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## Mariology in the English-Speaking World

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## MARIOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

A convention of this kind might welcome a session given over entirely to the review of the praise of our Blessed Lady by poetry. In such a session the English-speaking world would be proudly represented. Many of those who have inherited the poet's vocation of Chaucer have inherited together with it his desire to sing in our language the glory of *Our blissful Lady, Jesus' Mother dear*.

A certain humility and characteristic understatement have marked the poets of our language who sing of Mary, since first Chaucer confessed the temperamental limitation, if it be such, of our race:

Lady! Thy goodness, thy magnificence, thy virtue, and thy great  
humility,  
Surpass all science and all utterance; . . .  
My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen!  
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness,  
That I the weight of it may not sustain.

Thus the poets of our language ever since: Lydgate, Constable, Rowlands, and, in their later days, Gerald Manley Hopkins, G. K. Chesterton and some of our devout contemporaries.

But poetry is not the direct interest of this convention. Neither, I take it, is the literature of devotion, though in this fair field, too, those who pray to God and speak to His saints in the many accents of our language have told their love of God's Mother. Out of the not inconsiderable number of Marian devotional classics in English, each will probably remember the one or more to which he is personally indebted for warm light and loving understanding. And so where some



would recall other writers, another thinks of Father Faber or of Father Henry Coleridge and his *The Mother of the King* and *The Mother of the Church*.

Nor, again, is our present interest in the evidences of practical devotion to Mary in the English-speaking world. Presumably Daniel Sargent's "Our Land and Our Lady" most succinctly records the American chapters in the history of devotion to Mary. That story in its English chapters needs no retelling to one who remembers Walsingham or the unusually rich history of English understanding of Our Lady's Assumption from the days of King Alfred, through those of Lanfranc and later Henry VI and Lupton's Tower at Eton.

But, alas, the English-speaking world has largely broken with the orthodox Faith of Catholic Christendom. Heresy in doctrine and devotion concerning the Blessed Mother has had, however, occasional curious and seemingly contradictory characteristics. Together with an almost frigid repudiation of devotion to Mary, a refreshing desire to restore Mary to her proper place in the Christian Faith sometimes reveals itself in heterodoxy. For instance, one remembers a book of meditation on the Blessed Mother, her virtues and her predestination, published in the last century by the Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, of all places. True, the case is exceptional, but it is by no means unique.

So, too, there are grounds for hope, one feels, in the confession by many seekers for the truth of a genuine "embarrassment" with regard to the Blessed Mother. Thus in 1930 a significant article on "Why I Would Find It Difficult to Become a Roman Catholic" by Dr. William E. Orchard avowed difficulties concerning Catholic devotion to Mary; in point of fact the author was already well on the way to faith concerning Catholic *doctrine* on Mary.

Before him, John Henry Newman had confessed to like embarrassment. In his autobiography, Newman writes: "At



least during the Tract Movement, I thought the essence of her (the Roman Church's) offence to consist in the honors which she paid to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and the more I grew in devotion, both to the Saints and to our Lady, the more impatient was I at the Roman practices, as if those glorified creations of God must be gravely shocked, if pain could be theirs, at the undue veneration of which they were the objects. Such devotional manifestations in honor of our Lady had been my great *crux* as regards Catholicism."

One mentions this point because, paradoxical though it sounds in the face of the sometimes rude and even violent repudiation by non-Catholics of the recent dogmatic definition of the Christian Faith concerning the Assumption, one remains persuaded that the English-speaking world may yet return to its erstwhile convictions concerning *Christ* and to the sanctity and sanity of *Christendom* precisely through a greater appreciation of the moral and social corollaries of sound *Mariology*.

One ventures to cite John Henry Newman as the example of how this might yet be. Rereading his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* the impression grows that Newman as an Anglican was probably the last Protestant theologian of stature to speak of Jesus, of Mary and of God's grace as had ancient Christendom; just as he became probably the first Catholic in generations, please God not the last, to speak and write of these with the native verve, the disciplined restraint, the special genius and particular beauty of the language of the English-speaking world. At least for these two reasons, Newman must always be a symbol of hope to those whose solicitude for the Church includes a particular zeal for the souls outside the Church who, though deprived of the ancient, the perennial Faith, nonetheless share with us the language of Chaucer and Shakespeare, together with the racial characteristics, at least of Venerable Bede and Thomas More.



