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Mary, Virgin and Mother: an Anglican Approach

The place of our Lady in the scheme of redemption is a subject which has not received much attention either in current ecumenical discussion, or indeed in the whole movement of theological ferment which is at present affecting all the Churches. There are many possible reasons for this comparative neglect. At a time when all the most fundamental articles of the Christian faith are being questioned and re-examined, it may well seem a minor matter to take up again the theme of the position of Mary in the work of man's salvation. At the level of discussion between Catholics and Protestants there are few areas of dialogue which appear to be more difficult and, on the surface, unrewarding. Within the Protestant world in general there are few incentives to re-open a line of theological reflection and investigation left virtually untouched for four hundred years, though renewed contact with Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox

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*Among his works are the following: "Our Lady in Seventeenth-century Anglican Devotion and Theology" in *The Blessed Virgin Mary: essays by Anglican Writers*, edited by E. L. Mascall and H. S. Box (1963); "Be ye perfect . . .", a lecture given at the Annual Conference of the Guild of Pastoral Psychology at St. Hilda's College in Oxford (1965); and with John Coulson: *Newman: a Portrait Restored* (1965).*

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brethren has encouraged some Protestant theologians to look afresh into this question.¹ On the Roman Catholic side, an observer has the impression that there is at present something of a withdrawal from this area, the result perhaps of the very large if not exaggerated emphasis placed upon it in certain circles before Vatican II.

It will be the purpose of this paper to suggest three things:

1. that, although compared with the great questions of Christology and our faith in God as Trinity, the question of Mariology may be a secondary one, none the less it is an inherent element in the whole structure of Christian belief, closely related to our understanding of the nature of man and the nature of the Church, and it cannot therefore be neglected without serious consequences;
2. that the question, though undoubtedly difficult, is one which Catholics and Protestants ought to be discussing together, and that, granted a certain agreement as to the method of approach, one which they might study together with considerable profit;
3. that in our attempt to find a new way of stating the mystery of Christ, and still more of living it in the age in which we are placed, a serious consideration of the person of the Mother of the Lord is of vital concern, since both in the Gospels and in the development of tradition she stands for certain values which are not greatly appreciated by our over-assertive and over-activist society, though they are sometimes inarticulately sought after by it.

We shall do this by what may seem the curious method of examining some of the characteristics of the post-Reformation tradition of devotion to Mary and reflection on the mystery of Mary as it is to be found within Anglicanism, and we shall suggest that this tradition contains some clues which may be useful in our present situation. I recognize that this may seem an unlikely place in which to look for light on this subject. Anglican

¹ See e.g. Hans ASMUSSON, *Maria die Mutter Gottes* (Stuttgart, 1951) and Max THURIAN, *Marie, Mère du Seigneur, figure de l'Église* (Taize, 1962). Eng.tr. *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church* (London, 1963).

theologians have not created any large or systematic body of writing in this field, and the expressions of devotion to our Lady which are to be found above all in our poetry and hymnody, though significant, are not all that numerous. On the other hand, there has been within Anglicanism since the sixteenth century a discreet but continuous tradition of devotion to Mary, and we shall show a line of theological reflection which has never wholly died out. The daily recitation of the Magnificat at Evensong, the celebration at least of the feasts of the Purification and the Annunciation, the constant tendency in Anglican theology to return to a Chalcedonian Christology have all assured that the memory of the Mother of our Lord should never wholly be lost within our tradition as it seems to have been lost in many parts of Protestantism.

Furthermore, the evidently dialectical, incomplete character of Anglicanism, containing as it does Catholic and Protestant elements lying together in an imperfect synthesis, and the fact that in this Church alone those who assent to such doctrines as the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception live side by side with those who either reject them or remain agnostic about them, might suggest that an investigation of this sort could be of wider interest in an age like our own, in which the broken dialogue between Rome and the Reformation is everywhere being renewed.

