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*Devotion to Mary
in the Church*

REV. LOUIS BOUYER, ORAT.

Number 63

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Formerly an Alsatian Lutheran minister, now a Catholic priest and professor at the Institut Catholique of Paris, Father Louis Bouyer, Orat., was led step by step to embrace the Catholic Faith. In the introduction to his latest book (*The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, Newman, Westminster, 1956), he tells us that once he had discovered "the absolute incompatibility between Protestantism as a genuinely spiritual movement stemming from the teachings of the Gospel, and Protestantism as an institution, or rather, complex of institutions, hostile to one another, as well as to the Catholic Church," he could no longer remain outside the fold.

As is often the case for highly-gifted European converts, Father Bouyer found a prominent place in the irenic movement, which seems to be taking root in the Old World. He is better known in this country for his highly-regarded work in the field of the liturgy, relating worship to life (*Liturgical Piety*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), perhaps the most outstanding work in English on the subject. In the summer of 1956 he was invited to conduct a course on the liturgy in the summer series given annually at Notre Dame.

The present reprint is a translation of Father Bouyer's booklet *Le Culte de la Mere de Dieu dans l'Eglise Catholique* (4th rev. ed., Bordeaux-Capelle, Editions de Chevetogne, Belgium, 1954). The author's irenic preoccupation stands out in the main theme of the booklet: if Mary's place in the economy of Redemption were properly understood, then both the Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox sects would be brought into unity with the Church.

The translation is published with the permission of the author and the editors.

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DEVOTION TO MARY IN THE CHURCH

By REV. LOUIS BOUYER, ORAT.

INTRODUCTION

In the Catholic Church devotion to the Virgin is certainly not of minor importance. Non-Catholics who find this devotion a stumbling block are not deceived in recognizing its importance in the eyes of the Church for in this devotion an essential aspect of Catholic belief in the Incarnation is revealed. Herein in some way is vividly portrayed the Church's understanding of the cooperation of humanity in its own salvation in Christ.

It must be recognized, however, that there are few elements in Catholic doctrine and practice which are so misunderstood by outsiders as this one. Our task of elucidating the true signification of Marian devotion will have, therefore, two results 1) dissipation, perhaps, of certain of the more serious misunderstandings which separate many Christians from Rome and 2) illuminating them at the same time in both the theoretical and practical vision which the Church has of the economy of salvation.

In this regard, the East from whom the Church inherited Marian devotion, always more or less suspects the West of a masked Nestorianism, that is, a tendency to separate in practice the humanity of Christ from His divinity. In the West, Protestantism would rather make the opposite reproach — that of unduly divinizing the human element not only in Jesus but in all Christianity. We hope that a frank study of the Catholic devotion to Mary and of its implications for the Faith will dissipate many of these prejudices. It will demonstrate to the Orientals that the West, even in those matters which are the greatest sources of disagreement, teaches and practices what they themselves believe and live by. It will perhaps reveal to Protestants that the Church venerates nothing else in Mary but the work of divine grace.

I THE VIRGINAL MATERNITY

In beginning a synthesis of Catholic Mariology, we should start by recalling that the Roman Church regards the Eastern and Western traditions (liturgical, theological, and spiritual) as equal sources of the Faith. The Roman Church, and after her the entire Catholic Church, claims as her own the entire dogmatic and religious heritage of the

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Greek Fathers as well as that of the Latin Fathers; of the Byzantine liturgy as well as that of the Latin liturgy—no matter what problem their reconciliation might pose. If a doctrine is definitely affirmed by one of these sources the Church recognizes it as her own. If it is condemned, she rejects it. In principle it follows that there should not be any subject of disagreement between the East and West, for what is authoritative for the Orthodox is likewise authoritative for Catholics. But the entire point at issue is to ascertain if in practice there is not incompatibility between the two traditions and if the Catholic Church does not maintain in its own Latin tradition some elements of doctrine which are actually opposed to the Greek tradition which she also claims, but whose sources she has used only in a distant sort of way since the eleventh century. In our exposition, then, we will always first examine the Latin tradition, but we will constantly endeavor to compare it with the Greek tradition.

