The Ideological Messages of Our Lady
The first decades of the 20th century passed relatively quietly in The Netherlands. Its pacifist tradition and the policy of neutrality followed by the government kept the country out of the First World War. In 1918 there was briefly a squall when the socialist Pieter Troelstra undertook an attempt to seize power for the workers of the kingdom, following the Bolshevik’s example. It appeared however that the working class lacked sufficient revolutionary ardour, like the intended leader for the proletariat himself, who quickly explained that the had miscalculated. It was perhaps typical for a Netherlands in which the whole society, in both socio-cultural and political terms, was rigidly structured in three social pillars, the great Protestant and Catholic columns, and a smaller social democratic one. For those living with the idea of an apparently changeless social order, defined by the Christian tradition, Troelstra’s coup attempt had something of the character of a storm in a teacup; it is no wonder then that the violent invasion and occupation by Germany’s National Socialist regime in May, 1940, was nothing less than a profound cultural shock for them. It was to be followed by worse: the razzias and transports to the death camps and the final ‘Hunger Winter’ of the war. Despite its neutrality and stability, Dutch society appeared indeed to be vulnerable to the damaging effects of new ideologies.

It was against this background that on March 25, 1945, toward the end of the war, on the Feast of the Annunciation, that the Virgin Mary appeared to an Amsterdam woman. She intervened in the occupied Netherlands with a veiled message about the approaching end of the Nazi regime, the famine, and the Second World War.

At the moment of this first apparition, the visionary, the 39-year-old, unmarried Amsterdam woman Ida Peerdeman, was at home together with her sisters and a family friend, the Dominican Father Frehe. They were speaking about the dramatic situation in the world, in particular the war and the razzias. During the conversation Peerdeman saw a sea of light from which a woman emerged, who answered, in reply to Peerdeman’s question of whether she was Mary, ‘They will call me The Lady, Mother.’ The first message was passed on as a combined message text with a commentary by the visionary:

Then, all at once, the figure begins to speak to me. She says, “Repeat after me.” I therefore begin - she speaks very slowly - to repeat after her, word-for-
word. She raises first three, then four and finally five fingers, while telling me, “The 3 is March, the 4 is April and the 5 is May 5th.” Then she lets me see the Rosary and says, “It is thanks to this. Persevere!” She waits a little, and then says, “The prayer must be spread.” Then I see nothing but soldiers in front of me, many Allies, and the Blessed Virgin points at them. Then she takes the crucifix of the Rosary and points at the corpus. Then she points again at these soldiers. I should understand that it must become the life support of these soldiers, for that voice continues, “Now they will soon go home, these.” And she points at the troops.

My sisters and Fr. Frehe [Peerdeman’s confessor] had gathered around me. When he heard me begin speaking, he said to one of my sisters, “Just write down what she says.” After I had repeated a couple of sentences, I heard him say, “Listen, just ask who it is.” And then I ask, “Are you Mary?” The figure smiles at me and answers, “They will call me ‘The Lady’, ‘Mother’.” The image fades away before my eyes and then I look into my hand. Then a cross is laid down before me and I have to take it up. I take it up very slowly, and it is heavy. After that figure had said everything for me to repeat, she disappeared very slowly. Only then did the light also go away, and all at once I saw everything around me in the room as it had always been (The Messages 1999, 25-26).

The few words that the apparition spoke the first time nonetheless contain several of the core concepts that would be further developed in the following messages, including prayer and the title of ‘The Lady’, who is also ‘Mother’. It was the beginning of a long series of appearances, messages, and what have been termed eucharistic experiences. There were two successive series of 56 appearances and messages (ending on May 31, 1959). The messages from the apparition of Mary were each time literally transcribed by one of Peerdeman’s sisters. The first 25 messages, between 1945 and 1950, are primarily characterised by their chaotic and strongly symbolic style, which is, as it were, a reflection of the times, dominated by political unrest, moral ambiguity and personal anxieties. They also include apocalyptically phrased announcements of new evils which threaten, particularly focusing on the dangers of communism, atheism and modernity. The messages which followed the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin at the end of 1950 are couched in more positive terms and slowly reveal a divine plan by which She, as The Lady of All Nations, will deliver the world, as Mother of all mankind. Because She directs her messages to all people on earth, adherents regard Amsterdam as both the beginning and apex in the post-war sequence of global Marian apparitions. Close to the end of the apparitions in 1959 Peerdeman began to undergo a still longer series of about 150 ‘eucharistic experiences’ (ending on March 25, 1984). These experiences always took place during the Mass. Although Christ and the Eucharist are more central in them, Peerdeman still regularly saw Mary or heard her speak in them as The Lady of All Nations.

This article will discuss the manner in which statements, in the form of messages from an interceding Mary, made known and interpreted by their visionaries and other mouthpieces, relate to the ideological wars which have dominated the world at large (including obviously the Christian world) and Roman Church politics in particular since the Second World War. The modernisation of society in general and, since the 1960s, the modernisation of the Roman Church has in practice increasingly taken on the nature of a cultural war between the large group of mainstream Catholics who have accepted the modernisation, and smaller groups of conservative Catholics who
wish to remain traditional. For these latter, the messages, with their opposition to the new course of the faith, are literally a gift from heaven, and they see the correctness of their own views confirmed in them. In line with this, since 1945 particularly the Western world has witnessed a great increase in Marian apparitions, which in respect to frequency, content, structure and representation diverge from those of the preceding centuries. These are appearances which in their number and content were or are strongly influenced by, among other things, the rise of totalitarian and atheistic regimes, the Cold War, and the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the Church which it brought about, and the millennium in 2000 (Kselman and Avella 1986, 405-413). At the same time, the large number of new messages, and the worldly, often personally expressed content, and their contentious and political character has made the Roman Catholic Church more reluctant to acknowledge them. More specifically, the process of institutionalisation surrounding the locations of such apparitions has led to the establishment of autonomous cults and shrines. The controversial views which emerge from the messages and cults have led to the creation of a sort of subculture, in which all these unacknowledged apparitional sites have become linked with one another in an informal network of visiting devotees (Margry 2004b, 198-201). These are shrines which are less focused on physical healing, and more on support and direction in times of social tension and the transformation of personal and social paradigms; shrines which in the eyes of the visiting devotees offer more support in relation to their questions, anxieties and uncertainties regarding the world, faith and life, than does the institutional Church.

