

5-22-2016

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#### Recommended Citation

Kimball, Virginia M. (2016) "The Heart of Mary in Light of a Biblical Anthropology: Mother, Mystic, and Prophet," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 67, Article 5, Pages 97-132.

Available at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian\\_studies/vol67/iss1/5](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol67/iss1/5)

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## THE HEART OF MARY IN LIGHT OF A BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: MOTHER, MYSTIC, AND PROPHET

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*Virginia M. Kimball, STD*

*The biblical emphasis of Vatican II and later developments, such as the address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Marian Congress of 2012 about studying the Blessed Mother from many different perspectives, have led mariologists to a new appreciation for a determined biblical-anthropological approach. This approach has great significance for understanding the heart of the Woman who “held all these things in her heart.” Mary’s heart connects all of us to her—as woman, mother, mystic, and prophet—to her who holds the Lord in her heart, a heart completely united to the heart of her Son, Jesus the Christ.*

וְחִנָּה הִיא מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל לְבָבָהּ רַק שְׂפָתֶיהָ נְעוּת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמַע  
וְיִחְשְׁבֶהָ עָלַי לְשִׁכְרָה:

## 1 Samuel 1:13

13 But Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard, and Eli thought her to be a drunken woman.<sup>1</sup>

13 ...and she was speaking in her heart, and her lips kept moving, and her voice was not heard, and Eli reckoned her as drunk.<sup>2</sup>

13 ... Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.<sup>3</sup>

In 2012, the International Pontifical Mariological Academies [PAMI] in Rome addressed the theme “Mary since the Second Vatican Council.” For that special meeting, Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to the PAMI Marian Congress, stated: “The singular figure of the Mother of God must be developed and studied from diverse and complementary perspectives.”<sup>4</sup> At the conclusion of that

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<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Jewish Bible*, Chabad translation and commentary, [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#v=13](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#v=13) (1 Samuel 1:13).

<sup>2</sup> Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 249 (1 Reigns Old Greek Text 1:13).

<sup>3</sup> Michael E. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1 Sam. 1:13.

<sup>4</sup> MiracleHunter, [http://www.miraclehunter.com/marian\\_apparitions/societies/PAMI/23/index.html](http://www.miraclehunter.com/marian_apparitions/societies/PAMI/23/index.html). The pope concluded his address with these words: “For this reason, in the apostolic exhortation ‘Verbum Domini’ I proposed that we follow the line traced by the Council (cf. 27). This is also an invitation that [I] cordially address to you, dear friends and scholars. Offer your expert contribution of reflection and pastoral proposals, so that the upcoming Year of Faith might represent for all believers in Christ a true moment of grace in which the faith of Mary precedes us and accompanies us as a brightly burning lamp and as a model of the Christian fullness and maturity to which we can look with

meeting, there arose a consensus among many of those who attended that it was time for an anthropological study of Miryam, the mother of Our Lord, whose English name is “Mary.” Ever since then, the idea to employ a biblical-anthropological study to understand Miryam, a Hebrew young woman of the first century, has appeared more and more compelling for Mariology, and suggests a cogent approach to understanding the “heart of Mary.”

### **I. Christian Cultural Anthropology—Some Definitions**

Anthropology as a field has divided into different areas of study, some divisions being: cultural anthropology, social anthropology (sometimes a subset of cultural anthropology), biological anthropology, and archaeological anthropology. When we speak of biblical anthropology we are dealing with cultural anthropology and its related field of social anthropological archaeology. Cultural anthropology focuses on the study of cultural variation among humans, the way of daily life including customs and beliefs. Simply stated, anthropology is the study of being human, the meaning of “person,” and what is at the core of a person’s being. We will discover that in biblical anthropology, there are three dynamic words—*leb/lebah*, *ruah*, and *nefesh* (Greek: *kardia*, *pneuma*, and *psychi*)—each overlapping the other, that address the understanding of the Hebrew word “heart.”

Roman Catholic scholars Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar are well known for their studies in Christian

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confidence and from which we can draw enthusiasm and joy to live our vocation as children of God, brothers of Christ and living members of his body that is the Church with ever greater commitment and consistency.”

anthropology which they termed more specifically “theological anthropology.” Balthasar departed from the androcentric idea of the Middle Ages and directed his anthropology more to the relationship of humans with God. “God bestows an individual mission upon every human being which constitutes one’s own personality,” he wrote.<sup>5</sup> Balthasar locates the distinctiveness of Christianity in the absolute love of Christ and the saints.

Karl Rahner, along with his colleague Herbert Vorgrimler, developed a theological anthropology based on the phenomenism of existential philosophy. In their *Dictionary of Theology*, these theologians describe anthropology, and in particular “biblical anthropology,” as directly related to revelation in the Old and New Testaments:

Revelation in the OT and NT contains declarations of binding force about man which claim that they alone lead him to an experimental knowledge of his own real (concrete, historical) nature. Man is represented as a being without equal in this world, so truly personal as to be God’s partner, for whom everything else by the will of the Creator—and therefore by its own *real* nature—is merely environment. His position as a free spirit having eternal personal significance and value for God; his capacity to become a partner with God in a genuine dialogue or “covenant-relationships” which leads to absolute intimacy “face to face” in light inaccessible, to “partaking in the divine nature” where we shall know even as we are known; his capacity to disclose his own existence as an expression of God himself (God-becoming man--these are the things which really

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<sup>5</sup> For Balthasar’s notion of personhood, as it is developed in dialogue with other philosophical and sociological notions, cf. his *Theo-Drama* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, c1988- ), 1:481–648. See also *The Imaginative Conservative*, <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2013/07/uniting-faith-and-culture-hans-urs-von-balthasar.html>.

make man a being who is not in the last analysis a part of a greater whole (world).<sup>6</sup>

Rahner and Vorgrimler see the cosmos, the world, and man's history as not being simply a part of reality for mankind's use—or included as a part of a “cosmogony”; but they contend that the world was necessary for God to speak to mankind and establish a covenantal, loving-bond relationship with his beloved men and women. This leads to the question: Where and/or how does this encounter between God and the person happen?

