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George T. Montague

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ESCHATOLOGY AND OUR LADY

By now it is a commonplace to say that one of the marks of the Catholic theological renewal has been a rediscovery of the dimension of eschatology. The most obvious landmark in this direction is the Constitution on the Church, issued by Vatican II, which speaks repeatedly of the Church in terms of eschatology and devotes an entire chapter to the "Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church." "The Last Things" have ceased to be a kind of appendage to theological tracts, wherein death, judgment, reward and punishment were considered primarily in their individual perspective. Instead, the whole mystery of the divine plan is seen to be dominated by a conception in which time is not "the trappings of contingency" which the mind of the theologian must strip away to find some eternal mystery, but rather the matrix of revelation itself. Time does not conceal God but reveals Him.¹

This rediscovery has been due in large measure to the biblical renewal, and particularly to the development of biblical theology, in which scholars have begun to think in terms of the ancient Jewish thought patterns, which are quite different from Greek and from our own. It has been pointed out that the ancient Greeks thought of the distinction between imperfection and perfection in vertical terms, that is, a world "here below" which is only a shadow of the perfect world "there above." In other words, the distinction between the imperfect and the perfect was tantamount to a spatial "here" and "there." For the Hebrew, on the contrary, the distinction between the imperfect and the perfect was conceived in a horizontal or

¹ Besides the well-known works of Teilhard de Chardin, which have been attempts to achieve a synthesis between the scientist's view of an evolving universe and Christian eschatology, see O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia, 1950). M. D. Chenu, *Time in Theology*, in *TD* 10 (1962) 203-206.

temporal dimension, as the distinction between "now" and "then."²

At the root of this difference was, of course, an entirely different view of the world and of God. To detail this would be to belabor the obvious.³ Suffice it to point out here that eschatology in the sense of the future really being shaped by God is without parallels in ancient non-biblical religions.⁴

The emergence of an eschatology, in the broad sense of a future hope, in Israel was almost an inevitable consequence of its conception of a God who had entered history, chosen a people as His own, and sealed the choice by covenant. The covenant was the transferral into the religious domain of an instrument by which men and nations sought to stabilize and guarantee their future relationships, and thus, much like modern contracts, to gain some measure of control on one's future history. The word of the covenant was buttressed by formulas of curses and blessings by which the pact not only became a sacred engagement, but the gods of the respective contractants were called upon to enforce the terms of the treaty, to bless its observance, to punish its violation. With Israel, of course, it was Yahweh and He alone who would do this, and He Himself was the initiator of this suzerainty treaty.⁵ That this new rela-

² Cf R H Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel. A Commentary* (Oxford, 1956) 51

³ Cf E. H. Maly, *History and Bible History*, in *The 1960-1961 Athenaeum of Ohio LeBlond Lecture Series in the Bible and Modern Science* (Norwood, Ohio, 1961). A Gélin, *Messianisme*, in *SDBI* 5, 1165-1212. C. Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought* (New York, 1960). G T. Montague, *Maturing in Christ* (Milwaukee, 1964) 1-12

⁴ Eschatology is found in many ancient religions, but it is basically derived from, and reducible to, the cyclic pattern of nature, in which the world may be expected to die and to rise renewed as do the seasons. Cf Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1961) 68-113. S Mowinkel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford and New York, 1956)

⁵ G E Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Ancient Israel and in the Near East* (Pittsburgh, 1955). Reprinted from *BA* 17 (1954) 26-46, 49-76. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry*, in *CBQ* 27 (1965) 217-240. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1961).

tionship committed Yahweh in a very real sense to the future of His people can be seen in the way one of the earliest chants, the Canticle of Deborah, describes the victory over the Canaanite king Jabin: not only is the victory ascribed to Yahweh, but it is one more manifestation of His "just deeds"—*just* because done in fulfillment of Covenant (*Jg.* 5:11). One can see, then, that the seed of the future hope lay in Israel's origins and the unique relationship of this people with its God: namely election and covenant.

To trace the evolution of eschatology from these beginnings goes beyond the limits of this paper.⁶ The following observations will have to suffice:

1. Old Testament eschatology is not a wholly uniform thing. From a future hope centered on land and progeny (*Gen.* 15:5, 18; 26:3; 28:13) it became Messianic only with Nathan's promise to David (*2 Sam.* 7), and only through disillusionment with the incumbent kings did the prophets' hopes leap into the distant future to the ideal King who would achieve what the present kings failed to do, namely, commit themselves and the nation wholly to faith in Yahweh (*Is.* 7:9ff; 8:23-9:6; 11:1-9). It was at least in part, too, the same disillusionment that led the prophets to bypass the father and to stress instead the role of the Queen Mother in the birth of the heir.

