

Globalisation: Unity, Diversity or the End of Religion in the Age of Mary

Janet Kahl

This paper discusses the effects of globalisation on the modern world and considers whether this has influenced the rise of Marian pilgrimage sites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a period which has been described as the 'Age of Mary'. The Virgin Mary has appealed to ordinary people all over the world, and, particularly during this period, lay people have had visions of the Virgin Mary. The increasing number of sites of Marian pilgrimage and veneration is also considered in relation to globalisation.

The Virgin Mary is not linked to any one place as other saints are. She can thus be seen as a global saint, available to all and associated with many places. This is reinforced by common motifs that provide a unity between sites, including water, apparitions, relics and grottoes. Motives for pilgrimage include a desire for miraculous cures and intercession, spiritual reflection and devotion. These motives can, however, be complex, as the pilgrim may approach a sacred site with a range of interpretations and expectations and may, in addition, be a tourist as well as a pilgrim. Commerce can be present, providing further complexity through the exchange of money at the site as well as affecting the economy of the surrounding area. Globalisation and industrialisation have made pilgrimage easier through better transport and those sites that are closer to major centres can enjoy greater pilgrimage visits. Globalisation has also meant that Australia has been influenced by other cultures, traditions and rituals which have provided a rich pastiche in Marian devotion. Some Marian sites are linked to the Virgin warning the world of God's punishment for its lack of faith and warning against an end of religion. It can be argued that these messages became increasingly apocalyptic as the twentieth century concluded and the new millennium approached.

The Commonwealth Government in its Multilateral Agreement on Investment Final Report used the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) definition of globalisation: 'the rapid integration of economies worldwide through trade, financial flows, technology spillovers, information networks and cross-cultural currents'.¹ In

¹ *Multilateral Agreement on Investment: Final Report*, Report 18, Commonwealth of Australia, March 1999, p. 7.

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this era of globalisation, then, the world has shrunk, information is exchanged more rapidly, companies no longer feel required to operate only at the local level, and the idea of nationalism and borders has blurred. The benefits of globalisation are considered to include the ability to provide goods and services to any part of the world, freedom to use any labour supply, take advantage of 'economies of scale', and to use and distribute information in any arena.¹ Another perceived benefit of globalisation is the use of technology and the Internet.²

Just as there are apparent benefits to globalisation there are perceived disadvantages, and this is where public debate has been concentrated. The disadvantages of globalisation include the disruption and unemployment that can be caused at the local level, particularly when an international company withdraws its business to pursue cheaper labour in another country, chooses to downsize or work becomes more computerised and automated than before.³ Countries not benefiting from globalisation may experience unemployment, fewer job opportunities, particularly for women, and a widening gap between rich and poor.⁴

This latter view of globalisation is particularly depressing. The anti-globalisation case asserts a lack of caring and concern among people; and that the nation-state is losing its ability to control monetary policy and political power and protect community welfare; and there appears to be a danger of losing national identity.⁵ The individual has been promoted and there is a lack of community concern and sharing of community spirit⁶ and a 'degradation of local cultures and pressure on customary values'⁷ which may result in a breakdown in society. In addition, society has become media-driven and obsessed with the idea that growth is good. It could be argued that religion has been discarded, replaced

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 11 and 20.

² Larry Elliot, 'A New World Disorder', *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 1999, p. 53.

³ Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann, *The Global Trap: Globalization and the Assault on Democracy and Prosperity*, trans. Patrick Camiller, Annandale, 1997, pp. 96-117.

⁴ *Multilateral Agreement on Investment: Final Report*, pp. 14 and 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

⁶ Satish Kumar, 'Gandhi's Swadeshi: The Economics of Permanence', in Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (eds), *The Case Against the Global Economy*, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1996, p. 420; and Jeannette Armstrong 'Sharing One Skin: Okanagan Community', in *Ibid.*, p. 468.

⁷ *Multilateral Agreement on Investment: Final Report*, p. 20.

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by science, drugs and materialism. Globalisation affects the way people live and the way they view their world.

One reaction to this perceived lack of community and caring may be a turning to religion to deal with issues that globalisation is considered to be causing or not addressing. Religion may provide a solution through tradition in an era where everything else is new and disrupted. It may be sought by the alienated individual for a community spirit that cannot be found in the secular, globalised world; indeed, Turner considers that throughout history, during periods of transition and change, religious interest has tended to increase.¹ Those who consider themselves alienated from the modern global world search for religious meaning in their own or other social structures, and a recent rise in conversion to Christianity has been observed by Cohen, Ben-Yehuda and Aviad.² The need to look 'for some deeper meaning and purpose in their lives' is one reason cited for why people join New Age movements.³ Conway in *The Rage for Utopia* suggests we need mythologies (and thus religion) to nourish the soul, for without it 'the modern world' is turned into 'a mental desert'.⁴ This search for religion, tradition and community may have given rise to the large number of Marian pilgrimage sites which have developed in the 'Age of Mary'.⁵

This Age of Mary has resulted in the large number of shrines and appearances of the Virgin Mary that have emerged particularly in the 'New World', such as at Cuapa in Nicaragua, Conyers in North America and at a number of sites in Australia. In addition, it was estimated in 1987 that two-thirds of Christian shrines in Europe were dedicated to the Virgin Mary.⁶ This apparent increase in veneration of the Virgin Mary is in contrast to the view that since Vatican II was released Mary has received less emphasis within the

¹ Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca, 1974, p. 172.

