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THE NATURE OF MARY'S SPIRITUAL MATERNITY

The Blessed Virgin is not merely the Mother of Christ but of Christians as well. This truth has been woven into the very texture of the faith of our Catholic people. Nothing is more natural for the faithful in their devotion to Mary than to greet and invoke her with the sweet name of Mother. As children they were told that besides their earthly mothers they likewise had a heavenly Mother, radiant with beauty, rich in every bounty, powerful and most loving, who watched over their lives with the tenderest solicitude. Moved by the truth of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood, they expressed childlike sentiments to her and invoked her confidently in every difficult hour.

That such sentiments of filial piety toward Our Blessed Mother are not just poetic outbursts, but truths based on dogma and theological reasoning, will be demonstrated in the present annual convention. The various lectures will bring to light arguments from Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church which can best serve as bases for the doctrine of Mary's Spiritual Maternity. But these arguments must of necessity be preceded by a clear statement of the problem involved and of the doctrinal points to be proved. The present paper is an attempt at such a statement, and even though it may not do full justice to the topic of the nature of Mary's Spiritual Maternity, we hope that it will at least be thought-provoking and thus contribute remotely to the solution of the questions discussed.

I. THE CONCEPT OF MOTHERHOOD¹

The nature of Mary's Spiritual Maternity can hardly be defined without previously recalling the different acceptations of the word "mother." St. Thomas with his customary clarity and conciseness defines a mother as follows: "Ex hoc dicitur

¹ In this section we are adopting the classification given by Father Gregorio de Jesús Crucificado, O.C.D., in his article *Naturaleza de la maternidad*

aliqua mulier alicuius mater quod eum concepit et genuit."² A woman becomes a mother through the process of generation, which Aristotle defines: "Origo viventis a principio venti coniuncto in similitudinem eiusdem naturae."³ The quintessence of motherhood consists, therefore, in the production by the mother of a life similar to hers in virtue of an action proper to her person. All other maternal activities, such as the nourishment and education of the child, even though they naturally derive from a mother's sympathy for her offspring, are secondary and accidental functions of motherhood. They may be delegated to persons other than the true mother of the child, whereas the act of generation is in no way transferable. The essence of motherhood is, therefore, to be sought exclusively in the generative process, wherein alone lies the meaning of "mother" in the strict sense of the word.⁴

Literary and legal language has, however, attributed a number of looser meanings to the term "mother." Thus in the realm of letters the earth, or nature, or one's native land have metaphorically been designated as "mother"; while in terms of law we may speak of a motherhood of donation, of adop-

espiritual de María, in *Estudios Marianos*, vol. 7, Madrid, 1948, p. 123-125. Similar classifications can be found in: L. Marvulli, O.F.M.Conv., *María Madre del Cristo Místico*, Roma, 1948, p. 4-5; N. García Garcés, C.M.F., *Mater Corredemptrix*, Romae, 1940, p. 15-20; G. M. Roschini, O.S.M., *Compendium Mariologiae*, Romae, 1946, p. 273-274; G. Alastruey, *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*, Madrid, 1947, p. 747-748; M. Llamera, O.P., *La maternidad espiritual de María*, in *Estudios Marianos*, vol. 3, Madrid, 1944, p. 73-78.

² S. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. 3, q. 35, a. 4.

³ P. 1, q. 27, a. 2; Aristotle, *V Phys.*, c. 1; *VIII Phys.*, c. 7; *I De Gen et Corr.*, c. 4.

⁴ N. García Garcés, *Dalla maternità spirituale alla Corredenzione*, in *Marianum*, vol. 3, 1941, p. 382: "... il titolo di Madre, che essendolo in modo reale e perfetto, suppone due funzioni: generare (nel caso nostro, rigenerare) la prole e portarla alla sua perfezione e ultimo sviluppo." M. Llamera, *art. cit.*, p. 73: "Nosotros entendemos que sólo es verdadera maternidad la de la generación." Cf. A. Plessis, S.M.M., *Manuale Mariologiae Dogmaticae*, Pontchateau, 1942, p. 299.

tion and of federation. A mother by donation is one who exercises the accidental duties of motherhood, such as the nourishment and education of the child, in place of the true mother who is unable or unwilling to perform them herself. The most obvious example of this type of motherhood is that of a second wife who becomes the step-mother of her husband's children. Adoptive motherhood takes place when two married people who have no children of their own accept as their child one which they did not engender. Motherhood by federation is realized in the case of a woman who becomes the mother-in-law of her child's consort. Since married people are "two in one flesh" they become relatives by affinity of their partner's blood-relations. Noticeable in both the metaphorical and the three forms of juridical motherhood is the fact that they all lack the fundamental reason and constituent quality of motherhood in the strict sense, namely, the production of a new life through the medium of generation. The term "mother" in a juridical sense is justifiable only on the grounds of its implying a delegation of the secondary or accidental duties of motherhood.

