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THE NATURE OF MARY'S INTERCESSION ITS SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Recent treatments of the intercession of Mary do not provide much that is original or that opens the door to a deeper penetration of its nature. It is good therefore to strike out in a new direction in our effort to understand more thoroughly the nature of her intercession. A paper of mine given at the Louisville convention of this Society in 1966 explored one aspect of an approach to Coredeemption by way of the Scriptural covenant theme.¹ Inasmuch as Our Lady's coredeemptive merits are the chief basis of her intercessory power, that investigation is relevant to our present purpose. Further research has made it possible to fill in a large area which was lacking in the 1966 paper. To see how the newer material fits in, we need to summarize briefly the thought of that earlier paper.

We saw that a basic problem in understanding the covenant was the controverted nature of the old covenant of Sinai. Many exegetes, not for exegetical but for *a priori* reasons, were inclined to say that the covenant could not be interpreted as a bilateral pact, a pact in which both parties, God and His people, undertook obligations. Some of the exegetes feared that this interpretation would make God *owe* things to His creatures; others, moved by the classic Protestant denial of human cooperation with grace, felt they had to reject bilaterality for a similar reason. We saw that these *a priori* difficulties could be solved, but, more important, we saw that there are excellent exegetical reasons for believing that the writers of the old Scriptures themselves understood Sinai as a bilateral pact. Briefly, a study of the usage of the Hebrew word *hesed*, the

¹ *Our Lady and Christ's Saving Role*, in *MS* 17 (1966) 86-109.

word for the covenant bond, supported the bilateral view. Especially, the uses of *hesed* in parallelism with *sedaqah* showed that the writers of several Psalms believed that for God to carry out His covenant commitment, that is, to act according to *hesed*, with a matter of *sedaqah*, moral righteousness: He had bound Himself by freely entering into the covenant framework, so that even though He could not owe anything to a creature, yet He could and did owe it to Himself to keep His covenanted word. Some Septuagint renditions of *hesed* by Greek *dikaiosyne* (moral righteousness) reinforced the same conclusion. Additional reason was found in the frequent use by the prophets, especially Osee, of the image of marriage to describe God's relation to His people in the covenant. But in marriage there is a mutual contract, a bilateral pact in which both parties assume obligations. Further, St. Paul in Gal. 3, 16-18 finds himself having to wrestle with a problem of how to show that Sinai did not conflict with a previous promise of God to Abraham. The problem would not have arisen if Paul had not considered that God had bound Himself in a bilateral pact at Sinai.

We saw that, through Jeremiah,² God promised a new covenant which would be unbreakable, in which the covenant law would be written not on stone tablets but in the hearts of men. That new covenant would also bring into being a new people of God, enjoying His special favor on condition of obedience to the covenant law: hence God would again bind Himself on condition of obedience.

Vatican II, after citing these words of Jeremiah, added: "Christ instituted that new covenant . . . in His blood, calling together a people out of Jews and gentiles, which would grow into unity . . . and would be the new People of God."³

The obedience that conditioned the new covenant was basically that of Christ. Yet, by will of the Father, in the renewal

² Jer. 31,31-33.

³ On the Church, §9.

of that new covenant,⁴ the Mass, the obedience of His members was to be added to His, in such a way that the complete condition was that of the obedience of the whole Christ, Head and members. The infinity of His offering did not preclude that addition, because we are not in the realm of mathematics, where infinity plus a finite quantity does not increase: we are instead in the realm of divine generosity which was unwilling to stop with anything lesser, if more could be done. We noted that that pattern of divine action showed too in the fact that the Father chose the most difficult mode of Redemption, even though infinite worth would have been provided by the Incarnation in a palace instead of a stable, with the central act merely a brief prayer for forgiveness, instead of the terrible death of the cross.

We saw that if the renewal of the new covenant involved this double offering, so that a finite obedience is joined to Christ's infinite contribution, then, if the renewal is really parallel to the original, the implication is that the original must somehow have contained a similar double element: the element added to Christ's obedience there was, we suggested, the obedience of Mary. And Vatican II did stress her obedience, citing St. Irenaeus,⁵ and concluded: "...in suffering with her Son dying on the cross, she cooperated in the work of the Savior in an altogether singular way, by obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls. As a result she is our mother in the order of grace."⁶

In that study the stress was on one aspect: God's love for us was presented as the motive for the bilateral pact of the covenant. In regard to that motive, we noted there were two levels in the divine reasons: if we asked on the *fundamental level* why He wanted to make and then to keep His commitment in the covenant, we said that the reason could be only spon-

⁴ Constitution on Liturgy, §10.

