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OUR LADY AND CHRIST'S SAVING ROLE

Those who dislike to admit Our Lady's share in the saving work of Christ frequently charge: How can one speak of Co-redemption, when we still lack a satisfactory theory of Redemption?

Now, it is true that Co-redemption can be understood only in relation to Redemption. And it is also true that current theology of Redemption is not altogether satisfactory. For centuries, most theologians accepted the scholastic elaborations.¹ Today, such presentations are usually either passed over in silence, or are quickly dismissed as "too juridical." Such a dismissal, of course, is far from being a refutation.

Highly favored today are the explanations that speak of Christ as the Way, or as the Head of the Mystical Body. Christ opened up the way, traversing the stages of suffering and death, and so reaching the goal of glorification. We walk in the way which He opened up. Or again, Christ our Head has suffered and died, and thus attained glory. Since the Head has done this, it is necessary that the members should also do the same, if only they remain true members, who are like their Head.

Without denying the truth of these explanations, we must say that they do not exhaust the truth. For the Redemption is a marvelously rich reality and, as such, can be viewed from several different aspects, in such a way that each aspect makes some contribution to the total understanding.

Strangely, there is one aspect that has not been developed sufficiently: the covenant aspect of Redemption. That there is such an aspect is too evident to require proof. We need only recall, for example, the words of Christ in the Cenacle: "This

¹ Cf. for example, St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 48

is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins."²

The mention of the *new*³ covenant obviously suggests that we might look for light in a study of the *old* covenant.

The Old Covenant

Though there are several covenants mentioned in the Old Testament the covenant *par excellence* is undoubtedly the Sinai covenant

Interpretations⁴ of the Sinai covenant have varied considerably, nor has the end yet been reached. It is both unfortunate and surprising that some studies of the Sinai covenant seem influenced by aprioristic considerations. One is led to suspect this from the fact that many Protestant interpreters,⁵ as well as some Catholic,⁶ want to present the Sinai covenant, not as anything like a bilateral agreement, but rather, simply as unilateral, i.e., as a set of demands imposed upon Israel by God, the absolute master, much as an overlord might impose his terms on a vassal,⁷ in such a way that the subjects could do nothing other than simply accept. While it would be difficult to prove, it is hard not to wonder if some of the Protestants are not affected by their cardinal principle that there can be no human cooperation in divine affairs.

Other exegetes, both Catholic and Protestant, seem to fear

² Mt. 26, 28.

³ The word "new" seems absent in the better manuscripts of Mt 26, 28, as also in Mk. 14, 24, but it is found in Lk. 22, 20 and 1 Cor 11, 25

⁴ For a good survey see D. J. McCarthy, S.J., *Covenant in the Old Testament. Present State of Inquiry*, in CBQ 27 (1965) 217-40

⁵ Cf H. B. Huffmon, *The Exodus, Sinai and the Credo*, in CBQ 27 (1965) 101-13.

⁶ E.g., J. Bonsirven, S.J., *Theology of the New Testament*, transl by S. F. Tye (Westminster, 1963) 280, L. Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la théologie de Saint Paul* (2d ed., Paris, 1954) 110.

⁷ This notion is proposed chiefly in studies attempting to find the literary prototype of the covenant in near eastern vassal treaties Cf note 10 below.

that a bilateral interpretation of Sinai would smack of the sort of legalism reproved by St Paul,⁸ and they fear, too, that a bilateral interpretation would fall under the objection that God cannot really owe anything to a creature: but, the objection continues, in a contractual framework, He would owe something; therefore, we must reject any contractual interpretation of Sinai

Now, it is a basic principle of exegesis that we should not begin with aprioristic objections, but rather, should first try to determine what the text must mean, considered in itself and in its setting, and after that, consider possible objections.

We need, therefore, to institute a strict exegetical study of the Sinai covenant.

Acting under the impetus given in the *Divino afflante Spiritu*⁹ of Pope Pius XII, exegetes commonly inquire into the literary genre to which the covenant belongs. Many¹⁰ have thought that it follows the pattern displayed in Hittite vassal treaties of the 14th-13th centuries B C. However, this approach yields nothing decisive for our purposes, for two reasons: (1) It has not been proved that the Sinai covenant really does follow that literary form. One of the best of recent studies, by D J McCarthy, S J., concludes: "... the great, original covenant of Sinai ... does not show the covenant form."¹¹ And further, McCarthy notes: "... it should be an axiom for form study that similar situations call forth similar responses, and thus formal similarity hardly proves a causal nexus between similar manifestations in differ-

⁸ See, for example, the discussion in H. Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1946) 153-55.

