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The Hierarchy of Truths About Mary

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THE HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS ABOUT MARY

He who reads the Scriptures meets Mary the Mother of Jesus. Thereby he faces the problem of her meaning and value for the followers of Christ. He also faces the problem of Mary's place in liturgy today. In this context, I would like to offer some reflections on the hierarchy of truths in itself, in its relation to the truths about Mary, in its connection with Mary according to her image in Scripture, and in its connection with Mary in her place in the liturgy today. I am convinced that the theme of the hierarchy of truths about Mary is important, not only in the ecumenical quest for full union among Christians and Christian communities, but also for the grasp of the Catholic Christian faith and for its proclamation.

THE HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

Revelation and faith are first and foremost a personal encounter between the revealing Lord and the believer. They are only secondarily truths revealed and believed. Indeed, the revealed and believed truths are to be viewed in the context of the personal encounter between the revealing Lord and the believer.¹

The revealed and believed truths have their own proper meaning and value. In various ways they illumine and attract the believer who actively receives the gift of the revealing Lord Himself. Their own proper meaning and value are not without perspective. Some revealed and believed truths are nearer and more vital to the active reception of the Lord Himself; others

¹ *Dogmatic Const. on Divine Revelation*, #2, 4, 5, 6; in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by W. Abbot and J. Gallagher (New York, N.Y., 1966) 112-114.

are more distant and less life giving to the acceptance of his gift.

The perspective within the revealed and believed truths in relation to the personal encounter between the revealing Lord and the believer, the inner order of these truths, may be called a hierarchy. The hierarchy of truths is not a question of the degree of theological firmness that the various truths have. It does not concern itself with their rung in the ladder of definitive Church teaching. Both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary are defined dogmas. The spiritual motherhood of Mary is not. Yet the spiritual motherhood may be more central than the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption. The question of whether or not a truth is a defined dogma is not particularly relevant to the discussion of the hierarchy of truths.

What is singularly significant for the hierarchy of truths is the relation of a truth to the center and foundation of the faith. The word in *Romans* proclaiming that the love of God floods our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us, expresses well faith's heart and foundation. It is this personal encounter and gift that matters most.²

Should faith be taken as the believer's basic response to the personal encounter and gift, beliefs could be taken as the various revealed and believed truths which illumine it. This seems to be an acceptable interpretation of Vatican II's teaching on the hierarchy of truths in the decree on ecumenism. The key reference is made in a consideration on the practice of dialogue.

When comparing doctrines, they should remember that in Catholic teaching there exists an order, a 'hierarchy of truths,' since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith.³

There is a reference in the context concerning the Orthodox.

Nor must we underestimate the fact that basic dogmas of the Chris-

² *Rom.* 5:5.

³ *Decree on Ecumenism*, #11; *ed. cit.*, 354.

tian faith concerning the Trinity and God's Word made flesh of the Virgin Mary were defined in Ecumenical Councils held in the East.⁴

In this liturgical worship, the Christians of the East pay high tribute, in very beautiful hymns, to Mary ever Virgin, Whom the Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus solemnly proclaimed to be God's most holy Mother so that, in accord with the Scriptures, Christ may be truly and properly acknowledged as Son of God and Son of Man.⁵

There is also a reference in the context concerning the Protestants.

Our thoughts are concerned first of all with those Christians who openly confess Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as the sole Mediator between God and man unto the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are indeed aware that among them views are held considerably different from the doctrine of the Catholic Church even concerning Christ, God's Word made flesh, and the work of redemption, and thus concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church and role of Mary in the work of Salvation.⁶

Vatican II's teaching on the hierarchy of truths is important for the ecumenical movement. This is underlined by Oscar Cullman's comments on the key reference to the hierarchy of truths in the decree on ecumenism.

I consider this passage the most revolutionary to be found, not only in the Scheme de oecumenismo but in any of the schemas of the present Council.⁷

Paul Tillich's distinction between Protestant principle and Catholic substance is pertinent to the hierarchy of truths.⁸ The

⁴ *Decree on Ecumenism*, #14; *ed. cit.*, 357.

⁵ *Decree on Ecumenism*, #15; *ed. cit.*, 358.

⁶ *Decree on Ecumenism*, #20; *ed. cit.*, 362.

⁷ O. Cullman, *Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism*, in *The Ecumenical Review* 17 (1965) 94.

⁸ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3 (Chicago, Ill., 1963) 6 and 245.

Protestant principle is "no" to all idols and "yes" to Christ the Lord. The Catholic substance is the concrete embodiment of Christ's Lordship. All truths have a relation to Christ the Lord. They should embody this central affirmation, they should make it flesh and blood.