² Erik Cohen, Nachman Ben-Yehuda and Janet Aviad, 'Recentering the World: The Quest for 'Elective' Centers in a Secularized Universe', *Sociological Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, May 1997, pp. 324 and 329.

³ R. Guy Fielding and Sue Llewelyn, 'The New Religions and Psychotherapy: Similarities and Differences', in Guy Claxton (ed.), *Beyond Therapy: The Impact of Eastern Religions on Psychological Theory and Practice*, London, 1986, p. 282.

⁴ Ronald Conway, *The Rage for Utopia*, St Leonards, 1992, p. 243.

⁵ Victor Turner and Edith Turner, 'Postindustrial Marian Pilgrimage', in James J. Preston (ed.), *Mother Worship: Theme and Variations*, Chapel Hill, 1982, pp. 145 and 150.

⁶ Chris C. Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*, London, 1994, pp. 277-78.

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Catholic Church and that only a small proportion of Catholics are devoted to the Virgin Mary.¹ At the Anglican Christ Church at Yankalilla in South Australia, where an image believed to be Mary has appeared on a wall above the altar, the priest, Father Nutter, considers Mary's twentieth century role is teaching and calling people back to God. In his view, just as John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus, Mary is a forerunner of the coming of a new Christian era and is preparing the way for a reordering of creation back to God. Father Nutter considers that Mary's role is changing to a role of prophetess and that she is appearing to prepare for a rebirth of the church.²

For believers, through appearances at sites such as Yankalilla, the Virgin Mary has demonstrated to the community that she listens to, recognises, and cares for them which can provide comfort in an uncertain global world. Unlike earlier appearances to religious professionals, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen Mary appear to poor, lay people. In 1876 at Pellevoisin in France, for example, the Virgin Mary appeared to a servant girl several times and on the final occasion she was shown the Scapular of the Sacred Heart.³ As Carroll has written, 'to the believer, nothing so testifies to Mary's importance as the fact that she intervenes directly in the affairs of this earth by appearing face to face' with ordinary people.⁴ The Virgin Mary also has a history of being used as a symbol against invaders and was adopted in Mexico as a symbol against colonisation by the Spanish.⁵ In South America, however, this symbolism becomes problematic, as Sallnow found, as pilgrimage sites are used by the Spanish to demonstrate triumph over native (and thus evil) religion while the native population use these sites as reclamation of colonised land.⁶ Similarly, in the Age of Mary, the Virgin is now being turned to in the face of globalisation which can be seen as a form of colonialism whereby strong countries dominate poorer and less developed countries.

¹ Clare Hannagan. Interview on 24 October, 1998 with Janet Kahl.

² Father Andrew Nutter. Interview on 8 August, 1997 with Janet Kahl.

³ Michael Durham, *Miracles of Mary: Apparitions, Legends, and Miraculous Works of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, San Francisco, 1995, pp. 42-43.

⁴ Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*, Princeton, 1992, p. 115.

⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, New Haven, 1996, p. 180-181.

⁶ Michael Sallnow, 'Pilgrimage and Cultural Fracture in the Andes', in J. Eade and M. Sallnow (eds), *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, London, 1991, pp. 149-50.

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The Virgin Mary herself can be viewed as a global entity. She can be found in many parts of the world and is venerated in many religious ideologies - Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican - and is important as the mother of Jesus in Christian belief systems. She can be appealed to by believers all over the world, at any time, for intercession, healing and help. There are a host of Marian manifestations: Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Australia has its own Our Lady Help of Christians. Unlike other saints who are linked to particular sites, the Virgin Mary is not linked to any site in particular as there is no grave or body. The Catholic Church under Pius XII, proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption, *Munificentissimus Deus*, in 1950 stating the 'Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn'.¹ Marian relics thus tend to take a more personal, secondary form such as her sash, tunic, veil, hair and breast milk.² The historical popularity and efficacy of Marian relics was seen when a Laon Marian reliquary went on a 'fund-raising tour' in 1112 to pay for the Cathedral to be rebuilt.³

