

**The relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit
in the work of René Laurentin (1917-2017):
A biographical approach**

Thesis submitted by Catherine Jones

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St Mary's University**

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Magnus es Domine et laudabilis valde (Psalm 145:3)

Abstract

Name of University: St Mary's University, London

Candidate's full name: Catherine Jones

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Abbé René Laurentin (1917-2017) is widely acclaimed as one of the most influential Mariologists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, due to the extent and range of his writings, as well as the controversy surrounding his later writings on apparitions, there has been little academic engagement with his work. This thesis contributes towards addressing this lacuna by considering the question of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in his writings. For Laurentin, as for the Western church in general, this subject was seldom studied before Vatican II, but has been increasingly reflected upon in recent decades.

A biographical, chronological approach is taken, with each chapter focusing on a particular theme, from the pre-conciliar lack of focus on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by Laurentin's doctorates on Marian Priesthood, to the insights he gained from Catholic charismatic renewal, semiotics, and the experiences of an array of seers and mystics, mainly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Laurentin's significant contribution to the Marian conciliar debates is demonstrated, as is the connection between the development of his understanding of Mary and the varied historical, cultural, and ecclesial contexts in which he wrote.

Key findings of this research include Laurentin's use of several titles or analogies to capture something of the ultimately inexpressible relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit; the turning point of Vatican II; the prominent post-conciliar place given to charisms and to personal relationship; the significance of Laurentin's character in shaping his works, and the importance of a range of influences, including family members, visionaries, and theologians, particularly Heribert Mühlen, who made a lasting positive impact upon Laurentin, and Raymond E. Brown, with whom he engaged in relentless polemical disputes. While the vast majority of what Laurentin says is far from new, his contribution lies in presenting elements of the Church's tradition in an accessible and engaging manner.

Chapter 1: Formative years and pre-conciliar writings

Introduction

The prolific theological and historical works of Abbé René Laurentin (1917-2017), consisting of more than 170 books and 1,500 articles written over seventy years, provide a highly significant contribution to Marian theology within Roman Catholicism in the second half of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century. This study will use a biographical approach to explore the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in Laurentin's writings. The chronological methodology will enable the connection between the development of Laurentin's understanding of Mary and the historical, cultural, and ecclesial contexts to be demonstrated, as well as the influence of significant people in Laurentin's life, ranging from family members to a variety of seers and mystics. A notable change during the long decades of Laurentin's theological career is the deepening of his reflections on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. As one of the most influential contemporary Marian theologians, his writings have a substantial contribution to make to an examination of this post-conciliar development within Western Christianity.

Despite his status within Mariology, very little secondary literature is available about Laurentin or his writings. There are only two books which can be said to focus upon him and neither do so in a systematic or entirely neutral manner, as they were written for specific contexts which required essentially appreciative content. The first section of *Κεχαριτωμένη: Mélanges René Laurentin*, the Festschrift presented by his colleagues to mark his seventieth birthday in 1987, is a series of 'witnesses' to his life, and the eight papers given in homage to the recently deceased Laurentin at the 2018 conference of the *Société française d'études mariales* (SFEM) are the only collection of articles about him.¹ These articles cover diverse aspects of his writings about Mary, from his universally acclaimed work on Lourdes to the more disputed questions concerning his approach to the Bible, and his unique contribution as the 'architect' of African Mariology.² Together with a relatively small number of articles considering various

¹ Augrain, C. (ed.) (1990) *Κεχαριτωμένη : Mélanges René Laurentin*. Paris: Desclée, and (2019) *Études Mariales* 73, pp. 151-234. Laurentin had been an assiduous member of the SFEM for sixty years, from when he presented his first paper in 1952 to the last conference which he was able to attend in 2012, including three decades of vice-presidency from 1962 onwards. In recognition of his contribution to both Mariology and the Society, the SFEM changed the programme for its 2018 conference, held in Strasbourg, 3rd - 6th September 2018, dedicating half of it to papers about Laurentin.

² Cf. Articles in (2019) *Études Mariales*, 73: de la Teyssonnière, R.-M. 'René Laurentin et Lourdes', pp. 193-202; Doré, D. 'René Laurentin et les études bibliques', pp. 181- 185, and Sieme Lasoul, J.-P. 'L'apport de René Laurentin au développement de la mariologie en Afrique', pp. 213-230.

aspects of his theology, and articles summarising his life and work following his death in 2017,³ they will doubtlessly form the nucleus of a larger body of work about Laurentin, as his contribution to Marian theology is assessed and assimilated. At the time of writing, Laurentin has not proved an attractive focus to doctoral students, although, as this thesis will demonstrate, his influence was such that this is likely to change.⁴

Many reviews have been written of Laurentin's more academic works, but a large proportion of his books were never reviewed, with some fading into oblivion, despite the renown of their author. Cardinal Paul Poupard's (1930 -) observation that while many have read some of Laurentin's writings, few are aware of the "astonishing extent" of his work, is as true today as when it was made in 1987.⁵ This lack of academic engagement is particularly surprising given Laurentin's prominence within Marian studies, which is unequivocally demonstrated by the accolades of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; 1927 -), who acclaimed the soundness, meticulousness and "profound spiritual penetration" which are "proper to him and characterise his works,"⁶ and Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (Saint Pope John XXIII; 1881-1963), who lauded him as "an illustrious French theologian", referring to his "very welcome, serious and exhaustive" work on Lourdes as "*Summa Theologica et Historica Lapurdensis*."⁷

Laurentin's final books were published in 2016, in the year before his death.⁸ However, in his (2005) *Mémoires: Chemin vers la Lumière* Laurentin refers to a final volume of memoirs to be published a few years after his death (the wait being to avoid causing an unspecified scandal),

³ Cf. Simiz, S. (2019) '*René Laurentin (1917-2017). Théologien, mariologue et historien des apparitions. Portrait historiographique*', Studi e Materiali di Storia della Religioni, 85, pp. 807-819, and Largo, P. (2018) '*Unos apuntes sobre la vida y la obra de Mons. René Laurentin*', Ephemerides Mariologicae, 68, pp. 491-508.

⁴ While not explicitly focused upon Laurentin, Stuart Schafer's recent S.T.D. thesis makes significant reference to Laurentin's (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie). Cf. Schafer, S. (2020) *The dwelling of God: The theology behind Marian Ark of the Covenant typology of the first millennium*. Doctorate in Sacred Theology (S.T.D.), University of Dayton, International Marian Research Institute. Available at:

https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_olink/r/1501/10?clear=10&p10_accession_num=udmarian1613166917042061 (Accessed: 01/02/22). However, it makes no contribution to the focus of this current research.

In his (2008) homage to *Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski* on his being presented with the "*Prix-Laurentin – Pro Ancilla Domini*" Laurentin relates how Napiórkowski had supervised twenty-one doctorates, including one on his [Laurentin's] own work, but no further reference to such a study can be found. Cf. (2008) '*Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski une carrière théologique dans la lumière du concile*', Ephemerides Mariologiae, 70, pp. 657-661, p. 658.

⁵ Poupard, P. (1990) '*Préface aux Mélanges René Laurentin*' in *Κεχαριτωμένη*, pp. 17-21, p. 17

⁶ Ratzinger, J. (1982) '*Préface*' in *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ*. This preface was written for the 3rd edition and is included in the English translation, (1986) *The truth of Christmas: Beyond the myths*. Petersham, Massachusetts: St Bede's Publication, pp. xiii-xiv

⁷ Roncalli, A. (1958) *Trilogia Marialis Lapurdensis* p. 69 quoted in Laurentin, R. (2009) *Court traité sur la Vierge Marie, sixième édition mise à jour et augmentée*. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, p. 6. This and all subsequent translations of texts in French are my own, unless specified.

⁸ Laurentin, R. and Frenod, G. (2016) *Aux frontières de l'invisible. Un combat méconnu contre l'enfer*. Solesmes: Les Éditions de Solesmes, and Laurentin, R. (2016) *Le Rosaire : Les vingt mystères revisités*. Le Mesnil-le-Roi: Éditions du Gingko

as well as a second volume which was due to be published shortly after the first.⁹ The situation regarding Laurentin's unpublished works is further complicated by the fact that by 2005 his eyesight had deteriorated so severely that he was no longer able to read or write, and despite continuing to dictate works, it was clear to him that he would never finish all the projects he had started.¹⁰

In his final years Laurentin was preoccupied with how his archives would be preserved; his friend and colleague Jean Longère relates how they filled four floors of Laurentin's residence with the sisters of *Notre Dame de Sion* at Evry, with Laurentin refusing help to catalogue and rationalise them. Following his death those judged to be the most significant have been archived in three separate locations: "Vatican II" in the évêché at Evry,¹¹ " Lourdes" stored with the archives of the sanctuary in Lourdes,¹² and "true mystics" in the *L'académie des sciences morales et politiques* of the *Institut de France*, where, as Longère pragmatically remarked "no one would think to look for them, but they had to go somewhere."¹³ Together with the "Father René Laurentin Collection (1948-2003)" at the University of Dayton,¹⁴ these archives, in addition to Laurentin's extensive published works, illustrate the capacity of Laurentin's works to furnish material for several doctoral studies.

Upbringing and formative years

Born in 1917 in Tours, France, to an extremely pious bourgeois Catholic family, René was the second of five children; his younger brother, André (1922-1998), became a controversial priest of *Mission de France* and his three other siblings married, two becoming medical doctors, another the famous French radio presenter, author, and feminist, Menie Grégoire (1919-2014). Although the accounts of the personalities of their parents, their relationship, and how they brought up their children, differ significantly between Menie's autobiography *Telle que je suis* and René's *Mémoires*, this is not surprising when seen in the context of who these childhood companions became.¹⁵ While René's obituaries focus on his contribution to the Church through his Mariology, those of Menie, who, at the height of her fame was acclaimed

⁹ Cf. Laurentin, R. (2005) *Mémoires : Chemin vers la lumière*. Paris: Fayard, pp. 13-14

¹⁰ Cf. Laurentin, R. (2010) *Aveugles et voyants : Au-delà des malentendus*. Paris: Salvator, pp. 27-28, 43

¹¹ These are very well organised and catalogued; together the two volumes catalogue 3,323 documents. Cf. Dubost, M. et al (2001-2002) *Inventaire du fonds, René Laurentin. Tome 1 & 2*. Institut Catholique de Paris; Diocèse d'Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes avec la collaboration du CNAEF

¹² Cf. <https://sitesfem.wixsite.com/sfem/centre-de-documentation-mariale> (Accessed 01/12/21)

¹³ Longère, J. 'René Laurentin et la SFEM', 4th September 2018, talk given at the SFEM Conference, not part of the published article. All subsequent references to talks from this conference indicate that the content was not included in the published texts.

¹⁴ Cf. https://ecommons.udayton.edu/finding_aid/85/ (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁵ Cf. Grégoire, M. (1976) *Telle que je suis*. Paris: Éditions J'ai Lu

as the most well-known woman in France after the wife of the President of the Republic,¹⁶ recount how she emphatically rejected the faith of her family, and how through her radio programmes listened to by millions, especially women, she “revolutionised the sex lives of the French”.¹⁷ In stark contrast to the essentially serene familial atmosphere which René discretely paints,¹⁸ Menie candidly describes and analyses the internal dynamics of the family, including the relationship between her parents, who, she declares, despite appearing united, were “the most conflictual and the most sadomasochistic couple” that she ever encountered.¹⁹

René describes his father Maurice (1885-1959), an architect who had fought throughout the First World War in the trenches,²⁰ as an “unconventional”,²¹ extremely devout man, who had a remarkable connection to St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716), a renowned preacher and lover of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Maurice had inherited the mill at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre in which de Montfort had died; he was the architect responsible for the enlargement of the basilica where de Montfort’s tomb is venerated, and he worked in the archives of the mother house of the Montfort Fathers, publishing two booklets about their founder, including one on his statues.²²

Menie’s biography adds to this portrait of their father, depicting him as a crusader and a mystic, “a believer of the most authentic and unflinching type”, who was “fundamentally an anarchist”, “passionate about Christ, an anarchist like himself.”²³ Maurice Laurentin had significant intellectual and creative talents, which permeated his household and influenced the upbringing of his children, as is captured in Menie’s recollection of them as small children unable to reach the dining table sitting “on enormous texts related to the Jewish historian Falvius Josephus in Latin.”²⁴ Maurice closely monitored the educational progress of his children and subjected them, particularly Jean his oldest son, to his “terrifying anger”.²⁵

¹⁶ Cf. Bergès, J.-B. (2015) *Menie Grégoire. Ses derniers souvenirs*. Paris: Éditions du Panthéon, p. 75

¹⁷ ‘*Ménie Grégoire, rugby féminin : le nouveau féminisme*’ (2014). Available at <http://reinformation.tv/menie-gregoire-rugby-feminin-nouveau-feminisme/> (Accessed: 01/01/2021). Stefano Simiz describes Menie as a “specialist of affairs of the heart, of whom it could be said that she heard the confessions of France.” [Simiz, *René Laurentin (1917-2017)* p. 807.]

¹⁸ Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 119-120: “My childhood was austere and disciplined, according to the customs of the time, and in accordance with my temperament, but objectively happy, with good parents who loved us and did everything for us, following different but convergent pedagogies.”

¹⁹ Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 49

²⁰ Cf. Laurentin, M. (1965) *Carnets d’un Fantassin de 1914, présenté par Menie Grégoire*, 32 croquis. Paris: Arthaud.

²¹ *Mémoires* p. 93

²² Cf. (1996) *Dieu seul est ma tendresse. La vie et l’expérience de L. M. Grignon de Montfort*. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, p. 10

²³ Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* pp. 28, 11, 29

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 29

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 20. Cf. p. 13: “my father was dreadful to his oldest son, as is the rule with those who are jealous.”

His wife, Marie (1890 – unknown) lived very much in the shadow of her husband. Menie’s autobiography presents a stark image of her mother, as she declares that “the misery of my mother would have been evident to a moronic cyclops”,²⁶ and describes her in relation to the ‘queen’ in the game of chess: “For me there was no queen in the family game: the queen had arrived dead.”²⁷

Marie was also uncompromisingly strict with her children as is illustrated by René’s recalling one of his earliest memories of his mother teaching him to read as a four-year-old. On his being unable to identify the letter ‘J’, she left him struggling all morning, refusing him any lunch until he had completed the task of writing a sentence beginning with Jerome, an onerous and stress-inducing task for any child unable to properly distinguish letters.²⁸ However, it seems from Menie’s autobiography (where, apart from her oldest brother Jean, her siblings are all given pseudonyms), that René’s health led to him being treated much less harshly than the others, which she saw as contributing to his gentle nature:

I never saw Jacques [René] scolded. I felt sometimes what seemed to me weaknesses or favouritism for him. It was Pierre [André] that was whipped, Jean that was belted. Jacques [René], the most handsome of the three, gave the impression of being fragile, and was sent to the seaside! Anyway, he was the kindest, the softest with me. Why be aggressive towards others when one has not suffered this way oneself?²⁹

A further possible clue to René, with his “seraphic look of a child with long blond curls”,³⁰ being (relatively) favoured is found in his father’s war journals which poignantly reveal the fortuitous circumstances surrounding René’s conception during the most brutal fighting of the First World War. In the entry for 15th-16th January 1917 Maurice describes unexpected leave being announced amidst the noise of bombs during the Battle of the Somme and his anticipating going home to his unsuspecting wife: “our love is so great that for two days everything else will vanish”.³¹ While the extent to which the memory of the happy circumstances surrounding René’s conception influenced his mother’s treatment of René can only be conjectured, his being a favoured child, named after his mother’s only brother, the “first love of his mother”, to whom “she was madly attached”,³² will inevitably have influenced his early understanding of

²⁶ Ibid. p. 49 “...le malheur de ma mère aurait crevé l’œil d’un cyclope débile.”

²⁷ Ibid. p. 69

²⁸ *Mémoires* pp. 79-80. It should be noted that, in line with René’s positive portrayal of his parents, he concludes by saying that “apart from this unique incident, everything must have been fine” (p. 80).

²⁹ Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 115

³⁰ Jeanneau, P. (1990) ‘Monsieur Laurentin, vous êtes encore dans la lune ? Souvenirs mélangés’, in Κεχαριτωμένα, pp. 41-49, p. 41

³¹ Laurentin, M. *Carnets d’un Fantassin* p. 177. Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 19-21.

³² Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 63

the 'maternal' and hence of Mary.³³ The question of Laurentin's relationship with his family, especially his mother, is of particular interest in providing a background to his understanding of Mary, since with portrayals of Mary "it is not always possible to see whether we are dealing with objects arising from outside ourselves or within."³⁴ Indeed, as Thomas Merton (1915-1968) asserts insightfully, what people say about Mary often reveals more about themselves than about her.³⁵

A recurrent theme in Laurentin's writings is 'possessive mothers', and the significance of Mary not being one. On numerous occasions Laurentin stresses that Mary was not "a possessive mother", as is illustrated by her giving the child Jesus to Simeon to hold (Luke 2:28) and her allowing the twelve-year-old Jesus freedom to remain with others during their journey back from Jerusalem (Luke 2:44),³⁶ as well as in her relationship with the seers of Medjugorje.³⁷ Laurentin describes how Marian devotion can be "contaminated by the unhealthy representation of a possessive mother who demands, by a type of emotional blackmail, a closed, unshared love",³⁸ such that "many fantasies and bitterness coming from elsewhere" are projected onto Mary.³⁹ Similarly, he writes that those who have suffered from possessive mothers are more inclined to reject the privileges of Mary stressed by the Marian Movement,⁴⁰ and, perhaps thinking of his sister Menie, describes how the "instinctive and

³³ Interestingly, the anthropologist Nancy Rose Hunt highlights how the theme of the maternal is strongly present in the work of both of Laurentin's sisters - Menie Grégoire, the "maternalist feminist counterpoint to Simone de Beauvoir", and René's youngest sister, Anne Retel-Laurentin, doctor and ethnologist, a specialist in subfertility among the Nzakara, whose work was "therapeutic and feminist" and had "a decidedly maternalist sense, focused as it was on female suffering arising from an inability to bear children." Cf. Hunt, N. R. (2007) '*Colonial medical anthropology and the making of the central African infertility belt*', in Tilley, H. (ed.) *Ordering Africa: anthropology, European imperialism and the politics of knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 252-281, pp. 266-267

³⁴ Callaghan, B. (1990) '*Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head*': *Some psychological reflections on Mary in Christian thought*, New Blackfriars, 77, pp. 400-416, p. 404

³⁵ Merton, T. (1991) *Seeds of Contemplation*. Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke, p. 130

³⁶ The following texts by Laurentin all include this theme:

(1967) '*La Vierge Marie dans la formation des futurs prêtres*', *Seminarium*, 2, pp. 307-327, p. 314; (1970) *Nouvelles dimensions de la charité*. Paris: Apostolat des Éditions, pp. 28-29; (1987) *Une année de grâce avec Marie. Pour la connaître, retrouver sa présence et une consécration à Dieu*. Paris: Fayard, pp. 52, 55, 123; (1994) *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien : La plus proche des hommes, parce que la plus proche de Dieu*. Paris: Fayard, p. 84; (1996) *Un Avent avec Marie vers l'an 2000*. Paris: Fayard, pp. 50, 53; and (1998) *Dieu notre Père. Au-delà de la mort du père*. Paris: Fayard, p. 70.

Cf. Laurentin, R. (2014) *Mary in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Catholic Tradition*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, p. 156 on "Mary's free and non-possessive presence", which is important to understand in our time, "characterised by the 'death of the father,' and an 'uprising against the mother'", and Laurentin, R. (1965) *La Vierge au Concile*. Paris: P. Lethielleux, p. 166, where Laurentin states that devotion regarding Mary as a possessive mother is "formally put aside" by *Lumen Gentium*.

³⁷ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1984) *Is the Virgin Mary appearing at Medjugorje? An urgent message for the world given in a Marxist country*. (Co-authored with L. Rupčić.) Washington D.C.: The Word Among Us Press, p. 120. Laurentin recounts how Mary did "not act like a possessive mother to the six young people", telling them: "I would like you to become priests and nuns, but only if you desire it. You are free; it is for you to choose."

³⁸ (1967) '*Foi et mythe en théologie mariale*', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 89, p. 305.

³⁹ *Un Avent avec Marie* p. 160

⁴⁰ *Mémoires* p. 203.

unreasoned recoil against the mother as an ‘enveloping’ power” revealed by deep psychology, is often expressed by women by an “explosive and violent” recoil, while “with men it takes the form of a silent and discrete flight.”⁴¹ Although it is impossible to demonstrate any conscious causal connection between Laurentin’s relationship with his mother and his unusual concern for ‘possessive mothers’, the prominence he gives to this unusual theme suggests that it may have been connected to his personal experience. Whether or not this was the case, it is important to bear in mind that the young René’s experience of his mother in an emotionally complex childhood reveals his first encounters of the maternal. Laurentin himself recounts how depth psychology has revealed that “the representation of the mother conditions, according to a history which goes back even before the awakening of consciousness, even before birth, the psychology of each individual”, and how the “intimate and secret” image of woman and mother, “engaged in inextricable complexes” forms our image of the Virgin Mary.⁴²

Both René’s parents had unswerving faith and deep personal devotion. Marie entrusted all her children to the Blessed Virgin as soon as she knew of the beginnings of their existence; all apart from René had ‘Mary’ in their name, under different forms, and each morning Marie would lead her children in reciting a prayer offering themselves to Mary.⁴³ René would later look back upon the devotion of his childhood as “pure and simple confidence”, where Mary was loved “without Mariology.”⁴⁴ This is illustrated by the earliest reference to Mary in his life, when, aged six or seven, he was happy to follow his mother’s suggestion that he take the name of Mary for his confirmation. However, on seeing the little card he carried with the name ‘Marie’ written on it, the Bishop declared that this was a girl’s name, and that Maurice, his father’s name, would be given to the young René instead.⁴⁵ Ironically, while the ecclesiastical authority denied the future Marian theologian the patronage of the mother of the Lord, his sister, born on the feast of the Assumption and consequently named Marie, recounts how from her first words she refused to respond to this name, declaring herself to be ‘Menie’ not ‘Marie’.⁴⁶ Later the influential feminist was to interpret this as her way of rejecting the “heavy Christian baggage, classic and bourgeois” which the name Marie represented.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *La Vierge Marie dans la formation des futurs prêtres* p. 314

⁴² *Foi et mythe en théologie mariale* p. 293

⁴³ Cf. *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 10 and *Mémoires* p. 83

⁴⁴ *Mémoires* p. 202. Cf. p. 92 below on Laurentin’s aversion to the term ‘Mariology’.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 83

⁴⁶ Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 9

⁴⁷ (2014) Obituary in *Le Figaro*. Available at <http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2014/08/16/03004-20140816ARTFIG00082-la-mort-de-l-ancienne-animatrice-de-radio-menie-gregoire.php> (Accessed 01/01/2021) Cf. Bergè, *Menie Grégoire, Ses derniers souvenirs* p. 23

Laurentin compared his childhood in Cholet in Maine-et-Loire to that of the Middle Ages. Although nostalgically recalling collecting water from the nearby spring, and candles and oil lamps bringing poetry to the evenings,⁴⁸ Laurentin subjected what he saw as mediaeval tendencies of the Church and the prevailing educational methods to harsh criticism, declaring that the Vendean and Breton Christianity of his youth “did not have the creative intelligence of the thirteenth century.”⁴⁹ Reflecting on his early experience of the Church, he denounced it for “making a virtue of resisting the modern transformation”, remaining “an unshakable rock”, “defiant and judging”, whose zeal and narrowness gave her the appearance of an intolerant sect.⁵⁰ He frequently described the Christianity of his childhood as cultivating fear and neuroses,⁵¹ a situation starkly depicted by his sister Menie, who relates how while their upbringing appeared protected from the outside, it was “atrociously menaced from within”, for “the enemy was in the place... the devil and all hell, culpability, possible sacrileges, damnation, purgatory”.⁵²

The young René’s life at both home and school required much emotional and psychological navigating. School was a place of anxiety for Laurentin. His memoirs describe the misery inflicted by the unhappy priests who taught him,⁵³ including how according to the “hygienic sanctions of the time” one teacher often made him spend part of each class standing in the waste bin at the entry to the classroom, and how during the worst years he spent all his break-times being punished.⁵⁴ It is unclear to what extent Laurentin’s⁵⁴ mental health was affected by what would today be deemed abusive educational practices but both his own memoirs and the published recollections of one of his classmates leave no doubt that his early education was far from conducive to his academic and psychological flourishing. Pierre Jeanneau, who shared the back row of the classroom with Laurentin, remembered him as “surviving” at school, often panicked and abashed by the “reproaches and sarcasms” of the teachers.⁵⁵ Laurentin himself described the educational system as “rigid, severe, sometimes traumatic”, making “granite saints but also rebels, who rejected faith entirely.”⁵⁶ He recounts how he was often paralysed by shyness,⁵⁷ and suffered so much from isolation and withdrawal that his youth was a

⁴⁸ *Mémoires* p. 69

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 609

⁵⁰ Laurentin, R. (1989) *Église qui vient* : Au-delà des crises. Paris: Desclée, pp. 12, 14

⁵¹ Cf. Fourastie, J. and Laurentin, R. (1974) *L'Église a-t-elle trahi ?* Paris: Beauchesne, p. 168 and *Église qui vient* p. 15

⁵² Grégoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 124

⁵³ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 95

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 89, 96. Cf. *Église qui vient* p. 148

⁵⁵ Jeanneau, *Monsieur Laurentin, vous êtes encore dans la lune ?* pp. 42-43

⁵⁶ *Église qui vient* p. 147

⁵⁷ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 91

perpetual effort “to leave this interior prison”.⁵⁸ It is perhaps not surprising that he developed an inferiority complex,⁵⁹ and was prone to depression.⁶⁰ Laurentin would later relate how he had to free himself from the fears and traumas which paralysed him for a long time.⁶¹ Perhaps the key to understanding what the young René experienced can be found in his description of himself as “*un rien autiste*” (a little autistic), oscillating “between lively impulses and gloomy depressions, great momentums and pessimistic falls”.⁶²

From his earliest years René was determined to become a missionary but a visit to Italy aged thirteen where he found the heat unbearable led him to renounce this ambition.⁶³ He recounts how, aged sixteen, “like Jesus resigned to carry his cross” with “neither zeal, nor enthusiasm, nor passion for service, nor mystical tendencies, nor the least pastoral awareness”,⁶⁴ he entered the *Séminaire de Carmes* in Paris, the seminary of the *Institut Catholique* based in a former Carmelite monastery. Here he began the formation which would lead to him becoming a priest of the diocese of Angers, a vocational journey which he resolutely followed, despite his disquieting dispositions on entering seminary, and the many challenges he would face along the way.

At the end of his first year of theological studies the young seminarian was called up for military service as an infantry officer. He was made a prisoner of war in May 1940 and remained imprisoned in Silesia, in the camp Hoyerswerda IVD for allied officers, until 1945, before spending the last months of the war in the fortress of Königstein after being condemned by a German Council of War. Following in his fathers’ footsteps, René received the Cross of the Legion of Honour for his conduct during the war, as well as the Cross of War.⁶⁵

Despite the evident hardship of these years, Laurentin reflected on this time of “profound and polyvalent formation” with gratitude.⁶⁶ Due to the remarkable “seminary in captivity”, along with thirty other imprisoned seminarians, he was introduced to a wide range of philosophical

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 121

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 89

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 132

⁶¹ Cf. *Église qui vient* p. 148

⁶² *Mémoires* p. 137

⁶³ Cf. Ibid. p. 135

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 129

⁶⁵ Cf. Messmer, P. (2002) ‘*Discours de M. Pierre Messmer, Chancelier de l’Institut, à l’occasion de la remise des insignes d’officier de la Légion à l’abbé René Laurentin*’, (3rd June, Paris), Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 21.7, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio

⁶⁶ *Mémoires* p. 196

schools of thought and was grateful for the opportunity to teach Hebrew, despite having only studied it for a year himself.⁶⁷ He encountered a range of scholars, including Yves Congar (1904-1995) and Henri Fesquet (1916-2011), both of whom he would become closely acquainted with during Vatican II.⁶⁸ Jean Guitton (1901-1999) made a lasting impression upon Laurentin, instilling in him “a certain contemplative distance” and the ability to “think simply.”⁶⁹ Guitton would later describe Laurentin as having “an angelic *je ne sais quoi*” and provide an insight into his coping mechanisms, recounting how he seemed to be “always occupied, always evading himself”, escaping himself by unceasing work during the day and “as a good prisoner of war” digging a tunnel to escape from himself at night.”⁷⁰

Interestingly, Guitton recounts how during his years as a prisoner of war Laurentin appeared far from preoccupied with Mary, and gave him no encouragement to write about her when he tried to initiate a conversation about this.⁷¹ He describes Laurentin’s “constant effort to reconcile a critical approach and a mystical one, to found true mysticism on a critical basis”, and while believing that age reversed the proportions of each of these ‘spirits’, relates how during their time in captivity, Laurentin’s critical spirit seemed dominant.⁷²

Although Guitton’s assessment accurately captures the general trajectory of Laurentin’s theological methodology, it is also true that his years as a prisoner of war played a significant role in deepening his personal spirituality, including his relationship with Mary. Laurentin delighted in being able to follow a university level course by Fr. Marie-Albert Genevois O.P. on

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid. p. 192. Gérard Leclerc describes the “astonishing” nature of this camp:

Imagine six thousand French officers together in a restricted area, and who must organise their timetable themselves. Their status as officers gave them the privilege of total leisure, in contrast to the uniformed men who had to work. ... a hundred priests celebrated mass each day... there was about one priest for each sixty prisoners... And then there were also the seminarians... [Leclerc, G. (1998) *Portrait de Monsieur Guitton*. Paris: Bartillat, pp. 238-241.]

⁶⁸ *Mémoires* pp. 198, 203-204

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 195

⁷⁰ Guitton, J. ‘*Laurentin intemporel*’ in *Κεχαριτωμένη* pp. 39-40

⁷¹ Cf. Ibid. p. 40. The treatise Guitton was secretly writing about Mary whilst a prisoner of war was published shortly after the war: Guitton, J. (1949) *La Vierge Marie*. Paris: Aubier, published in English as (1952) *The Blessed Virgin*. London: Burns & Oates. Cf. pp. 28-29 below where the structural similarities between Guitton’s *La Vierge Marie* and Laurentin’s *Court traité* are discussed.

⁷² Guitton, *Laurentin intemporel*, p. 40. Guitton stresses the presence of both aspects within Laurentin, and notes: “when I read the works of our friend on ‘apparitions’, I once again find in him a constant effort to reconcile a critical approach and a mystical one – to found true mysticism on a critical basis.” Cf. Laurentin, R. (1999) ‘*Hommage à la Prof. Cettina Militello 6è Laureate du “Prix Laurentin – Pro Ancilla Domini”*’, *Ephemerides Mariologiae*, 61, pp. 443-458, p. 454, where Laurentin reminisces: “During World War II, one of my novelist friends, seeing my strained rational efforts, said to me as a good psychologist, ‘you cultivate analysis and you do not free the great current of intuition which is in you.’”

Mary, stressing that this would not have been possible at the *Institut Catholique* in Paris, where, on his return he found that she “no longer had the right to be spoken of.”⁷³

Laurentin had been familiar with de Montfort from his earliest years,⁷⁴ and as a prisoner of war he witnessed the power of de Montfort’s writings, when one of his *camarades de captivité* was “immediately and totally converted” through reading de Montfort, with the former *bon vivant* joining the “seminary of Oflag IVD” and eventually being ordained.⁷⁵ Laurentin also recounts how at the beginning of his time as a prisoner of war Fr. Fauconnier, novice master of the Dominicans and his spiritual director, guided him to consecrate himself to God through Mary, in the manner promoted by de Montfort, convincing him to add the words ‘as a slave’ which de Montfort had stipulated and Laurentin had been inclined to omit.⁷⁶

In the “seminary of captivity” Laurentin experienced at first-hand the two conflicting approaches to Mary which he would observe clashing so forcibly in the conciliar Marian debates. He contrasts those who “had a simple and unproblematic trust in her”, with those who were ill at ease, even repelled, by the acute emphasis on Mary promulgated by the Marian Movement. Laurentin describes how he “began to understand that the mediation of Mary, which was so popular and so often preached, implied unresolved ambiguities”, since emphasising Mary’s role as Mediatrix was liable to place God at a distance.⁷⁷ We find here the origins of Laurentin’s understanding of a dispute with which he would continue to be engaged for the next seventy years, first expressed in one of his earliest articles, from 1949, *Un problème initial de méthodologie mariale*,⁷⁸ and later developed in his influential and controversial *La Question Mariale*.⁷⁹

After several remarkable escapes with death, including the Russian advance arriving at the camp the evening before he was due to leave for internment in Poland,⁸⁰ Laurentin eventually

⁷³ *Mémoires* p. 202. In his Christmas letter to friends in December 1975, Laurentin shared his joy in having taught classes that year on Mary at the Institut Catholique, relating how she “had not been spoken of at the Theology Faculty since the death of Père Aubrin (before the first world war).” Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Unclassified box. Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

⁷⁴ See p. 10 above on Maurice Laurentin’s connection to de Montfort. Their home in Cholet was close to Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvres where de Montfort’s tomb is venerated; Laurentin recounts how both his grandmothers walked six kilometres each morning to attend mass at this basilica. Cf. *Mémoires* p. 111

⁷⁵ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 11

⁷⁶ *Mémoires* pp. 200-201

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 203

⁷⁸ *Maria*, 1, pp. 695-706

⁷⁹ Laurentin, R. (1963) *La Question Mariale*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil. Cf. p. 47 below

⁸⁰ *Mémoires* p. 207. Cf. pp. 207-208 where Laurentin describes the wheelbarrow precariously mended by a friend which enabled him to carry necessary provisions, to which he states that “without a doubt” he owes his life.

arrived back in Paris. Returning to study at the *Institut Catholique* he obtained his Licence in theology in July 1946 and was ordained as a priest on 8th December the following year. His early years as a priest were to be spent completing his doctoral studies. Here we find the first expression of Laurentin's intense engagement with a controversial area of study and his remarkable capacity for comprehensive historical research, with the latter providing a framework for the former to be addressed in an ecclesially acceptable manner.

Doctoral studies: Marian priesthood

Despite his later declaration that that he had no liking for risk or for the extraordinary,⁸¹ Laurentin could hardly have chosen a more controversial topic for his doctoral studies than the Marian priesthood (*le sacerdoce de la Vierge*). Pius X had attached a plenary indulgence to a litany which included three references to Mary as Virgin Priest in 1906, but ten years later under Benedict XV the Holy See issued a decree forbidding images of Mary clothed in priestly garments, which was confirmed and extended under Pius XI. By the time Laurentin was writing the Church's teaching was clear: the devotion was not approved and therefore should not be propagated. However, as Laurentin would later relate, "no one really understood why the Holy See waged war against the title Virgin Priest",⁸² and "everything related to this subject was suspected of heresy... at a time when the Holy See... was able to put great fear into theologians."⁸³ Ignoring the advice of concerned friends to avoid writing on a topic that was so dangerous in this ecclesial climate, Laurentin was determined to do so, the subject having "taken root in him".⁸⁴

The exact reasons for this subject having such an appeal to Laurentin are unclear but personal piety seems to have played a significant role in his choice. A study on Isaiah 24-27, which he had begun while a prisoner of war, had been envisaged but Laurentin was aware of his limits as an exegete and found himself irresistibly attracted to study Mary. He attributed this to both his upbringing and his consecration to God through Mary, and states quite simply, "I wanted to know Our Lady better; I would have opportunities to talk about her and I liked to speak of her admiringly, as my family had taught me."⁸⁵ Importantly, his motivation was never to promote a new privilege of Mary; he regarded the Marian priesthood as a means of approaching the

⁸¹ Cf. (2002) 'Remise de la Croix d'Officier de la Légion d'honneur par Monsieur Messmer. Réponse de l'Abbé René Laurentin' (3rd June, Paris). Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, box 21.7, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 2

⁸² *Mémoires* p. 231

⁸³ *Église qui vient* p. 81

⁸⁴ *Mémoires* p. 227

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

fundamental questions of theology which met at this cross-roads: incarnation, redemption, sacrifice, priesthood.⁸⁶

Demonstrating the capacity for meticulous attention to detail which would characterise many of his later works, Laurentin persevered through what he described as the “impasse” of the “intellectual tunnel” of his research.⁸⁷ This was not without significant consequences for his own well-being; he later recounted (in 1980) how “four out of five people experience a breakdown during a thesis”, and how this was “very hard” for him, and “made him ill until very recently.”⁸⁸ However, after six years of diligent study, and carefully constructed, studiously diplomatic writing, Laurentin successfully defended two doctoral theses at the Sorbonne, on the history and the iconography of the Marian priesthood and a third, a year later, at the *Institut Catholique* on the theology of the same subject. Although his work on iconography remained unpublished “by prudence”,⁸⁹ Laurentin’s other two theses were published shortly after their completion.⁹⁰ He had published several articles by this time, but it is with these two substantial works that Laurentin’s contribution to Mariology can be said to begin.

Laurentin’s *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium : Essai sur le développement d’une idée religieuse* is unparalleled in scope, a comprehensive history of the Marian priesthood, from the first ambiguous uses in Greek homilies, to the impact of the ecclesiological movement of the 1930s and 1940s.⁹¹ Analysis of the liturgical, theological and spiritual reasons for the ebb and flow of the popularity of this devotion is limited in this historical work; it is with Laurentin’s shorter thesis, *Marie, l’Église et le Sacerdoce : Étude théologique*, that a focused theological appraisal is found.⁹² This study concludes that the title and devotion of the Marian priesthood has little, if anything, to add to what can be known and expressed about Mary by more traditional titles.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Cf. (1980) René Laurentin. *Radioscopie* (Jacques Chancel [1928-2014] interviewing Laurentin) <https://www.ina.fr/audio/PHD97020671> (Accessed 01/01/21)

⁸⁸ Ibid. On several occasions in different works, Laurentin discusses how he suffered greatly from anxiety for several years. He recounts how while going through this “destructive crisis” he was “a stranger” to his “own eyes”, describing it as “a temptation” to destroy him, “for anxiety pushes to suicide to escape a seemingly helpless void.” He recalls being “aggravated by the feeling of being bizarre and repugnant in the eyes of others” and of doing the things he had to do as if he was not doing them, “as if another did them.” (Laurentin, R. *Science, Philosophie, Révélation. Trois voies convergentes* (2013) Paris: Éditions Salvator, p. 27.) Similarly, in his (1985) *Le démon mythe ou réalité ?* (Paris: Fayard, p. 236) Laurentin describes enduring the “agony” of anxiety, which Satan stirs up and knows how to maintain in us for “a long time”. Although it is not clear when this took place, Laurentin’s account of his suffering during his doctoral studies to Jacques Chancel suggest that it may have included this time.

⁸⁹ *Mémoires* p. 233

⁹⁰ The title of his theses, *Le sacerdoce de la Vierge* (‘The priesthood of Mary’) was too potentially shocking for a publication title, so *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* and *Marie, l’Église et le Sacerdoce* (both of which can be translated as ‘Mary, the Church and the Priesthood’) were used instead. Cf. *Église qui vient* p. 81

⁹¹ Laurentin, R. (1952) *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium : Essai sur le développement d’une idée religieuse*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines

⁹² Laurentin, R. (1953) *Marie, l’Église et le Sacerdoce : Étude théologique*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines

As Laurentin states, the development of the doctrine of the Marian priesthood has more often than not consisted in restating in terms which are less proper, and sometimes improper, what is expressed in obvious terms in saying that she is Mother of the Redeemer.⁹³ The conclusion that the Marian priesthood has “very little interest from a Mariological point of view”,⁹⁴ with the hope that it sheds light on the nature of Christian priesthood,⁹⁵ is a logical but somewhat incongruous conclusion to the study, given that Laurentin’s love for Mary had been a key factor in this choice of topic and that his research would become the foundation of a long and distinguished career in Mariology.

Since Laurentin concludes that the Marian priesthood offers so little to Mariology, it is hardly surprising that his doctorates have a very limited contribution to make to a study of his understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. The areas which are worth noting in this regard from the historical text are the imagery used to unite Mary and the Holy Spirit by various theologians through the centuries and the absence of the Holy Spirit in expected places, including what can be interpreted as the displacement of the Spirit by Mary.

Laurentin’s extensive historical study provides a surprisingly limited selection of examples of Mary and the Holy Spirit being linked through the concept of the Marian priesthood. Most of the accounts focus on Mary in her relationship with Christ or as an exemplar for priests, as found in the French school,⁹⁶ or victim-souls, usually women and often religious, in the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ The limited imagery relating Mary and the Holy Spirit varies from early Eastern symbolic language such as St. Theodore the Studite’s (759-826) descriptions of Mary as a thurible, carrying within her the divine coal by which the scent of the Holy Spirit is diffused,⁹⁸ to St. Lawrence of Brindisi’s (1559-1619) meditative depiction of Mary exercising a priestly ministry by the cross, “overflowing with the Spirit of God, truly sacrificing her Son and offering him for the salvation of the world.”⁹⁹ More theologically straightforward descriptions are also found, including St. Albert the Great’s (c1200-1280) description of Mary, by the Holy Spirit, building a temple in which the Son of God would live bodily, in her heart and her body,¹⁰⁰ and

⁹³ *Marie, l’Église et le Sacerdoce* p. 31

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 20

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 206

⁹⁶ Cf. *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* Third Period: 17th-18th Centuries, Chapter VII ‘Priestly spirituality’ pp. 341-384

⁹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.* Fourth Period: 19th-20th Centuries, Chapters II & III pp. 422-467. Laurentin gives particular attention to Mère Marie de Jesus Deluil-Martiny, whose biography he will later write: (2003) *Marie Deluil-Martiny. Précurseur et martyre béatifiée par Jean-Paul II*. Paris: Fayard

⁹⁸ *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* p. 61, referring to *Patrologica Graeca*, XCVI, 689C

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 237, quoting *In salut. Angelicam. Sermo 3, Mariale* p. 183

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 173, referring to *Mariale*, q. 25, éd. Borgnet, t. XXXVII.

St. Peter Damian's (c1007-1072/3) comparison of the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation and in the Eucharist, used to present Mary as a moral exemplar for priests.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Antoine Singlin (1607-1664), the spiritual director at Port-Royal for twenty-six years, taught that the priesthood is an "excellent image of the dignity of the Virgin, because she formed Jesus Christ in her most pure womb which was the altar of the Holy Spirit, and priests form him outside of themselves on our altars."¹⁰²

While Laurentin extols the Mariology of Matthias Scheeben's (1835-1888) *Dogmatik*,¹⁰³ Laurentin's determined emphasis on priesthood not being able to have a maternal function leads him to criticise Scheeben's linking of Mary and the Holy Spirit. We see here the strength of the weight of the principle that Mary cannot have been a priest because she was a woman.¹⁰⁴ Scheeben relates how:

By the operation of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived in her womb the Son of God; she made him descend from heaven by her assent... By the power of the same Spirit, *the priest* receives the incarnate Son of God to place him at the heart of the Church in the Eucharistic species... What marvellous fecundity of *the Church* in this indescribable union with the Holy Spirit who works in her womb miracles similar to that which he worked in the most pure womb of Mary.¹⁰⁵

In response, Laurentin asserts that this text is misleading in several ways, principally because the inversion of the concepts of maternity and paternity dangerously affects the vital point of doctrine that the Church has always reserved priesthood to men. Laurentin states that if the priesthood was a maternal function, it would have been fitting to confide this to women,¹⁰⁶ and the same boundary which prevents the concept of Marian priesthood bearing fruit blocks analogies between the working of the Holy Spirit in Mary and in the Church through her priests.

Alongside the examples given above, where Mary and the Holy Spirit are connected,

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 115: "...the virtue of the Most High covered her with its shadow; likewise, now, in a similar fashion, the power of the Holy Spirit gives life to the sacrament placed on the altar and it is necessary that the hand which touches it is pure and without stain." (*Opus 18*, dist. I, c. 1, PL CXLV, 388B)

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 354, quoting *Instructions chrétiennes, 'Pour la Conception de la Vierge'*, I, P. (C. Savreux) 1671, t. II, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 409: "These difficult and dense pages have rarely been studied, earlier studies rarely reached this level. Perhaps no one has surpassed him."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 643: "The constant reason that all the authors put forward for distancing Mary from the priesthood is found in this laconic aphorism: *Not priest because woman.*"

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 661-662, quoting Scheeben, M. (1865) *Mysterien des Christentums*. Fribourg: Éditions de Fribourg. p. 449. (As in all subsequent quotes, the formatting is as in the original text, unless otherwise stated.)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 663. Similarly, in the conclusion of *Marie, l'Église et le Sacerdoce* Laurentin stresses the importance of the "authentic order of concepts", that "it is less a question of maternal priesthood than of a priestly motherhood." (p. 201)

Laurentin's history of the Marian priesthood reveals what to a contemporary reader is a surprising absence of the Holy Spirit. For example, Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657) associates Mary and her Son so closely that there is little place left for the Holy Spirit, and imagery which one would expect to be applied to the Holy Spirit is applied to Mary, who is described as "like an arsenal" from which Christ draws "to re-clothe in his power the generals of his armies and the officers of his church",¹⁰⁷ and as the "universal creature" with "the universal spirit",¹⁰⁸ notably not the 'universal Spirit'.

The reflections about Mary tend to point to either the sacramental priesthood or the priesthood of all believers, not to a deeper understanding of Mary *per se*. For example, Laurentin quotes St. John Eudes' (1601-1680) declaration that "as the Holy Spirit associated Mary with himself in an ineffable manner in the most divine of his works and in his chief-work, which is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, likewise he associates priests with him to make an association and a continuation of this mystery in each Christian in whom the Son of God becomes incarnate in some manner by baptism and by the holy sacrament of the altar".¹⁰⁹ This illustrates why Laurentin is able to conclude *Marie, l'Église et le Sacerdoce* with the statement that the Marian priesthood has "very little interest from a Mariological point of view",¹¹⁰ as it does not lead naturally to reflection on Mary but is used to illuminate characteristics of the priesthood.

From *Marie, l'Église et le Sacerdoce*, Laurentin's theological study, the only area of note is the ontological analysis of the priesthood (including that of body of Christ, within which Mary is considered) using an Aristotelian framework.¹¹¹ This is the only extended reflection on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit that Laurentin provides in over nine-hundred pages of these two doctorates. It enables a clear articulation of the pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying Mary, enabling her to become the Mother of Christ. Laurentin describes how the efficient cause of priesthood (of Christ, of Mary, of priests and of the faithful) is always an action of God which consecrates.¹¹² However, while the priesthood of priests and

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 365, quoting Faillon, E. M., (1866) *Vie intérieure de la T. S. Vierge, ouvrage recueilli des écrits de M. Olier*. Rome: Salvucci, p. 100.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 364, quoting *Traité des saints ordres*, P. 3, c. 6, éd. Migne, col. 704, and Faillon, *Vie intérieure de la T. S. Vierge*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 358, quoting *Mémorial*, P. V, XVII, 2 Œuvres, III, 217-218.

¹¹⁰ *Marie, l'Église et le Sacerdoce* p. 202

¹¹¹ Cf. Ibid. pp. 96-106

¹¹² Ibid. p. 106

that of the faithful have as an instrumental cause a ritual action, the priesthoods of Christ and Mary proceed from an effusion of grace without the mediation of ritual:¹¹³

The hypostatic union anoints and consecrates Christ, but not at all Mary. If we want to find the cause of her consecration it is necessary to search instead in the action of the Holy Spirit spoken of in Lk 1:35.

Note well that this operation is a work of the Holy Spirit; it is a question of a work of sanctification...¹¹⁴

This operation of grace... consecrates, and orientates towards their mission, all the spiritual powers which Mary will use in her motherhood. It thus consecrates the person of Mary in proportion to her dignity as Mother of God. The consecration of Mary therefore has an entirely different meaning to that of Christ: He is consecrated by the hypostatic union, she is consecrated *because* of the hypostatic union of her Son, *through* the action of the Holy Spirit...¹¹⁵

.... The generative activity of Mary and her resulting motherhood are not the cause but the effect of the consecration by the Holy Spirit, as the words of the angel suggest.¹¹⁶

This strong emphasis upon the active power of the Holy Spirit enabling Mary's Divine Motherhood and all her spiritual powers is notably absent from the rest of these two doctorates. However, the similarities between their style and theological methodology and Laurentin's (1953) article on 'The holiness of Mary and the Church' are worth noting.¹¹⁷ Once again, there is only a very limited reference to the Holy Spirit, and this is explained using Aristotelian categories: Christ and the Holy Spirit are described as the efficient cause of the holiness of both Mary and the Church, as part of an analysis of the nature of holiness.¹¹⁸

Laurentin's two-volume doctorate on the iconography of the Marian priesthood was the first work on this topic to be written.¹¹⁹ It has never been published and remains the only substantial work on this topic. It has received very little scholarly attention, limited to occasional brief references to the work's existence. Given the content of his two published doctorates on the Marian priesthood, it is hardly surprising that this third doctorate reveals

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 104

¹¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 103-104

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 104. (Italics added to original text to clarify the meaning of the translation).

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 105

¹¹⁷ Laurentin, R. (1953) '*Sainteté de Marie et de l'Église*', *Études Mariales*, 11, pp. 1-27

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 11

¹¹⁹ (1951) *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique : Premier volume : Présentation. Deuxième volume : Dossier Iconographie*. Thèse complémentaire, Sorbonne, Paris. (Unpublished). Cf. Volume 1, p. 38, where Laurentin describes how, in the absence of any study on this topic, his sources were observations written about individual works. The one exception is the two and a half pages on this topic in Trens, C. (1946) *María Iconografía de la Virgen en España*. Madrid, pp. 446-448.

nothing explicitly about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit features in several of the images, and Laurentin occasionally finds this worthy of comment, there is no real analysis.

Unfortunately, the quality of many of the images used by Laurentin is far from optimal. They are often photographs of photographs that he has found in other texts, although some were taken by Laurentin himself. Written eighty years ago, Laurentin's thesis uses the methods of his time, with photographs glued into the pages by hand. The images given in Appendix 1 of this study are photographs taken of some of the better-quality images in Laurentin's thesis in the *Bibliothèque d'histoire des religions* of the Sorbonne, Paris.¹²⁰

The images which feature both Mary and the Holy Spirit fall into two distinct historical eras: the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, reflecting "the global tendency to a priestly symbolism in Marian iconography" at this time,¹²¹ and the seventeenth century, which was marked by "abundant literature about the relationship between Mary and the Eucharist".¹²² Probably the most fascinating image is a regrettably unclear image of the antependium of St Walburgis in Soest, a painting on wood, from the twelfth century.¹²³ To the left of Christ are the Virgin Mary and St. Walburgis; to his right are St. John the Baptist and St. Augustine. The clothing of Mary consists of three pieces: a tunic, a dalmatic, and a type of chasuble which is partially hidden by the symbolic figure of a dove and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Laurentin compares the attire of Mary with the episcopal dress of St. Augustine, noting that she "certainly does not have the juridical insignias of the bishop: pallium, cross and mitre" but "in place of these, she has a royal crown and the interior gifts of the Holy Spirit in her breast."¹²⁴ In keeping with the style of his thesis Laurentin refrains from reflecting upon the significance of this remarkable image, simply stating that "it is difficult to be precise about the intentions of the painter" regarding the priesthood of the Virgin Mary.¹²⁵ He does however note that this type, "the Virgin of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit", is derived from that of "Christ of the seven gifts of the Spirit", inspired by Isaiah 11:2-5.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Cf. pp. 204-207 below

¹²¹ *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique : Premier volume* p. 31

¹²² *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* p. 221

¹²³ Cf. *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique : Deuxième volume* pp. 152-155

¹²⁴ *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique : Deuxième volume* p. 153

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 155. 'Christ of the seven gifts of the Spirit' is found in two other twelfth century images presented by Laurentin: a stained-glass window in Saint-Denys, depicting Christ, full of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, crowning the Church and removing the blindfold covering the eyes of the synagogue (pp. 44-45), and an image from the *Bible de*

Two further images from this era connect Mary and the Holy Spirit and Laurentin's lack of reference to the Holy Spirit when describing them is striking. The first is a twelfth century stained-glass image from Flumm, Germany, portraying the Virgin Mary in chasuble and dalmatic overshadowed by the Spirit,¹²⁷ about which Laurentin only comments upon her attire. The second is an astonishing thirteenth century fresco in the vault of the Church of Kleranta (in the Diocese of Bressanone, Italy).¹²⁸ Laurentin's commentary on this remarkable image focuses the fact that Mary, standing upright, is carrying a host in each hand, "elevating the host like the priest does when pronouncing the Agnus Dei before giving communion" with a pope, a bishop and a king kneeling in front of her, in the place of communicants. Perhaps because of this striking aspect of the image, which embodies the text of Pseudo-Epiphanius describing Mary as "priest and altar who has given to the world the bread of life",¹²⁹ Laurentin does not reflect upon the fact that Mary is presented as offering the host to the Trinity, with the Spirit depicted under the traditional form of a dove placed between God the Father and the infant Jesus.

The final two images which connect Mary and the Holy Spirit date from the seventeenth century. The first, a painting of Pentecost by Charles Le Brun (1619-1690),¹³⁰ is part of a planned series of twelve paintings for the chapel of the *Séminaire Saint-Sulpice* commissioned by Olier to depict the priesthood of the Virgin in her different mysteries, and is the only remaining painting of the four which were completed.¹³¹ Given the extent of Olier's devotion to the priesthood of Mary,¹³² it is not surprising that Louis Tronson (1622-1700), the second successor of Olier as superior at Saint-Sulpice, would describe Olier's desire for a representation of Pentecost showing the Holy Spirit coming fully upon Mary "and through her to the apostles, to make it clear that she had the fullness of the apostolic spirit, and that it is in her and by her that we receive the spirit of priesthood and of the true religion."¹³³ While Laurentin spends more time reflecting upon this image than any other, he focuses upon the historical circumstances of the painting and does not consider its theological implications. This is also the case with the final image to be considered, a remarkable engraving by Herman

Saint Bertin de Saint-Omer of the Virgin Mary in chasuble and dalmatic, within a Jesse tree, with Christ and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (pp. 164-165).

¹²⁷ Ibid. pp. 162-163. Cf. Appendix 1 (a) p. 204 below

¹²⁸ Ibid. pp. 282-283. Cf. Appendix 1 (b) p. 205 below

¹²⁹ Cf. *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* pp. 26-30, where Laurentin discusses this first recorded reference to Mary as Virgin Priest, explaining that it is unclear which Epiphanius the author of the text in question is and stating that all that can be concluded is that the text is from the 7th or 8th century.

¹³⁰ Cf. Appendix 1 (c) p. 206 below

¹³¹ *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique. Premier volume* p. 12.

¹³² Cf. *Maria, Ecclesia, Sacerdotium* pp. 278-280, 341-385

¹³³ *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique : Deuxième volume* p. 81, from Tronson's *L'Esprit de M. Olier*. MS from Saint-Sulpice, Rue de Regard, Paris 6. Volume 2, p. 164 (undated)

Weyen (1638-1699) of the “Heavenly Priesthood of Mary”, which depicts Mary as elevating the chalice at the altar, as at the moment of the epiclesis, with the Spirit, in the form of a dove hovering over the altar.¹³⁴ Laurentin makes no mention of the presence of the Spirit in the image, focusing rather on the caption beneath the image which insists on Mary acting “not as a priest but as mediatrix”, which he attributes to the artist’s “fear of misunderstanding and censors”. Once again Laurentin demonstrates a historical rather than theological focus; a prudent approach given the suspicion surrounding his subject matter.

During his doctoral studies most of the articles Laurentin published were related to the Marian priesthood. A significant exception to this is his (1950) presentation to the *Congressus Mariologico-Marianus Internationalis* on the history of the title Co-redemptrix,¹³⁵ where, striving to be as objective as possible,¹³⁶ Laurentin gives a thorough account of the development of the use of the terms Redemptrix and Co-redemptrix, illustrating how the former is of much older usage than the latter. In this text the Holy Spirit is only mentioned in the concluding sentence, where Laurentin describes the Spirit’s work “slowly maturing controversial doctrines in the Church under the direction of the magisterium.”¹³⁷

Court traité de théologie mariale (1953)

On completing his doctoral studies in 1953 Laurentin took up a post as Professor of Theology at the *Université Catholique de l’Ouest* in Angers. He describes Mariology at this time as “a closed discipline, scorned by theologians, little open to ecumenism, which needed to be brought out of its quarantine.”¹³⁸ However, works which would come to be regarded as part of the Marian *ressourcement* movement were already emerging by 1953 when Laurentin’s *Court traité de théologie mariale* was published.¹³⁹ Unlike the liturgical, biblical, ecumenical and patristic movements, Marian *ressourcement* did not begin in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. The start of the movement is usually located in the years immediately following the Second World War, although Laurentin locates its origins a few years prior to this, with Stanislas Lyonnet’s (1902-1986) writings in the late 1930s.¹⁴⁰ Using the insights of the movements which preceded it, and in contrast to the privilege-centred approach of the Marian

¹³⁴ Ibid. pp. 106-109. Cf. Appendix 1 (d) p. 207 below

¹³⁵ Laurentin, R. (1951) ‘*Le titre de Corédemptrice : Étude historique*’, *Marianum*, 13, pp. 396-452

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 423

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 426

¹³⁸ *Mémoires* p. 243

¹³⁹ Laurentin, R. (1953) *Court traité de théologie mariale*. Paris: P. Lethielleux. This was translated into English, with minor changes: Laurentin, R. (1956) *Queen of Heaven: A short treatise on Marian Theology*. Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 250

movement, Marian *ressourcement* highlighted the relationship between Mary and the Church, and Mary's integral role in Scripture and salvation history, thus preparing the ground for the ecclesologically rooted Mariology which would characterise *Lumen Gentium*.

Laurentin's *Court traité* draws together in an accessible form the findings of works which had already been written.¹⁴¹ This significant, relatively small work, of just over one hundred pages excluding appendices, written to be accessible to the informed non-specialist reader, anticipated key Marian questions and concerns of Vatican II. Ten years before the conciliar debates, the concluding chapter of Laurentin's *Court traité* asked "should a treatise *de Maria* be considered as part of a treatise *de Ecclesia*, or vice versa?", and having demonstrated the pros and cons of each approach, affirmed "the need to keep Mariology at the point where it proves most fruitful, evenly balanced between Christology and Ecclesiology."¹⁴²

Laurentin also pre-empted conciliar concerns in his use of the work of theologians from a range of Christian traditions (Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran) to demonstrate how both Catholics and Protestants have rediscovered Mary via Scripture:

In the sixteenth century, Protestants and Catholics were too ready to agree about the supposed 'silence of Scripture' concerning the Virgin: a pretext for the former to reject mariology altogether, and for the latter to develop a parascriptural mariology. It is time to explode this obstinate and pernicious slogan. It is already losing force, since, for some time now, Protestants have been rediscovering Mary *through* Scripture, while Catholics are rediscovering her *in* Scripture.¹⁴³

With this Scriptural emphasis, Laurentin not only enables ecumenical dialogue, but uses a very different approach to Mariology to prevailing norms. The early twentieth-century manuals of Mariology followed a 'scientific' approach, ordered around a central 'principle'. This principle was usually the Divine Motherhood but alternatives included the plenitude of grace,¹⁴⁴ the bridal maternity of Mary,¹⁴⁵ and Mary as archetype of the Church.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ In his *Mémoires* (p. 251) Laurentin describes how his *Court traité* "casually assembled the first knowledge: beacons which illuminated anew texts which had been trivialised".

¹⁴² *Court Traité* (1953) pp. 108, 111 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* pp. 129, 133)

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 34 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 37) In a footnote to the text quoted Laurentin refers to recent works by E. Hoskyns (Anglican), F.-M. Braun (Catholic), F. Quiévreux (Protestant), A. G. Hebert (Protestant), H. Sahlin (Lutheran) and S. Lyonnet (Catholic).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Müller, A. (1951) *Ecclesia-Maria: Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche*. Freiburg: Paulus-Verl

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Scheeben, M. J. (1946-1947) *Mariology*. 2 Volumes. London: Herder. Scheeben has a novel concept of Mary's *Gottesbräutliche Mutterschaft*, "an untranslatable expression, meaning a motherhood that involves the fact that she is the bride of God". (Graef, H. (2009) *A history of doctrine and devotion*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p. 372)

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Semmelroth, O. (1964) *Mary, Archetype of the Church*. Dublin: Gill and Son. These are the three theologians providing alternative 'fundamental principles' highlighted by Thomas Thompson in his (2017) '*Recovering Mary's Faith and Her Role in the Church*' in Cavadini, J. and Peters, D. (eds.) *Mary on the eve of the Second Vatican Council*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 55-78, p. 64

Laurentin clearly illustrates the problems with allowing one principle to determine the rest of Mariology:

What was God's fundamental design for Mary? To choose a mother and raise her to perfection? To associate a creature with all his work of salvation? To raise at the side of God-become-man all the resources of grace that woman has to give? To provide the Church, the new Eve, with a perfect type? These are all disputed answers.¹⁴⁷

Asserting that the deductive method is too ambitious since its starting point is the divine intention which cannot be known with certainty, Laurentin maintains that we "should proceed from the complex data of Revelation to the divine intention that they manifest, not from these intentions that are beyond us to the data we already know."¹⁴⁸ Replacing the prevailing logical-deductive order for a chronological-salvific one emphasizes relationality, as is demonstrated by Laurentin's declaration that *Theotokos* "is not a 'first principle' from which all can be deduced (like geometry from a postulate); but a *personal relationship* which requires all the rest".¹⁴⁹ Moreover, with a Pneumatological reference which is unusual for Laurentin's pre-conciliar works, he stresses the role of the unpredictable workings of the Holy Spirit in the life of Mary, describing how the "logic of the mystery of Mary is not the logic of a theorem but that of a free destiny, open to the sometimes unexpected orientations of the Spirit."¹⁵⁰

Stefano de Fiore's (1933-2012) assessment of the significance of Laurentin's *Court traité* is worth quoting: "his Treatise distinguished itself with a prodigious originality amongst those which were published in the first half of the twentieth century."¹⁵¹ However, although Laurentin's methodology differed significantly from the dominant approach, it is important to note that it was not entirely unique in this respect. Guitton, who had tried, unsuccessfully, to initiate a conversation with Laurentin about the Virgin Mary while they were prisoners of war together,¹⁵² later published the treatise he had begun working on while in captivity, which Laurentin includes in the bibliography of his *Court traité*.¹⁵³ Like Laurentin's later work, Guitton's (1949) *La Vierge Marie* begins with a consideration of what Scripture reveals about Mary, followed by the development of the Church's teaching about Mary. Both texts then address aspects of what Guitton calls "the mystery of Mary",¹⁵⁴ and Laurentin describes as the

¹⁴⁷ *Court traité* (1953) p. 67 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 74)

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 75)

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 111 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 134)

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 11 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 10)

¹⁵¹ de Fiore, S. (1990) 'La mariologie au XX^e siècle : continuité et nouveauté' pp. 263-278 in Κεχαριτωμένη p. 266

¹⁵² Cf. p. 16 above

¹⁵³ Cf. *Court traité* (1953) p. 113

¹⁵⁴ Guitton, J. (1949) *La Vierge Marie*. Paris: Aubier. Translated into English as (1952) *The Blessed Virgin*. London: Burns & Oates. The third part of this text (pp. 115-157) is entitled 'The mystery of Mary', and the fourth part (pp. 161-186), 'The Blessed Virgin and the present age', continues this theme, considering Mary's current ecclesiological role.

“development of Mary’s destiny”.¹⁵⁵ Although written in very different styles, with Guitton’s manner of reflecting on Scripture contrasting with Laurentin’s more academic and concise approach, and his theological reflections on the mystery of Mary having wider philosophical and ecumenical concerns than Laurentin, the structural similarities of the two texts are beyond doubt.

Leaving to one side the question of the originality of the structure of Laurentin’s *Court traité*, it is important to consider how the chosen methodology influenced the text’s presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. As the only existing study of Laurentin’s pre-conciliar Mariology, Matthew Levering’s comparison of three Marian treatises written in the 1950s by theologians who helped to shape Vatican II is particularly noteworthy.¹⁵⁶ Levering concludes that in contrast to prominent works by Otto Semmelroth (1912-1979) and Karl Rahner (1904-1984), Laurentin’s *Court traité* gave a real place to Mary’s relationship with the Holy Spirit. Levering concludes that Semmelroth, seeing Mary primarily as a type of the Church, “generally studies the mysteries of Mary in order to show something about the Church”,¹⁵⁷ and Rahner, at least in the sermons that Levering chooses to study,¹⁵⁸ focuses so strongly on Mary exemplifying “what grace is and what humans are” that she “seems almost collapsed into theological anthropology as the most important exemplar of God’s grace, extended to all human beings.”¹⁵⁹ However, Levering maintains that because Laurentin’s account of Mary’s life and mission “follows the biblical portraiture”, it “takes us through Mary’s life”, showing “how deeply her unique relationship with the Holy Spirit marks her vocation.”¹⁶⁰

Despite the confidence with which Levering makes this assertion, an examination of Laurentin’s text leads the reader to question how justified it is. *Court traité* is divided into two parts; the first aims to describe “how the Church little by little acquired consciousness of the

¹⁵⁵ *Court traité* (1953) Part 2, pp. 66-111

¹⁵⁶ Levering, M. (2017) ‘*Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s: Presaging Lumen Gentium*’, in Cavadini and Peters, *Mary on the eve of the Second Vatican Council* pp. 133-155

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Ibid, p. 150. Levering relates how while Semmelroth describes “Mary’s and the Church’s *pleroma* of grace”, the Holy Spirit “is generally absent from Semmelroth’s quest for the ‘basic Marian principle’, even if one assumes... that grace, for Semmelroth, is appropriated to the Holy Spirit.” (pp. 139-140)

¹⁵⁸ Levering uses Rahner’s (1956) *Maria, Mutter des Herrn*, a short collection of eight sermon-conferences prefaced by an essay entitled ‘A short outline of the teaching of the faith about Mary’. Translated into English as: (1963) *Mary, Mother of the Lord*. London: Herder.

¹⁵⁹ Cavadi, J. ‘*Introduction*’ in Cavadini and Peters, *Mary on the eve of the Second Vatican Council*, pp. 1-27, p. 10. For example, Levering relates how when “describing the events of the annunciation (Luke 1), Rahner makes no mention of the Holy Spirit. Instead, he turns to a reflection on the relationship of God and the world of rational creatures”. (Levering, *Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s*, p. 146)

¹⁶⁰ Levering, *Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s* pp. 149-150

mystery of Mary”, and the second to “take up our position within the mystery itself and contemplate the development of her destiny, from the Immaculate Conception to the Assumption.”¹⁶¹ As Levering himself states, there is nothing of significant note in the first half about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit;¹⁶² it includes predictable accounts of the Spirit’s role in the incarnation,¹⁶³ and, by the 1956 edition, a reference to the Spirit’s guidance of the Church’s magisterium.¹⁶⁴ However, in the conclusion of the first section, Laurentin’s statement that each “great age has brought its new illumination, thanks to which points hitherto obscure became manifest”,¹⁶⁵ points towards the ‘new illuminations’ that would come to light following Vatican II.¹⁶⁶

The second part of the text is where the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is mentioned in several different contexts; unsurprisingly most of these are related to the incarnation. Laurentin stresses the action of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, emphasising that “we know from the Bible that the action of the Holy Spirit has sanctification for its object.”¹⁶⁷ Focused on the Holy Spirit’s role as sanctifier, Laurentin describes the Spirit’s activity as the means by which the holiness which was prefigured in the Mosaic tabernacle, “the holy place *par-excellence*, the residence of the God of holiness”, was “completely realised” in Mary.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, under the sub-heading “Transforming relationship”, Laurentin relates how the mystery of the Annunciation brought about in Mary not only a new relationship with God, “through which from *Κεχαριτωμένη* she became *Θεοτόκος*”, but a new created grace. Thus, according to Luke 1:35, “*le déploiement*” of “the virtue of the Holy Spirit, which is the principle of sanctification, has Mary herself as its object”,¹⁶⁹ with the Spirit, in enabling Mary to give birth, conferring upon her the “created imprint which is like the reverse

¹⁶¹ *Court traité* (1953) p. 12 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 10)

¹⁶² Cf. Levering, *Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s*: “In this section [the first chapter of the first part which is on Scripture] ... the Holy Spirit is rarely mentioned explicitly, although Laurentin does confirm that in Luke 1-2 ‘the operation of the Holy Spirit’ is at work.” (P. 135, referring to *Queen of heaven*, p. 19). While Levering asserts that the second part of the book “is where we should expect to find reflection on Mary and the Holy Spirit”, it could be asked whether, particularly given Luke 1-2, more of a presence of the Holy Spirit would not be expected in the chapter on Scripture. It is notable that although John 2:1-11(12) will come to play a substantial role in Laurentin’s later accounts of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is not mentioned here [cf. *Court traité* (1953) pp. 29-30, extended in *Queen of heaven* (pp. 30-32)]. Cf. pp. 117-119, 148-149, 176 below

¹⁶³ *Court traité* (1953) pp. 19-21

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *Queen of Heaven* p. 72 (a translation of the 1956 French edition); this reference to the Holy Spirit is absent from the first (1953) edition.