The Incarnation and Mariology

The inescapable point of departure is evidently the correlation between the cult given to the Blessed Virgin Mary and that given to Our Savior in the Catholic Church. That is why it seems to us that we would not be able to choose any texts of more fundamental importance than those of the liturgical feast of January 1. This feast bears today the title of the feast of the Circumcision, because of its date on the octave day of Christmas, but historically the liturgy which is celebrated on this day is nothing else but the ancient liturgy of Christmas proper to the patriarchal basilica of St. Mary Major, St. Mary on the Esquiline. This simply means that it is the liturgy of Christmas celebrated in a Marian atmosphere, that is, from the point of view of Mariology and devotion to Mary. Where, then, would we be able to discover closer to the source the idea which the Church entertains of the connection between belief in the Incarnation and devotion to Mary.

In the Latin rite the dogmatic theme of the liturgical feasts is generally found in the antiphons of Lauds, which are ordinarily repeated in first and second Vespers and always taken in turn in the Little Hours. It is worthy of note that those of the feasts of January 1 are repeated again on the feast of February 2, the Presentation in the Temple of Our Savior and the Purification of Our Lady. One can easily see why the Church seems never to tire using them, for they are of

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an incomparable beauty.

"O wondrous exchange! the Creator of the human race, taking unto Himself a living body, deigns to be born of a Virgin; and becoming man from no human generation hath bestowed upon us His divinity.

When Thou wast born in an inexpressible manner of a Virgin, then were the Scriptures fulfilled: Thou camest down like rain upon the fleece to save the human race we praise Thee, O our God.

In the unburnt bush which Moses saw, we acknowledge the figure of thy glorious inviolate virginity: Mother of God, intercede for us.

The root of Jesse hath budded forth: the Star is risen out of Jacob: a Virgin hath brought forth the Savior: We praise Thee, O our God.

Behold Mary hath brought forth unto us the Savior, whom when John saw, he cried out: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world, alleluia."

Mary the Mother of God

Let us try to make a synthesis of the doctrine contained in these antiphons. The first truth they affirm is the full reality of the divine Maternity. In order to win our acceptance of His most elevated gifts the Son of God placed Himself in the position of a Receiver in relation to our humanity represented by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even though we have nothing ourselves that we have not received from God, there took place a veritable exchange between the Creator and the creature. God wished to communicate His divinity to us in some way, but He did not do it without receiving from us beforehand this humanity of which He was the Author. Undoubtedly it belongs to Him by right of creation but now that humanity existed and we possessed it, it is of us that He wished to receive it.

I think that one can say that the initiative proper to humanity in the interaction of God and man finds its perfect expression in the role of the Mother, just as the initiative proper to God (and therefore incommunicable) is expressed forever in the heavenly paternity. Paternity signifies the absolute and transcendent origin of being. Maternity supposes a secondary, immanent intervention. It is a reception before being a gift, but under this form it nevertheless carries with it an

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irreplaceable initiative. It is dependence, but free dependence, and as such it is in its own way effectively creative. Likewise in the work of salvation the part proper to humanity is found affirmed and concretized in a supreme and definitive fashion in Mary, called to be the Mother of the Savior, and therefore of salvation, which is inseparable from the person of Jesus.

As these antiphons by all their images taken from nature express so marvelously, there was in humanity since its own creation a veritable creative potentiality immanent to life itself. Humanity is the image of God, we might say, in this: it is not a dead object, something made once and for all, but a living subject which, no matter how paradoxical it seems, is destined to have a part in its proper creation, inasmuch as it is called to perfect itself. In Mary this vocation finds a fulfillment beyond all expectation because she gives birth to a new humanity, a new Adam, source of the definitive humanity, of celestial humanity, or the humanity of the Son of God.

It is here then that we find the fundamental glory of Mary, by which she fulfills in the highest degree the very vocation of humanity inasmuch as it is a creature—the Divine Maternity.

Mary Always a Virgin

But always in these same antiphons we find intertwined the first glory of Mary—her Maternity—and a second glory of Mary—her super-eminent virginity. Let us again look into the significance of this fact: the fruitfulness of humanity is the very characteristic which shows forth the divine image because it renders humanity creative at the same time that it is a creature. But the fruitfulness of humanity in its present state (a consequence of original sin) is radically deceptive. In generation life and sin (that is, death) are propagated, and these two are inextricably interwoven. At the same time that humanity continues to affirm our divine parentage it lowers us to the level of the simple animal nature. This is bound up with the fact so well demonstrated by St. Paul, that the flesh of humanity is holy and is a glorification of God, but that nevertheless the flesh is sinful and the instrument of the devil. To speak more concretely, since Adam life is no longer propagated untainted. The being which transmits life does not do it without wounding its own integrity and the being which results is, by origin, a separated being. As Origen says, **ubi peccatum, ibi multitudo.**

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On the contrary in the Blessed Virgin Mary humanity at the same time that it attains the highest perfection of fecundity rediscovers virginal integrity. Consequently the grace proper to Mary in this mystery is not simply that she should be a virgin and the purest of virgins, but that she is a virgin in her very maternity. To say this in another way, on the one hand, her maternity does not imply any weakening, any diminution; and on the other hand far from giving birth to a new element in a humanity in full disharmony, she gives birth to a new Adam, by Whom and in Whom "all the separated children of God will be reunited in one body." Thus her virginity finds, as it were, its flowering in her maternity, which far from destroying it, perfects it. Thus we have the magnificent image of the burning bush, of the bush which is not consumed.