Relics can be found at sites dedicated to the Virgin Mary all over the world, thus providing a Marian global unity. In addition, common motifs can be found at these sites. Shrines and stations of the cross are visited by the pilgrim on the way to a pilgrimage centre which creates a heightened sense of devotion and sacrality. At the Pauline Father's Marian Valley in Queensland, shrines devoted to St Joseph and to Guadalupe are encountered on the path to the grotto. Their centre at Penrose Park near Berrima has stations of the cross placed along the path to the grotto situated on a hill; indeed many grottoes - a common Marian theme - are found on hills at pilgrimage sites as the hill enables the pilgrim to be closer to God. Water at many pilgrimage sites is believed to have miraculous and curative powers and many Marian pilgrimage sites have wells, springs and streams. The most famous and popular of such sites is Lourdes, where millions of pilgrims each year visit to bathe in, or drink, the waters for a miraculous cure.⁴ Reportedly, at Yankalilla, through the use of divining rods, fifteen streams have been

¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, Homebush, 1987, p. 86.

² Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215*, Aldershot, 1987, p. 133.

³ Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320*, London, 1992, p. 477; Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁴ John Eade, 'Order and Power at Lourdes: Lay Helpers and the Organization of a Pilgrimage Shrine', in Eade and Sallnow, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

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discovered.¹ These streams run 'under the apparition wall and it is believed that a number of streams converge under the altar to form three crosses'.² A pump was installed during 1996, and pilgrims may purchase bottles of holy water. A Sydney man is reported to have 'made some recovery from a brain tumour after drinking Yankalilla's holy water'.³ The water at Yankalilla is problematic, however, because it is no longer fit for human consumption and this raises questions regarding its efficacy.

Another common motif to be found globally at sites devoted to the Virgin Mary is that of apparitions, images and magical events which provide the pilgrim with the impression of a meeting with the divine. It is believed that at Lourdes the Virgin Mary appeared and instructed St Bernadette to drink and bathe in water from a spring located behind the grotto.⁴ It has been suggested by some that the Yankalilla image is a figment of the imagination or has resulted from salt damp or bad plastering.⁵ Others might argue, however, that even if it is bad plastering or salt damp, God has used that to create a miracle. As Brown has written, while reporting on the Florida image of Mary which appeared on an office building 'across nine panes of sun-reflecting glass', 'It's not what the image is that's important; it's what it's become'.⁶ The Benedictine Mission at New Norcia, Western Australia possesses a painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel which has been endowed with miraculous properties. In 1847 a bushfire was burning toward the mission and the monks and Aborigines fought the fire to prevent it destroying the mission's corn crop. Dom Salvado recorded that the monks were unable to beat back the fire so they

took the beautiful picture of Our Lady which had a place of honour over our altar, and placed it against the standing corn, which seemed about to catch fire at any moment. Then, with confident faith, we besought Her to look with maternal compassion upon our natives and upon ourselves. Merciful Heaven! No sooner was the sacred image of Mary placed in front

¹ Helen Chryssides, 'Visions of Mary', *The Bulletin*, Vol. 116, No. 6087, September 2, 1997, p. 16; and Jill Pengelley, 'Divine Help Finds 'Holy Water' Under Church', *The Advertiser*, August 21, 1996, p. 3.

² Chryssides, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³ Paul Lloyd, 'Holy or Hooley?', *The Advertiser*, December 14, 1996, p. 5.

⁴ Durham, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵ Chryssides, *op. cit.*, p. 16 and 'Simulacrum', <http://www.skeptics.com.au/journal/simulacrum.htm>, 6 March, 1998, p. 1.

⁶ Mick Brown, 'The Double Glazed Madonna', *She*, Sydney, August 1997, p. 66.

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of the raging fire than the wind blew in the opposite direction, carrying the flames away to where everything was already burnt black. The fire soon died out, and thus did we witness the protection granted by our Holy Mother.¹

In addition to common motifs, another global aspect is that special feast days are regularly celebrated around the world at sites dedicated to the Virgin Mary. At the Pauline Fathers' Marian Valley in Queensland and Penrose Park near Berrima these days include the Solemnity of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Fatima Day.² Such special days as these attract many worshippers, drawing pilgrims together to participate in community.

Motives for pilgrimage to Marian shrines can be many and varied. Shrines are visited for devotional purposes or to request intercession; the pilgrim may personally desire miraculous cures or they may be praying to Mary for others to be healed or helped. Shrines can also provide a place for spiritual reflection, set aside from the everyday. These sites can further provide pilgrims with a sense of shared religious experience, spiritual encouragement and a more intense form of worship and with the opportunity to encounter the divine. In addition, Marian pilgrimage shrines can be situated at a variety of locations such as missions, churches, monasteries and cult centres.