¹⁶⁵ *Court traité* (1953) p. 63 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 71)

¹⁶⁶ Significantly, by the fifth edition of *Court traité*, published in 1968 with the express aim of reflecting the post-conciliar situation, Laurentin highlights the Marian “Pneumatological orientation” as needing to be given its central place, (p. 99) as well as significantly developing his reflections on the divine maternity to include the role of the Holy Spirit. Cf. pp. 95-96 below

¹⁶⁷ *Court traité* (1953) p. 78 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 91)

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 92)

¹⁶⁹ The French term ‘*déploiement*’ refers to the spreading out or unfolding of the wings of a bird, a figurative reference to the Spirit which is not easily translatable in English.

side of her new relationship to the uncreated.”¹⁷⁰ In her Immaculate Conception Mary had already received supernatural graces but at the Annunciation these virtues were given “a new scope”, placing her on the level of her status as Mother of God.¹⁷¹ In the first edition of this work Laurentin speaks of Mary receiving “in her person and her spiritual being a new co-naturality with God, through which, his Son is not a stranger to her but a Son”.¹⁷² While there is no direct reference to this being the result of the action of the Holy Spirit, this is present in the 1956 edition and expanded upon in the 1968 edition.¹⁷³

Following these reflections on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation, Laurentin passes quickly through the rest of Mary’s life. Although he describes what took place at Pentecost as “very similar to the Annunciation”, for “the Spirit, who had manifested himself in secret to form the physical body of Christ, now manifests himself in startling clarity to form his mystical body”,¹⁷⁴ Laurentin does not develop this theme in any significant sense. Furthermore, while he contrasts Mary’s motherhood becoming ‘effective’ at Pentecost and ‘conscious’ in heaven, there is no reference to the working of the Spirit at Pentecost,¹⁷⁵ and in his section on Mary’s Assumption, although Laurentin stresses the power of God, “inspiring and penetrating her prayer”, there is no reference to the Holy Spirit here, as might be expected.¹⁷⁶

Thus, Levering’s claim that “Laurentin’s approach takes us through Mary’s life and shows us how deeply her unique relationship with the Holy Spirit marks her vocation”, can be questioned.¹⁷⁷ While Levering’s conclusion that Laurentin’s *Court traité* gave a much more substantial place to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit than the works chosen

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 84. It is perhaps not surprising that this complex account is modified significantly in the (1956) version *Queen of heaven* (p. 99), which explains this statement: “since to every *impression* of God upon a being there must be a corresponding *imprint* in the latter, what imprint in Mary corresponds to her divine motherhood?”

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Court traité* (1953) p. 84: “So far this grace, like that of the baptised, had enabled her to say from the depths of her soul, ‘Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:16, Gal 4:7), that is, ‘My God is my Father’. Now a new grace enabled her to say to Him she carried, whom she bore and brought up, ‘My God and my Son.’” (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 103)

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 85

¹⁷³ Cf. *Queen of Heaven* p. 99, which speaks of the “action of the Holy Spirit” being “aimed at assimilating her – co-naturalising her, in so far as that was possible – to the divine Person to whom she was to be mother.” This is developed further, with reference to Luke 1:28 and 1:42, in p. 128 of the (1968) edition.

¹⁷⁴ *Court traité* (1953) p. 94 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 113)

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. p. 99

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 101 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 122). Cf. p. 95 below on *Court traité* (1968) p. 124, where, with reference to the ‘Abba Father’ of Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6, Laurentin speaks of the Spirit “activating Mary from within.” Similarly, while in later works Laurentin will link John 2:1-11(12) with Pentecost and the Holy Spirit, there is no hint of such connections here. Cf. footnote 162 (p. 30) above, and pp. 117-119 below.

¹⁷⁷ Levering, *Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s* p. 150. However, it is a statement that could be said to be true of some of Laurentin’s later works, particularly his (2008) *Vie authentique de Marie*. Paris: L’œuvre Éditions. Cf. pp. 147-148 below

to be studied by Rahner and Semmelroth is justified, it is important to highlight the parameters of Levering's study, and the limitations of only comparing three texts. In his *Die Mutter des Herrn*, published in 1955 but written in 1942-1943,¹⁷⁸ Romano Guardini (1885-1968) like Laurentin, emphasises the importance of a Scripturally-based approach to Mary, the results of which he describes as surpassing "all the miracles of legends and all the superlatives of an eloquent piety", for "Scripture is much richer than we imagine."¹⁷⁹ Guardini's reflective approach to Scripture, and particularly the central place given to Pentecost in Mary's life, lead him to much deeper reflections upon the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit than are found in Laurentin's *Court traité*.

Guardini describes "the event of Pentecost as crucial" in Mary's life: "If the moment of the Annunciation determined the rest of her existence, the same must be said of the descent of the Holy Spirit" where she "received the true knowledge" and the strength to live it,¹⁸⁰ the Spirit having broken the limits of her being and conferred upon her a power beyond comprehension.¹⁸¹ Understanding Mary's condition as being "always that of a provisional non-understanding, in view of a future which must bring the solution and the accomplishment", Guardini sees the Annunciation as filling her previous desire for the coming of the Messiah and opening a new period of faithful waiting.¹⁸² With striking eschatological language, he describes how this culminates in "the illumination of Pentecost", which revealed a "new mystery", to be lived in "the ardent waiting of the End to come."¹⁸³

Guardini's meditative approach to Scripture results in his presenting Mary's life as divided into three eras by the life-changing descent of the Spirit at the Annunciation and at Pentecost. The important role given to the Holy Spirit in his Marian theology supports Levering's thesis that a Biblically based Mariology tends to a greater awareness of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit than a doctrinal approach. It also illustrates the potential richness of a meditative, contemplative approach to this subject, which is strongly supported by another

¹⁷⁸ Guardini, R. (1955) *Die Mutter des Herrn*. Würzburg: Werkbund Verlag. French translation: (1961) *La Mère du Seigneur*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf

¹⁷⁹ Guardini, *La Mère du Seigneur* pp. 17, 14

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 53-54

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ibid. p. 63. This theme is also present in Guardini's (1940) *Der Rosenkranz unserer lieben Frau*, translated into English: (1998) *The Rosary of Our Lady*. Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press. Cf. Guardini, *The Rosary of Our Lady* pp. 72, 126, 128.

¹⁸² Guardini, *La Mère du Seigneur* p. 59

¹⁸³ Ibid. pp. 59-60

significant text of the Marian *ressourcement* movement, Hugo Rahner's (1951) *Maria und die Kirche*.¹⁸⁴

Gérard Philips (1899-1972) acclaimed Rahner's text, "founded upon little-known knowledge of patristic and medieval thought", as "a beautiful example of a *theologia cordis* in which dogmatic soundness does not hinder devotion but reinforces and nourishes it".¹⁸⁵ Like Semmelroth's (1950) *Urbild der Kirche*,¹⁸⁶ the focus is on Mary and the Church, but while Semmelroth's principle aim was to demonstrate the variety of ways in which Mary can be seen as archetype of the Church,¹⁸⁷ Rahner began from the attributes or titles of Mary, each chapter being dedicated to one particular aspect of Mary's being and mission. For each of these, a variety of patristic and mystical medieval writings are quoted illustrating a wide range of ways in which Mary can be seen as intimately related to the Holy Spirit. Comparing Laurentin's *Court traité* with Rahner's more contemplative approach reveals that although Laurentin's emphasis upon Scripture allows Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit to be highlighted, this occurs both less frequently and with limited further reflections than when compared with an approach rooted in patristic and medieval mystical writings.

It is important to note the originality of both H. Rahner's and Guardini's texts amongst the Marian treatises of the 1950s, where the theme of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit tended to be far from prominent. In later years Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) would become an advocate of "pneumatological mariology",¹⁸⁸ "christopneumatological Mariology"¹⁸⁹ and "pneuma-christological Mariology",¹⁹⁰ but his acclaimed (1955) *Maria, Moeder van de verlossing* had minimal reference to the Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹ Alongside a few brief customary remarks and an insubstantial page on "Mary's Pentecost",¹⁹² the only unpredictable mention of the Holy Spirit is in describing Mary in "her *anawah*, her poverty and lowliness" as

¹⁸⁴ Translated into English, as (1961) *Our Lady and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd

¹⁸⁵ Phillips, G. (1963) 'Mariologie et Œcuménisme', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 39, pp. 122-136, p. 133

¹⁸⁶ Würzburg: Echter. English translation: (1964) *Mary, Archetype of the Church*. Dublin: Gill and Son

¹⁸⁷ This is clearly demonstrated by the titles of the three parts of the text: 'The Archetype of the Church', 'Mary as Archetype of the Church that brings Salvation', and 'Mary as Archetype of the Co-Redeeming Church'.

¹⁸⁸ Schillebeeckx, E. (1994) *I am a happy theologian: Conversations with Francesco Strazzi*. London: SCM Press, p. 62

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 61

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Schillebeeckx, E. and Halkes, C. (1993) *Mary: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. London: SCM Press, pp. 25-29

¹⁹¹ (1955) *Maria, moeder van de verlossing. Religieuze grondlijnen van het Maria-mysterie*. Haarlem: Gottmer. This was a revised edition of his earlier (1954) *Maria, Christus' mooiste wonderschepping. Religieuze grondlijnen van het Maria-mysterie*. Antwerpen: Apostolaat van de Rozenkrans, which was translated into English as (1964) *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*. London: Sheed & Ward

¹⁹² Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* pp. 98-99

having been overshadowed all her life by the Holy Ghost, acclaimed in the *Veni Creator* as *Pater pauperum*, the Father of the lowly.¹⁹³

The Holy Spirit has a more prominent place in Max Thurian's (1921-1996) *Marie, mère du Seigneur: figure de l'Église*, written in 1962.¹⁹⁴ Thurian, a Protestant minister and sub-prior at the ecumenical community of Taizé, based his work upon Scripture, and like Laurentin in his *Court traité* finds natural opportunities to refer to Mary and the Holy Spirit when recounting and reflecting upon certain Scriptural passages (notably Luke 1-2 and John 2, 16 and 19). Although a Protestant choosing to write about Mary and the Church in the early 1960s is notable, there is little in what Thurian says about Mary and the Spirit that is not predictable from the context.¹⁹⁵

Louis Bouyer's (1957) *Le trône de la Sagesse: Essai sur la signification du culte marial* adds a further dimension to a review of the Marian writings of the 1950s.¹⁹⁶ A Lutheran minister who was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1939, Bouyer was extremely influenced by Russian Orthodoxy. In his memoirs he recounts how, as a seminarian in Paris in the 1930s, an attraction to the liturgy caused him to frequent the Orthodox *émigré* churches, where he befriended Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944) and Evgraff Kovalevsky (1905-1970),¹⁹⁷ and came under the influence of the enigmatic self-styled "the monk of the Eastern Church", who persuaded him to privately receive chrismation while continuing as a member of the Lutheran church.¹⁹⁸ Russian theology had a lasting impact upon Bouyer, who stressed the influence of Bulgakov's Sophiology upon his own two trilogies "which are not without similarities with those of Bulgakov", for they were also "impregnated with a search for wisdom."¹⁹⁹ Bouyer's trilogy on God's creative and salvific work begins with *Le trône de la Sagesse*, which contains a chapter on Mary and the Spirit.²⁰⁰ Alongside expected themes resulting from reflection on Acts

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 45

¹⁹⁴ Translated in English as (1963) *Mary: Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church*. London: The Faith Press, and (1964) *Mary, Mother of all Christians*. New York: Herder & Herder

¹⁹⁵ The only unexpected reference comes in the conclusion to the text, a litany of prayers recalling God's power at work in Mary, where the response to each reflection is 'Come, Creator Spirit'. (Cf. Thurian, *Mary: Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church* pp. 189-191)

¹⁹⁶ Paris: Cerf. Translated into English as (1960) *Woman and man with God: An essay on the place of the Virgin Mary in Christian theology and its significance for humanity*. London: DLT

¹⁹⁷ Later to become Bishop Jean-Nectaire, hierarch of the Western Rite Diocese, now known as the Orthodox Church of France.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Bouyer, L. (2015) *The memoirs of Louis Bouyer*. Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, pp. 66-75. Bouyer describes the "monk of the Eastern Church" as "a French Benedictine who had made his profession at Farnborough and had theoretically gone over to Russian Orthodoxy, but I wonder (and I suspect that he wondered all his life himself) what religion he did, in fact, belong to." (p. 66)

¹⁹⁹ Bouyer, L. (2005) *Le métier de théologien. Entretiens avec George Daix*. Geneva: Ad Solem Éditions, pp. 210, 212.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Bouyer, *Woman and man with God* pp. 175-190

1:14 and Luke 1:35, Bouyer takes time to discuss whether Mary can be called 'Spouse of the Holy Spirit',²⁰¹ and what both Mary's and our participation in the Holy Spirit mean, highlighting the difference the Eastern and the Western theologies of the Holy Spirit make in how this question is approached.²⁰² Bouyer's reflections on both of these points go beyond anything found in Laurentin's *Court traité*, with Bouyer's evaluation of the title 'Spouse of the Spirit' prefiguring a theme which will occur frequently in Laurentin's later writings.²⁰³

When then, can be concluded about Laurentin's presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in his acclaimed *Court traité*? As Levering argued, Laurentin's Biblical focus and his tracing the development of Mary's life provided a natural setting for a greater place to be given to the Holy Spirit than in some influential contemporaneous works. However, Laurentin was far from alone in the 1950s in pointing towards the significance of the Spirit for Marian theology, with Guardini giving more of a place to Pentecost than Laurentin; H. Rahner demonstrating the contribution of the patristic and mystical traditions, and Bouyer demonstrating the rich tradition to be found in Russian theology. Moreover, as will be illustrated in following chapters, when the place given to the Holy Spirit in *Court traité* is compared with that of Laurentin's later writings, the extent of the development that this theme underwent is indisputable.

While the methodology of the *Court traité* was unusual for the 1950s, its content was not distinctly original. As Laurentin later reflected, it "illuminated anew texts which had been trivialised",²⁰⁴ and expressed in accessible terms the richness of the Marian tradition of the Church. The ecclesial and scholarly commitment which Laurentin demonstrated in *Court traité* also marked his next 'project': an extensive study of the apparitions in Lourdes in 1858 to the fourteen-year-old St. Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879).

Lourdes

Towards the end of his doctoral studies Laurentin was asked by Pierre-Marie Théas (1894-1977), Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, to present a theology of Lourdes at the International Mariological Congress of 1954 marking one hundred years since the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. At this time Laurentin was not known as a Marian scholar and was recommended by chance to Mgr Théas for this work by a Benedictine who

²⁰¹ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 177-178

²⁰² Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 179-190

²⁰³ Cf. pp. 182-184 below

²⁰⁴ *Mémoires* p. 251

had been a prisoner of war with him.²⁰⁵ Laurentin often had a sense of being more called than making a personal choice; this is most striking in his work on apparitions, about which he declared: “Apparitions, despite myself, for better or for worse”:²⁰⁶

It was not I who choose apparitions... Personally, I did not feel the need. ... I had never been a pilgrim to Lourdes... In an unexpected way, Mgr Theas engaged me in this task.²⁰⁷

This inauspicious start was to be the beginning of Laurentin’s ground-breaking work on apparitions, which he approached with characteristic attention to detail. Harris recounts how Laurentin’s six-volumed *Lourdes: Histoire authentique des apparitions* (1961-1964) “judged the veracity of witnesses, dated texts, and finally fixed a chronology of the apparitions that is difficult to gainsay”, and his seven-volumed work, co-edited with Bernard Billet, *Lourdes: Documents authentiques*, “provides an exacting documentary parage that runs from Bernadette’s childhood in the 1940s through to her departure to the convent in Nevers in 1866.”²⁰⁸ Laurentin would later reflect that “Lourdes required more than twenty years”, and describe how “the need for truth led me to write thirty volumes”, for “it was not possible to be serious apart from at this price.”²⁰⁹ His report for the 1954 Congress was enlarged to become the short *Sens de Lourdes*,²¹⁰ his first best-seller, which led to his encyclopaedic *Documents authentiques* and *Histoire authentique*.²¹¹

The Holy Spirit is conspicuously absent in *Sens de Lourdes*. Only the Spirit’s guidance of the Church’s magisterium merits a passing mention: when referring to the pontifical definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Laurentin asserts that “Our Lady does not add to this authority, which is that of Christ and of the Holy Spirit speaking by the Instrument of the Infallible Magisterium.”²¹² It is notable that, in Laurentin’s summary of the “progressive

²⁰⁵ Cf. Perrier, J. (2019) ‘*Sous le manteau de la Vierge*’, *Études Mariales*, 73, p. 171

²⁰⁶ *Mémoires* p. 331

²⁰⁷ Laurentin, R. (2005) *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui : Est-ce elle ? Que veut-elle dire ? Édition revue et augmentée*. Fayard: Paris, p. 12

²⁰⁸ Harris, R. (1999) *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the secular age*. London: Penguin books, pp. 20-21, referring to (1961-1964) *Lourdes: Histoire authentique des apparitions. Tomes 1 –6*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, and (1957-1966) *Lourdes: documents authentiques. Tomes 1-7*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux. (Laurentin co-edited *Documents authentiques* with B. Billet: Laurentin edited the first two volumes alone, then worked with B. Billet on volumes 3-6, and Billet edited volume 7 alone. Cf. Laurentin, R. (1966) ‘*Bulletin marial*’, *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 50, pp. 496-545, p. 530)

²⁰⁹ *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui* pp. 41, 12

²¹⁰ (1955) Paris: Éd. Lethielleux. Translated into English as (1959) *Meaning of Lourdes*. Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds

²¹¹ Demonstrating his concern to address as wide an audience as possible, Laurentin also oversaw the creation of an LP ‘*Naissance de Lourdes*’ (released in 1958 for the centenary of the apparitions), which, with the voice of the young actress Brigitte Fossey, was acclaimed as “a great success.” Cf. Simiz, *René Laurentin (1917-2017)* p. 810.

²¹² *Meaning of Lourdes* p. 50. Cf. p. 30 above where a similar situation is found in the first (historically focused) half of Laurentin’s *Court traité*, and p. 26 above describing Laurentin’s *Le titre de Corédemptrice*.

development of the apparitions”, there is no mention of the “sound like a wind” reminiscent of that accompanying the descent of the Spirit in Acts 2:2, which marked the first apparition,²¹³ nor is there any reflection on Mary’s unconventional self-designation as ‘the Immaculate Conception’.

Similarly, in the over two thousand pages of *Histoire Authentique des Apparitions* Laurentin does not reflect upon the ‘sound like a wind’, although the synopsis of Bernadette’s accounts of the events of the first apparition on 11th February 1858 make it clear that ‘*comme un coup de vent*’ was present in four of the five accounts of the apparition.²¹⁴ He does however, consider in some depth the meaning of the words of 25th March 1858, the French versions of which all state “*Je suis l’Immaculée Conception*” with the exact formulation of the Patois (the local dialect used in the apparitions) having numerous different renditions. Demonstrating the complexity of the problem of arriving at an agreed text in Patois, Laurentin presents thirty-one opinions spanning fifty-five years before arriving at the conclusion that according to the Occitane school the formulation was *Que sòi er’ Immaculada Concepcion*, while for the Fébus school it was *Que soy era Immaculade Councepciou*.²¹⁵ He considers whether Bernadette could have known these words, concluding that her clear and constant assertion that she did not was affirmed by the fact that these words would not have yet entered into Patois since preaching and prayer took place in French.²¹⁶ However, as Laurentin stresses, what is of significance is not whether Bernadette knew the words, but the fact that the expression itself was new to all who heard it:

We say that Mary *is* conceived without sin, we speak of her immaculate conception. Never is it said, never would it be dreamt of to say that she *is* the Immaculate Conception. ... The Virgin Mary is not her conception, as she is not her birth, or her assumption....

The astonishing formula was disconcerting to such an extent that the devout themselves could not ordinarily understand it. Therefore, during the years 1858-1859, it is rare that these words are repeated as Bernadette had spoken them.²¹⁷

In his reflections on the meaning of this phrase Laurentin considers a range of linguistic

²¹³ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 24-27

²¹⁴ Laurentin, R. (1961) *Lourdes : Histoire Authentique des Apparitions : Volume 1, Structure des Témoignages, État de la Question*. Paris: P. Lethielleux, pp. 46-47. Moreover, Bernadette’s use of the phrase ‘*uo rumor coumo u cop de bént*’ struck Abbé Pomian as being reminiscent of Acts 2:2. Cf. *Récit authentique des apparitions* pp. 32, 42, 81. Cf. p. 155 below.

²¹⁵ Laurentin, R. (1964) *Volume 6 : Les Dernières Apparitions* pp. 96-97. Cf. Laurentin, R. (1978) ‘*Aquero ou la théologie négative de Sainte Bernadette*’, *Foi et Langage*, 4, pp. 261-268

²¹⁶ Cf. *Volume 6 : Les Dernières Apparitions* pp. 100, 103

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 103

possibilities, concluding that it is “a winged formula (*une formule ailée*) that is destroyed in nailing it to a metaphysical or linguistic beam.”²¹⁸ If he was aware at this time of St. Maximilian Kolbe’s (1894-1941) interpretation of the phrase as indicating the close connection between Mary and the Holy Spirit, Laurentin did not refer to it, although in later writings Laurentin will frequently refer to Kolbe’s struggle to try to find a way to express that Mary was “in some sense” the Holy Spirit.²¹⁹

Laurentin concludes his two-thousand paged *Histoire Authentique des Apparitions* by identifying the key aspects of the message of Lourdes. As Perrier unambiguously states, these final twenty pages are “rather banal”, with the work of historical and textual criticism being so dominant that “it left little leisure for a more intuitive reading of the event.”²²⁰ Laurentin identifies four aspects of the “meaning of Lourdes”: poverty, prayer, penitence and ‘I am the Immaculate Conception.’²²¹ The Holy Spirit is not mentioned for any of these. As will be discussed below, this is in sharp contrast to his later works, where Lourdes is described as “a sign and a work of the Holy Spirit”,²²² which has been “a place of outpourings, of charisms.”²²³

Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2 (1957)

While continuing his research into Lourdes, Laurentin also produced an acclaimed study of the Lucan infancy narrative, *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*, which placed him firmly within the *Nouvelle Théologie* movement of the mid-twentieth century.²²⁴ Like his later *Jésus au temple, mystère de Paques et foi de Marie en Luc 2, 48-50*,²²⁵ it was published in *Études Bibliques* by the renowned *l'École biblique de Jérusalem*, and was described as making “a deep impact”,²²⁶ with Laurentin showing himself to be a “competent exegete”.²²⁷ Contemporary reviews, in both French and English journals, found much to praise, including Laurentin’s mastery of the immense literature on the subject,²²⁸ and it being the first detailed examination of Luke 1-2 by

²¹⁸ Ibid. p. 104

²¹⁹ Cf. pp. 184-185 below

²²⁰ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 172

²²¹ *Volume 6 : Les Dernières Apparitions* pp. 266ff. The same text is also the concluding section of Laurentin’s (1966) *Récit authentique des apparitions*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux (pp. 254-272)

²²² Laurentin, R. (1977) *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps*. Lyon: Chalot, p. 133

²²³ Ibid. p. 135. Cf. pp. 153-154 below

²²⁴ Laurentin, R. (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*. Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie

²²⁵ (1966) Paris: Libraire Lecoffre

²²⁶ Cf. O’Carroll, M. (1982) *Theotokos: A theological encyclopaedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Wilmington, Delaware: M. Glazier, p. 215

²²⁷ Benoit, P. (1958) ‘*Structure et théologie de Luc I-II par René Laurentin*’, *Revue Bibliques*, 65, pp. 427-432, p. 427. Pierre Benoit’s words are echoed by Daniel Doré in his (2019) ‘*René Laurentin et les études bibliques*’, *Études Mariales*, 73, pp. 181-185, p. 183

²²⁸ Cf. Benoit, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II par René Laurentin* p. 431

a Catholic exegete.²²⁹ Descriptions included it being “well planned and executed, sober, cautious, detailed, clear, yet abounding in its own complexities”,²³⁰ and “an exciting demonstration of typological methodology”, “thoroughly instructive and tantalizingly enlightening”.²³¹ Alongside these remarkable accolades, reservations were expressed about aspects of Laurentin’s exegesis, principally concerning the subjective nature of some of Laurentin’s views, such as Johannine influence upon Luke,²³² the overstrained evidence for some of his typologies,²³³ and his “thickly sown symbolisms”, which by their very nature challenged Laurentin’s stress on the historicity of the Lucan infancy narrative.²³⁴ Despite these criticisms, it is clear that the work made a significant impact in New Testament studies in the 1950s.

Noting how theologians often unconsciously add to texts, “projecting their private perceptions” upon them, “as children project upon the upholstery in their bedrooms the fantastic richness of their imagination,” Laurentin is clear that his aim is to produce a straightforward “analysis of the text, according to its sources and milieu.”²³⁵ He focuses on literary structures, concluding that the literary genre of Luke 1-2 is characterised by a dual framework: historical and midrashic. At the historical level, Mary’s being the sole witness of the Annunciation and the explicit statement about her memories (2:19,51) are taken as evidence for her being, either directly or indirectly, “the first source of what is essential in the account”.²³⁶ The Old Testament passages which shape how the account is presented, particularly Daniel 9 and Malachi 3,²³⁷ are described as enriching the account, creating a polyphony rather than a simple, clear and distinct melody.²³⁸ Laurentin finds in the midrashic dimension of the account, witness to “the divinity of ‘Christ the Lord’ and ‘Son of God’, according to the flesh from Mary, Daughter of Sion and eschatological tabernacle”,²³⁹ concluding that for Luke “the theology of the divinity of Jesus is mainly discovered through a

²²⁹ Cf. Coppens, J. (1957) ‘L’Évangile de l’Enfance : A propos de l’ouvrage de René Laurentin’, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 33, pp. 729-735, p. 735

²³⁰ Ceroke, C. (1958) ‘René Laurentin, Structure et théologie de Luc I-II’, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 20, pp. 272-277, p. 273

²³¹ Danker, F. (1959) ‘Structure et théologie de Luc I-II by René Laurentin’, *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 30, pp. 392-393, p. 392

²³² Ceroke, René Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* p. 277

²³³ Cf. Goulder, M. D. (1958) ‘Structure et théologie de Luc I-II by René Laurentin’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 9, pp. 358-360, p. 359

²³⁴ Goulder concludes his review by asking: “...the more thickly sown symbolisms are seen to be, the more unlikely it becomes that these details are also historical, and historicity is for him of the essence. ... Has Laurentin not cooked the goose he most cherishes? When he has eaten his symbolic cake, will he not find that the historical one is gone also?” (Ibid. p. 360)

²³⁵ *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* p. 7

²³⁶ Ibid. p. 19

²³⁷ Cf. Ibid. pp. 43-63

²³⁸ Cf. Ibid. p. 117

²³⁹ Ibid. p. 163

theology of the Virgin who appears as the place of this residence, personal realisation of the Daughter of Zion and type of the Ark of the Covenant.”²⁴⁰

Given the content of Luke 1-2, Laurentin could hardly refrain from referring to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. He describes how the Holy Spirit “in Scripture in general” and “very precisely in Luke 1-2” is referred to as an action of God, and relates how Luke 1:35 adds to the thought expressed by Matthew 1:18-20 as he recounts how the Holy Spirit’s presence above Mary was akin to that of “the beginning of the first creation in Genesis 1:1”.²⁴¹ This is following parallels between Genesis 1:1-2 and Luke 1:35 found in St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Rupert of Deutz (c1075-1129),²⁴² although Laurentin does not refer to any precedents for this comparison, nor indeed to Genesis 1:2, with its explicit mention of the Spirit of God “moving over the face of the waters”. In contrast, Laurentin’s later (1968) edition of *Court traité*, not only connects Luke 1:35 and Genesis 1:2, together with the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2, but refers to this notion of “new creation” of Luke 1:35 as being found in Eastern texts on the *Katharsis* of Mary.²⁴³

Laurentin notes that Elizabeth, speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit, describes the honour given her of a visit from “the mother of the Lord” (Lk 1:43), not, as would be more logical, the visit *of the Lord*, and that the joyous leaping of John the Baptist (which Luke 1:15 indicates is a response to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the precursor) is given as a consequence of the greeting *of Mary* (Lk 1:41; cf. 1:44: ‘your greeting’), not of the presence of the Messiah.²⁴⁴ Alongside these commonly found themes, Laurentin refers to “the analogy of formulas which express the manifestation of the Spirit upon Mary at the Annunciation at the origin of the life of Jesus, and the manifestation of the Spirit upon the assembly of the apostles reunited with Mary (Acts 1:14) at the origins of the life of the Church”; both Luke 1:35 and Acts

²⁴⁰ *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* p. 162. It is significant that *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* is dedicated to André Robert (1883-1955), Old Testament Professor at the Institut Catholique, described by Laurentin as “mon maître”. Laurentin was highly influenced by his “procédé anthologique”, which understood the Bible as progressing “in a poetical manner by comparisons and symbolical explanations of images, figures and people”. (Laurentin, R. (2012) *Marie Source Directe de l'Évangile de l'Enfance*. Paris: Éditions François-Xavier de Guibert, p. 213. Cf. Annex 3 ‘Le procédé anthologique, clef du développement de la révélation’, pp. 207-213, and *Hommage à la Prof. Cettina Militello* p. 453, where Laurentin describes how most of Robert’s work was destroyed in the war and survives through copies of his student’s notes.

²⁴¹ *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* p. 78

²⁴² Cf. Boss, S. J. (2000) *Empress and handmaid: On nature and gender in the cult of the Virgin Mary*. London: Cassell. pp. 84-85. Boss recounts how this “comparison of the Virgin at the Annunciation with the waters of chaos at the creation of the world is one which has appeared intermittently during the history of Christian mystical thought.” (p. 84)

²⁴³ *Court traité* (1968) pp. 137-138. Cf. p. 95 below. Laurentin also reflects upon this in his (1982) *Les évangiles de L'enfance du Christ. Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes, exégèse et sémiotique – historicité et théologie*. Paris: Desclée, pp. 512, 524. Cf. p. 131 below.

²⁴⁴ *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* pp. 149-150

1:8 use the verb *επέρχομαι*, relating how the Holy Spirit “will come upon” and “has come upon”.²⁴⁵ However, although the connection between the Annunciation and Pentecost will become an oft-repeated and important aspect of Laurentin’s post-conciliar Mariology, here it is only given space in a footnote. There is no indication that Laurentin is motivated by a particular interest in the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.

This conclusion is backed up by the obscure nature of the only connection made between Mary and the Spirit in addition to the conventional and predictable references outlined above. In an appendix considering Mary’s virginity in Luke 1-2 and its links to the Bible and the prevailing culture, Laurentin refers to a commentary of Rabbi Nathan which takes up the tradition that Moses abstained from conjugal relations after encountering God in the burning bush.²⁴⁶ In the light of this belief, Rabbi Nathan relates how when Zipporah learnt that the Spirit had come upon the elders in Numbers 11, Zipporah, the wife of Moses, cried out “woe upon the wives of these men”, for after this experience they would separate from their wives.²⁴⁷ Laurentin describes the light that these ideas from the Jewish milieu bring to Luke 1:35, and while acknowledging that Luke did not make an explicit connection, sees “the continence which a relationship with the Shekinah commands” as revealing a reason for Mary’s virginity *post-partum*.²⁴⁸ Given the tangential nature of the argumentation, it is unsurprising that this theme does not feature in Laurentin’s later writings.

Concluding comments

This examination of Laurentin’s pre-conciliar writings has revealed that during this stage of his life and theological career Laurentin did not seek to examine the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in any significant way. While Laurentin’s rootedness in Scripture and tradition naturally led to some reflection on this relationship, there is nothing to indicate that it held a particular importance for him. In contrast to Levering’s assertion that Laurentin gave more of an emphasis to Mary and the Holy Spirit than key contemporary writers, it has been shown how, unlike Bouyer, Laurentin gives no place to Sophiology, compared with Guardini he gives a limited role to Pentecost, and unlike H. Rahner he rarely turns to the insights of mystical theologians. While these lacunae are only to be expected, as no theologian can be

²⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 107

²⁴⁶ Laurentin (p. 181) refers to both Vermes, G. (1955) ‘*Quelques traditions de Qumrân*’, Cahiers Sioniens, 9, p. 42, and Bloch, R. (1954) ‘*Quelques aspects de la figure de Moïse dans la littérature rabbinique*’, Cahiers Sioniens, 8, pp. 245, (127), note 84, to demonstrate how widespread this tradition was.

²⁴⁷ *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* p. 181, referring to *Sifré Nomb* (12,1) in Horovitz, 99, p. 98, lines 5-15

²⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 182. While there is no explicit reference to the Holy Spirit in Laurentin’s account, as he speaks of the *Shekinah* and later ‘the Power of the Most-High’, the comparison with the Spirit of Numbers 11 creates an implicit reference.

expected to cover all possible approaches to a subject, it is important to situate Laurentin's pre-conciliar writings about Mary and the Holy Spirit in relation to both works of other theologians in the 1950s and Laurentin's post-conciliar writings on the same themes, such as his numerous works on the theology of Lourdes and the various editions of his *Court traité*, as will be turned to in the following chapters.

Chapter 2: Vatican II

Vatican II was a turning point in both Laurentin's theological career and in his approach to Mariology. Although his writings during the conciliar years rarely touch upon the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, the years Laurentin spent absorbed in conciliar debates and in communicating these as a journalist had a significant impact upon his later writings, including those about Mary and the Holy Spirit. This chapter will begin by examining Laurentin's influence upon Vatican II before turning to explore the presence of the Holy Spirit in his conciliar Marian writings. By demonstrating the considerable role Laurentin played in shaping *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII on 'The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church', his status as one of the key Marian theologians of the twentieth century will be established, and thus justification for the significance of research on his writings about Mary.

The conciliar debates about the Virgin Mary were so intense and convoluted that attempting to assess the precise influence of any of the key contributors would inevitably be a complicated task. The question of Laurentin's contribution is particularly problematic. Not only did his writings during the Council influence the Council fathers, but his accounts of the Council and its Marian theology influenced how *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII and the process by which it was finally arrived at have come to be understood. Laurentin also contributed personally to the conciliar Marian debates, both directly and indirectly. Added to this already complex situation are questions concerning the extent to which Laurentin appropriated other people's ideas and the difficulty of finding out what really took place, given the secrecy of the Council and the myriad number of levels on which conversations and debate occurred.

An important starting point is the recognition that Laurentin's influence was relative, and that the two prime influences upon the Marian theology of Vatican II were undoubtedly Gérard Philips and Charles Balić (1899-1977). Not only were they the most prominent voices in the conciliar Marian debates, but, following the momentous vote of 29th October 1963, where, by a narrow majority of only 40 votes,²⁴⁹ the decision was made to incorporate the teaching on the Blessed Virgin into the document on the Church, they were entrusted with writing the new

²⁴⁹ Of the 2,193 votes, 1,114 were for the incorporation of Mary into the document on the Church and 1,074 against, with 5 null votes. Laurentin later described how the assembly "ordinarily unanimous by more than 90 per cent, found itself for the first time divided into two almost equal parts, about her whom the text at that time called *Fauxtrix unitatis* (promoter of unity)." (1980) '*The Second Vatican Council and Marian Devotion*', Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, African Seminar Box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 68

chapter. This would go through five drafts before arriving at the version which, after revision by the doctrinal commission, was finally accepted.²⁵⁰

Alberigo and Komonchak recount how Philips distinguished “two opposed and irreconcilable approaches” to Mary of the Council fathers, epitomised by his own approach and that of Balić. While Philips and the “adherents of positive theology started with the earliest documents and traced the gradual development of the history of salvation”, Balić and the “defenders of the ‘privileges’ of our Lady began at the other end and mainly analysed the glorious titles of the Virgin as described in the encyclicals of the recent popes.”²⁵¹ Although Balić was moderate in his ‘high’ Mariology compared to some,²⁵² for example, knowing that there was not papal support for new Marian definitions he did not seek these, his approach, exemplified by his initial schema on the Blessed Virgin, was shaped by the emphases and approach of the privilege-centred Marian movement. Laurentin clearly identifies the difference between these two methodologies, describing the impact of the “ecclesiological perspective” which “calls for a change in the scale of values” with Marian theology no longer being envisaged as “an effort to exult the Virgin by adding new flowers to her crown, but to grasp the meaning of her role and of her being in relationship to the Church in the communion of saints.”²⁵³

Philips depicts *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII as a compromise text, which led to “neither exuberant joy nor bitterness” but brought “an honourable peace for all”.²⁵⁴ However, despite the concessions made by both sides of the debate, the text is clearly shaped by an ecumenically sensitive approach where Scripture is given priority over traditions which have developed over the centuries. The road that Vatican II would travel in order to move to this approach from that of Balić’s first schema would be “long and strewn with ambushes”.²⁵⁵ As will be illustrated, Laurentin was a significant presence on this journey, deeply embroiled in the Marian debates, placing himself firmly against the methodology and aims of the Marian

²⁵⁰ Cf. Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. (eds.) (2004) *History of Vatican II: Volume IV*, Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 52

²⁵¹ Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. (eds.) (1997) *History of Vatican II: Volume II*, Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 481. Cf. Philips, G. (1968) *L’Église et son mystère au deuxième Council du Vatican, Tome II* Paris: Desclée, pp. 207-11

²⁵² Cf. Congar’s comparison of Balić’s approach and Gabriel Roschini’s *La cosiddetta questione mariana di Laurentin* published against Laurentin’s *La Question mariale*, in Congar, Y. (2012) *My journal of the Council*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, p. 401 (journal entry for 29th October 1963)

²⁵³ Laurentin, R. (1965) *La Vierge au Concile*. Paris: p. Lethielleux, p. 62

²⁵⁴ Philips, G. (1967) *L’Église et son mystère au IIème Council du Vatican, Tome I*, Paris: Desclée, p. 63

²⁵⁵ Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II: Volume II*, p. 481

movement whilst being very aware of the importance of strategic planning and diplomacy to achieve as close to the desired end as possible.²⁵⁶

The preparatory doctrinal commission

In his *Mémoires* Laurentin relates how he came to be appointed as one of the thirty-five experts of the preparatory doctrinal commission of Vatican II. Balić had already named him as a member of the Mariological Academy of Rome, despite his youth (he was not yet forty).

Laurentin describes his “powerful friend who had great ambitions for me”:

Without exaggerating, he judged my doctrine capable of ‘enlightening the Church of France’. He wanted me to be promoted to the episcopate and had spoken of this to the apostolic nuncio, who had approached me at the start of the council...²⁵⁷

He had an esteem and a sympathy for me which I regret having let down, my works being orientated rather differently. Fr Balić’s Mariology was within the Marian Movement which sought to promote the glories of Mary: new devotions, new titles, privileges, feasts, and dogmas in the generous line of *De Maria nunquam satis*.²⁵⁸

Balić included Laurentin’s name in the list of Mariologists which had he produced for Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani (1890-1971) for experts of the preparatory doctrinal commission to be chosen from.²⁵⁹ Laurentin recounts how John XXIII, while Cardinal-Patriarch of Venice, had greeted him during the celebrations following the consecration of the underground basilica at Lourdes, recognising Laurentin from his *Court traité*, from which Laurentin deduced that the Pope’s admiration for this work led to his being chosen from Balić’s list.²⁶⁰

Despite their later clashes, at the end of the preparatory session Balić was still seeking the advice of Laurentin, turning to him as he sought to understand Marian mediation.²⁶¹ However, before long, on finding that Laurentin was determined to highlight the problems inherent within his Marian schema, this trusting relationship was severed with Balić accusing Laurentin

²⁵⁶ Cf. Laurentin’s advice to Maurice Pourchet (1906-2004) encouraging him to be both prudent and measured, not risking “unilateral interventions” but supporting “the balanced orientations of the schema” and contributing to their improvement, recounted in Fouilleron, J. (2014) ‘*Mémoire du concile Vatican II. Le journal inédit de Maurice Pourchet, évêque de Saint-Flour*’, *Revue d’histoire de l’Église de France*, 100, pp. 385-402, p. 397, quoting Arch. Dioc. De Saint-Flour, fonds Pourchet, *Lettre de Maurice Pourchet à René Laurentin, 25 août 1964*.

²⁵⁷ *Mémoires* p. 416

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 386

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 388

²⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 389-392

²⁶¹ Laurentin recounts their conversation at a meal he had invited Balić to, where the conversation was “both profound and constructive”, with Balić “full of questions”, including repeating several times “‘To Jesus by Mary’, what does that mean?” Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 416-417

of betrayal,²⁶² referring to him as “my friend and a little enemy”.²⁶³ As Laurentin later reflected, “one of his major helps” had become his “principal adversary”.²⁶⁴

Laurentin was particularly concerned that the Council’s teaching about Mary would further ecumenism. Congar describes him as speaking “strongly and courageously” about the need to declare first of all what we hold in common, particularly with the Orthodox, and then to develop from this, doing so “as far as possible in terms of the Bible and tradition, avoiding all that does not have serious and ancient roots in tradition.” Congar’s journal entry continues by recounting how, in response, Balić reproached Laurentin, albeit “with good humour, to some extent combined with a kind of clowning”, for “giving in to ecumenism – in which, judging by the evidence, Balić himself does not believe.”²⁶⁵

The influence of Laurentin’s writings upon the Council

Although he had not initially been named as an expert of the Council, having personally invested so much in the preparations for it, Laurentin travelled to Rome in October 1962 for its opening, without having any specific role. However, apparently due to Balić’s intervention, within weeks he was named a Council expert, and so, as he described it, acquired his ‘passport’ to enter St Peter’s.²⁶⁶ On the recommendation of Mgr Pierre Hauptmann (1912-1971) founder of the Press Office of the French Bishops’ Conference, *Le Figaro* asked Laurentin to write for them,²⁶⁷ and so, from June 1963, Laurentin assumed a ‘double role’, as expert and as journalist, covering the Council daily for *Le Figaro*, during the era of “*Figaro* triumphant”.²⁶⁸ He quickly became an influential commentator, and is one of the “five names which constantly reoccur for the one looking at ‘the great French chroniclers/commentators of the Council’: Yves Congar, Henri Fesquet, René Laurentin, Robert Roquette and Antoine Wenger.”²⁶⁹

²⁶² Cf. Lauret, B. (ed.) (1988) *Fifty years of Catholic Theology: Conversations with Yves Congar*. London: SCM Press, p. 63: “Laurentin was among the consultants, but he did not in fact do what Balić expected of him: I recall a day when I was sitting in front of them and Balić said to him, ‘You’ve betrayed us.’”

²⁶³ *Mémoires* p. 418

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 416

²⁶⁵ Congar *My Journal* p. 53 (journal entry for 21st September 1961)

²⁶⁶ Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 407-408. De Lubac’s journals of the council note how Balić “regained his smile”, recounting how he had succeeded in having Laurentin named among the *periti*. [Lubac, H. (2007) *Carnets du Concile. Tome I*. Paris: Cerf, p. 238, journal entry for 9th October 1962].

²⁶⁷ Pierre Ouvrard (1928-2002), then rector of the *Université catholique de l’Ouest* in Angers where Laurentin had taught since 1953, recounts how Laurentin accepted this role “without enthusiasm”, and Laurentin himself reminisces how it “was not by personal initiative that I became a professional journalist.” Cf. Ouvrard, P. (1990) ‘*Lettre de Monseigneur Pierre Ouvrard*’ in *Κεχαριτωμένη* pp. 13-15, p. 14, and *Remise de la Croix d’Officier de la Légion d’honneur* p. 3

²⁶⁸ Cf. Poncelet, Y. (2012) ‘*Les grands chroniqueurs français du Concile*’, in Barbiche, B. & Sorrel, C. (eds.) *La France et le Concile Vatican II : Actes du colloque de La Courneuve, 9 novembre 2012*. Paris: P.I.E. Peter Lang, pp. 77-100, p. 86, referring to *Le Figaro* (2007) *Deux siècles d’histoire*. Paris: Armand Colin, p. 309

²⁶⁹ Poncelet, *Les Grands Chroniqueurs Français du Concile* p. 78

Laurentin's short and well received *Court traité* may have led to Laurentin being invited to become an expert of the preparatory doctrinal commission, but it does not appear to have had much direct influence on the development of the Marian teaching of Vatican II. Similarly, it is unlikely that Laurentin's other pre-conciliar texts influenced the Marian theology of the Council in any significant manner; Laurentin certainly does not suggest that this is the case. It is worth noting that, as well as Balić assuming Laurentin would share his Marian outlook, Laurentin's presence led Congar and de Lubac to share their concern that there would be a Marian 'move'.²⁷⁰ Both of these facts indicate that, despite his *Court traité*, Laurentin had the reputation of promoting a Mariology diametrically opposed to that which would come to characterise his conciliar contributions.

It was with his *La Question Mariale*, published in September 1963 just weeks before the vote on a separate Marian schema, that Laurentin's Marian writings began to have a significant influence. As he recounts, this was "the neuralgic point of the debate",²⁷¹ where personal reactions were "still instinctive rather than understood".²⁷² Laurentin was unequivocal in asserting the path to be taken, describing the necessary transition from the Marian movement to the new conciliar currents, placing Mary integrally within the Church and giving Marian devotions solid foundations. He was fully aware how controversial his book would be, facing what Congar described as the "insidious propaganda" which "up to the last minute, presented the addition of the chapter on the Mother of God to the schema on the Church" as lessening the honour of Mary.²⁷³

The strength of the reaction against *La Question Mariale*, which Ratzinger would later describe as a "magisterial presentation",²⁷⁴ and as having "a unique significance",²⁷⁵ testifies to its influence. Given the intensity of feelings involved, it was only to be expected that it would elicit "much agitation" and "fairly violent contradictions."²⁷⁶ Two books were published almost immediately against the so-called 'Marian question', one by Joseph de Aldama (1904-1980) in Spanish, and another, by Gabriel Roschini (1900-1977), in Italian. The latter was published by

²⁷⁰ Congar, *My Journal* P. 19 (journal entry for 6th Sept 1960): "We also spoke of Laurentin (WILL there be a mariological move at the council? Fr de Lubac says that Fr Balić dreams of nothing else.)"

²⁷¹ *Mémoires* p. 425

²⁷² (1965) 'The Virgin Mary in the Constitution on the Church', *Concilium* 1, pp. 79-86, p. 79

²⁷³ Congar, Y. (1964) *Report from Rome: The Second Session of the Vatican Council*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, p. 81

²⁷⁴ Ratzinger, J. (2005) 'Thoughts on the place of Marian doctrine and piety in faith and theology as a whole', in von Balthasar, H and Ratzinger, J. (2005) *Mary: The Church at the Source*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp. 19-36, p. 21

²⁷⁵ Ratzinger, J. (1965) 'Das problem der Mariologie', *Theologische Revue*, 61, pp. 72-82, p. 72

²⁷⁶ Philips, *L'Église et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican*, Tome II, p. 210

the Holy See, for whom Roschini was an expert, and which, much to the affront of Laurentin, Roschini arranged to be distributed to all the members of the experts of the doctrinal commission, including Laurentin, who, like everyone else, found one in his place.²⁷⁷

While Philips concluded that the truth “seems to be found somewhere between the two theses” of Laurentin and Aldama (who asserted that the excess of enthusiasm Laurentin writes against were not present), it is notable that in what Philips says directly following this statement he appears to be more in agreement with Laurentin’s position than that of his opponents. Philips certainly had an irenic attitude to this conflict, reflecting that a “crisis may become beneficial, like a storm which clears the atmosphere and allows us to breathe purer air.”²⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, Laurentin was less inclined to a conciliatory reading of the situation, and was determined to receive an apology from Ottaviani, under whose authority the doctrinal commission was held.²⁷⁹

In contrast to the controversy which irrupted over his *La Question Mariale*, Laurentin’s writings made a discrete but significant impact upon the wording of Pope St. Paul VI’s (Giovanni Battista Montini, 1897-1978) declaration, “*in Concilio* but *extra Concilium*”,²⁸⁰ that Mary is ‘Mother of the Church’ in his closing address at the end of the third session of the Council on 21st November 1964, in what Ratzinger describes as “a deliberate response to the clearly brewing crisis”.²⁸¹ Indicating the esteem in which his writings about Mary were held, Laurentin refers to his article which addressed the confusions inherent in the title ‘Mother of the Church’,²⁸² describing how Paul VI, “corrected meticulously the ambiguities of the title which had been the object of my critique”, responding “point for point to the difficulties raised in my article”.²⁸³

²⁷⁷ *Mémoires* pp. 425-427. Cf. de Lubac, *Carnets du Concile, Tome II* (p. 79, journal entry for 4th June 1964), where de Lubac recounts how Laurentin told him about Roschini’s book and how Roschini had “excused himself to Laurentin, saying that he had been as moderate as possible”. Laurentin himself omits any reference to this apology.

²⁷⁸ Philips, *L’Église et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican*, Tome II, p. 212

²⁷⁹ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 448

²⁸⁰ Laurentin, R. (2001) *La consécration aujourd’hui à Dieu par Marie. 2^e édition*. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, p. 66. Laurentin robustly describes this personal act of Paul VI as, “neither conciliar nor collegial”. (Ibid.)

²⁸¹ Ratzinger, J. (1988) ‘*On the position of Mariology and Marian spirituality within the totality of faith and theology*’ in Moll, H. (ed.) *The Church and Women: A compendium*. Ignatius Press; San Francisco, pp. 67-79, p. 71. Ratzinger emphasises how “the new, Church-centred mariology was (and largely remained) alien to those Council Fathers who had advocated Marian spirituality.” (Ibid.)

²⁸² (1964) ‘*La Vierge au Concile*’, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 48, pp. 32-46

²⁸³ *Mémoires* p. 430. Cf. (1964) *La Vierge au Concile* pp. 36-50 and Laurentin, R. (1989) *La Proclamation de Marie “Mater Ecclesia” par Paul VI*, in *Paolo VI e i problemi ecclesiologicali al concilio, Colloquio internazionale di Studio, Brescia 19-20-21 settembre 1986*, Rome: Studium, pp. 310-390

Laurentin's writings about the Council

Laurentin's role of 'observer participant', combining the responsibilities of a Council expert and the work of a journalist, was unsurprisingly challenging, since "the expert needs to be discrete; the journalist to be indiscrete."²⁸⁴ At the height of his reputation as a journalist, with many of the Council Fathers reading his article each day in *Le Figaro* about the meeting of the previous day, Laurentin's position as a Council expert became problematic.²⁸⁵ Even if, as Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) relates, newspaper accounts were often "only abridged versions" which could be "'purified' from all hostile aspects" and "stripped of their militant function in the debate",²⁸⁶ the fact that Laurentin's articles were so widely read would almost inevitably have been the cause of contention in such a highly charged atmosphere. Thus, Congar relates how he was told that Cardinal Amleto Giovanni Cicognani's (1883-1973) letter about the discretion imposed on the *periti* was likely to have been aimed at people like Hans Küng (1928-2021) and Laurentin,²⁸⁷ and following the Council Laurentin learnt that he had been denounced as a journalist, with the claim that he had informed Fesquet (correspondent for *Le Monde*) about the debates of the doctrinal commission, an insinuation which Laurentin found "absurd on every level."²⁸⁸ Laurentin also relates how in retrospect he came to understand why he had been feared:

During the council I did not understand the worried reaction, sometimes brutal, of a minority (within or outside the council), from whom I received severe blows. I did not realise the extent to which it was dangerous to be an expert become journalist of a daily newspaper... Today I understand better the fears of the time.²⁸⁹

While it is possible that there were other causes for animosity towards Laurentin than his journalism,²⁹⁰ Laurentin himself saw it as the key stumbling block to his contributions being accepted and indicates that this was behind his decision to "change tactics" in the Conciliar debates. He recounts his reaction following an incident when he was only given the possibility to speak last in a meeting of experts concerning Mary and was then interrupted:

I gave my notes to bishops who would echo them with all their authority, or to Monseigneur Philips and to his two experts, the prelates Moeller and Thils. In this

²⁸⁴ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 174. Cf. Laurentin's reflections on this experience in his (1989) 'L'information au Concile' in *Le Deuxième Concile du Vatican (1959-1965), Actes du colloque organisé par l'Ecole Française de Rome, (Rome, 28-30 Mai 1986)*. Collection de l'École Française de Rome 113. Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, pp. 359-378, p. 361

²⁸⁵ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 428

²⁸⁶ Chenu, M.-D. (1995) *Notes Quotidiennes au Concile*. Paris: Cerf, p. 11

²⁸⁷ Congar, *My Journal* p. 491 (diary entry for 2nd March 1964).

²⁸⁸ *Mémoires* p. 448

²⁸⁹ *Eglise qui vient* p. 16

²⁹⁰ Cf. pp. 53-54, 57-58 below on Laurentin's manner of engaging with others and his appropriating their ideas.

way I obtained better results. For my own tranquillity and for my position in the Church, I would have been well advised to proceed in this way from the beginning.²⁹¹

Similarly, Congar relates a conversation he had with Laurentin in June 1964, asking him why he neither spoke nor seemed to want to, to which Laurentin replied that every time he had spoken, he had been reported to the Holy Office.²⁹²

Laurentin's *L'Enjeu du Concile* was published shortly before the opening of the Council.²⁹³ It situated Vatican II within Church history by relating it to previous ecumenical councils and was widely used by the press; Laurentin describes it as having often been plagiarized.²⁹⁴ The structure of this volume, a historical account ('*chronique*') followed by an appraisal ('*bilan*'), was also used in subsequent volumes, published at the end of each session. Poncelet highlights the fact that unlike the books by Congar, Fesquet, and Rouquette about Vatican II, Laurentin's did not consist of "a re-ordered arrangement of articles he had written" but "a re-elaboration" in the same successful style as *L'Enjeu du Concile* with "a keen sense of popularisation and of identifying the stakes, a level-headedness without lacking originality, a clear and simple vocabulary."²⁹⁵

Both Laurentin's five-volumed *L'enjeu du Concile* and his *La Vierge au Concile*, already published by 1965,²⁹⁶ have been well received as historical records of the Council, with the eminent historian Philippe Levillain (1940-2021) describing *L'enjeu du Concile* as "an unequalled wealth of information for a study of the conciliar procedure."²⁹⁷ Given this, it is hardly surprising that the account of the evolution of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII given at the *Société Française d'Études Mariales* of 1965 was written by Laurentin.²⁹⁸ Alberigo and Komonchak's *History of Vatican II* often refers to Laurentin's *L'enjeu du Concile*, as well as using his articles for *Le Figaro* and *La Vierge au Concile* as reliable sources. Similarly, Philips credits Laurentin with careful calculations, concluding that the figure he gives for the number of bishops who responded to the consultation before the Council saying that Marian devotion and dogma could not be absent ("nearly six hundred") are "probably the closest to the reality"

²⁹¹ *Mémoires* pp. 428-429

²⁹² Cf. Congar, *My Journal* P. 536 (diary entry for 2nd June 1964)

²⁹³ (1962) Paris: Éditions du Seuil

²⁹⁴ Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 406-407

²⁹⁵ Poncelet, *Les Grands Chroniqueurs Français du Concile* p. 86

²⁹⁶ (1965) *La Vierge au Concile*. Paris: Éditions Lethielleux

²⁹⁷ Levillain, P. (1975) *La Mécanique Politique de Vatican II : La Majorité et l'Unanimité dans un Concile*. Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, p. 21. Levillain's reputation is demonstrated by the fact that Daniélou allowed him to consult his personal archives and de Lubac wanted him to keep his. (Cf. *Ibid.* p. 30)

²⁹⁸ (1965) *Genèse du texte conciliaire, Études Mariales*, 22, pp. 5-23

of the “fairly different” figures of the various commentators.²⁹⁹ Likewise, when Philips refers to the calculations of “zealous commentators”, the footnote refers only to Laurentin’s *La Vierge au Concile*.³⁰⁰

Laurentin’s personal influence

Although Laurentin’s accounts of Vatican II have helped determine how the proceedings of the Council have been understood, it is with Laurentin’s personal influence that his greatest contribution to the Council is to be found. While it is important to take into account Étienne Fouilloux’s (1941-) cautionary note that “the assessment of the role of theologians from North West Europe who came to Rome for the council is too often given a legendary character, either golden or black”,³⁰¹ and that as “Congar’s journal highlights clearly, the expert, however well-known, has nothing of a *deus (or diabolus) ex machina* as is sometimes evoked”,³⁰² the extremely significant influence of the conciliar experts is undeniable.³⁰³

Thus, while situating himself, as an expert in the “great assembly”, as “nothing but a small wheel, without power nor a right to vote”, Laurentin stresses the “considerable authority” which theologians enjoyed:

Pre-conciliar theology... had led discretely to fundamentally coherent research... return to the sources (the Bible and the fathers), deepening of the mystery of the Church and the history of salvation, liturgical and missionary renewal, and ecumenism. Some bishops had not had the time to assume these discrete acquisitions. At that time... they scarcely left their dioceses where they were available for their priests and their flock. Absorbed by their local functions, they deeply desired to be open, in conformity with the spirit of John XXIII. They were hungry for information founded on doctrine. ... The theologians were therefore very much consulted. In this new and open climate, I was invited many times to give presentations to entire episcopates, notably African. ... I had excellent contacts and an ongoing collaboration with the experts and bishops of the most active episcopates: Belgium, Canadian, Chilean – with the Cardinals Suenens, Lèger and Raúl Silva Henríquez.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁹ Philips, *L’Église et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican, Tome II* p. 208, referring to *La Vierge au Concile* pp. 8ff

³⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 243, referring to *La Vierge au Concile* pp. 97 and 185

³⁰¹ Fouilloux, É. (1989) ‘Comment devient-on expert à Vatican II ? Le cas du Père Yves Congar’ in *Le Deuxième Concile du Vatican (1959-1965), Actes du colloque organisé par l’Ecole Française de Rome* pp. 307-331, p. 307

³⁰² Ibid. p. 330

³⁰³ Küng comments that the Council theologians were “the authors of by far the majority of the speeches by bishops”. Küng, H. (2003) *My struggle for freedom: Memoirs*. London/New York: Continuum, p. 390

³⁰⁴ *Mémoires* pp. 412-413. Küng relates a similar experience, (Cf. Küng, *My struggle for freedom* p. 355), as do du Lubac’s diaries, Cf. Wicks, J. (2009) ‘Further light on Vatican II’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 95, pp. 546-569, p. 554

It is significant that Laurentin notes his influence upon non-French bishops, while, according to Congar, Chenu, de Lubac and others, the French bishops were using their experts “infrequently and badly”, and their contribution to the council was marked by “mediocre preparation, unequal interest and weak organisation” which made them “a poor figure in comparison with their counterparts from Belgium, the Netherlands and above all, Germany”.³⁰⁵ Whether or not they were appropriately consulted by the Bishops, the experts put much energy into what Congar named ‘the council of theologians’, small meetings which Fouilloux describes as “both enriching and disappointing because they were without a tangible hold on the assembly itself, at the beginning at least.”³⁰⁶ Laurentin was part of a group of just over twenty experts and bishops which was brought together by Léon-Arthur Elchinger (1908-1998) and met each Friday, including such key figures as Philips, K. Rahner, Ratzinger, Congar and Daniélou.³⁰⁷

Laurentin’s role behind the scenes at the Council in his capacity of a journalist is illustrated by a range of examples recorded in Albert Prignon’s (1919-2000) journal of the fourth session of the Council. Prignon recounts both his phoning Laurentin to persuade him to present his article for *Le Figaro* as if a contentious text on religious freedom had been accepted when it had not yet been, and his meeting Laurentin to convince him to refrain from writing an inflammatory article regarding the text on relationships with the Jewish people.³⁰⁸ Laurentin’s literary skills were also sought after, including by Patriarch Maximos IV (1878-1967), for whom Laurentin composed a letter to Paul VI on the insufficiencies of the teaching of *Casti Connubii* on procreation.³⁰⁹

From the start of Laurentin’s time in Rome for the preparatory meetings he threw himself into making connections. As Congar wrote in his journal entry for 13th-17th November 1960, Laurentin had been in Rome for three days “and has already been everywhere, seen

³⁰⁵ Fouilloux, *Comment devient-on expert à Vatican II ?* p. 326. Fouilloux refers to Congar’s journal entry for 25th August 1963 as evidence for this: “Our bishops have only held local and partial meetings. There is no overall organisation and any help they ask for from the theologians remains disorganised and haphazard.” Fouilloux notes that “Chenu, de Lubac and Martelet shared this severe point of view, but none of them saw a remedy” (*ibid.* p. 327).

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 320, referring to Congar, *My Journal* pp. 109-110

³⁰⁷ Cf. Congar, *My Journal* p. 367 (diary entry for 11th October 1963) and Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. (eds.) (2000) *History of Vatican II: Volume III*, Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 62, recounting how this group was known as ‘Conciliar Strategies’.

³⁰⁸ Prignon, A. (2003) *Journal conciliaire de la 4e Session*. Louvain-la-Neuve ; Publications de la Faculté de Théologie, pp. 56, 172

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 241. Prignon recounts how Jozef-Maria Heuschen (1915-2002), then auxiliary bishop of Liège, sought to convince Laurentin to limit the critiques written on behalf of Maximos IV to questions of procedure (*Ibid.*)

everyone.”³¹⁰ Congar also notes Laurentin’s personal engagement and commitment in the debates of the Preparatory Theological Commission:

At first, the discussion was quite tough going. Fortunately, Laurentin is brave, measured, and knowledgeable. He fights the anti-maximalist battle.³¹¹

Laurentin has been brave, though a bit naïve perhaps in what he says. He has committed himself.³¹²

Alberigo and Komonchak indicate the influence of Laurentin’s interventions, stating that the title of the draft text on Mary prepared by Balić (initially entitled *De Maria Matre Iesu et Matre Ecclesiae* and later changed to *De Maria, Matre Corporis Christi Mystici*) “appears to have been changed because of opposition, particularly from Laurentin, against the title ‘Mater Ecclesiae.’”³¹³

Congar’s forthright descriptions leave his readers in no doubt as to both his high regard for Laurentin’s capacity to contribute significantly to the Marian debates, and his irritation with what he perceived as Laurentin’s attempts to ingratiate himself. Thus, while praising Laurentin’s “very good presentation” to the working group of French bishops on the schema *De Virgine Maria*,³¹⁴ and stating that Laurentin was “if not the only one capable, at least the one most capable, of indicating how to proceed, the rocks to be avoided” for *De Beata Virgine* to be placed within *De Ecclesia*,³¹⁵ he also describes Laurentin as “increasing his tendency to worm his way in, to adapt himself, to have his plan”.³¹⁶ This ‘increase’ is all the more striking when considered together with Congar’s journal entry five months previously:

I had a visit from Laurentin who seemed to me to have become impossible: buzzing about like a bee in a bottle, planning tricks, pouncing on everything that he could make use of, everything that he can turn to his own advantage. If I did not know him, I would say: a schemer.³¹⁷

Even more revealing is Congar’s description of Laurentin’s reaction when, in a discussion on Mary as Mediatrix his “somewhat confused” contribution was interrupted by Pietro Parente (1891-1986). Congar relates how Laurentin “got the huff” and declared that if he was not allowed to speak, he would remain silent, and describes him as “terribly nervous, anxious,

³¹⁰ Congar, *My Journal* p. 23

³¹¹ Ibid. p. 54 (journal entry for 22nd September 1961)

³¹² Ibid. p. 60 (journal entry for 25th September 1961)

³¹³ Alberigo, G. and Komonchak, J. (eds.) (1995) *History of Vatican II: Volume I*, Maryknoll: Orbis. p. 258

³¹⁴ Ibid. p. 208 (journal entry for 26th November 1962)

³¹⁵ Ibid. p. 252 (journal entry referring to 12th and 13th January 1963)

³¹⁶ Ibid. p. 256 (journal entry for 6th-7th February 1963, referring to 7th February)

³¹⁷ Ibid. p. 85 (journal entry for 10th October 1962)

suspicious”, looking “from one to the other, from Ottaviani to Parente, as though he had to justify himself and wanted to be restored to grace”.³¹⁸

Philips appears to both value Laurentin’s knowledge and opinion, and at times, to find him unbearably exasperating, as Congar relates:

Laurentin was at dinner. We had to speak about the *De Beata*. This went badly. Philips rather dug in his heels. He is tired: that is only to be expected. ... He called on Laurentin to say whether he approved or disapproved of his text *De Beata*, and as Laurentin did not say yes or no, he left the dining room.³¹⁹

It is only natural that the intensity of the debates and the personal commitment involved would have become causes of tension between those holding conflicting views. This is likely to have had some impact, however minor or subconscious, upon their openness towards the contributions of the others, and upon the retrospective assessment of the contribution of others. This is indicated by Philips’ account of the clearest example of Laurentin’s personal influence upon the final text of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII: his decisive contribution to the debate on the use of the term Mediatrix.

Whether or not the text on the Blessed Virgin should include the title of Mediatrix was highly controversial; if the term had been omitted it would have been interpreted as ‘downgrading’ Mary’s status, while retaining it was equally problematic, particularly for ecumenical reasons, as it is not part of the Biblical or Patristic representations of Mary. Charles Moeller (1912-1986) records Philips’ description of how he convinced Paul VI that ‘Mediatrix’ needed to be in the text, demonstrating that having it as part of a litany “was the only solution possible at the level of the Council”,³²⁰ the title being used to illustrate how Mary had traditionally been venerated under this title and others.

³¹⁸ Ibid. p. 539 (journal entry for 3rd June 1964)

³¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 506-507 (journal entry for 13th March 1964). Laurentin also recounts this incident in his *Mémoires* (p. 427) where he attributes Philips’ anger to “the tension the Council placed Philips under” which led to the heart attack which took him from the Council at the beginning of the fourth session. Although Laurentin situates this event as occurring on “an evening in November 1963”, the most likely explanation for this is that the same event is being related, with Laurentin providing the wrong date, a theory which is supported by Doré’s lament that Laurentin’s *Mémoires* had not been attentively proof-read (cf. Doré, *René Laurentin et les études bibliques*, p. 181). Antonelle’s significant study of the Marian conciliar debates in the light of the various conciliar archives reveals the beautifully expressed letter of apology Philips wrote following this incident, describing how he “was sadly too irritated and in too poor a physical condition to arrive at a fruitful discussion” and assuring Laurentin that he “will take into account” his “judicious remarks as much as possible.” [Antonelle, C. (2009) *Il dibattito su Maria nel Concilio Vaticano II. Percorso redazionale sulla base di nuovi documenti di archivio*. Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, p. 444]

³²⁰ Cf. Antonelli, C. (1993) ‘Le rôle de Mgr Gérard Philips dans la rédaction du chapitre VIII de *Lumen Gentium*’, *Marianum*, 55, pp. 19-97, p. 89, quoting Moeller’s journal (A.C.L.G. *Cuaderno Moeller*, cod. 00023, pp. 39-40)

Although Philips does not mention Laurentin's influence, the idea of proceeding in this manner had come from Laurentin. Alongside Laurentin's lengthy account of how, through Philips, he had provided the solution to the conflict which had "threatened to divide in two the assembly",³²¹ Alberigo and Komonchak's history of Vatican II makes it clear that the proposal which was eventually endorsed had been made by Laurentin "even before the third session began".³²² Laurentin relates how his proposed solution came to be accepted:

It was urgent to find a compromise. I therefore proposed a solution... that the council *does not teach* the controversial title but *explains* in which sense (relative and diverse) it was long-established in tradition...

Monseigneur Philips adopted and developed this solution, and it was accepted without discussion or problem. ...

The title of Mediatrix was neither censured nor omitted but was given the last place among other analogous terms. It was explained according to its limits, by strict reference to 'the unique mediator' (1 Tim 2:5), too often forgotten by Catholics.

