

# THE MARIOLOGY OF THREE POPES

By PETER HEBBLETHWAITE

**I**N THE ANNALS of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary there is a precedent for this paper. On 4 March 1969, Mgr Igino Cardinale addressed the Annual General Meeting at Central Hall, Westminster on 'Pope Pius XII and the Blessed Virgin'. But to recall this precedent merely sharpens the difference with what is about to happen today. Archbishop Cardinale was happy to speak on this theme, he told the Society, 'having been blessed by a close association with Pope Pius during the last six years of his pontificate, when I served him as one of the privileged few admitted to his inner circle'. One cannot compete with such a claim; and yet, having spent the last six years working on a biography of Pope John, I think I have come almost as close to him as Archbishop Cardinale did to Pius XII. Those are my credentials.

However, Archbishop Cardinale in his lecture stated a discouraging principle. Pius XII, he remarks, 'is often called the Pope of Mary. . . . Every pope . . . could claim the same title.' All our three popes (John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II) would then merge in a foam of mariological blandness. It is no doubt true that what they have in common exceeds what divides them. Yet it is the *differences* between them that are interesting. This is due not just to the perversity of human nature: a mariology is a *response* to a situation, not just an automatic pre-ordained reaction. If that is so, a study of their mariology will tell us much about the state of the Church in the second half of the twentieth century when mariology seems to have reached a crossroads.

Now a methodological remark. Mgr Cardinale's study of Pius XII's mariology is concerned exclusively with his pontificate. Documents and actions of the pontificate are passed in review. New feasts such as the Queenship of Mary (31 May), are explained. The reasons why Pius used the title 'Mediatatrix' but not 'Co-mediatatrix' are discussed. The background to the definition of the Assumption is evaluated. And so on. This is a perfectly legitimate procedure: only the acts of the pontificate count towards the *magisterium*: Eugenio Pacelli is absorbed into Pius XII.

But this perfectly legitimate method is, of course, profoundly unhistorical. Popes do not spring from nowhere. They are believers before they are popes, brought up in families that have, or do not have, a given mariological *praxis*: they may say the rosary together, fall to their knees at the Angelus, have statues or pictures expressing certain ideas about Mary. These belong to the cultural inheritance in catholic countries. Here 'culture' refers not to string quartets and high art but rather to the unspoken assumptions that are taken for granted in a particular society. External events may also impinge, sometimes with great force. It is a fact, for example, that Eugenio Pacelli was ordained archbishop on 13 May 1917, which chanced to be — he discovered later — the date of the first appearance of Our Lady at Fátima. Such a coincidence disposed him towards paying more attention to Fátima than he might otherwise have done. On 13 May 1982, Pope John Paul went to Fátima to thank Our Lady for 'saving his life' from the assassin's bullets — a year before to the day. 'I saw in everything that happened', he explained to the vast crowd, 'a special motherly protection of Our Lady — there being no coincidences in the ways of divine providence'. That is what Pius XII also believed.

The mariology of any given pope derives from his local Church. It is a product of that local Church. Apart from Karol Wojtyła, our other popes have been Italian. But even so there have been differences among them flowing from their background: Eugenio Pacelli was of the Roman 'black' aristocracy — his grandfather had been president of the Banco di Spirito Santo; Angelo Roncalli came from a peasant family that had lived in the same village in the foothills of the Alps for over 350 years; Giovanni Battista Montini was born close by in Brescia, but to a family belonging to the *haute bourgeoisie* that included newspaper editors and members of Parliament; Wojtyła was brought up by his father alone, his mother, brother and baby sister having all died tragically. In bringing out the differences between three men who have in common the fact that they all became pope, we will naturally have to conclude that still greater diversity would be involved if we were considering a pope from the 'third world' or — for the moment *per impossibile* — a woman pope.

These are large and complex problems. The only way forwards is to ask some simple questions. Of each of my three popes I will ask: what was the marian tradition in which he was brought up? What experiences modified or confirmed it? And — in the pontificate — whom did he think he was addressing when he talked mariology?

