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Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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ISABELLE OSTERAG

Commentario

Observations on Pope Francis' "March 24, 2021" Comments

ROBERT FASTIGGI

Vatican II teaches that we must adhere to ordinary teachings of the Roman Pontiff according to his manifest mind and will, which may be known—among other indications—“from his manner of speaking” (*Lumen Gentium*, 25). In general audiences, discourses, and homilies, popes sometimes express personal opinions without intending to impose their views on the faithful.

On March 24, the day before the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Pope Francis dedicated his Wednesday General Audience to prayer in communion with Mary. In his audience, the Holy Father reminds us that Christian prayer is directed to God “through Christ, with Christ and in Christ.” Referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] no. 2674, he points out that “Christ is the Mediator; Christ is the bridge that we cross to turn to the Father.” He then states that Christ is the only Redeemer: there are no co-redeemers with Christ.”

As with any text, including Sacred Scripture, we must understand what is said within a context, taking into account “the manner of speaking” and the intention of the author. When the Holy Father says there are no co-redeemers with Christ, he is highlighting Christ’s unique status as the God-man, the one Mediator between God and the human race (1 Tim 2:5). His intention is made clear when he cites Acts 4:12: “there is no other name by which we can be saved.” He is certainly not denying the teaching of Vatican II that “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source” (*Lumen Gentium*, 62). It was in this sense that St. John Paul II, when speaking to the sick at the Fatebenefratelli Hospital on April 5, 1981, invited them to unite their sufferings to the passion of Christ as “co-redeemers of humanity” (*corredentori dell’umanità*). Along the same lines, Pope Benedict XVI, when blessing the sick at Fatima on May 13, 2010, reminded them that if their sufferings are united to Christ they can “become—according to his design—a means of redemption for the whole world.” He then told them: “You will be redeemers with the Redeemer, just as you are sons in the Son.”

When Pope Francis tells us, in his General Audience of March 24, that the Madonna covers us “as a Mother, not as a goddess, not as a co-redeemer,” he is emphasizing Mary’s maternal role, which is that of the *Odigitria*, “the one who ‘shows the way’ ... to her Son and in connection with Him” (see

CCC, 2674). The Holy Father is absolutely correct that Mary is not a goddess. If the Marian title, “co-redemptrix,” makes her into a goddess, we would need to reject it as a blasphemy. As is well-known, though, the title “co-redemptrix,” when properly used, never suggests that Mary is divine or equivalent to Christ as redeemer. In a similar way, Mary’s role as “co-redemptrix” never challenges the unique role of Christ, the God-man, who is the divine Redeemer of the human race. Following the logic of Vatican II, we must understand Mary’s co-redemptive role in such a way “that it neither takes away nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator” (*Lumen Gentium*, 62).

The Marian title “co-redemptrix,” however, was never meant to take away from Christ, the one divine Redeemer. The prefix, “co,” comes from Latin *cum*, which means “with.” This means that Mary, as the co-redemptrix, contributes to the work of redemption with Christ, the Redeemer, in a way that is secondary, subordinate, and dependent—but still essential according to God’s chosen plan of redemption.

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that God could have chosen to redeem the human race in many ways because of his omnipotence (*Summa theologiae*, III, q. 1, a.2). God, though, freely chose to redeem us by becoming incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This, according to St. Thomas, was the most fitting or appropriate means of redemption for many reasons (see *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 1, a.2). God, however, did not wish to become human without the free assent of one representing the human race, and this representative was Mary, the New Eve, Just as the first Eve contributed to the fall of the human race, Mary, the New Eve, contributed to the redemption of the human race. Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *Octobri mense*: (Sept. 22, 1891), expressed this truth in vivid terms:

The Eternal Son of God, about to take upon Him our nature for the saving and ennobling of man, and about to consummate thus a mystical union (*mysticum ... conubium*) between Himself and all mankind, did not accomplish His design without adding there the free consent of the elect Mother, who represented in some sort all human kind, according to the illustrious and just opinion of St. Thomas, who says that the Annunciation was effected with the consent of the Virgin standing in the place of humanity (D-H 3274; cf. ST q. 30 a. 1).

The actual text of St. Thomas Aquinas uses the term “quoddam spirituale matrimonium” to express the union between the Son of God and human nature, but the reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary in Leo XIII’s encyclical is directly from the text of the *Summa theologiae*: “Through the Annunciation the consent of the Virgin, in the place of all human nature (*loco totius humanae naturae*) was awaited.” Vatican II likewise affirmed Mary’s unique collaboration in the work of redemption, especially in *Lumen Gentium*, 56, where, citing St. Irenaeus, we are told that Mary “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.”

In various writings, Pope Francis has also affirmed Mary’s role in the work of redemption. In his general audience of October 23, 2013, he notes that every action of the Blessed Virgin “was carried out in perfect union with Jesus. This union finds its culmination on Calvary: here Mary is united to the Son in the martyrdom of her heart and in the offering of his life to the Father for the salvation of humanity. Our Lady shared in the pain of the Son and accepted with him the will of the Father, in that obedience that bears fruit, that grants the true victory over evil and death.” The Holy Father also points out that “Mary’s ‘yes’, already perfect from the start, grew until the hour of the Cross. There her motherhood opened to embrace every one of us, our lives, so as to guide us to her Son.” Here we see Pope Francis affirming not only Mary’s fruitful participation in Christ’s suffering and sacrifice on the Cross but also her universal spiritual motherhood that embraces every one of us. . In his homily of January 1, 2020, Pope Francis stated: “Mary will forever be the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother: this is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without a woman.”

Unfortunately, some have reacted to Pope Francis’s March 24 General Audience without proper awareness of the use of the Marian title, co-redemptrix, by the Magisterium. For example, the article in *Crux*, states that the title is absent from papal teaching, with the exception of Pope Leo XIII’s 1894 encyclical, *Iucunda Semper Expectatione*. The title, co-redemptrix,” however does not appear in the Latin text of this encyclical of Leo XIII. It appears, though, in one English translation as a means of rendering the phrase, “*in quo partes quae fuerunt Virginis ad salutem hominum procurandam.*”

There are, though, magisterial texts, that do use the Marian title, co-redemptrix. During the pontificate of Pius X, the Holy See three times gave approval to prayers invoking Mary as co-redemptrix (cf. *Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS] 41 [1908], p. 409; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS] 5 [1913], p. 364; AAS 6 [1914], pp. 108–109). Pius XI was the first pope to publicly use the title: once on November 30, 1933 (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, 2, p. 1013); again on March 23, 1934 (*L'Osservatore Romano* [OR] 25 March 1934, p. 1); and once again on April 28, 1935 (OR 29–30 April 1935 p. 1). John Paul II publicly used the title, Co-redemptrix, at least six times: General Audience, 10 December 1980 (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo* [Inseg] II, III/2 [1980], p. 1646); General Audience 8 September 1982 (Inseg V/3 [1982], p. 404); Angelus Address 4 November, 1984 (Inseg VII/2 [1984], p. 1151); Discourse at World Youth Day 31 March 1985 (Inseg VIII/1 [1985], p. 889–890); Address to the Sick 24 March, 1990 (Inseg XIII/1 [1990], p. 743); Discourse of 6 October, 1991 (Inseg XIV/2 [1991], p. 756). Moreover, in a homily in Guayaquil, Ecuador on January 31, 1985, John Paul II spoke of the “co-redemptive role of Mary (el papel corredentor de María), which can be translated as “the role of Mary as co-redemptrix” (Inseg VIII [1985], p. 319).

Some people believe we should avoid the title, co-redemptrix, because Vatican II did not use the term. It is true that Vatican II decided to omit the term from what would become chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*. The term, however was not rejected because it was false. In the *praenotanda* or explanatory note that accompanied the first Marian schema of 1962, we are told that: “Certain terms and expressions used by Roman Pontiffs have been omitted, which, although most true in themselves (in se verissima), may be difficult for the separated brethren (as in the case of the Protestants) to understand. Among such words the following may be enumerated: ‘Coredemptrix of the human race’ [St. Pius X, Pius XI]; ‘Reparatrix of the whole world’ [Leo XIII] ... etc.” (*Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, Volumen I, Periodus Prima, Pars IV [Vatican City, 1971], p. 99).

The title co-redemptrix, however, appears in two footnotes of the 1962 schema. Footnote 11 states that ‘the compassion of Mary has a connection with the redemption in such a way that she may rightly be called co-redemptrix’ (*Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, Volumen I, Periodus Prima, Pars IV, 1971: 104). Footnote 16 provides a lengthy explanation of the meaning of terms such as *Meditatrix* and *Coredemptrix* as applied to Mary.

While Vatican II chose not to use the term, Coredemptrix,, a number of theologians, including Jean Galot, S.J and Georges Cottier, O.P. (the former theologian of the papal household), believe Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* affirms the doctrine of Mary as Coredemptrix without using the term (cf. Galot in *La Civiltà Cattolica* [1994] III: 236-237 and Cottier, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002).

Many saints and spiritual writers have spoken of Mary as “co-redemptrix,” especially since the sixteenth century (see Mark Miravalle, “With Jesus” *The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix*, Queenship Publishing, 2003). I don't believe we should see Pope Francis cancelling out all these references to Mary as “co-redemptrix” in his March 24 General Audience. In fact, he speaks of many “beautiful things” said about Mary by the Church and saints, but these “subtract nothing from Christ's sole Redemption.” Understood properly, what the Holy Father says is correct. The beautiful things said about Mary—including recognizing her as ‘co-redemptrix—subtract nothing from Christ as the only divine Redeemer. He is the God-man, the Redeemer of the human race, He, though, chose to redeem us with our cooperation and in a special way through the cooperation of his Mother, the New Eve. The Marian title “co-redemptrix” can never mean placing Mary on equal footing with Christ, the Redeemer, and it certainly can never make her into a goddess. I think it's best to understand the March 24th General Audience of Pope Francis as a warning against these false understandings of Mary as co-redemptrix.

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Pope Francis Affirms the Essence of Marian Co-redemption and Mediation

ROBERT FASTIGGI

Some people believe Pope Francis has rejected the teaching of Marian co-redemption because he has made several statements that suggest he prefers not to call Mary, the co-redemptrix. We need, though, to ask what the title means. The great Mariologist, Fr. Gabriele Maria Roschini, O.S.M. (1900–1977), gave a very brief but accurate explanation of what it means to call Mary, the Co-redemptrix of the human race:

The title Co-redemptrix of the human race means that the Most Holy Virgin cooperated with Christ in our reparation as Eve cooperated with Adam in our ruin.¹

From prior statements of Pope Francis, it's clear that he affirms this doctrine. In his morning meditation for the Solemnity of the Annunciation in 2016, the Holy Father states: "Today is the celebration of the 'yes'... Indeed, in Mary's 'yes' there is the 'yes' of all of salvation history and there begins the ultimate 'yes' of man and of God: there God re-creates, as at the beginning, with a 'yes', God made the earth and man, that beautiful creation: with this 'yes' I come to do your will and more wonderfully he re-creates the world, he re-creates us all". Pope Francis recognizes Mary's "yes" as an expression of her active role in salvation history—a role that we can call coredemptive. During his January 26, 2019 vigil with young people in Panama, the Holy Father spoke of Mary as "the most influential woman in history." He also referred to the Blessed Virgin as the "influencer of God." Mary influenced God by saying yes to his invitation and by trusting in his promises.

Pope Francis also affirms Mary's union with the salvific mission of Christ up to his death on Cross and in the life of the Church. In his general audience of October 23, 2013, he notes that every action of the Blessed Virgin "was carried out in perfect union with Jesus. This union finds its culmination on

¹ Padre Gabriele Maria Roschini, *Chi è Maria? Catechismo Mariano* edited by Carlo DiPietro (Pignola: Sursum Corda, 2017) question 83, page 47. My translation of the original Italian, which reads: "Il titolo di *Corredentrice del genere umano* significa che la Vergine SS. ha cooperato con Cristo alla nostra riparazione, come Eva aveva cooperato con Adamo alla nostra rovina." Fr. Roschini's Marian Catechism was originally published in 1944.

Calvary: here Mary is united to the Son in the martyrdom of her heart and in the offering of his life to the Father for the salvation of humanity. Our Lady shared in the pain of the Son and accepted with him the will of the Father, in that obedience that bears fruit, that grants the true victory over evil and death.” The Holy Father also points out that “Mary’s ‘yes’, already perfect from the start, grew until the hour of the Cross. There her motherhood opened to embrace every one of us, our lives, so as to guide us to her Son.” Here we see Pope Francis affirming not only Mary’s fruitful participation in Christ’s suffering and sacrifice on the Cross but also her universal spiritual motherhood that embraces every one of us.

Other statements of Pope Francis show that he recognizes Mary’s central role in salvation history. In his November 21, 2013 address to some Camaldolese Benedictine Nuns he exclaims: “We owe so much to this Mother! She is present at every moment in the history of salvation, and in her we see a firm witness to hope. She, the mother of hope, sustains us in times of darkness, difficulty, discouragement, of seeming defeat or true human defeat.” In an impromptu address given to the Servants of Mary on October 25, 2019, Pope Francis affirms Mary’s central role in the work of redemption. He tells the Servants of Mary that their founders “left everything to become servants, servants of Our Lady, because they understood the role of Our Lady in redemption, a role that so often the so-called ‘modern’ theologies forget. But Our Lady brought us Jesus! And your Founders understood this, they understood and they became servants. “

Pope Francis likewise affirms Mary’s role in the mediation of grace. In his prayer of December 8, 2017 he refers to the Blessed Virgin as “Mother of grace and mercy” whose “open hands ... let the Lord’s grace come down to the earth.” He has also referred to Mary as “auxiliatrix” and as the “Queen of the Saints and the Gate of Heaven.”

All of these references—which can be multiplied— show that Pope Francis accepts and affirms Catholic teaching on Marian coredemption and the mediation of grace. He clearly sees Mary’s “yes” as a central moment in salvation, history and he recognizes her union with Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross as spiritually fruitful. In his August 13, 2019 letter to the people of Genoa on the first anniversary of the terrible collapse of the Morandi Bridge he points them to Mary under the Cross suffering with her Son: “But I would also like to tell you that Jesus on the Cross was not alone. Under that scaffold, there was his mother, Maria. *Stabat Mater*, Mary was under the Cross, to

share the suffering of the Son. We are not alone, we have a Mother who from Heaven looks at us with love and is close to us. Let us cling to her and say to her: ‘Mother!’ as a child does when he is afraid and wants to be comforted and reassured.”

Two of the strongest statements of Pope Francis on Mary’s co-redemptive and mediatorial roles have come in his January 1 homilies for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God in 2020 and 2021. In his homily for January 1, 2020, the Holy Father affirms Mary’s essential role in salvation history:

The first day of the year, we celebrate this nuptial union between God and mankind, inaugurated in the womb of a woman. In God, there will forever be our humanity and Mary will forever be the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother: this is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without a woman. In her, God was united to us, and if we want to unite ourselves to him, we must take the same path: through Mary, woman and mother.

In his homily for January 1, 2021, Pope Francis highlights the central role of Mary as the Mediatrix between God and the human race:

The heart of the Lord began to beat within Mary; the God of life drew oxygen from her. Ever since then, Mary has united us to God because in her God bound himself to our flesh, and he has never left it. Saint Francis loved to say that Mary “made the Lord of Majesty our brother” (Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, 9, 3). She is not only the bridge joining us to God; she is more. She is the road that God travelled in order to reach us, and the road that we must travel in order to reach him. Through Mary, we encounter God the way he wants us to: in tender love, in intimacy, in the flesh. For Jesus is not an abstract idea; he is real and incarnate; he was “born of a woman”, and quietly grew. Women know about this kind of quiet growth. We men tend to be abstract and want things right away. Women are concrete and know how to weave life’s threads with quiet patience. How many women, how many mothers, thus give

birth and rebirth to life, offering the world a future!
(emphasis added).

In his homily of January 1, 2020, Pope Francis reminds us that there is no salvation without a woman. This is the core of the doctrine of Mary as the New Eve, who cooperated in our redemption just as the first Eve cooperated in our ruin. According to Fr. Roschini, this is what the Marian title, co-redemptrix, ultimately means.

In his homily of January 1, 2021, Pope Francis points to the Virgin Mary as “the bridge joining us to God” and “the road we must travel to reach Him” (la strada che dobbiamo percorrere noi per giungere a Lui). This is the core of the doctrine of Mary as the unique Mediatrix between God and the human race. If she is “the road we must travel to reach Him,” she is also the Mediatrix who joins us to God, the source of all grace. In this sense, she is the Mediatrix of all grace.

If we read carefully the words of Pope Francis, we see that he affirms the Virgin Mary’s essential role in God’s plan of redemption. We also see that the Holy Father affirms the Blessed Mother’s role of mediation between God and the human race. She is the bridge who joins us to God and the road we must travel to reach Him.

Note: Parts of this essay appeared in an article published on December 27, 2019 on the website, Where Peter Is: <https://wherepeteris.com/pope-francis-and-mary-co-redemptrix/>

Spouse of the Holy Spirit: A Defense of Mary, Coredemptrix

STRATTON DE WITT

In recent months, the question regarding the orthodoxy of the Mary, Coredemptrix title has come into serious contention in light of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's backtracking on the approval of Bishop Jos Punt of the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam's authorization of the public veneration of Our Lady of All Nations. Proponents of the Fifth Marian Dogma of Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate, including the lay movement Mother of All Nations, propose that concern over the title "Coredemptrix" may be the reason.² Dispute over the title of Mary, Coredemptrix, is not new. Indeed, Pope Francis himself has spoken out against the Marian title of Coredemptrix in his General Audience on March 24, 2021. Speaking *extempore*, the Pope affirms that Jesus entrusted the Church to Mary "not as a goddess. Not as a co-redemptrix. As a mother."³ The pontiff went on:

It's true that Christian piety has always given beautiful titles to her, like a son to the mother... how many beautiful things does a son say to the mother? But pay attention: the things that the Church, the saints, say to Mary, take nothing away from Christ's uniqueness as a redeemer... He [Christ] is the only redeemer. They [Marian titles] are expressions of love like a son to the mother, sometimes exaggerated, but we know love always makes us do exaggerated things. Lovesickness.⁴

Francis is not alone in his concerns about the title Coredemptrix. At the Second Vatican Council, there was a calling for the definition of a Fifth Marian Dogma. The claim was shot down for two reasons: the pastoral focus of the council and concerns over the ecumenical effects of such a proposal. Even Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, in affirming the preeminence of Christ's saving work, expressed that, "The word 'co-redemptrix' would obscure this [Christological] origin [of salvation]. A correct intention being expressed in the wrong way."⁵

² Fastiggi, Robert. "Questions on the Recent Judgment Concerning the Lady of All Nations." Mother of All Peoples, 2021.

³ San Martín, Inés. "Once Again, Pope Francis Says Mary Is Not the 'Co-Redemptrix'." Crux Now. March 24, 2021.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

While there is always disagreement and dialogue present at the heart of doctrinal development, there is far greater authoritative weight present in the evidence supporting the Coredemptrix title than discouraging it. In order to demonstrate the reasonability of the proposed Fifth Dogma, this paper will engage Francis' key claims proposed in his general audience in March of 2021: namely (1) that the Coredemptrix title is borne of infatuation and is not a reasonable conclusion drawn from scripture and tradition, (2) that the title Coredemptrix distracts from or minimizes Christ's preeminence in salvation, and (3) that Mary's motherhood over the Church, which the pontiff does recognize, is separate from the Coredemptrix title. This response will also rely on Maximillian Kolbe's pneumatology as the interpretive key through which the title must be viewed in order to appreciate Mary's instrumentality and humility through the third person of the Trinity. In doing so, this paper will aim to establish the means of dialogue which the Church must consider in order to arrive at an authoritative determination.

In order to address the primary concern—that is, the reasonability of the Coredemptrix title—one must first define its theological terms and, secondly, demonstrate the scriptural, traditional, and Magisterial foundations of the title itself. Put simply, the title of Mary, Coredemptrix is granted to her “in light of Mary’s unique and intimate cooperation with the Redeemer, both at the Incarnation (cf. Luke 1:28) and at the work of Redemption at Calvary (cf. John 19:26).”⁶ That is, Mary’s willing participation in the mystery of Christ’s birth as well as Christ’s passion merit for her a title exceeding the recognized “co-redeemer” title associated with all Christians; she is only one in all history who *uniquely participated* in the mystery of salvation. How is this? Namely, by fact of her maternity to the Savior himself, which “assumes a universal extension, which differentiates it from that of any other”⁷ via subjective redemption, which will be discussed in detail below, as well as a directly performative reality in the act of objective redemption. Namely, it was by her personal cooperation that objective redemption could be realized. In this fact, it was Mary’s spousal relationship with the Holy Spirit that made her the channel of all grace; the unity expressed in the joint actions of the Blessed Mother and the third person of the Trinity lend an absolutely singular character to Mary’s role in the work of salvation. For all of these reasons, she

⁶ Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*. Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1993, xv.

⁷ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2002, 11.

is recognized for her exceptional, cooperative role in the redemption of mankind through her son and savior, Jesus Christ.

Before we consider these two pivotal events in salvation history which define Mary's coredemptive role, let us turn to very beginning of that same *oikonomia*, the Old Testament, to trace the origins of the Coredemptrix title. Within the *protoevangelium*, we discover a prophecy of Mary's coredemptive participation. After man's Fall from grace, God declares to the serpent deceiver, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and my seed; she shall crush your head and you shall lie in wait for her heel." (Gen 3:15) The import of this passage cannot be overstated: the voice of the Church unwaveringly recognizes this moment as illustrative of the decisive battle between Satan, the deceiver, and Jesus Christ, the Savior. This battle not only prophesizes Christ's ultimate triumph over Satan, but illustrates how the woman—the mother of the victorious "seed," the Messiah—is inseparably involved in this battle.⁸ The Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* testifies to this very fact, stating that Mary is here "prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent which was given to our first parents after their fall."⁹ Pope Pius IX confirms this fact in *Ineffabilis Deus*:

The merciful Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was clearly foretold; that His most blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and at the same time, the very enmity of both against the Evil One was significantly expressed. Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, fastened triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with Him by a most *intimate and indissoluble bond*, was, *with Him and through Him*, eternally at

⁸ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 2.

⁹ Vatican II. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964) §55, Vatican Web Archive, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

enmity with the evil Serpent, and most completely triumphed over him. [my emphasis]¹⁰

It is via this “indissoluble bond” that irrevocably links the realities of the Messiah’s person and mission to his Blessed Mother. For now, it is sufficient to speak of this “bond” in the abstract, as a key component of the Messianic prophecy.¹¹ Note, however, that from the very beginning, the Mother’s involvement in redemption *through* the work of her Redeemer-Son is present. It is for this reason that Mary is recognized from the earliest ages of the Church as the ‘New Eve’ through whom the ‘New Adam,’ Christ, is brought into the world in order that the first Eve and all her children might be saved.¹² Indeed, as Fr. Stefano Manelli, F.I. recognizes in his work on Mary in the Old Testament, “the personal cooperation of Eve in the fall with Adam into original sin (Gen 3:6) was redeemed by the personal, active and immediate cooperation of Mary in the redemption wrought by Christ.”¹³

One further point must be made regarding the translation of *ipsa*, the feminine ‘she’ translation made by St. Jerome in the line “she shall crush your head” (Gen 3:15). While recent scholarship has called into question the validity of the feminine form of the noun, the comprehensive quality of St. Jerome’s translation, the *Vulgate*, ought to be maintained as the standard translation, considering its enduring reliability which the Church’s tradition testifies to.¹⁴ In maintaining the feminine form, the Coredemptive role of the Blessed Mother is clarified, indicating in her “a cooperation so direct and immediate that she herself (*ipsa*), with her ‘*immaculate foot*,’ will crush the head of the serpent, by the power of her divine Son.”¹⁵ The force of this statement

¹⁰ Pope Pius IX, The Immaculate Conception *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1854), Papal Encyclicals Online, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9ineff.htm>

¹¹ In subsequent pages, the Pneumatological character of the bond between Mother and Son will be illustrated.

¹² St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 4.

¹³ Miravalle, Mark. *Mariology: a Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*. Goleta, CA: Seat of Wisdom Books, a division of Queenship Publishing, 2007, 27.

¹⁴ Pius XII, Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 30 September 1943, 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html

¹⁵ Miravalle, *Mariology*, 11.

clarifies what reason concludes based on the primordial enmity between the woman and her son versus the serpent tempter. Without a doubt, Gen 3:15 indicates the indispensable, active role which Mary played in the work of redemption, choosing life where Eve had first chosen death. It is for this reason that St. Jerome is famously known to have written: “*Per Evam mors, vitam per Miriam*” (*Death through Eve, life through Mary*).¹⁶

A second Old Testament prophecy must also be recommended: the mother of the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah. In Is 7:14 there is written, “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.” Readers later hear in Isaiah that this son born of a virgin, the Messiah, would be “despised and rejected among men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole.” (Is 53:3-5) Within the context of the *protoevangelium*, which establishes the immutable bond between mother and son, it is reasonable to conclude that whatever the Messiah undergoes is shared in by the one who is united in his mission—the one who bore him into the world, His mother. Further, if the Messiah saves through this sacrificial suffering, the same must then also be true of his co-worker. Fr. Settimo Manelli, F.I. links the expression Mary uses to describe herself as “handmaid of the Lord” in Lk 1:38 as indicative of the bond between the suffering servant and the handmaid. He explains that the term “handmaid of the Lord” is precisely the female equivalent of the term “servant of Yahweh.” Based on this, he can draw two principles: (1) that the “servant” and the “handmaid” are intimately united in some way and (2) the two figures must share in the “suffering” of the Messianic “servant” described in the Isaiahan prophecy. It thus becomes clear that in Lk 1:38 Mary offers herself as a humble co-worker in redemption, demonstrative of the role already typified of her in the book of Isaiah.¹⁷

It bears a mention at this point there have been few serious qualms about the identity of the suffering servant and the virgin who bears him, as Matthew himself certifies in his description of the miraculous events leading up to the Nativity: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall

¹⁶ St. Jerome, *Epistula 22 ad Eustochium*, 21.

¹⁷ Manelli, Stefano, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, Academy of the Immaculate, New Bedford MA, 2005, 2nd ed., 180.

be called Emmanuel.” (Mt 1:22-23) While some ancient Jewish and some modern exegetes have called this into question, the insurmountable authoritative weight of Church tradition unanimously confirms the Marian interpretation of the suffering servant prophecy.¹⁸

We turn now to the New Testament and those examples of Scripture which demonstrate contemporaneous evidence of Mary’s coredemptive role in salvation. Once again, in Lk 1:38, Mary offers up the words which set in motion the saving of the human race: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word.” This statement stands as one of the foundations of Mary’s Coredemptive role, as well as her status as spouse of the Holy Spirit, which will be discussed below. Here, she accepts the role of mother of the Messiah, taking on all the responsibilities inherent within it, including the active cooperation in his life’s work. Inherently linked to this reality is Mary’s immaculate nature, which both conformed her will perfectly to that of her Creator and made her fit to be the holy vessel which was to nourish the body of the divine Messiah during the first nine months of his earthly presence. Pope St. John Paul II recognized this fact at a general audience in December of 1983: “We must above all note that Mary was created immaculate in order to be better able to act on our behalf. The fullness of grace allowed her to fulfill perfectly her mission of collaboration with the work of salvation: it gave her maximum cooperation in the sacrifice.”¹⁹

Dr. Mark Miravalle offers a concise explanation of the profound gravity which Mary’s *fiat*, found here in the first chapter of Luke, has on her coredemptive role:

At the Annunciation, Mary begins her role as the *Coredemptrix with the Redeemer*. Her *fiat mihi* to the angel is a free ‘let it be done to me’ to the giving of a human body to the Redeemer, who would fulfill the saving messianic role referred to in Mary’s own Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55), which ‘rejoices in God my Savior’ (Lk 1:47). It is a free ‘let it be done to me’ in cooperating with the Redeemer so intimately that Mary Coredemptrix gave to the Savior the

¹⁸ F. Ceuppens, *De Mariologia Biblica*, Rome 1951, 31.

¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Mary Immaculate the First Marvel of Redemption*, Papal Address at General Audience, 7 December 1983 *L’Osservatore Romano*, Issue n. 50, 1983, 1.

very instrument of Redemption—his human body—for ‘we have been sanctified through the offering of *the body* of Jesus Christ once for all’ (Heb 10:10).²⁰

Thus, we can see that it is only through Mary’s *yes* that Christ is able to enter the world, having been gifted a human body through his human mother. Mary’s role is totally unique in this respect. While there have been many called to great apostolic missions for God’s kingdom throughout salvation history, none—save Mary—have been called to so high a role as the Mother of God. This is because she is the only one who, being immaculately conceived, is therefore the vessel of consummate grace. By this same fact, she necessarily “will participate in the redemptive mission of the Son via the oblation of her own maternal suffering.”²¹

Mary’s immaculate nature compels her to actively cooperate in the work of redemption through her maternity to the Messiah. This fact is clarified in Lk 2:35 as Mary and Joseph present Jesus at the temple and the aged Simeon prophesies of the child’s messianic future—and his mother’s integral role in that expectation. Taking the child in his arms and turning to Mary, Simeon proclaims, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your [Mary’s] own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” (Lk 2:34-35) In this prophecy the unity of the mission of Mother and Son, New Eve and New Adam, is highlighted. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, this moment reveals Mary’s association with Christ’s obedience unto death and, therefore, “she, too, in her immaculate soul, must be pierced by the sword of sorrow, thus showing how her role in the history of salvation is not finished with the mystery of the Incarnation, but is consummated in the loving and sorrowful sharing in the death and Resurrection of her Son.”²² And this should be no surprise; how often do we see the pains and joys of a child reflected in equal measure in the face of his or her mother? Is there not something in the nature of maternity which binds mothers, out of love, to the rising and falling of their children? How much greater this must be then in the case of the Immaculata, bound by the fullness of grace to her divine Son. As Dr. Mark Miravalle notes: “Just as Mary anticipated her Son’s stainless entry into the human family by her Immaculate Conception, so too

²⁰ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 5.

²¹ Miravalle, *Mariology*, 76.

²² Benedict XVI, *Homily for Liturgical Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Day of Consecrated Life*, February 2, 2006.

did the Mother go before her Son in the order of suffering that would lead to the climax of Redemption on the Cross.”²³ Yet note that the prophecy is addressed first to Christ and only secondarily, though indispensably, to Mary. Mary’s cooperation in the work of “contradiction” does not impede or distract from Christ’s primary role. In this way, Simeon’s message is not a revelation of new information, but a foretelling of the consummation of what began in the Incarnation and the unity of Christ’s and Mary’s roles as Redeemer and Coredemptrix. Indeed, Mary’s role is not completed with the bearing and raising of Jesus into adulthood; her participation in Christ’s mission in the work of salvation has only just begun.

John 19:26 is perhaps the most striking moment in sacred scripture which points to Mary’s Coredemptive role. After enduring His brutal Passion and, at last, being hung upon a cross, the Lord, seeing John and his Blessed Mother standing at his feet, calls out: “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, ‘Son, behold, your mother!’...After this, knowing that all was now finished...he said, ‘It is finished’; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (Jn 19:26-28, 30) Firstly, it must be noted that the use of “Woman” is a clear reference to the “Woman” of Gen 3:15, the mother of the living, the New Eve, associated with the redeemer who will “crush” the serpent’s head.²⁴ Thus we see fulfilled at Calvary not only the sacrificial offering of the New Adam – the Messiah, the Redeemer – but also the New Adam’s female counterpart and cooperator whose participation, though secondary, is the means of a fallen race’s salvation. Inherently linked to Mary’s role here as the New Eve is also her maternity as the new mother of all the living—given restored and elevated meaning. While she is not mother of all biologically speaking, as Eve was, she is so in the order of grace. That is, having overcome the death incurred by humanity’s first mother, the offering of her Son on Calvary, to which she united her own soul, snatched man back from the grip of death, earning for Mary the maternity of all the living in a spiritual sense. Her complete maternal solicitude towards her Son, united to his universal saving mission, is thereby extended over all the earth, once more restoring the role rejected by Eve.

Within the covenantal context of Christ’s passion and death, it seems unreasonable to suggest that Mary would not also be associated via the natural ties of kinship which bound her to the divine Savior. In her obedience

²³ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 10.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 12.

to the will of God, Mary freely participated in the “ransoming back” of humanity from sin even here in the Gospel of John: “in keeping with the divine command, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, [Mary] associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim who was born of her.”²⁵ The covenantal context which grounds the scope of the Divine Economy necessitates that familial, kinship bonds tie those who are ransomed and those who do the ransoming, as in the Old Testament where the notion of a “redeemer” was one who, bound by the *hesed* of a covenant, ransomed back a family member from slavery.²⁶ If this is the case, it seems difficult to defend the idea that Mary, mother by blood of Christ the Redeemer, and New Eve, Spiritual Mother of all humanity, was somehow not intimately bound to the “ransoming” enacted by her son on behalf of her sons and daughters. Indeed, this fact is highlighted by Christ’s words to the disciple, symbol of the Church: “Son, behold, your mother.”

While I have already noted a number of Magisterial sources throughout the discussion of the scriptural foundation for Mary’s Coredemptrix role, focus must now be given to the scope of Magisterial support present at the heart of tradition for the proposed dogma. Before doing so it should be noted that the following pronouncements draw upon a rich history upholding the notion of Marian participation in the redemption. The fathers and doctors of the Church, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux,²⁷ St. Bonaventure,²⁸ and St. Albert the Great,²⁹ among others,³⁰ have all participated in the development

²⁵ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

²⁶ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 10.

²⁷ I am indebted to Dr. Miravalle for his extensive footnotes in *Mary: Coredemptrix*..., particularly pages 12-13, from which I draw the following information for footnotes 28, 29, and 30. Consultation of Miravalle’s footnotes would benefit those looking for further specifics on the patristic contribution to the Mary, Coredemptrix title. In this case, consider St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Hom. II super Missus est*, PL 183, 62; *Sermo III de Purificatione Beatae Mariae*, PL 183, 370; *Sermo II in Festo Pentecostes*, PL 183, 328.

²⁸ Relevant works include St. Bonaventure’s *Collatio 6 de deonis Spiritus Sancti*, n. 5, 15, 16, 17; *Opera Omnia*, (*Ad Claras Aquas*), vol. 5, p. 486; *Sermo 3 de Assumptione*, *Opera Omni*, vol. 9, p. 695; *III Sent.*, dist. 4, a. 3, qu. 3, concl.; *Opera Omnia*, v. 3, p. 115.

²⁹ Relevant works include St. Albert’s *Comment. In Matth.*, I, 18; *Opera Omnia*, ed. Borgnet, Vol. 20, Paris, 1898, 36; St. Albert of “Pseudo-Albert”, *Mariale* Q. 42, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 37, 81; Q. 150, 219; Q. 51, 97.

³⁰ See also John Tauler’s *Sermo pro festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis; Oeuvres completes*, vol. 6, Paris, 1911, ed. E.P. Noel, 253-255, 256, 259.

of the Church's understanding of the Coredemptrix title, the foundation upon which the following Magisterial pronouncements are grounded.³¹ The unity of authorial weight and individual development of the premise in the sources present a veritable bounty of evidentiary support.

Beginning in the late 19th century, we discover unambiguous declarations of Mary's Coredemptive merit. Leo XIII (1878-1903) describes in his encyclical letter *Jucunda Semper* (1894) how the Blessed Virgin's offering of her son at the temple is culminated in the offering of him upon the cross. By these means she joined Christ in his excruciating suffering, unified in the co-passion of redemption:

When Mary offered herself completely to God together with her Son in the temple, she was already sharing with Him the painful atonement on behalf of the human race. It is certain, therefore, that she suffered in the very depths of her soul with His most bitter sufferings...Finally, it was before the eyes of Mary that the Divine Sacrifice which she had borne...was to be finished...we see that there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, who in a miracle of charity, so that she might receive us as her sons, willingly offered Him up to divine justice, dying with Him in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow.³²

The unity between the Presentation at the Temple and Christ's Passion expressed here by Leo XIII affirms the two key events which the Coredemptrix title confirms. We find in this passage an authoritative ratification of the notion that Mary's life was dedicated to the same mission for which her Son was sent by the Father. In giving him up in a maternal offering—truly, the highest offering a mother can make—she immolated herself “in her heart, pierced by the sword of sorrow,” as the aged Simeon foretold, earning for herself the name of Mary, Coredemptrix.

