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THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR MARY'S QUEENSHIP

THE words could not be more carefully chosen for a statement of the theme proposed for discussion. The expression *Scriptural Basis* intimates the mystery and obscureness that attends the several texts in Holy Writ concerned with the prerogative of the Queenship of Our Lady. It is almost of universal acceptance now that the scriptural argument in mariology is predominantly one of appropriateness and convenience, rooted in the Pauline proposition: "He (Christ) also it is who has made us *fit* ministers of the new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6).¹ Our Lady indeed holds a paramount place in the New Covenant and her fitness for that office broadens and deepens the possible thought content underlying divine revelation in her regard. Perhaps in no other field of biblical studies does exegesis and theology need to work hand in hand as in that of expounding marian texts. The portrait of Our Lady given in the Old Testament is one seen in shadowy outline behind that of the Messiah and progresses in clarity with the revelation of the New Testament. We are not to cancel out that background, neither are we to give it a false emphasis.²

Particularly perplexing in the matter of the queenship of Mary is the application of hermeneutical norms that are universally satisfactory. Present day exegetical literature in Catholic biblical scholarship evidences three categories of thought: those claiming that Scripture has nothing to say about the queenship of Our Lady; those who allow explicit recognition of the prerogative; and those who can only admit implicit reference in the sacred writings. These contrary opinions are grounded in respective attitudes towards the lit-

¹ Cf. J. Keuppens, *Compendium Mariologiae*, ed. 2, 1947, pp. 16-19.

² A. Bea, S. J., *Das Marienbild des Alten Bundes*, in *Katholische Marienkunde* (ed. P. Sträter), vol. 1, Paderborn, 1947, p. 24.

eral sense of the Scriptures, the sole basis upon which one can affirm or deny doctrinal content of any part of the sacred writings. There are limitations to the literal sense and one all too readily recognizes why certain passages demand a *sensus plenior* for conveying their content, while others can only indicate the richness of their literalness in and through the typical sense bestowed on them by the Holy Ghost.

Today the scriptural argument is beleaguered with a new methodology tending to diminish its forcefulness as a source of revelation. Undeniably the constant tradition in theological procedure heretofore has been that of bestowing on the sacred word a primacy of position, a "*primus inter pares*" as it were, that is gradually finding itself in the last place of what has come to be designated as regressive argumentation.³ This is true in the theological expositions for the Immaculate Conception and for the Assumption; it is more so now in the queenship of Our Lady. The circumstance must be kept in mind so as not to let it influence the theological and rational criteria of the individual searching out the Scriptures. The scriptural argument is still an important one and Holy Mother the Church does not intend that its hidden beauty and truth be in any way neglected nor any feature of it overlooked by the exegete.

The radical difficulty with the doctrine of the queenship is had in its adequate definition. One is almost forced to project a terminology into the sacred text. That is why some will deny the existence of queenship as an affirmation in the Scriptures and allow it as present only in a metaphorical sense.⁴ Certainly the ideology of queenship is known to Old

³ Cf. M. Peinador, C.M.F., *Argumentum scripturisticum in Mariologia*, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, vol. 1, 1951, pp. 313-350; also C. Balic, O.F.M., *De proclamato Assumptionis dogmate*, in *Antonianum*, vol. 26, 1951, p. 19.

⁴ Cf. on this point G. M. Roschini, O.S.M., *Mariologia*, vol. 2 (pars 1), ed. 2, Romae, 1947, pp. 424-425. J. C. Fenton, *Our Lady Queen of Prophets*, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. 124, May 1951, 382.

Testament writers and in the New Testament the kingship of Christ seems to demand the complement of queenship for its perfection. Undoubtedly the fact that Mary is mother and spouse to One with absolute royal divine character heightens the probative strength of the few texts in the sacred writings which establish her as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

By way of classification, certain texts can be described as major ones. Two of them are concentrated in her prerogative of the divine maternity, namely, the Protoevangelium and the Woman of the Apocalypse; the others derive from her privilege of spouse and are to be found in the Annunciation pericope.