With this subculture, which grew and flourished in the final decades of the 20th century, the Roman Catholic Church has been faced with processes of religious divergence surrounding devotions which it does not have under its control. This has been an autonomous development, in which the central roles are played by the visionaries and the messages for which they are mediators and interpreters. This had led to the church ultimately in these situations finding itself being forced, whether it wanted to or not, to join in or converge with heterodox opinions, which it sometimes had previously condemned. For the purpose of comparison, on this point we will analyse two related and controversial cases, the cult of The Lady of All Nations, in Amsterdam, and the devotion to the Queen of Peace, in Medjugorje.

**Spiritual and ideological sources**

For many of the locations where apparitions have taken place in the network of divergent Marian devotion, and for these two shrines in particular, it can be said that the messages are a follow-on from, or find their roots in those of Fatima, in Portugal. The apparitions and messages received at Fatima in 1917 are still one of the most important sources of inspiration in the spirituality of these divergent devotions (Zimdars-Swartz 1992, 190-219). While the La Salette messages in 1846 were implicitly related to the industrial revolution and the phenomenon of modernity accompanying it, the Fatima messages were chiefly directed against revolution as a phenomenon which undermined society, as well as the ‘satanic’ ideology of socialism and the political system of communism, and contained severe warnings against the deterioration of Roman Catholic belief, and secularisation in society in general.

Although Fatima was recognised by the Church in 1930 as a place of pilgrimage and ‘mainstream’ Marian devotion, it also still has a particular function as a standard-bearer for traditionalist and fundamentalist Marian movements, comprised of a number of Catholic groups and institutions which take their inspiration from the messages (Christian 1984, 251-252; Beinert and Petri 1997, 95-96). The Fatima
messages, specially the ‘apocalyptic’ ones, frequently reappear, either in their original form or interpreted, in the messages announced by contemporary visionaries. Because the content is now used and abused in diverse ways, quite out of the 1917 context, this has been termed the ‘escalation of the messages of Fatima’ (Perry & Etcheverría 1988, 229). According to the organisations and devotees involved, Mary’s intervention in the messages of Fatima during the Russian revolution should form the basis for a world-wide re-evangelisation and missionary program, in order to save the ‘degenerate’ world, including the Church itself, from the ever-present Satan. Among the typical and central themes in the messages are penitence, prayer (particularly the rosary), conversion of all sinners, war, anti-Communism and anti-atheism, and the accompanying degeneration of the Church itself. Because of this, and because of the personal views and interpretations of the visionaries involved, they come into conflict with the Church. The Amsterdam messages elaborated on this, but at the same time included a prefiguration of the advancing modernisation and secularisation which would increasingly assert their influence on the Roman Catholic Church after the Second World War. ‘There will be a struggle in Rome against the Pope. Catastrophic’, said Mary on June 9, 1946 (The Messages 1999, 45). Only under the title of Co-Redemptrix would The Lady be able to save the world.

Satan’s constant activity further points to an approaching end of time. As The Lady said in Amsterdam in 1953, shortly after the massive flooding in The Netherlands that year, ‘the powers of hell will break lose. They will not, however, defeat the Lady of All Nations’ (The Messages 1999, 141). In the early Amsterdam messages the themes of the opposition of good and evil and the question of the corruption of the world and Church are emphatically present. Because the messages are constructed of multi-layered visions with elements of an apocalyptic and eschatological nature, they ultimately evoke an image which is more negative than positive. The Lady’s concern is the mobilisation of counterforces against the evil in the world, and as a means of influencing the leaders of the Church, with their new views.

The connection between Fatima and Amsterdam was made more explicit in one of the messages. At the age of twelve, in October, 1917, Peerdeman apparently already had herself experienced an apparition, at the same time as the messages to Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. When, in an appearance in 1950 Peerdeman asked Mary if the world would be willing to believe her, Mary answered, while Peerdeman remembered her first apparition in 1917, ‘Yes, that is why I came to you before - when you did not understand. It was not necessary then, it was the proof for now’ (The Messages 1999, 70). In the new edition of the Amsterdam messages a note has been added to this passage for the first time, in which the editors explain that this first apparition had coincided precisely with the solar miracle on October 13 of that year in Fatima, and likewise was accompanied with extraordinary light phenomena, in order to emphasise the close relation between the two places and events.

For the rest, shortly after World War II the Fatima messages and their anti-Communist content had already been introduced to The Netherlands through the triumphal procession of the Fatima statue which was given to the Pope, during the first stage of its route mondiale through Europe. This tour began in The Netherlands in Maastricht, where it called in during September, 1947. There the Fatima statue was invoked by thousands of devotees. The image was there especially for a large Marian conference which was being held at the same time, where there was discussion of the theme of Mary as Co-Redemptrix and as an opponent of the Devil (Verslagboek 1948,
Since the second Vatican Council (1963-1965) the interpretation of the Fatima messages has begun to take on a life of its own, and has increasingly begun to function as the paradigm for new alternative or divergent devotions and Marian apparitional cults. After the fall of Communism new enemies were found or reinvented, including apostasy, social degeneracy, abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia and, again, the corruption and degeneration of the Church and many of its priests. This forms the ‘classic’ repertoire of the church-related range of thought and belief of the conservative devotees and fundamentalist Catholics. Major unacknowledged and private shrines, as for example Medjugorje, Amsterdam or Italian shrines like Montichiari, San Damiano and Oliveto Citra, generate their own spiritual paradigm, a paradigm that influences other sites of the network (Apolito 1998, Baumer 1974, Margry 2004a+b).

For Amsterdam and Medjugorje it is likewise true that the long series of messages also appears to reflect the underlying social and political tensions in the Dutch and Yugoslav societies, and a fortiori, those of Europe in general. The messages which are conveyed via the various Marian interventions are parts of a moral-ideological and metaphorical offensive against the familiar themes such as atheism, apostasy and modernity. The wide mobilisation of devotees which is at least in part the result of this indicates that within our de-mystified, rational society great importance is still attached to dogmas and interpretations which are made known through preternatural interventions which are extraneous to the regular, circumscribed doctrines and means of redemption of the Church.

In the eyes of those involved in the Amsterdam cultus, not only do the apocalyptic and global perspectives in the viewpoint of the messages of the Lady of All Nations line up with Fatima in their content and the title, but they are also directly related to what would later happen at Medjugorje. They therefore view Medjugorje as a sort of ‘elaboration’ on Amsterdam, and not its crown or finalisation, since Amsterdam sees itself in that role (Hierzenberger and Nedomansky 1993, 329; Margry and Caspers 1997, 169).