II. REGENERATION TO THE LIFE OF GRACE

Motherhood includes an intrinsic relation to the production of life, and as the concept of life is analogical with various applications, we may legitimately investigate as to the possibility of a birth or generation to the supernatural life.

Philosophy defines life in general as an autonomous movement, and living beings as "ea quae seipsa secundum aliquam speciem motus movent."⁵ The cessation of such movement is known as death. Reason tells us moreover that man, capable as he is of spiritual operations, is endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul which possesses eternal life and will be rewarded or punished eternally according to its merits.

⁵ S. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. 1, q. 18, a. 1.

Over and above this immortal life, natural to man, there is another form of life, gratuitously infused into the human soul by God and known as the supernatural life of grace. Sanctifying grace is not a merely juridical entity which gives us a *right* to eternal life, but a physical reality, a participation in the divine nature. Not only does it make us adopted sons of God with a claim to our heavenly inheritance, but it constitutes the life-principle of an activity analogous and superior to our natural activity.

Man was created with the supernatural life, the germ of eternal life in his soul; but because of the sin of the first man, Adam, that life was taken away from him and his descendants, so that death reigned in the world. It was Christ's mission to restore this supernatural life to the universe by destroying sin, the cause of death. "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."⁶ This revivifying of the world took place by means of Christ's passion and death, which restored the life of grace to souls, by making it derive from the plentitude of grace possessed by the humanity of Christ. St. Paul mentions this supernatural revivification when he writes to the Colossians: "And you, when you were dead by reason of your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought to life along with him (*convivificavit cum illo*), forgiving you all your sins, cancelling the decree against us, which was hostile to us. Indeed, he has taken it completely away, nailing it to the cross."⁷

To this restoration of supernatural life Scripture applies the term "birth," ordinarily used to signify natural regeneration: "Amen, Amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."⁸ Deserving of our closest attention are our Lord's words in answer to Nicodemus who objects: "How can a man

⁶ *John* 10, 10.

⁷ *Coloss.* 2, 13-14.

⁸ *John* 3, 5.

be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?" Explaining the nature of the new life, Jesus goes deeply into the mystery of the Redemption. The supernatural life is spiritual, not carnal. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not wonder that I said to thee, 'You must be born again.' " ⁹ And He continues to show how this can be realized: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." ¹⁰ Man must be reborn in a spiritual manner in order to have a share in eternal life, and this life is imparted to him because God has given His Divine Son, through whom all are saved. Of such a rebirth St. Peter likewise speaks when he says: "For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever." ¹¹

Theology goes a step further and explains how sanctifying grace is derived from our Lord. By His Hypostatic Union Christ united the divine and human natures, in such a manner that human nature being invested by the divine was made a sharer in the divinity and was replenished with sanctifying grace. As, however, the Word became flesh in order to represent humanity and atone for its offenses, the plenitude of grace which informs the activity of Christ was destined to pass on to men, making them participants in the divine nature and giving them a new right to divine life. Moreover, this supernatural life was, by God's express decree, to be imparted to humanity through Christ's passion and death, on which depends our spiritual regeneration. Hence the passion of Christ may be considered as the immediate cause of our supernatural rebirth to the life of grace.

⁹ *John* 3, 6-7.

¹⁰ *John* 3, 16.

¹¹ *I Peter* 1, 23.

In this supernatural rebirth we find a proper analogy of proportionality with carnal birth in the natural order.¹² There is, first of all, a production of a new being, not as regards its natural, but as regards its moral and supernatural entity: a new creature, as St. Paul calls it, produced through Christ's intervention: "If then any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the former things have passed away; behold, they are made new! But all things are from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ."¹³ Furthermore, we may speak of an "origo viventis" since grace, which is imparted to us through the merits of Christ's passion, is a true life and makes us capable of a new activity in the supernatural order. The words "a principio viventi coniuncto" are also realized in the supernatural rebirth, for grace, which is granted us by God, derives from Christ's grace of Headship ("gratia capitali") and is merely a redundancy of His plenitude: "Of His fullness we have all received."¹⁴ And this overflow of Christ's plenitude of grace into our souls makes them like unto the divinity: "In similitudinem naturae." Indeed the grace imparted to us is the very grace of Christ, which makes us share *accidentaliter* in His divine nature in such a way that we are made His brothers by adoption. How truly then is our spiritual adoption a regeneration, a rebirth to a new life.