Historically the magisterium of the Church has emphatically supported a marian interpretation of the Protoevangelium.⁵ This explains why modern Catholic exegetes more or less favor a truly scriptural sense, applying the text of Gen. 3:15 literally or typically to Our Lady.⁶ The inseparable union between the woman and her seed is such that preeminence amongst women is suggested in this her office of motherhood to the seed, and with almost the overtone of royal lineage if a *sensus plenior* be explored. Moreover, the fact of victory and triumph on the part of both the woman and her seed not only intimates dominative power over the devil and his seed, but implies a consequent dominion over those freed from the slavery of Satan. No one will gainsay that two

⁵ Cf. J. B. Carol, O.F.M., *De Corredemptione B. V. Marie disquisitio positiva*, Civitas Vaticana, 1950, pp. 100-121. Id., *The Apostolic Constitution "Munificentissimus Deus" and Our Blessed Lady's Corredemption*, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. 125, October 1951, pp. 255-273.

⁶ A. Bea, S.J., *Progressi nell'esegesi*, in *Gregorianum*, vol. 33, 1952, p. 104, calling our attention to the importance of the Magisterium as a criterion in biblical exegesis, rightfully notes: "Molte discussioni che si sono fatte recentemente, p. es. riguardo al così detto *Protevangelo* sarebbero risultate più utili e fruttuose, se si fosse debitamente tenuto conto di questo principio così fondamentale di ogni argomentazione scritturistico-teologica." Cf. also A. Rivera, C.M.F., "*Inimicitias ponam . . .*" (Gen. 3, 15) "*Signum magnum apparuit . . .*" (Apoc. 12, 1), in *Verbum Domini*, vol. 21, 1941, p. 115.

pertinent characteristics of queenship are latent in these mysterious words. Indeed they do not appear with all the clarity one could wish; yet the burden of prophecy in the Protoevangelium is fundamentally concerned with Redemption and the Messiah, and therefore these details rightfully linger in the background. Hence, the argument from the Protoevangelium may well be summarized as follows: In Gen. 3, 15 Our Blessed Lady is formally introduced as Christ's intimate associate in the work of Redemption.⁷ Since it was precisely the redemptive task that won for Christ the title of King by right of conquest,⁸ it follows that Mary, too, is her capacity as Coredemptrix, shares Christ's Kingship also by right of conquest.⁹

Interpretation of the Woman in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 12:1) is divided between those who limit it to an ecclesiological sense and those who extend a mariological one.¹⁰ The latter are forced to parallel it with the Protoevangelium and the likeness does evince a compelling similarity of doctrine.¹¹ With the stars and moon about this Woman, the prerogatives of Queenship are all the more exalted in the passage and thus one can understand the fervid attention biblical scholars and mariologists are presently giving to elucidating its exegetical difficulties.¹²

It is in St. Luke that one finds Our Lady as bringing forth a Son whose kingdom will know no end (Lk. 1:32). Her consent was needed for the establishment of that kingdom (Lk. 1:38) and one readily appreciates that Mary is herein

⁷ Cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, in *Acta et decreta sacrorum Conciliorum recentiorum. Collectio Lacensis*, vol. 6, Friburgi Brisgoviae, 1882, c. 839.

⁸ Cf. Pius XI, *Quas primas*, in *AAS*, vol. 17, 1925, p. 599.

⁹ Cf. Pius XII's broadcast to the faithful gathered in Fatima, May 13, 1946, in *AAS*, vol. 38, 1946, p. 226.

¹⁰ Cf. B. Mariani, O.F.M., *L'Assunzione di Maria SS. nella Sacra Scrittura*, in *Studia Mariana*, vol. 1, pp. 460-466.

¹¹ Cf. A. Rivera, *art. cit.*, p. 120.