## I

Pope John, baptized on the day of his birth Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, was born in the matrimonial bed at Sotto il Monte beneath a large baroque picture of Our Lady, her heart pierced by many swords. His parents had been married on the feast of the Espousals of Joseph and Mary: they walked to Bergamo and back for their honeymoon. Like most pious Italians they were very conscious of the holy house of Loreto, angelically transported, it was believed, from Nazareth to the adriatic coast. We smile. But for these hard-working peasants who lived without much comfort in an overcrowded house — thirty people used to sit down to *polenta* — the example of the holy family brought strength.

Devotion to Mary was part of the air they breathed. Roncalli's very first memory was associated with her. Here is how he remembered it, seventy-six years later:

The shrine of the Madonna in my native village is at the end of a rough track, among the trees, at a point where you can go no further. It is still a place of pilgrimage today, especially for young people going off for military service or emigrants setting off to find work. And old people go there too, so they can remember the kindness of Mary, and renew their hope. . . . My mother lifted me up and said: 'Look, Angelino, look how beautiful the Madonna is. I have consecrated you wholly to her'. This is the first clear memory that I have of my childhood.<sup>1</sup>

We can fill out this memory a little. On 21 November 1885, when Angelo was four, Marianna Roncalli set off for the shrine of the Madonna delle Cáneve. It was only about a kilometre away, but the track wound uphill, and she had to coax along Teresa, aged six, Ancilla, aged five, Angelo, aged four, while carrying Zaverio, aged two, on one arm and Maria Elisa in the other. She was also — need I add? — pregnant again.

They arrived late, the tiny chapel was crowded, and unable to get in Marianna lifted up her children one by one so that they could look through the grille and see the Madonna. That was only a start. The first poem Angelo learned was about Mary. There was the rosary and the month of May. All this was confirmed in the Bergamo seminary, where he went at the age of eleven. It is difficult to say what the impact of all this was. If you do not like it, you call it 'pressure' or 'conditioning'. Yet it conveyed religious values and attitudes. Pope John, remembering, remarked that 'old people go to

the shrine, to renew their *hope*'. That is one clue. Mary is *spes nostra* because she is a creature, on our side, and her destiny anticipates ours. Later Pope John would speak of the Angelus as a summary of 'the christian epic' in three books: the divine invitation and initiative; the human response of obedience, *fiat*; and the result of this obedience, the Word made flesh. And within the Roncalli family, these values were lived out. Sometimes there were tensions, but they used the holy house of Nazareth as their model and this affected their attitudes to poverty, work, the stranger — they always had a dish of *polenta* ready for any passing tramp.

There is not the slightest suggestion — it seems to me — that Mary has somehow displaced Jesus at the centre of Christianity or that the uniqueness of his mediation has been undermined. I think they would have found that an incomprehensibly abstract notion, if ever they had thought about it. The mother leads to the Son, and that is that. It might be different in the *mezzogiorno* or in Naples where mother goddesses flourished not so long ago, but up here in the fore-Alps their mariology, like their life-style, is sound, sober, practical, unromantic, christocentric.

Roncalli was sent to Bulgaria in 1925 and he remained in the East for nearly twenty years. He came to know many orthodox Christians, met the Ecumenical Patriarch at an early stage, and had to deal with 'Uniates' whose mariology was, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from that of their orthodox brothers. Archbishop Roncalli had the text *Ad Jesum per Mariam* inscribed above his chapel in the Apostolic Delegation in Istanbul, and believed that mariology was the key to unity with the Orthodox: the *theotókos* remained the most essential part of the common heritage, the loadbearing heritage, despite theological quarrels on other matters.

It was his oriental experience, he says, which meant that in 1950 he had no problem with the doctrine of the Assumption. Ten years afterwards he wrote:

As Nuncio to France I was fortunate enough to be one of those present in St Peter's Square. I felt no anxiety about this doctrine, having always believed it; during my years in eastern Europe my eyes were constantly drawn to images (*eikons*) of the 'falling asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary' in churches of both greek and slav rite.<sup>2</sup>

Of course to say that he had no qualms about the *doctrine* is not to say that he had none about its *definition*. He was well aware of the orthodox view that the western Church tended to define too much

and too often. His determination that the Council, when it met, should propound no new definitions may have been prompted by a reflection on how the definition of the Assumption was 'received'.