⁵ On the Church, §56.

⁶ *Ibid.* §61.

taneous, unmerited, unmeritable love. On the *secondary*, less basic level, the reason for His doing His part under the covenant was the fact that He had bound Himself. He wanted to bind Himself to prove His love for us, so as to overcome our inherent tendency to mistrust a God whose ways are as far above us as the heavens are above the earth,⁷ and to move us to respond to His love so He could give the more abundantly.

We need not retract any of the above conclusions now. But further research suggests we add a new, a very large dimension to them.

We might approach the matter by a survey of a puzzling set of Scriptural and Patristic data.

We notice first that the book of Leviticus⁸ gives detailed rules for the offering of sacrifices for *involuntary* sins, that is, those in which a man does not contract formal guilt because of his ignorance, inadvertence, etc. For example: "If anyone sins, doing any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued by you at the price for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the error which he committed unwittingly, and he shall be forgiven. It is a guilt offering; he is guilty before the Lord."⁹

Abraham had an experience that brought home this lesson to him forcefully. He was going to Egypt because of a famine, and said to his wife Sara: "I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say: This is his wife. Then they will kill me. . . . Say you

⁷ Isa 55, 9.

⁸ Lv. 5, 14ss. Cf. also Lv. 4, 2, 22, 27; Eccles, 5, 5-6.

⁹ Lv. 5, 17-19. We note that the text speaks of doing "*any of the things*" that were forbidden. Therefore, it deals not merely with ritual or Levitical violations, but also with violations of morality proper. We note, too, that the last words state a man is guilty "before the Lord." Hence, there is a real objective guilt.

are my sister." And so they did, and the Pharaoh took her into his house, and sent gifts to Abraham. "But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sara, Abraham's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said: What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife. . . . Take her and be gone"¹⁰ Substantially the same incident is retold of Abraham and Abimelech.¹¹ Still later, Abimelech is reported to have had another close call, to have almost taken Rebecca, wife of Isaac, under similar circumstances.¹²

Tobias was so imbued with this concept that when his wife had brought home a kid that she seems to have received for her work, he, because somehow he feared it might have been stolen, said: "Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen. Restore it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that comes by theft."¹³ Similarly, the author of Psalm 18, 12 prayed: "But who can discern his failings [shegiyoth]? Cleanse me from my unknown [faults]."

Actually, all sacrifices of atonement in the Old Testament were intended merely for involuntary sins: there was no remedy provided for voluntary sins: "If one person sins unwillingly, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. . . . But the person who does anything with a high hand . . . shall be cut off from among his people, because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment."¹⁴

Could all these texts be dismissed as merely examples of a taboo mentality?¹⁵ One might possibly think of such a thing in the case of Jonathan,¹⁶ son of Saul, who narrowly escaped execution by his father for having unwittingly violated a curse his father had imprudently sworn that no one would eat until

¹⁰ Gn. 12, 11-12, 17-19.

¹¹ Gn. 20, 1-8. Possibly a doublet.

¹² Gn. 26, 1-11. Cf. also 1 Sm. 14, 24-25 and Gn 17, 14. See also E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Job* (Dublin, 1939) xix-xxiii.

¹³ Tob. 2, 21.

¹⁴ Num. 15, 27; 15, 30-31.

he had avenged himself on his enemies—we note that Jonathan himself was willing to die for an involuntary fault. But surely if the Hebrew concept of sin could have ever been merely one of taboo—and it is unlikely that it ever was *merely* that—surely at least by the later part of the Old Testament period, the concept was more developed. And especially, the high ethical tone of Psalm 18, at least, would preclude such a suspicion.¹⁷

Such a fear is of course totally absent when we find the same sort of concept in the words of Christ Himself: "That servant who knew his master's will but did not make ready or act according to his will shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating."¹⁸ Similarly, St. Paul called himself, "the foremost of sinners,"¹⁹ and said also, "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."²⁰ Yet he had acted not only ignorantly, but in "good conscience," in the belief that he was really doing a service to God by persecution. The same Paul also wrote: "I am not aware of anything against me, but I am not thereby acquitted."²¹ He was thinking he might have committed some fault unwittingly.

¹⁵ Cf. Bruce Vawter, C. M., *New Paths through the Bible*, (Wilkes-Barre, 1968) 84-85.

