

Marian Studies

Volume 32 *Proceedings of the Thirty-Second National
Convention of The Mariological Society of America
held in Tampa, FLA.*

Article 9

1981

Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament

Vincent P. Branick

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Branick, Vincent P. (1981) "Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 32, Article 9.
Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol32/iss1/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Studies by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

MARY IN THE CHRISTOLOGIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

This study is a sketch of the principal christologies of the New Testament and a reflection on how the figure of Mary relates to those christologies. The christological sketch will be limited to the Synoptics, Paul, and John, where relationships between Jesus and Mary appear, and will be synchronic rather than diachronic, concerned with the presentation of Christ in the final form of the texts rather than with the history of those christologies.¹ A thorough analysis of the New Testament christologies is out of the question in a study this size. My purpose rather is simply to outline the major and distinctive traits of the principal New Testament christologies and use them as a grid for examining the figure of Mary.

This study is concerned with Mary as she relates explicitly or implicitly to the interpreted figure of Jesus in the New Testament. Of primary concern will be the explicit descriptions linking Mary with Christ. Other implications arising from the comparison of Mary with Christ are also important for this study. These implications may or may not correspond to the mind of the New Testament authors or redactors but seem to arise from the data of the texts.

¹ For a brief but thorough prehistory of New Testament christology, cf. R. Fuller, *New Testament Roots of the Theotokos*, MS 29 (1978) 46-64. Other important recent studies include, I.H. Marshall, *Origins of New Testament Christology* (London: InterVarsity, 1976), who presents an excellent review of the literature on pp. 14-28; R.H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Collins/Fontana, 1965); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology. Their History in Early Christianity* (New York: World, 1969); M. Hengel, *The Son of God. The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

I. MARK

A. Christology

The christology of Mark is dominated by the question, "Who can this man be?" (Mk 4:41). To this question no clear answer is given. The apostles do not understand (cf. 6:52; 8:17-21). Their lack of comprehension is not completely their fault. Jesus conceals himself. He imposes secrecy. He speaks with parables precisely not to be understood (4:11-12).²

In the whole Gospel this mystery of Jesus' identity arises especially in the juxtaposition of two visions of Jesus. On the one hand Jesus appears extremely human. He lives with real limits. Among his people at Nazareth he *could* work no miracles because of their lack of faith (6:5-6). He does not have the authority to distribute the places in his kingdom at his right and left (10:40). He does not know the exact day or hour at the end (13:32). He asks questions which are more than just rhetorical (2:8; 4:13; 4:40; 5:9-30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:5.12.17-21.23; 10:18.36.38; 14:12). Moved by human emotions Jesus becomes compassionate (1:41), angry (3:5; 10:14), tender (9:36; 10:16), and distressed (14:33-34). In the passion narrative Mark depicts the utter helplessness and degradation of Jesus. Step by step, he leads the reader to the cry on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" (15:33).

On the other hand, Mark opens the Gospel with the identification of Jesus Christ as Son of God (1:1). This title then shows up in strategic places, proclaimed by divine or supernatural voices (1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7), on the lips of the accusing high priest (14:61), and finally on the lips of the centurion at the end of the Gospel (15:39). This final profession of faith on Calvary, in effect, forms an inclusion with the first verse of the Gospel. The transcendence of Jesus appears likewise at the beginning of the Gospel in the application of the Old Testament texts about God to Jesus (1:2-3).³ It appears in the authority of Jesus over

² Cf. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II (Freiburg: Herder, 1977) 36-47.

³ Cf. the shifts in the pronouns "me" to "you" in Mark's apparent use of Mal 3:1 and in the meaning of the title "Lord" in Mark's use of Is 40:3.

nature, sickness, and demons, and above all in his power to forgive sin (2:1-12). As the transcendent Son of Man, Jesus will appear in the future despatching the angels of God to gather the elect. He comes on the clouds of heaven in such a way that even the adversaries will have to admit who he is (14:62).

The combination of this lowliness and transcendence of Jesus constitutes the fundamental paradox or mystery of the Gospel. The apostles have special access to this mystery. It is *given* to them (4:11), not as special information as in the Matthean parallel.⁴ Rather the mystery is simply given to them as mystery.

No promise of a resolution of this mystery appears before the coming of the Son of Man. Until that time Christians must live with wars, famines, and persecutions. Even the resurrection of Jesus is not a resolution of this mystery. At the final verse of the Gospel, the women depart both "bewildered and trembling . . . they said nothing to anybody" (16:8).⁵

B. *Mary*

Mark makes only brief mention of the mother of Jesus. At 3:31, he states, "His mother and brothers arrived and as they stood outside they sent word to him to come out." The pericope then continues with Jesus explaining that his true mother and brothers are those who do the will of God (vv 33-34).⁶ The mother of Jesus may likewise be involved in the corresponding inclusion of 3:21, where "*hoi par*" *autou* came to take charge of him, saying, "He is out of his mind." The second explicit mention of Mary occurs at Nazareth on the lips of the townspeople, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary . . . They found him too much for them" (6:3).⁷

⁴ Note the shift in Mt 13:11 to the plural, "mysteries," and the addition of the verb, "to know."

⁵ For a discussion of the ending of Mark, cf. W. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965) 71-72; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1966²) 610.

⁶ For a discussion of this passage, cf. R. Brown, *et al. Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 51-59.

⁷ The expression here "son of Mary" of itself seems to involve no direct significance other than the probable widowhood of Jesus' mother. H.K. McAr-

In all these instances, Mary is involved in the obscurity of Jesus. At Nazareth, she is part of the picture of Jesus as offensively human. Precisely as son of Mary, Jesus is rejected by his townspeople.⁸ In the scene distinguishing the blood relatives "outside" from the faith relatives "in the circle," Mary appears to be rejected by Jesus, just as Jesus on the cross appears to be rejected by his Father. The scene reflects Marcan obscurity, the obscurity of suffering and failure that characterized the career of Jesus, the obscurity which for Mark is to endure until the coming of the Son of Man.

