

The Co-redeeming Mediation of Christians, the Church, the Virgin¹

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In his moral or *ascending mediation* Christ saves us by way of merit and by way of satisfaction or redemption. In his physical or *descending mediation* he saves us by way of an “instrument” or “organ” of the divinity.²

In order to avoid repetition, we unite here under the name of redemption all that relates to ascending mediation: merit and satisfaction.

It is necessary to speak of “redemptive merit” in order to clarify “co-redemptive merit”; and then of “redemptive mediation” in order to clarify co-redemptive mediation.”³

a) Incarnation and redemption

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16). He gave him twice. The first time in the days of the Annunciation and Christmas, when the only Son took a human nature to dwell among us: this is the mystery of the Incarnation. A second time in the days of his agony and death, where, not content with espousing our human nature “by taking the form of a servant and becoming like men,” he wished to marry her miseries and unite himself to her on the most tragic plane of her condition, “humbling himself and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:7-8): this is the mystery of the Redemption.

¹ The following translation covers vol. II of Journet’s work, *L’Église du Verbe Incarné: La structure interne de l’Église: Le Christ, la Vierge, l’Esprit Saint*, 675–713.—Ed.

² S. THOMAS, III, q. 48, a. 4 and 6.

³ Most mariologists, even when they oppose each other over the fact and the doctrine of the co-redemption of the Virgin, end by accepting, while pointing out the disadvantages themselves, the terminology distinguishing a cooperation as to “objective redemption” or to the “acquisition of graces,” and a co-operation as to “subjective redemption” or to the “the application or distribution of graces.” They dispute among themselves whether to grant the Virgin only the second, or also the first. We shall try to avoid here a terminology which is by no means necessary, which can be nevertheless well understood, but which seems to us inevitably to create misunderstandings.

b) Why the sufferings of the redemption?

1. The sole descent of the Son of God into the flesh, and the inevitable sufferings of his first contact with men would have sufficed, so that he might already raise to God, in the name of sinful humanity and of the whole of creation, an offering whose meritorious and satisfactory value was properly infinite and capable of compensating, in rigor of justice and with superabundance, the infinity of the offense committed against God by sin.

Why, after the “humiliation” of the incarnation, was there still a “lowering” of Christ, a descent into the depths of human pain and distress? What is the most profound reason for this? Here we are before one of the most secret aspects of the redemption.

2. The answer is that human pain and distress will last as long as human history. They would not have appeared without sin; it triggered them. From now on they have become inevitable companions to us. They are the very stuff of our present condition. Jesus could momentarily take them away from us, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Did he come for that? No. His mission was not to abolish human tragedy, but to allow it to have free course and to sanctify it. But then he had to drink first from the chalice of suffering. Knowing what they would be for us, he wanted to take them into his body and heart, to be “a man of sorrows and knowing suffering” (Is 53:3). It is to all human nature that he can say: “It was not for laughter that I loved you, it was not by simulation that I served you; it was not from far away that I touched you.”⁴ The theological preoccupation of St. Thomas is indeed to show here that Christ wanted to carry all human suffering, grasping it in its most intense point and as in its most secret knot.⁵

But by thus assuming human suffering and distress, drawing them into the radiance of his created grace and of the hypostatic union, Christ enlightened them and made them redemptive. What they are in a supreme way in him, who is the only Son, they will become in a derivative way in us, of whom he wants to make children of adoption and his brothers. Thus, because of the supreme outpouring of redemptive grace on the world, human tragedy, in all those who “suffer with” Christ and “die with” Christ, can become co-redemptive with Christ, through Christ, and in Christ. Human suffering is enlightened by the suffering of Christ: if it

⁴ Cf. *The Book of the Blessed Angela of Foligno*, Latin text, ed. Doncoeur, Paris, 1925, 133.

⁵ “If we look at the kinds of suffering, Christ has suffered all human suffering,” III, q. 46, a. 5. “The one and the other pain (that of the senses and that of the soul) were, in Christ, the highest sorrows of the present life.” III, q. 46, a. 6.

is left to us, it is so that we may, in Christ, work for our own rehabilitation and that of others.⁶

3. To the question of a moment ago: why the excess of the humiliation of Christ? Why his descent into the thick of the bloody tragedy of mankind? We can now answer: it is so that all human suffering may be in him, through him, co-redemptive. Jesus, who enters the water of baptism to sanctify it, enters into human suffering to restore it: in him, redemptive, and in us, co-redemptive.

c) A text of St Thomas

Before explaining further what distinguishes the redemptive suffering of Christ from the co-redemptive suffering of Christians, we must transcribe here an important text of St. Thomas.

In his *Commentary* on the passage of St. Paul to the Colossians, 1:24: *Now I rejoice in my sufferings endured for you, and I complete in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body which is the Church*, the holy Doctor specifies the relation of the merits and sufferings of Christ to the merits and sufferings of Christians. There are two ways, he says, of understanding this relation: one which is easy, and which is heterodox; the other, which is a profound mystery, and which is divine.

“A superficial reading might lead one to believe that the passion of Christ is insufficient to redeem us, and that the sufferings of the saints are added to it by way of complement. But *this sense is heretical*; for the blood of Christ is sufficient for redemption, it would suffice even for a host of worlds. *He is himself the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world*, it is said (1 Jn 2:2).

The true sense is that Christ and the Church are one mystical person, of whom Christ is the head, and whose body are all the just, each of the just being like a member of the head. Now God, in his predestination, has disposed the measure of the merits in which the total Church must reach, whether in the head or in the

⁶ When St. Thomas, *III. Sent.*, dist. 20, a. 1, q. 2, asks why satisfaction, that is to say the payment of a penalty, should be part of our rehabilitation, he answers among other reasons that “the man who is satisfied is more perfectly reintegrated.” Indeed, if man had not fully *satisfied*, his glory after sin would not be so high as in the state of innocence: for there is more glory for man to purge the sin which he has committed, by a full satisfaction, than to be forgiven without satisfaction. Similarly, there is more glory for man to receive eternal life as a reward for his *merits* than to achieve it without merit. For what one deserves, one holds in a certain way of oneself; and when one is satisfied, one is, in a certain way, the author of his rehabilitation.” *Let us not forget, when reading this text*, that St. Thomas, when he speaks here of the satisfaction and merit of man, thinks first and foremost of the satisfaction and merit of this man who is Christ Jesus: all of distinction 20 treats of the causes of the passion of Christ. It is in total dependence and in total subordination to Christ, that our satisfaction and our merit contribute to our rehabilitation. See above, 653-654, note 3.

limbs, just as he has predestined the number of the elect, and the purest of these merits are the sufferings of the holy martyrs. The merits of Christ, who is the head, are infinite; but each saint must merit according to his measure.

This is why the apostle says, *I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ*, that is to say, in the sufferings of the whole Church, of which Christ is the head. *I complete*, that is to say: I add my manner. And that *in my flesh*, that is, in suffering myself. We can also read: I complete *what is lacking in my flesh* to the sufferings of Christ. But what is lacking? It is necessary that the Christ, who has suffered in his own body, suffer similarly in Paul his member, and in all the others. And this *for his body, which is the Church*, that it may be thus redeemed by Christ.⁷

Thus, the merits of Christ arouse the merits of the Church, not by way of *addition*, but by way of *participation*; not by way of *juxtaposition*, but by way of *compenetration*: as the Being of God arouses the being of the universe.

d) The Redemptive Merit of Christ

There is therefore a profound resemblance but also an insurmountable abyss between the redemptive suffering of Christ and the co-redemptive suffering of Christians.

