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MARY'S SALVIFIC ROLE COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE CHURCH¹

The so-called Mary-Church analogy has received its greatest impetus to date from the teaching Church in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*.² Not only were the doctrinal considerations on Mary placed within the document which defines the mystery of the Church, but an explicit comparison is made between Mary and the Church in terms of their virginal maternities and their salvific roles.³ It is the purpose of this paper to underline as precisely as possible the specific role of Mary and the specific role of the Church in God's plan of salvation in light of the theological developments which have taken place in recent years in relation to the Mary-Church analogy.

I believe that the fundamental issues involved in the question and outlined in 1952 by Yves Congar⁴ remain the same. We are ultimately dealing with the question of the collaboration of the creature in his own salvation.⁵ It is in this evaluation of their mutual interrelationships based upon a theological realism in matters of grace that the Mary-Church analogy finds its ultimate meaning. Karl Barth seems to have perceived the

¹ An extensive, current bibliography on the general question of the Mary-Church analogy may be found in Philips, G., *Marie et L'Eglise* in *Maria*, 7, 363-419. In addition see Laurentin, R., *La Vierge au Concile* (Paris, 1965), esp. 111-133; Nicolas, M. J., *Theotokos* (Tournai, 1965), 191-213; Guindon, H., *Marie du Vatican II* (Paris 1971), esp. 87-103.

² Cf. Philips, G., *L'Eglise et son mystère au deuxième Concile du Vatican*, 2 (Paris, 1968).

³ Cf. Abbott, W. (Ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York, 1966), 90-93, #60-55. All other references to the Council documents will be taken from Abbott's edition.

⁴ Congar, Y., *Le Christ, Marie et l'Eglise* (Bruges, 1952). Eng. edition: *Christ, Our Lady and the Church* (London, 1956).

⁵ Cf. Laurentin, R., *Rôle de Marie et de l'Eglise dans l'oeuvre salvifique du Christ*, in *Etudes Mariales* 10 (1952), 43-62.

implications of this realism, even though he did not express it with theological exactitude, when he said:

"To the creature cooperating with the divine work are in the last analysis applied with the dignity and all the privileges which are forever being attributed to Mary, including all the affirmations which make of her a collaborator more or less in rivalry with Christ. What Roman Catholicism calls the Church corresponds exactly to the creature thus exalted."⁶

It is interesting to note in passing that while Barth says in his *Dogmatics* that Marian dogma is "the determining dogmatic criterion of the Roman Church . . . the standpoint from which one must consider all her decisions and upon which depends all her existence," nonetheless in the booklet which he wrote after returning from the Council Barth says:

"It was no accident that while Vatican II often acknowledged Mariology out of a sense of duty, it deliberately avoided it in all the important statements, or used it only for decorative purposes . . . The Catholic Church does not stand or fall (thank God) on its Mariology."⁷

The biblical roots for an understanding of the relationship between Mary and the Church do not lie in any one particular text or even in a series of texts taken by themselves. It is rather within the historical context of the Scriptures in which we perceive God's plan of salvation developing that we shall come to appreciate the basis for a biblical comparison or relationship between Mary and the Church.⁸ According to this plan, God

⁶ Citation taken from: Hamer, J., *Mary and the Protestants*, in *Worship* 37 (1962-63), 580-589.

⁷ Cf. Hamer, *art. cit.*, 584; Barth, K., *Ad Limina Apostolorum* (Richmond, Va., 1968), 62.

⁸ Cf. Congar, Y., *Marie et L'Eglise dans la pensée patristique*, in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 38 (1954), 3-38. Michalon, P., *Le témoignage du Nouveau Testament sur la Mère de Jésus*, in *Lumière et Vie* 10 (1953), 109-126.

has willed that mankind participate activity in its own salvation and that this activity has concentrated, at times, in certain individuals who would act in behalf of the entire group. This allows for a typology, a personification, or, as some prefer, a personalization, according to which individual persons really contain the destiny of a group or of a whole people or even of the human race.

It is my contention that the Daughter of Sion theme is one of these typologies inasfar as the Daughters of Sion is in some way identified with the remnant to be saved and eventually, in the New Testament, with Mary who thus typifies, i.e., really contains within herself a whole people, indeed the human race.