Mary is, of course, the mother of this Son of God who has authority over nature, demons, and sin. She is the mother of this Son of Man whose glory will appear on the final day. However, the transcendence of Jesus remains eschatological, to be revealed only with his coming as the glorious Son of Man. Thus Mary in Mark becomes an eschatological sign: on earth humble, obscure, weak, yet geared to something new in the future. Mary's most obvious place, then, in the christology of Mark remains bound up with the flesh and blood humanity of Jesus, this man of emotions, questions, and limits. As mother, she is the cause of her son's humble state and she remains an inseparable part of that state.

II. LUKE-ACTS

A. *Christology*

In Luke's Gospel and in his Acts, the mystery of Jesus lifts somewhat. The christology of Luke revolves around the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God, depicted with the dramatic clarity of the ascension and proclaimed in the inaugural preaching of Peter: "Let the whole house of Israel know beyond any doubt that God has made both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

thur, "Son of Mary," *NovT* 15 (1973) 38-58, suggests the phrase is simply an informal or colloquial expression. For a critical discussion of the range of interpretations, cf. Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 59-64.

⁸ G. W. Lathrop, "Who Shall Describe His Origin?" *Tradition and Redaction in Mark 6:1-62* (Nijmegen: Catholic University, 1969), sees a relationship between the expression "Son of Mary" and Mark's *theologia crucis* (p. 35).

The exalted status of the ascended *Kyrios* is projected in retrospect throughout the public ministry of Jesus. Even with his closest friends, Jesus is always Lord (10:39.41). The leaders of the Church are reminded that they are like slaves waiting for the return of their master (12:35-40). Christians should therefore consider themselves only useless slaves after they have done their duties to their Lord. (17:10). F.W. Danker suggests that Luke is using the model of the contemporary *Euergetes* to form his presentation of Jesus. In a way that surpasses in magnificence all the other Hellenistic benefactors, he is "savior" (2:11) and he brings peace to the world (2:14).⁹

Luke's presentation of Jesus' greatness contains something of a paradox. For Luke, Jesus is likewise in the midst of his disciples "as one who serves" (22:27). The Lucan Jesus remains poor and merciful. Luke insists on the poverty of Jesus. Passing over the mention of Jesus' middle-class profession as "builder" (*tekton*), Luke speaks of Jesus who had no place to lay his head and stresses his association with poor people. Luke likewise insists on the mercy and compassion of Jesus. He is moved at the sight of the widow of Naim. He fills his teaching with parables about the mercy of God.

The relationship of Jesus to God is crucial in the Gospel of Luke. He insists on his total dedication to his Father. He is a man of prayer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18.28; 11:1; 23:34.46). From his childhood he must be in his father's affairs (2:49). A major part of his public ministry is set in determined procession to Jerusalem, a deliberate journey to his God-given destiny. He goes to Jerusalem because it is a God-determined necessity for him to die (24:26.46).

Because of his suffering, God confers lordship and messiahship on Jesus (Acts 2:36). It is the Lord God who gives him the throne of David his father (Lk 1:32-33). The paschal glorification of Jesus, therefore, is something he receives as a divine gift

⁹ F.W. Danker, *Luke* (Proclamation Commentary; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 6-17. Danker's position runs into the difficulty that Luke never refers to Jesus by this title and uses the title only in an instruction to the apostles not to be like that (Lk 22:25).

Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament

and a consequence of his suffering. It is not presented as arising out of his nature.¹⁰

Luke thus limits his perspective to Jesus as a man.¹¹ He makes no allusions to a pre-existence of Jesus and apparently eliminates from his Marcan source any statement implying Jesus' authority over angels. (Compare Mk 13:27 and Lk 21:27; Mk 8:38 and Lk 9:26; cf. also Lk 12:8).

Jesus' title "Son of God" is important for Luke. In the infancy narrative we are alerted by the angel to Jesus' divine sonship (1:32.35).¹² The early preaching of Paul is summarized, "That Jesus was the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). In Luke the title does not indicate divinity. Rather, it is a way of designating Jesus as king or messiah, a meaning clear in Ps 2 which is cited and applied to Jesus (Acts 13:33). In the hymn of Jubilation (Lk 10:21-22), however, the Son title indicates a unique relationship of knowledge and sharing with God.

A final distinctive feature in Luke's christology appears in the relationships between Jesus and the Spirit. During his public ministry, Jesus is the bearer of the Spirit. The Spirit presides over his conception (1:35). It comes upon him "in bodily form" at his baptism (3:22). It fills and conducts him into the desert (4:1) and then empowers and anoints him for the beginning of his ministry (4:14.18).

The relationship between Jesus and the Spirit changes after the ascension. From this time on, Jesus sends the Spirit (Lk 24:24) and thus appears above the Spirit, just as God is above Jesus. This power to send the Spirit expresses the most transcendent aspect of the Lucan Jesus.

¹⁰ Luke's theological point here is not, however, to insist on the subordination of Jesus. That is simply presupposed. His purpose is to state how the messiahship of Jesus goes beyond his Davidic lineage. This messiahship rests rather on God's initiative. The non-fulfillment of the national hopes linked to the Davidic traditions, the loss of the Davidic capital city in AD 70 does not, therefore, invalidate Jesus' messianic credentials. Cf. Danker, *Luke*, 20-21.

¹¹ Cf. H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961) 173-184.

¹² The expression "will be called" is equivalent to "will be." The name or title here designates the reality of the person. Cf. R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977) 291.

32 *Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament**B. Mary*

Although Mary's role in the drama of Luke-Acts is primarily soteriological, according to Luke's way of placing her at the turning points of the history of salvation, we will attempt to relate her to his christology.¹³ Luke in fact stresses that Jesus is "the holy offspring" of Mary. Besides calling her by her proper name, Luke consistently links Mary to Jesus as "his mother" (Lk 2:33.34.48.51; 8:19).¹⁴

The most direct involvement of Mary in this christology appears in the dialogue at her annunciation. Here Luke introduces Jesus to the reader precisely as Mary is being drawn into the drama of salvation. It is the child of Mary who will be "called great," "Son of the Most High," receiving "the throne of David his father" from God, and ruling forever (Lk 1:31-32). We have in this invitation to Mary the essentials of Luke's christology. Mary is thus associated with the exalted roles of Jesus.