### **A. Language as a Core Element in Cultural Anthropology**

The Hebrew and, subsequently, the Greek language of the Septuagint and the New Testament form the core study for biblical anthropology, the subject of this paper on Miryam's heart. The study centers on the words *leb(ah)*, the Hebrew word for “heart,” and *kardia* (the Greek word used in the Septuagint and the New Testament). It should be noted that the Hebrew *leb* is always intrinsically and inextricably united to two other words, *ruah* (wind, spirit) and *nepes̄* (inner core of being).

For some reason, a true Hebraic approach to the Hebrew Scriptures was long neglected in biblical studies. In 1974, Hans Walter Wolff described a rediscovery of “person” that needed to emerge in Old Testament studies. He quoted Karl Barth, who wrote, in 1948, on biblical reflections viewed through anthropology:

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Dictionary of Theology*, new rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 17.

The time does not yet seem to have arrived when the dogmatist can accept with a good conscience and confidence the findings of his colleagues in Old and New Testament studies.<sup>7</sup>

Wolff's 1974 book on biblical anthropology still stands as a classic source, referenced in most biblical dictionaries and commentaries. Indeed, this is the beginning point to engage the meaning of "heart" in biblical terms. More and more today, anthropology is taking a new interest in the ancient village life, as pioneered by archaeologist Jodi Magness in her 2011 publication, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. These contemporary archaeological studies also open anthropological insights into the real meaning of Jewish cultural customs and attitudes, including purity laws and language phrases themselves—all which ultimately open new visions into Miryam as "virgin" and the meaning of her "heart."

In modern biblical translations, we often find a lack of appreciation for the Hebrew anthropology that did, indeed, carry over into the Koine Greek of the New Testament. As a first example, in the account about Hannah (in 1 Samuel), we find examples of variation in translation. This is why it is important to understand context, the Hebrew anthropological outlook, when considering translations. Let us just look at Hannah's despair in not conceiving a child and her prayer to God which was so intense that the priest Eli thought she was drunk. Here are four translations of the same passage:

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 2 [hereafter Wolff].

Hannah was praying silently, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. [1 Samuel 1:13] *New Revised Standard Version*

... for Hannah was praying silently; though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. [1 Samuel 1:13] *New American Bible*

But Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard, and Eli thought her to be a drunken woman. [1 Samuel 1:13] *The Complete Jewish Bible*<sup>8</sup>

... and she was speaking in her heart, and her lips kept moving, and her voice was not heard, and Eli reckoned her as drunk. [1 Samuel 1:13] *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*<sup>9</sup>

These comparisons are important because there is a direct parallel between Hannah's song of joy in conceiving her son Samuel and Miryam's Magnificat. Because of the firm interconnections in the Hebrew between *leb*, *ruah*, and *nepeš*, which we will attempt to explain, we will discover that in Hannah's song she states that her "heart" magnifies the Lord, and similarly Miryam sings in her Magnificat: "My soul magnifies the Lord." In Miryam's song it will be shown that it is her "heart" that magnifies the Lord. It is so important for our understanding today that the Hebrew biblical anthropology be taken into account by translators, showing that Hannah's word "heart" is directly related to, if not synonymous to, Miryam's word "soul."

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<sup>8</sup> *The Complete Jewish Bible*, Chabad translation and commentary, [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#v=13](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15830/jewish/Chapter-1.htm#v=13) (1 Samuel 1:13).

<sup>9</sup> Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 249 (I Reigns Old Greek Text 1:13).

Combined with the massive work accomplished over the last century in etymology of biblical terms, there appears a deeply mystical meaning, among a wide spectrum of meanings of the words *leb* (Hebrew) and *kardia* (Greek in the LXX and the New Testament), concentrating in particular on a meaning that relates to two fascinating meanings: “soul” and “spirit.” This can illuminate the meaning of Miryam’s heart to demonstrate that she is and was a profound mystic, a mother bearing God (*Theotokos*), knowing God in her heart and soul ... and thus a prophet.

Examination of the biblical traditions and translation of the Hebrew text into English, alongside the fascinating history of the translation of the Old Testament into Greek known as the Septuagint, provides many clues to the etymology of the words as they entered the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and then were carried culturally into the Koine Greek of the New Testament. A careful study of the Septuagint and its translation reveals that the manner in which it was translated flows over into the Greek usage in the New Testament, maintaining the Hebrew concepts. Rather than using Attic Greek with the attending grammatical uses that were complex and esoteric, the Septuagint was translated more with dynamic equivalency that corresponded to conceptual thought rather than literalism. The minds of the rabbinic translators of the Septuagint, state Conybeare and Stock, were “Semitic.”<sup>10</sup> This carries over directly into the etymology of the Greek employed in the New Testament.

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<sup>10</sup> F. C. Conybeare and St. George Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek, with Selected Readings* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., Inc., 1988; reprinted from the ed. originally published by Ginn and Co., Boston, 1905), 21.