In the early 20th century, Pope St. Pius X highlights this unity of “suffering and purpose” between Christ and his Blessed Mother. Due to this profound

³¹ For a more detailed exposition of the tradition of Coredemptrix theologies from the Patristic era to the Middle ages consult: Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Slavezza*, 179; J.B. Carol, *De Corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, 151.

³² Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter, *Jucunda Semper*, 1894, *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (ASS) vol. 27, 178.

consonance between them, Mary's obedience to the triune God expressed itself in her Coredemptive sharing in Christ's suffering and death:

Owing to the union of suffering and purpose existing between Christ and Mary, she merited to become most worthily the reparaatrix of the lost world, and for this reason, the dispenser of all the favors which Jesus acquired for us by His death and His blood. Nevertheless, because she surpasses all in holiness and in union with Christ, and because she was chosen by Christ to be His partner in the work of human salvation, she merits for us *de congruo*, as they say, that which Christ merits for us *de condigno*, and she is the principle dispenser of the graces to be distributed.³³

This selection calls attention to the issue of *de condigno* versus *de congruo* merit. Put simply, this distinction clarifies that in the work of redemption, it is Christ who merits salvation for man in the order of justice, whereas Mary merits salvation for man in the order of fittingness.³⁴ Therefore, Mary's participation in the mission of Christ does not displace him in the order of justice nor fittingness, but recognizes that Mary's participation was indeed *through* Christ and *according* to his divine plan. The Christian faithful follow thirdly in this order, uniting themselves through the sacrifice of the Mass towards the same end, in union with Christ and His Blessed Mother.

Shortly thereafter, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), consonant with his predecessors, made clear the far extent to which Mary cooperated in redemption with her Son:

The fact that she was, with her Son crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. To such extent did she suffer and almost die with her suffering and dying Son; to such extent did she surrender her maternal rights over her Son for man's salvation, and immolated Him – insofar as she could – in order to appease the justice of God, that we may rightly say she redeemed the human race together with Christ.³⁵

³³ Pope St. Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Ad diem illum*, 1904, ASS, vol. 36, 1903-1904, 453.

³⁴ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 20.

³⁵ Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter *Intersodalicia*, 1918, AAS 10, 1918, 182.

The mystery of Mary's maternity, defined as it is by her immaculate nature, results in an intimacy and unity with the Savior so profound that she herself almost died in her co-suffering with Christ! Note that her Coredemptive action is a performance inherently and irrevocably linked to her motherhood; it is only because Christ was, in a sense, her own—borne of her own body—that she had the humble ability to offer him to the Father. Further, in offering her Son, she was given in return the sons and daughters of Eve in her capacity as Spiritual Mother of the Church. Mary, Coredemptrix, as Benedict XV illustrates, is inseparable from Mary, Mother of God and universal Spiritual Mother of all the living.³⁶

Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) offers the very first Magisterial recognition of Mary explicitly under the title of Coredemptrix in his prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee in 1935. He implored,

O Mother of love and mercy who, when thy sweetest Son was consummating the Redemption of the human race on the altar of the cross, did stand next to Him, suffering with Him as a Coredemptrix...preserve in us, we beseech thee, and increase day by day the precious fruit of His redemption and the compassion of His Mother.³⁷

By these words, Pius XI's recognition of the reality present in the work of his predecessors and the tradition of the Church is a climax in the history of the Coredemptrix development. His words highlight that Mary's suffering is strictly underneath and in union with her son on the Cross—not, as opponents might claim, in conflict or competition with Christ's preeminence. Indeed, how strange it sounds to even suggest that the Mother of God, who is all sweetness and humility, could possibly do anything that would take away from the preeminence of her Son. Mary, Coredemptrix asserts the authority and sovereignty of Christ Jesus. The pontiff confirms this fact in another example, offered as a papal allocution to pilgrims at Vicenza:

From the nature of His work the Redeemer ought to have associated His Mother with His work. For this reason, we

³⁶ This fact is important in consideration of the proposed Fifth Marian Dogma, which recognizes Mary's Spiritual Motherhood under the three auspices of Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.

³⁷ Pope Pius XI, Prayer of the Solemn Closing of the Redemption Jubilee, April 28, 1935, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 April 1935, p. 1.

invoke her under the title of Coredemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied Him in the work of redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows of the agony and of the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind. And immediately beneath the Cross, at the last moments of His life, she was proclaimed by the Redeemer as our Mother, the Mother of the whole universe.³⁸

The concluding sentence calls particular focus to the words of Christ in his last moments, when he gave to humanity, in the symbol of his beloved disciple, his mother as their own. (Jn 19:26) Christ himself recognizes the work of the New Eve in salvation as Coredemptrix in the final lingering moments of his earthly life; in loving response to her total offering of self and son, Christ gives to Mary his infant Church, comprised of the wandering children of Eve, so in need of a new spiritual mother.

Pius XII (1939-1958) continues to uphold the papal teaching affirming Mary as Coredemptrix in her spiritual maternity over the Church. He calls attention to the Patristic conception of Mary as New Eve, united with the New Adam in the work of saving the fallen Adam and Eve's children down through the ages. It was Mary "who, always most intimately united with her Son, like a New Eve, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father, together with the sacrifice of her maternal rights and love, on behalf of all the children of Adam, stained by the latter's shameful fall."³⁹ Thus we see once more that Mary's submitting of her "maternal rights" over Christ and in union with him are offered on the altar of sacrifice merits her a sharing in the co-passion of the savior. In this act, the New Adam and New Eve are united in the work of redemption, wondrously giving spiritual rebirth to the people descended from their fallen parents. Again, Pius XII summarizes: "For having been associated with the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of human redemption, as Mother and cooperatrix, she remains forever associated with Him, with an almost unlimited power, in the distribution of graces which flow from the Redemption."⁴⁰

³⁸ Pope Pius XI, Papal Allocution to Pilgrims of Vicenza, 30 November 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 Dec. 1933.

³⁹ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, AAS 35, 1943, 247.

⁴⁰ Pope Pius XII, Radio Broadcast to Pilgrims at Fatima, 14 May 1946, AAS 38, 1946, 266.

The Second Vatican Council, acting under the jurisdiction of Pope John XXIII (1958-1962) and, later, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), offered conciliar authority to the Coredemptrix teachings of their modern predecessors. *Lumen Gentium*, the council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, offers one of the clearest and most detailed defenses of the Coredemptive role of Mary, if not in explicit name. While the council, in obedience to the late Pope John XXIII's wishes, did not promulgate doctrine in order to prioritize the council's pastoral focus, its words regarding Mary's role in redemption were a turning point in the development of the Coredemptrix dogma in defining, in a conciliar context, the reality of Mary's intimate and active participation in the work of Christ.⁴¹ While yet being a descendent of Adam, the document recognizes that Mary willingly consented to that indispensable role requested of her and became Christ's mother:

Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly, therefore, the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she 'being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.'⁴²

The document goes on to confirm how the unity between Mother and her Son in the work of salvation is seen in all the Marian events detailed in sweep of the Gospels: the greeting of Elizabeth, who is sanctified along with her unborn child, John the Baptist, by the unborn Christ within the womb of Mary; the virginal birth of Christ; the prophecy of Simeon which foretold that Mary's child was to be a "sign of contradiction" and that a sword would pierce her own heart as well; the child Jesus preaching in the Temple; her intercession at Cana for the first of Christ's miracles; her reception of the proclamation of the Kingdom her Son preached; even the grievous cross, where she, "uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice...lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought

⁴¹ See Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* 58, 61, as noted above.

⁴² Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 56

forth.”⁴³ Before Christ departed his earthly body at Golgotha, he affirmed her motherhood over his disciples as well: “Woman, behold thy son.” (Jn 19:26) Further, she continued to serve the Mystical Body of Christ, even after His glorious resurrection. At Pentecost, she perseveres in prayer with the infant Church, her children, and is “overshadowed” by that same Holy Spirit which alighted upon and within her at the Annunciation.⁴⁴ At last, she was taken up both body and soul into heaven, where she is now and for all time “exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe, that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and the conqueror of sin and death.”⁴⁵ The harmony between the Son and the Mother throughout all the events detailed in the Gospels is to such a degree that it could only be formed through a relationship like that which existed between them—a unity which is beautifully demonstrated through the illustration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Indeed, Mary’s heart, exposed in perpetual adoration to the Lord of hosts during her pregnancy, is so united that it is difficult to imagine their hearts separately. *Lumen Gentium* thus offers a clear foundation for the Coredemptrix title, drawing from scripture and tradition to define the intimate character of Mary’s Coredemption which, while the explicit term is not used in the document, the content clearly points to Mary’s coredemptive responsibility.

Finally, there was a climax of Marian devotion and development in the pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II (1978-2005), the “Pope of Mary the Coredemptrix.”⁴⁶ The frequency and vigor with which the late pontiff and saint confirmed the reality of the Coredemptrix title aided the Church-wide knowledge of and openness to the power of this Marian role. In union with his predecessors, John Paul II recognized that the sufferings which Mary underwent on Calvary, offered in union with her son, the Christ, contributed essentially to the work of redemption:

In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith, but also a contribution to the Redemption of all...It was on Calvary that Mary’s

⁴³ Ibid, 58

⁴⁴ Ibid, 59

⁴⁵ Ibid, 59

⁴⁶ Mark Miravalle, “Lecture 25: Coredemptrix Papal Magisterium,” THE655OLA: Mariology I: Dogma, Doctrine, & Devotion (class lecture, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH, Spring 2021).

sufferings, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view, but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son.⁴⁷

Truly, the profundity of Mary's suffering, emphasized here by the saint, allocates to her a unique role above all others in relation to Christ and the redemption. In her nearly unfathomable complete abandonment to the will of the Father, even to point of offering her Son and her own body, which "completed in her flesh" what was and is already present in her heart, Mary's immaculate state distinguishes her from the rest of human history.⁴⁸ This is a significant commentative shift in that the subject of Mary suffering in the flesh was secondary, if not silent, in many of the St. John Paul II's forebearers.⁴⁹ It serves to demonstrate the depth to which Mary's obedience would go—pointing, as the saint professes, to the "all-pervading...influence of the Holy Spirit and his light and power!"⁵⁰

John Paul II did much to expand the Church's conception of the relationship between the Blessed Mother and the Holy Spirit. While St. Maximillian Kolbe had written his Mariological-pneumatology in the nineteen-thirties and forties, John Paul's Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* in particular illuminated how the Holy Spirit, through whom Mary was conceived immaculately in order that she could offer this same nature to her divine son, was again the same spirit by which that son was conceived within her. (Lk 1:28, 1:35) Proceeding from this, by the spiritual fruitfulness which the Holy Spirit continually enlivened within her soul, Mary was empowered to consummate her role as Coredemptrix on Calvary, as foretold by Simeon in the temple years before.⁵¹ (Lk 2:35) Thus, from Leo XIII to St. John Paul II, there exists an unbroken chain of Magisterial recognition of the orthodoxy of the Coredemptrix title.

⁴⁷ Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 21.

⁵⁰ Pope St. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, 18.

⁵¹ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 22.

Having considered the foundations of the Coredemptrix title in scripture and tradition, it is necessary to affirm what the title is not, particularly in consideration of Pope Francis' claim that Mary's Coredemption in some way detracts from the one redemption of Christ. It must be absolutely confirmed—and often repeated—that offering Mary the title of Coredemptrix does not in any way place her on equal or superior terms to that of Jesus Christ:

The prefix “co” does not mean equal, but comes from the Latin word, ‘cum,’ which means ‘with’. The title of Coredemptrix applied to the Mother of Jesus never places Mary on a level of equality with Jesus Christ, the divine Lord of all, in the saving process of humanity's redemption. Rather, it denotes Mary's singular and unique sharing with her Son in the saving work of redemption for the human family. The Mother of Jesus participates in the redemptive work of her Savior Son, who alone could reconcile humanity with the Father in His glorious divinity and humanity. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, redeems the human family, as the God-man. Mary, who is completely subordinate and dependent to her redeeming Son even for her own human redemption, participates in the redemptive act of her Son as his exulted human mother.⁵²

Mary's role as Coredemptrix in no way distracts nor takes away from Christ's primary role in redemption. Rather, just as a mother cannot help but be intimately bound up with the successes, failures, and dreams of her child, so too Mary cannot help—particularly in fact of her Immaculate Conception—but be united to her Son in his mission of salvation. Mary's enduring presence at the heart of the Church, the heart and means of Christ's mission, attests to this reality. Through her own free will, she unhesitatingly works towards the realization of her son's calling, while never usurping his divine place. It is for this reason that many of the faithful have, in obedience to scripture and tradition, offered Mary worship and supplications under the Coredemptrix title. Yet, as with all the Marian cults, the Coredemptrix devotion, under the title of Spiritual Motherhood, “differs essentially from the cult of adoration

⁵² Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, xv-xvi.

which is offered to the Incarnate Word, as well to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it.”⁵³

It is this point of the worship due to Mary, Coredemptrix which Francis’ concern touches upon. Indeed, is it not inappropriate to worship Mary under a title which seems to only belong to Christ in a formal sense? Would that not make her a “goddess” as the pontiff claims? It is helpful here to first emphasize the difference between the notion of *latria* and *dulia* forms of worship. While this distinction is most often called upon to address the issues of Marian devotion in the broader sense, it is essential here as well in order to distinguish that just as Marian worship is separate from and lesser than the worship offered to Christ, so too is her role in redemption a secondary one, united in submission to the one sacrifice of the Redeemer. As Dr. Mark Miravalle explains, *latria* is the “manifestation of submission and acknowledgment of dependence shown towards the excellence of an uncreated person” and thus, given to God and to God alone. *Dulia*, on the other hand, is the “manifestation of submission and reverence shown towards the excellence of a created person,” namely the saints, angels, and the Blessed Mother.⁵⁴ In fact, Mary is the sole recipient of *hyperdulia*, a singular type of devotion offered to her by merit of her Immaculate Conception, status as Mother of God and thus Mother of the Church, and her perfect obedience to the Lord.⁵⁵ When the faithful reverence and call upon Mary as Coredemptrix, it is in light of this essential distinction between the devotion owed to her versus the devotion owed to the Trinitarian God. However, while description facilitates a separation between the two, there is only one redemption in Christ, to which Mary grafts on her own work, as branches grafted to the one vine of Christ;⁵⁶ Mary’s work as Coredemptrix is inseparable from the saving work of Christ, the Redeemer. Indeed, as Paul VI affirms in *Lumen Gentium*, her effect on salvation “flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it.”⁵⁷

⁵³ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 66

⁵⁴ Miravalle, Mark, “Lecture 12: Mary in the Early Church,” THE655OLA: Mariology I: Dogma, Doctrine, & Devotion (class lecture, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH, Spring 2021).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rom 11:24

⁵⁷ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 60

The second and more pointed issue at play here is the difference between objective and subjective redemption as articulated by German Catholic theologian Matthias Joseph Scheeben and others. Objective redemption is that ascribed only to Christ through his passion, death, and resurrection; that is, “the work which has acquired for mankind all the graces of salvation.”⁵⁸ By this means all men may be saved, regardless of their place in time, via subjective redemption. This subjective redemptive grace, experienced in the highest form within the Christian life as one grows in spiritual maturity through sacramental living within the heart of the Church, is merited through the once-and-for-all objective redemption of Jesus Christ.⁵⁹ In this same way, all Christians may become “co-redeemers” in Christ, entwining their daily sufferings and trials to the redeemer’s one cross through the grace he reaped and the grace he sacramentally bestows. Coredemptrix proponents assert that Mary is cooperatrix both in the subjective sense, in affiliation with all the faithful, but also, according to some, in the objective sense, through the high degree of intimacy only Mary could exert in her involvement in the life of Christ. In either case, it is not solely of her own power or merit that she participates in the work of redemption, but by fact of her intimate union with the Holy Spirit, far surpassing that of all other Christians who have not been immaculately conceived. Calls against the Coredemptrix title often conflate the two forms of redemption, but if this were the case, the Mass itself—in which Christians come to offer their works, joys, and sufferings upon the altar of sacrifice in union with their Lord and Savior—would lose its essential, participatory character. Being both the mother of Jesus and conceived full of grace, Mary is empowered and purified far above all other men in such a way that allows her to more fully espouse herself to Christ’s sacrificial offering. Indeed, as *Lumen Gentium* affirms, “the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.”⁶⁰

A note must also be made about the concern about the “one redemption” if there are truly two objective redeemers.⁶¹ Rev. Jean Galot, S.J., Professor of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, explains the nature of Marian preservative redemption, the means to Mary’s participation in objective redemption:

⁵⁸ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁶⁰ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 62

⁶¹ “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” (1 Tim 2:5-6)

The first intention of the redemptive sacrifice was concerned, according to the divine plan, with the ransom of Mary, accomplished in view of our ransom. Christ first ransomed his own mother, then with her collaboration the rest of mankind...Mary was ransomed only by Christ, so that mankind could be ransomed by Christ with the collaboration with his mother.⁶²

In this way, having been ransomed before all humanity, Mary was empowered through God's divine omnipotence to be an active participant in the salvation of her people. Indeed, this fact of her Immaculate Conception, through which she was knit together without the stain of sin in the womb of her mother, is a guarantee and anticipation of her active cooperation with Christ in the work of redemption.⁶³ Mary's Coredemptrix title bears witness to both kinds of cooperation, both subjective and objective, in their respective fields, based upon her preservative redemption which occurred prior to both.

Finally, Francis' concerns draw attention to the essential question at the heart of the Coredemptrix issue: if Mary is mother, how is she also Coredemptrix? Is there a relationship between the two titles and, if so, how does one balance and resolve them? By virtue of her sex and position, Mary's offering is necessarily not priestly in character, as Christ's is. But rather, as it is profoundly maternal in character, it has its own *raison d'être* as Rev. Galot describes: "It offers a specific contribution to the human aspect of the drama of the Passion...[Mary] offers a cooperation so necessary to the priestly work of Christ that the Father, in his sovereign design, required this feminine presence in order to grant salvation to the world."⁶⁴ Further, the merit of grace which Mary offers in the act of redemption is fundamentally maternal. Mary's motherly mediation is the grounding element of her coredemptive role, the object of her merit, by which she becomes the channel of all grace as universal Spiritual Mother of the human race, an elevation of her status as the New Eve.⁶⁵ In this way, her role is fundamentally different from Christ's. That is, just as Christ acted in a paternal and priestly manner, offering himself as both sacrifice and priest on the altar of the cross, so Mary acted in a maternal manner, offering her son and uniting herself so completely that she

⁶² Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 16-17.

⁶³ Ps 139:13

⁶⁴ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 18-19.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 22.

joined “herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart.”⁶⁶ Understood in this way, there is no confusion over any lack or excess of merit on her part in comparison to Christ. Rather, it affirms that Mary’s feminine, maternal character was altogether separate, though active and integral, in its participation in redemption.

What’s more, the effect of Mary’s participation in Coredemption empowers her in her role as universal Spiritual Mother of the Church. Fr. Galot poetically notes that as “Mother of God, Mary possessed a motherhood open to the infinite.”⁶⁷ In this case, it is an infinity applied to the openness of her maternal heart to care and intercede on behalf of all of her spiritual children. This motherhood is, strikingly, a consequence of her Coredemptive action. That is, having given her own son upon the cross, she receives in return the sonship of all of humanity. Indeed, Christ himself proclaims this very fact while hung upon the cross, calling to his mother concerning his beloved disciple, symbol of the infant Church: “Woman, behold your son.”⁶⁸ Were Mary not an integral part of Christ’s mission, it would be strange to bestow on her such a title. It seems only reasonable that the woman who united herself so perfectly to Christ’s divine vocation, offering herself in union with his passion, should then be deserving of being the Church’s mother.⁶⁹ If one recognizes Mary’s universal motherhood, as Francis does in his most recent remarks, in which he affirms that Mary is given to the church “as a mother,”⁷⁰ one must likewise recognize her Coredemption. In calling upon her as mother, asking for her intercession, and meditating on the mysteries of Christ in her rosary, Christians receive the gift of Mary’s maternal care owing to “the sacrifice offered on Calvary by the Mother of the Redeemer.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 58

⁶⁷ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 22-23.

⁶⁸ Jn 19:26

⁶⁹ Consider St. Albert the Great’s words on the subject in Pseudo-Albert, *Mariale super Missus est; Opera Omnia*, q. 150 : “To her [Mary] alone was given this privilege, namely, a communication in the Passion; to her the Son willed to communicate the merit of the Passion, in order that He could give her the reward; and in order to make her a sharer in the benefit of Redemption, He willed that she be a sharer in the penalty of the Passion, in so far as she might become the Mother of all through re-creation even as she was the adjutrix of the Redemption by her co-passion. And just as the whole world is bound to God by His supreme Passion, so also it is bound to the Lady of all by her co-passion.”

⁷⁰ San Martín.

⁷¹ Miravalle, *Mary Co-Redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, 23.

Having reviewed the scriptural and Magisterial foundations of the Coredemptrix title, demonstrating how Mary's coredemption in no way supersedes Christ's preeminence in the work of salvation and illustrating how the Virgin's universal Spiritual Maternity is inherently linked to her work as Coredemptrix, there may still endure a hesitance to bestow on Mary so illustrious an appellation. Perhaps one way to overcome this pious concern is to recall the pneumatology of St. Maximillian Kolbe (1894-1941). The late saintly Father is renowned not only for his astounding holiness of life, which he consummated with the crown of martyrdom in the death camp of Auschwitz, but also for his deep love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Throughout his life, Fr. Kolbe wrote extensively of the profound relationship between her and the Holy Spirit. At the heart of his pneumatology was the fact that both Mary and the Holy Spirit are the immaculate conception—the *created* immaculate conception and the *uncreated*, respectively. Having been immaculately conceived by the Holy Spirit himself, Mary was imbued with the fullness of grace from the very first moments of her existence. This being the case, She is bathed, plunged into the Spirit of the Father and the Son to such an extent that when she says, 'I am the Immaculate Conception' she means, 'I am the manifestation, the epiphany, of the Holy Spirit.' Beyond this we could say even that Mary is a true *theophany*, a visible manifestation of the father's infinite love for men, that love which, through the Holy Spirit, accomplishes in the church the work of the redemption, the mission of the son, who is also the son of Mary. Is this not what Father Kolbe has in mind when he says: Mary Immaculate is the incarnation of Divine Mercy (Conference, Nov. 24, 1938).⁷²

This is also fitting due to the maternal character of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Manteau-Bonamy describes how the masculine and the feminine intersect in the creation of life and how through the feminine the child is made aware of who his or her father is. Indeed, he claims, a mother completes one of her most essential tasks when she reveals one's father to a child.⁷³ In the same way, Christ, the "son[,] cannot be known except through the [feminine] Holy Spirit."⁷⁴ This being the case, it is fitting that the one through whom Christ is manifested in human flesh to the world—who makes him, sent from the Father, known to us—is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in Christ's

⁷² Manteau-Bonamy, H. M. *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of St. Maximillian Kolbe*. Libertyville, IL: Marytown Press, 2008, 30.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

conception, having been joined with him since before her own birth. The power of Spiritual Maternity present in Mary is not only by fact of her own personhood, but by the union which exists in a wholly unique way between her and the third person of the Trinity. This union is so perfect that their two wills, though distinct, act as one; an ideal marriage, in concept.⁷⁵ It is by this spousal union that Mary is exceptional: “No other creature is or will ever be Immaculate like her, or full of grace, or capable of being so intimately united to the Lord as was the Immaculate Virgin. (Sketch, 1940)”⁷⁶ It is by fact of her union with the Holy Spirit, based on their alike natures as the created and uncreated immaculate conceptions, that Mary is able to exert such maximal spiritual influence. This component is essential to the Coredemptrix discussion. As Miravalle notes, it is “the Holy Spirit, the Divine Spouse of Mary, who prepares and sustains Mary at each stage of her coredemptive role.”⁷⁷ Dialogue concerning the Mary, Coredemptrix title would do well to recall this crucial fact of Our Lady’s Spiritual Motherhood as not only the Mother of God, but also spouse of the Holy Spirit—and thus united to God to such a degree as to be able to participate in the saving work of redemption through her Son.

Other critics have called into question the issue of the theandric nature of Christ, which they propose is absent in the case of the Virgin Mary.⁷⁸ The term theandric combines *theos* (divine) and *andros* (human) to describe the actions of Christ, which have both a human and a divine nature by character. It is proposed that because Mary does not have hypostatically-united divine and human natures—as Christ does—then even if she herself were to be crucified for the sake of humanity’s redemption, it would not be sufficient for salvation to occur. The issue with this proposal is that it attenuates the reality of theandric actions. While it is true that Christ is the only person to have both a human and a divine nature, it is not true that theandric actions are reserved only for the Messiah. Rather, Christians daily engage in theandric

⁷⁵ “The mother of God is the most perfect of all creatures; she is Immaculate, full of grace, all beautiful. From her God receives the highest glory a creature can possibly give him. So perfect is she, so closely bound to the Holy Spirit, that we can call her his spouse. (Conference, June 20, 1937).” (Ibid, 45.)

⁷⁶ Ibid, 72.

⁷⁷ Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, 5.

⁷⁸ Miller, Michael J. “Mediatrix, Si! Coredemptrix, No!” Catholic Culture. Trinity Communications, 2001.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=4074>

actions whenever they experience or act under the influence of grace,⁷⁹ when they act in mediation between fellow man and God, or offer their sacrifices upon the altar of the Mass in participation with the work of redemption. In this way, man, however sinful and spiritually deficient, engages in theandric actions by way of participation in the divine means made accessible by God himself. Therefore, to claim that Mary cannot be Coredemptrix by way of the singular meaning of theandric activity in Christ is to ignore the very content and basis of holy Christian living.

Further, if theandric activity is an integral part of the lives of every Christian man and woman who aspire to holiness, how much more must this be true of the Immaculate Mother of God. Particularly in view of her spousal unity with the Holy Spirit, in which Mary's will is perfectly in union with God, there is truly a harmony of human and divine wills operating through the Blessed Virgin:

So, while their union is not of the same order as the hypostatic union linking the human and divine natures in Christ, it remains true to say that Mary's action is the very action of the Holy Spirit. For Mary as the spouse of the Holy Spirit is raised to such a height of perfection above all creatures that she accomplishes in everything the will of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in her from the very first instant of her conception. If we consider all these truths together we can conclude that Mary, as mother of Jesus our savior, was made the Co-redemptrix of the human race; as the spouse of the Holy Spirit she shares in the distribution of all graces.⁸⁰

The claim that theandric action is solely applicable to Christ—and that therefore Mary, in operating as the Coredemptrix, is not capable of committing actions which have both divine and human natures working as one—is to misunderstand the term and to negate the nature of the grace, mediation, and redemption in the Christian life. For these reasons, Kolbe's pneumatology upholds not only the reality of Mary's coredeemption, but also the firmament of Christian living.

In our present times, there is an ever-growing need to call upon Mary as Spiritual Mother of the Church to intercede as she faces new trials, it seems,

⁷⁹ Key in this respect is the role of the sacraments, by which the state of grace is sustained and enlivened.

⁸⁰ Manteau-Bonamy. *Immaculate Conception*, 91.

at every corner. In her humility, Mary will not exert her full powers unless we invite her to. For this reason, it would be in humanity's best interests to work towards a full, Magisterial recognition of the Coredemptrix title under the aegis of the proposed Fifth Marian Dogma. However, this cannot be realized if the Church's own pontiff, let alone other members of Christ's Church, maintain serious misgivings concerning the title. Pope Francis raises points which must be prayerfully addressed. The truth is present if man obediently seeks it in accordance with the will of the Lord. Scripture, from Gen 3:15 to Jn 19:26, attest to the anticipation and realization of the New Eve, universal Spiritual Mother of the all the living who, in bearing the Incarnate Word and suffering with him through a mutual self-offering upon the cross, merits for herself the title of Coredemptrix. Tradition and the Magisterium affirm this reality, if not in explicit word then in content and, particularly, the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium*, which recognizes that Mary's immaculate obedience intimately bound her to the work of her son in redemption, and the life and works of Pope St. John Paul II. In consideration of this evidence, it is difficult to defend that Mary, in her humility as Coredemptrix, could somehow displace Christ in his superiority in the work of salvation. Rather, Mary's Coredemption is directly drawn from Christ's preeminence: in her preservative redemption from sin by Christ himself, Mary is empowered to participate in his singular redemptive act. Drawing all authority from her Son, the mantle of Mary's universal Spiritual Motherhood extends over all the Church. If one recognizes this fact, it is then necessary to see that this motherhood is a logical result of her Coredemption, where, in the offering of herself and her Son on Calvary, she is granted in return all the sons and daughters of the Church. Finally, St. Maximillian Kolbe's pneumatology indicates that the various considerations which ground the Coredemptrix title are themselves rooted in Mary's spousal relationship to the Holy Spirit, through which she becomes the channel of all grace to humanity. If man is to open a new age of Marian intercession with its much-needed promise of peace, it is imperative that the Church engages in a timely dialogue, responding to the concerns expressed by our Holy Father in order that they might be resolved, empowering Mary to act as she, in obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, maternally sees fit.⁸¹

⁸¹ This has been initiated by the leaders of the lay movement, Mother of All Peoples, as of January 1st, 2021. An article detailing the specifics of this movement is available at the following: Miravalle, Mark. "Comment on Statement from Bishop of Amsterdam Responding to CDF Letter of the CDF Concerning the Lady of All Nations." Mother of All Peoples, January 1, 2021. <https://www.motherofallpeoples.com/post/comment-on-statement-from-bishop-of-amsterdam-responding-to-cdf-letter-on-the-lady-of-all-nations>

“As with one heart only”: Our Lady Coredemptrix

JANET WENNER

“My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart.”

“My Mother and I saved man as with one heart only, I by suffering in my heart and my flesh, she by the sorrow and love of her heart.”

-St. Bridget of Sweden, *Revelationes*

The term “future shock,” coined fifty years ago, referred to a mental state caused by profound change occurring so quickly that the human mind can’t deal with it. The latter half of the twentieth century saw significant cultural shifts, positive and negative, depending on one’s own outlook and upon which aspects one chooses to emphasize. An appreciation of difference, in individuals and in cultures, became more of an ideal; this can mean less prejudice and discrimination; or it can mean an abandonment of any norms, from cultural to moral and even an abandonment of the notion of ultimate, objective truth. For the United States, this meant everything from civil rights legislation on the one hand, to the legalization of abortion-on-demand and the rise of no-fault divorce on the other. Within the Church, a growing emphasis on ecumenism was accompanied, unfortunately, by downplaying the rich tradition of Marian devotion, seen as a stumbling-block to dialogue with Protestants and hence to hopes of future reunification. Subsequent to this, the role of women was examined, in a milieu increasingly hostile to anything perceived as traditionally feminine, without the contextual influence of the feminine role model *par excellence*.

For some time, there has been a growing movement in the Church calling for the proclamation of Our Lady Coredemptrix as the fifth Marian dogma. Mary is the Coredemptrix of mankind because she gave us Jesus incarnate, by whose body and blood we are saved and sustained. In addition, she entered with thorough and full consent into Christ’s Passion, suffering with Him and accepting the pain she sustained both through His death and in giving birth to all of us, as members of His Body, the Church. As St. Lucia said, “Mary, in becoming one with Christ, is the Coredemptrix of the human race.”

She did not feel the sufferings of Her Son by mere sympathy, but truly entered into the Passion with all her being, with Her heart, with Her soul, with the most intense love and with the most serene tranquility. She suffered in her heart everything that Jesus suffered in His Flesh, and there are theologians who state that she also felt in her body the same sufferings experienced by Jesus in His.⁸²

As with other Marian dogmas and doctrines, Coredemption has a long history in the thought and devotion of the Church, is rooted in both Scripture and Tradition, and comes to full fruition over time. Many are convinced that the time for the proclamation of this fifth Marian dogma has arrived. But there is opposition.

The documents from the Second Vatican Council, presented to the world at a tumultuous time, regrettably lack the guidance, help, and encouragement that would have been afforded by a clear statement affirming as dogma, the identity of Our Lady as Co-Redemptrix.

It [the fifth Marian dogma] could also be the providential remedy for radical feminism, and even, against all appearances, for an ecumenism which, in the case of Protestants, the ordination of women has made humanly impossible.”⁸³

This seems counterintuitive (“against all appearances”): looking for areas of agreement is generally a surer road to consensus than pointing out differences, an approach which may be expected to lead to argument and discouragement. How and why could it be advisable (conventional wisdom notwithstanding) to assert a dogma distasteful to Protestants, while endeavoring to win them over? For two reasons: first, hiding or even downplaying the truth is never acceptable, and second, trusting Our Lady and her place in the divine economy means entrusting the outcome to her. The Mother of God is so intimately involved in our redemption that it is dishonest, unjust, and ungrateful to leave her out of our discussions.

See sources in Bibliography

⁸² (Perillo 2005) p.459

⁸³ (Trower 2001) p.xiii

...the Catholic truth on Mary, as with all the truths of our faith, can never be the fruit of compromise. Truth, as such, is intransigent: The Gospel “let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no’” (Mt. 5:37) defines it in its unique character better than any other learned definition.⁸⁴

Interfaith dialogue of any kind must always be wholly honest. With other Christians, in particular, while it may be helpful in some conversations to emphasize the points we hold in common, we cannot make progress towards unity while ignoring those truths accepted primarily, even solely, by the Catholic Church. As our understanding of redemption grows, under magisterial guidance, we cannot ignore aspects of truth. If we acknowledge the role of Our Lady and our dependence upon her, we cannot hope to advance toward Christian unity without her.

The actual redemption worked by Christ is, in fact, perceived as a most perfect redemption by a most perfect Redeemer because the fruit is so perfect in the Immaculate Coredemptrix. And this precisely is for ecumenical reasons: the unity of the Church and of all Christians in fellowship (*koinonia*) with the sufferings of Christ, made possible by the continuous mediation of the Immaculate Coredemptrix in the Church.⁸⁵

As Msgr. Arthur Burton Calkins points out, Vatican II came at a time when Marian devotion was at a high point. The council was called shortly after the centennial of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception.

This Marian orientation had accelerated notably during the 19-year reign of the servant of God Pope Pius XII with the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on October 31, 1942, the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Our Lady on November 1, 1950, the establishment of the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1944 and of the Queenship of Mary in the Marian Year of 1954.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003)p. 353

⁸⁵ (Fr. Peter Damian M. Fehlner 2008) p. 2

⁸⁶ (Calkins 2007)

Of course, Pope John XXIII had declared that the Council was to be pastoral, so that the proclamation of a dogma was not to be expected. It is far from my intent to assert that the Holy Father was wrong. However, the avoidance of the title in conciliar documents is another matter, and in the event led to further misunderstanding and attacks on Coredemption even from within the Church, including attacks from ordained priests and theologians. Looking back at the early 1960s from the perspective of the 2020s, it is my belief that a golden opportunity was missed to change the course of history for the better, by bringing the Co-redemption to the attention of many who needed to hear this truth.

The chief reason behind this was a fear that references to Our Lady as Coredemptrix would offend the separated brethren, referring to those in the Protestant tradition of western Europe more than to the separated churches of the East, where Marian devotion is emblematic. While the first dogma, that Mary is the Mother of God, is widely accepted implicitly if not explicitly, the other three are questioned more frequently. Mary's perpetual virginity is accepted by some Protestants, rejected by others. The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are not widely well understood outside the Church.

The Marian dogmas are so closely interrelated that it is difficult to separate them. It is not as though each recognized attribute of Our Lady is something added to her, in the way an athlete or a composer may earn medals and awards, one by one. Newly realized truths are facets of one truth.