Divergent forces
Although Peerdeman’s family belonged to the parish of Amsterdam’s St. Dominic’s Church, and Fr. Frehe had been the family’s confessor for a considerable time, the presence of this priest in the home at the time of the first apparition was in part to define the development of the cult of The Lady of All Nations. A long-lasting and close relationship developed between the visionary and the Dominicans, who by degrees began to appropriate the cultus.

Through their efforts, in the late 1940s the visionary and her entourage were brought into contact with the Brenninckmeijer family, wealthy Catholics who had built their fortune on the C&A chain of clothing stores, and become very influential. With their social and economic capital, and the intense involvement of several members of family in the appearances, a structure could be established for the cultus and it could begin to expand. The visionary received financial support, and was provided with lodging by one of the Brenninckmeijers. Next, in 1951 they made it possible for her to have the artist Heinrich Repke create a concrete personification of the apparition. To enable the appearances to fit into the ecclesiastical context and not challenge the faithful too much, the Dominicans themselves regulated the practices of the devotion and the distribution of information about the apparitions. By getting a
Dominican who was active outside the diocese of Haarlem to grant the imprimatur for prayer cards bearing the painting, this necessary sanction was obtained while circumventing the reluctant diocesan officials there. This scored an important strategic point, since it created the suggestion that local ecclesiastical authorities with jurisdiction in this matter had given their approval to the cultus. It actually only meant, however, that neither the image or the prayer were in any formal sense opposed to doctrine. In practice, though, particularly adherents outside The Netherlands saw this as an official approval of the cult and the paranormal character of the apparitions. The photographic print of the painting, with The Lady’s prayer on the reverse, has nonetheless been employed since mid-1951 as promotional material, and millions of copies have been circulated in dozens of languages.

The representation of The Lady which was slowly created via the various messages led to a revolutionary new iconography. A semiotic analysis of the painting which is displayed at the shrine in Amsterdam, based upon one of the Marian apparitions, makes that project clear. Mary is portrayed on the canvass against a wooden cross. This image would indicate that Mary must be regarded as co-redemptress. That is already in itself a very controversial subject in the Roman Catholic Church. But further, since the body of Christ is not present in the painting, it creates the impression that Mary has in fact taken over the place of Christ on the Cross. From wounds (stigmata) in both her hands the figure of Mary radiates grace over the whole world and mankind, the latter being represented by a globe at her feet, populated by a flock of black and white sheep. The issue of Mary as co-redemptrix is particularly pushed by traditionalist Catholic groups. The acknowledgement of such a dogma would place many of the Marian apparitions in a whole different light, and therefore is all the more controversial.

In the course of the appearances, the role of the Dominicans was also supported by Mary herself, who in the 45th message designated the Dutch Dominicans as administrators of the shrine which was to be built, and for the expansion of the cultus (The Messages 1999, 135). Because the order possessed its own parochial churches in Amsterdam it was possible for the cultus to obtain a public, physical place in the church of St. Thomas. At the end of the Marian year, 1954, the painting was hung in one of the side chapels of the church. This granted the cultus a public character, which was immediately evident in a broad mobilisation of people, pilgrimage groups and expanded publicity. Within several months the diocese of Haarlem intervened forcefully and had the painting removed in 1955. Bishop Huibers of Haarlem would not permit that, after the distribution of the devotional print with the suggestive imprimatur, this non-acknowledged devotion would manifest itself still more openly. The opposing positions which emerged in this question concretely exposed new divisions within Dutch Catholicism.

The making public of these messages and their new views of the world, the Church and the position of Mary in them was entirely novel for Dutch Catholics. Their significance and reach however exceeded the Dutch situation, and because of the intended expansion of the Church’s sources of grace, had import for the world Church and its missionary commission. Amsterdam was presented as a new global Marian shrine from which a new religious, Marian movement would be sparked. In the messages to Peerdeman a new Marian personification, The Lady of All Nations, addressed the whole population of the world and announced deliverance by the Holy Spirit. The large-scale desertion of the Church by worshippers which was at hand would be stopped if ‘true Catholics’ would recognise and acknowledge Mary in dogma as co-redemptress with Christ. It was to this end that a new Marian prayer was
articulated in one message, a message, moreover, in which The Lady expressly
distances herself from the name Mary and introduces a new one:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, send now Your Spirit over the earth. Let
the Holy Spirit live in the heart of all nations, that they may be preserved from
degeneration, disaster and war. May the Lady of All Nations, who once was

Although the prayer was mentioned in the first message, in 1945, the literal text was
only communicated on February 11, 1951.

The Fifth Dogma

After this new positioning of The Lady ‘who once was Mary’, the messages began to
focus increasingly on the formulation and realisation of the presumed ‘last’ Marian
dogma, of Mary as Co-Redemptrix. The genesis of this doctrine was moreover
emphatically related to the presumed approach of the end of time. Shortly after Pope
Pius XII had promulgated the fourth doctrine of Mary, her bodily assumption, the
stage was set in the Amsterdam message cycle for the new, fifth dogma. On May 31,
1951, Peerdeman received the following message:

“I stand here and come to tell you that I wish to be Mary, the Lady of All
Nations. Look carefully. I am standing before the Cross of the Redeemer. My
head, hands and feet as of a human being, as of the Son of Man; the body as of
the Spirit. I have firmly placed my feet upon the globe, for in this time the
Father and the Son wants to bring me into this world as Coredemptrix,
Mediatrrix and Advocate. This will be the new and final Marian dogma. This
image will precede. This dogma will be much disputed, yet it will be carried
through. I have repeated these things so that you may once more clarify this to
your spiritual director and theologians and refute their objections.” (The

That this representation and this proposal of a dogmatic nature would become
controversial is an understatement. It would prove to be both a point of dispute, and a
breaking point. In the first place, it helped create a new, more or less autonomous
Marian movement which deviated in its content from the formal ecclesiastical views
on that subject. Although the theme of Mary as co-redemptrix had already been a
bone of contention within the Roman Catholic Church for centuries, the events in
Amsterdam now put Pius XII under immediate pressure. An offensive to achieve the
promulgation of this fifth doctrine now began on the part of diverse groups in various
countries. Although there was growing support within the Vatican itself, R. Leiber,
then the personal secretary to Pius XII, later explained that Pius personally resisted it.
Spokespersons from the leadership of the cultus of The Lady of All Nations suggest
that for this Pope it was particularly the growing ecumenical movement within the
Christian churches that proved decisive in his decision not to support the dogma of
Mary as co-redemptrix, which would have been so controversial with other
Christians.⁶

Whatever the role of the Vatican might have been, it was ultimately the
ordinarius loci, the Bishop of Haarlem, who had to pronounce on the authenticity of
the phenomena. An episcopal commission appointed in 1955 to investigate the
authenticity of the visionary Peerdeman and her messages came to the conclusion that
these were not phenomenon involving a preternatural source. Because the Marian
apparitions were directed to the whole world and the devotion around them caught on
in other countries and was supported by several bishops outside The Netherlands, the
matter quickly became a matter for the world Church, and the Congregation for the
Doctrine of the Faith (Congregatio de Doctrina Fidei) was also asked to take a position. It confirmed the conclusions of the episcopal commission. Because of criticism by devotees of the investigation that had been carried out, it was repeated in 1972-1973 by both the diocese and the Congregation, with the same negative conclusion.