¹² E. Théorêt, *La Médiation mariale dans l'école française*, Paris, 1940, p. 47: "C'est une génération analogique sans doute, mais une génération réelle." Gregorio de Jesús Crucificado, *art. cit.*, p. 127: "Este renacimiento espiritual se produce a través de una generación también espiritual, en la que, analógicamente con una analogía de proporcionalidad propia, se dan los mismos elementos que intervienen en la generación carnal." J. Beumer, S.J., *Maria, Mutter der Christenheit*, in *Katholische Marienkunde* (ed. P. Sträter, S.J.), vol. 2, Paderborn, 1947, p. 230: "Wenn die Sprache der Kirche Bilder und Vergleiche wie Vater, Mutter, Zeugung, Geburt aus dem Menschlichen nimmt, so sind es Analogien, die in ihrer Weise, ohne Beimengung der Unvollkommenheiten, auf das Göttliche zu übertragen sind."

¹³ *II Cor.* 5, 17-18.

¹⁴ *John* 1, 16.

III. THE NATURE OF MARY'S SPIRITUAL MATERNITY

If there is such a thing as a spiritual rebirth, then perhaps, we may speak of a mother sharing in the causality of that regeneration.¹⁵ It is not my province here to outline the arguments of Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church that point to the existence of Mary's Spiritual Maternity. Other lecturers will do that very competently in the course of this convention. I shall take the fact of the Spiritual Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin for granted and immediately proceed to explain what in my opinion constitutes its nature.

We have already seen the various acceptations of the term "mother" in the natural order. It may be understood in a strict or a looser meaning. That the Blessed Virgin is our Mother at least in the broader sense can hardly be contested; but the question is: must Mary's Spiritual Motherhood be regarded as *merely* metaphorical or juridical; or are the conditions of a *real* motherhood in the strict sense fulfilled in her? If we give a looser meaning to her Spiritual Motherhood, then we may rightly say of Mary, as is often said of an adopted mother: "She is not our mother." Indeed, the assertion would be even truer if Mary's motherhood were regarded as not one of adoption, but rather of donation or federation, or as a motherhood in the metaphorical sense.

(A) *Motherhood in the Broad Sense to be Excluded*

There can be no question of limiting Mary's Spiritual Motherhood to a merely metaphorical meaning, since such an acceptation would go contrary to the entire history of Marian devotion. The faithful have always felt that Mary had a personal love for them, inclining her to help them and surround them with the warmth of her affection. Motherhood in the

¹⁵ J. Beumer, *art. cit.*, p. 230.

metaphorical sense, as in the case of our mother country or mother earth, implies no such personal love.

Is Mary's Spiritual Maternity to be understood in a juridical sense? Legal motherhood presupposes that the person called mother does not intervene directly in the production of the life of her son. In the order of grace we would have to suppose that Mary's direct intervention began only after the Redemption of mankind, since Redemption is the act whereby human nature is reborn to the life of grace. Even in the application of the graces of Redemption to our souls, Mary would give us nothing of her own, and would merely apply Christ's merits to our spiritual regeneration.

We could say that Mary's Spiritual Maternity is one of donation, conferred on her when Christ from the cross declared her Mother of the human race: "Behold thy Mother."¹⁶ In that case she would not be our Mother through any activity of hers, but merely through Christ's donation. She would have no share in the production of our spiritual life, and we would not bear in our souls the mark of our Mother, nor would her plenitude of grace have overflowed into us to impart supernatural life to us. Or should there be question of a maternity of adoption, which is akin to the maternity of donation? But Mary does not really adopt us as her children; she merely contributes to our being adopted as children of God and heirs to His kingdom.

If Mary's Spiritual Maternity were one of federation, or of affinity, it would arise from the relationship both Mary and we have to the Author of our spiritual life. It could follow from the fact that we are brothers of Christ both by reason of our possessing the same human nature as He and of our becoming adoptive sons of God through the grace which Christ imparts to us. From which relationship it would result that if Christ is the Son of Mary and we in some way the brothers

¹⁶ *John* 19, 27.

of Christ, Mary would be our Spiritual Mother.¹⁷ This argument, however, has the defect of proving to excess, since with it we could also demonstrate that all women who have sons are our mothers because all men are brothers according to nature.

Mary might also be called our Mother by affinity or federation inasmuch as she is the Mother of Christ, the life of our souls. The Apostle asserts: "When Christ, your life, shall appear, then you too will appear with him in glory";¹⁸ and St. John writing of our Lord affirms: "And the Life was made known,"¹⁹ whereas Christ says of Himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."²⁰ St. Paul felt that he was so penetrated with the life of Christ that he exclaimed: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me."²¹ Christ being our life, and Mary being the Mother of our life, which she produced through her Divine Maternity, she can be called our Mother.