The redemptive offering of Christ on the cross, in which all his life is summed up, is divine as to the offering and human as to the thing offered: it is divine-human, or theandric.

Because, on the one hand, of the dignity of the One who offers, the meritorious and satisfactory value of this offering is, in strict terms, *infinite*: through it, creation gives God incomparably more glory than it can cause him insult. On the other hand, from the divine disposition which binds the destiny of men to that of Christ and of the “economy” by which Christ receives habitual grace, not only as a particular person but also as the head of the Church, the part of the human suffering which it assumes becomes, in him and in him alone, *redemptive*.

This means that this suffering is counted by God, not only for Christ, of whom we know that he must suffer to enter bodily into his glory (Lk 24:26), but also because of him, for all mankind. It is in consideration of the supplication of the passion of Christ that every grace is given to the world, from the day after the fall to the end of time; the supplication of the passion of Christ is the work to

⁷ The Commentary to the Colossians is a faithful transcription of the lessons of St. Thomas, made by Reginald of Piperno. GRABMANN, *Thomas von Aquin*, Munich, 1935, 32. It will be noticed that St. Thomas says here that the body of the Church is the righteous, *corpus omnes justi*. Not, however, in the condemned sense of Quesnel, see 1128 [in previous editions; In Vol. III of the present edition: conclusion of Excursion VI “On the Church without spot or wrinkle”].

which God decides to attach all the graces, to which he promises to grant in ransom, in compensation, all graces. If the relation of a work to its ransom, to its compensation, is called merit, and if merit is based on a true proportion of the work to its compensation is called merit by “right of justice” or merit *de condigno*, it must be said that the supplication of the passion of Christ is meritorious in justice, *de condigno*, of all the graces given to men: the justice in question being that which binds God by virtue of his own ordinance, of his own promise.

The value of *ransom*, of *buying back*, of the *redemption* of the passion of Christ, and therefore its *undeniable proportion to the salvation of the world* is often attested in Scripture. It is in the beloved Son, says St. Paul, “that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 7:7). “For there is one God, and there is one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6). “Christ ... entered the sanctuary once and for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12).

e) The coredeptive merit of Christians

By the supplication of his death on the cross Christ merited “de condigno” for men the grace (ascending mediation) which flows from his heart and he communicates to them (descending physical mediation).

The habitual grace which passes from Christ to men is Christ-conforming, tending to make them similar to Christ as far as the insuperable distance permits which separates the only Son from all the sons of adoption, and Christ who is the head, from the Church, which is the body.

In Christ, grace resides primarily and *as a source*; in the Church, it is, for its appearance, its preservation, its growth, totally and perpetually *dependent* on Christ.

In Christ, grace, connoting the hypostatic union with the Word, confers on his actions, and especially upon the excess of the human sufferings which he assumes, a value of supplication which is theandric, infinite. And it obtains “de condigno,” first for Christ, the glorification of his own passible body; then, for us, all the graces of salvation: “de condigno” means by “right of justice,” but a justice which can only be proportional here, and which presupposes the free divine pre-acceptance of counting the sufferings of Christ, not only for himself but also for the whole world. This is the *merit of Christ*.

In the Church and Christians, Christ-conforming grace acts as a life-giving sap, an intrinsic power of sanctification and illumination, empowering them to live and die with Christ and in Christ, and conferring to their activity thus transformed, this value of supplication and demand which theology calls merits. It is now a merit

dependent on that of Christ, a *co-merit in Christ*. It can take two forms, to which the notion of merit is proper, but in an unequal, proportional, analogical way.

Indeed, on the one hand, grace proportions the present life of the Christian to the life of heaven. Here, but this time in the Christian, the *merit of condignity*, “*de condigno*.” Let us avoid speaking here, as certain theologians are imprudently doing, “of strict justice”; let us speak rather of “a certain justice,” or – this is the exact word – of “condignity.” This merit counts only for the person who carries it, as the oil of the virgins of the Gospel. It is founded in justice, namely, in that justice which is only proportional, by which God binds himself, and which presupposes the divine pre-acceptance to glorify in Christ the man who suffers and dies in Christ: “We are heirs with Christ, if we suffer with him, in order to be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). It is this merit of which every Christian, knowing that he is a “useless servant” (Lk 17:10), must have concern for himself and which is spoken of in the beatitudes: “Blessed are you when they curse you ... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Mt 5:11-12).

On the other hand, the Christian in a state of grace can intercede for others in a very pressing way. His prayer, not merely because he prays, but because he is in a state of grace and in divine friendship, has a right to be heard: at least insofar as it is proper for God to do, when she is holy, the will of his friends. Without doubt it is no longer a “right of justice”; it is a “right of friendship.” This is the *merit of convenience*, “*de congruo*.”⁸ It is of this, above all, that it is a question, when Jesus asks his friends to pray that the Father’s name may be glorified, his kingdom come, his will be done (Mt 6:9), begging the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest (Mt 9:38); or when St. Paul writes to the Colossians: “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I complete in my flesh what is lacking in Christ’s affliction for the sake of his body, which is the Church” (Col 1:24).

Thus the intercession and mediation of Christians in a state of grace who pray for the salvation of the world derives its value, not from the simple prayer, as a

⁸ S. THOMAS distinguishes between merit of condignity and merit of congruity when he asks whether a man can deserve for another the first grace, that is to say, the grace of justification, of conversion: “It is the question of the *merit of condignity* that Christ alone, but no other, may deserve for others the first grace. Each one of us, in fact, is moved by God by the gift of grace in order to arrive at eternal life himself, and that is why the merit of condignity does not extend beyond this motion. But the soul of Christ is moved by God through grace not only to make Himself the glory of eternal life, but also to lead others there as the Head of the Church and the author of the salvation of men, having according to Hebrews 2:10 to lead to glory a great number of sons. It is a question of the merit of congruity that a man may deserve for another the first grace; for, inasmuch as man in a state of grace fulfills the will of God, it is fitting according to the proportion of friendship that God fulfill the will of this man to save another: although, on the side of this one, obstacles can arise.” I-II q. 114, a. 6.

man who is still a sinner can do,⁹ but from the quality of this prayer when she ascends with a heart more or less deeply united to Christ: “Verily, verily I say unto you, whatever you ask of the Father, he shall give it unto you in my name; so far you have asked for nothing in my name” (Jn 16:23-24).

f) Redemptive mediation and co-redemptive mediation

It is now easy to compare the redemptive mediation of Christ with the co-redemptive mediation of the Christians and the Church.