⁹ See *EB* 558-60

¹⁰ G E Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, in *BA* 17 (1945) 26-46, 49-76, K. Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular*, in *Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, 4 (Neukirchen, 1960); W. Moran, S J., *De foederis Mosarici traditione*, in *VD* 40 (1962) 3-17

¹¹ D J McCarthy, S J., *Treaty and Covenant*, in *AB* 21 (Rome, 1963) 172

ent cultures."¹² (2) While many vassal treaties are really unilateral dictations, in which the overlord assumes no obligation, this is not true of all these treaties. For example, the treaty between Mursilis and Duppi-Tessub says: "So honor the oath to the king and the king's kin! And I, the king, will be loyal toward you, Duppi-Tessub."¹³

Hence we see that it is quite doubtful if the Sinai covenant does follow the Hittite pattern; and further, even if it were so proved, that would not show whether Sinai is in bilateral or unilateral form, since vassal treaties come in both forms.

We turn next to the actual account in Exodus. At once we note a critical line, in *Ex* 19:5-6: "If you hearken to my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession." We notice easily that Exodus presents this covenant as a bilateral arrangement, for Yahweh says through Moses: "If you do this, I will do that. If you obey my law, I will make you my specially favored people"

But we must still try to see how this simple statement is understood throughout the rest of the Old Testament. If it really is meant in any truly bilateral or in any sort of contractual sense, then we should find two things: (1) That the Hebrew people are bound to keep the law; (2) That Yahweh binds Himself under the condition that they do keep the law.

The first point, that the Hebrew people were bound, is so obvious, so admitted by all, that no proof is required

But we must still ask: Does the Old Testament show a belief that God had, in some way, also bound Himself?

We can approach the question well by a study of the actual Old Testament usage of the Hebrew word *hesed*, which means: "the dutiful love and benevolence of men among one another, by which blood relatives, kinsmen, friends, those bound by pact

¹² *Ibid.*, 58

¹³ J B Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1955) 204

etc, are prepared to help and please one another. . . ."¹⁴ By this word *hesed*, then, the Hebrews described the relation in which they lived with their God, a relationship like that of members of the same family. As a result of this concept, they really did look on God as their Father, so that the Psalmist could say: "Though my father and mother forsake me, yet will Yahweh take me up"¹⁵ And Second Isaia added: "You are our Father. Were Abraham not to know us, nor Israel to acknowledge us, you, Yahweh, are our Father; our *go'el* is your name forever"¹⁶ We may note in passing that this concept of living in a family relationship with God was strengthened by the fact that God Himself, as we saw in the verse just quoted from Isaia, was called the *go'el* of His people. Now the *go'el*, in Hebrew law, was "the next of kin, to whom the Mosaic law gave the right or enjoined the duty of redeeming his kinsmen and protecting them in all their rights."¹⁷ The same family concept was likewise strengthened by the blood ceremony used in the making of the Sinai covenant. For, since in Hebrew thought, "the life of a living body is in its blood,"¹⁸ when Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice, already accepted by God, on the people, the symbolism meant that two lives were being fused, as it were, into one: the life of God and the life of His people.

We must return, however, to our investigation of the usage of *hesed*. We shall have to keep th Hebrew term even in translation, since there is, as we can see, no English equivalent for it. Nor, for that matter, is there any Greek equivalent, a fact that caused the concept to be dimmed in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, and thereafter, in other versions made from the Septuagint.

We find first that the Hebrews were confident that at least

¹⁴ F. Zorell, S.J., *Lexicon Hebraicum et Aramaicum Veteris Testamenti* (Roma, 1961) *s.v.* *hesed*.

¹⁵ *Ps.* 26, 10

¹⁶ *Is.* 63, 16.

¹⁷ Zorell, *s.v.* *go'el*.

¹⁸ *Lv.* 17, 11.

de facto God would observe this covenant relationship. Thus we read in *Ps.* 24.10: "All the ways of Yahweh are *hesed* and *emeth* [fidelity] to those who keep His covenant and His decrees."¹⁹

A further step appears when they appeal to the covenant in their requests for help. "Return, O Yahweh, save my life, rescue me because of your *hesed*."²⁰ Parallel appeals are also made to God's moral righteousness, His *sedaqah*. "In you, O Yahweh, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your *sedaqah* rescue me."²¹

But the fully clear indication we have been seeking is found in the several Psalm lines in which *hesed* and *sedaqah* are placed in Hebrew parallelism. For example: "Keep up your *hesed* towards your friends, your *sedaqah* to the upright of heart."²² Here, since both halves of the verse express the same thought, we gather that for God to carry out His part under the covenant relationship is a matter of *sedaqah*, moral righteousness. Now, if moral righteousness calls for His action, then He is morally bound.

Hence *Ps.* 61.13 can say: "And you, O Lord, have *hesed*, for you will pay a man according to his work." Deuteronomy is so bold as to use identical language to describe the situation of God and of His people in the making of the covenant: "You have caused Yahweh today to say He will be a God to you; and Yahweh has caused you today to say you will be to Him a people, a special possession."²³

This belief that God had actually bound Himself is reflected also in the fact that the Septuagint at times uses the Greek *dikaosyne* (justice) to translate *hesed*. For example, in *Ex.*

¹⁹ *Ps.* 35, 6; 56, 11

²⁰ *Ps.* 6, 5 Cf 73, 20.