To Catholic and non-Catholic alike, Newman appeals by reason of his profound convictions and his candid simplicity. His Christian character shines through every page of his works. More pertinent to our present considerations, we may take him without much debate as the prince of English-speaking theologians and, I venture to say, of our Mariologists in particular. Father Francis Friedel's notable dissertation on *The Mariology of Cardinal Newman* deserves fresh attention at this time, especially the section on the psychological evolution of Newman's Marian doctrine and devotion.<sup>1</sup> The spiritual case history of the great convert-Cardinal may yet prove more typical than it has to date, as God's graces are poured forth in proportion to the evils and vexations of the last half of the twentieth century.

In the *Mariology of Cardinal Newman* one encounters first, last and always a strictly Christological spirit and emphasis. As an Anglican he had argued: "The more (Mary) is considered in her person, the more dangerous is such knowledge for us; she is so close to God, too pure and holy a flower to be more than *seen* on earth. We hardly seem able to put her in her proper position. We cannot combine in our thought of her, all we should ascribe, with all we should withhold. Consequently, we are to think of her only with her Divine Son."

But later, as he came to understand the heinous ravages and unhappy origins of heresy, Newman turned his devout inquiry more directly to Mary, only to discover how intimately Christocentric had been the development of Catholic Christendom's Mariology. He came to see that the exaltation of Mary had been dependent upon the glory of her divine Son; only when it was necessary to secure a right faith in Jesus, had the manifestation of her privileges and prerogatives taken

<sup>1</sup> The indebtedness of the present paper to Father Friedel's book is complete and candid.



place. Newman said: "When His name was dishonored, then it was that she did Him service; when Emmanuel was denied, then the Mother of God (as it were) came forward; when heretics said that God was not incarnate, then was the time for her own honors. And then, when as much as this had been accomplished, she had done with strife; she fought not for herself. No fierce controversy, no persecuted confessors, no heresiarch, no anathema, were necessary for her gradual manifestation . . . she has raised herself aloft silently, and has grown into her place in the Church by a tranquil influence and a natural process. . . . Thus was she reared without hands, and gained a modest victory, and exerts a gentle sway, which she has not claimed. When a dispute arose about her among her children, she hushed it; when objections were urged against her, she waived her claims and waited."

And so, Newman came to reunion with Rome partly, at least, through understanding love for Mary. He came to Mary, as to all the Catholic creed, through his desire to see the firm basis of dogma concerning Christ restored to the crumbling walls of Christendom. Dogma was the fundamental interest of his mind. Of all the mysteries of faith, his attention was most concentrated on the central truth of the Gospel—the Incarnation, which Newman considered the article by which the Church stood or fell.

It was, then, from his clear understanding of Christology that Newman came to Mariology—and specifically out of his luminous appreciation of Christ's total *Divinity* and total *Humanity*.

Father Friedel summarizes effectively Newman's development: Since it was most fitting that the Word should become incarnate in order to effect man's redemption, He might have come into the world in divers manners. Though he did not wish to have an earthly father, yet He wished to come by the way of generation lest He should miss the participation of our



nature. As at the creation the Almighty formed woman out of man, so now by a like mystery but in a reverse order the new Adam was to be fashioned from the woman. The Word set apart Mary as His mother, "to yield a created nature to Him Who was her Creator. Thus He came into this world, not in the clouds of heaven, but born into it, born of a woman; He, the Son of Mary, and she . . . the Mother of God. Thus He came, selecting and setting apart for Himself the elements of body and soul; then uniting them to Himself from their first origin of existence, pervading them, hallowing them by His own Divinity, spiritualizing them and filling them with light and purity, the while they continued to be human." God chose a daughter of man to become the Mother of God. He was taking upon Him her flesh, and "humbling Himself to be called her offspring." Thereby He conferred upon her the greatest honor ever put upon any individual of our fallen race, so that it is difficult to say which is the more wonderful to admire—the unspeakable grace bestowed upon Mary or the great condescension of the Word, who though Son of God wished also to become the Son of Mary.