Because she is Coredemptrix, therefore Mary Most Holy is *Mediatrix of All Graces*. In Mary Most Holy *distributive* mediation of all graces of redemption is the fruit of the universal coredemption. One might still better say that *distributive* Marian mediation is the connatural complement of coredemption, and the title *Coredemptrix* becomes, then, the foundational title postulating the title *distributive Mediatrix* of all graces.⁸⁷

Maternity and coredemption are therefore, in Mary, correlatives, since She is the Mother of Christ and hence of God, Mary is the first and efficacious instrument of the

⁸⁷ (Manelli 2008)p. 407

redemptive incarnation of the Word. As such She is objectively and properly co-cause of the Redemption; therefore, She is objectively and properly Coredemptrix.⁸⁸

None of the Marian dogmas were without detractors. The identity of Mary as the Mother of God was defended at the Council of Ephesus, against Nestorius and his followers. This early example also illustrates how inextricably linked are a proper understanding of Christ and of His Mother, so that one cannot be attacked without the other suffering. It is not surprising, though, to find critics of each dogma; happily, the criticism leads in the end to elucidation.

Increased understanding of Mary in terms of Divine Motherhood, Immaculate Conception, Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix, and Coredemptrix shows that while these dogmas and doctrines can certainly be proclaimed and examined individually, they cannot be separated out, one from another, like so many strands of yarn. An attempt to do so, to accept some and reject others, is a heretical road already traveled by European Protestantism over the past five centuries.

It is therefore ironic that the argument was made at the Second Vatican Council, and continues to be made, that Marian dogma and references should be toned down in order to effect better dialogue with Protestants. It is difficult to see how encouraging error could aid in correcting it.

The Anglican theologian Dr. Judith Marie Gentle, tracing her communion's road away from the Catholic Church and looking for a way back, sees a strong connection between attitudes toward the Real Presence in the Eucharist and towards Our Lady as Co-Redemptrix. Absent belief in the Sacrament being truly the Body and Blood of Christ and the importance of His Mother in giving Him to us also fades, and with these there is also lost the understanding of redemption. She writes:

And, without this basic understanding of Redemption, it is impossible to realize that the only person who can bring us into this blessed life of communion with the Trinity is the Lord's Mother, whose very flesh and fiat make any hope of our communion with the Blessed Trinity possible in the first

⁸⁸ (Gherardini 2004)

place. But, oh, with this understanding, the Holy Spirit can reveal the mystery that Our Lady is present in each and every Consecration of the Mass as Co-Redemptrix. She is Co-Redemptrix because She is the ever-Virgin Mother of the Lord—and therefore, Mother of the Eucharist—and therefore, Mother of us—not in some mere sentimental way but, rather, ontologically and corporally.⁸⁹

The Founding Father of Protestantism (so to speak), Martin Luther, of course had a reverence for Our Lady which did not disappear overnight. In 1521, five years after the posting of his 95 theses in Wittenberg, Luther wrote, “It should also be meditated in the heart what that means: to be the Mother of God.” Sadly, and predictably, meditation of this kind undertaken outside of the Church, without guidance, did not bear good fruit. Had the “reformers” read the Bible in a better frame of mind, they would have seen the many ways in which Our Lady is prefigured in the Old Testament and honored in the New.

The most important comparison is of course that of Our Lady with Eve. Documented reference to Mary as the new Eve goes back to the second century; she is so identified by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian, all evoking St. Paul’s description of Christ as the new Adam. This idea, developed over the centuries, relates strongly to the doctrine of co-redemption: Mary’s obedience to God parallels, contrasts with, and corrects Eve’s disobedience, and Mary is the helpmeet to the New Adam that Eve should have been, but dismally failed to be, to the Old. This also helps to establish her place in redemption, and her relation to her Son and to us, her adopted children.

She represents the feminine component of the dimension of the human causality of the objective redemption, and is thus the associate of the historical Christ or the Second Adam and Savior. Mary, therefore, is soteriologically active only in relation to other men, not already in relation to herself. In the work of redemption it is necessary to distinguish two logical moments: Christ alone redeems

⁸⁹ (Gentle 2008) p.283

Mary, and, together with her, redeems the rest of humanity.⁹⁰

To summarize what is presented in much greater detail by Fr. Stefano M. Manelli in *All Generations shall call me Blessed*, there are many other women in the Old Testament who prefigure Mary in a number of ways: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Abigail, Judith, Esther, and the heroic martyred mother of heroic martyred sons in 2 Maccabees. (That last-named book was of course rejected by the reformers, but their doing so was an effect of their disobedience to the Church; they were already willfully cutting themselves off from the sources of truth where they could have found their answers.)

Sarah, like Mary, became a mother in a miraculous way; not on the same level, obviously, but she became the mother of the promised heir, Isaac, after it would normally have been possible due to her age. Rebecca was sought to be the wife of Isaac, prefiguring the Annunciation: Gabriel seeks out Mary as the future mother of the Messiah. (St. Louis de Montfort draws out in detail the comparison of Our Lady with Rebecca, in terms of the relationship between Rebecca and Jacob, and Rebecca's care for and defense of him, as a prefiguring of Jesus and also of Mary's spiritual adopted children.⁹¹) Rachel continued the covenant line with a son who was betrayed and sold for silver, yet who became the means of salvation for his brothers who had betrayed him. Miriam the prophetess, the only woman so identified in Scripture, worked alongside her brothers; she may be called a coredemptrix with them. Deborah worked with Barak to free her people from Sisera. Ruth, calling herself a servant, prefigures the "handmaid of the Lord;" a foreigner who followed her Hebrew mother-in-law out of filial love, she became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestress of Jesus. Abigail presents as a mediatrix, humbling herself before King David and assuaging his wrath. Judith decapitates Holofernes, recalling the Protoevangelium and thereby prefiguring Our Lady. Esther stands out among her people and is destined to save them, stepping out in humility as a mediatrix with the King. Finally, the mother of the Maccabees stands by and encourages her sons in their suffering, as Mary will stand at the foot of the Cross, accepting and participating in the suffering of her Son, becoming Coredemptrix with Him in their shared Passion, endured by them both as with one heart.

⁹⁰ (Calkins 2007) p. 383

⁹¹ (Montfort 1941) pp.116-134

Marian typology in the Old Testament should make Mariology more acceptable to Protestants, who place Scripture above Tradition; the image of Our Lady as Coredemptrix may be more easily understood by some when she is regarded as the New Eve, since nobody denies that Eve was instrumental in humanity's general fall through Adam.

In terms of relatability and appeal to women, the Old Testament types foreshadowing Mary, from Miriam to Judith to the heroic mother in the Book of Maccabees, show us a woman who is courageous, strong, and entirely unselfish. Certainly this is entirely relatable to Mary, described by St. Bonaventure as a "strong and tender-hearted Woman" who embraces the suffering contingent on her role as Coredemptrix. This ideal can be embraced by a true feminism which is not self-seeking and certainly is not inclined to sensual indulgence in a misguided imitation of the lowest behaviors of the male half of humanity.

As Pope John Paul II wrote in *Mulieris Dignitatem* the male's tendency to dominate is a result of the Fall. So it must be said that men cannot shrug off feminism as nothing to do with them. Most feminists in the western world begin from a bitter feeling of ill-usage, which transforms itself into a determination that women should do whatever men do, good, bad, or indifferent.⁹²

Insofar as feminism is understood as an attempt to declare and further the human rights and the dignity of women, it is a good thing. What is sometimes known as "radical feminism" may be said not to go too far, but to go in too many directions with too little discretion. Some complaints are valid; some questions merit answers, although the answer may not be the one looked for; attacks on dogma, sacraments, and the authority of the Pope and the Magisterium are never allowable. For instance, the question of whether women could be ordained to the priesthood may have been allowable at one time but now has been settled, by Pope John Paul II; the only question which now could be asked is why this is so, in terms not of defiance but of truly seeking understanding. Yet there is defiance, and vituperation. A better understanding of Mary, completely humble and yet exalted, best illuminates the dignity of womankind.

⁹² (Robinson 2001) p.287

In the Gospels, Mary shines out as the Theotokos and the Mother given to all of us by Christ from His Cross. The Book of Revelation makes this still clearer with the description of the woman clothed with the sun, the Mother of the Church.

Revelation is notable for being particularly rich in Marian imagery. Much of this can readily be interpreted in an ecclesiotypical manner. It may be easier to see Mary as an image of the Church than a unique cooperator with Christ. But there are verses in Revelation which may, particularly when read in the context of Scripture as a whole and of Tradition, be seen to support the image of Our Lady as Coredemptrix. The woman in Revelation 12 groans with labor pains, which cannot refer to the birth of Christ in the Incarnation as Mary was not subject to the curse put upon Eve.

To groan in the pains of labor means waiting for the adoption of sons and the redemption of the body. To be given birth to, in a spiritual sense, as from labor pains has, as its consequence, adoption as sons and redemption. In these two texts, then, [Revelation 12 and Romans 8] the expression “labor pains” is metaphorical and indicates the truly great suffering of someone who is about to give life to another in a spiritual sense. We can say, then, that the reference to labor pains in Revelation 12 indicates the woman’s spiritual maternity and not the natural one. In fact, it is clear that in Revelation 12 the pains also have a symbolic value, given the tone of the Book and of the context. They indicate the strong pain that Mary had to bear and offer, united and obedient to the will of God to save, in order to give adoption as sons of God and redemption to the Mystical Body of Christ. This is why she is called “Coredemptrix.”⁹³

And in the Last Supper Discourse in the Gospel according to John, Fr. Peter Damian Fehlner finds an implicit reference to the Coredemption, as Christ predicts the suffering of the Apostles, to be followed by joy, and compares this with the suffering and joy inherent in labor and childbirth (John 16:20-21).

⁹³ (F. S. Manelli 2010) pp 231-232

In a word Christ is speaking here of what we might call the Coredemption, and he is so speaking in order that we might grasp why the Woman in the new and eternal economy-covenant of salvation (cf. form for consecration of wine at Mass) is the real-true Mother of the living because through the coredemptive mediation of the Mother of the priest-victim the dead are brought back not only to life, but to transcendently better life, first in soul and then in body.⁹⁴

So John's Gospel and his Revelation both relate Our Lady to Genesis 3, where Eve falls, and incurs the curse, but also is given her name, signifying "the mother of all living." This name better describes Mary, since the fallen Eve could pass on to her children only a limited, corrupted life, so that as *Lumen Gentium* reminds us, the patristic phrase is "death came through Eve, life came through Mary."

Some modern exegetes outline a Pauline Mariology which supports Marian Coredemption. Don Arellano develops this from a reading of Romans, the Biblical book which inspired Luther to proclaim the principle of *sole fides*. Romans 5:12 ("sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin") must include Eve in the phrase "man", based on Genesis 3:1-7, and Mary's inclusion with Christ is also implicit.

The inclusive reading which introduces Mary into the "man" of Romans 5:12 is a possible and legitimate exegesis, with great possibilities for shedding light on the problems involved in the collaboration of the Virgin in the salvation of the world. At the same time, this hermeneutic makes possible an understanding of other Pauline texts in terms of Marian Coredemption. That Coredemption will probably be the fifth Marian dogma placing the mystery of Mary in full light.⁹⁵

Admittedly (and anticipating feminist objections) the women who figure prominently in the Old Testament are noteworthy partly because they are relatively few in number, compared with prominent men. This is true to a

⁹⁴ (Fehlner 2004) p. 5

⁹⁵ (Arellano 2010)

lesser extent in the New Testament, but this makes it all the more noticeable that Mary stands out in so many ways: as the mother of Jesus at a time when identity came from the father, as the one “filled with grace,” completely imbued with the Spirit of God, as the chief mourner at the Cross and the one to whom He there entrusts the fledgling Church in the person of John, the Beloved Disciple.

Marian Coredemption begins there, at the foot of the Cross, and if this image of Our Lady achieved widespread attention in the twentieth century, it was not a product of the twentieth century. As stated earlier, Mary’s role as Coredemptrix is seen in her identity as the New Eve; Jesus is explicitly called the New Adam by St. Paul, in First Corinthians, and the parallel of Mary as the New Eve, while not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, dates back to the Apostolic Era. This is found in the writings of St. Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus refers to Mary as the New Eve in matter-of-fact terms, suggesting that it is not an idea new with him, but rather something already known and accepted.

Put simply, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John. There is every reason, then, to believe that what he transmits to us about Mary as the “New Eve” is an integral part of “the Tradition that comes to us from the apostles.”⁹⁶

The theme of coredemption was further developed during the counter-Reformation in response to the rise of Protestantism in Europe. The sixteenth-century Carmelite mystic St. John of the Cross wrote of Mary’s intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity and her participation in the Passion of her Son.

St. John of the Cross teaches the efficacious collaboration of the Virgin Mary in the Redemption, even if he does not use those precise words. In virtue of her *consent* she brought to pass in her most pure womb the Incarnation of the Son of God. This was the beginning of the Redemption, with which she cooperated with her faith, her burning charity, and her obedience to the will of God...With his experience

⁹⁶ (Calkins 2007)p. 34

and in his teaching the Mystical Doctor describes the image of the Virgin Coredemptrix.⁹⁷

Mariology as a branch of theology flourished during the seventeenth century, with the appearance of such notable figures as Francisco Hurtado, St. John Eudes, and St. Louis Grignon de Montfort. These laid a foundation of Marian thought which would weather the coming attacks from Jansenism and the so-called Enlightenment.

Prosper Louis Pascal Gueranger, a nineteenth-century French Benedictine who dedicated his life to reviving the monasticism crushed by the French Revolution, was also a copious writer. Drawing on Scripture, Liturgy, and the Litany of Loreto he examined Mary's role in the divine economy. He was a strong advocate of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed as dogma in 1854. He believed that this dogma, along with the first two Marian dogmas, Divine Maternity and Perpetual Virginity, were revealed by Jesus to the Apostles, and further stated that further revelations were also made to them, carried in the Church as tradition. "The cooperation of Mary in salvation is therefore a truth that the Abbot of Solesmes traces back to apostolic times."⁹⁸

However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Marian devotion became a source of contention even among Catholics, as well as being criticized by Jansenists and Protestants. Unfortunately, this problem has persisted, even though in terms of doctrine, dogma, and recognized apparitions the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were decidedly Marian in nature. It is difficult to understand why resistance to the Coredemption grew after the 17th century, to the point of some Catholic theologians claiming that Coredemption, rather than arguments against it, were of recent growth and lacked the weight of tradition.

The theology of Marian coredemption was not born in the 17th century. It was not a novelty introduced by the mariologists of this century, as certain prominent mariologists of the 20th century claimed, precisely to downgrade and reject the validity of this thesis. The authors of the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly the Spanish

⁹⁷ (Fr. Enrique Llamas 2007)

⁹⁸ (Mother Maria Francesca Perillo 2005) p. 447

Mariologists, were conscious of having received this teaching from authors of earlier times.⁹⁹

To turn away from a true appreciation of Our Lady and her role in salvation history and in our personal redemption is foolhardy. To do so at a time following at least ten Marian apparitions, followed by two devastating World Wars and the rise of murderous Communism—against all of which Our Lady had warned us—is to compound that foolishness. Predictably, this leads away from God as well as from Mary. Denial of the miraculous, of the Resurrection, of the Trinity, follow: this isn't speculation, it has happened and is happening.

It is the Marian dimension which truly exalts Christ most, achieves His absolute centrality, not the “*Christus solus*” theories popularized by the Protestant reformers. Marian minimalism always tends to this as Newman after Bonaventure saw so clearly: far from exalting Christ it tends to exclude Him and ends by completely forgetting Him when the Mother has been repudiated.¹⁰⁰

And so we return to the twentieth century, to the 1960s and to the Second Vatican Council. The documents in their final form were the results of long discussion. Four hundred bishops had requested a dogmatic definition of Mary's mediation, including Coredemption and Mediatrix of All Graces. Then the Pope stated that this council was to be pastoral, so that dogmatic pronouncements were not expected. Even after this, though, the first schema of the document about the Blessed Virgin Mary outlined the history of the doctrine of co-redemption, including references by Pius X and Pius XI. All of this is conspicuously absent from *Lumen Gentium*.

One certain reason for the absence of the Co-redemptrix title in the final version of the conciliar treatment on the Blessed Virgin is the inclusion of a “prohibition” for the title written by a theological subcommittee in the form of an “Explanatory Note” (*Praenotanda*) which immediately follows the text of the original Marian schema as it was distributed to the Council Fathers. The subcommission's

⁹⁹ (Fr. Enrique Llamas 2007) p. 273

¹⁰⁰ (Fr. Peter Ma. Fehlner 2001)

prohibition reads: “Certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants). Among such words may be numbered the following: ‘Co-redemptrix of the human race’ [Pius X, Pius XI]...¹⁰¹

Advice, then, was presented and eventually taken that even the simple use of the time-honored term Coredemptrix was to be avoided, lest the separated brethren be scandalized. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that creating an explanation of Mariology palatable to Protestants was more important than honoring Mary rightly.

This explanatory note is of great importance, because it responds on its own to the objection of those who oppose the Coredemption solely on account of the fact that the term was not included in the text promulgated by the Council. If, on the other hand, this term is in itself most true, but difficult to understand by Protestants, this means that the Protestants, who do not accept Marian Coredemption, are considered to be closed to *catholica veritas*—closed to the Catholic truth. One can hold, then, that the acceptance of Marian Coredemption would signal a passage from a sterile dialogue with a counterpart who is closed to Catholic truth, to a dialogue which is fruitful, because it is open to the truth in its entirety. ¹⁰²

At the 81st General Congregation of Vatican II, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, speaking on behalf of the 70 bishops of Poland, proposed that the Church be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin by the Pope in union with all the assembled bishops. These bishops would then repeat this in their own dioceses.

In the intentions of the Polish bishops, this consecration to the Virgin constituted the most efficacious means of putting into effect on the pastoral plane that which, in their judgment, was the central Mariological truth of the recent

¹⁰¹ (Miravalle 2003) p171

¹⁰² (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003) pp. 320-321

Papal Magisterium: the universal Spiritual Maternity. Yet this same Spiritual Maternity of the Virgin is nothing else than the effect of her universal Coredemption. The logical sequence turns out as follows: Coredemption — Spiritual Maternity—Consecration — Unity.¹⁰³

This might, then, have amounted to a *de facto* acknowledgement of Coredemption as the fifth Marian dogma, as well as following the instructions of Our Lady at Fatima— in the wake of the devastation which she had accurately foreseen, in the form of two world wars and the rise of Communism. It didn't happen. Fr. Fehlner, as quoted by Msgr. Arthur Burton Calkins, observed:

Vatican II left the question open, like Trent with the Immaculate Conception, teaching the mystery of coredemption, but not dotting the “i’s” and crossing the “t’s.” Is this why the crisis continues, and why the hoped-for fruits of the Council have not been realized, above all the resolution of the ecumenical question (division among the baptized) and the problem of a genuine, and radical renewal of theology (confusion, even in the Roman schools)?¹⁰⁴

If Vatican II left the question open, it's fair to ask when the question was raised. As described earlier, Marian coredemption had been part of tradition and of the *sensus fidelium* for centuries. Acknowledgement of coredemption can be traced back to the time of the Apostles. Coredemption was addressed by Mariologists in depth by the seventeenth century and thereafter in response to Jansenism and rationalism. What about official specific attention from the Vatican? It is fair to say that Marian dogma developed incrementally, one building upon another in order to make up a cohesive whole.

The word “Co-redemptrix” makes its preliminary appearance on the magisterial level by means of official pronouncements of Roman Congregations during the reign

¹⁰³ (Fr. Alessandro M. Apollonio 2003) p. 333

¹⁰⁴ (Calkins 2007) p. 399

of Pope St. Pius X (1903-1914) and then enters into the papal vocabulary.¹⁰⁵

Pius X, in the 1904 encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*, referred to Mary as “a partaker in the sufferings of Christ and the associate in His Passion.” Pius XI built on this in a 1933 letter, writing that Mary’s immaculate conception prepared her “to be associated with Him [Christ] in the Redemption of mankind.”

During his pontificate the Servant of God Pope Pius XII (1939-1948) would show particular favor to describing Mary as the beloved associate of Christ... In his Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of 1 November 1950, by which he declared Mary’s assumption into heaven a dogma of the faith, Pius referred to her as “the noble associate of the divine Redeemer. He would underscore this association also in his Encyclical on the Queenship of Mary, *Ad Caeli Reginam* of 11 October 1954, explaining that “in this work of Redemption the Blessed Virgin Mary was closely associated with Christ.”¹⁰⁶

Popes John XXIII and Paul VI continued to use the term “associate” in describing Mary, as in being associated with Christ in the work of redemption. Paul VI also referred to Our Lady as the associate of the Holy Spirit. And in his homily on the occasion of the beatification of now-St. Maximilian Kolbe, he stated:

We all know how this humble, meek Franciscan, with incredible courage and remarkable talent for organization, developed this initiative of his, and made of the devotion to the Mother of Christ, the Woman clothed with the sun, the center of his spirituality, his apostolate, and his theology.... It is precisely from the way Mary completes and serves the universal plan of Christ for the salvation of all men that she draws her prerogatives and all her greatness. (October 17, 1971)

Pope John Paul II never referred to Mary as Coredemptrix in an encyclical. Since this Pope was so strongly Marian, adopting “Totus Tuus” (from *Total Consecration to Mary*) as his papal motto, this omission is noteworthy.

¹⁰⁵ (Calkins 2007) p. 375

¹⁰⁶ (R. M. Calkins 2002) pp. 57-58

However, John Paul II did use the term in other contexts on a number of occasions.

This repeated use takes on added importance, since the only other modern Pope to use the term *Coredemptrix* is Pius XI, who used it at least twice. Thus, John Paul II must have reflected at length before deciding to use it. He would have been aware that Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XII, while choosing not to use the term *Coredemptrix*, all taught this doctrine. The fact that theologians and bishops have been using the term since the fourteenth or fifteenth century and that prior to 1960 the vast majority of theologians subscribed to this doctrine, undoubtedly were factors favorably influencing his decision.¹⁰⁷

Pope John Paul II was among those tracing the doctrine back to Irenaeus and John the Geometer, and by implication to the Apostles. Pope Benedict XVI, though, expressed a concern that the specific title *Coredemptrix* departed too far from Scripture and the Fathers, and that other terms and titles better expressed Mary's role in salvation. Benedict XVI had, in his first public address after his election, entrusted the Church and his pontificate to Mary's maternal protection.

Pope Francis, who seems fated to set off media storms on a regular basis, drew criticism after his homily on December 12, 2019, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Headlines announced that the Pope had declared *Coredemptrix* to be 'foolishness,' but this is not true. Here is what he actually said:

When they come to us with stories about having to declare this, or make this or that other dogma, let's not get lost in foolishness. Mary is woman, she is Our Lady, Mary is the Mother of her Son and of the Holy Mother hierarchical Church.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ (Fr. James Kelleher 2002) p.163.

¹⁰⁸ (D. M. Miravalle 2020)

As Dr. Mark Miravalle pointed out a week later, in a commentary in *The National Catholic Register*, the Pope's remarks may have been taken to convey the opposite of what he intended:

While it is certainly true that a desire for a formal definition of a Marian truth could theoretically distract from the central truth that Mary is "Our Lady" and the Mother of the Church, fortunately in this particular case, it is *precisely the central truth of Mary being the Spiritual Mother of the Church and of all peoples that would be the very subject and focus of this proposed fifth Marian dogma*.¹⁰⁹

St. Louis de Montfort, in his classic *True Devotion to Mary*, writes that revelation concerning Our Lady has been very deliberately gradual, as part of God's plan for salvation. The Protoevangelium shows the beginning; Scripture goes on to relate the continuation; the culmination approaches.

It was through Mary that the salvation of the world was begun, and it is through Mary that it must be consummated. Mary hardly appeared at all in the first coming of Jesus Christ, in order that men, as yet but little instructed and enlightened on the Person of Her Son, should not remove themselves from Him in attaching themselves too strongly and too grossly to her....But in the second coming of Jesus Christ, Mary has to be made known and revealed by the Holy Spirit in order that, through her, Jesus Christ may be known, loved and served.¹¹⁰

This sheds light on the emergence of Mariology, and on reason there was an increase in Marian apparitions in relatively recent times. The first of these to be recognized and approved in modern times was in Guadalupe, Mexico, in 1531. There was another in Lezajsk, Poland, in the sixteenth century; two in the seventeenth century, in Lithuania and in France. During the nineteenth century there were nine Marian apparitions: four (including Lourdes) in France, and the others in Italy, the United States, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Ireland. And in the twentieth century Our Lady appeared in Portugal,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Belgium, and Rwanda, as well as Medjugorje, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, still under consideration by the Church.

When Mary has appeared, she has urged us to prayer, repentance, and sacrifice, and warned of devastating consequences if we ignore her. The consequences have been clear enough. (In suggesting that she was not obeyed, I am referring to our own personal failings, more than to the span of years before her appearance at Fatima and the papal consecration made in 1984.)

Mary's example and intercession are needed desperately in our time specifically to offset an increased devaluation of human personhood, evident in the Culture of Death and in an increased fascination with "virtual reality" and with an avoidance of interaction. Many examples of this come to mind, from the perversion of sexuality in ever-increasing ways, to the perception of people as "consumers," to an obsession with entertainment and a tendency to distance ourselves, communicating in ways which keep us faceless and carry an easy escape route. It's always easy to blame the younger generation, but even with future shock, nothing comes from nothing: technology changes quickly, people don't.

As I began work on this paper, the nation and the world were struggling to cope with the coronavirus. In my native New York State, schools and stores and libraries and museums closed; most people were directed to stay at home. This crisis opened up two very different paths: an increased appreciation for our interdependence and the value of each human life, or increased selfishness and concern for our own lives or, at best, those of our immediate circle. What has developed so far (the pandemic is not over) is politicization of Covid-19 and drastic polarization of the population. Diatribe is rampant. Sadly, our culture has served to obscure so much truth so thoroughly that uncovering it cannot be easy.

There is more than enough evidence to make it credible if not obvious that the world would be in a very different, and better, state had we paid more attention and more honor to Our Lady. We can still turn to her, recognizing that she destroys all heresies and that ultimately, as she has promised, her Immaculate Heart will triumph.

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Articles

Is Mary Co-redemptrix A “False Exaggeration”?

MARK MIRAVALLE* AND ROBERT FASTIGGI**

In its treatment on proper devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Second Vatican Council warns the People of God against two potential extremes. After the Council Fathers encourage a “generous fostering” of authentic devotion to the Blessed Virgin based on solid doctrine, and call for Marian devotional practices recommended by the teaching authority of the Church over centuries to be “highly esteemed,” (1) they then issue the following admonition: “But [the Council] strongly urges theologians and preachers of the Word of God to be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God.” (2) Here identified are the two immoderations of devotion to Mary, that is, Marian excess and Marian defect.

What, then, constitutes either “false exaggeration” or “too summary an attitude” regarding Mary? The Council repeatedly commends Marian devotions “within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine,” (3) as well those formed by the study of “Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church and under the guidance of the Church’s Magisterium.” (4)

Therefore, according to the Second Vatican Council, if a Marian devotion has its doctrinal basis in Scripture, a longstanding presence in the Church’s Tradition, and then taught by the papal Magisterium, then surely it would constitute an authentic form of Marian devotion.

Why, then, do some in the Church today consider the Marian title of human “Co-redemptrix” with Jesus, the only divine Redeemer, to constitute “false exaggeration”? The doctrine of Marian coredemption, which refers to Mary’s subordinate role though unique human role with Jesus in the historic work of Redemption, is deeply rooted in Scripture, the Fathers, the Liturgy, and Church doctors, and explicitly and consistently taught by the papal Magisterium for the last two centuries (5) ; and the Co-redemptrix title, which in a single term denotes Mary’s unique human role in the Redemption, has enjoyed an unbroken presence within the Church’s devotional and mystical Tradition since the 14th century (6).

Mary's free and active consent at the Annunciation brought Jesus, the divine Redeemer into the world, to whom she gave his body, the instrument of Redemption (cf. Lk. 1:38, Lk. 2:1-20, Heb. 10:10).). Simeon prophesies Mary's co-suffering with Jesus at Calvary (cf. Lk. 2:35). At Calvary, Mary shares in the suffering of her Redeemer Son, and consents to the offering of him as the victim-ransom of Redemption (cf. Jn. 19:26-27). The Council profoundly articulates our Lady's heroic coredemption with Jesus at Calvary:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. (7)

From the second century, St. Irenaeus expounds Mary's subordinate role with Jesus as the "New Eve" with the New Adam, and professes her as "the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race." (8) In the 5th and 6th centuries, eastern liturgies refer to her subordinate role in the Redemption, with the great Akathist hymn invoking her, "Hail, Redemption of the tears of Eve." (9) By the 10th century, John the Geometer articulates Mary's co-suffering with Jesus throughout her life and culminating at Calvary (10); and the term "Redemptrix" for Mary appears in liturgical hymns (11). In the twelfth century, Mary's *cumpassio* ("suffering with") was taught by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (12), and his disciple, Arnold of Chartres refers to the Mother at Calvary being spiritually "co-crucified" with her Son, and that she spiritually "co-dies" with Jesus in her heart (13). In the 15th century, the title, "Co-redemptrix" (14) appears, and by the 16th century, the prominent Tridentine theologian, Jesuit Alphonsus Salmeron defends the theological legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title (15). The 17th century Golden Age of Marian coredemption would see over 300 theological references to the role and title, with the doctrine recognized as the "common consensus of theologians." (16)

In the 19th century, the papal Magisterium begins its consistent doctrinal teaching on Mary's unique participation in the Redemption, which will extend successively through the 21st century papal Magisterium to the present. (17) Under the pontificate of Pope St. Pius X, the Co-redemptrix title is first used and approved, significantly, *by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith itself* (then Holy Office) along with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the

Discipline of the Sacraments (then Congregation of Rites) (18). Pope Benedict XV unequivocally teaches the Coredemptrix doctrine: "... We rightly say that she [Mary] redeemed the human race together with Christ." (19) Pope Pius XI explicitly uses the title on three occasions (20), and specifically defends the Co-redemptrix title:

By necessity, the Redeemer could not but associate [*non poteva, per necessità di cose, non associare*] his Mother in his work. For this reason, we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix. She gave us the Savior, she accompanied him in the work of Redemption as far as the Cross itself, sharing with Him the sorrows and the agony and in the death in which Jesus consummated the Redemption of mankind. (21)

Recognized Italian and French Protestant theologians in the 1950's identified the doctrine of Marian Coredemption as the central and fundamental issue of 20th century Catholic Mariology (22), and recognized it as the essential synthesis of all Mariology in the minds of popes and Catholic theologians (23).

The Second Vatican Council authoritatively and repeatedly teaches the doctrine of Our Lady's coredemption in Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, in terms of her "lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim" (24); her "freely cooperating in the work of man's salvation" as the New Eve (25); the "union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation" (26); and "in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls." (27) It is further noteworthy that the first schema of the document on Mary as prepared by theologians from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (Holy Office) contained a strong historical, theological, and magisterial defense of the Co-redemptrix title within its notation (28).

Pope Benedict XVI has prudently and wisely warned against a post conciliar "hermeneutics of rupture" with the Church before the Council, and instead directed the contemporary theological community, to a reverend and fruitful *hermeneutics of continuity*. How could any present rejection of the Co-redemptrix title in light of its undeniable foundation in Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium, and its ubiquitous presence in authentic 20th century Mariology, as testified

to even by Protestant observers, not constitute an obvious rupture of hermeneutical continuity?

Five Post-conciliar Witnesses

Let's examine the testimony of five prominent post-conciliar Church figures, who, well after the Second Vatican Council and from diverse roles from within the Church, have faithfully employed the Co-redemptrix title for Our Lady, and in several cases, have staunchly defended it.

Pope St. John Paul II used the Co-redemptrix titles at least six times (29) and [universally taught](#) the doctrine of Marian coredemption as Roman pontiff (30). One example of his teaching on Marian coredemption—highlighted within the context of a rich theology based on *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58—can be seen in this 1985 homily:

Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son (cf. Gal 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she “lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim born of her” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58).... At Calvary with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the mother of all the disciples of her Son Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son. (31)

Any claims that John Paul II used the title in only marginal texts, or texts devoid of doctrinal value, seems to run contrary to the conciliar teachings regarding the norms for the required religious assent of mind and will to the manifest mind of the Pope even when not speaking *ex cathedra* (32), including the characteristic of repeated papal teaching. Nor do such claims remove the plain fact that a post-conciliar Roman pontiff repeatedly used the Co-redemptrix title. Hence, any position which holds that Pope John Paul II did not use the Co-redemptrix term as part of his magisterial teaching is historically, theologically, and factually erroneous.

Cardinal Luigi Ciappi, O.P., Papal Theologian under St. John Paul II, confirmed the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title and strongly endorsed

the universal petition for its solemn definition (33). He has been joined by *over 600 brother cardinal and bishops*, who, since 1993 (obviously, well after the Second Vatican Council) have supported both the Co-redemptrix title and its solemn papal definition (34).

St. Teresa of Calcutta, the most universally acclaimed saint of the 20th century, repeatedly used the Co-redemptrix title and likewise supported its papal definition: “Mary is our Co-redemptrix with Jesus. She gave Jesus his body and suffered with him at the foot of the cross...The papal definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate will bring great graces to the Church.” (35)

The Fatima visionary, Sr. Lucia, who in her final writings, *Calls from the Message of Fatima* (published in 2002), not only uses the Co-redemptrix title for Our Lady of Fatima on seven occasions, but also provides extended explanations and defenses of the title and role. Sr. Lucia concludes: “Mary does not simply offer her Son, she offers herself with Christ, because Jesus had received his body and blood from her; thus, she offers herself in and with Christ to God, Co-redemptrix with Christ, of humanity” (36); and again: “...Mary, made one with Christ, is the Co-redemptrix of the human race.” (37)

A fifth witness, Oxford theologian, John Macquarrie, from the Anglican tradition, offers a particularly valuable ecumenical testimony. Macquarrie, referred to as Anglicanism’s most prominent theologian of the last 50 years, defends an open theological and ecumenical dialogue regarding the potential merits of the Co-redemptrix title:

The matter cannot be settled by pointing to the dangers of exaggeration and abuse, or by appealing to isolated texts of scripture such as 1 Timothy 2:5, or by the changing fashions in theology and spirituality, or by the desire not to say anything that might offend one’s partners in ecumenical dialogue. Unthinking enthusiasts may have elevated Mary to a position of virtual equality with Christ, but this aberration is not a necessary consequence of recognizing that there may be a truth striving for expression in words like Mediatrix and Co-redemptrix. All responsible theologians would agree that Mary’s co-redemptive role is subordinate and auxiliary to the central role of Christ. But if she does have such a role, the more clearly we understand it, the

better. It is a matter for theological investigation. And, like other doctrines concerning Mary, it is not only saying something about her, but something more general concerning the Church as a whole or even humanity as a whole. (38)

In light of these post-conciliar witnesses to the legitimacy and value of the Co-redemptrix title, who then would judge Mary Co-redemptrix to be guilty of false exaggeration? Who would identify John Paul II, Mother Teresa, 600 cardinals and bishops, and the others as supporting doctrinally erroneous title, pre-Vatican, or acting in violation of authentic ecumenism?

While there can certainly be preferences among the beauty of diversity of theological terminology, it is quite another thing, unacceptable from an authentic Catholic perspective, to decide that a Marian title, grounded in Scripture, nurtured through Tradition, and taught by the Magisterium, is now to be deemed theologically illegitimate, based only upon theological preference.

Preference, yes; prohibition, no. No one should judge these present-day Church luminaries, one a pope, two of them canonized, and a third with a cause open for canonization, and find them doctrinally unorthodox, ecclesiastically outdated, or ecumenically insensitive.

Theological preferences come and go, and our present time is but a brief step in the great historic journey of the development of doctrine. We must vigorously guard against any subtle or even unconscious forms of theological chronolatry of our temporary and passing role in this development. Lest we cast dispersions upon centuries of inspiration, prayer, reflection, and doctrinal development, effected by popes and bishops, saints and stigmatists, clergy and laity, contemplatives and mystics, let us respond to Mary Co-redemptrix in title and truth with theological humility and ecclesial reverence. We cannot play with Tradition.