Only the mediation of Christ is *redemptive*. This means that it is first, that it alone is theandric, it alone is infinite in rigorous terms, it alone is meritorious in justice, “de condigno,” of the salvation of all men: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6). “Christ alone,” says St. Thomas, “is a perfect mediator between God and men, because he has reconciled through his death, the human race with God. Thus, the apostle, speaking of the unique mediation of Christ, adds that he has given himself as a ransom for all.”¹⁰

The mediation of Christians and of the Church can only be *co-redemptive*. This means that it is entirely suspended from that of Christ, that it derives its full value from it, that it is meritorious to the salvation of another “de congruo,” by virtue of the proprieties of friendship, which bear God to hear those who, in Christ, ask in the name of Christ.

Christ, who merited in condignity the conversion of Augustine, helped Monica to co-merit this same conversion by the power of her tears. He merited in condignity that the reign of God should come upon the earth; he helps us, when we say the *Our Father* with love, to co-merit the coming of this reign. The redemptive mediation of Christ precedes, arouses, supports the co-redemptive mediation of Christians, the Church, and the Virgin.

g) Co-redemptive mediation is a mediation of supposit and an immediacy of virtue

It is important, from now on, to fully clarify the relationship between the redemptive mediation of Christ and the co-redemptive mediation of Christians, the Church, and the Virgin. The difficulties experienced by the Protestants, for example, in admitting a mediation other than that of Christ, are partly due to their mis-

⁹ Prayer as such is an appeal to divine omnipotence; when it emanates from a heart which has not yet left sin, it can have no other value.

¹⁰ III, q. 26, s. 1.

understanding of the nature of the mediation of intercession. They think: *addition* and *juxtaposition*, where one should think: *subordination*, *participation* and *compenetration*.

The mediation of intercession is a mediation of the moral order, but it is clarified by a distinction made by the ancients about mediation in

the metaphysical order and in the physical order. The moon is carried by the earth, which is carried by the sun. Between the moon and the sun, the earth is a reality, a *supposit* interposed. It does indeed bear the moon, but without lightening the sun, which carries totally, by its virtue of attraction, both the earth and the moon. This is what is expressed by saying that between the sun and the moon there is *mediation of supposit*, but *immediacy of virtue*.¹¹

Let us transpose this distinction into the order of intercessory prayer. The conversion of Augustine is suspended from the prayers of Monica, herself suspended from the prayer of Christ on the cross. Let it not be said that Monica carries nothing. Let it not be said that what Monica carries Christ does not have to bear.

Redemptive mediation is that which always carries all, totally, by the immediacy of virtue: it carries certain things by suppositis interposed, and others, without suppositis interposed. Co-redemptive mediation is that which intervenes in supposit, without breaking the immediacy of redemptive virtue: it carries very heavy burdens, but insofar as it is itself totally carried by the unique mediation of redemption.

h) Individual Co-Redemptive Mediation of Christians

If Christ, who is the head, is *redeemer*, and there is a symbiosis between the head and the body, it must be said that the Church is *co-redemptive*. Consequently, insofar as a man becomes a member of Christ and of the Church, he is called to be a co-redeemer.

Perhaps it does not belong except *by desire* to Christ and to the Church in complete act. Yet, especially if this desire is intense, we will see the prayer of intercession forming spontaneously in his heart. Thus, before Christ, the mediation of Abraham for Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis (18:23-33) is not only a solemn prefiguration, but already an anticipated participation in the redemptive mediation of Christ; it has not saved the sinful cities, and Jerusalem in the days of Titus and Vespasian will not be saved, but it will have been able to obtain at the last moment the salvation of souls, victims of these sinful cities. After Christ, belonging to Christ and the Church by desire alone, it continues to have similar effects: we will

¹¹ One may think, with CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, of the iron ring which attracts insofar as it is itself attracted by the magnet. *Strom.*, VII, 2; PG 11, 413.

see, for example, the *hassidim* rediscover, in the eighteenth century, the value of the prayer of intercession of the just.¹²

For those who belong *effectively and corporeally* to the Church in its complete act, in which grace is fully Christian, *i.e.* sacramental and oriented, they are, of this very fact, called in an immediate manner to intercede for others. They can, without doubt, miss their vocation, live in mediocrity, pass alternatively from sin to grace, and end up simply being “saved because of the prayer of others” – or perhaps, alas! of the damned. But, insofar as they are faithful to their vocation, they are asked to intercede at every Mass, and even at each *Our Father*, for the salvation of the world. Their task is not simply to be *members saved* by Christ, but to be in Christ, with Christ, through Christ, *co-redemptive members* of the rest of men. St. Paul never ceases to pray to God for his disciples, asking that they be filled with knowledge of the divine will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 1:9); he even goes so far as to wish to be anathema and separated from Christ for the salvation of his own (Rom 1:3). The saints are those who, in Jesus, give their lives for the salvation of the world.¹³

¹² “Master of the World,” said R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apta on his deathbed, “you know that I have no merit or good for which you can bring me into paradise after my death, among the just. You must therefore place me in hell among the wicked. You know, Master of the World, that I have hated, with extreme hatred, all those who transgress your will; how could I then dwell with them? This is why I implore thee to bring out of hell all the wicked out of the children of Israel, that I may be brought therein” P. J. DE MENASCE, *Quand Israël aime Dieu*, 1931, 163. The author adds a little further on, 175: “It cannot be denied that with this profound understanding of prayer and the role of the saints as mediators between men and God there really is something new in Judaism ... The innovation is in practice, in this strange phenomenon that is the Hasidic movement, where we see the masses accepting a notion that may seem simple to us and of good sense, which was not so, and which continues not to be, for those who, for many centuries, have lost the meaning ... of intercession.”

¹³ “The desire to bear all pain and fatigue until death for the salvation of souls is very pleasing to me. The more one bears, the more she shows that she loves me; the more one loves me, the more sweetness one knows; and the more one knows, the more intolerable is the pain and sorrow of seeing me offended. You asked me to place on you and punish you for the sins of others; and you did not know that it was asking for love, light, knowledge of truth. For I have told you, the greater is the love, the greater the pain and sorrow.” Saint CATHERINE OF SIENA, *Libro della divina dottrina*, Bari, 1912, 11; trans. Hurtaud, t. I, 18. “I saw by an inner certainty the demons triumph over those poor souls whom they wrested from the domain of Jesus Christ, our divine Master and sovereign Lord, who had redeemed them by his precious Blood. On these views and certitudes, I entered into jealousy, I could not take it any longer, I embraced all these poor souls, held them in my bosom, presented them to the eternal Father, telling him that it was time for him to do justice in favor of my Bridegroom, that he knew very well that he had promised him all nations for an inheritance...” MARY OF THE INCARNATION, ursuline, *Écrits spirituels- et historiques*, Paris, 1930, t. II, 310. Cf. the encyclical *Mystici corporis*, *A. A. S.*, 1943, 213 and 221; See above, 558.

i) Collective co-redemptive mediation of the Church

1. Of the individual co-redemptive mediation of the Christian, it must be said: (1) that it is measured by the intensity of its own fervor; (2) that it is deployed around it by concentric circles, according to what St. Thomas calls “the order of charity,”¹⁴ which grades and hierarchizes the obligations of each: it is first for Augustine that Monica must pray and cry; (3) finally, that it does not extend far beyond the generations of which it is contemporary, so that, as Cajetan did when he wanted to prove that the Pope did not to designate his successor,¹⁵ he recalled the word of the Lord: “Do not be worried about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself: let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day” (Mt 6:34).¹⁶