The solution went as smoothly as a letter at the post office. ... Monseigneur Philips thanked me several times for having provided this solution.³²³

While Laurentin records Philips' thanks, Philips himself omits Laurentin from his account of the Mediatrix dilemma. In his *L'Église et sa mystère au deuxième concile du Vatican* Philips devotes several pages to the debate over the use of Mediatrix and points to the work of Richard de Ridder (1921-2006) of the Christian Reformed Church, as providing clarity as to how the title could be used in a non-technical sense.³²⁴ No mention of Laurentin is to be found, leaving unanswered the question of whether it was Laurentin who brought de Ridder's work to his attention. What is clear, thanks to the well-preserved conciliar archives of both Laurentin and Philips, is that Laurentin did indeed suggest listing Mediatrix along with other titles, and that Philips replied that he would like this to be done, "as long as there are not too many titles, as each could raise further discussions."³²⁵

³²¹ *Mémoires* p. 434. Laurentin's account is given in *Mémoires* pp. 432-435, which includes a description of how his sharing was based on notes from a substantial book he was writing on the mediation of Mary, the scope of which was so vast that it was never completed. Cf. Butler's account of the pressing need for a text capable of arriving at "a virtual unanimity of votes" which contextualises the pressing need to find a solution to the 'Mediatrix dilemma'. [Butler, B. (1966) 'The Vatican Constitution on the Church, VIII The Blessed Virgin Mary', *Clergy Review*, 51, p. 197]

³²² Alberigo and Komonchak, *History of Vatican II: Volume IV* p. 56

³²³ *Mémoires* pp. 434-435. A similar account is found in Laurentin, R. (1996) 'Pétitions internationales pour une définition dogmatique de la médiation et la corédemption', *Marianum*, 58, pp. 429-446, p. 437. Antonelle's *Il dibattito su Maria nel Concilio Vaticano II* (p. 492) quotes Laurentin's letter to Philips sharing his work on Marian mediation (no. 1588 in the Philips' archives at Leuven).

³²⁴ Philips, *L'Église et sa mystère au deuxième concile du Vatican, Tome II*, pp. 264-268

³²⁵ Cf. Antonelle *Il dibattito su Maria nel Concilio Vaticano II* p. 493, where he quotes no. 1589 in the Philips archive and no. 928 in the Laurentin archive.

As well as his influence on the key contributors to the Marian debates, Laurentin's voice was also heard through others. Congar notes this particularly in the case of Sergio Méndez Arceo (1907-1992), speaking in the name of more than forty bishops from South America, who spoke on *Mater Ecclesiae* "along the lines and with the documentation of Laurentin, almost to the point of indiscretion",³²⁶ which Congar highlights by describing Laureano Castán Lacoma's (1912-2000) response on the following day as being to "Méndez (Laurentin)".³²⁷ Similarly, and with more significant results, Laurentin kept to his decision not to personally contribute to the debates but to go through intermediaries, particularly through Philips. Congar gives a straightforward description of the process at work:

We began to look at *De Beata*. There were corrections of detail proposed by Mgr Philips (Philips, seconded by Moeller, got quite a lot of Laurentin's corrections accepted: Laurentin himself did not say a word.)³²⁸

Alongside these contributions of content, according to Laurentin's *Mémoires*, though not mentioned by Philips, Laurentin also suggested a concrete method of advancing the work of the Council. Following the vote to incorporate the teaching on Mary into the document on the Church, Franz König (1905-2004) undertook to create a text with a small commission of four bishops, but the work did not progress well. Seeing that Philips would be far more gifted at writing a mediating text than the commission, Laurentin suggested this to him:

In a conflictual setting, I suggested to Monseigneur Philips, right at the beginning of November, that he write a mediating text.

"If I have time, I will try during next weekend" Philips replied.

I urged him with all my energy, for his authority was great, his balance and his Latin remarkable...

As promised, Philips wrote a schema... substantial and open, perfectible and without defects.³²⁹

However, it must be remembered that Philips may well have had this idea in mind, as Roger Aubert (1914-2009) suggests, recounting Philips' account of his tendency to produce texts once "things have become very obscure, and people begin to become tired."³³⁰

Despite Philips' apparent reticence to credit Laurentin for his contributions to the Marian conciliar debates, the sheer prolificacy of Laurentin's writings ensured his place in Philips' account of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII. The chapter in Philips' *L'Église et sa mystère au*

³²⁶ Congar, *My Journal*, p. 578 (journal entry for 17th September 1964)

³²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 580

³²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 532 (journal entry for 1st June 1964)

³²⁹ *Mémoires* pp. 422-423

³³⁰ 'Discussionne' in *La Proclamation de Marie "Mater Ecclesia"*, pp. 376-390, p. 383

deuxième concile du Vatican devoted to Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*,³³¹ is a detailed account of the process whereby the content came to be accepted, and reflections on the meaning of the text, referring to over one hundred theologians, most of whom are Philips' contemporaries. The eighty-three pages are extensively referenced and Laurentin is mentioned eighteen times, in stark contrast to other theologians, the vast majority of whom are mentioned only once, with four being the maximum number of references to other contemporary theologians.³³² Interestingly, although Laurentin's contribution to the Mariology which shaped *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII is without doubt, Philips never highlights this fact.

The conciliar archives of Philips in *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* prove that there was significant correspondence between Laurentin and Philips regarding the Marian content of Vatican II. The inventory of Philips' conciliar papers reveals that of the eighteen documents regarding *De Beata* during the theological commission of 1961, five concern Laurentin (compared with four for Balić); five of the seven Marian-related documents of the first half of 1963 are letters or articles of Laurentin, and the content of the thirty-one documents from October and November of 1963 is illustrated by the decision to divide it into four sections: Chilean, Laurentin, Butler,³³³ and 'other'. For the time related to the evolution and creation of the final text from December 1963 to September 1964, much of the early correspondence is, as would be expected, with Balić, but the archives demonstrate that Laurentin remained very much in dialogue with Philips, particularly regarding Marian mediation.³³⁴ Similarly, Philips' (1968) article *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l'Eglise Vatican II et prospective du problème* contains several references to Laurentin's works.³³⁵

The publication of Congar's journal of the Council has shed new light upon both the relationships between Council fathers and personal traits of individuals. While Congar repeatedly praises Laurentin's courage and forthrightness, on at least five occasions he writes about Laurentin appropriating the ideas of others and constantly making notes about what was being said, whether the occasion called for this or not. At first Congar had a generous

³³¹ Tome II, pp. 207-289

³³² Jean Galot (1919-2008), Joseph Hupperts (1922-2009) and Georges Jouassard (1895-1981). Despite Laurentin's five volumes *L'enjeu du Concile* not being mentioned, three of his significant books from the years directly preceding Vatican II and eleven texts (books and articles) published during the council or in the two years immediately following it are quoted.

³³³ Basil Christopher Butler (1902-1986)

³³⁴ Cf. Declerck, L. and Verschooten, W. (2001) *Inventaire des papiers conciliaires de Monseigneur Gérard Philips, Secrétaire adjoint de la Commission Doctrinale*. Leuven: Library of the Faculty of Theology (K. U. Leuven) pp. 28-29, 76, 100-103, 143-150

³³⁵ (1968) *Études Mariales*, 25, pp. 7-37. Cf. pp. 9, 10, 12, 17, 33

attitude to Laurentin's note-making, as is illustrated by his response to Philippe Delhaye's (1912-1990) criticism that Laurentin took advantage of what all the others said in order to prepare his own remarks, writing that while this could be true, "it does not matter by whom a thing is discovered and said", for, "the essential is that it should be said."³³⁶ However, a year later, when Congar himself is the object of Laurentin's note-taking, he is less accepting:

They got me to talk a little bit about everything, for about two hours. Laurentin took notes, asked questions, made me repeat what I had said so that he could note it down better. Is he preparing a book? Why does he make such an effort to get people to talk and make notes of what they say?³³⁷

By 1964 Congar is explicitly stating that Laurentin is "tiresome" in taking notes during a lunch meeting,³³⁸ and in November 1965 he relates how Laurentin knocked on his door at nine o'clock in the evening to ask him about the schema on priests which he had not yet read and had to write about for *Le Figaro*. Congar honestly recounts his reaction to this unusual situation: "I made the effort to reply amicably, but I was embarrassed by this utilitarian spirit, the sort of unabashed confidence that journalism has developed in Laurentin."³³⁹ A similarly frank journal entry is found a few weeks later, when a dozen theologians met to "anticipate theologically the period after the council and to draw up a little appraisal". Alongside acknowledging that Laurentin "presented a very solid picture of the schemas", Congar concludes "but he made notes of what the others said and asked questions: one will find all that in his articles and in his book".³⁴⁰

Congar's journal entries also reveal the unpredictability of Laurentin's behaviour. Although he often seemed intent on capturing the ideas of others, he could also appear self-obsessed:

Laurentin occasionally asked questions, but most of the time spoke forcefully and in an imperious manner without listening to anyone else. He is fully preoccupied with the small goings-on of the Council or of the Curia. I felt myself out of sympathy with him.³⁴¹

Assessing Laurentin's influence upon Vatican II

The complexity of the Marian debates of Vatican II meant that what Laurentin decided not to share also influenced the final document. In giving priority to the need to find a way through

³³⁶ Congar, *My Journal* pp. 59-60 (journal entry for 25th September 1961)

³³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 143-144 (journal entry for 3rd November 1962)

³³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 579 (journal entry for 17th September 1964)

³³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 840 (journal entry for 11th November 1965)

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 861 (journal entry for 30th November 1965)

³⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 833 (journal entry for 6th November 1965)

the impasses which threatened to stall the process of producing a text which could be accepted by all sides in the debates, Laurentin set aside some of his own work and contributions. For example, in order to enable Philips' proposition regarding Mediatrix to be smoothly accepted, Laurentin consciously "refrained from proposing amendments, despite the evidence that *Auxiliatrice* and *Adjutrix* were synonyms, being two translations of the same Greek word *boêthos* which posed a problem for translation into that language."³⁴² Led by the same conciliatory motivations, Laurentin recounts how he withdrew the Marian schema he had written once he knew that two had been produced,³⁴³ because "it was necessary to avoid a war of schemas at all costs."³⁴⁴

Laurentin's own evaluation of his contribution to Vatican II included what he later regretted not having thought of at the time. He expresses his sorrow that he noticed too late the faulty title 'The cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church',³⁴⁵ instead of which he believed 'The place of the Blessed Virgin in the Christian cult' would have been preferable, since "there is not another cult, a second cult which would be Marian", this "would be idolatry!" Laurentin confidently concludes: "If I had thought of this, this would have passed without a problem."³⁴⁶

The challenge of assessing the role of specific individuals in shaping the final texts of Vatican II is further complicated by the fact that the work of the Council was *sub secreto* and by the myriad levels on which discussions took place. Küng describes the 'Council secret' as "a sacred cow in the possession of the Curia", and relates how, although more openness towards the media developed as the Council proceeded, the official press spokesmen still had a monopoly of information and the printed documents remained *sub secreto*, "though often in vain."³⁴⁷ Laurentin describes how meetings occurred in a great array of contexts: "as well as the daily debates and plenary sessions, the Fathers met in the (secret) commissions and in innumerable groups (for study, action or exerting pressure): national, continental, gathered because of a project or an evangelical concern."³⁴⁸ Thus, as Laurentin himself relates, "innumerable meetings, working meals, meetings and telephone calls, the trace of which has only exceptionally been kept, played a role which was sometimes decisive."³⁴⁹

³⁴² *Mémoires* p. 435

³⁴³ One by Butler, the other by Jorge Medina (1926-2021) and Juan Ochagavia (1928 -)

³⁴⁴ *Mémoires* p. 422

³⁴⁵ For the fourth section of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII, nos. 66-67

³⁴⁶ *Mémoires* p. 438

³⁴⁷ Küng, *My struggle for freedom* p. 402

³⁴⁸ *L'information au Concile* p. 368

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

In this context journals recording the daily proceedings at the Council provide privileged access into the inside world of the Council and, as has been shown, reveal some of the interpersonal dynamics at play. Congar's journal, made public in 2002, with its numerous references to Laurentin is invaluable in this respect, while Antonelle's magisterial study of the Marian debates of the Council with reference to various archival records provides direct access to a multitude of primary sources. Although the precise influence of Laurentin upon the Marian teachings of the Council cannot be ascertained, Fouilloux's evaluation that *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII "would not have been as it is" without Laurentin is certainly justified.³⁵⁰

Having considered the many factors which complicate this assessment, it is fitting to end with Laurentin's own conclusion, acknowledging his role, but pointing towards Philips as the principal creator of not only *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII but of the Council itself:

If I sometimes worked without success or perceived too late the optimal solution of the conciliar debates, my observations, discretely transmitted during the debates, sometimes bore fruit. Such was my modest contribution to the council, of which the great doctrinal artisan was Monseigneur Philips, secretary, and arbitrator of the Commission.³⁵¹

Whilst not revealing anything about Laurentin's understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, this exploration of Laurentin's contribution to the Marian debates of Vatican II has provided valuable insights into Laurentin's character and work-ethic. As in his pre-conciliar works, Laurentin's relentless capacity for investigation is evident, with Congar's journal revealing a hitherto unknown dimension of this, namely Laurentin's propensity to exasperate others by his single-minded focus on the task in hand, coupled with his seeming unawareness of the socially acceptable limits of means to reach his desired end.

La Question Mariale (1963) and La Vierge au Concile (1965)

As will be demonstrated below, immediately following the Council Laurentin's understanding of Mary would include two new emphases: the person of Mary and the significance of the

³⁵⁰ Fouilloux, E. (2014) '*Les experts français au concile Vatican II*', in *Les théologiens français et le concile Vatican II: Colloque organisé par l'Association internationale Cardinal Henri de Lubac au Centre Sèvres, le 24 mai 2014*. Paris: Éditions Facultés jésuites de Paris, pp. 9-31, p. 29

³⁵¹ *Mémoires* p. 440. Congar is similarly effusive in his praise of Philips:

Mgr Philips... So much is owed to him! Without him the Theological Commission would never have functioned as it did function, nor would it have produced the fine texts that it did produce. He was not alone in having given these texts to the world, but he was, nevertheless the father of them. (*My Journal* p. 835, journal entry for 7th November 1965)

Likewise, Küng acknowledges Philips' unique role: "Though far from having the theological stature of a Congar, Rahner or Schillebeeckx, the short, friendly prelate surpasses them all as a tactician and formulator of consensus texts (tested by long years in the Belgian Senate)." (*My struggle for freedom* p. 350)

relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.³⁵² Laurentin's divisive (1963) *La Question Mariale* did not focus upon the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, indeed, it only contains a handful of references to the Holy Spirit. While acknowledging that there "is some justification in the reproach that the theology of the Holy Spirit has been diverted to the advantage of the Virgin Mary", Laurentin does not discuss this, he simply refers to an article by Congar in a footnote.³⁵³ Similarly, he briefly describes the tendency to build Mariology upon the myth of the "eternal feminine", which, however "purified and rightly adjusted", can frequently give rise to "metaphorico-metaphysical extravaganzas which completely swallow up the Virgin of the Gospels", turning "the Virgin Mary into an abstract and impersonal hypostasis offensive both to the theology of the humble mother of the Lord, and to the theology of the Holy Ghost."³⁵⁴ Once again, this theme is left undeveloped. Remarkably, given the strength of his critique, Laurentin quickly passes over it, declaring that it "is of only secondary importance and need not detain us longer";³⁵⁵ leaving the reader somewhat astonished by the dissonance between the force of Laurentin's critique and his swift dismissal of the subject.³⁵⁶

Laurentin's reflections on "the fundamental theme of motherhood" also refer to the Holy Spirit, including the statement that the "equilibrium and sane motivation of this filial affection will be strengthened if the close link between Mary's motherhood and that of the Church is grasped: spiritual motherhood within the mystery of Christ, a humble motherhood in the Holy Spirit who transcends and makes us pass beyond the narrow confines of our human psychology."³⁵⁷ Once again, this is very much a passing reference, with no development of the role of the Holy Spirit.

The final reference to Mary and the Holy Spirit in *La Question Mariale* is Laurentin's pastoral reflections on the "decreasing observance of Mary's month which has been so evident in the last few decades", which he notes can be viewed positively in so far as it is due to "the very

³⁵² Cf. pp. 74, 91-92, 95-96 below

³⁵³ *La Question Mariale* pp. 28, 164, referring to Congar's article in (1952) *Études mariale* 10, pp. 93 and 105 (Translation from (1965) *Mary's place in the Church*, London: Burns & Oates, p. 20)

³⁵⁴ *La Question Mariale* pp. 88-89 (Translation from *Mary's Place in the Church* p. 73). Despite the significance of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin for the popularity of this concept, no reference is made to him and his (1918) *L'éternel féminin*. [Cf. Teilhard de Chardin, P. (1968) *Writings in time of war*. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 191-201]

³⁵⁵ *La Question Mariale* p. 89 (Translation from *Mary's Place in the Church* p. 73)

³⁵⁶ Some light is shed upon this lack of critical engagement by the fact that, despite his extensive writings about Mary, Laurentin did not engage with de Chardin's writings about Mary; the only repeated refrain about de Chardin in Laurentin's works is his proposition that de Chardin's Omega point was the Holy Spirit rather than Christ "or rather both Christ and the Holy Spirit "the two hands of the Father" according to St Irenaeus." (*Science, Philosophie, Révélation. Trois voies convergentes* p. 134). Cf. p. 185 (footnote 1185) below

³⁵⁷ *La Question Mariale* pp. 90-91 (Translation based upon *Mary's Place in the Church* p. 75, with minor changes to keep the flexibility of interpretation as in the French text.)

rich liturgical season of the Ascension and Pentecost”, which call for primacy of place to be given to the Holy Spirit. On a practical note, Laurentin suggests that there “is nothing to prevent Advent from being made the Marian season of the year.”³⁵⁸

In contrast to these sporadic and seemingly incidental references to Mary and the Holy Spirit, typifying Laurentin’s pre-conciliar writings, his (1965) *La Vierge au Concile* can be seen as providing a ‘hinge’ between his conciliar and post-conciliar writings, both with respect to its content and date of composition, and to his approach to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.³⁵⁹ Published in March 1965, just months before the closure of the Second Vatican Council, *La Vierge au Concile* relates the history of the composition of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII, examines the movements which influenced it and provides a commentary on the text. About half of the book is devoted to commentary on the conciliar text, with Laurentin allowing himself significant freedom to develop the actual content of the text, as is demonstrated by the fact that over sixty pages of commentary are given on the relatively short *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII.³⁶⁰

In his commentary on *Lumen Gentium* nos. 52-53 Laurentin emphasises the Trinitarian context of the opening of this chapter, including describing how “Mary’s relationship with the Son of God closely connects her to the Trinity: she is Daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit.”³⁶¹ However, he does not reflect on the title given her by *Lumen Gentium* no. 53 of “temple of the Holy Spirit”, one of only a handful of references to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII, along with the Spirit’s role in her Immaculate Conception (no. 56), the Annunciation (nos. 63, 65) and Pentecost (no. 59). Similarly, it is striking that Laurentin’s commentary on *Lumen Gentium* no. 59 referring to Acts 1:14, Mary united in prayer with the apostles on the day of Pentecost, is limited to two sentences of commentary, in stark contrast to extensive commentaries on other sections of the text. Laurentin notes the “Biblical exactitude” with which Mary’s presence at the Cenacle is presented,³⁶² and “the analogy between the revelation of the Spirit at the Annunciation (Lk 1:35) and at Pentecost”. Stating that this is “a very fertile suggestion, and a subject for

³⁵⁸ *La Question Mariale* p. 127 (Translation from *Mary’s Place in the Church* pp. 107-108)

³⁵⁹ Paris: P. Lethielleux

³⁶⁰ *La Vierge au Concile* pp. 82-142

³⁶¹ *La Vierge au Concile* pp. 83-84. Laurentin describes how this opening points to essential truths which “situate Mary, Christ and salvation, with regard to the Trinity: The Father and his salvific ‘will’, the Son who becomes incarnate and the Spirit who interiorises the plan in humanity.” (p. 82)

³⁶² An exactitude which is strikingly absent from Laurentin’s account with its typographical error referring to Luke 1:14 rather than Acts 1:14.

research” he swiftly concludes this section, having indicated the significance of a theme that will come to be extremely important to him.³⁶³

The two areas of Laurentin’s commentary which provide the possibility of more detailed reflection on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit are on nos. 60-62 (on “the problem of mediation” and “the influence of Mary upon the Church”) and nos. 63-64 (on “Mary, type of the Church”).³⁶⁴ The first highlights the roles of both Mary and the Holy Spirit, considering each solely in relation to Christ, so that the connection between Mary and the Spirit is never mentioned. As *Lumen Gentium* nos. 60-62 does not refer to the Spirit, Laurentin’s bringing the Third Person of the Trinity into his commentary can be read as an indication of his awareness of the importance of acknowledging the Spirit’s role in salvation history and it could be argued that his not directly connecting Mary and the Holy Spirit at this juncture is not particularly noteworthy given the non-Pneumatological context.

Laurentin stresses that Mary’s influence “cannot take place apart from by the grace of Christ, and by his power, in the heavenly communion”, for there “is no place but for a mediation *in Christo*.” He then emphasises the role of the Spirit, who “fills all the earth” (Wisdom 1:7), whom Christ has sent to “remind the Church of all he has said” (John 14:26),³⁶⁵ before concluding:

We have the sense that, for Mary, the formal situation of mediation is surpassed for the most part, and gives way to something higher: a *communion-participation* in all the intentions and actions of Christ, communion and participation which exceeds that of all creatures.³⁶⁶

Having situated Mary’s ‘mediation’ within her ‘communion-participation’ with Christ, following the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* no. 62 that “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source”, Laurentin clarifies his understanding of this with reference to Mary’s ‘presence’.³⁶⁷ He

³⁶³ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 109

³⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 115-130 and 130-133

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 119

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 120

³⁶⁷ The ‘Presence of Mary’ will become a recurring theme in Laurentin’s writings about Mary, including his (2011) *Présence de Marie* (Paris: Salvator) translated (in an abridged form) into English as (2014) *Mary in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Catholic Tradition* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press). In the introduction to this text Laurentin describes the deep significance of this theme for him: “Ever since I was a young man at seminary... I was always captivated by words and texts that evoked the presence of Mary: it was like an invitation to go deeper, to discover more.” (*Mary in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Catholic Tradition* p. vii)

goes significantly beyond the content of the text he is commenting on, describing how there are times, in the life of the Church and of the believer, when the Virgin Mary plays a greater part, so that it is appropriate to call her Mediatrix.³⁶⁸ He presents three formulas to describe these moments: Mary as “the Virgin of beginnings”, “the Virgin of transitions” and “the Virgin of crosses and spiritual nights”.³⁶⁹

While the second of these naturally includes Pentecost, the prayer of which “implored the movement from the time of Christ to the time of the Church and the sacraments”,³⁷⁰ it is with the first, “the Virgin of beginnings” that Laurentin stresses a strong Pneumatological connection. Emphasising that Mary has “a particular mission for the beginning of works of grace”, Laurentin takes care to emphasise the “more fundamental place” of the Holy Spirit. He recounts how the Spirit’s role is explicitly revealed by Scripture in almost all of the Biblical moments of beginnings where Mary is present: the Annunciation; Mary’s carrying Jesus in her womb to the Precursor who would introduce his public life; Mary taking her Son to the temple for the first time; her suggesting the “first sign to inaugurate his public life”, and her presence and prayer at the birth of the Church at Pentecost.³⁷¹ Here Laurentin is developing in a structured manner reflections he made earlier in *La Vierge au Concile* in the context of the influence of the Biblical movement upon the conciliar teaching on Mary, where a wide array of themes are linked together to illustrate how Biblical studies have enriched Marian theology, including our understanding of “the Virgin of beginnings and of sorrows, the Virgin of fidelity and of the Holy Spirit”.³⁷²

Given that the text which Laurentin is commenting on (*Lumen Gentium* nos. 60-62) does not refer to the Holy Spirit, his drawing out connections between Mary and the Holy Spirit and emphasising the Spirit’s fundamental role can be seen as an example of the ‘transitional’ nature of *La Vierge au Concile*, marking Laurentin’s growing awareness of the centrality of the Holy Spirit to Marian theology. This concern is even more pronounced in Laurentin’s commentary on *Lumen Gentium* nos. 63-64, on Mary as a type of the Church. Here, the original

³⁶⁸ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 120

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 121. Very similar accounts are found in some of Laurentin’s later writings; cf. (1966) ‘*Mary in the liturgy and in Catholic devotion*’, *The Furrow*, 17, pp. 364-365, and (1987) *Une année de grâce avec Marie* p. 125

³⁷⁰ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 121

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* Laurentin tends to focus upon the description of the ‘birth’ of the Church at Pentecost, rather than at the cross as emphasised in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 766, which describes how “The Church is born primarily of Christ’s total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross”, with (no. 767), the Church being “revealed by the Holy Spirit” at Pentecost.

³⁷² *La Vierge au Concile* p. 58

text mentions the Spirit on three occasions: the overshadowing of Mary at the Annunciation,³⁷³ the members of the Church “born to her in baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God”,³⁷⁴ and the Church, which “imitating the mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit” keeps “with virginal purity an entire faith, a firm hope and a sincere charity.”³⁷⁵ In his commentary on these paragraphs Laurentin is far from constrained by their explicit content, and he develops the wide-ranging theme of Mary as “the model of the apostolate”. He describes this “rich theme, which takes us beyond any particularity”, radiating in the mysteries of Christ’s childhood, since “the Visitation prolongs in a missionary sense the coming of the Spirit at the Annunciation (Lk 1:35), the Nativity, the Presentation, and even Cana”,³⁷⁶ and concludes with an extended reflection on Mary being present wherever the Spirit is:

Mary, present to Christ and to humans, is present where the Spirit is. It is by the Spirit that she conceived the Word of God, in faith, and not according to human means; it is the breath of the Spirit which carried her across the mountains, symbols of the resistances and obstacles of this world, to Elizabeth, who will be ‘filled by the Holy Spirit’ (Lk 1:41); she is present at Calvary where Jesus ‘gives up the Spirit’ (Jn 19:30)... she is present in the Cenacle when Jesus gives the Spirit, really and no longer symbolically. She takes part in the common prayer (Lk 1:14) at the first and marvellous growth of a poor Church as the Saviour had left it in ascending to his Father.³⁷⁷

La Vierge au Concile contains two further references to Mary and the Holy Spirit which are worth mentioning.³⁷⁸ Both are occasioned by ecumenical and pastoral concerns and are found in the final chapter of the text, where Laurentin considers “the two leitmotivs” of *Lumen Gentium* “Mother of God” and “our Mother”, themes which “return at practically each step”.³⁷⁹ Alongside a passing reference in his conclusion on ‘pastoral orientations’ to the problems caused by “free constructions, unilateral and excessive, which impinge upon the role of the Holy Spirit, already so unknown”,³⁸⁰ Laurentin discusses extensively what it means for Mary to be the Mother of the mystical body of Christ, including reflecting on how it may appear to Protestants that Catholics are displacing the Holy Spirit with Mary:

Protestants, imbued with St Paul, distinguish firmly and extremely carefully, Christ according to the flesh and the resurrected Christ who is the source of life by the Spirit. ... That Catholics seem to say: Mary gave birth to Christ in the flesh and by Kenosis,

³⁷³ *Lumen Gentium* no. 63

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* no. 64

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 132

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 133

³⁷⁸ There are also straightforward references to Mary conceiving Christ by the Holy Spirit in the context of commenting on *Lumen Gentium* no. 52 which quotes the Nicene Creed (cf. pp. 82, 146) and a reference to Mary’s unique place “in the salvific destiny of Christ, from the Annunciation to Calvary and to Pentecost” (p. 64).

³⁷⁹ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 143

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 166

therefore she is the mother of the mystical body, that is for them, not only disconcerting but shocking, because grace comes from the death and resurrection of the Saviour, communicated by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Moreover, this reasoning seems to them to introduce a kind of substitution of the Virgin to the Holy Spirit, to whom they are astonished that we give so little explicit place.³⁸¹

Laurentin devotes considerable time to address this complex question of the nature of Mary's ecclesial motherhood.³⁸² He stresses that maternity is formed progressively and describes the importance of being aware of the stages in Mary's spiritual maternity, which are correlative to the grace of Christ becoming head of the mystical body.³⁸³ Pentecost occupies a central place, with, as in previous texts, Laurentin stressing the role of Pentecost in the establishment of the Church,³⁸⁴ describing how "Christ did not effectively become head of the mystical body which is the Church, until the Church was constituted as such at Pentecost, by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the transcendent soul of the mystical body."³⁸⁵ Similarly, quoting *Lumen Gentium* no. 53, Laurentin describes how, following the Annunciation and Calvary, and before Mary's heavenly motherhood, Pentecost is "a new stage" in her maternity, where the "mystical body is vitally established by the mission of the Spirit", with "the prayer and charity of the Virgin" contributing effectively "'to the birth of the faithful in the Church' according to the doctrine of St Augustine."³⁸⁶

Concluding comments

This study of Laurentin and the Second Vatican Council has demonstrated two key facts. Firstly, it has shown that the significant role Laurentin played in the development of the Marian teaching of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII cannot be disputed, a reality which supports the underlying claim of this thesis that Laurentin's Marian theology is worthy of academic study. Secondly, while there is very little of note about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in Laurentin's (1963) *La Question Mariale*, his (1965) *La Vierge au Concile* contains the seeds of what will become a varied and developed reflection on the significance of the personal relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. It thus acts as a turning point, both with respect to its content and date of composition, and to Laurentin's approach to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.

³⁸¹ Ibid. p. 154

³⁸² Cf. pp. 151-165. Laurentin refers particularly to St Augustine, who is quoted explicitly in *Lumen Gentium* no. 53 and indirectly in no. 63.

³⁸³ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 160

³⁸⁴ Cf. p. 64 above (footnote 371)

³⁸⁵ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 160

³⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 162

It has also been shown how writings about Laurentin during the conciliar years provide significant insights into Laurentin's personality and his manner of working. The following chapter, on the immediate post-conciliar years, will add to this picture, as well as examining various factors which influenced the development in Laurentin's interest in the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit heralded by *La Vierge au Concile*.

Chapter 3: Post-conciliar change

This chapter will explore three key influences which directly impacted Laurentin's understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit: the place given to Pneumatology at the Council, including the contribution of Eastern Christians; the Marian theology of Heribert Mühlen (1927-2006), and the impact of ecclesial upheavals and personal challenges in the late 1960s. Laurentin's changing approach to Biblical studies over these pivotal years will also be examined, including his growing emphasis on the historicity of the infancy narratives and the impact this had upon his ecclesial career. A further extremely significant influence, that of the Catholic charismatic renewal, shall be turned to in the following chapter.

The Holy Spirit in Vatican II

Following John XXIII's aim that the Council extend "a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated Churches to participate with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood",³⁸⁷ approximately one hundred 'observers' from other Churches were invited to participate. Although they could not contribute to the formal sessions in the aula, they were encouraged to make their opinions known informally,³⁸⁸ and André-Marie Charue (1898-1977) recalled how "theologians, both western and eastern, listened assiduously to their separated brethren".³⁸⁹ However, it was the Eastern Catholics, who were able to contribute actively during the sessions, who had a more direct impact. Laurentin recounts how he was "very struck" by Eastern Catholics during the Council, especially Melkites and Maronites, who he concluded were the only ones who "had known how to truly speak of the Holy Spirit in a way that was clear and inspired."³⁹⁰ He describes how several Eastern Catholics, notably the Maronite Archbishop Ignace Ziadé (1906-1994) and Elias Zoghby (1912-2008), leader of the Melkite church in Egypt, had manifested the inseparable unity of the Spirit, the Church, the Eucharist and eschatology, and asked, on a number of occasions for the texts to be restructured, beginning from Pneumatology.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Quote taken from Alberigo & Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, Vol 1. p. 15, quoting John XXIII's allocution on 25th January 1959.

³⁸⁸ Cf. O'Malley, J. (2007) 'Vatican II: Did anything happen?', in O'Malley, J. (2007) (ed.) *Vatican II. Did anything happen?* London: Bloomsbury, pp. 52-91, p. 61

³⁸⁹ Charue, A. M. (1970) 'Le Saint-Esprit dans "Lumen Gentium"', in Coppens, J. (ed.) *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta : Mélanges théologiques, Hommage à Mgr Gérard Philips*. Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, pp. 19-39, p. 22

³⁹⁰ (1998) *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu. Découvrir son expérience et sa personne*. Paris: Fayard, p. 420

³⁹¹ (1967) 'Esprit Saint et théologie mariale', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 89, pp. 26-42, p. 33. Congar gives an example of this Eastern perspective, recounting the story of dining with two Orthodox observers, who declared "If we were to prepare a treatise *De Ecclesia*, we would draft a chapter on the Holy Spirit, to which we would add a second chapter on Christian anthropology, and that would be all." Congar, Y. (1983) *I believe in the Holy Spirit*,

The need for the place of the Holy Spirit in the theology of the Western Church to be restored by a “more heightened awareness of a very ancient truth”,³⁹² had been clear long before the Council, the deficiency having been highlighted by the Patristic movement’s study of the Greek Fathers. Philips described how, teaching courses at Louvain on the Holy Spirit and the Church from 1957-1960, he found the research “overwhelming” due to the lack of “documents which had already been ‘worked on’ and the almost complete absence of monographs”. However, he stresses that liturgical texts were thankfully Pneumatologically richer than dogmatic manuals, largely because of the Octave of Pentecost and the Sundays following Pentecost.³⁹³

Assessment of the Pneumatology of the Council varies considerably depending upon whether it is viewed from an Eastern or Western perspective. Laurentin (along with Congar and Philips) focused on acclaiming the Pneumatological advances of the Council. However, while praising the first chapters of *De Ecclesia*, and asserting that it can be said that the Catholic Church has “re-found its oriental soul”,³⁹⁴ the Eastern Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément (1921-2009) lamented that it does not contain “a true Pneumatology”, for “the remarkable intuitions of the first chapters remain isolated, without application in the organisation (or the refusal of organisation) of the Church.”³⁹⁵ Similarly, in a conciliar speech in 1964, Ziadé declared that “Latin Ecclesiology has evolved merely in its Christic dimension, but is still adolescent in its pneumatic dimension”,³⁹⁶ and while acknowledging that the Spirit was more present in the final text of *Lumen Gentium* than in earlier drafts, Nikos Nissiotis (1924-1986) criticised its “lack of Pneumatological basis”.³⁹⁷ Congar’s robust response to Nissiotis’ critiques begins with a summary of Nissiotis’ argument: he accuses the Latin Church of “Christomonism”, making the Holy Spirit a “function to carry out, in the Church, the work of Christ” and lacking a “Pneumatological ecclesiology” which he regards as the soul of Orthodox ecclesiology.³⁹⁸ Congar then berates Nissiotis’ “exaggerated and insufficiently founded” criticisms, stressing that from neither “the Biblical point of view nor from the dogmatic can one propose an

Volume 2. New York: Herder & Herder, p. 66. Cf. Groppe, E. (2001) ‘*The Contribution of Yves Congar’s Theology of the Holy Spirit*’ (Theological Studies, 62, pp. 451-477, p. 456) on this being an oft-repeated story of Congar’s.

³⁹² Charue, *Le Saint-Esprit dans “Lumen Gentium”* p. 19, referring to Philip’s *L’Église et son Mystère, tome I*, p. 17

³⁹³ Philips, G. (1968) ‘*Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l’Eglise. Vatican II et prospective du problème*’, *Études Mariales*, 25, pp. 7-37, p. 11

³⁹⁴ Clément, O. (1966) ‘*Quelques remarques d’un orthodoxe sur la Constitution De Ecclesia*’, *Oecumenica (Annales de Recherche Œcuménique)*, pp. 97-116, p. 99

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 107

³⁹⁶ Ziadé, I. *Conciliar Speech, 15th September 1964* quoted in Boulding, M. (1985) ‘*The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the documents of Vatican II*’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 51, pp. 253-267, p. 264, formatting as in Boulding’s text.

³⁹⁷ Nissiotis, N. (1965) ‘*The main ecclesiological problem of the Second Vatican Council*’, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 2, pp. 31-62, p. 48

³⁹⁸ Cf. Congar, Y. (1970) ‘*Pneumatologie ou « christomonisme » dans la tradition latine ?*’, in Coppens, (ed.) *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta*, pp. 41-63, p. 41

economy of the Paraclete which would be autonomous with respect to the economy of the incarnate Word".³⁹⁹

Despite these substantial disagreements about how the Pneumatology of *Lumen Gentium* should be evaluated, the place of the Holy Spirit within ecclesiology clearly played a significant part in the conciliar debates. Charue's (1970) article *Le Saint-Esprit dans "Lumen Gentium"* provides a balanced account of this development. He begins by noting that a good number of bishops and theologians, especially the Biblical scholars and particularly Germans and Belgians, arrived in Rome desiring a more developed Pneumatology.⁴⁰⁰ From the discussions of the first drafts of *Lumen Gentium*, the dissatisfaction of the Eastern Christians influenced a movement for "an orientation that was more openly Pneumatological", which won over many Fathers of the Council and grew quickly.⁴⁰¹ Changes were made by the doctrinal commission in 1963, notably in the substantial paragraph (no. 4) on the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the Church, and further amendments which were made between 1963 and 1964, motivated by "a constant concern, throughout the constitution, to express the action of the Holy Spirit".⁴⁰² Charue concludes that the final version of *Lumen Gentium* "marks the height of a stage in the conciliar progress of Pneumatology."⁴⁰³

This development is also revealed by examining the increasing place given to the Holy Spirit as the Council progresses. After a slow start (the Holy Spirit was only mentioned three times in *Sacrosanctum concilium*, and not at all in *Inter mirifica*, the first two Council documents), the Holy Spirit would eventually be mentioned two hundred and fifty-eight times in the official documents of the Council.⁴⁰⁴ However, as Laurentin declares, although the Holy Spirit was evoked many times during the Council, he was "more often mentioned than taught".⁴⁰⁵ Laurentin affirms the truth of Charles Wesphal's (1896-1972) criticism that Vatican II only "sprinkled the texts with the Holy Spirit", and agrees with Congar that "it is not because the

³⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 42 [Translation from Congar, Y. (2017) *The Spirit of God: Short writings on the Holy Spirit*. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, p. 164]

⁴⁰⁰ Charue, *Le Saint-Esprit dans "Lumen Gentium"* p. 20

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. p. 23

⁴⁰² Ibid. p. 26

⁴⁰³ Ibid. p. 29

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. O'Connor, E. (1978) *Pope Paul and the Spirit: Charisms and Church Renewal in the Teaching of Paul VI*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, p. 7, recounting Paul VI's statement on 23rd May 1973.

Boulding describes how a "quasi-official index of the documents lists thirty-three themes, or groups of multiple references to the nature and activity of the Holy Spirit", with at least 80 in *Lumen Gentium* and "more than 180" scattered through other documents. [Boulding, C. (2002) *The treatment of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary in the documents of Vatican II – analysis and reflection*, in McLoughlin, W. and Pinnock, J. (eds.) *Mary for earth and heaven: Essays on Mary and ecumenism*. Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing. pp. 135-144, p. 135, referring to Vatican *Editio Typica*, 1966]

⁴⁰⁵ *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 33

Holy Spirit is mentioned 300 times... that there will be truly Pneumatology.”⁴⁰⁶ Yet, Laurentin also points beyond these deficiencies, quoting Moeller’s description of the Pneumatological orientation “that was manifest in the Council’s main themes”:

The Council has restored the priority of ecclesial communion over hierarchy.... The Council concerned itself with explaining the unity of the Church, not by the authority of the Pope, but basically by the Spirit who pours forth the same life and communion into all the *people of God*.⁴⁰⁷

The significance of moving away from closely associating the Spirit with the hierarchy is revealed when it is considered in relation to the criticisms of pre-conciliar Roman Catholic Pneumatology for limiting the work of the Spirit to the magisterium. For example, in an article from 1951 the Lutheran pastor Lucien Marchand (1906-1992) described “the Roman principle, which has limited the action of the Holy Spirit”, with “the privilege of the Holy Spirit” being “reserved to the Catholic hierarchy” in its power to “authentically assess revelation”.⁴⁰⁸ Marchand saw this limitation of the role of the Spirit as leading to the Catholic tendency to substitute Mary for the Holy Spirit, with the “immense and insuppressible” Marian piety of Catholics reacting to the “alleged reserved privilege” of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁹

The truth underlying Marchand’s hypothesis is demonstrated by Laurentin’s pre-conciliar writings, where, as was noted above, the role of the Spirit was on more than one occasion reduced to directing the Magisterium in the development of doctrine.⁴¹⁰ Similarly, reflecting on the “renewed actuality of the Holy Spirit” in the years following the Council, Congar contrasted “the studies devoted to the Holy Spirit over the past ten years” with “what theology had produced before that period”, describing how prior to the Council when “the Spirit *in the*

⁴⁰⁶ (1978) ‘*La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle*’ in Laurentin, R. et al. (eds.) *L’Esprit Saint*. Brussels: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, pp. 11-37, p. 24, quoting Wesphal’s (1966) *Vie et foi du Protestantisme*. Paris, p. 136. No reference is given for the quote from Congar.

⁴⁰⁷ (1980) ‘*Mary and the Holy Spirit*’, Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, African Seminar Box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, pp. 150-166, pp. 154-155. No reference is given for the quote from Moeller (referred to by Laurentin as “Charles Moller, the present Secretary of the *Unity Secretariat*”).

⁴⁰⁸ Marchand, L. (1951) ‘*Le contenu évangélique de la dévotion Mariale*’, *Foi et Vie*, 49, pp. 509-521, pp. 521, 517. Marchand is quoting P. Huby’s (1946) *Mystiques paulinienne et johannique*. A similar statement is made from a Catholic perspective by Mühlen’s post-conciliar edition of *Una mystica persona*: “...until recent times, Catholics felt that there was scarcely any help from the Holy Spirit, apart from in infallible definitions of the magisterium. The importance of ‘free’ charisms for the entire church was only officially rediscovered at Vatican II (Cf. LG II, no. 12,2).” (*L’Esprit dans l’Église*, Tome II, p. 294)

⁴⁰⁹ Marchand, *Le contenu évangélique de la dévotion Mariale* pp. 521, 517

⁴¹⁰ Cf. p. 36 above (footnote 212)

Church was discussed, he was mainly presented as the firm guarantee given to the institution and to its magisterium.”⁴¹¹

How then did *Lumen Gentium* relate the Holy Spirit and Mary? There is no specific number dedicated to their relationship, and reflecting on the final text, which he had been largely responsible for producing, Philips concluded that there were regrettable Pneumatological gaps in Chapter VIII. He notes particularly numbers 60-62, the start of the section on Mary and the Church, where Mary’s co-operation in the work of the Saviour is described but without any reference to the Holy Spirit, and in the final numbers (68 and 69) devoted to eschatology and situating the text in an ecumenical perspective, in neither of which is there any reference to the Holy Spirit.⁴¹² Similarly, Philips notes that no. 56, which includes an account of the Annunciation, does not mention the Holy Spirit, and he explains that “the drafting of the Chapter did not search to multiply the references to the Pneuma, even where they would have been perfectly suitable.” He reflects that “mentioning Mt 1:18 and Lk 1:35 would have been eminently desirable” and “the subsequent text could have usefully noted how the Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth (Lk 1:41), Zechariah (Lk 1:67) and Simeon (Lk 2:25) and how he dominates all the account.” However, Philips sees this “gap” as repaired, “even doubly”, by no. 59 (on Pentecost, including how Mary had already been “overshadowed” in her Annunciation), given the importance of this statement.⁴¹³

What has come to be known as the “Suenens amendment”, a last-minute addition to *Lumen Gentium* no. 65, is indicative of how the final text of *Lumen Gentium* came to be agreed upon. After “vigorous resistance” Suenens’s insistence that the evangelising mission of the Church and Mary should be linked together was accepted.⁴¹⁴ Apart from a reference connecting Mary to the Holy Spirit in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* no. 18, where the Spirit leads Mary to be docilely given to the work of redemption, the only other conciliar text outside of *Lumen Gentium* which

⁴¹¹ Congar, Y. (1973) *Renewed actuality of the Holy Spirit*, *Lumen Vitae* [English edition], 28, pp. 13-30, p. 15. In the same text Congar relates how in their “ecumenical encounters of the 30s, the late lamented Pastor Charles Westphal once told us: ‘You Catholics always give the impression that you want to manage the Holy Spirit.’” (p. 18) Elsewhere Congar recounts how a “theologian of repute but decidedly pre-conciliar in outlook remarked to one of the *periti*... : ‘I see you speak about the Holy Spirit. Actually you know, it’s the Protestants who do that. We Catholics have the magisterium.’” [Congar, Y. (1987) *Called to life*. Slough: St Paul Publication. p. 60]

⁴¹² Philips, *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l’Eglise* pp. 17, 19. These two Pneumatological deficiencies of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII are also highlighted by de Fiores. [Cf. de Fiores, S. (1988) *‘Mary in postconciliar theology’*, in Latourelle, R. (ed.) (1988) *Vatican II: Assessment and perspectives twenty-five years later - Volume One*. New York: Paulist Press, pp. 469-539, p. 496]

⁴¹³ Philips, *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l’Eglise* p. 16

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Farrell, M. (2002) ‘Evangelization, Mary and the “Suenens Amendment” of *Lumen Gentium* 8’ in McLoughlin, W. and Pinnock, J. (eds.), *Mary for earth and heaven*, pp. 145-155, p. 146. Farrell relates how contrary to the “custom disallowing the names of those responsible for amendments in conciliar documents from being divulged these sentences ... have become known as the ‘Suenens Amendment’.” (p. 146)

explicitly connects Mary and the Holy Spirit is *Ad Gentes* no. 4. This reflection on Pentecost connects the descent of the Spirit upon the Apostles empowering them for mission with both the coming of the Spirit upon Mary at the Annunciation and upon Christ as he prayed, impelling him “to the work of his ministry.”⁴¹⁵

Alongside these explicit references to the Holy Spirit, it is important to note the deep connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Council itself. On several occasions John XXIII recounted how the idea of convoking a Council came from a sudden impulse of the Spirit, and how it had long been his habit to direct his life according to these profound impulses.⁴¹⁶ From the time John XXIII announced that the Council would take place, he frequently referred to it as a “new Pentecost”, and the “image of the new Pentecost was henceforth habitually associated with the ecumenical Council, until it was sanctioned by the pope’s prayer for the Council in which he asked the Holy Spirit to ‘renew Thy wonders in this our day, as by a new Pentecost.’”⁴¹⁷ Paul VI, who has been acclaimed “the Pope of the Holy Spirit” who “may well have done more to promote devotion to the Holy Spirit than perhaps any other Pope in history”,⁴¹⁸ continued this Pneumatological emphasis. Edward Kilmartin (1923-1994) describes Paul VI’s “devotion to the Holy Spirit, as well as his profound theological grasp of the personal role of the Paraclete in the life of the Church”, and emphasises Paul VI’s stress upon the significance of the role of the Spirit in the Council, as demonstrated by his allocution for the opening of the second session on 29th September 1963: “It is the ‘Spirit of Truth’ that enables the Council to offer fruitful teaching about [the] nature of the Church”.⁴¹⁹

The theological atmosphere surrounding the Council was therefore marked by both an awareness of the presence and role of the Spirit and a growing recognition of the need for Pneumatology to be deepened, as is demonstrated by the Pneumatological disputes and by Paul VI’s later declaration that the “Christology and particularly the Ecclesiology of the Council must be followed by a new study of and devotion to the Holy Spirit.”⁴²⁰ Influenced by these

⁴¹⁵ Philips notes how “two or three other phrases appear in the conciliar documents speaking both of the third divine Person and Mary, but ... without a formal relationship between the two.” (Philips, *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l’Eglise* p. 22)

⁴¹⁶ Cf. *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 33, referring to G. Caprile *Il Concilio Vaticano*, Vol. 1, Part 1, *Annunziazione e preparazione* pp. 39-45

⁴¹⁷ Alberigo & Komonchak, *History of Vatican II*, Vol 1. p. 42

⁴¹⁸ O’Connor, *Pope Paul and the Spirit* pp. 3, 7. O’Connor notes that while “he has not composed any single document surveying the whole theology of the Spirit, as Leo XIII did, he has spoken insistently and eloquently on this subject throughout the whole course of his pontificate” (p. 7)

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Kilmartin, E. (1989) ‘Paul VI’s references to the Holy Spirit in discourses and writings on the Second Vatican Council, 1963-1965’ in *Paolo VI e i problemi ecclesiologicali al concilio*, *Colloquio internazionale di Studio, Brescia 19-20-21 settembre 1986*. Rome: Studium, pp. 399-406, pp. 399-400

⁴²⁰ Cf. O’Connor, *Pope Paul and the Spirit* p. 7, referring to a statement made on 6th June 1973

Pneumatological currents Laurentin expressed his hope that, as ecumenism with regard to Protestants had stimulated the Christocentric effort of the past fifty years, ecumenism with regard to the Orthodox would stimulate the pursuit of Pneumatological restoration.⁴²¹

The influence of Heribert Mühlen

Although Laurentin and Mühlen were both present at the Council, where Mühlen was a peritus to Cardinal Jaeger (1892-1975), Archbishop of Paderborn, Laurentin first mentions Mühlen in his 1966 (unpublished) lecture on 'The Virgin and the Holy Spirit',⁴²² where he refers to Mühlen's (1964) *Una mystica persona*,⁴²³ and draws upon several of its themes. This unpublished lecture was developed to become Laurentin's first article on Mary and the Holy Spirit, *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale*, published in 1967.⁴²⁴ In both of these works Laurentin unequivocally states the importance of the Holy Spirit to Marian theology, declaring that giving rightful "place to the Holy Spirit, 'the great unknown'" is "essential for the future of Mariology, as for Ecclesiology."⁴²⁵ When Laurentin wrote this, the second edition of *Una mystica persona* was not yet published,⁴²⁶ but its extended section on 'Mary and the mediation of the Holy Spirit' would subsequently feature frequently in Laurentin's writings.⁴²⁷ As will be illustrated, the content and emphases of Laurentin and Mühlen's Marian theology overlap significantly, and in some instances it is impossible to judge the extent to which their common concerns emerged independently from their shared theological context, including their experience of the Council.

Laurentin's tribute that *Una mystica persona* accomplished "the most original and most revealing [Pneumatological] step" in the twentieth century reveals how highly he regarded

⁴²¹ Cf. *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 34. Although Laurentin was clearly influenced by the Eastern theologians he met at the council, as the following chapter on the charismatic movement demonstrates, his primary contribution to ecumenism was in relation to Protestantism.

⁴²² (1966) 'The Marian question in an ecumenical age. Course 32: The Virgin and the Holy Spirit', Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 1, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

⁴²³ Mühlen, H. (1964) *Una mystica persona: die Kirche als das Mysterium der Identität des Heiligen Geistes in Christus und den Christen; eine Person in vielen Personen*. Paderborn: Schöningh

⁴²⁴ *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 89, pp. 26-42

⁴²⁵ *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 26. A similar statement is found in 'The Marian question in an ecumenical age' 32-3, as well as in Laurentin's (1966) 'Mary in the liturgy and in Catholic devotion' p. 352.

Nb. Some of Laurentin's lectures given at the University of Dayton, including (1966) *The Marian question in an ecumenical age*; (1968) *Present crisis in Mariology* (Box 3.2) and (1978) *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* (Box 4.8) are not numbered by pages but by paragraphs, hence the unusual referencing given.

⁴²⁶ This second (1967) edition was translated into French as (1969) *L'Esprit dans l'Église* (2 volumes) Paris: Cerf

⁴²⁷ Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Église*, Volume II, pp. 134-175. It is notable, that in his strongly worded critique of Mühlen's Mariology, Jean-Marie Salgado (1915-1994) notes the difference between Laurentin's account of Mühlen's Mariology in his (1967) *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale*, in which "there is evidence of some reservations" about Mühlen, and Laurentin's more forthrightly positive reception of Mühlen in his (1970) *Crise et avenir de la Mariologie* (*Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 20, pp. 53-62). [Cf. Salgado, J.-M. (1971) 'Pneumatologie et mariologie. Bilan actuel et orientations possibles', *Divinitas*, 15, pp. 421-453, pp. 428-429]

Mühlen's theology.⁴²⁸ This is concretely demonstrated by the amount of space devoted to various theologians in Laurentin's account of Pneumatological progress in the West since Vatican II in *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu*: eight and a half pages are devoted to Mühlen, while Congar and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) are each covered in a page, and half a page is given to the more recent works of Jürgen Moltmann (1926 -) and Brian Gaybba (1939-2018).⁴²⁹ Laurentin asserts that Mühlen "brought to Pneumatology a clear and well-structured *renewal* such as had not been seen in the western world for centuries, with new formulas, to different degrees illuminating or enlightening".⁴³⁰ Given that Mühlen is rarely mentioned in theological works written in English, Laurentin's esteem for his theology may be surprising to the anglophone reader. It is more understandable in the light of remarkable tributes paid to *Una mystica persona*: Avery Dulles (1918-2008) declared that it was probably the "boldest effort at a systematic ecclesiology since Vatican II",⁴³¹ George Dejaifve (1913-1982) described it as "one of the rare works of the last years consecrated to the theology of the Church, which immediately draws the attention of ecclesiologists",⁴³² and Aidan Nichols (1948 -) acclaims Mühlen's "peculiar excellence".⁴³³

Laurentin's praise of Mühlen covers two key areas: his personal journey to discover charismatic renewal and subsequent contributions towards a theological understanding of renewal in the Spirit,⁴³⁴ and the Pneumatology of *Una mystica persona*, particularly as it relates to Mary and the Church. Laurentin's understanding of Mühlen's significance cannot be understood without reference to Johann-Adam Möhler (1796-1835), acclaimed by Laurentin as "the great forerunner and pioneer of the ecclesiological movement, and the first who ever tried to react against the extrinsic legalism of the post-Tridentine ecclesiology."⁴³⁵ In his (1825) *Die Einheit in der Kirche* Möhler stressed that ecclesiology begins with the Holy Spirit:⁴³⁶

It may seem strange that I begin with the Holy Spirit, since the centre of our faith is the person of Christ. But I prefer to deal with the true focal point of the question from the start: the Father sends the Son; the Son sends the Spirit. This is the way that God has come to us. And it is in the opposite way that we go to God. The Spirit

⁴²⁸ *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 434

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 434-446

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 435

⁴³¹ Dulles, A. (1989) 'A half century of ecclesiology', *Theological Studies*, 50, pp. 419-442, p. 434. The phrase "since Vatican II" is explained by Dulles' reference to the (1968) 3rd edition of *Una mystica persona* (Munich: Schöningh).

⁴³² Dejaifve, G. (1965) 'Un tournant dans l'ecclésiologie', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 87, pp. 961-963, p. 961

⁴³³ Nichols, A. (2013) *Figuring out the Church: Her marks, and Her masters*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, p. 29

⁴³⁴ Cf. p. 99 below

⁴³⁵ (1978) *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal*, Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 4.8, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, 2-9.

⁴³⁶ English translation: (1995) *Unity in the Church or the Principle of Catholicism*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press

leads us to the Son, and the Son to the Father. Thus, I wanted to begin with the step which comes first in time, in our Christianisation.⁴³⁷

Laurentin closely connects Mühlen and Möhler, seeing the former as pushing the intuitions of his predecessor to their conclusions and giving them organic form, and declaring, in a surprisingly simplistic manner, that “it was only in 1965 that Mühlen was able to complete the work of J. A. Möhler.”⁴³⁸ In focusing solely on the ecclesiology of *Dei Einheit* Laurentin shows no awareness of the development of Möhler’s ecclesiology and the fact that Möhler’s (1832) *Symbolik*, in which he studied the ‘symbols’, the formal confessions of Catholicism and Protestantism, had a significantly different emphasis to his earlier *Dei Einheit*.⁴³⁹ While Möhler continued to “conceive of the Church as a *Gemeinschaft* [communion] in the Holy Spirit”, the ecclesiology of the *Symbolik* is firmly Christocentric, with Möhler stressing “that the church remains united with its objective referent, Jesus Christ, and that it witnesses to Christ through its institutional form.”⁴⁴⁰ Although the omission of the ecclesiology of Möhler’s *Symbolik* from Laurentin’s account can be partially explained by the status given to *Dei Einheit* by several influential Catholic theologians in the twentieth century, including Küng, Dulles and Walter Kasper (1933-),⁴⁴¹ nonetheless, it remains a significant lacuna in Laurentin’s interpretation of the relationship between Möhler and Mühlen.

Building upon key tenets of Augustinian theology and Möhler’s Spirit-centred ecclesiology of *Dei Einheit*, interpersonal relationships are at the heart of Mühlen’s theology and ecclesiology. Based upon the Spirit’s role in the Godhead, his being the link between persons, the “*Wir in Person*” [We in Person], Mühlen attributed to the Spirit “a proper personal function: with regard first to Christ (baptismal anointing), then to Christians and to the Church”.⁴⁴² Mühlen thus presents the Holy Spirit as the ‘we’ of both the Trinity and the Church, the link of love, the bond, which constitutes their unity. In his personalist formula of “one person (the Holy Spirit) in many persons (Christ and us)”, Mühlen presents the Holy Spirit as achieving ecclesial

⁴³⁷ (1925) *Die Einheit*. Tübingen, p. 1 quoted in *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-9

⁴³⁸ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1980), p. 157, in which Laurentin uses the spelling ‘Moehler’. This unusual approach to the history of theology is also found in Laurentin’s conviction that Maria Valtorta (1897-1961) completed de Montfort. Cf. (2014) *La Vierge des derniers temps. Une étape de la fin du monde, De Grignon de Montfort à Maria Valtorta*. Paris: Salvator (Co-authored with Debroise, F.-M.)

⁴³⁹ English translation by J. Burton Robertson (1997) *Symbolism: Exposition of doctrinal differences between Catholics and Protestants, as evidenced by their symbolical writings*. New York: Crossroad Publications. (First published in 1843)

⁴⁴⁰ Krieg, R. (1997) *Romano Guardini: A precursor of Vatican II*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, p. 52

⁴⁴¹ Cf. Rosato, P. (1978) ‘Between Christocentrism and Pneumatocentrism: An interpretation of Johann Adam Möhler’s ecclesiology’, *Heythrop Journal*, 19, pp. 46-70, p. 46

⁴⁴² Congar, *Pneumatologie ou « christomonisme »* p. 61 (Translation from Congar, *The Spirit of God* p. 193)

communion by playing an analogous role in the Church to that which he plays in the Trinity, identifying Christians to Christ, each in their diversity, by “raising up and not by supressing their personal existence.”⁴⁴³ The Spirit is therefore both the “bond” between Father and Son, and the “supernatural bond of unity among all who are in Christ.”⁴⁴⁴

Laurentin’s use of the terminology of “bond” to describe both the Holy Spirit and Mary echoes closely Mühlen’s imagery:

Mary, like the Holy Spirit, plays a role of bond. At the time of the Annunciation, she was the representative of humanity to establish the bond between the Word and humanity to be saved. In her, and not without her free consent, the Word and humanity were joined together in the unity of the body which she formed. She then truly plays the role of a bond.

But the role of bond characterises the Holy Spirit: in the Trinity, where He is the bond of personified love, in the Church where He is the bond of communion. This bond is established first at the point of departure, which is the Incarnation. The role of bond which Mary then plays on the human level, the Holy Spirit fulfils on a divine and transcendent level.⁴⁴⁵

Although not referring to Mühlen, Laurentin is clearly echoing him as he describes how, according to tradition, “the Holy Spirit is the bond of the Trinity; He is also the bond of the Church: the transcendent soul which unifies the plurality of persons in Christ the Head but in respecting the reality of persons.”⁴⁴⁶ The same concepts are found in the (1968) edition of *Court traité*, in a section on Mary and the Holy Spirit not found in earlier editions, where Laurentin connects this to the Chalcedonian Creed:

The Spirit is... the one who brings about unity without confusion... he brings about the unity of the Trinity in the distinction of persons.... At the level of the Church, Tradition presents the Holy Spirit as the one who ensures the bond (*lien*) of many people in one body in the person of Christ the Head, without confusion or assimilation.⁴⁴⁷

What Mühlen views as the conciliar deficiencies in Mariology stemming from a weak Pneumatology also reveal his influence upon Laurentin. The chapter entitled ‘Mary and the mediation of the Holy Spirit’ in the (1967) second edition of Mühlen’s *Una mystica persona*

⁴⁴³ *La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle* p. 27

⁴⁴⁴ Dulles, *A half century of ecclesiology* p. 434

⁴⁴⁵ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-8. Laurentin used the masculine form to designate the Spirit (*L’Esprit Saint* is masculine in French). When it is not possible to avoid specifying a gender without difficulty, following Laurentin’s usage, the Spirit will be referred to in the masculine form in this thesis. Cf. p. 186 below on the gender of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 32-4

⁴⁴⁷ *Court traité* (1968) p. 124

contains many disputed areas which are also of great importance to Laurentin.⁴⁴⁸ While it is likely that Laurentin and Mühlen's shared experience of the conciliar debates were a factor in their shared concerns, it is also worth noting Mühlen's powerfully expressive language which makes some of his writing eminently quotable.

Focusing on the question of Mary as 'co-redemptrix' and 'mediatrix', "discussed everywhere before Vatican II, but which the Council has practically removed", Mühlen maintains that these questions were not "ripe" because of "the lack of a satisfactory dogmatic doctrine on the Holy Spirit and his co-operation in the redemptive work of Christ."⁴⁴⁹ Mühlen addresses the question of the 'mediation' of Mary beginning from Pneumatology, which leads him to highlight concerns about the displacement of the Holy Spirit by Mary in Catholic devotion and doctrine. He considers the consequences of the manner of including Mary as Mediatrix in *Lumen Gentium* and concludes that "in striving to assimilate the title 'Mediatrix' to other invocations addressed to Mary, it seems that other functions which in Holy Scripture go back clearly and primarily to the Holy Spirit are attributed to Mary", as is demonstrated by the presence of the terms advocate, helper and intercessor.⁴⁵⁰ Like Mühlen, and others before him, Laurentin also stresses how "the expansive formulation of the role of Mary has sometimes encroached upon the role of the Spirit" with "a unilateral appropriation to Mary of what is rightfully hers, undoubtedly in a certain sense, but what is in the first place and fundamentally the domain of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵¹

In a similar vein, Mühlen quotes Nissiotis' reaction to Paul VI's proclamation that Mary is Mother of the Church, challenging the theological methodology behind this declaration: "Should we interpret this as the emergence of a dogma for want of putting the creative act of the Paraclete at the origin of the historic Church?"⁴⁵² With the same strength of conviction,

⁴⁴⁸ Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Église*, Volume II pp. 134-175

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 135

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 145

⁴⁵¹ *The marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-5. Laurentin had already reflected upon this in his *La Vierge au Concile*, p. 154 (cf. pp. 65-66 above). Unlike Reginald Buckler, the theological advisor to Archbishop Dowling, in his response to Cardinal Mercier's 1925 petition sent to the bishops of the world calling for the dogmatic definition of Mary as 'mediatrix of all graces', neither Laurentin nor Mühlen refer to the Holy Spirit with this title. Although Buckler was the only one of the responses to raise this objection, it is notable that his argument is found as early as 1925. Gloria Falcão Dodd explains that Buckler's "singularity in this context and time period may have been due to the fact that his argument seemed contrary to St. Thomas Aquinas' explicit teaching that the Holy Spirit was not, properly speaking, a mediator" because the Spirit was "the first cause of the union between God and man, and as God, the Holy Spirit was not the mean between God and sinful man." [Dodd, G. F. (2012) *The Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of all grace: History and theology of the movement for a dogmatic definition from 1896 to 1964*. New Bedford, Massachusetts: Academy of the Immaculate, p. 309]

⁴⁵² Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Église*, Volume II, p. 147, quoting *Kyrios* 5, 1965, p. 92. Cf. p. 64 (footnote 371) above on the 'birth of the Church'; like Laurentin, Mühlen focuses on the Church being born at Pentecost rather than at Calvary.

Mühlen poses the rhetorical question: “Why did the Council not explicitly and energetically emphasise the insurmountable difference which exists between the *Advocatus* and the *Advocata*?”⁴⁵³

Mühlen reflects in significant detail on the cooperation of the Holy Spirit in the redemptive work of the Son, something which he notes has hardly been mentioned in traditional dogmatics and theological manuals.⁴⁵⁴ He emphasises that Mary cooperates directly in the work of the Holy Spirit “such that the cooperation of Mary in the work of salvation is firstly and essentially a *cooperation in the cooperation of the Holy Spirit in the redemptive work of the Son*.”⁴⁵⁵ Thus, at the Incarnation “it is not *directly*, but only *by the mediation of the Holy Spirit* that Mary cooperates with the Logos who becomes incarnate in his work of Redemption which is thus inaugurated”, and “at the hour of the death of Jesus” she is again, “and above all”, “in full dependence on the Spirit of Christ who uses her.”⁴⁵⁶ Mühlen declares:

... all Mariology must *begin* by considering in a serious manner, as complete and precise as possible, the meaning of the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christ and his cooperation with him, to be able to raise in a satisfactory manner the problem of the ‘cooperation’ of Mary with Christ. If this does not happen, we risk placing Mary – thoughtlessly and because of not having sufficiently reflected on *the whole context* of the work of salvation – in the place and the role of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵⁷

Laurentin recounts how before Mühlen no one seemed to think of the co-redemption of the Holy Spirit, describing the fact that the Spirit is the divine co-redeemer as “a disregarded chapter in pneumatology.”⁴⁵⁸ From his first post-conciliar writings on Mary and the Holy Spirit, Laurentin shares Mühlen’s stress on the Spirit as the essential ‘co-redeemer’:

The term “co-redemption” would essentially correspond to the transcendent cooperation of the Spirit, for the Spirit is co-worker with Christ in the redemption. Likewise, when it is said that Mary has given us Christ at the Incarnation, do we not too often forget that the gift of Christ is essentially Trinitarian, that it is the work of the Spirit in Mary? And if Mary were able to give her consent in the name of humanity, is it not by the power of the Spirit? This is what Mühlen thinks for he writes: “If she gave her consent to the Incarnation, *loco totius humanitatis*, it is not possible except if the

⁴⁵³ Ibid. Mühlen also states that since the Council declares “that the influence of Mary upon humanity depends totally on the ‘*mediatio Christi*’ and only by participating in it, it would have been perfectly reasonable and perhaps even necessary to say that the role of Mary in the economy of salvation depends totally on the mediating role of the *Spirit of Christ* and that her participation is subordinated to this participation” (p. 159).

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid. p. 147

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid. p. 159

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 158, 160

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 159-160

⁴⁵⁸ *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 590

Holy Spirit... who is the we in person and as such carries the 'yes' of Mary, which already included a priori all the redeemed.⁴⁵⁹

In a unique manner, Mühlen distinguishes what he names Mary's "personological function" and her personal role. While Laurentin will quote this terminology of Mühlen, he does not appropriate it in any way, which is hardly surprising given Laurentin's capacity for making theology accessible and the effort which is required to assimilate this distinction of Mühlen's. Mühlen describes Mary's personal role as being expressed in her "free and conscious 'personal' acts",⁴⁶⁰ which are closely interconnected with her "personological function", "her existence in itself; her ontological personal being".⁴⁶¹ Personologically, Mary is the irrevocably predestined Mother of Jesus, who "being at the disposition of God, no longer disposes of herself".⁴⁶² Mühlen is particularly concerned to consider "the ecclesiological aspect of the personological relationship of Mary with Christ and with the Church",⁴⁶³ relating this to Mary's ministry or charism of motherhood:

It being permitted to call the motherhood of Mary a *ministry* coming from the Spirit can also be deduced from 1 Cor 12:7: the charisms are attributed *pros to sympheron*, for the general good... Undoubtedly the motherhood of Mary is also ordered to all the Church and even to all the economy of salvation; it is therefore necessary to see there in an *eminent* degree, a *ministry* of the history of salvation. This ministry is not only, like those which are attributed to other human beings, at the service of the edification of the Body of Christ, but prior to every other ministry, it enables the Son of God, and consequently, the Church, to enter human history; it is given to Mary to an eminent degree, *pros to sympheron*.⁴⁶⁴

As will be discussed in the following chapter, from the mid-1970s Laurentin will frequently refer to Mary's divine motherhood as her key charism. He recounts how he had not thought to do until the idea "came to him as he prepared an ecumenical report on Mary for the Dublin Charismatic congress of 1974 at which Pentecostals participated."⁴⁶⁵ Although the idea is already present here in Mühlen's *Una mystica persona*, which evidently had made a great impression upon Laurentin, he does not make a connection between his inspiration and the earlier text.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁵⁹ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-6 - 32-7, quoting *Una mystica persona* p. 278, formatting as in Laurentin's translation.

⁴⁶⁰ Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Église*, Volume II p. 156

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 161

⁴⁶² *Ibid.* p. 156

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 161

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 167

⁴⁶⁵ *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* pp. 75-76

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. pp. 119-121 below

Mühlen and Laurentin appreciated and used one another's works. This is illustrated by the section in *Una mystica persona* entitled 'Mary and the mediation of the Spirit of Christ', where in a text with relatively few references, Laurentin's *La Vierge au Concile* is referred to three times and his *La Question Mariale* once (in the 1965 German translation *Die marianische Frage*).⁴⁶⁷ While the precise dynamics of this mutual influence cannot be identified, the significance of Mühlen's personalism upon Laurentin's understanding of the importance of the personal nature of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit should not be underestimated (despite Laurentin's lack of use of Mühlen's distinction between Mary's personal and personological roles.) From Laurentin's first post-conciliar works about Mary and the Spirit to his writings in his final years, almost fifty years later, Mühlen is constantly referred to, both in terms of relationship being integral to what it is to be a person and the importance of the personal nature of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.