Thus, the sum total of Mary's glory (and the unique glory) of the Blessed Virgin, which is entirely centered on the fact that she is the Mother of the Savior, is to be at one and the same time the return to the primitive integrity of creation coming from the hands of the Creator and the attainment of the final end which He had planned. By the perfect response of her created initiative to the creative initiative, humanity becomes again all that God had conceived; thus she gives birth to the perfect fruit of the common work of God and of humanity—the God-Man.

II. MATERNITY OF GRACE

From the doctrine of the previous chapter flow consequences which give a vital character to the devotion which we pay to the Mother of God. The first result of what we have already said is this: being the Mother of the Savior, Jesus, she is the Mother of salvation, since Christian salvation is not separated from the person of the Savior. Better still, she is the Mother of the saved, because salvation for them is life in Christ Jesus; it is to be grafted on Christ and to become one with Him, it is to be made members of His Mystical Body. When Our Lord spoke to Nicodemus of new birth, he asked if a man would be able to enter again into the womb of his mother. There is no question here of that, for the birth alluded to is birth from on high, birth of the Holy Spirit and not carnal birth. But we are not able to attain this birth of the Holy Spirit except by becoming participants, mystically but really of the very birth of Jesus, because the new creation which

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it is to produce in ourselves is Christ Himself.

Thus it follows that the free correspondence with divine grace in virtue of which we have the duty of working at our own salvation (so true it is that it is always God Who works in us to will and to accomplish) will never exist otherwise than enveloped and, as it were, set in motion by that of which the Virgin Mother remains the perfect realization. The holy and trusting liberty of Mary will perpetually engender our own liberty. There is no faith of man which accepts grace otherwise than by grafting itself on hers and by allowing itself to be carried, as it were, and absorbed in her own.

Mary and the Mediation of Christ

It is here that a fundamental Catholic belief, which has been lived at all times by Catholic piety, but which is still searching for expression, finds its formulation. I am speaking about that doctrine which is translated today by these evidently tentative expressions of "Mary Mediatrix of All Graces," or of "Mary Co-Redemptrix".

There is absolutely no question in Catholic thought of any blasphemous idea of placing the Blessed Virgin Mary on the same level as Our Savior, of making her partake (in any measure) of His theandric and incommunicable characteristics. Christ alone obtains grace for us because He alone is God made Man, but grace is not received by us without us, i.e., without our free adherence. And this adherence of humanity to the gift of God realized in the Humanity of the Son of God does not take place in any of us except in imitation and in dependence upon that which took place in the Virgin. It is in this sense that we call "Mary Mediatrix of All Graces." As is said in the prayer of the Office celebrated in the West on May 31 by many particular Churches (but without having ever been extended to the universal Church), Mary is our Mediatrix, **with Christ**, while Christ alone is and remains our Mediator **with the Father**. To put this another way following the image dear to St. Bernard, Mary is envisaged here only as the neck of the Mystical Body, that is, the ontological connection between the Head and the rest of the Body.

Thus understood I believe that this "mediation", if one wishes to call it by this name, admirably sums up the very basis of the devotional attitude of the Church and of Catholic Christians towards Mary. They live with her in a filial dependence, that of sons towards their

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Mother. First of all they find in her the exemplar, but an exemplar endowed with a strength of communication absolutely unique because they are nothing in the order of grace except what they have become by her maternal power. In Mary as in a mother they know that this ontological reality is likewise inexhaustible: that of an intercession which is one with her **Fiat**, with this act of faith by which she dedicated herself to grace and all humanity with her. Thus it is, as it were, at the interior of the merits of the Virgin, to use the western terminology, i.e., as included in her free response to grace, (for merit is that and nothing else) that our own arises. Our prayers ascend, included in the prayer of the Virgin, by the Son Whom she brought forth, in the Spirit Who overshadowed her, towards the invisible Father.