In particular, Jesus' quality as Son of God seems to be linked causally to Mary's miraculous pregnancy. The angel states, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you, hence (*dio* or *dia ho*) the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God" (1:35).¹⁵ The scene is parallel to both the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus. At his baptism (3:21-22), Jesus is designated *Son of God*. The *Holy Spirit* descends on him, and shortly afterwards he begins his ministry filled with *power* (4:14). At his transfiguration (9:34-35), Jesus is again designated *Son of God*. In the place of the Holy Spirit, a cloud *overshadows* the scene.¹⁶ Luke is apparently insisting that the divine sonship proclaimed at the baptism and transfiguration must be carried back to the moment of Jesus' conception

¹³ Cf. Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 105-177.

¹⁴ Cf. also "your mother" (Lk 8:20), "the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14) and "the mother of my Lord" (Lk 1:43).

¹⁵ Cf. R. Brown, *Birth*, 291. S. Lyonnet, *L'Annonciation et la mariologie biblique*, in *MarSaScr*, IV (Rome: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1967) 61.

¹⁶ Cf. also the parallelism with Rm 1:3-4 where Paul proclaims "the gospel concerning His Son . . . designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness."

in Mary's womb. In this miraculous conception, greater realism can be associated with this divine sonship.¹⁷

Fuller sees in the pneumatic origin of Jesus' conception in Mary a dramatization of the "Sending-of-the-Son" christology, not in the sense of a pre-existent Son who is sent into the world (as in Paul's writing), but in the sense of a divinely-appointed emissary in salvation history sent by God, along the line of the prophets. The emphasis in Mary's virginal pregnancy here is on the activity of God bringing about the whole history of Jesus.¹⁸

It is noteworthy to see how the traits of Mary in Luke parallel those of Jesus during his earthly career. Like Jesus, she is poor. She celebrates her "lowliness," rejoices in God's gifts to the hungry and the lowly (1:48.52.53). She appears as a representative of the faithful *'anawim*. In fact, it is the poverty of Mary and Joseph, suggested by their offering in the temple, that first introduces us to the poverty of Jesus.

Likewise, like her son, Mary appears dedicated to the plan of God. We see this in her response to the angel (1:38). When Luke deals with the scene of the relatives, he eliminates the gestures and positionings that suggest a contrast between the relatives and the disciples. The stress on the faith relationship becomes simply "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it" (8:21). In fact, Mary qualifies rather well.

Like her son she is a person of prayer. The Magnificat is placed on her lips. In Luke 2, we see her and her family twice in the temple. At Pentecost she is listed by name among those who "devoted themselves constantly to prayer" (Acts 1:14). The relationship of Mary to the Spirit both at the moment of her pregnancy and at Pentecost parallels that of her son during his public ministry.

When we compare Mary to her son ascended and exalted at the right hand of God, however, the Christo-typical comparison gives way. If Christ is the *Kyrios* and dispenser of the Spirit,

¹⁷ Thus Brown, *Birth*, 311-316; *Mary in the New Testament*, 117-119.

¹⁸ Fuller, *Roots*, MS 29 (1978), 49 & 54, n. 14. Cf. also Fuller, *Birth of the Messiah—review*, CBQ 40 (1978) 120.

Mary remains the *doule* (1:38) along with the disciples who are *douloi*.

III. MATTHEW

A. Christology

The first line of Matthew's Gospel identifies Jesus as Christ, the son of David, son of Abraham. The frequent use in the Gospel of the titles "Christ" (17 times) and "Son of David" (8 times), along with Matthew's efforts to show Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament, clearly show Matthew's principal intention to identify Jesus as the messiah, "the one who is to come."¹⁹

Like Luke, Matthew also stresses the majesty and dignity of Jesus. The Gospel terminates with the *proskynesis* of the disciples before Jesus who declares, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (28:18). All through the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus exhibits this majesty and authority. He is always in complete control of his destiny, even as he is arrested (26:53). To stress this majesty and authority, Matthew eliminates questions from the lips of Jesus, often replacing them with commands. (Compare Mt 26:18 with Mk 14:14.) Except for the regular mention of compassion and one mention of wonder (8:10), Matthew generally drops references in his Marcan source to Jesus' emotions, especially those of anger. The result is a figure somewhat less human, less flesh and blood, but more regal, more sacred, He epitomizes the king of Israel.

In Matthew, Jesus is king over his *own* kingdom, a kingdom which appears at times as a present reality (13:41) and at other times as an eschatological reality (25:14). As messianic king, however, Jesus does not correspond to expectations. Insisting on Jesus as the humble messiah in the image of the Servant of God, Matthew states, "The bruised reed he will not crush, the smol-

¹⁹ For Matthew's Christology, cf. L. Sabourin, *Il Vangelo di Matteo. Teologia e Egesi*, I (Marino: Edizioni "Fede ed Arte," 1975) 130-166; J.D. Kingsbury, *Matthew* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 30-57; *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 40-127; P. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1974) 101-112.

dering wick he will not quench" (Mt 12: 16-21; cf. Is 42:1-4). The Christ who preached, "Blessed are the meek," himself comes to Jerusalem "meek and seated on a donkey" (21:5). This is not the stern eschatological judge predicted by the Baptist. Rather Jesus' messiahship is colored by the frequent mention of his compassion (*splagchnizesthai*: 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34). Jesus responds to John's bewilderment by pointing to acts of healing (11:5). As though recognizing the difficulty of John to accept such an unexpected messiah, Jesus continues, "Blessed is the man who finds no stumbling block in me" (11:6).