Let Newman himself describe the awesome mystery of all this: "At first sight we might be tempted to say that it throws into confusion our primary ideas of the Creator and the creature, the Eternal and the temporal, the Self-subsisting and the dependent; and yet, on further consideration, we shall see that we cannot refuse the title (Mother of the Creator) to Mary without denying the Divine Incarnation." But there is something more wonderful than that Mary should be called and should be indeed, the Mother of God. It is that God, without ceasing to be God, should become man. Yet this is an elementary truth of revelation; Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles all testify that the Eternal Word had decreed to come to earth and become a man like any of us, to take a human soul and body and to make them His own.



Faith teaches that the Blessed Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God, the Theotokos, *Deipara*. The Council of Ephesus defined it in clear, unmistakable terms: "If anyone doth not confess that God is in all truth Emmanuel, and that because of this the Holy Virgin is Mother of God . . . let him be anathema." The Council of Chalcedon confirmed it. Newman calls this sanctioning of the Theotokos "an addition greater, perhaps, than any before or since to the letter of the primitive faith." Elsewhere he says of this word: "It carries with it no admixture of rhetoric, no taint of extravagant affection—it has nothing else but a well-weighed, grave, dogmatic sense, which corresponds and is adequate to its sound. It intends to express that God is Mary's Son, as truly as any of us is the son of his mother."

And so the dogma of Mary as Mother of God follows from the Christian dogma concerning Christ. This is always one of its functions: The Catholic dogma concerning Mary keeps the dogma concerning Christ from degenerating into the amorphous state of heretical Christology. Mariology prevents a dreamy, unreal way of regarding the whole mystery of the Incarnation. It protects the doctrine *De Verbo Incarnato* and keeps the faith of Catholics from specious humanitarianism or vague theological abstractions.

Enamoured of the Fathers of the Church, of their science and speculation, Newman had the patristic sense of the basic dogmas concerning the *humanity* and the *divinity* of Jesus and perceived how Mariology is bound up with these. He declares: "The confession that Mary is *Deipara* or the Mother of God, is that safeguard wherewith we seal up and secure the doctrine of the Apostle from all evasion, and that test whereby we detect all the pretenses of those bad spirits of 'Anti-Christ which have gone out into the world.' It declares that He is God; it implies that He is man; it suggests that He is God still, though He has become man, and that He is true



man though He is God . . . if Mary is the Mother of God, Christ must be literally Emmanuel, God with us." The most effectual means the Church had of expelling false teachers concerning Christ's nature was by using the word *Theotokos* against them. Newman expresses this aptly when he says: "The Church and Satan agreed together on this, that Son and Mother went together; and the experience of three centuries has confirmed their testimony, for Catholics who have honored the Mother still worship the Son, while Protestants, who now have ceased to confess the Son, began by scoffing at the Mother."

Mary's special office in the Church is still to protect the doctrine concerning her Divine Son; so Newman would have us understand. She reminds us ever that there was one who, on becoming her Son, "did not abhor the Virgin's womb." She is the *Turris Davidica*, the high and strong defense of the King of Israel. With good reason, then, can the Church say of her that "she destroys all heresies in the whole world."

This conception of Mary's special function is not, of course, peculiar to Newman. St. John Damascene had already suggested the idea when he wrote: "It is with good reason that we give St. Mary the name of Mother of God, for this title suffices to establish in all its integrity the mystery of the Word made flesh."

The elements of Newman's theory of Mary's place in the work of the Redemption are again strictly Christocentric and follow closely on Sacred Scripture. His doctrine on the co-redemptive role of Mary is stated in terms of Mary as the Second Eve and is based on a tightly reasoned parallelism between the circumstances of the Fall and those of the Redemption as these are set forth in Sacred Scripture and are elaborated by his beloved Church Fathers.