It is important to note that Laurentin did not engage with criticisms of Mühlen's presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, such as that found in Salgado's (1971) article *Pneumatologie et mariologie*.⁴⁶⁸ In stark contrast to the deeply polemical approach Laurentin had to Raymond Brown's historical-critical analysis,⁴⁶⁹ and probably influenced by the wide audience he is often addressing, Laurentin focuses on presenting his theological vision (influenced by Mühlen) in an accessible and ecumenically sensitive manner.

The infancy narratives: Laurentin's post-conciliar approach

According to Laurentin's recollection of events, Vatican II played the all-important turning point in his theological and ecclesial career, with his approach to Biblical historicity being the core catalyst in his fall from grace: "In addressing the crucial problem of historicity, I was going to be put tacitly into quarantine."⁴⁷⁰ However, an examination of the reception of his immediate post-conciliar works indicates a more gradual transition, both in Laurentin's approach to Biblical exegesis and in what was judged to be within the parameters of scholarly acceptability.

At the end of the Council Laurentin arranged to meet with Ottaviani to discuss the pamphlet maligning him which had been distributed to the doctrinal commission under Ottaviani's

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Mühlen, *L'Esprit dans l'Église* pp. 134-175. The references to Laurentin's works are on pp. 136, 139, 140 and 155.

⁴⁶⁸ This article discusses a variety of presentations made at the *Société française d'études mariales* on Mary and the Holy Spirit from 1968-1970; the errors of Mühlen and those he influenced is a recurrent theme.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. pp. 124-127 below

⁴⁷⁰ *Mémoires* p. 268

authority,⁴⁷¹ and was not only assured that no grievance was held against him, but almost immediately afterwards was named as an expert for a commission on the historicity of the infancy narratives. Laurentin recounts how under the threat of academic exclusion, he had originally felt constrained to respect the established principle that the infancy narratives were late, legendary accounts, created by piety to address the ignorance about Christ's childhood, but that in his report for the Biblical commission he argued, albeit apprehensively, for the authenticity of Luke 1-2 (remaining, at that time, reserved about Matthew 1-2).⁴⁷² Possibly as a consequence of this, despite his having received the questionnaires of the commission and submitted his report, Laurentin was never invited to the session and only found out afterwards that it had taken place.⁴⁷³

Laurentin's lengthy *Mémoires*, concluding with Vatican II, include his emotionally charged reminiscences which leave the reader with no doubts about his perception of the extent of his changed ecclesial status in the post-conciliar years. His account of his "slow descent into hell" after the council presumably includes this rejection from the Biblical commission:

I end this volume of memoirs at the end of the Council, which was the summit, without doubt over-esteemed, of my reputation as a journalist and theological expert. ... I was made to shine with other distinctions before I had the time to cooperate in them. ... I did not realise the influence I exercised daily in the press, and more discretely, in the Church, in theology and exegesis.

The following would see my slow descent into hell, without drama or scandal, because I had limited the damage in not fighting against anyone and in obeying the established order. Thus, I quietly lost a good part of the freedom which I had so much appreciated in the Church. ... I avoided a rupture. Priest friends and people close to me, often better than I, left the Church, and I understood what one loses without knowing it in choosing the freedom of a lone cavalier... At this price, I remained in friendly (or, which was worse, neutral) relations with my adversaries, because I did not contest this power from on high, with which they regarded me with a gentle scorn, like a 'harmful threat' which had been neutralised.⁴⁷⁴

The pain which Laurentin experienced is obvious. What is less clear is the actual trajectory his approach to the historicity of the infancy narratives took.

Jésus au temple, mystère de Paques et foi de Marie en Luc 2, 48-50 (1966)

In his highly acclaimed (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* Laurentin stresses that Mary is, either directly or indirectly, "the first source of what is essential in the account", with Luke

⁴⁷¹ 10th/11th Dec 1965. Cf. p. 48 above

⁴⁷² Cf. *Vie authentique de Marie* p. 367

⁴⁷³ *Mémoires* p. 451

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 557-558

being the “ultimate (and active) editor, in relation to the style more than the thinking.”⁴⁷⁵ Goulder notes in his review of this work that historicity is “of the essence” for Laurentin,⁴⁷⁶ an assessment that contrasts with Laurentin’s own assessment of his early adherence to the exegetical ‘norm’ that the infancy narratives were late, legendary accounts. Laurentin’s post-conciliar *Jésus au temple, mystère de Paques et foi de Marie en Luc 2, 48-50* continues to have a nuanced approach to the historicity of the text,⁴⁷⁷ providing further evidence that there was not a clear demarcation between Laurentin’s pre-conciliar attitude towards historicity and his post-conciliar stance. Emphasising that Luke 1-2 aims “to present realities in a way in which their hidden riches are manifested”, Laurentin demonstrates the importance of the doctrinal themes of the account of the finding of Jesus in the temple, which “witness that the account was written for catechesis”.⁴⁷⁸ However, he stresses that this does not mean that it was artificially constructed: “the evangelist has not created his account with doctrinal themes like one cooks a dish by mixing a number of different ingredients”, its “original physiognomy” remains.⁴⁷⁹ Using a form critical approach Laurentin regards the catechetical text as having the form of a paradigm or apophthegm, intended to present the word of Christ (Lk 2:49), which “the editing tends to reveal” as “a prophetic gesture, signifying the mystery of his death and return to the Father.”⁴⁸⁰

At this immediate post-conciliar juncture, the academic world remained largely positive about Laurentin’s approach to Scripture.⁴⁸¹ While his *Jésus au temple* was not as widely or enthusiastically received as his earlier *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II*, Carroll’s balanced review describes how he was “fascinated by the painstaking analysis” of Luke 2:47-51,⁴⁸² and Coppens concludes that he “could not fail to appreciate” it.⁴⁸³ It is in Daniélou’s extensive

⁴⁷⁵ pp. 19-20

⁴⁷⁶ Goulder, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* by René Laurentin’ p. 360

⁴⁷⁷ (1966) *Paris: Libraire Lecoffre*. Given that the focus of this text is verses which are unconnected to the Holy Spirit, it is not surprising that there is no noteworthy reference to Mary’s relationship to the Spirit within it.

⁴⁷⁸ *Jésus au temple* pp. 87, 143

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 143-144

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 173-174

⁴⁸¹ However, in comparison with his earlier *Court traité*, which was translated into English, German, Polish and Italian, Laurentin’s immediate post-conciliar works were less attractive to non-French-speakers. Correspondence preserved in the Laurentin collection at the University of Dayton (in the ‘Unclassified box’) includes a letter from J. Cunneen of Holt, Rinehart and Winston (16th November 1966) declining to publish the text of the course Laurentin gave at Dayton in the summer of 1966, “The Marian question in an ecumenical age”, noting that “‘The Question of Mary’ did not find an audience in this country” and “a large number of Catholic journals never mentioned it”. W. Cole’s response to this letter (30th November 1966) highlights “the hard times through which things Marian seem to be passing.” A short letter of rejection for the same text from Geoffrey Chapman (London/Dublin) is found in the same archive box.

⁴⁸² Carroll, E. (1968) ‘René Laurentin, *Jésus au Temple : Mystère de Pâques et foi de Marie en Luc 2,48-50*’, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 30, p. 454

⁴⁸³ Coppens, J. (1967) ‘René Laurentin, *Jésus au Temple : Mystère de Pâques et foi de Marie en Luc 2,48-50*’, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 43, p. 274

reference to Laurentin's work in his 1967 *Les évangiles de l'enfance* that the most substantial appreciation is found.⁴⁸⁴ In the early chapters about Luke's infancy narrative Laurentin is a key source for Daniélou and in the final chapter on the finding of Jesus in the temple he is the sole authority cited, with Daniélou describing the breadth of the learning in Laurentin's book, and the "sureness of judgment displayed in it."⁴⁸⁵ Although Daniélou does occasionally disagree with Laurentin, the extent to which he relies upon Laurentin's text demonstrates clearly that, at least for the initial years following Vatican II, Laurentin's writings about Scripture were still regarded as a respectable source.

However, as Daniel Doré clearly demonstrates, there were significant differences between *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* and *Jésus au temple*; the former was the work of a Biblical exegete and the latter primarily that of a Marian theologian concerned to defend the Virgin Mary from what could be perceived as attack.⁴⁸⁶ Doré describes how *Annex 1* of *Structure et théologie de Lc I-II*, entitled "When did Mary know the divinity of Christ?", is "developed into a volume of 278 pages" in *Jésus au temple*.⁴⁸⁷ Doré was not alone in this assessment; he quotes Jacques E. Ménard's (1923 -) review of *Jésus au temple* which recounts how the impression given is that the author's prime intention is to address "the problem of Luke 2:48-50 in Mariology" and to "push as far away as possible the subject of the ignorance of the Virgin".⁴⁸⁸

In his lecture '*Approche biblique dans l'œuvre de René Laurentin*', Doré perceptively notes how this change in genre is manifested in the lengthy annexes of *Jésus au temple*.⁴⁸⁹ Here Laurentin presents the Catholic doctrinal norms with regard to the knowledge Mary had of her son's divinity, before providing extensive lists of Greek and Latin texts from the early Church which substantiate the main argument of his text.⁴⁹⁰ Doré also highlights the lengthy list of collaborators Laurentin names in *Jésus au temple*; each had been consulted about their area of expertise, including Olivier Lacombe (1904-2001), who had given advice about Buddhist literature, and Antoine Wenger (1919-2009) who had provided an unpublished text of the Byzantine John Geometre.⁴⁹¹ The very fact that Laurentin found non-Christian religions and

⁴⁸⁴ Daniélou, J. (1967) *Les évangiles de l'enfance*. Paris: Editions du Seuil. English translation: (1968) *The infancy narratives*. London: Burns & Oates

⁴⁸⁵ Daniélou, *The infancy narratives* p. 115

⁴⁸⁶ Doré, D. '*Approche biblique dans l'œuvre de René Laurentin*', 4th September 2018, talk given at the SFEM annual conference.

⁴⁸⁷ Doré, *René Laurentin et les études bibliques* p. 184, referring to pp. 165-175 of *Structure et théologie de Lc I-II*

⁴⁸⁸ Ménard, J.-E. (1967) in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 61, pp. 72-73, quoted in Doré, *René Laurentin et les études bibliques* p. 184

⁴⁸⁹ This was not included in the published version of Doré's lecture.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. *Jésus au Temple* pp. 179-234

⁴⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 5

poetic Byzantine writings to be relevant to his study of Luke 2:48-50 indicates that his methodology was much wider than that of conventional Biblical exegesis.

Ecclesial and societal upheavals

Alongside this gradual change in his approach to Biblical exegesis, the conciliar and immediate post-conciliar years are marked by Laurentin's increasing involvement in progressive or controversial areas. In his *Mémoires* he recounts how his talks provoked sufficient anger to be at the receiving end of protests, including youths throwing tear-gas into a Church where he was speaking,⁴⁹² and protestors preventing another of his talks about Vatican II taking place.⁴⁹³ He also describes how his determined efforts to re-establish worker priests contributed to their re-establishment in 1965 (following their suppression in 1953) and to his own ostracization.⁴⁹⁴

Laurentin's account of how the church perceived and treated women also took on a more forceful tone. De Lubac recounts how Laurentin strongly condemned what he viewed as "the patriarchal regime" influencing views of marriage and family life, launching the slogan: "As the Church lost the working class in the nineteenth century, she will lose women in the twentieth."⁴⁹⁵ In his (1967) article *Marie et l'anthropologie chrétien de la femme*, Laurentin points the reader to the writings of his sister Menie Grégoire, and declares that there "is much to retain from the unilateral plea" of Simone de Beauvoir's (1908-1986) *Le deuxième sexe*.⁴⁹⁶ Laurentin makes no definitive statement about the ordination of women; he states that there are "real difficulties" which bring about "hesitations".⁴⁹⁷ However, shortly afterwards, he was advocating "a delicate reassessment of the thesis of the absolute incompatibility between femininity and the priesthood",⁴⁹⁸ and, in a diplomatic balancing act, declaring that "it seems very difficult to be certain that Christ had forbidden the Church to establish women in priestly

⁴⁹² Cf. *Mémoires* p. 496, referring to an incident where Laurentin spoke in the parish of Saint Louis d'Antin in Paris. Laurentin simply notes that "he was subjected to violent attacks from fundamentalists" and describes the two masked youths "claiming to be from the Catholic counter-reform" who threw the tear gas into the church without any explanation.

⁴⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 496-497, where Laurentin describes a talk that he was meant to give about Vatican II in Saint-Honoré-d'Eylau but was prevented from doing so by protestors.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 463-465. Cf. Alberigo and Komonchak, Volume 3, p. 404 and Volume 4, p. 570 on Laurentin's advocacy for worker priests.

⁴⁹⁵ De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile Volume 1*. p. 73, journal entry for 9th March 1962. Cf. Alberigo and Komonchak, Volume 1, pp. 253-254 on Laurentin and Häring's criticism of the preliminary schema on Christian marriage for being "too juridical and negative, focused too much on procreation", and ignoring "the importance of married love."

⁴⁹⁶ *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 89, pp. 485-515, pp. 496, 501. Cf. Waché, B. (2019) '*Marie et l'anthropologie chrétienne de la femme chez René Laurentin*', *Études Mariales*, 73, pp. 151-159

⁴⁹⁷ *Marie et l'anthropologie chrétien de la femme* p. 502

⁴⁹⁸ (1969) '*Mary and womanhood in the renewal of Christian anthropology*', *Marian Library Studies*, 1, pp 77-95, p. 92

functions, and that this discrimination is absolutely desired by God”, although “it is another thing to know if the Church should change its tradition and symbolic universe”.⁴⁹⁹ While Laurentin’s affirmations are carefully nuanced, this is clearly a significant change from the stance expressed in his doctoral theses which are marked by an unquestioning acceptance of the reservation of the priesthood to men.⁵⁰⁰

The title of Laurentin’s largely forgotten (1971) *Nouveaux ministères et fin du clergé* demonstrates how forthright Laurentin could be in his progressive challenge,⁵⁰¹ as does von Balthasar’s deriding him as the “*Führer den Progressisten in Frankreich*”,⁵⁰² and de Lubac’s bitter critique of Laurentin’s support for “the French avant-garde movement” in a “tendentious, miserable article”:

On one hand, the optic of all the article is an outrageous French ‘provincialism’. On the other hand, he speaks of the Council as if it had ratified ... all the French ‘avant-garde’ movement, as if everything had been perfect in the movement of worker priests, the *Mission de France* etc.⁵⁰³

However, it is Laurentin and his siblings’ involvement in the movement for “ecclesial revolution” in the politically charged Paris of 1968 that was the most striking manifestation of his support for progressive causes.

André Laurentin, René’s younger brother, was a priest of *Mission de France* and almost all references to him in writings about the protest movements of the late 1960s speak of him in tandem with Robert Davezies (1923-2007) as leading figures in this movement.⁵⁰⁴ Davezies, also a priest of *Mission de France*, was renowned as an ardent fighter for social justice, including for his role in the *Front de Libération Nationale* of Algeria, which led to his imprisonment.⁵⁰⁵ In his work *La mai des Catholiques* Barrau recounts how they, along with Joseph Canal, were “marginal figures, on the edge of traditional priesthood”, without links to the hierarchy, “free electrons of the Church of France” whose “commitment to the extreme

⁴⁹⁹ (1971) *Nouveaux ministères et fin du clergé devant le III^e Synode*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 111

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. p. 21 above

⁵⁰¹ Paris: Éditions du Seuil (A literal translation of the title is “New ministries and the end of the clergy”).

⁵⁰² Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 10-11, and (1975) *L’évangélisation après le quatrième Synode* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil) p. 203, which situates this “campaign of calumnies” following the Third Synod of 1971 and Laurentin’s critical (1971) *Nouveaux ministères et fin du clergé* and (1972) *Réorientation de l’Église après le III^e synode* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).

⁵⁰³ De Lubac, *Carnets du Concile Volume II*, p. 59, journal entry for 9th December 1963, referring to an article in that day’s *Le Figaro*.

⁵⁰⁴ An example of this is the linking of their names among the fourteen signatures of the *L’appel aux Chrétiens* of 21st May, which Davezies describes as the “starting point of a first shared line of action” of the Christian protest movement. Cf. Davezies, R. (1968) *Mai 68. La rue dans l’Église*. Paris: Éditions de l’épi, p. 12

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Lajonchère, J. (2008) *Robert Davezies. Prêtre-apôtre de la libération de tous les hommes dans la société et l’Église*. Paris: L’Harmattan

left kept them *a priori* on the margins of the institution.”⁵⁰⁶ Barrau describes how Davezies, not being in relationship with the clerical hierarchy and only connected to a few priests as distanced from the parish-priesthood as himself, needed an intermediary with parish clergy. René Laurentin not only served as this intermediary but hosted the meetings in his home.⁵⁰⁷ While not being “like his brother, a militant openly engaged in favour of the protests”, he was “part of the network”.⁵⁰⁸

René’s youngest sister Anne Retel-Laurentin (1925-1983) and her husband Jacques Retel were also an integral part of the Christian protest movement. For six years Jacques had been a seminarian with the *Mission de France*, he was taught by André Laurentin, and after leaving the seminary married Anne, a pioneer in medical anthropology, who left religious life on the advice of André.⁵⁰⁹ It was in their large apartment on the rue de Vaugirard in Paris on 2nd June 1968 that the “iconoclastic and intentionally provocative” ‘Pentecost intercommunion’ took place,⁵¹⁰ denounced in *Carrefour* as “*le scandale de la rue Vaugirard*.”⁵¹¹ Seventy people gathered for this ecumenical celebration, including journalists invited to be witnesses, and some participants of the protest which had disrupted the Pentecost mass at Saint-Séverin that morning.⁵¹² Before the service a letter that was to be sent to Mgr François Marty (1904-1994), Archbishop of Paris, and Pastor Charles Westphal (1896-1972), President of the Protestant Federation of France, was read out; it included the declaration that those present had participated in the political battles of their time and “confirmed the revolutionary scope of the Church”.⁵¹³ The ceremony consisted of the singing of Psalm 72, the reading of a passage from the Acts of the Apostles, prayers of intercession focused on current events and an ancient Eucharistic prayer, with a “Eucharistic commentary” by Paul Ricœur (1913-2005). The three main celebrants alternated the Eucharistic prayer with all those participating, and then all – priests, pastors, and laity – pronounced the words of consecration, before taking the bread which each one broke and shared, and four glasses of wine which were passed around.⁵¹⁴

René Laurentin knew about the celebration but did not believe it was possible for him to take

⁵⁰⁶ Barrau, G. (1998) *La mai des Catholiques*. Paris: Les Éditions de l’Atelier, p. 113

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 114

⁵⁰⁸ Chiron, Y. (2018) *L’Église dans la tourmente de 1968*. Paris: Éditions Artège, p. 67

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Ibid. p. 88 and Hunt, *Colonial medical anthropology* p. 266

⁵¹⁰ Brillant, B. (2003) *Les clercs de 68*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, p. 364

⁵¹¹ Cf. Chiron, *L’Église dans la tourmente de 1968* p. 93. Cf. André Laurentin’s account of the reasons for and meaning of this controversial act: (1968) ‘*Le geste de Pentecôte ne m’appartient plus*’, *Christianisme Social*, 76, pp. 525-531.

⁵¹² Cf. Davezies, *Mai 68. La rue dans l’Église* p. 27

⁵¹³ Ibid. p. 38

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Ibid. pp. 37-38 and Chiron, *L’Église dans la tourmente de 1968* pp. 89-90

part. Without referring to the role of his siblings, his article in *Le Figaro* on 4th June was one of the first to comment on it.⁵¹⁵ Laurentin began his article stating that since the Eucharist took place without authorisation and was irregular according to the law of the Catholic church and the officially established norms of Protestant confessions, it was, “in this respect, regrettable”. However, most of Laurentin’s commentary was devoted to attempting to explain why “the 70” felt the need to make this “prophetic gesture” and reflecting on “the problem for the Church today” of reconciling life and order, so that “order does not suffocate life and life is not anarchy.”⁵¹⁶ Following the conciliar emphasis on charisms, he asked:

Will it be possible, within the structures of the Church... to give a place to the charisms which the Council spoke of, initiatives which sometimes shake the established forms? Will it be possible to establish a statute of prophetic gestures?⁵¹⁷

Laurentin continued to defend this ‘inter-celebration’, repeating his affirmation in *Le Figaro* that the participants had made an exceptional prophetic gesture which they did not intend to repeat, and situating it in relation to other instances of intercommunion.⁵¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the reaction from both Mgr Marty and Pastor Westphal, and later from Paul VI, was far from favourable.⁵¹⁹ Although there are no discernible traces of ecclesial reaction to Laurentin personally, it is inevitable that his views contributed to his being regarded as a liberal/progressist, as shown by von Balthasar’s description of him recounted above.⁵²⁰

Laurentin’s position vis-à-vis these protests demonstrates his engagement with the complex world of the French Church in the late 1960s and 1970s, the situation of which is unambiguously revealed in titles of works from this time, including de Lubac’s (1969) lecture *The crisis in the Church*; Bouyer’s (1968) *La décomposition du Catholicisme* and Congar’s (1969) *Au milieu des orages*.⁵²¹ Laurentin’s open-mindedness and personal struggle are honestly described in a letter dated “Christmas 1971”:

Fifty years ago, at my age a professor of theology lived his maturity in the assurance of the knowledge methodically accumulated. And now, he must return to school each

⁵¹⁵ Cf. (1968) ‘R. Laurentin dans *Le Figaro* du 4 juin 1968’, *Christianisme Social*, 76, pp. 415-418

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 417

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ Cf. (1969) *Enjeu du deuxième synode et contestation dans l’Église*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, pp. 18-19

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Chiron, *L’Église dans la tourmente de 1968* pp. 94-95. Chiron relates how Paul VI’s response was in a letter to Marie-Joseph Le Guillou (1920-1990) who had written a long article in *La Croix* challenging the ‘prophetic’ value of the intercommunion of Pentecost.

⁵²⁰ Cf. p. 86 above

⁵²¹ Cf. Komonchak, J. (2007) ‘Vatican II as an “event”’ in O’Malley, *Vatican II. Did anything happen?* pp. 24-51, p. 24

day, and accept the disintegration of many things to which he is attached, perceiving new integrations which are lines of hope for the Church.⁵²²

A few years later, in his Christmas letter of December 1974, Laurentin wrote about “the difficult time in which we live” and the “return to the sources” of faith which this had led him to:

...for a long-time I have had a nostalgia for a past and its vanishing securities. I have seen that this is neither evangelical nor human. ... Like all men of my generation, I have felt the vertigo of a time where so many things seem to be coming undone and disintegrating. And behold, under the disappearing sand, we tend to find once more the solid, in matters of faith in any case. ... There is a return to the sources which endure.⁵²³

Despite various concerns with his physical health and considerable work-induced stress,⁵²⁴ in the late 1960s and 1970s Laurentin not only wrote a significant number of books and articles but did so on a vast array of subjects, seeking to explore the riches of the universal Church in its diversity and to respond to the questions of the age. As well as regularly publishing on the synods which followed the Council,⁵²⁵ “convinced that the life of local Churches, place of the living Tradition, are an indispensable source for theology”,⁵²⁶ Laurentin visited numerous countries, and published books about Latin America (1968 and 1969), U.S.A (1971), the Far East (1971), Israel (1973) and China (1977).⁵²⁷ He also addressed what he saw as pressing

⁵²² Quoted in Serry, H. (2008) *‘Église catholique, autorité ecclésiale et politique dans les années 1960’*, in Damamme, D. et al (eds.) *Mai, Juin 68*. Paris: Les Éditions de l’Atelier, pp. 47-61, p. 50

⁵²³ Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Unclassified box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

⁵²⁴ For example, in his Christmas letter of December 1976 Laurentin writes that, “1976 has been for me so full of work and unimaginable worries, that I am astonished to finish it upright”. He recounts how to finish a book on St. Catherine Labouré for the centenary of her death he had “to invest in it beyond good sense, in shortening my nights to four hours.” Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Unclassified box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

⁵²⁵ Despite the complaints Laurentin’s critical ‘Bilan’ on the third Synod received, these were acclaimed as “an irreplaceable source of information by the quality of their records and the precision of their information”, with Laurentin being praised for being “alone among religious commentators” in having had “the patience to persevere.” [Poulat, E. (1972) *‘Réorientation de l’Eglise après le troisième synode’*, in *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 17, p. 217]

⁵²⁶ (2002) *‘René Laurentin, une œuvre, une vie’*, *Chrétien Magazine* (undated), Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 21.7, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 3. Here Laurentin was demonstrating his agreement with the conciliar emphasis upon the importance of local Churches, as is shown by K. Rahner’s belief that the most valuable new element introduced by the Council was the idea of the local church as the realization of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church (Cf. *Theological Investigations X*, pp. 7ff, quoted in Congar, *I believe in the Holy Spirit* p. 171). It is notable that there is no indication that Laurentin sought to engage with Eastern Christianity; his desire seems rather to encounter the reality of Roman Catholicism in realities very different to that of France.

⁵²⁷ Cf. (1968) *Flashes sur l’Amérique latine*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil; (1969) *L’Amérique latine à l’heure de l’enfance*. Paris: Éditions de Seuil; (1971) *Crise et promesse d’Eglise aux USA*. Paris: Apostolat des Éditions; (1971) *Flashes sur l’Extrême-Orient*. Paris: Éditions de Seuil; (1973) *Renaissance des églises locales : Israël*. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, and (1977) *Chine et christianisme : après les occasions manquées*. Paris: Desclée De Brouwer.

issues of the time, including writing about the relationship between the Church and Judaism (1967), *Is God Dead?* (1968), hope (1972), faith (1972), and liberation theology (1972).⁵²⁸

It is difficult to judge how this growing openness to the world and contemporary issues impacted Laurentin's approach to the study of Mary. He himself described the "two axis which are not foreign to one another", that of "the actual life of the Church" and his "centre of interest", his "first specialisation", the Virgin Mary.⁵²⁹ While Laurentin would later assiduously study apparitions throughout the world, at this early post-conciliar era his apparitions centred research tended to be a prolongation of his work on Lourdes, or in response to specific requests, such as marking the centenary of the death of St. Catherine Labouré (1806-1876).⁵³⁰ These areas of research demonstrate how, alongside Laurentin's seemingly indefatigable interest in contemporary theological issues and situations, he remained faithful to his commitment to exhaustively researching Lourdes and open to responding to similar ecclesial requests for historical studies of approved apparition sites, such as Rue de Bac and Pontmain, both well-springs of mainstream, popular devotion.

As was discussed above, Laurentin's early works were primarily meticulous research, both historical and doctrinal, and although he was attracted to the controversial Marian priesthood, he had carefully respected the boundaries of this subject. By Vatican II Laurentin was assertively defending theological issues about which he had a strong opinion. In Mariology this was primarily a stance against the emphases of the Marian movement, partially shaped by his concern for ecumenism. This trajectory of growing openness to question and challenge continued in the post-conciliar era, influenced by the spirit of the age and the call to *aggiornamento*, as well as by the views of others, including his siblings. Laurentin acknowledged the influence "progressives" had had upon him, describing how he valued their friendship and clarity of thought, which had helped him to see clearly.⁵³¹

Laurentin's character was marked by the tendency to push boundaries and a seemingly instinctive attraction to the marginal or marginalised; he was always fighting for one cause or

⁵²⁸ Cf. (1967) *L'Église et les juifs à Vatican II*. Tournai: Casterman; (1968) *Dieu est-il mort ?* Paris: Apostolat des Éditions; (1972) *Nouvelles dimensions de l'espérance*. Paris: Cerf; (1972) *Has our faith changed? Reflections on the faith for today's adult Christian*. New York: Alba House; (1972) *Liberation, Development and Salvation*. New York: Orbis books.

⁵²⁹ Christmas letter, December 1974. Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Unclassified box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio.

⁵³⁰ Cf. pp. 152-157 below

⁵³¹ Cf. *Église qui vient* p. 18. Laurentin does not name any of these influences, but they are likely to have included his siblings and their associates referred to in pp. 85-87 above.

another and did so with what he described as his “stubborn perseverance”, a trait which his grandfather had seen in him since his childhood.⁵³² This perseverance was combined with a remarkable concern for detail, which Laurentin expressed as his “thirst for evidence and synthesis”.⁵³³ There is no clear point at which Laurentin’s fighting ceased to be with and for progressive causes and came to be to defend the “fundamentals of faith and morals”, but he appears to have become gradually disillusioned and increasingly aware of the need to return to the solid sources of the faith in the turbulent decade after Vatican II. Laurentin reflects on this time in his *Mémoires*:

...for years I had sought how to make the Church advance, being a prisoner of archaisms and of constraints from which my best teachers suffered... My fundamental positions did not change, but in the widespread criticism and opposition which uprooted the essential, the post-conciliar urgency was no longer renewal but saving the fundamentals of faith and morals. ... After having criticised the parasitical extrapolations of the Marian movement, it was now necessary to alleviate the disintegration of the faith. Thus, after having been attacked by the right as a progressive promoter of Vatican II, I was given the reputation of a *back-lash* traditionalist, as the Americans say, that is, a retrograde. It was not me who changed, but wide Christian circles who ‘progressed’ by forgetting the essential...⁵³⁴

Laurentin also relates how exegesis “moved from an intolerable servitude to a freedom without break or interior discipline” with some exegetes “intoxicated by this liberation” making “a virtue of putting everything in question in a free, provocative and incoherent manner.”⁵³⁵ He is still fighting – but from a different corner.

Concluding comments: An increasing emphasis upon personal relationship

The most conspicuous change in Laurentin’s approach to studying Mary was evident immediately following the Council when he announced his concern to express the discipline differently. After Vatican II Laurentin carefully sought to avoid neologisms, preferring to refer as directly as possible to Mary the mother of Jesus.⁵³⁶ This is demonstrated by the new title given to his influential *Court traité de théologie mariale*, which went through five editions from 1953 to 1968, the last of which was entitled *Court traité sur la Vierge Marie*, in accordance with Laurentin’s belief that the “adjective ‘Marian’ (*Marial*) so popular in 1950-1960... calls for a circumspect use”.⁵³⁷ Laurentin attributed this change to the “Spirit of Vatican II” which “is

⁵³² *Aveugles et voyants* p. 43

⁵³³ *Mémoires* p. 232

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 490-491

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 540-541

⁵³⁶ Cf. Thompson, *Recovering Mary’s faith and her role in the Church* p. 77

⁵³⁷ *Crise et avenir de la Mariologie* p. 57. In *La question mariale* (pp. 38-39) Laurentin discusses the origins of the adjective ‘Marian’, noting that he had never found it used before the seventeenth century, and stating that “the use

that we do not become prisoners of a late vocabulary which created ‘mariology’ and ‘*culte marial*’ separate from Christian worship.”⁵³⁸ Laurentin would later explain this change in vivid terms, highlighting the importance of the person of Mary: “The Virgin is not called ‘Mario’ but ‘Maria’ ... I did not write a treatise of Mariology but a treatise on Mary.”⁵³⁹

The personal and relational become increasingly important to Laurentin as the years pass. In a dialogue with the sociologist Jean Fourastie (1907-1990) in 1974 Laurentin describes how his understanding of God had changed, and recounts how he now situates God at the heart of human relationships.⁵⁴⁰ For Laurentin, as for Mühlen, it is the Holy Spirit who “raises up other persons, not only to their uniqueness, but to interpersonal relationships in the image of those which exist in the Trinity.”⁵⁴¹ The following chapter, considering the Catholic charismatic renewal, will examine a further stage in Laurentin’s growing emphasis upon the relational.

of this epithet is a sign of the times”, it having been “created to indicate the recent phenomenon not merely of a specialization, but of a polarization.” (Translation from *Mary's Place in the Church* p. 29)

⁵³⁸ *Court traité* (1968) p. 11. Laurentin would later challenge the appropriateness of the title *Marialis Cultus* for Paul VI’s (1974) Apostolic Exhortation (Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 438-439).

⁵³⁹ <http://www.lejourduseigneur.com/Web-TV/Focus/Marie/Conference-de-l-abbé-Laurentin-sur-Mariee> an extract from a lecture by Laurentin in 2010. (Accessed: 01/01/2021). A similar stance is taken by de Fiores, as shown in the title of his contribution to *Κεχαριτωμένη*, “*La mariologie au XX^e siècle: continuité et nouveauté*” (pp. 263-278).

⁵⁴⁰ *L’Église a-t-elle trahi ?* p. 169

⁵⁴¹ *L’Esprit Saint* p. 178 (part of the “Group Discussion” animated by D. Coppieters with which the book concludes.)

Chapter 4: From *Lumen Gentium* to *Marialis Cultus* and the Catholic charismatic renewal

The “decade without Mary”

The decade between 1964 (*Lumen Gentium*) and 1974 (*Marialis Cultus*) is often regarded as a time of Marian crisis,⁵⁴² and has even been described as the “decade without Mary”.⁵⁴³ Whether or not the extent of this depiction is agreed with, it cannot be denied that this was a time of great change. This pivotal decade saw a marked reduction in the number of Marian writings published, although, as Laurentin assessed in 1972, the slow “and above all relative recession” was accompanied by “a rise in the quality” of publications about Mary.⁵⁴⁴ Reviewing the situation in retrospect, Bernard Sesboué (1929-2021) argues for a more nuanced evaluation than is often given of this era, seeing it as a “time of reconversion of Marian doctrine”, where the “sort of meditative silence” was not accompanied by a decrease in the quality of publications.⁵⁴⁵ As evidence for the latter point he points to the “congresses, symposiums and colloquiums regularly organised by the diverse associations of Marian theology”.⁵⁴⁶ Besutti’s *Bibliografia Mariana, 1967-1972*,⁵⁴⁷ described by Carroll as “a polyglot listing, with over 5,000 entries in 358 pages”,⁵⁴⁸ provides concrete insights into the Marian trends of the immediate post-conciliar period, particularly the “growth areas” which Carroll identifies as Scripture, patristic and later historical studies, and ecumenism.⁵⁴⁹

Viewing the situation from a historical perspective, Carroll describes how “periods of serious upset have normally followed the ecumenical councils” and depicts the post-conciliar decades as “a time of purgation as well as a time of trial.”⁵⁵⁰ When it is remembered that it was not simply what Vatican II said about Mary which changed Mariology, the inevitability of significant change is evident. Parmisano describes how the conciliar emphases on ecumenism, the

⁵⁴² *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, volume 20, 1970, was devoted to exploring this theme of ‘Marian crisis’ with theologians representing a variety of cultural contexts discussing the gravity of the situation.

⁵⁴³ Cf. de Fiores, S. (1988) ‘Mary in postconciliar theology’ in Latourelle, R. (ed.) *Vatican II: Assessment and perspectives twenty-five years later - Volume One*, pp. 469-539, p. 474. The origins of the phrase ‘decade without Mary’ are unclear; de Fiores does not specify his source.

⁵⁴⁴ (1972) ‘Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie’, *Revue de sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 56, pp. 43-491, p. 433

⁵⁴⁵ Sesboué, B. (1997) ‘La théologie mariale après Vatican II’, in Comby, J. (ed.) *Théologie, histoire et piété mariale. Actes de colloque. Université catholique de Lyon, 1-3 octobre 1996*. Profac, Lyon, pp. 63-76, p. 64

⁵⁴⁶ Sesboué, *La théologie mariale après Vatican II* p. 63. It is also important to note that The *Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* was founded in England in 1967, indicating the growth of ecumenical Marian studies.

⁵⁴⁷ Published in the 1973 (Vol. 35) edition of *Marianum: Ephemerides Mariologiae*

⁵⁴⁸ Carroll, E. (1976) ‘Current theology: Theology on the Virgin Mary: 1966-1975’, *Theological Studies*, 37, p. 253.

This can be compared with Besutti’s *Bibliographia Mariana, 1958-1966* (Rome, 1968) which included over 7,000 titles. [Cf. Philips, G. (1971) ‘La Vierge au II^e Concile du Vatican et l’avenir de la Mariologie’, *Maria*, VIII, pp. 41-88, p. 80.]

⁵⁴⁹ Carroll, *Current theology: Theology on the Virgin Mary* p. 253.

⁵⁵⁰ Carroll, E. (1985) ‘Mary: The woman come of age’, *Marian Studies*, 35, pp. 136-160, pp. 138, 149

priority of Scripture, the humanity of Christ, our sole saviour and intermediary with God, the reform of the liturgy and a more positive outlook on the world, life and death all contributed to a diminished devotion to Mary, and concludes:

...perhaps, in the long run, the Council will be seen to have done right by Mary, not so much because of what it said about her (though this also) but, rather, because of its emphasis upon other essentials of the faith. Having got them rightly and properly placed, according to the exigencies of our time, it has cleared the way for fresh and creative approaches to Mary in and for the contemporary world.⁵⁵¹

Thus, the post-conciliar years enabled new Marian approaches and emphases to be explored and developed, with Mary firmly situated within the Church and the history of salvation. As Philips stressed, the ecclesiological, Biblical, Patristic, liturgical, pastoral, missionary and ecumenical movements required “a renewal of Mariology” and had a powerful capacity “to strengthen and deepen the Marian movement” once “an enlightened trust takes the place of misunderstandings and suspicions.”⁵⁵² A new emphasis on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit was a significant development of this era, along with a move from “a theology of Mary-Queen to a theology of Mary-servant”, with Mary sharing in the human condition and representing the poor of Yahweh.⁵⁵³

While the degree to which there was a diminishment in Marian devotion is debated and inevitably varied according to cultural contexts,⁵⁵⁴ Paul VI’s *Marialis Cultus*, “for the right ordering and development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary” makes clear the need for “the renewal of devotion to Mary” and witnesses to changes in how Mary was approached on a popular as well as an intellectual level.⁵⁵⁵ For example, it acknowledges that some pious

⁵⁵¹ Parmisano, S. (1989) ‘*Marian Devotions: In and beyond Marialis Cultus*’, *Marian Studies*, 40, p. 138. Cf. Eamon Duffy’s reflections on nineteenth century British Marian devotions as revealed in popular hymns which unambiguously demonstrate this point. [Duffy, E. (2004) *Faith of Our Fathers: Reflections on Catholic Tradition*. London: Continuum, pp. 29-38]

⁵⁵² Philips, *La Vierge au II^e Concile du Vatican* p. 74.

⁵⁵³ Cf. Sesboüé, *La théologie mariale après Vatican II* p. 66. While this movement was welcomed by some, it has also been strongly critiqued, such as in the emphatic assessment of Charlene Spretnak: “Mary, Queen of Heaven was scaled down to her new role as Mary, Just a Housewife, albeit a pious forerunner of the Church. So much more rational!” [Spretnak, C. (2004) *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and her re-emergence in the modern Church*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 48]

⁵⁵⁴ For example, Jean-Pierre Sieme Lasoul stresses that the post-conciliar crisis “had, above all, intellectual connotations”, because “it was not revealed in the behaviour of the faithful, who continued to revere with love the mother of Christ and to turn with confidence to her maternal intercession.” [Sieme Lasoul, J.-P. (1998) *La Sainte Vierge Marie et l’Esprit Saint dans la ‘Marialis Cultus’*, *Testi di Dottorato in Sacra Teologia con specializzazione in Mariologia*, Rome, p. 71] In contrast, Duffy, writing about British Catholicism, describes “the way in which Marian piety has simply ceased to feature as a vital dimension of their faith for a growing number of people” as one “of the most striking developments in post-Conciliar Catholicism.” [Duffy, *Faith of Our Fathers* p. 29]

⁵⁵⁵ Part 2 (nos. 24-39) is entitled ‘The renewal of devotion to Mary’

practises of the past may not be suitable in today's world,⁵⁵⁶ and exhorts pastors and theologians to meditate more deeply on the working of the Holy Spirit, so that “the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth” is revealed.⁵⁵⁷ The fact that *Marialis Cultus* speaks of “the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion (to Mary) and modern anthropological discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field” demonstrates that the changes in Marian devotion were not only related to the Council but also to the significant cultural shifts of this time.⁵⁵⁸

Developments in Laurentin’s presentation of Mary and the Holy Spirit

Additions to the fifth (1968) edition of Laurentin’s *Court traité* demonstrate the new emphasis upon the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. As recounted above, in this edition Laurentin expands his reflections on the connection between Genesis 1:1-2 and the “new creation” of Luke 1:35 of earlier editions, including referring to Eastern texts on the *Katharsis* of Mary.⁵⁵⁹ Laurentin also adds a short section on “the Pneumatological orientation”,⁵⁶⁰ a summary of key points found in his earlier *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale*,⁵⁶¹ and develops the section on Mary’s divine maternity. This includes an emphasis on the Spirit acting “from within, *ex intimo*, stirring up the life-giving potentialities of this woman who has opened herself entirely to grace”, according to the Spirit’s “proper manner of acting”, as when the Spirit moves us to pray, “Abba Father.”⁵⁶²

Laurentin describes Mary’s divine maternity as “divine according to its similarity to the Trinitarian archetype” and emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit. Stating that “it has not been said enough that Mary is entirely relative to the Holy Spirit”, Laurentin stresses that this is “essential for understanding what happened at the Annunciation”, referring to the “several conciliar and other texts” which insist upon this “profound analogy between the Annunciation and Pentecost.”⁵⁶³ Laurentin quotes *Lumen Gentium* no. 59, with its reference to Mary before the day of Pentecost “by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation”, and the later *Ad Gentes* no. 4, with its ‘missionary

⁵⁵⁶ *Marialis Cultus*, Introduction

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.* no. 27

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.* no. 34

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. p. 40 above, referring to *Court traité* (1968) pp. 137-138. It is regrettable that, although Laurentin devotes a page (p. 129) to ‘*La katharsis de Marie à l’annonciation*’, he gives no references for the sources relating to the “new creation” of Luke 1:35.

⁵⁶⁰ pp. 99-100

⁵⁶¹ Cf. p. 74 above and pp. 186-188 below

⁵⁶² *Court traité* (1968) p. 124

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 123

elan': "The 'acts of the apostles' began with Pentecost, just as Christ was conceived in the Virgin Mary with the coming of the holy Spirit".⁵⁶⁴ Despite Laurentin only giving references for the conciliar texts (*Lumen Gentium* no. 59 and *Ad Gentes* no. 4) the following sentences which closely echo Mühlen's emphases, indicate that the second, post-conciliar edition of *Una mystica persona* was at least one of the "other texts" he had in mind:

At the beginning of this mystery of the Church, at the Annunciation, there is the establishment of the fundamental bond between the Word and the one who begets in the name of the whole human race, and it is the Holy Spirit who is the transcendent agent of this first, fundamental, and exemplary bond.⁵⁶⁵

Although he stresses the "profound analogy between the Annunciation and Pentecost",⁵⁶⁶ Laurentin does not develop this in any detail here. His reflections, with language which indicates influence by Mühlen, revolve around Mary's being anointed by the Spirit, so as to be "the bond (*lien*), the original human bond (*liant*) between the Word and the human race", with her anointing having "a functional and privileged place within the anointing *par excellence*: the double hypostatic and messianic anointing of Christ on one hand, and that of Christians who participate in this same anointing by the sacrament of Christian initiation, on the other hand."⁵⁶⁷ Thus, Laurentin recounts, "it is not surprising" that after the anointing of the Annunciation, "impelled by the Spirit" Mary leaves to visit Elizabeth, since "the mystery of communion and sanctification which is the Visitation," where Elizabeth is "filled with the Spirit and prophesies", and Mary responds by prophesying, comes from the same anointing.⁵⁶⁸

Similar themes (without the language of 'anointing') are found in Laurentin's (1970) article *Crise et avenir de la Mariologie*, addressing the Pneumatological and anthropological Marian orientations suggested by the Council, which Laurentin describes as offering "possibilities of rich and complimentary renewal".⁵⁶⁹ His reflections upon the relationship between the Annunciation and Pentecost include Mary being "a type of the action of the Church, rooted in the Spirit, which enables Christ to be born in the world",⁵⁷⁰ and are echoed in the closing words of this article, demonstrating Laurentin's vision of a Pneumatologically orientated, Scripturally based Mariology leading to an engagement with and witness to the world:

⁵⁶⁴ Translations from Flannery, A. (ed.) (1996) *Vatican Council II, the basic sixteen documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, pp. 84, 446

⁵⁶⁵ *Court traité* (1968) pp. 123-124. (Cf. pp. 74-81 above on Mühlen's *Una mystica persona*)

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 125

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ *Crise et avenir de la Mariologie* p. 58

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 59, reflecting on *Ad Gentes* no. 4

Perhaps it is the breath of the Spirit which will purify that which remains closed within what is called 'Mariology'... May specialisation not make us forget the fundamental movement by which the Virgin Mary knew how to welcome God: integrating him to the world, carrying him to people, as she did at the Visitation, occupying herself with their worries, as she did at Cana, entering into the mystery of human suffering as she did at Calvary, engaging herself in the prayer which called for the coming of the Spirit upon the earth ('fire to the earth'), according to the desire of Christ.⁵⁷¹

The Catholic charismatic renewal

Although the Marian orientations of Vatican II clearly had a great impact upon post-Conciliar Marian theology, they were by no means the only catalysts for change. Alongside "the profound changes" in "the psycho-sociological field" highlighted by *Marialis Cultus*,⁵⁷² the Catholic charismatic renewal, originally referred to as 'Catholic Pentecostalism',⁵⁷³ played an important role in the changing landscape of Marian theology and spirituality. This spiritual movement opened new horizons for Laurentin's understanding and presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, particularly through the place given to 'charism(s)', as well as contributing towards his turning to the personal and experiential.

Laurentin regards Catholic charismatic renewal as the prime impetus for the rediscovery of the Spirit in Catholic spirituality.⁵⁷⁴ While John XXIII had explicitly sought "a new Pentecost" in and through Vatican II,⁵⁷⁵ Laurentin relates how the "charismatic renewal was not born from an *application* of conciliar decrees, but from a deep, unexpected *inspiration*",⁵⁷⁶ when, in January 1967, four Americans from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, received the laying on of hands and prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit from Episcopalians.⁵⁷⁷ Laurentin describes the "dual

⁵⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 60-61

⁵⁷² Cf. p. 95 above

⁵⁷³ Several theologians, including Congar and Francis Sullivan (1922-2019) object to the term 'charismatic Catholics' because it implies that 'charismatic' is "an exclusive prerogative of participants in the Pentecostal movement", with Sullivan advocating the use of the alternative term 'neo-pentecostals'. [Sullivan, F. (2004) *Charisms and charismatic renewal: A biblical and theological study*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, pp. 50-51.] While this is a valid proposal, given that Laurentin used either 'Catholic Pentecostalism' or 'Catholic charismatic renewal' and the latter is the term in popular usage, this will be the term used in this study.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-2

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. p. 73 above

⁵⁷⁶ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1980) p. 158

⁵⁷⁷ Laurentin's account of this historic event provides an insight into the state of ecumenical relations at the time: "In 1967, Catholics in Pittsburgh would not have dared to go directly to the Pentecostals. But the Pentecostal experience had already spread among other religious denominations; it was called neo-Pentecostalism. It was in one of these denominations, one close to Catholicism, the Episcopalians, that the four American Catholics asked for the imposition of hands and for prayer to obtain the outpouring of the Spirit." *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1980) p. 159

experience” of the outpouring of the Spirit, marked by conversion and renewal, and the outpouring of charisms, beginning with glossolalia.⁵⁷⁸

Catholic charismatic renewal was not present in France until late 1971 or 1972,⁵⁷⁹ but Laurentin recounts how he was actively seeking ‘signs of the times’ and “became interested in Catholic Pentecostalism as early as 1967, the very year of its birth”, and spoke with Fr Edward O’Connor, professor at the University of Notre Dame, one of the early leaders and “the chief theologian of the movement” in August 1967.⁵⁸⁰ In the introduction to his (1974) *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* Laurentin notes that “participation is a prerequisite for understanding”, but as “a theologian and historian who is also a professional religious journalist”, he sought to keep “the distance needed for objective investigation.”⁵⁸¹ He relates how his research was based upon attending many meetings: in America (Ann Arbor, New Orleans and Houston), Canada, England and France, as well as the International Conference held at the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana) in 1974 where thirty thousand participants gathered.⁵⁸²

The first writings about Catholic charismatic renewal were by those heavily involved “sometimes to the point of total dedication and qualified mainly by their experience in it (brief though that necessarily was) and devotion to it”.⁵⁸³ However, from about 1970 theological works by professional theologians began to emerge: O’Connor names McDonnell and Gelpi (America), Sullivan (Rome), Tugwell and Hocken (England), Mühlen (Germany) and Laurentin (France).⁵⁸⁴ Although Laurentin was a professional theologian, as several of the numerous reviews of *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* rightly emphasise, despite his stated aim, his is far from a neutral approach; he is writing after several years of attending a wide range of charismatic meetings and finding much that is positive in them.⁵⁸⁵ He will later stress “the

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Laurentin dates the origins to late 1971 (*Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 18) and the editorial of the (1974) edition of *Vie Spirituelle* devoted to Catholic charismatic renewal specifies that the first charismatic prayer groups were present in France in 1972. Cf. A.M. (1974) *Bref rappel des origines du renouveau*, *Vie Spirituelle*, 128, p. 5, full name of author not given.

⁵⁸⁰ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* pp. 9, 235

⁵⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 10-11

⁵⁸² Ibid. p. 10

⁵⁸³ O’Connor, E. (1975) *Perspectives on charismatic renewal*. Notre Dame, Indiana; University of Notre Dame Press, p. 149

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 149-150

⁵⁸⁵ Laurentin’s Christmas circular letters of 1974 and 1975 (Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Unclassified box, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio) confirm this. In his 1974 letter he describes participating in the 8th international assembly of Catholic charismatic renewal in Notre Dame (Indiana), stating that “whatever may be the risks and the failings inherent in every renewal” there was “a profound and authentic outpouring”. In his 1975 Christmas letter Laurentin writes about the charismatic movement:

This movement, which continues to develop, has brought me a great deal... During my health worries this summer, I took part in a meeting of a small group at Villefort... where I had been asked to attend as a theologian. ... This remains a luminous point in the year which is ending.

fecundity of the charismatic experience to clarify biblical texts” and speak from personal experience of how “after twenty years of assiduous exegetical work” he “found a new light for a fresh reading of Luke 1-2 and Acts 1-2”.⁵⁸⁶ He also relates how he was “surprised to find, from this re-established experience of charisms, perceptions which until then had been unsuspected.”⁵⁸⁷

In *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* Laurentin does not speak of his own experience but does emphasise that of Mühlen, “the foremost contemporary theologian of the Holy Spirit, whose work has been profoundly reshaping pneumatology for the past twenty years”, who came to experience what he had previously expressed in theory through the charismatic renewal:

I would like simply to say that for 15 years I have known the Holy Spirit with my head, but now I also know him with my heart, and wish the same joy for you. For 15 years people said to me: “What you are writing is speculation, not real.” But now I am seeing it come to reality all over the world. The Holy Spirit is real, and is being sent by the Father and the Son to bring the human race to a knowledge of them. I longed for this but it was in my head, and an unfulfilled longing. Now it is in my heart, changing my life.⁵⁸⁸

Although Mühlen would become increasingly critical of the charismatic movement, mainly due to his objections to how the working of the Spirit in the Church was discerned,⁵⁸⁹ the strength of his testimony from the 1970s continued to have a powerful effect on Laurentin who frequently quoted his words.⁵⁹⁰

Laurentin’s positive approach to charismatic renewal explains why Simon Tugwell declares that despite Laurentin describing himself as a ‘participating observer’, his “sympathies are plainly engaged”,⁵⁹¹ and Josephine Massyngberde Ford forcefully asserts that it seems as if Laurentin “is determined to defend the movement ‘come hell or high water.’”⁵⁹² Roland Walls provides the insightful comment that Laurentin’s “real interest is to commend the Pentecostal

⁵⁸⁶ *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-46

⁵⁸⁷ (1978) ‘*Les charismes de Marie: Ecriture, Tradition et Sitz im Leben*’, *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 28, pp. 309-321, p. 310

⁵⁸⁸ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* pp. 231-232. (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* pp. 185-186, quoting Martin, R. (1974) *An interview with Fr. Heribert Mühlen, theologian of the Holy Spirit*, New Covenant, p. 6)

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Vondey, W. (2004) *Heribert Mühlen, his theology and praxis: A new profile of the Church*. Maryland: University Press of America, pp. 167, 172. Vondey describes how “Mühlen’s temporary solidarity with the charismatic renewal lasted roughly from 1972 to 1985” and he “has distanced himself from the official Charismatic Movement since 1985.” (p. 167)

⁵⁹⁰ In his (1998) *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* Laurentin gives no indication of Mühlen’s changed attitude towards the charismatic renewal but praises his “remarkable witness to the unity between theology and life.” (p. 435) Cf. *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-46 – 2-47, and *La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle* p. 35.

⁵⁹¹ Tugwell, S. (1978) ‘*Catholic Pentecostalism by René Laurentin*’, *New Blackfriars*, 59, p. 339

⁵⁹² Massyngberde Ford, J. (1978) ‘*Catholic Pentecostalism by René Laurentin*’, *Theological Studies* 39, pp. 190-192, p. 192

movement to the authorities of his church”, an approach which he judges was “not detached enough to win over the critics” or to help the movement to face internal and external contradictions.⁵⁹³ Laurentin’s attitude to this new and disputed movement is marked by loyalty; although he does not state this himself, it is clearly apparent to others.

As well as methodological critiques of *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, both French editions are noted as containing errors in referencing and typography,⁵⁹⁴ and despite his bibliography being “three and a half times the length of your arm”,⁵⁹⁵ several reviewers remarked on the gaps within it.⁵⁹⁶ While the sheer number of reviews of this text, both in French and English testifies to its significance, it is noteworthy that it reveals a less rigorous approach than Laurentin’s early works, no doubt influenced by restraints imposed by the combination of his prolific output, teaching schedule and frequent travels.

Despite these criticisms, parts of *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* received significant acclaim. Unsurprisingly, given Laurentin’s academic background, it is his reflections on healing, where charismatic healings are compared with healing at Lourdes,⁵⁹⁷ and the short concluding chapter on “Mary, model of the charismatic” (“*Marie, prototype charismatique*”) which are highlighted, including the latter for revealing “unexpected ecumenical dimensions of the renewal.”⁵⁹⁸ While the well-written chapter on healing adds little to our current topic, the chapter on Mary is highly significant as the starting point of Laurentin’s reflections on Mary and the Holy Spirit in the light of the Catholic charismatic renewal which will be developed in his later writings. Before turning to examine the key themes of this chapter, it will be situated within the context of the writings about Mary and the Catholic charismatic renewal in its formative years.

⁵⁹³ Walls, R. (1979) ‘*Catholic Pentecostalism by René Laurentin*’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 32, pp. 81-83, p. 82

⁵⁹⁴ An updated version was printed in 1975. Cf. Ebacher, R. (1976) ‘*René Laurentin, Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques. Risques et avenir*’, *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 32, pp. 213-214, p. 214, and Ségué, J. (1977) ‘*Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques : risques et avenir*’, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 44, p. 251

⁵⁹⁵ Fox, L.-D. (1977) ‘*Introduction*’ in *Catholic Pentecostalism*, London: DLT, pp. 3-4, p. 3

⁵⁹⁶ Tugwell complains that his own (1972) articles were ignored (Tugwell, *Catholic Pentecostalism by René Laurentin* p. 339), and referring to the book’s bibliography - “twenty-four pages in small characters” - Philibert de St-Didier highlights the fact that “if you look for the authors who do not bring, in one manner or another, water to the Pentecostalist mill, the result will be thin.” [de St-Didier, P. (1975) *Plaidoyer pour le pentecôtisme de M. l’Abbé Laurentin*, La Pensée Catholique, 158. Available at: http://wordpress.catholicapedia.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/1975_R.P.Philibert-de-Saint-Didier_Plaidoyer-pour-le-pentecotisme-de-M.-l.-abbé-Laurentin.pdf p. 1 (Accessed: 01/01/21)]

⁵⁹⁷ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, pp. 129-168. Cf. Massyngberde Ford, *Catholic Pentecostalism by René Laurentin*, p. 191

⁵⁹⁸ Corbett, T. (1979) ‘*Book reviews*’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 46, pp. 131-133, p. 131

Laurentin relates how the “Catholic Pentecostal current” initially retained the Protestant Pentecostal perspective (with its “prejudices and allergies” about Mary) but Mary “progressively and irresistibly emerged” in Catholic charismatic renewal,⁵⁹⁹ and was rediscovered under a new light.⁶⁰⁰ The earliest writings about Catholic charismatic renewal, such as the popular (1969) *Catholic Pentecostals* by Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan,⁶⁰¹ contained little, if any, Marian content. O’Connor’s (1971) *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*,⁶⁰² an early systematic reflection on the movement, gives no place to Mary when considering key elements of the movement, its effects, or in the chapters devoted to theological reflections. There is only a brief positive reference within the section considering ‘attitudes towards the institutional Church’, where a short account of how devotion to Mary has been strengthened by the Pentecostal movement throughout America is given.⁶⁰³ Similarly, the Marian content of Tugwell’s (1972) *Did you receive the Spirit?* was limited to sporadic references to Mary.⁶⁰⁴

As the Catholic charismatic movement became more established, Mary gradually received more attention. In the early 1970s two booklets directly focusing on Mary and the charismatic renewal were published: David Rosage’s (1971) *Mary: The model charismatic*,⁶⁰⁵ and Louis Pfaller and Larry Alberts’s (1973) *Mary is Pentecostal: A fresh look at Mary from a charismatic viewpoint*.⁶⁰⁶ Both were written for a wide audience and lacked theological depth. Laurentin succinctly assesses that “the content of these booklets covers a range of themes and disparate expressions, taken from what was most conventional in pre-conciliar Mariology”, and concludes: “the intuition had not found its expression.”⁶⁰⁷ However, they are significant in marking the start of a new manner of reflecting upon Mary in her relationship to the Holy Spirit because of the context (of the Catholic charismatic renewal) within which they were written.

⁵⁹⁹ *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-20 - 2-21

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1980) p. 160

⁶⁰¹ New York: Paulist Press

⁶⁰² Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press

⁶⁰³ “Some people, who had always been devoted to her, have rejoiced to find that the Holy Spirit has made her dearer than ever before. Many, whose devotion had been perfunctory or lukewarm, have become much more earnest about it, and in some cases have even become zealous promoters. A few, who used to experience a deep antipathy for Marian piety, now find that they can at least understand and accept it. On the other hand, some of the ‘zealous promoters’ have learned to be more tactful and understanding toward those who do not share their devotion.” (pp. 167-168)

⁶⁰⁴ A summary of these Marian references leaves no ambiguity about their incidental nature: a prayer at the end of the preface evoking Acts 1:14 and Mary’s praying presence before Pentecost; a comparison of the elderly women in Rome praying the rosary with speaking in tongues, and a brief reflection on the consequences of the Vulgate translation of Luke 1:28 (*‘gratia plena’*) no longer being used for understanding Mary’s mediation. [Cf. Tugwell, S. (1972) *Did you receive the Spirit?* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, pp. 11-12, 67 and 87]

⁶⁰⁵ A twenty-three paged pamphlet, originally published in 1971 in Boston by the Daughters of St Paul.

⁶⁰⁶ Pecos, New Mexico: Dove Publications. (A sixty-eight paged pamphlet).

⁶⁰⁷ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 310

Rosage's small booklet presents Mary as personifying the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰⁸ and being the one who teaches Christians "how to live our life in the Spirit".⁶⁰⁹ Like Mary, the reader is extolled "to personify the Holy Spirit in our times by permitting Him to produce His fruits within us."⁶¹⁰ Half the booklet is focused on the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), with Rosage describing Mary as a woman of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control.⁶¹¹ In a highly simple yet vivid manner he conveys his central premise, that the "fruits of the Spirit are manifest to an eminent degree in the life of our Blessed Mother":

The Mother of Jesus was kindness personified. Could you imagine her being rude to the shepherds, to the Magi, or to the many others who might have importuned her at Bethlehem or Nazareth? Hardly! The Spirit was operative within her.⁶¹²

Mary is Pentecostal: A fresh look at Mary from a charismatic viewpoint is a highly colloquial record of an interview between Pfaller, a priest who stresses that he is not a trained theologian,⁶¹³ and Alberts, who, despite strong personal resistance, found Mary through the charismatic renewal. It clearly demonstrates the conflictual place of Mary within some elements of the charismatic movement, particularly within ecumenical prayer groups, and the suspicion with which the charismatic movement was regarded by some of those whose prayer was marked by Marian devotion:

...many Christians today do not see eye to eye on the place which Mary and the Holy Spirit have in our lives today. They suppose that there is a dichotomy. I have friends who are dedicated to the Blessed Mother who look with fear and apprehension on those who are in the Charismatic Movement and pray for the conversion of those straying brethren. And there are sincere people in the Charismatic Movement who think that devotion to Mary detracts from the true worship of God and has no place in the life of the Spirit. ... Though it is not true that all charismatics are opposed to Mary, and all Marian devotees against the Charismatic Movement, there has been much opposition due to mutual misunderstandings.⁶¹⁴

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Rosage, D. (1977) *Mary the model charismatic*. Pecos, New Mexico: Dove Publications, pp. 1, 12

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 1

⁶¹⁰ Ibid. p. 20

⁶¹¹ Ibid. pp. 11-22. That this approach is in no way dependent upon charismatic renewal is demonstrated by a similar approach being used in *The Spirit enshrined: Meditations on Mary, spouse of the Holy Ghost* by A. Pattison (London: Herder), published in 1949; it contains chapters focused on applying different gifts of the Spirit to Mary. Cf. p. 24 above on representations of 'the Virgin of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit', and *Marialis Cultus*, footnote 81 (commenting on no. 26), referring to the eighth-century Paul the Deacon's *Homilia I, In Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis* (PL 95, 1567) which includes the statement "this venerable Mother of the Lord was enriched with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit." (Text given in Bertetto, D. (1979) 'L'azione propria dello Spirito santo in Maria', *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 41, pp. 400-444, p. 424)

⁶¹² Rosage, *Mary the model charismatic* pp. 11, 17

⁶¹³ Pfaller and Alberts, *Mary is Pentecostal* p. 7

⁶¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 5, 62, these quotes are from the preface and the concluding paragraph, both written by Pfaller.

The attitude towards Mary within Catholic charismatic prayer groups varied considerably according to their context. Laurentin recounts how while Mary was enthusiastically invoked at many charismatic prayer meetings in France and Canada, much greater reserve was shown in the United States where “most of the groups are (ecumenically) mixed”.⁶¹⁵ He also highlights that not all devotion to Mary found in French and Canadian groups was appropriate, with some fervent participants using “the ponderous and in some cases questionable formulas of the pre-conciliar period”, to “the detriment not only of the ecumenical spirit but of authenticity as well.”⁶¹⁶ Moreover, Hogan’s study of the development of Marian reflection and devotion in the first twenty-seven years (1967-1994) of Catholic charismatic renewal indicates that in the first decade of the movement there was a striking difference between the clerical leadership encouraging devotion to Mary and the lay leadership being much less enthusiastic.⁶¹⁷ Hogan highlights the role of Suenens, Paul VI and Laurentin in directly encouraging the integration of a Marian dimension within Catholic charismatic renewal,⁶¹⁸ and describes how the writings of Suenens, Laurentin, Mühlen and George Maloney gave “a much stronger theological foundation towards a ‘charismatic’ approach to Marian devotion” as they “developed the understanding of Mary’s relationship with the Holy Spirit, with Jesus Christ and with the Church.”⁶¹⁹ However, Hogan’s research finds that these theological works were not read as much as works by members of the (U.S) National Service Team and other early leaders in Catholic charismatic renewal, and that their “ideas did not quickly become part of the ‘common knowledge’” of those attending charismatic prayer meetings in the U.S.⁶²⁰ He concludes that “it cannot be said that Marian devotion was a widespread phenomenon in CCR by 1978.”⁶²¹

It is within this context that Suenens recounts his “happy surprise” and “joy” during his homily at the International Catholic charismatic conference of 1973, when his brief mention of the role of Mary as a secret of holiness “was met with a standing ovation from some twenty thousand people”, which he describes as “a reaction of authentic catholicity”.⁶²² This growing

⁶¹⁵ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* pp. 241-242. This reserve is highly understandable given that “certain Pentecostal groups” were “very particular about exorcising the so-called ‘marian dependence’ through the charism of deliverance.” (*Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal*, 2-20)

⁶¹⁶ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 242 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 194)

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Hogan, R. (2012) ‘*Mary and the Catholic charismatic renewal*’, *Marian Library Studies*, 30, pp. 237-372, pp. 342-343

⁶¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 344-348

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 369. George Malony’s (1976) *Mary: The womb of God* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension books) received a mixed reaction, with some objecting to his use of Jungian theories.

⁶²⁰ Hogan, *Mary and the Catholic charismatic renewal* p. 369

⁶²¹ *Ibid.* p. 372

⁶²² Suenens, L. (1974) *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, p. 246. Apart from the last phrase, which is my own translation, the translation is taken from (1975) *A new Pentecost?* London: DLT, p. 210

openness to Marian devotion within charismatic renewal was aided by key works which addressed the role of Mary within Catholic charismatic renewal that were written the following year; Laurentin's *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, like Suenen's *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* and George Montague's *Riding the Wind*,⁶²³ contained chapters on Mary, which, although brief, have significantly more theological substance than the earlier booklets by Rosage, and Pfaller and Alberts. The content of these chapters in the works by Suenens and Montague will be briefly outlined to enable Laurentin's work to be considered in the light of them.

Montague, a Marist priest and Scripture scholar, came to a deep understanding of the life-changing work of the Spirit through participation in charismatic renewal. Like Mühlen and Laurentin, Montague found fresh insights into Scripture through his new relationship with the Holy Spirit, declaring that the "Word began to speak in a way it never had before, to my daily experience".⁶²⁴ In his (1974) *Riding the Wind*, which he describes as "personal reflections on life in the Spirit",⁶²⁵ Montague dedicates a chapter to "Mary and learning the ways of the Spirit".⁶²⁶ This focuses on Mary as a model of faith and response, the "model listener" from whom we can learn "to listen to the Spirit in the Word", and an example of "love that does not exclude" which guards against "an untempered zeal".⁶²⁷ In a very practical fashion Montague presents Mary as an example of how to minister "to those who have not yet felt the intense power of the Holy Spirit", as he reflects upon her (having already received her proto-Pentecost at the Annunciation) awaiting Pentecost with the disciples knowing "to await the moment of God's grace", aware that "it would be hastened not by her impatience but rather by her prayer and her love and her presence."⁶²⁸ In a strikingly different tone to that of the preceding pages, this chapter ends with Montague describing Mary as "one of the most precious gifts of the Spirit" and "a charism of the Spirit in person",⁶²⁹ a description which made an impression upon Suenens who quoted it at the end of his chapter on the Holy Spirit and Mary.⁶³⁰

Suenens had acquired a deep devotion to the Holy Spirit as a seminarian under the influence

⁶²³ Montague, G. (1977) *Riding the Wind*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pillar Books for Word of Life

⁶²⁴ Ibid. p. 51

⁶²⁵ Ibid. p. 25

⁶²⁶ pp. 88-94. Interestingly, Montague's slender (1974) *The Spirit and his gifts* (New York: Paulist Press, a sixty-six paged pamphlet) has no significant mention of Mary, in contrast to his (2011) *Mary's life in the Spirit: Meditations on a holy duet* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press), which has a surprising understanding of the closeness of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. Cf. p. 199 below

⁶²⁷ Montague, *Riding the Wind* pp. 92-93

⁶²⁸ Ibid. pp. 93-94

⁶²⁹ Ibid. p. 94

⁶³⁰ Cf. Suenens, *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* p. 246

of his bishop and predecessor, Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851-1926), and later chose *In Spiritu Sancto* for his coat of arms at his episcopal ordination.⁶³¹ He vigorously defended the current relevance of the charisms of the Spirit and the importance of restoring them at Vatican II,⁶³² as well as being primarily responsible for the “Suenens amendment” of *Lumen Gentium* 65.⁶³³ In an interview with Laurentin for *Le Figaro*, Suenens describes how on encountering the Catholic charismatic renewal in 1971, he was moved by “seeing so many Christians living the Acts of the Apostles literally” and led to discover that he believed in the Spirit in a limited manner. As a direct consequence of this, the future papal delegate for charismatic renewal was initiated into the movement after asking a group of friends to pray for him and lay their hands on him, that he might be faithful to the Spirit.⁶³⁴

The short chapter on Mary and the Holy Spirit in Suenens’ influential (1974) *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* was principally marked by ecumenical concerns and Scripturally based reflections on Mary’s role in the Church and the life of the Christian.⁶³⁵ Suenens acclaims Mary as “the first charismatic”,⁶³⁶ and, like Montague, takes a pragmatic approach to Mary as a ‘model’ for charismatics, presenting her as a guarantee of humanity, humility, balance and wisdom. He describes how “a living perception and recognition of the role of Mary is particularly important in a movement such as the Charismatic Renewal”, since, in “the midst of all the extraordinary outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit it is necessary to maintain a healthy balance and penetrating discernment.”⁶³⁷ It is notable that there is no reflection on Mary’s personal relationship to charismatic gifts, nor indeed, in this chapter, on the charisms associated with charismatic renewal.