Matthew stresses the title "Son of God." It forms the culmination of a series of titles in the infancy narrative (2:15). Matthew follows Mark in the divine proclamations of this title (3:17; 17:5). Unlike Mark, however, Matthew places this title on the lips of disciples during Jesus' public ministry (14:33; 16:16). Yet, as is evident in Jesus' words to Peter, only a divine revelation allows a human being to recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

We find in Matthew no affirmation of Jesus' divinity. However, this gospel makes three significant statements about Jesus' divine-like transcendence: First, Matthew hints at an identification of Jesus with pre-existent divine wisdom. Jesus' works become the works of wisdom (compare Mt 11:19b with Lk 7:35). He seems to identify Jesus with the wisdom who sends "prophets and messengers" to Jerusalem (compare Mt 23:34 with Lk 11:49). The invitation to "come to" Jesus and accept his gentle yoke (Mt 11:28-30) recalls almost identical words about Wisdom in Sir 51:23 (Cf. also Sir 24:19ff; Prov 1:20ff; 8:1ff; 9:1-11).²⁰ The promise of Jesus to be present among those gathered in his name likewise resembles similar statements in late Judaism about the abiding *Shekinah*.²¹ The identifications here with di-

²⁰ M.J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1970) 99-108. H.D. Betz, *The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest* (Mt 11:28-30), *JBL* 86 (1967) 10-24. R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament* (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1973) 67-71.

²¹ Cf. *Abot* 3:2. For a study of identification, cf. J.M. Gibbs, *The Son of God as the Torah Incarnate in Matthew*, *StEv* 4 (Texte und Untersuchungen,

vine wisdom are not explicit. L. Sabourin warns against seeing anything beyond a simple analogy to divine wisdom.²² Yet a door has been opened and this sapiential christology becomes a path leading to far more transcendent identifications of Jesus.

Secondly, as God's Son on earth, Jesus' relationship to the Father is unique. Contradicting even his own reproductions of the Marcan logia regarding the limits of Jesus (Mt 20:23; 24:36), Matthew reports the hymn of jubilation, "Everything has been given over to me by my Father." This hymn then insists on the unique relationship of knowledge between Father and Son, "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (11:27). This unique relationship to the Father and this totality of sharing between Jesus and the Father places Jesus in the divine realm.

Thirdly, Matthew describes Jesus as the future Son of Man, not only sending angels, but having authority over them. They are in fact *his* angels (13:41; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31). This extraordinary authority, is exercised only for the future and forms a contrast with the humble beginnings of Jesus' kingdom. Matthew illustrates this contrast and at the same time insists on the continuity of the humble beginnings and glorious ends by such "contrast parables" as that of the mustard seed and that of the leaven.

B. Mary

Compared with her role in the Gospel of Luke, the figure of Mary in the Gospel of Matthew dramatically recedes. It is Joseph, not Mary, who dominates the infancy narratives. Yet she is named several times here with a certain insistence. She ap-

88; Berlin: 1964) 29-46. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 70f; G. Barth, *Matthew's Understanding of the Law*, in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. G. Bornkamm, *et al.* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 135.

²² Sabourin, *Matteo*, 162-165. Cf. also the hesitations of M.D. Johnson, *Reflections on a Wisdom Approach to Matthew's Christology*, *CBQ* 36 (1974) 44-64. On the other hand, Fuller's appreciation of these texts as simply ways of saying "the historical mission of Jesus rests on the divine initiative" seems inadequate; cf. his *Foundations*, 195.

pears again in the relatives' scene (12:46-50) where Matthew, for the most part, reproduces the Marcan contrast between the relatives and the disciples, dropping, however, Mark's description of the relative's estimation of Jesus as mad—a scene rather uncomplimentary for all involved. As in Mark, Mary is mentioned again only as part of the ordinariness of Jesus which formed a stumbling block to his kinsmen at Nazareth (13:55).

The clearest involvement of Mary in the christology of Matthew appears in Matthew 1-2. She is named in the genealogy as the one of whom "Jesus who is called the Messiah was born" (1:16). The story of the birth of Jesus opens with a mention of "his mother Mary" engaged to Joseph and pregnant by the work of the Holy Spirit (1:18). In the announcement to Joseph (1:20-23), the angel names her, identifying her as the *parthenos* of Is 7:14 and again relating her pregnancy to the Holy Spirit. The point of the angel's message is for Joseph to marry her and accept her child into his family so that Mary's child will also be a son of David. Finally when the Magi arrive, "They found the child with Mary his mother" (2:11). We then find four mentions of "the child and his mother" in the episodes of the flight into Egypt (2:13.14.20.21). Bracketed by these mentions is the description of Herod's slaughter and the grief of Rachel the matriarch.

Matthew makes two mentions of Mary's pregnancy through (*ek*) the Holy Spirit (1:18.20). Again, as we saw in Luke, the mention of the Holy Spirit recalls the Baptism scene where Jesus is identified as Son of God. The pregnancy by the Spirit, again, may be a way of insisting that Jesus was Son of God throughout his earthly existence, not just from his baptism.²³ More so than in Luke or Mark, however, the Baptism scene in Matthew recalls also the Isaian Servant of God,²⁴ on whom God places his spirit (Is 42:1; cf. Mt 12:18) and whose sufferings heal the people (Is 53:4-5; cf. Mt 8:17). For Matthew, furthermore, the Spirit of God is associated especially with baptism (3:11; 28:19) and the casting out of demons (12:28-32), that is, with the saving work

²³ Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 89-91.

²⁴ Sabourin, *Matteo*, 301.

of Jesus. The role of the Holy Spirit in Mary's pregnancy thus points to Jesus' whole saving work. We see this in the words of the angel to Joseph, where we find associated a) the person of Mary b) her pregnancy by the Spirit and c) the naming of the child Jesus "because he will save his people from their sin" (1:20-21).