The hierarchy of truths is important in the ecumenical movement because of its value for personal faith and its proclamation to others. There should be a perspective in the beliefs of the faith in both believer and apostle.

The hierarchy of truths has something in common with John XXIII's distinction between the deposit of faith itself and its manner of presentation.⁹ It does not aim to tamper with or to change the substance of the faith, but to discover more deeply and stress more clearly the focus within the beliefs of the faith. In this sense, the hierarchy of truths is valuable for a pastoral, ecumenical and contemporary presentation of the faith.

Is it permissible to speak of both an ontological and a psychological hierarchy of truths? Ontological refers to the objective perspective in the beliefs of faith according to revelation itself. Psychological refers to the subjective perspective in the insight and appreciation of the believers. Peter, Paul, and John have a faith in which there is the same objective perspectives of beliefs. They are one in their faith in the same revealing Lord. Yet do they not have a faith in which there is a different subjective perspective of beliefs? Does Peter not concentrate on the historical Christ, His life and ministry? Does Paul not lay more stress on the glorified Christ and His influence on the Church? Does John not put more emphasis on Christ as sacrament?

Do the saints not indicate a certain psychological hierarchy of truths? The poor Christ for Francis of Assisi, the teaching Christ for Dominic, the hidden Christ for Therese of Lisieux, the crucified Christ for Martin Luther, the risen and cosmic Christ for Teilhard de Chardin, could suggest a certain personal

⁹ *Pope John's Opening Speech to the Council*; ed. cit., 715.

insight and appreciation that color the experience of one and the same faith. In any case, the hierarchy of truths could be considered both in its ontological and psychological dimensions.

The hierarchy of truths involves the wisdom of faith. It orders and gives perspective to the truths of faith. There seems to be a difference between the hierarchy of truths and the fundamental principle of theology or of a theology. The hierarchy of truths is an expression of the wisdom of the faith believed. The fundamental principle of theology, both particular and universal, is an expression of the wisdom of the faith understood. The faith is understood scientifically in the sense of a revealed principle and revealed conclusions.

Cyril Vollert describes the fundamental principle:

To serve as primary or fundamental principle of a treatise in theology, a truth must fulfill certain conditions. It must be revealed, for in theology the principles are articles of faith. Since it is revealed, it is absolutely certain, as the principle of any science must be, and therefore imparts its own firmness and consistency to all the elements of the science. Further, it must be theologically rich and fecund, permitting the deduction of theological conclusions and the arrangement of all the factors of the science in logical organization. As the very term denotes, the principle must possess priority that is ontological as well as logical; it must be a supreme, primary reality expressing the basic order of God's knowledge of his plans for the universe. Finally, the principle must be one.¹⁰

Perhaps the wisdom of the faith believed and the wisdom of the faith understood scientifically can be the same in a material sense. They seem to differ formally. The hierarchy of truths and the fundamental principle of theology view the faith from different angles. These angles are respectively the core of the faith and the core of the scientific understanding of the faith.

Theologians of the past and present treat the hierarchy of truths. Thomas Aquinas touches on it when he treats the ne-

¹⁰ C. Vollert, S.J., *A Theology of Mary* (New York, N.Y., 1965) 52-53.

cessity for salvation of explicitly believing the mystery of Christ and the Trinity.¹¹ So does Martin Luther when he teaches justification by faith as the canon within the canon, as the *articulus Ecclesiae stantis et cadentis* of the Christian faith.¹² So also do Anders Nygren and Bernard Lonergan. Nygren holds that the fundamental motif of the Christian faith is *agape*, not *eros* and not *nomos*.¹³ Lonergan distinguishes religious conversion from moral and intellectual conversion.¹⁴ Religious conversion corresponds to the reality of Romans 5:15.¹⁵ It involves faith.¹⁶ He likewise distinguishes faith and beliefs. Thomas and Luther, Nygren and Lonergan, all deal with the hierarchy of truths.

THE HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS ABOUT MARY

The hierarchy of truths about Mary, the mother of Jesus, depends on the hierarchy of all the truths of the Catholic Christian faith. The center of the faith is that a human person is saved and healed by Jesus, that he is justified by faith in Christ Jesus, that he receives life and life abundantly from Jesus. Man is loved by the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The experience of salvation is religious conversion, the love of God flooding the heart by the Holy Spirit who is given. It is the *agape* of the Lord. It would seem that Thomas and Luther, Nygren and Lonergan, agree in describing the center of the Christian faith.

What is the center, foundation, motif of Mary in revelation? She is related to the second article of the Creed on Christ as

¹¹ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 2, a. 7-8.

¹² G. Tappert (Ed.), *Selected Writings of Martin Luther 1529-1546* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1967) 393-398; cf. 260-315.

¹³ A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London, 1957) 48 and 250.