... the New Testament is not written in literary, but rather in colloquial Greek, and in the colloquial Greek of men whose original language and ways of thinking were Semitic, and whose expression was influenced at every turn by the phraseology of the Old Testament. If we wish then to understand the Greek of the New Testament, it is plain that we must compare it with the Greek of the Old, which belongs, like it, to post-classical tomes, is colloquial rather than literary, and is so deeply affected by Semitic influence as often to be hardly Greek at all, but rather Hebrew in disguise. ... Now however there are manifold signs that scholars are beginning to realize the importance of the study of the Greek Old Testament in its bearing upon the interpretation of the New.<sup>11</sup>

This scholarly statement clearly points to the need for a biblical anthropology of the New Testament, and in particular to understanding the “heart” of Miryam, which is through-and-through Semitic.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, “The language of the Septuagint, so far as it is Greek at all, is the colloquial Greek of Alexandria, but it is biblical Greek, because it contains so large an element, which is not Hellenic, but Semitic.”<sup>13</sup>

### **B. Looking at Actual Etymology of *leb* and *kardia***

According to Wolff, the usual and working translation of *lēb(āb)* is “reasonable man.” It is the most important word

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: “Attic Greek was like a vintage of rare flavor which would only grow on a circumscribed soil. When Greek became a world-language, as it did after the conquests of Alexander, it had to surrender much of its delicacy, but it still remained an effective instrument of thought and a fit vehicle for philosophy and history. The cosmopolitan form of literary Greek which then came into use among men of non-Attic, often of non-Hellenistic, origin was known as the Common ([*koine*], sc. [*Dialekos*]) or Hellenic dialect.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 22.

used in the Old Testament in its anthropological meaning of “heart.”

In its commonest form, *leb*, it occurs 598 times in the Hebrew Old Testament; and in the form *lēb(āb)* 252 times. In addition, the Aramaic *lēb* occurs once, in the book of Daniel, and *lebab* seven times. Altogether, therefore, it can be found 838 times, which makes it the commonest of all anthropological terms.<sup>14</sup>

Wolff describes the major meanings that can be attributed to *leb* as seemingly an indication of the heart, an organ in the body—however, with a nuance of anthropological meanings. It can be interpreted in the following ways, and best translated as “the Heart”<sup>15</sup> meaning:

1. The obvious physical organ in the body (1 Samuel 25:37f);
2. An internal part of the body—a place of emotion, loyalty, spiritual awareness, and a metaphorical meaning of the very inner most part of a person (Hosea 13:8);
3. The walls of the heart (Jeremiah 23:9)—the “pericardium,” the “inside” of the body;
4. The hidden (Proverbs 30:18f).

“In all these cases, therefore, the heart stands for the inaccessibly unexplorable—for anything that is quite simply

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<sup>14</sup> Wolff, *Anthropology of the OT*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Wolff, 40-41.

impenetrably hidden.”<sup>16</sup> The heart is the place of “unknowable impulse (Proverbs 24:12).”<sup>17</sup>

In a major second grouping of meanings, the word “heart” can be translated as “feelings.” Particularly, in this interpretation, “the heart is the seat of certain states of feeling, such as joy and grief.”<sup>18</sup> Once baby Samuel is born, Hannah rejoices: “My heart exults in Yahweh (1 Sam 1:2; cf. Ps 13:5).”<sup>19</sup> Once again, we should note parallelism between Hannah’s song and Miryam’s song in this sense of an internal “feeling” of joy:

My heart exults in the LORD;  
I have triumphed through the LORD.<sup>20</sup> [1 Samuel 2:1, *Jewish Study Bible*]

This relates to a concept of praying, offering thanksgiving to God in one’s heart:

But I trust in Your faithfulness,  
my heart will exult in your deliverance.<sup>21</sup> [Psalm 13:6, *Jewish Study Bible*]

The person who hopes in Yahweh, “strengthens his heart.”<sup>22</sup> This may explain why in Hannah’s song and in Miryam’s song of joy, the faithfulness resulting in joy that both women

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<sup>16</sup> Wolff, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Wolff, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Wolff, 44.

<sup>19</sup> Wolff, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1 Samuel 1.

<sup>21</sup> *The Jewish Study Bible*, Psalm 13:6.

<sup>22</sup> Wolff, *Anthropology of the OT*, 45.

appear to experience means they are thereby strengthened by God who gives them courage and hope, something that both women relate prophetically.

Wolff speaks of “heart” as “longing and desire,” taking note that this is similar in meaning to *nepeš*, “soul.” Overall, once again it has to be said that there is an intimate and strong bonding of meanings between *leb*, *nepeš*, and *ruah*, seen conceptually and even mystically. In addition to the heart as the place where a human meets God, there is understood an awareness of the presence of the life force that animates the human being (*nefesh* / soul)—the individual’s very core of being, and a living spirit (*ruah*) that flows with God’s word and life into the person. Appearing to reflect a Trinitarian aspect of God, the *leb* refers to an incarnational residence of God, the *nepeš* to the power of being, and *ruah* as the spirit. Wolff states that the heart is found “in direct proximity to *nepeš*, and *ruah*.”<sup>23</sup> Wolff’s idea of “longing” and “desiring” in the heart relates to “soul,” because it occurs in the “heart” and the integral connection with the “core of being” that resides in the heart. What are the bonding aspects in all interpretations of “heart”? It seems to refer to all aspects of being human, as a gift of life from God, and a covenantal relationship to Him.

But what is the specific thing about ‘heart’—the characteristic note that still echoes at the back of all those statements about joy and grief, courage and fear, desire and arrogance, and in the usages

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<sup>23</sup> Wolff, 46

which are now almost solely pronominal [meaning they all relate to one another and overlap in meaning]?<sup>24</sup>

Wolff demonstrates how many translators move to “reason” and “thinking” for the word “heart.” Here the tie between *nepeš* and *ruah* appears. *Ruah* is regarded as a “vital power” of life as opposed to the flesh, and “*nepeš* connotes “spirit.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the human connection and response to God, which can be conceived as a human’s reasoning or thinking, occurs in the heart because the presence of the power of life and God’s spirit abide there. Once again, the words *ruah* and *nepeš* are, therefore, wrapped into one another along with *leb*.