Ecumenically Insensitive?

The call to Ecumenism, in point of fact, has become the principal rationale used by some to oppose the Co-redemptrix title for Our Lady. Is calling Mary the human “Co-redemptrix” an act of ecumenical insensitivity?

The papal teachings of St. John Paul II on ecumenism, based on the Council, stand perennial, and need to be accurately applied now regarding the Co-redemptrix title:

Taking up an idea expressed by Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Council, the Decree on Ecumenism mentions the way of formulating doctrine as one of the elements of a continuing reform. Here it is not a question of altering the deposit of faith, changing the meaning of dogmas, eliminating essential words from them, accommodating truth to the preferences of a particular age, or suppressing certain articles of the *Creed* under the false pretext that they are no longer understood today. The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth? The Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* attributes to human dignity the quest for truth, "especially in what concerns God and his Church", and adherence to truth's demands. A "being together" which betrayed the truth would thus be opposed both to the nature of God who offers his communion and to the need for truth found in the depths of every human heart. (39)

And again:

With regard to the study of areas of disagreement, the Council requires that the whole body of doctrine be clearly presented. At the same time, it asks that the manner and method of expounding the Catholic faith should not be a hindrance to dialogue with our brothers and sisters. Certainly, it is possible to profess one's faith and to explain its teaching in a way that is correct, fair and understandable, and which at the same time takes into account both the way of thinking and the actual historical experiences of the other party. Full communion of course will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ's disciples. Hence all forms of reductionism or facile "agreement" must be absolutely avoided. (40)

Marian coredemption is a doctrine of the Church. Co-redemptrix is the title that expresses this doctrine. The title must continue, as certainly will the doctrine.

Gradualism in ecumenical dialogue is legitimate. Reductionism is not.

The Co-redemptrix title, moreover, encompasses in itself several key Catholic doctrines concerning grace and free will, the necessity of human cooperation in salvation, and faith, hope, and charity as required for justification, all of which constitute an essential aspect of the *depositum fidei*.

Surely, terms like “transubstantiation” and “papal infallibility” take more work in dialogues of Christian unity, due to their constituting obvious areas of disagreement. Why, then, do we continue to use them? Because they convey critical Catholic doctrines that cannot be reduced or compromised. Papal infallibility, for example, requires extensive explanation as to its nature, proper application, and limits, but we do not seek to suppress that title, because no better single term captures the doctrinal truth contained therein. The same holds true for the unique role of Mary in the Redemption and its corresponding term of Co-redemptrix.

Once again, to posit any notion of Mary Co-redemptrix as constituting an alleged violation of authentic Catholic ecumenism is necessarily to indict John Paul the Great, Mother Teresa, and over 600 post-conciliar prelates as being ecumenically insensitive. Would that be true? Would that be fair?

Model for the Church

Is there a further value in this Marian title for the People of God? What does Mary Co-redemptrix say to the Church today?

Apart from the rightful solemn acknowledgement our Mother deserves for her unique human role with Jesus, Mary Co-redemptrix also reminds all the faithful of the critical universal Christian call to cooperate in the work of redemption, to follow St. Paul’s example to “make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body, which is the Church (Col:1:24).” By spreading the Gospel, by teaching the faith to our children, by feeding the hungry, by acts of fraternal kindness, by offering our sufferings— by these

and many more ways, every Christian has the imperative to cooperate with Jesus in the redemption of others. The very nature of the Church has been established to continue the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ through its prayer and sacramental life. St. Paul calls us to be “co-workers with God” (1 Cor. 3:9). Should we be surprised when St. John Paul II calls us to be “co-redeemers in Christ”? (41)

If Christian married couples can co-create with the Creator in having children, and bishops and clergy can co-sanctify with the Sanctifier when administering the sacraments, then surely the People of God can co-redeem with the Redeemer by sharing in the saving work of Jesus.

Every truth about Mary abounds to the Church, and her unique role as human Co-redemptrix reminds us of the Christian duty to cooperate with the Redeemer in the ongoing work of human redemption in a contemporary world in such desperate need of Christian evangelization.

Some might argue that the term “redemption” should be reserved only to the divine act of Jesus. But this would logically deny another core Catholic doctrine and mission: *to freely and actively participate in the life and the saving mission of Jesus Christ*. When an inferior being, a human, shares in a quality or perfection of a superior being, God, this participation takes nothing away nor competes with the perfection of God. Thus, for a human being to participate in the work of Jesus, the divine Redeemer, takes nothing away nor competes with Jesus’ one mediation (cf. 1 Tim 2:5), but rather manifests its glory. (42). As the Council teaches regarding Our Lady’s unique participation in the one mediation of Christ: “Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.” (43) This is also true about all Christ’s faithful who are called to participate in his great work of Redemption.

The Lord himself, providentially from all time, intended free human participation as an integral part of his divine work of Redemption. This constitutes essential Catholic doctrine and is embodied in the co-redemptrix and co-redeemer terms.

Pope Benedict XVI offers an extraordinary example of the universal call to Christian coredemption in which he incorporates precisely the same principle of human participation and analogy in calling the sick gathered at Fatima

Shrine to become “redeemers in the Redeemer” and thereby to offer “a means of redemption for the whole world.”

Dear friends who are sick, welcome the call of Jesus who will shortly pass among you in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and entrust to him every setback and pain that you face, so that they become—according to his design—a means of redemption for the whole world. You will be redeemers with the Redeemer, just as you are sons in the Son. At the cross...stands the mother of Jesus, our mother. (44)

Using the same root term of redemption in referring to Mary as Co-redemptrix and “co-redeemer in Christ” for every member of the Church provides an essential theological and etymological link, within the sound Catholic usage of analogy, on how the human members of the Church must intimately share in the divine Redeemer’s greatest victory.

Moreover, the Christian value of human suffering is intrinsic to the Co-redemptrix term. In light of the global and multiform human suffering being experienced right now, inclusive of the Covid pandemic and its tragic global consequences, should we not be accentuating suffering’s transcendent value right now as captured in this title and the unparalleled efficacious example of human suffering united with Christ by our Mother Co-redemptrix?

Finally, in our current efforts to more fully appreciate the role of women in the Church, should we not also accentuate the fact that it was not a pope, not a bishop, not a priest, nor a man, but a woman who was willed to the Father to join his incarnate Son, like no other creature, in the redemption of the human family?

Marian titles like Mary Co-redemptrix, deeply seeded in the sources of divine revelation, can never die. Quite the contrary, the Holy Spirit, Our Lady’s divine spouse, within his wondrous development of doctrine, only unveils more and more its timeless truth, its intrinsic beauty, its eternal profundity. Mary Co-redemptrix will live on to point perennially to redemptive victory of Jesus, her Son, and to the ongoing human imperative for the People of God to cooperate in Jesus’ saving mission, especially in our own present critical hour of human history.

O Immaculate Mother of the Church, Mary Co-redemptrix, pray for us!

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Endnotes

- (1) Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, n. 67.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 66.
- (4) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 67.
- (5) Cf., "[The Role of Mary in Redemption](http://www.eccematertua.com): A Document of the Theological Commission of the International Marian Association," *Ecce Mater Tua: An International Journal of Mariology*, Vol. 1, January 1, 2017, www.eccematertua.com; J.B. Carol, *De corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae* (Rome, 1950); G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza* Vol. II, (Isola Del Liri: Pisani, 1969) 144-155. For a survey of papal texts from Leo XIII to John Paul II, cf. A. Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Co-redemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, 25-92; M. Perillo, F.I. and M. Somerton, F.I., "The Marian Coredeemption Through Two Millennia," *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, Academy of the Immaculate, 79- 112.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58.
- (8) St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, Ch. 22, n. 4, PG 7, 959 A, Harvey 2, 123.
- (9) *Akathist Hymn*, c. 525 A.D., Strophe 1, PG 92, 1337 A. Cited in *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56.
- (10) Cf. John the Geometer, *Life of Mary*, Bol. 196, 123; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.
- (11) For example, *Litanies des saintes*, Cathedral of Salisbury, Parchment 173; cf. Laurentin, *Le Titre de Corédemptrice*, 11-12.
- (12) St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Serm. 3 in Purificatione Beatae Mariae.*, 2; PL 183, 370; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.
- (13) Arnold of Chartres, *De septem verbis Domini in cruce*, 3; PL 189, 1694; PL 189, 1726-1727; PL 189, 1693 B; cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Wednesday Audience*, October 25, 1995, *Inseg.* XVIII/2 (1995) 934-936.
- (14) *Orat. Ms S. Petri Slaiburgens, saec. XV; Codex Petrin, a, III, 20; Orat. Ms S. Petri. Saec. XIV, XV; Codex Petrin. , 1, 20*, quoted in M. Dreves, *Analecta hymnica medii aevi, Leipzig, Reiland*, t. 46, 1905, 126, n. 79.
- (15) Alphonsus Salmerón, *Commentarii in Evangel.*, Tr. 5, Opera, Cologne, ed. Hierat, 1604, t. III, 37b-38a; *Commentarii*, vol. 10, tr. 41, 359b. vol.10, tr. 41, 359b; vol. 11, tr. 38, 312a; vol. 3; tr. 43, 495a.
- (16) Cf. J.B. Carol, "Marian Coredeemption," Carol, ed., *Mariology*, Vol 2, 1957, p. 409.
- (17) For a survey of papal texts on Marian Coredeemption from Leo XIII to John Paul II, cf. A. Calkins, "The Mystery of Mary Co-redemptrix in the Papal Magisterium," *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, 25-92; M. Perillo, F.I. and M. Somerton, F.I., "The Marian Coredeemption Through Two Millennia," *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002) 79- 112; Cf. J.B. Carol, *De corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Rome, 1950; G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, Vol. II, (Isola Del Liri, Pisani, 1969) 144-155.

- (18) Congregation of Rites, *Decretum quo festum Septem Dolorum B. M. V., Dominicae tertiae Septembris affixum, ad ritum duplicem secundae classis elevatur pro universa Ecclesia* (may 13, 1918) *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 41 [1908] in which the Congregation itself uses the Co-redemptrix title in granting the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary to be raised to the rank of double class; the Congregation of the Holy Office also uses the title, Co-redemptrix, in a decree of June 26, 1913, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS] 5[1913], 364; and in another decree of January 22, 1914, AAS 6, [1914], 108.
- (19) Pope Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*, AAS 10, 182. "... ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse."
- (20) Cf. Pius XI, *Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza, Italy*, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano* no, Dec. 1, 1933, 1; Pius XI, *Allocution to Spanish Pilgrims*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 25, 1934, 1; Pius XI, *Radio Message for the Closing of the Holy Year at Lourdes*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 29-30, 1935, 1.
- (21) Pius XI, *Allocution to Pilgrims from Vicenza, Italy*, November 30, 1933, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 1, 1933, 1; see also Domenico Bertetto, S.D.B., ed. *Discorsi di Pio XI* 2:1013.
- (22) G. Miegge, *La Vergine Maria, saggio del storia del dogma* (Torre Pellice: Editrice Claudina, 1950) p. 178, as cited by Carol, *Mariology*, Vol. 2, p. 377.
- (23) P. Maury, *La Vierge Marie dans le catholicisme contemporain*, in *Le Protestantisme et la Vierge Marie*, ed., J.Bosc, P. Bourguet, P. Maury, and H.Roux (Paris: Ed Je Sers, 1950) p. 39-40, as cited by Carol, *Mariology*, Vol 2, p. 377.
- (24) *Lumen Gentium*, 58.
- (25) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 56.
- (26) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 57.
- (27) *Lumen Gentium*, n. 61.
- (28) "De Maria Virgine Matre Dei et Matre Hominum," Section 3, note 16, *Acta Synodalia Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, *Typis Polgottis Vaticanis*, 1971, vol. 1, pt. 4. The decision to exclude the Co-redemptrix title from the final version of the Marian document to be eventually found in *Lumen Gentium* Chapter 8 did not come from the Council Fathers themselves, but from a theological sub-committee who would state in a "*Praenotanda*" [explanatory pre-note] that while certain terms used by Roman Pontiffs such as "Co-redemptrix of the human race" were "absolutely true in themselves" (*in se verissima*) they "may be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case, Protestants)" and were, for that reason, "omitted" from the schema. Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Volumen I, Periodus Prima, Pars IV, Praenotanda*, Vatican City, 1971, 99; cf. *Besutti, Lo Schema Mariano*, 41.
- (29) See John Paul II General Audience, 10 December 1980 (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo* [Inseg] II, III/2 [1980], p. 1646); General Audience 8 September 1982 (*Inseg* V/3 [1982], p. 404); Angelus Address 4 November, 1984 (*Inseg* VII/2 [1984], p. 1151); Discourse at World Youth Day 31 March 1985 (*Inseg* VIII/1 [1985], p. 889-890); Address to the Sick 24 March, 1990 (*Inseg* XIII/1 [1990], p. 743); Discourse of 6 October, 1991 (*Inseg* XIV/2 [1991], p. 756). Moreover, in a homily in Guayaquil, Ecuador on January 31, 1985, John Paul II spoke of the "co-redemptive role of Mary (*el papel corredentor de Maria*: *Inseg* VIII [1985], p. 319), which was translated as "Mary's role as Co-redemptrix" in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985
- (30) Cf. A. Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Ordinary Magisterium on Marian Coredemption," *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Vol. II, New Bedford, MA, Academy of the Immaculate, 2002; M. Perillo, F.I. and M. Somerton, F.I., "The Marian Coredemption Through Two Millenia," *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Ratcliffe College, England, 2002, Academy of the Immaculate, 79-112; G. Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, Vol. II, Isola Del Liri, Pisani, 144-155; Arthur B. Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption," M.

- Miravalle ed., *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate, Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical*, Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997.
- (31) Pope St. John Paul II, *Homily at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Alborada*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Jan. 31, 1985, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., March 11, 1985.
- (32) Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25.
- (33) M. Miravalle, *Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publications, 1993) Introduction by Luigi Cardinal Ciappi, 5 May, 1993, ix.
- (34) Cf. *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Archives of cardinal and bishop endorsement letters received, filed, copied and submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith since 1993, 48765 Annapolis Rd, Hopedale, Ohio.
- (35) Letter of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, August 14, 1993 as contained in M. Miravalle, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-redemptrix*, Queenship, 2003, p. 229.
- (36) Sr. Lucia, *Calls from the Message of Fatima*, (Still River, MA: Ravengate Press, 2002, p. 279.
- (37) Ibid, p. 137.
- (38) J. Macquarrie, "Mary Co-redemptrix and Disputes Over Justification and Grace: An Anglican View," *Mary Co-redemptrix: Ecumenically Doctrinal Issues Today* (Goleta, CA: Queenship, 2002), p. 140.
- (39) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut Unum Sint* (May 25, 1995), n. 18.
- (40) Ibid., n. 36.
- (41) For example, John Paul II, *Discourse to the Personnel of the Fatebenefratelli Hospital*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 5, 1981.
- (42) Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 60-62.
- (43) *Lumen Gentium*, n.60.
- (44) Pope Benedict XVI, Papal Address to the Sick, "You Can Overcome the Feeling of the Uselessness of Suffering," Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Fatima, Portugal, May 13, 2010.

Belleza femenina y salvación. Perspectiva bíblico-mariológica¹¹¹

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En la novela *El idiota*, de Fiodor Dostoyevski, Hipólito pregunta al príncipe Myshkin, el personaje principal: «¿Es cierto, príncipe, que dijiste alguna vez: *la belleza salvará al mundo?*». El príncipe no respondió directamente a la cuestión, pero la novela sugiere que sí¹¹². Intentaremos responder bíblicamente a este interrogante fijándonos en cómo salvó Dios a su pueblo

¹¹¹ Este trabajo ha sido realizado con la ayuda financiera del Centro Español de Estudios Eclesiásticos anejo a la Iglesia Nacional Española de Santiago y Montserrat en Roma en el marco de los proyectos de investigación del curso 2018-2019.

¹¹² «“El hombre puede vivir sin ciencia, puede vivir sin pan, pero sin belleza no podría seguir viviendo, porque no habría nada más que hacer en el mundo. Todo el secreto está aquí, toda la historia está aquí”, dijo Dostoyevski. La belleza parece decirnos que hay algo que debemos hacer, algo con lo que debemos unirnos, algo que debemos desnudar que es el sentido más profundo de la existencia. Venus (la belleza) seduce a Marte (la acción). ¿Sin belleza para qué actuar? ¿Si el mundo no fuera bello para qué habría que preservarlo y actualizar la creación con nuestros actos? La belleza instaura un dinamismo en la existencia e impide que la evolución se petrifique, insufla una tendencia volátil en la materia que la lleva al espíritu» (https://pijamasurf.com/2017/06/platon_dostoevski_y_por_que_la_belleza_salva_al_mundo/).

por la belleza de dos heroínas, Ester y Judit, las cuales prefiguran a la Virgen María.

Para contextualizar bíblicamente estos pasajes, antes presentaremos sucintamente la belleza de Dios y sus criaturas (1 y 2), así como el valor ambivalente que ésta ha jugado en la historia de los hombres (3).

1. La belleza de Dios

Dios es el sumo bien, la absoluta verdad, y la belleza infinita. En Él se da la plenitud de los trascendentales del ser y, a la vez, es la fuente y origen de ellos: de todo bien, de toda verdad, y de toda belleza. Ésta última es el centro de nuestra atención.

Bíblicamente hablando, ¿qué es la belleza de Dios? Por lo general asociamos la belleza a lo visible, a algo que captamos con la vista: un paisaje, una obra de arte... Dios, sin embargo, es invisible; al menos el Padre y el Espíritu (así como el Verbo hasta el momento de la Encarnación) lo que nos indica que la belleza puede ser captada no solo por la vista.

La belleza es, por definición, lo fascinante, lo atractivo, lo que nos deja pasmados y extasiados, lo deleitante, aquello que cuando lo percibimos no podemos dejar de extasiarnos... Esto, en la Biblia, aplicado a Dios, es lo que llamamos *su Gloria*¹¹³. Aquella ante la cual uno solo puede balbucear, fascinarse y alabar, ensalzar y glorificar a Dios ante tanta majestad, poder, belleza y hermosura¹¹⁴. Es la que tantas veces hace exultar al salmista en alabanzas: “Bendice, alma mía, al Señor: ¡Dios mío, qué grande eres! Te vistes

¹¹³ Hans Urs von Balthasar intuyó de modo especial esta dimensión, a la que dedicó la tercera parte de su famosa trilogía: *Gloria. Una estética teológica*, I *La percepción de la forma*, II *Estilos eclesiales*, III *Estilos laicales*, IV *Edad Antigua*, V *Edad Moderna*, VI *Antiguo Testamento*, VII *Nuevo Testamento* (Encuentro, Madrid 1988).

¹¹⁴ H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Gloria. Una estética teológica*, VI. *Antiguo Testamento* (Encuentro, Madrid 1988, reimpr. 1997) 14: «Esta gloria de Dios, su sublimidad y soberanía en sí mismo y en su donación [...] es exactamente lo que constituye lo específico y propio de Dios [...]. Este, en términos bíblicos, significa que cuanto más profundamente puede una criatura encontrarse con la gloria de Dios, tanto más desearía exaltar esta gloria como la que se eleva por encima de sí misma y de todo lo creado». Se percibe este aspecto especialmente en la Renovación Carismática, donde de modo espontáneo el espíritu de alabanza brota ante la presencia de la gloria de Dios.

de *belleza* (=ἐνπρόκειαν)¹¹⁵ y *majestad*, la luz te envuelve como un manto” (Sal 104 [103] 1-2).

Ante la gloria que se manifiesta, «Moisés cayó en tierra de rodillas y se postró» (Ex 34,8), Elías se cubre el rostro (1 R 19,13), Isaías se siente perdido (Is 6,5), Ezequiel cae de bruces (Ez 1,28), Daniel se turba en su espíritu (Dn 7,15) y cae desvanecido, rostro en tierra (Dn 10,9), los apóstoles en el Tabor caen «espantados» (Mc 9,6), «llenos de temor» (Lc 9,34), llenos de miedo (Mt 17,6), rostro en tierra, Pablo cae a tierra derribado y deslumbrado (Hch 9,4.9), Juan cae como muerto a los pies de quien se le aparece [...]. Y, no obstante, cuando sucede, esto se percibe con estupor casi incrédulo, como una gracia única¹¹⁶.

Es lo que hacemos nosotros mismos, por ejemplo, al proclamar su santidad con el triple *sanctus* de la Eucaristía, imitando lo que continuamente hacen los querubines en su presencia, como sucede en la teofanía de la vocación de Isaías. Así lo narra el profeta, subrayando la majestad gloriosa de Dios:

El año de la muerte del rey Ozías, vi al Señor sentado sobre un trono alto y excelso: la orla de su manto llenaba el templo. Junto a él estaban los serafines, cada uno con seis alas: con dos alas se cubrían el rostro, con dos el cuerpo, con dos volaban, y se gritaban uno a otro diciendo: «¡Santo, santo, santo es el Señor del universo, llena está la tierra de su gloria!». (Is 6,1-3)

La Biblia de la CEE señala en nota a pie que esta gloria y santidad «se define como su fuerza y energía, que lo hacen *infinitamente atractivo* y misterioso, digno de respeto y amor y, a la vez, temible». Es la belleza que desea contemplar Moisés por encima de todo en el rostro de Dios, que también en este pasaje se identifica con su gloria:

Entonces, Moisés exclamó: «Muéstrame *tu gloria*». Y él le respondió: «Yo haré pasar ante ti *toda mi bondad* y pronunciaré ante ti el nombre del Señor, [...] Pero *mi rostro*

¹¹⁵ En hebreo, *majestad* y *esplendor* (הֹד וְקִדְּוָה) son dos dimensiones de la belleza misma.

¹¹⁶ VON BALTHASAR, *Gloria. Una estética teológica*, 16.

no lo puedes ver, porque no puede verlo nadie y quedar con vida. [...] Cuando pase *mi gloria*, te meteré en una hendidura de la roca y te cubriré con mi mano hasta que haya pasado. Después, cuando retire la mano, podrás ver mi espalda, pero mi rostro no lo verás». (Ex 33,18-19.20.22-23)

El mismo deseo de ver la belleza divina tiene Felipe, cuando hace a Jesús en la última cena la misma petición que Moisés: ver el rostro de Dios, pues el rostro es donde se expresa más plenamente la belleza de una persona: «Señor, muéstranos al Padre y nos basta» (14,8).

2. La belleza de sus criaturas

Esa belleza infinita de Dios ha quedado plasmada de modo admirable en la creación¹¹⁷. Él mismo lo repite una y otra vez conforme van apareciendo sus criaturas: «Vio Dios que la luz era buena (καλόν; בִּיָּוֶה)» (Gén 1,4). «Y vio Dios que era bueno» (Gén 1,10.12.18.21.25). «Vio Dios todo lo que había hecho, y era muy bueno (καλὰ λίαν; טָבָה בְּיָוֶה) Pasó una tarde, pasó una mañana: el día sexto» (Gén 1,31).

Nótese que la LXX traduce el adjetivo hebreo *tób* (bueno, agradable) no por *agathós*, el término griego que propiamente significa bueno, sino por *kalós*, bello, hermoso, subrayando así que la creación es no solo buena, sino fundamentalmente hermosa, bonita (que en castellano procede de la misma raíz que bueno, *bonus*). De hecho, durante los seis días de la creación, Dios lo que hace fundamentalmente es ordenarla, embellecerla: el primer día es el que hace que se pase de la nada a *algo*, pero ese *algo*, la materia recién creada, es *tohu babohu* (Gén 1,2), caos y vacío, caos informe. Dios va a convertirlo en cosmos (= orden). Es decir, Gén 1 presenta la labor creadora de Dios como una gran acción de cosmética, que literalmente es el arte de poner orden y belleza donde hay *tohu babohu*, desorden y caos. Así, al final de seis días creando, ordenando y embelleciendo el universo, éste resulta una obra hermosísima.

¹¹⁷ VON BALTHASAR, *Gloria. Una estética teológica*, 21: «La literatura sapiencial confirma esta manifestación de la gloria de Dios tanto en la naturaleza como en la historia, y Pablo la presupone tanto en sus cartas (Rom 1,18-21) como en sus discursos (Hch 17)».

Ahora bien, de entre sus criaturas, hay una concreta que destaca por su belleza, aquella que es imagen de Dios: el ser humano¹¹⁸, y de un modo especial, la mujer. Se subraya en las primeras palabras de asombro que pronuncia Adán al contemplar a su hermosa compañera: «¡Esta sí que es hueso de mis huesos y carne de mi carne!» (Gén 2,23). La exclamación *¡Esta sí!* (en hebreo **הִנֵּה הִיא**; *esta vez sí*) manifiesta la correspondencia entre las expectativas de Adán y lo que ven sus ojos en Eva, es decir, su apariencia, su belleza¹¹⁹.

Primero conclusión: la creación es el primer acto salvífico de Dios, pues nos salva del *no existir*, de permanecer en la nada. Y la belleza de cada una de sus criaturas también es salvadora, pues además de transmitir alegría, gozo, deleite, serenidad, nos salva de lo feo, lo tenebroso y, sobre todo, nos manifiesta algo de la infinita belleza divina.

3. Ambivalencia de la belleza creada

Ahora bien, la belleza, que en sí misma es buena y salvífica, va a jugar un papel ambivalente en la historia de la salvación, pues como todo don de Dios, es susceptible de no ser acogido como se debe. Así sucedió al principio: en el origen del pecado están la hermosura y atracción de un árbol, el del conocimiento del bien y del mal, que, unidas al engaño de la serpiente, fueron la ocasión de la caída (cf. Gén 3). En nuestro estudio nos centraremos, sin embargo, en la belleza de una criatura concreta, la mujer, y en su papel dentro del plan salvífico, por la vinculación que tiene con María Santísima, que posteriormente veremos.

3.1. Origen de pecado

La Biblia testimonia multitud de ocasiones donde la belleza de la mujer ha sido ocasión no de salvación, sino de pecado. Ésta, precisamente por su

¹¹⁸ VON BALTHASAR, *Gloria. Una estética teológica*, 18: «es necesario infundir intrínsecamente en esta imagen –si tiene que parecerse a su modelo original– algunas dimensiones de la gloria (Sal 8)».

¹¹⁹ La mujer, por su belleza física, tiene el peligro de ser cosificada por una visión machista. Pero como sabemos, su hermosura no se reduce al aspecto (siendo ésta innegable), sino que es mucho más profunda.

hermosura, durante toda la historia de la humanidad ha corrido el riesgo de ser cosificada por una visión que la reducía a su exclusiva dimensión estética. Aquellos que, limitando la belleza de la mujer a su aspecto físico, la han reducido a un objeto de placer visual —que con frecuencia luego han querido poseer— denigrándola y cosificándola; de este modo se han perdido la salvación profunda contenida en su hermosura. Estos tales, en vez de acoger el don han querido dominarlo, saciarse de él, frustrando la salvación que conllevaba. No han sabido reconocer la belleza profunda de la mujer como criatura, imagen del Creador, convirtiendo ese don en alabanza.

El primer caso de esta acogida pecaminosa, no salvífica, de la belleza femenina, está en Gén 6,1-4, uno de los textos más oscuros del AT¹²⁰:

Cuando los hombres comenzaron a multiplicarse sobre la superficie del suelo y engendraron hijas, *los hijos de Dios* vieron que las hijas de los hombres *eran bellas* y se escogieron mujeres entre ellas. [...] Por aquel tiempo había gigantes en la tierra; e incluso después, cuando los hijos de Dios se

¹²⁰ Cf. F. H. BREUKELMAN, “The Story of the Sons of God Who Took the Daughters of Humans as Wives”, en: M. KESSLER (ed.), *Voices from Amsterdam. A Modern Tradition of Reading Biblical Narrative* (Scholars, Atlanta, GA 1994) 83-94; D. J. A. CLINES, “The Significance of the “Sons of God” Episode (Genesis 6,1-4) in the Context of the “Primeval History” (Genesis 1-11)”: *JSOT* 13 (1979) 33-46; F. DEXINGER, “Jüdisch-Christliche Nachgeschichte von Gen 6,1-4”, en: S. KREUZER – K. LÜTHI (eds.), *Zur Aktualität des Alten Testaments. Festschrift für Georg Sauer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Lang, Frankfurt am Main – Bern – New York Paris 1992) 155-175; L. ESLINGER, “A Contextual Identification of the *bene ha’elohim* and *benoth ha’adam* in Genesis 6,1-4”: *JSOT* 13 (1979) 65-73; R. S. HENDEL, “When the Sons of God Cavorted with the Daughters of Men”: *BiRe* III/2 (1987) 8-13; S. R. KÜLLING, “Genesis 62.Teil: Gen 6,1-4”: *Fundamentum* 4 (1996) 12-23; R. R. MARRS, “The Sons of God (Genesis 6,1-4)”: *RestQ* 23 (1980) 218-224; Y. MARZEL, “The Sons of God and the Daughters of Man, Development and Destruction”: *BetM* 27 (1981) 203-219; R. C. NEWMAN, “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2-4”: *GTC* 5 (1984) 13-36; J. W. ROTHSTEIN, “Die Bedeutung von Genesis 6,1-4 in der gegenwärtigen Genesis”, en: K. MARTI – K. F. R. BUDDE (eds.), *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft. Karl Budde zum siebzigsten Geburtstag am. 13. April 1920* (BZAW 34; Töpelmann, Giessen 1920) 150-157; C. SAVASTA, “*Figli di Dio e Giganti* (Gen. 6,1-4). Una proposta di identificazione”: *BibOr* 36 (1994) 193-215; A. VAN DER KOOIJ, “Peshitta Genesis 6: *Sons of God* — Angels or Judges?”: *JNW/SL* 23 (1997) 43-51; M. ZIMMERMANN – R. ZIMMERMANN, “„Heilige Hochzeit“ der Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter? Spuren des Mythos in Gen 6,1-4”: *ZAW* 111 (1999) 327-352.

unieron a las hijas de los hombres y engendraron hijos.
Estos fueron los héroes de antaño, los hombres de
renombre.

Los misteriosos *hijos de Dios* son probablemente ángeles caídos, conforme a las tradiciones más antiguas testimoniadas principalmente en 1 *Hen* 6,1-8, *Jub* 4,22, *CD* 2,16-21, 1*QapGn* 2,1, *TestNef* 3,5, *TestRub* 5,6-7 y Flavio Josefo (cf. *Ant.* I,73). Además, en los textos más arcaicos del AT es frecuente denominar así a los ángeles¹²¹. Estos custodios espirituales, que debían cuidar de los humanos, no solo fallaron en su misión, sino que, seducidos por la belleza, quisieron poseerla y prevaricaron con las mujeres. Esto provocó grandes desórdenes y el enfado de Dios (cf. *Gén* 6,3-4)¹²².

Por desgracia, pecados como éste se siguieron multiplicando entre los humanos. Sucedió en el origen con los ángeles, y siguió sucediendo en la humanidad.

¹²¹ Cf. G. COOKE, "The Sons of (the) God(s)": *ZAW* 76 (1964) 22-47; B. J. BYRNE, "Sons of God" - "Seed of Abraham". *A study of the idea of the Sonship of God of all christians in Paul against the Jewish background* (AnBib 83; Biblical Institute Press, Rome 1979) 10-13; T. C. DE KRUIJF, *Der Sohn des Lebendigen Gottes. Ein Beitrag zur Christologie des Matthäusevangeliums* (AnBib 16; Romae 1962) 4-5; M.-J. LAGRANGE, "La paternité de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament": *RB* 17 (1908) 491-493; K. LIMBURG, "La paternidad divina en el AT: algunas observaciones lingüístico-formales", en: G. ARANDA PÉREZ - C. BASEVI - J. CHAPA (eds.), *Biblia, Exégesis y Cultura. Estudios en Honor del prof. D. José María Casciaro* (CTUN 83; Eunsä, Pamplona 1994) 202-204; W. SCHLISSKE, *Gottessöhne und Gottessohn im Alten Testament. Phasen der Entmythisierung im Alten Testament* (BWANT 97; Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1973) 15-77; A. GIMÉNEZ GONZÁLEZ, "Si el justo es Hijo de Dios, le socorrerá" (*Sab* 2,18). *Acercamiento canónico a la filiación divina del justo perseguido en Sab 1-6* (ABE 48; Verbo Divino, Estella 2009) 307-308.

¹²² Cf. G.-H. BAUDRY, "Le Péché originel dans les pseudépigraphes de l'Ancien Testament": *MSR* 49 (1992) 166-169; DEXINGER, "Jüdisch-Christliche Nachgeschichte von *Gen* 6,1-4", 159-161; A. DíEZ MACHO, *La resurrección de Jesucristo y la del hombre en la Biblia* (CSAp; Fe Católica, Madrid 1977) 62; P. D. HANSON, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11": *JBL* 96 (1977) 195-233; J. L. DEL VALLE, "Los demonios. Testimonio de los escritos apócrifos": *BiFe* XIX/56 (1993) 58-59; J. C. VANDERKAM, "The Interpretation of Genesis in 1 Enoch", en: P. W. FLINT (ed.), *The Bible at Qumran. Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (SDSS; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI - Cambridge, UK 2001) 132-140.

3.2. Pecados de belleza, insertos en la historia salvífica

Dirijamos ahora la mirada al pueblo elegido, donde la belleza femenina jugará un papel importante. En los orígenes del mismo destaca la hermosura de las matriarcas, especialmente la de Sara, que todavía a sus 65 años deslumbraba a propios y extraños, a familiares y egipcios. Su belleza era tal, que Abrán sabía que todos desearían desposarla:

Cuando estaba llegando a Egipto, dijo a Saray su mujer: «Mira, *sé que eres una mujer hermosa*; cuando te vean los egipcios, dirán: “Es su mujer”, y me matarán a mí y a ti te dejarán con vida. Por favor, di que eres mi hermana, para que me traten bien en atención a ti y salve mi vida por causa tuya». Cuando Abrán llegó a Egipto, vieron los egipcios *que su mujer era muy hermosa*. La vieron también los oficiales del faraón y *la ponderaron* ante el faraón. La mujer fue llevada al palacio del faraón. (Gén 12,11-15)¹²³

En este caso, la cobardía de Abrán y la condescendencia de Sara casi dan al traste con el plan salvífico. Para evitarlo, Dios tuvo que actuar directamente y rescatar a Sara para devolvérsela a su legítimo esposo. En este caso fue la propia belleza de una mujer del pueblo elegido la que sedujo a un extranjero. La historia posterior, sin embargo, testimoniará que incluso entre los miembros del pueblo habrá quien caiga a causa de la belleza.

Así, poco después de haber pactado solemnemente la alianza del Sinaí, a punto de entrar en la tierra prometida, y habiendo vivido un período de inusitada fidelidad a la alianza, que los llevó a conquistar la tierra de Og y Sijón en Trasmoravia, los israelitas pecaron estrepitosamente. El famoso profeta Balaán mostró al rey de Moab el camino para vencer a Israel: bastaba hacerles pecar contra su alianza. Para ello, envió una legión de hermosas moabitas que con suma facilidad les sedujeron¹²⁴:

¹²³ Respecto a la belleza de las demás matriarcas. Cf. «Rebeca, hija de Betuel, el hijo de Milcá, la mujer de Najor, el hermano de Abrahán, con el cántaro al hombro. La muchacha *era muy hermosa*, una doncella que no había conocido varón» (Gén 24,15-16; también 26,7: «era muy hermosa»); «Raquel era de buen tipo y bello semblante» (Gén 29,17).

¹²⁴ Cf. P. BUIS, *El libro de los Números* (CuaBi 78; Verbo Divino, Estella 1993) 54-55.