2. Eschatology also involves a day of judgment, of vindication of Yahweh. This was the "day of the Lord" of *Am.* 5:18-20, which brings doom not only to the nations that have refused to recognize Yahweh but also to the unfaithful Israelites who have broken His covenant. At the same time emerges

⁶ Cf. E Jenni, *Eschatology of the Old Testament*, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962) 126-133, with bibliography; M. Rist, *Eschatology of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, *ibid.*, 133-135; J. W. Bowman, *Eschatology of the New Testament*, *ibid.*, 135-140; J. T. Nelis (tr. L. A. Bushinska), *Eschatology*, in *EBD* 677-686, with bibliography. I am also grateful to Father Francis Martin, OCSO., for allowing me to read the manuscript of his excellent forthcoming article on Biblical eschatology in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

the theology of a remnant that is bearer of the promise and beneficiary of salvation.

3 While eschatology strictly refers to the final or ultimate act of God, even in the Old Testament it admits of a partial realization. Thus Jeremiah applies previous prophetic predictions of the divine judgment to the contemporary invasion of Nebuchadnezzar (11:15-17; 15:1-4 etc.). And the "day of the Lord" is applied to the fall of Jerusalem after the event (*Ezek.* 34:12; *Lam.* 1:21; 2:21) while still being spoken of as a day to come (*Ezek.* 38-39, *Jl.* 2:28-32). Thus eschatology cannot be dismissed simply as a prediction of the end of time; rather it concerns the definitive act of God which fulfills previous promises or threats, while at the same time not closing the door to a further fulfillment at a later date.

4. By New Testament times a distinction was made between the "present age," which would witness the Age of the Messiah, and the "age to come," which would be a transcendent, supernatural thing. By this time belief in the resurrection of the dead was common; in the divine timetable, it would be placed at the end of the Age of the Messiah or at the beginning of the "age to come." At any rate it would be an eschatological event of the first importance.⁷ The apocalyptic works speak of "the end" which will be preceded by a time of great stress and calamities—called in some works the "birthpangs" of the Messiah (cf *Hos.* 13:13; *Is.* 26:16-19).

5. Quite important for understanding the nature of the Christian fulfillment is the fact that Jewish eschatology, like other Jewish concepts, bears the stamp of "corporate personality" or "totality." The general semitic tendency to speak of the individual as containing the group is now taken as a commonplace in biblical studies, following the path opened by the im-

⁷ Cf W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1958) 287-289. In the preaching of Jesus, too, the general resurrection is a preliminary condition for the judgment (*Mt.* 14:41 f = *Lk.* 11:31 f; *Lk.* 14:14, *Mk.* 12:18 ff. par., etc.).

portant work of Wheeler Robinson⁸ This is not personification but a real actualization of the group in the individual. Now the totality concept can extend not only into the past (Amos and Jeremiah, for example, address their contemporary hearers as the people God brought forth from Egypt) but also to the future, and it is even especially prominent in visions of the future such as we find in Daniel (*Dan.* 2:32-38; 7:3-7, 17, 23; 7:13-14, 22, 27, etc).

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Eschatology is an important key to understanding the New Testament. To win the faith of the Jews, it was necessary to convince them that the *eschaton* had arrived—and this could be done only by pointing simultaneously to the Scriptures and to the act of God in Christ. The earliest sermon of Peter in Acts uses Joel's description of the day of the Lord to explain the event of Pentecost (*Acts* 2:14ff), and hence a "realized eschatology" is his argument for repentance and belief. At the same time, however, the glorified Messiah is to come to judge the living and the dead (*Acts* 3:19-21; 10 42), and hence there is a forward-looking eschatology in the New Testament kerygma too. It is a sound opinion today among New Testament scholars that this twofold division is found in the preaching of Jesus Himself, that Jesus was not the type of "consistent eschatologist" Albert Schweitzer thought Him to be, but that Jesus made the present acceptance or rejection of His own person the critical issue for the future judgment⁹ Some scholars, and among them C H Dodd, have gone so far in this as to practically exclude any "futurist" eschatology from the message of Jesus. But W. G. Kümmel in a significant study

⁸ W. Robinson, *The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality*, in *BZAW* 66 (1936) 49-62

⁹ A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York, 1961); Werner G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment. The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (London, 1961) 61-64

has rather convincingly shown that both elements, future and present, are found in Gospel texts whose originality cannot reasonably be questioned¹⁰ For the purpose of our study, it suffices to say that the New Testament kerygma as delivered to us in the Gospels is itself normative for Catholic theology, and any attempt to give greater normative weight to texts more "certainly" original to Jesus is open to serious objection from a hermeneutical standpoint¹¹ Now in that kerygma it is clear not only that Jesus, the risen Lord, is the *eschaton*, the fulfillment toward which the entire Old Testament points, but also that the community of believers, the Church, belongs to the same eschatological reality It, too, is part of the *eschaton*.¹² This conclusion seems inescapable not only from Peter's sermon on Pentecost (*Acts* 2:17-36) but also from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. While the Church cannot claim to be the *eschaton* apart from her risen Lord, nor in any sense equated with Him, and while the Church too looks to a consummation toward which she journeys or which she awaits (the returning Bridegroom)—still the kingdom is present now very really in the Church, in a way which itself consummates Old Testament hopes