Before proceeding to consider this theme and its relationship to the Mary-Church analogy and specifically its ramifications for a theology of salvific activity on the part of Mary and the Church there are three points to be clarified: 1) In speaking of Mary as the Archetype or personification of the Church we are not simply identifying them or their salvific roles; 2) in saying that Mary personifies humanity in need of redemption we must be careful to distinguish her "representative" role from that of Christ; 3) the salvific roles of Mary and the Church must be understood as subordinated to the salvific function of the Holy Spirit.⁹

One of the requirements for a valid typology is that it be verified, i.e., that the relationship between type and antitype be explicitly established either in Scripture itself or in the writings of the Fathers or in the doctrinal statements of the Church.

The prophets themselves (*Micah* 4:7-10; *Zeph.* 3:12-17) identify the Daughter of Sion with the remnant. In his gospel (*Luke* 1:28-33) St. Luke takes the further step and identifies Mary with the Daughter of Sion, making her the personification of this remnant. The biblical characteristics of the Daughter

⁹ Cf. Mühlen, H., *L'Esprit dans l'Eglise* 2 (Paris, 1969), 134-175.

of Sion which Luke develops most are motherhood and the dwelling place of God.¹⁰

The maternal role proper to the Daughter of Sion is described in *Isaiah* 66:7-9.¹¹ The maternity of the woman of the Apocalypse is inspired by *Isaiah* 66 while Luke takes his notion of maternity from *Zeph.* 3:17: "the Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty savior," and from *Micah* 4:8-10 and 5:1-5. Luke seems to see the birth of Christ as proceeding from an individual, Mary, and at the same time from a collectivity, Mary as the Daughter of Sion, the personification of Israel. Mary is the dwelling place of Yahweh insofar as the Spirit of God (identified by the Israelites with Yahweh) overshadows her.¹² This apparent reference to Exodus 40:35 brings with it a double connotation: the presence of God's Spirit "over" Mary who is this tabernacle of the new covenant and the presence of God's glory "within" that tabernacle. In this way Luke links the Daughter of Sion theme (more collective in its tendency) with the Ark of the Covenant theme (more personally realized in Mary). The theological progress evident in Luke is the identification of this woman (Sion) tabernacle with Mary who is thus presented as the summit of Old Testament expectations. She realizes personally in the most perfect way possible both the presence of Yahweh within her in the person of her Son and maternity by giving birth to the true Son of God.

If there is any doubt about Luke's perception of the verification of the Daughter of Sion typology in Mary, we have the clear statement of chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*:

With her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and after a long expect-

¹⁰ Cf. Laurentin, R., *Structure et théologie de Luc I et II* (Paris, 1959), 154-161.

¹¹ Cazelles, H., *Fille de Sion et théologie mariale dans la Bible*, in *Etudes Mariales*, 21 (1964), 66.

¹² Cf. Lyonnet, S., *Le récit de l'Annonciation et la Maternité divine de la Sainte Vierge*, in *L'Ami du Clergé* 66 (1956), 43-45.

tation of the promise, the times were at length fulfilled and the new dispensation established. All this occurred when the Son of God took a human nature from her, that He might in the mysteries of His flesh free man from sin."¹³

The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the way is thus opened for an identification of Mary with the Church, a step which the Council itself took in numbers 64-65 of the Constitution. She is the summit of Old Testament hopes for salvation. She bears in herself all the aspirations of God's chosen people. At the same time, she responds to God's salvific gesture as the first of the New Israel, the Church mothering the Messiah and receiving salvation from Him.¹⁴

This typology between Mary and Israel (the Church) as expressed through the Daughter of Sion theme is not an empty symbolism, a mere literary device. Both Mary, Ancient Israel and the Church are historical realities. Mary springs from Israel as the "highly favored one" who really embodies in herself the destiny of God's chosen people. It is in the name of the remnant that she welcomes the Messiah. The messianic community is typified, is "contained" in the person of Mary. Mary is the messianic community giving birth to the Messiah as prophesied—this is the true sense of the Daughter of Sion theme. She is an individual and as His Mother she experiences the agony of her Son's suffering and death; bearing within herself (as a collectivity) Israel's destiny, she experiences the sorrowful rejection of her Son by so many.¹⁵

In Luke and John in particular Mary is presented as intimately involved, as an individual, in the redemptive work of her

¹³ Abbott, *op. cit.*, 89, #55.