Despite Suenens’ sincere and thoughtful ecumenical sensibilities, this chapter received damning reviews from the Pentecostal review *Expériences*; the front cover of a (1974) edition

⁶³¹ Cf. O’Connor, *Pope Paul and the Spirit* p. 35

⁶³² Cf. In an intense debate in October 1963, Suenens resolutely opposed Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini’s (1888-1967) attempt to relegate charisms to Church history because of a concern that they could threaten the institutional Church. Küng relates how he not only suggested this subject to Suenens but worked out a speech for him, described by Peter Hebblethwaite (1930-1994) as the “most influential speech of the Council so far” (*My struggle for freedom* pp. 360-361).

⁶³³ Cf. p. 72 above

⁶³⁴ (1974) ‘Le “Renouveau dans l’Esprit” ? Une nouvelle jeunesse de la foi et de l’espérance nous declare le cardinal Suenens’, *Le Figaro*, 3rd June, p. 9.

⁶³⁵ Suenens, *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* pp. 229-246. The parts of this chapter which directly address the ecumenical ramifications of Catholic presentations of Mary are very similar to those found in Suenens’ (1971) lecture at the congress of the *Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* [Suenens, L.-J. (1982) *The relationship that exists between the Holy Spirit and Mary* in Stacpoole, A. (ed.) (1982) *Mary’s place in Christian dialogue: Occasional papers of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary 1970-1980*. Slough: St Pauls, pp. 69-78.] However, this earlier article did not explicitly refer to charismatic renewal.

⁶³⁶ Suenens, *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* p. 230

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 245 (Translation from *A new Pentecost?* p. 210)

was entitled in bold red lettering “*NON! Monsieur le Cardinal Suenens. Nous ne sommes pas d'accord !*”⁶³⁸ The opening article declares that “there are times when one should no longer keep silent... the latest book of Cardinal Suenens was in some sense ‘the drop which made the glass overflow’... the spirit which it reveals, the intellectual and theological approach which it advocates are unacceptable to us.”⁶³⁹ The following article lists some of the reasons for this outrage:

No! *Monsieur le Cardinal*, we do not agree with your position on the place of Mary within charismatic renewal!
No! Mary does not help us to receive the Spirit!
No! To welcome the spiritual maternity of Mary is not a sign of our openness to the Spirit.
No! We do not need to be dependent upon Mary to receive the Spirit.⁶⁴⁰

What is most remarkable about this forceful critique of Suenens is that the same edition contains a glowing review of Laurentin’s *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, which was particularly appreciative of the chapter on Mary. Why was the attempted ecumenical sensibility of these two prominent theologians received so differently? Paradoxically, it was Suenens’ discussion of Catholics using expressions which ‘substitute’ Mary for the Holy Spirit, including expressions such as ‘to Jesus through Mary’ and ‘Mary is the link between Christ and ourselves’ which led to the critique. While acknowledging that Protestant brethren object since these are precisely the roles of the Holy Spirit, Suenens concluded that these expressions should be applied to Mary “in a correct but secondary, derived sense, always in dependence on the Holy Spirit”, and in doing so outraged the Pentecostal pastors writing for *Expériences*.⁶⁴¹

Like Suenens, Laurentin was acutely aware of the ecumenical ramifications of writing about Mary, and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, he had already written in more detail than Suenens does in *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* about Catholic substitution of the Holy Spirit for Mary and Mary’s participation in roles which are primarily Pneumatological.⁶⁴² However, Laurentin, conscious of the broad audience for which *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* was written, managed to remain accessible to both Catholic and Protestant readers by a consistent focus on Scripture. This approach received significant acclaim in *Expériences*, with Yvon Charles commending the “objectivity and rigour” of Laurentin’s enquiry,⁶⁴³ and J.-Y Carlier’s review entitled “*Une livre courageux*” declaring that the chapter “can be regarded as a basis for a

⁶³⁸ Number 16 (4th Trimester). English translation: “*NO! Cardinal Suenens. We do not agree!*”

⁶³⁹ Charles, Y. (1974) ‘*Les catholiques charismatiques à l’heure du choix*’, *Expériences*, 16, pp. 4-9, p. 4

⁶⁴⁰ Thobois, J.-M. (1974) ‘*Non, Marie ne nous aide pas à recevoir l’Esprit !*’, *Expériences*, 16, pp. 10-20, p. 10

⁶⁴¹ Cf. Suenens, *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?* pp. 231-232 and Thobois, *Non, Marie ne nous aide pas à recevoir l’Esprit !* p. 12

⁶⁴² Cf. pp. 78-79 above

⁶⁴³ Charles, *Les catholiques charismatiques à l’heure du choix* p. 9

constructive dialogue between classical Pentecostalism and the Catholic Pentecostal movement”, a review that was so pleasing to Laurentin that he included it in the second edition of the book.⁶⁴⁴

The short (nine-paged) concluding chapter, unexpectedly coming after the chapter entitled ‘Conclusion’,⁶⁴⁵ begins with a brief discussion of the different roles given to Mary by Catholic charismatics in various countries,⁶⁴⁶ and the two pamphlets by Rosage and Pfaller and Alberts available on this theme.⁶⁴⁷ Laurentin continues by stressing that “the basic problem is clear”, an “authentic rediscovery of Mary” has been made by the charismatic renewal, and “now it must learn to express Mary’s Spirit-animated presence in the communion of saints in a way that is faithful to the experience of the movement itself, which is so truly biblical and ecumenical”.⁶⁴⁸ Laurentin then attempts this in a straightforward manner, firstly by Scriptural reflections on Mary at Pentecost, then by answering the questions ‘was Mary a tongue speaker?’ and ‘was Mary a prophet?’ with reference to Scripture.

Laurentin’s account of Mary’s presence at Pentecost contains three short sections. The first is entitled ‘Mary is the model for the Church in her receptivity to the Holy Spirit’,⁶⁴⁹ which focuses on the similarity of language between Luke 1:35 (“The Holy Spirit will come upon you”) and Acts 1:8 (“when the Holy Spirit comes upon you”).⁶⁵⁰ Laurentin views this intentional similarity of language as being required by Luke’s theology, with both accounts showing the same dynamic at work as the Spirit’s coming sets “the human actors in motion: Mary goes on her visitation to Elizabeth, the apostles go out on their mission”, in both cases leaving “the enclosed space where the Spirit was manifested to them.” The coming of the Spirit is followed by “witnessing in the form of praise”: the Magnificat (Lk 1: 46-56) and the praise of the disciples in front of the crowd (Acts 2:4-13).⁶⁵¹ The Annunciation is therefore described as a

⁶⁴⁴ *Catholic Pentecostalism* pp. 192-193, quoting Carlier, J.-Y (1974) ‘*Un livre courageux : Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques !*’, *Expériences*, 16, p. 74: “In this portrait of Mary the author defines her essentially as the prototype of the charismatic. It is a portrait that in its broad outlines is quite acceptable to an evangelical Christian. ... In summary, this is a book which creates and nourishes hope.” Laurentin relates how a member of the editorial board of *Expériences* had written to him explaining how his chapter on Mary had influenced them to add a paragraph entitled “Mary was fully a charismatic” to their report.

⁶⁴⁵ In the original French version, Chapter 9 is entitled ‘*Conclusion: Valeur et avenir du renouveau dans l’Esprit*’ (‘The value and future of renewal in the Spirit’) and is followed by the tenth and final chapter on Mary. For the later English translation, the word ‘conclusion’ is omitted from the title of Chapter 9.

⁶⁴⁶ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* pp. 241-242. Cf. p. 103 above

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 242-243. Cf. pp. 101-102 above

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 243 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 194)

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 244-245

⁶⁵⁰ These, and all subsequent Biblical quotes, are from the RSV, unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 244-245 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 195)

“proto-Pentecost, the Pentecost of Mary”.⁶⁵² Apart from a passing reference to the fact that this comparison has been made by Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium* 59 and *Ad Gentes* 4),⁶⁵³ this section is entirely focused upon Scripture.

The Biblical rationale is continued as Laurentin describes how Mary is “the model for Christians baptised in the Spirit”.⁶⁵⁴ As “object par excellence of God’s favour” (*Kecharitōmenē*, Lk 1:28), and “the first to be moved by the Spirit” (Lk 1:35), Mary is “the model, in the very first Christian community, for the reception of baptism in the Spirit.”⁶⁵⁵ Laurentin’s justification for presenting Mary as “model of the charismatic life” is given by asking whether she exercised the gifts of glossolalia and prophecy. Highlighting that glossolalia was the charism that was most evident in the account of Pentecost, Laurentin argues that Mary “is the model not only for the charisms in general but specifically for the praying in tongues that is characteristic of the Pentecostal movement.”⁶⁵⁶ He notes that there are ways of “evading this conclusion”, including by referring to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 14:34 that women should keep quiet in meetings. Laurentin swiftly dismisses this objection by raising the disputed Pauline authorship of this command, and by referring to 1 Corinthians 11:5, where it is explicitly stated that a woman may pray or prophesy in church, provided she keeps her head covered.⁶⁵⁷ He also raises the possibility that the Lucan “all” (Acts 2:4) should be interpreted in the light of Luke’s “penchant for universal statements and for the poetic use of all” but counters this by highlighting the fact that in the group mentioned in Acts 1:13-14, apart from the twelve apostles, Mary is the only one mentioned by name. Therefore, Laurentin concludes that Mary “plays an important part in the prayer of collective praise” described in Acts 2:4-13.⁶⁵⁸

Declaring that it is important “to resist reductive interpretations”, Laurentin states that while he does not intend to exaggerate the importance of glossolalia, which according to St Paul is a secondary charism, “it is rather surprising to see how theologians who are so ingenious at finding Scriptural grounds for much that is not explicit there (including the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption) will raise all sorts of factitious objections in order to avoid facing what is clear and obvious.”⁶⁵⁹ This polemical, Scripturally focused ending indicates both

⁶⁵² Ibid. p. 244

⁶⁵³ Cf. Ibid. p. 245

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 245-246

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 246 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 196)

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 196)

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 246

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid. (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 196-197)

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 248 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* pp. 198-199)

why this chapter was so acceptable to Protestants and how Laurentin's methodology is a continuation of the emphases of his controversial *La question mariale*.⁶⁶⁰

Following Laurentin, most authors writing about Mary and glossolalia maintained that she had this gift, although it must be remembered that those choosing to write about this subject tended to be favourably predisposed. Notable exceptions include Pelletier in his (1974) *A new Pentecost*, who, while asserting that Mary had the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit to a supreme degree, maintains that she did not actively use them so as not to draw attention away from Jesus,⁶⁶¹ and Holstein who proposes that Mary's silence attested to by the Gospels suggests that "the action of the Spirit in Mary leads to silence and the contemplation of discrete prayer, a prayer which listens and savours more than it makes noise."⁶⁶² However, Laurentin's literal reading of the "all" of Acts 2:4 is clearly the most straightforward interpretation, and one which was acceptable to both Protestant and Catholic reviewers.

Laurentin's response to the question "Was Mary a prophet?" is unequivocally affirmative. Relating the Magnificat to prophecy found in contemporary renewal movements, he describes it as "a tissue of biblical expressions... analogous to the kind of prophecy that is becoming prominent in our own day."⁶⁶³ Describing both the Magnificat and the prophecies of the charismatic renewal as "basically poems of praise", Laurentin concludes that "Luke presents Mary to us as a 'pre-Pentecostal' model of the exercise of the charism of prophecy"; she is "model and first exerciser of the charism", and importantly, "not its 'source' or 'mother' since the charism comes from the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶⁴ Taking up a theme which will continue to hold an important place in his subsequent writings, Laurentin stresses that Mary was far from an isolated prophet, but part of the Lucan series of prophets with Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Zechariah, Anna and Simeon.⁶⁶⁵

In exploring how Mary is "the model for Christians baptised in the Spirit",⁶⁶⁶ Laurentin concurs with earlier and contemporary writings within Catholic charismatic renewal, for Mary as 'model', 'prototype' or 'archetype' of discipleship and receptivity to the Spirit are common

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. pp. 47-48 above

⁶⁶¹ p. 34, quoted in Hogan, *Mary and the charismatic renewal* p. 285.

⁶⁶² Holstein, H. (1976) '*Le mystère de Marie et de l'Esprit*', *Cahiers Mariales*, 102, pp. 67-92, p. 82

⁶⁶³ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 247 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 197)

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.* (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 197)

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 247-248

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 245-246

themes, closely connected to a comparison of Luke 1-2 and Acts 1-2.⁶⁶⁷ Laurentin's contribution is not so much in his straightforward response to the question of whether Mary exercised the gifts of glossolalia and prophecy but in his choosing to focus upon this question. Before Laurentin this had not been clearly addressed in the context of Catholic charismatic renewal, despite Mary having received the charisms of prophecy and glossolalia being deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, as Laurentin will develop in later, more substantial reflections on this theme.⁶⁶⁸

Charisms

Although Laurentin's chapter focusing on Mary and the charismatic renewal is a relatively straightforward account of Mary's key charisms, which received positive reviews, the creative way in which he develops the theme of Mary's charisms in later writings is more open to critique. In order to assess these writings, it is necessary to begin by considering the meaning of the term charism, which, until relatively recently was rarely found in Catholic theology, with 'grace', 'gifts' and 'fruits' being more frequently used to express the action of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶⁹ Congar describes how "the charisms occupied a minor place in ecclesiology", with Pius XII's (1876-1958) *Mystici Corporis* (1943) being the first official document to teach that the Holy Spirit distributes the various charisms to create the organic unity of the body of Christ, and doing so "within the context of its own ecclesiology", identifying "the 'Body of Christ' with the visible and hierarchically structured Roman Catholic Church."⁶⁷⁰ It was with Vatican II that the charisms were given a more prominent place, in the context "of lay participation in the mission of the church and the theology of particular or local Churches."⁶⁷¹ *Lumen Gentium* 12 distinguished the work of the Holy Spirit through "the sacraments and the ministries" (institution) and "special graces" distributed "among the faithful of every rank" (charism).⁶⁷²

How exactly are "charisms" to be understood? Analysing the use of *charisma* in the New Testament Albert Vanhoye (1923-2021) considers whether "apart from its general meaning of 'generous gift'", it "sometimes takes on a technical meaning", and supported by Baumert's study of the uses of the *charisma* in the New Testament, concludes that this is never the

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Hogan, *Mary and the Catholic charismatic renewal* pp. 369-370. This is illustrated by the examples given above: Rosage focused on Mary's reception of the (moral) fruits of the Spirit; Montague presented her as an exemplary listener, and Suenens as a model of humanity, humility, balance and wisdom. (cf. pp. 102, 104-105 above)

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. *Les charismes de Marie*, p. 321, and pp. 113-114 below.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. O'Connor, *Pope Paul and the Spirit* p. 23 and Sullivan, *Charisms and charismatic renewal* pp. 9-10

⁶⁷⁰ Congar, *Renewed actuality of the Holy Spirit* p. 16

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² *Lumen Gentium* 4 also speaks of the Spirit equipping and directing the Church with "hierarchical and charismatic gifts".

case.⁶⁷³ Vanhoye describes how the general meaning of “free gift” is “qualified by other words in the various contexts, but in a way that varies from one text to another, and these variations prove that no fixed concept of charism yet existed”, with the “only unvarying feature of the use of *charisma* in the New Testament” being that “it always refers to divine gifts, and is never used for a gift given by one human person to another.”⁶⁷⁴

Although 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is sometimes interpreted as a complete list of charisms,⁶⁷⁵ a simple comparison of these verses with other lists given in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:6-8 demonstrates the incomplete nature of this list, with Vanhoye concluding that “Paul is in no way concerned to provide a complete and correctly graded list of charisms” but is seeking to emphasise “the variety of gifts of the Spirit, in order to counter the tendency of the Corinthians to attribute excessive importance to the gifts of prophecy and glossolalia.”⁶⁷⁶ This is illustrated by Peter Hocken’s (1932-2017) highlighting the gift of tears, which Patristic literature emphasises but is absent from the New Testament lists.⁶⁷⁷

Laurentin was fully in agreement with *Lumen Gentium* 12’s emphasis upon the importance of both “the more outstanding” and “simple and widely diffused” charisms which contribute to the renewal and building up of the Church. He distinguishes the two parts of the spiritual experience of the Pentecostal movement: interior transformation (called “baptism in the Spirit” or “the outpouring of the Spirit”) and the charisms, the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the service of the Church.⁶⁷⁸ A significant feature of Laurentin’s writing about charisms is the frequency with which he refers to the fear some people have of a clash between institution or ecclesial authority and charisms.⁶⁷⁹ He describes ‘charism’ as “a word long forgotten, and often suspected where remembered”,⁶⁸⁰ and recounts how “history shows that the peaceful coexistence of institution and charisms has always been beset with difficulties, from the

⁶⁷³ Vanhoye, A. (1988) ‘*The Biblical question of charisms after Vatican II*’, in Latourelle, R. (ed.) *Vatican II: Assessment and perspectives twenty-five years later - Volume One*, pp. 439-468, pp. 454-456, referring to N. Baumert, N. (1986) *Charisma und Amt bei Paulus* in Vanhoye, A. (ed.) *L’Apôtre Paul. Personnalité, style et conception du ministère*, BETL 73, Leuven, pp. 203-228

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 456-457

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid. p. 458. Vanhoye relates how Aquinas indicates that he views 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 as a complete list of charisms (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I/II, q. 111, a. 4.)

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 458. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, (2016) *Iuvenescit Ecclesia: to the Bishops of the Catholic Church regarding the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and the mission of the Church*, no. 6, declaring that the Pauline lists of charisms, which never claim to be exhaustive, are open to additions.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Hocken, P. (1974) ‘*Catholic Pentecostalism: Some key questions*’, *Heythrop Journal*, 15, pp. 131-143 and pp. 271-284, p. 272

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 31

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Ibid. pp. 31, 65, 67, 182-184

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 60 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 50)

beginning of Church history down to our time.”⁶⁸¹ O’Connor relates how this has been particularly the case in recent centuries; ever since the writings of Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), “the idea of an inherent opposition between ‘charismatic’ or inspired leadership in the Church, and fixed institutional structures, has been in the air”.⁶⁸²

Laurentin stresses the ideal harmony between charism and institution, “since the same God and Father is the origin both of the visible sending of the Son and of the invisible sending of the Spirit”,⁶⁸³ with God normally working through both if we allow him to.⁶⁸⁴ However, he recognises that what is true in theory is often more complicated in practice,⁶⁸⁵ and is unambiguous about the precedence of charism over institution. Laurentin describes Vatican II as having “rejected the old pyramidal view of the relationship between institutions and the people of God”,⁶⁸⁶ and, seemingly oblivious to the way in which Möhler’s ecclesiology developed, praises Möhler’s renewal of ecclesiology based on the charisms.⁶⁸⁷ It is in this context that Laurentin presents the charismatic renewal as exemplifying the precedence of charism over institution:

The charismatic renewal is living in accordance with a principle that was enunciated by Vatican II and that has dominated the postconciliar theology of the Church. This principle is that the Church is not a society shaped from outside by laws and institutional frameworks; it is structured from within by the charisms, and institutions and laws have for their purpose to express and regulate the charisms. What the theologians have been saying in theoretical terms, the communities of the charismatic renewal have been discovering in real life.⁶⁸⁸

Given this background, the concluding chapter of *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* on “Mary, model of the charismatic” is somewhat bland. Presenting Mary as embodying the charismatic (non-institutional) Church has much potential for development, including along the lines of von Balthasar’s Marian and Petrine dimensions of the Church which found classic form in his

⁶⁸¹ Ibid. p. 182 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 143). Laurentin discusses the various movements suppressed in the Middle Ages and the Alumbrados (*Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* pp. 179-182). In his later article *La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle* Laurentin clearly expresses what he believes to be the reason for this tension, describing how the “lights which the charisms radiate bring a shadow over authority founded on a power received by tradition, to the extent that this power is not itself charismatic.” (p. 29)

⁶⁸² O’Connor, *Pope Paul and the Spirit*, p. 22. O’Connor refers to G. Arnold’s (1699) *Unpartheyische Kirchen-und Ketzerhistorie* and his (1702) *Historia et description theologiae mysticae*.

⁶⁸³ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 67 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 55)

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Ibid. p. 65

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Ibid. p. 67

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 185 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 146)

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid. p. 64. Cf. p. 76 above

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 232 (Translation from *Catholic Pentecostalism* p. 186)

(1974) *Der antirömische Affekt*.⁶⁸⁹ While Laurentin never explicitly engages with this approach, in the following years his understanding of Mary's charisms will develop, both through the extension of themes found in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* and through the application of novel concepts.

Developments of the themes found in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*

(a) The charisms of prophecy and glossolalia

Laurentin's reflections on Mary exercising the charisms of prophecy and glossolalia are developed in works written shortly after *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, where more space is devoted to considering each charism and the relationship between them. In an (1978) article *Les charismes de Marie* and a (1978) lecture *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* Laurentin connects the charism of glossolalia and the prophecy of the Magnificat by comparing Acts 2:11 ("we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God") and Acts 10:46 ("they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God.") He explains how the word 'magnificat' (*megalunei*), the first word of this canticle, characterises glossolalia according to Acts 10:46 (they "spoke in languages" and "magnified God") and also characterised the glossolalia of Pentecost of Acts 2:11.⁶⁹⁰ This connection of the two charisms needs to be considered alongside the emphasis Laurentin gives in his (1975) lecture *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person according to Acts 1-2 and Luke 1-2* to the fact that prophecy, which Paul describes as one of the first of the gifts (cf. 1 Cor 13:2,8),⁶⁹¹ and the one which is to be preferred (cf. 1 Cor 14:1,5) is attributed to Mary in Luke 1-2.⁶⁹²

Aware that the term 'prophetess' was frequently applied to Mary from the second century until the Middle Ages with a range of interpretations,⁶⁹³ in *Les charismes de Marie* Laurentin asserts that while it was "very often linked to a text whose first literal sense is other: '*I went to the prophetess and she conceived*'",⁶⁹⁴ the most ancient reference and the one "most certainly affirmed by Tradition" is "that Mary, filled by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35) was the prophet of the

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. von Balthasar, H. U. (1974) *Der antirömische Affekt*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder. Translated into English as (1986) *The office of Peter and the structure of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

⁶⁹⁰ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 317. Cf. *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-33

⁶⁹¹ In both the English and French versions of this text Laurentin records this mistakenly as 1 Cor 13:28.

⁶⁹² Cf. *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person*, p. 17. 1 Corinthians 14:5 directly compares prophecy and glossolalia: "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophecy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues..."

⁶⁹³ Cf. *Les charismes de Marie* p. 321, referring to A. Grillmeier's (1957) '*Der Titel Maria Prophetin und seine Begründung in der Theologie de Väater*' in *Geist und Leben*, 30, pp. 102-115

⁶⁹⁴ Isaiah 8:3

Magnificat.⁶⁹⁵ In his *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* Laurentin gives further reasons why we can be confident in classifying the *Magnificat* as a prophecy, for, although this is not explicitly stated, it is said of Zechariah's Benedictus (Lk 1:68-79) which is "not only very similar in every respect (structure and theme), but closely parallel, in the diptych or correspondence between the two annunciations and the two births."⁶⁹⁶ Furthermore, in a lecture on Mary's place within the spirituality of the charismatic renewal, Laurentin notes the various prophetic elements of the *Magnificat*: "a prophecy of thanksgiving and liberation, including also a prediction: 'All generations will call me blessed' (Lk 1:48), of which there is no doubt that the word 'prophecy' is appropriate."⁶⁹⁷ Laurentin therefore can confidently assert that the *Magnificat* "inaugurates the charisms of the New Testament".⁶⁹⁸

Laurentin has less to say about Mary and glossolalia; he simply stresses that the belief that Mary spoke in tongues is far from a recent innovation, as it was commonly held in classical Mariology. However, he notes that, while pseudo-Albert's *Mariale* and Roschini's *Mariologia* both attribute glossolalia and the interpretation of tongues to Mary, this only has a relative value since all gifts tended to be indiscriminately attributed to Mary,⁶⁹⁹ "on principle, abstractly, and without attaching to this any particular importance, like innumerable items are preserved in a museum."⁷⁰⁰

(b) The Annunciation as 'proto-Pentecost' and first of many pentecosts

As we have seen above, in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* Laurentin draws upon the closely connected terminology of Luke 1:35 and Acts 1:8, and the parallels between the actions of Mary after the Annunciation and the disciples at Pentecost to conclude that the Lucan author presents the Annunciation as a "proto-Pentecost, the Pentecost of Mary".⁷⁰¹ In later works Laurentin will occasionally situate the grace of the Annunciation in relation to Mary's

⁶⁹⁵ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 321. Cf. *Mariolis Cultus* no. 26 on the "special working of the Spirit who had spoken through the mouths of the prophets" which was found in "Mary's prophetic canticle", with a footnote pointing to Origen (c184-c253), Cyril of Alexandria (c378-444) Ambrose (c339-c397) and Severian of Gabala (4th/5th century).
⁶⁹⁶ p. 17. The first chapter of Laurentin's (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* (pp. 23-42) has a detailed demonstration of how "the plan of Luke 1-2 is organised upon the foundation of a diptych between John and Jesus" (p. 42).

⁶⁹⁷ *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-36 - 2-37.

⁶⁹⁸ *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* p. 38

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 15 referring to pseudo-Albert (*Mariale*, question 118, which cites Acts 2) and G. Roschini (*Mariologia* t. 2, pars 2, p. 182). In his (1979) article 'Holy Mary' [in Duquoc, C. and Floristán, C. (eds.) *Models of holiness*. New York: The Seabury Press, pp. 56-64] Laurentin describes how in the thirteenth century pseudo-Albert "conceived the fulness of grace as a form of omniscience comprising all possible virtues, gifts and charisms, right up to speaking in tongues and interpretation" and in his *Mariale* "examines this minutely in nearly two hundred chapters" (p. 62).

⁷⁰⁰ *Les charismes de Marie*, p. 309

⁷⁰¹ *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* p. 244. Cf. pp. 107-108 above. As was noted above (p. 104), Montague also uses this terminology in his (1974) *Riding the wind*.

Immaculate Conception “the first and secret Pentecost of Mary”, the “irruption of grace” which prevented sin and gave “full dynamism to her freedom, her capacity of faith and love”, and was followed by “the second proto-Pentecost of Mary”, the Annunciation.⁷⁰² However, this is far from a prominent theme in his writings.

In contrast, Laurentin frequently addresses the question of how Mary, filled with grace at the Annunciation (*Kecharitōmenē*, Lk 1:28), could be re-filled at Pentecost:

Following a mathematical logic, we might be tempted to say that it is not possible to refill what is already full. But Pentecost is not a closed fullness for Luke. It is a fullness in time, in a moment of History, which leads to further fullness.⁷⁰³

With reference to the apostles being filled anew in Acts 4:31, Laurentin explains how “one is never finished with the Holy Spirit”:

At Pentecost... the apostles will be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), but they will be filled with him anew (Acts 4:31). For what purpose?, one might ask. This had already taken place. Yes, but they now receive a new plenitude, in order to face persecution. And in the same way, Mary will go from plenitude to plenitude.⁷⁰⁴

Laurentin places great emphasis upon Pentecost not being an *ephapax*, but “but destined to be renewed”; it being “one of the most insistent affirmations of the *Acts of the Apostles* in the speeches of Peter”, who describes Cornelius and his family as receiving the Holy Spirit “just as we did” (Acts 10:47), and repeats this “with extreme insistence” (cf. Acts 11:15,17), with the same identification later reaffirmed three times in Acts 15:8,9,11.⁷⁰⁵ He describes how this insistence “could seem to be needless repetition if it was not precisely a question of a fundamental affirmation.”⁷⁰⁶ Thus, while “Mary is the *first* to receive the Spirit and to give him a reflected and deliberate (Lk 1:29 and 34) theological adherence (Lk 1:38), which precedes the

⁷⁰² *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1980) pp. 164-165. Cf. (1991) *The Hail Mary: Its meaning and its origin*. Ohio: Faith Publishing Company, p. 32. While both *Lumen Gentium* and *Marialis Cultus* relate Mary's Immaculate Conception to the Holy Spirit, neither speak of it as a 'Pentecost', cf. *Lumen Gentium* no. 56 and *Marialis Cultus* no. 26.

⁷⁰³ *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-30

⁷⁰⁴ *The Hail Mary* p. 32. Although this theme frequently occurs in Laurentin's post-conciliar writings, he does not critically analyse it. The nearest that comes to Laurentin presenting an alternative point of view are unexpected references to Pierre de Montbossier's (Peter the Venerable, c1092-1156), confidence that Pentecost was unable to add anything to the grace without equal of the Annunciation, in a work about Romanesque statues of the Virgin Mary. [Cf. Laurentin, R. (1988) *Vierges romanes : Les vierges assises*. La Pierre qui Vire (Yonne): Zodiaque (Co-authored with Oursel, R.), pp. 13-14]

⁷⁰⁵ *Les charismes de Marie* pp. 313-314

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 314

charismatic manifestation of the *Magnificat*”,⁷⁰⁷ she is by no means set apart, as having exclusivity of the Spirit.”⁷⁰⁸

(c) Mary, a member of a community

Given Laurentin’s emphasis on Mary being primarily situated *within* the Church in the conciliar debates, it is not surprising that he develops the theme of Mary being integrally located within a community, and that Acts 1:14 holds a central place in his reflections. Laurentin emphasises the minimal role given to Acts 1:14 by Mariologists for a significant part of the twentieth century. Referring to the twenty-thousand itemed bibliography of Marian titles from 1947-1972 compiled in Besutti’s *Bibliografia Mariana*,⁷⁰⁹ Laurentin describes Acts 1:14 as “a verse long neglected”, with only one monograph on this text having appeared during these twenty-five years, and this being the extremely brief paper by Augustin Bea (1881-1968) given at the International Marian Congress in Rome in 1950, advocating Mary’s participation in the Eucharist on the basis of Acts 1:14, and making no connection between Mary and the Holy Spirit.⁷¹⁰

While Laurentin writes in 1980 that since 1972 “interest in this verse has grown”,⁷¹¹ his 1975 lecture on *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person according to Acts 1-2 and Luke 1-2* is an attempt to address this void which at that time had only “very recently” begun to be commented on by Mariologists,⁷¹² influenced by the conciliar connection of Luke 1:35 and Acts 1:14 (in *Lumen Gentium* 59 and *Ad Gentes* 4).⁷¹³ Reflecting upon Mary’s place within the primitive apostolic community Laurentin stresses that “Mary, the Mother of Jesus” is the only woman mentioned in this community and that she occupies a “a prototypical place because she belongs to both the family group” (the brethren of Jesus) and “to the group of women to whom Luke attaches so much importance.”⁷¹⁴ She is called by “the only designation employed

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 318

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 317

⁷⁰⁹ Roma: Edizioni Marianum. Laurentin is referring to the information given in Volumes 1-5 (covering 1947-1972) published in 1950, 1952, 1959, 1968 and 1974.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1980) ‘*Mary: Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John*’, in Branick, V. (ed.) *Mary, the Spirit and the Church*. Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, pp. 28-43, pp. 29 and 42, referring to Bea, A. (1952) ‘*Erant perseverantes... cum Maria Mater Jesus... in communicatione fractionis panis*’ (Acts 1,14; 2,42) in *Alma Socia Christi*, Rome: Academica Mariana, 6, pp. 21-37, and *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 1

⁷¹¹ *Mary: Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John* p. 29

⁷¹² *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 1

⁷¹³ Ibid. pp. 1-2. Cf. p. 108 above.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid. p. 7

by John: ‘The Mother of Jesus’” which is preceded by “a proper name: Mary, which is not used by the Gospel of John”,⁷¹⁵ she is named by both her personal name and her role.⁷¹⁶

Laurentin emphasises that “we must never forget that Luke places her essentially within this context of the community, at least as regards Acts 1:14”, where “she is presented as “a member of the community of the Pentecost, in the strongest, fullest and most typical sense of the word,”⁷¹⁷ and later asserts that it “is fundamental that Mary is situated in a community and that nothing can be said of her apart from in relation to this community”.⁷¹⁸ On this basis, Mary “appears neither as mother of the Church, nor as type and personification of the Church, but as a member of a Judeo-Christian community, poor and exemplary.”⁷¹⁹ Understandably, this emphasis upon Mary belonging to a charismatic community connects well with the charismatic renewal, within which communities are an essential component.⁷²⁰

The Johannine contribution

Although Laurentin’s chapter on Mary in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* did not include any reference to John’s Gospel, the Johannine contribution to understanding Mary’s relationship to the Spirit within a spirituality of the charismatic renewal was firmly present in Laurentin’s later works. Despite the title of his *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person according to Acts 1-2 and Luke 1-2* which suggests that, like his earlier *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, his reflections will be limited to Lucan texts, it contains a significant section on John 2 and 19.⁷²¹ Laurentin describes these texts referring to Mary as confirming and giving greater specification to the conclusions drawn from the Lucan accounts.⁷²² Influenced by Aristide M. Serra’s (1937 -) research using Jewish exegesis to elucidate John 2 and 19, Laurentin interprets John 2:1-11(12) as “a renewal of the theophany of Sinai in Exodus 19-24”, which was celebrated by the feast of Pentecost, and “became, for Christians, a feast of the renewal of the Covenant by the Gift of the Spirit.”⁷²³ Mary’s “word” to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana to “Do whatever he

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. *Les charismes de Marie* p. 313

⁷¹⁷ *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 7

⁷¹⁸ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 313

⁷¹⁹ *Mary: Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John*, p. 31. Laurentin also stresses that Mary “is seen here not as a sacred prodigy, or as the center (*sic*) of the community, but on the contrary, within the entourage of the apostles.”

⁷²⁰ Similarly, Laurentin will later emphasise that Luke was a member of the charismatic community of Antioch. This connection is not stressed in Laurentin’s earlier works but is in his (1982) *Les évangiles de L’enfance du Christ* pp. 539-541 (cf. pp. 132-133 below) and (1998) *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu*, pp. 25, 136.

⁷²¹ pp. 20-26

⁷²² *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 20

⁷²³ Ibid. p. 21. While Laurentin does not refer to Serra’s influence in this lecture, he had done so previously, in an article addressing a more academic audience: *Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie* (1972) p. 437, referring to Serra, A. M.

tells you” (John 2:5), is seen as echoing “the word of God’s people, ratifying the Covenant and the gift of the law: “Whatever the Lord has said, we will do” (Exodus 24:3).⁷²⁴ Laurentin concludes that this parallel implies several identifications: of Jesus with God, of Mary with the people of Israel and the eschatological Daughter of Sion, and of “the glory of Jesus Christ (2:11) with the glory of God manifested at the time of the first Covenant.”⁷²⁵

Laurentin is aware that the “allusion in the first manifestation of the glory of Jesus to the Sinai covenant may appear tenuous, if we restrict ourselves merely to a comparison of the biblical texts”, but influenced by Serra, he stresses that “it becomes evident once we realise the dependence of John 2 on Jewish traditions, especially the targum of pseudo-Jonathan on Exodus.”⁷²⁶ Obscure as this solitary source may be, Laurentin confidently presents its relevance to John 1-2, unaware that later research would date it to the Christian era:

It was this Jewish tradition that inspired the counting of days evident from Jn 1:29, 35, 43, 2:1, a total of one week which is completed on the seventh day with the first miracle of Jesus and the manifestation of his “glory” (2:11). This count refers less to the week of creation (Gen 1), than to the week which according to Jewish tradition preceded the theophany on Sinai. In these traditions, all the stress is on “the third day”, according to the phrase of Exodus 19:16, echoed in John 2:1: “On the third day there was a wedding at Cana...” This phrase refers to both the revelation of the glory and the Law celebrated by the Jewish feast of Pentecost and also to the Resurrection of the Lord on the third day (a constant theme in the Gospels.)⁷²⁷

In his later *Les charismes de Marie* Laurentin acknowledges the influence of Serra’s (1977) *Contributi dell’antica letteratura giudaica per l’esegesi di Giovanni 2, 1-12 et 19, 25-27*,⁷²⁸ and extends his earlier exegesis of John 2:1-11(12). Emphasising the importance of John 1:51, Laurentin describes John 2:1-12 as “solemnly introduced as a theophany”,⁷²⁹ and he stresses the significance of the ‘sign’ of Cana, describing it as “the inaugural sign of the new Covenant”,

(1971) ‘Le tradizioni della teofania sinaitica nel Targum dello pseudo-Jonathan, Ez 19, 24 e in Giov 1, 19-2,12’, *Marianum* 33, pp. 1-39.

⁷²⁴ *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 21. Ignace de La Potterie (1914-2003) also follows Serra’s thesis indicating its academic acceptability. [Cf. de la Potterie, I. (1997) *Mary in the mystery of the covenant*. New York: Alba House, pp. 189-190]

⁷²⁵ *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 21

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 22. Laurentin not referring to the targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on Exodus in later writings suggests a re-evaluation of its significance, perhaps including an awareness of scholarly consensus dating the text between the 4th and 12th centuries. Cf. Gořlib, L. (2021) *Towards a More Precise Understanding of Pseudo-Jonathan’s Origins*, *Aramaic Studies* 19, pp. 104-120, and McDowell, G. (2021) *The Date and Provenance of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: The Evidence of Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer and the Chronicles of Moses*, *Aramaic Studies* 19, pp. 121-154, both of which argue for its origins in 12th century Italy.

⁷²⁷ *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 22

⁷²⁸ Rome: Marianum. (Referred to on p. 318 of *Les charismes de Marie*)

⁷²⁹ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 319. Cf. *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-39, 2-40, which contains much of the same material.

with the new wine symbolising “the new outpouring of the Spirit promised by the prophets.”⁷³⁰ Laurentin also emphasises the integral connection between John 2 and 19, explaining how the “two scenes of Cana and Calvary are homologous”, relating to each other “according to the process of inclusion”, so that they are “the first sign and the realisation (the fulfilment) of the new Covenant, characterised by the outpouring of the Spirit (Jn 19:30).”⁷³¹ Thus, both are theophanies, analogous to that of Sinai, which the Jewish feast of Pentecost celebrates, with the Johannine Pentecost “symbolically situated at Calvary (the hour of glory), and at the resurrection of Jesus (Jn 20:22)”.⁷³² Importantly, Mary is present in both of these theophanies “in reference to the hour of Jesus, to the disciples, and to the Spirit.”⁷³³

At the same time as emphasising the relationship between Mary and the Spirit, Laurentin stresses Mary’s role as “type” of all Christians who will later receive the Spirit:

Those who stand at the foot of the cross, above all the Mother of Jesus and the disciple whom Jesus loved (19:25-27), are designated as the first to receive the Spirit, the type of those who will come after them and will be regenerated by the Spirit, water and blood, those who henceforth are the brothers of Jesus (Jn 20:17, cf. 2:11).⁷³⁴

Linked to this reception of the Spirit from the cross is the mission Mary receives of becoming the mother of the beloved disciple (whom Laurentin refers to as “the disciple-type”) and through him, the mother of all Jesus’ disciples. Thus, using the language of ‘bond’ typifying Mühlen, Laurentin recounts how John’s Gospel describes Mary’s “charismatic function” as “related to her role as a link and bond in her Maternity as in her faith, a link and bond between Jesus and the disciples.”⁷³⁵ Connecting John 19 to John 2, Laurentin describes how this “charism of Mother, given to Mary, is clearly within the line of her communitarian role at Cana.”⁷³⁶

Divine Motherhood as the prototype of all charisms

As well as regarding Mary’s spiritual motherhood as a charism, Laurentin introduces a novel element into his presentation of charisms with his understanding of Mary’s divine motherhood as the key charism and his viewing Mary, proto-type of the Church, as also being the prototype of all her charisms.⁷³⁷ Laurentin relates how he had not thought to “define the divine maternity

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Ibid. p. 318

⁷³² Ibid. p. 319

⁷³³ *Mary in the spirituality of the charismatic renewal* 2-39

⁷³⁴ *Mary, prototype of the charismatic person* p. 24

⁷³⁵ Ibid. pp. 25-26

⁷³⁶ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 319

⁷³⁷ Cf. (1992) ‘*Découverte de Marie dans le renouveau charismatique*’, *Études Mariales*, 48, pp. 101-112, p. 107

of Mary as a charism” but this “came to him as he prepared an ecumenical report on Mary for the Dublin Charismatic congress of 1974 at which Pentecostals participated.”⁷³⁸ As with his earlier chapter on Mary in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques*, Laurentin knew that a straightforward Biblical foundation would make it possible for Protestant Pentecostals to engage with his presentation of Mary, since while they are “often suspicious or hostile with respect to Mary” they “accept her where she is justly related to the Holy Spirit.”⁷³⁹ Laurentin summarises his account:

According to the Bible, the principal title of Mary “Mother of the Lord” (Luke 1:42) also designates a charism, since, according to the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 12), a charism is a free gift given by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary for the edification of the physical body of Christ, the principle of the mystical body of which Mary was the first member: a founder member by her connection to Christ (Luke 1:38). This charism is therefore founded upon Scripture: it is at the root and the foundation of all the others.⁷⁴⁰

This theme is found in several of Laurentin’s works. In his (1998) *Mary and the Holy Spirit* Laurentin stresses that the divine motherhood is “a gratuitous gift, according to the true sense of the word; the grace which is strongly featured in the Gospel of the Annunciation” where “Mary is the object par excellence of the grace of God” (Lk 1:28), who “found grace” (Lk 1:30).⁷⁴¹ A slightly different emphasis is found in his (1980) *Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John* where he identifies the “most fundamental charism of Mary” as being “that of welcoming the gift of the Spirit (Lk 1:35 and 38) in order to form the Body of the Son of God, the Word Incarnate, come down to save men by uniting them all in his Body.”⁷⁴² Here Mary is clearly not a passive recipient of the grace of God, but one whose prime role is an active welcome of the Spirit. These reflections are extended in Laurentin’s (1985) *La maternité divine: ineffable ou exemplaire ?*,⁷⁴³ which clearly distinguishes the two levels at which Mary

⁷³⁸ *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* pp. 75-76. Cf. p. 80 above. In his (1998) *Mary and the Holy Spirit* Laurentin stresses that this “is not a thesis merely to accommodate circumstances”, with it having been prepared “on strictly biblical bases for a dialogue with David Duplessis and the Pentecostals present at the Congress”. [(1998) ‘*Mary and the Holy Spirit*’, in Plunkett, D. (ed.) *A symposium on the Virgin Mary and the people of God*. Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, pp. 32-40, p. 37]

⁷³⁹ *Les charismes de Marie* p. 311. Cf. *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 37: “They [the Pentecostals] gave a good reception to this theology of charisms, itself charismatic, of what we call abstractly the divine maternity.” Laurentin’s popularity as a speaker for this type of audience is evidenced by the fact that his lecture on Mary as a charismatic at the Dublin charismatic conference in 1978 had to be repeated before a second crowded audience. (Cf. O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A theological encyclopaedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* p. 380.)

⁷⁴⁰ *Découverte de Marie dans le renouveau charismatique* p. 109. Laurentin later explains that Mary’s divine maternity is the first charism of the New Testament, “chronologically, ontologically, and notionally”, and is “the first and full prototype to which all charisms are referred.” *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 37

⁷⁴¹ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 37

⁷⁴² *Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John* p. 41

⁷⁴³ *Marian Library Studies*, 17. pp. 787-794. Cf. pp. 792-794. Available at:

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ml_studies/vol17/iss1/56 (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

plays a foundational role in the Body of Christ: by forming the *physical* body, in which the Son of God became incarnate, and by founding the *mystical* body, by “her adherence to faith in Christ”.⁷⁴⁴

In his (1994) *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* Laurentin stresses that “no other charism is realised in a manner so specific, formal, concrete and complete” as the divine maternity.⁷⁴⁵ While it could be claimed that classifying the divine maternity as one among other charisms risks clouding its significance, it is certainly true that it was a freely given grace of the Spirit, which is both a necessary cause of the body of Christ and continues to build it up, thus fulfilling the quasi-definition of charisms of 1 Corinthians 12:7. Furthermore, as has been shown, Laurentin stresses that the divine maternity is “much more” than simply “situated amongst the charisms and functions of the Church”, as it is the “point of departure, the prototype and the foundation” of all other charisms.⁷⁴⁶

As was discussed above, while Laurentin repeats on several occasions that his inspiration for regarding the divine motherhood as a charism was the Dublin charismatic congress of 1974, a very closely related view is found in the (1967) second edition of Mühlen’s *Una mystica persona*, a text which Laurentin was extremely familiar with.⁷⁴⁷ While Mühlen refers to the *ministry* of Mary’s motherhood “to an eminent degree *pros to sympheron*”,⁷⁴⁸ Laurentin writes not about ministry but *charism*. However, both justify their reasoning with reference to 1 Corinthians 12:7, which refers to both charisms and ministries/services, as is clear from the context: “Now there are varieties of gifts (χαρισμάτων) but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service (διακονιών) but the same Lord” (1 Cor 12:4-5). Given that Laurentin freely acknowledges being influenced by other theological innovations of Mühlen, such as the Holy Spirit being the co-redeemer,⁷⁴⁹ a generous interpretation of this close similarity would be that if Laurentin was influenced by Mühlen, it would have been subconsciously.

Other charisms of Mary

Scattered throughout Laurentin’s works are references to other charisms of Mary, mostly those *Lumen Gentium* 12 refers to as “special graces distributed among the faithful of every

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 792

⁷⁴⁵ *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* p. 76

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Cf. p. 80 above

⁷⁴⁸ Mühlen, *L’Esprit dans l’Église*, Volume II p. 167; cf. 1 Cor 12:7 “for the common good”

⁷⁴⁹ Cf. pp. 79-80 above

rank”, which are “perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.” While Laurentin is unique in giving Mary’s diverse charisms such a prominent role, his attentiveness to the variety of charisms is very much in line with both the conciliar theology of charisms and post-conciliar studies, such as Vanhoye’s *The Biblical question of charisms after Vatican II* discussed above.⁷⁵⁰

All these Marian charisms have a Biblical foundation. Laurentin recounts how Mary “exercises a threefold charism in Cana according to John”, consisting of her charisms of compassion, of interceding with Christ, and of “calling the assembly together, when she invites the servants to be ready for Christ.”⁷⁵¹ Noting how Acts 2:16-18 refers to “the charisms of *vision, dreams*, and with more insistence, of *prophecy*, without precisising how these gifts are shared out or exercised in the new community”, Laurentin judges that “it can only be concluded from Acts 1-2 that Mary was a beneficiary of other charisms, in a vague and global manner.”⁷⁵²

While Laurentin was clearly both very interested in and influenced by charismatic renewal,⁷⁵³ he did not view charisms solely through the lens of this movement. Discussing the “rebirth of charisms” in 1978, he describes the “diverse, ambiguous and debated” renaissance which is in progress, and refers to charisms “in the political sphere”, the “new charisms of action for justice and peace”, and “in the mystical sphere”, both “the birth and development of groups, such as the Focolarini” and the charismatic renewal.⁷⁵⁴

Despite what may appear to be Laurentin’s exhaustive reflections on Mary’s charisms, it should be noted that contemporaneous theologians highlight aspects of Mary’s relationship with the Holy Spirit in the light of Catholic charismatic renewal which Laurentin does not consider. For example, Albert-Marie de Monléon (1937-2019) describes the experience within charismatic renewal of Mary’s “discrete and self-effacing” presence, which is characteristic of a

⁷⁵⁰ Cf. pp. 110-111 above

⁷⁵¹ *Mary: Model of the charismatic as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2 and John* p. 40

⁷⁵² *Les charismes de Marie* p. 316

⁷⁵³ Laurentin’s (1982) *Trois Charismes-Discernement-Guérison-Don De Science* (Paris: Pneumathèque) reveals his ongoing interest in and thoughtful analysis of the nature of charisms found within the charismatic renewal. Similarly, the time he spent in El Paso, encountering those who had witnessed miracles stemming from charismatic renewal made an impact upon Laurentin, as did the charismatics who were involved in exorcism. Cf. (1981) *Miracle à El Paso*. Paris; Desclée de Brouwer [English translation: (1982) *Miracles in El Paso*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant books]; (1988) *El Paso. Le miracle continue... autrement*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, and *Aux frontières de l’invisible*, pp. 10, 114.

⁷⁵⁴ *La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle* pp. 30-31. Laurentin describes these “prophetic gestures of selflessness, concern for others, notably the poorest, renewal of hope in the future etc” which are “very remarkable in Latin America and in some pastoral areas in the USA” (p. 31).

discovery of the Holy Spirit whose presence is “all discretion and like self-effacement”, not speaking about himself but enabling faith in and confession of the Lordship of Jesus.⁷⁵⁵ Likewise O'Donnell portrays Mary as a model in “grateful use of charisms”, showing us how “to receive God’s gifts in an attitude of faith and trust”;⁷⁵⁶ while this is entirely congruous with Laurentin’s understanding of charisms, it is not an element emphasised in his works. However, as has been demonstrated, the contribution of Laurentin’s wide-ranging reflections on Mary in the light of the charismatic renewal is without doubt.

Concluding comments

With the Catholic charismatic movement, ‘charism’ not only gained a place within Laurentin’s Marian writings, but it came to the forefront of his understanding of the fruitful relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit and would continue to hold a prominent place in his writings in subsequent decades. Although, as has been shown, Laurentin was by no means alone in making this connection through the influence of charismatic renewal, he was unique in presenting Mary’s divine motherhood as the central charism, and his ability to make the subject matter accessible to varied audiences, both Catholic and Protestant, academic and popular, ensured that his writings and lectures met with considerable success. Given the turbulence of the immediate post-conciliar years for Laurentin, this positive acceptance of his theology among members of the charismatic renewal must have been particularly welcome to him. While, as befitted the objective judgement of a professional historian and theologian, Laurentin sought to maintain a distance from personal involvement in charismatic renewal, he found sources of personal renewal and fresh insights into Luke 1-2 and Acts 1-2 through it, and loyally defended its spirituality in the face of the suspicion accorded new movements, particularly those centred upon charisms which could be seen as challenging the centrality of institution.

⁷⁵⁵ de Monléon, A-M. (1975) ‘*L’Esprit Saint et Marie à la lumière du renouveau charismatique*’, *Cahiers Mariales*, 99, pp. 217-229, pp. 227, 219.

⁷⁵⁶ O'Donnell, C. (1981) *Life in the Spirit and Mary*. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier Inc., p. 27

Chapter 5: Biblical exegesis

Laurentin's return to Biblical exegesis in the late 1970 and 1980s was far from eirenic. His fierce disagreements with Raymond E. Brown (1928-1998), renowned American Scripture scholar and tireless proponent of historical-critical analysis, indelibly marked Laurentin's reputation, and his enthusiasm for semiotic analysis was not widely shared. Given the notoriety of Brown's critiques and the impact they had upon Laurentin's academic reputation, the clash between Laurentin and Brown will be briefly presented, before turning to examine what contribution Laurentin's lengthy (1982) *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* and his later works about Scripture made to his understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵⁷

In the years following Laurentin's (1966) *Jésus au temple* Catholic Biblical scholarship became more sceptical about the historicity of the infancy narratives and Laurentin became increasingly emphatic about their historicity. Historical-critical analysis came to hold an extremely prominent place in Catholic Scriptural studies, and was significantly influenced by the writings of Brown and Joseph A. Fitzmyer (1920-2016). This approach tended to clash with 'spiritual exegesis', often influenced by Patristic approaches to Scripture, as found in theologians such as von Balthasar, de Lubac and Bouyer. For example, Fitzmyer declaimed von Balthasar's "ranting" against "modern exegesis",⁷⁵⁸ and critiqued Dulles' advocating a "comprehensive approach, combining scientific and spiritual exegesis", declaring that the latter is "not 'exegesis' at all; it is *eisegesis*."⁷⁵⁹ Although Laurentin emphasised that he sought to learn from all possible approaches to scripture,⁷⁶⁰ as the decades passed he gave a greater place to spiritual reflections, and the academic rigour of his earlier works was often merged with imaginative contemplation and 'insights' from seers and mystics. This movement was reflected in the scholarly reception of his work: his exegetical work of the 1970s and 1980s met with significant critique but by the time of his writing about Scripture in the 1990s and

⁷⁵⁷ (1982) *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ. Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes, exégèse et sémiotique - historicité et théologie*. Paris: Desclée. English translation: (1986) *The truth of Christmas: Beyond the myths*. Petersham, Massachusetts: St Bede's Publication

⁷⁵⁸ Fitzmyer, J. (1994) *Scripture, the soul of theology*, New York / Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, p. 59

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid. pp. 90-91, referring to Dulles' (1992) *The craft of theology: From symbol to system*. New York: Crossroad, p. 85

⁷⁶⁰ Cf. Laurentin's *Mémoires* p. 318: "To bring into full light the infancy narratives... I did not limit myself to highlighting the intra-Biblical connections nor to treating the historicity. I applied to them all the scientific methods available..."

2000s when he sought to produce ‘authentic lives’ of both Jesus and Mary, as well as a ‘new diatessaron’ there was very little academic engagement with his work.⁷⁶¹

The fact that in the late 1970s Laurentin was very much an exegete to be engaged with, even if critically, is demonstrated by the lengths to which Brown’s (1977) *The birth of the Messiah* goes to refute central themes of Laurentin’s (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2* and (1966) *Jésus au temple*,⁷⁶² with Henry Wansbrough describing Brown as having “systematically savaged in various publications” Laurentin’s symbolic dimensions.⁷⁶³ Brown express his regret at having had to disagree so often with Laurentin’s “suggestions”, and justifies having done so by asserting that Laurentin’s “claims to discover symbolism defy control.”⁷⁶⁴ Laurentin was far from reticent in responding to these criticisms. He was also harshly critical of the (1978) *Mary in the New Testament: A collaborative assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* edited by Brown,⁷⁶⁵ where the team of exegetes was limited to followers of the historical-critical method, resulting in the exclusion of the Orthodox, “allergic” to this method, and consequently being, according to Laurentin, “an ecumenism reduced to one school and two denominations.”⁷⁶⁶ Although Brown asserted that “he had *never* been an advocate of the all-sufficiency” of historical-critical exegesis,⁷⁶⁷ he fiercely defended it, and in later life, as newer methodologies emerged, confided that he “honestly felt too old for taking on new approaches to biblical studies”.⁷⁶⁸ In contrast, Laurentin thrived on novelty, with an indefatigable thirst for

⁷⁶¹ Cf. (1996) *Vie authentique de Jésus Christ, Récit*. Paris. Fayard; (1996) *Vie authentique de Jésus Christ, Fondements, preuves et justification*. Paris. Fayard; (2002) *Nouveau Diatessaron : Les quatre Évangiles en un seul*. Paris: Fayard, and (2008) *Vie authentique de Marie*.

⁷⁶² Brown, R. (1977) *The birth of the Messiah*. London: Geoffrey Chapman. Brown explicitly contradicts Laurentin on many occasions, including: p. 246 on a Hebrew source for the Lucan infancy narrative; pp. 282, 446 on Laurentin’s thesis of a Danielic 70 weeks of years in the Lucan infancy narrative; pp. 323-325 and 344 on Luke portraying Mary as Daughter of Zion and the Ark of the Covenant; p. 336 on the name Miryam being hidden in the Hebrew substratum of “magnifies” of Luke 1:46; p. 482 on the order of Luke 2 being dictated by Malachi 3:1-3; p. 487 on a resurrection motif being found in Luke 2:46; p. 489 on Laurentin’s belief that Mary’s “Why have you done this to us?” (Lk 2: 48) had been uttered in a tone of deference and affection; p. 490 on Jesus being identified with divine Wisdom found in the Temple, and p. 484 where Brown states that he absolutely rejects Laurentin’s “using in an exegetical and historical study the principle: ‘One cannot suppose that Mary lacked knowledge that would befit the Mother of God.’” As well as these direct references to Laurentin, Brown also challenges the thesis of a Marian source for the Lucan infancy narrative (pp. 238, 244-245) and the Magnificat being composed by Mary (p. 340), both of which are foundational beliefs for Laurentin.

⁷⁶³ Wansbrough, H. (1996) ‘*Mary in the Mystery*’, *The Month New Series*, 29, pp. 455-462, p. 460

⁷⁶⁴ Brown, *The birth of the Messiah* p. 491

⁷⁶⁵ Brown, R. et al. (eds.) (1978) *Mary in the New Testament: A collaborative assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press. The text criticises both Laurentin’s *Jésus au Temple* (p. 119) and his *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (p. 129).

⁷⁶⁶ (1981) ‘*Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie*’, *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 65, pp. 123-154, 299-335. p. 125. Cf. *Mémoires* p. 292 where Laurentin describes how Brown had concluded that Orthodox exegesis was pre-scientific.

⁷⁶⁷ Brown, R. (1985) ‘*More polemical than instructive: R. Laurentin on the infancy narratives*’, *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 47, pp. 188-207, p. 190

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Senior, D. (2018) *Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic biblical renewal*. New York/Mahwah New Jersey: Paulist Press, p. 96, referring to a private conversation with R. Witherup recorded in Witherup, R. (2005) *The Incarnate Word Revealed: The pastoral writings of Raymond Brown*, in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel* in Donahue, R. (ed.) *Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, pp. 238-252, p. 248.

new methods and insights. As Perrier concluded, in summarising his long life: “We can say of Laurentin that he was curious about everything.”⁷⁶⁹

Laurentin’s critique of historical-critical exegesis and his desire to demonstrate the fruitfulness of semiotics are the central themes shaping his 600-paged *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ*, written to be accessible to the non-specialist and acclaimed as “magisterial”.⁷⁷⁰ Poupard relates how Laurentin “consecrated thirty years of study” to preparing this “*chef-d’œuvre*, which has become a classic of our times”, described by Pope Saint John Paul II (1920-2005) as “that very beautiful and very great book” and by the then Cardinal Ratzinger as giving us the infancy narratives anew by “the soundness and meticulousness with regard to information and profound spiritual penetration which are proper to him [Laurentin] and characterise his works.”⁷⁷¹

In stark contrast, Brown’s assessment of *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* describes “the misunderstanding of critical NT exegesis on the part of an ultraconservative scholar” and “the fallacy of driving a wedge between modern biblical exegesis and the traditional doctrinal proclamation of the church.”⁷⁷² It was not only Laurentin’s criticism of Brown’s use of the historical-critical method to challenge the historical basis of the infancy narratives which Brown reacted against but the way in which he expressed his discord. In discussing “conservative misunderstanding of the interaction between Biblical criticism and dogma”,⁷⁷³ Brown contrasted John McHugh’s (1927-2006) “gentlemanly, scholarly review” and “care and unflinching courtesy”,⁷⁷⁴ with Laurentin’s use of “extremely pejorative terminology”, including describing his opponents as rabid (*acharné*) and, rather astonishingly, declaring some hypotheses about the infancy narratives as “the excrement of historical research”.⁷⁷⁵ Brown

⁷⁶⁹ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 179

⁷⁷⁰ Cf. Winandy, J. (1984) ‘René Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ*’, *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 106, pp. 257-258, p. 258

⁷⁷¹ Poupard, ‘*Préface*’ in *Κεχαριτωμένη* pp. 18-19. In his (1985) *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press) Brown gives an alternative interpretation of Ratzinger’s preface:

The Cardinal praises the contributions of Laurentin’s earlier book of 1956... In the last lines of the preface the Cardinal turns to the present book with the non-committal wish that it find attentive readers. I agree fully with the need for *attentive* reading, for care will show that this book is inferior to Laurentin’s earlier work. ... Thus the Cardinal’s preface does *not* constitute a blanket approval of Laurentin’s ideas and polemic, despite promotional claims being made to that effect. (p. 83)

⁷⁷² Brown, *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* pp. 75, 85

⁷⁷³ This is the title of the fourth chapter of *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* (pp. 66-85) in which Brown discusses John McHugh and Laurentin.

⁷⁷⁴ Brown, *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* p. 70

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 76. Cf. *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 68 (“*l’acharnement*”), p. 375 (“*On s’est acharné*”), and p. 439 (“*les excréments de la recherche historique*”). These criticisms are also found in *More polemical than instructive*, pp. 192-193. In Laurentin’s defence, it should be noted that Brown’s translation of ‘*acharné*’ as ‘rabid’ stretches the possible translations given in *Le Robert* French dictionary (fierce, bitter, dogged, unremitting) to their limit.

brusquely chides that such “language is not appropriate to scholarly discourse”,⁷⁷⁶ and highlighting the extent to which Laurentin sought to refute him, remarks how he “noticed with some amusement” that his name “occurs in the index with only slightly less frequency than that of the Apostle Paul.”⁷⁷⁷ Declaring that “almost every statement he makes about my views is prejudicially partial or distorted”,⁷⁷⁸ Brown concludes his ‘*non*’ article to the ‘*sic et non*’ discussion about *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* in (1985) *Ephemerides Mariologicae*:

As a final line in my *sic et non*, it may please Father Laurentin to know that, when I teach, I shall always tell the students that he has written a most significant book on the infancy narratives. That is my *sic*. I regret that part of my *non* is to explain to them that the significant book I mean is the one Laurentin did nearly 30 years ago on the structure of Luke 1-2.

This recent book is defensive and polemic and a step backward from the positive contribution of Laurentin’s earlier book. I cannot speak for Europe, but I know that in my own country the book will be hailed by those who reject all historical conditioning in the study of Scripture and theology and who search desperately for a known name to support their retrograde stance.⁷⁷⁹

Faced with such harsh critique from as eminent a scholar as Brown, lauded with thirty-one honorary doctorates,⁷⁸⁰ and favoured (even “overprotected”) by American bishops,⁷⁸¹ this massive opposition was “fatal” to the launch of the English translation.⁷⁸² Moreover, coupled with Laurentin’s endorsement of George A. Kelly’s book criticising Brown,⁷⁸³ it was “disastrous” for Laurentin “in the exegetical establishment, not only American, but internationally.”⁷⁸⁴

What then, did this controversial book say about Mary and the Holy Spirit? Material relevant to their relationship is found under three distinct headings, relating to different sections of the book: literary criticism, the question of “what kind of historicity?”, and semiotic analysis. Given the predominance and the complexity of the latter, this will be addressed in detail, together with other works in which Laurentin wrote about semiotics, after the first two subjects have been considered. While semiotics is a type of literary criticism, since Laurentin considers it

⁷⁷⁶ Brown, *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* p. 76

⁷⁷⁷ Brown, *More polemical than instructive* p. 189

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 198

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 206

⁷⁸⁰ Senior, *Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic biblical renewal* p. 192

⁷⁸¹ Cf. Kelly, G. (1983) *The new biblical theorists: Raymond E. Brown and beyond*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant books, pp. 137-143. Cf. *Mémoires* p. 291 where Laurentin recalls how Brown’s (1972) *The Virginal Conception* was recommended by the American bishops for the Marian year of 1974.

⁷⁸² Cf. *Mémoires* p. 297

⁷⁸³ Laurentin, R. ‘*Preface*’ in Kelly, *The new biblical theorists*, p. vii. Laurentin recounts the complex situation surrounding his short ‘endorsement’, which he did not know was going to be used as a preface (*Mémoires* pp. 297-298), which Brown used to denigrate Laurentin:

It may help readers to know that Laurentin wrote a forward to George Kelly’s attack on biblical critics in the *New Biblical Theorists*, a book which an Irish scholar [J. Murphy-O’Connor] described as “thinly veiled animosity, incessant slurs, bitter pervasive righteousness.” (*Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* p. 75)

⁷⁸⁴ *Mémoires* p. 298

separately to earlier forms of literary criticism, the same approach will be adopted.

(a) Literary criticism

Although Laurentin discusses both textual and literary criticism, it is only the latter which has any substantial content relating to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, and then only in reference to Luke's Gospel. Criticisms of the unbalanced nature of *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* are shown to be justified by the contrast between the fifty pages devoted to Matthew 1-2, where Mary does not have a dominant role, and the over two hundred and eighty pages about Luke 1-2, where Mary's place is central.⁷⁸⁵ Of these pages on Matthew, only seven are devoted to textual and literary criticism,⁷⁸⁶ and they, unsurprisingly, contain nothing of relevance to Mary and the Holy Spirit.

Literary criticism, the area of Biblical criticism focusing on the text itself, in contrast to textual and source criticism, uses a diversity of methods, including lexical and grammatical. In discussing literary criticism applied to Luke 1-2 Laurentin develops at length the importance of the "new name given to Mary" in Luke 1:28, comparing it to the new name given to Gideon (Judges 6:12) and emphasising the cultural setting where "the name had a sovereign importance, an ontological sense."⁷⁸⁷ Laurentin explains why *kecharitōmenē*, the perfect passive participle of the verb 'charitoō' (to endow with grace) does not mean "full of grace", as translated in the Vulgate, which would be "*plērēs charitos*" the term used to describe Christ in John 1:14 and Stephen in Acts 6:8, but rather "the object of the favour of God".⁷⁸⁸ Laurentin develops his exploration of the meaning of this 'new name', arguing from theology that God "makes good those whom he considers with love" and from philology that verbs ending in *oō* "signify a transformation of the subject",⁷⁸⁹ and concluding that "*charitoō*" therefore "does not just mean to look upon with favour, but to transform by this favour or grace."⁷⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom (354-407) is used to support this argument, with Laurentin recounting how, in his commentary on Ephesians 1:6, Chrysostom writes that the apostle

⁷⁸⁵ pp. 11-297 are on Luke's Gospel and pp. 299-356 on Matthew's Gospel. Cf. Brown's criticism in *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* p. 157: "Why this unbalanced 6-to-1 favoritism (*sic*) toward Luke? The key, I suggest, lies in the fact that Mary plays a relatively small part in Matthew's infancy narrative and the large part in Luke's."

⁷⁸⁶ pp. 301-307

⁷⁸⁷ *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* pp. 29-30 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 19)

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 29 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 18)

⁷⁸⁹ For example, *leukoō* means to whiten, *kakoō* to damage and *douloō* to enslave (Cf. p. 29)

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 30 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* pp. 18-19)

“does not say ‘*echaristo*’... as if we were merely considered with grace, i.e., gratuitously, but ‘*echaritōsen*’ (from *charitōō*), that is to say, transformed by grace.”⁷⁹¹

Although Laurentin does not name the Holy Spirit in relation to the grace of which Mary is a recipient as she receives her ‘new name’, a connection is implied by Laurentin’s exploration of the significance of grace within the Lucan infancy narrative. His reflections on *kecharitōmenē* are situated within a wider emphasis upon the fact that Jesus is characterised by grace (*charis*), which “is upon him (2:40) and in him (2:52)”, and his therefore being “the prototype of *charis*” which “is anticipated in her who gives him birth in faith.”⁷⁹² Laurentin notes how the “recurrent use of this word *grace* at the beginning (1:28 and 1:30) and at the end (2:40 and 52) of the infancy narrative constitutes a sort of inclusion which increases the importance of the word.”⁷⁹³ The contrast between grace and law, which will be further developed by Laurentin in his semiotic analysis of this text,⁷⁹⁴ is noted from a simple literary analysis in relation to the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple (Lk 2:22-39), where “the episode begins under the Law (mentioned three times in 2:22-24), and ends in the Spirit (also mentioned three times in 2:25-27)” with “the prophetic consequences” of this unfolding in 2:28-38 and concluding with the law in 2:39.⁷⁹⁵ In this way, the connection between grace and the Holy Spirit is implied.

Laurentin’s account of the insights gained from literary criticism also include aspects already expounded in his work connected to Catholic charismatic renewal, principally the Annunciation and Visitation as proto-Pentecosts,⁷⁹⁶ and his connection of John 2:1-11(12) with the theophany of Sinai which was celebrated by the feast of Pentecost.⁷⁹⁷ This latter point is

⁷⁹¹ Ibid. p. 30, referring to *On the Epistle to the Ephesians*, c.1, Hom. 1, no. 3, PG 62, col 13. (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 19) The meaning and significance of the new name given to Mary is a favourite theme in Laurentin’s subsequent works, where much the same description is found, modified according to the intended audience. Cf. *Vie authentique de Marie* pp. 43-44; *The Hail Mary* pp. 18-19; *Présence de Marie* pp. 29-30; *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* p. 61; *Une année de grâce avec Marie* pp. 34-35; *Un Avent avec Marie vers l’an 2000* p. 33; *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 581, and (2011) *Magnificat : Action de grâce de Marie, nouvelle édition revue et augmentée*. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, pp. 39-40.