¹⁴ B. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York, N.Y., 1972) 235-243.

¹⁵ Lonergan, *op. cit.*, 123.

¹⁶ *Mt.* 9:12-13, *Rom.* 3:28, *Jn.* 10:10.

the mother of Jesus the Savior.¹⁷ She is related to the third article of the Creed on the Holy Spirit as a graced woman who believes and follows the Lord. So Mary is the graced mother of Jesus the Savior and her faith and life center on Him. The bond between Jesus Christ and Mary His mother is Yahweh's saving love for man. He willed to save Mary through Jesus Christ her Son and his Son. Mary's salvation as mother of the Savior is her motif in revelation.

The Reformers would not seem to be opposed to this idea of the motif of Mary in revelation. Martin Luther accepts Mary as mother of God, virgin, and singularly holy.¹⁸ John Calvin accepts her as mother of the Lord, virgin, singularly holy.¹⁹ Luther even accepts Mary as our mother and type of the Church.²⁰

Mary is related to and centered on Jesus Christ. Luther easily admits her to be mother of God, since he stresses the one Person of Christ.²¹ Calvin styles her mother of the Lord, since he emphasizes the two natures.²²

Conservative Protestants underline the action of the Lord. They view Mary as graced by Him. She is the singularly holy, virgin, mother of God. Liberal Protestants underline human action. They can view Mary in her free response, following the saving design of the Lord and serving the Messiah and the movement and people He came to start.

Instead of either grace or free response, there is the option of both grace and free response, of both operative and cooperative grace. Free response is itself a grace. In this option Mary stands

¹⁷ E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* (New York, N.Y., 1964). Cf. X. Léon-Dufour (Ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London, 1967), arts. *Mary, Redemption, Salvation*.

¹⁸ T. O'Meara, O.P., *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (New York, N.Y., 1961) 112-125.

¹⁹ O'Meara, *op. cit.*, 125-137.

²⁰ W. Cole, S.M., *Was Luther a Marian Devotee?* in *Marian Studies* 21 (1970) 124-129.

²¹ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1:2 (Edinburgh, 1956) 139.

²² K. Barth, *ibid.*

Anglicans, like Protestants, view Mary first and foremost as mother of God, mother of Jesus who is the Christ, the Son of for the saving grace of the Lord and the free human response it initiates, supports, and gives.

the Father and Sender of the Spirit from the Father. They can move from Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, to Mary the exemplar of the Christian who has a living faith, and then to Mary the exemplar of the mutual indwelling between the Christian and Christ in the Eucharistic sacrament.²³

The Orthodox tend more to prayer and less to scientific theology.²⁴ They grasp intuitively that Mary is bound up with the Word made flesh. She is the singularly holy, virgin, mother of God. She is our mother and type of the Church. She is the new Eve. She is the temple of the Lord. Her birth and her falling asleep in death are singularly holy. Mary stands for both the saving grace of the Lord and the human free response, itself graced.

The path to follow in charting the hierarchy of truths about Mary begins with the Scriptures and passes through the first seven ecumenical councils and through Eastern and Western liturgies in the various ecclesial traditions. The core of the Scriptural image of Mary seems to be Mary, the mother of Jesus the Savior, the graced woman who believes in the Lord and follows Him in service. This core expresses Mary, the singularly holy virgin, mother of God, and our mother and type of the Church. It is open to the insights of the Orthodox, the Anglicans, and both conservative and liberal Protestants. It expresses Mary both in her grace and her free response under and with grace. It expresses Mary's basic relation to Jesus. He is her Savior and our Savior. He is her son and our brother. It expresses Mary's basic relation to the saving life and action

²³ A. M. Allchin, *Mary, Virgin and Mother: An Anglican Approach*, in *Marian Library Studies* 1 (1969) 100.

²⁴ A. Schmemmann, *On Mariology in Orthodoxy*, in *Marian Library Studies* 2 (1970) 26-29.

of Jesus. She is our mother. She is the type of the saved community of persons that is Christ's Church. She is the type of the eucharistic sacramental union between the Christian and Christ. Her union with Him was flesh and blood and living faith. The Lord was her child, her boy, her son, as He is our brother.

The Word was made flesh of the virgin Mary. He was born of her. She is related to Him as the new Eve. She is the mother of those with a living faith. She is His temple. The Lord is present to her in a singular way. The beginning and the end of her life on earth are blessed. Not only is her death holy, but it is even transformed. Her holiness in conception and transformation in death are due to the Word made flesh, her and our Savior, her son and our brother.

The path of the hierarchy of truths goes from Mary's Scriptural image to the basic doctrinal image in Calvin, Luther, conservative and liberal Protestants, the Anglicans, the Orthodox, the Roman Catholics. It goes from what we hold together to what we do not hold together with our agreement as a bridge over and beyond our disagreement.

