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## THE MARY-CHURCH RELATIONSHIP IN THE APOCALYPSE

THAT the Johannine writings are replete with deep symbolism, embedded in a pronounced Johannine theology reflecting the catechesis and sacramental life of the Early Church is the growing conviction of all who devote themselves to their earnest study.<sup>1</sup> One cannot give an adequate and correct interpretation of pertinent passages in these writings by means of a mere verse-for-verse exegesis. Rather, one must become thoroughly familiar with the background of Johannine thought, the outlook of which pervades the whole writing (and that outlook is undoubtedly theological), as well as the thought-patterns and literary devices by which the author conveys his message, and the unity of purpose which surprisingly embraces even the smaller details.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for example, B. Vawter, C.M., *The Johannine Sacramentary*, in *TS* 17 (1956) 155: "It is frankly acknowledged that the fullness of John's meaning is to be seen only against the background of the belief and worship of the Church that brought it into being." See also D. Stanley, S.J., *Bulletin of the New Testament, The Johannine Literature*, in *TS* 17 (1956) 521-523. \*C. H. Dodd has given a great impetus to this approach in his recent study, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1955) esp. 3-9. The influence of the Qumrân literature on Johannine thought has been the subject of several excellent articles, though the points of contact do not offer any new light on our topic under discussion. F. M. Braun, O.P., compares verbal analogies, thought-patterns and doctrinal parallels: *L'arrièrefond judaïque du quatrième évangile et la communauté de l'alliance*, in *RB* 62 (1955) 5-44. Points of contact and their sources are also given by R. Murphy, O.Carm., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament Comparisons*, in *CBQ* 18 (1956) 267 and 272.

<sup>2</sup> F. M. Braun, O.P., *La Mère des fidèles* (Paris, 1953) 19: "La théologie johannique ne se limite pas à des enquêtes partielles, celles-ci fussent-elles centrées sur la doctrine contenue dans les textes. Autre chose est l'analyse des textes isolés, autre chose l'intelligence de l'ensemble. Comme un corps vivant, un livre est plus qu'une juxtaposition de *membra disjecta*. Ce que nous y devons chercher principalement est le sens du tout dans lequel les parties se compénètrent."

## MARY'S PLACE IN THE JOHANNINE GOSPEL

In his Gospel, St. John<sup>3</sup> betrays the importance he wishes to allot to Mary (refraining the while from mentioning her personal name), by placing the "Mother of Jesus" at the beginning and at the very end of a thought-pattern, which is the well-known Semitic literary device called "inclusion."<sup>4</sup> At Cana, the beginning of the messianic ministry of Jesus, there is a triple reference to "His Mother" (John 2), and on Golgotha, the consummation of that ministry (John 19:25-27), there is again a triple reference to "His Mother" (apart from the words of direct address).<sup>5</sup>

At Cana, the first disciples of Jesus come to recognize the "sign" of His mission, by reason of the instrumentality of her whom Jesus addresses as "Woman." On Golgotha, to the favored disciple, bearing witness to the climax of the Redemption, the dying Savior proclaims the Motherhood of her, whom

<sup>3</sup> Unity of authorship of all Johannine writings is the traditional view upheld also by many present-day scholars as J. Bonsirven, S.J., *Le témoin du Verbe, le disciple bien-aimé* (Toulouse, 1956). Others, such as P. Gächter, S.J., and M. E. Boismard, O.P., posit at least the same Johannine circle of disciples. Cf. H. Haag, *Bibel Lexikon* (Einsiedeln, 1951) 523f.

<sup>4</sup> "Inclusion" is a literary technique by which a unit of thought is bounded on both extremities by similarity of terms or ideas. See M.-J. Lagrange, O.P., *Evangile selon saint Jean* (7th ed., Paris, 1948) XCIX: "Nous voudrions insister sur un phénomène qui ne paraît pas avoir reçu l'attention qu'il mérite: c'est celui de l'*inclusio*, ou du cadre qui renferme certains récits ou certains discours, par ex. John 1:1 et 18; 1:19 et 34; 6:27 et 58."

<sup>5</sup> P. Gächter, S.J., *Maria im Erdenleben* (Innsbruck, 1953) 220: "Einmal ist höchst bemerkenswert, dass Maria in Kana und Maria unter dem Kreuz im Aufbau des Johannesevangeliums eine Art von *inclusio* darstellen. Nirgends sonst taucht in Jo Maria auf; in Kana bewirkt sie das erste Wunderzeichen Jesus, begegnet uns also am Anfang seines öffentlichen Wirkens als Messias, unter dem Kreuz empfängt sie seine letzte Verfügung, steht also im Abschluss seines messianischen Tuns: eine vollkommene *inclusio*, die nur aus der Absicht des Schriftstellers erklärt. Ferner verbindet die beiden Perikopen der Inhalt, indem die Kana-Erzählung einen Hinweis auf Maria unter dem Kreuz enthält." Similarly R. Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven*, trans. by G. Smith (Dublin-London, 1956) 31.

He again addresses as "Woman."<sup>6</sup> By means of this literary device of "inclusion" it becomes evident that the sacred writer not only links the Virgin Mother with the work of her divine Son from the very outset, but wishes to connect the Cana scene with the drama enacted on Golgotha, where Mary is given the role of *alma socia Christi*, inseparable with her divine Son in the salvific work of regenerating all mankind unto the *new life in God*.

In fact, the express purpose why the Johannine Gospel was written is given in clear terms toward the end: "That believing [in Christ, the Son of God], *you may have life in His name*" (20:31). For that purpose Christ came into the world (10:10), namely, that all men could share in abundance the divine life which is in the Word of the Father (1:4; 1 John 1:1-4). He Himself is the Bread of life to sustain the new life in us (6:48), and He promises the Waters of eternal life (4:10; 4:14; 7:38). *Life, indeed, is the major theme* of the Johannine Gospel.<sup>7</sup> This new life is imparted to men by means of another birth, a transforming *rebirth in the Spirit* (3:3-5). Only against such a background is the Cana scene grasped in its true perspective with its authoritative message (*didache*) of a transformation, amazing and unheard of, water yielding to new wine at the symbolic nuptials of the divine Bridegroom,

<sup>6</sup> J. Michl, commenting on the title "woman" in *Bibl* 36 (1955) 499, maintains that as *gynai* does not appear as a title in the Old Testament, it was probably borrowed from Hellenistic usage, and consequently would probably not have been a title actually used by our Lord in speaking to His Mother, but rather was employed by St. John as part of the Johannine symbolism. But even in this case, the matter at stake remains the same, namely, to discover the symbolism of St. John's words. Nevertheless, the Lord could well have used the word "woman" in reference to Gen. 3:15 with a messianic import.