II

The Reformation in England, as on the continent of Europe, brought with it a great and violent revolution in the Marian devotion of medieval Christendom. One of the greatest pilgrimage places in England for instance, the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham, was totally destroyed. Most of the liturgical commemoration of the Blessed Virgin and almost all the popular piety of the time was swept away. It is important to remember, however, that this great alteration in devotional attitudes, though it was linked with certain basic themes in reformation preaching, was not accompanied by any correspondingly sudden and complete revolution in the sphere of doctrine. The reformers are ready enough to castigate what they regard as abuses in medieval devotion to Mary; they do not

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generally attack the doctrines which touch upon her person. The doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord is at this time virtually unquestioned, and the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of our Lady, where it is mentioned, is generally upheld. The doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, neither of them of course dogmas of the faith at that time, are usually left on one side in silence. The English reformers, like the followers of Calvin and Luther, appealed in their articles of faith to the decrees of the first four general Councils, and therefore they were bound to maintain for Mary the title of *Theotokos*, Mother of God.² In our own day a number of writers have pointed out that the original reformers in Germany and Switzerland, and especially Martin Luther, were by no means silent in the praise of Mary. While questioning much in the Marian devotion and theology of their times, they did not intend to destroy it entirely.³

As is well known, the most constructive period of classical Anglican theological writing begins not with the Reformation itself, but with the work of Richard Hooker (1554-1600) at the close of the sixteenth century. It is in the writers of the subsequent hundred years that we can discern the outlines of a distinctively Anglican approach to the mystery of Mary. This is one of the points at which seventeenth-century Anglicanism drew away from continental Protestantism. The developed theology of Lutheranism, still more of Calvinism, laid so great a stress on the total depravity of man, and the absolute priority of God's activity in the work of man's salvation, as to leave little or no space for the thought of man's free consent and co-operation in the scheme of redemption. In such theological systems there was little that could be said about the distinctive role of Mary.⁴ The

² See S. CWIERTNIAK. *La Vierge Marie dans la tradition anglicane* (Paris, 1958).

³ See e.g. Walter TAPPOLET, *Das Marienlob der Reformation* (Tubingen, 1962).

⁴ These large generalizations would doubtless need to be qualified in any fuller treatment of the subject. In particular it would be necessary to investigate how far differences in the understanding of Christology in the two traditions, Lutheran and Calvinist, lead to different estimates of creation, the sacramental character of the Church, and ultimately the place of Mary. It would be difficult to imagine the Marian devotion of a nineteenth-century Lutheran like N.F.S. Grundtvig in a Calvinist writer of the same period. In the twentieth century this same difference is to be seen in the criticism of the Christology of Karl Barth made by such Lutheran theologians as Regin Prenter and Gustav Wingren. For a discus-

course of Anglican theological development during the century was different. More and more the distinctive positions of the reformers were not abandoned, but balanced and modified in the light of a deeper knowledge of the theology of the first six centuries. The doctrine of justification by faith was complemented by a doctrine of the Incarnation, the Church and the sacraments, which owed much to patristic models. The exclusively Pauline emphases of reformation theology were balanced by a concern for the Johannine writings in the New Testament, which has remained a characteristic of Anglican theology down to our own day. It was in this context that the question of Mary again began to receive attention, and that a number of Anglican theologians, while not accepting the fully developed theology and cultus of the Counter-Reformation, began to write about the Mother of God in a more positive and fervent tone than had been customary in the previous century.⁵

There are at least three themes discernible in the writers of this period which I should like to illustrate:

1. Mary is always thought of in relation to the Incarnation of the Lord, her Lord as well as ours. In this sense the Christocentrism of the Reformation is maintained, but it is understood in a less exclusive way. Once the priority and centrality of the person of Christ the Mediator is established, we need not fear to give honor to our Lady and the saints.
2. Mary is seen as the type of every Christian in whom, in a special manner, the Lord is to be born: in particular, she is the type both of the faith and prayer of man, and of the receptivity and fruitfulness of creation.
3. Christ's presence in the flesh through the child-bearing of blessed Mary is the foundation of his presence in the Church, and more particularly in the Holy Eucharist, which is the focal point of the mystery of God's presence amongst his people.

sion of this theme, though not in direct relation to Mariology, see the article by Johannes Aagaard, "Revelation and Religion," *Studia Theologia* XIV (1960), pp. 148-185.