In a reversal of situations where Laurentin has been presented as appropriating the views of others (cf. pp. 57-58 above), de la Potterie’s (1997) *Mary in the mystery of the covenant*, first published in Flemish in 1985, presents, almost word for word, the same account of *kecharitōmenē* as Laurentin, with no reference to him, including the same examples from the Greek language and an identical reference to John Chrysostom. Whatever else may be said about this, it clearly reveals an appreciation of Laurentin’s approach.

⁷⁹² *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 39 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 27)

⁷⁹³ Ibid. (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 27)

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. pp. 142-143 below

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 82 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 62)

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Ibid. p. 81 on the Annunciation and p. 125 on the Visitation, where the “Holy Spirit provokes the encounter and the sharing (1:15, 35, 41) of the mothers and their two infants”. (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 99) Cf. pp. 107-108, 114-115 above

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. pp. 117-119 above

developed here, so that not only is John 2:1-11(12) read as being connected to Exodus 24, but the Annunciation account is as well, with the people's assent at Sinai being seen as similar to both Mary's "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5) and her *fiat* (Lk 1:38).⁷⁹⁸ Whilst linguistically these utterances are unrelated, it is true that all three are instances of "sealing a covenant", and all have a theophanic character.⁷⁹⁹ Connected to this is Laurentin's description of the Annunciation as "the first of a series of theophanies which manifest the divinity of Christ throughout Luke's Gospel", with key words appearing in these and some other texts. Of these, 'Holy Spirit' occurs in Luke 1:35, at Jesus baptism in Luke 3:21-22, and in Romans 1:3-4 (the only non-Lucan text referred to.)⁸⁰⁰ Although Laurentin had previously vigorously challenged the way in which Brown connected Luke 1:35 and Romans 1:3, with the Lucan verse being seen as a creation based upon the epistle, here Laurentin refrains from engaging in polemic, and does not even mention Brown. He simply states that the resurrection theophany as described in Romans 1:3-4 shares characteristics with the Lucan theophanies of which the Annunciation is the first, with Jesus Christ, the descendent of David, being "designated Son of God in power" through the "spirit of holiness".⁸⁰¹

Despite the length of the section on the Lucan infancy narrative and literary criticism, these are the only notable references to Mary and the Holy Spirit. They are, as has been noted, a combination of reflections which played a substantial role in Laurentin's earlier works relating to charismatic renewal, including some development of them, and a new emphasis upon Mary's new name, *Kecharitōmenē*. Here Laurentin does not display a polemical agenda, in sharp contrast to his discussion about the type of historicity found in the infancy narratives.

(b) The question: "What kind of historicity?"

Laurentin begins his discussion about what type of history the infancy narratives are by examining the convergences between the Lucan and Matthean accounts. From a straightforward analysis of the two accounts, Laurentin describes how "the events narrated differ through almost 99% of the text", and of "the 132 verses of Luke 1-2 and the 47 of Matthew 1-2 the (scattered) details they have in common occupy the space of about a single

⁷⁹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 120, referring to Ex 24:3 and 24:7: "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do."

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 120-121

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 121 (Translation from *The Truth of Christmas* pp. 95-96)

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 121 (Translation from *The Truth of Christmas* p. 96). Whilst acknowledging Brown's (1975) *Biblical reflections on crises facing the Church* to be "a brilliant study", Laurentin firmly refutes Brown's presentation of Luke 1:35 as "a projection of the ancient Christological statement of Rom 1:3." Laurentin judges Brown's reconstruction to be artificial, declaring that if "the connections between Luke 1:35 and Rom 1:3... are significant, they in no way authorise the presumption that the first verse is fabricated from the second." Cf. (1976) '*Bulletin sur Marie, Mère du Seigneur*', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 60, pp. 309-345 and 451-500, pp. 312-313

verse.”⁸⁰² Laurentin lists the shared content, including the fact that in both accounts the “unusual birth of Jesus is explained by a transcendent (and not theogamic) intervention of God”; thus emphasising what *was not* the role of the Spirit.⁸⁰³ Following these rather self-evident descriptions, Laurentin moves to more directly polemical areas, discussing what kind of history the infancy narratives are. He addresses the aim graphically depicted in his introduction, of taking “up the scientific tools of exegesis in the service, not to the detriment, of the text”, unlike the “rationalistic pioneers of scientific exegesis” who “acted with the superiority of the all-knowing professor”, criticising or correcting the infancy narratives “as if they were student essays” and “accusing them of inconsistencies, contradictions, and inaccuracies” treating them as “myths or fictions”.⁸⁰⁴

This section of the book contains a few largely unrelated and unoriginal references to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. In the context of demonstrating how the authors used and went beyond the literary form of genealogy, Laurentin stresses that the Matthean genealogy does not present Mary as belonging to the transcendent order, but as being “a sign of the gift of the Spirit”, since “the virginal conception is indicative of the new creation, of eschatology, which renews all things”. Thus, she is included in the fourteen names of the last series, “between Joseph and Jesus, the two begotten non-begetters”, for “she is not a ‘begetter’” but “a sign of the gift of God.”⁸⁰⁵ Similarly, he stresses that in recording Jesus’ descent from David and his Abrahamic origins the genealogies go back to the very beginning of the Bible (cf. Mt 1:1 and Lk 3:38):

It is a new creation under the sign of the Spirit (Mt 1:18 and 20; Lk 1:35). As he was present over the primordial waters so that life might be born there-from (Gen 1:2), so he is present over Mary so that she might conceive the Life which will transform history and the world.⁸⁰⁶

The ‘newness’ of this creation is apparent in the Matthean “the genesis of Jesus Christ” (1:1 and 18) and the reference to the Spirit in Matthew 1:18-20, and in Luke 1:35 which “also expresses the new creation under the signs of the Spirit, but with a clear eschatological orientation.”⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰² *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* p. 359 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 302)

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 362 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 304)

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 8 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* pp. xviii-xix)

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 422 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 360)

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 512 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 437). This theme had also been present in *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* and *Court traité*, cf. p. 40 above.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 524 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 446). Cf. pp. 525-526, where Laurentin describes “Jesus’ entry into the human condition” as being “totally baffling”, for his “human beginning depended upon God alone: on the Holy Spirit, the principle of the new creation (cf. Gen 1-2).” (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 447)

As part of his account of the relationship between symbolism and historicity, discussing divine communication, Laurentin describes how the Holy Spirit “does not impose himself, but rather awakens the subject from within to what is best in himself, and nurtures his relationship to Christ and to God”, being “the hidden mover” who works by means of prophecies “towards the revolutionary novelty of Pentecost”.⁸⁰⁸ Thus, as is demonstrated in Elizabeth, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Mary, Simeon, Anna and the shepherds, the Spirit reveals the “intimate activity of God, who does not manipulate human beings but inspires them to what is best in their desires and in their hopes.”⁸⁰⁹ This aspect of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and those whose lives the Spirit impacts has already appeared several times in Laurentin’s works and will continue to be an oft-repeated theme of his Marian theology,⁸¹⁰ including having a significant place within his reflections on Mary and the Holy Spirit derived from applying semiotic analysis to the infancy narratives.⁸¹¹

In the conclusion to *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* Laurentin draws out some implications of the aim stated in his introduction, of “recapturing from within, the experience of the two evangelists: Matthew, persecuted preacher of a church in silence, and Luke, the evangelist of the Holy Spirit, who was predisposed by the experience of Pentecost to preserve the witness of Mary who “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (2:19, 51).⁸¹² Describing how the Antiochian community “in which the missionary experience of Paul and Barnabas began, and with which Luke was associated, was undoubtedly the most charismatic community in the primitive Church,”⁸¹³ Laurentin relates how Luke, “with an evident concern to get to know Jesus ‘from the beginning’ (1:2 and 3), from his very origins”, was “able to discover in Christ’s origins the beginning of eschatology, the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, the earliest flowering of the charisms.”⁸¹⁴ He declares that the “Pneumatological reading of the infancy according to Luke is not anachronistic”, for it is “a hinge experience” between the prophets, who “enjoyed the experience and the fruits of the Spirit” and Pentecost, which it prefigures.⁸¹⁵

⁸⁰⁸ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* pp. 517-518 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 441)

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 518 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 442)

⁸¹⁰ Cf. (1967) *Esprit-Saint et théologie mariale* p. 38; (1968) *Present crisis in Mariology. Lecture 14: Mary and the Holy Spirit*. 14-8; (1980) *Plus jeune que le péché. Le mystère de l’Immaculée Conception*, Association Sacerdotal ‘Lumen Gentium’, 66-67, pp. 1-10, p. 6; (1996) *Un Avent avec Marie vers l’an 2000* p. 121; *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) pp. 34, 36-37; (2011) *Présence de Marie* p. 193, and (1994) *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* p. 101. This central theme of the Holy Spirit awakening Mary, and those whose life are touched by the Spirit, to the best of themselves has several variations. Cf. pp. 140-141, 182-183, 188-189 below

⁸¹¹ Cf. pp. 140-141 below

⁸¹² *Ibid.* p. 10 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. xx)

⁸¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 539-540 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* pp. 456-457). Cf. p. 117 above on Luke’s membership of this charismatic community.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 540 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 457)

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 541 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* pp. 457-458)

While not making any definitive judgement about how Mary influenced the Lucan infancy narrative, Laurentin is unequivocal in affirming that she is a source for these chapters.⁸¹⁶ He suggests that it is probable that Luke “gathered this legacy of memories” indirectly, from the community in which he lived, “not as anecdotes, but rather assimilated (through comparison and confrontation), matured, processed in the light of Scripture, according to the midrashic mode of meditation.”⁸¹⁷ This will be expressed in a more explicit manner in Laurentin’s (1993) article *Ce que le recouvrement (Lc 2, 41-52) enseigne sur Marie*:

The interior and Pneumatological perspective of Luke results from his experience as a convert in the most charismatic community of the early Church: that of Antioch. Thanks to this affinity, he knew how to discover, understand, and express the theological and charismatic experience of Mary, as came from the Holy Spirit and the heart of Christians.⁸¹⁸

Clearly, in this stress upon the historicity of the infancy narratives and Mary being the key source behind the Lucan account, Laurentin is in direct conflict with Brown and other prominent historical-critical exegetes, with Brown declaring that Laurentin is “intensively interested in historical issues which he solves not by historical criticism but often by pious assumptions.”⁸¹⁹

(c) Semiotic analysis

Somewhat paradoxically, during the same years as Laurentin was influenced by charismatic renewal, with its experiential approach, and was passionately advocating the historicity of the infancy narratives, he also delighted in new insights found by applying the deconstructive, taxonomic method of semiotic analysis, originally known by the more general term ‘structuralism’,⁸²⁰ to Biblical texts, particularly to the infancy narratives. Uninterested in questions of historicity, Scriptural semiotics first came into being in the 1960s, at the same time as the birth of Catholic charismatic renewal. However, these two significant influences upon Laurentin could hardly be more different.

Semiotic analysis, an offspring of linguistics, followed the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) who argued that “language should be studied, not only in terms of its individual parts, and not only diachronically, but also in terms of the relationship *between* those parts and *synchronically*”, that is, “language should be studied as a *Gestalt*, a unified ‘field’, a

⁸¹⁶ Cf. Ibid. pp. 543-544. This theme will be developed at length in Laurentin’s (1991) *Magnificat : Action de grâce de Marie* and in his (2008) *Vie authentique de Marie*. Cf. pp. 147-148 below

⁸¹⁷ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 542 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 459)

⁸¹⁸ *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 43, pp. 213-226, p. 225

⁸¹⁹ Brown, *Biblical exegesis and Church doctrine* p. 20

⁸²⁰ Cf. Houlden, J. L. (ed.) (1995) *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. London: SCM Press, p. 24

self-sufficient system, as we actually experience it now.”⁸²¹ This method came to be widely applied, including in ethnology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, history, music, and cinema, and with the Russian morphologists it was applied to the meaning of texts.⁸²² Vladimir Propp’s (1895-1970) *Morfologiia skazki* (Morphology of the Folktale), published in 1928, was a seminal text, demonstrating that fairy stories consist of a small number of personage-types following some simple models, and insisting that the “all-important and unifying element” of fairy tales is found “in the characters’ function; the part they play in the plot”.⁸²³

Semiotics focuses on the architecture which gives meaning to a text through the differences within it and is based upon the principle that “there is no meaning but by and in difference”.⁸²⁴ It has been described as “a game of construction” where “the most basic and general semiotic rules” are “those which best enable, with the most finesse, the unique specificity of the text which is studied to be highlighted, to discover there a particular phenomenon of meaning.”⁸²⁵ It is not a question of seeking *what* the text says but *how* it says what it says; it is not the *elements* of a text which are important “but their *relations* and correlations, their organisation.”⁸²⁶ Changes in time, place and the actors (the protagonists of the action), are thus of great importance, as in classic theatre.⁸²⁷

Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917-1992), the most prominent of the French semioticians, was the creator of the ‘semiotic square’ (also known as a ‘Greimas square’). This structured model provides a means of mapping the oppositional logic at the heart of a narrative, consisting of “the pair of opposites which create and rule the meaning”, representing “the principal relationships to which the units of meaning are necessarily submitted”,⁸²⁸ and marked by the fundamental roles of subject or hero, object, sender and recipients.⁸²⁹ Importantly, a key principle of semiotics is that it “is not a question of stating ‘the’ true meaning of the text, nor of finding a new and unprecedented meaning outside of which there will be no other meaning.”⁸³⁰ Thus, Laurentin takes care to stress that however enlightening a semiotic square

⁸²¹ Hawkes, T. (1977) *Structuralism and semiotics*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., p. 20, referring to Saussure’s *Cours de Linguistique Générale* published posthumously in 1915.

⁸²² Cf. *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 136

⁸²³ Hawkes, *Structuralism and semiotics* p. 68

⁸²⁴ Groupe D’Entrevernes (1979) *Analyse sémiotique des textes*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, p. 8

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 7, 193

⁸²⁶ Laurentin, R. (1982) ‘Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie. Bilan et prospective’, *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 32, pp. 53-80, p. 54

⁸²⁷ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1984) *Comment réconcilier l’exégèse et la foi*. Paris: O.E.I.L., p. 142

⁸²⁸ Groupe D’Entrevernes, *Analyse sémiotique des textes* pp. 135, 132

⁸²⁹ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1983) ‘Vérité des évangiles de l’enfance’, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 105, pp. 691-710, p. 702
The hero is often helped or hindered by helpers or opponents.

⁸³⁰ Groupe D’Entrevernes, *Analyse sémiotique des textes* p. 7

may be, “it is never a perfect explanation” but a hypothesis which can never exhaust the resources of a text, with different semiotic squares of the same text being able to explain different aspects of the text.⁸³¹

Laurentin’s main semiotic studies were written in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when semiotics was “a new field”, still “proving its worth”.⁸³² While he continued to draw upon his earlier findings in later works, in 2003 Laurentin described semiotics as “so revealing but currently in an impasse”,⁸³³ and later expressed his regret that losing his sight had prevented him from continuing his studies in semiotics.⁸³⁴ Describing the reception of semiotics in the early years of its existence, he relates how the “objectivity and effectiveness” of this “scientific method”, has “seduced a number of exegetes, especially in France”,⁸³⁵ whilst others discuss or refuse it without knowing it well, regarding it as difficult and off-putting.⁸³⁶ Although aware of the restraints of this “extremely limited” method, Laurentin notes that the narrowness of the field of research itself enables efficacy,⁸³⁷ and he acclaims the “surprising resources for further progress in understanding the Gospels” that semiotics provides.⁸³⁸ His enthusiasm for this “exhilarating domain”,⁸³⁹ unambiguously expressed in his declaration that the “advantages of this new framing are immense” and that he “remains full of wonder at them”,⁸⁴⁰ explains the considerable part of *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* devoted to this new method. Paralleling the insights gained from reading Luke 1-2 and Acts 1-2 in the light of his experience of charismatic renewal,⁸⁴¹ Laurentin describes how “when semiotics was born, and I applied it to the texts that I had already studied with so many scientific disciplines (Luke 1-2, Matthew 1-2), I was deeply moved by the importance of the objective studies which resulted from it.”⁸⁴²

Given that the principle concern of *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* is to affirm the historicity of the infancy narratives,⁸⁴³ it is a testament to Laurentin’s thirst to learn from a

⁸³¹ *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* p. 58

⁸³² *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 136 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 111)

⁸³³ Laurentin, R. (2003) ‘Discours de Mons. René Laurentin pour la remise au Prof. Cándido Pozo, SI, du VIII^{ème} prix “Pro Ancilla Domini”’, *Ephemerides Mariologiae*, 65, pp. 541-547, p. 546

⁸³⁴ Cf. Laurentin, R. (2008) ‘Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski une carrière théologique dans la lumière du concile’, *Ephemerides Mariologiae*, 70, pp. 657-661, p. 660

⁸³⁵ *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* p. 53

⁸³⁶ *Comment réconcilier l’exégèse et la foi* p. 137

⁸³⁷ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1977) ‘Faith, myths and historical facts in the infancy narratives’, Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 3, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 23

⁸³⁸ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 136 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 111)

⁸³⁹ *Mémoires* p. 285

⁸⁴⁰ *Vérité des évangiles de l’enfance* p. 694

⁸⁴¹ Cf. pp. 98-99 above

⁸⁴² *Magnificat : Action de grâce de Marie* p. 169

⁸⁴³ Cf. Bourke, M. (1984) ‘René Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ : Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes. Exégèse et sémiotique – historicité et théologie*’, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 46, pp. 579-582, p. 580

wide variety of exegetical approaches that a significant proportion of the book is devoted to this method which is not interested in the relationship of the account to historical reality,⁸⁴⁴ and which, when used within the framework developed by structuralist philosophy, both refuses “to accept individual personal identity within the text and extratextual reference beyond it.”⁸⁴⁵ However, Laurentin’s highly critical stance towards the prevailing use of historical-critical analysis by Catholic exegetes partially explains his openness to semiotics. He describes it as “the specific antidote to the abuse of the historical critical method” which “seeks the explanation outside the text”, since semiotics “remains with the text alone”, seeking to objectively analyse its “mechanisms of meaning.”⁸⁴⁶ As Laurentin repeatedly stresses: “Exegesis will pass. The text remains.”⁸⁴⁷ Similarly, Laurentin believed that semiotics had the potential “to shed light on the symbolism so little known by scholastic rationalism, as well as by the critical rationalism of the ‘*années contestataires*’ since 1968.”⁸⁴⁸

Laurentin stresses that semiotics should be used “as an instrument and not as an end”,⁸⁴⁹ and he is careful to state that this “tool” like all methods, has both its limits and its risks.⁸⁵⁰ As for the relationship between semiotics and other forms of Biblical exegesis, whilst upholding the “primordial scientific rule that only one method can be used at a time”, Laurentin emphasises the need “to be aware of the limits of each method, and remain open to the value of others, without mixing them, because no method exhausts the real, and there is more in the reality

⁸⁴⁴ Cf. *Faith, myths and historical facts in the infancy narratives* p. 25, where Laurentin describes structuralism as not only being uninterested in the events behind the accounts, but also in the author (personal or communitarian):

For structuralism, under its most rigid theoretic forms, it is not man who makes language, it is language which makes man. Thus, it is not the author who would create his account but the account which would impose itself on the author just as the mechanism of the wheels imposes itself on a watch maker (*sic*) who is responsible for the mounting of a clock.

⁸⁴⁵ Houlden, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church* p. 26

⁸⁴⁶ *Vérité des évangiles de l'enfance* p. 694

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. *Comment réconcilier l'exégèse et la foi* p. 254. In *Église qui vient* (pp. 110-111) Laurentin recounts the origins of this slogan with disparaging irony:

During a conversation at table with exegetes and theologians of a high level, I brought about an outcry by daring to say:

- *Exegetes pass, but the text remains*

There was a chorus, an outcry!

- *Nonsense, absurdity!*

My colleagues laughed because they know: *the text is nothing!* Knowledge, projected upon a text, is everything. The Copernican revolution of Kant had journeyed here, and I remained in the realism of the Middle Ages!

⁸⁴⁸ *Discours de Mons. René Laurentin pour la remise au Prof. Cándido Pozo* p. 546

⁸⁴⁹ *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* p. 143 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 117)

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* p. 79. Elsewhere Laurentin describes how, like “the hammer and saw of the carpenter may construct or demolish an altar”, it can be used to “*destroy or to build.*” [Laurentin, R. (1981) ‘*Approche structurale de Matthieu 1-2*’ in Carrez, M., Doré, J. and Grelot, P. (eds.) *De la Tôrah au Messie: Mélanges Henri Cazelles*. Paris: Desclée, pp. 381-416, p. 386]

than in all the methods combined.”⁸⁵¹

(i) Semiotics and the Matthean infancy narrative

Although Laurentin had given courses on semiotic analysis of both the Lucan and Matthean infancy narratives in 1977,⁸⁵² in his first published work on semiotics based on these lectures he chose to limit his reflections to the Matthean account, explaining that he did not want to write about the Lucan account before the publication of Agnès Gueret’s *Mémoire, Luc 1-2: Analyse sémiotique*.⁸⁵³ His (1981) *Approche structurale de Matthieu 1-2* is a somewhat surprising debut text. While Laurentin was breaking new ground in being, at least to his knowledge, the first to apply structuralism to Matthew 1-2,⁸⁵⁴ he concludes that this method “brings little to Mary.”⁸⁵⁵ However, he finds it brings “a principle of order and of meaning, keys” which he had not previously perceived “at least in this light and to this degree.”⁸⁵⁶ Whereas his *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* includes a sustained reflection on a semiotic square of Matthew 1-2 of generation and kingship,⁸⁵⁷ here this possibility is simply alluded to.⁸⁵⁸ Of the insights from structural analysis of the text, the “marks (*repères*) of meaning” include references which relate to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, within the context of the origins of Jesus,⁸⁵⁹ which are developed in later works.

Laurentin highlights the contrast between the “initial atopy [lack of spatial reference] of the Messiah (Mt 1) and the contrasting eventful topology which follows”. The Messiah “comes from nowhere”, his origin is “of the Holy Spirit” (1:18,20). Coming from God alone, he “comes forth from Bethlehem” (2:6) as highlighted in the Matthean use of the prophecy of Micah 5:1.⁸⁶⁰ What is meant by “coming from God alone” is further reflected on, as Laurentin considers who Jesus is begotten of.

A further contrast, the difference between Matthew 1:16 and the preceding verses of the Matthean genealogy, is used by Laurentin as an important tool to help answer this question.

⁸⁵¹ *Comment réconcilier l’exégèse et la foi* p. 24

⁸⁵² Lectures given in English in 1977 and part of the Father René Laurentin collection at the University of Dayton, including ‘Faith, myths and historical facts in the Infancy Gospels’, ‘Matthew 1-2’ (Box 4.2) and ‘Luke 1-2’ (Box 4.3).

⁸⁵³ *Approche structurale de Matthieu 1-2* p. 382. In *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* pp. 272-273, 275-277 Laurentin discusses three semiotic analyses of Luke 1-2, including that of Gueret.

⁸⁵⁴ Cf. *Matthew 1-2* p. 12 and *Faith, myths and historical facts* p. 47

⁸⁵⁵ *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* pp. 53-80, p. 69

⁸⁵⁶ *Approche structurale de Matthieu 1-2* p. 411

⁸⁵⁷ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* pp. 343-356

⁸⁵⁸ *Approche structurale de Matthieu 1-2* p. 382

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 386-391

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 389. (Michée 5,1 is the reference used in *La Bible de Jérusalem*, for the RSV it is Micah 5:2.)

Grammatically, in contrast to Luke 1-2 where Mary is the subject of active verbs, it is Joseph who acts in Matthew 1-2.⁸⁶¹ However, as Laurentin stresses in *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ*, this is not the case in the genealogy:

Now, after thirty-nine stereotyped repetitions of the verb *begot*, at the point at which we would normally expect “Joseph begot Jesus”, the chain breaks. The name Joseph is not followed by “begot”; it is followed by ten extremely important Greek words that determine all that follows: *ton andra Marias, ex hēs egennēthē lēsous ho legomenos Christos* (“The husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born who is called Christ,” 1:16).⁸⁶²

Stressing Matthew’s assertion that Jesus *was* begotten, for the verb *gennaō* is used three times in the passive voice, Laurentin discusses who the Matthean account points to as the begetter. He asserts that the grammatical structure of Matthew 1:16 (the “genealogical gap”) clearly excludes Joseph, and that Mary’s passivity throughout Matthew’s infancy narrative, and the fact that the Matthean genealogy reserves the verb ‘beget’ for men, indicate that Mary is not to be understood as the ‘begetter’ either.⁸⁶³ Laurentin then considers whether the Holy Spirit can be understood as being the “origin of the Messiah” and adamantly concludes that this is not possible:

Can we say, then, that the begetter is the Holy Spirit, who is twice mentioned in the following pericope (1:18 and 20) as being the origin of the Messiah? He is not presented here as the begetter or father of Christ. Jesus is linked to him by the same particle *ek* that describes the connection of children with their mothers.⁸⁶⁴

Laurentin stresses that the infancy narratives are “on guard against any form of theogamy”, which the word “Spirit”, feminine in Hebrew and neuter in Greek, excludes, and concludes that for Matthew “the Holy Spirit does not serve in any way as Father of Christ or ‘Spouse of Mary’”.⁸⁶⁵ While who is the father of Jesus is not clear in the infancy narrative, and will only be

⁸⁶¹ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 386-387

⁸⁶² *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* p. 316 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 262)

⁸⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 317. In his *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* (p. 70) Laurentin extends this reflection, stressing the importance for Matthew of Mary not begetting:

He does not say: Mary *begot* Jesus... No, a woman, for him, according to his culture and mentality, does not beget. To beget is the role of the father. The woman conceives and gives birth. Her relationship to her posterity, which her spouse is said to beget, is only indicated by the particle *ek* which means provenance.

⁸⁶⁴ *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* p. 318 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 264). This point is extended in *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* p. 71, where Laurentin recounts how Matthew 1:18 and 1:20 describe the relationship of Jesus to the Spirit with the same participle (*ek*) used in 1:16 in reference to Mary: she is “found to be with child by (*ek*) the Holy Spirit” (1:18) and it is declared of her that “what has been begotten in her is from (*ek*) the Holy Spirit” (1:20).

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 318 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 264)

revealed in the course of the Gospel as Jesus refers to his father,⁸⁶⁶ Laurentin highlights the indication given in Matthew 2:15:

The only (transcendent) reference is that which Matthew explains later by this Biblical quotation: *I have called my Son out of Egypt* (Mt 2:15, referring to Hosea 11:1). The only Father of Jesus Christ is God. And all the Gospels take care not to obscure this fundamental reference.⁸⁶⁷

Apart from a passing reference to the relationship of Mary to the Holy Spirit appearing “as a sign of the new creation, in this new Genesis, upon which Matthew 1:1,18 insists”,⁸⁶⁸ these are the only contributions to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit from Laurentin’s several works addressing semiotics and the Matthean infancy narrative. While it is true that the ‘difference’ semiotics seeks highlights the significance of Matthew 1:16 and Christ’s origin from God alone, it is far from clear that Laurentin’s reflections upon the Holy Spirit not begetting Jesus necessitate a structuralist approach. As Laurentin himself was very aware, it is in applying semiotics to the Lucan infancy narrative that its main contribution is to be found.

(ii) Semiotics and the Lucan infancy narrative

Laurentin’s engagement with Luke 1-2 utilised semiotic methods to a much greater degree than his work on Matthew 1-2. Unlike the Matthean infancy narrative, it was a text which had already been studied from a structuralist viewpoint by the time of Laurentin’s first course on this subject in 1977,⁸⁶⁹ and his work is both an engagement with existing research and the presentation of his own analysis. Laurentin’s *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ*, where over one hundred and fifty pages are devoted to examining Luke 1-2 using semiotics, is the key account of his findings.⁸⁷⁰

Although Laurentin identified two semiotic squares (consisting of ‘grace and law’ and ‘glory and humility’),⁸⁷¹ he devotes most space to the former, within which a significant role is given to the Holy Spirit. This, along with the findings related to Mary and the Holy Spirit from his

⁸⁶⁶ Cf. *Matthew 1-2* p. 11

⁸⁶⁷ *Analyse sémiotique des évangiles de Marie* p. 71

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 72. Cf. pp. 40, 131 above

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. *Luke 1-2*, pp. 15-17, where Laurentin gives a ‘bibliography’ of the three existing works on this subject: an issue of *Sémiotique et Bible* (no. 3, June 1976), Violaine Montsarrat’s catechetical pocketbook *Séquence Jean-Jésus* which includes a structural analysis, and the research of Agnès Gueret.

⁸⁷⁰ pp. 144-297. Similar material is found in several shorter texts and lectures, Cf. *Faith, myths and historical facts in the infancy narratives* pp. 78-111; *Luke 1-2; Comment réconcilier l’exégèse et la foi* pp. 161-166, and *Magnificat: Action de grâce de Marie* pp. 171-198 (a semiotic analysis of the Magnificat).

⁸⁷¹ Cf. *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* pp. 272-297

examination of grammatical elements with a semiotic value and the narrative itself will be examined below.

In his analysis of the topology, the spatial framework of the narrative, Laurentin's observations about "divine space", signified in terms of altitude, and "interior (spiritual) space", corresponding to the influence of the Holy Spirit, are particularly noteworthy.⁸⁷² Laurentin highlights the use of the preposition *epi* (upon) used for the action of the Holy Spirit, who comes *upon* Mary (1:35), *upon* Simeon (2:25) and *upon* Jesus (2:40).⁸⁷³ These, as well as the use of the prefix *ep-* in 1:25 (*ep-eiden*, God looking upon Elizabeth) and 1:48 (*ep-eblepsen*, God looking upon Mary), locate God 'on high', which correlates with the naming of God as *hypsistos* (Most High), which occurs three times in Luke 1-2.⁸⁷⁴ Importantly, for Luke the "loftiness of God does not lower humans at all"; in coming to meet them he exalts them, "disregarding all apparent spatial distance." Thus, the loftiness of God, far from being overwhelming, "awakens dynamism and liberty": the "space of God is not so much engulfing as inspiring and stimulating, as the frequent reference to the Holy Spirit also indicates."⁸⁷⁵

In this way, divine space relates to the interior (spiritual) space which the Spirit influences, with God's transcendence (*upon*) implying immanence (*within*). Thus, Laurentin concludes that the "multiform presence of the Holy Spirit does not replace the spirit of the persons who benefit from it" but he "awakens their liberty, their very dynamism."⁸⁷⁶ Laurentin illustrates this with reference to John the Baptist, whom Luke 1:80 describes as growing and being strengthened in spirit, and to Mary, in her declaration that her spirit rejoices in God her saviour (Lk 1:47).⁸⁷⁷

This emphasis is also found in Laurentin's discussion of Luke 1-2, where he concludes that the particular subjects of each scene are referred to both "the transcendent subject who is God the addresser" and "the principal virtual subject who is the Messiah".⁸⁷⁸ He stresses that God, the addresser "is not the subject who does everything" but the one who "inspires, directs, and

⁸⁷² Ibid. pp. 153-156

⁸⁷³ Cf. Ibid. p. 153. Although this last reference is to the *charis* (grace) of God which was upon Jesus, Laurentin simply equates *charis* with the Spirit without comment.

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. Ibid. Laurentin notes the significance of the fact that "this designation is found only ten times in the whole NT, seven of which are in Luke-Acts." (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 125)

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 154 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 126)

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 156 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 128) Cf. p. 132 above and pp. 182-183, 188-189 below

⁸⁷⁷ Cf. Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 267 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 218)

stimulates the initiatives woven by human beings”,⁸⁷⁹ and does so by his Holy Spirit, the great celestial adjuvant (helper),⁸⁸⁰ who “plays the role of motivator during the entire Gospel (and in Acts)”⁸⁸¹:

In contrast to Caesar... God is not a manipulator. He influences by attraction and inspiration; in the form of the Holy Spirit, directing from within the freedom of human actions toward that communion which pleases God, where man finds his fulfilment and happiness.⁸⁸²

Having situated the nature of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to humans in general, we turn now to examine what Laurentin’s analysis of Luke 1-2 says about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. Discussing the account of the Annunciation, Laurentin highlights the difference between Mary’s qualification to be mother of Jesus and the “dynastic qualification”, the “human heritage” of Joseph. Mary is qualified by “pure grace”, as is made explicit by the angel’s second utterance, “You have found grace (*charis*) before God” (1:30).⁸⁸³ Laurentin also reflects upon the meaning of the Lucan description of how this grace is manifested. Noting that the expression ‘the Holy Spirit will come upon you’ is “found again (substantially) in Luke at the baptism of Christ (3:22)”, with the statement “the Holy Spirit descended upon him”, Laurentin highlights the fact that Luke 1:35 avoids saying that the Holy Spirit “descended”. He sees this as the author’s way of distancing himself from any concept of a theogamy, choosing instead to apply to Mary “the formula by which Christ announces Pentecost to the apostles, ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you’ (Acts 1:8).”⁸⁸⁴

Reflecting upon the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-56), Laurentin emphasises that this journey was not commanded by the angel; Mary departed in haste in response to a personal inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she was not following an order. The account also reveals the interplay of influence of Mary, Jesus, and the Spirit, with the Spirit working in and through Jesus and Mary:

In the framework of the unity of persons which characterizes pregnancy in Luke 1, Mary is presented as the subject operative of the transformation in Elizabeth and her child... It is clear, however, that beyond this sign, the radiance can be attributed to the Son of the Lord God, who is in her (1:43), and to the Holy Spirit, who “fills” John the

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 269 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 220)

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. *Luke 1-2* p. 34 where Laurentin discusses the many adjuvants (helpers) who “are divided into celestial and terrestrial”, with the Holy Spirit “above all” exercising this celestial role (1:35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26, 27).

⁸⁸¹ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 197 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 154)

⁸⁸² Ibid. p. 269 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 220)

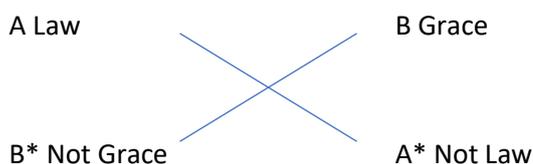
⁸⁸³ Ibid. p. 185 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 144)

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 190 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 149). Laurentin relates that “what is important is that the action of God is indicated less as an effective force (despite the word *dynamis*) than as a presence”.

Baptist (1:15) and his mother (1:41) conjointly. Mary and her son are recognized in the Spirit. Elizabeth and her son are changed by the Spirit (1:15 and 41).⁸⁸⁵

Laurentin stresses the importance of situating this key moment within the total context of Luke 1, “because this Pentecost of John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zechariah proceeds from the fundamental focus of this program: the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God.”⁸⁸⁶ Although Elizabeth attributes herself and her son being filled with the Spirit to the greeting of Mary (1:44), Laurentin emphasises that it is clear “that the voice of Mary (her greeting) was only a sign and signal” of the outpouring of the Spirit, with Jesus, “the child conceived through the power of the Spirit as the new presence of God in the new Ark (Mary)”, being “the source of the proto-pentecost of his precursor.”⁸⁸⁷

Further insights into the nature of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit are given in the context of Laurentin’s discussion of the semiotic square of law and grace.⁸⁸⁸



Laurentin emphasises both the frequency of these two words in the Lucan infancy narrative (Law in 2:22, 23, 24, 27, 39; grace [*charis*] in 1:28 [*kecharitōmenē*] and 1:30) and the fact that the word ‘grace’ “forms a sort of inclusion in Luke 1-2, from the Annunciation to Mary (the major sequence which introduces Christ) to the last verse indicating Jesus’ growth in grace (2:52).”⁸⁸⁹ He describes how the “most significant narrative processes”, which is what the semiotic square seeks to identify, “are those which manifest the transcending of the Law (and customs) by the eschatological gift of grace”:⁸⁹⁰

Law and grace have a structural position in each episode. Luke begins with an ordinary program, regulated by law, religious (1:5, 59-62; 2:21-22) or secular (2:1-2), and by custom. Grace, however, causes the eschatological newness to burst forth by a gratuitous act of the Lord.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 203 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 158)

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 216 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 171)

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 217 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 171)

⁸⁸⁸ Cf, Ibid. pp. 277-288. In *Comment réconcilier l'exégèse et la foi* (p. 163) Laurentin describes how this “conceptualisation in *Law and Grace* reveals in Luke a disciple of Paul”, Luke having a “different temperament” to Paul, since for him “the movement from the Law to Grace is not at all dramatic but is an ‘accomplishment’, harmonious in gentleness.”

⁸⁸⁹ *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ* p. 277 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 228)

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 280 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 231)

⁸⁹¹ Ibid. p. 279 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 230)

Seen in the light of this context, certain aspects of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit as recounted in the Annunciation narrative are highlighted. Topographically, the Annunciation occurs in the place where ‘grace’ (*charis*) is exclusively situated (three times in 1:30; 2:40 and 52, and *kecharitōmenē* in 1:28), in contrast to Jerusalem, “the place where the ‘Law’ is exclusively situated (2:22-24, 27, 39) along with the legal and cultural vocabulary (1:5-11, 23).”⁸⁹² Thus, while the law is represented in relationship to Jerusalem, grace is related to Nazareth. The movement from law to grace takes place by the Holy Spirit, “the spirit of Pentecost, the source of freedom, of charisms, of joy, who appears in a significant manner throughout Luke 1-2 (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25, 26, 27) as a source of inspiration, revelation, prophecy (1:42, 67, 70, 76; 2:28 and 36), and prediction (1:48, 76; 2:29, 32, 34-35).”⁸⁹³ The action of the Holy Spirit results in grace “which involves a social revolution, the reversal of the high and the low according to the Magnificat (1:51-53)” and also involves a “reversal of topographical hierarchies”; the fulfilment of grace does not come from the place of the temple (2:27, 37-46) and of the law (2:22,23,24) but from lowly Nazareth.⁸⁹⁴

In contrast to Zechariah, who faithfully observed the law (cf. 1:6), Mary “is characterised by *grace*”, with the name God gives her, *kecharitōmenē* (1:28) being formed from *charis* (grace) and explained by the angel in 1:30 (“You have found *grace*”).⁸⁹⁵ While the law did not suffice for Zechariah, who was struck mute for his lack of faith, through the coming of the Son of God in Mary, he, along with Elizabeth and John the Baptist, move from the law “to the *Spirit* and therefore to *grace*.”⁸⁹⁶ With a “triple Pentecost”, indicated by the reoccurring formula “filled with the Holy Spirit” applied to each member of John the Baptist’s family (1:15, 41, 67), they, like Mary, “received by anticipation the gift of the Spirit.”⁸⁹⁷ Thus, Mary, precisely as recipient of grace, is not an isolated figure, but united with others through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

(iii) Semiotics: Concluding remarks

Laurentin’s work on the infancy narratives using semiotic analysis reveals different aspects of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. For Matthew 1-2, the sole contribution of semiotics is its ability to highlight the emphasis of the narrative on the origins of Jesus,

⁸⁹² Ibid. p. 283 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 234)

⁸⁹³ Ibid. p. 279 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 229)

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 284 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 235)

⁸⁹⁵ *Comment réconcilier l’exégèse et la foi* p. 162

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁷ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 216 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 170)

begotten not *by* but *of* the Holy Spirit. As would be expected given the significant place of both Mary and the Spirit in Luke 1-2, this narrative includes a richer variety of interwoven themes.

Viewing the text in terms of its topology reveals the relationship between “divine space” and “interior (spiritual) space”, with the Holy Spirit’s transcendence, far from overwhelming humans, awakening and enabling their freedom, as is demonstrated by Mary’s response to the angel and her subsequent choice to visit Elizabeth. Reading the text from the perspective of the semiotic square of grace and law situates Mary, “*kecharitōmenē*”, characterised by grace, both at the thematic core of the narrative and together with the others who receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Significantly, while the movement from law to grace is revealed as the determining theme,⁸⁹⁸ since semiotics must by its very nature remain within the text, this theme can only be developed with internal references. This demonstrates the necessary limits of structural analysis: although it added to what Laurentin had already found through his extensive studies on Luke, it is itself complemented by literary criticism, which both manifests how the text is enriched by Old Testament references, as shown in Laurentin’s (1957) *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*, and by being read in the light of Acts 1-2, as Laurentin’s writings on the charismatic renewal frequently emphasised.⁸⁹⁹ Despite his obvious delight in insights found through semiotics, Laurentin was under no illusion about its limitations. Since it only explains the meaning of a text “insofar as that can be produced by the interplay of differences within discourse”,⁹⁰⁰ Laurentin, unlike advocates of ‘pure’ structuralism, maintains the importance of remaining open to the value of other exegetical methods.

While there is no doubt that Laurentin himself found that semiotics enriched his understanding of the infancy narratives, the extent to which the insights Laurentin recounts in *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* require the semiotic method has been questioned. Dubois asserts that Laurentin’s “semiotic analysis serves above all to present in a new vocabulary a type of critical remark which formerly were considered as literary criticism”, and asks whether semiotics was really necessary for explaining the relationship between law and grace.⁹⁰¹ Similarly, in a largely positive review of this “monumental” work which has “the happy fortune to be expressed in clear terms”, Winandy recounts how he could not prevent himself “from asking if the results which it arrives at are proportionate to the effort which it must have required of the author”, could they not “have been obtained at less cost, more directly and

⁸⁹⁸ This theme had already been highlighted by literary criticism. cf. p. 129 above

⁸⁹⁹ Cf. pp. 38-41, 114-116 above

⁹⁰⁰ *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 141 (Translation from *The truth of Christmas* p. 115)

⁹⁰¹ Dubois, J. D. (1984) ‘*Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ*’, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 57, p. 249

more simply?”⁹⁰² However, alongside such assessments, positive appraisal from Brown, albeit nuanced, demonstrates that Laurentin’s use of semiotics did make a positive scholarly contribution. In the midst of extensive criticism of Laurentin, Brown remarks that in Laurentin’s semiotic discussion of the infancy narratives “impressive observations occasionally caught my attention, and I wondered what would have been the impact if he had published those pages as a separate volume without the negative setting of the rest of the book.”⁹⁰³ Brown’s stressing the difficulty for a “non-Gallic” to appreciate the impact of this “predominantly French contribution to exegesis” also needs to be taken into account, as it highlights the modest impact semiotics has had upon American and British exegetes.⁹⁰⁴

Whatever the assessment of the (lengthy) *means* by which Laurentin arrived at the new insights produced by applying semiotic analysis to the infancy narratives, his presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is certainly enriched by his use of this method – to a limited extent for the Matthean narrative and more substantially for the Lucan account. Like the insights Laurentin gained through his familiarity with charismatic renewal, the methodology used is far from suiting all tastes and temperaments, but, given that his findings can be understood without reference to the extensive semiotic structure, it can be maintained that, regardless of the appraisal of the *method*, new insights have been gained. Moreover, it is significant that Laurentin incorporates these insights into his later writings about Mary without reference to the semiotic context which either revealed them to him or confirmed earlier theological reflections.⁹⁰⁵

Laurentin’s later writings about Scripture

In his assessment of the merits of semiotics Laurentin contrasted meaning attained through experience and that arrived at by semiotics, which “arrives at the *produced* meaning, not the ‘full’ or ‘virtual’ meaning of which the Christian Tradition has the experience.”⁹⁰⁶ This emphasis on the experiential and on the central role of faith, already present in *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ*, becomes increasingly prominent in Laurentin’s later writings, as is clearly illustrated in the sixth edition of his *Court traité* where Laurentin stresses that “the Bible (and

⁹⁰² Winandy, *René Laurentin, Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* p. 258

⁹⁰³ Brown, *More polemical than instructive* p. 191

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Brown forthrightly declares that “non-Gallics may be thought genetically defective in appreciation of the impact” of semiotics.

⁹⁰⁵ This is particularly true for two reoccurring themes in Laurentin’s writings: the Holy Spirit *not* begetting Jesus and it therefore not being appropriate to call Mary the ‘Spouse of the Spirit’ (cf. pp. 182-184 below) and the Holy Spirit awakening Mary’s freedom (cf. pp. 182-183, 188-189 below).

⁹⁰⁶ *Mémoires* p. 319

theology) is a message of faith, written in faith by believers, for believers.”⁹⁰⁷ Laurentin is concerned that exegesis sometimes “lacks the objective which it should never lose from sight: to lead to the life proposed by Christ”, and laments that when “this objective is lost, the Christian who wants to better understand the Scriptures finds himself initiated not to the Word of God but to a method of analysis.”⁹⁰⁸ Thus, he declares that “Biblical renewal will be contemplative or it will not be at all.”⁹⁰⁹ In this emphasis Laurentin is particularly close to von Balthasar’s post-conciliar stress upon the priority of spiritual experience, an approach also shared by Congar and de Lubac, amongst others.⁹¹⁰

However, while Laurentin was not alone among influential theologians in his stress upon Scripture’s primary role being to nurture faith, the extent to which he took his attempts to connect his readers with both Jesus and Mary were unparalleled and resulted in scathing reviews from academia. His two-volumed (1996) *Vie authentique de Jésus Christ* was described as “a strange amalgam of profound truths, penetrating intuitions, scrupulous attention to the texts, with hazardous shortcuts, simplistic connections, bitter criticisms and a good dose of imagination”; a book the reader “hastens to close” to “return to the freshness of the four distinct Gospels of Tradition.”⁹¹¹ Laurentin later regretted the form of this book, not for the reasons given by critics, but because of the place that his writings had in the text and a desire “to go just to the end of a radical dispossession: that there would *only be the Gospel itself*.”⁹¹² This desire led to his following the second century theologian Tatian in creating a diatessaron, about which Philippe Wagnies scathingly remarks: “If the enterprise would be so useful to believers, we would not have waited nineteen centuries to ‘attempt to improve the ancient Diatessaron which had hardly progressed since Tatian.’”⁹¹³ Wagnies describes this “lost cause in advance” of four Gospels in one, which cripples the literary genre of a Gospel, and in contrast to a synopsis which helps to highlight comparisons, serves to “deform” and “destroy”.⁹¹⁴ As Perrier remarks: “It is not in this way that he [Laurentin] would reconcile with the exegetes.”⁹¹⁵

⁹⁰⁷ Court traité sur la Vierge Marie (2009) p. 229

⁹⁰⁸ (1988) ‘Introduction’, in de Solms, E. et al (eds.) *Bible Chrétienne. Les quatre Évangiles*. Quebec/Paris: Éditions Anne Sigier/Desclée, pp. X-XI, p. IX

⁹⁰⁹ *Bible Chrétienne* p. XI (*ibid*)

⁹¹⁰ Cf. Duffy, K. (1998) ‘Exegetes and theologians’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 63, pp. 219-231 and p. 124 above on Fitzmyer and Brown’s critique of this approach to Scripture.

⁹¹¹ Radermakers, J. (1999) ‘*Vie authentique de Jésus Christ*’, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 121, pp. 138-139

⁹¹² (2002) *Nouveau Diatessaron : Les quatre Évangiles en un seul*. Paris: Fayard, p. 25

⁹¹³ Wagnies, P. (2004) *René Laurentin : Nouveau Diatessaron. ‘Les quatre Évangiles en un seul’. À propos d’un livre récent*, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 126, pp. 251-257, p. 252

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 254-255

⁹¹⁵ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge*, p. 178

While these texts do not reveal anything about Laurentin's understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, they prepare the way for his (2008) *Vie authentique de Marie*, a substantial 470-paged text based upon the limited references to Mary in the New Testament. Published when Laurentin was in his ninth decade, it contains much from his earlier works, combined with insights from visionaries and mystics, as well as conjecture reminiscent of imaginative contemplation. It also includes an astonishingly specific chronology of Mary's life, with precise dating, including Pentecost taking place on Sunday 28th May 30 AD.⁹¹⁶ References to Mary and the Holy Spirit that are not found in previous works are clearly the result of pious reflection; at times it is as if Laurentin is storytelling, setting the scene as vividly as possible to draw the reader in. Scripture tells us nothing about Mary's childhood and youth, yet Laurentin writes a chapter on this, including the following about Mary's relationship with the Spirit from her youth:

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Mary created, little by little, in her young head, her 'interior Bible': the growing number of texts which she lived and meditated 'in her heart' (Lk 2:19, 51).⁹¹⁷

She foresaw obscurely this radiant future; the Holy Spirit had begun to interest her in the prophetic texts which she had heard read in the synagogue.⁹¹⁸

What Mary has left us of the memories she meditated in her heart, enables us to reconstruct, in general lines, the 'Bible of Mary', that which she had retained from each Sabbath, according to the daily lights of the Holy Spirit. ... The Holy Spirit enlightened her discretely and progressively, better than anyone else, according to his grace.⁹¹⁹

The style of writing is mainly descriptive and when it does seek to justify or explain it is noteworthy that the experience of visionaries is often referred to. For example, Laurentin relates how Mary discovered her son's "blue eyes, like hers" and adds in a footnote "this colour is not a historical fact, but Bernadette and many other seers (not all) 'saw' the Virgin like this."⁹²⁰ Similarly, when describing how the Holy Spirit inscribed in the memory of Mary the words of the angel Gabriel, he compares this to how God engraves "in the heart of certain seers messages which they write without rapture, sometimes a long time later."⁹²¹ The contrast with Laurentin's early exegetical works could not be more striking.

⁹¹⁶ *Vie authentique de Marie* pp. 9-11

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 23

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 27

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 28

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 115

⁹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 51

Laurentin's *Vie authentique de Marie* makes very clear the role he attributes to both Luke and John as witnesses. He continues the emphasis found in his earlier works on Luke having informed himself from "eye-witnesses", including Mary, which Brown found so objectionable,⁹²² and through his ponderings on the relationship between Mary and John the Beloved Disciple, stresses the "essential, cultural, Pneumatological roots, common to Mary, John and Luke."⁹²³ He describes John and Luke as "two witnesses who are close but different, by their method of information, their style, their culture, their temperament and their environment", with the experience of the Spirit "more mystical in John, more charismatic in Luke."⁹²⁴ This stress upon John as witness is not surprising given the amount of space Laurentin devotes to Mary's life post-Calvary, entrusted to John's care,⁹²⁵ but is far removed from exegesis *per se*. Similarly, in his *Magnificat : Action de grâce de Marie*, Laurentin describes the "spiritual *sitz im leben*" of the Magnificat,⁹²⁶ which was recounted to the first Christian community during "the six days of prayers which prepared Pentecost and during the months which followed" when Mary was with the Apostles who were "full of questions" about Jesus' origins.⁹²⁷

Although Laurentin recounts in his *Mémoires* how he spent a long time preparing "a book on Mary in the Gospel of John, in the wake of Braun... Feuillet, La Potterie, and even Cerfaux, without forgetting Serra",⁹²⁸ this, like several other planned works, was never completed, and Laurentin's reflections on John's Gospel are to be found in a variety of his works, often mentioned in passing. His (2014) *Présence de Marie* contains the most focused account, where Laurentin sees the Gospels of Luke and John as closely connected, "wonderfully complementary".⁹²⁹ However, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in his reflections, although he describes the Lucan "sort of inclusion, from the birth of Christ to the birth of the Church" as "in a certain way", being like

⁹²² Ibid. p. 372. Cf. p.133 above, and *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*, p. 19. In *Le Rosaire* published in 2016, Laurentin's hundredth year, his meditation on the Annunciation demonstrates the simplicity to which he had reduced these complex questions of authorship and influence: Laurentin declares that "Luke wrote between 50 and 65" at the time when the Church was "recalling memories, words and acts of Jesus in history" and found at Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-19) "the first and principle eye-witness of Jesus: his mother." (p. 32)

⁹²³ *Vie authentique de Marie* p. 421

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ pp. 255-343 are devoted to the time from 'La sépulture' to 'La fin mystérieuse de Marie'.

⁹²⁶ *Magnificat : Action de grâce de Marie* p. 126, Laurentin contrasts this with the "sociological *sitz im leben*, defined by Gunkel".

⁹²⁷ Ibid. p. 9

⁹²⁸ *Mémoires* p. 306

⁹²⁹ *Présence de Marie* p. 43. Laurentin's (1966) *Jésus au temple* contains a chapter on 'L'éclairage Johannique' (pp. 111-133) but this is limited to parts of John's Gospel substantiating Laurentin's reading of Luke 2:49-51.

“the Johannine inclusion” between “the first sign” and the fulfilment of John 19:25-30, with its Pneumatological importance.⁹³⁰

Concluding remarks

Examining Laurentin’s writings about Scripture from the 1970s onwards has demonstrated the variety of methods he used and the insights he found, as well as the increasing divergence between his methodological approach and genre of writing and that of historical-critical exegetes. As has been demonstrated, in these works Biblical exegesis, particularly semiotic analysis of the Lucan infancy narrative, provides Laurentin with some ‘insights’ into the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. Although *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ* does not contain any significant content about Mary’s personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, by the time of *Vie authentique de Marie*, Laurentin’s use of imaginative contemplation about the life of Mary leads to statements about Mary’s growing relationship with and influence by the Holy Spirit.

The following chapter, focusing on Laurentin’s personalist approach to apparitions and mystics in the last decades of his life, will demonstrate how the reflections found in *Vie authentique de Marie* about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit are entirely congruent with the insights gained from his growing fascination with seers and mystics. It remains an open question whether Laurentin’s approach to Scripture or his advocating an array of disputed mystics and seers was more damaging to his academic reputation.

⁹³⁰ *Présence de Marie* p. 48 (Translation based upon *Mary in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Catholic Tradition* p. 31, with modifications to be closer to the original French text)

Chapter 6: A personalistic approach to apparitions

It is natural to ask what aspect of Laurentin's many Marian works he is remembered for and what his legacy will be for future generations. Obituary titles, such as the New York Times' "*René Laurentin, investigator of celestial visions, dies at 99*",⁹³¹ the Washington Post's "*René Laurentin, Catholic scholar who studied visions of Mary, dies at 99*",⁹³² and *La Croix's* "*Spécialiste des apparitions mariales, le père René Laurentin est mort*",⁹³³ demonstrate that it was his work on apparitions for which he was known at the end of his life.⁹³⁴ Internet searches of Laurentin's name quickly reveal the controversies these studies of apparitions led to, particularly relating to his writings on Medjugorje and his support of Vassula Ryden (1942 -); titles such as "*Fr Laurentin's fabrication concerning the father of a nun's child*",⁹³⁵ and "*Ringleader of the Medjugorje hoax – René Laurentin*" speak for themselves.⁹³⁶ A more measured analysis of Laurentin's reputation is given by Jacques Perrier, Bishop Emeritus of Tarbes and Lourdes (1936 -), who relates how Laurentin's esteemed *Court traité* was only referred to in one footnote in the (1999) *Groupe des Dombes' "Mary in the plan of God and the communion of saints"*, despite the fact that the questions asked "were exactly the same as those of the *Court traité* and the conclusions are not so very different from one another." Perrier concludes:

Why this silence? It is not due to the age of *Court traité*, because some of the books quoted are much older. To express it crudely, it seems to me that the reason for this amnesia is very simple: thirty years after *Court traité*, Laurentin had become someone

⁹³¹ Cf. Roberts, S. 15th September 2017: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/international-home/rene-laurentin-investigator-of-celestial-visions-dies-at-99.html> (Accessed: 01/01/21)

⁹³² Cf. Smith, H. 18th September 2017: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/rene-laurentin-catholic-scholar-who-studied-visions-of-mary-dies-at-99/2017/09/17/4a7322ec-9bb3-11e7-9083-fbdfdf6804c2_story.html (Accessed: 01/01/21)

⁹³³ Cf. <https://www.la-croix.com/Urbi-et-Orbi/Actualite/Carnet/Specialiste-apparitions-mariales-pere-Rene-Laurentin-mort-2017-09-11-1200875979> (Accessed: 01/01/22)

⁹³⁴ A note on terminology: In an article from 1976 Laurentin discusses the different connotations in the French language between *voyant* (seer) and *visionnaire* (visionary), and *vision* and *apparition*, with 'apparition' signifying an objective event and 'vision' a subjective perception. [Cf. Laurentin, R. (1976) '*Fonction et statut des apparitions*' pp. 153-205 in Billet, B. *et al Vraies et fausses apparitions dans l'église. Seconde édition revue et augmentée*. Paris: Éditions P. Lethielleux, p. 155] However, Laurentin later seeks to explain the complexity of the language of apparitions, which he describes as "full of traps", and relates how in French universities "vision and apparition are not distinguished, because, according to the prevailing philosophy – that of idealism, which privileges the subject and the subjective – there is no place for them to be distinguished". [Cf. Laurentin R. and Sbalchiero, P. (eds.) (2007) *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie*. Paris: Fayard, p. 4] Despite 'apparition' being in inverted commas in *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie*, it will be used in the following account without necessarily implying that the 'apparition' in question was an objective event, and 'apparition' and 'vision', 'visionary' and 'seer' will be used interchangeably. This is following the usage given by Chris Maunder in his (2016) *Our Lady of the Nations: Apparitions of Mary in twentieth century Catholic Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. ix.

⁹³⁵ Cf. <http://en.louisbelanger.com/2012/02/09/medjugorje-the-unbearable-sadness-of-duping-the-faithful-2-fr-laurentins-fabrication-concerning-the-father-of-a-nuns-child-part-1-the-libel-4/> and <https://en.louisbelanger.com/2012/03/15/medjugorje-the-unbearable-sadness-of-duping-the-faithful-2-fr-laurentins-fabrication-concerning-the-father-of-a-nuns-child-part-2-the-facts/> (Accessed: 01/01/21)

⁹³⁶ Cf. <http://www.testreligion.com/laurentindishonestmedjugorjefan.html> (Accessed: 01/01/21)

not to be associated with, perhaps above all in Protestant circles, because of his apparent addiction to the phenomenon of apparitions.⁹³⁷

Despite the significant criticism his work on apparitions generated, Laurentin was undeterred in his investigations and was particularly keen to meet those who claimed to have been recipients of visions and other mystical experiences. His studies of apparitions continued throughout his life alongside other varied research, and over the years his style, methodology and sheer breath of interest developed significantly from his early, extremely thorough historical research on Lourdes, for which he had received much acclaim.⁹³⁸ This chapter will demonstrate how Laurentin's approach to apparitions came to be marked by a personalistic, relation-focused approach and by the 'end-times', and will examine the connections Laurentin made between Marian apparitions and the Holy Spirit. Laurentin's viewing genuine apparitions as charisms will also be discussed, as well as the reasons he posits for the absence of the Holy Spirit in apparitions of Mary.

Changing approaches to apparitions

An important starting point for understanding Laurentin's approach to apparitions or visions is that apparitions occupy a "very humble place" in the Church, "in keeping with the words of Christ: *Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed* (John 20:29)".⁹³⁹ Laurentin frequently quotes St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) in this regard,⁹⁴⁰ and explains at length, in relation to dogmatic theology, biblical theology, fundamental theology, moral theology, mystical theology, Church history and canon law, why apparitions are "situated near the bottom of the scales of received values within the Church".⁹⁴¹ He also consistently reiterates Church teaching that no-one "is obliged to believe in the truth of the fact of apparitions, even if they are recognized by the Church", and that "the faithful remain free to judge apparitions

⁹³⁷ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* pp. 169-170

⁹³⁸ Cf. p. 36 above

⁹³⁹ (1994) *Pilgrimages, sanctuaries, icons, apparitions: An historical and Scriptural account*. Milford, Ohio: Riehle Foundation, p. 90.

⁹⁴⁰ Cf. *Fonction et statut des apparitions* (1976) p. 159: "St John of the Cross spoke strongly in reaction against the 'enlightened' of his time: 'There is no longer a reason for us to interrogate God, nor for him to respond as before, for, since he gave us his Son, who is the Word, there is no other word to give us, he has said everything at once in this Word...' (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 2, Ch 20)."

(1986) 'Préface' in Faricy, R. & Rooney, L. (1986) *Au cœur de Medjugorje: Marie parle au monde*. Fayard: Paris, pp. 7-12, p. 7: "Apparitions are not held in honour in spiritual theology. John of the Cross is very severe about these exceptional phenomena: 'The pure and simple soul... must use all his strength and all his diligence to resist and reject revelations and visions as the most dangerous temptations.' (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 2, c.7)."

⁹⁴¹ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1989) *The Church and apparitions – Their status and function: criteria and reception. Report at the National Conference on Medjugorje, Notre Dame, Indiana. May 12-14, 1989*, Ohio: The Riehle Foundation, pp. 2-3

which have not been recognized.”⁹⁴² Thus, despite the “main sanctuaries (Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, etc.)” having an outstanding number of visitors, acclaimed by the *sensus fidelium*,⁹⁴³ the fundamental principle for understanding apparitions is the Church’s contrast between “the absolute certainty of Revelation, which she teaches in the name of God, and the relative uncertainty of private apparitions and revelations.”⁹⁴⁴

Although Laurentin’s approach to apparitions developed over the years, it continued to be marked by a methodology governed by a relentless quest to integrate “all possible sources of information.”⁹⁴⁵ In the 1970s and early 1980s he wrote extensively on established apparitions, with the extent and range of his works leading Perrier to assert, “‘Laurentin’ is not an author, it is a library”.⁹⁴⁶ Laurentin’s writings included several books about Lourdes focusing on Bernadette, approached from an array of angles. These included the popular (1978) *Vie de Bernadette* written to mark the centenary of her death;⁹⁴⁷ the less well received two-volumed (1978) *Visage de Bernadette*,⁹⁴⁸ a presentation of seventy-five photographs of this the first of the canonised saints to be photographed during her life;⁹⁴⁹ a (1979) life of Bernadette for children;⁹⁵⁰ an account of Bernadette’s life created using her eight hundred and fifty-seven recorded words and conversations,⁹⁵¹ and the (1986) screen play *Bernadette et ses juges*, as well as an article on the negative theology of Bernadette.⁹⁵² The person of Bernadette, the “small, poor girl” who was a “humble icon” of Mary who had appeared to Bernadette as a child and not as the ‘great lady’ that contemporaries wanted,⁹⁵³ captivated Laurentin, and his extensive reflections included Bernadette’s relationship with both Mary and the Holy Spirit. He

⁹⁴² Ibid. p. 24

⁹⁴³ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 930 (Part of the article on ‘Statut’)

⁹⁴⁴ *The Church and apparitions* p. 3

⁹⁴⁵ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 514 (in the article by P. Sbalchiero about Laurentin.)

⁹⁴⁶ Perrier, J. (2015) *Lourdes dans l’histoire: Église, culture et société de 1858 à nos jours*. Paris: Harmattan, p. 213

⁹⁴⁷ Paris: Desclée De Brouwer. (English Translation: (1978) *Bernadette of Lourdes*. London: DLT). Laurentin would later describe how 350,000 copies of this book were sold in a year, [Cf. Laurentin, R. (1986) *Bernadette et ses juges : Scénario-testament d’un historien pour un film sur Lourdes*. Paris: O.E.I.L., p. 8], with 500,000 copies sold in ten years. [Cf. Laurentin, R. (1988) *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje*. Paris: O.E.I.L., p. 13 (Co-authored with Lejeune, R.)

⁹⁴⁸ *Visage de Bernadette. 1. Présentation de ses 75 photographies authentiques et des portraits d’après nature avec expertise morphopsychologique et prosopologique, and Visage de Bernadette. 2. Album*. (Paris: Éditions P. Lethielleux.) Perrier notes how, “curiously, they did not have much success”, which “aggrieved” Laurentin. (Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* pp. 173-174)

⁹⁴⁹ Cf. *Visage de Bernadette. 1* pp. 11-12. Laurentin notes that although Catherine Labouré, who was older than Bernadette, was photographed, this not take place until the last year of her life in 1876, when seventy photographs of Bernadette had already been taken, and that, although St. John Vianney (1786-1859) was photographed in 1859, it was only after his death.

⁹⁵⁰ Laurentin, R. (1979) *Vie de Bernadette racontée aux enfants*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer

⁹⁵¹ Laurentin, R. (1977) *Bernadette vous parle. Tomes 1 & 2*. Paris: Lethielleux. Translated into English as (2000) *Bernadette Speaks: A life of Saint Bernadette Soubirous in her own words*. Boston, Massachusetts: Pauline Books Media.

⁹⁵² Laurentin, R. ‘*Aquero ou la théologie négative de Sainte Bernadette*’, *Foi et Langage*, 4, pp. 261-268

⁹⁵³ *Plus jeune que le péché* p. 10

described Bernadette's transparency to the Holy Spirit as finding its perfection in Mary,⁹⁵⁴ and Bernadette's holiness as "inspired by the Holy Spirit, the gift of God and divine source of the charisms widespread at Lourdes."⁹⁵⁵ Laurentin's extensive study of Bernadette demonstrates what he will later express about the formative nature of apparitions.⁹⁵⁶ Because an interpersonal relationship is central to apparitions, they contribute to structure the person of the seer,⁹⁵⁷ so that "seers worthy of this name" live their apparition "as a personal connection more profound and more real, more formative and more fulfilling than the personal connections here below."⁹⁵⁸

As was noted above, it is with Laurentin's (1977) *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* that a significant place is given to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in relation to apparitions.⁹⁵⁹ Laurentin was writing shortly after the first European meeting of Catholic charismatic renewal which took place in Lourdes in 1976, and he describes how the attraction of Lourdes to Catholic charismatics "came from its affinities and complementarities, from convergences", prayer, charisms and healings, and from "the attraction of the Virgin Mary, which the Catholic branch of Pentecostalism tended to discover in Scripture itself, notably in the texts where she is in relationship with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35 and Acts 1:14)."⁹⁶⁰

In sharp contrast to his earlier works about Lourdes, where the Holy Spirit was only mentioned in passing, Laurentin devotes the final section of *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* to "Mary and the Holy Spirit",⁹⁶¹ concluding that both the historical sources and the present reality show that "beyond even the words of the message, beyond Bernadette, even beyond Mary, the messenger, of whom the seer is only a reflection, Lourdes is presented as *a sign and a work of the Holy Spirit*."⁹⁶² Laurentin carefully explains this, stressing that "the role of the Holy Spirit *is not explicit at Lourdes*" and it "is therefore normal that he cannot be discerned apart from at a second look, beyond appearances." He explains why this discrete presence of the Spirit "need not astonish us", for "the Holy Spirit, by his place in the life of God and the Church, is the most secret of the persons of the Trinity: the one who is at the heart and reveals

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 6. Laurentin notes that this transparency to the Spirit is found in children brought up in a Christian culture and family as they awaken to grace.

⁹⁵⁵ *Qu'est-ce que l'Eucharistie ?* p. 73

⁹⁵⁶ Cf. *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* p. 882 (Part of the article entitled *Signe et réalité*), and pp. 166-167 below.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. Ibid. p. 39 (From the introduction by Laurentin)

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 34 (From the introduction by Laurentin)

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. p. 38 above

⁹⁶⁰ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 76

⁹⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 133-139

⁹⁶² Ibid. p. 133

the others.” While “it was in the nature of Mary to appear humanly”, it “is not in the nature of the Spirit, invisible in essence, and of whom ‘no one knows where he comes from or where he goes.’”⁹⁶³ Laurentin draws upon John 14:26 and 16:13 as Scriptural justification for his description of the role of the Spirit as being “like a projector which enlightens”, which “is not made to be looked at directly” but to “bring light to that which it enlightens”; thus, “the Holy Spirit is in some sense behind us, like a light, and not in front of us like an object.”⁹⁶⁴

Alongside this theological contextualisation of the nature of the presence of the Holy Spirit, Laurentin develops the theme of charisms in relation to specific aspects of the apparitions at Lourdes. Laurentin was not the first to do this, he acknowledges de Monléon’s (1973) article *Les apparitions de Lourdes et le renouveau spirituel*,⁹⁶⁵ and Billet’s (1975) *Lourdes, lieu charismatique de présence mariale*,⁹⁶⁶ but it was his writings which were the first to meet more than a limited specialist audience. Laurentin writes straightforwardly how “Lourdes is inspired by the Holy Spirit: it was, from the start, at the time of the apparitions, a place of outpourings, of charisms”, both “the charism of apparition for Bernadette” and “the blossoming of other charisms” including physical and spiritual healings and deliverance.⁹⁶⁷ Moreover, referring to Karl Rahner’s *Visionen und prophezeiungen*,⁹⁶⁸ Laurentin stresses the significance of the charisms connected to Lourdes because their origins were at a time when “the gifts of the Holy Spirit were narrowly channelled” and “apparitions were one of the rare channels open to the prophetic and dynamic movement in the Church.”⁹⁶⁹ While it is not surprising that Laurentin does not draw out any of the possible ramifications of this statement in this ‘popular’ work, it is notable that he does not mention the fact, evidenced by his own early works, that the role of the Holy Spirit was often limited to guiding the magisterium,⁹⁷⁰ nor the witness of history to the clash between authority and charism in the Church.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶³ Ibid. p. 133

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 134

⁹⁶⁵ Cahiers Mariales, 90, pp. 333-342. Cf. *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* pp. 135-136, where Laurentin recounts how de Monléon had told him that in re-reading the apparitions “he found himself in a known country”, for the experience of charismatic renewal had provided him with “the key” to a clear reading of the history of Lourdes:

The author began by underlining the differences: on one side the apparition of Mary to Bernadette alone, on the other a revelation of the Spirit to a community. Then he showed the analogies between what happens today in charismatic renewal, and what happened for Bernadette and the crowd, as well as the similarities between the message of Lourdes and what is lived in charismatic renewal.