²¹ *Ps.* 70, 1-2, cf. 118, 40; 114, 3-6

²² *Ps.* 35, 11; cf 142, 11-12; 32, 5; 142, 1

²³ *Dt.* 26, 17-18

34 6-7, God describes Himself as "continuing *hesed* [*dikaiosyne*] for a thousand generations." And the victory hymn of *Ex* 15.13-17 says: "In your *hesed* [*dikaiosyne*] you led the people you redeemed."²⁴

The same notion of obligation was expressed by Osee the prophet in the bold figure in which he spoke of God as the spouse of His people. For, as Father Stuhlmueller points out so well: "Marriage is a mutual contract, a two-way agreement, what is true for one party, is true for the other. God dares to oblige Himself by such an agreement."²⁵

At this point it is good to recall that we had noted at the outset three *a priori* reasons why some fear they cannot accept any interpretation that would make the Sinai covenant appear in any way as a sort of bilateral contract. It is convenient to put off till later the objection from St. Paul. As to the others: First, Protestants are committed to the position that there can be no human cooperation in divine matters. Catholics, however, are under no such presupposition. Rather, the clear testimony of the Old Testament that God did oblige Himself cannot be set aside.

Secondly, some object that God could not owe anything to a creature. We readily concede that He cannot—but add at once that He can owe something to Himself. The result in practice is the same: If He freely puts Himself into a contractual framework, He owes it to Himself to keep His pledged word. He is truly bound.

To understand this better, we need to notice that there are two levels on which we can ask: Why did God make the covenant, and why does He carry out His part under it? If we ask this question on the *fundamental* level, there can be only one answer, the answer given in Deuteronomy. "It was not because you are the largest of all nations that the Lord set His

²⁴ Cf. also *Is* 38, 19.

²⁵ C. Stuhlmueller, C.P., *The Prophets and the Word of God* (Notre Dame, 1964) 103.

heart on you, and chose you. . . . It was because the Lord loved you. . . ."²⁶ So, on the fundamental or basic level, the reason why God made the covenant, and the reason also why He kept it was simply His spontaneous, unmerited, unmeritable love. There could be, of course, no thought of any gain for Him. As we read in Job: "Can a man be profitable to God . . . ? Is it of advantage to the Almighty if you are just? Or is it a gain to him if you make your ways perfect?"²⁷

But we can ask the same question on a less basic or secondary level. On that level, we obviously must say that God keeps the covenant because He bound Himself.

But why did the spontaneous love of God wish to make use of this particular kind of means? It was obviously a device taken by His love. We may quite reasonably speculate about it as follows: We notice that human beings also put themselves under obligation when they vow to God to do something good. They do this out of intense love. They know that they are all too prone to waver, after a time, in a good course. In an intense desire of continuing in the path of pleasing God, they impose on themselves an obligation by vow, to try to insure that they will not later go back on their resolve.

Now, of course, there could be no thought that God might go back on a resolve of His. But even so, there can be a valid use for an assurance to man. For men are apt to think—not entirely without reason—that the ways of God are so lofty, so above ours. Who can understand Him? And so it is possible for men not to trust God as they should. But if God puts Himself into the contractual framework of a covenant, and thereby binds Himself, He gives a most firm assurance of His favor. His intense love leads Him to give such an assurance, not, of course, that He may gain anything from the obedience of His people, but rather that they may be disposed to gain, i e., that by their obedience they may be disposed to receive the favors His love

²⁶ *Dt.* 7, 7

²⁷ *Jb.* 22, 2-3

wishes to give. For if they were to refuse, they would obviously deserve not favor but penalty.

To sum up, then: Scripture does teach clearly that God as well as His people is under moral obligation as a result of the covenant. The obligation of God is contingent on the fulfillment of the human condition in the covenant: "If you hearken to my voice," that is. If you obey Scripture likewise teaches explicitly that the basic reason why God made the covenant and gave His favors under it was simply His unmerited, spontaneous love. The secondary or added reason for conferring His favors was the fact that He had bound Himself. If we ask why He chose that sort of arrangement, we may plausibly say that He wanted to bind Himself in order to prove His love, and that He wanted to prove His love in order to move His people to respond in obedience, so that thereby they might be disposed to receive the favors His love wanted to give.

Parallelism of the Old and the New Covenants

We must next determine: Is the new covenant really parallel to the old, at least in the essential points? The essential points would be these: Is there a contractual arrangement? or, to put it another way: Does the Father, on condition of human obedience, bind Himself to take a new chosen people, to whom He pledges His favors?

An exegetical, not a speculative difficulty meets our eye at once. For in the New Testament it is the Greek word *diatheke* that expresses the idea of covenant. But that word *diatheke* in secular Greek usage of the time normally meant "last will and testament" rather than "covenant." For this reason many exegetes have asserted that the concept of covenant was modified or even lost by the time of the New Testament: therefore, the term "new covenant" cannot express something really parallel to the old.