Finally the Blessed Virgin could be called our Mother by affinity for yet another reason. In the spiritual life the soul unites itself to Christ to the point of becoming assimilated with Him. The whole itinerary of the interior life tends toward the union of the soul with God, and this union is brought about by the soul's mystical identification with Christ. It was with these facts in mind that a Father of the Church rather daringly called the Blessed Virgin: "Maria socrus animarum";²²

¹⁷ L. Di Fonzo, O.F.M.Conv., *Doctrina S. Bonaventurae de universali Mediatione B. Virginis Mariae*, Romae, 1938, p. 325: "Si per desponsationem humanae naturae Dei Filius factus est frater hominum, isti facti sunt patris et matris Filii Dei filii, et revera Deus effectus est noster pater et Maria nostra Mater."

¹⁸ *Coloss.* 3, 4.

¹⁹ *I John* 1, 2.

²⁰ *John* 14, 16.

²¹ *Gal.* 2, 20.

²² S. Anselm, *De Laudibus Mariae*; apud Gregorio de Jesús Crucificado, *art. cit.*, p. 133.

for if she is the Mother of Christ, she is also the Mother of those who have mystically become espoused to Christ.

All these broader acceptations of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood are admissible, but do they include everything that the nature of such a Motherhood comprises? Would it not be possible to admit a Spiritual Motherhood in the strict sense, based on a real and immediate causality by Mary in the act of our spiritual regeneration?

(B) Spiritual Maternity in the Strict Sense

Just as in the natural order she only is a mother who really engenders her son, imparting natural life to him in co-operation with a man; so in like manner can Mary really be considered our Spiritual Mother only if she engenders us to the supernatural life, namely if she intervenes with her personal influence in the origin of that life, imparting it to us in union with Christ who is its source and principle. Indeed, despite a substantial difference between the natural and the supernatural orders, the two are similar by an analogy of proper proportionality which warrants our comparing the conditions of motherhood in both.

To become a mother both in the natural and supernatural order a person must have an aptitude for motherhood. In the natural order this aptitude consists in puberty whereby nature, perfected in the individual, tends to overflow into a new being; in the supernatural order the corresponding aptitude would be a plenitude of grace perfecting Mary's own spiritual life and overflowing into the lives of her spiritual children.

In woman the plenitude of life, despite its tendency to transmit itself to others, does not become maternal until she has been associated with a man and receives from him a principle of life which fecunds her and to which she imparts of her superabundance of life. In a similar manner Mary's plenitude of grace, even though it is given her in view of her Spir-

itual Motherhood, does not become maternal until, associated with Christ, she receives from Him the impulse to transmit the superabundance of her plenitude of grace. And she must associate herself with Christ precisely in the act which produces life. Since, however, the act in which supernatural life is caused consists in the Redemption, Mary, to be our Mother, must be associated with Christ precisely in the redemptive act.

Furthermore, in the natural order, a mother must transmit something of her own life to her son and thus imprint on him the mark of her motherhood. It does not suffice that she receive the life principle from her spouse and content herself with conserving it. In the supernatural order Mary must in a similar fashion contribute of her own grace to our spiritual regeneration.

In order to penetrate more deeply into the question of Mary's co-operation with Christ, let us examine her two principal interventions in the work of our Redemption: her Divine Maternity with the plenitude of grace that derives from it, and her association with Christ on the Cross.

Relations Between Mary's Spiritual and Divine Maternity

When we speak of Mary we can never overlook her Divine Maternity, the origin of all her grandeur, the highest of all her excellencies and the basis of each of her prerogatives. What relations are there between Mary's Divine and her Spiritual Maternity? Is it sufficient to say that she is the Mother of God in order to conclude that she is the Mother of men? Or must another principle intervene to serve as a basis for her Spiritual Maternity?

If the term "mother" were taken in its broader sense only, the question could easily be answered. Having given life to Christ, the primary cause of our spiritual regeneration, Mary

is mediately and indirectly our Spiritual Mother.²³ Patristic testimonies implying this teaching abound; they will be given by the lecturer concerned with the arguments from Tradition.

But couldn't we go still further and say that by the very fact that Mary is Christ's Mother she becomes directly and immediately the Mother of those whom Christ regenerates to the life of grace? Father Marceliano Llamera has emphatically sustained that there is a direct and immediate link between Mary's Divine and her Spiritual Motherhood.²⁴ His argument is based on two statements, the first of which reads: "The Incarnation constitutes Christ as Head of the human race, and makes men His members, incorporated in and regenerated by Him."²⁵ The implications are that if Christ was to satisfy the divine Justice and redeem us *ex toto rigore iustitiae*, He had first to become part of the human family in order to assume the juridical representation of all mankind. Now by His Incarnation He became the Brother of sinners and could very well represent them before the throne of God. The second statement reads thus: "Mary, by her Divine Maternity is an efficacious and immediate cause of our incorporation in and regeneration by Christ."²⁶

²³ Card. A. H. M. Lépiciér, O.S.M., *Tractatus de Beatissima Virgine Maria, Matre Dei*, ed. 5, Romae, 1926, p. 453-454; E. Brand, *Die Mitwirkung der seligsten Jungfrau zur Erlösung nach dem hl. Antonin von Florenz*, Rom, 1945, p. 26-29.