MARY'S IMAGE IN SCRIPTURE

The New Testament is the primitive faith of the Church in the Jesus of history. As there is the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, so there is the Mary of history and the Mary of faith. Faith and history do not stand in opposition. The New Testament's Christ of faith explicates the Jesus of history, and its Mary of faith explicates the Mary of history. Raymond Brown has made an exploratory quest of the historical Mary.²⁵ His tentative conclusion is that the Mary of history is the mother of Jesus and a true disciple. He summarizes the results of his research.

²⁵ R. Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York, 1975) 86.

I find that both Luke and John have reworked the Marcan information (or information similar to Mark's) in a way that confirms that Mary is truly a mother, not merely because of physical relation to Jesus, but because she is a true disciple faithful to the word of God. Luke accomplished this by rewriting the Marcan scene itself and by anticipating the portrait of Mary in the annunciation and visitation. From her first encounter with God's will whereby she was to have the role of a mother in the plan of salvation, Mary declared her discipleship in terms of obedience to God's word. John accomplished this partially at Cana, his equivalent to Mark's account of Jesus' rejection of family interference, and partially at the foot of the cross where Mary receives from Jesus her role as mother in God's plan of salvation, mother of the Beloved Disciple who becomes Jesus' true brother. If these observations are correct, I find confirmed more than I had ever expected Pannenberg's contention that the NT does not give us much knowledge of Mary as a historical character.²⁶

My reflection is concerned primarily with the Mary of faith in the New Testament. It involves a descriptive, phenomenological method. Its interest is meaning rather than history.²⁷ It searches the Scriptures as the Word of God given through words of men.²⁸ Its quest is the image of the Mary of faith in the Scriptures and its meaning and value. It does not reject

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁷ E. R. Martínez, *The Identity of Jesus in Mark*, in *Communio* 1 (1974) 330-331: "How one interprets His (Jesus') actions is what is important in the long run. This manifests a difference in emphasis between the Western and the Eastern mentality. When faced with the narrative of an event, the Western mind tends to ask 'What happened?' The facts are the important thing. The Eastern mind tends to ask 'What does it mean?' For the Hebrew mind the interpretation is the all-important factor."

Cf. R. Brown, K. Donfried, and J. Reumann (eds.) *Peter in the New Testament* (New York, 1973) 157-168. Peter is considered in his roles and images, in his trajectory. Cf. R. Brown, *The Meaning of the Magi; The Significance of the Star*, in *Worship* 49 (1975) 574-582.

²⁸ *Dogmatic Const. on Divine Revelation*, #11 and 12; ed. cit. 118-121.

modern scholarship on the historical Mary.²⁹ As a matter of fact, my reflection on the Mary of faith seems to be in full harmony with Brown's Mary of history.

What is the basic biblical image of Mary? Is she most the new Eve, mother of the redemption and of the redeemed, related to the Spirit and us? Is she most the mother of God, the mother of the Redeemer, related to the Word Incarnate? Is she both? It seems that Mary in the Scriptures is basically a graced woman who, as mother of the Savior, believes in the Lord and follows Him.³⁰

Mary is woman. In the Gospel of John she is called "woman" by Christ at Cana and Calvary. She is in some way the woman in *Genesis* whose seed shall crush the serpent's head and at the same time be wounded in the heel. She is the woman in *Galatians* of whom the Son sent by God was born. She is likewise, in some way, the woman of *Revelation*.

Mary is a graced woman. She is the daughter of Zion, personifying the chosen people of the old covenant. The angel addresses her as the favored one, with whom the Lord is. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims that she is blessed among women, blessed in the fruit of her womb, blessed in her faith in the Lord's word. Mary herself praises the Lord her Savior, who has done great things for her, whose mercy is from generation to generation.

Mary believes in the Lord. She believes the word of the Lord announced to her by the angel. She believes she will become the mother of the Savior by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. She believes she will become the virgin mother of the Messiah. Her response to the word of the Lord announced to her through the angel is a willingness to receive his promised

²⁹ R. E. Brown, S.S., "Who Do Men Say That I Am?": *Modern Scholarship on Gospel Christology*, in *The Catholic Mind* (June, 1975) 21-33.

³⁰ X. Léon-Dufour (Ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London, 1967) art. *Mary*. The Scriptures to which allusion is made in tracing the image of Mary are familiar enough; hence we dispense with footnotes.

action of the virginal motherhood of the Messiah. Elizabeth praises Mary's faith in the word spoken to her from the Lord. Jesus Himself praises her faith. In the context of the attribution of His work to the evil one, Beelzebub, He says that they who hear the word of God and keep it are more blessed than is His physical mother, if this physical fact be considered alone.