Despite these results, the phenomenon unleashed what has more or less become a cultural war within Catholic Netherlands. The cultus came into conflict with, and to an increasing degree set itself off in relief against the powerful movement for renewal and liberalisation within Dutch Catholicism (Coleman 1978, 211-261). The cracks in the once monolithic Dutch Catholic system surfaced, while the episcopate feverishly attempted to keep its hold on the once so closed community. To this end they published an episcopal admonition in 1954, calling on all Catholics to remain within their specifically Catholic organisations, with warnings against all socialist influences. It was the end-game for a corporatist-hierarchical, closed Catholicism. Modernisation led to a disintegration of the institutionalised relationships within - and outside - the Catholic community. But this also offered space to those within the Catholic community who experienced this development precisely as a threat to and undermining of Catholic life and Catholic identity. They saw these Amsterdam Marian interventions as a rebuke to such modernism. Their attempts to influence the leadership of the church can clearly be traced back to these messages. Key figures were often addressed in these messages: the ‘Pope’, ‘Holy Father’, ‘your Bishop’, ‘your spiritual advisor’, ‘your theologians’, ‘the clergy’, ‘Rome’, ‘the Church of Rome’, and ‘the Church’. In the messages they are pictured as untrustworthy, straying, and influenced by evil. The messages also give further instructions to them about how they must lead the Church. Such indications and interpretations make the messages an unmistakable effort to counter the new ideas and positions of the bishops and bishops’ conferences, and the centralism of the Vatican. Moreover, the visionary Peerdeman received explicit instructions from The Lady that fly in the face of particular episcopal policies. For example, the painting of her must be returned to the parish church from which it had been removed on orders of the bishop, and hung in a public place (The Messages 1999, 156). But The Lady also instructed Peerdeman not to follow the instructions of her own spiritual advisor, Fr. Frehe. This was all an attempt to break through the renewal-minded but still hierarchic and patriarchal church structure, in favour of giving more significance to local variants in belief. At the same time it can be seen as a first important manifestation of a rising individualisation and privatisation within institutionalised forms of faith. Moreover, in view of the express place and function that the ‘Lady’ and her visionary demand, it would also appear that altered gender relationships are involved. In the fifth dogma of Mary total peace can be brought to the world, and, according to her visionary, The Lady can complete and perfect the redemptive work of Christ.

At the same time, the often oppositional content of the messages was something which could be seized upon by other traditionalist and fundamentalist religious/ecclesiastical groups and movements, and could appropriated to use for their own ends. The militant Sint Michäellegioen, and the followers of anti-pope Clement XV and the schismatic French bishop Marcel Lefèbre in The Netherlands could find support for their own ideas in the messages, thereby placing the cultus in a still more controversial position.

The cycle of messages generated a theological conflict with the world Church regarding a modern view of Mary, and in particular, over her as co-redemptress. At
the same time it engendered a discussion about the significance of private revelations and about the functions and powers of the church agencies and offices involved with them, such as the bishop, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and certain regular clergy and their congregations or monastic orders. The stormy church renewal in The Netherlands however initially led to the monastic communities involved, such as the Dominicans, distancing themselves entirely from the cultus. With this the guidance and support regularly given by monastic orders not under the authority of a bishop, and thus ‘elusive’ (cf. Medjugorje) disappeared. As a rule, within the realm of contested Marian devotions the spiritual/pastoral support lies in the hands of clergy from such sources, acting more or less as individuals. In Amsterdam too there was continual involvement - and great influence - from individual, unaffiliated, retired or suspended clergy who found a new ‘work situation’ and new purpose for their faith in the cultus. The everyday running of affairs in Amsterdam was for a long time determined by such clergy, who provided spiritual advice for both the visionary and for the pilgrims. The theoretical concept with regard to conflicting religious regimes (Bax 1987, 1-11) - between regular and secular priests - therefore would seem to have played only a partial role in defining this cultus, which functioned in a much more extensive arena of relevant competing actors. Although the priests involved - Dominicans - initially acted as facilitators and intermediaries, the oppositional views of the visionary and her adherents in Amsterdam were definitive for the growth of the cultus - not in the least part because of the visionary’s function as mediator, which also acquired sacred qualities of its own.

When the Dominicans and other parties within the Church which had been involved withdrew, the cultus was left in a vacuum as far as The Netherlands was concerned. In the meantime the 1959 publication of an ecclesiastically unauthorised book by Louis Knuvelder about the cultus, once again brought widespread publicity to the apparitional cultus because of the ecclesiastical ban pronounced against its publication. Because of their traditionalist views, and the specific selection by the author, in the book the messages and particularly their interpretation are put in a still more negative and dramatic light. The book proved to be a catalyst in the process in The Netherlands, in view of the fact that the cultus was forced into a largely underground existence there. Outside The Netherlands however it continued to experience slow but steady growth, particularly in the mission fields of Asia and Africa, and within traditionalist circles in the United States. The wide distribution of the prints and messages, and the popularity of the doctrinal approach to Mary as Co-Redemptrix gave the cultus a unique dynamic in Southern Europe, and non-European areas. Many more or less autonomous clergy, priests, monks and bishops, including within the Vatican, supported the cultus. The most relevant central organ, the Holy Office, since 1967 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, however continued to stand behind the diocese of Haarlem in its pronouncements.

The Amsterdam messages were not only an intervention by Mary into the personal life of the visionary and her entourage, but also into the official doctrine and ideology of the Roman Catholic Church itself. The Amsterdam apparitions can at the same time be regarded as the start of an offensive of apparitional cults which was to focus on the creation of new views in Catholicism world-wide, and stimulate traditionalist opinions. It can be regarded as a global move in a conflict over the ideology of the Church.