²⁴ N. García Garcés, *op. cit.*, p. 103-104; R. Bernard, O.P., *Le mystère de Marie* . . ., Paris, 1933, p. 21-30; H. D. Simonin, O.P., *Médiation mariale ou Maternité spirituelle de Marie?*, in *La Vie Spirituelle*, vol. 38, 1934, [99]-[100]; J. Beumer, *art. cit.*, p. 226: "Aus der Wahrheit der Gottesmatterschaft ergibt sich als Folgerung des theologischen Denkens: Maria ist Mutter der Christenheit."

²⁵ L. Di Fonzo, *op. cit.*, p. 325: "Maternitas spiritualis hominum evincitur etiam ex consideratione Maternitatis divinae ad Christum, quatenus hic intelligitur Caput omnium electorum."

²⁶ M. Llamera, *art. cit.*, p. 91: "Primera proposición: La Encarnación constituye a Cristo en Cabeza de los Hombres y a éstos en miembros suyos, incorporándolos y regenerándolos en El. Segunda proposición: María por su

If these two statements were acceptable, the conclusion of a direct and immediate link between Mary's Divine and Spiritual Maternity would follow as a matter of course. But neither affirmation can be admitted without distinction.

Regarding the first we must remark that the concept of Christ as Head of the human race is complex. According to St. Thomas,²⁷ it supposes the threefold priority of dignity, perfection and influence, of which the first two are inseparable from the Hypostatic Union and are included in the Incarnation. The third, however, which implies Christ's influence on the members of His Mystical Body—the priority that really has a bearing on our question here—cannot adequately be included in the Incarnation. No doubt, from the Hypostatic Union derives the plenitude of the grace of Christ, and from this plenitude Christ's grace of Headship (*"gratia capitalis"*), as St. Thomas affirms. Yet we must remember that this grace of Headship is included merely *in actu primo* in the Incarnation, in as far as it denotes a capacity to influence; but in order that its influence be exercised *de facto* on the members of Christ's Mystical Body, it is necessary that an additional element intervene, namely, the Redemption. Without the latter, neither are Christ's merits applied to us, nor is the influence of His grace of Headship extended to us.

Christ's Headship should, I believe, be considered from a double point of view, namely, *in actu primo*, when it could be called a juridical Headship, and *in actu secundo* when it would really be a full and effective Headship. Juridically Christ's Headship includes the grace of union and habitual grace. The grace of Headship is included only in as far as it denotes a

maternidad divina, es causa eficaz e inmediata de nuestra incorporación y regeneración en Cristo."

²⁷ S. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, P. III, q. 8, a. 1: "Ita Christus dicitur caput Ecclesiae secundum similitudinem humani capitis. In quo tria possumus considerare: scilicet ordinem, perfectionem et virtutem. . . . Tertio, virtutem habuit influendi gratiam in omnia membra Ecclesiae."

plenitude of habitual grace in Christ, and an aptitude toward the Redemption. By it Christ possesses the *right* to represent humanity in such a way that, through a divine acceptance of the soteriological end of the Incarnation, His satisfaction *can* become valid for us all. But He represents us *de facto* only through the application of His passion. Christ's Headship *in actu secundo*, or fully and effectively considered, supposes the Redemption accomplished and the doors of the fullness of His grace opened, allowing it to flow freely to mankind.

In order that Mary might properly be called our Spiritual Mother in virtue of her Divine Maternity, it would be necessary that her Divine Maternity result immediately in the act by means of which grace is imparted to us. We know for certain that the immediate result of the Divine Maternity is the Hypostatic Union, and with it also the Headship of Christ *in actu primo*, in as far as this is included in the Incarnation. But the Incarnation does not of itself impart supernatural life to mankind, nor does it produce their spiritual regeneration. All this requires an act of oblation which cannot take place without an act of the will of Christ; and this act of the will supposes the Incarnation as an accomplished fact. Since Mary's divine maternity does not result immediately in anything beyond the Incarnation itself, it does not attain immediately, but only mediately and indirectly, to our spiritual regeneration. Mary does not, therefore, become our Spiritual Mother in the strict sense by virtue of her Divine Maternity alone.²⁸