⁵ For a fuller treatment of this subject see my article, "Our Lady in Seventeenth-Century Anglican Devotion and Theology," in *The Blessed Virgin Mary; Essays by Anglican Writers*, ed. E. L. Mascall and H. S. Box (London, 1963).

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To take these three points in order:

1. Bright Queen of Heaven! God's Virgin Spouse
The glad world's blessed maid!
Whose beauty tied life to thy house
And brought us saving aid.
Thou art the true Loves-knot; by thee
God is made our Allie,
And man's inferior essence he
With his did dignifie.
For coalescent by that Band
We are his body grown,
Nourished with favors from his hand
Whom for our head we own.
And such a knot, what arm dares loose
What life, what death can sever?
Which us in him, and him in us
United keeps for ever.⁶

Thus writes Henry Vaughan (1622-95), with George Herbert (1593-1633), one of the outstanding Christian poets of the century, in a vein which is characteristic of the devotion of the time, linking the thought of Mary directly with the thought of the Incarnation and all that follows from it. And the praise of the poet can be matched by the preaching of the theologian. Mark Frank (1613-64), Master of Pembroke College in Cambridge, who has written more beautifully of Mary than any other theologian of this period, says, commenting on the angelic greeting, "The Lord be with you":

Give we her in God's name the honour due to her. God hath styled her "blessed" by the Angel, by Elizabeth; commanded all generations to call her so, and they hitherto have done it, and let us do it too. Indeed, some of late have overdone it; yet let us not therefore underdo it, but do it as we hear the Angel and the first Christians did it; account of her and speak of her as the most blessed among women, one highly "favored", most highly so. But all the while *Dominus tecum*; all the glory, the whole glory of all to him; give her the honour and blessedness of the chief of saints—him only, the glory that she is so; and that by her conceiving and bringing

⁶ Henry VAUGHAN, *Poetry and Selected Prose* (London, 1963) p. 342.

our Savior into the world we are made heirs, and shall one day be partakers of the blessedness she enjoys, when the Lord shall be with us too, and we need no angel at all to tell us so.⁷

Thus, our veneration of Mary is always to be seen in the light of the Incarnation, and is always to pass beyond the Mother to the Son. So in a sermon on the feast of the Annunciation, Mark Frank says:

The Incarnation of Christ and the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin—his being incarnate of her, and her blessedness by him, all our blessedness in him with her, make it as well our Lord's as our Lady's day. . . . All her worthiness and honour, as all ours, is from him; and we to take heed today, or any day, of parting them; or so remembering her, as to forget him; or so blessing her, as to take away our blessing him; any of his worship to give her.⁸

But once this necessary caution is made, the Anglican theologians of this period are clear that a direct consequence of a true belief in the Incarnation of our Lord is a high and reverent regard for the person of his Mother. Bishop John Pearson (1613-86) in his commentary on the Creed, for generations a standard work in the training of the clergy of the Church of England, writes:

If Elizabeth cried out with so loud a voice "Blessed art thou among women", when Christ was but newly conceived in her womb; what expressions of honour and admiration can we think sufficient, now that Christ is in heaven and that Mother with him? Far be it from any Christian to derogate from that special privilege granted her which is incommunicable to any other. We cannot bear too reverent a regard to the Mother of our Lord, so long as we give her not that worship which is due unto the Lord himself.⁹

2. But if there is an aspect of the call of Mary which is unique and incommunicable, none the less she is in many respects the type of the faithful Christian, the one who like her hears the Word of God and keeps faith and obedience, which is no less necessary in the Church than the public life of preaching and administration. Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), one of the outstanding writers and preachers of his time, draws this out in making

⁷ Mark FRANK, *Sermons*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Vol. 11, p. 50, (Oxford, 1849).

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹ John PEARSON, *Exposition of the Creed* (Oxford, 1864) p. 321.

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a comparison between the life of Blessed Mary and that of the Apostle Paul:

But the holy Virgin . . . arrived to her perfections by the means of a quiet and silent piety, the internal actions of love, devotion and contemplation; and instructs us that . . . the silent affections, the splendours of an internal devotion, the unions of love, humility and obedience, the daily office of prayer and praises sung to God, the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity, and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make as great ascents to God and as sure progress to favour and a crown, as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion."¹⁰

In such a passage as that, one can see not only the depth of Taylor's meditation on the life of the Blessed Virgin, but also something of the seventeenth century's understanding of the contemplative life, that understanding which was to blossom two centuries later in Anglican history in the revival of monastic life.