⁹⁶⁶ *Recherches sur Lourdes*, 52, pp. 171-187. Cf. *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 136

⁹⁶⁷ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 135

⁹⁶⁸ Innsbruck, 1958. Translated into English: (1963) *Visions and prophecies*. London: Burns & Oates

⁹⁶⁹ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 135

⁹⁷⁰ Cf. pp. 26, 30, 36 above

⁹⁷¹ Cf. pp. 111-112 above

Suitably for this work written for a wide audience, Laurentin focuses on two of the “signs of Lourdes”, wind and water, both “typically signs of the Holy Spirit”.⁹⁷² Speaking of the noise “as if it were a gust of wind” (in patois: *Uo rumou como u cop de bent*) which preceded the first apparition on 11th February 1858, Laurentin recalls how Bernadette’s words echoing the account of Pentecost in Acts 2, struck Abbé Pomian when Bernadette confided in him, and explains:

Bernadette didn’t say that she *had heard a gush of wind*. On the contrary, she specified that there was no wind. As a girl of the countryside and as a shepherdess, she made the clear statement:

So, I turned my head towards the prairie (the side opposite the Grotto), I saw that the trees did not move.

Bernadette did not know the Acts of the Apostles, she did not yet speak French and was even unaware of the mystery of the Trinity. She never established a connection between the apparition and Pentecost according to Luke, at least to our knowledge. But the terms in which she expressed this experience are exactly those of Luke in Acts 2:2: *There came from heaven a sound as if it was a strong gush of wind*.

The difference is that Bernadette never used the slightest adjective to describe this precursor sign. She did not say from where this noise came from; its origin disconcerted her. She was sobriety itself.⁹⁷³

This perceptive account, linked to Bernadette’s minimal use of words which Laurentin demonstrates in his *Bernadette vous parle*,⁹⁷⁴ is followed by a much less substantial reference to the light which “is also a sign of the Spirit”. Laurentin recounts how “it was after this gush of wind that she saw the light in which the apparition would afterwards be revealed”, declaring that light “is a sign of the Spirit” because “it is in his light and in his life itself that the Communion of Saints exists and is revealed”.⁹⁷⁵ Laurentin makes no attempt to support this assertion, although in his later (1991) *Le 20 Janvier 1842 Marie apparait à Alphonse Ratisbonne* he connects the light of Ratisbonne’s vision and that of the children of Fatima with Revelation 12:1, stating that “this *blessed light* is God himself, whose glory illumines Mary”, God who “transfigures ‘the woman clothed with the sun’ according to the description of Revelation 12:1, and “calls Alphonse to the same transfiguration by divine grace.”⁹⁷⁶ Similarly, in his

⁹⁷² Ibid. p. 136. In his *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* Laurentin connects the “warning signs” of the gush of wind at Lourdes and the thunder in Fatima (p. 868, in the entry *Scénario d’une apparition* written jointly with P. Sbalchiero.)

⁹⁷³ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 137

⁹⁷⁴ Laurentin stresses the “absolute clearness” of Bernadette’s “new and hidden style” which makes some people consider her “the most secretive of all the saints”, for hers “was the secret of transparency”, her “real secret” being “quite simply, simplicity”. (*Bernadette Speaks*, pp. xvi, 618)

⁹⁷⁵ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 138

⁹⁷⁶ Paris: O.E.I.L. p. 90. Cf. Laurentin, R. (2001) *La consécration aujourd’hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 168 where Laurentin refers to Lucia’s biography of Francisco, and her account of his having said that while he had been very happy to see the angel and even more happy to see Our Lady, what had marked him most was to have seen the light of God.

(1988) *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* Laurentin describes how, like at Lourdes, a gentle light preceded “the Gospa”, although here he attributes ‘the light’ to Christ, who “himself illuminates the woman clothed with the sun”.⁹⁷⁷

Laurentin’s account of the correlation between water and the Spirit witnessed to in John 3:5 and 1 John 5:6-8, as well as in the “spring of water welling up to eternal life” of John 4:14, is much more noteworthy.⁹⁷⁸ It adds a significant dimension to the customary understanding of the meaning of the spring of water that emerged at the back of the grotto, as Bernadette shocked witnesses by responding to the request of the *Aquero* to “drink” from the mud, from which came forth a spring, the source of the famous Lourdes holy water, linked, from its origin to healing, both physical and spiritual. Laurentin describes how “this symbol is highlighted by a striking contrast”, in that the “spring at the grotto began to well up by means of mud”.⁹⁷⁹ He relates how Bernadette was originally disheartened by the cloudy water, which became clear as it was drawn from, and draws a parallel with the Christian life and “the nature of the work of the Spirit in us”:

His power awakens, alongside the best of our being, troubled waters of our ambiguous riches. And this can be troubling. How many Christians have felt this at the hour of their conversion? The Holy Spirit moves into our sinful lives through an ordeal like that of Bernadette before the muddy fountain from which she drew for the first time on 25th February: a repulsive mud, yes, but from which gushed the purified spring.⁹⁸⁰

These reflections are striking in their difference to the predominant style of Laurentin’s earlier works on Lourdes, with their historical and systematic focus. Here Laurentin is reading into the account, reflecting on what the symbols of Lourdes could say to the believer, and the Holy Spirit is at the heart of his exhortation. In a later popular work written for the 42nd International Eucharistic Congress at Lourdes in 1981, Laurentin suggests further symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit in the “abundance of candles which were placed at the grotto, even during the apparitions, from the beginning of March 1858”, asking whether they should be seen as “a popular manner of evoking the tongues of fire of Pentecost, the quest for ardent and consuming love, which comes from God?”⁹⁸¹

Remarkably, St Bernadette was not the only person Laurentin wrote extensively about during

⁹⁷⁷ *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* p. 62

⁹⁷⁸ Cf. *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* pp. 136, 138-139

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 138

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 139

⁹⁸¹ *Qu’est-ce que l’Eucharistie ?* p. 73

the 1970s and early 1980s. In collaboration with Vincentians and Daughters of Charity, he made a thorough study of Catherine Labouré for the centenary of her death and the fiftieth anniversary of the apparitions,⁹⁸² from which resulted several books aimed at a varied audience,⁹⁸³ as well as writing a significant study for the centenary of the apparitions at Pontmain,⁹⁸⁴ and several books on St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897).⁹⁸⁵ His works on Thérèse and Catherine Labouré reveal nothing about the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit but there are a few passing references to the Holy Spirit in his account of the apparitions of Mary in the village of Pontmain in 1871 in the midst of the Franco-Prussian war. Laurentin describes the “charismatic role” of this exceptional sign,⁹⁸⁶ and in a rather complicated manner, relates how its authenticity, like all similar apparitions of Mary, is judged on whether the intention of the one appearing (*la visiteuse*) is achieved, with the apparition being recognised as such and conversions taking place in human hearts, and an exchange taking place within the communion of saints, “in Christ, by the Holy Spirit”.⁹⁸⁷ A more direct reference to the Holy Spirit is found in the importance given to Mary’s participation in the prayer during the apparition. Laurentin stresses that Mary not only invited the children to pray but participated “in an exemplary manner”, pronouncing “the words of supplication addressed to the Lord”, describing this as “a resurgence of what was spontaneously born in the cenacle when the apostles and disciples ‘persevered in prayer with Mary, Mother of Jesus’ (Acts 1:14), awaiting the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁸⁸

Engagement in controversial investigations

Laurentin’s work on these non-controversial areas of approved apparitions was both in response to ecclesial requests to mark significant anniversaries, and a means of moving to “less trap-filled subjects”, after the “campaign of calumnies” related to his writings about the

⁹⁸² Laurentin, R. and Roche, P. (eds.) (1976) *Catherine Labouré et la Médaille miraculeuse [1] 1830-1876 Texte imprimé documents authentiques*. Paris: P. Lethielleux; Laurentin, R. et al (eds.) (1979) *Catherine Labouré et la Médaille miraculeuse [2] Procès de Catherine : 1877-1900*. Paris; P. Lethielleux. Cf. pp. 89 (footnote 524) above

⁹⁸³ (1980) *Vie de Catherine Labouré. Tomes 1 & 2*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, and (1981) *Catherine Laboure. Sa vie, ses apparitions, son message. Racontée à tous*. Paris: Desclée De Brouwer.

⁹⁸⁴ (1970) *Pontmain, histoire authentique. Tomes 1-3*. Paris: Apostolat des Éditions. (Co-authored with A. Durand). As with Laurentin’s research on Lourdes, this study was made in response to a request by the bishop of the diocese where the apparitions took place, Charles-Marie-Jacques Guilhem (1897-1975) then Bishop of Laval. (Cf. *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui* p. 13)

⁹⁸⁵ Laurentin, R. and Six, J.-F. (1973) *Thérèse de Lisieux, dialogue entre René Laurentin et Jean-François Six*. Paris: Beauchesne, and Laurentin, R. (1972) *Thérèse de Lisieux, mythes et réalité*. Paris: Beauchesne.

⁹⁸⁶ Laurentin, R. and Durand, A. (1990) *Pontmain, histoire authentique 1 : Un signe dans le ciel*. Saint-Berthevin, Laval: Imprimerie René Madiot, p. 153

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 154

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 159. This contains an unexpected reference to Matthew 19:19-20, presumably an error, with 6:9-13 being the correct Matthean reference for the ‘Our Father’.

Third Synod of 1971.⁹⁸⁹ However, as Perrier relates, from 1980, Laurentin “would devote himself to two subjects which from then onwards would mobilise him”, Mère Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit (1901-1951) and Medjugorje.⁹⁹⁰ Both were controversial when Laurentin began his lengthy research and remain so today. Yvonne-Aimée’s file had been considered to be definitively closed by the Holy See when Laurentin obtained permission to examine her life and writings, and Medjugorje has been embroiled in controversy from the time the apparitions were first reported in 1981.

Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit (Yvonne Beauvais) has been honoured by several countries for her courageous actions during the Second World War when she saved numerous people from otherwise certain death by hiding them in her convent at Malestroit. Acknowledging her audacious resourcefulness, which included camouflaging paratroopers as nuns,⁹⁹¹ not only did General de Gaulle present her with the *Légion d’honneur*, but she also received the *Médaille de la Résistance* and the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française*, as well as being decorated with the *King’s Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom* and the *Medal of Freedom*, signed by General Eisenhower.⁹⁹² However, ecclesial authorities have found the accounts of her extraordinary spiritual experiences much more difficult to recognise. Predictions, bilocating, severe demonic attacks, and inexplicable events, such as mysteriously escaping after having been arrested by the gestapo,⁹⁹³ led Laurentin to declare that in Yvonne-Aimée are found “the almost complete collection of charisms and extraordinary gifts attested to in the annals of sanctity.”⁹⁹⁴ True to character, Laurentin was relentless in his historical investigations. He obtained permission from Cardinal Franjo Šeper (1905-1981), then Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to examine her life and writings, working *sub secreto*. Laurentin visited Malestroit in north-west France more than three hundred times to work with his collaborators, compiling “a dossier of 30,000 documents, rigorously classified in chronological order”, and publishing numerous books, including a five-volume biography and eight other books.⁹⁹⁵ Despite the extent of this work, Perrier highlights that the work was

⁹⁸⁹ In his (1975) *L'évangélisation après le quatrième Synode* (p. 205) Laurentin recounts: “I had the choice of beginning half a dozen legal proceedings of defamation and degrading myself... or of going forward, to other less trap-filled subjects, which I did, notably with my works on charismatic renewal and the miraculous medal.”

⁹⁹⁰ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 175

⁹⁹¹ Cf. Laurentin, R. (1985) *Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit. Un amour extraordinaire*. Paris: O.E.I.L., pp. 180-181

⁹⁹² Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 181-184. In 1929 Yvonne-Aimée had a vision predicting her being presented with the *Légion d’Honneur*, which took place sixteen years later. Cf. Laurentin, R. (1987) *Prédictions de Sœur Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit*. Paris: O.E.I.L., pp. 7, 69-71

⁹⁹³ Cf. *Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit. Un amour extraordinaire* pp. 167-168

⁹⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 8

⁹⁹⁵ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* pp. 175-176. The books, all published by F.-X. de Guibert (Paris) include: (1996-2002) *Biographie d’Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit (1901-1951) Tomes 1-5*; (1987) *Prédictions de Mère Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit*; (1987) *Écrits spirituels de Mère Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit*; (1988) *Yvonne-Aimée : priorité*

uncompleted, and “the future is uncertain”;⁹⁹⁶ the website of the *Communauté des Augustines Hospitalières de Malestroit* simply notes that Rome is studying Yvonne-Aimée’s dossier in view of beatification.⁹⁹⁷

Important as this immense work was to Laurentin, it does not contribute to his understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, and despite the even more abundant bibliography of his books on the apparitions which six children (now adults) claim to have received in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, these too have little to add to the specific focus of this thesis. They do, however, mark an important turning point in both the development of Laurentin’s methodology in studying apparitions and how he was regarded as a theologian.

In the letter opening the Festschrift marking Laurentin’s seventieth birthday Ouvrard describes how Laurentin’s study of apparitions led him to discover “another dimension of the life of the Church, that which is sometimes called ‘popular religion’”, which Laurentin preferred to call “the faith of the people of God.”⁹⁹⁸ While a case could well be made for Laurentin’s passionate interest in the life of local churches in the immediate post-conciliar years being an equally important factor in his growing appreciation of the importance of popular religion,⁹⁹⁹ his wide ranging research on apparitions, including his personal contact with seers and mystics, undoubtedly had a very significant influence. Laurentin was also acutely aware of the tendency from the mid-1970s to revalue popular religion, “until then the object of a generalised suspicion”,¹⁰⁰⁰ and his (1978) *Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie* describes seeing “once again” a “literature of exhortation and of private revelations, where Mary speaks”, with sanctuaries and apparitions showing a new vitality.¹⁰⁰¹ Laurentin was no doubt influenced by this development, which he made an important contribution to, particularly by his writings about Medjugorje.

The influence of Laurentin upon the popularity of Medjugorje cannot be underestimated.

aux pauvres en zone rouge et dans la Résistance; (1988) *Stigmates de Mère Yvonne-Aimée*; (1990) *Formation spirituelle et discernement chez Mère Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit*; (1990) *Bilocations de Mère Yvonne-Aimée*; (1993) *L'amour plus fort que la souffrance. Dossier médical d'Yvonne-Aimée, en collaboration avec le Docteur Mahéo.*

⁹⁹⁶ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 176

⁹⁹⁷ Cf. <https://augustines-malestroit.com/mere-yvonne-aimée/dhier-a-aujourd'hui/> (Accessed: 01/01/22)

⁹⁹⁸ Ouvrard, *Lettre de Monseigneur Pierre Ouvrard* p. 14

⁹⁹⁹ Cf. p. 89 above. In his (1973) *Renaissance des églises locales : Israël* (p. 7) Laurentin asserts that “the actual life of the Church” is the “principal source through which the historical sources of Revelation come to us” and that “it is not libraries, even Biblical ones, but communities of believers which continue Jesus Christ today.” Cf. (1971) *Flashes sur l'Extrême-Orient* pp. 7-8

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Bulletin sur Marie, Mère du Seigneur* (1976) p. 486

¹⁰⁰¹ *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 62, pp. 97-126, pp. 97-98

Laurentin relates his extreme surprise at the public reaction to his (1984) *La Vierge apparaît-elle à Medjugorje ?*.¹⁰⁰² While he had never heard that any of his previous eighty books had led to conversions, not only did the ten thousand copies of the first edition of the book sell out within a week, but an “abundant daily postbag revealed that this book shook lives” and “led to the discovery of God, of prayer, of fasting, among people of all backgrounds: from 15 years to 80.”¹⁰⁰³ Moreover, this was only the start of his writing about Medjugorje. Relating how Laurentin went to Medjugorje annually and published the *Dernières nouvelles de Medjugorje* each year between 1984 and 1998, Perrier describes Laurentin quoting the saying: “To destroy Medjugorje, it is necessary to destroy Laurentin.”¹⁰⁰⁴ Similar assertions were made by detractors of Medjugorje. Mark Waterinckx castigates Laurentin, because of whom “many innocent pilgrims are caught up in a lie”, for until Laurentin’s first book about Medjugorje in 1984, “almost nobody knew about it”.¹⁰⁰⁵ Similarly, an extraordinary rant entitled “*Ringleader of the Medjugorje hoax - René Laurentin*”, refers to him as a “dangerous manipulator”.¹⁰⁰⁶ Laurentin’s writings about Medjugorje were particularly influential because they recounted how the seers were studied “by medical technicians with the most advanced technology”,¹⁰⁰⁷ using electro-cardiograms, electro-encephalograms and electro-oculograms of the visionaries during ecstasy.¹⁰⁰⁸ This was the first time that such studies had taken place during apparitions.

Whatever opinion is held about Medjugorje, Laurentin undoubtedly had not only an unparalleled influence upon its reputation but was also privy to an exceptional breadth of information. For example, in the space of a few pages in his (1994) *Medjugorje - 13 years later*,¹⁰⁰⁹ he recounts how John Paul II, while expressly not visiting Medjugorje, “benefited from an apparition of the Virgin” in Zagreb Cathedral, since Marija “was there discretely”, and “it was the hour of the apparition”,¹⁰¹⁰ and describes how Mary “appeared to Ivan on the ferry

¹⁰⁰² Paris: O.E.I.L. Translated into English as (1984) *Is the Virgin Mary appearing at Medjugorje? An urgent message for the world given in a Marxist country*. Washington D.C.: The Word Among Us Press (Co-authored with L. Rupčić)

¹⁰⁰³ *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* p. 13

¹⁰⁰⁴ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 176. Laurentin stopped writing these annual accounts at the request of the Bishop of Mostar, Pavao Žanić.

¹⁰⁰⁵ (2008) *Time to Tell the Truth about Medjugorje* <http://www.unitypublishing.com/Apparitions/Mark-Laurentin.htm> no. 9. (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cf. <http://www.testreligion.com/laurentindishonestmedjugorjefan.html> (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰⁰⁷ Laurentin, R. (1987) *The apparitions at Medjugorje prolonged: A merciful delay for a world in danger?* Milford, Ohio: The Riehle Foundation, p. 44

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cf. Laurentin, R. and Joyeux, H. (1987) *Scientific and medical studies on the apparitions at Medjugorje*. Paris: O.E.I.L.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Milford, Ohio: The Riehle Foundation

¹⁰¹⁰ p. 111

Dover-Calais” during his trip to England in 1994.¹⁰¹¹ More disconcertingly, he also reports that Mary said, “Let the priests read the book of Fr. Laurentin and spread it.”¹⁰¹²

Although Pope Francis (1936 -) has spoken out about his personal negativity towards the presumed ongoing apparitions,¹⁰¹³ Laurentin recounts how John Paul II often spoke with him about Medjugorje,¹⁰¹⁴ which he called “the spiritual centre of the world”.¹⁰¹⁵ However, the significant ecclesiastical opposition to Medjugorje led to Laurentin contrasting his visiting Medjugorje not being deterred by the Marxist state, despite his being arrested and forbidden to remain,¹⁰¹⁶ with the “more vigorous” opposition of the Church and the Catholic press.¹⁰¹⁷ Laurentin describes the local Bishop’s “severe and partially calumnious judgements” against him, which were sent to Conferences of Bishops and newspapers around the world,¹⁰¹⁸ and how, out of ecclesial obedience, he stopped writing about Medjugorje.¹⁰¹⁹ The controversy surrounding Medjugorje thus significantly impacted Laurentin’s reputation, and while he consistently stressed his obedience to Church authorities, at times the language he used to describe them is far from moderate. For example, in his (1998) *Medjugorje Testament: Hostility Abounds, Grace Superabounds* Laurentin passionately defends the spiritual fruits of Medjugorje and pleads with decision makers not to “perpetuate the obstinacy of scribes and pharisees.”¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰¹¹ Cf. pp. 126-127

¹⁰¹² ‘*Dernières nouvelles des apparitions de Medjugorje*’ n° 3, March 1985, p. 27 (“*Faites lire aux prêtres le livre de l’abbé Laurentin et divulguez-le*” – quoted in Waterinckx’s online article ‘*Time to Tell the Truth about Medjugorje*’, no. 2 c.)

¹⁰¹³ While recognising the “spiritual and pastoral fact” of the conversions which take place there, Pope Francis has spoken unambiguously about the “presumed current apparitions” in Medjugorje, declaring, “I personally am more negative, I refer Our Lady as a mother, our mother, not the head of a post-office that sends a message every day at a specific time, this is not the mother of Jesus.” (13th May 2019, on a flight back from Fatima, Cf. www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FTDWY8SIX0 Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰¹⁴ *La Vierge des derniers temps* p. 109

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 125

¹⁰¹⁶ Cf. *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* (p. 25) where Laurentin recounts how in 1984, due to the suspicion of a clerical-political conspiracy, he was “turned back at Zagreb airport, then subjected to a trial, fined and forbidden to visit for a year”. He stresses that “the repressions were neither radical nor definitive.”

¹⁰¹⁷ Cf. *Église qui vient* p. 134

¹⁰¹⁸ Referring to Bishop Pavao Žanić’s non-official statement of 30th October 1984. Cf. *The Church and apparitions* p. 28, and the article on Medjugorje by ‘C.M.’ in *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* (pp. 1195-1219), which relates how, in October 1984, the Bishop of Mostar made a three-fold accusation against Laurentin, declaring: “He wrote his books for money... he betrayed his honour as a theologian, and gave way to the charms of the visionaries instead of listening to the bishop.” (p. 1202, original source not given.)

¹⁰¹⁹ *Speech of M. Pierre Messmer* p. 4. In his *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui* Laurentin recounts how “he has always obeyed the church”, including “the bishops who forbid me to give conferences on apparitions in their dioceses... while others invite me to give them and preside at them.” (p. 13)

¹⁰²⁰ Laurentin, R. (1998) *Medjugorje Testament: Hostility Abounds, Grace Superabounds (The Latest News #17)*, Toronto, Ontario: Ave Maria Press, pp. 175-176, quoted in (2018) *The Medjugorje testament of Fr René Laurentin (1917-2017)* in Watkins, C. (2018) *Of men and Mary: How six men won the greatest battle of their lives*. Sacramento, California: Queen of Peace Media, pp.167-168, p. 168. Laurentin’s critique is lengthy:

Laurentin's *Mémoires* contrasts the derision and opposition of many in the Church, and the trust and friendship he received from the visionaries and pilgrims.¹⁰²¹ The importance to him of the personal relationships he had with living visionaries and mystics cannot be underestimated. At its most straightforward level this is entirely understandable, given the years he had spent meticulously studying Bernadette, Catherine Labouré and others:

...when I studied the Miraculous Medal... or Lourdes, I was sorry not to be living in the time where one could see and question the seer herself, in place of working with her writings and the writings of witnesses...

The difference is like that between a doctor who must come to a judgement based on what is written and those who can make a diagnosis *in vivo*.¹⁰²²

The direct contact with the ecstasies of Medjugorje... was a revelation for me. I knew apparitions as a historian... by mediation and the dust of archives, with the regret of never having been able to see or question Bernadette or Catherine Labouré; and here I discovered the living reality of apparitions. ... I realised to what extent a historian is only the gravedigger of events buried in the past. I was like an Egyptologist who met Khufu or Nefertiti while visiting the Great Pyramid.¹⁰²³

The Medjugorje seers were the first of an extensive list of “alive subjects” whom Laurentin was able to assess and form relationships with; his personal encounters with those exercising various charisms or having mystical experiences may well be unparalleled. His research extended to those who had come under the power of evil spirits. From 1992 to 2010 he interviewed French exorcists, with the findings from his early years of research published in his substantial (1995) *Le Démon, mythe ou réalité ?*,¹⁰²⁴ and, thanks to the co-authorship of Guy Frenod, a further shorter work was published in (2016) *Aux frontières de l'invisible : Un combat méconnu contre l'enfer*, the aim of which was to enable the aspects of Laurentin's research suitable for the general public to be published.¹⁰²⁵ Although both texts conclude with a chapter on Mary, the content is largely predictable, with an emphasis upon Mary's power against the

You who tolerate and support so many institutions where prayer is disappearing, where faith and sometimes morals are disintegrating, where vocations are few or lost, do not fight against the unequalled source of conversions and vocations... You who, according to the doctrines of the Church and of the Bible, are respectful of life in all its forms, and discourage abortions, do not perpetrate the abortion of this great grace... (pp. 167-168)

¹⁰²¹ Cf. *Mémoires* p. 331. The families of the seers also welcomed Laurentin warmly; in *The apparitions at Medjugorje prolonged* (p. 59) he describes how “Ivanka's father, or Helena's, Marinko... have always put me up in their homes without question.”

¹⁰²² *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 808 (part of the article entitled ‘Risques’)

¹⁰²³ *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* p. 14

¹⁰²⁴ Paris: Fayard. Laurentin aims to demonstrate the reality of the presence of the devil, declaring that ignorance and denial of Satan have “greatly helped his forceful return in our times” and that to “be unaware of the influence of the devil is like venturing in the buses of Rome unaware of pickpockets.” (*Le démon mythe ou réalité ?* p. 156)

¹⁰²⁵ Solesmes: Les Éditions de Solesmes.

evil one,¹⁰²⁶ and without reference to Mary and the Holy Spirit. Laurentin also wrote an extended “*Présentation*” to the journal of “Madame R”, subtitled “*Journal d’une mystique assiégée par le démon*”,¹⁰²⁷ which contains his account of Madame R’s ‘perception’ that Mary was not spared the “radical distress” caused by the devil, and that Mary’s suffering had a Trinitarian meaning, since “the Father and the Holy Spirit, who transcend suffering, mysteriously suffered in this woman”, with the Holy Spirit being the bond connecting both Mary and Jesus and Mary and the Father. Prudently, given the quagmires it could lead to, Laurentin does not attempt to provide a theological commentary on this unusual account; he simply highlights the “mysterious” nature of the suffering of the Father and the Spirit it relates.¹⁰²⁸

“Madame R” was by no means the only recipient of unusual charisms, including the stigmata, whom Laurentin met; he nonchalantly refers to “those who in a hidden manner receive the stigmata today” who are “many more than one would think: I’ve met at least ten.”¹⁰²⁹ Of these mystics, the visionaries of Medjugorje and Vassula Ryden have the most prominent place in Laurentin’s life and writings. Vassula and her ‘True life in God’ (TLIG) movement has a wide following from Christians of a variety of denominations,¹⁰³⁰ although her “messages” from the three Persons of the Trinity have received the official disapproval of both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Church of Cyprus, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has declared that Catholics should not take part in prayer groups established by her.¹⁰³¹ Not only

¹⁰²⁶ Laurentin stresses that those who place their trust in Mary have “nothing to fear from the evil spirit” (*Frontières de l’invisible* p. 206), with exorcists knowing “that the devil fears Mary, who makes them tremble with anger at their impotency.” (*Le démon mythe ou réalité ?* p. 285)

¹⁰²⁷ Laurentin, R. (1993) *La passion de Madame “R”*. *Journal d’une mystique assiégée par le démon*. Paris: Plon. Laurentin’s ‘*Présentation*’ is found in pp. 13-51, as well as concluding words (‘*Et après*’) and several appendices and notes (pp. 323-355).

¹⁰²⁸ p. 44. Laurentin quotes Madame R’s account of Calvary:

The passion of the Father was lived in Mary. He borrowed, so to speak, her human heart, to suffer in her, with her and by her, the passion of his Son in a single fusion of love. ... During all the passion of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was the link, the communication between Jesus and Mary, and the Father in her. All the Trinity was in passion with Mary.

Everything that Jesus felt, all that he suffered in his body, in his soul, in his human heart, the Holy Spirit transmitted to Mary, who immediately experienced the same feelings of desolation, the same feelings of love for the Father, of pardon for people. (p. 44)

Cf. (1995) ‘*La foi de Marie dans l’épreuve*’, *Études Mariales*, 52, pp. 9-35, p. 35

¹⁰²⁹ (2002) *Découverte du secret de La Salette*. Paris: Fayard, p. 96 (Co-authored with Corteville, M.) Cf. *La passion de Madame “R”* where the same assertion is made, along with the declaration that authentic mystics “generally know how to remain discrete.” (pp. 16-17)

¹⁰³⁰ Cf. <http://www.tlig.org/> (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰³¹ After being reprimanded by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in 1995, Vassula responded, seemingly satisfactorily, to his request for clarification on what were held to be five suspect points of her doctrine. However, in 2007 Cardinal William Levada (1936-2019) wrote as Prefect of the CDF to the Catholic hierarchy worldwide stating that “the Notification of 1995 remains valid as a doctrinal judgment” of Vassula’s writings (CDF 25th January 2007: Prot. N.: 54/92 – 24945). In *Dieu notre Père* (p. 220) Laurentin describes Vassula as “the most attacked of all seers, including by theologians and fervent Christians.”

did Laurentin write two books in defence of Vassula,¹⁰³² whom he describes as “one of the most balanced and transparent seers that I know”,¹⁰³³ but, as her website proudly acclaims, he attended all the TLIG pilgrimages, including the pilgrimage in Rome in 2015, when he was both blind and scarcely able to walk.¹⁰³⁴ The extent of Laurentin’s influence upon Vassula’s reputation is demonstrated by the caricature of “a dollar bill with Vassula’s effigy in place of the national figure, and in place of the bank guarantee, the handwritten inscription ‘Laurentin guarantees authenticity’.”¹⁰³⁵ However, there is nothing of note about Mary and the Holy Spirit in the ‘messages’ Vassula receives through automatic writing (‘channeling’).

The substantial annex of Laurentin’s (2007) *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie*, covering the ‘tidal wave’ of apparitions from 1980-2006,¹⁰³⁶ witnesses to numerous other encounters and friendships Laurentin had with visionaries. A handful of examples demonstrate both the international nature of his visits and their variety.¹⁰³⁷ Laurentin describes how his visit to Australia, to visit Debra Geileskey, the foundress of the Magnificat Meal Movement, later judged to be a cult, “was the beginning of my most serious difficulties”,¹⁰³⁸ how he travelled to Columbia to meet Antonio Sevillano, a famous lawyer who had heard Mary sing to him when he was a small child,¹⁰³⁹ and his meeting with Maria Aparecida Martins d’Avila in Brazil, who has had frequent apparitions since the age of six and who finds responses to her prayer in the designs left by the piercing of ants in the leaves of the trees around her house, which form precise Biblical references.¹⁰⁴⁰ Laurentin also describes “discretely meeting” with seers whose apparitions the Church has judged not to be authentic and who have “become ill in the

¹⁰³² Laurentin, R. (1993) *When God gives a sign: A response to objections made against Vassula*. Missouri: Trinitas, [Published in French as (1993) *Quand Dieu fait signe*. Paris: F.x. de Guibert.] and (1994) *Qui est Vassula ? Itinéraire, réponses et témoignage pour un combat spirituel*. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert. Cf. *True Life in God, 2015. Testimony of Fr. René Laurentin on Vassula Ryden* [online video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI953ErcE7o> (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰³³ *When God gives a sign* p. 32; Cf. *Qui est Vassula ?* p. 18 where Laurentin declares, “I have never met a more perfectly balanced person, psychologically and spiritually.”

¹⁰³⁴ Cf. <https://www3.tlig.org/en/news/mgr-rene-laurentin-has-gone-to-heaven/> (Accessed: 01/01/2021). Laurentin did not attend the pilgrimage in Russia in 2017; he died on the final day of the pilgrimage.

¹⁰³⁵ *When God gives a sign* pp. 92-93. Cf. *Qui est Vassula* p. 40

¹⁰³⁶ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 16. The annex covers 345 pages (pp. 1017-1362)

¹⁰³⁷ In the article by P. Sbalchiero about Laurentin in *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* (pp. 512-515) Sbalchiero recounts how Cardinal Jaime Sin (1928-2005) asked Laurentin to respond to the question ‘*the multiplication of apparitions of the Virgin Mary today: is it her and what does she want to say?*’ and Laurentin’s research in answer to this question took him “on trips to more than forty countries.” (p. 514)

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid. p. 807. Cf. Garde, M. (2006) *Spirituality and cultism: A case study of a new religious movement – the Magnificat Meal Movement*. Dissertation submitted to the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy. Available online at:

http://infosecte.org/SPIRITUALITY_AND_CULTISM_Magnificat_Meal_Movement_M-Garde.pdf Garde relates how “Debra used and exploited” Laurentin (p. 74).

¹⁰³⁹ pp. 1187-1190

¹⁰⁴⁰ pp. 1351-1352. Laurentin is inclined to believe this unusual claim, recounting how she connects this to Proverbs 6:6 “Go to the ants and see how they work.”

greatest secret and without protesting.”¹⁰⁴¹

A personalist model of apparitions

As one of the very few articles analysing Laurentin’s work, and the only serious study of his approach to apparitions, Johann Roten’s (2019) *Un modèle personaliste pour évaluer les apparitions*,¹⁰⁴² provides an important framework within which to view Laurentin’s later writings on apparitions. Roten’s short article focuses solely on Laurentin’s (2007) *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie*, which draws upon disciplines as diverse as medicine, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and semiotics.¹⁰⁴³ This monumental work of over one thousand four hundred pages, endorsed by a remarkable ‘Comité d’honneur’ whose members include five Cardinals and a Princess,¹⁰⁴⁴ was jointly written with Patrick Sbalchiero and twenty other contributors, with Sbalchiero writing the vast majority of entries. However, since the author for each entry is given, Laurentin’s writing is easily identifiable,¹⁰⁴⁵ enabling Roten to clearly identify Laurentin’s approach to apparitions.

Roten distinguishes Laurentin’s personalist model of apparitions from five other “models or methods for the scientific or experimental study of apparitions”, two Freudian, two based on Jungian analysis, and Alain Dierken’s transpersonal psychological approach.¹⁰⁴⁶ Roten describes Laurentin’s personalist model as “an attempt to identify and situate the phenomenon of apparition through the notion and the reality of *relationship*”, and as characterised by five key elements: “the objectivity of the event, encounter, communication, presence and edification”.¹⁰⁴⁷

The personalist model is built upon the objectivity of knowledge. For Laurentin, as a good and faithful realist, knowledge is defined by a relationship – interaction between subject and object. ... The person’s experience itself reveals that they are

¹⁰⁴¹ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 21 (From the Introduction by Laurentin)

¹⁰⁴² *Études Mariales*, 73, pp. 187-192

¹⁰⁴³ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 42 (part of the introduction by Laurentin). Entries include Greimas, whose “keys and his grids of analysis are enlightening and penetrating for the phenomenological study of apparitions” (p. 401), as well as existentialism, since “the phenomenological study of apparitions benefits from existential reflection”, (p. 308) and ‘resting in the spirit’ to which Laurentin applies the finding of quantum mechanics that “the observer always disturbs the observation” (p. 800, where Laurentin wrongly attributes this scientific principle to Einstein, who was famously opposed to quantum theory.)

¹⁰⁴⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 8-9

¹⁰⁴⁵ The dictionary consists of 2,430 articles, 208 of which are written by Laurentin alone, and 55 co-written with Sbalchiero, as well as two articles jointly written with G. Cadegiamini, and one each with B. Billet and R. Maisonneuve. Thus, Laurentin individually wrote less than one tenth of the dictionary and contributed towards approximately eleven percent of the work, which covers all the apparitions known to the authors (cf. p. 41).

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cf. Roten, *Un modèle personaliste pour évaluer les apparitions*, pp. 187-188, referring to Dierkens, J. (1991) ‘*Apparitions et théories psychologiques contemporaine*’ in *Apparitions et miracles, Problèmes d’histoire des religions*, 2. Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Roten, *Un modèle personaliste pour évaluer les apparitions* p. 188

more than an isolated subject because “the person is essentially interpersonal.” ...
And an interpersonal relationship is also communication.¹⁰⁴⁸

Roten’s analysis captures the heart of Laurentin’s approach. It contextualises Laurentin’s eagerness to meet with visionaries and explains why, in this final epoch of his writing, his approach to apparitions was both a development of earlier emphases and one in which the relational, in its different forms, takes centre stage.

Roten’s short article does not explore the paradoxes which mark Laurentin’s personalist approach to apparitions. While Laurentin insisted that he knew “more after an hour of conversation with a seer than by having read all their messages”,¹⁰⁴⁹ and that “intuitive contact with a seer” reveals more than “the study of messages and almost all medical tests, however useful they may be”,¹⁰⁵⁰ in several instances Laurentin’s personal judgement was severely mistaken. This is most evident in the case of Fr Tomislav Vlasic (1942 -), the spiritual director of the Medjugorje visionaries in the early years of the apparitions. Laurentin admired Vlasic, describing him as “a true spiritual” who “knows how to waken the soul of God from the inside, with a deep respect for the work of God in the (*sic*) hearts.”¹⁰⁵¹ However, in 2009 Vlasic was accused of teaching false doctrine, manipulating consciences, disobeying ecclesiastical authority and sexual misconduct. He was laicized and later was excommunicated for disobeying the directives of ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁰⁵² The case of Fr Jack Spaulding is similar. In 1991 Laurentin spent three days visiting Scottsdale in Arizona, spending time with visionaries in the parish of St Maria Goretti, and with Spaulding, their pastor and “official guide” who claimed to frequently receive messages at the time of his homilies.¹⁰⁵³ Laurentin described Spaulding as a “remarkable parish priest, a man of profound prayer”.¹⁰⁵⁴ In 2014 an ecclesiastical trial found Spaulding guilty of sins against the sixth commandment with a minor.¹⁰⁵⁵ This judgement, coupled with the complicated situation surrounding the

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 189-191, with reference to pp. 29, 309 and 202 in the *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie*.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 1017 (Part of the article ‘Répertoire des apparitions récentes depuis 1966’)

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 631 (Part of the article on ‘Méthodologie’)

¹⁰⁵¹ *Medjugorje - 13 years later* p. 61

¹⁰⁵² Cf. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/tomislav-vlasic-former-spiritual-director-of-medjugorje-visionaries-excommunicated-80554> (Accessed: 01/01/2021)

¹⁰⁵³ Laurentin, R. (1992) *Our Lord and Our Lady in Scottsdale: Fruitful charisms in a Traditional American Parish*. Ohio: Faith Publishing Company, p. 13

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui* p. 219. Laurentin also recognised that “some find him difficult” which he attributed to “multiple and extreme tensions, in many respects insurmountable.” (*Our Lord and Our Lady in Scottsdale* p. 128)

¹⁰⁵⁵ <http://dphx.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2014-01-17-STATEMENT-DIOCESE-OF-PHOENIX.pdf> (Accessed: 01/01/2021) Subsequent further claims against Spaulding were also found to be credible.

condemnation of the messages of one of the group, Gianna Talone,¹⁰⁵⁶ has led to Laurentin's work on Scottsdale being of little lasting value.

Laurentin's personalist approach to apparitions also stresses the importance of assessing "the influence of apparitions on the life of the seers", because, for authentic seers, apparitions are "an enriching interpersonal relationship" which transforms, illuminates and balances.¹⁰⁵⁷ While Laurentin's research shows that this principle held true in the case of Bernadette,¹⁰⁵⁸ Laurentin did not always take this principle seriously into account in studying visionaries, as his (2002) *Découverte du secret de La Salette* demonstrates. Laurentin and Cortville's co-authored text describes the evident limitations of both the young visionaries of La Salette. The litany of Maximin's unsuccessful projects concluded with his notoriously associating with a liquor maker who used his fame as a seer as a marketing device,¹⁰⁵⁹ while Melanie changed religious congregation four times, including 'escaping' from two separate convents by throwing letters out of the window,¹⁰⁶⁰ with various scholars concluding that she was egocentric and/or hysterical.¹⁰⁶¹ Given that this is recounted, it is surprising to read in the conclusion that this "more complete account invites us to recognise in Melanie a mystical life at a high level, heroic in penitence, patience and perseverance."¹⁰⁶² However, it is highly probable that Cortville's very positive stance towards La Salette significantly influences the book,¹⁰⁶³ demonstrating the complexity of judging co-authored texts. This situation was made considerably more problematic by Laurentin's visual impairment in his later years. By 2005 he was no longer able to read or write and, in his remarkable (2010) *Aveugles et voyants*,¹⁰⁶⁴ where the expert on seers reflects on his personal experience of blindness, Laurentin honestly recounts how this

¹⁰⁵⁶ Cf. *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* pp. 1334-1337 (The article on Gianna Talone)

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 630 (Part of the article on 'Méthodologie')

¹⁰⁵⁸ Cf. pp. 152-153 above) This is particularly evident in Laurentin's (1977) *Bernadette vous parle*, which covers the whole of Bernadette's life.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Cf. *Découverte du secret de La Salette* p. 78

¹⁰⁶⁰ Those from Darlington Carmel went as far as to claim "I am held here by force... I want the police of Darlington to come and make the religious let me leave." (Ibid. p. 80)

¹⁰⁶¹ Cf. Ibid. pp. 82-85. Laurentin and Courteville's text also highlights the changes in the 'secrets' revealed to Melanie over time. While all the versions of her secret speak of the anti-Christ, her 1851 version adds the fact that he will be born of a religious (p. 49) and her 1860 version adds "and his father will be a bishop" (p. 156). Similarly, the description of priests in Melanie's secret becomes more and more dramatic, such that by 1878 she is announcing that Mary revealed to her that "priests have become cesspools of impurity" and "the demon has obscured their intelligence; they have become wandering stars whom the old devil will drag with his heel to make them perish" (pp. 153-154).

¹⁰⁶² Ibid. p. 187

¹⁰⁶³ Cortville had been familiar with La Salette since childhood, as his father was involved in researching the apparition, and he had personally devoted much time and research to La Salette, including discovering the lost first version of the secret of La Salette in the CDF archives. Cf. Ibid. p. 9

¹⁰⁶⁴ Laurentin, R. (2010) *Aveugles et voyants*. Paris: Salvator

meant that his writing depended upon “devoted readers”, whose patience he tried as his memory weakened.¹⁰⁶⁵

Despite Laurentin’s enthusiasm for investigating purported apparitions, he was acutely aware of the difficulties of discerning extra-cosmic intervention because of the “personal and subjective aspect” of participation in any apparition,¹⁰⁶⁶ since there is no such thing as “pure objectivity”.¹⁰⁶⁷ He stresses the “adage of Aristotelian philosophy popularized by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): ‘*Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*’”,¹⁰⁶⁸ recognizing that the limits, participation, commitment, failings, interpretations or exaggerations of the recipient all influence how an apparition is perceived and recounted.¹⁰⁶⁹ Laurentin applies the findings of quantum physics to apparitions and relates how for physical phenomenon, every observer will necessarily modify the observation, and he suggests that this is even more so on the spiritual level.¹⁰⁷⁰ Moreover, Laurentin not only recognises that without the distance of history perspective is lacking,¹⁰⁷¹ but stresses the limitations of history.¹⁰⁷² He describes the “uncertainties of the historian” as “in some way symmetrical to those of the prophet”, and capturing the past as akin to capturing the future: “a vertiginous act, an imperfect capture”.¹⁰⁷³ Similarly, Laurentin is aware of the effects flawed human nature can have on those who have experienced visions, judging that “too many popularisers, including seers, are prisoners of their character and prolong by mimicry (sincerely) a gift which has had its time.”¹⁰⁷⁴ Therefore,

¹⁰⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 43, 74

¹⁰⁶⁶ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 187 (Part of the article on ‘*Circonstances des apparitions*’). Cf. (1961) *Lourdes : Histoire authentique des apparitions*, tome 1, p. 38:

The witnesses are to historical truth what the colours of the rainbow are to white light, different, but coming from this light, of which they are the authentic components. The equivalent of a prism, it is the psychological milieu through which the past comes to us.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 681 (Part of the article on ‘*Objectivité des apparitions*’)

¹⁰⁶⁸ (1989) ‘*Sacred Scripture and the message of Fatima*’ in Miller, F. (ed.) *Exploring Fatima: World apostolate of Fatima. A presentation of the proceedings of the National Fatima Symposium at Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia, July 7-9, 1989*. Washington, N.J.: AMI Press, pp. 56-93, pp. 60-61. (Translation: “Whatever is received is received in the manner of the receiver.”)

¹⁰⁶⁹ Cf. *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd’hui* p. 45

¹⁰⁷⁰ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* pp. 800-801 (Part of the article on ‘*Repos dans l’Esprit*’). Cf. pp. 347, 681, 793 and 936 where Laurentin applies this same principle to apparitions, and p. 165 (footnote 1043 above)

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 807 (Part of the article on ‘*Risques*’)

¹⁰⁷² Cf. G.T. (2008) ‘*L’abbé René Laurentin et sa vision de l’histoire en 1961*’, *Revue Administrative*, 365, pp. 540-541, p. 541:

It is very rare today that a historian dares to say that he cannot know much. But Abbé Laurentin was a free spirit, independent, who knew to examine his practice and meditate upon his experience: which each historian should do.

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 540-541

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 897 (Part of the article on ‘*Spiritualité*’). Laurentin makes no reference in this statement to Medjugorje, but (on p. 243 as part of the article on ‘*Deviances*’) refers to those who, struck by the length of the visions at Medjugorje, have hypothesised “that the supernatural apparitions of the beginning had ceased and that the seers continued by subjective substitution to mobilise the well-demonstrated mechanisms of ecstasy”. Laurentin states that he had examined this hypothesis, without finding anything to support it.

despite the critiques of Laurentin's detractors and occasions where his judgement has been proved to have been flawed, his aim in studying apparitions was "to reconcile a critical approach and a mystical one", to "found true mysticism on a critical basis".¹⁰⁷⁵

As for Laurentin himself, he describes himself as "too deformed by intellectualism to be capable of apparitions or extraordinary phenomenon",¹⁰⁷⁶ and his personal life as being nourished by "the Gospel, the sacraments and the example of the saints", so that "no particular message is for me, an event or plateau, not even Medjugorje, where I definitely admire the work of God."¹⁰⁷⁷ Similarly, he recounts how, although valuing greatly the conversions that the Lord has brought about through Vassula Ryden, his "personal life has not been touched by her messages", of which he receives too many for one to become his "cup of tea" or his "basic nourishment."¹⁰⁷⁸

Despite the challenges inherent in the practical application of Laurentin's personalist approach to apparitions, analysing his approach makes it clear that naming it a 'personalist model' is entirely appropriate. As was discussed above, Laurentin's writings from the late 1960s were marked by a turn to the personal and relational. This was not only in regard to Mary, "a living person not simply an object of theology",¹⁰⁷⁹ but also in relation to the Trinity, and the personal relationship we are called to with God.¹⁰⁸⁰ It also should be noted that while the centrality of the person is crucial to understanding Laurentin's post-conciliar approach to apparitions and to his entire worldview, it was found as early as his (1953) *Court traité*, where the importance of a "personalist" view with regard to Mary, which a "too logical synthesis of Marian doctrine" might reduce, was highlighted.¹⁰⁸¹

This emphasis became increasingly prominent in Laurentin's later writings, particularly in his work on the Trinity in the years leading up to the year 2000.¹⁰⁸² His interest in science and the

¹⁰⁷⁵ Guitton, *Laurentin intemporal* p. 40

¹⁰⁷⁶ René Laurentin. *Radioscopie* (Jacques Chancel interviewing Laurentin)

¹⁰⁷⁷ *When God gives a sign* p. 32

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 31. Cf. *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* (p. 237) where Laurentin recounts: "Raised in the faith and nourished by the sacraments since infancy, I personally don't have the need of these particular phenomena. I don't drink milk, but I understand that it is essential for small children."

¹⁰⁷⁹ Laurentin, R. (1979) 'Conclusion, 1979' Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 5.7, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 18. Cf. pp. 91-92 above

¹⁰⁸⁰ Cf. p. 92 above

¹⁰⁸¹ *Court traité* (1953) p. 68 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 75)

¹⁰⁸² Cf. (1998) *Dieu notre Père*; (1998) *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu*; (1999) *La Trinité mystère et lumière. Dieu est Amour, Relation, Société*. Paris: Fayard, and (2000) *Traité sur la Trinité. Principe, modèle et terme de tout amour*. Paris: Le Sarment/Fayard.

findings of both Einstein and quantum physicists on the interrelated nature of all things contribute a cosmic dimension to his person-centred approach.¹⁰⁸³ The introduction to *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* demonstrates this, as Laurentin recounts his delight in recognising the accord between quantum physics and Trinitarian theology:

When Costa de Beauregard announced this adage ["All is relationship..."], I was taken by it and responded to him: "But that is the most beautiful formulation of the Trinity, because, according to Biblical revelation, God is love, therefore he is relationship, and this relationship is absolute." ...theology progresses and unifies when, and to the extent to which, it understands that all is relationship...¹⁰⁸⁴

Laurentin describes the same conversation in *Aveugles et voyants* and continues by reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit at the heart of the relationship which is "the very being of God", the Spirit being: "their exchange, their relationship, their communication, their reciprocity: their love."¹⁰⁸⁵

Charisms and the absence of the Holy Spirit

Given Laurentin's stress upon the Holy Spirit's role, it may be initially surprising that the presence of the Holy Spirit in his writings about apparitions is very limited. Laurentin's article on the Holy Spirit in his *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* explains this 'absence', as well as the important fundamental connections between the Spirit and apparitions:

Is it necessary to mention him [the Holy Spirit] like the angels and saints who often appear in connection with the Virgin Mary? No, because he does not appear in any known apparition, although he symbolically appears in the Gospel, at the baptism of Christ, under the form of a dove. ...

Above all, the Holy Spirit concerns apparitions because they are a charism, therefore attributable to the Spirit, who thus raises the action of people above their capacities to spread the Gospel...¹⁰⁸⁶

With the important place Laurentin attributes to charisms in relation to Mary,¹⁰⁸⁷ it is not surprising that he regards apparitions as charisms, "attributable to the Spirit". He suggests that accounts of apparitions of the Virgin Mary should be classified in libraries not under 'spirituality' but under 'charisms', and stresses that they are given, by the Spirit, for the edification of both the community (*ekklesia*) and those who receive them. Laurentin refers to 1 Corinthians 14:4 in this regard: "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who

¹⁰⁸³ Cf. p. 165 (footnote no. 1043) and p. 168 (footnote 1070) above

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* p. 24 (From the introduction by Laurentin)

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Aveugles et voyants* pp. 98, 100

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* p. 301

¹⁰⁸⁷ Cf. pp. 110-114, 119-123 above

prophesies edifies the church”,¹⁰⁸⁸ thus linking apparitions with prophecy, the gift of the Spirit which Paul teaches should be most highly sought after.¹⁰⁸⁹ This linking of apparitions with prophecy is also found in Laurentin’s *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* in his discussion of whether “the apparitions which multiply today” can “be considered as a Pneumatological movement”. After stating that “this may seem to be a false question, because the Holy Spirit *does not appear*, neither being visible, nor the subject of iconography”, Laurentin gives three reasons why it is the case. Alongside the “essential discretion” of the Holy Spirit and the fervour which apparitions result in, Laurentin describes how “apparitions are charisms (authentic or not, according to the case), which aim to edify the faith and the charity of the ecclesial communities under many forms”, and that “where there is a ‘locution’ (words from on high)”, which “is generally the case”, there is a deeper question of prophecy.¹⁰⁹⁰ In the closing pages of this book Laurentin returns to apparitions as charisms, interpreting Revelation 12, where Mary’s “eternal crowning and her presence upon the earth” are not separated, as evoking “her multiple apparitions in the Church”, which are a “charism of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁹¹

Laurentin’s belief that apparitions should be classified as charisms is far from new. In his *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* he summarises the “diagnostic of Thomas Aquinas”, that apparitions “fall under the category of charisms and more precisely the charism of prophecy” and “their role is to stimulate faith, but above all hope”,¹⁰⁹² and in his (1976) article *Fonction et statut des apparitions* he refers to the seventeenth century John of the Annunciation who listed private revelations among the charisms.¹⁰⁹³ Laurentin extends this definition, distinguishing private apparitions which concern the seer alone “and those which constitute a *public message*, destined to a more or less large Christian community”. He maintains that the latter “should be understood in the technical sense of the word: graces *gratis datae*, given for the common good”, and that they therefore come “more precisely” under the prophetic charism, with ‘prophetic’ understood theologically, not as “formal prediction” but “the word addressed in the name of God to acknowledge the project of Salvation, according to the historical needs of each time.”¹⁰⁹⁴

This stress upon apparitions addressing the needs of the era in which they occur is a

¹⁰⁸⁸ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 897 (Part of the article on ‘Spiritualité’)

¹⁰⁸⁹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 14:1

¹⁰⁹⁰ *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 254

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 587

¹⁰⁹² *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* p. 45

¹⁰⁹³ (1976) *Fonction et statut des apparitions* p. 164

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 164

fundamental principle of the methodology which Laurentin developed in his (1955) *Sens de Lourdes*, which he describes as “a methodology that was accepted by the Holy See and to some extent appropriated by Pius XII on the occasion of the centenary of Lourdes in 1958: ‘An apparition is nothing but a reminder of revelation, for the purpose of opening our deaf ears to hear and helping our blind eyes to see the things we have forgotten; to reawaken our sleepy memories.’”¹⁰⁹⁵ Thus, authentic private apparitions should have a practical outcome,¹⁰⁹⁶ renovating and stimulating faith, and eliciting “an understanding that is lived, a *praxis*”.¹⁰⁹⁷

Despite this emphasis on apparitions being charisms and having a prophetic and practical function, there is very little explicit reference to the Holy Spirit in *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie*. Laurentin’s articles reveal only a handful of references to the Spirit, none of which are actual apparitions. Some concern heretical teaching being conveyed in the purported apparition, such as the French woman writing under the pseudonym J.N.S.R. (*‘Je ne suis rien devant Dieu’*),¹⁰⁹⁸ and Francesca Miscio (who uses the pseudonym *Conchiglia*) from Rome, both of whom describe messages and locutions they have received about Mary’s divinity, with Mary being conceived by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹⁹ A few articles contain references to what the visionaries and mystics report that Mary says about the Holy Spirit, such as “Mme R” who recounts how Our Lady indicates the priest who should be her spiritual guide, and states that the “Holy Spirit will be in him for everything concerning you... The Holy Spirit will guide you through him”.¹¹⁰⁰ Other references are less precise, like Anna Schmidt, whose visions, without any explicit messages, “reinforce her against the filioque”,¹¹⁰¹ or the young Italian, Francesca Payer, who, in striking similarity to Bernadette at Lourdes, does not name the Holy Spirit but recounts how while playing outside she “heard a ‘strong gust of wind’, ‘felt a presence’ and saw ‘a great light’” before hearing the words “I am the Blessed Virgin Mary”.¹¹⁰²

Similarly, while many of Laurentin’s books on specific visionaries or apparition sites include references to the Holy Spirit, this is not a prominent theme. In the account of the messages received by the seers of Medjugorje in *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* the

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Sacred Scripture and the message of Fatima* p. 57

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 64. Laurentin notes that this is what both Aquinas and Thomas Cajetan (1469-1534) taught.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 62

¹⁰⁹⁸ ‘I am nothing before God’

¹⁰⁹⁹ Cf. *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie* pp. 1155-1157 on J.N.S.R and pp. 1280-1283 on Conchiglia. Laurentin points out how this heresy is suggested by the Protoevangelium of James (2nd century), which describes how Mary was conceived while Joachim was praying in the desert (cf. p. 1156).

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 814 (Part of the article on ‘Rolande’)

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 870 (Part of the article on ‘Schmidt’)

¹¹⁰² Ibid. p. 1080 (Part of the article on ‘Col di Roanza, Italy’)

summary in an annex about the prayer intentions given by Mary states that of the nine prayer intentions that are explicitly about God, with four about the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁰³ This is less than ten percent of the forty-eight prayer intentions, and they are given in entirely predictable contexts. For example, Mary is reported as encouraging prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Eastertide as Pentecost approached.¹¹⁰⁴ Likewise, in Laurentin's (1993) *The Way of the Cross in Santa Maria* the only significant reference to the Holy Spirit refers to temptations and divisions emerging wherever the Spirit is at work,¹¹⁰⁵ and his (1990) *An appeal from Mary in Argentina* simply quotes some of the messages to Gladys which refer to the Holy Spirit, none of which are particularly striking.¹¹⁰⁶

While *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* does not aim to contain accounts of statues or images of Mary which have emitted effusions,¹¹⁰⁷ Laurentin's earlier *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* contains an account of the theological meaning of the oil coming out of an icon and from the hands of Myrna Akhras of Damascus.¹¹⁰⁸ Laurentin states that this sends a message which "seemed to announce a new outpouring of the Spirit."¹¹⁰⁹ Reflecting on this and on similar instances of oil being produced from icons, people and statues, Laurentin describes the effusions of oil as speaking "of the gentleness of God, of his entering into humans, of his power of healing" and their perfume enabling "the love and sweetness of God to be smelt."¹¹¹⁰ He relates how in the Old Testament oil is the "sign of divine blessing" and of "divine election" accompanying "the outpouring of the Spirit (1 Samuel 10:1-10, 16:13), and how, in Christianity, oil is traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit, particularly through the sacraments. The oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick and chrism oil demonstrate how oil "communicates to Christians the multifaceted grace and strength of the Holy Spirit."¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰³ Cf. *Message et pédagogie de Marie à Medjugorje* p. 347. They are: For the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (March-April 1983; 9.5.1985); that the Spirit of Truth comes (9.6.1984); that the Holy Spirit renews the parish (30.3.1984), and to obtain the gifts of the Spirit that are necessary (17.4.1986).

¹¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 89, referring to April and May 1985; p. 189 on 3rd June 1983, and p. 222 on 2nd June 1984

¹¹⁰⁵ Laurentin, R. (1993) *The Way of the Cross in Santa Maria*. Santa Barbara, California: Queenship Publishing Company, p. 26

¹¹⁰⁶ (1990) *An appeal from Mary in Argentina*. Ohio: Faith Publishing Company. For example, on 12th November 1983 the message included "Your spirit is being nourished by the Holy Spirit...." (p. 9) and on 25th November 1983 "The Holy Spirit is your guide. You must obey" (p. 11).

¹¹⁰⁷ Cf. p. 285, an article entitled '*Effusions des statues et images of the Virgin*' in which Laurentin explains that these will be the subject of a specific dictionary, edited by Sbalchiero, with a preface by Laurentin.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* pp. 74-83. Cf. *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* pp. 1093-1097, an article entitled '*Damas/Soufanieh*' by Sbalchiero on the visions and messages received by Myrna.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* p. 75

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 226

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 233-234

However theologically valid such reflections on the symbolism of oil may be, a major obstacle lies in the probability of the underlying events being authentic. Since a multi-disciplinary medical team performed different tests on Myrna in 2004, no more apparitions or effusions of oil have been reported,¹¹¹² and in another instance, that of oil emerging from images of Our Lady placed near the 'weeping statue' of Our Lady in Naju, Korea, all connected devotions have been banned by the local ordinary after investigation by a commission.¹¹¹³ Given such debatable origins it is difficult to see how much weight can be given to them.

Leaving these other purported paranormal instances to one side, it is important to note once again the lack of reference to the Holy Spirit in relation to apparitions,¹¹¹⁴ and Laurentin's emphasis on the very nature of the Holy Spirit making it "normal" that the Spirit "cannot be discerned apart from at a second look, beyond appearances."¹¹¹⁵ The 'absence' or rather 'hidden presence' of the Spirit is entirely consistent with Laurentin's portrayal of the "strictly invisible, spiritual and transcendent" Spirit,¹¹¹⁶ who is "infinitely discrete" and "a stranger to all ostentation", who "disappears to illumine the Father and the Son and to bring the best out of us".¹¹¹⁷ Moreover, with convincing practical examples, Laurentin stresses that it is not only apparitions "where so many Pneumatological values are found", that have so little reference to the Holy Spirit, for "many prophetic movements of a social nature, like service of the poor and the marginalised" are also rarely explicit about "the role of the Paraclete who nevertheless inspires these movements."¹¹¹⁸

Mary's role in preparing for the eschatological 'New Pentecost'

From the start of the 1980s, as Laurentin focused much of his energies on Scriptural studies and investigating controversial apparitions and mystics, connections between Mary, the Holy Spirit and the end times came to have a significant place in his writings for the first time. Laurentin was by no means alone in this emerging emphasis; eschatologically orientated Mariology came into prominence in the 1980s, receiving significant scholarly attention, with the *Société Française d'Études Mariales* taking *Marie et la fin des temps* as the theme of their

¹¹¹² *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* p. 1097

¹¹¹³ Cf. *Multiplication des apparitions de la Vierge aujourd'hui* pp. 111-114 and *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* pp. 1237-1244

¹¹¹⁴ Cf. pp. 153-154, 170-173 above

¹¹¹⁵ *Lourdes, pèlerinage pour notre temps* p. 133

¹¹¹⁶ Cf. (1998) *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit*, Father René Laurentin collection, 1948-2003, Box 17.3, Marian Library, University of Dayton Libraries, Dayton, Ohio, p. 14

¹¹¹⁷ Laurentin, R. (1998) *L'Esprit Saint, source de vie : Les beaux textes de quatre millénaires*. Paris: Fayard, p. 13

¹¹¹⁸ *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 254

1984-1986 conferences and it being a significant feature of the Mariology of von Balthasar, particularly as found in his *Theodramatik*.¹¹¹⁹

How the 'end times' are understood by Laurentin varies between texts. When writing about apparitions or mystics the Parousia is usually envisaged, whereas in other contexts he is often referring to the 'end times' which last from the Incarnation to Jesus' second coming, as indicated by Galatians 4:4, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman", and as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit".¹¹²⁰

According to this latter understanding of the 'end times' the eschatological nature of both the Annunciation and Pentecost are highly significant for Laurentin. He describes the eschatological relationship between Zephaniah 3:15ff and Luke 1:28-33, with the fulfilment of the prophecy of "the future coming of Yahweh Saviour among his people, in the Daughter of Zion, as in a new Ark of the Covenant."¹¹²¹ In presenting Mary as a personal personification of the Daughter of Zion, she "represents *the people of the end times*, who, in her, take possession of the promises";¹¹²² Mary "inaugurates the *time of the Spirit*" at the Annunciation and prefigures the *time of the Church* by her faith, the charisms she exercises and by her communion with Christ.¹¹²³ Laurentin also sees eschatological significance in Mary's prophetic Magnificat and her assurance of God's promises "to Abraham and his descendants FOREVER, *eis ton aiōna*" (Luke 1:56).¹¹²⁴

For Laurentin the eschatological nature of Pentecost and Mary's central presence therein are intricately connected. Describing how the author of Acts of the Apostles highlights the presence of Mary at Pentecost, as she is the only person apart from the Twelve who is named, Laurentin links this with the eschatological character of Pentecost, indicated by the use of Joel 3:1-5 in Acts 2:17-21: "In the last days, it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit

¹¹¹⁹ Four volumes were published in German between 1973 and 1983, with volumes 3, *Die Handlung* (The Action) and 4, *Das Endspiel* (The Last Act) having this Marian eschatological emphasis. Cf. Jones, C. (2001) *The contribution of von Balthasar's Theodramatik to contemporary Marian theology*. M. Phil thesis, Heythrop College, University of London. (Unpublished)

¹¹²⁰ No. 2819

¹¹²¹ Laurentin, R. (1984) 'Marie dans la dernière économie selon les textes du Nouveau Testament', *Études Mariales*, 41, pp. 61-90, p. 75

¹¹²² Ibid. p. 76

¹¹²³ Cf. Ibid. p. 79

¹¹²⁴ Ibid. Cf. pp. 79-80 where the Magnificat is contrasted with the Benedictus, in which no similar eschatological view is found, despite the first part of the Benedictus being "a fairly literal echo" of the first part of the Magnificat.

upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.”¹¹²⁵ He describes Mary in the upper room as linked to “an eschatological waiting, marked by apocalyptic signs signifying this aspect of the mystery: breath of the Spirit and tongues of fire” and concludes:

Mary, Daughter of Sion, for whom was fulfilled the first Pentecost of the New Testament (Lk 1:35), is clearly in her rightful place at the time when the early Church received from Christ the Spirit who would inaugurate the grace and the charisms of the end times.¹¹²⁶

Laurentin also presents John’s Gospel as connecting Mary and the end times. He describes John 2:1-11 as having “a typical and eschatological value” which signifies “the permanent role of Christ and of Mary beyond this world” with Christ working but Mary interceding and mobilising the servants. He also stresses the eschatological significance of the wedding feast, which points to heaven, the ultimate meal to which God invites humans.¹¹²⁷

While an eschatological emphasis was not found to this degree in Laurentin’s early works, there is nothing particularly striking or new in what he says. However, when Laurentin writes about the Mary and the Parousia, although there is nothing original in what he says, as his writings are almost entirely based on those of others, the influence of mystics and seers leads to an emphasis which is not found in mainstream Christian theology. One of the prominent voices which are heard in Laurentin’s ‘Marian eschatology’ is that of de Montfort, whose formula of consecration Laurentin made as a prisoner of war.¹¹²⁸

De Montfort’s Marian theology is distinctly Pneumatological and eschatological. He focuses on Mary’s spiritual mission and situates Mary “in constant reference to the Holy Spirit and as dependent upon him”;¹¹²⁹ it is the Holy Spirit who formed her and makes her known.¹¹³⁰ In his *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à Marie* de Montfort speaks of the Virgin to whom “the formation and the education of the great saints who will come at the end of the world is reserved”, since “only this singular and wondrous virgin can produce in union with the Holy Spirit singular and wondrous things.”¹¹³¹ These “apostles of the latter times”,¹¹³² will be the servants, slaves and children of Mary,¹¹³³ for in the “second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary must be known and

¹¹²⁵ Cf. Ibid. p. 77

¹¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 78

¹¹²⁷ Cf. Ibid. p. 84

¹¹²⁸ Cf. *Mémoires* pp. 200-201, and p. 17 above

¹¹²⁹ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 28

¹¹³⁰ Cf. Ibid. p. 176

¹¹³¹ *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à Marie* no. 35. Text taken from <https://www.montfort.org.uk/Writings/TD.php> (Accessed: 01/01/21). *Traité de la Vraie Dévotion à Marie* was originally written about 1712 and first published in 1843. Cf. *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* pp. 7, 261

¹¹³² Ibid. No. 58

¹¹³³ Cf. Ibid. no. 56

openly revealed by the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus may be known, loved and served through her.”¹¹³⁴ De Montfort prophesied that there would be an “age of Mary”, when the Holy Spirit “finding his dear Spouse present again in souls, will come down into them with great power” and “fill them with his gifts.”¹¹³⁵

Laurentin not only wrote books directly about the life and spirituality of de Montfort,¹¹³⁶ but his (1991) *Retour à Dieu avec Marie: de la sécularisation à la consécration* largely focuses on de Montfort,¹¹³⁷ and in several other books de Montfort’s influence upon Laurentin is evident. This is illustrated by Laurentin’s reading of history, for example in (1991) *Les chrétiens détonateurs des libérations à l’est*,¹¹³⁸ where Laurentin’s frequently repeated emphasis on the pivotal role of Poland in the defeat of communism is understood to be linked to the consecration as taught by de Montfort of “the three greatest Polish leaders who have ever lived: Wyszinski, Wojtyla, Walesa”.¹¹³⁹

While Laurentin is consistent in highlighting the theological complications relating to the Marian title ‘Spouse of the Spirit’, as favoured by de Montfort and others,¹¹⁴⁰ de Montfort’s influence is found in many other ways, and is particularly prominent in Laurentin’s last major Marian work, written jointly with François-Michel Debroise, and published in 2014: *La Vierge des dernier temps: Une étape de la fin du monde, de Grignion de Montfort à Maria Valtorta*.¹¹⁴¹ It is important to highlight that this work was written when Laurentin was blind and in his ninety-seventh year, factors which indicate that Debroise would have played a significant part in the construction of the text, although similarities with a number of Laurentin’s earlier texts point to his authentic contribution.¹¹⁴²

At the heart of the co-authored text is an emphasis upon de Montfort’s prophecy that the

¹¹³⁴ Ibid. No. 49

¹¹³⁵ Ibid. No. 217

¹¹³⁶ Cf. *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* and (1996) *Petite vie de L. M. Grignion de Montfort*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer

¹¹³⁷ Paris: O.E.I.L. An extended second edition was published in 2001: *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie*.