Y el pueblo empezó a fornicar con las muchachas de Moab. Estas invitaron al pueblo a los sacrificios de sus dioses y el pueblo participó en el banquete y se postró ante sus dioses. Israel se unió así al Baal de Peor, y se encendió la ira del Señor contra Israel. (Núm 25,1-3)

Dos siglos más tarde, el mismísimo rey David, que había recibido todo tipo de favores de parte de Dios, entre los que destacaba la promesa mesiánica (cf. 2 Sam 7), no supo valorar correctamente la belleza de Betsabé: «Desde allí divisó a una mujer que se estaba bañando, de aspecto muy hermoso» (2 Sam 11,2: καλὴ τῇ εἵδει σφόδρα; מְאֹד מְרָאָה טוֹבַת הַאִשָּׁה). Por no ordenar adecuadamente esta hermosura, quiso adueñarse de ella y no solo cometió flagrante adulterio, sino también el más vil y frío de los asesinatos (cf. 2 Sam 11,3–12,14)¹²⁵.

Podríamos seguir poniendo muchos ejemplos semejantes, pero no es necesario.

3.3. Bondad de la belleza

Visto lo visto, podría pensarse que no fue una buena idea plasmar tanta belleza en las criaturas, en concreto en las mujeres, puesto que ha sido ocasión de tantos pecados... El ya citado Dostoyevski, en *Los hermanos Karamazov*, expresó magistralmente esta dualidad de la hermosura: «Lo espantoso es que la belleza es misteriosa como también terrible. Dios y el diablo están luchando ahí [en la belleza] y el campo de batalla es el corazón del hombre»¹²⁶.

La belleza es siempre un don de Dios que, como todo don, implica una responsabilidad. Frente a ella, el hombre decide en su corazón acogerla como don de Dios y corresponder a él, o intentar apoderarse de ella haciéndose su dueño y destruyéndola, como en los casos precedentes. Frente a estos últimos, no faltan ejemplos bíblicos donde sí se ha sabido acoger dicho don.

Así, las bellas matriarcas Sara, Rebeca y Raquel, fueron acogidas por sus maridos como un don de Dios. Un caso paradigmático a este respecto es el

¹²⁵ Cf. P. GIBERT, *Los libros de Samuel y de los Reyes. De la leyenda a la historia* (CuaBi 44; Verbo Divino, Estella 1984) 27-28.

¹²⁶ Tomado de <http://ciaccona.blogspot.com/2007/10/los-hermanos-karamazov-dostoyevsky.html>.

de Sara, hija de Ragüel, el de Ecbatana (Media), una joven «prudente, decidida y muy hermosa», según la opinión del ángel Rafael (Tob 6,12: φρόνιμον καὶ ἄνδρεϊον καὶ καλὸν λίαν)¹²⁷. En su noche de bodas, tras librarla del demonio Asmoneo, el joven Tobías, en vez de unirse directamente a ella y disfrutar de su belleza, quiso dirigirse a Dios, fuente de toda hermosura: «Tobías se levantó de la cama y dijo a Sara: “Levántate, mujer. Vamos a rezar pidiendo a nuestro Señor que se apiade de nosotros y nos proteja”. Ella se levantó, y comenzaron a suplicar la protección del Señor» (Tob 8,4-5)¹²⁸. En su oración, Tobías bendijo a Dios y le alabó, por diversos motivos: haber creado el género humano y el matrimonio, que se remonta a Adán y Eva; por la procreación; y por la bondad/belleza de la ayuda y unión de los esposos (cf. Tob 8,5-6). A continuación, explicita que su casamiento no es fruto de una pasión desordenada por la belleza de Sara, sino que asume la hermosura del orden establecido por Dios en las relaciones humanas, permitiendo así que la belleza desarrolle su potencial salvífico (cf. Tob 8,7-9: «“Al casarme ahora con esta mujer, no lo hago por impuro deseo, sino con la mejor intención. Ten misericordia de nosotros y haz que lleguemos juntos a la vejez”. Los dos dijeron: “Amén, amén”. Y durmieron toda la noche»)¹²⁹.

Hay muchas otras hermosas mujeres, cuya belleza se refleja no solo en su apariencia, sino en su interior, en su conducta, en su fidelidad o en su integridad. Como Rut, la moabita, que no quiso abandonar a su suegra viuda y consagró su vida para servirla (cf. Rut 1,14-19)¹³⁰. Aunque el texto no subraya su hermosura física, la cual se puede presuponer, sí indica su belleza

¹²⁷ Para una introducción al libro de Tobías, cf. J. VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, *Tobías y Judit. Narraciones III* (NBE; Verbo Divino, Estella 2000) 5-228; M. NAVARRO PUERTO, “Narraciones bíblicas”, en: J. M. SÁNCHEZ CARO (ed.), *Historia, Narrativa, Apocalíptica* (IEB 3b; Estella 2003) 403-425.

¹²⁸ Tobías siguió el consejo del ángel, recibido en el cursillo prematrimonial expés que éste le dio poco tiempo antes de la boda: «Y antes de unírte a ella, debéis orar los dos en pie, suplicando al Señor del cielo que os conceda su misericordia y protección. No temas, porque está destinada para ti desde la eternidad. Tú la salvarás y ella se irá contigo. Estoy seguro de que te dará unos hijos que serán como hermanos para ti. No te preocupes» (Tob 6,18).

¹²⁹ Cf. D. DORÉ, *El libro de Tobit o El secreto del rey* (CuBi 101; Verbo Divino, Estella 2000) 43-44.

¹³⁰ Para una introducción al libro, cf. NAVARRO PUERTO, “Narraciones bíblicas”, 381-403; para un comentario al mismo, cf. A. WÉNIN, *El libro de Rut. Aproximación narrativa* (CuBi 104; Verbo Divino, Estella 2000).

moral varias veces, también por boca de Booz, su futuro marido: «Él replicó: “El Señor te bendiga, hija mía. Esta muestra de piedad es mayor que la primera, pues no has buscado un pretendiente joven, fuera rico o pobre. No te preocupes, hija mía. Haré cuanto me pidas, porque, como todo el pueblo sabe, eres una mujer ejemplar”» (Rut 3,10-11)¹³¹.

También la casta Susana, cuya belleza provocó el delirio pecaminoso de los viejos corrompidos, manifestó una virtud de mayor hermosura que la de su cuerpo (Dan 13,2: «Susana, hija de Jelcías, mujer muy bella y temerosa del Señor»)¹³². En efecto, prefirió la muerte antes que dejar a unos libidinosos profanar su cuerpo y marchitar su hermosura (cf. Dan 13,22-23). Pero Dios la rescató por medio del joven Daniel que, al demostrar la inocencia de Susana provocó la alabanza en el pueblo: «Entonces toda la asamblea se puso a gritar bendiciendo a Dios, que salva a los que esperan en él» (Dan 13,60). De este modo, la belleza de Susana, la física y la moral, fue causa de que Dios fuese alabado, fin último de las criaturas.

3.4. Belleza, regalo de Dios

Ciertamente, la belleza es un regalo especial que Dios hace a todas sus criaturas, y de un modo especial a su pueblo. Pero no solo a algunas de sus mujeres, como hemos visto, sino también al pueblo en cuanto tal, que en su relación con Dios juega el papel de esposa en virtud de la alianza. Los profetas subrayan especialmente este aspecto, presentando a Israel como a una doncella que ha recibido toda su hermosura de Dios:

Así fue tu nacimiento: El día en que naciste, no te cortaron el cordón, no te lavaron con agua para purificarte, ni te friccionaron con sal, ni te envolvieron en pañales. Nadie se apiadó de ti ni hizo por compasión nada de todo esto, sino que por aversión te arrojaron a campo abierto el día que naciste. *Yo pasaba junto a ti y te vi revolviéndote en tu sangre, y te dije: Sigue viviendo, tú que yaces en tu sangre, sigue viviendo.* Te hice crecer como un brote del campo. Tú creciste, te hiciste grande, llegaste a la edad del matrimonio. Tus senos

¹³¹ Cf. WÉNIN, *El libro de Rut*, 56-57.

¹³² Sobre la historia de Susana, cf. P. GRELOT, *El libro de Daniel* (CuaBi 79; Estella 1993) 49-51.

se afirmaron y te brotó el vello, pero continuabas completamente desnuda. Pasé otra vez a tu lado, te vi en la edad del amor; extendí mi manto sobre ti para cubrir tu desnudez. Con juramento hice alianza contigo —oráculo del Señor Dios— y fuiste mía. *Te lavé con agua, te limpié la sangre que te cubría y te ungué con aceite. Te puse vestiduras bordadas, te calcé zapatos de cuero fino, te ceñí de lino, te revestí de seda. Te engalané con joyas: te puse pulseras en los brazos y un collar en tu cuello. Te puse un anillo en la nariz, pendientes en tus orejas y una magnífica diadema en tu cabeza. Lucías joyas de oro y plata, vestidos de lino, seda y bordado; comías flor de harina, miel y aceite; estabas cada vez más bella y llegaste a ser como una reina. Se difundió entre las naciones paganas la fama de tu belleza* (יהוה ויהוה, ἐν τῷ κάλλει σου) *perfecta con los atavíos que yo había puesto sobre ti —oráculo del Señor Dios—.* (Ez 16,4-14)¹³³

Su belleza fue tal, que el ya citado Balaán, hijo de Beor, desde la cima del monte Peor, divisó a Israel acampado por tribus, y habiendo venido el espíritu de Dios sobre él, entonó su tercer oráculo sobre el pueblo elegido: «¿Qué bellas (מֶה-טוֹב; Ὡς καλοί) tus tiendas, oh Jacob, y tus moradas, Israel! Como vegas dilatadas, como jardines junto al río, como álces que plantó el Señor o cedros junto a la corriente» (Núm 24,5-6)¹³⁴.

Ahora bien, el pueblo no custodió esa hermosura para su Dios, su esposo y Señor. No supo reconocer que tal don procedía de Dios, y que sólo a Él debía corresponder la entrega del propio ser. Continúa Ezequiel el texto anterior, resumiendo lo que fue la historia de Israel durante siglos: «Pero tú, *confiada en tu belleza*, te prostituiste; valiéndote de tu fama, prodigaste tus favores y te entregaste a todo el que pasaba» (Ez 16,15)¹³⁵. De nuevo constatamos, por una parte, la ambivalencia de la belleza y, por otra, que toda hermosura es un

¹³³ Cf. J. M. ASURMENDI, *Ezequiel* (CuaBi 38; Verbo Divino, Estella 1982) 21-24; L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL – J. L. SICRE DÍAZ, *Profetas II. Ezequiel – Doce Profetas Menores – Daniel – Baruc – Carta de Jeremías* (NBE; Cristiandad, Madrid 1980) 728-734.

¹³⁴ Sobre los oráculos de Balaán, cf. BUIS, *El libro de los Números*, 48-51.

¹³⁵ La misma acusación encontramos repetidamente en varios profetas, presentando al pueblo como una mujer que ha sido infiel a su Dios adulterando con muchos amantes: Os 1-3; Jer 2,1-3,10; Ez 16; 23.

innegable don de Dios, expresión de su amor inefable por su criatura, que debe servir para corresponder fielmente a Dios.

4. Belleza salvífica

Llegamos finalmente al tema central de la exposición. Hemos situado bíblicamente la belleza, especialmente de las mujeres, y el papel que en general ha jugado su hermosura en la historia salvífica. Nos detenemos ahora en tres casos paradigmáticos, donde esta belleza ha sido decisiva para alcanzar la salvación: Ester, Judit, y la dama Sabiduría. Empecemos por esta última.

4.1. La Sabiduría

Los sabios de Israel se esforzaron por orientar a los jóvenes en su elección de esposa. No debe hacerse a la ligera, pues de esta decisión dependerá en gran parte que su vida se arruine, o que su vida se salve. A la hora de elegir, no bastará sólo la belleza física de la mujer para salvar la vida del marido. Tendrá que valorar la hermosura de todas sus otras dimensiones, aquellas que le garantizarán una vida plena y salvífica: los aspectos que hacen de una mujer la esposa ideal, la compañera perfecta que todo hombre desearía tener a su lado. Esta mujer brilla tanto por su hermosura y fortaleza, como por su piedad, sabiduría y prudencia¹³⁶:

- El famoso poema a la mujer fuerte (cf. Prov 31,10-31) describe multitud de virtudes y habilidades de la esposa, que hacen de la vida doméstica un paraíso¹³⁷. Ahora bien, termina advirtiendo sobre la supremacía de la piedad respecto de la belleza física: «Engañosa es la gracia, fugaz la hermosura; la que teme al Señor merece alabanza» (Prov 31,30).
- El Sirácida también indica los rasgos que más complacen a los maridos de sus mujeres; además de su sabiduría, su silencio, su buena educación, su honestidad, su bondad, su orden, y su autocontrol, también su hermosura, su encanto femenino, su

¹³⁶ Cf. D. DORÉ, *Eclesiastés y Eclesiástico. O Qobélet y Sirácida* (CuBi 91; Verbo Divino, Estella 1997) 55.

¹³⁷ Cf. M. P. HORNE, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes* (S&HBC; Smyth Helwys, Macon, GE 2003) 359-365; K. DELL, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge University Press, New York 2006) 85-87.

rostro hermoso, su figura esbelta, sus piernas bonitas y sus talones firmes (cf. Eclo 26,13-18)¹³⁸.

Sin embargo, en el libro de la Sabiduría, Salomón presenta a la misma sabiduría divina como a la mejor de las esposas, aquella que no solo salvará al marido de tener una vida mediocre, sino que además le acarreará la inmortalidad¹³⁹. Como bien podía imaginarse, su belleza no tiene parangón: es radiante e inmarcesible (cf. Sab 6,12), todo el oro ante ella es un poco de arena (cf. 7,9), es emanación pura de la gloria del Omnipotente (cf. 7,25), «Ella es más bella que el sol y supera a todas las constelaciones» (cf. 7,29).

Por eso, el propio Salomón, nos confiesa: «La amé y la busqué desde mi juventud y la pretendí como esposa, enamorado de su hermosura. [...] Decidí hacerla compañera de mi vida, sabiendo que sería mi consejera en la dicha y mi consuelo en las preocupaciones y la tristeza» (8,2.9). Así pues, Salomón pidió su mano a Dios, padre de la sabiduría, y se la concedió por esposa (cf. Sab 8,21).

Además, Salomón insiste a todos sus oyentes en que se desposen con ella, en que se enamoren de su belleza y, uniéndose a ella, se llenen de sabiduría divina, pues «abundancia de sabios salva el mundo» (Sab 6,24). Es decir, que la belleza de la sabiduría divina, atrayendo a los hombres hacia sí y haciéndoles sabios, está salvando el mundo.

Veamos ahora el caso de dos mujeres que encarnaron esta sabiduría, tanto en su belleza exterior, como en su actuar, convirtiéndose en verdaderas salvadoras del mundo.

¹³⁸ Sobre el Sirácida, y bibliografía sobre el mismo, cf. DORÉ, *Eclesiastés y Eclesiástico*, 43-72.

¹³⁹ Ya en Prov aparecía la Sabiduría como una mujer hacendosa y hospitalaria, que invita a su hogar para instruir a los ignorantes: «Venid a comer de mi pan, a beber el vino que he mezclado; dejad la inexperiencia y viviréis, seguid el camino de la inteligencia» (9,5-6). Sin embargo, no es presentada como posible esposa del hombre.

4.2. Ester

El libro de Ester presenta el mundo entero dominado por el imperio persa (cf. Est 3,13a-b)¹⁴⁰. De repente, se produce una situación extrema de gran peligro para los judíos, pues surge un edicto de exterminio contra ellos: «A todas las provincias del reino fueron enviados mensajeros con cartas en las que se ordenaba destruir, matar y exterminar a todos los judíos, jóvenes y viejos, niños y mujeres, y saquear sus bienes en un solo día, el trece del mes duodécimo, que es el mes de adar» (Est 3,13)¹⁴¹. No hay humanamente hablando posibilidad de salvación para los judíos. El decreto lleva el sello real y el ministro Amán está dispuesto a ir hasta el final en su odio aniquilador contra el pueblo.

Sin embargo, Dios va a sacarse un as de la manga, precisamente por medio de la belleza. Previamente al decreto, la reina legítima había sido depuesta a causa de su hermosura, y de su negativa a ser usada como mero objeto de complacencia y contemplación. El rey Asuero había ordenado «que llevaran ante su presencia a la reina Vasti, adornada con la corona real, para que la gente y los nobles pudieran admirar su hermosura, pues era realmente una mujer muy hermosa (אֶת־יְפִיָּהּ כִּי־טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא; τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς, ὅτι καλὴ ἦν.). Pero la reina Vasti se negó a obedecer la orden que le comunicaron los eunucos» (Est 1,11-12)¹⁴².

Podríamos interpretar este acto de la reina como un acto de soberbia frente al mandato del rey, aunque es preferible pensar más bien en un acto de defensa de la dignidad de la mujer ante la actitud machista del monarca y sus cortesanos. De este modo, a través de un acto virtuoso —en el que una mujer impide que su belleza sea cosificada— se desarrolla el plan de Dios. Vasti será destituida, y en su lugar se elegirá a la mujer más hermosa que se encuentre en el reino:

Conviene que busquen *jóvenes vírgenes y hermosas* (בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה; ἄφθορα καλὰ τῶ εἶδει) para el rey. Para ello, [...] que reúnan a todas las jóvenes vírgenes y hermosas en

¹⁴⁰ Para una introducción al libro de Ester, cf. NAVARRO PUERTO, “Narraciones bíblicas”, 453-479; J. CARRUTHERS, *Ester through the centuries* (BBCom; Blackwell, Malden, MA – Oxford – Victoria 2008).

¹⁴¹ Cf. CARRUTHERS, *Ester through the centuries*, 155-157.

¹⁴² Sobre los posibles motivos de su negativa, la tradición judía ha sugerido que se le habría pedido comparecer desnuda, cf. CARRUTHERS, *Ester through the centuries*, 61-67.

el harén de la ciudadela de Susa [...]. Luego, la joven que más le guste al rey será reina en lugar de Vasti. (Est 2,2-4)

Aquí es donde entra en acción Ester. Gracias a ser una muchacha «hermosa y muy atractiva» (Est 2,7: מְרֹאֶה וְיָפִית־תֵּאַר וְהִנָּעָה; καλὸν τῷ εἶδει), gustó mucho a Hegeo, el encargado de las mujeres del palacio real (cf. Est 2,8-9). Éste le proporcionó su ayuda para potenciar su belleza natural todavía más, con una sesión intensiva de cosmética «que duraba doce meses: los seis primeros se ungían con aceite de mirra, y los otros seis con cremas y perfumes típicamente femeninos» (Est 2,12). Finalmente, gracias a la hermosura que Dios le concedió más que a los potingues persas, Ester fue preferida a todas las demás por el rey, que la coronó en lugar de Vasti (cf. Est 2,17)¹⁴³.

Su pariente Mardoqueo enseguida entendió que todo lo sucedido había sido dispuesto por Dios para que desde su posición Ester pudiese interceder por los judíos. Ella asumió su papel, aunque implicase jugarse la vida, pues no estaba permitido presentarse ante el rey sin ser previamente convocado. Sabiendo que todo estaba en manos de Dios, Ester se dirigió a Él con súplica ardiente, desprendiéndose de su belleza física, aquella que la había llevado hasta el trono. Manifiesta así su conciencia de que no es la hermosura exterior, sino la interior —que se manifiesta en la humildad— la que más agrada a Dios:

Despojándose de sus vestiduras lujosas, se puso ropas de angustia y aflicción; y, en lugar de sus refinados perfumes, cubrió su cabeza de polvo y basura. Humilló extremadamente su cuerpo con ayunos, cubrió totalmente su aspecto alegre con sus cabellos desordenados y suplicó al Señor, Dios de Israel. (Est 4,17k)

En la oración de Ester resalta especialmente la hermosura de su espíritu, que es capaz de reconocer con contrición el pecado de su pueblo, y que huye de los signos de belleza mundanos: «Tú sabes mi pena, porque detesto el signo de mi dignidad que llevo sobre mi cabeza cuando aparezco en público; lo detesto como trapo de menstruación y no lo llevo en privado» (Est 4,17v). Ahora bien, junto a su confianza en Dios, al que pide humildemente su ayuda cuando se

¹⁴³ Cf. CARRUTHERS, *Esther through the centuries*, 125-132.

presente ante el rey, la otra clave de su éxito es precisamente su belleza, con la que tratará de conseguirse el beneplácito de Asuero.

Así, llena de valentía, dispuesta a asumir la muerte por salvar a su pueblo, con el don de la belleza que Dios le había regalado, y abandonada a las manos de Dios,

cuando terminó de orar, Ester se quitó la ropa de súplica y se vistió con sus galas (περιεβάλετο τὴν δόξαν αὐτῆς); estaba deslumbrante. [...] ella estaba sonrosada, en el culmen de su hermosura (ἄμῃ κάλλους αὐτῆς); su rostro alegre como el de una enamorada, pero su corazón angustiado por el miedo. (Est 5,1a.b)

El resultado fue el esperado, y su hermosa presencia cautivó al rey, que le perdonó la vida: «Cuando el rey, que estaba sentado en el trono real, mirando hacia la entrada, vio a la reina Ester de pie en el patio, *quedó embelesado* y extendió hacia ella el cetro de oro que tenía en la mano» (Est 5,1-2). Habiéndose ganado el favor del rey, conseguir la salvación de su pueblo fue tarea sencilla. Asuero acabó promulgando un decreto contrario al anterior por el cual los judíos no solo quedaban absueltos, sino poderosamente beneficiados (cf. Est 8,11)¹⁴⁴.

4.3. Judit

En la historia de Judit la belleza de una mujer israelita también va a ser determinante para alcanzar la salvación del pueblo, que en esta ocasión se encuentra en una situación mucho más desesperada que la apenas vista. De hecho, el libro presenta intencionadamente un contexto histórico imposible¹⁴⁵, donde, tras diversas circunstancias que no vienen al caso, todos los grandes enemigos de Israel de todas las épocas, acechan a sus puertas:

- Nabucodonosor, el famoso rey de los babilonios, les ha declarado la guerra. Babilonia fue el imperio que sometió toda

¹⁴⁴ Cf. CARRUTHERS, *Esther through the centuries*, 244-249.

¹⁴⁵ Para una introducción al libro de Judit, cf. VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, *Tobías y Judit*, 229-491; NAVARRO PUERTO, “Narraciones bíblicas”, 425-453; D. DORÉ, *El libro de Judit o La guerra y la fe* (CuBi 132; Verbo Divino, Estella 2006).

Mesopotamia del 614 al 539 a.C., destruyó Jerusalén, incendió el Templo, y llevó cautivo a todo el pueblo de Judá en el 586 a.C.¹⁴⁶.

- Su capital es Nínive (cf. Jdt 1,1), que como todos saben no lo fue de Babilonia sino del imperio asirio, el gran dominador internacional de los siglos VIII y VII a.C. que destruyó Samaria el 722 a.C. y deportó a todo el reino del norte¹⁴⁷.
- El general que dirige todo su ejército es Holofernes (cf. Jdt 2,4), clásico nombre persa, la gran superpotencia del oriente desde el 539 al 333 a.C., que extendió su poder desde el Ganges hasta Grecia, sometiendo igualmente a los judíos¹⁴⁸.
- A esta amalgama de los grandes dominadores del primer milenio a.C., se les unieron los ejércitos de los clásicos enemigos de Israel de toda la vida: amonitas, moabitas, edomitas, sirios, fenicios, filisteos, egipcios... no falta nadie¹⁴⁹.

Todas estas tropas se han unido a las huestes de Holofernes, que acecha a las puertas de Betulia, ciudad judía ignota que impide el paso del enemigo al territorio judío. Israel es el único pueblo de la tierra que no se ha rendido ante este inmenso ejército, ni ha prestado adoración a Nabucodonosor como único dios, tal como exigen los extranjeros (cf. Jdt 3,8; 5,1-4). Holofernes ha decidido sitiar la pequeña aldea esperando su rendición o su muerte por falta de agua (cf. 7,1-18). Como se ve, la situación no podría presentarse más dramática.

Los judíos están aterrados. Multiplican sus rogativas y ayunos a Dios, suplicando su ayuda ante la desesperada situación. Tras 34 días de asedio, sin

¹⁴⁶ Cf. J. M. ASURMENDI – F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, “Historia e instituciones del pueblo bíblico”, en: J. GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY *et al.* (eds.), *La Biblia en su entorno* (IEB 1; Verbo Divino, Estella 1990) 191-195; F. VARO, “Historia social y religiosa de Israel en los tiempos bíblicos”, en: I. CARBAJOSA – J. GONZÁLEZ ECHEGARAY – F. VARO (eds.), *La Biblia en su entorno* (IEB.AA 1; Verbo Divino, Estella 2013) 293-301.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. ASURMENDI – GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, “Historia e instituciones del pueblo bíblico”, 178-180; VARO, “Historia social y religiosa de Israel en los tiempos bíblicos”, 240-242.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. ASURMENDI – GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, “Historia e instituciones del pueblo bíblico”, 224-227; VARO, “Historia social y religiosa de Israel en los tiempos bíblicos”, 313-320.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. P. GARELLI – V. NIKIPROWETZKY, *El Próximo Oriente antiguo. Los imperios mesopotámicos. Israel* (Barcelona 1978).

respuesta alguna del cielo, el abatimiento ha caído sobre Betulia y los israelitas. A pesar de que están siendo fieles a la alianza —quizá por primera vez en su historia (cf. 8,18-20)— no obtienen la esperada salvación de Dios. Finalmente, todos caen extenuados en las calles por la sed y piden al jefe de la ciudad que se rinda; éste pide confiar en la salvación divina y esperar todavía cinco días más antes de entregarse al enemigo; si entonces Dios no los ha salvado, se rendirán (cf. Jdt 7,19-32).

Como respuesta a tal situación, el Señor no va a mandar plagas contra Holofernes, como hiciera contra Egipto en tiempos de Moisés (cf. Éx 8–12), ni hacer llover piedras gigantes del cielo como en la batalla de Josué contra los reyes del sur en Gabaón (cf. Jos 10,11). Tampoco va a suscitar un segundo Sansón que muela a palos a sus enemigos, sino a Judit, una joven viuda. Ahora bien, ¿qué podrá hacer una frágil mujer contra todos los ejércitos de la tierra? Como veremos, Dios no va a necesitar más que la belleza, la astucia, el valor, y la confianza ilimitada de esta mujer para salvar a su pueblo. Da la impresión de que, en la sapientísima sabiduría divina, cuanto más desesperada es la situación y más impensable cualquier vía de salvación, más le gusta a Dios salvar por los medios más frágiles posibles y humanamente insospechados.

La tal Judit destaca, según lo dicho, por su virtud, su sabiduría (cf. 8,19-27), su penitencia, su piedad y su belleza: «Era muy hermosa y atractiva (καλή τῇ εἵδει καὶ ὥραία τῇ ὄψει σφόδρα)» (Jdt 8,7)¹⁵⁰. Ésta será el arma que le permitirá introducirse en el ejército enemigo, que queda estupefacto al ver semejante mujer entrar en su campamento. Su belleza le abrirá todas las puertas, hasta llegar al mismo Holofernes, que la acoge entre los suyos.

Consciente de ello, antes de salir de Betulia y después de haber rezado a Dios, Judit hizo resaltar toda su hermosura:

Se quitó la prenda de saco y el vestido de luto, se bañó, se ungió con un perfume de gran calidad, se peinó, adornó su cabeza con una diadema y se puso un elegante vestido [...] Se calzó las sandalias, se puso collares, brazaletes, anillos, pendientes y todas sus joyas. Estaba tan hermosa que atraería las miradas de los hombres que la vieran

¹⁵⁰ Cf. DORÉ, *El libro de Judit o La guerra y la fe*, 26, 29.

(ἐκαλλώπισατο σφόδρα εἰς ἀπάτησιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀνδρῶν; lit: *se embelleció mucho para seducción/engatusamiento...*). (Jdt 10,3-4)

El elogio de su belleza se va a repetir varias veces desde este momento:

- Cuando Judit se despide de los jefes y ancianos de Betulia, éstos, «al ver a Judit con el semblante transformado y su nuevo atuendo, se quedaron atónitos ante tanta hermosura (ἐθαύμασαν ἐπὶ τῇ κάλλει αὐτῆς ἐπὶ πολὺ σφόδρα)» (Jdt 10,7).
- Cuando los soldados enemigos salen a su encuentro, Judit les habló, «oyeron sus palabras y vieron su rostro —de tan maravillosa hermosura (θαυμάσιον τῇ κάλλει σφόδρα)—» (Jdt 10,14), que la escoltaron con 100 hombres hasta la tienda de Holofernes.
- Su presencia causó tal revuelo que todo el campamento se arremolinó para verla: «Admirados de su hermosura (ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ τῇ κάλλει αὐτῆς), pensaban que los hijos de Israel debían de ser un pueblo extraordinario y se decían: “¿Quién puede despreciar a un pueblo que tiene mujeres como esta?”» (Jdt 10,19).
- Como era de esperar, al ver a Judit, también Holofernes «y sus servidores se maravillaron al ver un rostro tan bello (ἐθαύμασαν πάντες ἐπὶ τῇ κάλλει τοῦ προσώπου αὐτῆς)» (Jdt 10,23).
- Después de su discurso ante el general enemigo, todos sus servidores exclamaban deslumbrados: «No hay en toda la tierra mujer como ella, tan hermosa y tan prudente en su hablar (ἐν καλῷ προσώπῳ καὶ συνέσει λόγων)» (Jdt 11,21). Y el propio Holofernes le hace el cumplido: «Eres tan hermosa (ἀστεία εἶ σὺ ἐν τῇ εἵδει) como persuasiva» (11,23).

Pues bien, esta belleza deslumbrante de Judit será la clave de la victoria. Pasados tres días, Holofernes, carcomido por el deseo de saciarse de la hermosura de Judit, va a cavar su propia fosa. Al ser un pagano, poco avezado en la virtud y el reconocimiento de los dones de Dios, y poco acostumbrado a no obtener lo que desea, se va a dejar llevar por su atracción irrefrenable hacia Judit. Por eso, ordenó a su camarero eunuco: «Ve y convence a esa mujer hebrea que tienes a tu cargo, para que venga a comer y beber con nosotros. Sería una vergüenza que la dejáramos marchar sin gozar de sus favores. Si no consigo poseerla, se reirá de mí» (Jdt 12,11-12).

El propio mal va a ser la ruina de los malos, y la belleza misma será la causa de la caída para aquellos que buscando poseerla lascivamente no han sabido respetarla. Judit, consciente de esto, aceptará la gentil invitación del eunuco Bagoas: «No rehúse esta hermosa joven (ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ καλὴ αὐτῇ) el honor de ser invitada por mi señor para beber y alegrarse hoy con nosotros» (Jdt 12,13). Judit asistió al banquete, cuando «se vistió y se puso todos sus adornos de mujer» (12,15), causando el efecto deseado: «Holofernes se turbó y, presa de la pasión, sintió un violento deseo de poseerla. [...] Él, fascinado por ella, bebió tanto vino como jamás había bebido en los días de su vida» (12,16.20). Cuando quedaron solos, con el enemigo totalmente vencido por el vino, Judit le cortó la cabeza y, con ella en su bolsa de los alimentos, salió como los días anteriores del campamento, esta vez para no volver (cf. Jdt 13,8). Ya en Betulia, narró a todos su hazaña, sintetizada en la siguiente frase: «mi rostro sedujo a Holofernes para su perdición» (13,16). Con su general decapitado, el pánico se adueñó del ejército enemigo, que huyó despavorido ante las huestes de Israel (cf. Jdt 14–15). Tras la gran victoria, Judit proclamó su famoso cántico, narrando las grandezas de Dios. Los enemigos de Israel quisieron arrasar con todo: tierras, jóvenes, niños, doncellas, «pero el Señor todopoderoso lo impidió por mano de mujer» (16,5). Como ella misma indica, su hermosura fue la clave de la victoria. A Holofernes

lo desarmó Judit, hija de Merari, *con la sola belleza de su rostro* (ἐν κάλλει προσώπου αὐτῆς). Se quitó sus lutos de viuda [...]; ungió su rostro con perfumes, adornó su cabeza con diadema, se vistió de lino para seducirlo. Sus sandalias le cautivaron la vista, *su belleza le arrebató el corazón* (τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς ἠχμαλώτισεν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ), y la espada le partió el cuello. (Jdt 16,6-9)

Tanto el caso de Judit como el de Ester, son dos testimonios en los que Dios trajo la salvación, impensable en una situación desesperada, por medio de la belleza de una mujer piadosa, que confía en Dios, que afronta el peligro con valentía y sabiduría, y que pone al servicio del plan de Dios todos los dones recibidos, especialmente su hermosura.

Hay otro elemento común entre los libros de estas dos mujeres: no remiten a un acontecimiento particular del que tengamos conocimiento por la historia. Aunque presentan personajes, lugares y acontecimientos de la

historia, sus relatos se salen de ella —de modo llamativo en Judit—, pero no para abandonarla, sino para apuntar a su final, a su escatología. El tinte escatológico de los dos libros es notorio, y en algunos detalles incluso el apocalíptico¹⁵¹. La escatología bíblica recuerda que el momento final será el más difícil de la historia para el pueblo de Dios: «serán tiempos difíciles como no los ha habido desde que hubo naciones hasta ahora» (Dan 12,1)¹⁵². El CCE, a su vez, enseña que los poderes del mal, reunidos bajo el poder del Anticristo, harán su último ataque en forma de persecución contra el pueblo santo¹⁵³.

Es decir, que la situación será tan desesperada como la presentada por Judit y Ester, de cuyos textos se desprende que en ese momento final habrá también una salvación inusitada. En los dos textos bíblicos señalados Dios no quiso salvar a través de su poder, como por ejemplo en la salida de Egipto, sino a través de elementos sencillos, débiles, pobres y humildes... Quizá quiera indicarse que también será así en el momento final, y quiera salvar por la belleza deslumbrante de una humilde mujer, vestida de sol y de luz (cf. Ap 12,1).

5. La Virgen María

5.1. La *Tota Pulchra*, la plenamente hermosa

Llegamos a la mujer que es sin duda la más hermosa de toda la Sagrada Escritura y de toda la historia¹⁵⁴. Así lo manifiesta el ángel Gabriel cuando entró en su presencia. Él, que por ser espíritu puro podía percibir no sólo la belleza exterior sino también la hermosura de su alma, exclama al verla:

¹⁵¹ Cf. J. STEINMANN, *Lecture de Judith* (Gabalda, Paris 1953) 131-132.

¹⁵² Cf. GRELOT, *El libro de Daniel*, 46-48.

¹⁵³ Éste no obtendrá una victoria humana, sino que se unirá al misterio pascual de su Señor, participando de su muerte y resurrección (cf. CCE 675-677). «El Reino no se realizará, por tanto, mediante un triunfo histórico de la Iglesia (cf. Ap 13,8) en forma de un proceso creciente, sino por una victoria de Dios sobre el último desencadenamiento del mal (cf. Ap 20,7-10) que hará descender desde el cielo a su Esposa (cf. Ap 21,2-4)» (CCE 677).

¹⁵⁴ Para una sucinta presentación de María en los evangelios, cf. J.-P. MICHAUD, *María de los evangelios* (CuBi 77; Verbo Divino, Estella 1992).

«Alégrate, llena de gracia, el Señor está contigo (χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ)» (Lc 1,28)¹⁵⁵.

El κεχαριτωμένη expresa que María tiene toda la gracia posible en sí misma, toda la *charis* (en hebreo *hen*), que bíblicamente remite a las distintas dimensiones humanas: la gracia de la belleza, de la pureza, de las virtudes, de los dones espirituales, etc. Con respecto a la hermosura corporal, es clásica la expresión bíblica «hallar *gracia* a los ojos de» para indicar que la belleza de una mujer ha cautivado a un varón. María está llena también de esta gracia física, de esta preciosidad, que el ángel proclama, y que ha conquistado al propio Dios, del cual se dice que «está con María», pues ella *ha hallado gracia* a sus ojos. También nosotros lo recordamos al rezar *Bendita sea tu pureza*, cuando proclamamos que «todo un Dios se recrea en tan *graciosa belleza*», es decir, belleza plena de la gracia del Altísimo. Si Dios, cuando vio todo lo que había creado, constató que era muy bello, al contemplar la hermosura de la criatura sin mancha de amor perfecto, ¿cómo no va a exultar proclamando que es la más bella de sus criaturas? Del mismo modo que Adán exclamó «ésta sí» al ver a Eva, Dios Padre al contemplar el *sí* obediente y humilde de María, también se dijo «ésta sí; ésta es toda hermosa».