¹⁶ 1 Sm. 14, 24-25.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Guillet, *Thèmes Bibliques* (Paris, 1954) 94-100.

¹⁸ Lk. 12, 47-48. Cf. Mt. 25, 44 where those on the left at the Last Judgment try to defend themselves saying they did not know Him and so did not aid Him. Their plea of ignorance is rejected. It was of course only a partial ignorance that they could plead—they did not see Christ in the needy. But they could see that the persons were needy and so were not ignorant of that fact.

¹⁹ 1 Tim. 1, 15.

²⁰ 1 Cor. 15, 9.

²¹ 1 Cor. 4, 4. Cf. also in Rom. 3, 21-26 the implication that it was important for God to show He was not ignoring moral righteousness in leaving many sins unpunished or without reparation: the reparation was

In this Paul was following in the best tradition of the pious Jews of his day. As Büchler tells us: "... the ancient pious men brought every day a doubtful guilt-offering, to clear themselves from any error of a grave religious nature possibly committed on the previous day."²²

The pattern we have seen in these passages does not die out, but persists long into the Patristic age.

Pope St. Clement I, writing to the Corinthians about 96 AD, tells them: "You stretched out your hands to the Almighty God, beseeching him to be propitious, if you had sinned at all unwillingly [akontes]."²³ The Shepherd of Hermas, whose final redaction perhaps belongs to the time of St. Pius I (14-150), but whose older parts probably go back to the time of Clement, claims to have been told by an apparition: "For definitely, it is because of some trial or some transgression which you do not know of that you receive what you ask for so tardily."²⁴

Tertullian at least probably reflects the same notion. In his *Apologeticum*, dating from 197 A.D., he says "For from the beginning He sent into the world men whose innocence made them worthy to know and preach God, steeped in the divine spirit, to proclaim what sanctions he had decreed for not knowing, for deserting, for observing these [disciplines]...."²⁵ Of course, one might ask if the ignorance in question could be a culpable ignorance. But in his *De idololatria*, dating from 211 A.D., he goes even farther: "I know a brother who was severely chastised in a vision the same night because his slaves, after a sudden announcement of a public celebration, had crowned his door. And yet, he himself had not crowned

to come through Christ; "It was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous."

²² A. Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (New York, 1967) 425.

²³ *First Epistle of Clement*, 2, 3.

²⁴ *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandates 9, 7. Cf. also 5, 7, 3 and Vision 2, 1, 2.

it, nor commanded it; for he had gone out before that time, and when he came back, had rebuked it. To such an extent are we considered part of our *familia*, even in things of this kind."²⁶

Clement of Alexandria, writing about the same time, in his *Stromata* (probably 208-11) says: "Whatever anyone of you has done out of ignorance, not clearly knowing God, if he repents when he does learn [the truth] all his sins will be forgiven him."²⁷ Clement is probably echoing the words of Peter from Acts 3, 17-19: "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouths of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. . . ."

St. John Chrysostom, in his treatise on the priesthood (379 A.D.), complains that sometimes those who choose a man for ordination are moved by human respect, or even make no investigation. But: "If the elector is guilty of none of these things, but says he was deceived by the opinion of the many, he will not be free of punishment, though he will pay a penalty somewhat less than the one who is ordained."²⁸ Again, a satisfaction for an involuntary fault.

The so-called Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which probably dates from a much later period, and is in use even today in the Eastern Churches, contains a prayer:²⁹ "Forgive us every offense, both voluntary and involuntary [akousion]." The Roman Rite Postcommunion for Thursday after the First Sunday of Lent asks: "... and may we be cleansed from our unknown [faults]," reflecting Ps. 18, 12: "Who can discern his failings? Cleanse me from my unknown [faults]." And of course that

²⁵ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 18, 2-3.

²⁶ Tertullian, *De idololatria*, 15, 7-8.

²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6, 6.

²⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4, 2.

²⁹ Prayer before the Epistle, Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

Psalm is used directly, too, in the Roman liturgy even today.

We have seen a considerable series of passages from Scripture, Jewish history, and the Fathers, in which prayers and sacrifice are offered for forgiveness of involuntary sins, sins in which no formal guilt is contracted. In some instances there is mention of a divinely imposed penalty for such involuntary sins. What underlies these passages?