Nevertheless, for a long time the Bishop of Haarlem, in whose jurisdiction Amsterdam lies, and also the dean of Amsterdam took a detached position and rarely interfered with the cultus which had arisen. For many years they appeared convinced
that the cultus would fail to achieve the necessary dynamism to be really vital and lift itself to a higher, national or international level. But thanks to an effective international network within the Dominicans, and later, active promotion by the devotees directly involved, the successful export of the devotion to the world still turned out to be possible.

The case of Medjugorje

The conflicting interests in the religious/ecclesiastical arena surrounding the Amsterdam apparitions had, for the time being, assured that no critical mass for a formal acceptance of the cultus could be achieved in Western Europe. But this point has actually been achieved regarding the non-acknowledged Marian shrine at Medjugorje.

The death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980 marked the end of an era in a land that symbolically lay between East and West. His death created space for a repositioning of many elements, including religion. About a year after Tito’s death, on June 24, 1981, two boys and four girls, then between 10 and 17 years of age, began receiving frequent messages regarding penance and peace from Mary - Gospa as the Virgin is called locally - under the title Queen of Peace (Zimdars-Swartz 1991, 233-240). The authenticity of these apparitions and messages reported in Medjugorje, when it was still in the socialist-Marxist republic of Yugoslavia, is one of the most disputed issues in the modern Catholic Church. The early messages from the apparition could be read as an anti-Communist manifesto. Other central elements were prayer, conversion and a return to God. This was an appeal that faced off against Communist regimes both in Yugoslavia and throughout the East Bloc, but equally against secularism elsewhere in the world. This Queen of Peace was entering into battle to ultimately realise the creation of a communality of all various views. To achieve that her adherents were provided with five ‘weapons’ for their use: prayer, fasting, Bible reading, confession and the Eucharist. With these, and through conversion, sanctification and belief, reconciliation and ultimately peace can be achieved. It was a theme that would receive a concrete significance in 1991-1995, during the conflicts in Bosnia (Claverie 2003, 221-250).

In its first years the regime took action against the devotion as a ‘fascist’ movement which could undermine the unity of the state, and the spiritual advisor to the child-visionaries, the Franciscan Jozo Zovko, was labelled a ‘counter-revolutionary’. After 1984 the authorities left the cultus unmolested, a decision in which practical economics - the hard currency being brought into the country by foreign pilgrims - played a role.

At the same time an ecclesiastical and theological controversy was brewing which had its roots in the historically strong role of the Franciscan order in pastoral care in the region. When the popular fathers refused to turn over their pastoral duties to the Bishop of Mostar-Duvno, the bishop, against the background of the controversy, had growing doubts about the authenticity of the phenomena, fuelling suspicions about manipulation and the devotion being employed as a tool in the struggle for control over local parishes. Since then there has been a vociferous conflict and various Franciscans have been suspended or expelled from their order (Bax 1995, 9-30). Another explanation for the rapid brewing up of the controversy must be sought in the fact that the Franciscans supported and helped to establish the phenomena immediately from the start. Generally the Church handles such matters by waiting to see if something structural is going to arise from them, and only then
determines if a constat or a non-constat should be given - in other words, whether the phenomenon should be regarded as preternatural or not.

Over the years many influential persons within the Catholic Church have intervened for or against the cultus, or expressly refused to do so: supporters who really ‘see’ Mary, others who consider the whole the work of Satan, still others who assume pious deception by the visionaries and their advisors, and yet others who chiefly see political machinations on the part of the Franciscans involved. Whatever the case, three diocesan investigation committees have declared that the phenomena and messages are not authentic, and when called upon to do so, this was confirmed by the Vatican in 1996 and 1998 in statements from the secretary of the Congregation for the Faith - albeit in a somewhat half-hearted manner. The results from the investigatory committee chaired by Bishop Komarica of Banja Luka, appointed by Cardinal Ratzinger, held that Medjugorje is a ‘place of prayer’ and that ‘private pilgrimages’ should be permitted. They however passed no judgement on the messages or apparitions.

Despite increasing ecclesiastical centralist power in Rome in regard to all sorts of matters, the Church has made no other statements on this issue, nor has it performed any further investigation. Almost as a rule this is seen by devotees as a positive sign, and they point to the absence of a ban as an implicit affirmation of authenticity. On the other hand, since ecclesiastical involvement often leads to positive interpretations, as a rule the Catholic Church keeps its distance in these matters. Nevertheless, authenticity remains the key question in this context. As a matter of fact, it is the local bishop responsible who ultimately must pronounce on the question of their preternatural character. As a rule this happens only when the phenomena create confusion and call up questions among the faithful about their veracity: in other words, when the faithful begin to question whether they are permitted to visit the shrine, to perform devotions there, and accept the messages as an exposition of the faith. At the same time this policy implies that the central authority of the Vatican is being undermined, and also that diocesan officers are encouraged to take on a larger role.

The half-hearted attitude of the Vatican in regard to Medjugorje means that reports of the genuineness of the apparitions and the authenticity of the messages are now being spread around the world. Internet has assumed a role of primary importance as an (unreliable) source of information on the devotion. The effect of this is multiplied because devotees, faced with a multitude of Medjugorje organisations, are no longer able to determine the accuracy of the information provided, since the majority are openly promotional sites which seldom mention controversial issues. If the extent of the Medjugorje cultus already becomes rather clear from the number of internet pages and sites, this is confirmed by the massive numbers of devotees who physically visit the shrine. By 1987 a total of about 5 million pilgrims had already visited Medjugorje, by 1991 that was about 15 million, and by 2001 over 35 million. This is an exponential growth that appears impossible to stem. Among the visitors were thousands of regular priests and hundreds of bishops and archbishops.

The ‘fruit’ of ‘deviance’
The devotional network for which Amsterdam and Medjugorje are important centres is to a large extent independent of or parallel to mainstream Marian devotion, but not in a static way: there is a continual interaction with the institutional church. On the one hand the Catholic Church ignores, discourages or impedes these devotions
because of the possible negative consequences for Catholic faith; on the other there are also conservative forces within the Church that wish to give elements of this *vox populi dei* a stronger role, because of the indirect benefits for the weakened modern Church - for instance, the many vocations for the priesthood which are claimed to come out of the Medjugorje cultus.