The meaning of *leb* and *kardia* is usually “soul” or “spirit” termed in modern language as “soul.” The translator may choose other words such as “mind,” “thinking,” or even “inner thoughts” in place of the direct translation of “heart.” These meanings touch directly to wisdom, the inner conviction of truth rendered biblically in the heart. It is in the heart that a person understands who God is. “The wise heart seeks knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> And especially it should be noted:

It is highly significant that [*leb*] occurs by far the most frequently in the wisdom literature—99 times in Proverbs alone, 42 times in Ecclesiastes, and in the strongly didactic Deuteronomy 51 times.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Wolff, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Wolff, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Wolff. Wolff cites Proverbs 8:5; 18:15; and 16:23. And Psalm 90 states the aim of life—“number our days—so teach us—that we may bring home a heart of wisdom.”

<sup>27</sup> Wolff, 47.

It is in the heart that a person encounters God, in some mystical manner. Solomon longed for a “hearing heart” (I Kings 3:9-12).”<sup>28</sup> This meaning of reason encompasses everything that contemporary language attributes to the head and brain:

... power of perception, reason, understanding, insight, consciousness, memory, knowledge, reflection, judgment, sense of direction, discernment. These things circumscribe the real core of meaning of the word [*leb*].<sup>29</sup>

Wolff describes *leb* as “decisions of the will.” Curiously, when a person decides to walk toward God, it is a prompting in the heart. “The Israelite finds it difficult to distinguish linguistically between ‘perceiving’ and ‘choosing,’ between ‘hearing’ and ‘obeying.’”<sup>30</sup> This is seen clearly in Proverbs:

A man’s heart plans his way  
But Yahweh directs his steps.<sup>31</sup> [Proverbs 16:9]

In reference to Miryam of Nazareth, as we hear her words of obedience to God’s messenger, we observe that a relationship with God is occurring in her heart. In Deuteronomy 8:2, for example, “Here *obedience* on the basis of knowledge of the commandments is tested ‘in the heart.’” Miryam’s reaction to God’s call is a remarkable coalescence of the words *leb* and *ruah*. Miryam’s response to God at the Annunciation prompts us to remember Ezekiel’s oracle:

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<sup>28</sup> Wolff, 47.

<sup>29</sup> Wolff, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Wolff, 51

<sup>31</sup> Wolff, 51.

And I will give them another (new) *leb*  
and put a new *ruah* within them;  
I will take the stony heart out of their body  
and give them a heart of flesh [Ezekiel 11:19]<sup>32</sup>

... so that they might walk by my ordinances and keep my statutes  
and perform them [generated by the soul], and they shall be for me  
as a people, and I will be a god for them. [Ezekiel 11:20  
Septuagint]<sup>33</sup>

Understanding these connections informs not only the  
Annunciation but also Miryam's song of joy, that includes  
all of the faithful, Israel.

To sum up all the commentary that Wolff provides on  
*leb*, we find there is, on the one hand, a wide collection of  
meanings, but, on the other hand, these meanings overlap  
and coalesce.

We can see that the spectrum of meaning of this most frequent  
anthropological term is a particularly broad one. But though it  
undoubtedly embraces the whole range of the physical, the  
emotional and the intellectual, as well as the functions of the will,  
yet we must clearly hold on to the fact that the Bible primarily views  
the heart as the centre of the consciously living man. The essential  
characteristic that, broadly speaking, dominates the concept is that

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<sup>32</sup> Wolff, 54.

<sup>33</sup> Pietersma and Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. This  
concept of heart/spirit/soul, in fact, almost the same words, appears again in  
Ezekiel 36: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will give in  
you, and I will remove the stone heart from your flesh and give you a heart of  
flesh. And I will give my spirit in you and will act so that you walk in my  
statutes and keep my judgments and perform them [action of the soul]."  
[Ezekiel 36:26-27, Septuagint]

the heart is called to reason, and especially to hear the word of God.<sup>34</sup>

In Bromiley's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, a concise version drawn from Gerhard Kittel's multi-volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley), we find succinct comments on *kardia*. In its relationship to *leb* and *lebab* in the OT: "The literal meaning is a. "breast" and b. "seat of physical vitality."<sup>35</sup> Take note here that "seat of physical vitality" overlaps and is coherent with the Hebrew words *nefesh*, soul, and *ruah*, spirit. Subsequent notes on the Hebrew word for "heart" demonstrate:

2. Figuratively the heart stands a. for courage (2 Chr. 17:6) in various expressions, b. for the seat of rational functions (Dt. 29:3), c. for the place of willing and planning (Jer. 23:20), and d. for the source of religious and ethical conduct (1 Sam 12:20).<sup>36</sup>

Concerning use in the LXX and rabbinic Judaism we find Bromiley succinctly stating:

The LXX and Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism

For Heb. *Lēb* and *lēbāb kardia* is the true equivalent, though we also find *diánoia*, *psyche*, and, rarely, *nous*, *phrenes*, and *stethos*.

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<sup>34</sup> Wolff, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1985), 415.

<sup>36</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the NT, Abridged*, 415.

*Kardia* in the LXX is the chief organ of human life, including the intellectual, the volitional, and the religious.<sup>37</sup>

These are the meanings of the corresponding words: *diánoia*, mind, understanding, intention, purpose, thought, and attitude; *psyche*, self, inner life; *nous*, mind; *phrenes* and *stethos*, chest or breast.

And, again, Bromiley succinctly lists the uses of *kardia* in the New Testament.

2. There is in the NT a rich usage of *kardia* for a. the seat of feelings, desires, and passions (e.g., joy, pain, love, desire, and lust); ... b. the seat of thought and understanding ...; c. the seat of the will ...; and d. the religious center to which God turns, which is the root of religious life, and which determines moral conduct ...; as the heart of the sinner ...; as the heart of the redeemed.<sup>38</sup>

In a more extended and deep analysis of the words for “heart,” we look to the articles written by Friedrich Baumgärtel on OT use of *leb* and a long article by Johannes Behm on New Testament use of *kardia*, included in Volume III of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Baumgärtel adds to what we have encountered so far:

“With the heart one serves God. ...with the whole heart. ...Circumcision of the heart ... comes with the conversion of heart; the righteous is pure in heart...”<sup>39</sup> Behm specifies that in the LXX, Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaic usage: “The wealth of nuances in the underlying Heb. words

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<sup>37</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the NT, Abridged*, 415.