Mary and Redemption in Christ

And it is along the same line that we see her called 'Co-Redemptrix', in spite of the great reserve which the Church shows towards this expression which she has not yet allowed to be used even in the local liturgies. Mary is Co-Redemptrix in the same way as the rest of us, in the first place i.e., inasmuch as the redemption cannot simply be received passively and just submitted to by humanity. There is no question here, as our Protestant brethren might perhaps be tempted to believe, of ceding in any way to the semi-Pelagian tendency. In no way do we wish to insinuate that God and man can in some way collaborate on the same plane in the work of salvation, no matter how small, how insignificant one would make the part of man in this work. In the work of salvation, just as in creation, all comes from God. But precisely for this reason salvation is not less efficacious nor any less real than creation; in fact all its efficacy consists in resurrecting the entire reality of the creation. It is a fallen being, and not another, which is to be elevated. It is the very thing which was lost which must be saved. It is necessary, then, that there be the closest bond, the most solid continuity between the dead being which we became and the living beings which we are to become again. It follows that salvation for all its gratuity cannot be given to us as a complete whole.

There is not only the matter of making it fruitful in ourselves, but also the free action of man for all its mysteriousness should already be included in the very gift of God. That is why there is no redemption without suffering. It is not as if human suffering contributes any value

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to the cross of Jesus. On the contrary the cross of Jesus because it is the cross of the Son of God gives value to human suffering. Without this communion in suffering which the sin of Adam had brought upon humanity, we cannot share in the glory of the Son of God. "If we suffer with Him," says St. Paul, "we shall be glorified with Him." It is in this sense that we must understand his exhortation to "work at our salvation with fear and trembling." And in the same way, we can understand how this statement in no way opposes what he adds: ". . . knowing that it is God who works in us to will and to accomplish."

In the light of these thoughts, we can understand how the Blessed Virgin, standing at the foot of the Cross, her heart pierced by the prophecy of Simeon, represents in an eminent way this cooperation which humanity in its entirety has to contribute towards its own salvation, even though that humanity owes it solely to the strength of her divine Head.

If we add two considerations, it seems that we will have assembled everything that theologians or the faithful who apply to Mary the title of "Co-Redemptrix" can include under this expression. In the sense which we have already developed one can say that it is the entire Mystical Body which is "co-redeemer". How, then, can we apply the expression in a special way to Mary? First of all, because of the precedence, not only chronological but ontological, of her response to grace when compared with our own response. To put this another way, the special application of this title to Mary is only a special consequence of her maternity of grace. On the other hand the virginity, as well as maternity of Mary, can earn for her this signal attribution. Because of the complete absence of sin in Mary, human suffering finds in the Virgin a strictly incomparable perfection in its correspondence with the suffering, properly redemptive of Jesus.

We are all personally, at least in some measure, the cause of the sufferings we undergo. She alone, with Jesus, could accept them with an absolutely pure generosity. Her "Com-passion" (in the etymological sense of the word, surpassing all the sentimental considerations which it evokes) is, therefore, of a quality absolutely **sui generis**, and in that measure has an entirely singular efficacy for the entire Mystical Body. If it is true that all that a member suffers and all that he does has its influence on all, with how much more reason is this true when its

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suffering is disinterested to this degree that its action is inaccessible to selfishness?

Nothing would be more false than to conclude that Mary had less need of salvation and of grace than all of us. If the expression "Co-Redemptrix" could lead to such an aberration there is no doubt that the Catholic Church would condemn it mercilessly, for the truth is absolutely opposed to it. In theology, as well as in Catholic spirituality, Mary is, on the contrary, the very example of what grace is, of what grace is able to do, and what grace does. Not only is she in need of the salvation earned by her Son, just as much as we are, but all her privileges can be simply summed up by saying that she has been saved in a more marvelous manner than any other person. This is exactly what a more precise study of the relation between Mary and the Church is going to show us.

III. MARY and the CHURCH

What we have already said about the meaning of the maternity and the virginity of Mary permits us to understand its exceptional value as a figure and as an eschatological promise. In this respect, we observe throughout the entire Latin liturgy a very significant interchange of texts and expressions between the Virgin and the Church, considered in all the splendor of her eternal perspectives. The figure of the Woman crowned with the stars, clothed with the sun, her feet standing on the crescent of the moon and ready to give birth, such as the Apocalypse describes her for us, refers in the final analysis to the Church. But it is very clear that, taken in the strictest sense, it applies still better to the Mother of Jesus. Likewise, in the baptismal liturgy of Easter, there are frequent allusions to the virginal womb of the Church from which is to be reborn a divinized race.