But Mary is not only the type of prayer and faith. She is also the type of the fruitfulness of creation. In one of his sermons, Mark Frank applies to Mary the blessings promised to faithful Israel in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy; Mary seen as representative of the faithful, obedient Israel, the representative of humanity which awaits the coming Messiah:

Blessed of God, blessed of men; blessed in the city, and blessed in the field. Cities and countries call her blessed; blessed in the fruit of her body, in her blessed child Jesus . . . Blessed in her going out and her coming in, the Lord still being with her, the good treasure of heaven still open to her, showering down upon her, and the earth filled with the blessings which she brought into the world, when she brought forth the Son of God.¹¹

3. The whole Christian dispensation, and especially the mysterious presence of God with his people in the Sacrament of the Altar, all this is in a sense derived from the child-bearing of Mary, and is of a piece with it. It is

¹⁰ Jeremy TAYLOR, *The Works of Jeremy Taylor* (ed. R. Heber and C. P. Eden) Vol. II, pp. 54-55.

¹¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

worthy of remark that in the poem of Henry Vaughan's which has already been quoted, the last stanza runs:

And such a knot what arm dares loose,
 What life, what death can sever?
 Which us in him, and he in us
 United keeps for ever.

The last two lines of this verse will very quickly suggest to an Anglican reader a sacramental reminiscence, for at the end of the Prayer of Humble Access in our Communion rite, we pray that as a result of communion "we may evermore dwell in him and he in us", and this thought of the mutual indwelling of the believer and Christ is one of the deepest notes in the Eucharistic devotion of our Church.

This coherence between the Lord's birth of the Virgin, his birth in the believing soul, and his mysterious presence in the Sacrament is wonderfully developed in the concluding paragraphs of a number of Mark Frank's sermons. Like his teacher, Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), Frank regularly turns towards the altar at the end of his sermons and applies the subject on which he has been preaching to the Sacrament which is about to be celebrated. In a sermon on the Epiphany he sees the Wise Men coming "to the house where the young child lay", as representatives of all mankind, pressing into the Church:

Hither they come even from the ends of the earth to their devotions; "a house of prayer" it is "for all people"; Gentiles and all; hither they come to worship, hither they come to pay their offerings and their vows; here is the shrine and altar, the glorious Virgin's lap, where the Savior of the world is laid to be adored and worshipped; here stands the star for tapers to give light; and here the wise men this day become priests¹²

Mary is at the center of the picture, not herself the object of worship, but the place where the divine presence is to be found.

In the sermon preached on the feast of the Annunciation, from which we have already quoted, he is still more explicit. Christ, he tells us, is at no time more fully with us

¹² *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 280.

... than in the Blessed Sacrament to which we are now a-going. There he is strangely with us, highly favours us, exceedingly blesses us; there we are all made blessed Marys, and become Mothers, sisters and brothers of our Lord, whilst we hear his word, and conceive it in us; whilst we believe in him who is the Word, and receive him into us. There angels come to us on heavenly errands, and there our Lord indeed is with us, and we are blessed, and the angels hovering all about us to peep into those holy mysteries, think us so, call us so. There graces pour down in abundance on us—there grace is in its fullest plenty—there his highest favours are bestowed upon us—there we are filled with grace unless we hinder it, and shall hereafter in the strength of it be exalted into glory—there to sit down with the blessed Virgin and all the saints and angels, and sing praise and honour and glory to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.¹³