2. The collective co-redemptive mediation of the Church is also measured by its fervor, which can be relaxed or intensified according to time and place. But still, the fervor of the Church is greater than that of each of its members; it is made of an impetus which comes from Pentecost and which brings her to the encounter of the Parousia: the more delicate the piety of her children, the more so they experience the power of that impulse which raises and carries them, and the more they know the value of the prayer of intercession of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

The primary and immediate end of the Church’s prayer is the gradual and ever closer attachment of the universe to Christ. She implores by the *Our Father* the continual coming of the reign of God. The primary intention of each Mass is that of the Cross, namely the sanctification and expansion of the Church, the body of Christ, and by that, for it is the same thing, the salvation of the world.¹⁷

But the present Church does not exist *tota simul*. She endures in time. From then on, it is at every hour of her existence that she bears before God the burden of humanity which is contemporary with her. At least for one part: for if God sends some workers to his harvest of himself (immediacy of supposit), and if he sends other workers again when we pray to him, Mt 9:37-38 (mediation of supposit); if it is true, more generally, that he saves men, either by first gifts which precede all their thoughts (immediacy of supposit), or, on the contrary, by raising and offering up their prayers (mediation of supposit), we must say that a great part of the graces of conversion given to the world at each period of its duration are the effect of the intercession of the Church at the same time (mediation of supposit).

¹⁴ II-II, q. 26.

¹⁵ *Apologia de comparata auctoritate papae and concilii*, chap. XIII, n. 740.

¹⁶ It is necessary to reserve, however, the case of exceptional vocations, as we have done above, 570, note 552.

¹⁷ "The canon of the Mass testifies, if examined, that even Masses celebrated with particular intentions are nevertheless always celebrated explicitly *for the living and the dead*." CAJETAN, *De missae celebratione, Opusculae*, t. II, treatise III, chap. II.

It must even be added that the Church, at every period of her duration, answers before God of the corresponding duration of purgatory, insofar as she can contribute to alleviate the exile by her mediation (of supposit).

3. If we now consider the Church, no longer at any time in her life, but in all her duration, from Pentecost to the Parousia, can we say that her co-redemptive mediation, extending to all men during all time, is *universal*? Yes, but on the condition that such a universality is only *relative*; for the co-redemptive mediation of which we are speaking: (1) is fully valid only for the age when the Church is fully formed, that is, for the age which, according to the apostles, is the last or eschatological age of the world, and which begins at Pentecost; (2) it obtains only a part, doubtless important, but not all, of the graces given to men.

j) First and universal co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin

Unlike the collective co-redemptive mediation of the Church, the personal co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin is universal absolutely: (1) it extends to all men of all times; (2) it obtains for them (mediation of supposit) all the graces which derive from the redemption of Christ (immediateness of virtue); (3) it is therefore anterior and enveloping in relation to the co-redemptive mediation of the Church. The mediation of the Virgin is, therefore, the point towards which the mediation of the Church tends without ever joining it, as the curve tends towards its asymptote. It is in the Virgin alone that the Church can become mediatrix (of a co-redemptive mediation) of all graces, *mediatrix omnium gratiarum*.

1. One recalls how Marian theology proceeded to establish that Mary was conceived without original sin.¹⁸ To be the worthy mother of God the Redeemer, she was to receive, this is inscribed in the exigencies of so high a notion, all the purity compatible with the fact of her redemption by the cross of Christ. The difficulty was to know whether to exempt the Virgin from original sin was not at the same time to save her from the redemption of Christ. As soon as the notion of “preventive redemption” emerges, the difficulty collapses, and the triumph of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin will be assured.

A similar approach will enlighten the doctrine of the co-redemption of the Virgin. To be the worthy mother of a redeeming God of the whole world, Mary, this is required by such a notion, must be associated with the act of redemption of the world, as intensely, as completely as her condition allows as the first redeemed by the cross of Christ. But can she be co-redemptrix of the whole world, can she be a first and universal co-redemptrix, being herself redeemed? That is the whole question.

¹⁸ See above 674, note 28.

2. The answer depends on two notions: the common notion of co-redemption; the particular notion of first redeemed and first co-redemptrix.

a) We have defined the common notion of co-redemption. Every co-redeemer must first be redeemed; and the more the grace which redeems her is intense in her, the more co-redemptive she becomes. Christ directly ransomed Monica and Augustine; but he causes Monica to join her finite sufferings with his infinite sufferings, a finite charity to his infinite charity, so that it is directly due to the sufferings of Christ that Augustine is redeemed (immediacy of virtue), and directly due to the sufferings of Monica that Augustine is co-redeemed (Monica directly bears Augustine, but as a supposit born in turn by Christ). The conversion of Augustine is entirely merited, first and in condignity, by Christ, and wholly co-merited in the second place and in convenience by Monica. Co-redemption is to redemption, co-merit is to merit, as participation is to the Source – taking from it without bringing anything to it – as the being of the universe is to the Being of God: after creation, say theologians, there is not, intensively, more being (*non est plus esse*) there are only many participants in being (*sunt plura entia*). Wanting to suppress our co-merit in Christ for fear of doing harm to the merit of Christ, our co-redemption in Christ for fear of doing harm to the redemption of Christ, *this is not to honor, it is on the contrary to blaspheme the merit of Christ and the redemption of Christ*. And to demand, “what do co-merit and co-redemption in Christ matter, when the merit and redemption of Christ suffice,” is ultimately to ask what does the being of the universe matter, when the being of God suffices.

b) If Mary were redeemed in the common way, like St. John, St. Monica, the rest of men, she would be co-redemptrix in the manner of St. John, St. Monica, and the rest of men. But precisely – this is the dogma of her “preventive redemption” and her Immaculate Conception – Mary is redeemed in an absolutely unique way, superior to all the rest of men, she is the first of the redeemed: in the order of the intensity of grace, for in the order of the succession of time Adam is the first of the redeemed. She is therefore co-redemptrix in an absolutely unique way, superior to all the rest of men, she is, in the order of the intensity of grace, the first co-redemptrix. Jesus redeems her on the cross so that, once redeemed by him alone, she is co-redemptrix with him of all that he is the redeemer, that is to say, of all the rest of the human race. The privilege of her Immaculate Conception, the fullness and growth of her charity, the successive favors with which she had been filled, and which had been conceded to her by anticipation and because of the future Passion of Christ, all these graces were destined, when the Cross would be erected, to be united to the infinite Passion of Christ, directly redemptive of the Virgin herself and of all other men, by the act of unspeakable Compassion, exceeding in intensity,

elevation, amplitude, all that men are capable of conceiving, and directly co-redemptive of all other men.

3. To the question we asked a moment ago: can Mary be a co-redeemer of the whole world, being redeemed herself? It must be answered that Mary, being the first redeemed, above all the rest of humanity, is therefore the first co-redemptrix, above all the rest of humanity. In Mary, the Church reaches the point towards which she tends without being able to attain it by herself alone.¹⁹ In Mary, the Church is fully the Church: in Mary the Church becomes co-redemptrix in Christ, of all that Christ is the only redeemer, namely, of all men, whether they know it or not, of those who have lived from the beginning of the world to Christ, and of those who have lived since Christ until the end of the world.

