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THE NEXUS BETWEEN THE DIVINE MATERNITY AND MARY'S OTHER PREROGATIVES

At first sight, the question proposed this morning offers but little difficulty. To our way of thinking, generally speaking, it would seem quite clear that the Divine Maternity stands out as the supreme fountain from which flow all her other prerogatives. And this is certainly true if we give to the notion of Mary's Divine Maternity a broad connotation. But theology aims at preciseness of terminology and takes nothing for granted.

The problem then is to see whether our generally accepted notion of the connection between the Divine Maternity and Mary's other prerogatives is theologically acceptable.

Without doubt, all theologians will accept the statement that Mary's Divine Maternity is the greatest of her prerogatives. Most will go further and see in it the basis for most, if not all, of her privileges. To cite but a few: Father W. Sebastian, O.F.M., says: "When we speak of Mary we can never overlook her Divine Maternity, the origin of all her grandeur, the highest of all her excellencies and the basis of each of her prerogatives."¹ J. Keuppens: "Maternitas enim divina est omnium relationum maxime fundamentalis ex qua quaedam privilegia immediate et necessario profluunt . . . aut ab illa postulantur vel antecedenter . . . vel consequenter. . ."² Card. Lépicier: "Porro, eorum omnium quae de beatissima Virgine dici possunt ultima ratio ex ejus elevatione as dignitatem Matris Dei repeti debet. . ."³ In view of these testi-

¹ In *The Nature of Mary's Spiritual Maternity*, in *Marian Studies*, vol. 3, 1952, p. 24.

² *Mariologiae Compendium*, ed. 2, 1947, p. 30, n. 49.

³ *Tractatus de Beatissima Virgine Maria Matre Dei*, ed. 5, Romae, 1926, p. 5, n. 5.

monies as well as many others of a similar nature, it is easy to see the validity of claiming the Divine Maternity as the source of Mary's other wonderful prerogatives.

This claim is further bolstered by the theories concerning the primary principle or principles of Mariology. Though there may not be absolute agreement as to the actual terms of the principle, most place the Divine Maternity as an essential part of this principle. Briefly stated:

1. Some claim that Mary's Divine Maternity alone constitutes the basic principle of Mariology (Pohle-Gierens, M. Llamera, A. Fernández, and R. M. Gagnebet).

2. Others hold for the concept of Mary as the Associate of the Redeemer or the New Eve (A. Deneffe, C. Zimara, S. Alameda).

3. Others find a composite principle: the Materno-Sponsal character of Mary. Mary is both the Mother of Jesus and His Spouse (M. Scheeben, E. Druwé, C. Feckes, H. Derckx).

4. Others find the first principle of Mariology in the Divine Maternity not considered in the abstract, but in the concrete and historical sense, i. e. as found in Scripture and Tradition (J. M. Bover, R. Bernard).

5. Another group of theologians sees the first principle in the Co-redemptive Maternity. In other words, Mary is the Mother of God the Redeemer *qua talis* (B. H. Merkelbach, M. Benz).

6. N. García Garcés, C.M.F., holds for the principle: Mary is the Mother of the Whole Christ (Head and Members).

7. J. B. Terrien and M. Cuervo see *two* supreme principles: the Divine Maternity *and* the Spiritual Maternity.

8. Finally, many theologians today uphold these two principles as supreme: the Divine Maternity and the Consortium with the Redeemer. Mary is the Mother of God and the

Associate of the Redeemer. Thus, for example, J. Bittremieux, C. Dillenschneider, J. Keuppens, G. Alastruey.⁴

From this discussion of the basic principle or principles of Mariology it appears abundantly clear that most theologians, either explicitly or implicitly, see the Divine Maternity as the primary source of all Mariology and hence the ultimate source of all her privileges. The reason for this insistence on the Divine Maternity as the fundamental principle is the intrinsic richness of this concept. Most see in it the all-important fact of her life and the one toward which everything else is ordained either antecedently—for the privileges which preceded this fact chronologically, or consequently—for the prerogatives which followed it.

The crux of this question lies in the position we take with regard to Mary's Divine Maternity. If we consider the bare fact of Mary's Divine Maternity—the physical fact that Mary clothed with Humanity a Divine Person—we can readily see that her dignity must be inestimable; that she approaches the confines of divinity . . . “reductive pertinet ad ordinem hypostaticum.” We can readily see also how fitting it was that she be Immaculate in her Conception; that she be full of grace; that she be Ever-Virgin; that she be assumed into Heaven; that she as the Mother of the King of Heaven and earth, be the Queen of Heaven and earth. We could even go a step farther and see readily enough her right to the title of Co-redemptrix at least in the sense that she gave us the Redeemer and because of this we can see the fittingness that she should have a share in the dispensation of graces. Thus we see that solely because of this unique privilege of her Divine Maternity in the restricted sense of the physical reality we can easily deduce her main prerogatives as being eminently fitting to her dignity.