III

I have quoted at some length from our seventeenth-century authors partly in order to show that this theme of Marian devotion and reflection is not the product of the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century. It is true that the Catholic revival of the last one hundred and forty years has given a great new impetus to the theological consideration of this question, and still more to the renewal of popular devotion to Mary within the Anglican Communion. It is certainly only within the last hundred years that some Anglicans have begun to adopt, sometimes uncritically and perhaps unwisely, the fully developed cultus and theology of Mary as it has been worked out in the Roman Catholic Church since the time of the Reformation, and that the scruples felt in the seventeenth century against any direct addressing of our Lady and the saints have been cast aside by a number of Anglicans. But behind the occasional extravagances of an imported piety, which I believe are no more displeasing to God than our more customary Anglican luke-warmness and respectability, there does lie this older tradition of a deeply felt and deeply thought-out devotion to Mary, more reticent in its outward manifestations, but no less inwardly true. In no one is this older tradition more evident than in John Keble himself (1792-1866), the oldest of the leaders of the Oxford movement;

¹³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 50-51.

in Newman's judgment "its true and primary author", the most deeply rooted in Anglican tradition of them all.

The place of Mary in the scheme of redemption is for Keble a necessary and inherent element in the whole work of man's salvation. As Dr. E. R. Fairweather remarks, "The Tractarians saw the Incarnation, the Church and the Sacraments as contiguous and inseparable elements in God's redemptive economy." For them the two-fold truth of the Incarnation implied "on the one hand, that man's salvation comes from God alone; on the other, that God's saving action really penetrates and transforms man's world and man's life."¹⁴ We see the truth of these two sides of the Christian faith vividly pictured in Mary. In her faithfulness and obedience, her emptiness before God, we see the creature's recognition of the priority of the Creator. In her motherhood we see the way in which the saving act of God takes flesh in a human body, entering into and transforming man's world and man's life. Keble expresses this union of human and divine in Christ, and in the Church, which is the body of Christ, very clearly in a note to one of the poems in *Lyra Innocentium*:

Thus according to the Scriptures, the Sacramental Touch of the Church is the Touch of Christ; and her system is *deifica disciplina*, a rule which, in some sense, makes men gods, and the human, divine; and all this depends on the verity of the Incarnation, therefore His Mother is especially instrumental in it; besides being, as nearest to Him, the most glorious instance of it. "The Mother of Jesus is there, and both Jesus and his Disciples are called"—He as the Bridegroom and Author of the whole mystery, they as ministers, servants and instruments—to this mysterious "marriage", or Communion of Saints.¹⁵

Of all Keble's writings which treat this theme, none seems to me finer than the poem entitled "Mother out of Sight." It was written about a year before Newman's conversion and Keble's friends persuaded him not to publish it at that time. With its outspoken and heart-felt devotion to the Mother of God, with its openly expressed regret that devotion to Mary was so little in evidence in the Church of England so that we might indeed speak of a "Mother out of Sight," they were perhaps right. Its publication

¹⁴ E. R. FAIRWEATHER (ed.) *The Oxford Movement* (New York, 1964).

¹⁵ John KEBLE, *Lyra Innocentium*.

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could easily have led to misunderstanding and bitter controversy of the type which always tends to surround this question, where human feelings are so deeply involved. But more than the better known hymn, "Ave Maria, Blessed Maid," this poem expresses Keble's deepest convictions on this subject, and a careful reading shows that although he laments the lack of love for Mary shown in his Church, yet in a more profound sense, he maintains that the true glory both of Mary and of the Church is hidden as yet, and is visible only to the eye of faith. We shrink from speaking too openly or dogmatically of mysteries which are hidden in God.

Mother of God! O not in vain " "
We learned of old thy lowly strain.
Fain in thy shadow would we rest,
And kneel with thee, and call thee blest,
With thee would 'magnify the Lord',
And if thou art not here adored,
Yet seek we, day by day, the love and fear
Which bring thee, with all saints, near and more near.
What glory thou above hast won,
By special grace of thy dear Son,
We see not yet, nor dare espy
Thy crowned form with open eye.
Rather beside the manger meek
Thee bending with veiled brow we seek
Or where the angel in the thrice-great Name
Hail'd thee, and Jesus to thy bosom came.
Yearly since then with bitterer cry
Man hath assail'd the Throne on high,
And sin and hate, more fiercely striven
To mar the league 'twixt earth and heaven.
But the dread tie, that pardoning hour,
Made fast in Mary's awful bower,
Hath mightier proved to bind than we to break.
None may that work undo, that Flesh unmake.
Thenceforth, whom thousand worlds adore,
He calls thee Mother evermore;
Angel nor Saint His face may see
Apart from what He took of thee.
How may we choose but name thy name