Certainly he had a very different view of the Assumption from that put forth by Cardinal Giovanni Siri, Archbishop of Genoa, and the presumed dauphin of Pius XII. Only last year Siri explained that 'it was an act of courage to challenge with an infallible definition a world that did not want teachers' (address to the Synod, 8 October 1983, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Pius XII). This made the definition of the Assumption sound like an act of ecclesiastical *machismo*, a flexing of the papal muscles, a display of catholic defiant strength. Roncalli's meditation on the Assumption was very different and deeply christological. Mary is clearly with us. She is the first of disciples and a leader in faith, and so she can be of some use to us. Roncalli concludes his meditation:

The mystery of the Assumption brings home the thought of death, of our death, and it diffuses within us a mood of peaceful abandonment; it familiarizes us with and reconciles us to the idea that the Lord will be present in our death agony, to gather up into his hands our immortal soul.<sup>3</sup>

He wrote that when he had only another eighteen months to live. It offers an existential interpretation of the Assumption that could be developed in a 'christian euthanasia' or art of dying, *ars moriendi*, as it was once called.

In the 'Marian Year' of 1954, those who wanted more and more marian titles were given their head. Emboldened by the 'successful' definition of the Assumption, and with the words *De maria nunquam satis* on their banner, they petitioned the Holy Father to inaugurate the feast of the Queenship of Mary. Roncalli, now Patriarch of Venice, received a copy of the petition and finally replied on 22 April 1954:

I beg you to forgive my silence so far which is evidence of my uncertainty and also the fear that such a feast could prejudice the great action already undertaken towards refashioning the unity of the catholic Church in the world. When Jesus was dying, he said to John, 'Behold your mother'. That is enough for faith and worship. All the rest may be — and no doubt for the most part is — edifying and moving for devout and pious souls; but for many, far, far more, however well disposed towards the Catholic Church, it would be merely irritating and — as the modern phrase is — counter-productive.<sup>4</sup>

In saying that in 1954, Patriarch Roncalli was swimming against the mariological tide. Few others allowed ecumenical considerations to check their mariological enthusiasm. Pius did not, and 'responded to the petition' by prescribing the feast of the Queenship of Mary later that year.

When John was Pope, he received another petition — there seems to have been a special team of Franciscans to produce them — requesting a dogmatic definition of 'Mary's spiritual maternity'. John replied that it was 'neither necessary nor opportune':

Not necessary: because on this point the ordinary doctrine of the Church is sufficiently clear. Not opportune: because there are uncertainties and doubts on this matter, it is not yet common doctrine, and indeed there are clashes among Catholics. A movement of this kind would create upset and confusion among non-Catholics, and we should spare them this embarrassment.<sup>5</sup>

We may conclude, of Pope John, that even though he wrote an encyclical — largely forgotten — on the rosary, he was led by his concern for the separated brethren and, indeed, for 'all men of good will', to speak of Mary with commendable restraint. And the Council he summoned followed his example.

## II

With Giambattista Montini, we meet a more complex man with a more complex background. His father, Giorgio, was a politician and newspaper editor. He often returned home from the offices of *Il Cittadino di Brescia* in the early hours of the morning, but however late he was, his wife, Giuditta (*née* Alghisi) would always wait up for him.<sup>6</sup> The family had many devotional traditions that were all their own. Once a year Giorgio drew from a hat a patron saint for each of his children for the coming twelve months. The young Giovanni Battista never had much luck: in 1916 he drew St Philomena (whose feast he was to abolish) and in 1919 a rather embarrassing St Mary Magdalen. Marian piety was strong but far from exclusive. They fell to their knees, and encouraged guests to do so, when the Angelus rang out; but they fell to their knees again on Fridays at 3 p.m. in honour of the passion of Our Lord. They spent time in church 'to keep the Madonna company' (*per far compagnia alla Madonna*). Montini said his first Mass in their favourite Brescia church, the Madonna delle Grazie. His father Giorgio, who was rather a martinet,

insisted that all the members of the family, wherever they were and whatever they were doing, should return to the bosom of the family for 8 September, feast of Our Lady's birthday. The celebrations lasted several days.