<sup>7</sup> In the fourth Gospel, the term "life" (*zōē*) in the sense of supernatural divine life occurs 36 times (over against 7 times in Matthew, 4 in Mark and 3 in Luke), with an additional 16 times for the same idea in the verb form. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, 144.

come to seek His bride. Only against the setting of that principal theme of life and rebirth does the Golgotha scene yield its full import, for then the Woman of 19:26 stands there as the *Mother of all the living*, the new Eve who co-operated with the New Adam in the death-holocaust at the Tree of Life from which new life was imparted to men.<sup>8</sup>

That the name of Mary was left unmentioned, and that of John suppressed (throughout the Gospel) in favor of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is also not without purpose and design. It allows another function of Johannine symbolism to stand out, namely, the representative character of a living individual. At Golgotha, the person of John stands for the transformed disciple, the living Christ.<sup>8a</sup> It was but another step for the Early Church, whose theological thought is reflected in the Johannine Gospel, to see in Mary the role played by Mother Church begetting the new man, the living Christ.<sup>9</sup> St. Ephraem, of Semitic mentality and one well-

<sup>8</sup> B. Vawter, *art. cit.*, 161f: "From the prologue on, John's Gospel has set up *zōē* as the expression of Christ and of the divine life shared in Christ. . . . By precisely the same process which the Synoptics use to present the Baptist as a second Elias, or Christ as a new Moses, John has shown our Lady to be the New Eve, mother of those born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Cf. also R. Laurentin, *op. cit.*, 30f; D. Mollat, S.J., and F. M. Braun, O.P., *L'Évangile et les épîtres de saint Jean* (Paris, 1953) 188; F. M. Braun, *La Mère des fidèles*, 90-94; *Id.*, *Ève et Marie dans les deux Testaments*, in *BSFEM* 12 (1954) 30-32.

<sup>8a</sup> B. Vawter, *art. cit.*, 161: "The disciple is the living Christ . . . he has suppressed his own name throughout the Gospel to make himself the "ideal" disciple, the sign of all the living."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 164: ". . . our Lady has become for John a symbol of the Church as mother of all the living. . . ." W. Leonard mentions this phenomenon in *A Catholic Commentary to Holy Scripture* (New York, 1953) paragr. 779f: ". . . the symbolical or typological method . . . consists in selecting an actual historical event or fact or person and seeing in it or in him a spiritual meaning." See also our article on *Semitic Totality Thinking*, in *CBQ* 17 (1955) 197-201. A similar phenomenon is noticeable in the Qumrân Literature, according to T. H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York, 1956) 26. Two prominent representatives of "Form-Geschichte" method, M. Dibelius and

acquainted with the Johannine writing, had no misgivings whatsoever in stating that on the Cross Christ "gave to John Mary His Church."<sup>10</sup> Patristic literature shows how this parallel was developed in those centuries.<sup>11</sup> That the mystery of Mary-Church was bound up with the theme of rebirth in the baptismal liturgy, and with the idea of the baptismal font, becomes more evident with the attentive study of early Christian inscriptions and writings.<sup>12</sup>

#### STYLE AND THOUGHT-CONTENT OF THE APOCALYPSE

In the Apocalypse, it is at once evident that we are dealing with a special style of writing, namely, the apocalyptic; by means of symbolic tableaux or visions a message of eschatological import is communicated.<sup>13</sup> Whereas this may be partly

R. Bultmann share the same views concerning the Johannine typology; cf. F. M. Braun, O. P., *Marie et l'Église d'après l'Écriture*, in *BSFEM* 10 (1952) 9.

<sup>10</sup> Found in the Armenian fragments of St. Ephraem's commentaries on the Gospels, edited by the Venetian Mecharists in 1836 and translated into Latin by J. B. Aucher and J. Mössinger (Venice, 1876): *Evangelii concordantis Expositio*, 134: "[Christus] super mare ambulavit, in nube apparuit, ecclesiam suam a lege circumcisionis solvit et Johannem virginem pro Josue, filio Nun, ducem Dei constituit, eique Mariam, ecclesiam suam, dedit, sicut Moyses Josue populum dederat."

<sup>11</sup> Cf. W. J. Burghardt, S.J., *Theotokos: The Mother of God*, in *The Mystery of the Woman*, ed. by E. O'Connor, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, 1956) 17-18; A. Müller, *Ecclesia-Maria: Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche* (Freiburg i.d.S., 2nd ed., 1955); C. Vollert, S.J., *Mary and the Church*, in *Mariology*, ed. by J. B. Carol, O.F.M., 2 (Milwaukee, 1957) 550-595, *passim*; H. Holstein, S.J., *Marie et l'église chez les pères anté-nicéens*, in *BSFEM* 9 (1951) 11-25.

<sup>12</sup> W. Bedard, *The Symbolism of the Baptismal Font in Early Christian Thought* (Washington, D. C., 1951) 17-18. See also our article, *The Spiritual Motherhood of Mary in John 3:3-5*, in *CBQ* 14 (1952) 122f. The great impulse given to this study in recent years is chiefly due to \*O. Cullmann's *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst* (2nd ed., Zurich, 1950) 70-76. Further literature in *TS* 17 (1956) 494-510.

<sup>13</sup> A. Robert and A. Tricot, *Guide to the Bible* (Rome, 1951) 306f; J. Bonsirven, *L'Apocalypse* (Paris, 1951) 72f; L. Cerfaux and J. Cambier, S.D.B.,

"realized eschatology" as it is in the Gospel, a deeper message concerning the consummation of God's Kingdom on earth toward the end of time shines through the contemporary implications. The author conveys his message by using a wide variety of images such as grotesque animals, cosmic phenomena, numbers and colors, even historical persons and objects that embody a further reality. All this is given in detailed schematic structure which lends an enigmatic and mysterious coloring to the entire book. There is above all a pronounced orientation toward Old Testament passages and images.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the differences of external style between Apocalypse and Gospel, the same trends of theological thought as well as thought-patterns are discernible throughout. There is the Son of Man who had the power to lay down His life and take it up again, living in the midst of His Church (1:12-20). There is the Redeemer-Lamb who ransomed man for God by His sacrificial death (5:9), to whom the Father gave all judgment over mankind (5:7-14; 6:16; 14:10). There is also the Good Shepherd (7:17; 22:1-3), the Bridegroom who is about to celebrate the wedding Feast with His Bride (19:7-9; 21:9). There is moreover the same all-powerful Divine Word, whose sufferings were the price of victory (19:13). Likewise we encounter the same sevenfold Spirit (1:5), whom the victo-

*L'Apocalypse de saint Jean lue aux chrétiens: Lectio divina* 17 (Paris, 1955); J. B. Frey, in *SDBI* I, 326-353; A. Romeo, *Apocalittica letteratura*, in *ECt* 1, 1616-1626. Cf. also F. M. Braun, O.P., in *BSFEM* 12 (1954) 27.

<sup>14</sup> In the work of Cerfaux-Cambier mentioned in the preceding footnote, the Apocalypse is described as belonging to the apocalyptic genre of writing, and so announces the end of the world. It is also biblical eschatology, revealing in mysterious formulae the events which, by putting an end to the present, establish the future world. Msgr. Cerfaux in another article, *La vision de la femme et du dragon de l'Apocalypse en relation avec le protévangile*, in *ETL* 31 (1955) 25, shows that the peculiar style of complementary interpretation of a given vision as is done by the angel in the Apocalypse is also peculiar to some of the Qumrân literature, e.g., 1QHab. (This same article appears in *VgI* 3 (1955) 116-131, but in the following references the quotations are according to *ETL*.)

rious Lamb sends to all parts of the earth (5:7), the waters of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb (22:1), identified in the Gospel as the Holy Spirit (John 7:38). And finally, there in the midst of the apocalyptic drama, in a chapter of most concentrated theological thought, stands the Mother of the Messiah (12:5), this time again designated as "Woman" (12:1).<sup>15</sup> But before examining the chapter further, let us take notice of another contrast between Gospel and Apocalypse.

Though the major theme of the Gospel is that of Christ the Life of men, that of Light is also in the background, running hand in hand with it. The Life was the Light of men (1:4), the true Light that enlightens everyone by His coming into the world. "I am the Light of the world," said Jesus (8:12).<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the theme of Light is far less frequent than that of Life, turning up in only three more passages: 3:19-21; 12:35f; 12:46. The reason is evident: the Apocalypse was written before the Gospel, and the theme of Light was already taken as the main characterization of Christ in the Apocalypse, which is the dramatic struggle of the Victorious Christ over the powers of darkness.<sup>17</sup> The Apocalypse

<sup>15</sup> Catholics and non-Catholics alike admit that Apoc. 12:5 refers to the Messiah, and thus the woman is in some manner His mother. For no one if not the Messiah could St. John claim such world rule. He uses the same epithets of Christ in 19:13-16. Cf. L. Cerfaux, *art. cit.*, 30; \*W. Michaelis, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Basel, 1946) 315; \*M. Goguel, *Eschatologie et Apocalyptique dans le christianisme primitif*, in *RHR* 133 (1947-48) 147.

<sup>16</sup> \*C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, 204: "The archetypal light was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Light in which we see light; that is, He is *alêtheia*, reality revealed, as He is also *zōē*. He mediates to man that knowledge of God which is eternal life. Thus when John speaks of the Light coming into the world (3:19; 12:46), he is always thinking of the appearance of Jesus Christ in history."

<sup>17</sup> That the Gospel was written after the Apocalypse is generally conceded. Cf. A. Robert and A. Tricot, *op. cit.*, I, 219 and 266. Both themes are John's favorites, but the one is developed at length in the Apocalypse and the other in the Gospel.



is flooded with the Light that is Christ. In the Son of Man's first appearance, His countenance is like the *sun when it shines in its intensity*, His eyes a flame of fire, His feet like glowing brass, and He is walking in the midst of seven burning lamp-stands (Apoc. 1:12-16). In a second vision, against a background of glittering diamond<sup>18</sup> and sardius and lightnings (4:3-5), appears the Lamb of God, now triumphant and glorified, enthroned with God Almighty, and sharing the glory (*doxa*) of the Father (4:11 and 5:12).<sup>19</sup> Engulfed in the flames of the sevenfold torch of the Spirit of God (4:5), the Lamb receives the homage of untold myriads (5:6-14). When for a third time Christ appears (as a major actor), He is enthroned on a *bright cloud*, the symbol of the divinity (Ex. 13:21-22; 40:34-38), and, wearing the golden crown of the Lord of the universe, He comes with the sickle as Judge of the world for the harvest. There follows in 19:11-16 the brilliant parousia of the triumphant Word of God. The heavens open wide and the Divine Conqueror rides forth on a white horse, His armies following on white horses, arrayed in linen, white and pure. His eyes are like a flame of fire, the light of the divine judgment piercing the powers of darkness. In a final vision, after describing the New Jerusalem as possessing the divine glory, and lustrous as the glittering diamond (21:11), St. John sees the Lamb of God Himself as the Light

<sup>18</sup> The Greek word *iaspis* is usually translated "jasper." Jasper is an opaque quartz, an unclear stone of varying colors. But in Apoc. 21-11 the same stone is said to be crystal clear. This description fits far better the brilliant diamond, which surely was well known to Old Testament writers. In the Septuagint, "*adamis*," the classical word for diamond, is not to be found, but "*iaspis*" is used for several different Hebrew words.

<sup>19</sup> *Doxa* characterizes the refulgent power of the Godhead. Cf. G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 2, 250ff. *Gloria* among early Latin Church writers expresses likewise the dazzling majesty and might of God. Cf. A. J. Vermeulen, *The Semantic Development of Gloria in Early Christian Latin* (Nijmegen, 1956). C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, 206, examines *doxa* in John's Gospel.

of the New Jerusalem: "And the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it: for the glory of the God illuminates it, and the Lamb is its lamp" (21:23). All the nations walk by that Light. "And they have no need of light of lamp and light of sun, for the Lord God shall illuminate them" (22:5). "I, Jesus . . . am the radiant morning star" (22:16).

It is evident that the theme of Light assigned to Christ in the Apocalypse holds prominence over that of Life, although the latter comes to the fore in the beginning (1:17-18) and again at the end in the symbols of the Tree of Life, the Water of Life, and the Book of Life of the Lamb (21:17; 22:1-2; 22:17), another possible instance of "inclusion." If the Johannine Gospel is replete with sacramental symbolism in the form of new life imparted in Baptism, the Apocalypse may well portray the same in the form of illuminating light. It is a well-known fact that the Early Church did think of Baptism in terms of light and illumination, and the New Testament itself bears witness to this fact.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE WOMAN OF APOCALYPSE CHAPTER TWELVE

Into this background of the double theme of Light and Life the vision of the *Woman clothed with the sun and preg-*

<sup>20</sup> D. Stanley, S.J., *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism: an Essay in Biblical Theology*, in *TS* 18 (1957) 181: "The biblical emphasis upon the creation of light provided an apt vehicle for the presentation of New Testament baptismal doctrine. The whole episode of the healing of the man born blind from birth (John 9:1-41) forms a kind of baptismal catechesis in which Christ, the author of the sacrament, figures as 'light of the world' (John 9:5): . . . After reminding the Gentile Ephesians that 'once you were sheer darkness, but now light in the Lord' the Apostle [Paul] urges them to 'conduct themselves as children of light' and avoid 'the sterile works of darkness,' 'since everything that comes to light is light' (Eph. 5:13). This last obscure remark seems to contain a promise of victory for all believers through their rejection of pagan immorality, and thus forms an introduction to what is probably a fragment of a baptismal liturgy: 'Awake, you slumberer, and rise from the dead, then Christ will illuminate you' (Eph. 5:14). A clear reference to baptism as an illumination occurs in Hebr. 6:4-6."

*nant with child* must be placed if the theological connotations of the chapter are to be grasped. The symbolism of a woman clothed or invested with the sun is unique in all Scripture,<sup>21</sup> and the sun can only signify the Godhead with whose powers the mortal woman (*gynē*) is invested in order to conceive and bring forth a male-son that is both Messiah and divine.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, while there is mention of only one parturition of the woman in this vision, there is an unmistakable reference to a twofold offspring of that woman, namely, the child (*teknon*), carried off to the divine throne (a symbolic description of the victorious Christ), and the rest of her offspring (12:17) described with characteristics which throughout the Johannine literature designate the sons of God (see 1 John 3:1-14; Apoc. 14:12). Hence the male son in 12:5 is a unit comprising both an individual (the Messiah-King who is divine) and a collective (the sons of God, members of Christ), both born of the woman.<sup>23</sup> Together they are destined to rule the nations (Apoc. 12:5 and 2:26). Together they are destined to share the throne of God (12:5 and 3:21). Hence the function of the Woman in chapter twelve is to pour forth

<sup>21</sup> Of Yahweh the psalmist sings: "You are robed in light as a cloak" (Ps. 103:2) but in this creation psalm the order of the Hexaemeron is followed, so that the light of the first day is in the mind of the psalmist, not the sun of the fourth day. Nor is there any parallel image to Apoc. 12:1 in any of the apocryphal writings, nor in Talmud or Midrash. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, etc., under Luke 24:26 (2, 284) and Apoc. 12:1 (3, §12). But light is a natural symbol of the Deity. See Dodd, *op. cit.*, 201.

<sup>22</sup> The sun is really not intended as a garment but as a symbol of the power and means with which the woman is invested in order to accomplish her task. A. Romeo may well have determined the correct symbolism by preferring to see the sun as a vehicle of God, by means of which the woman is able to spread out the rays of Light on the world. Cf. *La Donna ravvolta dal sole, Madre di Christo e dei cristiani* (Apoc. 12), in *Vgl* 3 (1955) 220f.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bernard J. Le Frois, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Apoc. 12). *Individual or Collective?* (Rome, 1954) 162-164, 172f, 175, 205. (Hereafter, in this article, I shall refer to this book simply as *The Woman*.)

upon the world the divine Light that is Christ, manifested in the human form of the Child, and simultaneously to bring forth those who share His divine Life as faithful sons of Light (12:17).

But this is the same picture of the Woman in the Johanne Gospel, namely, Mary, Mother of the Christ (Messias) and Mother of the disciple that represents the perfect, living Christ. Whereas there the Mother of Jesus stood by the Cross as the New Eve and Mother of all the living (19:26), here, through the symbolic birthpangs of suffering, the New Eve brings forth the male son, namely, the whole Christ. If there in the Gospel the motherhood of Mary-Church is brought into connection with the baptism of rebirth, here it is brought into connection with the putting on of that Light which is Christ, a capacity made possible for the sons of God through the instrumentality of the Woman clothed with that Light. Hence the same thought-pattern of individual representing collective is seen to shine through these passages in the Apocalypse as it does in the Gospel. The male son is both an individual and a collective. Why not the Mother of the Christ? St. Hippolytus (d. c. 237) seems to intimate that in his commentary on this chapter,<sup>24</sup> and Tyconius (d. 390) in his rules for interpreting the Apocalypse laid the groundwork for just such a solution.<sup>25</sup> So it is not at all surprising that St. Quodvultdeus, a disciple of St. Augustine, in a homily that is still preserved in the Roman Breviary for the Vigil of Pentecost, would claim such wide acceptance in his time for such a stand: "No one of you is ignorant of this: that that Woman signified the Virgin Mary, who being inviolate, brought forth our Head intact; at the same time she represented in her person Holy Church in figure."<sup>26</sup> There are other traces of a Marian interpreta-

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-16, 49f, 59.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-24, 60.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-53, 60-61.

tion of the woman in Apoc. 12 in both East <sup>27</sup> and West in early centuries,<sup>27a</sup> but since birthpangs seemed to conflict with the theological tradition of Mary's virginity, and the symbolic period of 1,260 days (three and a half years) seemed to refer rather to the period of the Church's suffering under the beast in Ch. 14, the balance of patristic opinion preferred to see in the "woman" merely the Church, the Mother of Christians.<sup>28</sup>

Are the birthpangs against the interpretation that sees Mary first of all in the woman? Not at all. They need not and ought not be taken in the literal proper sense at all. This is evident from the use made of the image of a woman in birthpangs all throughout classical Greek literature, as well as in contemporary Jewish writings of the time, and in particular in the books of the Old and New Testament. Such an image is used in those writings for sufferings in general, for persecution, pain, interior trials and exterior tribulation, not

<sup>27</sup> With regard to the East, the polemic of St. Methodius seems to demand it. Cf. *The Woman*, 58f, and especially F. M. Braun, O.P., *La Femme vêtue de soleil (Apoc. XII). Etat du problème*, in *RT* 55 (1955) 641. A. Viard remains unconvinced; see *RSPT* 40 (1956) 160.

<sup>27a</sup> As to the West, Père Braun in the article cited above, p. 642, arrests our attention with a passage of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.*, III, 23, 7) which seems to be the earliest allusion to the Marian interpretation of Apoc. 12. This is not accepted by R. Laurentin in *BSFEM* 12 (1954) 95. Moreover, there is an interesting possibility of an early representation of Apoc. 12 in the Catacombs. See D. Unger, O.F.M.Cap., *Witness in the Catacombs*, in *OLD* 12 (1957) 28-40.

<sup>28</sup> One ought not overestimate the weight of the patristic testimonies for Apoc. 12 because neither the number nor the quality of the testimonies come anywhere near the required "unanimity." Only the following names can be called in as witnesses to the view that the woman is the Christian Church: St. Hippolytus, St. Methodius, a Pseudo-Cyprian, Tyconius the Donatist, a Pseudo-Augustine, Primasius, St. Gregory the Great, Andrew of Caesarea, and Bede. Those who gave the matter more thought, such as St. Victorin, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine, saw the evident difficulty of making the Christian Church the Mother of the Messiah, and so pronounced the woman to be the Ancient Church of both Testaments. Still others came out for Mary, at least as the archetype of the Church. See *The Woman*, 12 and 58; F. M. Braun in *RT* 55 (1955) 639f.

only of a collective but also of an individual.<sup>29</sup> Even more decisive in our chapter is the series of symbolic details revolving about the woman. The other details are certainly not intended by the author to be taken in the literal proper sense, such as being clothed with the sun, standing on the moon, being crowned with stars, flying away in the desert on two wings, threatened by a flood of water spewed out by a dragon. Evidently all these details must be understood as part and parcel of the multiple symbolism of the chapter. To insist that one sole image in the midst of all the rest must be taken in the literal proper sense, namely, that of the birthpangs, is against the tenor of the passage and the norms of correct interpretation. Hence physical birthpangs are not in question at all. Even the authors who see only the Church in this woman do not understand the birthpangs in the literal proper sense, but as some kind of suffering, physical or spiritual. Most recent commentators admit that it is groundless to make the birthpangs of the woman an objection against a Marian interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

That the woman has other children (v. 17) is no objection either. For it has been shown above that the children are spiritually born of her, being the faithful brethren of Christ. This holds good not only for the Church but also for the Blessed Mother, as is clear from Catholic doctrine on Mary's Spiritual Motherhood over all Christians.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the sojourn of the woman in the desert arrests our attention, for it seems definitely to mark the woman as the Church in her period of trial under the persecution of the beast in 14:6. How

<sup>29</sup> *The Woman*, 130-144, 211-214.