Just as Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises to redeem Israel and all mankind,¹³ so likewise the gift of the Lord's Spirit on Pentecost was the fulfillment of God's promise to

¹⁰ See the preceding note

¹¹ In this respect, Catholic theology is more in sympathy, it would seem, with Bultmann than with some of the methods of the post-Bultmannians, who tend to bypass the Apostolic kerygma in favor of the historical residue which they believe they can distill from the Gospels James M Robinson, *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London, 1959). James M Robinson and John B Cobb, Jr (editors), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York, 1964) 62-63. For Catholic reactions and appraisals see P Joseph Cahill, *Rudolf Bultmann and Post-Bultmannian Tendencies*, in *CBQ* 26 (1964) 153-178 (helpful bibliography given in note 1), R E. Brown, *After Bultmann, What?*, in *CBQ* 26 (1964) 1-30, with bibliography

¹² According to W G Kummel, *op. cit.*, 140, such a development was completely unforeseen by Jesus

¹³ *Lk.* 1:54-55; 2:29-32, *Rom.* 1:1-6; *Eph.* 2:11-22; *Heb.* 9:11-22

pour out His spirit on all flesh (*Acts* 2:17-35; *1 Cor.* 2:6-13). Moreover, the kerygma applies to the Church the eschatological terms of the Old Testament and of Judaism: "remnant," "building," "temple."¹⁴ The theme of "God with us" runs through Matthew's Gospel, just as that of Messianic joy runs through Luke's. All this adds up to showing that for the New Testament authors the New Day has dawned—a fact which can be affirmed as *come* at the same time that it can be said to be near at hand.¹⁵ Thus the Apostles' Pentecost realization was that the kingdom of God preached by Jesus had come indeed in the sending of the Spirit—a fact to be providentially confirmed by the fall of the temple in the year 70—while the Lord's second coming would be delayed until the Jews would collectively enter the Church (*Acts* 3:19-21), and this in turn (it was soon realized) would not happen until "the full number of the Gentiles" had come in (*Rom.* 11:25-26).¹⁶

It is this affirmation of the New Testament kerygma which makes possible the question of the role of Our Lady in eschatology. If the Apostolic Church itself was part of the *eschaton*, did it affirm any of its eschatological self-realization in Mary?¹⁷

The question is not misplaced, nor is it a contemporary meteorite fired into the atmosphere of the early Church's outlook, for, in line with what we have already intimated, Luke in *Acts* points to the experiences both of the community and of individuals in it as manifestations that the Church is the

¹⁴ *Rom.* 9 22-23; *1 Cor.* 3:9, 16-17; *Eph.* 2:19-22; *1 Pt.* 2:4-10.

¹⁵ *Rom.* 13 11-14; *Phil.* 4:5; *Heb.* 1:2, 9:26; 10 25, 37-38, *James* 5:7-10, *1 Pt.* 1:5, 20, 4 7; *1 Jn.* 2:18, 22, 4:3, *Jude* 18; *Apoc.* 22.10, 12, 20.

¹⁶ Cf. D. M. Stanley, *From Kingdom to Church*, in *TS* 16 (1955) 1-29, reprinted in P. J. Burns (ed.), *Mission and Witness* (Westminster, 1965) 25-60.

¹⁷ It is well known that the Church-Mary relationship in the context of salvation history is the approach to Mary taken by the Constitution on the Church issued by Vatican II. The theological sketch therein presented distills much of the modern biblical research to which the remainder of this paper also witnesses.

eschatological reality. Thus in Acts the boldness of Peter and John in speaking (4:23-31) and their heroic joy in suffering (5:41) manifest the reign of the Spirit. Peter plays a very important role—people bring him their sick and possessed as formerly they had to Christ (*Acts* 5:15-160); and his decision resulting from the Cornelius incident concerning the Gentiles is normative for the early community. And so we may legitimately ask whether the Mother of Jesus was seen to have any special role in this "realized eschatology" Luke certainly has some reason for singling out Mary among the women who persevered in prayer in the Cenacle prior to the Descent of the Holy Spirit (1:14), but this statement in itself is not very illuminating.

Paul's only "Mariological statement" in *Gal.* 4:4f. is placed in an eschatological context: "*When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that he might redeem those under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" The Incarnation is here seen to be the *eschaton*, and it is a redemptive incarnation immediately linked with the divine sonship which means the gift of the Spirit (4:6). The Mother of Jesus is mentioned anonymously, in keeping with Paul's conception of the Incarnation as the supreme act of humiliation, the self-emptying of Him who was "in the form of God" (*Phil.* 2:5-11). Nevertheless, she is there, with an anonymity in keeping with her role as the instrument of this divine abasement which even today remains a scandal to Jewish monotheism.