We must note at the outset that this objection is largely the product of a new outmoded piece of scholarship. As early as

about 1920, the best exegetes had begun to reject such a view. For example, Da Fonseca, in a series of articles in *Biblica* in which he made an exhaustive study of the actual Scriptural usage of the word *diatheke*, arrived at the conclusion: "They [the New Testament writers] conceived the new *diatheke* in a manner entirely parallel [to the old]." He found in the Septuagint no example in which *diatheke* meant "last will."²⁸ Similarly, the article in Kittel on *diatheke* says: "The NT owes to the OT the form and content of the concept of *diatheke*. The difference between OT and NT is the step from prophecy to fulfillment."²⁹ More recently, G. E. Mendenhall, noted for his study of the old covenant in the light of the Hittite treaties, wrote, in regard to the use of *diatheke* in the Epistle to the Hebrews (in which are found two out of the three passages in the New Testament in which *diatheke* happens to be used in the sense of "last will"): "There is an incidental argument drawn from the Greek usage of *diatheke* to refer to a 'last will and testament.' There can be no doubt, however, that this is simply an apologetical argument, and cannot be taken seriously as the framework of the author's conception of the covenant, which is entirely within the OT pattern of thought."³⁰

As to the matter of the secular usage of *diatheke*, we need only note: (1) that not all scriptural usage of words matches the secular;³¹ (2) even in secular usage, *diatheke* can be found as early as the fifth century B. C. in the sense of a bilateral pact.³²

²⁸ L. G. Da Fonseca, *Diatheke—Foedus an testamentum*, in *Bibl* 9 (1928) 158.

²⁹ G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT*, 2 (Stuttgart, 1935) 137.

³⁰ G. E. Mendenhall, *Covenant*, in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon, 1962) 723, cf also J. H. Moulton, G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, 1957) 148, A. Van den Born, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1963, tr and adapted by L. F. Hartman, C. S. S. R.), s.v. *covenant*.

³¹ Cf for example, the sense of *'iláskesthai*, as treated in S. Lyonnet, *SI, De peccato et redemptione*, 2 (Romae, 1960) 67-117.

³² Cf. Aristophanes, *Birds*, 439.

Finally, when Christ Himself said in the Cenacle that He was making a *new* covenant, the very use of the word *new* alluded to the *old* covenant. But, there never had been an old "last will and testament." Hence the word *new* would have been quite empty had He meant a last will and testament.

But we can learn more positively of the nature of the new covenant, and thereby see its parallelism with the old, by examining two sources: (1) the prophecy of Jeremiah on the new covenant, and (2) the actual New Testament presentation of the entire new economy.

Jeremiah, in chapter 31, foretells the new covenant in these words: "I will make a new covenant . . . It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers . . . for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master. . . . But this is the covenant . . . I will place my law within them and write it on their hearts: I will be their God, and they shall be my people."³³

We notice at once in the prophecy that the new covenant is to be in some ways different from the old. It is to be different in two respects: (1) "they broke my covenant," and (2) "I will place my law within them." Therefore, the old covenant was written on stone, and was actually broken. The new will be written by God Himself in hearts: it will not be dissolved.

Yet, in the essential respects, the new will be parallel to the old. For (1) God does pledge to take to Himself a new people: "They shall be my people." And (2), as in the old covenant, there is required, as a condition, that they observe the law, written in their hearts. "I will place my law within them and write it on their hearts."

If now we turn from the prophecy to the fulfillment, as presented in the New Testament, we find these two points realized.

First, by the new covenant, God makes for Himself a new people. Hence the first Epistle of St. Peter says to Christians: "You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy

³³ Jer. 31, 31-33. Cf. the commentary of John Bright in *Jeremiah*, in *The Anchor Bible* (New York, 1965) 287.

nation, a purchased people"³⁴ And the twenty-four elders in the Apocalypse sing: "You have redeemed us for God . . . and made them for our God a kingdom and priests. . . ."³⁵ This is an obvious echo of *Ex.* 19.5-6: "If you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession. . . . You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"

The same theme of the "purchased people" is echoed less explicitly, but yet unmistakably, when St. Paul tells the Corinthians: "You have been bought at a great price."³⁶

Secondly, Christians must obey the law which the Spirit writes in their hearts. For, as St. Paul told the Romans "The Spirit of God dwells in you . . . if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ"³⁷ This Spirit writes in Christians the "law of the Spirit"³⁸ so that Christians "do not walk according to the flesh"³⁹ Rather, "if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live"⁴⁰ We note the conditional form used; "if by the spirit you put to death, the deeds of the flesh, you will live" Similarly, "whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"⁴¹ The implication is that they who do not follow the lead of the Spirit cannot be the sons of God: they will not live. Again, St. Paul tells the Romans: "Do you not know that to whom you offer yourselves as slaves for obedience, to him whom you obey you are the slaves, whether to sin unto death, or to obedience unto justice? But thanks be to God that you who were the slaves of sin have now obeyed . . . that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered and . . . you have become the slaves of justice."⁴² Similarly, the Epistle to the Hebrews says of Christ:

³⁴ 1 *Pt.* 2, 9

³⁵ *Ap.* 5, 9-10

³⁶ 1 *Cor.* 6, 20.