The spiritual and theological autonomy of the Medjugorje devotion is further stimulated by a powerful relation between the cultus and charismatic renewal, a movement which disassociates itself from institutional ecclesiastical structures. Charismatic prayer groups have been set up from Medjugorje which function as models for such groups elsewhere in the world, and which serve to further spread the cult (Claverie 2003, 232-233). These intensive mission activities are supported by world tours by the visionaries and the Fathers themselves. World-wide establishment of Medjugorje prayer groups, foundations, committees and magazines, and the creation of branch shrines, meets the demand for opportunities for frequent and nearby devotion from the millions of devotees who can not come to Medjugorje often enough, or not at all.

Today Medjugorje is one of the most heavily visited shrines in the Catholic world and at the same time is the one pilgrimage centre that has placed itself outside the formal order of the Catholic Church and exists as a spiritual vacuum. This is all the more marked because the devotion enters into links with non-acknowledged ‘deviant’ apparitions and devotions all around the world, encouraging a sort of mutual confirmation. Furthermore, as in the Amsterdam cultus, several devotional contradictions have arisen, such as for example the blood-weeping Madonna of Civitavecchia. This is a cultus which itself was initially disqualified, but later qualified as an official pilgrimage shrine. The cult object appears however to be a copy image of the Queen of Peace from Medjugorje which was purchased during a forbidden pilgrimage there (Tornielli 1995, 19-32).

While interest groups surrounding Medjugorje put all manner of words in the mouth of Pope John Paul II, formally the Vatican remains silent. On the Vatican website, for example, there is but one allusion made, cited from the Pope’s visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003.

Whatever the case, the massive size of the cultus, the normalisation of the devotional practice among average believers, and its growing interaction with the official Church appears to make continued rejection by the Vatican an impossibility. Its position is strengthened by the constant reference to the ‘fruits’ the cultus has borne for the ‘threatened’ Catholic Church itself. In 2000 one of the candidates then suggested as a successor to John Paul II, Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Belgium, publicly argued for a breakthrough in the stalemate and reopening discussions on the position (i.e., the acknowledgement) of Medjugorje. For all that, in 2004 the Archbishop of Zagreb still reported that the Conference of Bishops of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not wish to pronounce any judgement about Medjugorje, because there were still insufficient arguments for acknowledgement. In the case of this Mariann apparition too, the Marian intervention has meant not only an incursion into regional social and ethnic power configurations, but particularly into the ideological war between the supporters of a modernised Church and a traditionalist Church.

From the conduct of the Church it appears that during a kind of limbo phase Catholic dissenters, in a sort of no-man’s-land, are given possibilities to steer their own alternative, almost sectarian course, which in the end is welcomed back into the Church. However much in previous stages the Church pointed to the role of the devil around such phenomena and spoke against the practised heterodoxy of the devotion
and its messages, that same Church, when the fast-growing cultus reaches a certain critical mass, changes course toward a theological-spiritual convergence. Then the Church redefines its standpoint by apparently objectifying the phenomena and pointing to their good side effects, namely the claims to ‘fruit’ from the cultus such as conversions to Catholicism, professions for the priesthood, healings, and massive levels of confession and communion. If these things are indeed happening, so reason the Church’s representatives, then ‘it is difficult to accept that Medjugorje can really be devoid of real religious importance’, to cite the present Dutch Cardinal Adriaan Simonis. This seems to be a Church that counts its blessings (‘fruits’) and then makes a practical choice.

The turning-point in the formal decision regarding rejection or acceptance by the Church appears to come when the main figure in establishing the cultus, the visionary or founder of the cultus, dies, is otherwise silenced, or removed from direct involvement with the devotion. A still active visionary could manipulate affairs, speaking critically or providing interpretations of new phenomena and the way the Church is dealing with them. So long as the founder of the devotion is alive, he or she is a potential danger to the Church. A certain interest from the Church is already taken by the devotees as an implicit acceptance, or at least not as a rejection. As soon as the factor of the ‘visionary’ is removed from the equation, the first step in constituting the content of the cultus in a formal ecclesiastical sense is made. In the case of Amsterdam that was when the visionary Peerdeman died in 1996, after which it took only a couple of years for the opinion on the cultus to change from rejected to ‘acknowledged’, ‘authentic’ and ‘rich in blessings’. At Medjugorje the visionaries are still alive, and their relatively young age, conduct and world tours as media stars make this a good deal more complicated. Because the question has already been playing itself out for so long at the highest levels of the Church, and the parties are so deeply entrenched, the question is that much more complicated, and new openings in the stand-off will perhaps only arrive after the successors to present key figures are in place.

The power of devotees

The anthropologist Mart Bax performed research in the 1990s on the ecclesiastical and political power relationships in Bosnia-Herzegovina, placing them within the previously mentioned theory of ‘religious regimes and state formation’ (Bax 1987, 1-11). According to him two internal church regimes, seculars and regulars, battle one another in their pursuit of power and pastoral influence (the Franciscans on one side and the Bishop of Mostar and the bishops’ conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the other), while at the same time there is a devotional-theological conflict between local believers and the central doctrines of the faith which are watched over by Rome. The theory however appears to be too limited, in the sense that it is bi-polar in its organisation, since it does not take into account other powerful players. The most important factor is actually missing from this model of power regimes: namely the visitors and the devotees themselves. As a more or less co-ordinated collective they appear to give an autonomous direction to the development of the cultus and its power relationships.

For more than a decade now there has been an exponential increase in groups of devotees operating outside of Medjugorje. They are perhaps in contact with the central pilgrimage site as a primary source for information and logistical aspects of visits to the shrine, but at the same time have created a cultus of the Queen of Peace which is autonomous of that in Medjugorje itself. By setting up Medjugorje prayer
groups, foundations, committees and periodicals around the world, and the creation of branch shrines for the millions of devotees who can not come to Medjugorje (or at least not as often as they would want), there are possibilities for an independent expansion of the cultus and its traditionalist messages throughout the world. By now this has become an established fact on a large scale, and the cultus of the Queen of Peace has slipped out of the control of the Franciscans, but also out of the control of the diocese and, a fortiori, the Vatican. A similar process has occurred around The Lady of All Nations. Often, the greater the distance from the original shrine, the greater the chance that the cultus will be tolerated, permitted or even in certain respects formalised. By formalising smaller aspects of the cultus such as prayer cards, booklets and websites, a different status quo is suggested than is in fact the case. In combination with the increasing number of Roman Catholic clergy who place Medjugorje on a list with other Marian shrines, this gives a strong stimulus to the normalisation process with regard to this cultus.