One of the characteristics of the kingdom Jesus preaches will be the priority of obedience to God's will and attachment to the person and message of Jesus above all natural ties. The synoptic account of the visit of the "Mother and the brethren" of Jesus is told to illustrate this (*Mk.* 3:31-35 and par.). It is significantly placed in Mark and Matthew after the Beelzebub incident, in which Jesus had pointed to the fact that His power to bind Satan shows the effective *presence* of God's power and

kingdom—or, as Luke gives it, “the kingdom of God *has come to you*” (*Lk.* 11:20). And therefore obedience to God’s will not only establishes a spiritual relationship with Jesus but also gives a real participation in the kingdom present in Jesus.

Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke places this pericope not after the Beelzebub incident but after a section of sayings of Jesus, including the parable of the sower, the theme of which is the hearing of the word of God. Luke, aware of another tradition about the Mother and the brethren of Jesus, namely that they belong to the nucleus of the primitive resurrection-community in the Cenacle (*Acts* 1:14), says nothing about a misunderstanding of Jesus at this point, but rather edits the statement of Jesus to read, “My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God and do it” (*Lk.* 8:19-21). After the Beelzebub incident, on the other hand, Luke places instead the account of the woman who blessed the Mother of Jesus, to which Jesus gave the well-known reply, “Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it” (11:28). This may be a completely different tradition or a doublet of the other incident which Luke has reshaped to his purpose. In either case, the brethren are conspicuously absent, and the Mother of Jesus alone is singled out by the woman in the crowd. The answer of Jesus affirms again the importance of hearing the word of God and keeping it. Taken by itself, this incident really means nothing more than the point made earlier: it is more important to hear and keep God’s word than to be closely related to Jesus in the order of flesh and blood. There is nothing implied in this text for or against the perfection of Mary’s response in faith to Jesus. But light is shed upon this text by Chapters 1 and 2 of Luke, to which we now turn

It is well known that Luke 1-2 forms a block apart. Granted that there are resemblances of style at times, and that Luke has obviously incorporated these chapters into his overarching theme, still the archaisms of style and the specifically Jewish outlook (in contrast to Lukan universalism) make it clear that

Luke has used a source here, doubtless from the early Jewish-Christian community.¹⁸ René Laurentin's study of these two chapters is well known.¹⁹ It is not our purpose merely to repeat what he has said there, except in the measure that it may at times be useful for establishing Mary's function in Lukan eschatology.

The problem of the humble origins of Jesus was one that troubled not only the crowds who heard Jesus (*Mk.* 6:1-6 and par; *Jn.* 6:42) but even the disciples (*Jn.* 1:46). Granted that the resurrection definitively pointed Him out as Lord and Messiah (*Acts* 2:36); granted that the mighty works of His public ministry in their turn could be appealed to as signs of the imminent inbreaking of the kingdom and even of its beginning, there was little, precious little, that could be appealed to prior to the baptism by John, which would have led anyone to suspect that Jesus of Nazareth was the "elect" of God. Mark avoids the issue completely and begins with the preaching by John the Baptist. Matthew, it is true, offers evidence to show that even the birth of Jesus had its political echoes in the capital city and drew the Magi as Gentile witnesses to His birth. But he is well aware that these events, however they happened, had no lasting effect on the Messianic expectation and that the bulk of the infancy events are privately witnessed matters without the apologetic value that the public ministry would have: virginal conception, the name Jesus, birth at Bethlehem, youth at Nazareth.

Luke's theology of the infancy is more profound. Disciple

¹⁸ As René Laurentin points out, the object of hope in these chapters is the return to the Lord of the sons of Israel (1.16), the restoration of the kingdom to the house of Jacob (1.33), the salvation of Israel (1.54), the promises made to Abraham (1.55, 73), the deliverance of the people (1.68) and their victory over their enemies (1.71, 74). The Messianic joy is for Israel (2.10). The apparently universalist statement of 2.32 does not go beyond *Is.* 42.6 and 49.6, implicitly cited. *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957) 16.

¹⁹ See the preceding note.

of Paul, he has been impressed by the theology of abasement in the Incarnation, the theology of the *anawim*, and far from apologizing for the obscurity of the infancy, he capitalizes on it: Nazareth is a village unknown to the Old Testament and without mention in Josephus or the Talmud. The good news of His birth is announced to social outcasts, the shepherds. The parents of Jesus are poor; Jesus is born in a stable. But it was precisely in such a hidden coming that God's saving plan was received with Messianic joy by the privileged few, and in perfection by the privileged one, the *kecharitomene* of the Annunciation.

There is, of course, a realized eschatology in the Child, but our interest here is in Mary as eschatological realization. It is well known that Luke 1-2 is a tissue of allusions to the Old Testament, so carefully interwoven with the events related that only one well versed in the Bible would catch the unmistakable intention of the author to suggest, in almost every line, a fulfillment. This appears not only in the three canticles but also in the narratives—so that what we have here is really a kind of intentional "double exposure," superimposing present realization upon past preparation—the type of "comparing" which we are told Mary herself did (*Lk.* 2:19).