This is explained by the two-fold belief of the Catholic Church.

Conversely the image of the heavenly Jerusalem is directly the figure of the Church, in the possession of its ultimate perfection. But in this Jerusalem, "Which is our Mother," we also see Mary, when we call her "House of Gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven." It suffices to compare the liturgy of the feast of the Blessed Virgin with the admirable liturgy of the dedication of churches to ascertain this interchange.

Herein we can see a fundamental source of Catholic Mariology

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and one which best explains certain aspects which seem more difficult for non-Catholics to understand or to admit. **Mary presents at the origin of the Church, as summarized in one person, the same perfection which is to reach its fulfillment in the multitude of believers assembled in the One.** She is thus the symbol and the measure of Catholic unity. Everything which we should attain, everything toward which we should strive and which all of us together will find in Christ when we are united to form one perfect man, in the maturity of adult age—all of this, Mary, from whom Christ proceeds has shown us in advance.

Mary Immaculate from Her Conception

This is explained by the twofold belief of the Catholic Church. One belief was the object of a nineteenth century definition (which is ordinarily very poorly interpreted by the Eastern theologians); the other was recently defined in its turn. We are speaking about the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, such as Pope Pius IX proclaimed it in 1854 seems to correspond (using the synthesis we have just sketched of the connection between Mary and the Church) to the vision of the Apocalypse about the Church descending from the throne of God at the end of time. This creation and this celestial perfection of the Church in no way diminish her dynamic temporal reality nor her complete humanity; it is the same in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Simply stated, from the beginning we find the Blessed Virgin in that perfect belonging to God which the Church will realize only at the end.

In no way should the Immaculate Conception be envisaged as a privilege which separated Mary from the rest of humanity and which dispenses her from the need of salvation. On the contrary, it is a first realization of this salvation whose original perfection in Mary is for us the exemplar and the measure of the final perfection which we will all have one day.

In the first place the Immaculate Conception is no wise signifies that in the transmission of the life inherited from Adam, which the parents of the Blessed Virgin gave her, they have been exempted miraculously from original sin independently of the redemption operated in Christ. In the act of her parents, inasmuch as it proceeds from them, the Blessed Virgin has nothing which sets her apart nor, with

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all the more reason, anything which separates her from the rest of mankind. It is certainly true, then, that not only has she been conceived in our common humanity, but also in our common condition.

On this point the Catholic Church is in perfect accord with the Eastern theologians who, insisting on a sense entirely different from that which the Church attaches to it, think they see here an opposition which does not exist. In the first place the proof of this is that the Western theologians starting with the greatest, St. Thomas, and including the most typical of the Western mariologists, St. Bernard, as long as they pose the question in this way have been unanimous in giving a negative response.¹ It is not inasmuch as it is the conception of **St. Anne** (I mean the conception which St. Anne effected) that the conception of Mary is Immaculate, but inasmuch as it is Mary who is the fruit of it.

The Eastern Church herself, the same as the Western Church, admits (her liturgy has even more striking expressions of it) that Mary is all pure and that she has always been that way. The Western Church, just like the Eastern, believes that it is by the grace of Christ (since she has been saved by the Cross of Jesus) that Mary is free of the sin inherited from Adam.

Guided by the universal sentiment of the Church, we believe that this sanctification instead of taking place for Mary only at a certain moment of her development (as is the case for us at Baptism), has been worked by God from the very beginning of her being in the maternal womb. Thus there was not a moment, even germinal, in which Mary would have been stained by original sin, and then a moment when she would have been freed from it. From the moment Mary exists, she exists as a creature saved by Christ. According to the Catholic belief her conception is not immaculate in the sense that her parents have not transmitted to her our life as sons of Adam, i.e., a life polluted in its source. She is entirely different in another sense namely, that she has not received and effectively partaken of the stain, because from the first instance of her conception the grace of Christ was at work in her, redeeming her from the start, lifting from her the curse leveled against the human race.