¹² Cf. A. Luis, C. Ss.R., *La Realeza de María*, Madrid, 1942, p. 31.

constituted a queen by reason of her union with the Divine Word assuming the royal character of the throne of David from the very moment He is conceived in her womb.¹³ There is more than a theological inference here, inasmuch as the context provides a graphic picture of the intimate espousal of Our Lady with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35), expressed in terminology too closely identified in Mother and Son not to have royal prerogatives correspondingly, as well as actually, present and communicated.

Upon first proposal these texts from Scripture demonstrating the queenship are seemingly all too meagre and strangely—almost loosely—connected with more familiar sacred truths whose importance is supreme in the salvation of mankind. However, in their literalness these texts are pregnant with a profound marian meaning available for human comprehension with the teaching authority of the Church and the perceptive powers of the human mind can penetrate. In any case, the important factor revealed is the absolute dependency of Our Lady upon Christ, which is fundamental to any mariological concept. Nothing is claimed for her that does not flow directly and intimately from her Divine Son. A very attractive feature about these major texts is the startling fact that they are, as it were, localized at focal points in the divine economy. Inasmuch as the doctrine of the queenship of Mary is of such universal implication, there is more than poetic justice in having it literally expressed in the Books of Genesis and the Apocalypse. Moreover, the surprise continues in finding that her dominative power should come into existence at the solemn moment of the Incarnation in and through her gracious consent to be the Mother to Him whose kingdom was not of this world and at the same time Spouse of the Most High.

¹³ T. U. Mullaney, O.P., *Queen of Mercy* (Part II), in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. 127, 1952, pp. 32-33.

What might be designated corroborative texts from Scripture manifesting an apparent relation to queenship are to be found in the Old Testament. A most engaging one is that of Psalm 44:10 (Hebr. 45:10) "The Queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety"—(Hebr. "adorned in gold of Ophir"). It is a messianic psalm, the context of which is prevaillingly pertinent to the Church as its primary object. Nonetheless, application to Our Lady has been strongly favored throughout a long tradition, although the consent thereunto is far from unanimous and all too frequently only by way of allowing an accommodated sense. Under the circumstances, the marian signification can hardly have the character of implicit revelation despite the appropriateness of the terminology as well the ideology.

Everyone is familiar with the adaptation of the Wisdom texts (Wis. 8:22-36 and Eccl. 24:11-25) to Our Lady by the liturgy, which indeed has effected an integration into the *lex orandi* of the faithful. Their probative value, however, for the queenship of Mary is fraught with similar encumbrances and one must be content with the observations of the esteemed biblical scholar Father Vaccari S. J.: "The praises given Wisdom rightfully apply to the Mother of Christ both in the natural and supernatural order in and through a consequent sense and the obvious accommodations available".¹⁴

Types or figures foreshadowing the Blessed Virgin undoubtedly exist in the Old Testament. Difficulty with the typical sense in this regard is had in the fact that persons, events, and things have been employed as symbols by extra-scriptural agents and no longer have God as the author of their application. They therefore become severed from the source of revelation and the life goes out of them. This is so true in the case of the types of Esther and Judith as basic texts for the queenship of Our Lady. A mariological type

¹⁴ Cf. F. Vaccari, S.J., *Institutiones Biblicae*, vol. 2, Romae, 1935, p. 172.

must conform to all the requirements of a messianic type and, above all, that it be revealed as such in Scripture. This explains why modern exegesis is quite wary of adducing a marian typical sense for these alluring Old Testament personalities and their history.¹⁵

Mention should be made, in passing, of the kingship recognized in Christ by the Magi (Mt. 2:1-12). It is a forceful episode that makes the presence of Our Lady something more than mere association or coincidence. The exegete is compelled to evaluate oriental customs with their stern traditions that permeate this context of Matthew. They predicate a royalty in the mother both temporal and spiritual.