From opposition to convergence
These divergent apparitional Marian devotions are by now one of the strongest structural elements in the modern religious field of influence surrounding the Roman Catholic Church. Thanks to the contacts among individual devotees and their prayer groups, both interpersonal and with the aid of the internet, such devotions in practice constitute an international movement which through its character as a network takes on an autonomous religious existence. It becomes clear that the increase in traditionalist oriented cults and devotions has polarised the Catholic Church, particularly in Western countries. The structure of the traditionalist movement takes on new forms in the new cultus sites, thus creating a divergent force within the Church in the post-Vatican II era. From another perspective this can be seen as a new confrontation between Catholic believers and devotees and modernity, in which the autonomy granted to the bishops and centralism in Rome no longer mesh with the processes of globalisation and individualisation and the possibilities for local devotional autonomy.

In the decades between 1950 and 1970 there was rather forceful action taken against apparitions and the conservative groups which were related to them, but since then, as appears from the two case studies, these devotions are being handled in a much more ambivalent and restrained way. This brings with it a religious divergence that leads to confrontation and contestation. In part because of the personal preferences of John Paul II and some of his traditionalist advisers, a first result of this has been that devotions, although having been previously demonised or termed non-authentic, later lead to canonisation despite this (one can think in this context of formerly controversial visionaries such as Faustina Kowalska and Padre Pio). Second, cultural differences in the world church have become more manifest, and within the increasingly important realm of Third World Catholicism divergent devotions are looked upon much more favourably.

Against this background various bishops in the West have observed that going too far in modernising produces more Roman criticism than does a certain embrace of traditionalism. In order to eventually arrive at official recognition for these cults, and perhaps also incorporate them in the diocese as a sort of mission tool, they first seek to have some of the sharper corners rounded off, so that a process of convergence can get under way. In Amsterdam that has already happened. For the more recent and not unproblematic Medjugorje the situation presently appears different, but there too the position of the Church is slowly being undermined by the international network
structure which has arisen around the cultus and lodged itself both within the official Church, among traditionalist parties, and in circles outside the Church. Further convergence and official acceptance of this cultus will therefore follow, probably sooner than later.

The Lady Takes All
For Amsterdam, a turn-around in its situation began with the 1983 appointment of the conservative bishop of the Congregatio Missionis H.J.A. Bomers as Bishop of Haarlem. After his appointment he created an informal and peculiar relationship with this banned Marian devotion. He visited the visionary in secret at the central shrine, the almost unsightly converted garage of an Amsterdam residence. He began to see the messages as confirming his own views on developments in the world and world Church. In the meantime a small conservative community of Austrian nuns, the community of Mary Co-redemptrix, under the spiritual leadership of Father Paul Maria Sigl, had established itself in that residence. It started a renewed world-wide propaganda campaign.

The 1990s saw a total reversal in the fortunes of the cultus. First, the hegemony of the opponents in the diocese was broken with the appointment of the secular priest and theologian Joseph Marianus Punt as suffragan bishop. He appeared to have a personal mission with regard to The Lady. From almost the first apparition his mother had been a fervent devotee to The Lady, and at his birth had dedicated her son to Her. This was one of the formative elements in his personality. In his period as suffragan bishop he therefore proved to be a key figure, though in the background, in the resurgence of the cultus in The Netherlands. With his convictions, while the visionary Peerdeman was more or less on her deathbed, on May 31, 1996, he was able to move the weakened Bishop H.J.A. Bomers to granting the cultus an approbatio devotionis, permitting open devotions to Mary as The Lady of All Nations. It was a decision that entirely contradicted the policy that had been carried out thus far, and of which the Dutch Bishops’ Conference took cognisance with incomprehension and a feeling of distaste. Affairs around The Lady now began to pick up speed. The following year saw the organisation of large-scale International Prayer Days in Amsterdam, and later in other countries. These days had an explicit missionary character and for that reason copies of the painting of The Lady were sent on tour to further familiarise the world with the content and significance of the messages.

When Bishop Bomers died in 1998, Punt was not immediately appointed as his successor, but the Pope ‘merely’ appointed him as apostolic administrator. His controversial position with regard to The Lady was seen in this matter as a factor which impeded his full appointment as Bishop. When in 2001, after his conduct has been observed for several years, he was finally named as Bishop and acquired full authority to make formal pronouncements with regard to the cultus, he moved the following year, on May 31, 2002, to full acknowledgement of The Lady and her messages. He explained that in a personal/mystical manner he had arrived at the insight that this case was indeed of preternatural character. Thus without further investigation or explanation, Punt declared it was his ‘honest conviction’ that the manifestations were authentic. He wished, Punt said in his statement, ‘to understand the signs of the times’ and see a prayer offensive arise around the cult, particularly in the Third World. The Church must not be denied the creation of such ‘fruit’.13

This action ‘purified’ the springhead of the already globally active cultus for the devotees, and a start could be made on further development of the programmatic plan for redemption laid out in the messages: the reform of the Church’s theology and
the deepening of life in faith, in ways which prevailed before the second Vatican Council. These developments have enabled the once forbidden cultus to enter into a self-standing normalisation process, eroding previous decisions and permitting the religious and intellectual views of a traditional or almost neo-integralist nature to gradually be taken up into the Church.

The rise and expansion of the devotion to The Lady of All Nations is an almost classic example of how a ‘deviant’ and disqualified apparition cultus can still ultimately assume a strong and/or formal position in the world Church. Where initially the judgement of the private and heterodox messages led, at least to a certain extent, to the containment of the devotion, episcopal autonomy and the cultural diversity of the world Church can bring the cult into a development tending toward official status. This is but one of many examples. It leads to the question whether the Roman Catholic Church, through an inconsistent policy with regard to revelations to individuals, gives more room to these individual or ‘private’ revelations and to heterodox and traditionalist elements - space which generates both division and anti-modern tendencies.

The developments surrounding divergent devotions are a pre-eminent example of unclear policy, and of why few - and certainly not devotees - can judge what is to be counted as part of the official domain of the Church and its piety, and what is not.

Further examples of this emerge with regard to the cultus of The Lady of All Nations. While it was banned in The Netherlands, this cultus developed a life of its own elsewhere. Before a carved wood image based on the painting of The Lady of All Nations - a statue which in 1973 began to shed tears and blood - a handmaid of the Eucharist in Akita, Japan received visions and messages (Hierzenberger and Nedomansky 1993, 452-554). In 1984, close to his retirement, the local bishop responsible however pronounced that these phenomena were authentic, and with a remarkable phrase declared that veneration of this image of Mary was permitted until a final decision was rendered by the Holy See. To date, that has not happened. Thanks to healings, devotion to this weeping Lady has taken strong root in South Korea. In the Philippines too The Lady enjoys widespread devotion tending toward official recognition. Perhaps influenced by the fact that this country was named specifically in Peerdeman’s messages, Philippine Catholicism has embraced it as an important national devotion.