Adam as head of the human race had been, of course, primarily responsible for the fate of posterity; he was our repre-



sentative. By his fall, the race forfeited the privileges conferred originally upon us by God; had he not fallen, though Eve might have yielded to the tempter's wiles, grace would not have been lost to humanity. Eve was not head of the race as Adam was; still, she had her co-operative position in the First Covenant. Adam named her the "Mother of all the living" to show not only her relation to the human race, but also her dignity. She had her special place as regards its trial and fall in Adam; she had an integral share in the primeval events. She listened to the serpent, ate of the forbidden fruit, and offered it to her husband. Newman argues: "She co-operated, not as an irresponsible instrument, but intimately and personally in the sin; she brought it about. As the history stands, she was a *sine qua non*, a positive, active cause of it. And she had her share in the punishment; in the sentence pronounced on her, she was recognized as a real agent in the temptation and its issue, and she suffered accordingly."

Three actors are represented in this tragic scene of the Proto-evangelium—a scene fraught with so many consequences for the billions of human beings that would people the globe in future ages. There was the serpent, the woman, and the man. When the sentence was pronounced on each of these three individually, an event was announced for some distant future when the three same parties would meet again—the serpent, the woman, and the man; but it was to be a second Adam and a second Eve, and the new Eve was to be the mother of the new Adam, for the Lord had said: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed."

As Adam primarily brought about the fall, so the new Adam would be the principal and absolutely essential cause of Redemption. However, Eve had her share in the first sin; in like manner, the new Eve was to have her place in the economy of Redemption. Eve was responsible and instru-



mental in Adam's sin; the new Eve, too, was to be a voluntary agent; she was to be united with her divine Son in spirit and in will, as she was associated with Him in body, by furnishing Him the elements of His human nature. "As Eve opened the way for the fatal deed of the first Adam, so it was fitting that Mary should open the way for the great achievement of the second Adam, even our Lord Jesus Christ." So Newman presents the matter.

For him Mary is the second and better Eve, as taking the initial part in the world's restoration. God ever demands a reasonable service and the voluntary co-operation of creatures in His works; He forces no will, but requires acquiescence in His designs. Though the Incarnation was to be of such tremendous significance for the whole human race, nevertheless as for man's fall, so for the restoration, He allowed the accomplishment or non-accomplishment of His will to rest solely on the *fiat* of a young maiden. When God sent the Angel to announce the great dignity that was to be Mary's portion, He wished that she should enter upon her function as Mother of the Redeemer knowingly and willingly. Mary pondered the full import of the Angel's message and, with the consent of a heart full of God's love, she answered: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

It is at once evident from the mere Gospel narrative that Mary was not only the physical instrument of the Word's taking flesh, but also an instrumental responsible cause. This Newman considered to be the view of the Fathers. Protestants lose sight of this important fact. Newman was obliged to call Pusey to task for his assertion in the *Eirenicon* that "the Fathers speak of the Blessed Virgin as the instrument of our salvation in that she gave birth to the Redeemer, and apply personally to her the title of chosen vessel of the Incarnation." Newman, even as an Anglican, had not shared this view of



his friend, though he speaks of her as an instrument, as is every saint, working toward an end appointed by God. But he does not consider her exclusively as such; he had already remarked the parallelism between Eve and Mary: "Jesus is the seed of the woman announced to guilty Eve . . . in her (Mary) the destinies of the world were to be reversed and the serpent's head bruised . . . in her the curse pronounced on Eve was changed to a blessing . . . in bearing our Lord, she has taken off or lightened the peculiar disgrace which the woman inherited for seducing Adam, in that she was ruled over by man."

Newman turned to the Fathers for his understanding that Mary was more than a mere physical instrument. "They declare," says he, "that she was not a mere instrument in the Incarnation, such as David or Judah may be considered; she co-operated in our salvation not merely by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon her body, but by specific holy acts, the effects of the Holy Ghost within her soul; but as Eve forfeited privileges by sin, so Mary earned privileges by the fruits of grace: as Eve was disobedient and unbelieving, so Mary was obedient and believing; that as Eve was a cause of ruin to all, Mary was a cause of salvation to all; that as Eve made room for Adam's fall, so Mary made room for our Lord's reparation of it; and thus, whereas the free gift was not as the offense, but much greater, it follows that, as Eve co-operated in effecting a great evil, Mary co-operated in effecting a much greater good."