²⁸ Cf. Gregorio de Jesús Crucificado, *art. cit.*, p. 136-138; J. M. Bover, S.J., *Orden en que han de concebirse Maternidad, Corredención y oficio de dispensar las gracias*, in *Estudios Marianos*, vol. 1, Madrid, 1942, p. 143: "A la muerte del Redentor corresponde la Compasión de la Madre Dolorosa: son los dolores del parto espiritual. La acción de Espíritu Santo tiene sus precedentes y su preparación en la encarnación del Hijo de Dios, cuando en el seno de la Madre Virgen y de su misma sustancia formó el cuerpo del Redentor, en que se concentraba y entrañaba toda la humanidad, y se le infundió con toda su

Relations Between Mary's Spiritual Maternity and Her Plenitude of Grace

Father Llamera's second argument to prove Mary's Spiritual Maternity is based on the doctrine of her plenitude of grace. His reasoning is again summarized in two statements: first, Mary was full of grace by virtue of her Divine Maternity; secondly, the plenitude of grace of the Blessed Virgin, derived from her Divine Maternity, disposes and constitutes her formally as the Mother of mankind.²⁹

If the first of these statements is commonly admitted by theologians, the second, on the contrary, needs to be more closely examined. That the plenitude of grace in Mary gives her an *aptitude* to become our Spiritual Mother seems quite acceptable; but to say that it *actually constitutes* her as such is an overstatement. The causal connection between our Lady's fullness of grace and our spiritual regeneration does not depend on the amount of grace she possesses, but on the Will of

plenitudo." J. Keuppens, *Mariologiae Compendium*, Nyakibandae (Ruanda), 1946, p. 140: "Ex quibus patet quod Maternitas spiritualis competit B. Virgini secundario in quantum est Mater Dei aut Mater Salvatoris, qui est Caput Corporis Mystici; primario autem quia est Socia Mediatoris, qua mediatione proprie dicta nobis donum gratiae acquisivit et continuo applicat." Scheeben-Feckes, *Die bräutliche Gottesmutter*, Freiburg i. B., 1936, p. 185: "Wie aber Christus vollkommen erst der geistliche Vater der Menschheit geworden ist durch seinen Opfertod, indem er in der Vergießung seines Blutes die in ihm gewordene göttliche Lebenskraft flüssig machte, so ist auch Maria erst dadurch vollkommen die geistliche Mutter der Menschheit geworden, dass sie vermöge ihrer Teilnahme an dem Opfer Christi dieses in ihrem Herzen trug und dessen Kraft in die Menschheit herabzog."

²⁹ M. Llamera, *art. cit.*, p. 110: "La fuerza demostrativa de este argumento supone la verdad de las siguientes proposiciones: (1a) María fué llena de gracia en razón de su maternidad divina. (2a) La plenitud de gracia de María derivada de la divina maternidad, la habilita y la constituye formalmente en madre de los hombres." R. Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 337: "En sa qualité de mère du Rédempteur, elle acquiert une certaine participation, quoique imparfaite, à ce rôle de chef de l'humanité qui appartient en propre à son Fils. Elle a toutes les grâces en rapport avec sa mission, cette plenitude que nous avons dite."

God which decrees that her fullness of grace produce our spiritual rebirth.

Even Christ's plenitude of grace, as we have seen, did not of itself cause our spiritual regeneration without His passion and death. His grace of Headship merely implied an *aptitude* to redeem us; but in order that we be *actually* redeemed, Christ had to suffer and die for us on the cross. *A fortiori* must a similar reasoning be applied in the case of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood. Even though her fullness of grace was derived from Christ's grace of Headship, she still had to become a sole principle of spiritual regeneration with Him. As it was through His passion, however, that Christ regenerated us, Mary had necessarily to be united with her Divine Son in His passion if her grace was to become generative of the supernatural life in our souls.

Mary's plenitude of grace cannot formally constitute her Spiritual Motherhood, for the latter supposes a spiritual regeneration, which consists in an actual production of grace and not in a mere aptitude to produce it. The relation of a mother to her son is based essentially on the process of generation. Hence our Lady's fullness of grace is powerless to regenerate us spiritually if it is not, by a divine decree, associated with the passion and death of Christ, whereby our spiritual regeneration is effectively produced.³⁰

³⁰ Card. Lépicier, *op. cit.*, p. 455: "At vero a Deo definitum fuerat ut redemptio, et consequenter adoptio nostra, non nisi mediante Verbi acerbissima passione et morte in Cruce completeretur, ut vere esset copiosa apud eum redemptio. Ut igitur perfecte esset operationum Dei circa homines harmonia, decretum quoque fuit ut spiritualis Deiparae maternitas, et consequenter nostra relate ad eam adoptio, non completerentur nisi cum ipsamet suum sacrificium, juxta crucem morientis Filii stans, perficeret; ita ut eo fere momento consummaretur Beatissimae Virginis spiritualis maternitas, quo Christi opus redemptivum consummatum est." G. Alastruey, *op. cit.*, pp. 763-767 develops the same thought at considerable length.