Just as the sun carries the earth, which carries the moon, but all the weight of the earth and the moon ultimately weighs directly on the sun, so the redemptive mediation of Christ carries the universal co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin Mary, which in turn brings about the relatively universal co-redemptive mediation of the Church and the particular co-redemptive mediation of Christians, for there are souls who bear others as a planet its satellites; but all the weight of the particular co-redemptive mediation of Christians, and the relatively universal co-redemptive mediation of the Church, and the absolutely universal co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin, ultimately weighs on that moment of Christ's life when he enters into his agony and dies on the cross.

k) Progress of the doctrine of the universal co-redemption of Mary. Eve and Mary

1. The parallel of the first and second Eve was already worthy, as we have said, to remind us that both were created without any sin, immaculate.

The Fathers used this same parallel, but to oppose the contrary fates of Eve and Mary, one cooperating in our catastrophe, the other in our redemption. They draw our attention to the positive role of Mary in our redemption.

Yet the principle of Mary's co-operation in the work of our redemption remains with the Fathers in an enveloped state, without being able to display all its

¹⁹ "The whole Church is co-redemptive because it co-operates in the redemption of men not only as an instrument of the grace of Christ, but by the offering of her own sacrifice. But the Virgin Mary is before the Church and for the foundation of it ... Among the co-redeemers, she is the co-redemptrix *par excellence*. She is the first and the model in that order. Among all the associates of Christ, she is *par excellence* the Associate. She is the model and type of the Church, the Bride *par excellence*, the one in whom the human race is more closely co-assumed with the holy humanity of Christ." M.-J. NICOLAS, O.P. "The Co-Redemption," *Revue Thomiste*, 1947, 44.

consequences. How could it be otherwise? The theology of the mystery of the *redemptive incarnation* develops in stages. It is especially the theology of the *incarnation* that retains the attention of the first Christian centuries. When it is fully elaborated, the theology of redemption can be constituted, in dependence on it, with the *Cur Deus homo* of St. Anselm and the *Summa* of St. Thomas. When, therefore, the Fathers affirm the principle of Mary's co-operation in our redemption, they first hear of her cooperation in the work of the incarnation, which will be redemptive. Later, the same principle, which they use in a still general and remote way, can be applied in a more immediate and more precise manner, and to understand the co-operation of Mary in the very work of redemption. In the first instance, Mary's co-operation will be seen primarily as a *ministry* and a *service*. In the second, it will necessarily appear under the aspect of co-intercession and co-merit. It is then that the notion of the universal co-redemptive mediation of Mary can be fully explained.

2. Mary positively cooperated in our redemption by freely giving birth to the Redeemer through her faith and obedience at the time of the Incarnation. This is the theme which the Fathers will hardly surpass.

In the *Dialogue with Tripbo* (c. 150-155), Saint Justin contrasts Eve, docile with the Serpent, who gives birth to death, with Mary, docile to the Angel, who gives birth to Life: "Eve, virgin and without corruption, received in her the word of the serpent and bred disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary felt faith and joy, when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that the Spirit of the Lord would descend upon her, that the power of the Most High would cover her with his shadow, that consequently the holy one who would be born of her would be the Son of God. And she said, "Let it be done to me according to your word."²⁰

St. Irenaeus (verses 140-202) opposes Mary, wife and virgin, repairing in obedience for all mankind what Eve, wife and virgin, had destroyed in disobedience for the whole human race: "Just as Eve, having Adam for her husband, but still virgin, was by her disobedience cause of death for her and all mankind; Mary, destined for a husband but yet virgin, was by her obedience cause of salvation for her and all mankind, *et sibi et universo generi humano*. And if the Law calls the bride still virgin, it is to signify the recommencement, the circuit, *recirculationem*, which goes from Mary to Eve; for what had been bound could only be loosened by a contrary knot, the first knot being defeated by the second, the second delivering from the first. Thus the knot of Eve's disobedience is defeated by the obedience of Mary, which a vir-

²⁰ *Dialogue*, chap. C, n. 5, PG., t. VI, col. 709.

gin (wife) had bound by her unbelief, another virgin (wife) unties by her faith.”²¹ In the *Proof of Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus writes: “It was because of a disobedient virgin that man was struck, and after his fall was subjected to death; in the same way, it was because of the Virgin who is docile to the word of God that man has been regenerated at the hearth of life ... It was just and necessary ... that Eve was restored in Mary, ‘so that a virgin becoming the advocate of a virgin, the disobedience of one was effaced and destroyed by the obedience of the other.’”²²

The same parallel is more dense in Tertullian, in *De carne Christi* (208-211) : “The ways God uses to win back man, made in his image and likeness, are parallel to those of which the devil had used to rob him of it. A word of death had come to the virgin Eve; the Word of life was to come also into a virgin: so that what was lost by the woman might be saved by the woman. Eve believed the Serpent, Mary believed Gabriel; where the credulity of one sinned, the faith of the other repairs.”²³

For Saint Augustine, “a great mystery was suggested in that death had come to us by a woman, life would come to us by a woman; and that the devil was vanquished and thwarted by our dual nature, feminine and masculine,”²⁴ by the Virgin and Christ.

Elsewhere, in an important text, in which he considers not only the maternal love of the Virgin for Christ, but also the maternal love of the Virgin for us, and thus, as a result, seems to pass from the consideration of the role of the Virgin in the incarnation, and the direct consideration of her role in redemption. He teaches that Mary, the bodily mother of Christ, who is the head, is in all truth spiritually mother “of his members, because she has co-operated by her charity to bring into the Church the faithful who are members of this head, *quia cooperata est caritate ut fideles in Ecclesiano nascerentur, quae illius capitis membra sunt.*”²⁵

²¹ *Adversus haereses*, book III, chap. XXII; PG 7, 959. “It could only be loosened by a contrary knot”: according to the editor, Dom Massuet, the meaning would be “could only be loosened by pulling back the ends of the tie.”

²² *Patrologia Orientalis*, t. XII, 772, n. 33.

²³ *De carne Christi*, chap. XVII, PL 2, 782.

²⁴ *De agone christiano*, chap. XXII; PL 40, 303.