From her co-operation with the Redeemer, Catholics have come to style Mary "co-Redemptrix," a title to which Pusey protested in his *Eirenicon*. Newman could not see why there should be any objection to calling her co-Redemptrix, when the Fathers of the Church had called her by such names as "Mother of God," "Second Eve," "Mother of Life," "the



Morning Star," "the mystical new heaven," "the Sceptre of Orthodoxy."

For Newman, Mary does not usurp the place of her Divine Son in the work of redemption. She is not the cause of grace. Jesus alone is the life of the soul; He alone regenerates us; Mary is our mother by divine appointment, her office is external to us. This is elementary dogma known by the simplest Catholic. No matter how high we elevate Mary—and we may raise her to a height short of the infinite—she remains ever a creature as one of us, though a very privileged one.

Her function of Mediatrix or co-Redemptress was not absolutely necessary *necessitate medii*, as the Schoolmen would say; yet it was really necessary according to the designs of Divine Providence. The Fathers manifest this clearly when they speak of her as the cause of salvation to the human race. From the doctrine of the Second Eve, springs that of the spiritual maternity. She is truly the Mother of men; like Eve, she has become the Mother of all the living. By becoming the Mother of God and therefore instrument of the Incarnation, she has entered into an intimate relationship with *us*, each and all, in what concerns our spiritual life, for through the Incarnation we become brethren of Christ and heirs of heaven.

Mother of the physical Christ, she is not less Mother of the Mystical Christ. It is suggested, in all deference, that a future gathering of this group might well explore the rich theological implications of Mary's spiritual maternity.

Cardinal Newman will provide many and rewarding leads in such exploration. Theological literature offers few pages so ingenious or so attractive as those which preserve Newman's reflections on Mary and the Church, for example.

Newman saw the relation between Mary and the Church, as others before him, such as St. Caesarius of Arles, who speaks of these "two mothers." St. Augustine has given us in a masterly page the doctrine on the relation between Mary



and the Church: "The Church imitates the Mother of Christ, her Spouse and Lord. The Church also is both mother and virgin. Of whose purity do we take such jealous care if she is not a virgin? and to whose children do we speak if she is not a mother? Mary has given corporal birth to the head of this body; the Church brings forth spiritually the members of this head. For both, virginity is no hindrance to fruitfulness; for both, fruitfulness does not tarnish their virginity. . . . But to one woman alone, to Mary, belongs the right to be both spiritually and corporally, Mother and Virgin. Spiritually, she is not mother of our Head, of our Savior, from whom she was rather spiritually born, but she is certainly mother of His members, that is, she is our mother; for she has co-operated by her love in giving birth to the faithful in the Church. . . . Mary is, then, in body and soul, mother and virgin, Mother of Christ and Virgin of Christ. As for the Church, in the person of the Saints who will possess the kingdom of God, she is in spirit, Mother of Christ (i. e., by doing the will of God according to the expression in St. Matthew) and wholly Virgin of Christ."

By consenting to the Incarnation and becoming the Mother of God, Mary becomes mother of men, since she willed the regeneration of men; the Church is on earth to continue the work in which Mary had co-operated. The superiority, however, lies on the side of Mary. She is united to the Conqueror and triumphs with Him; the Church succeeds to continue the struggle. Mary has her place in the work of Redemption, in the acquisition and distribution of grace; the Church participates only in their distribution. In the acquisition and distribution of grace Mary is associated, though only in a secondary manner, to Jesus Christ, principal cause and source of all merit; in the distribution of grace the Church is but an instrument. Mary is mother of the Savior and of



the members of His mystical body; the Church is mother of the members only.