The two major points of eschatological convergence are that of *Daughter Sion* and the *Tabernacle*.

The former identification arises from an analysis of the account of the annunciation to Mary. It begins, as we know, with the greeting, "Rejoice," which is not the usual Hebrew greeting "Peace," but rather a precise Old Testament term heralding Messianic joy, as its Septuagint usages bear out (*Zeph.* 3:14; *Joel* 2:21; *Zach.* 9.9). The context of these three passages is basically the same. They are addressed to the Messianic people as "Daughter Sion" (or, in Joel, "the land of Israel") and announce Yahweh's coming to dwell in her midst. The contacts with *Zeph.* 3:14-17 are most numerous: "Re-

joyce," "fear not," "Yahweh in your midst" as "King" and "Savior." All these appear in the Annunciation account and correspond to the midrashic technique already witnessed in the Old Testament, by which the correspondence of two events is suggested by describing one in terms originally used to describe the other (e.g. the prophets' describing the Assyrian domination as a return to the enslavement of Egypt, or Second Isaiah describing the return from exile in terms originally used to describe the Exodus). But "Daughter Sion" has become *kecharitomene*, "favored one," and the one who comes to dwell in her is Jesus, Son of the Most High. However, even the name Jesus fits the pattern, for it means "Yahweh Savior." And the Hebrew term for "in your midst" in Zephaniah is *beqrbbek* (cf. also *Is.* 12.6), an expression which can also mean "in your womb" (cf. *Gen.* 25:22). What then in Zephaniah meant the indwelling of Yahweh in the temple, for which he used terminology going back to *Ex.* 33:3, developed a propos of the *shekinah* and now transposed to proclaim the new indwelling promised in the new temple—all this has been realized in the person of Mary, the Daughter of Sion of the final times.

This actualization upon the person of Mary of a prophecy addressed originally to the collectivity of the people of God is not surprising in the light of what was said above concerning corporate personality. It is even less surprising when it is recalled that just as the city represented the people, so the image of a woman (virgin and/or mother) frequently represented both.²⁰ The transition from a figure standing for the collectivity to the individual person of Mary realizing the collectivity was prepared by the Old Testament theology of the remnant. In fact, it was to the remnant that the prophecy of *Zeph.* 3:14-16 was addressed: "But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord: the remnant of Israel" (*Zeph.* 3:12-13). For

²⁰*Lam.* 2 13, 19; *Is.* 66.7; *Mic.* 4:9-10, cf. 4 *Esdras* 9 and 10, 1 QH III, 9-10.

Luke the remnant, the Daughter Zion to whom the Messianic joy is announced, is Mary²¹

As already indicated above, the eschatological Daughter Zion was portrayed as the dwelling-place of Yahweh. This aspect provides the connection with the second major Marian theme of Luke 1-2—Mary as the eschatological tabernacle. Already implied in *Lk.* 1:35, the allusion to the *shekinah* of *Ex.* 40:35, this theme is nailed down by the midrashic portrayal of the Visitation in terms of David's transfer of the Ark of the Covenant of Jerusalem (*2 Sam.* 6:2-11).²² Bearing in mind the constant interplay between individual and collectivity which characterizes the historical evolution of these Old Testament themes, it follows that for Luke, Mary is the crystallization of the people of God, the purified and humble remnant, both in her function of bringing forth the Messiah and in her perfect acceptance of the entire plan of God²³ She then belongs to the *eschaton*,²⁴ and the question may justly be asked whether for Luke Mary is simply the summit of the Old Testament realizations or whether she is also portrayed here as the model and type to which the Church may look, so that *Lk.* 1-2 would reflect a *Sitz-im-Leben der Kirche* whereby the Apostolic Church aspired to the perfection of her faith. When we consider the importance Luke gives to these two chapters as a kind of extended prologue to his Gospel (the Gospel begins "again,"

²¹ These texts point to a scriptural foundation for the holiness of Mary, for Zephaniah characterizes the remnant by humility and sinlessness, just as Jeremiah described the new covenant to be new precisely in the perfect human response it would (finally) achieve. *Jer* 31 31 ff.

²² Laurentin, *op. cit.*, 79-81

²³ This is confirmed by the interest *Lk.* 1-2 shows in the people of God: the word *people* (*laos*) occurs seven times, *Israel* also seven times; other evidences are the "we" of the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*, the representative character of Zachary and Elizabeth, the central place of Jerusalem and the Temple

²⁴ After coming to this conclusion, I discovered that Fr Geoffrey Wood stated the same point last year in his paper to this group, *Mary in the Plan of God's Graciousness*, in *MS 16* (1965) 71-73

so to speak, at 3:1), the fact that all generations will call her blessed (1:49) and especially the praise of Mary's enlightened faith and obedience in diptychal contrast with Zachary, who nevertheless with Elizabeth represents the highest Old Testament ideal (1:6)—and the contrast, moreover, with the imperfect faith and understanding of the disciples during the public life (8:9; 9:45; 17:5; 22:34) and even after the resurrection (24:38; *Acts* 1:6)—the conclusion seems inescapable that Luke wishes to portray the perfection of the eschatological community sketched out already in the silence and humility of the coming to Mary—so that *Lk.* 1-2 can be said to contain the essence of the Good News and its response in miniature. This shows then to what extent the Apostolic Church, at least as Luke presents it to us, found its eschatological self-realization in Mary.