Mary follows and serves the Lord. She accepts His will to take her for His virgin mother. She is the handmaid of the Lord, ready to follow His word. Jesus says that the one who does the will of God is His mother more than the one who merely is His physical mother. A sword will pierce through Mary's soul when Christ is rejected. This, the handmaid of the Lord accepts. So Mary is a graced woman who believes and serves the Lord.

Mary is the mother of Jesus. This is how she is called first and foremost in the Scriptures.³¹ Jesus means Savior. He is to be named Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. Mary, the mother of the Lord, praises God her Savior. The angel tells the shepherds the good news of a great joy coming to all the people. He tells about the birth of a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Simeon blesses God for having seen His salvation. He tells Mary that the child is a sign of contradiction revealing hearts by their stand for or against Him. Thus, Mary is a graced woman who as mother of the Savior believes and serves the Lord.

The dynamic Scripture image of the lives of Jesus and His mother shows that they are closely bound together. Mary is not only very much present in the hidden life of Jesus. She also makes an appearance at crucial points in His public life.

Mary is with Jesus from conception to birth as His first home on earth. Jesus in her womb meets John the Baptist. As a new born child he is shown by her to the shepherds. Forty days after His birth, Jesus is presented by her to the Father in His house, the temple. He is found with Mary His mother by the

³¹ *Mk.* 3:31f; *Lk.* 2:48; *Jn.* 2:1-12 and 19:25f.

wise men from the East. To save His life from Herod, He is taken by Mary and Joseph to Egypt and later back to Nazareth.

Mary complains to the twelve year old Jesus sitting among the teachers of the temple. She accepts His reply that He must be in His Father's house. At twelve He becomes an Israelite by right. He belongs to His Father in heaven before He belongs to Mary and Joseph. Mary does not understand Jesus' reply but keeps all these things in her heart, as she had kept the earlier events surrounding His birth. Jesus is subject to Mary and Joseph. In their company and with their guidance He grows in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man.

Mary makes an appearance at crucial points in the public life of Jesus. She is present at the beginning of His hour of self manifestation through teaching and sign. At Cana she seems to be even actively involved in the initiation of this hour. She draws Jesus' attention to the lack of wine at the marriage feast. When she is told by Him that His hour has not yet come, she tells the servants to follow Jesus' directions. She seems to be willing to have His hour of self manifestation begin, even though it means she will now enter a new kind of relation to Him. She then goes with Him, His brothers, and disciples to Capernaum.

Mary is present in the hour of Jesus' passover to the Father. She is with Him in the phase of humiliation, of suffering and death. She stands under His cross. When Jesus sees His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He addresses her as woman and tells her to behold as her son the disciple whom He loved. Then He tells the disciple to behold the woman as his mother. From that hour the disciple takes her to his home. Mary's acceptance to be the mother of the Savior becomes her compassion with Him in the hour of His saving death. She suffers with Him. He shows special love, concern, and care for her and for the disciple whom he loved.

Mary is likewise present in the hour of Jesus' passover to the Father in the phase of exaltation and glorification. After the

ascension of Jesus the apostles return to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet. They go to the upper room where they are staying, the room of the last supper and the room of the first appearance of the risen Jesus to the group. They devote themselves with one accord to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, the women, and His brothers. They pray for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, for His coming upon them to make them witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Mary was actively involved in the conception and birth of the physical Jesus. She is overshadowed by the Spirit. She is filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary was actively involved in the initiation of the hour of signs of Jesus by her prayer to Him out of concern for others. She is actively involved in the hour of His passover in its phase of humiliation by her presence and compassion and in its phase of exaltation by her presence and prayer for His outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the mystical Jesus.

So according to the dynamic Scripture image the lives of Jesus the Savior and His mother are bound together in His hidden life and in His public life, both in its hour of signs and in its hour of passover. Jesus the Savior related her to Himself throughout His saving human life and action.

Mary is somehow the woman in *Genesis* and the woman in *Revelation*, the virgin mother in *Isaiah*, the daughter of Zion in *Zephaniah*. There is enmity between the serpent and Mary, between his seed and her seed, Jesus. Jesus shall bruise the serpent's head, though He shall be bruised in the heel by the serpent.

Mary is somehow a great portent appearing in Heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She is with child. Another portent in Heaven, a great red dragon, stands before her to devour her child. She brings forth a male child, who is to rule all the nations. Her child is caught up to God and to His throne. She, the woman, flees into the wilderness, where

she has a place prepared by God. Mary is somehow the sign the Lord Himself will give to Ahaz. She is the young woman conceiving and bearing a son, calling his name Immanuel.