We might approach it this way: There is very large difference in the concept of God held by the Hebrews from that of the ambient peoples. The latter thought of their gods as seriously deficient in interest in morality. As Professor Jacobsen describes the situation in Babylonian thought: "The personal god may use his influence with the higher gods to obtain favors for his protégé from them. But even justice is such a favor; it cannot be claimed, but it is obtained through personal connections, personal pressure, through favoritism. Even the most perfect 'good life' held out but a promise, not a certainty, of tangible rewards."³⁰ In fact, "...the gods, for all their power, have their human sides. Their emotions, especially after too much beer, are likely to get the better of their judgment; and when that happens, they are in danger of being tripped up by their own power, by the binding force of their own commands."³¹

In other words, the Babylonians made their gods in their own image and likeness, full of weakness, prone to ignore morality.

In contrast, Yahweh is the Holy One, the one separated—*qadosh*—from the foibles, weakness, injustice of men. As Our Lady herself said in her *Magnificat* "Holy is His Name." Or, in the words of Ps. 19, 7: "The Lord is just, and he loves just deeds."

In this, His zeal for the moral order, He goes so far as to

³⁰ Thorkild Jacobsen, *Mesopotamia*, in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago, 1946) 207.

³¹ *Ibid.* 161.

impose some sanction on even involuntary violations of the moral order.

Or, if someone might hesitate to accept such an interpretation of the Scriptural and Patristic data, he could not escape at least the explicit Scriptural statements on *voluntary* sin. Jewish thought at the time of Christ frequently spoke of sin as a debt (*hobah*).³² It is true, the word *debt* in the sense of "sin" does not occur often in the New Testament. In fact, it is found just once, but that one passage is of prime importance, for it occurs in the Our Father: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."³³ But there is further evidence of an indirect kind, in that the same concept of debt seems also reflected in many other New Testament passages in which the Greek noun *aphesis* and the related verb *aphiemi* occur, in the sense of *forgive*. Now those words, as Arndt and Gingrich point out, can readily refer to the cancellation of a debt.³⁴ Still further, St. Paul writes to the Colossians that Christ,³⁵ "cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands." And of course, Paul's notion of a price³⁶ of redemption fits in with the same type of thinking.³⁷

³² Cf. C. F. Moore, *Judaism* (Harvard, 1962) II, 95 and I, 546-52.

³³ Mt. 6, 12. It is interesting to notice that Luke 11, 24, giving the same prayer for gentiles, uses the word "sin" instead of "debt".

³⁴ Cf. W. Arndt, F. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1963) 124 and 125; and L. Hartman, C.S.S.R., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (New York 1963) 2224.

³⁵ Col. 2, 14.

³⁶ 1 Cor. 6, 20; 7, 23. Our notion of God's concern for the objective moral order provides a solution to the old question: To whom was the price of Redemption paid? We reply that even though the Father could not, strictly, *receive* a price Himself, yet He could will it to be paid to balance the objective order, and as the covenant condition with which to bind Himself for the reasons we have already seen.

³⁷ On this thinking in first-century Judaism see also A. Büchler, *op. cit.* 327-28, and esp. on 328-29: "R. Yehudah (b. Ilai) said, 'the ancient pious men were chastised with a disease of the bowels for about twenty days before their death in order to scour everything, so that they might enter pure into the world-to-come... the protracted physical suffering purged not only the body, but also the moral condition of the pious men.'"

Now if sin is regarded as a debt, and Redemption involves a price, then we can see that a new dimension must be added to our understanding of Redemption and Coredemption. It is not enough to speak merely of the subjective side of things, as Lyonnet³⁸ does, and say that sins cannot harm or touch God, they harm only the sinner: so all that is needed is for the sinner to change his disposition. That view would at least tend to reduce the Redemption to a demonstration of love intended to move the sinner to reform. It leaves out of view that there is an objective component to Redemption. Now part of that objective component lies in the covenant titles, as we have seen. But in presenting it in our previous study, we brought out only one side of the divine purpose, namely, God's generous love, His desire to bind Himself to do good to us. That remains true, unshakeably true. But we now need to add, in view of our new evidence, that another part of His divine purpose in creating covenant titles in the Redemption was the fact that the work of creating those titles also constituted a righting of the objective order, a payment of an objective debt.