The Gospel of John presents Mary in other eschatological motifs. Aside from the prologue, which presents the Incarnation as the eschatological inhabitation of the Word among men, the two Marian passages (2:1-11; 19:25-27) are likewise concerned with eschatology. The debate continues about the enigmatic, "What to me and to you, woman?", but there can be no doubt that the question concerned eschatology—and specifically the question of the divine timetable—"My hour has not yet come." The hour of Jesus is that of His glorification, His passion, death, and resurrection (7:30; 8:20, 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1); but the working of the miracle is the first of the Messianic signs, which inaugurates His public career and gains the response of faith in the disciples (2:11).

The event is shot through with eschatological fulfillment: abundance of wine was to be the mark of Messianic times (*Amos* 9:13-14; *Gen.* 49:10-12, etc.); the water jars are those of Jewish purification rites, marvelously surpassed by the "better wine" of the New Covenant. The larger section to which this passage belongs is permeated with themes of Genesis and

the first creation,²⁵ and there is little reason to doubt the use of the title "Woman" is meant to suggest a parallel with Eve.²⁶ In view of the importance of Wisdom motifs in the Fourth Gospel, it is possible also that there is an allusion to *Prov.* 9:4-5, where Wisdom provides wine for those whom she invites to her feast

The Calvary episode forms an obvious inclusion with Cana; John presents the crucifixion scene in terms of consummation (19:30); in fact, the whole Paschal mystery beginning with chapter 13 has been called the "Book of Glory," of which the preceding chapters form the "Book of Signs"²⁷ We can see then in what sense the public life of Jesus prepares the consummation: not so much as a thickening plot (the plan of the synoptics) but as a series of scenes in which the meaning of the Paschal mystery and the possible responses to it are already adumbrated in the individual events, persons and works of the public ministry. Calvary, then, represents in consummation what Cana represents in sign. The echoes of Cana at Calvary are more than one: the presence of the Mother of Jesus, the address "Woman," the water and the wine at Cana, the water and the blood on Calvary, and, of course, the "hour" of fulfillment. For our purposes here, this suffices to indicate in what sense Mary belongs to the *eschaton*. She was given the role of fulfilling not only the typology of the Old Testament but also the promise of the sign of Cana—to the woman who asks for wine for the wedding guests is given the motherhood of the disciples of Jesus, the privileged guests at the Messianic ban-

²⁵ Among other indications the prologue, "In the beginning"; the light-darkness theme, the Spirit of God over the water at Jesus' baptism, the division of the events from Jesus' baptism to Cana into seven days.

²⁶ Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel of St. John and the Johannine Epistles, New Testament Reading Guide* n. 13 (Collegeville, 1960) *ad loc.*

²⁷ This is the division proposed by R. E. Brown, *op. cit.* It is also basically that of C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), who gives an illuminating conclusion on the character and structure of the Book of Signs on pp. 383-389.

quiet where the blood of the Lamb is poured out in abundance for them

John's "realized eschatology" of Mary is built on Genesis and Wisdom motifs, where Luke's was built on the prophetic motif of the *anawim*.²⁸ And whereas Luke's center of interest is the mystery of the Incarnation and the infancy of Jesus, John's interest in Mary concerns the mystery of the Redemption, the "hour" of His triumph and the painful birth of the new people of God

This leads us immediately to the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse

Recent studies on the Apocalypse have stressed the similarity in structure of this work with the great example of Apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament, the book of Daniel. One of the results of this study has been a greater understanding of the literary unity of the book. The two-text theory still proposed as recently as *La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem* commentary by Father Boismard is no longer seen to be necessary to explain the appearance of a great number of doublets. Rather the body of the book, in this view, falls into a twofold division, quite like that of Daniel—namely one which looks to past historical events as an encouragement, and the second, which, using the first as a springboard, gives an apocalyptic forecast of the outcome of present trial and distress. The first part in the Apocalypse, after the introduction (chapters 1-3), runs from chapters four through eleven and describes God's visitation upon Israel, historically verified in the fall of the Temple. The second part, chapters twelve through twenty, describes God's impending judgment on Rome, and has its historical stimulus in the persecution of the Church under Domitian. Chapters 21-22 are the

²⁸ Nevertheless, A. Feuillet would prefer to see the author of the Fourth Gospel affirming 19.25-27 as the fulfillment of the oracles of *Is.* 26.17 and 66.7-9 via *Jn.* 16.21 f. and *Apoc.* 12.6-7. The text would then have a more immediate ecclesiological connotation. *Le Messie et sa mère d'après le chapitre XII de l'Apocalypse*, in *RB* 66 (1959) 82 f.

conclusion²⁹

This helps us immediately to situate the much-discussed chapter 12 into the overall scheme of the author, to appreciate its centrality and also its specific eschatological purpose. It serves to open up the era of the universal Church in the divine plan, wherein Christ is no longer hailed with the Jewish titles of Lion of Judah and Root of David (5.5) but as one who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. It is to furnish the backdrop and setting for the drama of the Church's historical and eschatological struggle that the chapter introduces the birth of the child in terms of pain and anguish. The new order of things emerged from a sorrowful beginning, the Paschal victory was won at the price of Calvary.