Mary is the daughter of Zion, the daughter of Jerusalem. She is humble and lowly. She rejoices and exults with all her heart. The king of Israel the Lord is in her midst. He will rejoice over her with gladness. He will renew her in his love. He will remove disaster from her and deal with all her oppressors. He will bring her home. He will make her renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth. Thus, there is a suggestion of Mary in prophetic flashes of the Old and New Testaments.

Adam and Jesus Christ are contrasted by Paul as the two key men in human history. Sin comes into the world through Adam and death through sin, and so death spreads to all men, because all men sinned. Adam is a type of the one to come. Much more does the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man, Christ Jesus, abound for many.³² Eve, the mother of all the living, is associated with Adam in his sin of disobedience by which man are made sinners. Mary in view of her Scripture image is associated with Jesus Christ in His obedience by which many will be made righteous.

Adam and Jesus Christ are contrasted by Paul as the two most influential men in human history, the one as source of sin and death, and the other as source of grace and righteousness and of the resurrection of the dead. There is an order in the resurrection of the dead: Christ the first fruits and then at His coming those who belong to Him.³³ Eve is associated with Adam in his becoming the source of death. Mary in view of her Scripture image is associated with Jesus in His person and work in becoming the source of grace and of resurrection of the body.

Mary has a singular relation to Jesus the Savior and to His saving life and action. She has a singular relation to Him who

³² *Rom.* 5:12-17.

³³ *1 Cor.* 15:21-26.

is victor over sin and death, to Him who is source of grace and of resurrection of the dead. God our Savior desires all men to be saved. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all, whose preacher and apostle Paul is.³⁴ God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He has given Paul and others the ministry of reconciliation. They are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through them.³⁵ As God gives a ministry of reconciliation to Paul, so he can give a ministry of reconciliation to Mary, not necessarily in the same way. Does Mary not have a ministry of reconciliation in her singular relation to Jesus the Savior and to His saving life?

The Mary of faith in the Scripture has a singular relation to Jesus the Savior and to His saving life. At the conclusion of a study on Mary in the Johannine writings Father F. M. Braun goes so far as to affirm:

When retracing the broad outline of the Marian theology of St. John, I cannot but repeat my surprise at finding there, both explicitly and implicitly and with wonderful coherence, the traditional doctrine developed by the Church through the centuries. The divine maternity of Mary, the virginal birth, the spiritual maternity with regard to Christians, the recapitulation of Eve in Mary, the anticipated glorification of the Mother of the male child, the role of mediatrix: all these themes appear in the writings of John in 2:1-11 and 19:25-27, completed by John 1:13 and Apoc. 12. Two ideas are predominant: the Eve-Mary concept is developed in Mary-Church analogy. It is here that all terminates. Mary replaces the ancient Eve; she is the Woman of the Protoevangelium, the Mother of the Savior, sharer in the victory won over the ancient Serpent, and Mother of Christians. Under this threefold aspect she prefigures the Church.³⁶

³⁴ 1 *Tim.* 2:5-7.

³⁵ 2 *Cor.* 5:18-19.

³⁶ *Is.* 49:14-15.

Mary in the Church's faith today should be presented in relation to her image in Scripture. Her Immaculate Conception and Assumption should be viewed in the context of her singular relation to Jesus the Savior and to His saving life. Mary's Immaculate Conception is her singular gift from Jesus the Savior, the one mediator, the source of grace and righteousness. Her initial grace is in a special sense a prevenient grace, a pure gift of God in Christ. Mary's bodily Assumption is her singular resurrection of the dead from Jesus the Savior. There is an order in the resurrection of the dead: Christ the first fruits, then Mary, finally at his coming all who belong to Him. As Christ is king, indeed, the king of kings and the lord of lords, so Mary is queen. Her intercession with Him at Cana and in the upper room in the days before Pentecost, her prayer, continues. She intercedes with Him on our behalf for the wine and fire of the Holy Spirit. In this way she influences our lives now.

Mary's spiritual motherhood should be viewed in the context of her singular relation to Jesus the Savior and to His saving life. She is our mother because Jesus loves her and us. He gives her to us, His beloved disciples, as our mother, and us to her as her sons, her children. She is mother of the Savior in His Person and His work of salvation. She is mother of the saved. She is mother of those who receive grace and righteousness from Jesus and who shall receive resurrection of the body from Him.

Mary's heart, her love, should be viewed in relation to Christ's heart, His love. What is central to Jesus is *agape*, the *agape* of the Father for Him in the Spirit and His *agape* for the Father and His brothers in the human family, His heart can be a symbol of His *agape* and even of the *agape* of His Father. Mary's heart can be a symbol of *agape*, of the love of the Father through Jesus the Savior in the Holy Spirit for her, of her *agape* for the Father and for us her brothers. Heart in the biblical sense is the source of our personal thought, attitude, affection, decision.