Spiritual Maternity and Co-Redemption

From what has already been said we may logically conclude that if Mary's Spiritual Maternity is to be understood in the strict sense, it must include formal Co-Redemption; nay more, Co-Redemption is to be considered as the constituent element of her Spiritual Motherhood.³¹ By Co-Redemption we mean Mary's co-operation in the work of our Redemption; and by formal Co-Redemption her effective, direct and immediate co-operation. If the Redemption consists in Christ's ransoming mankind and endowing it with supernatural life, Co-Redemption must denote the action or group of actions by which Mary intervenes in the production of the supernatural life. Hence, without Co-Redemption there would be no Spiritual Motherhood.

Naturally, the Co-Redemption does not mean that Mary contributed to our spiritual regeneration on Calvary alone. Even though the Redemption was completed on the cross, it consists formally in Christ's oblation of Himself, which began at the very first instant of the Incarnation, when entering this world the Man-God exclaimed: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me: In holocausts and sin-offerings thou hast no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I come . . . to do thy will, O God.' " ³² "It is in this will," adds the Sacred Writer, "that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." ³³ This oblation gave the entire redemptive activity of Christ its value. To it Mary united her *Fiat* of the Annunciation, accepting her Divine Maternity with the full knowledge that her Son was being born to become a Victim for our salvation. By giving

³¹ N. García Garcés, *op. cit.*, p. 148: "Nihil ergo mirum si corredemptio Mariae proponatur tamquam actus praecipuus spiritualis maternitatis."

³² *Heb.* 5, 5-10.

³³ *Ibid.*

her consent to the immolation of her beloved Jesus, Mary shared all through her life in His redemptive work and contributed her share of merit to our Redemption. From that moment on, Mary was already exercising her prerogative of Co-Redemptrix as well as her Spiritual Maternity.³⁴

But if Co-Redemption and Spiritual Motherhood always go hand in hand, if the one is the constituent element of the other, must we conclude that they are completely identical? Such is the problem which in recent years has held mariologists puzzled. That Co-Redemption and Spiritual Maternity are inseparable cannot be denied. But are they one and the same reality, one and the same objective concept expressed by two different names? And if they are distinct, which of the two is metaphysically prior to the other? Authors like Jérôme de Paris, Dillenschneider, Bover, Llamera, Roschini, and Gregorio de Jesus Crucificado have asked themselves these questions.

They all seem to agree that a distinction does exist between the Co-Redemption and Spiritual Maternity, although they do not all explain in what the difference consists. Bover, Bernard, García Garcés and Plessis identify Mary's Spiritual Maternity with her mediation *adequate sumpta*,³⁵ and look on

³⁴ A. Plessis, *op. cit.*, p. 226-227; G. Alastruey, *op. cit.*, p. 758: "Tesis: La Santísima Virgen fué constituida Madre espiritual de los hombres incoativamente por su consentimiento en la Encarnación; consumada y perfectamente, por su compasión junto a la cruz de Cristo."

³⁵ Cf. J. M. Bover, *art. cit.*, p. 106: also his *Síntesis orgánica de la Mariología en función de la asociación de María a la obra redentora de Jesucristo*, in *Crónica oficial del Congreso Mariano Hispano-Americano de Sevilla*, Madrid, 1930, p. 272; R. Bernard, *op. cit.*, p. 340-341; N. García Garcés, *op. cit.*, p. 147-148. A. Plessis, *op. cit.*, p. 230: "Maternitas spiritualis *adequate sumpta*, i. e., non solum ut est relatio, sed ut est functio maternitatis, importat tum Corredemptionem tum distributionem gratiarum, sicut functio maternitatis physicae importat tum conceptionem et parturitionem, tum nutritionem et educationem prolis. Quaecumque tandem aliquando sit illa relatio maternitatis in seipsa considerata, haec omnia necessario importat, et ex his omnibus necessario resultat."

the Co-Redemption and Distribution of Graces through Mary as different acts of the same mediation. More specifically, García Garcés considers the Spiritual Maternity as the end or synthesis of all the functions of the Blessed Virgin on behalf of mankind, and the social character of her fullness of grace as a means to this end. The Co-Redemption and Distribution of Graces are but acts whereby Mary's plenitude of supernatural life is really imparted to her spiritual children.³⁶ In García Garcés' usage the word "Co-Redemption" is obviously restricted to Mary's direct and immediate co-operation in the objective Redemption, namely, in the acquisition of graces. If such is the meaning of the term, and I believe authors today generally understand it that way, then there definitely is a distinction between Mary's Spiritual Motherhood and her Co-Redemption, for Spiritual Motherhood has undoubtedly a wider comprehension than Co-Redemption.