But perhaps this account, based on hitherto unpublished documents gathered by Antonio Fappani and Franco Molinari, suggests that mariology had swallowed up everything else in the Montini family. This was far from the truth. His mother was of a contemplative disposition, and was very interested in the Blessed Elena Guerra, of Lucca, who had inspired Pope Leo XIII to encourage what she called 'the return of the Holy Spirit' for the renewal of the Church and the reconciliation of all Christians. We can see here the germ of Montini's 'spiritual ecumenism' and the idea of 'convergence towards Christ' that he always spoke of in meetings with other Christians.

But that is to anticipate. Montini spent thirty years in the Vatican Secretariat of State. He was involved in important events. He seemed close to Pius XII until, in 1954, he was mysteriously removed to Milan without a cardinal's hat. Montini's milanese exile — everyone expected him to return sooner or later — was his introduction to 'the modern world'. Milan, the largest diocese in Italy, and the richest, was also the most aggressively modern city. Montini soon perceived that under the twenty-five years of Cardinal Idelfonso Schuster O.S.B., the Church had failed to speak to the workers and to the intellectuals. Trying to reach these alienated workers and intellectuals was his obsession and, we may say, his agony. Nobody could say that he did not try.

Yet Montini in Milan was accused of 'lacking in marian sensitivity'.<sup>7</sup> This may seem a preposterous charge, but one has to understand what it meant in the minds of those conservatives who made it. Montini in Milan neglected the traditional *popular* manifestations of marian piety: processions in the month of May, public recitation of the rosary, pilgrimages to Loreto and elsewhere. Of course he celebrated the marian feasts and preached eloquently on them, but the critics justly sensed that for him other aspects of christian faith were more important. In other words, they blamed Montini for the very reasons that the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary praises him.

For it was evident to Montini that Milan had become secularized and that the old formulas did not work. He was concerned not with evangelization, but with pre-evangelization. And, in the work of

pre-evangelization, traditional popular piety, including marian piety, was either misleading or ineffectual or both. It reached only the converted. It did not even aspire to reach out any further. None of this meant that mariology was finished or useless; but it did mean that if mariology were to be of any use in this 'modern world' symbolized by Milan, it would have to go through a rigorous *aggiornamento* in which the *point* of it appeared and ecumenical considerations were allowed to play their part. Mere repetition was not enough. One should add that this was a problem that affected popular piety generally and marian devotion in particular.

Pope John died and Montini became pope. If Roncalli, in taking the name John, was trying to rescue this evangelical name from the rapsallions who had disfigured it in the past, in reviving the name Paul, Montini was expressing his desire to reach out in dialogue to 'all men of good will'. As far as mariology was concerned, he seemed to let the Council find its own way. The only serious question was whether the treatment of Mary should be separate — in which case the 'maximalists' would have invented some new titles and prerogatives — or whether it should be integrated in the document on the Church. The Council adopted the latter course. That is what Pope Paul had wanted. He knew perfectly well that what the separated brethren most disliked was a separated marian doctrine which set up Jesus's mother on a remote pedestal. The answer was to place Mary very firmly in the Church, as a believer ('Blessed are you because you have believed'), and firmly in the communion of saints ('Queen of Saints', if you will, but among them). The Council proceeded to do the right thing in 1964.

But then, suddenly, at the end of the third session, on 21 November 1964, Pope Paul seemed to do the wrong thing. He proclaimed Mary by the title 'Mother of the Church'. This title had been considered and rejected by the Theological Commission, repeatedly and unanimously, on the grounds that it appeared to place Mary *outside* the Church. Since the whole effort of the Council had been in the contrary direction, Pope and Council were in opposition, and expert advice had been ignored (it was a dress rehearsal for *Humanae vitae*). The observers were disconcerted. Even the *bien-pensant* Jean Guitton said that it was 'a host shocking his guests'.<sup>8</sup> Even when one has explained, with René Laurentin, that the Theological Commission had rejected the title 'Mother of the Church' not because they thought it was wrong but because it was fatally prone to misunderstanding, one was still left wondering: why



did he do it? Why did he risk rebuff over a question on which silence would not only have been possible but recommended? I suggest that he was throwing a sop to those Milanese (and others) who imagined he was 'weak on devotion to Mary'. After this he hoped they would shut up and allow him to get on with the serious business of developing a viable mariology for today.