²⁵ *De sancta virginitate*, chap. VI, n. 6; PL 40, 399. One can give birth to others unto Christ in two ways: by way of intercession or merit, and by way of ministry or service. These two paths require intertwining. Does the text of St. Augustine signify that Mary by her charity merits to give birth to us unto Christ? In this case, it would go beyond the preceding texts and introduce us further into the doctrine of co-redemptive mediation. Saint Augustine commented at this place on the word of Jesus, Mt 12:50: “Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother and my sister and my mother.” For those, he said, who have grace, being co-heirs with Christ, they are spiritually his brothers and sisters. But for the soul who does the will of the Father in love, gives birth to others according to grace,

3. The doctrine of the co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin, which can only become clear in dependence on the progress of the theology of redemption, is only the explication of the supreme principle of Mariology: *Mary is the worthy mother of a God who becomes incarnate to save us, Mary is the worthy mother of the Redeemer, as the Redeemer.*²⁶

As it is elaborated,²⁷ the theology of co-redemption invites us to reread, with more attentive faith, the mysterious words of Jesus to his Mother, close to his cross, and to St. John: "Jesus, seeing his Mother, and very near, the disciple whom he loved, said to his Mother – *Woman, behold your son!* Then he said to the disciple – *Behold, your mother.* And from that hour the disciple took her into his home" (Jn 19:26-27). It is, indeed, the grandeur of theology, the more it advances and unfolds, to bring us back to Scripture with new eyes, to make us discover depths still unperceived. And how can we forget here that this woman is the one who, in the vision of the apostle, brings into the world the male Child (Rev. 12) and who at Cana of

and forms Christ in them (Gal 4:19), it must be said that she is spiritually the mother of Christ. Even more than a particular soul, the Church is the mother of Christ, for she brings forth by the grace of God the members of Christ, namely the faithful. And Mary, because of the faith and love with which she, too, did the will of the Father, is spiritually the mother of Christ; she gives birth to us unto Christ in a more beautiful and privileged manner, *laudabilius atque beatius*. For her faith was great. To the woman who blessed his mother, it was the true greatness of his mother that Jesus revealed in replying: "Blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it!" (Lk 11:28). Mary was "more blessed to receive the faith of Christ than to conceive the flesh of Christ," "her maternal kinship would have served her nothing if, by a higher felicity, she had not borne Christ more in her heart than in her flesh." *De sancta virginitate*, chap. III, n. 3. Thus, Mary gives us birth into Christ: if it were by the value of the intercession of her love, we would have in this text a precision, a de-enveloping, of the doctrine of the co-redemptive mediation of the Christian, of the Church, of the Virgin.

²⁶ As incarnation and redemption are not two irreducible mysteries, but the two successive moments of a single mystery, that of the redemptive incarnation, it follows that Mariology rests not on two juxtaposed principles, the first in which Mary is the mother of God, the second in which she is associated with redemption, but on a single principle revealed in the Gospel: Mary is mother of God the Redeemer, as Redeemer. See above, 663. Cf. B. H. MERKELBACH, O.P., *Mariologia*, Paris, 1939. 91: "Mary consents to these two things: to become the mother of God, and to become the associate of the Redeemer; but she consents to it by a single movement, these two things not being dissociated in the message of the Angel: she accepts to be the mother of God the Redeemer as such."

²⁷ The hesitations which some Catholic theologians still find themselves faced with the notion of co-redemption are, we believe, dispelled by the mere analysis of this notion, and by the manner in which one specifies its application to Christians, to the Church, to the Virgin. In the discharge of the few contemporary theologians who hesitate or refuse to regard the Virgin as co-redemptrix, we can say that they feel the need to protest against certain awkward and insufficiently theological expressions. A list of these theologians can be found in Clement DILLENCHNEIDER, C. ss. R., *Mary in the service of our redemption*, Haguenuau, 1947, 94-105.

Galilee obtains by her mediation the first miracle of Jesus? (Jn 2:1-11). Christ having not communicated to any creature the redemptive grace by which he is the head of the whole mystical body,²⁸ the highest communicated grace is, in the order of co-redemption, the grace by which he gives his Mother a co-redemptive motherhood over all the rest of the mystical body.

4. The doctrine of the co-redemptive mediation of the Virgin appears in recent papal documents.²⁹

Leo XIII shows us, “standing at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, Mary, his Mother, who, touched by an immense desire to receive us as sons, offers her own Son to divine justice, dying with him in his heart, pierced by a sword of grief.”³⁰ Elsewhere he declares that “the most holy Virgin, as she is the mother of Jesus Christ, is likewise the mother of all Christians, for she bore them on the hill of Calvary during the supreme torments of the Redeemer.”³¹

Pius X says, in a great text that must not be dislocated, for he bears his exegesis with him: “When the last hour of her Son comes, the Mother of Jesus stands by his cross Through a communion of sorrows and will which united her to Christ, Mary merited to become, in a very high way, the reparatrix of the fallen world, and thus the dispenstrix of all the gifts that Jesus has acquired for us through his bloody death³² ... Because of this communion of sorrows and anguish of the Mother and the Son, it was given to this august Virgin to be with her only Son, the mediatrix and conciliatrix of the whole world³³ Because Mary prevails over all by her holiness and union with Christ, and because she has been associated by Christ with the work of the salvation of humanity, she merits us *de congruo*, as they say, what Christ has merited for us *de condigno*, – *de congruo, ut aiunt, promeret*

²⁸ Cf. S. THOMAS, III, q. 64, a. 4, ad 1 and 3

²⁹ An account may be found at Clement DILLENCHNEIDER, C.ss.R., *Mary at the service of our redemption*, 44 ff.

³⁰ Encyclical *Jucunda semper*, 8 September 1894.

³¹ Encyclical *Quamquam pluries*, 15 August 1889.

³² To speak exactly, it is Christ, who is reparator, by merit of condignity; And Mary is co-reparatrix, by merit of convenience, as the Pope will say a few lines below. And it's Christ, who is the dispenser, as “conjoined instrument” to the divinity, of all the gifts he has acquired through his bloody death; and Mary is second-in-command, as *princeps ministra*, as the Pope later says, and, according to some, as a “separate” instrument from the divinity. The word *reparatrix perditii orbis*, borrowed from the monk EADMER (1124), simply meant that the Virgin gave birth to the Savior. *De excellentia Virginis*, chap. IX, PL 159, 574 ff.

³³ She is mediatrix and conciliatrix beside her Son, as the Pope says. In other words, she is mediatrix and conciliatrix of the whole world, not indeed in the sphere of redemption, but in the sphere of co-redemption.

nobis, Quae Christus de condigno promeruit – and she is the first instrument, *princeps ministra*, of the dispensation of graces.”³⁴

According to Benedict XV, “the doctors of the Church commonly report that if the Blessed Virgin Mary, who appeared absent from the whole public life of Jesus Christ, is suddenly present at the death of her crucified Son, it was not without a divine purpose While her Son was suffering and dying, she suffered, and is, as it were, dead with him; she has renounced her maternal rights over her Son for the salvation of men;³⁵ in order to appease divine justice insofar as she could, she sacrificed her Son,³⁶ so that it can be rightly said that she, with Christ, has redeemed the human race.”³⁷

Pius XI invokes “the very benign Mother of God, who gave us Jesus our Redeemer, fed him, offered him as a victim at the foot of the cross, and who through her mysterious union with Christ and a grace exceptional in every way, was also reparatrix, and deserves to be called such.”³⁸

Pius XII shows us Mary, “a new Eve, exempt from any personal or hereditary fault, always closely united to her Son, offering him on Golgotha to the eternal Father with the holocaust of her maternal rights and love for all the sons that Adam defiled by his sad sin; so that the one who, bodily, was the mother of our Head became spiritually the mother of all his members by a new title of sorrow and glory.”³⁹

All these texts of the popes, and this seems crucial to us, are centered on the page of the Gospel where St. John speaks to us of the mysterious presence of Mary near the Cross of Jesus.

5. The parallel of Eve and Mary, found by the Fathers of the apostolic age, can be constantly taken up and enriched.

From the side of the first Adam, sleeping in paradise, came the first Eve, who, during the supreme trial, shares his pride, and drags us with him into catastrophe.