³⁷ *Rom.* 8, 9

³⁸ *Rom.* 8, 2.

³⁹ *Rom.* 8, 1

⁴⁰ *Rom.* 8, 13

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Rom.* 6, 16-18

"He became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation."⁴³ Christ is here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, presented as the new Torah.⁴⁴

However, we must not forget that the new covenant was made, not directly by men with the Father, but by Christ. This is already evident from the words of Christ in the Cenacle: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins." We find, namely both elements mentioned above, i.e., (1) there is a new people of God, and (2) the acquisition of this people depends on a human condition of obedience. But, if Christians are, as St Paul says, a purchased people "bought at a great price," it is Christ who paid the price. He paid that, not by the mere physical shedding of His blood, but by the shedding of that blood in obedience, as St Paul also told the Romans. "... just as by the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted just."⁴⁵ For Christ became "obedient to death, even to death on a cross."⁴⁶ The Epistle to the Hebrews vividly outlines the passing of the old covenant and the establishment of the new, effected by means of this will of Christ to obey. "... in coming into the world he says: 'Sacrifice and oblation you did not want, but

⁴³ *Heb* 6, 8-9

⁴⁴ Cf W D Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1962) 147-76; We notice also that the Epistle to the Hebrews (as also certain other NT writings, such as *Mt.* [eg, 2 15, 20] and *Jn* [eg, 1, 17] and *Acts* 3, 22) presents Christ as the New Moses, thereby bringing the new covenant into parallel with the old. Cf the note in the *Bible de Jérusalem* on *Dt* 18, 18 "On the basis of this text of *Dt* the Jews expected the Messiah as a new Moses." Cf also Davies, chapters 7-9, and p 144, and H M. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Monograph Series*, 10 (Philadelphia, 1957)

⁴⁵ *Rom.* 5, 19. Cf. also Vatican II, Constitution on the Church, 1 "By His obedience He brought about redemption," and the Decree on the Missions, 4 24. "He [the missionary] must be convinced that obedience is the virtue of the servant of Christ, who by his obedience redeemed mankind."

⁴⁶ *Phil* 2, 8

a body you have fitted to me . . . ' Then said I: 'Behold I come to do your will, O God' In saying in the first place, 'Sacrifices and oblations . . . you did not want' . . . and then saying: 'Behold I come to do your will, O God,' He annuls the first covenant in order to establish the second. It is in this 'will' that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all⁴⁷

This new covenant was formally ratified in the Cenacle. Christ ratified it, not by signing a document, nor even by explicitly, in so many words, saying that He pledged to obey the will of the Father. Rather, He chose to dramatize His acceptance and obedience by a symbolic act. He took bread and said over it: "This is my body," then He took the cup of wine and said over it: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins." Now if one's body is in one place, and his blood in another place, this man is dead. Christ, knowing the will of the Father that He die on the morrow, expressed His acceptance and obedience, the human condition of the new covenant, by putting Himself under the appearances of death. On the next day He carried out that which He had pledged. Thus, as St. Paul expressed it, "by the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted just." His obedience even to the death of the cross was the price of Redemption. Just as the Father at Sinai had bound Himself to take to Himself a special people, on condition of their obedience, so in the new covenant He took to Himself a new people, on condition of obedience, the obedience of the New Adam, Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body.

Since the obedience of Christ is infinite in worth, the favor the Father pledges to His new people is measured by that infinity. He binds Himself to offer graces without limit.

But we note that Christ acts as the Head of the Mystical Body. For others to come under the new covenant with Him, it is required that they be both His members, and conformed to Him.

⁴⁷ *Heb* 10, 5-10

or like Him. They must, in other words, obey Christ, the new Torah,⁴⁸ who "became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation."⁴⁹ Or, to put it another way, the members of Christ must obey the "law of the Spirit"⁵⁰ which is written in their hearts as Jeremia had foretold, by "the Spirit of God [who] dwells in you."⁵¹ For "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."⁵² Christians, being brothers of Christ, are by that very fact sons of the Father, "heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ."⁵³ But again, only on a condition, for, as St. Paul continues immediately in the same verse, "provided, however, we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him."

The Renewal of the New Covenant

The focal point at which Christians join their obedience with the obedience of Christ is the Mass, which is, as Vatican II said, the renewal of the new covenant.⁵⁴ There as He, the Head, again, through His priest, repeats the same dramatization of His obedient acceptance of the will of the Father, in the same double consecration, the members of that Head join to His obedience their obedience already carried out in the time preceding that Mass, and pledge their continued and improved obedience in the time to follow that Mass. Thus the Mass becomes the focus into which is channeled all the obedience that precedes it, and in which is pledged obedience in the time to follow.

In the Sinai covenant we distinguished two levels. On the most fundamental level, it was solely the gratuitous, unmerited and unmeritable love of the Father that led Him to make the covenant, and, having made it, to carry out His commitment

⁴⁸ Cf. note 44 above.

⁴⁹ *Heb.* 6, 8-9.