It took nearly ten years to do, and the results are to be found in *Marialis cultus* of 2 February 1974, a remarkable document that has not been sufficiently studied. It was an apostolic exhortation though it might well have been an encyclical (but after *Humanae vitae*, the genre encyclical had taken a knock). Paul VI's starting-point was the simple observation that the *imitatio Mariae* had become more difficult given that 'the socio-cultural background in which she lived . . . scarcely exists today anywhere'.<sup>9</sup> It followed that Mary's imitability lay not in the details but in the direction of her life (and from this point of view she is exemplary for both women and men). The essential is that she said yes, *fiat*, to God's plan. Paul VI saw Mary as the second Eve standing alongside and subordinated to Christ, the second Adam. As the second Eve, she is the new woman, the definitive expression of what it is to be human. In Mary we see what God intends for his people as a whole. 'She is given to us', says Paul VI, 'as a pledge and guarantee that God's plan in Christ has *already* been realized in a creature'<sup>10</sup> — a phrase which contains within it, I believe, the content of the two 'recent' mariological dogmas. Both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are not just wildly extravagant theories so much as realized eschatology. Mary points the way we all have to go.

But there is something else in *Marialis cultus* which applies more particularly to women. Paul VI tries, as it were, to cap the feminist movement by presenting Mary as 'the outstanding type of womanhood and a prominent example of a life lived according to the gospel'. But how this is worked out in practice varies, necessarily so, since Christians 'expressed their sentiments with the mentality and images corresponding to their age'. It seems fairly clear that what Paul VI had in mind — or hoped — was that twentieth-century women would find in Mary an *eikon* of liberated femininity. But if that is true, then he is very close to John McKenzie who says that 'if a new mariology is to be formed, it will have to be formed by women'.<sup>11</sup> Mariology has to be re-invented. Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, *Marialis cultus*, opens up this perspective without actually exploring it. This provides the motto, the slogan almost, of

the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for Paul VI stresses that 'every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christians about the true doctrine of the Church'.

### III

That is not a proposition to which Pope John Paul II feels greatly drawn. He starts from a personal experience of mariology that is self-authenticating and seemingly irrefutable. In his first Letter to Priests, dated Passion Sunday 1979, he 'entrusted all priests to the Mother of Christ who, in a special way, is our Mother, the Mother of priests' and adds this personal touch: 'If I may be permitted to speak here of my own experience, I will say that in writing to you I am referring to my own personal experience'. But that cuts both ways. If John Paul descends from Peter's Chair, then he is not exercising the *magisterium*, and his ideas are as open to discussion as anyone else's. So we may be permitted to observe that having no sisters, never having seen his mother in good health and losing her altogether when he was nine predisposed him towards idealizing the 'feminine element' in Mary.<sup>12</sup>

No doubt he would dismiss that as cheap psychologizing. In his conversations with french intellectual André Frossard, John Paul does not discuss family relationships at all, and says that the turning-point in his life was reading Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort's *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la sainte Vierge*.<sup>13</sup> He read it and re-read it, and had it in his pocket when he was working in the sodium factory, and so 'its handsome binding became spotted with lime'.

What did he find in Grignion de Montfort that so changed his life? In his own words:

Whereas originally I held back for fear that devotion to Mary should mask Christ instead of giving him precedence, I realized in the light of Grignion de Montfort's book that the situation really was quite different. Our inner relation to the Mother of Christ derives from our connection with the mystery of Christ. There is, therefore, no question of the one preventing us from seeing the other.<sup>14</sup>

Though the word 'therefore' is used here, the remark contains more assertion than argument. And that is what we find in the rest of this 'personal confession'.