A scriptural basis for the queenship of Mary, commensurate indeed with the tremendous devotion shown her throughout the ages in so many regal titles, does exist and one can safely assert that it is inherent in the literal sense of the sacred text, at least to the point of implicit revelation. Though the prerogative is stated in but few words, they are weighty ones demonstrating that—as Pope Pius XII, gloriously reigning, remarked so well in a similar context—“the proofs and considerations of the Holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation”.¹⁶ Mary, then, “like her own Son, having overcome death, [was] taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as *Queen*, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages.”¹⁷

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¹⁵ Cf. M. Peinador, *art. cit.*, pp. 335-336.

¹⁶ Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, in *AAS*, vol. 42, 1950, pp. 770.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Exchange of Views on Fr. Smith's Paper

The panel leader, Fr. Kugelman, launched the discussion by proposing this question to the group: is the doctrine of the Queenship of Mary formally contained in the Lucan texts of the Annunciation?

Fr. E. Smith immediately replied that it was, and Fr. May added that one should note that there is a cumulative proof for the doctrine when *all* Scripture texts are examined.

Fr. R. Murphy stated that the element of queen mother is clearly contained in the Annunciation text and was inclined to see also the element of queen-consort, due to the intimate union between Christ and Mary; in other words, the grace which filled Mary's soul, her union with God, was such as to justify the term, "espousal."

Fr. J. Carol introduced Gen. 3:15 into the discussion, indicating how the Queenship of our Lady is contained in this text.

Fr. Murphy returned to the Annunciation text and argued for the presence of the third element of Marian queenship, her queenly power, being present in the *Fiat* of Mary. Her consent to the Incarnation was a consent to be the Mother of the Savior-King; it was not a consent to an isolated fact, but a consent to a whole concatenation of events which included the role God had destined for her as Mediatrix, which is one of her primary attributes as Queen.

Fr. Kugelman agreed with this solution, stating that he had always been convinced of the probative value of the Lucan texts for the Queenship, but had proposed his question to the floor to see if all could come to common agreement.

Fr. Le Frois pointed out that Pope Pius XII said that Mary consented as the "Sponsa Verbi," which lends Papal support to the element of queen-consort in the scriptural text.

In reply to a point raised by Fr. May, Msgr. Vandry claimed that Mary need not have had knowledge of all that the angel's words contained when she gave her consent.

Fr. Carol returned to the Marian meaning of Gen. 3:15, which had been questioned by Fr. Murphy, and noted that Fr. Ceuppens, former Rector of the Angelicum, had changed his views to agree with the Marian interpretation of this verse in the second edition of his Mariological work; he indicated that the use of the text in the definition of the Assumption had made the Marian meaning certain. To this Fr. May added the support of Fr. Bea of the Biblical Institute. Fr. Kugelman expressed his own understanding of the text, seeing the Marian interpretation as the "sensus plenior," with the doctrine of the queenship implicitly contained.

Fr. Murphy proposed for discussion two "facts,"—insisting that there was no proper scriptural sense involved,—which might indicate Mary's power as queen: that Jesus was subject to her throughout the Hidden Life and also that He changed His mind and began His Public Ministry with the miracle she requested. The query of Fr. Le Frois indicated that the same facts could be understood of Mary's power as Mother. Fr. May was inclined to think that the circumstances surrounding the Cana miracle point to Mary's queenship implicitly: the result was that they *believed* in Him; that under such circumstances Jesus should launch His Public Ministry.

Fr. Heeg proposed for discussion the words of Mary to the Cana servants: whatever he tells you, do. These are the last quoted words of our Lady and suggest the act of a queen. Fr. Kugelman, while cautioning against too free a use of scriptural texts for proof, confessed that these words might have a deeper meaning when one considers the evident symbolism found in the gospel of St. John.

Mr. Griffin asked if the verses of the Magnificat, being the echo of the words of the mother of Samuel, might not be relevant to the queenship. Fr. Le Frois took this up, drawing attention to Luke 1:52 and pointing out that the exaltation of the humble would include Mary, who had described herself as humble.

Discussion ended with a prayer.