There is, however, complexity in the motives and purposes of the pilgrim. Eliade's view of the sacred centre, for example, can be challenged because pilgrimage sites do not always conform to strict devotional practices but may take many forms and interpretations within the sacred area.³ Shrines can be associated with singular, or a mixture of, events including miraculous cures, apparitions, heavenly messages and 'straightforward' Marian worship. Above all, 'the pilgrimage centre must achieve a reputation for having a unique character and offering something available at no other place with which it competes for patronage'.⁴ Bowman, however, considers that

¹ *The Story of New Norcia: The Western Australian Benedictine Mission*, 7th ed., New Norcia, 1991, p. 15.

² *Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy Penrose Park Calendar 1998/1999*, Penrose Park, 1998; and *Programme 1998: Welcome All Pilgrims to Special Devotions Held At Our Lady Help of Christians Shrine 'Marian Valley'*, Canungra, 1998.

³ Eade and Sallnow, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 and 10.

⁴ Alan Morinis (ed.), 'Introduction: The Territory of the Anthropology of Pilgrimage', in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Westport, Connecticut, 1992, p. 18.

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It is at the sites whence the pilgrims set out on their searches for the centre that pilgrims learn what they desire to find. At the centres where they go in expectation of fulfilling that desire pilgrims experience little other than that which they already expect to encounter.¹

If an alternative shrine is established that offers similar or more intense religious experiences an established shrine may experience a drop in pilgrim attendance. New Norcia, in Western Australia, was discontinued as a pilgrimage shrine in 1994, because while pilgrims continued to visit New Norcia, it was considered by the mission that the emergence of other, more frequent, pilgrimage activities were adequately catering to pilgrims needs.² Bullsbrook in Western Australia is a pilgrimage site associated with miraculous cures and holds regular pilgrimages.³ At Yankalilla, there are pilgrims of many denominations visiting, along with academic researchers gathering material, while tourists are present through curiosity or the desire to experience another 'culture'.

There may, indeed, be a difficulty in differentiating between the pilgrim and tourist. The pilgrim to Marian Valley who purchases holy water, for example, may also enjoy the holiday nature of Surfers Paradise and may purchase secular memorabilia. While the sites discussed are focused on devotional practices there is also an element of commercialism. Commercialism has been criticised by some pilgrims, particularly in relation to Lourdes, where there was perceived to be an overabundance of souvenir shops; this commercialism was deemed to detract from the spirituality of the centre.⁴ No overt commercialism appeared to be present the Marian sites visited within Australia. The exchange of money was limited to small on-site gift shops, while donations (for votive candles and holy water) are primarily used for shrine maintenance and development. According to Eade and Sallnow, the exchange of

¹ Glenn Bowman, 'Christian Ideology of the Image of a Holy Land: The Place of Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Various Christianities', in Eade and Sallnow, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

² Right Reverend Placid Spearritt. Letter dated 30 September, 1998 to Janet Kahl. The New Norcia monastery suffered, in addition, from a decrease in able-bodied monks, and pilgrims were therefore unable to be fully attended and ministered to.

³ Charles Waddell, 'Magic and Liturgical Correctness in the Church: The Story of a Spiritual Journey Home', *Australian Journal of Liturgy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1997, pp. 5-21.

⁴ Stephanie Yee. Interview on 1 August, 1998 with Janet Kahl.

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monies is complex, particularly within Catholicism, because 'a person performing an ostensibly selfless act of charity or abnegation, while spurning the idea of tangible, earthly rewards, will automatically reap spiritual dividends, whether or not such was his or her intention'.¹

Other complexities in commercialism are present at the Marian charismatic sites. The Little Pebble, or William Kamm, at Nowra, New South Wales, and Debra Geileskey's Magnificat Meal Movement at Helidon, Queensland, are reported to require members to donate their property and assets. This is perceived in the press to be a 'scam', an accusation levelled at many cults. It has been reported that The Little Pebble spent time in New York with the group, known as Our Lady of the Roses, led by Veronica Leuken, who has experienced visitations from the Virgin Mary since 1970.² It was also reported that Kamm had modelled his cult on Leuken's group, thus falling into Stark and Bainbridge's 'entrepreneur model of cult innovation'.³ That is, Kamm possibly observed how profits may be earned in receiving messages from the Virgin Mary and realised its marketability in Australia. Ex-members of The Little Pebble's cult report being requested to 'give all the money and property' they had to the mission in accordance with the theme 'Give all. Receive all'.⁴ Many Magnificat Meal Movement members are also reported to have transferred part or all of their property to the cult.⁵

Pilgrimage sites can be affected by the economy. Christian, in his study on shrines in Spain, has noted that 'shrines [can] experience periods of expansion and contraction'⁶ through financial crises which limit supportive donations and fluctuations in population affecting pilgrim numbers. He has noted that such shrines showed a decline which reflected world financial crises such as the depression in the early twentieth century. Improved economic conditions, however, do not necessarily mean that the pilgrimage

¹ Eade and Sallnow, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

² Durham, *op. cit.*, 174-175; and Susan Borham and Rosa Maiolo, 'Prophet & Loss', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 24, 1993, Spectrum 4A.