Of course, Pope John Paul is aware that the baroque style of Grignon de Montfort is off-putting for many. He says for example: 'It is well known that the author of the treatise defines his devotion as a form of 'slavery'. The word may upset our contemporaries. Personally I do not see any difficulty in it'.<sup>15</sup> This almost contains the suggestion that if contemporaries are 'upset', so much the worse for them. And if the 'contemporaries' happen to be Protestants, there is no need for Catholics to worry. So thoroughly imbued with Grignon de Montfort is Pope John Paul that his motto, *Totus tuus*, is taken from him. The words apply to Mary, not to Christ. And it is known that John Paul hopes to make Grignon de Montfort a Doctor of the Church.

For what it is worth I shall oppose this move, and recommend the Society to do the same. I am quite unable to fathom how *La vraie dévotion* can be reconciled with Vatican II's sober teaching on Mary. It is not just a matter of the baroque style, as though its oddities could be explained away. Nor is the language of 'slavery', offensive as it is, the main problem.<sup>16</sup> It can be expounded in an intelligible way, especially if we remember that Mary is the 'slave', the *doulē*, the word we so feebly translate as handmaid, with its quaint and medieval associations.

The greatest difficulty in *La vraie dévotion* is found in Book II, section 4, which is headed 'We need a mediator to come to the mediator'.<sup>17</sup> This is not just a baroque idea: it is a jansenist idea: Christ is so strict and awesome a figure, while we are so full of impurities and loaded with sins, that we need an intermediary to draw close to him. Now 'the divine Mary is the one most capable of fulfilling this charitable office. Through her Jesus comes to us and through her we have to go to him'.<sup>18</sup> I leave you to ponder on the ecumenical consequences of this doctrine which is not just a stray remark in passing but is, according to de Montfort himself 'one of the five fundamental truths about true devotion'.<sup>19</sup>

So the main marian influence on the young Karol Wojtyła came from seventeenth-century France. But of course he received Grignon de Montfort in Poland where Mary is inseparable from messianic nationalism. That she is 'Queen of Poland' is not just some pious honorific. It makes a political point about where true sovereignty lies. Throughout the nineteenth century when the Polish state had vanished from the maps of Europe, the Polish 'nation' survived, sustained by its language, its culture, its faith and its Queen. At the great shrines of Mary, Kalwaria Zebrydowska

between Cracow and Wolomin, Piekary Slaskie in Silesia, and above all at Czestochowa and the 'Bright Mountain', 'Our Lady spoke Polish'. She spoke the language, that is, of the oppressed. Marian devotion was sometimes an underground and dissident movement. Nor must we forget that in 1655 a handful of Polish monks defeated a vastly superior Swedish (and Protestant) force that was threatening Jasna Gora. On the following 1 April, King Jan Kazimierz consecrated the whole nation to Our Lady in a 'baroque' gesture and vowed to work for social justice among his people. So it was not surprising that Pope John Paul should address Our Lady of Czestochowa as 'Queen of social justice'.

All of this makes for an extremely powerful cocktail of emotions. To give the flavour and feel of it, here are a few words spoken on Sunday evening, 19 June 1983, at Czestochowa. Recall the circumstances. Harsh and unpopular military rule has been in force since 13 December 1981; Solidarity has been declared illegal; its leaders have been imprisoned or gone underground. In distant Rome, Pope John Paul can only look on, impotently. But now, back home in Jasna Gora, where no one dare question Mary's queenship or sovereignty, he casts aside his prepared speech and apostrophizes Mary in the following terms:

Our Lady of Jasna Gora, I open my heart to you this evening in this hour of frankness. I think that my words are clumsy because it is difficult to speak of painful matters. So I simply ask you, Mother of my nation, to stand by those who are suffering. . . . O Mother and Our Lady of Jasna Gora . . . I would like once again to entrust my nation to you. I am a son of the nation, in myself I carry the heritage of its culture, its history, the heritage of victories — this year we remember especially Jan II Sobieski and Vienna — but also the heritage of disasters. . . .

Queen of Poland, I also wish to entrust to you the difficult tasks of those who wield authority on Polish soil. The state gains its strength from the support of the people. To you, O Mother of Jasna Gora, I bring the plea that this support should flow from the full understanding of the nation's history and its contemporary experience. This is at the same time the way of respect for man, for his conscience, and for his beliefs.