Echoing below their high acclaim
 In holy Creeds? Since earthly song and prayer
 Must keep faint time to the dread anthem there.
 How, but in love on thine own days,
 Thou blissful one, upon thee gaze?
 Nay every day, each suppliant hour
 Whene'er we kneel in aisle or bower,
 Thy glories we may greet unblam'd,
 Nor shun the lay by seraphs framed,
 'Hail Mary full of grace', O, welcome sweet
 Which daily in all lands all saints repeat!
 Fair greeting, with our matin vows
 Paid duly to the enthroned Spouse
 His Church and Bride, here and on high,
 Figured in her deep purity,
 Who, born of Eve, high mercy won,
 To bear and nurse the Eternal Son.
 O awful station, to no seraph given
 On this side touching sin, on the other heaven!¹⁶

IV

What conclusions can we draw from this investigation? I would hope that they might be three:

1. This is a subject of greater importance than might at first sight appear. The fact that quantitatively little is said about Mary in the New Testament should not make us neglect the significance of what is said. As we have seen, to a number of Anglican writers of different centuries, this subject has seemed to be linked with our whole understanding of the Church, of the nature of man and the way in which man can respond to God's revelation. To illustrate this I can hardly do better than to quote from a sermon preached in March, 1968, by the present Dean of the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York, Dr. Samuel Wylie:

The first of the Christian holy ones in chronological order, in the greatness of her vocation and in her appeal to ordinary people, is Mary, the Mother

¹⁶ JOHN KEBBLE, *Miscellaneous Poems* (Oxford, 1869) p. 254 ff.

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of our Lord. She consented to do God's will whole-heartedly even before the birth of Christ. She trusted our Lord's vocation and subjected herself to it from his youth. She was faithfully present at his death (when all but John had run away) and she was at the tomb the morning of his resurrection. She was with the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost. She did not *rule* in the early Church, and Episcopalians do not usually believe that she *rules* in heaven. She was loved, honoured and present, and subsequent generations of Christians loved her, trusted her and patterned their lives on hers, rather than on the apostles, the theologians, the bishops She became a symbol of humanity's consent to God's redeeming work; the assurance that man can co-operate with grace; the assurance that though men are twisted they are not totally depraved. When God stooped down to us, to catch us up into his divinity, humanity's consenting symbol was Mary—and our Lord Jesus Christ became the unique blending of the out-pouring love of God, and of the age-long hope of man.¹⁷

It is to be noted first that this statement centers on the picture of our Lady which we glean from the Gospels. Although, as Dean Wylie pointed out in his sermon, purely psychological factors have played a large part in the development of devotion to Mary, which has often grown far beyond its original simplicity, the Christian tradition of respect for Mary has its roots in the Gospels themselves. The imaginative exuberance in which popular piety has loved to picture and adorn the ideal figure of the virgin Mother, is not necessarily to be reproved, though it needs to be checked and directed by the pattern of the Gospels. For it is in the words of her acceptance of her vocation as recorded in St. Luke, and in the scene at the foot of the Cross, as recorded in the Fourth Gospel, where with St. John she becomes the nucleus of the new humanity, that her true claim to Christian remembrance lies. Out of this root the statements of this sermon naturally come. "Mary was the first of the Christian holy ones in chronological order." This at once suggests her role in summing up the faith and expectation of the ancient people of God, and indeed not only of Israel, but the whole of the age-long hope of man. She is the first "in the greatness of her vocation," which while it is to be shared with all who hear the word of God and keep it, yet brings her into a unique

¹⁷ From an unpublished sermon preached on March 26, 1968.

relationship with the work of our redemption. She is the first "in her appeal to ordinary people." She has simply become, in the course of the Christian centuries, a mother to the faithful. "She became a symbol of humanity's consent to God's redeeming work; the assurance that man can co-operate with grace, the assurance that though men are twisted they are not totally depraved." Here there are large questions of theology which are still at issue as between Catholic and Protestant, but they are issues which cannot be avoided in any full and open ecumenical dialogue. The whole of the traditional love and veneration for Mary may be said to spring from the faith that God, who could create the world by his own *fiat*, cannot and will not redeem it without the free and obedient *fiat* of his creature. The questions which this raises about the freedom of man and the operation of God's grace are ones which no theology can neglect.