³ Borham and Maiolo, *op. cit.*, Spectrum 4A; and William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Stark, 'Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models', *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1979, pp. 287-288.

⁴ Borham and Maiolo, *op. cit.*, Spectrum 1 and 4A

⁵ Greg Roberts, 'Helidon: quiet one day, God's war zone the next', *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 12, 1997, p. 1.

⁶ William A. Christian, *Person and God in a Spanish Valley*, Seminar Press, New York, 1972, p. 65.

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site will enjoy patronage as other shrines may have gained in popularity. The reasons for increased patronage at other shrines cannot be easily explained and can be difficult to rationalise.¹ The area in which the pilgrimage site is situated can be profoundly affected by commercial aspects. If an influx of pilgrims occurs there will be a demand for accommodation, food and other essentials for the traveller as well as other worldly items such as signposting. At Yankalilla, some parishioners objected to changes being made to their church and they felt they were unable, and did not have the opportunity, to discuss the changes and events that were happening. This has led to the parish of Yankalilla splitting because there have been conflicting views and perceptions of what was important spiritually and materially within the parish. Conflict can thus arise within traditional parishes over the very presence of the shrine as local parishioners feel as though they are becoming less important than the visiting pilgrims. At the same time, others in the parish may be wishing to promote Marian pilgrimage to the area from many parts of the world.²

While many travel with the express intention of visiting a shrine they also take the opportunity to visit secular attractions and may participate in tours specially designed to visit religious sites. Some destinations, like Lourdes, began as regional pilgrimage sites but now attract pilgrims from all over the world.³ In this way, they have become global centres; indeed, Marian sites attract millions of people each year.⁴ Yet even the smallest and closest of sites may be places of pilgrimage in their own right. Chapels situated in local churches are also valid pilgrimage sites. While these sites are local and do not require a long journey, they are nonetheless visited for devotional purposes and can be considered places of pilgrimage. Large, overseas shrines where the Virgin Mary has appeared - Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje - may be considered by pilgrims to be more efficacious than local, regional sites which are thus ignored or visited only because they are cheaper and easier to access.

Globalisation and industrialisation have made pilgrimage popular through better transport. Christian⁵ and Turner⁶ note that

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

² *Visions of Yankalilla*, Australian Film Finance Corporation and Flaming Star Productions, 1998.

³ Park, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁴ Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁵ Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶ Turner, 'The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal', *History of Religions*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1972, p. 196.

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shrines which cater for travel by motor vehicle have expanded at the expense of those shrines 'inaccessible except by foot'.¹ There is a reluctance to experience difficult pilgrimage journeys.² Bullsbrook in Western Australia is situated closer to Perth than the Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia. Perhaps because of its more convenient access, Bullsbrook drew pilgrims away from New Norcia. Thus the improvements in transport that have facilitated globalisation also affect pilgrimage.

In Australia, while the centres are located in areas outside major urban centres, they are nonetheless relatively easy to visit. There are no major and difficult journeys to be accomplished. Marian Valley, for example, is a forty-five minute drive from Surfers Paradise. Penrose Park is twenty minutes by car south of Berrima, while Yankalilla is located in a small country town one hour's drive by road south of Adelaide. For Turner the 'peripherality of pilgrimage shrines ... can be interestingly related to ... [the] concept of the rite of passage, with its stages of separation, margin or limen and reaggregation'.³ The Marian Valley pilgrim leaves the multinational world of Surfer's Paradise, travels through picturesque tropical scenery and enters the shrine's sacredness. Through worship with others, the pilgrim focuses on Marian devotion and experiences a strong sense of *communitas*.

This *communitas* can be found especially in rural villages in countries such as Greece and Spain, where each area has its own shrine. It could be argued, however, that a movement toward urban areas, for employment and more opportunity, would affect local, rural shrine attendance; indeed, Christian considers that local rural shrines are affected because 'small rural shrines are no longer chic'.⁴ Further, there is a lack of the community coming together to participate in specific, unifying events. Unlike villages in Greece, Australian towns and suburban communities, now multicultural and global, may not rely collectively on, or even believe in, the potency of the Virgin Mary for their profitable existence.⁵

Immigration has provided a mix of cultures and exposure to different forms of religious devotion as well as religious tradition in Australia. Historical Marian traditions associated with European centres provide an authenticity for some Australian centres. The Shrine of Our Lady of Islington at Saint Mark's, Newcastle, New

¹ Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

² Turner and Turner, 'Postindustrial Marian Pilgrimage', p. 148.