<sup>38</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the NT, Abridged*, 416.

<sup>39</sup> Gerhard Kittel, ed. (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965), 3:607.

is reflected in *kardia* in the LXX. Thus, *kardia* is the first principle and organ of man's life. It is the focus of his being and activity as a spiritual personality."<sup>40</sup> He continues to say that the New Testament use of the word "heart" is synchronous to the use in the Old Testament, but often "distinct from the Greek *dualism*."<sup>41</sup> Behm then makes a particularity that is most helpful to comprehend Miryam's heart: "Even more strongly than the LXX it concentrates on the heart as the main organ of psychic and spiritual life, the place in man at which God bears witness to Himself."<sup>42</sup> This would mean that in the heart God is present. Behm also repeats the close connection between "heart," "soul," and "spirit." "That the heart is the centre of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the forces and functions of soul and spirit is attested in many different ways in the NT."<sup>43</sup>

Further confirmation of the close connection of *ruah* and *leb*, is seen in an achievement of repentance and reform when a person's heart is "shattered" and "crushed."<sup>44</sup> We see this in the parallelism of the Hebrew poetic strophe:

And put a new and right *spirit* within me. [Psalm 51:10]

According to Johnson, in a careful anthropological study of the *ruah*:

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<sup>40</sup> Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, 3:609.

<sup>41</sup> Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, 3: 611.

<sup>42</sup> Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, 3:611.

<sup>43</sup> Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, 3:611.

<sup>44</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, Great Britain: University of Wales Press, 1964), 86.

When all is said and done, however, this can only be achieved as man's 'stony' heart is shattered, and he numbers himself with those whose heart is 'broken' and whose [*ruach*] is 'crushed', thus taking sides with all the stricken and oppressed amongst his fellow men; i.e., he must also learn to say with the psalmist,

My sacrifice, O God is a broken [*ruach*];  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

When this takes place, there will be a new and vital relationship between Israel and God, i.e., what Jeremiah calls the new covenant which is to be inscribed upon the heart; ... All in all, therefore, it is little wonder that the Israelite sage advised his pupil to keep watch over his heart on the ground that it is there that the springs of life are to be found:

Above everything guard thy heart,  
For it is the well-spring of life. [Proverbs 4:23]<sup>45</sup>

All of this should be kept in mind when the angel visits Miryam and speaks of her "remaining in the joy" of trust and relationship to Yahweh. It then is seen to speak of the vital relationship that will come from Miryam's maternity that will give birth to the salvation of Israel.

Among other fascinating sources to explore for biblical anthropology is the Dead Sea scroll known as the *Hodayot*, which is comprised of documents that include unique psalms found at Qumran. Identified today as a community that mystically referred to its community as "the Temple," their documents use the word "heart" repeatedly. In a collection of "psalms" unique to this community we find the following:

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<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *The Vitality*, 86-87.

Your holy spirit illuminates the dark places of the heart  
of your servant, with light like the sun.<sup>46</sup>

At the danger of being repetitive, we can say that all these descriptions reinforce the anthropological approach by Wolff. The word “heart” is multi-valent in meaning and inherently linked to the Hebrew words “soul” and “spirit.” What we’re saying is that Miryam’s heart is the center of her loving passion for God; it is the core of her human thought and understanding; it is the foundation of her will which is her *fiat* to God’s call; it is the core of God’s connection with her; it is the directive of her spiritual life, in which abides all her decisions and life choices; it is intimately correlated to and embedded in her body; and it is, thereby, in her heart that she is redeemed.

## II. Now Looking at Miryam, Mother of Christ

How can we ascertain the meaning of Miryam’s “heart” according to biblical anthropology? From language studies inherent to cultural anthropology, we have a wide spectrum of meanings for “heart,” all of which are anchored in a fascinating cohesive manner with “soul” and “spirit.” One obvious observation is that biblical anthropology is not at all dualistic. Contemporary anthropology speaks of the human mind and soul, leaving the heart as a vague source for love. The Hebraic anthropology presents a firm interrelationship between the body and these aspects of “heart,” “soul,” and “spirit.” They are inseparable. The “heart” is a visceral

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<sup>46</sup> The Thanksgiving Psalms, Dead Sea Scrolls’ Texts, available in *The Gnostic Society Library*, <http://www.gnosis.org/library/psalm.htm> [April, 2016].

concept—not isolated to a particular organ of the body or a particular human activity. The “heart” is a place of encounter with God in communication with the life force and core of a person’s being—the “soul,” which is enlivened by “spirit,” and all of which makes Miryam human as she lives and breathes with God at the core of her being.

### A. The Annunciation

Now let us look at the Annunciation with biblical anthropology in mind, “The angel Gabriel was sent by God ... to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David” (Luke 1:26-27, NRSV). Gabriel is sent to prepare Miryam for an encounter with the Living God—which will be an encounter in her heart, not independent of her relationship with Yahweh, already remaining in her *leb*, but in her *nefesh* and *ruah* as well. “And he [Gabriel] came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his word and pondered what sort of greeting this might be” (Luke 1: 28-29 NRSV). Right away our attention anthropologically goes to the word “ponder.” She is not “debating” the words in her mind, or assigning them to her emotions, but she is in reality embracing them in her heart and holding them there as a revelation, probing and considering God’s new revelation to her. Schrenk makes this patently clear:

Only when the sing[ular] [*dielogizeto*] excludes conversation with others. As in Lk1:29 with respect to Mary’s meditation on the greeting of the angel or in Lk 12:17 in relation to the rich fool: [*dielogizeto en eavto legon*] is it unnecessary to add the more precise “in his heart.” The reason for the addition is that these two

Hellenistic Evangelists are both familiar with the current second sense of “conversation” or “discussion.”<sup>47</sup>