The Marian as well as the ecclesiological interpretation of this chapter is admitted by a large number of authors today³⁰. But there is still a considerable divergence as to the relative predominance of Marian and ecclesiological motifs. One point can now be considered certain: the reference to the pains of childbirth is no argument against the Marian interpretation of the passage³¹. On the other hand, an exclusively ecclesiological interpretation does not seem adequate in view of the Johannine tradition which underlies the Apocalyptic view and elsewhere

²⁹ Cf. A. Feuillet, *L'Apocalypse: état de la question* (Paris, 1963) 48-52, *Essai d'interprétation du chapitre 11 de l'Apocalypse*, in *NTS* 4 (1958) 183-200, *Le chapitre X de l'Apocalypse, son apport dans la solution du problème eschatologique*, in *Sacra Pagina* (Paris, 1959) 414-429; M. Rissi, *Zeit und Geschichte in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zurich, 1952) 123-133; M. Hopkins, *God's Kingdom in the New Testament* (Chicago, 1964) 185-202; *The Historical Perspective of Apocalypse 1-11*, in *CBQ* 27 (1965) 42-47.

³⁰ For the history of the exegesis of this chapter see B. J. Le Frois, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Rome, 1954) 1-8; P. Prigent, *Apocalypse 12 Histoire de l'exégèse* (Tübingen, 1959). A review of works on *Apoc.* 12 from 1950-1959 is presented by J. Michl, *Die Deutung der Apokalyptischen Frau in der Gegenwart*, in *BZ* 3 (1959) 301-310.

³¹ The reason for this is either that the primitive expression could be used of Mary's parturition without prejudice to her virginity (Kassing), or that the allusion is to the maternal sufferings on Calvary (Feuillet et al.).

knows the "Woman" as the Mother of Jesus, and the Old Testament oracles *Gen.* 3:15 and *Is.* 7 (the sign), both of which seem to have an individual woman in view. The tendency in modern studies is to find Mary *within* the ecclesiological motif of the passage. Thus A. Feuillet gives the entire passage an ecclesiological interpretation and then goes on to say: "It now seems to us almost impossible that the author did not at the same time think of the Virgin Mary."³²

But for Feuillet the Messianic motherhood of Mary proclaimed on the cross is, it seems to me, merely the attribution to the person of Mary by Jesus on the cross, of the Messianic rebirth already achieved independently of her, so that Mary at the foot of the cross becomes merely the symbol and beneficiary of the new generation which is the Church. Mary, then, can indeed stand as a type or representative of the group, but only, as it were, in the second moment of theological reflection. It does not seem to me that the author adequately accounts for the Jewish conception of corporate personality of which we spoke earlier, wherein the individual is not a "personification" of the collectivity, but a genuine realization of it—a "concrete universal." B. J. LeFrois had already studied and applied this principle to the Woman of the Apocalypse,³³ and A. Kassing has taken a similar path in viewing Mary concretely as an individual member in a collectivity rather than as the representative or archetype of a society.³⁴ Was it not at least equally probable that the personal Mother of the Messiah and her sufferings suggested to John the fulfillment (beyond expectations) of the Old Testament Woman motifs, rather than the

³² A. Feuillet, *art. cit.*, in *RB* 66 (1959) 82

³³ B. J. LeFrois, *op. cit.*, 236-262

³⁴ Cf. A. Kassing, *Die Kirche und Maria. Ihr Verhältnis im 12. Kapitel der Apokalypse*, (Düsseldorf, 1958), he interprets 12:5 of the Incarnation; *Das Weib und der Drache (Apk. 12:1-6, 13-17)*, in *BK* 15 (1960) 114-116, Kassing's contribution is reviewed and approved by M. Peinador, *El problema de Maria y la Iglesia. La interpretación de Apocalipsis XII, 1.*, in *EphM* 10 (1960) 161-194

other way around? A study of the manner in which the theological significance of the Old Testament motifs dawned on the Apostles reveals that far from seeing the Christ-event as a logical conclusion of preestablished motifs, it was rather the concrete, existential experience of the Christ-event which evoked the Old Testament motifs. I do not mean to imply by this, however, that the *primary* meaning of *Apoc.* 12 is Marian. In interpreting the chapter, it seems much sounder to give all due consideration first to the ecclesiological meaning. I am merely suggesting that the role of the person of Mary, if it is here at all, is not an afterthought.

