not regard the gospels as appropriate object texts of source/ tradition/ redaction criticism, nor is it troubled by such questions as: why are the nativity accounts in Matthew and Luke so different? Why is Mary's presence at Cana and the cross recorded in only one gospel, that of John? Why does Mark say so little about her? Thus Mary's life comes to be reconstructed, like so many lives of Jesus, on a kind of

'Diatessaron' (9/27), which draws uncritically on the different gospels and is based on an amalgam of them.

These issues cannot be resolved, or even tackled at length, in this thesis, but it is necessary to take them into account. There are roughly three main positions which could be taken when researching into the historical Mary: (a) everything said about her in the New Testament is historically true (9/28);

(b) the New Testament stories are part legendary, but are based on the early Christian experience of Mary as an historical human being, and thus are 'true' in a symbolic and illustrative sense (9/29);

(c) statements about Mary are wholly symbolic or theological, not based on her life, and can tell us nothing or almost nothing about her history (9/30).

These positions we will name the literal, part-symbolic and pan-symbolic respectively.

With these alternatives in mind, we will proceed to an important issue which returns us again to the theme of objectivity and subjectivity with respect to the apparitions. Firstly, most writing on the figure of Mary perceived in the visions is, as we have already noted, based on a literalist biblical model, relating the experiences of the visionaries to it (9/26; 9/31). A consistent relationship between visionary experience and gospel account is, anyway, essential to the authentication of a visionary phenomenon (3.3; 4.2.1).

Yet at the same time it must be admitted that the visionaries see the figure of Mary according to their own cultural and educational expectation: this is the most obvious demonstration that subjective elements are present in the experience. This might be understood in different ways, from an assertion that it is Mary's design to appear

under local guise and to speak comprehensibly in the local language for the sake of the visionaries (9/32), to suggesting that the whole experience takes place in the subjective psyche of the observer(s).

Of course, much of the experience does take its form and content from the individual lives of the seers, ie it is founded in the images that they have been exposed to, and in the issues that they consider important. At the same time, however, there may be the dimension of the Jungian collective psyche to consider, the images containing elements of the collective unconscious, with its balancing, prophetic and symbolic expressions and responses to historical experience (6.3.2).

Yet how could the Jungian 'archetype' of the Great Mother, representing transformation, security, community, etc., relate to the objectively historical Mary? We must again avoid two extreme views, one of which sees Mary as the only 'true' or 'profound' manifestation of this archetype, and the other regarding Mary as an historical person merely attracting the projection of the archetype. Quite clearly, the Great Mother is a worldwide religious phenomenon of value, and cannot be restricted to Mary; equally clear is the fact that mariology cannot begin as an enterprise if Mary is a mere projection of something else that is real, universal and complete in itself. It must be the Mary of history that lives in the Church that venerates her, and not an archetype represented by Mary.

Once again, the way forward is provided by a parallel consideration of the figure of Jesus Christ. Christopher Bryant views Jungian psychology in a positive light from a Christian and Catholic perspective. For Bryant, Christ, the Word of God, is an objective figure in history and the universal divine within human beings (9/33):

"Jesus Christ presents us with a clue to the nature of the powerful inner force which is ceaselessly urging us to change.... to realise our own truth", ie the Word effects what Jung terms the 'individuation' process (9/34). Christ is person and symbol: "The central Christian symbol is, of course, Jesus Christ. The Christian believes him to be much more than a symbol, to be an actual person who lived and died and is alive still. But it is because he is able to be for men and women a living symbol that he is able to change their lives" (9/35).

However, Bryant, quoting Austin Farrer, discovers that Christ is not merely a single symbol, but that

"in him many archetypal symbols meet and merge", eg innocent sufferer, blood-offering, Messiah, Wisdom, Word, Son of God, new Adam, and the ideal martyr-king (9/36).

In theological terms, the forces within the psyche that are 'of God' or 'in the divine image' are revealed objectively in the Christ of history (9/37). We might add that the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are looked for as signs of authentic visionary phenomena, were won in the self-giving of God on the cross and the resurrection from the dead of the Son of God (9/38). Thus the subjective experience of the divine gains objectivity in the act of reconciliation between God and humanity occurring in history (9/39).

This objectivity of the divine act in history includes the historical life of Mary, to a degree which is estimated in different ways by various parts of the Christian tradition. The 'highest' expression of Mary's involvement is the title given to her by some Catholics, ie 'Co-redemptrix' (8.1.2; 8.2.2). Whether or not this title is accepted, it is true that the redemptive act of God in Jesus occurred in an historical context which included fellow human beings, of whom the most prominent, from a Catholic point of view, was Mary (9/40).

Put differently, a piece of founding history is considered sacred in Catholic theology. Although this piece of history is centred on one human being, Jesus of Nazareth, the inference is that any aspect of this history which enabled the redemption to take place is taken up, at least in part, into the sacredness and divine nature of the redemptive incarnation of Jesus. Mary is the only human being for whom it could be said that she actively enabled this to take place. Everyone else is either:

(a) graced with a partial knowledge of what is happening, but without the ability to help or prevent it (eg Peter), or (b) an unwitting participator despite their actions (eg Judas and Pilate).

So Mary too, applying Bryant's concept, may be said to be living symbol and historical person, in symbol an amalgam of archetypes, all centered upon the feminine (9/41). Like Christ, she is a constellation of archetypal forces which are objectivised in the historical figure. It is this objectivity in history that takes Mary beyond the subjective, even in a collective sense, ie she stands as 'Other' over against the collective aspirations of those who see in her the fulfilment of their desires, even if she also fulfils them. Only by way of this integration of history and the symbolic can Christian theology make sense of the insights of Jung (9/42). Yet this conclusion must be followed by a further step: the recognition that Mary as living symbol objectivised in her own life history has vital force in Christianity only because of her inclusion in the once-and-for-all redemptive act, occurring in history but effective for everyone throughout history who accepts it. Thus her activity in the historical events and her activity in the psyche and life of the modern believer are one and the same phenomenon (9/43).