A general pattern emerges from these mentions of Mary. She is the mother of the messiah and is associated with the matriarchs and queen-mothers of the Old Testament. In the genealogy she is associated with the four other women named, three matriarchs and the "wife of Uriah," Bathsebah, the queen-mother of Solomon.²⁵ The *almah/parthenos* of Is 7:14 historically refers to Abi, the mother of King Hezekiah, whose birth as Immanuel was predicted by Isaiah. Matthew has the powerful figure of the Old Testament *gebirah* or queen-mother in mind as he repeatedly mentions Mary in this story of the birth and infancy of "the newborn king of the Jews" (2:2). Just as the queen-mother was constantly mentioned in the summaries of the Judean and Israelite kings, so Matthew here repeatedly mentions Mary as Jesus' mother (1:18; 2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21; 12, 46, 47; 13:55). This association would explain the interest Matthew has in Mary being with the child as the nobles of the East reverence the new king, a scene where Joseph is not even mentioned. The reference to Rachel in the following episodes maintains the comparison of Mary with the matriarchs.

To what extent can Mary be associated with the Matthean Jesus in his transcendence? We have no texts that explicitly relate Mary to Jesus in his resemblance to pre-existent wisdom, to the unique Son who shares all from the Father, or to the glorious coming of the Son of Man. In fact the appearance of Mary at 13:55 relates her to the scandalous ordinariness of Jesus. Yet Matthew has actually combined in his Gospel a conception christology with these transcendent portrayals of Jesus, albeit he places these different patterns in different places of his Gospel and makes no explicit correlations between them.

²⁵ The possible significances of these women is discussed in Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 78-83; Brown, *Birth*, 71-74.

The degree to which Mary can be related to the divine-like Son of Man coming at the end of the world depends on the degree this eschatological Son of Man is in continuity with the earthly Jesus. For Matthew, of course, they are the same person.²⁶ Furthermore, Matthew emphasizes the contrast in continuity between the humble beginnings and the glorious end of Jesus and his kingdom. One somehow develops into the other. Unlike Mark, Matthew describes the early Jesus as already sharing all things from his Father. Implied in Matthew, therefore, is the conclusion that the mother of the rejected messiah is also the mother of the glorious Son of Man.

The fact that Matthew combines in his Gospel both Jesus' conception-birth account and also his resemblance with pre-existent wisdom is significant for any theology of Mary. As Fuller points out, it is the synthesis of conception christology with pre-existence christology that leads eventually to the view of Mary as *theotokos*.²⁷ The major difficulty for our considerations here is the obscurity of any real identification of Jesus with divine wisdom in Matthew's Gospel. Does Matthew want to identify Jesus with this pre-existent wisdom or simply draw some analogies between the two?

Finally, although Matthew gives us almost nothing of the characteristics of Mary's life, his great insistence on the gentleness and healing work of Jesus could reflect on the mother of this messiah. Jesus requires of his disciples gentleness and healing care. If Mary is associated from the beginning with this gentle king, it is a small step to see beyond the text and relate these qualities of Jesus to Mary.

IV. PAUL

A. *Christology*

The hymn of Phil 2:6-11 captures the principal aspects of

²⁶ For a discussion regarding the identity or non-identity of Jesus with the eschatological Son of Man in the earliest strata of New Testament tradition, cf. Fuller, *Foundations*, 119-125; Hahn, *Titles*, 21-28; F.H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967). For a discussion regarding its use in Matthew, cf. Sabourin, *Matteo*, 148-156.

²⁷ Fuller, *Roots*, MS 29 (1978), 64.

Paul's christology.²⁸ Here Paul typically refers to the three phases of Christ's career: pre-existence, *kenosis*, and exaltation. I will sketch the principal christological teachings in each part of this hymn, relating them to other significant Pauline texts.

1. Pre-existence

Since v 7 describes Jesus' becoming man, v 6 clearly indicates his pre-existence. The hymn makes two statements about this pre-existence: he was in the form of God, and he did not deem equality with God a matter of robbery. The concept "form" (*morphē*) here should be read as virtually synonymous with "image" (*eikon*), a title Paul again uses in Col 1:15 to describe Jesus outside the order of creation. It was thus that the Greek fathers understood the text of Philippians.²⁹ The ambiguous "matter of robbery" can best be left as combining both ideas of *res rapta* and *res rapienda*.³⁰ Describing Christ as the image of God, not stealing equality with God and intensely obedient, Paul is alluding to Jesus as the New Adam. Paul articulates this Adamic christology in 1 Co 15:45-49 and Rm 5:12-21.

The concept of Christ's pre-existence appears in other texts of Paul. Paul's statement "though he was rich he became poor for

²⁸ For the Christology of Paul cf. especially L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959), esp. 374-397. A. Feuillet, *Christologie paulinienne et tradition biblique* (Paris: Desclée, 1973). O. Michel, *Die Entstehung der paulinischen Christologie*, ZNW 28 (1929) 324-333. Bibliography on the hymn of Phil 2:6-11 is impressive. Some important titles include L. Cerfaux, *L'hymne au Christ-Serviteur de Dieu (Phil 2:6-11; Is 52:13-53:12)*, in *Recueil L. Cerfaux*, II (Gembloux, 1954) 425-438; J. Dupont, *Jésus-Christ dans son abaissement et son exaltation d'après Phil 2:6-11*, RSR 37 (1950) 500-514; E. Käsemann, *Kritische Analyse von Phil 2:6-11*, ZTK 47 (1950) 313-360; E. Lohmeyer, *Kurios Jesus. Eine Untersuchung über Phil 2:5-11* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Akademie, 1961²); R.P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (SNTSMS, 4; London: Cambridge U. Press, 1967); W. Schrage, *Theologie und Christologie bei Paulus und Jesus auf dem Hintergrund der modernen Gottesfrage*, EvT 36 (1976) 121-154.

²⁹ Cf. H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 73-78; Cerfaux, *Christ*, 385-386.

³⁰ Cf. Cerfaux, *Christ*, 384f.

Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament 41

our sake" (2 Co 8:9) clearly implies a state of pre-existence better than that of Jesus' earthly career.³¹ But perhaps the most expressive and significant texts are those which describe Jesus' involvement in creation: "All things were created through him in him" (Col 1:16; 1 Co 8:6). Paul is applying descriptions of divine wisdom to Jesus, implying an identification of Jesus of Nazareth with pre-existent wisdom.³² In Rm 8:3 and Gal 4:4, Paul speaks of God sending his Son and relates that sending to the human condition of Jesus. In the context of Paul's thought, these texts also express pre-existence, although they are silent about the nature of that pre-existence.³³ We will return to these two texts in our considerations about Mary.

2. *Kenosis*

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Paul's christology is his general appreciation of the earthly career as that of an emptying, a degrading humiliation, a descent as far as death on the cross. Philippians 2:7-8 expresses this emptying.³⁴ Paul's general silence about the public career of Jesus fits this perspective of his christology. Except for isolated "sayings of the Lord," Paul practically skips over the earthly career of Jesus. He summarizes this phase of Jesus' life as "according to the flesh," which simply prepares for the directly saving phase of his life "according to the Spirit" (Rm 1:3-4). In Paul's soteriology, Jesus' life "according to the flesh" represents his intense identification with the sinful conditions of humanity.

³¹ Commentators generally agree in seeing pre-existence expressed by this text. For a survey of positions, cf. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence*, 150f. Hamerton-Kelly points out, the abruptness of this passage presupposes a familiarity with the motif by the Corinthians.

³² Compare esp. with Job 28:23-38; Prov 8; Sir 24; Wis 6:22-11. Cf. Cerfaux, *Christ*, 267-274.

³³ Fuller is probably correct when he states that the "sending of the Son" christology did not originally express pre-existence, but rather a continuity with the sending of the prophets. However, Fuller likewise states, "It is highly probable that Paul himself . . . reinterpreted the sending pattern in the light of the pre-existent concept" (*Roots*, 59-60). Cf. also Fuller's article, *The Conception/Birth of Jesus as a Christological Moment*, *JStNT* 1 (1978) 37-52.

³⁴ Cf. J. Jeremias, *Zu Phil. 2, 7: heauton ekenosen*, *NovT* 6 (1963) 182-188.

42 *Mary in the Christologies of the New Testament*

3. Exaltation

Vv 8-11 of the Philippian hymn finish off the picture with the exaltation of Jesus. He is given the name 'above all names, the name *Kyrios*, which in this context clearly refers to the Greek substitution for the name Yahweh. He receives a divine adoration from the entire universe.³⁵ Does Paul here affirm that Jesus is God? We note that Jesus here *receives* this name, this state, as a recompense for his *kenosis*: "Because of this God highly exalted him." He appears better off than he was even at the start of this hymn. Paul, therefore, appears to be sticking to the soteriological perspective of Jesus' role in salvation. He is speaking about Jesus of Nazareth. It is Jesus the man who has received the divine name and the universal worship.

K. Berger suggests that the reception of the divine name refers only to a legitimation of Jesus in his mission, along the lines of Moses' reception of the divine name.³⁶ The parallels, however, are quite different. The extraordinary worship received by Jesus persuades us that Paul intends to speak of an ontic, if not ontological, participation in the divinity.³⁷ A confirmation of this understanding arises from a comparison of 1 Co 8:6 with Col 1:17-18. Writing Corinthians, Paul speaks of God as "for whom" all things exist. At this point it is God who is the ultimate goal of the universe, the ultimate term which gives meaning to all of creation. Writing Colossians, however, Paul says that not only are all things created "through" and "in" Christ, but also "for" Christ. He has located Jesus in the place of God.

For all this affirmation of divine dignity of the exalted Christ, however, Paul maintains the subordination of Christ to God. As

³⁵ Cf. E. Lohmeyer, *Der Brief an die Philipper* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1964¹³) 97: ". . . kein anderer sein als der hernach genannte alt. Gottesname 'Herr.'" Cf. also K. Berger, *Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund christologischer Hoheitstitel*, NTS 17 (1970-71) 422-424.

³⁶ Berger, *Hintergrund*, 414-415.

³⁷ Thus Fuller, *Foundations*, 214-230; also G. Bornkamm, *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum* (Munich: Kaiser, 1959); E. Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1961) 51-95; *pace* Cullmann, *Christology*, 3f, who sees the whole christology of the NT as exclusively functional.

he writes to the Corinthians, "When finally all has been subjected to the Son, he will then subject himself to the One who made all things subject to him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Co 15:28). Even in his ontic descriptions of Christ, Paul always views Jesus as the instrument by which God reconciles the world to himself.

B. Mary

Paul's unique explicit reference to Mary occurs in his description of God sending forth "his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal 4:4). The reference relates Mary directly to the *kenosis* of Jesus. "Born of a woman" is equivalent to "born under the Law," and describes the self-emptying and humiliation of the pre-existent Son.

The kenotic character of this sending appears in a striking way when we compare Gal 4:4-5 with its parallel in Rm 8:3-4:

Gal 4:4-5

God sent forth his son
born of a woman
 born under the law
 to buy back those under the law
 so that we might receive
 adoptive sonship

Rm 8:3-4

God sending his own son
in the likeness of sinful flesh
 and as a sin offering
 condemned sin in the flesh
 so that the just demands of the
 law might be fulfilled in us.

In comparison, we see the extent of the *kenosis* of Jesus according to Paul. For Jesus, becoming a man was his immersion into the sinful condition of humanity. Paul thus explicitly relates Mary to the humility of Christ and his solidarity with sinners. She is a sign of Christ's coming "in the likeness of sinful flesh." She relates to that state of Christ which leads directly to the cross.