María es el punto culminante de la *via pulchritudinis*, porque es la «llena de gracia», la *Tota pulchra* que canta el famoso himno franciscano, que no sólo quiso proclamar la inmaculada concepción de María, su pureza sin mancha ni pecado, sino también cantar que ella es totalmente bella, pulcra en grado sumo. Su hermosura es total porque en ella brillan al unísono la belleza corporal, física, moral y espiritual, potenciándose todas las dimensiones unas a otras en una criatura perfecta y unitaria.

5.2. Restauradora de la belleza femenina del AT

Pues bien, en María, en su persona y en su historia, por ser la *tota pulchra*, van a recapitularse todos los episodios de la historia salvífica relativos a la belleza que hemos visto. En primer lugar, por su relación con el ángel Gabriel: si en

¹⁵⁵ Sobre el saludo del ángel, cf. F. BOVON, *El Evangelio según San Lucas I. Lc 1–9* (BEB 85; Sígueme, Salamanca 2005) 110-111; J. A. FITZMYER, *El Evangelio según Lucas II. Traducción y comentarios. Capítulos 1–8,21* (Cristiandad, Madrid 1986) 112-115.

el origen de la humanidad los ángeles custodios no respetaron la belleza de las mujeres y entraron en ellas para poseerlas lujuriosamente, aceptando ellas tal ilícita unión, por contraste en la anunciación, otro ángel, puro, fiel y obediente, entró en la presencia de una virgen que por amor a Dios había renunciado a la unión carnal (cf. Lc 1,34)¹⁵⁶. Tanto en Gn 6,4 (εἰσεπορεύοντο πρὸς τὰς θυγατέρας) como en Lc 1 (εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτήν) se emplea el verbo *entrar* teniendo a los ángeles por sujeto; en el primer caso para prevaricar con la belleza de las mujeres; en el segundo, para proclamar la gracia de una mujer única, pura, casta, virgen y esclava de Dios por amor. Gabriel y María indican un nuevo inicio para la historia de la salvación en contrapunto a aquel inicio pecaminoso entre ángeles y mujeres, cuyo primer episodio protagonizaron Eva y el diablo (cf. Gén 3)¹⁵⁷.

Todas las mujeres hermosas del AT, cuya belleza no fue bien empleada — bien por ellas mismas, bien por los que las desearon pecaminosamente— fueron prefiguraciones de la *pulcherrima* Virgen María en forma de *anti-typos*, como diría la exégesis tipológica de Paul Beauchamp (cf. *infra*). María, con una acción contraria restableció el orden creado y salvífico de la hermosura:

- Con respecto a Sara cuando acepta la propuesta de Abrán de presentarse como su hermana al bajar a Egipto: ella se dejó separar de su esposo—y lo que Dios ha unido no debe separarlo el hombre— por culpa de su belleza. María, anti-tipo de Sara y figura de la Iglesia esposa de Cristo, no se dejó separar de éste cuando lo desfiguraron en la pasión. Si lo propio de la belleza es atraer, lo característico de la fealdad es repugnar, retraer. Pues bien, frente al rostro de Cristo deformado, ante quien se aparta el rostro (cf. Is 52,13–53,12), ante el que huyeron sus discípulos, María no huyó (cf. Jn 19,25). Una belleza más profunda, el amor, la mantuvo a su lado. Abrán por miedo a morir, no dijo quién era, y puso en peligro la intimidad de su esposa. Cristo, sin miedo

¹⁵⁶ Cf. A. GIMÉNEZ GONZÁLEZ, “El posible voto de virginidad de María (cf. Lc 1,34): base veterotestamentaria”: *EstM* 83 (2017) 499-518.

¹⁵⁷ Nótese la abundantísima bibliografía mariológica que presenta a María como la nueva Eva, desde que lo hiciera San Ireneo en el s.II, mostrando a la Virgen María como aquella que restaura con su obediencia la desobediencia de la virgen Eva (cf. *Adversus Haereses* V,19,1; A. ORBE, “La Virgen María abogada de la virgen Eva”: *Gregorianum* 63 [1982] 453-503). Como botón de muestra, Cándido Pozo tituló su manual de mariología *María, nueva Eva* (BAC, Madrid 2005).

a la muerte, fue condenado por decir quién era, el hijo de Dios (cf. Mt 26,64-65). Y con su muerte, restauró la integridad de su esposa, la Iglesia, haciéndola santa e inmaculada¹⁵⁸. Esta santidad ya era una realidad en María, la nueva Eva, la nueva Sara, que tampoco tuvo miedo de proclamar su identidad, con su sola presencia en el Calvario: la madre del condenado a muerte.

- Las moabititas de Baal-Peor sedujeron con su belleza a los israelitas, para alejarlos del Dios verdadero y su alianza. María, en cambio, con su dulzura, encaminó a los sirvientes de las bodas de Caná hacia su hijo, el Dios verdadero, y todavía hoy no deja de repetir a todos los hombres, a través del evangelio, que obedezcan a Jesús: «Haced lo que Él os diga» (Jn 2,5).
- El adulterio de David con Betsabé, y el posterior homicidio de su esposo, causados en su origen por la hermosura de su esposa, son restaurados en la virginidad, pureza y castidad de María, cuyo cuerpo y alma fueron siempre y plenamente para Dios. David miró lascivamente a Betsabé; María no tuvo ojos sino para Dios, para su hijo, para su esposo san José, y para todos los hombres recibidos como hijos espirituales. Betsabé accedió a subir a la casa del rey, para complacer sus deseos deshonestos. María no permitió que en su casa interior entrase otro que no fuese su Dios, el rey del universo. Del adulterio de aquellos surgió el homicidio de Urías, hombre justo y fiel. Por la fidelidad perfecta de María y José a las indicaciones del ángel, salvaron de la matanza de Herodes a Jesús (cf. Mt 2,13-16), el justo por antonomasia. Del pecado de Betsabé y David nació un bebé que al poco tiempo murió. Del sí de María nació un niño que daría vida eterna al hombre mortal.

5.3. Plenitud de la belleza salvífica

La Virgen lleva a plenitud toda la belleza salvadora que hemos visto en el AT. Por una parte, María refleja en sí la extraordinaria belleza de las matriarcas de

¹⁵⁸ Cf. “Abraham et Sarai: la sœur-épouse, ou l'énigme du couple fondateur”, en: C. COULOT (dir.), *Exégèse et herméneutique. Comment lire la Bible?* (Lectio divina 158; Cerf, Paris 1994) 11-50.

Israel, Sara, Rebeca y Raquel, llegando a ser mucho más que una matriarca: la Madre de la Iglesia, del nuevo Israel, y la Madre del Hijo Eterno de Dios. Es la Madre del Salvador y de la salvación.

Su hermosura es prefigurada por la de Sara, hija de Ragüel, la cual, en su noche de bodas, en vez de unirse a su esposo Tobías rezó con él. María no sólo no se unió carnalmente a su esposo la primera noche de sus desposorios, sino ninguna noche, siendo la virgen perfecta que vive en continua oración y oblación al Creador por traer la salvación al mundo.

También Rut prefigura a María, pues con la hermosura de sus acciones humildes —eligiendo siempre morir a sí misma en favor de los otros— se convirtió en la bisabuela del rey David, el que recibió la promesa mesiánica. La Virgen fue la receptora de esa promesa acogiendo en su seno al Mesías davídico, por la belleza de su humildad y querer siempre ser la esclava del Señor y de los demás (cf. Lc 1,38.46-48).

La bella y casta Susana representa a todas las mujeres deseadas lujuriosamente o difamadas en su honor que, no cediendo al pecado, abandonaron su defensa en manos de Dios. María las recapitula a todas ellas con su rechazo constante al pecado, y también de un modo especial cuando, habiendo quedado embarazada *inesperadamente*, aceptó humildemente —y no sin dolor— el juicio y la duda de san José, dejando que fuese Dios mismo el que la justificase ante su esposo (cf. Mt 1,19-21)¹⁵⁹.

María encarna en su seno a la Sabiduría de Dios, anunciada por la literatura sapiencial. Ella posibilita que esta Sabiduría (el Logos divino) se haga hombre dándole su humanidad: la Sabiduría se reviste de la carne de María, y ella se empapa de la sabiduría divina, llegando a ser la mujer fuerte y sabia por excelencia que ensalzaba el AT. Nadie, sin embargo, podrá aspirar a tomarla por esposa, aunque sí por madre, compañera y maestra.

¹⁵⁹ Sobre la duda de José, cf. I. GOMÁ CIVIT, *El Evangelio según San Mateo I* (Marova, Madrid ²1976, ¹1965) 33-35; U. LUZ, *El Evangelio según San Mateo I. Mt 1-7* (BEB 74; Sígueme, Salamanca ²2001) 142-143.

Ahora bien, María realiza de modo especial la salvación que se atisbaba en Ester y Judit, las dos mujeres centrales de esta exposición, y que remiten al momento final de la historia de la salvación¹⁶⁰. La belleza de ambas fue el camino empleado por Dios para, de un modo insospechado, rescatar a su pueblo de una perdición inevitable. Del mismo modo, al final, María resplandecerá como sólo Dios conoce para traernos, una segunda vez, la salvación a la tierra, esta vez gloriosa y definitivamente.

Al igual que Ester¹⁶¹, se presentará ante el soberano de todos los reinos para interceder en favor de su pueblo, condenado al exterminio por sus enemigos¹⁶². Esa intercesión de María, ni ha faltado en el pasado, ni falta en el presente, ni ciertamente faltará en el final. Y al igual que Judit, atacará la raíz del mal, arrancará la cabeza del enemigo, de Satán, para pisarla (cf. Gén 3,15) y encaminar a su pueblo a la victoria final, con su belleza, su santidad, y su confianza en Dios¹⁶³.

Prestemos todavía un poco de atención a Judit, en quien la Iglesia siempre ha visto una imagen de María, pues su figura es un *typos* admirable de la Virgen¹⁶⁴. Cuando Ozías, jefe de Betulia, la ve llegar victoriosa con la cabeza del enemigo, la recibe diciendo: «Hija, que el Dios altísimo *te bendiga entre todas las mujeres de la tierra*» (Jdt 13,18a)¹⁶⁵. María es realmente la bendita entre las

¹⁶⁰ Cf. E. MAY, “María en el Antiguo Testamento”, en: J. B. CAROL (ed.), *Mariología* (BAC 242; BAC, Madrid 1964) 77.

¹⁶¹ Cf. R. KNOX, “Esther as a type of Our Lady”, en: F. J. SHEED (ed.), *The Mary Book* (Sheed & Ward, New York 1950); A. BEA, “Das Marienbild des Alten Bundes”, en: P. STRÄTER (ed.), *Katholische Marienkunde I* (Paderborn 1947) 41-42.

¹⁶² Cf. J. ALONSO DÍAZ, “Sentido mariológico del libro de Judit”: *CulB* 16 (1959) 57-58.

¹⁶³ Cf. MAY, “María en el Antiguo Testamento”, 77. El pueblo, guiado por María, no vencerá al enemigo con la espada, sino como enseñó Jesús, con la entrega de la propia vida con amor, dejando que el grano de trigo muera, para que dé mucho fruto y sea resucitado (cf. CCE 677).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. ALONSO DÍAZ, “Sentido mariológico del libro de Judit” 93-96. Aunque no se trata de un *typos* estrictamente hablando, la liturgia ha atribuido a María las palabras dirigidas a Judit. Cf. C. POZO, *María, nueva Eva. Historia Salutis. Serie monográfica de teología dogmática* (BAC 652; BAC, Madrid 2005) 126-127.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. BEA, “Das Marienbild des Alten Bundes”, 41.

mujeres, como repetimos en cada *Ave Maria*, recordando las palabras de Isabel (cf. Lc 1,42).

Ozías continúa su saludo de bienvenida diciendo: «Alabado sea el Señor, el Dios que creó el cielo y la tierra y que te ha guiado hasta cortar la cabeza al jefe de nuestros enemigos» (Jdt 13,18b). En efecto, María es la que —manteniéndose intacta, sin mancha, conservando su belleza de criatura— ha destruido la cabeza de la serpiente, tal como se anunció en el protoevangelio: «ésta te aplastará la cabeza» (Gén 3,15)¹⁶⁶. Los enemigos de Betulia sintetizaron perfectamente el papel salvífico de Judit: «Ha bastado una mujer hebrea para cubrir de vergüenza la casa del rey Nabucodonosor. Ahí está Holofernes tirado en tierra y sin cabeza» (Jdt 14,8). Del mismo modo, bastó una mujer judía, santa e inmaculada para destruir el infierno en el tiempo de la encarnación, y bastará la belleza pura y gloriosa de esta misma mujer —aunque no sepamos cómo— para la victoria final. Dicha hermosura se cita en el Apocalipsis, en el contexto de la séptima trompeta, donde se anuncia la gran victoria, el tiempo «de dar el galardón a tus siervos los profetas, y a los santos y a los que temen tu nombre, y a los pequeños y a los grandes, y de arruinar a los que arruinaron la tierra» (Ap 11,18). Es ahí cuando se menciona a María, imagen de la Iglesia, como el *gran signo* de la victoria que «apareció en el cielo: una mujer *vestida del sol*, y la luna bajo sus pies y una *corona de doce estrellas* sobre su cabeza» (Ap 12,1). Bíblicamente hablando, no hay mayor belleza para una criatura que la descrita con estos términos¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁶ «María se hizo corredentora al aplastar la cabeza de la serpiente»: MAY, “María en el Antiguo Testamento”, 77. Igualmente, cf. S. M. MANELLI, *All Generations shall call me blessed. Biblical Mariology* (Academy of the Immaculate, New Bedford, MA 2005) 56.

¹⁶⁷ DORÉ, *El libro de Judit o La guerra y la fe*, 31 cita un poema de Paul Claudel titulado *Judith*, en el que muestra a la heroína como prefiguración de María: «Así, y mil veces más bella, e irradiando la gloria prefigurada de María, los sacerdotes y los ancianos cuando vieron a Judit con su criada avanzar hacia la puerta de Betulia. Ella tiene estrellas en las orejas, y el sol sobre su cabeza, y púrpura en los pies, y fuego alrededor del talle. [...] Una paloma invencible está en sus ojos y de sus labios se escapa un aliento bermejo. He aquí que Betulia envía hacia el Monstruo a la Mujer vestida de sol».

Volviendo al discurso de Ozías de Betulia, su final parece igualmente dirigido todo él a María, pues indica que Judit quedará siempre en el corazón de todos como signo del poder de Dios, capaz de salvar en cualquier situación. Subraya también que ella ha evitado la ruina del pueblo de Dios, arriesgando su vida por él. Además, el deseo de que Judit sea engrandecida siempre por Dios se realiza plenamente en María, como ella canta en el *Magnificat* (cf. Lc 1,46-55)¹⁶⁸:

«Tu esperanza permanecerá en el corazón de los hombres que recuerdan el poder de Dios por siempre. Que Dios te engrandezca siempre y te dé felicidad, porque has arriesgado tu vida al ver la humillación de nuestro pueblo. Has evitado nuestra ruina y te has portado rectamente ante nuestro Dios». Toda la gente respondió: «¡Amén, amén!». (Jdt 13,19-20)

También se aplican a María de modo admirablemente adecuado las palabras que le dedicaron a Judit el sumo sacerdote y las autoridades de Jerusalén, que tras la victoria acudieron a Betulia «para ver por sí mismos las maravillas realizadas por el Señor en favor de su pueblo y para felicitar a Judit»¹⁶⁹:

Tú eres la gloria de Jerusalén, tú eres el orgullo de Israel, tú eres el honor de nuestro pueblo¹⁷⁰. Lo has hecho todo con tu mano. Has devuelto la dicha a Israel, y Dios se muestra complacido. La bendición del Señor todopoderoso te acompañe por todos los siglos. (Jdt 15,8-10)

Al final de la historia, todos los salvados acudirán a María para ensalzarla con palabras semejantes, subrayando su decisiva intervención en la salvación: «lo has hecho todo con tu mano». Entonces la Virgen podrá proclamar el cumplimiento definitivo de lo que anunció en el *Magnificat*: «me felicitarán todas las generaciones, porque el Poderoso ha hecho obras grandes en mí» (Lc 1,48-49)¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. MAY, “María en el Antiguo Testamento”, 77.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. ALONSO DÍAZ, “Sentido mariológico del libro de Judit”, 56.

¹⁷⁰ Estas tres afirmaciones se cantan a María en el *Tota pulchra: Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu, laetitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri*.

¹⁷¹ Cf. FITZMYER, *El Evangelio según Lucas*, 139; BOVON, *El Evangelio según San Lucas*, 131.

Nosotros, sin esperar a que llegue ese momento final, proclamamos ya ahora que Ella traerá la salvación a su pueblo, con belleza admirable. Ella no es solo la nueva Eva, es también la verdadera Ester y la única Judit. Nuestra reina y madre, cooperadora sin par de la salvación.

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La “Corredentrice” nell’800

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This article by Father Paolo Siano was published in *Corrispondenza Romana* on April 28, 2021. Father Siano shows the widespread use of the Marian title, co-redemptrix (*corredentrice*) during the 1800s. Most significantly, he notes Pope Leo XIII’s July 18, 1885 approval of a prayer of praises (*laudes*) to Jesus and Mary with an indulgence of 100 days granted by the Congregation for Indulgences and Sacred Relics. In the Italian version of the praises to Mary, she is referred to as “coredemptrix of the world” (*corredentrice del mondo*). In the Latin version, she is referred to as the “coadiutrix in redeeming the world” (*mundo redimendo coadiutrix*). Leo XIII approved both the Italian and Latin versions of the prayer (*Acta Sanctae Sedis* [ASS]18 [1885] p. 93. See <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ass/documents/ASS-18-1885-ocr.pdf>

La “Corredentrice” nell’800

Dopo il mio precedente articolo (**vedi qui**) ho scoperto altri testi del ‘600 e del ‘700 in favore del titolo mariano di «Corredentrice». Mi limito a riportarne un paio prima di dare uno sguardo al XIX secolo.

Nell’opera postuma «Mariani Cultus Vindiciae, seu nonnullae animadversiones in libellum cui Titulus: Monita Salutaria B.V.Mariae ad Cultores suos indiscretos. Pro vindicanda contra Autorem Anonymum. Deiparæ Gloria, Secundum Orthodoxæ Fidei dogmata, Sanctorum Patrum testimonia, Rectae Rationis dictamina, Et Theologorum principia concinnata» (Pragae 1677), scritta contro il giansenista Adam von Widenfeld, P. Maximilian Reichenberger S.J. (1613-1676), gesuita boemo e docente di Filosofia e Teologia all’Università di Praga, chiama Maria: «Corredemptrix» (p.38), «Salutis humana Corredemptricem & Restauratricem» (p.120) secondo la dottrina dei Santi Padri.

Nel Syllabus Marianus (Leopoli 1717), P. Anton Wegrzynov dei Frati Minori Riformati, Lettore di Teologia della Provincia dei Minori di Polonia, chiama la Madonna: «Corredemptrix» (col. 508), «corredemptrix generis humani» (col. 1011, corsivo del testo).

Passiamo ora all’ ‘800.

Nel libro *Il Mese di Maggio* consacrato a Maria. Operetta nuova (In Roma 1821, Presso Vincenzo Poggioli, stampatore della Rev. Cam. Apostolica. Con Approvazione) si afferma che «Maria divenne come corredentrica del mondo, e vera Madre del Figliuolo stesso di Dio» (p.23).

Nel libro *Grandezze di Maria* (Tomo V, Fuligno 1840) P. Francesco Di Paola, ex Generale della Congregazione dei Missionari del SS. Redentore, afferma che Maria: è «nostra Corredentrica» (pp. 174-177, 185-187, 198, 202); «Corredentrica del Mondo perduto» (p. 186); «merita il titolo glorioso di Corredentrica» (p.199); è «vera Corredentrica» (p.214).

Nell'opera "Pareri dell'Episcopato Cattolico, di Capitoli, di Congregazioni, di Università, di personaggi ragguardevoli etc. etc. sulla definizione dogmatica dell'Immacolato Conceimento della B.V. Maria rassegnati alla Santità di Pio IX P.M. in occasione della sua Enciclica data da Gaeta il 2 febbraio 1849", (Parte I, vol. I, *Coi tipi della Civiltà Cattolica*, Roma 1851), troviamo la lettera del Vescovo d'Asti Mons. Filippo Artico (1798-1859) che, rivolgendosi al Romano Pontefice, chiama Maria: «Corredentrica del mondo» (p. 325).

Nel 1852 a Roma, a cura di P. Marcellino da Civezza M.O. (M.O. = Frati Minori dell'Osservanza) viene pubblicata l'edizione italiana della dissertazione teologica "Della definibilità della Concezione Immacolata di Maria" di P. Pietro Gual M.O., Guardiano del Collegio di Propaganda Fide di Ocopia (Perù). La Madonna è chiamata: «la corredentrica degli uomini» (p. 7), «Corredentrica dell'umana famiglia» (p. 42).

Nel libretto di devozione *Affetti e preghiere* pei devoti della Madonna Addolorata colla corona dei sette dolori che si recita in tutti i venerdì dell'anno nella Cattedrale di Napoli (Napoli 1855), c'è la «Litania della Vergine Addolorata» composta dal Servo di Dio Papa Pio VII (1742-1823), regnante dal 1800 al 1823. In quella Litania la Madonna è chiamata anche: «Corredentrica dell'uman genere» (p. 26).

Nel libro *L'Immacolata Concezione della Beata Vergine Maria* considerata come dogma di fede (edizione italiana, Giacinto Marietti Tipografo-Libraio, Torino 1857), Mons. Jean-Baptiste Malou (1809-1864), teologo e poi Vescovo di Bruges, chiama Maria: «corredentrica» (p. 65), «corredentrica del genere umano» (pp. 121, 251, 253), «corredentrica del mondo» (p. 256),

«corredentrice in un col suo Figlio divino» (p. 227). Maria è «corredentrice» perché associata al Suo Figlio quale «cooperatrice de' grandi misteri dell'incarnazione del Figlio di Dio e della redenzione degli uomini» (p. 251). Maria ha preso «una gran parte ai patimenti di suo Figlio», ella unisce la sua volontà a quella del Figlio; Maria «immolava» il suo Figlio Agnello divino (cf. p. 251). Ella «è dunque davvero la corredentrice del mondo, e, dopo suo Figlio, lo stromento principale della redenzione» (p. 252). Per essere «corredentrice del genere umano», Maria «ha dovuto essere preservata dalla macchia originale» (p. 252).

Nel libro *Per le Feste della Solenne Coronazione del V. Simulacro di Maria Santissima sul Monte di Varallo nell'agosto 1857* (Novara, Tip. di Girolamo Miglio, s.d.), troviamo in ben 4 omelie il titolo di «Corredentrice».

Nell'Omelia del 18 agosto 1857 il Vescovo di Ventimiglia Mons. Lorenzo Biale chiama Maria: «Corredentrice della perduta umanità» (p. 44), «Corredentrice e Correatrice delle nostre sciagure» (p. 46), «affettuosa nostra Corredentrice» (p. 50).

Nell'Omelia del 19 agosto 1857, Mons. Raffaele Biale, Vescovo di Albenga parla «del sublime titolo di Corredentrice onde l'onora la Chiesa» (p. 65), del «grandioso titolo di Corredentrice dell'umanità» (p. 66), Maria è «Corredentrice del mondo» (p. 65).

Nell'Omelia del 20 agosto 1857 Mons. Fr. Giovanni Tommaso Ghilardi O.P., Vescovo di Mondovì, afferma che Maria ha meritato «il titolo di nostra Corredentrice!» (p. 86).

Nell'Omelia del 22 agosto 1857 Mons. Alessandro d'Angennes, Arcivescovo di Vercelli, afferma che Maria «fu detta, ed è realmente Corredentrice del genere umano» (p. 119).

Nel *Compendio dell'Istituzione del Terzo Ordine del Padre S. Francesco d'Assisi a cura dei Padri Minori Riformati di S. Pietro ad Aram*, (5a edizione migliorata, Napoli 1858), si legge circa il «Serafico Patriarca» San Francesco che «la passione del Redentore, e il martirio della Corredentrice» (p. 172) sono stati «lo scopo de' pensieri di lui ed affetti» (p. 172). In una coroncina dei Dolori di Maria, si contempla anche il «perenne ringraziamento» di Maria a Dio «avendola scelta a Corredentrice per la gloria del Cielo, e per la salvezza della terra» (p. 184).

Nella Relazione di quanto si operò a festeggiare la venuta del Sommo Pontefice Pio Nono nella città di Ascoli del Piceno scritta dal Cav. Gaetano Frascarelli (Ascoli 1859), leggiamo che in una colonna «eretta temporariamente» in Piazza del Popolo in onore della Vergine Immacolata, nelle iscrizioni mariane vi è il titolo: «Corredentrice dell'uman genere» (p. 120).

Nei Discorsi sacri in onore della Gran Madre di Dio Maria SS. con una Novena per la Festa del S. Natale (Napoli 1864), il redentorista P. Bartolomeo Giordano chiama Maria: «Corredentrice insieme col Figlio» (p. 74), «nostra corredentrice, e mediatrice della nostra salute» (p. 74). «Gesù è Redentore, e mediatore, come causa primaria; Maria come causa secondaria» (p. 74). «Ebbero dunque ragione i Padri della Chiesa nel chiamare Maria chi corredentrice, e coadiutrice della nostra salute [...] chi cooperatrice della nostra salute» (p. 77). «Maria la nostra corredentrice» (p. 77).

Nel libro *Die Mutter Gottes. Geschildert von den Hl. Vätern und Lehren der Kirche* (Wien 1866), P. Geminiano Mislei S.J. afferma che Maria può essere chiamata Corredentrice («die heilige Maria Miterlöserin nennen kann»: p. 329), Gesù è il Nuovo Adamo («den neuen Adam»). Maria è nostra Corredentrice («Maria auch unsere Miterlöserin nennen»: p. 329).

Nel Panegirico dei dolori glorificati di Maria Santissima (Sanremo 1871) P. Girolamo Priori, «ex Generale dei Carmelitani Scalzi, Esaminatore dei Vescovi innanzi al Sommo Pontefice e Consultore di varie Ecclesiastiche Congregazioni», afferma che Maria «patì da Corredentrice coll'offerta di un sacrificio il più doloroso» (p. 5). Maria è la «nostra Corredentrice» (p. 13), «l'amabile nostra Corredentrice» (p. 17).

Nel libro *Il mese di Maggio. Sermoni sopra la dignità altissima di Maria Vergine detti in Roma nella chiesa di Santa Maria della Pace* (Torino 1872, Pietro di G. Marietti, Tipografo Pontificio) il sacerdote Natale Severini, già professore di Eloquenza e Teologia Dogmatica, chiama Maria «corredentrice» (pp.199-201), «mediatrice, corredentrice e madre nostra tenerissima» (p. 269).

Nella Vita di Maria SS.ma (Torino 1874, Cav. Pietro Marietti, Tipogr. Pontif. ed Arciv.) il cappuccino P. Teodoro Piccone scrive che «Maria, come corredentrice, intrepida stavasi appiè della Croce [...]. Gesù per noi immolava sé stesso sul ruvido legno insanguinato; e Maria, nel colmo del suo dolore,

magnanima offeriva al Padre il prezzo del gran riscatto» (p. 154). Maria, offrendo Gesù all'Eterno Padre, «propriamente corredentrice addiviene dell'umana famiglia» (p. 154).

Nel libro *La dottrina cattolica esposta in tre libri. Vol. II* (Napoli 1877), il sacerdote oratoriano Alfonso Capecelatro (1824-1912), poi Arcivescovo di Capua dal 1880, Cardinale dal 1885, Bibliotecario della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana dal 1890, chiama Maria: «corredentrice, perché per la ineffabile forza dell'animo offrì al Padre per noi il sacrificio del Figliuol suo dolcissimo, e partecipò col Figliuolo a tutti gli strazi, a tutte le ignominie, a tutt'i dolori che redensero il genere umano» (p. 195).

Nei suoi *Discorsi sacri* (Genova 1877), il sacerdote Don Paolo Tirinzoni, Parroco Prevosto di Buglio, chiama Maria: «vera corredentrice del genere umano» (p. 317), «corredentrice del mondo perduto» (p. 325).

Nel 1877, all'interno della Chiesa di Santo Spirito dei Frati Minori in Ferrara viene posta una lapide a ricordo della beneficenza elargita dalla Contessa Elisa Gulinelli in Fioravanti per il rifacimento del pavimento adiacente la Cappella del Crocifisso. Nell'iscrizione leggiamo che con tale beneficenza la Contessa ha desiderato emulare «la pietà dei suoi illustri maggiori verso le pene del Redentore Divino e della Corredentrice Maria» (cfr. P. Teodosio Lombardi OFM, *I Francescani a Ferrara. Vol. II. Il Convento e la Chiesa di Santo Spirito dei Frati Minori*, Bologna 1974, p. 100).

Nel libro *L'amico del clero secolare e regolare* (Milano 1878) il sacerdote barnabita P. Carlo Parea, già Penitenziere Onorario nella (Basilica) Metropolitana di Milano, chiama Maria: «Corredentrice del genere umano» (pp. 285, 689), «Corredentrice nostra [...] qual nostra Corredentrice divenne canale di carità» (p. 682). Inoltre «la vita di Maria, Madre di Dio e nostra Corredentrice, è un tessuto di meraviglie» (p. 684); «Madre del Redentore e degna Corredentrice, tutta pura, santa, immacolata e da capo a piedi adorna d'una incomparabile bellezza, ammirata dagli Angeli stessi» (p. 687); «vera Corredentrice» (p. 689).

Nel libro *Sculture e mosaici nella facciata del Duomo di Firenze* (Firenze 1883), il Prof. Augusto Conti dell'Istituto di Studi Superiori in Firenze afferma che «Maria Vergine, Madre di Gesù Cristo, è la Corredentrice degli uomini» (p. 16), «corredentrice con Gesù dell'antica Eva e del vecchio

Adamo» (p. 79), «la Corredentrice degli uomini» (p. 98).

Nel “Bollettino Salesiano” del giugno 1884 (Torino, Anno VIII, N. 6), ancora vivente San Giovanni Bosco (1815-1888), nella «Relazione sulla festa di Maria Ausiliatrice», la Madonna è chiamata: «corredentrice, avvocata e madre nostra dolcissima» (p.83).

Negli Acta Sanctae Sedis del 1885 (vol. XVIII, Romae, Typis Poliglottae Officinae S.C. de Propaganda Fide), nella rubrica «Ex S. Congreg. Indulgentiarum» si legge che in data 18 luglio 1885 Papa Leone XIII ha concesso un’indulgenza di 100 giorni a chi recita delle Lodi a Gesù e a Maria Santissima («Laudes in Christi Jesu et Mariae virginis honorem cum indulgentia centum dierum») in cui c’è anche il titolo mariano (in italiano e latino) di «Corredentrice del Mondo» (p. 93) — «Mundo redimendo coadiutrix» (p. 93).

Infine su “La Palestra del Clero” del 1893 (Roma, vol. XXXII), organo ufficiale della Società per gli Studi Biblici presieduta da mons. Giambattista Anania («Cameriere Segreto di S. Santità»), nel discorso “Il Sacro Cuore di Maria” la Madonna è chiamata: «corredentrice» (p. 289), «Eva novella» (p. 289), «la cooperatrice della rigenerazione di tutte le anime» (p. 293). Inoltre: «Sotto questo rispetto di corredentrice e madre di vita noi dobbiamo sempre meglio riconoscerci come veraci figli del cuor suo» (p. 294).

St. John Paul II's Synthesis of Marian Coredemption

FR. JÁN KOŠIAR

The most significant synthesis on Marian Coredemption was the catechesis of Pope John Paul II of April 2nd and 9th 1997. On April 2, 1997, St. John Paul II offered these reflections:

Mary united herself to Jesus' offering

1. Regina caeli laetare, alleluia!

So the Church sings in this Easter season, inviting the faithful to join in the spiritual joy of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer. The Blessed Virgin's gladness at Christ's Resurrection is even greater if one considers her intimate participation in Jesus' entire life.

In accepting with complete availability the words of the Angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she would become the Mother of the Messiah, Mary began her participation in the drama of Redemption. Her involvement in her Son's sacrifice, revealed by Simeon during the presentation in the Temple, continues not only in the episode of the losing and finding of the 12-year-old Jesus, but also throughout his public life.

However, the Blessed Virgin's association with Christ's mission reaches its culmination in Jerusalem, at the time of the Redeemer's Passion and Death. As the Fourth Gospel testifies, she was in the Holy City at the time, probably for the celebration of the Jewish feast of Passover.

2. The Council stresses the profound dimension of the Blessed Virgin's presence on Calvary, recalling that she "faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58), and points out that this union "in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death" (*ibid.*, n. 57).

Mary Joins her Suffering to Jesus' Priestly Sacrifice

With our gaze illumined by the radiance of the Resurrection, we pause to reflect on the Mother's involvement in her Son's redeeming Passion, which was completed by her sharing in his suffering. Let us return again, but now in the perspective of the Resurrection, to the foot of the Cross where the Mother endured "with her only-begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which was born of her" ([ibid.](#), n. 58).

With these words, the Council reminds us of "Mary's compassion"; in her heart reverberates all that Jesus suffers in body and soul, emphasizing her willingness to share in her Son's redeeming sacrifice and to join her own maternal suffering to his priestly offering.

The Council text also stresses that her consent to Jesus' immolation is not passive acceptance but a genuine act of love, by which she offers her Son as a "victim" of expiation for the sins of all humanity.

Lastly, [*Lumen Gentium*](#) relates the Blessed Virgin to Christ, who has the lead role in Redemption, making it clear that in associating herself "with his sacrifice" she remains subordinate to her divine Son.

3. In the Fourth Gospel, St John says that "standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (19:25). By using the verb "to stand", which literally means "to be on one's feet", "to stand erect", perhaps the Evangelist intends to present the dignity and strength shown in their sorrow by Mary and the other women.

The Blessed Virgin's "standing erect" at the foot of the Cross recalls her unfailing constancy and extraordinary

courage in facing suffering. In the tragic events of Calvary, Mary is sustained by faith, strengthened during the events of her life and especially during Jesus' public life. The Council recalls that "the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 58).

Sharing his deepest feelings, she counters the arrogant insults addressed to the crucified Messiah with forbearance and pardon, associating herself with his prayer to the Father: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). By sharing in the feeling of abandonment to the Father's will expressed in Jesus' last words on the Cross: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit!" (ibid., 23:46), she thus offers, as the Council notes, loving consent "to the immolation of this victim which was born of her" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58).

Mary's Hope Contains Light Stronger than Darkness

4. Mary's supreme "yes" is radiant with trusting hope in the mysterious future, begun with the death of her crucified Son. The words in which Jesus taught the disciples on his way to Jerusalem "that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" re-echo in her heart at the dramatic hour of Calvary, awakening expectation of and yearning for the Resurrection.

Mary's hope at the foot of the Cross contains a light stronger than the darkness that reigns in many hearts: in the presence of the redeeming Sacrifice, the hope of the Church and of humanity is born in Mary. (John Paul II, General Audience, April 2, 1997).

The second very important text about the Virgin Mary's role as Cooperatrix in the Redemption is found in John Paul II's General Audience of April 9, 1997:

Mary's co-operation is totally unique

The basis of this singular co-operation is Mary's divine motherhood and her sharing in Jesus' life, culminating in her presence at the foot of the Cross:

1. Down the centuries the Church has reflected on Mary's co-operation in the work of salvation, deepening the analysis of her association with Christ's redemptive sacrifice. St Augustine already gave the Blessed Virgin the title "co-operator" in the Redemption (cf. *De Sancta Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399), a title which emphasizes Mary's joint but subordinate action with Christ the Redeemer.