<sup>30</sup> Msgr. Cerfaux, *art. cit.*, 31, finds no difficulty whatsoever. The birthpangs are merely symbolic of the tribulations which usher in the messianic age, the passage of the old to the new era. Likewise F. M. Braun, *art. cit.*, 643.

<sup>31</sup> W. Sebastian, O.F.M., *Mary's Spiritual Maternity*, in *Mariology*, ed. by J. B. Carol, O.F.M., 2 (Milwaukee, 1957) 325-376; also the entire volume of *MS 3* (1952).

can the woman persecuted by Satan (12:13-15) and by the beast (14:6), yet cared for by God during the symbolic period of 1,260 days, refer to Mary? Here again we must have recourse to peculiar thought-patterns.

There is a similar thought-technique in this passage with regard to the relation of Mary to the Church as there is in other parts of the Apocalypse as well as in the Pauline letters with regard to the relation of Christ to the members of His Mystical Body. In Apoc. 17:14 it is said that the ten kings "will war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall conquer them, because He is Lord of Lords and King of kings, and those shall conquer who are on His side, called and chosen and faithful." Evidently, the Lamb is already triumphant and immortal, and yet the kings war on Him, namely, in His mystical members who will conquer through Him. Similarly in 1 Cor. 15:24-27, St. Paul in apocalyptic style of language depicts Christ as reigning on high and nevertheless the object of enemy attack: "He must reign until He (God) puts all His enemies under His feet." In reality, it is against the Mystical Body of Christ on earth that the enemies of Christ battle, yet it is also true that they are battling against Christ Himself who is the inseparable Head of that Body and one with it. A clear case is Acts 9:4f, where the risen Jesus states that Saul is persecuting *Him*, whereas Saul was bent on murdering the disciples of the Lord. Saul persecutes Jesus in person when he persecutes the members of Christ.

In Apoc. 12 it is Mary's relation to the Church that stands out by means of the same thought-technique. After the woman's child was carried off to God's throne (12:5), (a reference to Christ's glorious ascension and triumph over Satan),<sup>82</sup> the woman herself was removed "to the place prepared for her by God" (12:6 and 14). This last expression in Johannine terminology (John 14:2-3) has reference to the

<sup>82</sup> *The Woman*, 166f, 266.

mansions of the Father, prepared for the faithful after this life's passage is over. In that "place prepared by God for her" the woman is both with God in total safety and security, and nevertheless is the object of persecution on the part of the dragon. In plain words, this may be a reference to the fact that after Christ's Ascension, Mary too was removed to safety in the mansions of the Father above, yet continues to be an object of Satan's fury in the Church which she embodies in her person and for which she stands. In persecuting the Church, Satan vents his wrath and hatred on Mary.<sup>33</sup>

But there is another possible symbolism for "the place prepared by God for the woman" in this chapter. It flows from the Genesis coloring of the chapter which is now admitted on all sides. The mention of the Serpent in verses 9-15 conjures up the image of the earthly Paradise, which in Gen. 2:8-23 is depicted as a special place prepared by God for the first man and woman (although it may well be the author's literary device for presenting deeper religious and historical facts). That image of Paradise brings to mind (1) the period of trial for the woman, (2) the attack on the woman and her being defeated by the Serpent, (3) the eating of the forbidden fruit which brought on sin and death. Here in Apoc. 12:6-15 the woman (1) undergoes a period of great trial from the side of the same Serpent, (2) is attacked by the Serpent but remains unconquered and inviolable, (3) is nourished by God in a special way and thus sustained in life during the entire period of trial. Hence the symbolism of the "place prepared by God" may have to do with the state of integrity which the woman enjoyed in Paradise, which would admirably characterize the Virgin Mother's integrity of both body and soul against all the onslaughts of the devil, as well as the doctrinal integrity of the Church persecuted by all manner of diabolical

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 181, 215f. F. M. Braun, *La Mère des fidèles*, 161-169; *Id.*, in *BSFEM* 12 (1954) 30; *Id.*, in *RT* 55 (1955) 659-663.



agents, or even a gradual participation of Marian integrity of body and soul on the part of the members of the Church, the more they conform to that Marian archetype.<sup>84</sup>

None of the objections against seeing Mary in Apoc. 12 have been sustained. On the contrary, the thought-pattern in this chapter has brought us to the same conclusion as in the Johannine Gospel with regard to Mary's role. Here as there *Mary is seen as the Church*.<sup>85</sup> The Church is not merely personified and decked out with the features of Mary, but the concrete personality of the Virgin Mother of Christ takes on a collective signification,<sup>85a</sup> for if the Church is said to bring forth new life in the baptismal waters and to impart the saving light that makes men the sons of God, it is in reality the Mother of Christ who is instrumental in imparting this life and Light divine to men, by her co-operation in the Redemption on Golgotha where the New Eve suffers the messianic birthpangs that bring salvation. If the Church brings forth Christ amid the sufferings of her temporal vocation, it is in reality Mary sharing her spiritual Motherhood which brought forth each and every member in the birthpangs of Golgotha. If the Church is open to the attack of the Dragon with all his fury and venom, it is really Mary on whom he is venting his venom and whom he is trying to defy.

<sup>84</sup> *The Woman*, 181f. For the fuller treatment of 1,260 days as a period of trial, cf. 186f.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. F. M. Braun, *La Mère des fidèles*, 154-161. *Id.*, *Ève et Marie dans les deux Testaments*, in *BSFEM* 12 (1954).

<sup>85a</sup> Cf. F. M. Braun, *La Mère des fidèles*, 154-161. *Id.*, in *BSFEM* 10 (1952) 9-10; *Id.*, in *RT* 55 (1955) 645f, 663f. For Msgr. Cerfaux, *art. cit.*, 32, the symbol of the woman designates Mary, both a real person and as one having a role to play, namely, representing something else, that is, the Church. This double application of the symbol is based on a similar application of Eve in Gen. 3:15-16 and on other apocalyptic symbols. Most recently, S. Lyonnet, S.J., in *Bibl* 38 (1957) 206f, affirms that the very abundance of literary contacts between Apoc. 12 and the Johannine Gospel are convincing proof that St. John has Mary in mind in his description of the woman, and that Mary's person symbolizes the Church.

APOCALYPSE 12 AND GENESIS 3:15

Not only does Apoc. 12 show a Genesis coloring in the portrayal of the messianic birthpangs of the New Eve and in the probable allusion to the place reserved by God for the woman to be nourished and kept safe, but above all in the striking similarity of thought-content with Gen. 3:15. So many points of contact in various details are discernible that it becomes evident we are dealing here with a deliberate orientation of the sacred writer toward the prophetic and eschatological import of the Protogospel. Even apart from the message which the sacred writer of Genesis (at least in its final form) wished to give his readers, such detailed similarity of thought-content in Apoc. 12 argues an undeniable literary dependence of the latter on Gen. 3:15, and also that St. John evidently considered Gen. 3:15 as a messianic oracle, making it the basis of his eschatological symbolic tableau in Apoc. 12. That suffices for our purpose.<sup>86</sup>

The starting point for identification is the equating of the dragon with "the ancient Serpent" in Apoc. 12:9. No other ancient Serpent can be meant than the Serpent of Gen. 3.<sup>87</sup> Attendant details pin-point the allusion in a special manner to Gen. 3:15. In both passages this Serpent is the archenemy of the woman and of the offspring to whom she gives life. Woman and offspring are a closed unit as far as the Serpent's attacks are concerned. Emphasized also in both passages is

<sup>86</sup> L. Cerfaux, *art. cit.*, 27: John considers Gen. 3:15 as a messianic oracle and the basis for his eschatological vision. Likewise, F. M. Braun, *La Mère des fidèles*, 145; *Id.*, *La Femme et le Dragon*, in *BVC* 7 (1954) 63-71. Père Boismard, in *RB* 52 (1955) 296, is inclined to deny this dependence of Apoc. 12 on Gen. 3:15, but Père Braun wins his point in *RT*, *art. cit.*, 647-650. See also *The Woman*, 222.

<sup>87</sup> *The Woman*, 148-150. Cf. W. Foerster in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 2, 285, Anm. 14. The same expression, found in rabbinical writings, took its cue likewise from Gen. 3. See G. Delling, *ibid.*, 1, 485, and P. Joüon, S.J., *Le grand dragon*, in *RSR* 17 (1927) 444-446.

the impotence of those attacks to bring about the desired ruin. In Gen. 3:15 the Serpent's head is utterly crushed by the victor's heel; in Apoc. 12 his attempts to devour the child and swallow up the woman (v. 15) come to naught. In Gen. 3:15 the offspring (inseparable from the woman) gains the victory over the Serpent, and likewise in Apoc. 12, but with this clarification: the victory of the rest of the woman's offspring is gained by reason of the victory of the Lamb (v. 11). In Apoc. 12, the offspring is both one and many, and the same seems to hold good for Gen. 3:15. The quintessence of Gen. 3:15 is one of enmity, battle and victory; victory for the offspring, which implicitly reflects back on the woman. The quintessence of Apoc. 12 is enmity, action, and victory; not only is the Child victorious over the Serpent (v. 5), but the woman is portrayed in most triumphant colors.

If Apoc. 12 is a dramatic elaboration of Gen. 3:15 in the mind of St. John, it must be expected to describe the reversal of the position of the woman who in Gen. 3:13 and 16 stands defeated and condemned. Victory will then be the triumphant note of Apoc. 12. The Lamb is victorious (v. 5); those who conquered the dragon are victorious in His Blood (v. 11); and the New Eve is victorious in every respect over the Serpent. Therefore she is portrayed as standing on the moon, on her head a crown, the victorious symbol of triumph. The symbol of having the moon under one's feet is bound up with the ideas of the universe prevalent in the ancient world, which the sacred writer shares to some extent. Above the moon all was considered "*aether*," the pure air, and all that was pure, sublime and heavenly; below the moon, all that was dark, cold, mortal and demon-infested. Also for early Christians the moon was the dividing line between the blessed spirits and the demons who ruled the lower realms (Eph. 2:2). In view of these ideas, the figure of the woman standing on the moon conveyed a definite message. It marked her as the conqueress

of the demon-infested world.<sup>38</sup> The moon "under her feet" brings out expressly the ancient oriental symbolism of complete subjection so prevalent in the Scriptures. It is a reflection of Gen. 3:15; it turns up in Jos. 10:24; 3 Kings 5:3, and Mal. 4:3 where there is question of the enemies being put under the feet of the conquerors; and it is prominent in Psalms 109:1 where the footstool of the Messias-King has the same symbolism (cf. Matt. 22:44).

Likewise the symbol of the crown points to victory in the Apocalypse (6:2; 2:10; 4:4; 14:14), though there is in these passages the added implication of royalty and sovereignty. Exalted above the demon-infested world, conqueress of all her adversaries, the woman is the victorious sovereign of the world.<sup>39</sup>

Early patristic writings saw in the New Eve both Mary and the Church. Apoc. 12 seems to be the scriptural foundation for that tradition.<sup>40</sup> From the concept of Mother of the divine Christ subsequent centuries were to draw all the other great prerogatives of Mary, the New Eve, such as her Immaculate Conception, her perfect sinlessness, her final triumph in bodily Assumption into glory. But all this is the triumph of the Mother of Christ over Satan and the works of Satan, namely, sin, concupiscence and death. Apoc. 12 shows the New Eve to be absolutely impregnable against any of the wiles of Satan and entirely unharmed by them because of God's special protection. But the Church, in bringing forth the divine life of Christ in the hearts of men, is also the New Eve, mother of all the "living." Her goal is likewise to crush Satan in all his works and pomps, beginning with the baptism of the new-

<sup>38</sup> *The Woman*, 107-112.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117, 124.

<sup>40</sup> C. Martindale, S.J., in *A Catholic Commentary to Holy Scripture* (New York, 1953), paragr. 968k. C. Vollert, S.J., *Mary and the Church*, in *Mariology*, ed. by J. B. Carol, 2 (Milwaukee, 1957) 573: "As Mary is the New Eve, the Church is likewise the New Eve."

born babe and ending with that same person's triumphant entry into heavenly glory, after she has continually accompanied him along the demon-plagued path of life's journey. And to the Church has been solemnly promised ultimate victory over the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). If the Baptismal liturgy with its relation to Mary-Church motherhood is implicated in Apoc. 12 (as was shown in the first part of this article), surely the battle of Satan against the New Eve (Mary-Church) and her progeny is also evident in the symbolism of the chapter.<sup>40a</sup>

Thus, while it is Mary foremost and primarily who is exalted above the demon-haunted world in Apoc. 12, such is also the destiny of the New Eve, the Church. It is against Mary and the Church one with her that the rebellious and envious Satan launches his attacks. But as he was unable to overcome Mary, he will not be able to overcome the Church. The oneness of Mary and the Church is the underlying reason both for Satan's furious attack and for his failure. Moreover, the full import of the symbolism of the chapter is to be placed in positive lines. The Woman is depicted as Queen and Sovereign of the Universe. This befits the Mother of Christ the King. The Child that she bears in v. 5 is the triumphant Lord of the world, with whose coming the Kingdom of God is permanently established (v. 10). In the person of Mary, reigning triumphantly over all the faithful, is seen again the figure of Mother Church, enthroned amid the nations, and

<sup>40a</sup> C. Vollert, *art. cit.*, 573: "Under this aspect of the New Eve, Mary and the Church are identified with each other. The two unite in their opposition to the ancient serpent." F. M. Braun, *Ève et Marie dans les deux Testaments*, in *BSFEM* 12 (1954) 30: "Abstraction faite de la tradition patristique, l'étude exégétique du texte à laquelle j'entends me borner, fait apparaître un nouveau rapport entre la Femme du Protévangile et Marie. . . . Jean insiste sur la préservation dont elle jouit à l'égard de l'ennemi. . . . Le voyant la maintient ainsi en relation avec l'église persécutée et lui accorde une maternité de surcroît à l'égard des fidèles, encore exposés aux furieuses attaques de Satan."

destined despite the constant attacks of the dragon launched against her, to celebrate one day the triumphant victory over all her enemies. That victory will come to pass when the powers of darkness are brought to naught.