In a helpful article by Alec Basson on the metaphorical meaning of “the heart” in the Old Testament, he has identified three major categories: (1) the heart as a living organism, a “living, autonomous entity ... having the ability to rejoice, to fear, to cry out, to sing, and to be sick”; (2) the heart as an object of value “that can be lost or even be destroyed”; (3) the heart as a solid which can “melt or be easily indented,” or that is heavy and hard like “stone or iron”; and (4) lastly, but most importantly, the heart as a container with an interior and exterior, where the “word of God” can be stored.<sup>48</sup> This last concept of the heart as a container opens a meaning for Mary’s pondering for us. We see this in Psalm 119:11:

In my heart I hid your sayings  
So that I may not sin against you.<sup>49</sup> [*Septuagint*]

The revelation that Gabriel delivers to Miryam, then, is stored in her heart, where she enjoys the joy of God’s presence but will now reflect God’s words over and over as the angel reveals God’s message to her. Extending this concept, if we might, for the faithful today, communication with Miryam, as she resides with her Son in Heaven, will be

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<sup>47</sup> Gottlob Schrenk, “[*dialogizomai*]” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), 2:96.

<sup>48</sup> Alec Basson, “Metaphorical Explorations of the Heart in the Old Testament: A Few Remarks,” *Scriptura* 96 (2007): 310-315.

<sup>49</sup> Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Psalm 119:11.

prayers that are “contained” in her heart, embraced by the presence of God’s spirit which dwells there and constitutes her soul, her very core of being.

Now, we must address the poor translation of “Greetings, favored one!” The Greek term coined by Luke for the angel’s greeting is *Xaire, kexaritomene* and it should be translated: “Rejoice, (one) having remained in joy!” The key foundation of this Greek word *kexaritomene* is *charis*, meaning joy, gladness, or delight. We come later to understand why her heart contains this joy when we hear the Lord’s teaching of the beatitudes. Living with God’s word and entrusting ourselves to him, despite affliction and suffering, we experience joy. But to a profound level, Miryam’s abiding mystical trust in Yahweh means she is “found remaining in joy,” clutched in the container of her heart. In this sense, we call her a “mystic.”

Then the angel adds: “the Lord is with you.” From this, we hear that Miryam, being “greatly perplexed,” is pondering the meaning of the words. With interpretation informed by utilizing biblical anthropology, she is “pondering” in her heart. And why is she “perplexed”? It is not because she does not find God in her inner core and being, nor does she harbor doubt (like Zechariah),<sup>50</sup> nor confront the angel with doubt, but she will strive to grasp the fullness

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<sup>50</sup> “Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.’ The angel replied, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur’” [NRSV Luke 1:18-20]. What is the difference between Zechariah’s question to Gabriel and what Miryam says? It is that she ponders the words in her heart.

of meaning of the words, “the Lord is with you.” She is pondering in her heart the depth to which this greeting refers. The narrative then moves to explain. The angel tells her not to turn to “fear” (the absence of God in her heart), reminding her that she experiences great joy in God’s plan, which are the passions and love aspect of the heart, and that it is to be amplified in her “heart/soul/spirit,” as we find her stating later in the Magnificat. The Son, who will be “great,” “the Son of the Most High,” and the “Lord God” (Luke 1:32) is the remarkable reality that Miryam ponders. She asks how this will be done. Abiding in the joy of God in her heart, she wonders how God will accomplish this magnificent act, and it is not a resistance to God’s will. Next, the angel messenger explains that the “Holy Spirit will come upon you” and the “power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). Again, understanding the anthropological cohesion of “heart” and “spirit,” this suggests that the Spirit, *ruah*, will intensify in her heart, *leb*; and, understanding the anthropology of “soul,” *nefesh*, suggests that God as Life Force will flood into her heart and her body, tying together body and soul in a tight cohesion. The overflowing of the Spirit will infuse in its fullness a pregnancy of the Son of God within her body, understood by the lack of dualism between “body and soul.”

Biblical anthropology reflects a unique aspect in the Hebrew language that the “person” is considered in a visceral way. Body and soul are distinct but not separated; they are interconnected layers of a reality unified in God, who is the life source and sustenance of being in these concepts. Remembering that the three words *leb(ab)*, *ruah*, and *nefesh* are essentially interrelated, we find that the “being-ness” of the person is found essentially in all three

words, and is fundamental to the whole of the person, including the physical body.

There are many examples where “the flesh is clearly associated with psychical functions,”<sup>51</sup> as demonstrated in Psalm 84:

How lovely the dwelling place where Thou dost dwell,  
Yahweh of Hosts!  
My whole being [*nefesh*] longeth, yea pineth,  
For Yahweh’s courts;  
My heart and my flesh [*basar*] acclaim  
The Living God. [Psalm 84:1-2]<sup>52</sup>  
[translation by Johnson]

It is with this understanding of the consistent connection between, on the one hand, “body,” and on the other hand, “flesh,” that the mystery of the incarnation perhaps can be illuminated (but not explained). Reflecting on Psalm 84, we can better understand that it is in the “heart-soul-spirit” that God will dwell with Miryam in the incarnation. The ascent of her very being, her core reality, to Yahweh opens the possibility of God residing “in” her body.