This is not a radical step to take. Most Catholic theological writings on mariology and/or apparitions of Mary would regard the historical Mary as agent (through God's grace) of the experiences that believers have of her (9/44). Our approach is a departure from the norm only in that:

(i) it is based on a mariology 'from below', ie that the Mary of history is primary, and the Mary of mariology, ecclesiology and dogma is secondary, even if legitimately derived from the former;

(ii) it does not insist on the literalist view of the gospel life of Mary, but accepts that the part-symbolic view may be valid (yet note that the pan-symbolic view, wherein the gospel texts about Mary are wholly non-historical, does not allow a mariology 'from below', and is not therefore a possible option for the argument given here) (9/45);

(iii) it assumes that the integration of historical figure and symbol (or amalgam of symbols) in Mary means that the spontaneous content of marian prophecy, ie that deriving from the 'collective unconscious', is more profound than local, partial concerns (especially if visionary phenomena are to be credited with relevance for the whole Catholic Church) (8.5.2).

We should add here that the part-symbolic view of the New Testament does have consequences for the history of Mary. It suggests that an historical kernel should be found that is most reliable from the point of view of contemporary scholarship, accepting that this will be the subject of heated debate (9/46). It is not that the virgin birth would be excluded from any attempt to sketch the life of Mary. It is, however, true that a cautious historical-

critical approach would regard the birth narratives as illustrative signs which help us to understand Mary's involvement in Jesus' mission; as Rahner suggests, the record of her virginity at least ensures the early Church's memory of her total participation in this (9/21).

The historicity of the cross, burial, and resurrection appearances of Jesus is, on the other hand, beyond serious historical dispute, even if we cannot be sure of all the details (9/47). Whether Mary attended the crucifixion itself is, perhaps, a point of contention (9/48), but the principle that the gospel accounts are 'true' to her participation leads us to accept that she was involved in the events of the Passion in a committed way, and was also a member of the post-Easter community (9/49). The Passion, unlike the virgin birth, cannot be merely a theologumenon, and thus Mary's place in it cannot be merely symbolic and illustrative of another type of commitment.

So, to conclude, the objective element in the apparition phenomena, if viewed from a theological perspective, is based firmly in the historical life of Mary and her participation in the events of the redemption. This life of Mary is best centred on the drama of Easter. Although an historical figure, she is at the same time the point at which archetypal symbols centred on the feminine merge: this totality of history and symbol becomes the 'Other' which stands as objective and confronts the subjectivity of the seers and their community. The whole experience of the apparition is thus a meeting-place and integration of objective and subjective. If it is not possible to identify the objective elements, ie both the spontaneous unconscious aspects of the archetypal contents and the conformity with the historical Mary, then it will not be possible to recognise the vision as authentic.

9.2.3 The historical Mary as Church

Another important issue concerning the history of Mary remains to be tackled: the concept of Mary as prototype of the Church. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Mary is proleptically (ie anticipates in person) the Church as representative of the Old Testament anawim, the poor (8.2.1; 9/50). The Church has two major points of origin for von Balthasar, and at both Mary is biblically present. The first is her own fiat, her consent to bearing the Saviour, and the second the cross itself (9/51).

The images of Mary as Madonna and Mary at the cross both appear prominently in the apparition tradition. In the visions, therefore, taking von Balthasar's model, the community sees its own origin as Church. Set beside the Church of today, with its struggles, structures and sins, is the Church at its origin in image form. This Church in origin is either Mary herself, with its beginnings in the fiat, or the early Easter community, coming through the laborious birth which was the crucifixion (9/52). Either of these possibilities may be considered to be the original Church which confronts the contemporary Church as 'Other' and yet also 'Kernel'. The prophetic element in the visions brings the attention of the Church of the 19th and 20th centuries to bear on the events of its constitution. Its present-day struggle is seen in the light of its original struggle to be (7.3.1), with the resulting lessons that may be learned from such an encounter: perhaps these are that the great gifts - faith, hope, and love - are bestowed on those who hear the word of God amidst the strife, and who trust in God's providence in the future, despite the contemporary cross and burial that has to be undergone in the modern world,

secularisation, war and all (7.3.2). This is one way of looking at it, and there may be others.

The problem here, in understanding the concept of the historical Mary as the Church in prototype standing as objective 'Other' and perceived by the visionaries through their subjective faculties, is that it is not clear whether we are dealing with a person or with a personified community. Could it not be that the biblical Mary is merely a symbol for the early Church (9/53)? Indeed, this community's history would be adequately portrayed by the figure of Mary, but then her own history as person would become eclipsed and unimportant. This is an example of the 'pan-symbolic' view mentioned in 9.2.2, except that now the symbol is standing for a collectivity of real people. It is also a possible conclusion drawn from the view of Mary as the 'model believer' (9/23; 9/54).

Here again, the problems of biblical criticism lie outside the scope of this thesis, and we may only offer some comments to establish principles. There are three obvious possibilities:

(a) the figure of Mary as an individual is pre-eminent above the Easter community, and it is only she who stands as the "perfectly redeemed", the pre-eminent figure among a group of faithful individuals who made the up early Church (9/55) - such a view goes comfortably with a 'literalist' approach to the texts, but it is not incompatible with a 'part-symbolic' approach;

(b) there is no dichotomy between the individual Mary and the early Christian community of which she was a member, ie her activities and achievements were also those of the whole, and thus both Mary and the early Church are equally deserving of the praise that they "heard the word of God

and kept it" - this position would have to go with a 'part-symbolic' approach, or possibly a literalist one with a relatively 'low' mariology;

(c) Mary is merely a symbol for the early Christian community, and attention should be focussed on the real history of the latter because, of the history of Mary, nothing is known - this is an example of the 'pan-symbolic' approach with a particular application, but one in which a real history stands behind the texts rather than theology alone.