¹⁴ Cf. Nicolas, M. J., *Theolokos* (Tournai, 1965), 193: "Nous sommes passé du sens typique que les Pères de l'Eglise ont emprunté à l'Ecriture elle-même."

¹⁵ George, A., *Déconverte de Marie dans le Nouveau Testament*, in *Cahiers Mariales* 73 (1970), 150: "C'est aussi la fille de Sion: elle a sa personnalité propre, bien sûr mais elle engage tout le peuple de Dieu, elle accepte pour tous les hommes le Messie."

Son. In the Cana and Calvary scenes as well as in the Apocalypse we have the development of a profound symbolism according to which we experience an almost imperceptible interchange between the individual, Mary, and the group or collectivity, the new Israel. Thus, from the point of view of Scripture, Mary becomes the point of insertion of the Messiah into humanity and as such she is at the term and the summit of the preparatory phase of the new economy. Fundamentally it is her maternity which forms the principal point of comparison between her and the Church. But this scriptural material had to be developed by the reflective thought of the Fathers in order for the implications of a Mary-Church analogy to be grasped.

The Fathers did not make any direct comparison between Mary and the Church. They came to an understanding of this relationship because of their far more fundamental concern with the plan of God as it had been revealed in Christ.¹⁶ The aspects under which the relationship between Mary and the Church were grasped by the Fathers were their maternity and virginity. Their maternities were viewed in relation to Christ. For the first eight centuries Mary's significance in salvation history was limited to a consideration of her "Fiat" pronounced at Nazareth; during this same time the Church was considered to be the mother of Christ in souls by her (the Church's) presence on Calvary.¹⁷ From the late seventh to the twelfth century we find a transposition taking place. Authors begin to apply to Mary what they had previously applied to the Church: she begins to be viewed in terms of her present activity in heaven, i.e., as having a role in the distribution of graces.

The maternity of Mary and the Church is considered to be virginal, implying a constant fidelity to God's word expressed in Christ, a faith which is incorruptible. Again, these virgini-

¹⁶ Cf. Congar, Y., *Marie et l'Eglise dans la pensée patristique*, loc. cit., 75-76.

¹⁷ Coathalem, H., *Le parallélisme entre la Sainte Vierge et l'église dans la tradition latine jusqu'à la fin du XII^e siècle* (Rome, 1954), 46.

ties were not compared one with the other; rather they were considered in their relationship to God's power which made them faithful. Even the explicit affirmations of the early Fathers about Mary were fundamentally in line with the notion of divine economy or plan of salvation. They do not speak of Mary as the co-redemptrix or as a representative of mankind on Calvary or as a spiritual mother. While the Church is frequently depicted as the spouse of Christ, this title is very rarely applied to Mary.¹⁸

Having said all of this, the crucial question must be asked: What is Mary's precise role in salvation and how is it related to that of the Church? Are they simply identified; are they completely distinct? How is this typology to be expressed in more metaphysical terms? The emphasis upon this typological relationship might threaten to leave us with vague notions. Yet Mary is an individual while the Church is a collectivity; though she is a member of the Church and thus shares in the Church's salvific role, she is also hailed as "a preeminent and altogether singular member of the Church and as the Church's model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity."¹⁹

The mysterious rebirth of mankind, the term of God's plan to be realized in the Church, was realized first and fundamentally in Christ and Mary. Mary and the Church are participants in the same mystery, which ultimately is God's doing. The vital question is: is Mary in any sense the source of what happens in the Church, or is she merely its first realization and manifestation? In other words, does she exercise any kind of effective role in the place of the whole Church? What weight is to be given to the statement, e.g., that at the moment of the Annunciation she personifies the Church? This is the sensitive issue of Mary's cooperative role in salvation.

Congar would limit the patristic notion of typology and per-

¹⁸ Cf. Congar, Y., *Marie et l'Eglise dans la pensée patristique*, 8-9; Coathalem, H., *op. cit.*, 59ff.

¹⁹ Abbott, *op. cit.*, 86, #53.

sonification to the manifestation-actualization of God's salvific activity in a particular individual, which individual in turn is the type of a collectivity in which the same divine activity will later be realized and manifested.