In the prayer of the early Christian centuries, we may find the biblical anthropology shining in liturgical prayer and hymns written in an age when the Church’s Bible was the Septuagint. Remembering that the Septuagint was culturally Semitic in its interpretation from the Hebrew, we turn to the *Akathistos*, a mystical poem that in its chant contemplates the Incarnation in a long series of salutations to the

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<sup>51</sup> Johnson, *The Vitality*, 38.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

*Theotokos*. Attributed to Romanos in the fifth century, the very first stanza describes “an angel of supreme rank” (Gabriel) crying out to Miryam: “Rejoice through whom is the joy to shine forth.”<sup>53</sup> The Greek word “joy” here is *xara*, the very word we find at the foundation of *kexaritomene*. Anthropologically, this “joy” is harbored in her heart, and Miryam rejoices as does all of humanity, because—through her—her “joy” shines forth, understood both bodily and spiritually! The image of restoring the “broken, shattered heart” by trust in God is clear in the *theotokion* in Ode Seven of the *Akathistos*: “We your servants now beseech you and we bend the knee of our heart to you.”<sup>54</sup> It is with the help of an oracle in Isaiah that God reveals:

By myself I swear,  
“Verily righteousness shall go forth from my mouth;  
my words shall not be turned back,  
because to me every knee shall bow.” [Isaiah 45:23]<sup>55</sup>

Bending the “knee of our heart” to Miryam is, in reality, an embrace of the concept that she is the “righteousness” coming forth from Yahweh which will reveal God’s incarnation in her body. Christ is contained in her heart. For us, today, when we contemplate and pray to the heart of Miryam, we will find our joy and hopes to be fulfilled.

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<sup>53</sup> *The Service of the Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos*, trans. Heiromonk Seraphim Dedes (published by his monastery, 2000), 105.

<sup>54</sup> *Akathist*.

<sup>55</sup> Pietersma and Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*.

## B. The Magnificat

According to biblical anthropology ... What is happening in Miryam's heart when she visits her cousin Elizabeth and sings this canticle, so very much like the Song of Hannah? Let us first look at Hannah's song, seeing in it a song that parallels the Magnificat.

Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2: 1-11 is effectively a song of praise to Yahweh in which she extends the sovereignty she has experienced in her life to the whole field of human relationships. It is a sovereignty that jars modern susceptibilities, for in practice we often prefer to domesticate the divine power to conform to our ideas of what is reasonable. Hannah will have none of that. Her conception of God's greatness soars to the heights of the absolute; there are no secondary causes in her portrayal of majesty. It is the Lord who reverses fortunes, who elevates and relegates, who raises the humble and demotes the proud, apportions poverty and wealth, life and death as he sees fit (1 Sam 2: 4-8).<sup>56</sup>

With God as our sustenance. life will be fruitful for the faithful. The one to whom the faithful may always go to appeal for help is the Lord God, like Hannah and Miryam do.

So Hannah's song, as a testimony to woman's spirituality [in times when they had no other recourse for help], was preserved and ultimately found its echo in the song of another mother whose faith and submission to God also marked a turning point in the history not just of Israel but also of the world.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Dorothy Jean Weaver, "Commentary on 1 & 2 Samuel," in *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 156.

<sup>57</sup> Weaver, "Commentary on ... Samuel," 158.

The biblical anthropology in Hannah's song, as it is echoed in Miryam's song, can provide a wealth of insights. However, for now, we will examine two aspects in terms of *leb* and *kardia*. First, it should be noted that throughout the Bible women are heard from through their "joyful noise: music and dance," according to a study of women in the time of the Bible made by Miriam Feinberg Vamosh.

The Bible speaks of women singing, playing musical instruments or dancing in praise of God's saving power in some of its most dramatic stories, such as the crossing of the Reed Sea, the victory of Deborah and Barak, and the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem. Praise-song and dance was a time that women, whose lives were often limited to their homes and families, could give full expression to their creativity in a public sphere. Women also gave thanks for the miracles in their lives, like the unique song of Mary, the Magnificat, and Hannah's song, which have given us some of the Bible's most memorable poetry.<sup>58</sup>

Bearing this in mind, we find the mystical voice of Miryam singing forth prophetically in her memory of Hannah. Because we know that the Septuagint used the word "soul" for "heart" in a Semitic way among the myriad of other colors of meaning in the spectrum of *leb*, we can see that the opening of both Hannah's song and Miryam's song of joy are the same.

Jewish Study Bible:

My **heart** exults in the LORD;

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<sup>58</sup> Miriam Feinberg Vamosh, *Women at the Time of the Bible* (Herzlia, Israel: Palphot Ltd., 2007; also published by Abindgon Press, 2008), 62.

I have triumphed through the LORD,  
I gloat over my enemies;  
I rejoice in Your deliverance.<sup>59</sup>

LXX:

My **heart** was made firm in the Lord:  
my horn was exalted in my God;  
my mouth was made wide against enemies;  
I was glad in your deliverance,  
because there is none holy like the Lord,  
and there is none righteous like our God;  
there is none holy besides you.<sup>60</sup>

Koine Greek–Luke 1:46-47:

Kai eipen Mariam, megalunei e **phyke** mou ton Kyrion<sup>61</sup>

The Greek word *phyke* here is “soul.” We return to Wolff to understand how the transition may have been made from “heart” to “soul” in the translation path from the Septuagint to the Koine Greek in Luke’s gospel. Wolff, in discussing the close affinity of heart, spirit, and soul, comments:

In by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart–i.e., precisely what we ascribe to the head and, more exactly, to the brain; cf. 1 Sam. 25-37. Here the word [*leb*] is clearly distinguished from *nepeš* and *riiah*. We shall see that just as *riiah* means ‘vital power’ (in contrast to the

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<sup>59</sup> *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1 Samuel 2:1-2.

<sup>60</sup> Pietersma and Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 1 Samuel 2:1-2.

<sup>61</sup> Transliterated from the Greek Bible Online, <http://www.greekbible.com/index.php>, Luke 1:46.

infirmity of the ‘flesh’) rather than spirit, [*leb*] is frequently better rendered by ‘spirit’ than by ‘heart.’ We must guard against the false impression that biblical man is determined more by feeling than by reason. This mistaken anthropological direction is all too easily derived from an undifferentiated rendering of [*leb*]. The Bible sets before men clear alternatives, which have to be recognized. It is highly significant that [*leb*] occurs by far the most frequently in the wisdom literature—99 times in Proverbs alone, 42 times in Ecclesiastes, and in the strongly didactic Deuteronomy 51 times.<sup>62</sup>

It can be seen then that the knowledge of God in the heart can be translated as “soul.” This line of thought can be corroborated in another verse of the Magnificat.