⁴ On these various authors and their opinions, cf. G. M. Roschini, O.S.M., *Mariologia*, vol. 1, Romae, 1947, p. 324.

But there is another way of conceiving this Divine Maternity which enriches it to an extraordinary degree, and which seems the only true notion of this great prerogative. It is to consider this prerogative as more than just an isolated act of giving a human nature to a Divine Person and stopping there, so to speak. It goes much further in analyzing this act of Maternity. It views it not only from the physical point of view, so to speak, but also from the metaphysical and psychological point of view. In simpler terms: it considers the Divine Maternity in its totality as laying the ground work for the whole work of the Redemption—as being really and truly an essential step of the whole work of Redemption. It is well expressed by saying that Mary is the Mother of God the Redeemer “qua talis.” The basis for such a position is the thoroughly unique role of Mary’s consent in the mystery of the Incarnation. We must never forget that her consent was necessary (hypothetically albeit) and that it was freely given with full cognizance of what it implied. In other words, Mary consented to become the Mother of God with all its implications, not the least of which was the Redemption of mankind and her Spiritual Maternity.

This is further illuminated by the consideration proposed by several theologians⁵ that Mary by her consent to the Incarnation became not only the Mother of the Son of God but also His Spouse. In other words, Mary’s consent represented the consent of the whole world to the work of the Incarnation and Redemption and resulted in a mystical marriage between them based on the highest form of love so that their whole life was bound up inseparably in each other. Viewed from this vantage point, it is easy to see how the Divine Maternity is the focal point of all Mary’s privileges. It contains in germ the whole of the picture of the plan of Redemption. The work of Redemption is a work of love of Jesus and Mary

⁵ Scheeben, Druwé, Feckes, Derckx. Cf. Roschini, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

(evidently not in the same sense for each) and that love began its full manifestation at the Incarnation, continued with increasing intensity throughout life and continues unabated throughout eternity.

In this conception of the Divine Maternity with the accent on the sponsal character the parallel of the New Eve so familiar to Tradition also finds its place. Just as Adam the Head of Mankind had an associate in Eve, the Mother of Mankind, in the typical marriage, so Christ, the second Adam, had an associate, Mary, the New Eve, in a mystical marriage. Just as the union of Adam and Eve produced the entire human race, so did the union of Mary and Jesus bring about the spiritual rebirth of all mankind.

Another aspect of the Divine Maternity which widely broadens its implications is the consideration of the idea of the Mystical Body of Christ. From this point of view Mary is from the instant of the Incarnation, the Mother of the Whole Christ: "Mater Christi totalis," as Fr. García puts it.⁶ Mary gives birth to Jesus, the Head of the Mystical Body, therefore she also gives birth to the members of that Mystical Body, as St. Louis de Montfort insists in his *True Devotion to Mary*.⁷ It is true that the effective rebirth of the members does not take place at the moment of the Incarnation, yet it is obviously there that it begins. In this concept it is easy to see that if Mary is really and truly the Mother of the Mystical Body by her Divine Maternity, she does not cease her role at that moment but follows it up effectively throughout life: she is the Coredemptrix and Dispensatrix of graces.

To sum up: the Divine Maternity can be considered as a more or less isolated fact terminating in the birth of the God-Man. In this sense it is certainly a great privilege for

⁶ In *Restauremos nuestra Mariología*, in *Crónica Oficial del Congreso Mariano Nacional de Zaragoza* (1940), Zaragoza, 1942, pp. 44-45.

⁷ N. 32.

Mary and places her in an altogether unique position above all the angels and saints. Yet it does not *directly* include her role as Mother of Men, Coredemptrix, Dispensatrix or Queen. But if we consider the Divine Maternity in its totality with the insistence on the free and fully conscious consent of Mary to the birth of the Redeemer *qua talis*, the above named privileges have a very solid connection with the Divine Maternity. This concept is further bolstered by the consideration of the Sponsal Character of Mary's Divine Maternity and her Motherhood of the Mystical Body, which in the mind of many theologians are an integral part of this prerogative of Mary.⁸

Thus we see the Divine Maternity as the great principle from which flow all of Mary's privileges. As J. Keuppens puts it: "Maternitas enim Divina est omnium relationum maxime fundamentalis ex qua quaedam privilegia immediate et necessario profluunt, qualis est v.g. affinitas as Personas Divinas; aut ab illa postulantur vel antecedenter, ut v.g. Immaculata Conceptio, gratiae relativa plenitudo ac virginitas; vel consequenter, ut singularis gratiae plenitudo; aliae denique perfectiones vel munera praesupponunt Maternitatem Divinam, sicut duplex munus mediationis etc."⁹

This, of course, supposes the divine decree so establishing things, i. e. Mary's predestination as Mother of God and Associate or Spouse of the Redeemer.

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⁸ Roschini, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-337.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.