APOCALYPSE CHAPTER TWELVE AND APOCALYPSE  
CHAPTER ONE

A comparison of the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse with the first chapter (1:12-20) brings out further implications for our theme. There the symbolism focused on the Son of man abiding in the midst of the seven lampstands. It is Christ abiding in His Church. Though the seven lampstands are expressly interpreted as the seven Churches to whom John sends his message (v. 20), nevertheless they implicitly symbolize the universal Church, seven being the number of totality in apocalyptic thought-patterns. John's message is for the entire Church, as is evident from the plural nouns at the end of the individual messages: "Thus the Spirit speaks to the Churches" (ch. 2-3). This is another instance where historical objects embody a deeper symbolism of further realities.

In Apoc. 1, Christ is portrayed in relation to His Church as its divine High Priest (v. 13) and judge (v. 14). As such He has the keys of death and the grave (v. 18), that is, absolute power; and is the source of all life (v. 17). In Apoc. 12, Mary's relation to the Church is portrayed as the New Eve, imparting life to all who are one with Christ, and as the powerful victress over Satan and his monstrous work of sin and death. Both visions are grandiose. Christ's countenance is dazzling bright like the sun in its intensity (v. 16); Mary is invested with the same dazzling brightness (12:1). If the vision of Christ made John fall at His feet as one dead (v. 17), the vision of the glorious woman is likewise overpowering. It would even seem that St. John depicts the dragon as charg-

ing and then coming to a full stop before the woman (v. 4), overpowered and helpless before her.<sup>41</sup> In 1:6 Christ holds seven stars in His right hand, interpreted in v. 20 as the "angels" of the seven Churches (which recent commentators see as the angelic powers employed by Christ in the ministry of the Church).<sup>42</sup> In 12:1 the woman has a crown of twelve stars on her head, which seems to be the symbol of the entire victorious angelic host, since there is question of the fallen angels in 12:4 under the same symbol of stars.<sup>43</sup>

From the foregoing it would seem that these two visions of the twelfth and the first chapter are related to each other. Can we determine that relation? What else is the Apocalypse but the Grand Finale of the Kingdom of God on earth, the mosaic of all prophecy in a final synthesis with regard to the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ and its glorious consummation on earth? <sup>44</sup> It is well known that prophetic vision often embraced merely the first and last phase of something to be realized. The eschatological discourses of Our Lord offer a good example of this by combining in the same visionary context the fall of Jerusalem and the consummation of the world. Accordingly, Apoc. 1-3 portrays the first phase of Christ's Kingdom on earth, and it opens with the vision of the divine High Priest abiding in His Church, dictating to His Apostle the sevenfold message to the Church contemporary with St. John. It was a message of warning to come up to the ideal or else be removed from the presence of Christ.

<sup>41</sup> *The Woman*, 155.

<sup>42</sup> Traditionally, the interpretation fluctuates between angelic beings and the Bishops of the Churches. But there is no reason for taking "angel" in a different sense than is usually meant in the rest of the Apocalypse. J. Bon-sirven, *op. cit.*, 99-100, favors angels.

<sup>43</sup> *The Woman*, 119f.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 264. As stated by A. Colunga, O.P., *El Milenio (Apoc. 20:1-6)*, in *Slms* 3 (1956) 220-227, the general purpose of the Apocalypse is to narrate the battle between the serpent and the woman's descendants until the latter's victory.

Chapter four opens with the symbolic vision of things "that are to come hereafter." These tableaux would seem to refer primarily to the last phase of Christ's Kingdom on earth, even though they are portrayed in contemporary symbols, such as pagan Rome, its metropolis and ruler. In these chapters the Lamb executes the decrees of the sealed scroll down to the last trumpet sound of the seventh angel (11:15), which is the third woe (compare 9:12 and 11:14), the reign of the beast, personal Antichrist (ch. 13).

Yet before that scene unfolds, the stupendous vision of chapter twelve is introduced, which discloses the reality behind the scenes, and clarifies the goal as well as the means to reach it, imparting the while the needed assurance of victory. That goal for the Church of the consummation is Mary, the Mother of Christ. The Church is given to see the high ideal for redeemed mankind in the mind of God, and the pattern offered to all the children of God to "double" is none other than the New Eve and Mother of all the living. Oneness with Mary insures the Church of complete victory over the dragon in every and any form of attack. Oneness with her ideal marks out for the Church the perfection that is to be hers in the consummation of time, when the "mystery of God achieves its full perfection" (10:7).<sup>45</sup> Thus, the first chapter of the Apocalypse portrays the first phase of Christ's Kingdom, the Church, whereas the twelfth chapter discloses the ideal to be reached in its last phase. If we now turn to the last chapters of the Apocalypse we shall see that ideal realized.

THE WOMAN OF CH. 12 AND THE SPOUSE OF  
THE LAMB (CH. 19-21)

In the last chapters of the Apocalypse there is the blessed vision of the Bride of the Lamb: "Alleluja (praise the Lord!), for our Lord God the omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and

<sup>45</sup> *The Woman*, 265.



rejoice and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His bride has prepared herself" (19:7). The Bride has made herself ready for the wedding feast by putting on fine linen, radiant and pure; that white linen garment is the righteous deeds of her saints (19:8).

Before the wedding feast can be celebrated, all that is obnoxious and sinful must be wiped off the face of the earth. Seven angels pour out the final wrath of God on all unbelievers (15:1; 16:1-21). Every enemy of God and Christ and the Church is overcome (17-20). Babylon, the throne of the beast, comes to utter ruin (18), the two beasts who were the instruments of Satan are cast into the pool of fire forever (19:20); Satan, the Dragon, is likewise hurled into the pool forever (20:10); hell and death are sent back to the same pool of fire (20:14) and every evil-doer not written in the Book of Life is cast in likewise (20:15). The entire work of Satan has come to naught. Sin and its agents, hell and death are no more. Then one of the seven angels who poured out the wrath of God on His enemies opens up before St. John the vision of the Bride: "Come! I will show you the Bride, the spouse of the Lamb" (21:9). "And he conveyed me in spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, possessing the divine glory. Her luster resembled a very precious stone, as it were a jasper-stone clear as crystal" (21:10f).