He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
[Luke 1:51, NRSV]

### C. Koine Greek Use of the Word “Heart”

*Kardias* (heart) in Luke 1:51 demonstrates the meaning so closely related to “soul” which Miryam states “magnifies the Lord.” The very heart of Miryam—her soul, her thoughts and understanding, her relationship to the Lord who resides within her—is filled to the brim, and therefore “magnified.” The proud will push God from their hearts—his presence in their very soul, heart and being—but Miryam’s soul is resplendent with joy. We find in the parallelism at the beginning of her song that “soul” and “spirit” are aligned with one another, again demonstrating the Hebraic anthropology that overlaps and wraps “heart” [*leb*], “soul” [*nefesh*], and “spirit” [*ruah*] together. These words are not

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<sup>62</sup> Wolff, *Anthropology*, 47-48.

“synonyms” or close analogies of each other; they are layers of mystical reality tightly interwoven together. By reflecting on this aspect, we are led even more profoundly into Miryam’s song. She is filled with joy and proclaims that “all generations will call me blessed,” not meaning that she has reached any hierarchical position but that she is “found remaining in joy.” The “blessing” is her “joy.”

### ***1. A Sword Will Pierce Her Heart***

In Luke 2:25, we find Miryam and Joseph preparing to journey to Jerusalem to present their offering in the Temple to complete the Jewish law of purification following the birth of their son Jesus. Simeon recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. He then blesses the parents and says to Miryam: “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce you own soul too” [NRSV, Luke 2:34-35]. We can now realize in these words that the “inner thoughts of many” corresponds to what we just found in the Magnificat, those who push out God from their hearts, who oppose Jesus. We know that some translations will use the phrase “a sword will pierce your heart,” although the word used in the Koine Greek is *psyche* (soul). Many have postulated what Simeon was prophesying.

Luke 2:34-35 “This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” [NRSV]

However, looking at the actual Greek interlinear, we see more in the actual Greek word order.

And blessed them Simeon and said to Mary the mother of him, behold this one is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign being opposed—and of you also yourself the soul will pierce a sword—so that may be revealed from many hearts the thoughts.<sup>63</sup>

Understanding the relationship of thoughts contained in the soul and the reality of a person's heart, and realizing that Miryam's son is the sign that will be opposed causing the "falling and rising" of many in Israel, the opposition of the hearts and thoughts of many to Jesus will be revealed. This will be the piercing of Miryam's heart. It will be the sword of earthly sorrow that will pierce what is contained in her heart—the revelation that she is the mother of the Lord who is Son of God ... thus revealing that what really exists in the hearts of many will strike the heart of Miryam.

## ***2. Events Pondered in Her Heart--the Finding in the Temple***

We will consider one more reference to Miryam pondering in her heart. Jesus and his family journeyed to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover. When the festival ended, the family headed home to Nazareth. Discovering that Jesus was missing after a day's journey, they frantically returned to Jerusalem to find him. After three days, they found him in the Temple sitting and talking with the rabbis.

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<sup>63</sup> J. D. Douglas, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., Inc., 1990), 204-205.

His mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. [Luke 2:48-51, NRSV]

Some Bible translations give the phrase “she kept all these things in her heart.” However, a deeper translation of the last phrase uses the word “treasured” (in the Greek, *dieteirei*). The meaning conveyed with this word, used only in Luke, is that Miryam is keeping and storing up memories contained in her heart with special care and love. Luke’s use of it in this phrase means more accurately a memory that she holds deep in her heart.

The biblical anthropology, therefore, sheds light on the true way to interpret this scene. Miryam is adding all the memories concerning her Son, Jesus, to what she already holds in her heart. She was truly frightened at not finding him, and, like any mother, the fear was shown in momentary anger—“Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety” (Luke 2:48, NRSV). The etymology of the word translated as “anxiety” carries a meaning of pain, suffering, and sorrow.<sup>64</sup> Any mother will know why this causes Miryam to be quite upset with her child, despite the immense love she has for him. The anthropological concept here explains: Miryam knows in her heart that he is the Son of God, but she adds to her heart the awareness that it will not be easy to be

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<sup>64</sup> Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the Bible, Abridged*, 673.

his mother and he will have tasks perhaps she cannot fully understand, such as sitting and talking to rabbis at his young age.

### **III. Conclusion**

The biblical anthropology of “heart” is not easy for us today to comprehend in its fullness. We must think conceptually and not literally. We must see that there is no dualism of flesh and soul that renders them distinct and separate. In addition, there are layers of meaning with inseparable connections among heart (*leb*), soul (*nefesh*), and spirit (*ruah*). Miryam’s heart was and is filled with joy, and to pray to her is to connect with that mystical reality of her as mother, mystic, and prophet who holds the Lord in her heart. Just as St. Paul told the Thessalonians: “As for us, brothers and sisters, when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face” [1 Thess, 2:17, NRSV]. The faithful of Thessalonia stayed united through Paul’s heart. In the same manner, when we go to Miryam as mother, she embraces us in her deep heart of trust and love ... and she takes us to her Son who abides there! We can say she ponders us and our prayers in her heart, and truly treasures them.

To pray to Miryam’s heart is to be held in her heart with Christ.

### **Author Biography**

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*Note:* The publication of the 2016 issue of *Marian Studies* was delayed; thus, the biography of Dr. Kimball was revised accordingly.

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Virginia Kimball, STD (6/20/1940-7/18/2019), was an accomplished writer, biblical scholar, and educator. Mother of nine children, she was also teacher and mentor for many. An active member of the Greek Orthodox Church, she greatly loved the Blessed Mother. She served as president for both the Mariological Society of America (2004-2006) and the Ecumenical Society of The Blessed Virgin Mary in the U.S. (ca. 2006-2016).