Whichever of these possibilities is chosen, the central principle - that a real history lies behind, and is profoundly illustrated by the symbols and stories concerning Mary in the New Testament - is not contravened. This real history may be of an individual or of a community or of both in different degrees of relationship, with the individual being a member of the community. Of course, there is a very critical issue for mariology here, but it is not one which could be decided without a thorough study of the relevant texts. It is, perhaps, more consistent with a christotypical mariology (which is implied in the consideration of Mary as person and symbol in 9.2.2) to discount any form of the pan-symbolic approach to the marian texts. Yet the possibility of (c) must be noted and not dismissed without text-critical rigour.

Thus the images seen and heard in the apparition phenomena call the contemporary Church to view its origin. This original Church, centred on the figure of Mary, provides perhaps an alternative to the despair, anxiety and insularity of Catholics living in the pressures of modern society. This Mary is an 'Other', standing as objective and historical over against the modern Church and its

members, and she is also a 'model', a possibility for viewing the Church's position in the struggles of today in a different and 'prophetic' way. From a theological perspective, the unity that stands behind Mary, the early Christian community of which she was a member, and the contemporary Church, is based in Christ: once human, and then living in the Church through the Holy Spirit and in the sacraments.

9.3 The perspective of Mary and its relevance to her apparitions

So Mary represents the Church in embryo, and her apparitions call the Church to view its own origin in the events of the first Easter, thus evoking the themes of loyalty, hope, belief in the risen Christ: all attributes of the Mary who was intimately concerned with the destiny of Jesus. Whether or not we accept the historicity of the nativity stories, or of Mary's presence at the cross, we can accept the principle (which is probably a minimum for mariology) that these texts are illustrative of her real history in a profound way.

Yet, although Mary is the prototype of the whole Church, she is also especially regarded as the representative of the laity (8/71). It is reckoned in orthodox Catholic mariology that, as a woman, she cannot represent the priestly role, but only either the laity alone or the Church as a whole (9/56). She is seen as the passive recipient of the Word as flesh, just as the lay people passively receive the sacrament and listen to the preaching of the priests; on the other hand, she is active in faith, and in this way co-operates in her own redemption as do all believers (9/57).

However, Mary in the Catholic tradition is also a mediatrix to a wholly different degree than the ordinary believer can be; even though the title "mediatrix of all graces" is out of fashion, her own co-operation was part of the objective historical act of redemption, and not just necessary for her own subjective salvation, but essential for the salvation of all (8.1.2; 8.2.2; 9/58). Therefore, her conception of the Word ensures that she must be regarded as a vital part of the medium by which the Word comes to the modern believer, because this medium is historical as well as existential in Catholic thought, ie Mary's mediation in history, and the Church's mediation of the Word through history are considered analogous (9/59). (Little wonder, then, that Karl Barth, the great spokseman for the Word as 'Wholly Other' and not to be looked for in religion or religious people, was also an outspoken critic of mariology (8.3.3; 9/60).)

Could the representative of the laity also be a mediatrix of salvation? Yes of course, in so far as we are all co-mediators of salvation for each other (9/61). Yet there is something in the concept of the great mediatrix being representative of the laity that does not quite square with the traditional understanding in which Christ is present in the Church in the sacraments, which are indispensable for salvation and mediated by the priests alone.

The fact is that apparitions are traditionally the charismata of the laity, at least as far as public apparitions and pilgrimage are concerned (9/62). Perhaps this helps to answer the question as to why it is usually Mary and not Jesus who is seen in these cases. Jesus is often seen and heard in private revelations (9/63), but is not the prominent figure in the spontaneous modern cases which catch the public eye (9/64).

The apparitions are therefore primarily a lay phenomenon. Indeed, while we may regard them as the Church in origin standing beside the contemporary Church as 'Other', they represent more specifically the lay Church in origin being encountered by the lay Church of today. Of course, a few cases have been integrated with the sacramental Church and accepted as charismata by the hierarchy, as at Lourdes and elsewhere. In all probability, the promotion of several selected cases into the mainstream life of the Church allows the hierarchy to disregard the majority of apparition phenomena; the great shrines provide a 'safety valve' for popular religiosity, being not too difficult to control (6/223-5; 9/65). (The Catholic ability to integrate 'popular' and 'official' religion impressed the Italian Marxist Gramsci, who appreciated the importance of popular belief, although he had no sympathy with the Church (9/66).)

Of course, we noted in chapter 7 that the logic of the Church's own ecclesiology suggested that the integration of popular phenomena and sacraments was to the benefit of both (7.2.3). Now, however, we also have a mariological reason for this integrative process. This is that, in certain (and possibly all) regions and periods, Mary symbolises the need for the lay Church, with its charismata and popular religiosity, to play its full part in the necessary and continuous transformation of the Church. Mary's history shows that she was an integral and active co-operator in the events of redemption. Today she is regarded as an active and important agent in the ongoing redemptive mission of the Church: this is nowhere so clearly demonstrated as in the apparition cult. She is prophetically active through those who are her image, the laity (here we deliberately provide a complement to the notion of the priest as eikon Christi) (9/67).

Two very common themes in the apparitions themselves support the hypothesis that these phenomena represent, in part, a need for Mary to have a more explicit complementary role to that of Jesus. They are (a) the paired Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the first Sacred and the second Immaculate (9/68), and (b) the importance of publicising the "glory of", and devotion to, Mary (9/69). These elements occur throughout the series, although as we have said in chapter 8, a more christocentric emphasis emerges with Medjugorje, but even there the two 'Hearts' and the important role of Mary as Queen of Peace are emphasised (1/97; 5.5.2; 5/99; 8.4).