This is what is meant by Newman when he maintains that the Apostle would not have spoken of the Church under this particular image unless there had existed a Blessed Virgin Mary. Under the symbol of the Woman, the real sense applies to the Church. But Mary is not an inferior personage taken as symbol of something greater; she is rather taken as the model of all who are to follow her; as a sovereign, she unites in herself all the forces and the will of the whole Church. The thought of the Church and of Mary complete and recall each other. Such is the meaning of the Fathers theologians as well as of the Church's liturgy, when applying this chapter of the Apocalypse to the Blessed Virgin. Hence, Newman can say that the Woman and Child are more than mere personifications; they are *real persons*. Thus, it is not a mere accommodation of the text to the Blessed Virgin; when St. John contemplated in the heavens the Woman clothed with the sun, he found in her a resemblance to the one whom he could call his own mother.

It is not easy to forego the pleasure of following Newman into the pages of his *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* and the *Meditations and Devotions* in order to enjoy the sheer beauty of his treatment of the personal relations between Jesus and Mary, the qualities of Mary's sanctity and the circumstances of her death. Perhaps passing reference may be made in our present moment of Marian history to Newman's considerations on the Assumption, a dogma he was quick to see as crowning and following from all the privileges of Mary, beginning with the Immaculate Conception.

The comparison between Mary and Eve once more recurs to Newman in this connection. Adam and Eve both had been created upright and sinless; had they been faithful to God's command, they would have been immortal in spite of the



corruptibility of their bodies. Only when they had sinned, did their bodies follow the ordinary law of their corruptible nature. From thenceforth all who share in their curse must share in the punishment. "If Eve, the beautiful daughter of God, never would have become dust and ashes unless she had sinned, shall we not say that Mary, having never sinned, retained the gift which Eve, by sinning, lost? What had Mary done to forfeit the privilege given to our first parents in the beginning? Was her comeliness to be turned into corruption and her fine gold to become dim, without reason assigned? Impossible. Therefore, we believe that, though she died for a short hour, as did our Lord Himself, yet like Him and by His Almighty power she was raised again from the grave."

Extrinsic arguments from history weigh heavily with Newman and his reasoning from these concerning the Assumption is typical:

"If her body was not taken into heaven, where is it? how comes it that it is hidden from us? why do we not hear of her tomb as being here or there? why are not pilgrimages made to it? why are not relics producible of her, as of the Saints in general? Is it not even a natural instinct which makes us reverent toward the places where our dead are buried?" Our Lord's tomb was honored; in like manner the tombs and relics of John the Baptist, the Apostles and Martyrs. "Now if there was any one who more than all would be preciously taken care of, it would be our Lady. Why, then, do we hear nothing of the Blessed Virgin's body, and its separate relics? Is it conceivable that they who had been so reverent and careful of the bodies of the Saints and the Martyrs should neglect her—her who was the Queen of the Martyrs and Queen of the Saints, who was the very Mother of Our Lord? It is impossible. Why, then, is she thus the *hidden Rose*? Plainly because that sacred body is in heaven, not on earth."

The Assumption does not, of course, terminate the rela-



tion of Mary to the Church. On the contrary, it give this relation a new meaning, a more intimate character. Newman sums up briefly but beautifully the inter-relations of the Communion of Saints, the prayer of Christians and the privileges of Mary:

"I consider it impossible, then, for those who believe the Church to be one vast body in heaven and on earth, in which every holy creature of God has his place, and of which prayer is the life, when once they recognize, the sanctity and dignity of the Blessed Virgin, not to perceive immediately, that her office above is one of perpetual intercession for the faithful militant and that our very relation to her must be that of clients to a patron, and that, in the eternal enmity which exists between the Woman and the serpent, while the serpent's strength lies in being the tempter, the weapon of the Second Eve and Mother of God is prayer."

At least in the possession of this weapon in common with Mary, we have a ground for hope whatever evils close about us. May we who speak the language of Newman, speak it in prayer—particularly in prayer to Mary and through her to Jesus, Her Son, Our Brother.

✠ JOHN WRIGHT,  
*Bishop of Worcester.*