I believe, however, that more than this must be said about Mary as the Archetype of the Church in terms of their salvific roles. The redemptive work of Christ is fundamentally a work of expiation for sin, the restoration of an order of justice which has been disrupted by man's rebelliousness. This same divine design can also be expressed in terms of a dialogue which God has instituted with man, a personal relationship initiated and sustained by God's love for man but also demanding a response from man. Salvation in this respect is founded upon God's loving initiative but it also includes essentially man's acceptance of that initiative, his "yes."

When one speaks of Mary as the personification of the Church, one is placing her on the side of humanity in need of redemption and one is considering her insofar as she exemplifies (i.e., reveals and actualizes in some way) man's response to God. Her response involves her "Fiat" pronounced at the moment of the Incarnation and "prolonged" or ratified on Calvary. In what sense, then, does this "fiat" of Mary represent or personify mankind's response to God? Some²⁰ would say that by her consent Mary makes the objective redemption a possibility; her consent is an example to the rest of men—this is the limit of its effectiveness since it does not enter into the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

Mary has in no way been delegated by mankind to act in its behalf; yet Mary represents mankind by virtue of God's decision which I would find implicit in the typology of the Daughter of Sion according to which she was invited by God to welcome messianic salvation in the Person of Christ by consenting to the marriage of mankind with the Messiah. The marriage

²⁰ Rahner, K., *Le principe fondamental de la théologie mariale*, in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* (42 (1954), 481ff.

theme initiated in the Old Testament to express God's relationship with His people is utilized in the New Testament by Paul (*Eph.* 5) and John (*Apoc.* 19:7f.; 21:2f.) to express the salvific relationship between Christ and His Church. It is understood to take place at the Incarnation and to be sealed with His blood on the cross. This is not to say that the idea of Mary personifying the Church at the time of the Incarnation by giving her consent to the marriage between Christ and humanity is explicitly patristic in origin.²¹ It is rather a theological development explicited by St. Thomas in his *Summa* and it is in perfect accord with the scriptural-patristic data concerning the significance of Mary's "Fiat" at Nazareth.²² Although not everyone admits that St. Thomas was speaking in a metaphysical sense,²³ this seems to have been his intention and on occasion it has been explicitly interpreted and approved in this sense in the teaching of the Popes.²⁴ Again, the Lukan identification of Mary with the Daughter of Sion seems to be a positive scriptural basis for the thought developed by St. Thomas, namely that Mary consented in the name of humanity, as its representative, to the Incarnation. Her consent was not a private affair but was an act performed in behalf of all mankind.

Having said this, two points should be clarified: a) Mary's consent does not make Christ's consent meaningless nor does she supply for something which is lacking in Christ's humanity. As perfect, true man, Christ represents the whole of humanity in need of redemption before the Father. His consent makes it possible for mankind to receive the benefits of His redemptive

²¹ Congar, Y., *Marie et l'Eglise dans la pensée patristique*, 19.

²² S.T. III, q. 30, a. 1: "Fourthly, in order to show that there is a certain spiritual wedlock between the Son of God and human nature. Wherefore, in the Annunciation the Virgin's consent was besought in lieu of that of the entire human nature."

²³ Cf. Philips, G., *La Mariologie de l'Année Jubilaire*, in *Marianum* 18 (1956), 53; *Marie et l'Eglise*, in *Maria*, 7, 401.

²⁴ Cf. Dillenschneider, C., *Marie dans l'économie de la création renouvelée* (Paris, 1957), 223.

life, death, and resurrection. Every human consent to God's salvific will is virtually contained in this primordial consent of Christ, the Head of His Body, the Spouse of His Church.

Mary's consent is totally subordinated to that of her Son. She does not represent the Church in need of redemption before the Father. She represents the Church in its acceptance of Christ as Redeemer, as Head, as Spouse. She unites the Redeemer of the human community in need of redemption. Her "representative" consent is not absolutely necessary; it seems to have been petitioned by God in fact. b) Mary's consent is the act of an individual and not a collective act; yet it has universal consequences because it is performed in behalf of the human race by a unique individual of that race, by one who had been previously redeemed in a most sublime manner, by one whose very being is identified with the name with which she was identified by God's messenger: the highly favored one. Her maternal consent is not the source of salvation for mankind but, according to God's designs, it brought mankind into contact with that Source.