Reflection has developed along these lines, particularly since the 15th century. Some feared there might be a desire to put Mary on the same level as Christ. Actually the Church's teaching makes a clear distinction between the Mother and the Son in the work of salvation, explaining the Blessed Virgin's subordination, as co-operator, to the one Redeemer.

Moreover, when the Apostle Paul says: "For we are God's fellow workers" (1 Cor 3:9), he maintains the real possibility for man to co-operate with God. The collaboration of believers, which obviously excludes any equality with him, is expressed in the proclamation of the Gospel and in their personal contribution to its taking root in human hearts.

Mary's Cooperation is Unique and Unrepeatable

2. However, applied to Mary, the term "co-operator" acquires a specific meaning. The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread by prayer and sacrifice. Mary, instead, co-operated during the event itself and in the role of mother; thus her co-operation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work. She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him,

she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity.

The Blessed Virgin's role as co-operator has its source in her divine motherhood. By giving birth to the One who was destined to achieve man's redemption, by nourishing him, presenting him in the temple and suffering with him as he died on the Cross, "in a wholly singular way she co-operated ... in the work of the Savior" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 61). Although God's call to co-operate in the work of salvation concerns every human being, the participation of the Saviour's Mother in humanity's Redemption is a unique and unrepeatable fact.

Despite the uniqueness of her condition, Mary is also the recipient of salvation. She is the first to be saved, redeemed by Christ "in the most sublime way" in her Immaculate Conception (cf. Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, in Pius IX, *Acta*, 1, 605) and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3. This assertion now leads to the question: what is the meaning of Mary's unique co-operation in the plan of salvation? It should be sought in God's particular intention for the Mother of the Redeemer, whom on two solemn occasions, that is, at Cana and beneath the Cross, Jesus addresses as "Woman" (cf. Jn 2, 4; 19, 26). Mary is associated as a woman in the work of salvation. Having created man "male and female" (cf. Gn 1:27), the Lord also wants to place the New Eve beside the New Adam in the Redemption. Our first parents had chosen the way of sin as a couple; a new pair, the Son of God with his Mother's co-operation, would re-establish the human race in its original dignity.

Mary, the New Eve, thus becomes a perfect icon of the Church. In the divine plan, at the foot of the Cross, she represents redeemed humanity which, in need of salvation, is enabled to make a contribution to the unfolding of the saving work.

Mary is our Mother in the Order of Grace

4. The Council had this doctrine in mind and made it its own, stressing the Blessed Virgin's contribution not only to the Redeemer's birth, but also to the life of his Mystical Body down the ages until the "eschaton": in the Church Mary "has co-operated" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 63) and "co-operates" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 53) in the work of salvation. In describing the mystery of the Annunciation, the Council states that the Virgin of Nazareth, "committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will, devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of Redemption by the grace of Almighty God" (*ibid.*, n. 56).

The Second Vatican Council moreover presents Mary not only as "Mother of the divine Redeemer", but also "in a singular way [as] the generous associate", who "co-operated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior". The Council also recalls that the sublime fruit of this cooperation is her universal motherhood: "For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace" (*ibid.*, n. 61).

We can therefore turn to the Blessed Virgin, trustfully imploring her aid in the awareness of the singular role entrusted to her by God, the role of co-operator in the Redemption, which she exercised throughout her life and in a special way at the foot of the Cross (John Paul II, General Audience, April 7, 1997).

These two papal addresses are particularly rich in doctrine and precision. St. John Paul II here accentuates the historical development of the Church's insight into Mary's cooperation in the work of our redemption. These two speeches highlight the subordinate nature of Mary's cooperation while at the same time recognizing that her cooperation is altogether singular because she cooperated during the event itself and in the role of Mother. In these two audiences St. John Paul II shows the participation of the Savior's Mother in humanity's Redemption.

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God's Masterpiece and Our Saving Mother Co-Redemptrix

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Introduction

The doctrine of Mary as Co-Redemptrix has been somewhat controversial since Vatican II. This article seeks to show that Mary's Co-Redemptive role is well founded. Beginning with the philosophical underpinning of the existence of God, this article reviews Sacred Scripture and Tradition to demonstrate that the proper understanding of the "woman" leads to the doctrine of Mary the mother of God as the Co-Redemptrix.

Beginning with Genesis, Sacred Scripture gives the foundation in divine revelation for the doctrine of Mary's Co-redemptive role. Through the Tradition of the Church, the theme of Mary's singularly unique role in the redemption of man is examined. From the seed of divine revelation in Genesis and the subsequent books of the Old Testament, the Apostolic Fathers described and explored an antithetical parallelism between Adam and Eve and Christ the New Adam and Mary the New Eve. This paper examines the "woman's" essential role as the New Adam's battle partner for the salvation of souls. As this prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament, the "woman," by the power of the only begotten Son, "crushes the head of the infernal serpent with her immaculate foot." The magisterium's development of this doctrine is taken into consideration as well, particularly during this current Age of Mary.

Private revelation of certain approved apparitions are reviewed and their significance in this title of Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

The argument for the promulgation of a dogmatic definition of Mary's role as Co-Redemptrix will be argued from this body of evidence.

This article seeks to describe, in a comprehensive yet succinct manner, the doctrine of Mary as Co-Redemptrix. This doctrine is rooted in Mary's divine and spiritual motherhood. Mary's role as Co-Redemptrix as it relates to her divine and spiritual motherhood, will be further elucidated through the Church's history as promulgated in theological rationale by several saints and doctors of the Church and lastly the papal magisterium. From this body of

evidence, the argument for the promulgation of a dogmatic definition will be presented.

A Brief History of Creation

There is God and then there are created things that are living and non-living. Everything that we see, experience and interact with, falls into one of these three categories. There are material inanimate objects that comprise the physical universe; those things that are not alive, but exist. Then there are the living creatures that have two broad categories; those we see and those we don't see. The angels and demons are pure spirits that do not have material bodies, and are beautiful in the case of angels and ugly in the case of demons. Living material creatures constitute everything from a single cell bacteria to human beings. All of the non-rational creatures are works of perfection from the Creator, and as a result each individual is a masterpiece that speaks to the glory of God. This beauty is displayed as each particular species of non-rational creature can only be, act and respond in accordance with its inherent nature as designed by God. This is true of all non-living systems of the earth, sea and sky as well. They all operate within the parameters as designed by the Almighty. Aquinas' fifth proof of the existence of God, the governance of all things,¹ speaks to these non-rational living creatures and non-living things being ordered to their end, even though they do not have intelligence themselves. However, as God grants to the non-living and non-rational living things perfection in their being as they are ordered to their end by God, man is rational and was created in freedom to choose the good, but instead chose the evil. It is man who is impure because of sin. It is our sinfulness that defiles us, that makes us something less than what we were originally created to be. Our rebellion and conflict within ourselves is then manifested in nature. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning with labor pains....."(Rm.8:22)

God's original creation, *baryth* (Hebrew) including *ba adam* (man and woman) is the pinnacle of that creation. Man was created with infused knowledge, preternatural justice and supernatural grace, giving man a share in the divine life of God. (Gen.2:25) At the end of each day of creation, God saw it and it was "good." Fast forwarding to get a glimpse at what this means, we should look at the exchange between Jesus and the rich young man, who comes up to Jesus and asks, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus first responds by saying, "Why do you call me good, only God is good?"

In Genesis, we see that on the last day of creation, “God looked at all that He had made and it was *very* good.”(Gen.1:31) It was perfect; for Jesus tells us, “Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.” In the beginning, everything was perfect just as the heavenly Father is perfect and so it was “very good.”

In another account of creation, God noted that “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a suitable *helper* (*ezer* Hb.) *fit* for him.” (Gen. 2:18) This *ezer*, or helper is bone of Adam’s bone and flesh of his flesh, whom he names “woman.”

Co-Redemptrix in Sacred Scripture:

The “woman” at her creation was to be the *ezer* for Adam. The Old Testament has twenty-one references to this “helper,” nineteen of which are in the context of a battle.² “With thy hands contend for him, and be a *help*, (*ezer*) against his adversaries.”(Deut. 33:7) In Psalm 33:29 we read, “...a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your *help*, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you.” And, “Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our *help* and shield.” (Ps.33:20) This helper is engaged in a battle for those who call upon the Lord, as the Old Testament Scriptures reveal. In light of the saving actions of Jesus Christ, the “woman” who is the “helper” is the New Adam’s *ezer*, his battle partner, the head crusher.

In his envy and hatred of God, the serpent sought to undo what was “very good.” The evil one could not affect God, as he is immutable, so he attacked what was made in His image and likeness. He tempted the woman to follow in his rebellion and she in turn enticed the man who was with her. After condemning the serpent to crawl on his belly and eat dust, God promised redemption to save His creation and not allow it to be destroyed by one of His creatures. He tells the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; she shall crush your head and you shall bruise her heel.” (Gen. 3:15) The enmity between the “woman” and the serpent is the scriptural grounding for the “woman’s” preparation and role as Co-redemptrix. There has been some recent controversy in the text between *ipsa* (she), as St. Jerome translated the original Hebrew and Greek to Latin, and *ipsum* (the seed) which is a more modern translation existing in some copies. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine noted, “The fathers who have cited the old Italic version, taken from the Septuagint agree with the Vulgate, which is followed by almost all the Latins; and hence we may argue

with probability, that the Septuagint and the Hebrew formally acknowledged *ipsa*.”³

Until the “woman” is born in history, the Scriptures foreshadow her, (*ipsa*) as the head crusher. One archetype who stands out as foreshadowing “*the woman*” is Judith. “The Lord has struck him (Holofernes) down *by the hand of a woman*. As the Lord lives, who has protected me in the way I went, it was my face that tricked him to his destruction, and yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me.” (Judith 13:15-16) Judith acknowledges and gives glory to God as the one who struck down the enemy of Israel. She recognizes that she is but an instrument of God’s power. She is Israel’s (God’s first born son) *ezer*, who engages in the battle and is not defiled in the process.

The enmity between the “woman” and the serpent prophesied in Gen. 3:15 is realized in time when Gabriel addresses Mary as the one “full of grace” *kecharitomene* (Gk) as written in the Gospel of Luke. (1:28) He affirms from the Divine Father that Mary is the “woman” of Genesis 3:15. It is Mary’s fiat to the angelic messenger that allows the Incarnation of the Logos to take place in time. It is in the womb of the “woman” where the eternally begotten Son, the Logos, takes on His perfect human nature from his immaculately conceived human mother.

“Like that of Jesus, Mary’s predestination and role in salvation after the Incarnation, is cosmic, absolute and universally crucial to the creative plan of the world’s being and history.”⁴ Her immaculate human nature becomes his human nature, her flesh becomes His flesh, her heart becomes His heart. And the human body given by the most perfect creature, is offered by the Logos to the Father for the redemption of man. The Logos obtains the very instrument of our salvation from the “woman” who is “full of grace.” The excruciating anguish that she will experience at the immolation of the Lamb of God on Calvary, who is flesh of her flesh and heart of her heart, is the sword that will pierce her immaculate heart. (Lk.2:35)

Our Spiritual Mother

It is at Calvary that the dying Son of God, the Son of Mary, reaffirms His mother as the “woman.” “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then he said to his disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’” It is here that he

bequeaths his mother to His “beloved disciple” to “take into his own,” to be his mother and for her to be his son. (Jn. 19:26-27) According to Thayer’s Greek lexicon, a definition of “behold” is, “at the beginning of sentences: as the utterance of one who wishes that something should not be neglected by another.”⁵ The definition cites Jn. 19:26 as an example of this usage. Mary should not be neglected by the beloved disciple, nor he by her. Jesus is giving an imperative command to both. The command is simple, Mary is the beloved disciple’s mother and he is her son. We can read Jesus’ command to be the sons (and daughters) of His mother and she our mother alluded to in Lk.8:20-21. “And he was told, ‘Your mother and your brethren are standing outside desiring to see you.’ But he said to them, ‘My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it.’” Logically, we can conclude that if those who hear and do the will of God are his brethren, Mary must be their mother. For truly no one heard and did the will of the Father as she did. Her hearing and doing the will of the Father was so perfect and so fruitful that the Word of God, (λογος θεός) took on flesh in her immaculate womb. As Titus Bostrensis, a fourth century Father, writes, “When you hear of our Lord’s brethren you must include also the notions of *piety and grace*. For no one in regard of His divine nature is the brother of the Saviour, (for He is the Only-begotten,) but He has, *by the grace of piety, made us partakers in His flesh and His blood, and He who is by nature God has become our brother.*”⁶ Therefore, Jesus’ gift of His mother to the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross is His gift to everyone who is His beloved disciple. But there is more to this relationship between the mother of the Logos and the beloved disciple who takes Mary into his home to care for the now childless widow. Jesus doesn’t say, “John, take care of my mother,” but rather, “Behold your mother.” St. Ambrose writes, “He thought it a greater thing to show Him victorious over punishment, fulfilling the offices of piety to His mother, than giving the kingdom of heaven and eternal life to the thief. For if it was religious to give life to the thief, a much richer work of piety it is for a son to honor his mother with such affection.

Co-Redemptrix in Tradition:

The first of the Apostolic Fathers from whom we have writing about Mary’s role in the salvation of man is St. Justin Martyr, (+c.165). “In his *Dialogue with Tryphon*, (AD 155) Justin Martyr outlines the antithetical parallel between Eve and Mary, between the fruit that brought death and the fruit that was filled with blessing. ‘Eve the virgin conceived the word of the serpent and brought forth disobedience and death; Mary in faith and joy, that the Spirit

of the Lord would overshadow her and bring forth the Son of God when she said, be it done unto me according to your word.”⁸

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (+c. 202) develops the theme of Eve and Mary being parallel antithetical virgins:

And just as it was through a virgin who disobeyed that man was stricken and fell and died, so too it was through the Virgin, who obeyed the word of God, that man resuscitated by life received life for Adam had necessarily to be restored in Christ, that mortality be absorbed in immortality, and Eve in Mary, that a virgin, become the advocate of a virgin, should undo and destroy virginal disobedience by virginal obedience.⁹

St. Melito of Sardis (c.170) uses sacrificial language in referring to Christ and Mary participating in that sacrifice. Tertullian (c.240-250) reiterates the Eve-Mary antithetical parallelism where Eve was the cause of man’s fall and death and Mary the renewal of life or recapitulation.¹⁰ St. Ephraem teaches that we are reconciled to God through the Mother of God and that God chose the Blessed Virgin to be the instrument of our salvation. St. Epiphanius (+403) echoes St. Ephraem that our salvation comes through the Blessed Mother as she furnishes the cause of life.¹¹

Athanasius of Alexandria, the hero of Nicaea and the great defender of Christian truth against the Arian heresy writes in regard to the Incarnation, “...He took our body, and not only so, but He took it directly from a spotless, stainless virgin, without agency of a human father- a pure body, untainted by intercourse with man. He the Mighty One, the Artificer of all, Himself prepared this body in the virgin as a temple for Himself, and took it for his very own, as the instrument through which he was known and in which He dwelt.”¹² The development of the doctrine continues with St. Ambrose, “Let us not be astonished that the Lord who came to save the world, began his work in Mary, so that she, by whom the salvation of all was being readied, would be the first to receive from her own child fruits.”¹³

St. Augustine, the spiritual son of St. Ambrose, incorporates the fact that Jesus received his body, the instrument of our salvation, from Mary, the second Eve. By continuing the antithetical parallelism between Eve and Mary, Augustine, like the earlier fathers, show this symmetry in the arch of

salvation. Adam and Eve are the purchasers of death, and Christ and Mary are the New Adam and New Eve who buy back life. St. Augustine (+430) incorporates this foundational idea of Mary as the New Eve from the earlier Apostolic Fathers and identifies the fittingness of the feminine sex in the redemption of man. "...so that in both sexes, feminine and masculine, the devil, being conquered, might be tormented, as he had glorified in the downfall of both." The term "conquered" that Augustine uses here, would seem to indicate a victory in a conflict, battle or war. For Augustine, since both sexes were involved in the downfall of man, it was fitting that both are involved in gaining man's freedom.¹⁴

The development of Mary's participation in the salvation of mankind because of her unique role in bringing forth the Redeemer of the world continues with Chrysostom, Chrysologus, and Cyril of Jerusalem, among others, all proclaiming that Mary has a unique and singular participation in the salvation of man. This unique role is intimately tied to her divine motherhood as it is by this divine motherhood by which she gives Jesus, the Redeemer the instrument of our salvation. Near the end of the Apostolic Father's era, liturgies of several rites, incorporate Mary's role in salvation. The Armenian liturgy of that time period specifically incorporate the title of Mary salvatrix and liberatrix.¹⁵

Liturgical celebrations incorporating Marian devotion of her nativity dating back to the fifth century in Syria and perhaps Jerusalem developed and began spreading very quickly through the Middle East Churches. Pope Innocent IV in 1243 adds this liturgy to the Church's calendar and with it a corresponding octave.¹⁶ The seventh and eighth centuries witness a continued fleshing out of the theology of Mary as the New Eve that cooperates uniquely in the redemption of man. St. Modestus of Jerusalem and then later St. Andrew of Crete (+740) writes, "In you we have been redeemed from corruption."¹⁷

St. John Damascene reiterates St. Andrew confirming that it is by Mary that man is saved. Being saved by Mary must always be understood that it is through the Blessed Virgin that the divine person of Jesus Christ became Incarnate and by his Passion Death and Resurrection, we are redeemed. The papal Magisterium and the Second Vatican Council will properly explain how Mary's participation in the Redemption of mankind in a subordinate role allows the Fathers Modestus and Andrew of Crete to say, "In you we have been redeemed from corruption." Toward the end of the Medieval period,

St. John the Geometer introduces Mary's life as being wholly united with her Son in his suffering and work of salvation.¹⁸

During the tenth century, John the Geometer systematically developed Mary's associated role in Jesus' suffering during the tenth century. He ties together Mary's divine maternity and the love associated with maternity combined with the grace that Mary singularly possessed as the one "full of grace" and so shared not only in Jesus' suffering but in his whole work of redemption as only she could.

In a French psalter of the tenth Century the term "Redemptrix" is used which describes Mary's role as the fathers of earlier centuries understood it. Mary's role is unique, subordinate creaturely participation in the salvation work of Jesus the Redeemer.¹⁹

St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century writes, "O hallowed Virgin, offer thy Son; and present anew to the Lord this fruit of thy womb. Offer for our reconciliation this Victim, holy and pleasing to God."²⁰ St. John Tauler, the fourteenth century mystic and Dominican theologian develops the thought of Mary's gift of offering her Son to include the offering of herself and her sorrows as a living victim.²¹ He writes, "...God accepted her oblation as a pleasing sacrifice, for the utility and salvation of the whole human race...so that through the merits of her sorrows, she might change God's anger into mercy."²²

In the thirteenth century, Pseudo-Albert refers to Mary as the "co-helper of the redemption which he roots in her compassion as "helpmate of Redemption at Golgotha."²³

The Fathers and doctors of the Church would expound on Bernard's development that takes Mary's role beyond the Incarnation itself, and contemplates the unique relationship that Mary had with Jesus which culminates at His definitive redemptive act on the cross; where Mary stands, in complete solidarity with her divine Son and the son who is the "beloved disciple." Because of her immaculate heart, which knew no sin, she suffered like no other mother at the cruel torturous death of her divine Son and Savior. The theology advanced in development of this doctrine is furthered, yet tethered to the Scriptural grounding in Genesis 2:18-23, by Alphonsus Salmeron, S.J. a preeminent theologian of the Council of Trent (+1585). Salmeron anchors the theology of Mary as Co-Redemptrix to Mary's solitary

unique role in the Incarnation of the Logos which unites her to Jesus and his divine mission of redemption of man. “The Mother stood near the Cross for this: that the restoration of mankind would correspond with the collapse of the world. As the fall of the world was accomplished by two, but especially man, so the salvation and redemption came about from two, but especially from Christ...”²⁴ As Eve and Adam are the full expression of humanity in the beginning, so too is Mary and Jesus the full expression of humanity as it was originally designed to be; the masculine and the feminine expression of that humanity with preternatural gifts and supernatural grace. So it is fitting that as God gives to Adam a helper, Jesus has a helper too. It must be stressed that Jesus’ redemptive act in no way required any assistance, help or supplemental action to complete the action of Redemption. He chose, in His omnipotent free will to involve the cooperation of a woman in the definitive act that saves mankind from the wreckage caused by our first parents at the suggestion of the devil.

Papal Teaching: From the Magisterium

Pius IX in *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception, echoes the doctrinal kernel that was deposited by divine revelation, and developed by the fathers as has been presented.

From these considerations, we can conclude as follows:
Mary in the work of redemption was by God’s will joined with Jesus Christ, the cause of salvation, in much the same way as Eve was joined with Adam, the cause of death.”
[17]

And in assuredly a most quotable line evoking a celebration of victory and a cause for great joy for the human race at the Redeemer and His head crushing *ezzer* writes,

“...just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot.”[14]

The theological foundation for Mary's role as Co-redemptrix is expressed in the above excerpt from *ID*. Mary's Co-redemptrix role as part of her spiritual motherhood of the mystical body of Christ is intimately tied to Mary being the mother of God the Son. Mary's Immaculate Conception, perpetual virginity and Assumption are all rooted in her divine motherhood. It is no coincidence that the first Marian Dogma was Mary the Mother of God, *theotokos*, at the council of Ephesus in 431. Mary, *theotokos*, is Christological, as it is a statement about Jesus being a Divine person. Because Mary was designated before time to be the mother of the savior, it was fitting that she would be "full of grace;" for in this she has enmity with the infernal serpent. She has no part with Satan and hence he has no power or dominion over her. She is the handmaid of the Lord and is focused on Him and His will, which she makes her own.

Leo XIII advances the support for the development of Mary's co-suffering with Jesus at Calvary for the redemption of the human race because of her unique and singular role in the Incarnation of the Savior in his encyclical on the Rosary, *Jucunda Semper*. Leo XIII confirms Mary's office of Mother, and that as she offered Jesus to the Father for the expiation of the sin of man, she offered herself and suffered a "mystical death by dying with him in her heart."²⁵

Up until this point in history, the term Co-redemptrix has not been used by any papal magisterium, although the doctrinal elements of Mary's suffering with Jesus and her unique role in association with and subordinated to Jesus in the salvation of man is clearly present as has been briefly illustrated here. It is under the pontificate of Pius X, the ground on the magisterial level is broken in the use of the term co-redemptrix. The Congregation of Sacred Rites under Pope St. Pius X, in response to a request by Father Giuseppe Lucchesi responds to Father Lucchesi, "the cultus of the Sorrowful Mother may increase and the piety of the faithful and their gratitude toward the merciful Co-Redemptrix of the human race may intensify."²⁶

Pius XII writes in *Mystici Corporis*: "Christ, says the Apostle, 'is the Head of the Body of the Church [13] and if the Church is a body, it must be an unbroken unity.'" This encyclical gives the rationale for declaring that Mary is our mother as she is the mother of the head of the Church, Jesus Christ, so she must also be the mother of the body united to the head. How Mary's spiritual motherhood is related to her specific role as Co-redemptrix is given

by Pius XII within the encyclical. Pius XII does not fail to tie Mary's spiritual motherhood to the Eve/Mary antithetical parallelism first posited by Irenaeus in the second century.

It was she, the second Eve, who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always more intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam. ...her mother's love was included in the holocaust. Thus she who, according to the flesh, was the mother of our Head, through the added title of pain and glory became, according to the Spirit, the mother of all His members. [MC 110]

In the recognition of Mary's role in salvation or the Co-redemptrix, Pius XII writes in *Ad Caeli Reginum*, "... in taking an active part in the work of salvation, was, by God's design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of "recapitulation,"[49] in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race.

Magisterial Approved Private Revelation

The Marian Age, while not discounting the development of the Apostolic Fathers, began in earnest in 1830 with the apparition of Our Lady of Grace and the instructions for the miraculous medal. In this approved apparition, Mary gives instruction to Sr. Catherine Labouré to have a medal struck. The image was initially part of the apparition on November 30, 1830. The miraculous medal depicts several Marian doctrines, beginning with the words around the face of the medal which encircle the Blessed Mother with her hands outstretched with rays of light emanating from precious stone rings on her fingers. These words, "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee" state what would be defined 24 years later as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Mary's image, surrounded by the words, is on a globe and her foot is on the head of a green serpent with yellow spots. On the back of the medal, there is a cross bar across the top with an "M" under a cross. Under the "M" are the sacred heart of Jesus surrounded with a crown of thorns and the immaculate heart of Mary depicted pierced by a sword through it. Mary standing with her foot on the head of the serpent certainly identifies her with the "woman" of Genesis 3:15.²⁷ The design of the cross over the "M" on the back of the medal with the two hearts has been interpreted to signify Mary's subordinate role as Co-redemptrix (hence the M

under the cross) in that her heart was intimately united to Christ's and suffered with him in his Passion and death.

Five hundred years earlier, St. Bridget of Sweden (+1373) reported vision of Jesus and Mary and describes Mary the Mother of Sorrows revealing that, "My Son and I redeemed the world as with one heart."²⁸

Other approved apparitions include Lourdes, Fatima, Our Lady of All Nations, and Akita, Japan. At Lourdes, the "Lady" identified herself as "the Immaculate Conception" to St. Bernadette. It is Mary, the Immaculate Conception who is perfectly at enmity with Satan and thus the unwavering helper with Jesus in the redemption of man.

Vatican II

Leading up to Vatican II there was still much debate about Mary's co-redemptive role in our salvation. Of note, and in relation to the Eve/Mary parallelisms is Father Lino Cignelli's observation, "Insofar as Co-redemptrix, she is instead the complement of the man Christ and his "*helper*" in the work of universal salvation. She represents the feminine component of the dimension or human causality of the objective redemption."²⁹

Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, the Constitution on the Church, is wholly devoted to the Blessed Mother in a thorough, although not exhaustive, treatment of her. The Dogmas of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin and holy Mother of God are noted, as are her duties as Advocate and Mediatrix. The title of Co-Redemptrix, the shoot of the seed of Divine Revelation as was first noted by the Fathers as demonstrated above, is conspicuously absent. *Lumen Gentium* notes that this title could cause a disruption to ecumenical efforts to those outside the Church; particularly Protestants. However, *Lumen Gentium* does expound the doctrine of Co-redemptrix. "She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the Temple, shared her Son's sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls." LG [61] It was unfortunate that the Council Fathers omitted the title Co-redemptrix for sake of ecumenism with "our separated brethren" LG[67] although the description of Mary's participation in Christ's redemption is delineated.

Post Vatican II

Pope St. John Paul II's motto during his pontificate was *totus tous*, totally yours, in his devotion to the Blessed Mother. He did not fail to recognize Mary's unique and cooperative role in the redemption of man. He coalesces the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the ongoing development of Mary's role in redemption as the Co-redemptrix.

In the light of the New Testament and the Church's tradition, we know that the woman announced by the *Protoevangelium* is Mary, and in "her seed" we recognize her son Jesus who triumphed over Satan's power in the Paschal Mystery. We observe that in Mary the enmity God put between the serpent and the woman is fulfilled in two ways. God's perfect ally and the Devil's enemy, she was completely removed from Satan's domination in the Immaculate Conception...In addition, associated with her Son's saving work, Mary was *fully involved in the fight* against the spirit of evil.³⁰

St. Maximilian Kolbe notes that because all the truths of Christian Dogma are intertwined together, defining that Jesus is the divine person in which the hypostatic union of the human nature and divine natures exist, the Council of Ephesus dogmatically defined Mary's divine motherhood. St. Maximilian Kolbe discusses all the truths of the Incarnation, the Redemption of Jesus and the actions of the Holy Spirit through the Immaculata, taken together as allowing us to conclude that Mary, as the mother of Jesus our savior, was made the Co-Redemptrix of the human race; as the spouse of the Holy Spirit she shares in the distribution of all graces. Kolbe reiterates what the early Church Fathers discussed regarding "Eve bringing the ruin of man by her own free actions and Mary by her own free actions took part in the reparation of the human race."³¹

Conclusion

Mary is the "Woman" of Genesis 3:15 who crushed the head of the serpent and did so, not by her own power, but only by the power of God. "The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman." (Judith 13:15) Originally, prior to the fall, Eve was the helpmate fit for Adam. But where Eve consented to the word of the serpent and brought about sin and death, Mary conceived the Word and brought forth the redeemer of humanity. The Apostolic Fathers describe the antithetical parallelism between Eve and Mary; the first

shoot of the kernel of divine revelation. As the Church “pondered these things in her heart” the development of the “woman” at enmity with the serpent began to blossom. In the light of definitive revelation of Jesus Christ, God the Son, born of a woman in time, (Gal.4:4) the grounding of all Marian Dogmas is established in Mary as *theotokos*. Mary’s co-redemptive role in the salvation of man is further developed through time by St. Andrew of Crete, St. John Damascene, Pseudo-Albert, St. Bernard, and Arnold of Chartres. Beginning with Pius IX, and in *Ineffibilis Deus*, the Marian age is confirmed to have begun in earnest with the apparitions of Our Lady of Grace. Pope Pius XII pronounces Mary’s spiritual motherhood of us all united in Christ. Maximilian Kolbe’s insight into the unity of the “uncreated eternal conception” and the created Immaculate Conception, advances the doctrinal understanding of Mary’s unique relationship of the Holy Spirit by which the Incarnation took place and the graces of the redemption are obtained and dispensed. St. John Paul II’s expounding on the “woman fully involved in the fight” highlights Mary’s singularly unique role as the *exer* of the New Adam which reaffirms the Apostolic Fathers’ Eve/Mary antithetical parallelism. The blossom has now become the fruit of the doctrine of Mary as spiritual mother of the mystical body of Christ who fulfills her role as the Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and the Advocate of humanity. She is God’s masterpiece of creation and graciously our mother.

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Mater Misericordiae:

The Representation of the Miracles of the Virgin in the Queen Mary Psalter, the Taymouth Hours, the Smithfield Decretals, and the Carew-Poyntz Hours.

ISABELLE OSTERAG

Prior to the twelfth century in Western Europe, miraculous stories about the saints omitted stories of Marian miracles.¹⁷² This absence can be explained considering the association of physical remains of saints with the performance of miracles. A crucial shift in the creation of compilations of miracles of the Virgin Mary in England occurred in the first half of the twelfth century due to the influence of the monastic writers Anselm, Dominic of Evesham, and William of Malmesbury. Thus, Marian miracles represented the expression of a new form of medieval piety and devotion wherein Mary's intercession rather than veneration of relics became the central focus.

¹⁷²Southern, "The English origins of the 'Miracles of the Virgin,'" 236.

Particularly lacking in the study of the miracles of the Virgin Mary is an examination of their representations within illuminated books.¹⁷³ Devotional books are a valuable resource to better understand the nature and development of medieval Marian devotion because they provide the greatest number of surviving privately owned holy images.¹⁷⁴ These books condense elements of Marian devotion into a visual image for the laity. Thus, Marian miracles and their depictions reflect devotional practices. In this essay I aim to establish the purpose and permutation of these stories through a close examination of the representation of these miracles in four fourteenth-century English books: the Queen Mary Psalter, the Taymouth Hours, the Smithfield Decretals, and the Carew-Poyntz Hours. The visual representations of Marian miracles in these four case studies reveal the contrasting purposes of these stories. Furthermore, the context of each book contributes to how these miracle stories were interpreted. Ultimately, these contexts indicate the broader purpose of such miracles to establish Mary's tangible mercy that transcends simple folklore.

Miracles of the Virgin Mary in Text and Image:

Previous scholarship is concerned mainly with the textual tradition of medieval Marian miracle stories. The main point of contention among this scholarship is centered on the origin and reception of these texts for either a select group or the common laity. In the introduction to her book *The Miracles of Our Lady Saint Mary*, Evelyn Underhill attributed the origin and purpose of Marian miracles as myths conceived of in monasteries for common people.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the medieval devotional practices of the laity are particularly difficult to closely examine given the lack of extensive written and physical evidence. Thus, much of our understanding of medieval Christianity relies on the information preserved in monastic communities. R.W. Southern particularly advocated for the spread of monastic ideas and practices concerning Marian devotion to secular society in his essay titled "The English Origins of the Miracles of the Virgin."¹⁷⁶ Southern describes how the travels of the twelfth

¹⁷³ See Emily Howe, Henrietta McBurney, and William Waldegrave. *Wall Paintings of Eton* (London: Scala, 2012).

¹⁷⁴ Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular piety and art in the late Middle Ages: image worship and idolatry in England 1350-1500* (New York: Macmillan, 2002), 155.

¹⁷⁵ Evelyn Underhill, *The Miracles of Our Lady Saint Mary: Brought Out of Divers Tongues and Newly Set Forth in English* (Boston: EP Dutton & Company, 1906), xiv.

¹⁷⁶ Southern, "The English origins of the 'Miracles of the Virgin,'" 176.

century abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, Anselm, allowed him to collect a widespread compilation of miracle stories.¹⁷⁷ However, Southern focuses on the English association with Marian devotion rather than noting the widespread origins of the earliest miracle stories themselves.¹⁷⁸

Prior to the twelfth century England was characterized by a strong culture of Marian devotion. Southern argues that this culture was the ideal environment for the generation of the first miracle compilations by Anslem, Dominic of Evesham, and William of Malmesbury. However, Adrienne Boyarin challenges Southern's argument for the English origins of Marian miracles in her book, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends*. Boyarin examines what distinguishes English examples from others.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, she aims to address the time gap noted by Peter Whiteford in his book, *The myracles of oure lady*, between the emergence of Latin collections of these miracles and the later vernacular individual miracle stories.¹⁸⁰ Unlike previous scholarship, she examines the miracles themselves as textual examples rather than simple folklore or myth. However, she neglects the visual representations of these miracles in later Psalters and Books of Hours. In this essay I will examine the representation of Marian miracles within such texts in order to provide deeper insight into the nature of lay Marian devotion. Ultimately, this approach will lead to a more holistic

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 184, 199, 205-16. J.C. Jennings notes the origins of the earliest fourth and sixth century Marian miracles in the Middle Eastern monasteries in his 1968 article. J.C. Jennings, "The origins of the" Elements series" of the Miracles of the Virgin", *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, Volume 6 (1968): 84-93.

¹⁷⁸ For more information on English Marian devotion see Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁷⁹ Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 1-7.

¹⁸⁰ These individual stories were more widespread in continental Europe. Miracles in Middle English were most often *exempla* included in sermons. Compilations of Marian miracles became more widespread in the later twelfth century. Perhaps most notable of these continental compilations is Alfonso X's collection of over 420 songs of miracles of the Virgin Mary. Kathleen Kulp-Hill, *Songs of holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: a translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), xix-xxvi; Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends*, 15; Peter Whiteford, *The myracles of oure lady: ed.* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1990), 20-23.

understanding of the purpose of English Marian miracle cycles to promote essential aspects of devotional practices.

Beginning in the thirteenth century there was a notable increase in the number of private devotional books such as Psalters and Books of Hours.¹⁸¹ The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 encouraged parish clergy to better address the spiritual needs of lay parishioners.¹⁸² As a result, a new market for devotional books was created as more lay people sought to actively engage with their faith. The rise in popularity of these individual books of prayer indicates that practices such as the recitation of the daily office were no longer confined to the clergy.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the flexible and personalized nature of the content of Books of Hours also appealed to the lay faithful, who could select to include a variety of prayers and offices.¹⁸⁴ Notably, Books of Hours emphasized the Blessed Virgin Mary and often contained the Office of Mary, which itself was recited in monastic houses across Europe by the early twelfth century.¹⁸⁵

The growing popularity of privately owned devotional objects such as Psalters and Books of Hours can be seen in the burgeoning English book economy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁸⁶ Lay commissioning of such texts rose about sixty percent in the period between 1190 and 1385.¹⁸⁷ In order to support this economy, a guild of book artisans organized in London during this era. It is within this group of artisans that the Queen Mary Psalter (1310-20), Taymouth Hours (1325-1335), Smithfield Decretals (1330-40), and Carew-Poyntz (1350-1360) are all believed to have been

¹⁸¹Charity Scott-Stokes, *Women's Books of Hours in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 15; Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 99-100.