⁵⁰ *Rom.* 8, 2.

⁵¹ *Rom.* 8, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Rom.* 8, 17.

⁵⁴ Constitution on the Liturgy, 1, 10.

under it. On the secondary level, the Father carried out His commitment precisely because He had pledged it and so owed it to Himself to do so. The obedience of His people was the means by which His love bound itself, or, as it were, to use legal terminology, the "consideration" in a contractual arrangement. He wanted such an arrangement as a means of exercising and proving His love, so as to move His people to respond and, in responding, to be disposed to receive what He so lovingly wanted to give.

Similarly, in the new covenant we again distinguish the two levels. On the fundamental level, the reason why the Father made the covenant was love. He looks with favor on His people not because Christ became obedient unto death. It is rather the reverse: Christ became obedient unto death because the Father always loved His people, and wanted to give them His favors. The Father did not have to be *moved* to love them: he did not have to be brought, by the price of Redemption, from a state of disaffection into a state of benevolence. He could not be moved into that state for He was already there. He always loved men. As St. Thomas puts it: ". . . Christ is not said to have reconciled us to God in that He would begin to love us *again*; for it is written, in *Jer* 31,3 'In *everlasting* love have I loved you. . .'"⁵⁵ So, even the obedient death of Christ did not move the Father. Rather, the death of Christ was the reason of the secondary level, for the grant of the Father's forgiveness and favors. The Father wanted to have this secondary level because He wanted to exercise and prove His love, so as to move His people to respond, so that in responding, they might be disposed to receive what He so lovingly wanted to give.

In the renewal of the new covenant we see the price of Redemption presented again, not indeed to move the Father—for He does not need to be moved, but as a reason, on the secondary level, for the grant of divine favors. But we note that the instrument by which the Father's love binds itself in the Mass to

⁵⁵ St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae* 3, q. 49, a. 4 ad 2

that grant of favor, is not solely the offering of the obedience of our Head: rather, *the Mass includes the offering of the obedience of the whole Christ, Head and members*. That double offering melts, as it were, into one offering, the obedience of the whole Christ, which is the "consideration" or title, on a secondary level, by which the intensity of the Father's love wills to bind itself.

What of the fact that the obedience of the Head is, by itself, infinite in worth? Does that exclude the offering of the obedience of the members? We have seen that it does not. In the realm of mathematics, it is true that infinity plus a finite quantity is not increased. But we are not in the realm of mathematics; we are in the domain of intense love, of love which is never satisfied with less, as long as there is any more that can be done. Had the Father been counting like a mathematician, He could have declared that an infinite claim to grace was established by the least of the free acts of Christ, long before the day of His death. In calling for the cross, the Father was, strictly speaking, going beyond infinity. Similarly, He wills that there be a finite addition to the infinite title provided by the offering of the Head in the renewal of the new covenant.

Coredemption

The second Vatican Council, in the decree on the Church, teaches that "The Blessed Virgin in conceiving Christ, bringing Him forth, feeding Him, presenting Him in the temple to the Father, and in suffering with her Son dying on the cross, cooperated in an altogether singular way, in obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls"⁵⁸

In making this statement, the Council was not giving any new teaching, but was repeating that which the Popes, for nearly a century, had taught. For example, St. Pius X, in *Ad diem illum*, said that Mary on Calvary "merited congruously,

⁵⁸ Vatican II, Constitution on the Church, 8. 61.

as they say, what Christ merited condignly"⁵⁷ Pope Pius XII, in the solemn dogmatic constitution in which he defined the Assumption, wrote:

We must remember especially that, since the second century the Virgin Mary has been presented by the Holy Fathers as the New Eve, who, although subject to the New Adam, was most closely associated with Him in that struggle against the infernal enemy which, as foretold in the protoevangelium, was to result in that most complete victory over sin and death, which are always correlated in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Wherefore, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and final sign of this victory, so also that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her Son had to be closed by the glorification of her virginal body.⁵⁸

These papal texts, in turn, are a development of what is contained more vaguely, and to some extent only implicitly, in the Patristic teaching which, as Pius XII said is the above cited text, goes back to the second century, and which is found in virtually every major Father. For example, St Irenaeus of Lyons, after comparing all sin to an involved, tangled knot, said that if one wishes to untie such a knot, he must take the end of the rope through every twist and turn that was used in tying it. Only then will it be loosed. And after developing this comparison, he adds: "Thus then the knot of the disobedience of Eve was untied by the obedience of Mary."⁵⁹

From the above statements, and other similar ones, we can gather, as the very minimum, the following data: Mary did co-

⁵⁷ ASS 36, 454. On the interpretation of this text, see J B Carol, O F M, *De Corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae* (Civitas Vaticana, 1950) 517-24. Since St Pius X was quoting ("as they say"), his words do not rule out the possibility that Mary's merit was more than congruous. See W G Most, *The Problem of Causality in the Corredemption*, in *EphM* 13 (1963) 61-76.