Finally, O Our Lady of Jasna Gora, I have come to you to say once again *Totus tuus*. O Mother I am all yours and all that is mine is yours. . . . O Mother I have been called to the service of the universal Church in the See of Peter. With this universal service in mind I constantly repeat *Totus tuus*. I wish to be a servant to all, and at the same time I am a son of this land, of this nation.

There is one more thing. On 13 May two years had elapsed since that afternoon when you saved my life. It was in St Peter's Square. There during a general audience, a shot was aimed at me that was intended to deprive me of my life.

Last year I was in Fátima to thank the Immaculate Heart and consecrate the world to her. Today I desire to leave here in Jasna Gora, as an offering, a visible sign of that event — the shot-pierced sash of my cassock.

August Cardinal Hlond, the primate of Poland, uttered these words on his deathbed: 'The victory, when it comes, will come through Mary'. *Totus tuus*: I will add no more. Let us sing the final words of the Jasna Gora hymn, and then I ask you to go home in reverent calm, meditating upon its words.<sup>20</sup>

It would be impertinent to argue with this or even comment on it at length. To say too much would be to intrude upon the private grief of a nation, and to add to its present sufferings the cross of being misunderstood. It would be sadistic to deny to Poles whatever consoles them.

Yet two comments and two questions may be permitted. The first is that in Pope John Paul's rhetoric, the apostrophe is his favourite form of prayer: he addresses a statue, usually of Our Lady, and makes a speech to it. As a literary device, this belongs to the seventeenth century which seems to be his 'spiritual home'. He would have liked to have repelled the Swedes from Czestochowa or been with Jan Sobieski at the gates of Vienna. That a *Turk* should try to kill him has a certain divine irony!

Now we have to ask what happens when this Grignion-de-Montfort-in-a-polish-accent version of marian devotion is extended to the whole Church. In Poland it can be defended as an instance of theological pluralism and the vindication of a remarkable and unparalleled historical experience. But in virtue of the same pluralism, we can fairly wish not to have it imposed on the rest of us. I am not sure whether the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 24 March 1984, feast of the Annunciation, was intended or used as 'a loyalty test to sort out the episcopal sheep from the episcopal goats. Bishop Hugh Lindsay, in a letter to *The Times*, claimed that it was an invitation, not an order, and that 'it could have been declined without appearing to challenge the Pope's authority' (Letters, 2 April 1984). That may be so, but one wonders just how many bishops actually declined and how many just went through it without any great conviction. Notice, too,

that in order to make the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary palatable to readers of *The Times*, Bishop Lindsay tones it down and retranslates as 'an act of entrusting to our Lady'. So the first question is: is polish mariology in this version for export? Can it travel? Does it have a sufficiently universal quality to help the universal Church?

The answer would seem to be 'no' to all these questions. For the theological content of polish mariology is very slender. It is all based on two phrases in John's gospel: 'Do whatever he tells you' and 'Son, behold your Mother' developed in a way that few exegetes would find acceptable. More gravely still, it appears to ignore what Paul VI said in *Marialis cultus*: marian devotion should be biblically based, should reflect the great christian themes, be in harmony with the liturgy, and show an awareness of ecumenical concerns.<sup>21</sup> Does what I have been describing in Poland pass this test?

This raises the suspicion that much practical marian devotion is not theological at all: it is a cultural or, at the limit, an ideological reality. In Poland it binds the nation together by a chivalrous bond towards the 'eternal feminine' embodied in a feudal queen; and it makes General Wojciech Jaruzelski feel uneasy. It does not make much sense to ask whether Mary of Nazareth was really like that: the point is that that is the function she is now called upon to perform. And she does it magnificently, so long as people believe in it. That is also why an exportable mariology has to have a more solid theological base than has so far been provided; and the threat of Grignion de Montfort as a Doctor of the Church, far from remedying the lack, compounds it.