From the side of the second Adam, “sleeping on the cross,” came the second Eve, who shares her love at the supreme sacrifice, and drags us with her into deliverance.

³⁴ Encyclical *Ad diem illum*, 2 February 1904.

³⁵ This trope, taken from Leo XIII, must obviously not be changed into a thesis of “juridical theology.”

³⁶ Not like a Spartan mother. She consented, but in the breaking of her whole being, that her Son should be sacrificed: *Verum-tamen, non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat*.

³⁷ Letter *Inter sodalicia*, March 22, 1918.

³⁸ Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928. The theological word would be *co-reparatrix*.

³⁹ Encyclical *Mystici corporis*, Epilogue, 29 June 1943.

The second Eve is first of all Mary. She comes entirely from Christ on the Cross. It is, indeed, by virtue of the passion of Christ that she is immaculate from the beginning. And it is the passion of Christ that will provoke in her that unimaginable compassion, which, with God, will merit in convenience what the passion itself merits in condignity, namely the universal salvation of the human race. The merit of convenience, which includes degrees, will know its supreme intensity in Mary, if Jesus gives her to us as Mother.

The second Eve is then the rest of the Church. She is born from the side of Christ from which emerge water and blood symbolizing baptism and the Eucharist, in short the sacraments, which, according to St. Thomas, make the Church.⁴⁰ She is also immaculate, without spot or wrinkle or anything like it. In the likeness of the Virgin she is also compassionate, although her compassion is less intense and less extensive. At every moment of the world the Mass brings to her all the passion of Christ so that by her compassion at that time she may work to save the world at that moment. The passion of Christ merits in condignity, and the compassion of Mary in convenience, all the graces of all men; the compassion of the Church of each age merits in its own right an important part of the graces of all men of that period.

The prayer of each Christian is raised by the prayer of the Church, raised herself by the prayer of the Virgin, raised in turn by the prayer of Christ on the Cross, to which, in the last instance, is suspended all the weight of the world.⁴¹

1) Mediation of the earth and mediation of heaven

One frees oneself of many confusions by being attentive to distinguishing the mediation of the earth and the mediation of heaven. The former may be meritorious, and consequently co-redemptive; the second cannot be meritorious or co-redemptive. We always speak of the mediation which we have called moral or ascending (to oppose it to physical or descending mediation).

1. Let us consider first the *mediation of the earth*.

⁴⁰ "The sacraments of the Church hold their virtue especially from the passion of Christ, whose virtue is in some measure applied to us by the reception of the sacraments. Christ, on the cross, poured forth water and blood, relating to baptism and the Eucharist, which are the principal sacraments." III, q. 62, a. 5.

⁴¹ "The sinner stretches out his hand to the saint, gives his hand to the saint, since the saint gives his hand to the sinner. And all together, one by the other, one pulling the other, they go back to Jesus, they make a chain that goes back to Jesus, a chain with indelible fingers. He who is not a Christian is the one who does not give his hand. It does not matter what he does next with this hand. When a man can accomplish the highest action in the world without being soaked with grace, this man is a stoic, he is not a Christian." Charles PÉGUY, *A New Theologian*, Paris, N. R. F., 1936, 205.

The infinite supplication of Christ, although the cross has been erected only at a particular point in space and time, draws to it the whole extent of space and the whole duration of time. It merits in condignity and directly, that is to say, without anything intervening in this line of merit of condignity, all the graces, both those of the human race and those of each individual person. To say that it merits means that it is given by God to *obtain*, to *acquire*, to *buy*, all these graces. These are the very words of Scripture. It speaks of “the Church of God, which he acquired through his own blood” (Acts 20:28); of the man Christ Jesus “who gave himself *as a ransom* for all” (1 Tim 2:6); Christians who have been *redeemed* ... not by perishable things, silver or gold, but by the precious blood of Him who is like a Lamb without blemish and without spot, Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19). Such is the redemptive supplication of Christ.

It arouses the finite supplication of Christians, who, under the impulse of charity, intercede in their turn for others. Their supplication is meritorious in convenience. In other words, it is given by God to *co-obtain*, to *co-acquire*, to *co-buy* in Christ the salvation of others. Scripture shows us Jesus inviting the disciples to supplicate if they want to drive out demons from others: “This kind [of spirit] can only be driven out by prayer” (Mk 9:29); it shows us St. Paul waiting upon Christ to be delivered from his dejection, but soliciting at the same time of the Corinthians that they would willingly “in his favor, *join their help by prayer*” (2 Cor 1:10-11). Such is the co-redemptive supplication.

In the Virgin it will be first and universal, so that the Virgin merits and acquires in supreme convenience the graces of the rest of the human race. In the other faithful, it will be second, and will know the limits of space and even more of time. If Monica weeps, it is to buy through her tears and her love the conversion of Augustine.

One thing is constant: every intercession inspired by charity here on earth, whether it be Christ, or the Virgin and the saints, is meritorious; and this means that *it is valuable in the order of the acquisition of graces*.

2. It is quite different for the *mediation of heaven*.

The risen Christ, who is “at the right hand of God, intercedes for us” (Rom 5:34; Heb 7:25). His charity has not diminished, *but it has ceased to be meritorious*, to be redemptive.⁴² His intercession consists *in ratifying through an uninterrupted supra-historical act the earthly and historical supplication of the cross, valid for each of the successive moments of our time*: “By a single offering he brought to perfection those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:14).

⁴² “The oblation of the sacrifice was made once for all on the cross, but the goods which it obtains from the elect are eternal.” S. THOMAS, III, q. 22, a. 5.

The intercession of the Virgin and of the elect has also ceased to be meritorious, to be co-redemptive. It always proceeds from charity, *but from a charity which no longer has to merit or to acquire*, and whose whole office is to ask that the graces of salvation be given to men *in compensation for the merits of earthly, historical charity*. What is this earthly charity of which heaven retains the merits? It is first and foremost the earthly charity of Christ, the redeemer of all historical ages. It is also the co-redemptive earthly charity. The Church of heaven presents to God the earthly charity of the Virgin, the co-redemptrix of all historical ages. And it presents to God the earthly charity of the Church of time and of its saints, valid especially for the moment of the history of which they are contemporaries. In this light appears the extraordinary value of the charity of the present time.

Here we are, then, in the presence of an ascending or moral mediation, which proceeds from the highest charity, and yet is not meritorious at any of its stages: neither in Christ, nor in the Virgin, nor in the elect. *It does not aim at the acquisition of new graces*; on the contrary, it aims only to promote in our favor the earthly merits of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. One may speak, if one wishes to designate it, of a *mediation in the distribution of graces*.

3. Here, for the first time, we find the distinction between cooperation or mediation in the acquisition of graces, and cooperation or mediation in the distribution of graces.

But these two mediations oppose one another as the mediation of earth and the mediation of heaven.