An objection might emerge at this point. This is that many Catholics who espouse a 'high' mariology and support the apparition cults also have a very conservative view of the liturgy, preferring the traditional roles in which the priest plays the only active part. This is probably true, although this group is soon critical of the priesthood when the latter departs from traditional paths, and attempts to take a lead in exhorting its fellow laity back to them, often with a viewpoint that isolates the pope as the only priest to be fully trusted (9/70). In practice, this attitude is often lay power at its most strident. In addition, one wonders whether the exalted Mary of some of the writings of 'high' mariology has very much in common with the laity (or even with human beings at all) (9/71).

We must return once more to Jung. In his thought, the manifestations of the unconscious - dreams, visions, etc. - often act as a balance to over-emphases in the conscious life (6.3.2). The combined fact that the apparitions are predominantly of Mary, that Mary is the symbol of the laity, and that visionaries are nearly always lay people demonstrates the lay and marian perspective on Church and salvation that the apparitions represent. This perspective

stands in contrast to the all-male priestly hierarchical Church with its control over the sacraments and its notion of the eikon Christi. If the apparitions, as phenomena of the collective unconscious, do balance the one-sided nature of this power relationship, does this mean that they are, in Marx's terms, the "the sigh of the oppressed", ie the laity, disenfranchised in the decision-making processes of Church life (9/72)?

We might here be reminded of the 'miraculous' communion of Fatima, Garabandal and Palmar de Troya, which occurred to children too young to receive communion at Fatima (two of the three visionaries) and, in the Spanish cases, at sites where there was to be little or no integration of popular phenomena and sacraments (7/60; 7/61). Is this the 'sigh' of those who have no access to an understanding of their experiences within the context of the sacramental Church and, by extension, a phenomenon to be expected among a laity whose aspirations to full participation in the sacramental priestly Church are being denied?

Yet one may prefer to see the marian phenomena as expressions of the laity as complementary to the sacramental priesthood without any political-ecclesiastical implications, as a reaching into the roots at a time of distress. Both priesthood and laity may thus access their respective roots - ie the mystery of the Last Supper and the marian dimension of the cross - and find that they are intertwined and yet distinct. Whether this suggestion or the more contentious one is chosen will depend on the programme for the Church favoured by the observer. Here we cannot avoid simply drawing out the obvious link between Mary, as representative of the laity, and the apparitions of her as lay phenomena.

Finally, we should not overlook a papal statement as a possible model for the complementarity of marian and eucharistic perspectives. It is that "Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist", as stated by John Paul II (7/107). This is indeed consonant with the images and messages in the apparitions, and with our own contention, argued in chapter 7, that the eucharistic liturgy 'fulfils' the popular phenomena. Nor is it inconsistent with the suggestion that the laity are being called upon to play a greater part in the eucharistic liturgy, bringing the struggles, anxieties and joys of everyday existence into the light of the Easter message.

One last point: we have identified the parallelism of the exaltation of Mary and the self-consciousness of the Catholic laity (a more precise one, with regard to apparition phenomena, than that of Mary and the whole Church disliked by such as Karl Barth (8.3.3)). This does not necessarily imply that an equality of power between priesthood and laity (or between men and women) would have to be matched by a theological equality of Jesus and Mary (9/73). Only in the Catholic tradition is the parallel of Mary and laity suggested, and it may not be a good one. Yet it should not be surprising that the aspirations of the laity are expressed, apparently, within the logic of the Catholic tradition, ie as an exaltation of Mary representing the inferior partner in the orthodox view of the Jesus-Mary relationship. Having pointed out the links and relationships involved here, we leave it to the reader to decide which aspect of the tradition would be best developed or reformed in the future.

9.4 Concluding summary

In this chapter, we have considered the historical Mary who stands behind the apparition phenomena. Firstly, she is to be found primarily in the historical person rather than in the mariological statements which are secondary to this history, and which always threaten to upset the balance between objectivity and subjectivity in the visions if considered alone. This is because such statements themselves betray something of the subjective needs of those making them, and not because they are wrong or inappropriate. They are also well-known to most visionaries, and therefore not likely to be considered archetypal in any particular case in the sense that Jung meant it, ie unconscious (until revealed spontaneously). (Nevertheless, such mariological statements do, of course, express collective archetypal elements through the tradition of the Church.)

The assignation of the primary status to the actual history of Mary rather than derived statements about her is a 'mariology from below'. The search for this history, beyond the scope of this thesis, will necessitate a choice between literalist and part-symbolic approaches to the biblical texts about Mary, but without losing the principle that the texts profoundly embody, either actually or in illustrative form (interwoven with theological ideas), the truth of Mary's life. This is probably a minimum principle for mariology.

The most certain historical facts of the experience of Mary comprise the events of cross and early pre-Pentecost Church; these are the most certain unless one takes a pan-symbolic approach. Thus our mariology from below is primarily a 'mariology of the cross and resurrection'. It is difficult to decide here on whether the fundamental

historical fact behind the marian texts is Mary as mother of Jesus or Mary as model disciple, as suggested by Brown and Fitzmyer et al.; of course, one may view these features in unison.

The history of this mother and disciple Mary is part of the objective historical fact of redemption. It is 'Other' to the subjective yearning and context of 19th and 20th century Catholics, although it provides fulfilment and the role of prototype for them. While the subjective element is an integral feature of all apparitions, Mary herself stands beyond this as an historical figure who attracts the archetypal qualities based on the feminine to herself. She is, as Jesus is for Bryant, a person and an amalgam of symbols, speaking to our day through the symbol with its identifiable features, according to Jung, of spontaneity and universality, and thus non-partiality.

Mary is the prototype of the Church, and she may therefore be a symbol of the whole Easter community who stand together collectively as the origin of the Church. In this way, by means of the apparitions, today's Church is directed to view its own modern history in the light of the events at its origin. This is also the dynamic of the eucharistic liturgy, according to Schillebeeckx, whose work we considered in chapter 7. However, Mary is also an individual, whose life stands as an appropriate symbol and prototype for the post-Easter community and the Church beyond. She is the only character in the gospels who appears to actively enable the events of the redemptive death of Jesus to occur, apart from Jesus himself.

As a woman, she is also regarded, rightly or wrongly, as a representative of the laity complementary to the eikon Christi of the priesthood. The apparitions are predominantly the charismatic province of the laity, and

this suggests a further reason why these popular phenomena should be integrated into the sacramental life of the Church, ie the need for a healthy, integrated relationship between priests and laity. Whether one sees an ecclesio-political message in the phenomena as expressions of the disenfranchisement of the laity will depend on one's viewpoint and programme for the Church. Yet we have uncovered one important possible answer to the question of why the subject/object of the public apparitions is Mary, and no other.

Chapter 10 - Drawing together Conclusions

10.1 What are marian apparitions?

The answer that we have given in this thesis to this question is as follows: apparitions are charismata in the context of the Catholic ecclesial community which enable the charismatic to perceive 'something beyond' the empirical space-time world, in what could be termed a 'mystic' experience (although it differs from the famous medieval mystics in its collective, public and temporary features). The mystic experience, we are reminded by von Hugel, is valuable and essential but only one of perhaps three major and equally-important aspects of ecclesial life, the others being institutional and intellectual.

The 'something beyond' is, however, overlaid with subjective impressions, audial and visual, from the contemporary life of the seer and the seer's own community, the latter on varying levels: local, national, international. The experience is formed according to this subjectivity: the influence of the 'something beyond' that could be called 'objective' may vary in its effectiveness, and this could probably never be accurately ascertained. In some cases, the experience could be wholly subjective, ie originating in the delusions of mental illness or hysteria, or mistakenly perceived due to an illusion with perhaps the additional weakness of suggestibility. It could also be fraudulent, deliberately invented for one reason or another.

Here we have maintained the presupposition that perception of 'something beyond', even if qualified by the subjective, is a possibility, and has probably occurred in

at least some of the cases known to our sources. What we cannot concur with is the idea that the official Catholic authentication procedure is free of error caused by contextual ecclesiastical and political concerns. The procedure is not self-critical enough, and it relies too heavily on the notion that some cases are authentic (as objectively revelational) while others are wholly non-authentic. Nor does it take into enough account the Christian praxis of the devotees as a sign of the transformation which is the major criterion of authenticity. Rather, it depends too much on the increase in devotion alone.

This is not to say that the authentication procedure has nothing to recommend it. On the contrary, it is quite rigorous in its checks for fraud, mental illness, and manipulation of the visionaries. The problem is that heterodoxy and/or political content are enough for the authorities to condemn an apparition event, without the official view recognising that every case has a subjective element which is born in a socio-political and ecclesiastical context.

This is why mariology, and a biblical picture of Mary, are vital. Because subjective needs are so likely to be present in the genesis of such an experience, the only possible 'objective' element, if the apparition is to be considered 'authentic', is that the person claimed to be present is actually present in a special way (or we could say that her universal presence is being perceived in a special way). If this is so, then something in the experience that is reported must conform to the biblical and historical person who is/was Mary. Nevertheless, we would claim that:

(i) in theory, each and every case contains some aspects of a subjective view of Mary (ie one that may not be

biblically 'correct');

(ii) the hierarchical Church does not necessarily have the only 'correct' view of the biblical Mary.

Of course, if there is a 'correct' view of the biblical Mary, then it can never be known in an objective sense, unless one claims that there is an authority which could finally decide such a thing (which we do not here). Nevertheless, a theological model - in which the objective historical person Mary is, through the providence of God, present to the visionary observer in a way that uses subjective material in order to be 'clothed' and thus perceived - is helpful. This is because the discernment process must take into account that there is a biblical figure above (below?) and beyond the doctrines and formulations of Christian history (perhaps, to some extent, beyond the New Testament texts themselves, as they may already be the result of legend, myth and theological accretion), and ask whether or not there is any convergence between this biblical figure and the person encountered in the vision. This fact makes relevant the christological work of Wolfhart Pannenberg as a model for a 'mariology from below'.

Psychic research and depth-psychology also lend themselves to the task of building a model for understanding the apparitions. The basic statement is William James': namely, that God may be encountered in certain cases through the subconscious world of the psyche, ie in dreams, visions, outpourings of enthusiasm, etc. Such things have, throughout history, been regarded as having religious authority. However, apparition experiences are not uncommon, and there are many non-religious examples. The main distinction between these and their marian counterparts is that the latter are often more intense and are based in a Catholic community context.

A promising humanistic model for understanding the phenomena arises from Carl Jung's idea that there is a 'collective unconscious', characterised by universal archetypal energies, primitive psychological forms around which certain symbolic ideas are grouped. These groupings are repeated from culture to culture, age to age, and are expressed in the contemporary forms of each. Mary herself is an instance of the 'Great Mother' or universal 'Anima', known elsewhere as the 'Eternal Feminine'.

However, a truly Christian biblical perspective could not be content with the idea that Mary is merely an 'instance' of this archetype. We would have to see her, in the same way as Christopher Bryant sees Christ, as the coming together of these archetypal ideas in an historical person: the 'ultimate expression' of the archetype, one could say. If so, people will perceive her through their own psychological predisposition to apprehend the archetype. As an archetype is a feature of the collective unconscious, then the most perfect apprehensions will be, according to Jung, spontaneous and not based on personal memories or predilections: in particular, the visions of children. Our point of synthesis between apparition mariology and Jung's psychoanalysis becomes, then, that his observations regarding discernment of the psychic phenomena of the collective unconscious may be applied to marian apparitions, without thereby depreciating the latter as Christian phenomena.

If the apprehension of the feminine archetype is a 'true' manifestation of the historical Mary (who is, perhaps, from a Catholic Christian point of view, its ultimate expression), then the particular and individual features of the biblical Mary, distinct from any other manifestation of the archetype, will be present.

However, mariology does not regard Mary as a 'supernatural' or 'heavenly' being outside the context of the whole revelation of God in Christ. She is important because of her role in salvation history, especially in the moment of her fiat, in her bearing Jesus and at the cross. In Catholic theology, Christ, ie the historical Jesus of Nazareth raised from the dead and 'seated at the right hand of the Father', is present to the Church community in a way that is centred upon the sacraments, of which the Eucharist and Reconciliation are the two participated in (supposedly) by each Catholic on a regular basis. These two sacraments have been at the centre of concern of some apparition cases. The point that we should wish to make here, and it is one in keeping with the Catholic tradition, is that, if Mary is integral to salvation history, then she is also integrally related to the sacraments themselves.

For this reason, the 'presence of Mary' is not only a feature of apparition phenomena and special devotions, but also of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. The saving action of Christ (in which Mary has a part) is encountered in the sacraments and has a transformative effect on the Church which lives through them. Therefore it is no surprise that the most fruitful cases of apparition events and pilgrimages are those where the popular religious features are integrated with the sacramental Church. This is what we should expect from a theological point of view (if, indeed, we accept any evidence of 'transformation'). As the Church has, in theory, a sacramental transformative life in the Spirit, then we should not expect apparitions to provide a transformative life that is separate.

The apparition events redirect those attracted by the sensational nature of charismatic phenomena to the

sacramental life of the Church (sometimes implicitly by requesting a chapel on the sacred site, and often explicitly). Only in this way could they be viewed as charismata in the ecclesial life of the Church, as the Catholic Church is a sacramental Church. However, we have also seen that the Church is a sinful Church. Apparitions, taking place as they do within the ecclesial life, partake of the sin and grace that is present within the ecclesia. That is why we encounter partial concerns at shrines, and attitudes that are questionable from a Christian point of view. The messages themselves (and the hierarchy recognises their possible fallibility) cannot be accepted as wholly divine but, even in an 'authenticated' case, may contain 'error', ie partiality that contravenes the nature of the Church as universal and/or its claim to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in scripture.

As the charismata take place in a context that is socio-political as well as ecclesial, it is important that account is taken of this context, and how its concerns are represented in the apparitions, messages and ensuing devotions. The context into which the messages are later received, as a result of their promulgation by devotees, is also important: it is not uniform, but consists of powerless and powerful, and the messages should not necessarily be monopolised by the latter and aid the legitimation of political programmes. They are first and foremost 'directives' to, and expressions of, the powerless, and perhaps we could conjecture that they have no meaning outside this context.

The context cannot be overlooked when integrating the popular phenomena into the sacramental life of the Church. Edward Schillebeeckx suggests that contextual factors should not be overlooked in the sacramental liturgy anyway, and this makes his model of liturgy in context a

very useful one for understanding the dynamic of integrating popular phenomena with the universal Church.

Finally, the sinfulness of the Church may be illuminated by the phenomena and their development. Firstly, the messages may be understood as legitimation of the politics of hate (eg anti-communism). Secondly, the charismata may be stifled by a hierarchy that does not understand popular religious experiences or the aspirations of the laity. Thirdly, certain images in the apparitions, especially the 'visible host', may suggest the psychological need of 'compensation' for the fact that popular aspirations and charismatic phenomena may not be allowed to be involved in the liturgical life of the Church, except when the hierarchy have full control over them. (The rejection of and utilisation of apparitions may be illustrated by von Hugel's terminology as, respectively: the institutional Church siding with the intellectual dimension against the mystic, and with the mystic against the intellectual - in the latter case, a too literalist view of apparitions is accepted by the hierarchy.)

The popular shrines may express a division - perhaps often unconscious but sometimes explicit in wild criticism - between priesthood and laity, and this division may also be represented by the concept of a divergence of wills between Christ and Mary. The integration/reconciliation of shrine and church, or lay person and priest, in a spirit of mutual respect, is therefore a healing task of great urgency.

10.2 Why Mary?

Our model posits the historical Mary as the 'objective element', the 'something beyond', in an apparition case

(at least, one that could be considered an 'authentic' charism). However, it is not possible to assert that there is nothing subjective in the fact that it is Mary and not, for example, Christ, St Joseph or St Peter who is seen by the visionaries. Jung maintained that the predominance of a particular archetype in such phenomena represented forces within the collective unconscious: in this case, as he saw it, a desire for the feminine to be part of the Godhead (the dogmatisation of the Assumption being the official expression of this) and the Great Mother symbolising the hope for the birth of a peacemaker.

There are several possible aspirations that visions of Mary could be expressing, none of which can be proven to be the case, but all of which illustrate the point. They are not exclusive but interlinked, yet those aspects that are chosen in a particular theological perspective will depend on personal/communal preferences. Behind these is the sociological perspective which might conclude that the Catholic apocalyptic mood of the day, like such moods in different periods, denominations and religions, may have a sociological basis, eg deprivation of various kinds and denial of access to power in society in general. This observation would underpin, and not negate, theological conclusions.

Firstly, there is what could be called the official understanding, one which draws on the writing of St Grignon de Montfort, ie that Mary's presence is being manifested in a spectacular way because this is an 'Advent' period. Given that there is an apocalyptic mood in some quarters of the Catholic Church today, it is not surprising that Mary is the figure who symbolises a period of suffering and yet hopeful anticipation for the coming of the Messiah who will liberate.

The official theology will differ from much popular theology in that the former will not expect a literal fulfilment of this expectation, but a symbolic one, realised in a programme of renewed devotion and conversion leading up to the millenium. The latter, however, based on a literal understanding of apparition messages, does expect actual objective happenings to occur which will change the world, in the form of global 'warnings', 'miracles', 'chastisements' and the coming of Christ. In both symbolic and literal understanding, Mary is the suffering 'Sun woman' of Revelation 12, whose labour presages the birth of the Saviour and thus also the apocalyptic battles of the last age.