¹⁸² Scott-Stokes, *Women's Books of Hours in Medieval England*, 16.

¹⁸³ The daily office marked the hours of the day in monastic houses with intervals of prayer. Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 5-6.

¹⁸⁴K. Smith, *Art, identity and devotion in fourteenth-century England: Three women and their books of hours* (London: British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁸⁵The earliest surviving examples of the Office of Mary come from eleventh century England. *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸⁶ Kamerick, *Popular piety and art in the late Middle Ages*, 155.

¹⁸⁷ Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 99.

decorated and illuminated in London.¹⁸⁸ While the exact provenance of each of these texts is difficult to determine, the content of their bas-de-page Marian miracle illuminations leaves little doubt of a shared decorative and visual culture.

Examining the provenance of these books enables a better understanding of their purpose and in turn that of the miracle depictions. Because of their high-quality parchment and illumination, both the Queen Mary Psalter and the Taymouth Hours are believed to have been created for a member of the royal court.¹⁸⁹ Which member precisely is difficult to determine given the tumultuous period of the early thirteenth century. During this period there were two kings and several royal women.¹⁹⁰ The Queen Mary Psalter has been associated with Edward II, Isabelle of France, Edward III, and Thomas, Earl of Lancaster.¹⁹¹ Most recently, the Taymouth Hours was attributed to Princess Eleanor of Woodstock.¹⁹² In contrast to these other books, the Carew-Poyntz Hours is thought to have been created for an aristocratic client.¹⁹³ Despite the difficulty in attributing ownership, the purpose of these books can be better understood in the economic context of devotional books as wedding gifts. Devotional books were a part of the fourteenth century market for marginalia as they were often given as wedding gifts.¹⁹⁴ Decorating margins was expensive. The high cost incurred by decorating margins suggests that the chosen illuminated images were not the result of artistic creativity, but that of conscious investment and planning. Thus, the inclusion of Marian miracle imagery within these texts was intentional.

¹⁸⁸ Sandler's reference numbers for these manuscripts are the following: Queen Mary Psalter no.56, Taymouth Hours no.98, Smithfield Decretals no.101, Carew-Poyntz Hours no. 130. Lucy Freeman Sandler, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Gothic Manuscripts, 1285-1385* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 1986), 64-66, 107-108, 111-112.

¹⁸⁹ Anne Rudloff Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter: A Study of Affect and Audience*. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2001), 1-14.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, *Art, identity and devotion in fourteenth-century England*, 9.

¹⁹¹ Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter*, 5.

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¹⁹³ Emily N. Savage, "The Manuscript as a Work-in-Progress: Creativity and Re-Creation in the Carew-Poyntz Hours," *The Mediaeval Journal* 6, no. 2 (2016): 111-135.

¹⁹⁴ Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 299-301.

All four of these texts have been selected because of their shared inclusion of bas-de-page pictorial narratives. The Smithfield Decretals differs from the other three examples because it is a collection of papal decrees and constitutions concerning canon law. However, the decoration of the Decretals has more in common with devotional books.¹⁹⁵ The dissonance between the inclusion of a variety of bas-de-page imagery within a law book has been of great interest to scholarship. In her essay "A Pictorial Ex-Libris in the Smithfield Decretals", Alixe Bovey concluded that the Decretals was owned by the Batayle family based on the repeated heraldry depicted throughout the marginalia. However, she failed to fully investigate the importance of the manuscript's provenance with St. Bartholomew's in London. The location of this priory was close to the center of book production in London during the fourteenth century.¹⁹⁶ Given this proximity, the illuminators commissioned to decorate the Smithfield Decretals would have been accustomed to decorating psalters and books of hours. All four books contain bas-de-page scenes of the Marian miracles. The Queen Mary Psalter depicts thirty-five Miracles of the Virgin, which is the largest number of miracles in the three books. Both the Teymouth Hours and the Smithfield Decretals depict eleven miracles, while the Carew-Poyntz Hours depicts thirteen miracles.¹⁹⁷ Despite the shared subject matter of Marian miracles, the contexts of each of these texts indicates their varying purpose and reception.

Queen Mary Psalter: The Power of Prayer

The placement of the miracles of the Virgin in the Queen Mary Psalter is significant because it reflects the devotional nature of these texts and the images for the purpose of prayer. Decoration in psalters organized the groupings of psalms. The miracle depictions correspond with psalms traditionally associated with two forms of Marian devotion. Firstly, the miracles accompany the psalms prayed for Saturday Matins and Lauds.¹⁹⁸ Given the monastic tradition of a celebrating a votive mass to Mary on Saturday, the placement of these depictions on the office for the same day

¹⁹⁵ Otto Pächt, "A Giottesque episode in English mediaeval art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, no. 6 (1943): 56.

¹⁹⁶ Alixe Bovey, "A Pictorial Ex Libris in the Smithfield Decretals: John Batayle, Canon of St Bartholomew's, and his Illuminated Law Book," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700: Decoration and Illustration in Medieval English Manuscripts* (2002): 64.

¹⁹⁷ Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter*, 223-4.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

indicates how Marian devotional practices and the miracles themselves intersected.¹⁹⁹ Secondly, images of the intercessory power of Mary are placed on the pages with important psalms for the Office of the Virgin. Psalms 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, and 99 were all options for different parts of the Office throughout the week.²⁰⁰ Thus, in reciting the Office of the Virgin, the owner of this text could also gaze upon the following visual representations of Mary as a merciful intercessor:

Miracle	Folio Number
Theophilus	204v-205
Drowning sacristan	205v
Ebbo the thief	206
Deceased nun	206v
The drunk monk	207
Jewish boy of Bourges	207v-208
Pregnant abbess	208v-209
The cleric and the flower	209v-210
The Virgin's reward	210v
Painting of an image	211
Healed woodcutter	211v
The charitable pauper	212
Priest who only knew the mass of the Virgin	212v-213
Drowning monk	213v
Unknown miracle story	214
A monk of St. Peter's at Cologne	214v
King Louis VII	215
The stained chasuble	215v-216
The legend of Amoras	216v-217
The chaste Empress	217v-218
The nun who ran away with a knight	218v-219
Priest saved by the Virgin after confession	219v
Drowning girl	220
Monk cured of mouth cancer	220v-221v
St. Mercury	222-223
Devoted clerk of Pisa	223v-224
The immersed pilgrim	224v
Eulalia, a nun of Shaftesbury	222v-226
St. Bon, bishop of Clermont	226v-227
The priest who used magic to seduce a maiden	227v-228
St. Dunstan and the Virgin's Choir	228v-229
The Image of the Christ Child that was Held for Ransom	229v-230
The Monk who was Healed by the Virgin's Milk	230v-231
The Doubting Monk	231v-232

¹⁹⁹ The celebration of a Marian mass on Saturdays was introduced in the Regularis Concordia in the late tenth century, which reformed Benedictine practices in England. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 3.

²⁰⁰ The psalms and antiphons used for the Office varied based according to feasts and differing regional traditions. For a detailed examination of the most common form of the Office see Rachel Fulton Brown, *Mary and the Art of Prayer: The Hours of the Virgin in Medieval Christian Life and Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 4.

Analyzing the depiction of the story of Theophilus as the first Marian miracle in the Queen Mary Psalter demonstrates the underlying characteristics of such narratives. According to this story, Theophilus, made a pact with the devil to assume a higher clerical position before repenting and receiving forgiveness by invoking Mary's intercession.²⁰¹ The miracle associated with Theophilus did not originate in England, but its popularity impacted the creation of the Marian miracle as a genre.²⁰² The earliest English compilations can be described as addenda to this story.²⁰³ Two core elements of Marian miracles can be found in this story. First, Theophilus can be described as the archetype of the sinner in a Marian miracle story. He sins grievously but is saved because of his supplication and invocation of the intercession of the Virgin. Secondly, Mary's mercy and authority are demonstrated in her ability to act as a legal advocate. Within the bas-de-page scenes Theophilus is depicted praying to Mary in front of her statue (Figure 1). The subsequent folio depicts Mary confronting the devil to revoke this pact (Figure 2). Thus, the reader is presented with a visual example of the power of invoking Mary's intercession.

Examining the depictions of the first miracle of Theophilus highlights how context indicates varying interpretations of a single miracle. The Smithfield Decretals, Taymouth Hours, and the Carew-Poyntz Hours all include a depiction of the story of Theophilus. In all three of these devotional books the narrative begins with the scene of the devil giving the charter to Theophilus (Figures 3 and 4). The Decretals expand this narrative by including depictions of the presentation of a charter to the bishop to advance Theophilus' position (Figure 5). The inclusion of this narrative as the first Marian miracle depicted in the Decretals has added significance given the purpose of this text as a lawbook. The miracle reflects different aspects of Marian devotion based upon their physical context within each book. Thus, its inclusion exemplifies the second core element of Marian devotion. Mary is presented as a significant legal advocate for sinners in her nullification of

²⁰¹ Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 42-7.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰³ Textual sources of this miracle story be found in Aelfric's first series of homilies and Dominic of Evesham and William of Malmesbury's compilations. *Ibid.*, 47, 62-74.

the contract between Theophilus and the devil. In comparison, the inclusion of this miracle in the devotional texts of the Queen Mary Psalter, the Taymouth Hours, and the Carew-Poyntz Hours serves as a visual example of the importance of prayer and devotion by presenting evidence of Mary's ability to act as a powerful intercessor.

Taymouth Hours: Mary as Intercessor for the Deceased

Within the Taymouth Hours the placement of the Miracles of the Virgin with the Office of the Dead, which was said for the repose of souls, emphasizes Mary's mercy towards souls. Mary's intercession as souls pass from life to life after death is the thematic focus given this textual context. The miracles are organized as follows:

Miracle	Folio Number
The Oxford Scholar	151
Drowning sacristan and laywoman	151v-152v
Leprous cleric	153
St. Mercury	153v-154
Possessed woman	154v
Healed woodcutter	156
Pregnant Abbess	156v-158
Theophilus	158v-160v
The cleric and the flower	161-161v
The legend of Amoras	162-164
Pope Leo	164v
Man and his wife brought back to life	165-166
Rescued noblewoman	166v
Hermit and the Virgin	167
Adulterous monk or the Devil in the Stocks	167v-171
Monks who abandoned their monastery	171v-174v
Possessed Girl	175
Dying Clerk	179

The placement of the miracles and the imagery itself visually underscore Mary's role as a primary intercessor for souls. The miniature beginning this office depicts Mary interceding on behalf of a dying man (Figure 6). This scene can be traced to the story generally titled 'Oxford Scholar lead to

Heaven'.²⁰⁴ In this miracle the scholar has a vision of Mary and the devil at the scales of justice. This vision results in the scholar's confession of and contrition for his sins. In the Taymouth miniature, Mary is depicted visually and metaphorically beside the soul. The Virgin leans outward from behind the column supporting the architectural frame of the scene to aid the soul as she raises her hand in a blessing. Thus, the reader would have been reminded of Mary's intercession for the dead.

The differences in the miracles once again demonstrate the potential for these stories to be permuted and portrayed according to various aspects of Marian devotion. In the Smithfield Decretals the depiction of Mary's mercy towards souls is focused on her role in administering justice. Thus, Mary's intercession at the scales is more prevalent in this text than the others. The scales of justice appear both at the bedside of the deceased on folio 266v (Figure 7) and on the subsequent folio (Figure 8). This depiction resembles the vision of the Oxford scholar with Mary visibly beside the dead. However, the subject of Mary's mercy is not a scholar, but a king. The depiction of the weighing of souls in the Decretals and the Taymouth Hours implements the same visual language to convey Mary's justice and mercy. While the Decretals scene does not depict a precise miracle narrative it repeats the imagery of the scales in order to depict the justice of Mary's mercy. In comparison, the focus on the power of intercessory prayer within the Queen Mary Psalter results in the depiction of Mary's mercy towards souls based on the story of the monk of St. Peter's in Cologne. Devils seize a monk's soul because he died in a state of presumed mortal sin. St. Peter appeals unsuccessfully on behalf of the soul, and thus calls on the intercession of the Virgin Mary. [Note: I think "presumed" mortal sin is needed because it is Catholic doctrine that souls who die in actual mortal sin "go into hell immediately after death" (Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus*, Jan. 29, 1336: Denz.-H, 1002; cf. CCC, 393, 1022). The other possibility is to keep the text as is but add a footnote explaining that the image in figure 9 is not in complete accord with Catholic doctrine. Not even the intercession of Mary can liberate a soul from hell] Mary's relationship as the Mother of God establishes her as the ultimate intercessor. In the bas-de-page depiction, this narrative is condensed into a single image (Figure 9). The scales of justice are absent. Rather the focus of this image is the power of Mary's intercession over that of St. Peter, who stands nearby.

²⁰⁴ This miracle can be found in the 15th century miscellany British Library MS Additional 37049 and in the South English Legendary. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 32-33, 17-55, 194.

Thus, the visual elements implemented to depict textual miracles can be permuted in order to create new variations on the same themes of Marian devotion.

Smithfield Decretals: Mary as Legal Advocate

My analysis of the miracle stories depicted in the Decretals focuses on law and justice. A central theme of all the Marian miracles depicted within the Decretals is Mary's ability to enact justice. The miracles included are interspersed with other images and are organized as follows:

Miracle	Folio Number
Theophilus	166-172v
Adulterous nun	181-184
Adulterous monk or Devil in the stocks	185-191v
Drowning nun	192-192v
Pope Leo	193-195v, 197v-198v
Healed woodcutter	196-196v
Painting of an image	209-210
Jewish boy of Bourges	211-213
St. Mercury	214v-216v
Clerk of Chartres	221-225v
Drowning sacristan	226-227
Mary saving the soul of a king	226-268

The inclusion of these depictions of Marian miracles in a law book can be better understood by examining the miracle story of the drowned sacristan. This story can be found in the earliest English compilations of Marian miracles.²⁰⁵ An adulterous sacristan falls off a bridge and drowns on the way to meet his mistress. He prays for Mary's intercession as he perishes, and thus Mary saves his soul. All four books contain bas-de-page variations of this miracle.

²⁰⁵The textual sources for this narrative can be found in MS BL Additional 37049. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 190; Southern, "The English origins of the 'Miracles of the Virgin,'" 183.

The story is condensed into one or two bas-de-page scenes in the books. The bas-de-page depiction in the Queen Mary Psalter depicts two demons drowning a sacristan and Mary interceding. The other books expand on this story to include scenes of Mary interceding on behalf of other individuals. In the Taymouth Hours Mary rescues both a monk and a laywoman from a devil attempting to drown them. The Taymouth images depict the devil fleeing the scene as Mary extends her hand over the bridge to intercede on behalf of the monk and the woman (Figures 10 and 11). The narrative is extended over additional folios in the Smithfield Decretals and differs considerably in two ways. First, the devil is depicted holding a nun rather than a laywoman in the water over a bridge (Figure 12). The depiction of the drowning monk is not found directly beside that of the woman, but rather is a number of folios away (Figure 13). The simplification of the narrative into one where demons are visually responsible for drowning the individual underscores Mary's intercessory power. The variation of these depictions within the Decretals from both the text itself and from the other books demonstrates the permuted quality of Marian miracles. The role of Mary as a just intercessor can be depicted with a variety of individuals, further reflecting the appeal of Marian devotion.

The inclusion of Marian miracles in the bas-de-page scenes of the Smithfield Decretals can be better understood by examining the text of the original miracle of the drowned sacristan. According to the British Library MS Additional 37049 narrative of the drowned sacristan, Mary presents a legal argument for the return of his soul to her. Since the sacristan was praying to her at the time of his death, he was doing her work and thus the demons have stolen what is rightfully hers. Thus, this miracle story reinforces Mary's role as the Mirror of Justice and mediator of judgment. While the bas-de-page scenes of this miracle fail to represent this textual argument, its inclusion demonstrates the ability for these images to be representative of a larger known narrative. Therefore, given the tradition of Mary's association with justice within miracle texts, it follows that these stories would appear in a book of law.

Carew-Poyntz Hours: Mary as Help of Christians

Within the Carew-Poyntz Hours the Marian miracles can be interpreted with the themes of mercy and penance based on their placement in the bas-de-page scenes for the penitential psalms. This grouping traditionally consisted of psalms 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142 to be used for reflection and

repentance of sin.²⁰⁶ The juxtaposition of the miracles of Mary with these psalms reinforces devotion to Mary as the Mother of Mercy and help of sinners. The miracle stories visually depict Mary's motherly mercy and royal power. The miracles are organized as follows:

Miracle	Folio Number
St. Mercury	152v-154
Dying clerk	154v-155
Pope Leo	155v-158
The Cleric and the flower	158v-159
Clerk of Chartres	159v-165v
Pregnant Abbess	166-167
Adulterous monk	167v-171
Healed woodcutter	172
The legend of Amoras	172v-175
Theophilus	175v-181v
Painting of an image	182-182v
The Bleeding Host	183v-188
Jewish boy of Bourges	188v-189

Analyzing the first miracle depicted of Mary raising St. Mercury from the dead within the context of the penitential psalms, aids in understanding devotion to Mary as a source of mercy. These scenes are part of the larger story of Julian the Apostate.²⁰⁷ Julian was a Roman emperor who violently persecuted Christians. As a result of St. Basil's invocation of Mary's intercession, St. Mercury is raised from the dead in order to defeat Julian in battle. Thus, the Christian faithful are aided through the mercy of the Queen of Heaven. The juxtaposition of this imagery with the penitential psalms reinforces God's mercy as the source of Marian intercession. Line 3 of Psalm 6 calls on the Lord for mercy, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. And my soul is troubled exceedingly: but thou, O Lord, how long? Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver

²⁰⁷ This story is found in the first group of Aelfric's homilies, MS BL Royal 18 B. XXIII, and Dominic of Evesham and William of Malmesbury's miracle compilations. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 192.

my soul: O save me for thy mercy's sake.²⁰⁸ Mary's role as a merciful intercessor is reinforced by depictions of her intercession with an accompanying text calling on God's mercy. In reflecting on the penitential psalms, the reader could gaze upon images of evidence of God's mercy through Mary's intercession on behalf of sinners in miracle stories. Both the psalms and the accompanying miracle bas-de-page scenes encourage reflection on Mary as a powerful intercessor to God's mercy.

Comparing the depictions of St. Mercury in the Carew-Poyntz Hours, the Queen Mary Psalter, the Taymouth Hours, and the Smithfield Decretals reveals how the same miracle can be permuted in varying cycles to underscore different aspects of Mary's mercy. St. Anselm's prayers to Mary often invoke her as a source of mercy: 'What I want to ask you, Lady, is that by a glance from your mercy you will cure the sickness and ulcers of my sins.'²⁰⁹ The amount of the original story depicted in each of these examples indicates differing focuses. In the Carew-Poyntz, the Queen Mary Psalter, and the Decretals images the Virgin Mary intercedes on behalf of St. Mercury and on the following folios he is depicted fighting an adversary, thus highlighting Mary's active role in helping the faithful (Figures 14, 15, 16, and 17). The inclusion of these scenes in the Carew-Poyntz Hours visually demonstrates the result of Mary's intercession and God's mercy. The Psalter includes a depiction of St. Basil praying for the intercession of the Virgin Mary, thus reinforcing the power of intercessory prayer (Figure 18). The depiction in the Taymouth Hours only depicts the Virgin Mary's intercession as St. Mercury is raised from the dead (Figure 19). This miracle is followed by a depiction of Mary exorcising a demon from a woman (Figure 20). The context of the law within the Decretals results in understanding this story as a depiction of proper justice for the persecuted. Thus, the context of each of these texts imbues the same miracle story with different meaning.

²⁰⁸ Douay-Rheims Online Bible Translation.

²⁰⁹ Benedicta Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion* (London: Penguin Classics, 1973), 108.

Reiteration and Amplification:

In Geoffrey of Vinsauf's thirteenth century work titled *Poetria Nova*, the importance of repetition with variation in rhetorical pedagogy is both exemplified and espoused.²¹⁰ The impact of this treatise on textual composition was widespread.²¹¹ The use of reiteration to develop meaning and to underscore themes is perhaps best exemplified in the vast number of miracles of the Virgin Mary. The themes of Mary's mercy and royal power are at the center of all these stories. Analysis of the common themes within the textual tradition of Marian miracles establishes the central elements and themes later transmitted to their visual depictions.

In the introduction to his study on the later fifteenth century English vernacular compilation of Marian miracles, Peter Whiteford argues that authors of these texts place emphasis on the motherly mercy and royal power of Mary.²¹² The importance of Mary's motherhood is encapsulated in one of St. Anselm's prayers to her: 'So the accused flees from the just God to the good mother of the merciful God. The accused finds refuge from the mother he has offended in the good son of the kind mother.'²¹³ Thus, the sinner can be forgiven by the mercy of Mary, which is given to her because of her role as the Mother of God. Both the motherly mercy and royal power of Mary are the basis for Marian miracles because they are essential to her ability to intercede on behalf of sinners. These themes are important in understanding the transmission of these textual miracles to their visual representations. While the differing miracles speak to their variety, the shared depictions illuminate the common themes of Mary's motherly mercy and royal power. The shared miracles found in at least two of the books are the following:

²¹⁰ Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom commentaries: teaching the Poetria nova across medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), 82-84.

²¹¹ Ibid., 21-26.

²¹² Whiteford, *The miracles of our lady*, 15.

²¹³ Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, 112.

Miracle	Queen Mary Psalter	Taymouth Hours	Smithfield Decretals	Carew-Poyntz Hours
Theophilus	204v-205	158v-160v	166-172v	175v-181v
Healed Woodcutter	211v	156	196-196v	172
St. Mercury	222-223	154	214v-216v	152v-154
Pregnant Abbess	208v-209	156v-158		166-167
Painting of an Image	211		209-210	182-182v
Jewish boy of Bourges	207v-208		211-213	188v-189
Pope Leo		164v	193-195v, 197v-198v	155v-158
Amoras	216v-217	163v-164		172v-175
The Cleric and the Flower	209v-210	161		158v-159
Adulterous Monk		167v-171	185-191v	167v-171
Drowning Sacristan	213v	152	226-227	
Clerk of Chartres			221-225v	159v-165v

These miracle stories can all be traced to textual sources, both early Latin miracle compilations and later Middle English examples. Their inclusion indicates a set program of miracle stories that were either the most well-known or the most popular. All four contain depictions of the story of Theophilus, the healed woodcutter, and St. Mercury. The Carew-Poyntz Hours and the Smithfield Decretals share the most miracles. The similarities in the depictions of these stories is the result of their shared textual sources and reflects their shared origins in the fourteenth century London book market. Examining depictions of the same miracle also reveals the effect of the both the original narrative and the accompanying text on visual imagery. Analysis of the story of the 'Jewish Boy of Bourges' illuminates how the textual origins of these miracles impact their visual representation. This story can be traced to the sixth century *Historia ecclesiastica* of Evagrius Scholasticus of Antioch and was spread throughout Europe in Gregory of Tours' version.²¹⁴ According to this text, the boy's own mother cannot save him from being thrown in the oven by his father for receiving the Eucharist by

²¹⁴ The story can be found in Dominic of Evesham and William of Malmesbury's miracle compilations as well as in the South English Legendary. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 64-5, 191.

accident, but he is unharmed once the flames subside. He recounts that the Virgin Mary covered him with her cloak and thus protected him from the fire. The bas-de-page images depicting this story in the Queen Mary Psalter, the Decretals, and in the Carew-Poyntz Hours, condense the textual narrative into one or two scenes.

Despite the condensed narrative, the central eucharistic symbolism is transmitted from text to image. The bas-de-page scene on folio 207v in the Queen Mary Psalter begins the miracle story of the 'Jewish boy of Bourges' with a depiction of the boy receiving the Eucharist (Figure 21). The story is imbued with eucharistic symbolism. After eating the Communion bread, the boy himself becomes what he has consumed. Just as the bread in the Eucharist is baked to take on its final form, so too is the boy baked in the fires of the oven to become a Christian (Figure 22). In the Smithfield Decretals and Carew-Poyntz Hours the boy is depicted about the size of a loaf of bread (Figures 23 and 24). All of these scenes depict the Virgin Mary standing between the oven and the father to prevent the child from being harmed (Figures 22, 24, and 25). Of particular note is the significance of the eucharistic symbolism conveyed in the imagery with the placement of Mary next to the oven in all of the illustrations. As the Mother of God, Mary carrying the Christ-child within her womb evokes the baking of the bread in the oven. Thus, the illumination itself underscores Mary's role as the Mother of God and the Eucharist visually in a way the miracle text cannot.

The combination of text and image within three of these books extends the devotional purpose of these miracles. This is exemplified in analysis of the accompanying psalm with the depiction of the 'Jewish Boy of Bourges' in the Queen Mary Psalter. This depiction corresponds with the beginning of psalm 95, which was one of the psalms used to begin the Office of the Virgin at Matins.²¹⁵ Given the increased devotional practices of this period, it can be inferred that this placement was intentional. Either the patron, their spiritual director, or artist would have been aware of the connection between psalm 95 and the Office of the Virgin. Considering the eucharistic symbolism of the bas-de-page scene, the psalm can be interpreted as one of praise for the gift of salvation made possible in Mary's bearing of Jesus Christ. Psalm 95 begins with the following lines: 'Sing ye to the Lord and bless his name: shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the Gentiles: his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and exceedingly to be

²¹⁵ Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 4.

praised.²¹⁶ Thus, the faithful not only sing songs of thanksgiving for Mary as a merciful and powerful intercessor, but also in order to thank her for her role as the Mother of God. The juxtaposition of this psalm of praise with the Marian miracle of the 'Jewish boy of Bourges' reinforces the purpose of these non-Biblical stories.

The incorporation of these images into these texts can be better understood by examining the depiction of actual visual objects such as statues. David Freedberg's *The Power of Images* sought to analyze the conjunction between reality itself and the reality of an art object.²¹⁷ Within the Christian tradition art has what Freedberg describes as 'living potentiality'.²¹⁸ Thus, statues and paintings can become the figure they represent. Most commonly these images are of a crucifix or of the Virgin Mary.²¹⁹ Such an example can be found in the Queen Mary Psalter's depiction of King Louis VII seeing victims healed by the Virgin in the cathedral of Soissons (Figure 26). This story can be traced to earlier thirteenth century Marian miracle compilations.²²⁰ The depiction thereof is crucial to our understanding of the purpose of the depiction of Marian miracles because it embodies an eyewitness. Louis kneels in front of an altar with a statue to the Virgin Mary, where a priest is saying mass. His head is completely turned around to see the Virgin Mary blessing three men who kneel before her. The liturgical form of the mass and the apparition of the Virgin occur at the same time. Thus, time, space, heaven, and earth are all condensed into a single image. Both the statue and actual figure of the Virgin Mary are mirror images. Thus, while the statue does not become the Virgin Mary herself, it acts as a visual representation of her. In praying in front of the statue, Louis VII is praying for the intercession of the Virgin Mary. This juxtaposition visually represents the power of prayer and devotion in front of religious images.

The representation of Marian miracles within Psalters and Books of Hours served to both complement and support devotional practices. Depictions of

²¹⁶ Douay-Rheims Online Bible Translation.

²¹⁷ David Freedberg. *The power of images: Studies in the history and theory of response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 436- 439.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 297.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 307.

²²⁰ The story can be found in British Museum Royal 6B.X. Adolfo Mussafia. *Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden*. (Wien: In Commission bei F. Tempsky, 1888), 10-11.

the power of intercessory prayer to the Virgin Mary would have served as visual evidence and encouragement to the owners of these books. The Queen Mary Psalter, Taymouth Hours, Smithfield Decretals, and the Carew-Poyntz Hours implement both similar and different depictions of these miracles in order to exemplify particular aspects of Marian intercession. All of the images within these books depict Mary as an active participant in rescuing individuals from a variety of occurrences. However, the placement and distillation of specific miracles reveals how their reiteration can be used to highlight a variety of different aspects of Marian intercession. Their inclusion adds complexity to these miracle stories. Furthermore, the varying placement of the scenes within the texts themselves indicates the extension and transmission of monastic Marian devotional practices to those of the laity. Decorating a devotional text was expensive given the amount of labor it required to draw on vellum by hand.²²¹ Thus, the decoration itself cannot be dismissed as unimportant. By reexamining Marian miracles within an intended devotional setting, the nature of medieval devotion to the Virgin Mary can be more fully understood.

The variety and commonalities of the miracles within these examples demonstrates their appeal to a wide audience and their ability to be constructed based upon individual preference. The Queen Mary Psalter highlights the importance of intercessory prayer to the Virgin Mary. Within the Taymouth Hours, Mary's role as intercessor for the dead is the central focus. The context of the Decretals reinforces the depictions of Mary as a source of justice. The Carew-Poyntz hours images exemplify Mary's mercy. Their variety attests to the ability of these core elements of Marian devotion to be creatively reimagined and multiplied. As Southern noted the world of the miracle stories of Mary, 'is one of unbounded, unbridled imagination. Time and place lose all significance...Like the rain this protective power of the Virgin falls on the just and unjust alike...in a word the stories are popular and speak to the common man wherever he might be.'²²² The bas-de-page depictions of the Miracles of the Virgin Mary highlight another aspect of their widespread reception. Ultimately, examining the miracles within these contexts in turn deepens our understanding of the narratives as more than merely tales, but as a part of a broader Marian devotional culture.

²²¹ Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 11.

²²² Southern, "The English origins of the 'Miracles of the Virgin,'" 248-50.

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Illustrations:



Figure 1 Theophilus in front of a statute of the Virgin Mary, Queen Mary Psalter, f. 204v



Figure 2 Mary revoking the Devil's agreement with Theophilus, Queen Mary Psalter, f. 205



Figure 3 Theophilus making a deal with the devil, Smithfield Decretals, f. 167



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Figure 5 Charter presented to a bishop in the story of Theophilus, Smithfield Decretals, f. 169



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Figure 8 Weighing of a soul, Smithfield Decretals, f. 267



Figure 9 Monk of St. Peter's at Cologne, Queen Mary Psalter, f. 214v

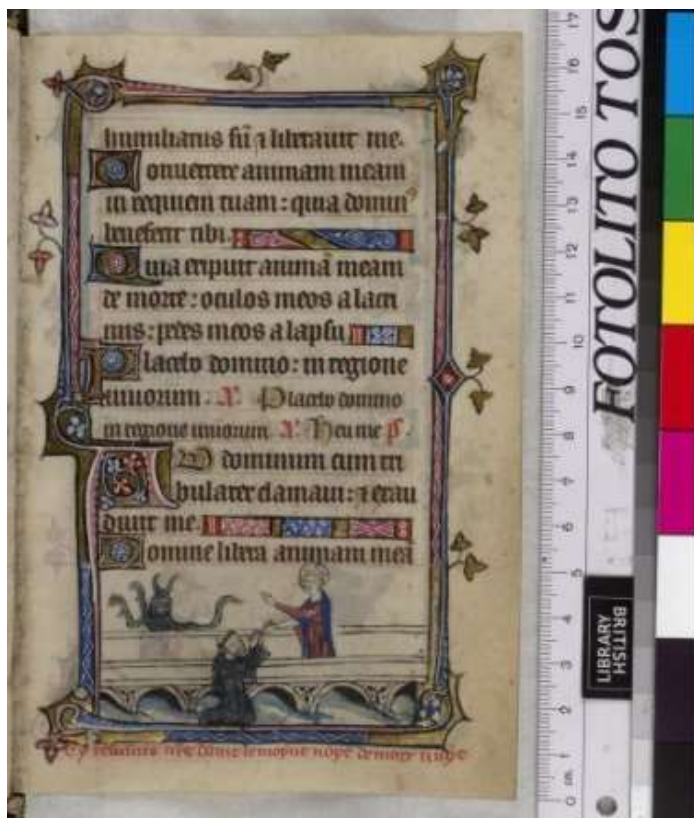


Figure 10 The Drowning Sacristan, Taymouth Hours, f.152

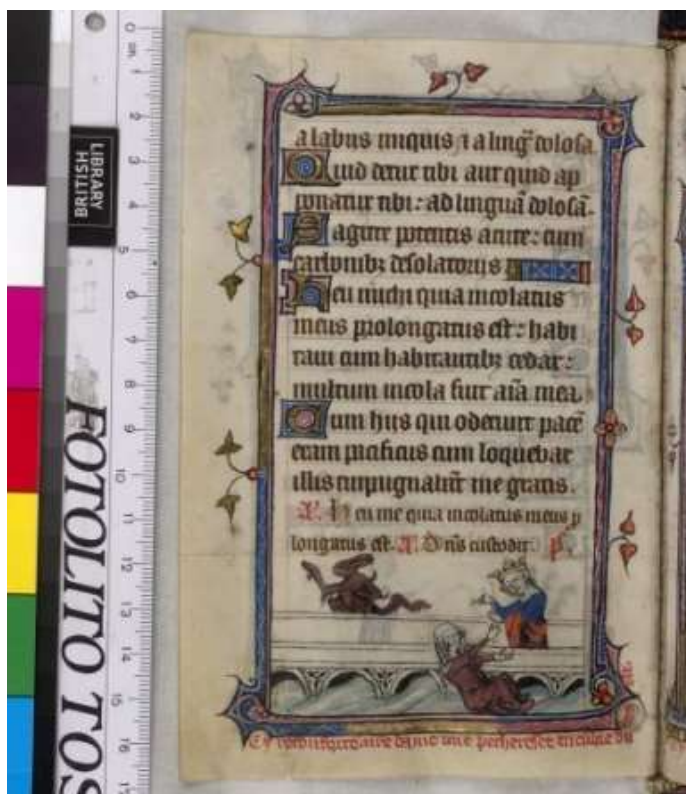


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Figure 21 The Jewish Boy of Bourges receiving the Eucharist, Queen Mary Psalter, f. 207v



Figure 22 Mary saving the Jewish boy of Bourges, Queen Mary Psalter, f.208

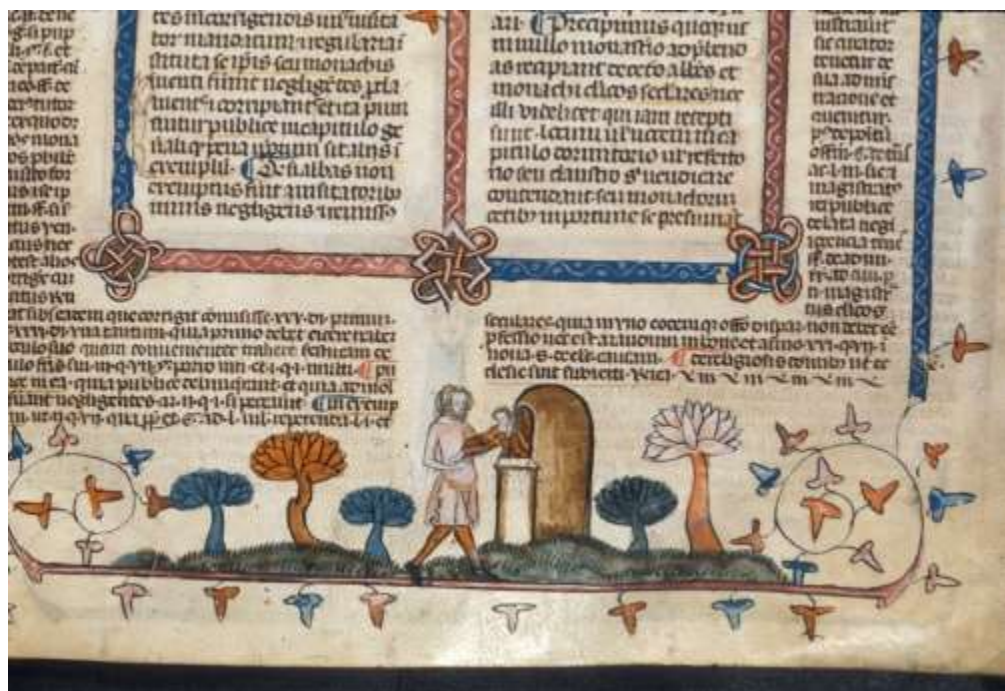


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