³ Turner, 'The Center Out There: Pilgrim's Goal', p. 213.

⁴ Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵ Mary Evripidou. Interview with Janet Kahl on 22 October, 1998.

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South Wales, was established in 1984 and was promoted as being linked with a namesake in London, purported to have been established in approximately 1128.¹ Islington, New South Wales, could thus claim a devotional and ancient history to provide a sense of authenticity to encourage pilgrims.² At Marian Valley the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa is at the altar thus providing a link with the Polish fourteenth century Black Madonna painting. At New Norcia the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel is related to a fifteenth century fresco of the Virgin Mary which had miraculously appeared in a church in Genazzano, Italy.³

Religious tradition related to the Virgin Mary in multicultural Australia is a further demonstration of a mix of cultures and traditions. The Greek Orthodox Church, for example, celebrates Mary's feast day on 8 September in Australia. On this occasion, those who have the Virgin Mary's day as their name day take five bread loaves, stamped with the sign of the cross, olive oil and *coomandaria* (port) to the church. At the end of the service these offerings are blessed by the priest and prayers are offered as requested in petitions.⁴

Aboriginal Australians have been exposed to Christianity and there is a resultant merging of indigenous and European religious beliefs.⁵ Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, whose painting 'Hail Mary' demonstrates the merging of the Christian Virgin Mary into Aboriginal painting where the star in the centre, for example, represents Mary as Star of the Sea. The tones are black and brown and represent the Earth while the circles are signs of womanhood with Mary, as the central star, the foremost woman.⁶ As a further example of Aboriginal people absorbing Western Christian

¹ Reverend Ray Nelson, 'Our Lady of Islington Restored', *Universal Rosary Bouquet*, Mt Tamborine, April 3, 1985, p. 3.

² William Kent (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of London*, London, 1937, pp. 401-04; Sonia Roberts, *The Story of Islington*, London, 1975, *passim*. English histories of Islington, however, make no mention of a pilgrimage shrine or statue; although a monastery was destroyed in 1539. Islington's only parish church 'until the beginning of the nineteenth century' was named Saint Mary the Virgin.

³ A. J. Ennis, 'Our Lady of Good Counsel', *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, New York, 1967, p. 833; *Our Lady of Czestochowa Queen of Poland*, Canungra, no date, p. 1.

⁴ Mary Evripidou. Interview on 22 October, 1998 with Janet Kahl.

⁵ Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, St Leonards, 1996, p. 74.

⁶ Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, *Hail Mary*, no publication details, in documents compiled by T. Swain, University of Sydney.

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experiences, in 1997 'a group of 21 from Santa Teresa, Alice Springs, Darwin and Melville Island' participated in a pilgrimage to Medjugorje.¹

The Italian community brought with them to Australia an emphasis on celebrating saints' feast days, including the Virgin Mary, processions and liturgies.² The blessing of the fleet brought from Molfetta, Italy was initially celebrated in South Australia in 1934 followed by similar celebrations in Fremantle, Adelaide and Sydney. In 1985 hundreds of people processed through the Botanic Gardens to Farm Cove to witness the blessing of the fleet.³ These events encourage unity and demonstrate that a communal atmosphere still exists despite the perception that the world is no longer a community.

The perceived breaking down of community and associated lack of caring and concern, and the interest surrounding the new millennium have perhaps meant that increasingly, Marian pilgrimage sites globally have been associated with messages to care for others, and for repentance. They have also taken on an apocalyptic nature.⁴ A member of the Yankalilla congregation, for example, has received messages from the Virgin who is concerned there is too much suffering in the world.⁵ Mary's message is one of love and compassion throughout the world⁶ Followers may perhaps see this as addressing their need to deal with a rapidly changing society, experienced through the trend toward globalisation, and a desire for a more caring world. At Garabandal, Spain, messages warning of the future were received,⁷ while at Fatima, Mary urged prayer for the conversion of Russia which would lead to a cessation of many of the world's troubles.⁸ World-wide rosary crusades

¹ Jan Pile, 'Santa Teresa, Alice Springs', *The Medjugorje Sentinel*, No. 39, September 1998, *passim.*, and Jan Pile, 'Medjugorje Pilgrimage from "The Alice"', *The Medjugorje Sentinel*, No. 37, March 1998, p. 39 and *passim.*

² Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1977, p. 404, and Professor Francis J. Moloney. Interview on 10 July, 1998 with Janet Kahl.

³ *Devotions and Traditions*, No. 2, Associazione Madonna Dei Martiri, Sydney, 1986, p. 2.

⁴ Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, p. 149.

⁵ Paul Connolly, 'Mary, Mary, On the Wall', *Who Weekly*, August 4, 1997, p. 28 and Father Andrew Nutter. Interview on 8 August, 1997 with Janet Kahl.