Actually, this conclusion is taught in a very recent papal document, the *Indulgentiarum doctrina*: "... we need to recall certain truths which the whole Church, illumined by the word of God, has always believed.... As we are taught by divine revelation, punishments inflicted by divine holiness and justice follow upon sins.... These penalties are imposed by the merciful judgment of God to purify souls and to defend the sanctity of the moral order, and to restore the glory of God to its full majesty. For every sin brings with it a disturbance of the universal order, which God arranged in His inexpressible

Cf. also A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature* (N.Y. 1968) esp. 66: "The second impression we gather from our review is that everything, fortune, misfortune, good or evil, is caused by a merit or by a sin." See also *ibid.* 8, 25, 49, 74.

³⁸ Cf. S. Lyonnet, S.J., *De peccato et redemptione* (Romae, 1960) II, 49-117, esp. 66.

wisdom and infinite love. . . . *So it is necessary for the full remission and reparation of sins . . . not only that friendship with God be restored by a sincere conversion of heart and that the offense against His wisdom and goodness be expiated, but also that all the goods, both individual and social and those that belong to the universal order, which were lessened or destroyed by sin, be fully reestablished either through voluntary reparation, which will not be without penal aspect, or through the suffering of penalties set by the just and most holy wisdom of God.*"³⁹ The Holy Father puts the Redemption within this context. He says there is "a treasury of the Church. . . which is the infinite and inexhaustible price that the expiations and merits of Christ have before God, offered that all humanity might be liberated from sin. . . ." ⁴⁰

The Holy Father does not cite his Scriptural support. But he does tell us that this is a teaching which "the whole Church, illumined by the word of God, has always believed." According to the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II, such a teaching is infallible.⁴¹ So, whether or not the Scriptural support we have adduced is the basis of the thought of the Holy Father, yet we are sure that our conclusion is valid, namely, that there is an objective moral order, which is damaged by sin, is restored by suffering in atonement. So atonement is something objective—it is not merely at-one-ment, the process of subjective changes in the sinner in which he becomes open to grace.

Further, the same document adds that the balancing of the objective order was to be done not only by Christ the Head, but by the Whole Christ; "Furthermore, there pertain to this treasury also the truly immense, immeasurable, and ever new price that the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints have before God."⁴²

³⁹ Paul VI, *Indulgentiarum doctrina*, Jan. 9, 1967; *AAS* 59, 5-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

⁴¹ On the Church, §12: "The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief."

⁴² *AAS* 59, 11-12.

We note that not only Our Lady, but also the Saints are mentioned. That makes it clear that the objective balancing action extends even to what is called the subjective redemption, the distribution of the graces once-for-all earned by the great Sacrifice. But it is also clear that the papal teaching takes in the objective redemption too, since it makes the atonement of Christ Himself the chief element.

Where, then, does Our Lady's contribution fit in? In the objective or in the subjective redemption? The document does not make it clear at all. However, that need not concern us. We know from other evidence that her role belongs to both phases—one part of that evidence was our study of the covenant, in which we reached the conclusion that her obedience was part of the very price of Redemption.⁴³ But, what we want to gather from this new document, in conjunction with our Scriptural evidence on the objective order, is the new dimension in her role: her contribution is accepted by the Father not only as part of the covenant condition. It is also part of the balance of the objective order. Or, to put it another way: the obedience of Christ and His Mother is viewed by the Father in two ways or under two aspects: 1) as obedience, it constitutes the covenant condition 2) as laborious, even penal obedience, it constitutes a righting of the objective moral order.

We need to notice several aspects that apply to both facets simultaneously.

First, we need to recall the distinction, mentioned above, of the two levels. If we ask why did the Father make a covenant and keep His commitment under it, there are two levels on which we can ask and answer. On the most basic level, the *sole* reason why He did all this was simply His spontaneous, generous, unmerited, unmeritable love. It was not that Christ's coming *moved* the Father to begin to love man again. Rather, it was because the Father always loved man that Christ came, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. So

⁴³ MS 17, 105.

even the work of Christ is not the motive on the basic, primary level. But on the secondary level, which the Father wanted to establish for reasons we have already seen, on that level there enters the obedience and atonement of Christ, joined with that of His Mother. There the Father used the obedience of both to provide an objective title for grace and forgiveness. He wanted this title out of love of the objective moral order and out of love for man.