⁵⁸ AAS 42, 768

⁵⁹ *Against heresies* 3, 22, 4. Cf Dominic Unger, O F M Cap, *Sancti Irenaei Lugdunensis Episcopi, doctrina de Maria Virgine Matre, socia Iesu Christi Filii sui ad opus recaptulationis*, in *MEcl*, 4 (Romae, 1959) 67-140.

operate in our Redemption, "to restore supernatural life to souls"⁶⁰ She did this in a way that was "altogether singular."⁶¹ In fact, her association was so close that Calvary, the "struggle,"⁶² was a work "common to the Blessed Virgin and her Son." And it is to be regarded as a work in common in so strict a sense that with true necessity it follows that she, like Christ, *must* have attained glorification through it. That is, the common struggle on Calvary was a common cause. This common cause had a common effect: the effect in Him was the glorification of His Resurrection; so there had to be a parallel common effect in her, the glorification of her Assumption. It can be said that she merited in a lesser way that which Christ merited in strictest justice. Further, if one understands the word *merit* in the sense of the payment of something analogous to a price—the only sense the word had in strict theological writing at the time when St. Pius X wrote the passage in question—then we would say she in a lesser way paid the price which Christ paid in all justice.

One very plausible way to interpret these official teachings would be to set them into the Scriptural framework of the Redemption which we have just presented. It is easiest if we begin with the last stage, the renewal of the new covenant in the Mass. In that renewal, as we saw, there is a double title presented on the secondary level for the conferring of the Father's favors, namely, the obedience of Christ our Head, to which, even though His contribution is infinite, there is added the obedience of His members, in such a way that both melt into one great offering, a work that is, if we may echo the words of the Assumption constitution, common to the members and their Head.

But the Mass is, as the Second Vatican Council said, the renewal of the new covenant. Or, as the Council of Trent puts

⁶⁰ Cf. note 56 above.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Cf. note 58 above.

it, it is the re-presentation of Calvary, "only the manner of offering being changed."⁶³ But, in the renewal and re-presentation, there is a double price, the offering of the obedience of the Head and that of the members. Therefore, if the renewal and re-presentation differs only in the manner of offering, as Trent says (the exchange of an unbloody manner for a bloody one) then the original offering should also have been a double offering, an offering which was common to members and Head. That would mean that the original offering was a work "common to the Blessed Virgin and her Son"⁶⁴ Just as the infinity of the offering of the Head does not preclude the addition of the finite offering of the members in the renewal, so neither does the infinity of the oblation of Christ on Calvary preclude the addition of the finite oblation made by Mary, the Church at that time.

St. Paul tells us that we were redeemed or bought at a great price⁶⁵ That price is the blood of Christ, but it is not just its physical shedding, but its shedding in obedience, as we saw from the words of St. Paul to the Romans: "By the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted just."⁶⁶ Hence also Vatican II said "By His obedience, He brought about redemption."⁶⁷ But, Mary joined her obedience to His, as Vatican II also says: "[Mary] cooperated in an altogether singular way, in obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls."⁶⁸ Hence, since obedience was the price of Redemption—or the human condition or "consideration" in the contractual framework of the covenant—it is apparent that Mary contributed to the payment of the price of Redemption.

If the price of Redemption had to *move* the Father, on the fundamental level, then we might fear to accept a conclusion

⁶³ DB 940.

⁶⁴ Cf. note 58 above.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 6, 20.

⁶⁶ Rom. 5, 19.

⁶⁷ Cf. Note 45 above.

⁶⁸ Cf. note 56 above.

that Mary, a creature, could contribute to that price. However, the price did not move the Father, as we saw above, for He did not have to be moved into a state of benevolence towards mankind: He always was in that attitude of benevolence. Rather, even the obedience of Christ belongs to the secondary, not the fundamental level, for, on the fundamental level, the sole reason for all is the gratuitous love of the Father. The work of Christ is on the secondary level, rather than a moving cause. As St Thomas would put it. "[Deus] vult . . . hoc esse propter hoc, sed non propter hoc vult hoc." The work of Christ Himself is the *hoc propter hoc*, the means which the intense love of the Father willed to bind itself. "Sed non propter hoc vult hoc": it was not *because of* the payment of the price that the Father became willing to look with favor on men.

In the price, conceived in this way, there is readily room for the contribution of a mere creature.

It is obvious that the work of Mary, conceived in this way, is far more than active receptivity.⁷⁰ The mere fact that her contribution on Calvary is parallel to that of the members of Christ in the renewal of the new covenant makes this clear. For the members do not merely actively receive; they, thanks to the intense love of the Father, are enabled to contribute to the generation of a title to grace, by their obedience. So also does Mary contribute to the title of grace, the price of Redemption. Were we to say that both Mary and the members of Christ do no more than receive, we would not be far from the Lutheran position that man contributes nothing, cannot cooperate in his own salvation. And yet, since the contribution of creatures is only on a secondary level, it remains true on the fundamental