⁶ 'Diana Claimed as the Princess of Light', *The Advertiser*, September 22, 1997, p. 8.

⁷ Durham, *op. cit.*, pp. 164 and 172.

⁸ Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 136 and Antonio Borelli, *Our Lady at Fatima: Prophecies*

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resulted in a 'prayer for peace and the conversion of Russia'¹ and are an example of the way the Virgin Mary has a global following. When the statue of Our Lady of Fatima toured Australia in the 1950s, *The Ave Maria* reported that thousands of people, some having travelled long distances, lined the streets to see this statue.² Where churches were full, worshippers knelt on the road to participate in services.³ The final tour celebrations in Sydney saw 'tens of thousands packed into Hyde Park'.⁴ It can be seen that the Virgin Mary brings together many people in the community to pray as one. The fall of communism in Russia does not mean conversion, as promoted by the visitation at Fatima, rather it could be seen as part of a greater trend toward globalisation, and an opening of new markets for the West.⁵

This Marian stance against communism and call for the conversion of Russia was taken up more recently in 1990 by The Little Pebble, a cult leader situated at a Marian pilgrimage site at Nowra, New South Wales, who warned that 'the Red Forces of Communism' were about to attack Australia, as well as the United States and Canada, and salvation was through 'prayer and penance.'⁶ The Little Pebble (also known as William Kamm) is one of two new religious movement leaders in Australia who claim to receive messages from the Virgin Mary. The other is Debra Geileskey, whose Magnificat Meal Movement is based in Helidon, Queensland. These first generation movements could be classified as 'charismatic' as they are centred around the charismatic mediators Kamm and Geileskey⁷ and are among a growing number,

of Tragedy or Hope?, 3rd ed., Sydney, 1996, p. 47.

- ¹ 'Pilgrim Statue Helps Crusade for Peace', *The Age*, January 27, 1951, p. 10.
- ² Frank Murphy, 'Australia Greet Our Lady', *The Ave Maria*, November 10, 1951, p. 593.
- ³ 'Great Crowds Fill Churches, Kneel on Roads', *The Catholic Weekly*, Vol. X, No. 502, October 11, 1951, p. 2.
- ⁴ 'Sydney Farewells Fatima Pilgrim Statue', *The Catholic Weekly*, Vol. X, No. 503, October 18, 1951, p. 5.
- ⁵ *Multilateral Agreement on Investment: Final Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- ⁶ *Our Lady of the Ark, Mary Our Mother, Help of Christians: Highlights of Messages from Heaven Given to the Little Pebble*, Nowra, 1983-1986, Book 1, p. 5.
- ⁷ Geoffrey K. Nelson, 'The Spiritualist Movement and the Need for a Redefinition of Cult', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1969, p. 156; and *What God Might Say To Me Today ... in Australia: A Series of Reflections with Debra of Australia*, Magnificat Meal Movement International, Kew, Diary 5, 1994, p. 10, here Debra Geileskey says she was a member of a Catholic Charismatic Group in 1990.

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world wide, of charismatic cults devoted to the Virgin Mary. Kamm is reported to claim 'a world wide following of 30 million people'.¹ The attraction of both these groups is the mystery of Mary revealed in messages. Members can experience 'an immediate and personal contact' with a divine figure.² Members are surrounded and inspired by ecstatic religious experiences utilising traditional, orthodox figures such as the Virgin Mary which provide authenticity to a cult.³ In turn these cults have 'sought legitimation through the claim that it is through these individuals that the divine has chosen to intervene in order to persuade the laity to return to the true, traditional Catholicism'.⁴ This can clearly be seen in the way that both The Little Pebble and Geileskey have attacked their local bishops.

These Marian seers receive apocalyptic messages for repentance and warnings of earthly suffering if the world fails to pray and believe in God, and in particular the Virgin Mary.⁵ This theme is taken up by The Little Pebble, who states that through him, Mary has exhorted Australians 'to pray and do penance, say the Rosary, the same prayer that I have asked for through many Apparitions around the world'.⁶ The outcome of disobedience will be earthquakes, atomic bombs, and great suffering in Australia;⁷ indeed, a Little Pebble spokesman is reported to have said that the 1998 'floods in Wollongong were part of a 'prophecy of Our Lady''.⁸ Debra Geileskey's messages encourage a return to religion and a belief in the Virgin Mary. The failure to do so also means death and destruction. Believers are encouraged to

Pray the Rosary ...

Be united with the Battle Queen of Heaven.

Mary has been chosen by us

¹ Borham and Maiolo, *op. cit.*, Spectrum 1A.

² J. Gordon Melton and Robert L. Moore, *The Cult Experience: Responding to the New Religious Pluralism*, The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1982, p. 31.