(1) We are doing nothing more here than citing Duns Scotus, the first theologian to formulate the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the terms which the Western Church was one day to adopt as her own (cf: *In Sent.* 3, Q. 1, n. 1 et 11)

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When one has well understood the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (and to convince oneself it suffices to read with an open mind the Bull **Ineffabilis Deus** of Pius IX and the explanations of it furnished by the most eminent theologians of the epoch, such as Newman in his **Memoir** on the question), it seems the Oriental objections should automatically disappear. Strictly speaking, it is not really this doctrine to which the Eastern Church is opposed, but to entirely different doctrines. On the contrary, it is the Oriental tradition which again furnishes the most solid support for defined Catholic doctrine. Proof of this is that the Latin office of the Immaculate Conception has been formed almost exclusively from the texts of Oriental Fathers (Greek or Syrian), as one could ascertain by a glance at the Roman Breviary.

It is well to add two precisions about the exact extent of the grace given to Mary at the very moment of her conception. The first is that there is no question of exempting her from the sad consequences of original sin, inasmuch as these consequences are not other sins. If our Savior Himself has not been in any way preserved from them neither by His virginal birth nor by His divine nature, with all the stronger reason is this true in Mary's case. What is more, no matter what may be the extent of the graces given to her, and in particular of the special lights which she received, there is no reason to doubt that the revelations of the divine plans should have been progressive for her. Consequently, even if belief in the Immaculate Conception is normally accompanied by another belief, likewise traditional in the East and the West, according to which Mary has not committed any positive moral faults, no matter how light, one should not conclude from this fact that she has always been exempt from ignorance or errors.

This leads to a second precision, still more important. The Immaculate Conception in no way signifies that Mary, unlike the other saints, did not progress spiritually. On the contrary, the common teaching of Catholic doctors is that two moments in particular in the life of the Blessed Virgin have been marked by an increase of grace so important that they really mark three radically different stages of grace in her existence. The first of these moments is evidently the Incarnation of the Word; the second is Pentecost. Before the Incarnation, no matter how real was the sanctity of Mary it was only a sanctity of waiting and

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of preparation, simply bringing to its highest point that of the just of the Old Testament. From the moment of the conception of the Word in her womb, once the Holy Spirit had overshadowed her, it is as the dawning of the grace of the revealed Christ. But is only after the accomplished work of the Passion—Resurrection of the Savior that the definitive plenitude of the gifts of God was able to unfold, first in His Mother, then in His Spouse, the Church. Paralleling this objective progress of grace in Mary the Catholic Church believes with one accord that the personal effort of prayer and obedience which was the framework of her earthly life had to represent a constant ascension in holiness. It is evident that no matter how sublime the grace of the Immaculate Conception may be, it does not in any way place Mary outside the conditions of humanity in search of the lost Paradise. It only makes her capable of drawing from the conditions all the advantages possible for this reconquest, since grace is strengthened in Mary by an unequalled proximity and immediate belonging to the Redeemer.

The Immaculate Conception and Grace in the Old Testament

The only serious difficulty which can remain in the face of the doctrine defined by Pius IX is this: how can we admit the possibility of such a grace before the Cross, and with all the more reason before the birth of Jesus? To this, there is only one possible reply, and it is that such a difficulty is in no way proper to Mary. This difficulty is posed by all the sanctity of the just of the Old Testament, from Abel to St. John the Baptist. In the case of Mary it appears simply in its highest degree. But once one admits (and Scripture as well as tradition obliges us to admit it) some kind of justice and consequently some kind of outpouring of grace before Pentecost, there is the same difficulty. The question of more or less is here entirely secondary. When one examines more profoundly, the marvelous manner in which the sin inherited from Adam is found annihilated in Mary does not pose a problem more insoluble than the remission of a single sin before the accomplishment of the work of salvation. Now, we cannot doubt that "Abraham believed God and this was reputed to him unto justice"; neither can we doubt all the just cited by the Epistle to the Hebrews were not just in reality. The Eastern Church undoubtedly would be the last to reproach us since she celebrates on equal footing the saints of the two Testaments, whereas the Latin Church limits herself to men-

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tioning the patriarchs and the prophets in the martyrology.

The difficulty is undeniable, but it seems to us only an optical illusion would limit it to the case of the Immaculate Conception. This case is only the most remarkable example of an absolutely general law: gifts of salvation that the Cross has earned for humanity have not waited for the effective accomplishment of the Redemption before beginning to spread. Herein we see for the Mystical Body something which corresponds to what happened for its Head at the Transfiguration. It seems to us that root of the difficulty can be removed when we remark as we have already done, that holiness before the Cross, in Mary as in all the rest of the just, has only preparatory value, being itself ordained to the Redeemer and incapable of full accomplishment before the full realization of the Redemption. This leads us to the ultimate answer, which while it does not dissipate the mystery, gives it all its dimensions: It is that of the Fathers, starting with Irenaeus: the redemptive Incarnation was not an event without preparation in the history of humanity for since the beginning "the Word found His delight in living among the children of men".