Following this same perspective, we must consider the Calvary scene in order to appreciate more fully the relationship between Christ, Mary and the Church in the drama of salvation. Mary's consent given to God's plan of salvation at Nazareth is actually identical to the consent which I believe she gave on Calvary as the personification of the Church. Scripture makes no explicit mention of a consent given by Mary to her Son's redemptive sacrifice; nor does any Patristic theme underline her role on Calvary. Yet as Mary's active role in salvation began to become more evident within the praying Church, medieval theologians and scripture scholars began to pay more attention to her presence on Calvary.²⁸

The Council states clearly in #58:

²⁸ An abundance of material can be found on this subject in *Etudes Mariales* 16-18 (1959-1961) and an excellent bibliography is contained in *Maria* 6, 551-638.

"Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with her divine plan (cf. Jn. 19:25) suffering grievously with her only begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice; and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth."

Besides, there seems to be a biblical justification for considering Mary's consent on Calvary as a ratification of her consent to the marriage between Christ and humanity willed by His Father. The context of chapter five of Ephesians describing Christ in His spousal relationship to humanity refers to His redemptive suffering. In this perspective, the messianic espousals between Christ and humanity would be sealed by His blood. Mary's role in this instance would be to unite humanity to this redemptive sacrifice through her act of faith (her loving consent), a continuation of her consent at Nazareth. She unites the Church (and humanity) to the actual redemptive mystery of Christ's death. At that moment Christ alone represents humanity in need of redemption before the Father; Mary responds in the name of humanity to Christ's self-offering by means of an act best described as a communion. He alone effects mankind's redemption; through Mary mankind is put into communion with that self-oblation. At Nazareth and at Calvary she represents humanity responding to Christ and to God. Her consent in behalf of humanity adds nothing essential to Christ's redemptive act (which alone redeems us), yet it is a consent willed by God. Her consent is, I believe, best expressed as an active receptivity in the sense that it remains extrinsic to Christ's personal act of love by which He accepts His Father's will (thus safeguarding His unique Mediatorship) and yet is an active communion with Christ's decision, an integrative part of God's redemptive design and thus humanity's (through Mary) participation in the objective redemption itself. As at Nazareth, this communion remains a personal act of

Mary offered in behalf of mankind. It is meritorious in regard to the redemption of mankind because it is a supreme act of personal love offered by One who has been prepared by God to represent mankind at that moment.²⁶

Thus far we have considered two phases of Christ's redemptive activity, His incarnation and His death on Calvary. Each of these pertains to what we call the objective redemption. We have seen that Mary made a personal contribution to each phase, a contribution which was salvific. Since the Church, the community of those who believe in and follow Christ, did not yet exist as a visible salvific community, it played no salvific role in these instances.

The heavenly phase of the salvific activity of Christ is usually referred to as the subjective phase of redemption. While this terminology may be ambiguous, it is intended to express the fact that the heavenly Christ conveys to individuals the benefits of His earthly redemptive mission. His death and resurrection are definitive; yet He continues to redeem man by interceding for them before His Father and by acting through the sacraments of His Church.

Gradually the early Church became aware of the fact that Mary as His Mother exercises even now an influence upon the salvation of men; gradually, too, the Church began to address Mary in prayer, a prayer which at times indicates a belief in her universally efficacious activity.²⁷

²⁶ Cf. Feuillet, A., *Les adieux de Jésus à sa Mère et la Maternité Spirituelle de Marie*, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964), 469-489. Feuillet sees Mary on Calvary as the personification of the ideal Sion of the prophets who is to give birth to a messianic people. This would confirm what we have already said about the significance of Mary's presence on Calvary in the sense that as the personification of the ideal Sion (the Church) Mary would give birth to many offspring out of love proven by suffering. Cf. also Philips, G., *Le mystère de Marie dans les sources de la Révélation*, in *Marianum* 24 (1962), 14.

²⁷ Cf. Laurentin, R., *Court traité sur la Vierge Marie* (Paris, 1968), 52ff.; Galot, J., *L'intercession de Marie*, in *Maria* 6, 513ff.; Philips, G., *Le sens chrétien de la foi et l'évolution du culte mariale*, in *De Primordiis*

Mary's "representative" role in heaven is implicit in the awareness of the Church in the Middle Ages that she was its most excellent member. Donal Flanagan²⁸ mentions that in the 12th century there is a certain tradition according to which the term "spouse" is transferred to Mary from the original application made to the Church because of the awareness of an identity between Mary and the heavenly Church. He sees Mary in her Assumption as being the heavenly Church and a type of the pilgrim Church.