Both Gal 4:4-5 and Rm 8:3-4 speak of the saving consequences of this humiliation. Romans speaks of the condemnation of sin and the fulfillment of the just demands (*dikaiōma*) of the law. Galatians speaks rather of a liberation from the law. In Galatians, Paul then refers to the gift of adoptive sonship as an explanation of what this liberation means. The two descriptions

of salvation — a') the gift of sonship and b') redemption from the law — relate in inverse order back to Jesus' double *kenosis* of a) being born of a woman and b) being subject to the law.³⁸

For Paul, the statement "God sent his son" expresses Jesus' pre-existence. By associating it in Gal 4:4 with the birth of Jesus, Paul forges an important link between pre-existence christology and conception christology. "Born of a woman" qualifies and explains the phrase, "God sent forth his Son." Paul thus implicitly relates Mary to this person through whom and for whom all things exist.³⁹

Paul never associates Mary with the exalted Lord, the glorious Jesus after his resurrection. In fact, Paul insists on a discontinuity between the pre-paschal lowliness of Jesus and the glory of his resurrection. This resurrection is the work of God. Yet the same Paul writes, "God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Rm 11:29). Paul speaks likewise of the permanent role of Israel in God's plans, and thus provides us with an implicit basis for associating Mary with her glorious Son, on whom God bestowed "the name above every other name."

In the second century, Justin and Irenaeus associated Mary with Paul's Adamic christology. From the presentation of Jesus as the obedient image of God who brings life and acquittal to all humanity, it is a short step to relate Mary as the New Eve, one closely associated with Jesus in his saving role. The imagery in Paul is intensely suggestive along this line and would make Mary a reminder of the public and historical character of Jesus' work. But Paul does not associate Mary or any other person in the active redeeming role of Jesus. Actually, behind this patristic interpretation of Mary as New Eve is a synthesis of Pauline christology with the Johannine portrayal of Mary as "the mother of

³⁸ This text is discussed in Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, 44, n. 76, which suggests the correspondence is rather between a) God sending his Son and a') our receiving adoptive sonship.

³⁹ It is difficult to follow recent studies insisting that "conception christology" and "pre-existence christology" were not combined in the NT. Cf. Fuller, *Roots*, MS 29 (1978) 60. Brown speaks of the synthesis of "conception christology" and "pre-existence christology" only in Ignatius of Antioch, Aristides, Justin, and Melito of Sardis: *Birth*, 141, n. 27.

the disciple." Underlying this patristic Marian theme, therefore, is the question of the Canon or the unity of the New Testament.

IV. JOHN

A. Christology

1. Jesus as Truth

John is above all concerned with presenting Jesus as the revealer of God.⁴⁰ This is the fundamental purpose of Jesus' mission. The crucifixion in John's Gospel is above all the high point of this revelation.

In this role of revealer, Jesus is the truth. As I. de la Potterie points out, truth in John is not a Platonic or divine reality which man must attain by rising from the earth. Rather, for John, truth is the action on earth by which God reveals himself. In himself God is love. As revealed to mankind, he is truth.⁴¹

Jesus reveals God by being the truth. Not only by his teaching and actions, but above all by his very life or being Jesus manifests the Father. "To see me is to see the Father," Jesus explains to Philip. He is the word of God, the very self-expression of God spoken into the world.

This truth or revelation in John's Gospel is the key to salvation. The truth is given to us, not simply to satisfy some gnostic curiosity, but to become a principle of life within us flowing out into practical charity. "Let us love, not just in word and tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 Jn 3:18). Just as the truth is the externalization of God, whose inner life is love, so the truth assim-

⁴⁰ For the christology of John, cf. A. Wikenhauser, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Regensburger NT, 4; Regensburg: Pustet, 1964), 170-172; 204-210; D.L. Mealand, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, *SJT* 31 (1978) 449-467; R. Kysar, *Christology and Controversy: The Contributions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John to New Testament Christology and Their Historical Setting*, *CurTM* 5 (1978) 348-364; A.C. Sundberg, *Christology in the Fourth Gospel*, *BR* 21 (1976) 29-37; R.T. Fortna, *Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Redactional-Critical Perspectives*, *NTS* 21 (1975) 489-504.

⁴¹ *La vérité dans Saint Jean* (2 vols., *AnBib* 73 & 74; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977); cf. also Wikenhauser, *Johannes*, 181f.

lated into the heart of man becomes love, which is the life of God. Jesus is therefore both the truth and the life.

For John, the incarnation is the means by which God communicates his truth to mankind. In contrast to the Pauline view of radical *kenosis*, the incarnation in John's Gospel is a glorious event. The earthly character of Jesus is therefore colored with regality and glory. He stands like a prince before his Father and prays, "I want. . . ." Even during the passion, the Johannine Jesus remains the serene king. The highest political figure of the land presents Jesus to the people wearing his crown and royal cloak. His kingship is proclaimed to the world in three languages.

2. Jesus as God

As the total expression of the Father, then, Jesus is himself God. "The Word was with God (*ho theos*) and the Word was God (*theos*)" (1:1).⁴² We note in this opening verse of the Gospel the paradox of the Word's simultaneous distinction from and identification with God, a paradox expressed by the play with the arthrous and anarthrous *theos*. The word *theos* shifts in meaning from being the proper name of the Father⁴³ to a designation of something like "Godhead" or "deity." The description of the Word as God, becoming flesh (v 14), and then named Jesus Christ (v 17) is the clearest affirmation of the divinity of Jesus in the New Testament.⁴⁴ Despite textual difficulties, the last verse of the prologue (v 18) should be read as an affirmation of Jesus as God. With the best MSS, we find a description of Jesus as *monogenēs theos*, "the only-begotten God." This description forms an inclusion for the prologue.

⁴² Barret in his commentary writes, "John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous." *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1962), 130.

⁴³ This meaning is quite clear in Paul. Cf. especially Rm 1:7, 15:6; 1 Co 1:3, 8:5f; 2 Co 1:2f, 11:31; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2, 2:11; Col 1:3; I Thes 1:1.3, 3:11.12.

⁴⁴ Outside the Gospel of John, other explicit affirmations include: Heb 1:8-9; 2 Pet 1:1; Tit 2:13; 1 Jn 5:20. Cf. R. Brown, *Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?*, *TS* 26 (1965) 545-573.