It is of prime importance to keep this distinction of levels clearly in mind. Without it, we would be necessarily forced to limit the role of Mary, in our realization that she could not possibly move God. We might even be embarrassed in trying to find any possible place for her contribution. We might have to treat it as only something extrinsically added, as a sort of superfluous thing. We might even fall into the strange combination of statements we find in Dillenschneider who said her role "was exercised at the very interior of the active redemption; but that does not mean it was integrated in any way with the strictly sacrificial act of the Savior."⁴⁴ Once we know that both her work and that of her Divine Son did not move the Father, but merely provided a title that He, in His love for men and His love of the objective order, willed to have present—then there is no problem about admitting her role is integral, even a part of the essence. For the essence of the Redemption consists in precisely what the Father willed it to be. Even the death of an incarnate Divine Person is necessary and essential only hypothetically—in the hypothesis that the Father willed an infinite Redemption. In fact, an infinite Redemption could have been had by the Incarnation without death, without the stable—just a prayer "Father, forgive them" would have been infinite, coming from an Infinite Person. So if the Father willed to make her role an integral part, even an essential part, He was able to do so.

⁴⁴ C. Dillenschneider, C.S.S.R., *Le Mystère de la Corédemption Mariale* (Paris, 1951) 60.

Now we can advance also a step farther. Once we see, thanks to the fact of the two levels, that there is nothing to prevent her contribution from being an integral or even essential part of the whole condition for the grant of grace and forgiveness, we can ask about the *mode* in which her contribution is united with that of Christ. We know already that it formed part of the covenant condition along with His obedience. That fact alone should make us at least inclined to suspect that both operate *per modum unius* (even though she is, of course, dependent on Him for her very ability to co-operate). But we can obtain added light from looking at the renewal of the new covenant, the Mass. We recall that in it there is presented as the condition of covenant renewal not just the obedience of Christ the Head, but also that of His Members. In other words, the condition is the obedience of the Whole Christ. Now if the obedience of Head and Members melt together, as it were, in such a way that the total condition can be called the obedience of one, namely, the Whole Christ, then surely the term *per modum unius* would be quite applicable in the renewal of the new covenant. But of course that renewal is supposed to repeat the original—else it would be something different, not a renewal. And if in the renewal we have human contributions joined *per modum unius* with that of Christ, then obviously the same should be true of the original which the renewal renews: in the original, the obedience of Mary should be *per modum unius* with that of Christ.

The same description will of course apply to her obedience considered under its penal aspect, the aspect in which it constitutes, with His, a righting of the moral order. We recall spontaneously the remarkable dictum of St. Paul that he was filling up the things lacking to the sufferings of Christ in His flesh for His body which is the Church.⁴⁵ Paul obviously had in mind things lacking, not to Christ the Head, but to the Whole

⁴⁵ Col. 1, 24.

Christ. He was thinking of an atonement *per modum unius* of Head and Members. What is true of Paul is obviously all the more true of Our Lady. For Paul could enter only on a later phase, while she was present and operative in the basic making of the new covenant.

We recall, too, that the infinity of Christ's contribution in the renewal of the new covenant does not preclude the adding of a finite contribution by His members. Similarly, neither does His infinity preclude the addition of her contribution in the making of the new covenant. The reason is this: we are not in the realm of mathematics, where infinity plus a finite quantity does not grow. We are in the realm of divine generosity, a generosity that strictly had gone beyond infinity in calling for the stable and the cross, when an Incarnation in a palace and a Redemption by a mere prayer, without death, would have had an infinite objective value.

What has all this to do with Mary's intercession? The new papal document *Indulgentiarum doctrina* also tells us that the Saints who are now "present before God, through Him, with Him, and in Him do not cease to intercede with the Father, presenting the merits which they gained on earth through the one Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ, by serving the Lord in all things, and filling up the thing that are lacking to the sufferings of Christ in His flesh for His body, which is the Church."⁴⁶

There are two ways in which a Saint can be said to exercise intercession. One is that mentioned in the *Indulgentiarum doctrina*, namely, by presenting, as it were, the merits gained on earth; the other is by prayer of petition. It is obvious that both are eminently true in the case of Our Lady.

We shall consider first her intercession as carried out by "presenting merits." Since, as we have seen, her merits and atonement were *per modum unius* with Christ, it follows that that intercession which consists in "presenting merits"

⁴⁶ AAS 59, 12.

should be similarly *per modum unius* with His.⁴⁷ Therefore it will not be enough, as some theologians have suggested, to call her merely *Mediatrix apud Mediatorem*, as though her intercession were merely indirect. It is true, her merits depend on Christ. But it is one thing to say they all depend on Him in their *origin*; it is another thing to say that their *presentation* must be only indirect. Since in the covenant they were presented *per modum unius* with His as the covenant condition, as we have shown, similarly they must be presented *per modum unius* with His intercession—a different stance from that of the merely indirect activity of the *Mediatrix apud Mediatorem*.