A second way of interpreting the manifestation of the heavenly mother, but one that does not preclude the first, is to say that, as this archetype evokes the ideas of transformation and rebirth, then the visions express the fact that the Church is going through a period of profound change. The visionary messages call for loyalty, renewal, conversion and a discovery of a religion of the heart in a time when the social supports of European Catholicism seem to have been collapsing. Thus the believer is strengthened internally, as it were, while the external situation is weak. The apparitions vary in the amount of specific mandates that they have for Church policy during this change. The most famous child visions are the least specific, which is not surprising because the messages are limited to the capacity for knowledge of the recipient.

Vatican II was perhaps the most obvious ecclesiastical expression of this time of change, but clearly there has also been a major transformation of European society since the beginning of our period, ie 1830. The traditional world of rural peasantry is diminishing, for example, in the face of greater urbanisation due to the decline of

available work in the country, and because of technological advances. The country is the major, but not the sole, location of apparition events (Lourdes and Beauraing are, and were, small towns, and there have been visions in cities too). Overall, though, Catholicism has had to change to adapt to the modern world, and this change has not been comfortable for many.

The third interpretation that could be made is related to the second, and it is also based on an archetypal quality of the mother, recognised in mariological terms. The mother represents the community into which one is born, one's security in it and one's loyalty to it. Mary is known as the 'prototype of the Church', ie she who has already gone where the Church must aim to go. In other words, Mary represents the Catholic community in its ideal form by which it may understand how it is to face the future. The messages taken together suggest that the community concerned with apparitions should identify itself as a community of penance and prayer, trusting in God's providence and faithful to the cross of Christ, especially through participation in the sacraments. Of course, certain marian devotions are encouraged, particularly the rosary and devotions to the Immaculate Heart. However, the sacramental nature of the Church ensures that these must be understood as part of the central revelation of God in Christ as the focus for salvation history.

This third idea has Durkheimian overtones, perhaps, ie because the object of devotion symbolises the 'ideal' community (in the Durkheimian view, the act of devotion helps the individual to internalise the ideal so as to take part in the transformation necessary). This is a valuable insight, as it might help the Church to avoid the dangers of self-exaltation inherent in this, a tendency

that Hans Küng and Karl Barth, amongst others, have criticised. The link between the dogmatisation of the Immaculate Conception and the proclamation of Infallibility has been pointed out, and this seems to suggest that there is something in this objection. A healthy mariology must retain a radical distinction between Mary in her special role at the origin of the Church and the Church in later history. The Church through history, unlike Mary, has not succeeded, despite the grace of God, in keeping the power of sin at bay.

A fourth interpretation draws on the comments made in the writing of Jung, and it is that the visions of Mary are a compensation for the powerlessness of the groups represented by her, namely women and the laity (also the poor, but Christ could as easily symbolise the poor as distinct from the laity in Catholic tradition). This would suggest that the apparition phenomena are an invitation to the Church to redress these imbalances.

The function of Mary as a compensatory figure has a long history. In the middle ages, she was seen as a heavenly mother who was merciful where Christ was judgemental, a dichotomy which has lasted into the modern period. This division seems to have been maintained in the socio-dynamics of the family. The apparitions provide an opportunity for lay visionaries (and in the modern period, women are the most prominent among them) to speak out on all kinds of issues, theological, ecclesiastical and pastoral, commanding the ear of many in the Church and, in isolated cases, of the hierarchy itself.

So here we have four possible and interlinked reasons as to why it could be Mary that is at the heart of Catholic visionary phenomena. These suggest that the marian manifestation has a subjective grounding in the social,

historical, political and ecclesiastical conditions of the modern period, a subjective grounding which yields a particular perspective on the events of salvation history in which Mary played an integral part, ie a marian perspective. This does not change the fact that the events of salvation history, including the actions of the historical Mary, are objective, however. Our theological model for apparitions will be based on the concept that they, as charismata, limited by human sin and error on individual and collective levels, and conditioned by local and temporal expectations and faculties, nevertheless provide a subjective perspective on the objective and historical fact of our salvation.

10.3 Power, presence and authority

Jung suggested that spontaneous archetypal expressions from the collective unconscious could be distinguished from regurgitations of dogma, doctrine or political aspirations. One major difficulty is that, while accepting his model as a helpful tool in understanding the matter of the theological 'authenticity' of visionary experiences, it is impossible to draw the line between what is spontaneous and what remembered. There is the further difficulty that archetypal expressions have to be made through familiar channels, which sometimes become traditional vehicles for them; thus, reproduction of familiar material is not necessarily non-archetypal. Overall, it would seem that we have to accept religious expressions as spontaneous (eg Bernadette Soubirous' apprehension of the words "Immaculate Conception"), while regarding elaborations of doctrine or political ecclesiastical projects as having been contributed by the conscious mind or creative imagination of the visionary.

Therefore the mariological content, even if not strictly biblical, is not necessarily to be dismissed as the subjective creation of the visionary. It may express ideas that the Jungian would identify as symbolic and concerned with the feminine archetype, but that are not, for that reason, inappropriate expressions of belief about the historical person Mary. She herself represents the fulfilment in history of many aspects of the feminine archetype, even if this is limited by the patriarchal culture in which she lived (as with Christ, a human history cannot be unlimited!).

It is when we come to long explanations or expansions of the mariological doctrines that we might begin to be less confident of the 'authentic', ie collective unconscious, basis for the messages. If the genuine visionary experience as charism is a product of the 'collective unconscious', then such intellectual formulations fall short of the criteria that, because of our Jungian model, we have suggested here. So to understand the mariology of the apparitions, we should probably limit ourselves to spontaneous and simple ideas, very often through the media of children.