2. This brings us naturally to our second conclusion which is that this is a subject which must take its place in the ecumenical discussion, and that here as elsewhere, as between separated Christians, we should seek to start from what we have in common. This means to start from the biblical basis for our attitude to Mary, and to go on from there to the formulations of the first four general Councils, which for the vast majority of Christians still form a common heritage of faith and understanding. This again means that we ought not to start either by attacking or defending, or even perhaps by explaining, the highly developed theological system of Roman Catholic Mariology, with its dogmatic formulation of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Let us go back to our common roots and see if we cannot begin to understand one another there. At least from our Anglican experience this would seem to be the most helpful method of approach.¹⁸ In this, as in other matters, the presence of Eastern Orthodox voices in any discussion can be of the greatest importance. Theirs is a tradition in which the praise and glori-

¹⁸ See e.g. the brief but highly significant comments on the scene at the foot of the Cross in E. Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed. London, 1947) p. 530, and still more important in R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (Oxford, 1956) pp. 319-20. A. Lancashire's small but unjustly neglected work, *Born of the Virgin Mary* (London, 1962) also contains valuable considerations of the biblical witness to Mary.

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fication of Mary is even more joyful and unrestrained than in the Catholic West, but in which the Church's expression of its faith has not been hardened into dogmatic formulations, and where there has been less defining of rigid theological positions through the necessities of controversy and polemic.

3. Our third conclusion, which must be more tentative, relates to the relevance of all this to the present dilemmas of the Church in the world. We live in a society which trusts too much in words, consciousness, organization, activism. Mary, the Mother of God, reminds us of the necessity for silence, receptivity, growth and contemplation. At times in our century, the Church seems to be running along behind the world, always twenty or thirty years behind, desperately trying to present to the world a mirror-image of its own concerns. But unless the Church can reveal to our society something which it does not already know or does not recognize about itself, what value has it for the world, let alone in the eyes of God? In the world itself, if we would be attentive to it, there are many hints of a growing awareness of the need to rediscover the intuitive, symbolical, pre-conscious modes of living and knowing and being, the need to find some corrective to the insistent pressures of activity. Is it not the Church which ought to be able to give to the world the possibility of a new vision, of a new frame-work in which to see things?

It seems as if the insights of psychology might be particularly helpful here.

If prayer is basically withdrawal, self-communion, self-relatedness and facing God in openness and receptivity, it would seem to be a fundamentally feminine mode, a function of the *anima* If action is basically involvement in the world, decision making, doing, it would seem to be a fundamentally masculine mode . . . a function of the *animus*.¹⁹

At the moment in our Western Christendom we are caught up in a whirl of activity and organization, of intellectual analysis and of the attempt to communicate in words. Perhaps what we need above all is the ability to wait and to listen, to be present and open, to let things grow, so that

¹⁹ From an unpublished essay by my friend the Rev. R. V. Morris to whom I am particularly indebted in this last part of the paper.

our actions may in time become more fruitful and less anxious, and our words be qualified with the wisdom which comes from silence. It may be that the reason why for many, Catholic as well as Protestant, the question of Mary seems remote and unimportant, is because the particular things for which Mary stands are neither seen nor understood. It seems as if we were trying to incarnate the presence of God in the world through our own efforts, without sufficiently realizing that if it is to be the presence of *God*, and not just of certain ideas, or words, or concepts about God, then that presence can only become real in our world, in our flesh, in so far as we are learning to be open, receptive, obedient to the Word of God, so that the Holy Spirit may work his re-creative work in us. Only in the free consent and obedience of the Virgin could God take flesh; only through his relationship to her could her Son, who is God's Son, express in human love the love of God which both creates and redeems the world. Only in so far as the Church and every member of it begins to rediscover how she, the second Eve, is the mother of all living shall we be able again not only to confess our faith before the world, but to love it in simplicity and joy.

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