⁶⁹ St Thomas, *Summa theologiae* 1, q 19, a 5 c

⁷⁰ On the receptivity theories, see C J Vollert, S J, *Mary and the Church*, in *Mariology*, 2 (ed J B Carol, OFM, Milwaukee, 1957) 550-95, *idem*, *A Theology of Mary* (New York, 1965) 113-73, W. G Most, *De corredemptione et regalitate in Epistula Encyclica ad Caeli Reginam*, in *Mm* 17 (1955) 354-68, and D Fernández, CFM, *María y la Iglesia en la moderna bibliografía alemana*, in *EM* 18 (1957) 55-107.

level that they have nothing that they have not received

We admitted at the outset that our picture of Coredeemption was to a certain extent speculation, in that it is presented as one way to explain the words of the Magisterium on Coredeemption. Yet, it is not just mere speculation, in several respects: (1) It does fit so well into the scriptural framework of Redemption; (2) It readily accounts for all the patristic data on the New Eve, (3) It gives an unstrained and full interpretation to every text of the Magisterium. For, in our interpretation, we can say most fully with Vatican II that Mary "cooperated in an altogether singular way, in obedience, faith, hope and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls;" we can say most readily with St. Pius X: "she merited congruously . . . what Christ merited condignly," we make our own in the most ample sense the words of the Assumption constitution: "that struggle . . . was common to the Blessed Virgin and her Son," so fully common that her Assumption, along with the Resurrection of Christ, was an essential part and final sign of the victory of Calvary. For the common cause, in which she took an essential part, had to have a common effect

Two Objections

Finally, we may consider two objections. Early in this study we noted that some feared that a contractual interpretation of the covenant would smack of the legalism rejected by St. Paul, especially in Romans. By now it should be obvious that St. Paul would not reject our interpretation: (1) because our interpretation, though it does have a certain legal aspect, yet employs that very aspect as an experience and proof of the intensity of the love of the Father, (2) because we found the elements needed for our interpretation of the new covenant precisely in St. Paul, and indeed, mostly in the Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul seems farthest removed from legalism. The truth is, of course, that St. Paul in Romans is really employing an older style of polemic, a style not in vogue today. In it he

argues with all possible vehemence against the distorted legalism of the Judaizers, and makes no concession that there is any truth at all on the side of his opponents. All is black; there are no greys. He rejects (rightly) any notion that man can earn the very foundation of salvation, the first grace. He by no means objects to the idea that after the gratuitous gift on that first grace, man can, on a secondary, not on a fundamental level, generate a *ratio cobonestans* within the covenant for the conferring of grace. Nor does St. Paul object to obedience, even obedience formally given to a law. In that same Epistle, at the opening of chapter 13, St. Paul demands obedience even to the corrupt pagan authorities of his day: "Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God . . . he who resists the authority, resists the ordinance of God . . ." ⁷¹ This is not really surprising, for the Spirit who writes the law in the hearts of Christians, leads them to duplicate the attitudes of Christ. But Christ became obedient even to the death of the cross—and in doing so, He obeyed not only His eternal Father, but even the base Roman governor, and those delegated by that governor to execute Him. A Christian who would not obey, and obey precisely because a thing is commanded by an authority ordained by God, would not be a true imitator of Christ, and hence, would not be truly led by His Spirit.

Nor does our stress on obedience put love out of the picture. Obedience, properly carried out, is love in practice. Hence Christ Himself said: "If you love me, keep my commandments," ⁷² and again: "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." ⁷³

It is well to note also the relation of obedience and love to the two levels of which we spoke in regard to the reasons for the Father's attitudes. Just as love is the fundamental reason

⁷¹ *Rom.* 13, 1-2

⁷² *Jn.* 14, 15

⁷³ *Jn.* 14, 21; cf 14, 23

why the Father made the covenant, and gives favors under it, while man's obedience is only a condition on the secondary level, so too, the fundamental reason why we obey is love of the Father, and respect for His majesty: our pledge under the covenant is a secondary, though valid, reason for our obedience.

Finally, our second difficulty: Mary was not present in the Cenacle when the new covenant was ratified, but the Apostles were. So, should we not then call them coredeemers, and not Mary?

Our basic reply is that the Magisterium has never taught that the Apostles were coredeemers, but it has taught that Mary was. But, to explain this fact in line with our presentation of the covenant, we note: (1) The Apostles were not capable of making such a commitment as would have been required, since they seem not to have understood at that time what was taking place. It was only later, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, that they began to comprehend. (2) It is not certain that Mary was absent from the Cenacle. But even if she were, her commitment had already been made long before, on the day of the Annunciation, when she gave her consent to the redemptive Incarnation. As Vatican II taught: "This maternity of Mary in the economy of grace began with the consent she gave in faith at the annunciation and sustained without wavering beneath the cross . . ."⁷⁴ So, her obedient assent was already in existence long before that night. It was still in force then, and was taken up by Christ Himself, and joined to His own assent, whether she was present or not. And of course, on Calvary when that which had been pledged the night before was actually being carried out, she was present, her will most intimately joined with that of her divine Son.

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⁷⁴ Constitution on the Church, 8 62