The apparition messages promote a mariology that is more explicitly christotypical than ecclesiotypical, and it is also occasionally theotypical. The most famous example of the christotypical tendency is the impetus to promote the Immaculate Heart of Mary to a similar status in devotion as the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the other hand, however, Catholic (and all Christian) teaching would reject any intimation that Mary and Jesus are equal in status; the former is creature, and the latter the God-man, the incarnate Word.

The mariology of the apparitions as spontaneous phenomena (aside from the later reflections of the visionaries when they have some theological knowledge) does not contain this latter qualification. It is true that, in more recent cases and especially at Medjugorje, there is a clearer emphasis on Mary as the subordinate messenger of Christ. However, even with the more sophisticated theology as it has developed at the shrines, there is still a tendency for the messages to betray a christotypical mariology.

It is possible that recent (post-Vatican II) cases provide an example of the decline of the high mariology of old: a process which might be a continuation of the process by which the mediating role of saints becomes unified, firstly in Mary - a process which began in the middle ages - and now in Christ, especially under the inspiration of the carefully-worded document on Mary (Lumen Gentium 8) arising from Vatican II. Nevertheless, the apparition tradition, with all its qualifications of this, does espouse an high mariology overall.

The messages have some common themes: prayer, penance, and the desire for the building of a shrine probably being the most representative. The common features of the figure of Mary herself, apart from the traditional style of dress and the youthful beauty which characterise most cases, are her power, presence, and authority. It is these aspects which lie at the core of the phenomena, and ensure that the visions will be utilised in the political effort to sanction different programmes and different theologies. These basic features are probably common to many archetypal manifestations, certainly the maternal ones, and it is not surprising that they are also true in the case of Mary.

Nevertheless, her power is usually qualified in two ways. Firstly, she pleads with believers to help her in the task of praying for peace and for the world. She is often a weeping Madonna. Secondly, she has referred to the judgement of her Son, something which she can only commute through her own and others' prayers. This aspect could be seen as part of the 'regurgitation' present in visions, as the tradition of the Mary of mercy is an old and familiar one. Does this mean that Mary is in fact the powerful mother archetype, but reduced to feminine impotence by the trappings of the culture in which she is revered, and in which the visionary messages are formed?

The answer is probably both yes and no. This ambiguity derives from the fact that Mary is/was an historical person, born into a patriarchal culture herself. Mary is always the historical Mary, even if raised in power in her Assumption. If the historical person spoke of the coming judgement of her Son (which is not unlikely, given the thought milieu of the New Testament) and the need to convert and pray, then to say that this is being said by the Mary of apparitions is perhaps not detrimental to the principle that it is ultimately Mary who is present, even if behind the subjective trappings of the visionary.

This Mary who prays to avert the judgement of her Son may be historical, but she also reflects the socio-dynamics of the Mediterranean family through the centuries: although this is rather a generalised observation, it nevertheless has credence for many modern writers who belong to a cultural ethos which does not find such an idea comfortable. Mariological writers themselves, like Jean Stern, attempt to find ways of making this concept more respectable for the modern reader. Yet, however it is put, it will not gain much sympathy with feminist theologians who either regard Mary as a figure who evokes the

independent power of the ancient Goddess, or who do not find her a helpful image for the cause of women's liberation.

Is Mary, an historical person intimately involved with the events of Christian salvation centred upon Jesus of Nazareth, quite distinct from the figure of power evoked by the feminine archetype under whose image she is often perceived? Or is her actual history one of autonomy and strength, independent, as far as was possible, of the structures of male power in a patriarchal society? The present thesis cannot finally answer such questions. The task which lies beyond our present study can be formulated in three sections:

- (i) a renewed and intensive research programme into the historical biblical figure of Mary that may lie 'behind' the New Testament texts;
- (ii) a modern and profound understanding of mariological concepts familiar in Catholicism, such as 'Immaculate Heart', 'Immaculate Conception', 'Assumption', 'Ever Virgin', etc. - this will require a critical approach that is not afraid to uncover abuses that will be occasioned by these terms, and indeed may exist in their very inception;
- (iii) the establishment of clear links between the history of Mary and mariological terminology - the latter must find its root in the former.

This task has, to some extent, been begun in recent years, although there is much to do. It is important, for mariology, like christology, appears to be 'at the crossroads'. Some women writers, eg Marina Warner, suggest that the image of Mary may be at the beginning of a period of terminal decline; others, eg Rosemary Radford Ruether, see her as integral to a new programme for Christian theology which liberates Christian women from centuries of

ideological oppression based on the theology, imagery and biblical exegesis of the patriarchal churches.

10.4 A final word

Here we must remain content with our phenomenological observations, namely, that in the Mary of the visions we have a figure of power and authority, whose presence is felt to be real to both visionaries and to the pilgrims who come because of them. If there is one major conclusion of our research, it is that we may come to a satisfactory understanding of apparitions only by emphasising the contextual basis of such phenomena. If visionary, community, Church or devotees have anything in them that runs counter to the will of God, then this will find its way into the phenomenon itself. This does not preclude the possibility that they perceive, as in a glass darkly, the Mary of the New Testament, and her eternal presence with Christ in the Church and world. But it does put upon them a terrible responsibility as through them this perception may become distorted. On the other hand, if they are good channels, then what they have to tell the Church will help to redirect its members to the divinely-inspired mission that it shares with its fellow churches in Christianity. In short, they will be charismatics and prophets for our age.

We will let the New Testament have the final word. The visionaries may be charismatics who can 'see' the image of Mary (and other aspects of salvation history) in a manner not perceptible by others, but they operate and must participate in a Church with many different kinds of gifts, equally valid and profound: "If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many, but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand,

'I do not need you', nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you'" (1 Corinthians 12.19-21).

The visionaries' perceptions of the figures and facts of salvation history are qualified, to a great extent, by the context in which they live: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear... Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known" (1 Corinthians 13.9-10, 12).

If visionaries are accepted as genuine charismatics, then they will bear an awesome responsibility for the faith of those who believe that their testimony is important: "The light of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!" (Matthew 6.22-3).