Mary should be viewed in relation to Christ's Church. She is the figure, the type of the Church, of the community of persons who are saved. She believes and serves the Lord as the graced woman who is mother of the Savior. She serves us His people in our history, both as persons and as a community. Mary, like each human person, is a special revelation of the Lord. She images in a special way the motherly love of the Lord, who has not forgotten us, who has far more compassion for us His children than our earthly mother has.³⁷

There is a biblical image of Mary's inward life. Her attitude is that of a servant who in poverty and humility receives the gift of the Lord and gives herself to Him and His servants. It is the inward attitude of the graced woman who serves as mother of the Savior in His Person and work of salvation. Mary's words in Scripture are seven and are significant in giving us hints about her inner depth. At the annunciation of the Lord, she says to the angel: "How can this be, since I have no husband?" and "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word." At the visitation Mary greets Elizabeth, at which Elizabeth's babe leaps in her womb and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizes Mary's gift and response. Mary praises the Lord:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold; henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation . . .

On finding the twelve-year-old boy Jesus in the temple after three days, she says to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." At Cana, Mary says to Jesus, now some thirty years old: "They

³⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Devotion to Mary (Marialis Culus)*, Feb. 2, 1974 (USCC ed., Washington, D.C., 1974) 17-29.

have no wine," and to the servants she says: "Do whatever he tells you." These words reveal Mary's inner attitude toward Yahweh, Jesus, her fellow men, herself.

According to her scriptural image, Mary can be viewed more profoundly in the context of the Blessed Trinity. The Father loves Mary through Jesus in the Holy Spirit and in the communion of saints with a covenant love. Mary responds wholeheartedly to Him through Jesus in the Holy Spirit and in the communion of saints.

MARY'S PLACE IN THE LITURGY TODAY

The method of the hierarchy of truths about Mary is vital for personal faith, for apostolic proclamation, for ecumenical dialogue. It is valuable for discovering and communicating Mary in the liturgy.

Paul VI draws attention to the renewal of devotion to Mary. In this connection he stresses the Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesial aspects of devotion to her and sketches four guidelines: biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological.³⁸

Mary is related to Christ, His Father and His Spirit, and to His body, His followers, His Church. This relationship must be to the fore as it is revealed in the Scriptures, as it is celebrated in the liturgy, as it is involved in the forwarding of Christian unity and of human development, liberation, and advancement.

The anthropological guideline is very important for a contemporary appreciation of Mary. She is close to us today. Mary symbolizes the democratic aspect of the people of God. She is sister and friend. She does not belong to the leadership in the sense of the apostolic college. Yet she is influential by her prayer, example, word, action, by her presence. She has a more profound influence on people and history than any other human person. That goes for all saints with their charismatic gifts, including those who belong to the apostolic college and to the

³⁸ *Ibid.*

episcopal college.

Mary is mother of the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed. Jesus is anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit. He is consecrated and sent to make us an anointed people, prophetic, priestly, royal. Mary is involved deeply with Christ's action making us an anointed people, a messianic people, a Christian people. She does not belong to those chosen to be consecrated and sent as ministerial priests to lead the anointed people by word, sacrament, and service. Yet Mary is involved deeply with Christ's action which is made visible through and in His minister's action.

Mary is our example as disciples of Christ. She is a woman for all ages and cultures, for our age and culture too. At the annunciation Mary was taken into a dialogue with the Lord about her active and responsible acceptance of the event of great world importance, the becoming flesh of the Eeternal Word. Mary's virginity was courageous. Its motivation was to consecrate herself to the love of God. Mary proclaimed the revolutionary action of God who vindicates the humble and the oppressed, who removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions. She is on the side of the poor and the humble of the Lord. She experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile. Mary was concerned with Jesus the Savior of all and with His saving life and influence. Her concern went from the home to the farthest reaches of the universe and of time.³⁹

Mary is a freed woman. She comes across in the Scriptures as inquiring and contemplative, responsive and creative, compassionate and courageous. She is always a woman of great faith.

The Mother of Jesus is portrayed in the gospels as: intelligent (the annunciation, 'How can this be?'); apostolic (the visit to Elizabeth);

³⁹ *Behold Your Mother, Woman of Faith*, Past. Letter of the Catholic Bishops, Nov. 21, 1973 (USCC ed., Washington, D.C., 1973) 50.

inquiring and contemplative (the child lost in the temple); a woman of great faith.⁴⁰

Mary stands for the human person, fulfilled in the context of community and history, as receiving the gift that is the Lord Himself. The United States of America stands for the human dream of fulfillment, of the freer and better, happier and richer human life. Mary in her Immaculate Conception is a providential protector and ideal for our people and their aspirations.

In reference to the liturgy, it is helpful to reflect on the present celebrations of Mary and their ecumenical import. In the new liturgy there are solemnities, feasts, and both obligatory and optional memorials. The solemnities of Mary are the Immaculate Conception, the Divine Motherhood, and the Assumption. She also shares in the solemnity of the annunciation of the Lord. The feasts of Mary are her nativity and the visitation. She also shares in the feast of the presentation of the Lord.

The obligatory memorials of Mary are her presentation, her sorrows, her queenship, and the rosary. The optional memorials of her are Lourdes, her Immaculate Heart, Mount Carmel, and the basilica of Mary Major. These are the solemnities, feasts, obligatory and optional memorials of Mary in the present general Roman calendar. Advent and Christmas as liturgical seasons are closely related to her. Traditionally, May and October are months in which she is honored in a special way.

The most ecumenical of Mary's celebrations is the visitation. It is manifestly biblical. It is centered on the grace of the Lord and her humble reception and acknowledgment of it. It is a visit, a Christ-bearing visit, between two friends and cousins. The Holy Spirit overshadows this visit. This is a feast of Mary that Luther did not reject.⁴¹

The solemnity of Mary the mother of God is ecumenical. It

⁴⁰ W. Cole, *art. cit.*, 183.

⁴¹ C. Gumbinger, O.F.M.Cap., *Mary in the Eastern Liturgies*, in J. B. Carol, O.F.M. (Ed.), *Mariology* 1 (Milwaukee, Wis., 1955) 186.

celebrates the reality defined by the third ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431. It is a truth defined by a council that is accepted by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions: Mary, the mother of the man Jesus who is the Lord, the one God, the Son of the Father, and together with the Father, the Giver of the Holy Spirit. It takes place in the orbit of Christmas.

It is ecumenically important to view the historical origins of Mary's celebrations in the liturgy. The cult of Christ and of Mary arose in the East.

Christ and Mary are of the East. Their cult arose in the East . . . The theological foundation of Eastern devotion to Mary is her divine Maternity.⁴²

The Council of Nicea with *homoousios* gave impetus to the development of the cult of Christ. The Council of Ephesus with *theotokos* gave impetus to the cult of Mary. Early feasts of Mary in the East are her motherhood during the Christmas cycle, her nativity, her presentation, the annunciation, the presentation-purification, and the falling asleep. Mary has an especially prominent place in the Byzantine calendar.

Among the twelve greater feasts in this rite (the Byzantine) . . . four are in honor of Mary, namely, her Maternity, her Presentation in the Temple, the Annunciation, and the Falling Asleep (Assumption) of Mary. From October 1 to 14 there is commemorated the Protection (Intercession) of Mary.⁴³ Except for the feast in the cycle of Christmas and the Nativity, the feast of the Assumption is the only Marian feast celebrated in every Eastern rite.⁴⁴

In the West, early feasts, which are of a later date than those in the East, are her motherhood during the Christmas cycle, her nativity, the annunciation, the purification, and the dormition.

⁴² Gumbinger, *art. cit.*, 189.

⁴³ Gumbinger, *art. cit.*, 228.

⁴⁴ R. Chabot, M.S., *Feasts in Honor of Our Lady*, in J. B. Carol, O.F.M. (Ed.), *Mariology* 3 (Milwaukee, Wis., 1961) 24-25.

The nativity of Mary seems to have come to be celebrated in connection with the nativity of John the Baptist. In Scripture John was sanctified before birth on the occasion of the visitation. What about Mary's first sanctification? The feast of her conception in Anna began to be celebrated in the East and later in the West.⁴⁵

All of Mary's liturgical celebrations should be viewed in the perspective of the liturgical celebrations of Christ. This aids ecumenical understanding. Mary's own conception, birth, and presentation belong to her hidden life as preparing for her future role in salvation history. The annunciation, visitation, nativity, and presentation belong to her public life as related to the human beginnings of Jesus. Her divine motherhood involves her public life especially as concerned with the hidden life of Christ. The passion and the descent of the Holy Spirit belong to the hour of Christ's passover. Mary's compassion under the cross is an event of her public life sharing in this hour. Her assumption and queenship are related to her exaltation by the glorified Christ. Christ's heart symbolizes the Father's and His own love. The heart of Mary symbolizes her love for Jesus Christ and His followers. The rosary is a prayer, a pondering with Mary over Christ and the history of our salvation. Three places honor Mary's prayer to Jesus and through Him to the Father, and our prayer with and to her: Lourdes, Rome, and Mount Carmel. The liturgy should make Mary close to us. It should make us close to the Lord and to one another.

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