Whether the entire chapter 12 is susceptible of a Marian interpretation is far from certain, and we cannot hope to resolve the problem here.⁸⁵ What is relevant to our purpose is to show that in *Apoc.* 12, as the Messianic people faces the woes of persecution by Rome, it should know that it embodies a twofold mystery—that of glory and suffering. The Church is enveloped with divine glory and power (the sun), yet is destined to suffer and struggle. As it wends its way toward its eschatological

⁸⁵ Verse 6 concerning the flight into the wilderness is particularly difficult. Père Braun's explanation in *La mère des fidèles* (2nd ed., Paris, 1954) 166, taken up by LeFrois (*op. cit.*, 181), that it refers to the heavenly mansion prepared by God (cf. *Jn.* 14.2-3) and hence to Mary's union with her Son in heaven (which would imply the Assumption, at least in the fuller sense) has met with severe criticism. See M. E. Boismard in *RB* 62 (1955) 295-296; A. Feuillet, *art. cit.*, in *RB* 66 (1959) 74-76, who appeals to the immediate context and scriptural allusions. The eagle wings refer to *Ex.* 19.4 and *Deut.* 32.11, Yahweh's carrying Israel into the desert and to the promised land, and *Is.* 40.31, where the image concerns the return from exile. In *Apoc.*, the food prepared for the Woman evokes the manna (a Eucharistic motif in *John* 6). The main difficulty lies in the 1260 days during which the Woman is fed, the number is taken from *Dan.* 7:25; 12.7, which refer to persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes—hence they represent the time of trial prior to the perfect inbreaking of the kingdom of God. Hence the woman here would be the Church, nourished and protected by God during her earthly pilgrimage, while awaiting the Parousia. As the people were fed the manna in the desert, so the Church is fed the Eucharist, prelude to the heavenly banquet and the Parousia (*1 Cor.* 11.26, *Mk.* 14.25 par.).

consummation in heaven (chs. 21-22), it has many reasons for confidence and perseverance even in the face of death (12·11): the promise of ultimate victory (vv. 7-12) and of God's care and protection even now (v. 6), and above all the experience of its head, Christ, who was born to the light of glory through the birthpangs of the cross—and the Woman in whom these birthpangs were truly maternal and life-giving as she stood at the foot of the cross.

CONCLUSION

If biblical eschatology has the twofold dimension of eschatology-fulfilled and eschatology-forecast, the person and role of the Virgin Mary is presented in the New Testament under both these aspects. The earliest documents, including both Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2, reveal Mary in her virginal maternity and especially in her response of faith as witness to the realized eschatology of the new people of God. She is not only the virgin-queen-mother foretold by Isaiah (Matthew's approach) but the virgin Daughter Sion, the remnant, to whom the Messiah is promised and of whom He would be born, thus inaugurating the definitive indwelling in His people. Yet even as Luke was working the infancy accounts into his Gospel, he was also proclaiming to the Church of the sixties and the seventies that the blessedness of the disciple is to believe, to hear the word of God and keep it (*Lk.* 8·21). The model for that belief was found in the response of Mary, proclaimed blessed for her faith and repeatedly portrayed as model for acceptance of the word of God, even when there was not a perfect comprehension of the events (*Lk.* 1:38; 2:19, 50, 51). Nowhere else in the Gospel is there found the perfection of her response. There is no doubt, then, that Luke presents Mary not only as the quintessence of Old Testament faith, the remnant concentrated in one person, but also as a model of New Testament faith, and hence of the Church. It is but a step from this to conclude that the Church in her present pilgrimage aspires to have the faith of

Mary, and that Mary then stands for the eschatological goal to which the Church looks. However, as this is not expressly affirmed by Luke, it is better to leave such an inference to theological reflection on the text.

It is in the Apocalypse that we have Mary set in the eschatological forecast of the Church. True, she is nowhere mentioned in the phase of consummation described in chapters 21-22, though there can be no reasonable doubt that the heavenly Jerusalem there is identical with the woman of chapter 12. But in *Apoc.* 12 the opening of the era of the Church is described as a painful birth, recalling the sorrows of Calvary, necessary prelude to the new birth of the resurrection. The Church on its pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, where there will be neither night nor tears (21:4, 23), must take courage in its present struggle from the fact that the Messianic age was begun at the price of Calvary, the new birth on Easter morning by the birthpangs of Good Friday. At that moment, the image of the woman bearing the Messianic people in pain was no longer merely a metaphor but, as in Luke 1-2, was dramatized and realized in the person of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The sorrowful mother who became Mother of the disciples of Jesus, her other offspring, is an encouragement to the Church in distress—for she is, in and because of her suffering, just what the Church is, the Woman clothed with the sun and pregnant with victory, the *great sign* of the final age.

REV. GEORGE T. MONTAGUE, S.M.
St. Mary's University
San Antonio, Texas