The spouse (*gynē*) of the Lamb is portrayed as a collective body and expressly declared to be the New Jerusalem, that is, the People of God that make up the perfect Church of the consummation. Her raiment is radiant and white, for she is made up of the saints (19:8). Now that the entire work of Satan is removed from the earth, the Bride is ready. However, if in the woman (*gynē*) of chapter 12 the Church was seen in the person of Mary, what relation does the Church as the Spouse (*gynē*) of the Lamb have with the Church in

chapter 12? The similarities of description are noteworthy. In 12:1 the Woman is clothed with the sun, the symbol of the God of all Light who became visible to man in the person of the Incarnate Word. In 21:23 the Spouse of the Lamb, the New Jerusalem, "needs neither sun nor moon to shine upon it, for the glory (*doxa*) of God illuminates it and the Lamb is its lamp." In 12:1-18 the Woman is invulnerable against the attacks of Satan and hence free from all his works of sin and darkness; in 21:27 it is expressly declared that there shall never enter into the City anything profane or any abomination or lie. "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers, and the fornicators and the murderers, and the idolaters and every one loving and making a lie" (22:15). Inside the City are those who have washed their robes, and have obtained the right to enter in and partake of the Tree of Life (22:14). "*And night shall be no more*; and they have no need of light of lamp and light of sun, for the Lord God shall illuminate them" (22:5). In 12:5 the Mother of Christ brought forth the male son, namely, Christ Head and members. In 21:4 the New Jerusalem is the everlasting dwelling place of God: "Lo, the dwelling-place of God is with men,<sup>46</sup> and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples and God Himself shall be with them."<sup>47</sup> In the Incarnation the Incarnate Word took up His dwelling among us in Mary, and now the New Jerusalem has become His everlasting dwelling place.

Behold, the Woman of chapter 12, the Mother of the Christ, has become the Spouse of the Lamb.<sup>48</sup> There is noth-

<sup>46</sup> The New Jerusalem as the living *skēnē* of God connects the thought with John 1:14 where the Word-made-flesh "pitched His tent" (*eskēnōsen*) among us, as well as with the typology of the Old Testament *skēnē* of Ex. 40:34.

<sup>47</sup> "God Himself shall be with them" is an evident play on the word *Em-manu-el*: God-with-us of Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.

<sup>48</sup> B. Vawter, *art. cit.*, 163: "The *gynē* of the Apocalypse who is the mother

ing contradictory or repellent in this statement.<sup>49</sup> Mary is the Mother of the Incarnate Divine Word and Mother of the Mystical Christ. As such she is the archetype for the Church, which is her family of children. But from another viewpoint, Mary is the foremost member of the Church, as our gloriously reigning Pontiff unhesitatingly states.<sup>50</sup> If the entire Mystical

of Christ is likewise the bride of the Lamb. . . . This Old Testament typology is found also in the Synoptics and in John. It is at a marriage feast that Mary first appears in John, a feast in which John sees a symbol of our Lord's whole life and work. . . ." In an enlightening article, C. Moeller, *Doctrinal Aspects of Mariology*, in *LV* 8 (1953) 226-251, presents the case thus: ". . . Mary is the Woman, the Serpent's enemy, the mother associated with the Savior in the work of Redemption; that is the reason why he represents her in two parallel places (John 19:26 and Apoc. 12:17) as the mother of the faithful. Moreover, at the time when he was writing, he considered her, placed in *her proper place*, under the glorious aspect which can only be compared with that of the Lamb triumphant and the heavenly Jerusalem. If we now consider that the heavenly Jerusalem is presented by St. John in the Apocalypse as a bride adorned for her spouse, and that all the correspondences appear as the mystery of the betrothal of God and the world in the Kingdom, around the messianic banquet. . . . St. John furnishes us with an indisputable base for the title of New Eve which, in part at least, tradition accords to Mary. Here is to be found the scriptural root of the title *Sponsa Verbi*" (237f). And again: "Mary is the Church. If the latter is the new Eve, Mary, being the archetype of the Church, is equally the new Eve. If the Church is the bride of the Word, Mary, this time in a very special way, is equally *Sponsa Verbi*" (238f).

<sup>49</sup> F. M. Braun, in *BSFEM* 10 (1952) 16, is averse to considering Mary as the *Bride* of Christ. C. Vollert likewise, in *art. cit.*, 568-570 shows that tradition offers little or nothing to support the idea. Mary in Scripture and Tradition is exclusively Mother, not Spouse. But perhaps one could offer a distinction. Mary's relation to the God-man *as man* is indeed that of Mother. But Mary's relation to the God-man *as God* is just as well a sponsal relation as is that of any other members of the Mystical Body to the Incarnate Divine Word. Indeed, Mary eminently fulfills in her person the character of the Bride in the spiritual nuptials between God and man. Not only did she act as proxy in these divine nuptials, but realized them primarily in herself.

<sup>50</sup> Pius XII, *Inter complures* (Oct. 24, 1954), in *AAS* 46 (1954) 679.

Body of Christ is the Spouse of the Lamb, Mary is eminently so.<sup>51</sup> Since the ideal of Mary was put before the Church in chapter 12, the last chapters of the Apocalypse show that ideal realized in the Church that has put on Christ the Light to the utmost, and has become holy and spotless like the Mother of Christ.

#### RESUMÉ

In the Gospel as well as in the Apocalypse St. John has given Mary a leading role to play in the salvific work of her Divine Son, namely, that of the New Eve who is the Mother of all those who live the life of Christ as children of the Light. As such, Mary embodies in her person the mystery of the Church whose role is identical with that of the Virgin Mother in bringing forth the life divine in the hearts of regenerated mankind. Thus the work of the powers of darkness comes to naught and the children of Light gain the victory together with the Mother with whom they are identified in the struggle against the Dragon-Satān and his agents. Once the entire work of the powers of darkness is crushed and removed from the earth, the mystery of God which is the Church can blossom in full perfection and the Marian ideal, set by God for the Church at the outset, can be realized to the full. When that ideal shall have been realized, the Spouse will be ready for the Bridegroom; and just as the Spirit and Mary were active at the first Coming of Christ into His Kingdom, so too the Spirit and the Marian Spouse of the Lamb implore His Coming in consummation and glory: "And the Spirit and the Bride say: Come!" (Apoc. 22:16). Come, Lord Jesus!

<sup>51</sup> This prescinds from Scheeben's viewpoint that the fundamental principle in Mariology is Mary's bridal-motherhood. That matter has been excellently treated by C. Vollert, S.J., in *The Fundamental Principle of Mariology*, in *Mariology*, ed. by J. B. Carol, 2 (Milwaukee, 1957) 30-87.

(22:20). He shall come when the Church shall have realized in herself her Marian prototype.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> As is evident, the above article approaches the Mary-Church relationship from the exegetical angle. Dogmatic specifications and doctrinal implications are left to speculative and positive theology. Other articles in this volume will develop that angle of the theme. Cf. also C. Vollert, *Mary and the Church*, 550-595; also C. Moeller, *art. cit.*, 239. After finishing our paper our attention was called to an article by M. Peinador entitled *Estudio sintético-comparativo de los textos escriturarios que fundamentan las relaciones entre María y la Iglesia*, in *EM* 18 (1957) 127-155. The author's conclusions substantially coincide with ours.