Next, we gather from the previous parts of this study that merits, and therefore her intercession, must be entirely singular. We recall the words of Vatican II's constitution on the Church that "in suffering with Her Son dying on the cross, she cooperated in the work of the Savior in an altogether singular way, by obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to the souls. As a result she is our Mother in the order of grace."⁴⁸ Her merits are singular in at least two ways: 1) they are exercised in the making of the new covenant as well as in its renewal. 2) They, unlike the merits of other Saints, apply to all graces. We know this because she was united with Him *per modum unius* "to restore supernatural life to souls" and "as a result . . . is our Mother in the order of grace," so that she shared in meriting all graces.

Someone may object: we have said that even the faithful are united with Christ *per modum unius* in the renewal of the covenant. But that fact does not make their merits universal. Therefore, neither does Our Lady's union *per modum unius* prove her merits are universal. We reply that the case is quite different in the two phases. In the second phase, i.e. the giving out of the fruits of the Redemption, graces are

⁴⁷ Cf. the words of Pius XII in *Munificentissimus Deus* (Nov. 1, 1950; AAS 42, 768): "always sharing His lot."

⁴⁸ On the Church §61.

given individually or in clusters, as it were—not all graces are given through one Mass. So it is possible for the faithful to be united with Christ *per modum unius* in a Mass, resulting in the giving out of only certain graces. But the case is other in the basic earning of Redemption. One Mass gives out only some graces—but the original Sacrifice earned *all*. Christ did not earn salvation only for some. Now Mary, as the above-cited text of Vatican II said: “cooperated in the work of the Savior in an altogether singular way . . . to restore supernatural life to souls.” She thereby shared in all that that work of His accomplished. Hence Vatican II did not say she cooperated only for some souls. Just as His death had a bearing on *all*, so her sharing would bear on *all*, and be similarly universal. In other words, His activity in the first phase is universal, in the second phase (the Mass) it bears on only some graces in each individual Mass. Whoever is united with Him *per modum unius* in either phase will have his contribution bear on the same range as that of Christ *in that phase*.

Therefore, looking at that aspect of intercession which the *Indulgentiarum doctrina* called “presenting merits”, her merits must be presented for the dispensation of *all* graces, since her merits that are presented bear on all graces. As a result, it is evident that she is Mediatrix of all graces, not just of some.

Turning to the second aspect of intercession, that of prayer, her prayer for her children must be similarly universal, since all are her children. Now that prayer could be understood in two ways. First, she could ask for our needs in a general way, *in globo*. It is obvious that she does this. But second, if she knows our needs individually, she *can* ask even individually. As Mother of all men she should know their needs specifically. And, as enjoying a light of glory proportioned to her grace on earth which was, as Pius IX said, so great even at the Im-

⁴⁹ Vatican II (on the Church, §62) spoke of her only as Mediatrix, without adding “of all graces”. However, in a note it refers us to several papal statements that do contain the added words.

maculate Conception that "none greater under God can be thought of, and only God can comprehend it"⁵⁰—she is also *able* to see even our individual needs. And, as possessing love of the same dimensions—for the extent of her grace and that of her love are of course the same—she is *willing* to ask individually. Therefore she does so.

The groundwork we have laid also leads us to further conclusions.

First, we can solve the problem of whether or not her universal intercession renders superfluous the intercession of other Saints. It is obvious that it does not make it superfluous. For, as we noticed above, even the death of Christ is required only hypothetically, i.e., in the hypothesis that the Father wanted an infinite Redemption. An infinite Redemption, as we saw, could have been had by an Incarnation in a palace, and Redemption by a mere prayer, without death at all. So the death of Christ, and His hard life, meant a going beyond infinity. That is explained as we said, not mathematically—again, infinity plus a finite quantity does not increase. It is explained as further stage in the generosity of the Father. His principle seems to be this: as long as anything more can be done to make richer titles of grace for men, richer balance to the objective moral order, He will want that richer means. Hence He went beyond the palace to the stable, beyond the deathless prayer to the cross. Hence, too, He went beyond all these in the sense that He wanted to add the finite contribution of Our Lady to them. And now we add: Hence, too, He wanted to add the still more limited intercession and merits of ordinary Saints to those of Christ and His Mother.