Once this distinction has been admitted, we are immediately confronted with the question of priority. In the plan of God, which comes first, Mary's Spiritual Maternity or her Co-Redemption? Father Bover has gone very extensively into the question in an article in *Estudios Marianos*.³⁷ Enlightening analyses have likewise been presented by Fathers García Garcés³⁸ and Llamera.³⁹ They all conclude in favor of the priority of Mary's Spiritual Maternity. Jérôme de Paris, Dillenschneider⁴⁰ and Gregorio de Jesús,⁴¹ on the contrary, say

³⁶ N. García Garcés, *Dalla maternità spirituale alla Corredenzione*, in *Marianum*, vol. 3, 1941, p. 178: "La maternità spirituale (fine e sintesi degli uffici di Maria verso gli uomini) determinerà i mezzi (il carattere sociale della sua grazia) e gli atti (rigenerazione-corredenzione, e perfezionamento della vita-distribuzione delle grazie) coi quali Maria avrà da concorrere alla nostra rigenerazione e vita nuova."

³⁷ Cf. J. M. Bover, *art. cit.*, p. 101-165.

³⁸ N. García Garcés, *art. cit.*, p. 373-397.

³⁹ M. Llamera, *art. cit.*, p. 67-162.

⁴⁰ Cf. García Garcés, *art. cit.*, p. 373.

⁴¹ Cf. Gregorio de Jesús Crucificado, *art. cit.*, p. 142.

that the Spiritual Maternity is merely a corollary of the Blessed Mother's Co-Redemption. Though I am not able in this short paper to analyze their arguments, I would like to make a few remarks by way of suggestion.

We can admit that in the order of execution or efficient causality Mary did not fully become our Spiritual Mother until she had regenerated us by her share in the Redemption, and that, therefore, Co-Redemption preceded her Spiritual Maternity. But I think the question here really belongs to the order of intention or final causality. In God's plan did Mary become our Spiritual Mother so that she could be our Co-Redemptrix, or was she our Co-Redemptrix in order to become our Spiritual Mother? Father Llamera remarks very aptly that Mary's Co-Redemption is to her Spiritual Maternity what the Redemption is to Christ's Headship.⁴² Was Christ primarily predestined to be the Head of the human race in order to become their Redeemer? or was He to redeem them in order to become their Head and King? Which takes the precedence in the decrees of God's Providence: Christ's dignity as Head of the human race or His function of Redeemer? In other words, the solution to the question of the priority of Mary's Spiritual Maternity over her Co-Redemption or vice versa, depends on the question of the predestination of Christ or the motive of the Incarnation. If Christ was predestined primarily to be the Redeemer of mankind, then Mary must likewise primarily be their Co-Redemptrix, and all her other functions on behalf of mankind are but a means to her Co-Redemption. If, however, it is admitted that Christ was predestined primarily to be the Son of God and King of the universe, and only secondarily, after the prevision of man's

⁴² M. Llamera, *art. cit.*, p. 142: "Decimos, en general y suficiente respuesta, que la corredención es a la maternidad lo que la redención a la capitalidad de Cristo. Y, por tanto, que si la capitalidad esencialmente es anterior a la redención y causa de ella, también la maternidad esencialmente es anterior a la corredención y causa de ella."

sin, to be the Redeemer of mankind through His passion and death; then it is logical to hold likewise that Mary, His Mother, was predestined to be the Mother of mankind before she was predestined to be their Co-Redemptrix.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have analyzed the nature of motherhood in the natural order and have reached the conclusion that it consists essentially in the transmission of life to a new being by the process of generation. Arguing from the fact that there is a proper analogy of proportionality between the origin of life in the natural and supernatural orders, we concluded that Mary could be called our Spiritual Mother in the true sense of the word only if she had a share in the production of our supernatural life or in our spiritual rebirth, as Scripture calls it. Since, however, neither her Divine Maternity nor her plenitude of grace alone were sufficient to cause our spiritual regeneration without her participation in the sorrows of Christ's passion and death, she did not fully become our Mother until she had fulfilled her office as Co-Redemptrix. Whether Mary's Co-Redemption or her Spiritual Maternity is the ultimate purpose of her predestination on behalf of mankind remains controversial. The question is closely connected with the problem of the motive of Christ's predestination.

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