THE ASSUMPTION AND DIVINE WISDOM

After these long explanations about the Immaculate Conception it does not seem that the belief, canonized recently in the West, that the Blessed Virgin is now risen corporally and present in heaven at the side of her Son, demands anything analogous. In the first place no one is ignorant of the Eastern origin of this belief. It would be paradoxical then if the Eastern Church would raise some difficulty about the value which the Western Church attaches to it. Let us add that it is bound up with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, such as we have explained it, exactly as death in humanity is bound up with original sin. If, in Mary, because of her unique closeness to Christ the victory of redemption over sin, which shall be that of the Church at the end of time, finds its promise in the Immaculate Conception, it is natural that the victory over death, which flows from it, is likewise already realized beforehand in her Assumption. Thus Mary, at the side of Jesus, appears as the eschatological icon of the Church. Henceforth she attests the validity of the hope by which all of redeemed humanity longs to partake of the plenitude of life, as the plenitude of holiness of its Head. These two doctrines, consequently, express only the entire

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meaning of the affirmation which is so traditional: "Mary, at the side of the second Adam, is as a second Eve."

At the end of our explanation of those Catholic teachings on Mary which ordinarily detour the Eastern theologians it is remarkable indeed to find exactly the same idea which is the soul of the most original contemporary Mariological researches of the Orthodox theologians. Is it not precisely this idea of Mary as the new Eve, and more exactly this personal realization, anticipated in Mary, of all the plenitude of grace and of the correspondence with grace which is to fill all humanity assembled in the Church of the last times, which the various attempts (still groping) of an orthodox "wisdom" are trying to comprehend? In this matter it is undeniable that the Marian liturgy of the West, especially that of the feasts of December 8 and August 15, lends to such attempts an encouragement at least as strong (and perhaps even stronger) than able to be found in the Byzantine tradition. Is this not the sign that Christians of the East and of the West, on this point as on so many others, have everything to gain by a comparison of their points of view, by a common sharing of their heritages?

IV. MARY AND DEVOTION TO THE HUMANITY OF THE SAVIOR

A last objection must detain us an instant before we are able to hope for an harmonious accord of western and eastern Mariology with all that it implies for the faith and the spirituality of both Churches. In the West, if we judge from devotions like the month of Mary or like the cult of the Most Pure Heart of the Virgin or from pictorial representations as the medieval **Pieta**, or even a title like that of Our Lady (in which so many Orientals are suspicious of false "troubador" flavor, without perceiving that it is only a translation of the Oriental appellation **Thespoina 'Emon**) the Marian piety often takes on sensuous coloring which seems to many Orthodox too human and (let us say it) profane. This impression is not attached to anything in particular in Catholic doctrine, but floats around all these concrete manifestations. How can we reply to a difficulty, so diffused and at the same time so imprecise?