We can also interpret better certain expressions alleged to have been used by her in private revelations, e.g. when she said she could barely hold up the arm of her Son from striking us. Taken too crudely, that would seem to make Him harsh

⁵⁰ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854.

and to put all mercy in her alone. That of course would be false. But when we understand that by positive will of the Father there is required not only the atonement and merits of Christ the Head, but those of the Whole Christ, including His Mother an Associate, the New Eve, including even His more ordinary members—then we can see what the expressions could mean. They are simply anthropomorphisms, much like those found in Scripture, where the Sacred writer says that God is angry—when we know He is incapable of any emotion. The saying about her holding up His arm from striking means she is trying to induce His members, her children, to contribute the needed measure of atonement, the critical measure to be contributed by the members of Christ. If contributed, divine justice will have reason for withholding punishment otherwise due. If not, the “arm of her Son must fall.”

Of course, we have not proved that such statements really were made in any private revelation: we have merely shown that they are theologically possible, and what their content could be.

We may permit ourselves to add a further, a loose speculation, which we do not claim at all to have proved here. Those who believe in the message of Fatima sometimes say that since God promised Abraham to spare Sodom for even the merits of ten just men, therefore only a small percentage of people praying should suffice for the conversion of Russia reported as mentioned in the Fatima promises. We wish to notice a difference between the two problems, the sparing of Sodom, and the conversion of Russia. In both cases, there are exceedingly grave objective violations. But Sodom may have well been at least somewhat ignorant of the fact that its practices were morally wrong. Even with a greatly reduced guilt, by way of ignorance, the destruction of Sodom would fall well within the Old Testament framework of thought on involuntary sin. But in Sodom it was question, not of converting the Sodomites, but of avoiding a special divine intervention to punish. In

the case of Russia, there is question of a real conversion, a change of heart, on the part of men extraordinarily hard-hearted and spiritually blinded. We note that the peace of the world etc. mentioned in the prophecy, by the nature of the case, must come *through* the conversion of Russia. That is a factor not present or paralleled in the case of the punishment of Sodom.

What measure of grace is needed to accomplish such a feat as the conversion of Russia? It would seem to require something strictly extraordinary, comparable to a miracle in the natural order. Now if the Father is calling, through Our Lady, for objective atonement and merits commensurate with extraordinary graces—we can see that more than a comfortable recitation of the Rosary by a minority will be needed.

Could we say the leaders of Russia are also excused by ignorance? St. Paul writing to the Romans asserts those who deny God in spite of the abundant evidence of His existence are "inexcusable."⁵¹ One may not realize, under the blinding fog of sexual emotion, that some sex practices are wrong. But he cannot fail to know there is a God.

Whatever be the truth about these last speculations, we have at least come to see a few things clearly. God's reason for the covenant and the atonement was in part a generous love of men, so generous that it would not stop with infinity, but went beyond, by adding the cross, by adding Mary, by adding the Saints; in part it was His surpassing love of the objective moral order, a love so great that He wanted fullest

⁵¹ Rom. 1, 20. We do not intend to deny the existence of what are sometimes called anonymous believers or even anonymous Christians who may not explicitly profess a belief, but implicitly have it. (The idea is not really new; it is found in Justin Martyr, *Apology I*, 46; II, 8 & 10). However, no one would say that all who profess atheism are really atheists. And the rulers of the Kremlin do not seem likely prospects. In any case, if we are to have peace, they must first be converted from their dream of world domination.

⁵² In the Church, §61.

restitution of the damaged goods, a restitution to be carried out not only by Christ the Head, but also by His Mother, and all the Saints. We saw, however, that her position was entirely singular: she is operative not just in the renewal of the new covenant, but also in its making; in both the making of the covenant and its attendant atonement, and in the renewal of the covenant and the distribution of its fruits, she is joined with Him in such a way that she is not only *Mediatrix ad Mediatores*—she is that of course—but she is also joined with Him *per modum unius* as a unitary principle. Her merits in the objective Redemption were universal, since the Redemption is not divided: Christ did not merit for some only, but for all. As Vatican II said, she cooperated with Him in an altogether singular way . . . “to restore supernatural life to souls”⁵²—to all, just as He did—not just to some. Finally, inasmuch as her intercession by way of “presenting merits” is universal (since the merits presented are universal), and inasmuch as she also asks by way of impetration for all the needs of all those over whom she is Mother in the order of grace, it is theologically certain, even before we look at Magisterium statements, that she is Mediatrix of *all* graces.

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