In 1999 and 2000, before the acknowledgement of the phenomenon, the primary approbation of the devotion led to the creation of two subsidiary devotions to Amsterdam’s Lady elsewhere in The Netherlands. These are sites where visionaries have received new apparitions and messages from The Lady, and new sanctuaries have been established. Not only have the bishops of the dioceses involved again absolutely distanced themselves from these new shrines, in view of the strongly oppositional character of the new messages, but the present leadership of the shrine and cultus in Amsterdam declines to acknowledge them because of the exuberant phenomenon taking place there (Margry & Caspers 2004, 60-63, 82-86).

Conclusions
Changes in society which are related to social, religious, political and ethnic crisis situations and conflicts regularly are reflected in Marian interventions such as apparitions and messages. The shifts in ideological, social and ecclesiastical paradigms in Europe after the Second World War were accompanied by frequent interventions of this sort. The phenomenon, and the cults which arose around them were, in the context of their social construction, employed by the visionaries and their
adherents as instruments to combat the changes, such as communism, growing secularism and renewal within the Roman Catholic Church itself, all of which were sometimes interpreted as 'apocalyptic'. The contents of the Marian messages are then used to attempt to curb or oppose the supposed errors in society, and to support the adherents of the particular cultus in their effort to realise a better community of faith and hope of redemption. For the ecclesiastical/theological aspects, the devotees involved reach back to earlier or informal traditions of the Church. For the Church authorities this context of fundamentalism and heterodoxy is, as a rule, a reason to distance themselves from these developments. Whatever the case, it appears that many Catholics and devotees are convinced that such deviant and unacknowledged cults and shrines offer a better setting for their faith and greater certainty in life. The universal strength of these shrines based on apparitions lies in their informal network, which is created and supported by the devotees as they organise themselves. Yet it would appear that because of the success of some of these cults, the Church authorities ultimately find themselves forced to join in or converge with the heterodox and previously rejected opinions. In this way the Church cedes more scope to the significance of conservative and traditionalist ideas and practices in its community of faith. This in turn confirms the idea that visionaries and potential visionaries have that the Church is moving along a too modern track, and they believe themselves confirmed in their expectations regarding the effect of Marian interventions on the Church and faith. It is a form of India rubber politics that is difficult for a large proportion of its own supporters to swallow. Such situations occurred particularly in the post-war Netherlands, which was rapidly freeing itself from its rigid ideological straitjacket and quickly modernising and secularising, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which for a long time had been a plaything in the hands of rival ecclesiastical and ethnic regimes. In both cases one can note a creeping normalisation process around the cult’s practice far outside its own diocesan and national context which ultimately reaches critical mass, as a result of which convergence with the official Church and doctrine becomes unstoppable.

Literature


*Verslagboek* (1948) van het Mariacongres gehouden te Maastricht, Maastricht: Bestuur Maria-Congres.

Abstract
Since 1945 the Western world has recorded a sharp increase in Marian apparitions and messages, which in terms of frequency, content, structure and representation differ from those of previous centuries. The often oppositional content is actively disseminated by traditionalist and fundamentalist Catholics and devotees, and generates cults and shrines which turn away from or disassociate themselves from the Catholic Church. On the basis of two related and much discussed cases, Amsterdam’s cultus of The Lady of All Nations and the devotion to the Queen of Peace at Medjugorje, this paper investigates the manner in which these two Marian interventions are articulated and interpreted by the visionaries, and how these interventions relate to the ideological wars which have dominated ecclesiastical politics, and the politics of the Christian world, since the Second World War. When the Roman Catholic Church fails to get such processes of religious divergence under control, it appears that because of the success of some of these cults, the ecclesiastical hierarchy ultimately finds itself forced, willingly or not, to join in or converge with the heterodox and previously rejected opinions. In this way the Church increases the significance of conservative and traditionalist thought and practice within its faith community.

Key words
Mary, Apparitions, Roman Catholicism, Ideology/-ies, Conflicts, Amsterdam, Medjugorje, Netherlands, Bosnia-Hercegowina

1 The published texts of the messages with Peerdeman’s commentaries are subject to change. For example, as compared with previous editions, in the latest editions in both English and Dutch, respectively in 1999 and 2002, texts have been altered and/or passages omitted, without indication this has occurred.
2 In the Marian year 1954, and in 1955, the image also toured various countries. Much later, after the fall of Communism, in 1997 new revival missions were held with the Fatima image in various countries of the former East Bloc. On the way back to Rome it once again visited Maastricht.
3 Likewise, its visionary Peerdeman herself was not unrestrained in her enthusiasm for Medjugorje, having observed ‘Mary doesn’t waffle around that much.’ Personal communication from Mr. J.A. Leechburg Auwers, Voorburg, The Netherlands, who was her personal secretary for many years.
4 Traditionally Marian devotions have been important for the Dominicans, a fact which particularly is expressed in popular devotion with their centuries-long monopoly on praying the rosary, which developed into the most important prayer among the laity in modern times. Since the Fatima messages praying the rosary has likewise developed into a arena for Catholic traditionalists.
5 This also relates this depiction of Mary to the ‘radiant’ Our Lady of the Miraculous Medallion (1830) of the Rue du Bac in Paris.
6 Private communication from Mr. J.A. Leechburg Auwers, Voorburg, The Netherlands, who in the 1970s personally negotiated with Cardinal J Ratzinger on behalf of those involved with the cultus of
The Lady of All Nations; cf. also the passage in *Marienlexikon* (St. Ottilien: Eos-Verlag 1992) IV 484-485.

7 For this, see the index to the 1971 Dutch text edition of the *Messages*, which differs in its arrangement from later indices.


9 In a document not for public release, on April 6, 1957 the Holy Office endorsed the views and measures of the Bishop of Haarlem, that no preternatural source had been found, and therefore there could be no consideration of a public devotion for The Lady of All Nations or her image.

10 The Papal Decree *Romanus Pontificibus* of June 6, 1975, had ordered the Franciscans to turn over seven parishes in the region to the Bishop.

11 In this context, a clear reference to Matthew 7:15-16, with regard to false or genuine prophets (or, *mutatis mutandis*, visionaries) ‘By their fruits you will know them’.


13 Reproductions of the official documents of the approbation of the apparitions and the title can be found on the official website of the cultus: http://www.de-vrouwe.net/english/