In our eyes it is wandering to speak of an intercession which, proceeding from the terrestrial charity of the Virgin, of the Church, of the Christians, would have value, not for the acquisition of graces, but only for their distribution.⁴³

⁴³ To the thesis: "By her compassion the Virgin merits to be the dispensatrix of graces, she does not contribute to their acquisition." M.-J. NICOLAS, O.P., "The Co-Redemption," *Revue Thomiste* 1947, 39, rightly replies: "Such a thesis, which I presume, reveals the insufficiency of the usual terminology. What does it mean to deserve the power of dispensing grace?" To this question, in always keeping strictly to the line of ascending mediation, our answer would be twofold: (1) here, to dispense grace to someone, is to merit grace for someone; (2) in heaven, to dispense grace is not to merit, it is to appeal, at the side of God, to earthly merits.

Mary's cooperation in redemption is studied by Matthias Joseph SCHEEBEN, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, book V, nn. 1786 ff., Friborg en Brisgau, vol. III, 600 ff. – (1) Scheeben accepts as partially correct the assertion that "what Christ has acquired for us by a merit *de condigno*, Mary has acquired for us at the same time by a merit *de congruo*, that is to say, by way of impetration," n. 1792. Why this apposition? Is not the merit *de condigno* also an impetration? Moreover, Scheeben will distinguish here the acquisition of graces, which he reserves for Christ, and their application, which Mary will fulfill by making us more disposable to receive them. In our view, Augustine's conversion is a total, unique, indissociable ef-

4. Thus the non-meritorious intercession of heaven is based on the meritorious intercession of the earth to raise the whole universe of historical time and, consequently, the whole universe of purgatory. Here we touch in its center the problem of the efficacy of intercessory prayer. Let us speak about a soul of prayer. Treating of the state of spiritual marriage, where God suggests to souls what they must ask, in order to be able to answer them infallibly, Father Rabussier writes: “But how is it that such domination is attached to the prayer of spiritual marriage, when so many millions of saints and angels, who are confirmed in these graces, do not chain the demons and triumph over sinners? Let us recognize here that God does everything in order, that heaven and the Church of the earth are distinct. Just as there is in a single star enough to melt all the ice of the earth, yet we undergo winter; just as to make a lever work, it needs a fulcrum, God wants every action of heaven here below to have a fulcrum on the earth; this point of support is the saints who continue their pilgrimage of this life.”⁴⁴

m) The order of descending or physical mediation

1. In the order of descending mediation, the passion of Christ is the instrumental efficient cause of our salvation.⁴⁵ The graces that Jesus merited for us, God does not give them to us except by passing them through his pierced heart, from which flow water and blood, baptism and the Eucharist.⁴⁶

The human nature of Christ, acting as a “joint instrument” or “organ” of the divinity, can use the sacraments and their ministers, which are “separate” or “ex-

fect, due entirely to Christ as redeemer, and to Mary as a co-redemptrix. According to Scheeben, if we interpret him correctly, in the conversion of Augustine it would be necessary to distinguish one thing (grace) due to Christ, and another thing (the disposition) due to Mary. Let us bring to this problem the word of St. Thomas on efficient causes: “non est distinctum quod est ex causa secunda et ex causa prima,” I, q. 23, a. 5. – (2) Scheeben asks that we complete the preceding assertion in acknowledging Mary’s participation in the sacrifice of Christ, which, without adding “to the objective integrity of the sacrifice of Christ” is required “to the subjective integrity of oblation”: it is all mankind that Christ integrates eminently in his sacrifice by integrating Mary, nn. 1795, 1798, 1799. This is the one indubitable truth, which is at the heart of the notion of the compassion and the universal co-redemption of Mary. – (3) Scheeben has reason to blame those who speak of the Virgin-priest. But is it happy when, naming it *ministra*, he translates by: deacon, *Diakonin*? n. 1798. Does not this image risk rejecting the grandeur of hierarchy? The parallel of Abraham immolating Isaac, and of the Virgin, Scheeben’s note, n. 1797, is only valid in certain respects: Abraham alone was a priest.

⁴⁴ *Review of Ascetics and Mystics*, July 1927, 289. Quoted by Jacques MARITAIN, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 729 [O. C., IV, 921].

⁴⁵ S. THOMAS, III, q. 48, a. 6; q. 64, a. 3.

⁴⁶ III, q. 62, s. 5.

trinsic” instruments, a little like the hand, which is conjoined to us, uses a tool, which is external.

2. Must we also look at the Virgin at the foot of the cross as an efficient instrumental cause of the graces which make up the Church? Then, beneath the human nature of Christ, a conjoined instrument of divinity, on the level of separate instruments, we would have hierarchically: first, the Virgin, which would be a privileged separate instrument, a kind of major sacrament of which the efficacy would be universal, and by whom would pass all the graces coming from Christ for men; and then the sacraments of the Church, which are separate and limited instruments destined to lead the various graces of Christ to each particular soul.

Must we, on the contrary, think that the Virgin, wholly hidden in the order of the greatness of holiness, and not having to appear in the order of hierarchical greatness, to which the jurisdictional powers and the sacramental powers belong, does not intervene when we are infused with justification and sanctification except by her ascending and moral mediation?

The question remains open and we are not really trying to decide it. It seems to us, however, that the greatness of holiness alone is required by the mission of the Virgin.⁴⁷

3. The whole life of the Virgin, which is a long co-operation in the work of the sanctification of the world, may be considered according to a distinction which we have already made, under the aspect in which it is *an intercession and a merit*, or under the aspect where it is *a ministry and a service*. In the first case one stands in the line of ascending and moral mediation.

In the second case, we consider the line of downward and physical mediation. Let us leave unresolved, as regards the Virgin, the question of an instrumental efficient causality of grace; its downward mediation is still to be exercised in an infinite number of tasks: she gives birth to the Savior, she protects his childhood, she par-

⁴⁷ R. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P., admits that “Mary, like our Lord and in a fashion subordinate to Him, transmits to us the graces that we receive, thanks to an instrumental physical causality”; But he regards this teaching as only probable, and as being “neither denied with certainty nor demonstrated.” *The Mother of the Savior*, Lyon, 1941, 243 and 387. In the contrary sense, B.H. MERKELBACH, O.P., does not think that Mary can be considered as the instrumental efficient cause of grace, or even as the cause of a disposition which would require the infusion of grace. *Mariologia*, Paris, 1939, 367. The path to the solution must be sought, we believe, in the answer to two questions. (1) *are the grandeurs of holiness alone demanded by the mission of the Virgin?* It seems to us that yes, and that it is the thought of St. Thomas, see farther on, 763, note 6; (2) *can we regard Virgin as an instrumental physical cause of grace as a separate instrument, a major sacrament, without at the same time conferring on her the grandeurs of hierarchy?* It seems to us that we cannot.

ticipates in the first steps of the Church, she spreads around her the flame of her beneficence and his love.

In the line of descending mediation, Christ as man is the only perfect mediator; his power to communicate grace is a *power of excellence, of principal ministry*.⁴⁸ The Virgin can only mediate in a *dependent and imperfect* manner. If one granted that it physically causes grace, its mediation would be *direct*, but would fall under a subordinate ministerial power.⁴⁹ But in the tasks and activities of which we have just spoken, her mediation is only *dispositive*.

⁴⁸ S. THOMAS, III, q. 64, a. 3 and 4.

⁴⁹ “The priests of the New Testament ... are *ministers of the true Mediator*, when they give to men, in his name, the salutary sacraments.” III, q. 26, a. 1, ad 1.