¹¹³⁸ Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert. Published in English as (1993) *The cause of liberation in the USSR*. Santa Barbara, California: Queenship Publishing Company

¹¹³⁹ *The cause of liberation in the USSR* p. 7. Although writing relatively little about Fatima, Laurentin also links this to the consecration of Russia to Mary’s Immaculate Heart, following the instructions of Lucia of Fatima. (Cf. *The cause of liberation in the USSR* pp. 18-19)

¹¹⁴⁰ Cf. p. 145 (footnote no. 905 above) and pp. 182-184 below

¹¹⁴¹ Paris: Salvator.

¹¹⁴² Laurentin and Debroise had already co-written (2011) *La vie de Marie d’après les révélations des mystiques : Que faut-il en penser ?* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance) where their differing viewpoints on received ‘lives of Mary’ are stated openly, with Laurentin “distrustful” and Debroise, “appreciative” (pp. 9-10. cf. p. 16 which describes Debroise’s conversion as being “arrived by means of Medjugorje, and by the ‘revealed lives’, especially that of Maria Valtorta”), and separate conclusions being given (cf. pp. 242-250). However, in *Une étape de la fin du monde, de Grignion de Montfort à Maria Valtorta* there is no sense of their contributing different opinions, which complicates discernment of Laurentin’s personal view.

“Virgin Mary will play a particular role in the end times” having “been taken up by several messengers of different eras”, and a claim that the ‘revealed’ writings of Maria Valtorta (1897-1961) “bring up to date and make explicit the prophecies of Grignon de Montfort.”¹¹⁴³ Maria Valtorta’s *L’évangile tel qu’il m’a été révélé* was the result of what she understood to be daily visions and messages from 1943-1950, which she recorded in one hundred and twenty two school notebooks, representing fifteen thousand manuscript pages.¹¹⁴⁴ Despite Pius XII’s encouragement for the text to be published, in 1959, a year after his death, it was put on the Index, being the last work to be censured in this way before the suppression of the Index six years later.¹¹⁴⁵

Laurentin and Debroise see in Maria Valtorta’s assertion that the Holy Spirit has revealed to her that “now is the hour of Mary” a fulfilment of de Montfort’s prophecy, with “the hour” being interpreted as “not referring to the 1950s when this was written, but the 2000s when the writings are diffused.”¹¹⁴⁶ However, is far from clear that Maria Valtorta herself saw this ‘now’ as referring to a future time. For example, her declaration that “it is the time of Mary which rises up” for “already over the darkness which, always heavier and more cursed, covers the earth, a glow looms which could not be more gentle” is most obviously interpreted as referring not to a future time but to the historical situation as peace emerged after the Second World War, and the doctrine of the Assumption, the real symbol of the definitive victory over death and the darkness of evil, was declared.¹¹⁴⁷ As a compilation of texts from Maria Valtorta’s revelations indicates, the unspecific nature of the timing of prophecies means that any judgement about their application to a specific future moment is conjecture.¹¹⁴⁸

However, possible correlations between Maria Valtorta and de Montfort are far from the only reason for Laurentin suggesting that de Montfort’s prophecies may be being fulfilled in our times. His earlier (1994) *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* describes how “some signs of our time seem to confirm already the premonitions of de Montfort”, including the uprising and liberation of Poland, and the multiplication of Marian apparitions, with Mary being described

¹¹⁴³ *La Vierge des dernier temps* pp. 9, 11

¹¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 35

¹¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 94

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 26

¹¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 133

¹¹⁴⁸ Cf. Valtorta, M. (1994) *The end times, as revealed to Maria Valtorta*. Sherbrooke, QC: Éditions Paulines. For example, the account from 16th August 1943 (pp. 31-34), which opens with an emphatic ‘the time of the Spirit must come’, uses the phrases ‘at that time’ and ‘when that time comes’ in an unspecific manner.

as “coming to the help of a world moving towards self-destruction.”¹¹⁴⁹ However, Laurentin simply presents this as a possibility, as his words a few pages later make clear:

The new presence of Mary, is it a sign of *the end of time* according to Montfort? Is it not rather the sign of *a new historical epoch* in the battle of the woman and the dragon (Rev 12), to make the desert re-flower and lead us to heaven? ... We cannot predict. In any case, the apparitions of Mary, the true ones, invite us to ‘redeem the time’....¹¹⁵⁰

Laurentin and Debroise’s projection of the intended focus of Maria Valtorta’s visions and messages appears to be due not only to the current troubled situation of the world, but, more significantly, to its connection to the message of other contemporary visionaries. Prominent among these are Vassula Ryden,¹¹⁵¹ and the message of the seers of Medjugorje, which Laurentin describes as having a “resolutely eschatological and universal” character, with Mary wanting to lead her children “to full holiness by a maternal pedagogy”.¹¹⁵² These themes are also very much present in the messages of La Salette, where the ‘secret’ entrusted to Melanie contains a call to the ‘apostles of the end times’,¹¹⁵³ and in the ‘Rule’ for the religious order she was instructed to found she writes about the age of the “new Pentecost of the Spirit” from which there will “spring up the apostolic life of the apostles of the end times and the new evangelisation.”¹¹⁵⁴

Laurentin and Debroise link these private revelations with the theme of the New Pentecost which has been found in a succession of Popes of the twentieth century: Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.¹¹⁵⁵ For three of these (John XXIII, John Paul II and Benedict XVI) this is linked to the intercession of Mary.¹¹⁵⁶ However, while the private revelations tend to point towards the Parousia, Laurentin and Debroise relate how the ‘new Pentecost’ evoked by different Popes “seems to be a future event of a particular intensity

¹¹⁴⁹ *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* p. 106

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 109

¹¹⁵¹ For example, one of her messages from Jesus illustrates the themes shared with de Montfort and Valtorta: “Through this woman, my reign on earth will come again. My reign on the earth will be built in each heart. Once again, my Spirit will be poured out over you...” (*La Vierge des derniers temps* p. 164, quoting *La vraie vie en Dieu*, 3rd April 1996, notebook 83.)

¹¹⁵² *La Vierge des derniers temps* p. 137. For example, Laurentin quotes the message of 2nd May 1982: “I came to call the world to conversion for the last time, later, I will not appear again on this earth.” (Cf. *Ibid.* p. 170). However, it should be noted that Laurentin’s presentation of Medjugorje has been described as a “mellowed apocalypticism”, with his diminishing the more sensational aspects to make it more palatable to a wider Catholic audience. (Cf. Maunder, *Our Lady of All Nations*, p. 163, referring to Zimdars-Swartz, S. (1991) *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 243)

¹¹⁵³ *La Vierge des derniers temps* p. 10

¹¹⁵⁴ *Découverte du secret de La Salette* p. 177

¹¹⁵⁵ They also link them to revelations to Maria of Agreda (1602-1665) and St. Faustina (1905-1938) both of whom have less obvious connections to Laurentin’s thesis, Maria of Agreda having written before Montfort with some similar themes, and Faustina being much more focused on Divine Mercy as a sign of the end times. While Lucia of Fatima is also included in a chart of showing the ‘convergences of mystics’ in the conclusion of *La Vierge des derniers temps* (p. 209) she can hardly be claimed to support this thesis, as the chart itself indicates.

¹¹⁵⁶ Cf. *La Vierge des derniers temps* pp. 10-19, 210

which is not the ultimate return of Christ but his spiritual reign.”¹¹⁵⁷ We are left therefore with the ambiguity connected to the very different ways of interpreting ‘the end times’. Alongside the more apocalyptic intimations of the private revelations Laurentin focuses on, the most straightforward reading of the prayers of the various popes of the 20th century for a New Pentecost indicates a desire for a simple renewal of the gifts already given at the origins of the Church.

Concluding comments

Laurentin’s many decades of investigating apparitions and mystical experiences ends on this eschatological note applied to the current era. However, apart from Laurentin and Debroise’s interpretation of the ‘end times’ of Maria Valtorta’s revelations as referring to the start of the twenty-first century, this eschatological emphasis, like the study of apparitions itself, is not something which Laurentin sought, he was simply recounting what his research revealed. In his study of apparitions Laurentin essentially remains a historian, albeit one who reflects theologically on his findings, and one who, with his personalistic approach, gave great weight to relationships and personal character, an approach which, as has been illustrated, is not without its pitfalls.

It is important to stress that, despite being the most prolific writer on apparitions of the modern era, and almost certainly of any era, Laurentin seeks to not give undue weight to apparitions. In 1970 he compared the fervour surrounding apparitions to an experiment upon mice, who, when undernourished, drank alcohol placed in their cage, but when well nourished, scorned it,¹¹⁵⁸ and throughout his life Laurentin stressed that his personal spiritual life was nourished by Scripture and the sacraments, and that renewal in the Church would come not from apparitions, but from Scripture, and ultimately, from the love of the Triune life which we are invited to enter into, aided by Mary’s relationship with the Trinity. The sixth and final edition of Laurentin’s *Court traité* makes this clear:

As for the voices of renewal concerning the Virgin Mary, despite the considerable work I have consecrated to apparitions of the Virgin Mary, I do not think that the theological renewal will come from there.

Apparitions are an eschatological anticipation of her presence. And what counts with authentic seers, is not so much the apparition, because the perceptible side (visible, auditory, even tactile) is only the sign of a mystical and foundational union in the light of God radiated by Mary. These diverse facts of the life of the Church, often creative and foundational, are not a theological *source* according to the norms of the Church.

Renewal comes, today as yesterday, from Scripture because revelation has not revealed

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 20

¹¹⁵⁸ (1970) ‘*Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie*’, *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 54, pp. 269-317, p. 313

all its meaning. ...

It will be born from a new penetration of the relationship of Mary with the Trinity... *God is love*. Love is gift. It is reciprocity; it is Relation.¹¹⁵⁹

Despite this emphasis upon relationship and Mary's relationship with the Triune God, it is striking that Laurentin's extensive studies of apparitions reveal a fundamental lack of emphasis upon the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. While his later works on Bernadette and Lourdes refer more to the Holy Spirit than his initial studies, these references generally take the form of theological reflections on what he and others have experienced at Lourdes and befit the wide audience they are written for. For other apparitions, almost all references to the Holy Spirit are simply what any seer or mystic 'receives' within their messages. Although apparitions are charisms, gifts of the Spirit, these are given so discretely that the Holy Spirit himself can rarely be discerned, a hiddenness that Laurentin maintains is entirely consistent with the Spirit's nature.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Court traité sur la Vierge Marie* (2009) p. 231

Chapter 7: Conclusion – The relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit

This final chapter will begin by exploring how Laurentin described the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in terms of analogies and titles of Mary, with reference to material first found in his immediate post-conciliar works which was often repeated and extended in the following decades. Following this, the key findings of this research project will be presented, before turning finally to address the pertinence of this research, and further areas of study it indicates.

A critical assessment of terminology and concepts

Several often-repeated refrains found in Laurentin's post-conciliar writings provide an important element of the response to the question of how he views the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. Laurentin frequently outlines what he understands to be misjudged attempts at formulating the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, before proceeding to demonstrate how their unique relationship can be enlightened by analogies and titles given to Mary.¹¹⁶⁰ Following Laurentin's own approach, we begin with his critique of the title 'Spouse of the Holy Spirit' and approaches which see Mary as akin to an incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

Despite being highly influenced by de Montfort's spirituality,¹¹⁶¹ Laurentin is critical of his influential use of the title 'spouse of the Holy Spirit',¹¹⁶² primarily because he believes that it can "suggest a hierogamy: the copulation of pagan gods with goddesses (or with humans)" and the Holy Spirit's having inseminated Mary,¹¹⁶³ whereas "his coming to her is entirely other":

Spouse is not in fact the appropriate term to be used, for Mary did not have a "face-to-face" objective relationship with the Holy Spirit, any more than we do. The Holy Spirit operates from within. The Holy Spirit awakens us and inspires each one of us to do the best that is in us... The Spirit came to Mary not as a spouse encountering her as a partner to be embraced and fecundated. The Holy Spirit's inspiriting "embrace" was entirely different in kind; it was interior. It awakened in Mary all her potentialities as a woman and as a mother – all the things that were specific to Mary, in fact, and not to the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶⁴

¹¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* pp. 37-42; *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* pp. 578-580, 588 and *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* pp. 6-13, 31-33

¹¹⁶¹ Cf. pp. 17, 176-177 above

¹¹⁶² Laurentin's disapproval becomes more nuanced in his later writings: in his (1967) *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* Laurentin describes this title as "strongly improper" (p. 38), while in his (1996) *Petite vie de L. M. Grignon de Montfort* he writes "Let us then be sober and prudent (or better, abstain) in the use of this title *spouse of the Spirit*" (p. 125).

¹¹⁶³ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 182

¹¹⁶⁴ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 129 [Translation from (1992) *The meaning of consecration today: A Marian model for a secularized age*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, p. 150]

Thus, Laurentin's approach is a positive one, stressing that the action of the Holy Spirit is "infinitely more subtle, profound and transcendent" than that of a spouse, awakening Mary, and "each Christian, each Church" to their own freedom and fullness, "according to the diversity of ethnicity, of temperament or culture."¹¹⁶⁵

Laurentin also assesses this title by its historical presence. He stresses its "relatively rare" occurrence in the Christian tradition, from the fourth century poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens and the "obscure Byzantine writer" Cosmas Vestitor, to the influential St. Francis of Assisi (c1181-1226) through whom it spread within the Franciscan family,¹¹⁶⁶ and relates how de Montfort took the title from François Poiré's (1639) *La triple couronne*.¹¹⁶⁷ Using an analysis of *Polyanthea Mariana*, a dictionary of titles of Mary, collated by Ippolito Marracci (1604-1675) and published in 1866, Laurentin relates how of the three hundred and fifty titles of 'spouse' given to Mary, only nine refer explicitly to the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁶⁸ Thus, Laurentin concludes, "the Christian tradition only let this title appear rarely and late, in a context which was poetic, or oratorical, and not theological."¹¹⁶⁹

However, Laurentin appreciates why de Montfort found this title so attractive, as it "expresses authentic values" of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit: the "love which characterises the Holy Spirit, Mary and the work of God"; their "indissoluble and perfect union", and their "shared fecundity".¹¹⁷⁰ This explains why, influenced by de Montfort and the Franciscan martyr and ardent devotee of Mary, St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941), "Spouse of the Spirit" came to be used by Leo XIII, Pius XII, and on many occasions by John Paul II.¹¹⁷¹ Aware of the limits of this title, Laurentin suggests other approaches, tentatively proposing that the profound love between Mary and the Spirit is that of "a filiation and a twin rather than of an espousal between complimentary beings", and that Mary is "in some sense" the sister of the Spirit.¹¹⁷² On another occasion, recognising that 'Temple of the Holy Spirit' does not convey the love, communion and fecundity communicated by 'Spouse of the Holy Spirit', Laurentin suggests that a collection of titles – *chosen one*, *icon*, and *fertile sign* – together

¹¹⁶⁵ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 188. Cf. p. 89 above on Laurentin's concern for the local church.

¹¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 34 and *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* pp. 183-184, with Francis of Assisi calling Mary "spouse of the Spirit" in an antiphon of his Office of the Passion.

¹¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 181

¹¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 183. Laurentin notes that: "77 make precise spouse of *God*; 34 spouse of *Christ*; 24 spouse of the *Father*, and only 9 spouse of the *Holy Spirit*."

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 184

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 181-182

¹¹⁷¹ Cf. *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 7

¹¹⁷² *Petite vie de L. M. Grignon de Montfort* p. 128. Laurentin does not explore what he means by Mary being a "sister of the Spirit"; no obvious insight is provided by his statement that this is "as we are brothers in Christ".

“express something” of the ultimately inexpressible.¹¹⁷³ It is clear that, whilst very conscious of the difficulties which can arise from the title ‘Spouse of the Spirit’, Laurentin recognises the impossibility of capturing the mystery of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in words.

Interestingly, while highlighting the limitations of the title of Mary ‘Spouse of the Spirit’, Laurentin is open to the concept rarely found in contemporary theology, favoured by de Montfort, Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), and “throughout the seventeenth century”,¹¹⁷⁴ of the Holy Spirit, “infertile in the Trinity” manifesting an *ad extra* fecundity by the birth of the Son of God on earth. Recognising the objections made to giving an “*entirely negative* property” to the Spirit,¹¹⁷⁵ Laurentin highlights the truth expressed in this formula, and extends it to apply to the entire Biblical history, where the Spirit is the principle of fecundity, not only over Mary at the Incarnation (Lk 1:35), but also over the waters of the first creation, over the Messiah at baptism, over the early Church (Acts 1:8 and 2), and over the new creation announced by the prophets.”¹¹⁷⁶

As well as promoting the title ‘spouse of the Holy Spirit’, Kolbe expressed the closeness of Mary and the Holy Spirit in terms of a quasi-hypostatic union. Kolbe’s right thumb was healed during a short pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1930, and Laurentin recounts how this not only led to the canonical obstacle to Kolbe’s ordination being removed, but to his becoming captivated by Mary’s self-description at Lourdes: “I am the Immaculate Conception”. Kolbe saw in Mary “a type of ‘incarnation of the Holy Spirit’, *created conception of the Uncreated Conception*”.¹¹⁷⁷ Given Laurentin’s disapproval of Kolbe’s terminology, his accounts of Kolbe’s attempts to express the closest possible bond between Mary and the Holy Spirit are extremely generous. Laurentin stresses that Kolbe himself recognised “that there was something excessive and unacceptable in his formula” hence prefacing it “with the disclaimer ‘in some way’”.¹¹⁷⁸ Moreover, while asserting that poetic formulas were “little adapted to the mysteries” which Kolbe wanted to denote, Laurentin understood that Kolbe was seeking to express “the hidden

¹¹⁷³ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 193

¹¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Dieu notre Père* p. 166

¹¹⁷⁵ Ibid., referring to Louis Billot’s (1846-1931) *De Deo Trino*, thèse 18.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 181. Cf. pp. 40, 131, 139 above

¹¹⁷⁷ Cf. Ibid. p. 142. Laurentin reinterprets Kolbe’s statement, making it theologically acceptable to him: “What he wanted to say was that Mary is a *very pure sign* of the Holy Spirit, without obscuring, nor deforming in any way: a visible icon of the Spirit, the most pure concretisation of his dynamism on earth.” Cf. Manteau-Bonamy, H.-M. (1977) *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian teachings of Father Kolbe*. Libertyville, Illinois: Franciscan Marytown Press, which discusses Kolbe’s statement at great length.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 13

dimensions” of the “inexhaustible and vertiginous” mysteries of the Holy Spirit and of Mary.¹¹⁷⁹ In recognition of these attempts Laurentin included Kolbe in the dedication of his *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu*.¹¹⁸⁰

Laurentin is far less charitably disposed towards Boff who, in his *Maternal face of God*,¹¹⁸¹ presents a theologoumenon akin to Kolbe’s poetic reflection. In a section entitled “Mary, eschatological anticipation of the feminine in its absolute realization: a hypothesis”, Boff proposes that Mary is “to be regarded as hypostatically united to the Third Person of the Trinity”, since “it is fitting that God divinize the feminine, because of the equal dignity of masculine and feminine.”¹¹⁸² Laurentin relates how Boff’s account “set everyone against him”, and he questions whether Boff really understood the meaning of a classical notion of hypostatic union, a divine person assuming a human nature and destiny through an Incarnation.¹¹⁸³

The limitations of Laurentin’s engagement with Boff are shown when his critiques are compared with those of other theologians. Although Laurentin frequently criticizes Boff,¹¹⁸⁴ unlike von Balthasar he does not explore the writings of contemporary theologians who are “close to Boff’s basic intention” but develop it “in an Orthodox form.”¹¹⁸⁵ Similarly, unlike J.-M. Hennaux, Laurentin does not explore the important theological complications raised by Boff’s concern for the feminine to have been divinised in Mary, which leads an implication that the feminine in Mary, her ‘essence’, no longer remains human.¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁷⁹ *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 433

¹¹⁸⁰ p. 7. Laurentin includes Kolbe and Grignon de Montfort in his list of dedications, writing of their “intuition and profound experience of the Holy Spirit and of his relationship with Mary” and describing them as being unable “to adequately express this, despite their radical authenticity”.

¹¹⁸¹ Boff, L. (1987) *The maternal face of God*. New York: Harper and Row. Boff presents the same ideas in the shorter text (1982) *Ave Maria: Il “femminile” e lo Spirito Santo*. Santander: Sal Terrae, translated into French as (1988) *Je vous salue Marie: L’Esprit et le féminin*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf

¹¹⁸² Boff, *The maternal face of God* pp. 92-103, the quotes given are from p. 93 and p. 95.

¹¹⁸³ Cf. *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* pp. 12-13. Cf. *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 35

¹¹⁸⁴ Cf. *Bulletin sur la Vierge Marie* (1981) pp. 311-312; *Marie, clé du mystère chrétien* pp. 101, 118-119; *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 12; *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 35 and *La Trinité mystère et lumière* p. 529

¹¹⁸⁵ Cf. von Balthasar, H. U. (1990) *Test everything, hold fast to what is good*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp. 45-46. Von Balthasar refers to both de Chardin’s “vision of the *Eternal Féminin*” and Bouyer’s sophiology. Cf. Lemna, K. (2011) *Louis Bouyer’s sophiology: A Balthasarian retrieval*. Heythrop Journal, 52, pp. 628-642, p. 638

¹¹⁸⁶ Cf. Hennaux, J.-M. (1987) ‘*L’Esprit et le féminin: la mariologie de Leonardo Boff*’, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 109, pp. 884-895, pp. 887-888. In contrast to the Incarnation, where the two natures are united but without confusion, Hennaux describes how Boff presents the two natures (Mary’s humanity and the Spirit’s divinity) as being united *and* confused.

Analogies and titles: Ways in which the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit can be expressed

As has been mentioned above, Laurentin suggests that taking several titles of Mary together is an appropriate way of expressing the “perfect and inexpressible” relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit,¹¹⁸⁷ with each title shedding different light upon the ultimately mysterious union. The key analogies which reoccur in many of Laurentin’s post-conciliar writings, beginning with his writings about Mary and the Holy Spirit in 1966 and 1967, are femininity, witness, and bond/link, with later texts also referring to gift/love. These analogies lead Laurentin to reflect on various aspects of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, namely, Mary as the (living) temple, sign, witness, instrument, transparency, and icon/image of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁸⁸ While the vast majority of what Laurentin states is far from new, his contribution lies in taking elements of the Church’s tradition and presenting them in an accessible and engaging manner.

Laurentin describes how he ‘hesitates’ to draw attention to the analogy of femininity, which Philips, whom he esteems highly, had described as “a dead end”.¹¹⁸⁹ However, it has too strong a place in theological reflection, from early Patristic writings onwards, for it not to be considered.¹¹⁹⁰ While stressing that this analogy “certainly should not be forced” since the Holy Spirit transcends categories of masculinity/femininity, Laurentin takes into account the fact that in Hebrew and Semitic languages ‘Spirit’ is a feminine word, and that this theme of the Spirit’s femininity is prominent in Eastern theology, from the early Syriac texts using *consolatrice*, and not *consolateur*, to Paul Evdokimov (1901-1970) emphasising the “profound link between the Holy Spirit, Wisdom, the Virgin Mary, the feminine.”¹¹⁹¹ Laurentin does not develop this popularly used analogy, although he does point out that it “illuminates the inadequacy and the disadvantages of the theme which makes Mary the spouse of the Holy Spirit” and “helps to dispel the false notion according to which femininity is defined by passivity”. For, while the Holy Spirit can be viewed as “ultimate receptivity within the Trinity”, far from being passive, the Spirit is “supremely active”, being “the dynamism of salvation and the mission of the Church.”¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁸⁷ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 130

¹¹⁸⁸ This line of thinking, in summary form, is also found in the fifth (1968) edition of *Court traité* (p. 125) where Laurentin refers to Mary as witness, icon and temple of the Spirit.

¹¹⁸⁹ Cf. Philips, *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans l'Eglise*, pp. 29-31, and p. 60 above on Laurentin’s esteem for and Philips.

¹¹⁹⁰ Cf. Murray, R. (1975) *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. London: Cambridge University Press, pp. 142-150, 312-320

¹¹⁹¹ *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 40. Laurentin is quoting Evdokimov’s (1958) *La femme*, Paris, p. 215.

¹¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Scripture is also the source of the analogy of “witness”. Laurentin describes the Holy Spirit, who is explicitly called ‘witness’ in John 15:26 and 1 John 5:7-8, as “a discrete witness, who disappears in his witness”, and recounts how Mary’s witness, “is not an exterior witness, official, by preaching, like that of the apostles” but “is a living and intimate witness, analogous in this way, to that of the Spirit in the heart of the faithful.”¹¹⁹³ Furthermore, Laurentin presents Mary’s witness as “a witness *in* the Spirit”, as is revealed at the Visitation, where Mary is not the first to speak, and the Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:41).¹¹⁹⁴ Laurentin succinctly expresses how this theme has ecclesiological consequences: “the Holy Spirit makes witnesses, and Mary is the first witness of His work.”¹¹⁹⁵

A third analogy which Laurentin discusses, that of Mary and the Holy Spirit being bonds/links, is the one he describes as being “undoubtedly the most profound”, and as demonstrating both the correlation between Mary and the Spirit, and the dependence of Mary upon the Spirit to exercise this role. Here Laurentin recounts how he is drawing upon the terminology of the Lutheran theologian Hans Asmussen (1898-1968), who called Mary a *Bindeglied*, a ‘binding member’ of the Church, since it is through her that the connection between the Word and humanity is first made.¹¹⁹⁶ Echoing the central Pneumatological themes of Mühlen,¹¹⁹⁷ Laurentin recounts how Mary’s role resembles that of the Holy Spirit, both “in the Trinity, where He is the bond of personified love”, and “in the Church where He is the bond of communion.”¹¹⁹⁸

In works from the late 1990s Laurentin weaves several titles and images together to relate Mary being the image of the Spirit to their both being love and gift. He describes how “he [the Spirit] is nothing but Love, he is nothing but gift; and on the human level, she is nothing but love, she is nothing but gift”.¹¹⁹⁹ Laurentin describes how the name for the Spirit of ‘gift of God’ can be applied to Mary, since she is “perfect gift in the image of the Holy Spirit”.¹²⁰⁰

Laurentin links these analogies to several titles of Mary, each of which expresses an aspect of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, and ways in which Mary represents both

¹¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid. Cf. *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-9

¹¹⁹⁵ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-9

¹¹⁹⁶ *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* pp. 40-41

¹¹⁹⁷ Cf. pp. 76-77 above

¹¹⁹⁸ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-8

¹¹⁹⁹ *L’Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 588

¹²⁰⁰ *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 29

the Church collectively and individual Christians in their relationship with God. In taking this approach Laurentin is consistent with his longstanding emphasis upon Mary's role within the Church, stressing that "she is the perfect figure, the model and origin of the Church, in whom the Holy Spirit continues the work of grace which began in Mary."¹²⁰¹

Mary being the place or temple of the Spirit, or using the Patristic terminology, the 'living temple' / 'the living sanctuary',¹²⁰² is described by Laurentin as perhaps being "the most profound formula".¹²⁰³ While far from being proper to Mary, for Paul declared that all Christians are temples or sanctuaries of the Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), Laurentin explains that Mary realised this in a unique manner, "more than anyone, and before anyone else",¹²⁰⁴ as she was the "sanctuary formed by the Spirit to receive Christ in His Incarnation",¹²⁰⁵ and "lived better than anyone the indwelling of the Holy Spirit".¹²⁰⁶ He stresses how this dwelling of the Spirit in Mary, highlighted in *Lumen Gentium* no. 53, is "called to extend universally, to be realised eschatologically".¹²⁰⁷

Mary as 'a sign' is the oldest direct title of Mary, found in both Matthew 1:23 (the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14), and in Revelation 12:1, where it refers to both Mary and the Church.¹²⁰⁸ Laurentin stresses that Mary "is 'sign-image' rather than 'sign-instrument': a sign to contemplate rather than to use, because she is above all an example". Entirely dependent upon the Spirit, she is his privileged place and image, "the visible type and the ideal realisation of the divine communion which he brings forth and accomplishes in the Church";¹²⁰⁹ the sign and image of the maternity of the Spirit with respect to the Church.¹²¹⁰

As was mentioned above in discussing the title 'spouse of the Holy Spirit', Laurentin stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in awakening Mary, and all Christians, "to the best of themselves".¹²¹¹ In his reflections on the title of Mary 'harp (or lyre) of the Holy Spirit', as used by St. Ephrem (c306-373), Laurentin develops this aspect of the work of the Spirit within Mary,

¹²⁰¹ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 130

¹²⁰² *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 41

¹²⁰³ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-9

¹²⁰⁴ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 35

¹²⁰⁵ *The Marian question in an ecumenical age* 32-9

¹²⁰⁶ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 35

¹²⁰⁷ *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* p. 41

¹²⁰⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 42

¹²¹⁰ Cf. *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 55

¹²¹¹ Cf. pp. 182-183 above; the quote is from *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 129. Cf. also pp. 132, 140 above.

the Spirit's "most harmonious lyre,"¹²¹² and "most docile instrument", because she is the one most available and open to the Holy Spirit;¹²¹³ a "most accurate and sensitive musical instrument" within whom none of the "inspirations and movements of the Paraclete" are betrayed.¹²¹⁴ Laurentin emphasises that Mary is the perfect instrument, not according to a mechanical understanding of the word, but according to the transcendent relationship between a first cause and a secondary one, "where the instrument is not so much utilized as it is awakened to its proper existence and its liberty".¹²¹⁵ He uses this imagery to illustrate the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to all Christians, namely to awaken each one to their proper life, to their vocation, to liberty itself, in making them "discover the infinite law of evangelical love."¹²¹⁶ It is not difficult to see the attraction of such easily understood and positive descriptions to both the heart and mind of the believer.

Through the titles 'image (or icon) of the Holy Spirit' and 'transparency of the Holy Spirit' Laurentin weaves together several closely related concepts. Linked to his reflections on Mary as harp/lyre/instrument of the Spirit, he describes her as the Spirit's "humble and marvellous human icon in this world", the creature "most purely transparent" to the Spirit's "inspirations and action",¹²¹⁷ "his *chef-d'oeuvre* in his image",¹²¹⁸ the one who, better than anyone else, welcomed the Spirit "without resistance, without stain or sin".¹²¹⁹ In some of Laurentin's reflections this is linked to Mary's femininity: Laurentin calls her "the purest feminine reflection" of the Spirit's love,¹²²⁰ and recounts how she "is his image, as woman, as mother, as gift and perfect love."¹²²¹ He also relates this to the roles/titles of Mary (co-redeemer, mother, advocate) which he stresses are primarily roles of the Spirit.¹²²² Laurentin describes Mary as the "most pure created image of his [the Spirit's] Person and function, including co-redemption, maternity and advocacy",¹²²³ and explains that the confusion between Mary and the Holy Spirit, extended at times to the substitution of Mary for the Holy Spirit which has been found in Marian devotion, "comes precisely from their links and their similarities",¹²²⁴ for

¹²¹² *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 129

¹²¹³ Cf. *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 588

¹²¹⁴ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 36

¹²¹⁵ *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 32

¹²¹⁶ *Present crisis in Mariology. Lecture 14: Mary and the Holy Spirit* 14-8. In *Une année de grâce avec Marie* (p. 123) Laurentin describes Mary's concern which "reflects that of the Holy Spirit... to awaken each one of her children, each community, each Church, to the best of themselves, according to their diversity and their own vocations."

¹²¹⁷ *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 19

¹²¹⁸ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 128

¹²¹⁹ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 35

¹²²⁰ *Mary, the Church and the Holy Spirit* p. 32

¹²²¹ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 36

¹²²² Cf. pp. 78-80 above on the co-redemption of the Spirit

¹²²³ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 36

¹²²⁴ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 127

Mary is “both the human sign and the instrument” of “what the Holy Spirit does in a transcendent and divine manner.”¹²²⁵

While these titles/themes frequently reoccur within Laurentin’s writings, other expressions occur occasionally, highlighting aspects of the ‘picture’ Laurentin is creating of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. For example, he describes Mary as not only “associated with Christ” (*socia Christi*) but also as “associated with the Holy Spirit, including all his action in service to the Redemption”.¹²²⁶ He stresses that Mary is “the most perfect *interpersonal* relationship of God and humanity”,¹²²⁷ and emphasises Mary’s personal relationship with the Holy Spirit being “the most intimate and the most profound among simple creatures”.¹²²⁸ This is not only to explain her participation in the activity of the Spirit (rather than her being regarded as a substitute for him), but her role in drawing people to the Holy Spirit and thereby into a deeper relationship with the Triune God:

Mary does not wish anything other than to put us in contact with Him [the Holy Spirit] ... If therefore we are linked with her, we can ask her to fruitfully lead us to Him, who Himself has no other desire than to lead us to Christ and the Father, according to the divine dynamism which is his.¹²²⁹

This theme of personal relationship shall be considered in further depth below in the second part of this chapter addressing the key findings of this research. For now, it is important to note the role analogies and titles played in Laurentin’s attempts to express the inexpressible relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, and to emphasise that while this was an aspect of theology which Laurentin cared deeply about, his contribution is not in originality, but in making these concepts accessible beyond a specialist readership. Laurentin’s recourse to a wide range of titles and analogies has the merit of demonstrating both the impossibility of encapsulating the mystery of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit in words, and the fact that *attempting* to do so is a means of shedding light upon this mystery.

It is also important to highlight the fact that a foundational element of Laurentin’s presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is his emphasis upon the

¹²²⁵ Ibid. p. 133

¹²²⁶ *Mary and the Holy Spirit* (1998) p. 36

¹²²⁷ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 128

¹²²⁸ *L'Esprit Saint cet inconnu* p. 577

¹²²⁹ Ibid. p. 19

mysterious and discrete nature of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit is “revealing, not revealed”,¹²³⁰ and there are no satisfactory icons of him, because “he is essentially a hidden inspiration”.¹²³¹ This aspect of the nature of the Holy Spirit helps to explain why Mary is given titles relating to her revealing the Spirit, such as icon or sign of the Spirit. Similarly, it being in the Spirit’s nature to “step aside before Christ whom he reveals, and before each Christian whom he awakens to themselves”,¹²³² underlies Laurentin’s emphasis upon the Spirit awakening in Mary all her potentialities as a woman and as a mother, all her capacity for faith, for freedom and for dynamism,¹²³³ just as the Spirit reveals each Christian and each Church to themselves, enabling them “to become, from within, what they are called to be”.¹²³⁴

Key findings of the research

Having outlined Laurentin’s post-conciliar use of analogies and titles to provide points of entry into the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, we turn now to the principal findings of this research about the relationship of Mary and the Holy Spirit in the work of René Laurentin. These can be grouped into main themes: (a) the turning point of Vatican II; (b) the place given to charisms; (c) the prominent role of relationality and personal relationship; (d) Laurentin’s personal character, and (e) influences upon Laurentin.

(a) The turning point of Vatican II

The biographical approach taken in this research highlights the extent to which Vatican II was a turning point in Laurentin’s understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. As was demonstrated in Chapter 1, this relationship was far from prominent in his thematically diverse pre-conciliar writings. Laurentin’s extensive doctoral research into the Marian priesthood reveals very few connections between Mary and the Holy Spirit; his best-selling *Sens de Lourdes* only refers to the Spirit in connection to guiding the magisterium, and although his Scripturally focused writings, the second part of *Court traité* and *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*, naturally connect Mary and the Holy Spirit, there is less of an emphasis on the Holy Spirit in *Court traité* than in several other contemporaneous works of Marian theology.

¹²³⁰ Cf. *La redécouverte de l’Esprit Saint et des charismes dans l’Eglise actuelle* p. 15, quoting Moeller (in *Mélanges Philips*, Brussels, 1970, p. 589)

¹²³¹ *Petite vie de L. M. Grignon de Montfort* p. 120. In *Pilgrimages, Sanctuaries, Icons, Apparitions* Laurentin notes that the Gospel proposes the icon of a dove but emphasises that “iconography of the Holy Spirit remains difficult, ambiguous, an object of approximations, of errors and prohibitions” (p. 4).

¹²³² *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 189

¹²³³ Cf. p. 140 above

¹²³⁴ *Dieu seul est ma tendresse* p. 188. Cf. p. 183 above

The fact that Vatican II was a turning point in Laurentin's approach to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is illustrated by his (1965) *La Vierge au Concile*, particularly the commentary on *Lumen Gentium* nos. 60-64, which draws out connections between Mary and the Holy Spirit and contains themes which will be developed in Laurentin's later works. This new Pneumatological emphasis is at least partially explained by the increasing awareness of the Council of the need to express the role of the Holy Spirit, and by the influence of Eastern Christians, whose Pneumatology made a significant impact upon Laurentin. However, the extent to which Laurentin's explicit focus on Mary and the Holy Spirit in some of his post-conciliar writings was due to Vatican II is unclear, due to the significant influence both Mühlen and the Catholic charismatic renewal had upon him. What is evident is that there is a 'before' and an 'after' Vatican II for Laurentin's understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.¹²³⁵ Importantly, Laurentin was by no means unique in having this new emphasis, as is shown, for example, by the second (1967) edition of Mühlen's *Una mystica persona*, with the section on 'Mary and the mediation of the Holy Spirit' added to the first (1964) edition, and by the *Société française d'études mariales* taking 'The Holy Spirit and Mary' as its theme for the 1968-1970 conferences.

(b) The place given to charisms

Although Vatican II giving more prominence to the place of charisms within the Church would have undoubtedly influenced Laurentin,¹²³⁶ it is with his work on charismatic renewal that the charisms begin to have a prominent place in his writings about Mary. Laurentin was the first theologian writing about charismatic renewal to explicitly address questions such as whether Mary prophesied and spoke in tongues. What he said was by no means new, he was simply making known within this new context beliefs which were well-established in the Church's tradition. Laurentin's capacity to communicate effectively and judiciously to a wide audience, enhanced by the journalistic skills he acquired writing daily about the Council in *Le Figaro*, meant that his sharing these elements of the church's tradition made a notable contribution within the theology of charismatic renewal. His chapter on Mary in *Pentecôtisme chez les catholiques* was positively received by both Catholics and non-Catholic Christians,¹²³⁷ the significance of which was highlighted by the comparison of how it was received by evangelical

¹²³⁵ Laurentin himself stressed that Vatican II was a turning point in his life for another reason: it being the start of his rejection within ecclesial and theological circles. Cf. p. 82 above

¹²³⁶ Cf. p. 105 (footnote 632) above

¹²³⁷ As was discussed above (cf. pp. 99-100) an exception to this acclaim is from academic reviewers of his work who justifiably critiqued Laurentin's claim to be a 'neutral observer' of Catholic charismatic renewal.

Christians with their reception of Suenens' contemporaneous chapter about Mary and the Holy Spirit in *Une nouvelle Pentecôte ?*.¹²³⁸

One area in which Laurentin did claim to make a unique contribution was in presenting Mary's divine motherhood as being the key charism, and in his viewing Mary, prototype of the Church, as being the prototype of all ecclesial charisms. Laurentin recounts on several occasions how this idea came to him as he prepared an ecumenical report on Mary for the Dublin Charismatic congress of 1974. Significantly, he makes no reference to the similar idea present in Mühlen's (1967) *Una mystica persona*, a text which he often refers to in other contexts. As was demonstrated in Chapter 2 when Laurentin's appropriation of the ideas of others during the Council was discussed, the question of what is truly original in Laurentin's writings is an important one.¹²³⁹ It is worth noting that Laurentin's presentation of Mary's divine motherhood as archetypal charism has not made an impact upon Mariology. Although Gustavo Gutiérrez's (1928 -) *El Dios de la Vida* written in 1989, expresses the same idea, there is no indication that it did not emerge independently, and when Elizabeth Johnson (1941 -) mentions this concept in *Truly our sister*, it is Gutiérrez, not Laurentin (or Mühlen) that she refers to.¹²⁴⁰

In works written after Laurentin's engagement with Catholic charismatic renewal he describes apparition sites as being places where charisms are poured out, and apparitions themselves as being charisms of both the person appearing and the one receiving the vision. These are not original ideas, as Laurentin himself points out, including his emphasis that Aquinas categorised apparitions as charisms. However, given the prominence of Laurentin's status as a historian/theologian of apparitions, his connecting apparitions and charisms has received a large readership; in recent decades it has been Laurentin's writings which have disseminated these concepts. This example also illustrates the 'divide' between Laurentin's pre- and post-conciliar works; as was shown in Chapter 1, charism was not part of his pre-conciliar (and pre-Catholic charismatic renewal) theology of apparitions.

(c) The prominent role given to relationality and personal relationship

Laurentin does not explicitly link his turn to the relational to his involvement in and influence

¹²³⁸ Cf. pp. 105-107 above

¹²³⁹ Cf. pp. 57-58 above

¹²⁴⁰ Cf. Johnson, E. (2003) *Truly our sister: A theology of Mary in the communion of saints*. New York: Continuum, p. 277, referring to Gutiérrez's (1991) *The God of life*. London: SCM Press, p. 175, the English translation of *El Dios de la Vida* (Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de Las Casas).

by Catholic charismatic renewal, but it is highly likely that the emphasis upon personal relationship (both with God and with others) found in charismatic renewal contributed to his growing emphasis upon the centrality of personal relationship with the Triune God, with Mary and with others.¹²⁴¹ Whatever the extent of the influence of charismatic renewal, it is clear that this emphasis emerged after the Council, no doubt due to a range of theological and cultural influences, among which it is important to note Mühlen, for whom personal relations and the Spirit's role in enabling these, were at the heart of both ecclesiology and Trinitarian theology.¹²⁴²

Laurentin's post-conciliar desire to refer to Mary as a concrete individual is the most obvious application of his 'turn to the personal'. Building on the foundation laid in his (1953) *Court traité* where he emphasises that the Theotokos "is not a 'first principle' from which all can be deduced (like geometry from a postulate); but a *personal relationship* which requires all the rest",¹²⁴³ Laurentin's (1965) *La Vierge au Concile* stresses that Mary's motherhood is a concrete historical reality which happened to a person, and criticises "scholastic rationalism" for substituting "divine maternity" for "mother of God."¹²⁴⁴ This move from abstraction "to a more *existential* way of thinking, concerned to express without artificiality the mystery of the person and interpersonal relationships",¹²⁴⁵ is concretely shown in Laurentin's post-conciliar re-naming of the *Court traité*, and in his dislike of the terms 'Mariology' and 'Marian', which "makes an adjective of the person of Mary."¹²⁴⁶ Importantly, it is precisely as a person that Mary can be in relationship with the Holy Spirit, and as a person that the Holy Spirit awakens her to the best of herself, awakening her freedom and her dynamism, so that, as the 'harp (or lyre) of the Holy Spirit', she becomes more fully herself the more the Holy Spirit rouses her to her proper, personal, free, existence.¹²⁴⁷ Similarly, Laurentin links Mary's personal relationship with the Holy Spirit with the fact that she *participates* in the activity of the Spirit rather than being a *substitute* for him.¹²⁴⁸

¹²⁴¹ Cf. McDonnell, K. (1979) 'The experience of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic charismatic renewal', pp. 95-102 in Küng, H. and Moltmann, J. (eds.) *Conflicts about the Holy Spirit*. New York: The Seabury Press, p. 100: "Essential to the charismatic movement is the insight that the relationship to the divine communion leads to the formation of community, the extension of person to person contact, and the extension of relationship."

¹²⁴² Cf. pp. 76-77 above

¹²⁴³ *Court traité* (1953) p. 111 (Translation from *Queen of Heaven* p. 134)

¹²⁴⁴ *La Vierge au Concile* p. 147

¹²⁴⁵ Laurentin, R. (1966) 'Le chapitre de Beata Virgine devant les exigences de la rénovation conciliaire', *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 16, pp. 5-32, p. 8

¹²⁴⁶ Cf. pp. 91-92 above; the quote is from *Découverte de Marie dans le renouveau charismatique* p. 101

¹²⁴⁷ Cf. pp. 132, 140, 182-183, 188-189 above

¹²⁴⁸ Cf. p. 190 above

As was discussed in Chapter 6, a further facet of Laurentin's stress upon the relational is found in his personalistic approach to apparitions which led him to place significant weight upon meeting with those claiming to have received visions as a criterion for judgement, and of assessing the influence of apparitions on the seers, since authentic apparitions are "enriching interpersonal relationship(s)" which transform and illuminate those who receive them.¹²⁴⁹ Thus, the role Laurentin gives to relationality also influences his approach to assessing what is a genuine apparition, although Laurentin's own mis-judgements of people purporting to have had visions indicates the problematic nature of this evaluative criterion.

(d) Laurentin's personal character

An important element of this biographical approach to Laurentin's presentation of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is the personal characteristics of Laurentin which informed or shaped his writings. It is evident that Laurentin was a complex character, who, as Perrier declares, it is impossible to categorise:

As exegetes say to designate a word which is only found once in Scripture, 'it is a hapax'. Laurentin is a hapax. The problem with hapaxes is that it is difficult to find a precise meaning by bringing together several usages of the same word. It is the same with Laurentin: unclassifiable.¹²⁵⁰

Nonetheless, some aspects of Laurentin's multi-faceted character have emerged strongly in this study, without which he would not have left such a remarkable literary legacy. These include Laurentin's courage, perseverance, work-ethic, capacity for teamwork, and availability for service to the Church, as well as his determination to utilise all sources of information and all means of dissemination possible. While an analysis of Laurentin's character could furnish a separate doctoral thesis, these key aspects will be briefly highlighted.

Laurentin's determination, against the advice of many, to base his academic career on his doctorates on the Marian priesthood, demonstrates both his single-mindedness and his courage in daring to risk his ecclesial reputation in this way. His remarkable dedication to thorough research, not without considerable cost to his mental well-being,¹²⁵¹ is vividly illustrated at numerous stages of his life, by his three doctorates on the Marian Priesthood and his extensive research on Lourdes, Rue de Bac, Medjugorje and Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit,

¹²⁴⁹ Cf. pp. 165-167 above; the quote is from *Dictionnaire des "apparitions" de la Vierge Marie* p. 630 (Part of the article on 'Méthodologie')

¹²⁵⁰ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 166

¹²⁵¹ Cf. p. 19 (footnote 88) above

to name just a few of the many areas he examined as thoroughly as was possible. Laurentin's availability for service to the Church is epitomised in his not only accepting Mgr Théas' request to research Lourdes despite having no personal attraction to this area of study but devoting many years of his life to it.¹²⁵²

To achieve his aims, Laurentin travelled extensively, and was open to all means of communication, not only producing both scholarly and popular works, but also authoring simple books for children on the life of saints,¹²⁵³ and making "numerous and regular appearances on French television",¹²⁵⁴ including regularly contributions to the television programme '*Mystère*', popular in both France and Italy in the early 1990s.¹²⁵⁵ He was single-minded in achieving the task in hand, regardless (or perhaps unaware of) what was socially acceptable, as Congar's accounts of the increasingly aggravating nature of Laurentin's interpersonal interactions during the Council reveal.¹²⁵⁶ Faced with marginalisation and even ecclesial prohibitions, Laurentin was indefatigable. As he pragmatically remarked, "precious is the advice of Jesus: *If they persecute you in one place, flee to another*".¹²⁵⁷ Thus, on being forbidden to write on certain subjects, he simply turned to others, manifesting the same "calm astuteness" that his sister Menie noted in him as a child.¹²⁵⁸

Given Laurentin's relentless work-ethic, it is significant that he was a team-worker, collaborating with others to arrive at the desired goal. Collaboration became more necessary as his sight failed; although unable to read or write since 2005, Laurentin dictated his works to what sound like long-suffering secretaries, and often co-authored texts with others, a situation which can make identifying Laurentin's personal position problematic.¹²⁵⁹

¹²⁵² Cf. Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 179: "Can we summarise a life of almost one hundred years? ...it seems to me that the word 'service' captures well his vocation. ...He thought to serve the Church, as he could: 'There are things which I can do and others which I cannot do'. His aim was 'to help others to do better what they had to do.'"

Similarly, Simiz emphasises that "Laurentin never forgot that he did this work [researching apparitions] for the Church and not for a university or an independent research body." [Simiz, *René Laurentin (1917-2017). Théologien, mariologue et historien des apparitions* p. 812]

¹²⁵³ Cf. (1979) *Vie de Bernadette racontée aux enfants*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, and (1981) *Catherine Laboure. Sa vie, ses apparitions, son message. Racontée à tous*. Paris: Desclée De Brouwer.

¹²⁵⁴ Simiz, *René Laurentin (1917-2017)* p. 807

¹²⁵⁵ Cf. Laurentin, R. (2002) '*Préface*' in Sbalchiero, P. (ed.) *Dictionnaire des miracles et de l'extraordinaire chrétiens*. Paris: Fayard, p. xv-xxii, p. xviii

¹²⁵⁶ Cf. pp. 53-54, 58 above

¹²⁵⁷ *Mémoires* p. 560, referring to Mt 10:23. This was a favoured maxim of Laurentin which is also quoted on p. 497 of his memoirs.

¹²⁵⁸ Cf. Gregoire, *Telle que je suis* p. 116: "Jacques (René) put at the service of the community his calm astuteness when the demands of parents were impossible".

¹²⁵⁹ Cf. p. 167 above

Each of these aspects of Laurentin's personal character directly influenced his theological writings. His habit of recording everything other theologians shared,¹²⁶⁰ combined with his journalistic flair for making theology accessible to the non-specialist, demonstrate that two significant aspects of Laurentin's theological legacy were his capacity to gather varied material on a subject and his talent for popularising the views of other, often less accessible, theologians, such as Mühlen. The significance of his remarkable capacity as a historian to reveal forgotten or little-known aspects of earlier theologians, and his faithful and indefatigable curiosity, which included an enthusiasm for a wide range of disciplines to make their contribution, should not be underestimated.

(e) Influences upon Laurentin

The chronological approach adopted in this study has shown how significant developments and changes occurred over the many decades of Laurentin's contribution to Marian theology, as he was influenced by and participated in movements within Church and society. At each stage of Laurentin's life he engaged with theological and cultural realities and was influenced by a range of personal relationships including family members and a wide array of seers and mystics, as well as theologians, like Mühlen, who made a lasting positive impact upon Laurentin, and Brown, with whom he engaged in relentless polemical disputes.

Given that Laurentin was writing about Mary, it is only natural to ask to what extent his relationship with his own mother influenced him. As was shown in Chapter 1, Laurentin's *Mémoires* and the autobiography of Menie, his sister, differ significantly in their manner of relating their early experience of family life. While there are indications that René's relationship with his mother was complex, such as his unusual frequent reference to 'possessive mothers',¹²⁶¹ and Menie's graphic account of their dysfunctional upbringing,¹²⁶² the nature of René's relationship with his mother remains unknown. Apart from recollections of his early years in his *Mémoires* and *Église qui vient*, and occasional similar references in other works, Laurentin does not refer to his parents. Despite his openness in sharing other deeply personal aspects of his life, such as the extent to which he suffered from anxiety,¹²⁶³ Laurentin never reflects upon the sickness or death of either of his parents. This is in stark contrast to Menie who gives a detailed account of her father's death after suffering with brain cancer and

¹²⁶⁰ Cf. pp. 57-58 above

¹²⁶¹ Cf. pp. 12-13 above

¹²⁶² Cf. pp. 9-12 above

¹²⁶³ Cf. pp. 14-15, 19 (footnote 88) above

his remarkable hospitality to men of the road in his final years,¹²⁶⁴ and describes her mother's "atrocious suffering, with an almost inhuman courage" with cancer.¹²⁶⁵ René's silence is all the more conspicuous compared with Menie's frank account of their mother's final hours.¹²⁶⁶ Ultimately, all that can be said of this seminal source of Laurentin's understanding of the maternal is that it remains clouded in mystery.

The reception of Laurentin's writings on Mary and the Holy Spirit

As was emphasized at the start of this work, there has been relatively little scholarly engagement with Laurentin's Marian theology. His keen interest in apparitions has been criticised, particularly his support for controversial seers and mystics such as the Medjugorje visionaries and Vassula Ryden; his critical Bilan about the Third Synod was the catalyst for what Laurentin called the "campaign of calumnies" against him,¹²⁶⁷ and his post-conciliar approach to Scripture received significant censure, principally by the prestigious Raymond Brown. However, apart from Levering's article '*Mary and the Holy Spirit in the 1950s: Presaging Lumen Gentium*',¹²⁶⁸ Laurentin's approach to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit has only been assessed as part of wider discussions, such as Salgado's critique of Laurentin's use of Mühlen.¹²⁶⁹

Although articles such as Eliseo Tourón del Pie's (1981) *María en la escatología de Lucas* discuss Laurentin's understanding of Mary and the Holy Spirit in relation to approaches taken by other contemporary scholars,¹²⁷⁰ these views tend to be presented as complementary rather than conflicting. For example, Tourón del Pie summarises interpretations of Luke 1:35 of

¹²⁶⁴ Cf. *Telle que je suis* pp. 36-41

¹²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 235. Menie describes her dying mother as being "like the images of the damned that she had made me look at for so long." (p. 63)

¹²⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid. pp. 235-237. Menie recounts how it was Anne, their youngest sister who remained with their mother as she died as Menie could no longer bear remaining with her.

¹²⁶⁷ *L'évangélisation après le quatrième Synode* p. 203. Cf. p. 86 (footnote 502) and pp. 157-158 (footnote 989) above

¹²⁶⁸ Cf. pp. 29-32 above

¹²⁶⁹ Cf. p. 81 above. It should be noted that several significant articles from the 1980s about Mary and the Holy Spirit either do not mention Laurentin or only refer to him briefly without real engagement. Angelo Amato's extensive article '*Lo Spirito Santo e Maria nella ricerca teologica odierna delle varie confessioni cristiane in occidente*' (in *Maria e lo Spirito Santo. Atti del 4° Simposio Mariologico Internazionale (Roma, ottobre, 1982)* (1984) Rome/Bologne: Edizioni Marianum, pp. 9-101) discusses a range of post-conciliar theologians (Mühlen, Manteau-Bonamy, Roschini, Bertetto, von Balthasar, Boff, Pikaza and Chavannes) but only refers in passing to Laurentin's (1967) *Esprit Saint et théologie mariale* (on p. 11). The same book contains Serra's '*Aspetti Mariologici della Pneumatologia di Lc 1,35a*' (pp. 133-200), which refers on several occasions to Laurentin but does not substantially engage with his work. [Pages 135 and 149 refer to *Structure et théologie de Luc 1-2*, and pp. 197-198 to Laurentin's understanding of parallels between the Annunciation and Pentecost, referring to *La Vergine Maria. Mariologia post-conciliare* (Roma, 1970), an Italian translation of *Court traité* (1968).]

¹²⁷⁰ *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 31, pp. 241-266. This article is discussed in de Fiorés, S. (1986) '*Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans les derniers temps selon Grignon de Montfort*', *Études Mariales*, 43, pp. 133-171, pp. 166-167.

Laurentin (from his *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II*), C.-K. Barrett and Xavier Pizaka, and concludes that they are in no way contradictory, with each highlighting in different ways “the fullness of the Spirit in Mary, witness to the presence and the beginning of the end times.”¹²⁷¹ Similarly, de Fiorés’ account of ‘*Mary in postconciliar theology*’ twenty-five years after Vatican II, which discusses a number of approaches to the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, does not view them as opposing or mutually exclusive.¹²⁷² De Fiorés’ conclusion demonstrates how Laurentin’s central emphases are clearly present within de Fiorés’ account of the then current theological status quo, and indicates Laurentin’s influence:

Theological research has established an area of agreement in which Mary is recognised as the *place of encounter, witness or sign, and sanctuary of the Spirit*: through her special acceptance of the Paraclete at the Annunciation and at Pentecost, the Virgin became *par excellence* “she who bears and is conformed to the Spirit.” ... While theology rejects the identification between Mary and the Holy Spirit on the personal level, it does tend to emphasize the unity existing between them on the operative level.¹²⁷³

Another approach to viewing how Laurentin’s accounts of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit have been received is by highlighting alternative approaches, which, by their very nature, indicate that they believe that Laurentin’s approach is lacking. For example, Montague’s (2011) *Mary’s life in the Spirit: Meditations on a Holy Duet* takes Laurentin’s understanding of Marian apparitions to be charisms to another level with Montague’s explicit statement that “authentic apparitions of Mary are really apparitions of the Holy Spirit working through her”.¹²⁷⁴ Similarly, those promoting Kolbe’s Mariology with his reference to Mary as ‘Quasi-Incarnation of the Holy Spirit’, and having been ‘transubstantiated into the Holy Spirit’, will naturally find Laurentin’s approach minimalistic in comparison.¹²⁷⁵

¹²⁷¹ p. 265; cf. de Fiorés, *Le Saint-Esprit et Marie dans les derniers temps selon Grignon de Montfort* p. 167

¹²⁷² For example, de Fiorés (p. 499) summarises the approach of several theologians who emphasise “a certain identification of the Holy Spirit with Mary”, including “on the level of activity or synergy (Bertetto), visible mission (Manteau-Bonamy), transparency (Pikaza), and even personal unity (Boff’s hypothesis).”

¹²⁷³ pp. 500-501. The quote within this text comes from Fernández, D. and Rivera, A, (1978) “*Boletín bibliográfico sobre el Espíritu* Ephemerides Mariologicae *santo y María*”, Ephemerides Mariologicae, 28, pp. 265-273.

¹²⁷⁴ Montague, G. (2011) *Mary’s life in the Spirit: Meditations on a Holy Duet*. Fredrick MD: The Word Among Us Press, p. 26. Montague describes apparitions as “artistic creations of the Holy Spirit mediating a presence of the Mother of God in a form that the local visionaries and the people can instantly identify with.” (p. 115) Elizabeth Johnson describes how Orlando Espín has taken a similar approach, maintaining that the profound devotion to Guadalupe is “a superbly inculturated experience of the Holy Spirit”, and how “Espín lists a growing number of thinkers who are making similar suggestions that manifestations of the *Virgen* are not always the same as manifestations of Mary the mother of Jesus but signify the presence of the Spirit.” Cf. *Truly our sister* pp. 83-84, referring to Espín’s (1997) *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, and his article ‘*An Exploration into the Theology of Grace and Sin*’, in Espín, O. and Diaz, M. (eds.) *From the Heart of Our People*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, pp. 121-152, p. 150.

¹²⁷⁵ Cf. Miravelle, J.-M (2018) ‘*Mary and Divinization: Peter Fehlner on Our Lady and the Holy Spirit*’ in Goff, J. I., Kappes, C. and Ondrako, E. (eds.) *The Spirit and the Church: Peter Damian Fehlner’s Franciscan Development of*

The pertinence of this study

In considering the significance of this study, the natural starting point is the incongruous situation within contemporary Marian theology where a theologian of the stature of Laurentin has received so little academic attention. Not only did the account of Laurentin's contribution to the Marian debates of Vatican II in Chapter 2 show how central he was to the final version of *Lumen Gentium* Chapter VIII, but the sheer volume of his publications about Mary and the fact that he was internationally recognised as *the* leading expert on apparitions demonstrate the need for his contributions to be critically assessed. As Brigitte Waché, currently the President of the *Société Française d'Études Mariales*, stated in the introduction to the homage paid to Laurentin at the conference following his death, a "systematic study of his contribution to the Mariology of the second half of the twentieth century" is very clearly called for.¹²⁷⁶ Almost thirty years earlier Cardinal Sin had praised Laurentin's "lifetime of outstanding dedication to Marian studies" and spoke of the "debt of profound gratitude" owed to him by the international Catholic community.¹²⁷⁷ Although this study is necessarily limited by the time and space permitted for a doctoral study, the constraints in its extent serve to demonstrate that further research into Laurentin's contribution to Marian theology would be opportune.

Similarly, since Vatican II the need for the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit to receive theological attention has become increasingly evident, with Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* exhorting meditation on and study of the working of the Holy Spirit in salvation history, which will manifest the "hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, and show the influence they exert on the Church".¹²⁷⁸ Moreover, nos. 721-726 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly reflect on various aspects of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷⁹ It can be asserted that this research project provides an original contribution to the question of Laurentin's place within the growing awareness of the significance of the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, both in terms of the content of his writings and in his expressing established concepts in an accessible form.

Vatican II on the Themes of the Holy Spirit, Mary, and the Church—Festschrift. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, pp. 88-96. Miravelle recounts Peter Damian Fehler's (1931-2018) exploration of Kolbe's language concerning Mary and the Holy Spirit: "We hear to our astonishment that St. Maximilian called Mary the 'Complement of the Trinity', a 'quasi-part' of the Trinity, the 'Quasi-Incarnation of the Holy Spirit', and stated further that Mary is 'Transubstantiated into the Holy Spirit.'" (p. 89)

¹²⁷⁶ Waché, B. (2019) *Introduction*, *Études Mariales*, 73, pp. 7-9, p. 9

¹²⁷⁷ Sin, J. (1990) *Greetings in Κεχαριτωμένη*, pp. 27-28, p. 27

¹²⁷⁸ No. 27

¹²⁷⁹ The significance of the Catechism devoting several numbers to Mary and the Holy Spirit is emphasised by Mike Scherschlight, founder and executive director of the 'Holy Family School of Faith'. Cf. Scherschlight, M. (2018) 'Mary, Sacrament of the Spirit', *Marian Forum* 7, International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, 12th October 2018 (text distributed to participants but unpublished).

Avenues of further research

The final note on which this study will end is highlighting areas of further study which are indicated by the current research. From a biographical point of view, an extremely significant untouched source is the unpublished second (and possibly third) volume(s) of Laurentin's *Mémoires*. In the first volume of his *Mémoires* Laurentin speaks of a second volume due to be published shortly after the first, which Perrier refers to as "currently sleeping in a chest" because Laurentin "found it too explosive",¹²⁸⁰ as well as a final volume to be published a few years after his death.¹²⁸¹ Should these become accessible they would be of invaluable worth in understanding both Laurentin and his writings.

The two substantial theological themes which did not fall within the remit of this study but to which it points are 'Mary and God the Father', and 'the Trinity and relationality'. Building on an established tradition,¹²⁸² in his later years Laurentin gives a substantial role to the relationship between Mary and the Father, including asking whether "the spiritual maternity of Mary has been substituted for the heavenly Father", in an analogous way to her "substitution for the Holy Spirit" which he and many other theologians criticised.¹²⁸³ Laurentin writes that God the Father "placed the most beautiful image of his paternity in a woman, the Virgin Mary", and that consequently, in another sense than Jesus, Mary could also say, "Who sees me, sees the Father." (John 4:9).¹²⁸⁴ With the same language of 'icon', 'sign' and 'image' which he used in attempting to capture in words the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, Laurentin utilises analogies to describes Mary as "the most perfect icon of the paternity/maternity of the Father with regard to the same Son";¹²⁸⁵ with her compassion at Calvary being "a sign, icon and sacrament of the mysterious compassion of the Father in the Passion of his Son",¹²⁸⁶ and her becoming at Pentecost "the feminine and living image of the adoptive paternity of the Father in the midst of his first reborn children in Jerusalem."¹²⁸⁷ Laurentin's presentation of the relationship between Mary and God the Father and how this relationship is connected to the

¹²⁸⁰ Perrier, *Sous le manteau de la Vierge* p. 164

¹²⁸¹ *Mémoires* p. 14. Laurentin declared that "there would be no shame in recounting the continuation" which he had so far kept to himself "because notoriety makes of its beneficiary a battered man". (*Mémoires* p. 558)

¹²⁸² For example, Michel Dupuy describes how for de Bérulle "the maternity of Mary is even more often placed in relationship with the divine Fatherhood than with the infecundity of the Spirit" and relates how John Eudes "devotes a chapter to 'Mary, image of the Father', and a chapter to 'Mary, image of the Son', just like he devotes one to 'Mary, image of the Spirit'". Cf. Dupuy, M. (1969) *L'Esprit et Marie dans l'Ecole Française*, Études Mariales 26, pp. 19-35, p. 31

¹²⁸³ *Dieu notre Père* p. 261. Laurentin continues (p. 262): "If this reproach can be founded in some particular cases (as for the Holy Spirit), it would be unjust and a caricature to generalise this."

¹²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 331

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 383

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 384. Cf. pp. 309-311

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 385

relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit is an extremely rich theme and would be a very suitable extension of the work covered in this study.

A second theme falling outside the specific remit of this research is the extent of the theological and personal consequences of Laurentin's research on the Trinity and the illumination he received about the relatedness of all things.¹²⁸⁸ If, as has been emphasised, Vatican II was a decisive turning point for Laurentin, a second, important development occurs with Laurentin's research and writings on the Trinity, from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s.¹²⁸⁹ In his speech on receiving the cross of Officer of the Legion of Honour in 2002 Laurentin spoke of his work on the Trinity as "a late source of all light", describing how, like the sciences, theology has progressed to "rethink everything in terms of relation".¹²⁹⁰ In his (1999) *La Trinité mystère et lumière* Laurentin declares,

All love tends towards unity. Absolute love is absolute unity. I needed half a century to finally understand this. It is the message of this book: the good news of the year 2000.¹²⁹¹

Although Laurentin had initially believed that Trinitarian theology was "abstruse, a beautiful metaphysical poem but irrelevant to life",¹²⁹² his study of both the Trinity and existential personalism, "which discovered the interpersonal character of all people in the image of God",¹²⁹³ led him to the belief that the Trinity is "the vital concrete subject *par excellence*". Expressed simply, this is because 'God is love' and we are "his children called to join his eternal life of love", for "he is our future".¹²⁹⁴ This new emphasis, emerging in Laurentin's later years, naturally has ramifications for Mariology, as Laurentin emphasises in his "*Hommage à la prof. Cettina Militello 6^e lauréate du 'Prix Laurentin – Pro Ancilla Domini'*":

The organic edifice of relationships of love is founded upon God, who is love, with Mary in the first place in this living organism: the vine of which we are the branches, being the closest to people, because she is the closest to God, in the great current of love which proceeds from the Father and returns irresistibly to him.¹²⁹⁵

¹²⁸⁸ Cf. pp. 169-170 above

¹²⁸⁹ In his (2001) *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* (p. 181) Laurentin relates how he devoted fifteen years to theological research on the Trinity, "the supreme theme" of which he "thought himself, unworthy, incapable."

¹²⁹⁰ *Remise de la Croix d'Officier de la Légion d'honneur* pp. 3-4, referring to Laurentin's (1999) *La Trinité mystère et lumière* and the abridged version (2000) *Traité sur la Trinité*.

¹²⁹¹ p. 12

¹²⁹² *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 181

¹²⁹³ *Science, Philosophie, Révélation* pp. 170-171

¹²⁹⁴ *La consécration aujourd'hui à Dieu par Marie* p. 181

¹²⁹⁵ p. 548

Exploring the consequences for his presentation of Mary of Laurentin's stress upon relationality founded upon Trinitarian theology, as found in his later writings, would be a fitting extension of the research covered in this thesis. Such research would also involve an exploration of Laurentin's understanding of personalism, for instance how it relates to the various forms of personalism, not only that of Mühlen, but as found in other influential theologians/philosophers such as Vladimir Lossky (1903-1958) and John Paul II.

Concluding comments

This study has shown that the value of the varied ways in which Laurentin reflected on the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit lies not so much in his originality, which is limited, but in the extent of his work and the different lights he was able to shed upon this mystery from the various theological approaches taken. While some of his studies, particularly his earlier writings, had little reference to this relationship (for example Laurentin's unparalleled work on the Marian priesthood), others, such as his highly accessible writings on Catholic charismatic renewal, provide valuable insights, drawing strongly upon both Scripture and the Church's tradition. Laurentin's openness to both historical sources and the insights he gained from movements at that time in their infancy such as semiotics and charismatic renewal, demonstrate that it can be said of him that like a "scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven", he "brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."¹²⁹⁶ While many of these 'treasures' still require dissemination, including translation into languages other than their original French, the contribution they have to Mariology is without doubt. May this research serve to open, albeit in a limited manner, these treasures to a wider readership and greater academic engagement.

¹²⁹⁶ Cf. Matthew 13:52

Appendix 1: Images from Laurentin's (1951) *Le Sacerdoce de la Vierge, Étude Iconographique: Deuxième volume: Dossier Iconographie*

(a) Stained glass image showing the Virgin Mary in chasuble and dalmatic overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. From Flumme, in the Landesmuseum of Zurich; 12th century.
Image on p. 162 and brief commentary on p. 163



(b) The Virgin giving the Eucharist in the vault of the Church of Kleranta (diocese of Bressanone, Italy). A fresco from the 13th century, of unknown author. Image on p. 282 and commentary on p. 283



(c) Print of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin and the Apostles*, from Charles Le Brun's painting in the chapel of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, commissioned by Jean-Jacques Olier (17th century).

Image on p. 94 and commentary on pp. 79-95



Modern photograph of the same image, now in the chapel of the Sulpician house, Rue du Regard, Paris. Source: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/charles-le-brun/la-descente-du-saint-esprit-1654> (accessed 12/05/2021)



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