Mary intercedes with Christ, not by informing Him of something of which He is ignorant, nor even less by moving Him to grant our requests. Her intercessory role, I believe, is similar to her role at Nazareth and on Calvary, a communion of mind and heart and will with her Son before the Father. Her intercession is a personal act and it is supremely efficacious because it is in communion with that of Christ. We may call her a mediator in Christ. Her prayer is universal and supremely efficacious in contrast to ours, first of all, because she is the universal mother of mankind and secondly because she is the supereminent member of the communion of saints who alone cooperated effectively in the name of humanity in the very act of the redemption. Mary personifies the Church (the militant and suffering Church) and she *is* the glorified Church in the presence of Christ with whom before the Father she intercedes for all mankind.²⁹

In heaven Mary serves in a subordinate way as a source of attraction and encouragement for the rest of mankind still on its pilgrimage toward final union with Christ. In her by God's grace has been realized the most perfect possible union with the heavenly Spouse. She is the perfect model, the full realiza-

Cultus Mariani: Acta congressus Mariologici-Mariani in Lusitania anno 1967 celebrati, 3, 475-485.

²⁸ Flanagan, D., *Eschatology and the Assumption*, in *Concilium* 5, 68-73.

²⁹ *Recherches sur l'intercession de Marie, I-II*, in *Etudes Mariales* 23-24 (1966-1967).

tion of that collaboration which the Church is called upon to accomplish with Christ insofar as it is an organism of salvation. Mary is more than a model, however; she exercises a direct action upon the Church. As a model we might call her the instrument of the Holy Spirit; as such she is visibly present to the Church, disposing Christians for the reception of the sacraments. She is also invisibly present to the Church by her prayer, her love, her intentions.

In the "subjective" phase of the redemption the Church becomes the "sacrament" of Christ among men. She symbolizes and actualizes His salvific presence through word and sacrament. She is the spiritual mother of men by cooperating in their spiritual rebirth in an instrumental way principally by means of the sacraments each of which flows from and centers around the physical, glorified body of Christ in the Eucharist. The Church exercises her salvific mission among men by word and symbolic rite, bringing them into contact with the redeeming Christ, fundamentally with His passion, death and resurrection. The Church imitates Mary in her maternity and her virginity. She is likewise the Spouse of Christ; as His Spouse she receives from Christ; as His Mother, she acts with Him to give life. The Church is faithful to Christ as a virgin, faithful to God's word in all things. This fidelity is an essential condition of her fecundity. As a virgin she gives herself to Christ, as a mother she gives herself to mankind. While these expressions are to be understood metaphorically since they are being applied to a collectivity, they express the true, salvific, instrumental activity of the Church.

On the other hand, Mary is personally a virgin and a mother both physically and spiritually. Her physical virginity is the sign of her profound fidelity to God; her physical maternity is the source of her universal spiritual motherhood. In consenting to become Christ's mother in the flesh she acted out of faith and implicitly accepted to become in the future the spiritual mother of men. She fulfills that role by continuing her faith-

assent to the redemptive death of her Son in behalf of mankind.

In the Catholic understanding of the virginal maternity of Mary and the Church is found the touchstone for the profound appreciation our faith possesses for the grace of God, a reality which, while never removing the distinction between the divine and the human, between infinite and finite, brings the created into a real participation of the uncreated. In terms of redemption, in Mary the victory over Satan and his works is definitive and absolutely perfect since she of all creatures was redeemed "in a more sublime way." As the source of salvation on earth, the Church is holy and yet she prays each day for forgiveness of the sins of her members. The one is still a pilgrim, the other is a source of sure hope for pilgrims.

At the moment of final consummation the salvific function of Mary and the Church will come to an end. Yet Mary's love will continue to be absorbed in Christ and through Him in mankind. She shall occupy the principal place among creatures in the heavenly kingdom because of her preeminence in God's plan of salvation. Yet she shall be joined in love by all those who have kept God's commandments and remained faithful to His Word (*Apoc.* 12:17). All separation between her and the Church will come to an end. All salvific functions exercised by her and the Church during the pilgrimage of faith will be absorbed in simple contemplation. At that instant God will be all in all (*1 Cor.* 15:28).

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