#### IV

My conclusion on the three popes is this. Pope John XXIII, born in 1881, showed the way forward from Pius XII towards the restrained mariology developed by Vatican II; his experience in the east made him sensitive to ecumenical, particularly orthodox, objections. Paul VI, born in 1897, came to realize that a new mariology was needed and sketched it out in *Marialis cultus* which remains the normative statement of the *magisterium* in this field; and just as he knew that there was a variety of 'socialisms' (see *Octogesimo adveniens*), so he understood that marian devotion would involve different responses — Latin America, for example, would make the *Magnificat* the hymn

of liberation theology. Pope John Paul II, though born in 1920 and therefore well into the twentieth century, with his powerful and charismatic personality, belongs essentially and on his own admission to the dramatic and tragic history of Poland; the rest of us can only look on, admiringly and wonderingly.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf Hebblethwaite, Peter: *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984), p 10.

<sup>2</sup> John XXIII: *Journal of a soul* (London, 1980, revised edition), p 337.

<sup>3</sup> Capovilla, Loris (ed): *Il rosario con papa Giovanni* (Rome, 1979), p 56.

<sup>4</sup> Alberigo, A. and G.: *Giovanni XXIII, profezia nella fedeltà* (Brescia, 1978), p 489.

<sup>5</sup> Capovilla, Loris (ed): *Lettere 1958-63* (Rome, 1978), p 520.

<sup>6</sup> Fappani, A. and Molinari, F.: *Giovannibattista Montini giovane* (Turin, 1979), p 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p 47.

<sup>8</sup> Laurentin, R.: *Bilan du concile* (Paris, 1966), p 160.

<sup>9</sup> Neuner, T. and Dupuis, J. (eds): *The christian faith in the doctrinal documents of the Catholic Church* (London, 1983), p 210.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p 211.

<sup>11</sup> 'Mary in the Churches', *Concilium* (October 1983).

<sup>12</sup> I have discussed this point in 'The pope and Fatima' in *New Blackfriars* (October 1982), pp 422-29. In John Paul's picture of family life the son 'opens his heart to his mother, and speaks to her about everything'. But only very small children do that, and it does not happen in adolescence. Since all mariology is based on some form of analogy of mother-son relationship, it is important to get the human side of the analogy right. As Peter Nichols noted of Pope John Paul, 'The family means something to him that is natural, but which he never had'. (*The Times*, 1 June 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Frossard, André: *Be not afraid* (London, 1984), p 125.

<sup>14</sup> Frossard, *ibid.*, p 125.

<sup>15</sup> Frossard, *ibid.*, p 126.

<sup>16</sup> Pope John found it very offensive. When nuncio in France he read Charles Péguy and noted down these lines: 'The submission of a hundred slaves is not worth the adhesion of one truly free man'.

<sup>17</sup> Cf the Italian edition, *Trattato della vera devozione alla Santa Vergine* (1980), with notes by Stefano De Fiore. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p 75.

<sup>19</sup> I have subsequently discovered an English translation, with a foreword by Frank Duff of the Legion of Mary. The 'fourth truth' is found on pp 58-61 where one notes further that not to approach Jesus through Mary 'is to show less ceremony towards the King of Kings than we would show towards an earthly king or prince, to whom we would not dream of approaching except through the recommendation of a friend at court'. It is piquant to think that de Montfort must have derived his notions of etiquette from the court of Louis XIV, where the 'intermediaries' tended to be royal mistresses or confessors. A socio-historical study of de Montfort is called for.

<sup>20</sup> *The pope teaches* (CTS, London), pp 183-85. On 13 May Pope John Paul bequeathed to the shrine of Fatima 'the bullet which hit and nearly killed him in the assassination attempt in Rome three years ago' (*The Times*, 16 May 1984).

<sup>21</sup> *Marialis cultus*, sec 32: 'For Catholics, devotion to the Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians is also a natural and frequent opportunity for seeking her intercession with her Son in order to obtain the union of all the baptized within a single people of God (*Lumen gentium*, 69). Yet again, the ecumenical aspect of marian devotion is shown in the Catholic Church's desire . . . to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other christian brethren . . . any manifestations of cult which is opposed to correct catholic practice should be eliminated'.