³ Cohen, Ben-Yehuda, and Aviad, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁴ Eade and Sallnow, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁵ They claim to receive messages from the Virgin Mary as well as God, Saint Joseph, Jesus Christ, and Saint Michael the Archangel.

⁶ *Highlights of Messages from Heaven Given to the Little Pebble*, Book 1, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Book 1, 15-16; and *Our Lady of the Ark, Mary Our Mother, Help of Christians: Highlights of Messages from Heaven Given to the Little Pebble*, The Marian Work of Atonement Society Ltd., Nowra, 1983-1986, Book 2, p. 19.

⁸ Lorna Knowles, 'Church Trial for Death Comet Cult', *The Daily Telegraph*, October 9, 1998, p. 3.

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He who endures to the end,
in companionship of love with Mary, will be saved.¹

Members of these new groups feel a sense of *communitas* and belonging which they may consider to be missing in this age of globalisation. The groups provide followers with a perceived solution to the complexity of the modern world and its problems² through pilgrimage retreats and community worship. Some New Age Movements provide 'structure of meaning an a community of like-minded people'.³ These groups are problematic, however, because while they are seen to be concerned with community worship, the focus is especially on the saving of souls and damnation of those who do not believe. The Little Pebble recorded that Mary's response to prayer was the release of sinners from Purgatory which on August 3, 1985 numbered one million.⁴ This is a theme from Fatima where the Virgin Mary showed the three peasant children a scene of Hell.⁵

Globalisation has meant a greater sophistication of technology which is particularly seen through the use of the Internet. The Magnificat Meal Movement has its own website through which newsletters and pilgrimage information can be accessed and purchases made.⁶ The Internet can be seen as an advantage, yet this is not necessarily the case, as many countries have limited access to a telephone, so access to sophisticated computer technology for many is out of the question.⁷ It could be argued, however, that the Virgin Mary is using technology to reach other potential followers. In addition to the Internet, other forms of modern media and communication report on Marian pilgrimage sites. Some of these reports can be critical of Marian groups. A cartoon drawing in the *Courier Mail* places the Magnificat Meal Movement at Helidon on par with Jonestown and Waco while another depicts the devil standing next to a sign 'Welcome to Hell-idon'.⁸ Such reports can

¹ *What God Might Say To Me Today ... in Australia*, Diary 7, p. 73.

² Conway, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

³ Fielding and Llewelyn, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

⁴ *Highlights of Messages from Heaven Given to the Little Pebble*, Book 1, p. 33.

⁵ Borelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

⁶ *Magnificat Meal Movement International - Index*,

<http://www.iol.ie/~magnific/index.html>, 30 November, 1998, pp. 1-3.

⁷ Elliot, *op. cit.*, pp. 53.

⁸ Amanda Gearing, 'Cult Leader Set to Die in Ecstasy - Disciple', *Courier Mail*, August 7, 1999, p. 5.

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be discouraging to the potential pilgrim, particularly as many Marian pilgrimage sites are not approved by the Catholic Church because they do not fall 'within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine'.¹ Many newspapers and television stories, however, can be positive and these allow Marian sites to become known, particularly through reports on the way the present Pope, John Paul II, shows his devotion to Mary through visits to Marian shrines throughout the world including Czestochowa in Poland and Knock in Ireland. Such reportage may encourage others to visit shrines they may have previously heard of or to experience new shrines that can be found all over the world.

To summarise, in the face of globalisation and the view that the world is no longer a positive and caring place, the number of Marian pilgrimage sites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has increased. These sites share common motifs including water, apparitions, relics and grottoes. A variety of motives for pilgrimage – to pray for miraculous cures and intercession, and for spiritual reflection and devotion – influence those who visit these sites. Each site, however, is approached with a range of interpretations and expectations which provides complexity to motives. In addition, secular tourism can be combined with sacred devotion and provides another dimension to pilgrimage. The global world is a highly commercial world and the exchange of money can affect the financial standing of both the site and the surrounding area – and can fluctuate according to the pilgrimage site's popularity. Globalisation and industrialisation have meant that pilgrimage is easier through better transport. Those sites that are closer to major centres are often the most popular. At the same time, however, these sites, in order to survive, must offer the pilgrim something that is unique in character and available at no other place. Through globalisation and multiculturalism, Australia has been influenced by other cultures, traditions and rituals which have provided a rich pastiche in Marian devotion. The Virgin Mary has appeared at many sites warning the world of God's punishment for their lack of faith and warning against an end of religion. These messages were increasingly apocalyptic as the twentieth century concluded and the new millennium approached. The Internet and other forms of communication are enabling the world to become aware of orthodox sites and cult groups in both a positive and negative way.

¹ Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, trans. Joseph Gallagher, London, 1966, VII:66, p. 94.

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The Virgin Mary can be seen as a global saint, worshipped all over the world and available to all.