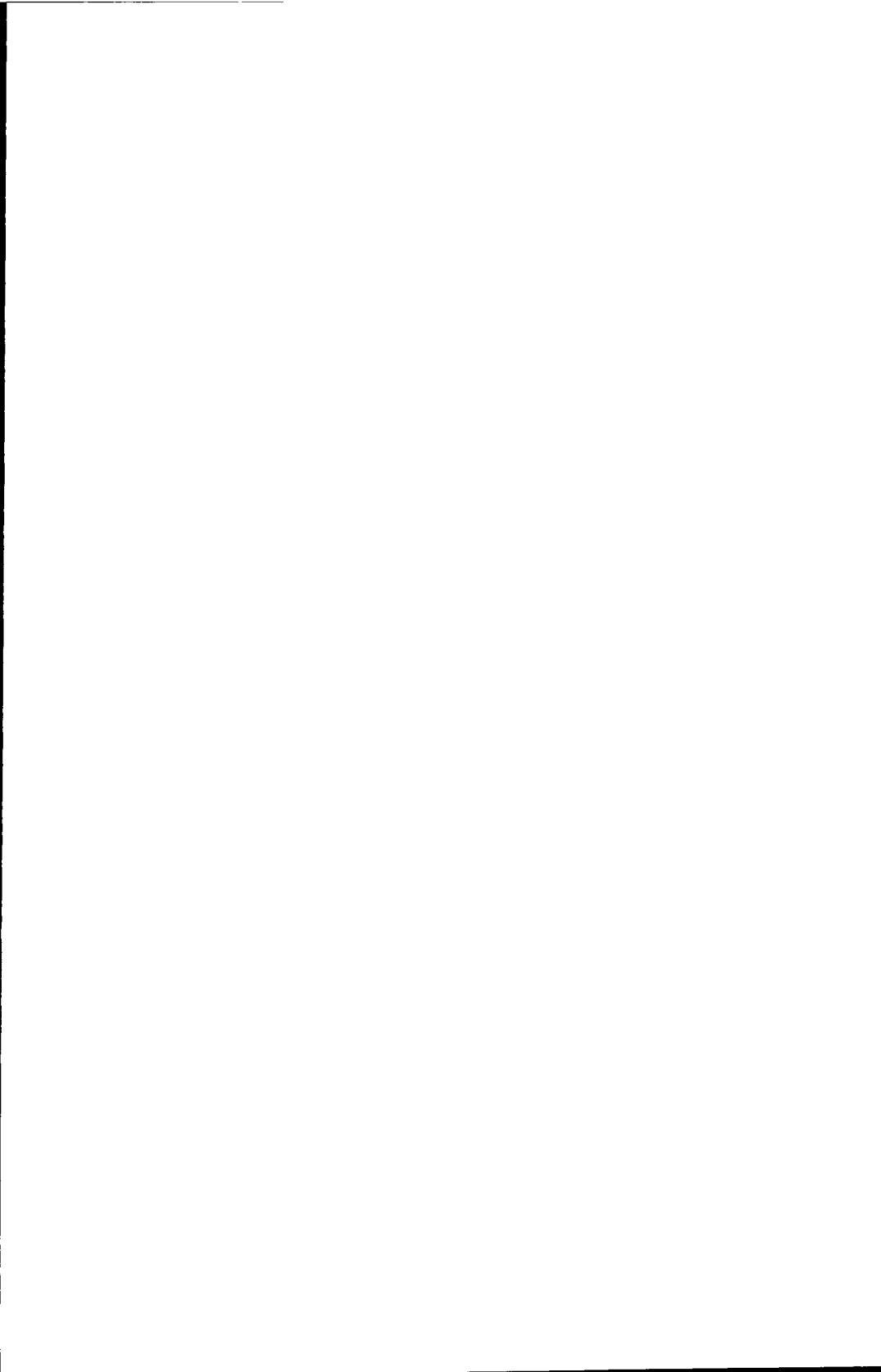
First of all, it is evident that it is only a particular case of the devotion to the humanity of Jesus which is a typical product of the medieval soul in the West. And here we must first of all inform the Orientals that if numerous romantic apologists of the nineteenth cen-

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tury have too easily seen in this special character of the Catholic devotion after the thirteenth century a choice argument for winning back the modern soul to Catholicism, the theologians have always been notably more reserved. Even today after the successive rediscovery of the great Catholic theological tradition of the West, first of the Middle Ages, then among the Fathers, many a Catholic theologian, far from precipitously canonizing these relatively recent particularities of devotion to Jesus and Mary in the West, would be inclined to be just as severe towards them as the Orthodox. More than one would denounce these signs as harbingers of Protestantism ready to dethrone the Savior Himself of His divine glory.

Without going to this extreme in reaction, it is perhaps well to remark that the sole Marian piety for which the western Church as such is responsible, the liturgy of the feasts of Mary, is free from all deviation of this kind. To which we must add that the search for a character which is fully human in Marian piety, as in piety toward Jesus should not be (far from that) condemned without reserve. On the contrary we have here, against the dualistic or Docist tendencies, which perpetually menace the Christian conscience, a balance which is perhaps one of the principal "charisms" which the West as such can bring to the ecumenical reunion. It does not have to be suppressed, but only balanced by the Oriental "charism", which would be the perpetual maintenance of the supernatural character of the two figures whom the love of the West like that of the East refuses to separate: Jesus and Mary.

We are always led back, therefore, to the same conclusion: if Mariology at first glance seems to be the terrain where opposition bursts forth between the Orthodox East and the Catholic Occident (even where Protestants or unbelievers think they are identical) nevertheless in the measure that one penetrates beyond the surface of the problems and goes to their profound meaning, he perceives that these two traditions call for and demand one another. May Mary, throne of the eternal Wisdom, **Mater pulchrae dilectionis et sanctae spei**, aid all of us together to discover our fraternity in the unique image of her divine Son, by helping us to reproduce it as she herself has done, i.e., without adding anything of our errors, without losing anything of His truth.



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