In 20:28, we hear again a confession of the divinity of Jesus by Thomas, "My Lord and my God." The expression parallels imperial acclamations, but the strategic location of this confession, just before the original ending of the Gospel, relates this line to the opening verse of the Gospel and thus forms an inclusion for the whole work. The confession, therefore, should be read as a major statement of Johannine christology.

This affirmation of Jesus as God appears also in the discussion of his work on the Sabbath. By the accusations of the adversaries, we are led directly to the proposition of Jesus "making himself God's equal" (5:18). The response of Jesus relates to his working on the Sabbath. As Brown points out, this work of giving life and judging corresponded exactly to the work reserved for God on the Sabbath.⁴⁵

3. Jesus as Son

The title John uses for Jesus, "the Son," refers to a unique relationship of Jesus to God, his Father. Berger sees the background of this title in late wisdom traditions, where it describes the intimacy between teacher and disciple.⁴⁶ We note the Son title in John's Gospel appears frequently in reference to the teaching of Jesus and his reception of this teaching from God. F.J. Moloney, on the other hand, sees the dynamics of salvation as the precise context for the "Son" title in John.⁴⁷ This title appears primarily in descriptions of salvation as the will of the Father and the task of the Son (Jesus). The title shows that the relationship between Jesus and the Father reaches outside of limitations of time, a transcendence which makes the dynamic of salvation possible.

B. Mary

The two explicit references to the Mother of Jesus, at Cana and at Calvary, relate Mary as "the woman" to the saving work

⁴⁵ R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 216-219.

⁴⁶ Berger, *Hintergrund*, 422-424.

⁴⁷ F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of God*, *Slm* 38 (1976) 71-86.

of her son.⁴⁸ “The mother” in these scenes appears on the same symbolic level as “the good wine” at Cana or “the disciple” on Calvary. She represents the Church, whose maternal role coincides with the hour of Jesus.

The attempt to relate Mary to the principal christological emphases in John must deal with the absence of any birth narratives, which would explicitly associate Mary with the incarnation. In a way, John’s insistence on the pre-existence of Jesus overshadows any human maternity. Yet John does allude, at least indirectly, to the conception/birth of Jesus by describing the Word becoming “flesh” (1:14) and by frequent mention of Jesus’ mother. Mary appears consistently as “the mother of Jesus” (2:1.3), “his mother” (2:5.12; 3:4; 19:25), or simply as “the mother” (6:42; 19:26 twice). She is thus associated with the incarnation.

Fuller rightly points out that John contains no christological reflection on the significance of Mary giving birth to Jesus.⁴⁹ In fact, the figure of Mary is not developed as a function of John’s christology but rather in John’s ecclesiology. Her appearance as Jesus’ mother, however, clearly eliminates any christology in John patterned on the myth of a gnostic redeemer who descends fully developed from heaven. Conception theology and pre-existence theology have in fact been combined in the Gospel of John, whether or not it was the author’s conscious intention.

By implication then, we can relate Mary to the christology of John in the following ways: First, Mary provides the medium, Jesus’ flesh, by which humanity can perceive the revelation of the Word. She is the one through whom the saving truth of God shines in the world. Philip is invited to look on Jesus and see the Father, because Mary gave Jesus that visible humanity. It is

⁴⁸ For Mary in the Fourth Gospel, cf. J. Alfaro, *The Mariology of the Fourth Gospel: Mary and the Struggles for Liberation*, *BTB* 10 (1980) 3-16; F.F. Ramos, *El Espíritu Santo y María en los escritos joánicos*, *EphM* 28 (1978) 169-190. I. de la Potterie, *La Mère de Jésus et la conception virginale du Fils de Dieu. Étude de théologie johannique*, *Mm* 40 (1978) 41-90; N.M. Flanagan, *Mary in the Theology of John’s Gospel*, *Mm* 40 (1978) 110-120; J.P. Michaud, *Marie et la Femme selon saint Jean*, *EgliseTh* 7 (1976) 379-396.

⁴⁹ Fuller, *Roots*, 60.

through Mary that the love of God becomes his truth. Second, since truth, which defines the being of Jesus, is life-giving, Mary's role in the realization of this truth includes her role in the gift of life. Her role in the incarnation, therefore, leads eventually to her role as mother of the disciple and symbol of the Church. Third, by implication, she is the *theotokos*: Jesus is God; Mary is his mother. The concept does not obviously occur in John, nor perhaps did John consciously draw this conclusion. But the premises of the conclusion are in the text.

A final aspect of Mary can be drawn from the way John portrays her. He includes no reference to her lowliness or humility. Her demeanor at Cana and Calvary is rather that of a self-composed noblewoman. John, who underlines the princely, regal character of Jesus, may be intentionally portraying Mary as the queen-mother figure.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing our data relating Mary to the New Testament christologies, we may be struck by the diversity of patterns or views. The Word of God appears in human form with all the limits of humanity. Limitation and diversity are correlates. Only the infinite is One. The challenge to the believing mind is to synthesize this diversity, at least to the degree implied by the canon of the New Testament, and thus lay the foundation for systematic theology.

The full and explicit formulation of the *theotokos* doctrine results from this synthesis and in a way continues to symbolize it. The doctrine rests on the identification of the divine Johannine Jesus with the Matthean or Lucan Jesus conceived and born of Mary. More precisely, this doctrine rests on the affirmation of the reality of Jesus as a person in whom various interpretations or christologies cohere and unite. A phenomenology of meanings operates on the level of essential heterogeneity. The affirmation of reality, the drive to "the truth of the matter," is necessarily synthetic. The christological myths of the New Testament are many. Jesus of Nazareth is a single reality.

Mary consistently appears in the christologies of the New Tes-

tament in relation to Jesus' concrete humanity, even where that humanity provokes scandal. She is a sign of the concrete reality of Jesus in whom the diverse christologies unite. As a thread running through the major works of the New Testament, the figure of Mary symbolizes the unity of the canon, and reminds us that the christologies are only weak human tools to attain Christ.

VINCENT P. BRANICK, S.M.
Department of Religious Studies
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio