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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND MARIAN STUDIES

*Scott Hahn, Ph.D.**

As we consider Mary from many points of view, it can sometimes seem as if we are studying many models of Mary—a collection of constructs, rather than a person. In Mariology, no less than in secular academia, zeal for our specializations can consume us. We can succumb to the disease that Jacques Barzun calls “specialism”—the “pedantic, miser-like heaping up” of relatively trivial knowledge in our narrow, isolated fields. Barzun complains that, today, “The expert takes a little subject for his province—and remains provincial all his life.”¹

This is the lot of those of us who pursued our studies in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. Such are the provinces to which our advisors and our dissertation committees led us. Yet, somehow, out there in our provinces, something else led us, or drew us, to Miryam of Nazareth—a woman of the provinces. And, in meeting her, a whole world opened up to our eyes. For, in her, more than almost any other human subject, the provincial becomes universal. In this peasant woman, the parochial becomes most literally and most truly catholic.

Perhaps it is because Mary is the very archetype of motherhood, and it is every mother's job to gather her scattered children. But ever has it been this way: Mary is the hope of the poor. Her icon is the catechism of the unlettered. Yet Mary marks also the pinnacle of culture: the centerpiece of royal tapestries and the ornament of aristocratic drawing rooms. It is Mary who inspires both encyclopedias and novenas. Roman

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¹ Jacques Barzun, *The Culture We Deserve: A Critique of Disenlightenment* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 6-7.

Catholics call her *Mater Ecclesiae*, Mother of the Church, and it is a big Church after all.

For this reason and many others, I believe that Mariology, perhaps more than any other field, can provide an antidote to the theological strains of Barzun's Syndrome—a cure for chronic, idiopathic, systemic, debilitating, degenerative specialism. And make no mistake: theology has all-too-willingly followed the trend of secular academia and fragmented into provincial disciplines, each working in isolation from all the others. Dogmatic theologians may now assume they have nothing to learn from biblical scholars. Exegetes, for their part, give scant consideration to the insights of systematic and dogmatic theologians. To many scholars, these disciplines are almost contradictory: exegesis is opposed to dogma, and vice-versa.

I do not wish to be a callow critic. I speak in strong terms, because I am making my confession. I am, after all, a Catholic professor of theology—a doctor of Catholic dogma—who was once trained in the rigors of both Protestant systematic theology and Protestant biblical exegesis. Believe me, I know the provinces because I have always lived in the provinces.

But Mariology offers my colleagues and me a way out into that wider world, that *catholic* vision. Mariology can gather the scattered disciplines by modeling an integrative, holistic approach. I believe that Mariology is especially well-suited to the recovery of a *biblical theology*—a biblical theology that integrates such diffuse and disparate fields as dogma, exegesis, and liturgy.

There are many misconceptions about how biblical theology differs from systematic theology. It is not as if a systematic theologian is bound by logic, while a biblical theologian is free to be illogical and unsystematic. Rather, the ordering principle behind systematic theology is the logical progression of the doctrines of theology, whereas the ordering principle behind biblical theology is the divine economy. In salvation history, the biblical theologian recognizes an order, a plan that reflects the divine pedagogy of God fathering His family. It is a different systematic ordering principle, but it is no less systematic.

Biblical theology is more than simply one of many possible methods for reading the Bible. It is, in fact, the way our me-

dieval, patristic, and apostolic ancestors lived and preached and had their being. And it is the way the Magisterium of the Catholic Church asks that Scripture be studied today. The guidelines from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education's *On the Theological Formation of Future Priests* concluded: "After the introductory questions have been handled, the teaching of Sacred Scripture *must culminate in a biblical theology* which gives a unified vision of the Christian mystery."² Note that such an integrated approach is the *necessary culmination* of theological study—not an elective, not a specialty. It is a way out of the provinces and into a unified, universal "vision of the Christian mystery." Similarly, Vatican II stated: "For the Sacred Scriptures contain the word of God and since they are inspired really are the word of God; and so the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology" (*Dei Verbum*, 24).

A Mariology that follows these principles—a biblical theology of Mary—is a discipline worthy of our calling. For surely it was not by accident or coincidence that we entered this field, but by vocation. A biblical theology of Mary is worthy of our calling and capable of reviving the fires of our first love.

A biblical theology of Mary makes us one with the evangelists, the Fathers, the medieval commentators, and Christians through the centuries who have been drawn away from their small interests—not by a collection of constructs, not by an accumulation of hypotheses, not by a dispute or by a dogma—but by Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mother of the Messiah. A biblical theology of Mary takes us back to the *theo-logoi*—the inspired word of God, set down by the primordial theologians. According to many great Christians, from Pseudo-Denis to Bonaventure to Joseph Ratzinger, biblical writers are the most worthy of the name "theologians." A biblical theology of Mary lifts us out of the habit of what I call "theologian-ology"—as fascinating as that can be—and compels us to confront the canonical wellsprings of all Marian doctrine and devotion.

² Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (February 22, 1976), as quoted in *The Pope Speaks* 21 (1976): 365-66.

This approach does demand our serious engagement of the biblical canon, and that means both testaments. *Dei Verbum* instructed us to “be especially attentive ‘to the content and unity of the whole Scripture;’” and this instruction was repeated verbatim in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (DV, 12; *Catechism*, no. 112).

Our attention “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture” leads us logically to a typological reading. Typology is an essential element in our biblical theology of Mary, and we need not shrink from it. It is superfluous for me to say that typology is integral to the patristic and medieval methods of exegesis and theology. It is self-evident that typology is the natural mode of understanding for the New Testament authors (and Jesus Himself), all of whom understood the entire Old Testament as inseparable from the Gospel they proclaimed. Saint Paul described Adam as a “type” of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:14). It is no news that typology is endorsed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Still, many modern interpreters are uneasy with typology. They worry about its potential for latent anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. They worry about the dark recesses and historical excesses of supercessionism. So they turn a blind eye to all things typological and sever all ties that bind the two testaments. They read typology out of theology, exegesis, and even Scripture itself. Of such interpreters, a great scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, John J. Collins, wrote that “the ecumenical intentions” of their claims are “transparent and honorable, but also misguided” since their claims are “so plainly false.”³

Indeed, a cursory reading of the Old Testament should show that typological method predates Christianity by many centuries. Isaiah used it to prepare Israel for the coming savior. And his three motifs were the three motifs most zealously adopted by the New Testament authors and their successors. Again and again, Isaiah evokes creation, exodus, and the establishment of the kingdom of God, through God’s covenant with the house

³ John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 2.

of David and his dynastic heirs. Isaiah looks, simultaneously, back to these events and forward to their glorious reprise, in a new creation, a new exodus, a lasting kingdom.

Isaiah, moreover, is not alone in doing this. Ezekiel and Jeremiah employ a similar typological method, focusing on the same three pivotal moments in salvation history. It is the *Old Testament* prophets who inspired Jean Danielou's famous definition of prophecy as the typological interpretation of history.⁴

Why do the Scriptures work this way? Why does history unfold typologically? Saint Augustine explained that ordinary human writers use words to signify things; but God uses even created *things* to signify things. So not only are the *words* of Scripture signs of things that happened in history, but the *very events of sacred history* were fashioned by God as material signs that show us immaterial realities—temporal events that disclose eternal truths. God writes the world the way men write words (see *Catechism*, nos. 116-17).

Thus we can read the Scriptures at once as a kind of divine poetry and as the sacred history of the world. The two are not incompatible. As Mark Twain once observed: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme a lot." In typology, we discover God's rhyme scheme in history.

What has all this to do with dogma, much less dogmatic theology? Now is a good time for us to address their interrelation directly. Cardinal Ratzinger has put the matter succinctly. Dogma, he says, "is by definition nothing other than an interpretation of Scripture."⁵ His insight has been confirmed by the 1989 document of the International Theological Commission, *On the Interpretation of Dogmas*: "In the dogma of the Church, one is thus concerned with the correct interpretation of the Scriptures."⁶ Dogma, then, is the Church's infallible exegesis,

⁴ Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).

⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Crisis in Catechetics," *Canadian Catholic Review* (June 1983): 178.

⁶ International Theological Commission, *On the Interpretation of Dogmas* (1989), as quoted in *Origins* 20 (May 17, 1990): 10.

and dogmatic theology is a reflection upon that work. This, then, is the end of specialism. Dogma is dependent on exegesis. Indeed, dogma is nothing less than exegesis, confirmed authoritatively by Tradition and the Church.

Well, I said this was a confession, and I must confess now that I have gone too far into this address without practicing what I preach. Now I wish to show from biblical theology how the Marian dogmas are statements founded in the Scripture. I propose to trace three Old Testament types to their New Testament antitypes and then, further, to their definitive interpretation as dogmas of the Church. At three most pivotal moments—creation, the Exodus, and the establishment of the kingdom of David—salvation history presents types of the Virgin Mary to accompany principal typological anticipations of Jesus Christ. These types are revealed, in remarkable detail, in their New Testament fulfillment. Moreover, I propose that the Church's most important Marian dogmas are best understood as authoritative exegeses of those biblical texts.⁷ Three types, three antitypes, three dogmas: that is ambitious, I admit. So I will begin where a biblical theologian should—in the beginning.

The early Christians considered the beginning of Genesis—with its story of creation and Fall and its promise of redemption—to be so christological in its implications that they called it the *Protoevangelium*, or “First Gospel.” While this theme is explicit in Paul and the Church Fathers, it is implied throughout the New Testament. For example, like Adam, Jesus was tested in a garden—the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36–46). Like Adam, Jesus was led to a “tree,” where He was stripped naked (Mt. 27:31). Like Adam, He fell into the deep sleep of death, so that from His side would come forth the New Eve (Jn. 19:26–35; cf. 1 Jn. 5:6–8), His bride, the Church.

The motif of the New Adam is nowhere so artfully developed as in the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist does not work out the ideas as a commentator would. Instead, he tells the

⁷ For a fuller treatment of these themes, see my book *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

story of Jesus Christ. Yet he begins the story by echoing the most primeval story of all: the story of creation in Genesis.

The most obvious echo comes *in the beginning*. Both books, Genesis and John's Gospel, begin with those three words. The Book of Genesis sets out with the words "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). John follows closely, telling us that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (Jn. 1:1). The old creation was a prototype for what Christ would accomplish through His debut. John presents the first week as ushering in a fresh start, a new creation for mankind.

The next echo comes soon afterward. In Genesis 1:3-5, we see that God created the light of the sun to shine in the darkness. In John 1:4-5, we see that the Word's "life was the *light* of men" and that it "shines in the darkness." Genesis shows us, in the beginning, "the Spirit of God . . . moving over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). John, in turn, shows us the Spirit hovering above the waters of baptism (see Jn. 1:32-33). At that point, we begin to see the source of the new creation recounted by John. Material creation came about when God breathed His Spirit above the waters; the renewal of creation would come with the divine life given in the waters of Baptism.

John, the evangelist, continues to leave hints of Genesis throughout his opening narrative. After the first vignette, John's story continues, "the next day" (1:29), with the encounter of Jesus and John the Baptist. "The next day" (1:35) again comes the story of the calling of the first disciples. "The next day" (1:43) yet again, we find Jesus' call to two more disciples. So, taking John's first discussion of the Messiah as the first day, we now find ourselves on the fourth day. John introduces his next episode, the story of the wedding feast at Cana, with the words: "On the third day . . ." Now, he cannot mean the third day from the beginning, since he has already proceeded past that point in his narrative. He must mean the third day from the fourth day, which brings us to the seventh day—and then John stops counting days.

And we cannot help but notice something familiar. John's story of the "new creation" takes place in seven days, just as the creation story in Genesis is completed on the sixth day, and

sanctified—perfected—on the seventh, when God “rests” from His labor. The seventh day of the creation week, as every week thereafter, would be known as the Lord’s Day. We can be sure, then, that whatever happens on the seventh day in John’s narrative will be significant.

Jesus arrives at the wedding feast with His mother and His disciples. A wedding celebration in the Jewish culture of the time normally lasted about a week. Yet we find that, at this wedding, the wine ran out very early. At which point, Jesus’ mother points out the obvious: “They have no wine” (Jn. 2:3). It is a simple statement of fact. But Jesus seems to respond in a way that is far out of proportion to His mother’s simple observation. “O woman,” he says, “what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (Jn. 2:4).

Then, of course, Jesus defers to His mother, though she never commands Him. She, in turn, merely tells the servants to “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn. 2:5). But let’s return for a moment to Jesus’ initial response. He addressed Mary not as “Mother” or even by name, but as “woman.” What can this mean? Of course, Jesus addressed Mary again as “woman,” but in very different circumstances. As He hung dying on the Cross, He called her “woman” when He gave her *as mother* to His beloved disciple, John (Jn. 19:26). Jesus’ use of that word represents yet another echo of Genesis. “Woman” is the name Adam gives to Eve (Gen. 2:23). Jesus, then, is addressing Mary as Eve to the New Adam—which heightens the significance of the wedding feast they are attending, whose historical bride and groom are never named.

“Woman” redefines not only Mary’s relationship with Jesus, but also with all believers. When Jesus gives her over to His “beloved disciple,” in effect He gave her to all His beloved disciples of all time. Like Eve, whom Genesis (3:20) calls “mother of all living,” Mary is mother to all who have new life in Baptism. At Cana, then, the New Eve radically reverses the fatal decision of the first Eve. It was “woman” who led the old Adam to his first evil act in the garden. It was “woman” who led the New Adam to His first glorious work.

The figure of Eve reappears later in the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, which is also attributed to John.

There, in chapter 12, we encounter “a woman clothed with the sun” (v. 1), who confronts “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil” (v. 9). These images hark back to Genesis, where Eve faces the demonic serpent in the Garden of Eden, and where God curses the serpent, promising to “put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed” (Gen. 3:15). Yet the images of Revelation also point to a New Eve, one who gave birth to a “male child” (v. 5), and who would “rule all the nations.” That child could only be Jesus; and so the “woman” could only be His mother, Mary. In Revelation, the ancient serpent attacks the New Eve because the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is fresh in his memory. The New Eve, however, prevails over evil, unlike her long-ago “type” in the Garden of Eden.

We can multiply New Testament parallels if we wish, and we need look no further than a few very early patristic sources. Justin, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, gives an extended treatment of the subject of Mary as the New Eve.⁸ Just a generation later, Irenaeus develops the idea further in two of his works, his tome against the heresies and his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*.⁹ The motif is firmly established in Tradition.

What is the dogmatic implication of Mary’s status as the New Eve? What is the Church’s infallible interpretation of the biblical record? Cardinal Newman taught that the Immaculate Conception was an important and implicit corollary to Mary’s role as the New Eve. He asked: “If Eve was raised above human nature by that indwelling moral gift which we call grace, is it rash to say that Mary had even a greater grace? . . . And if Eve had this supernatural inward gift given her from the first moment of her personal existence, is it possible to deny that Mary too had this gift from the very first moment of her personal existence?”¹⁰

⁸ Saint Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, no. 100. See discussion in Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1 (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1952), 211-12; also see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 44-48.

⁹ Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* 3.22.3; 5.19.1; 4.33.11; and *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 33. See also discussion in Quasten, vol. 1, 296-99.

¹⁰ John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Mystical Rose* (Princeton, NJ: Scepter, 1996), 20.

The Church carried on its historical reflection on Mary's sinlessness over the better part of two millennia before the dogma was promulgated in 1854. Important exegetical interlocutors were Justin, Irenaeus, Augustine, Scotus, and Aquinas, among others. While in the West theologians have taught the doctrine somewhat negatively, emphasizing Mary's sinlessness, the Eastern churches have always put the accent, instead, on her abundant holiness. The affectionate colloquial term for her is *Panagia*, the All-Holy—for everything in her is holy.

All theologians, however, have this in common: they must discuss Mary's sinlessness in the context of Eve's primeval sin. Pope Pius IX also evoked the ancient drama even as he defined the dogma: "the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of Original Sin."¹¹

The medieval poets summed up the matter neatly by pointing out that the Angel Gabriel's *Ave* (the Latin greeting) reversed the name of *Eva*. So also did it reverse the rebellious inclination Eve left to her children—to you and to me—and replace it with the readiness to obey, which Mary wants to teach us when she says: "Do whatever He tells you."

* * *

We move on to our second type, our second fulfillment, our second dogma. Luke's Gospel tells us more about the mother of Jesus than any other book in the New Testament. Most of this information is packed within his first two chapters, where Luke strings together some of the most beautiful traditions we have about her life and mission. The deeper we delve into Luke's narrative, the more we appreciate the way in which Luke tells us the story of Mary. One example of this is found in the story of the Visitation. On one level, it tells of a joyous encounter between two expectant mothers; on another, it re-

¹¹ Pope Pius IX, Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (December 8, 1854).

calls memorable stories told in the Old Testament about the ark of the covenant. By alluding to these ancient traditions, Luke expands the vision of the careful reader considerably. For he leads us to see Mary as the Ark of God's New Covenant and implies that the sacred ark of the Old Covenant merely pre-figured a more wonderful Ark to come: the Mother of the divine Messiah.

One tradition that Luke draws upon is from 2 Samuel. He intentionally sets up the subtle but significant parallels between Mary's Visitation and David's effort to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, narrated in 2 Samuel 6. When Luke tells us that Mary "arose and went" into the Judean hill country to visit her kinswoman (Lk. 1:39), he reminds us of how David "arose and went" into the same region centuries earlier to retrieve the ark (2 Sam. 6:2). Upon Mary's arrival, Elizabeth is struck by the same sense of awe and unworthiness before Mary (Lk. 1:43) that David felt standing before the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:9). Parallels continue as the joy surrounding this great encounter causes the infant John to leap with excitement (Lk. 1:41), much as David danced with excitement before the ark (2 Sam. 6:16). Finally, Luke adds that Mary stayed in the "house of Zechariah" for "three months" (Lk. 1:40, 56), which recalls how the ark of the covenant was temporarily stationed in the "house of Obed-edom" for a waiting period of "three months" (2 Sam. 6:11). Taken together, these parallels show us that Mary now assumes a role in salvation history that was once played by the ark of the covenant. Like this golden chest, she is a sacred vessel where the Lord's presence dwells intimately with His people.

Luke also draws upon a second tradition from the Book of Chronicles. This time, he brings into his story a highly significant expression once connected with the ark. The term shows up in Luke 1:42, where Elizabeth bursts out with an exuberant cry at the arrival of Mary and her Child. Although the Greek verb translated as "exclaimed" seems ordinary enough, it is hardly ever used in the Bible. In fact, it is found only here in the entire New Testament. Its presence in the Greek Old Testament is likewise sparse, appearing only five times. Why is this important? Because every time the expression is used in

the Old Testament, it forms part of the stories surrounding the ark of the covenant. In particular, it refers to the melodic sounds made by Levitical singers and musicians when they glorify the Lord in song. It thus describes the “exulting” voice of instruments that were played before the ark as David carried it in procession to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:28; 16:4-5) and as Solomon transferred the ark to its final resting place in the Temple (2 Chron. 5:13). Alluding to these episodes, Luke connects this same expression with the melodic cry of another Levitical descendant, the aged Elizabeth (Lk. 1:5). She too lifts up her voice in liturgical praise, not before the golden chest, but before Mary. Luke’s remarkable familiarity with these ancient stories enables him to select even a single word that will whisper to his readers that this young mother of the Messiah is the new Ark of the Covenant.

At the end of the New Testament, the Apocalypse confirms Luke’s insights. There, at the close of the eleventh chapter, we find God’s temple in heaven opened and the ark of the covenant revealed. And we learn that the ark is “a woman,” who is mother of the Davidic king, the Messiah. We are left with the question, however, of how this woman can also be the revered Ark of the Covenant.

To understand this, we must first consider what made the ark so holy. It was not the acacia wood or the gold ornaments; nor was it the carved figures of angels. What made the ark holy was that it contained the covenant. Inside that golden box were the Ten Commandments, the word of God inscribed by the finger of God; the manna, the miracle bread sent by God to feed His people in the wilderness; and the priestly rod of Aaron, who was Moses’ successor.

Whatever made the ark holy made Mary even holier. If the first ark contained the word of God in stone, Mary’s body contained the Word of God enfleshed. If the first ark contained miraculous bread from heaven, Mary’s body contained the very Bread of Life that conquers death forever. If the first ark contained the rod of the long-ago ancestral priest, Mary’s body contained the divine person of the eternal Priest, Jesus Christ. What John saw in the heavenly temple was far greater than the ark of the Old Covenant, the ark had radiated the glory cloud

before the Menorah, at the center of the Temple of ancient Israel. John saw the Ark of the *New Covenant*, the vessel chosen to bear God's covenant into the world, once and for all.

For the reader with eyes to see and ears to hear, Luke and John "the Seer" have given us a vision of the Virgin Mary that becomes ever more glorious as we dig deeper into the Scriptures. Our ability to see Mary as they did depends in part on our knowledge of the Old Testament, and in part on our sensitivity to the New Testament writers' skillful use of it. By choosing their words and phrases carefully, they are able to weave various strands of biblical tradition into their narratives, adding beauty and depth to his already elegant prose. Little wonder the Church's liturgical and theological traditions have so often described Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant. This vision is not merely the fruit of mystical speculation from a later age. It is already embedded within the Infancy Narrative of Luke's Gospel.

Tradition hallows Mary as the Ark of the Covenant. How has the Church interpreted this dogmatically? This is explicit in the liturgies for the vigil and the feast of the Assumption, which have always included the pericopes I have discussed here: those related to David and the conveyance of the ark to its place in Jerusalem, Luke's story of the Visitation, and the apocalyptic unveiling of the Ark in heaven.

Around 740 AD, Saint John of Damascus preached three homilies on Mary's Assumption into heaven, and he incorporated many of the types we have discussed here. His evocation of Mary's reception into heaven is especially telling: "David her forefather, and her father in God, dances with joy," he said, "and the angels dance with him, and the archangels applaud."¹² This is the ultimate reprise of David's ancient ascent with the ark. In heaven, however, David is no longer dancing around a tabernacle of gold. As the old ark was "assumed" into the old, earthly Jerusalem, so the Ark of the New Covenant, "the woman clothed

¹² Saint John of Damascus, in *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, ed. M. F. Toal (4 vols.; Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963), 4:426.

with the sun," was assumed into the divine Temple of the new, heavenly Jerusalem.

* * *

We come to our third and last type, fulfillment, and dogma. Israel's monarchy arose in very specific historic circumstances, in a particular geographic region. In the ancient Near East, most nations were monarchies ruled by a king. In addition, most cultures practiced polygamy; so a given king often had several wives. This posed problems. First, whom should the people honor as queen? But, more importantly, whose son should receive the right of succession to the throne?

In most Near Eastern cultures, these twin problems were resolved by a single custom. The woman ordinarily honored as queen was not the wife of the king, but the mother of the king. There was an element of justice to the practice, since it was often the persuasive (or seductive) power of the mother that won the throne for her son. The custom also served as a stabilizing factor in national cultures. As wife of the former king and mother to the present king, the queen mother embodied the continuity of dynastic succession.

The office of the queen mother was well established among the Gentiles by the time the people of Israel began to clamor for a monarchy. For Israel had not always been a kingdom. In God's plan, *God* was to be their king (see 1 Sam. 8:7). But the people begged the prophet Samuel to give them a king: "[W]e will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:20). God, then, allowed the people to have their way, but for His glory. Israel's monarchy would providentially foreshadow the kingship of God's own Son. Israel's kingdom would be a "type" of the kingdom of God.

This played out historically, as the people looked around them for models of governance. Remember, they wanted a king in order to "be like all the nations." Thus, following the models of the neighboring lands, they established a dynasty, a legal system, a royal court—and a queen mother. We find this in Israel at the beginning of the Davidic dynasty. David's first successor, Solomon, reigns with his mother, Bathsheba, at his

right hand. Israel's queen mother, or *gebirah* ("great lady"), appears, then, throughout the history of the monarchy, to the very end. When Jerusalem falls to Babylon, we find the invaders taking away the king, Jehoiachin, and also his mother, Nehushta, who is given precedence, in the account, over the king's wives (2 Kings 24:15; see also Jer. 13:18).

Between Bathsheba and Nehushta, there were many queen mothers. Some worked for good; some did not; but none was a mere figurehead. *Gebirah* was more than a title; it was an office with real authority. Consider the following scene from early in Solomon's reign: "So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand" (1 Kings 2:19).

This short passage speaks volumes about Israel's court protocol and power structure. First, we see that the queen mother was approaching her son in order to speak on behalf of another person. This confirms what we know about queen mothers in other Near Eastern cultures. We see in the Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, that the queen mother in Mesopotamia was considered an intercessor or advocate for the people. Next, we notice that Solomon rose from his throne when his mother entered the room. This makes the queen mother unique among the royal subjects. Anyone else would, following protocol, rise in Solomon's presence; even the king's wives were required to bow before him (1 Kings 1:16). Yet Solomon rose to honor Bathsheba. Moreover, he showed further respect by bowing before her and by seating her in the place of greatest honor, at his right hand. Undoubtedly, this describes a court ritual of Solomon's time; but all ritual expresses real relationships. What do Solomon's actions tell us about his status in relation to his mother?

First, his power and authority are in no way threatened by her. He bows to her, but *he* remains the monarch. She sits at his right hand, and not vice versa. Yet clearly he will honor her requests—not out of any legally binding obligation of obedience, but rather out of filial love. By the time of this particular scene, Solomon clearly had a track record of granting his

mother's wishes. When Adonijah first approaches Bathsheba to beg her intercession, he says, "Pray ask King Solomon—*he will not refuse you*" (1 Kings 2:17). Though Solomon was technically Bathsheba's superior, in the orders of both nature and protocol, he remained her son.

He relied on her, too, to be his chief counselor, who could advise and instruct him—in a such a way, perhaps, that few subjects would have the courage to follow. Chapter 31 of the Book of Proverbs provides a striking illustration of how seriously a king took the queen mother's counsel. Introduced as "[t]he words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him" (v. 1), the chapter goes on to give substantial, practical instruction in governance. We are not talking about folk wisdom here. As a political advisor and even strategist, as an advocate for the people, and as a subject who could be counted on for frankness, the queen mother was unique in her relationship to the king.

When the prophets foretold the restoration of the House of David, they always predicted a new *gebirah* bearing the infant king. In his seminal essay on the subject, Barnabas Ahern wrote: "The role of the queen-mother is of paramount importance in studying the full meaning of texts like Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2, which feature the pregnancy of a woman at the very heart of a dynastic sign. These prophecies which center in a son of David pass over all mention of his father to focus attention on the mother whose role must be interpreted with an eye to the queen-mother tradition."¹³

Without the Davidic matrix, we cannot begin to understand the coming of Jesus Christ. His Davidic ancestry was essential not only to His self-understanding, but also to the expectations of His contemporaries and to the theological reflection of His first followers, such as Saint Paul and Saint John. The Messiah would be David's son, yet also God's Son (see 2 Sam. 7:12-14). The everlasting king would come from David's house, from David's "body." When the "male child" came to rule the na-

¹³ Barnabas Ahern, C.P., "The Mother of the Messiah," *Marian Studies* 12 (1981): 45.

tions, He would rule as a Davidic king, with a rod of iron, as David himself had sung.

Yet this typological relationship would not cease with the fact of kingship; it would include many of the small details of the monarchy. As David established a holy city in Jerusalem, so his ultimate successor would create a *heavenly* Jerusalem, where, in fact, His mother would reign at His right hand, clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars (signifying the twelve tribes of Israel), and with the moon at her feet. As David's first successor reigned beside his queen mother, so would David's final and everlasting successor. The Davidic monarchy finds its perfect fulfillment in the reign of Jesus Christ—and there was *never* a Davidic king without a Davidic queen mother. Only with this Davidic key can we unlock the mysteries, for example, of the wedding feast at Cana. Mary approaches her Son to intercede for the people—just as Bathsheba spoke to Solomon on behalf of Adonijah.

Mary counsels her Son about the matter at hand; yet she counsels others to obey *Him* and not her. Jesus, then, speaks to His mother as her superior; yet He defers to her suggestion—just as one might expect a Davidic king to grant the wish of his queen mother. (Critics sometimes complain that Bathsheba sets a bad precedent, since she failed in her persuasive mission. But, by that standard, Eve can be counted a failure as well. We must keep in mind that *every* type is only a *partial* sign, pointing toward a more complete future fulfillment—what Saint Jerome called *compenetratio*). Barnabas Ahern concludes: “Historically, [Mary] was the Mother of Jesus. Theologically . . . she was the *gebirah*, the Queen Mother of Christ's kingdom.”¹⁴

Sacred Tradition sings with one voice every Easter season: *Regina caeli, laetare! Alleluia!* Let me quote John of Damascus again: “She indeed became mistress of all creation when she became mother of the Creator.”¹⁵ And John's words merely

¹⁴ Ahern, “The Mother,” 46.

¹⁵ Saint John of Damascus, as quoted in Donald Attwater, *A Dictionary of Mary* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956), 234.

echo those of Origen, Ephrem, Gregory Nazianzen, Prudentius, Jerome, and many others through the centuries. "From all saints the song ascends."¹⁶

As *gebirah*, the Blessed Virgin Mary is Queen of heaven. So she has been hymned in the "Salve, Regina." So she is celebrated annually on the feast of her queenship. In establishing the feast in 1954, Pope Pius XII all but sketched a portrait of the Virgin as an everlasting *gebirah*. Her queenship, he said, rests on her divine motherhood and her close association with the King. "Certainly, in the full and strict meaning of the term, only Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is King; but Mary, too, as Mother of the divine Christ, as associate in His redemption, in His struggle with His enemies and His final victory over them, has a share, though in a limited and analogous way, in His royal dignity."¹⁷

* * *

We have looked at three Old Testament types, tracing them to their New Testament fulfillment and beyond, to their dogmatic interpretation. The Church, through her Tradition and Magisterium, shows the New Eve to be the Immaculate Conception; the heavenly Ark of the Covenant to be the bodily Assumption; and the Mother of the Lord, the final *gebirah*, to be the Queen of heaven.

What have we gained by tracing these patterns in the mode of biblical theology? We have moved beyond systematic theology's specialized vocabularies and arrived at the definitive biblical word—which is surely more useful for evangelization, for preaching, for catechesis, and for ecumenical dialogue.

Specialized terms are helpful, but they are secondary. The biblical language is primary. In a 1984 document, the Pontifical Biblical Commission declared: "The 'auxiliary' languages employed in the Church in the course of centuries do not enjoy the same authority, as far as faith is concerned, as the 'referential language' of the inspired authors, especially of the New Testament with its mode of expression rooted in the Older [Testament]."¹⁸

¹⁶ From the hymn "Sing of Mary?"

¹⁷ Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Ad Caell Regnam* (October 11, 1954), no. 39.

¹⁸ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Instruction on Scripture and Christology* (1984), 1.2.2.1.

What is meant by auxiliary languages? Clearly, it refers to the various credal, dogmatic, and theological terms (such as *Theotokos*), dogmatic concepts (such as “immaculate conception”), and theological methodologies (such as Thomism and Scotism) that were developed and used to teach true doctrine, quite often in the face of heresy, throughout Church history. These auxiliary languages have proven indispensable for maintaining, defending, and transmitting the Catholic faith in its integrity.

Nevertheless, no matter how useful these languages may be, they are subordinate to the divinely inspired language of the Bible, which they are created to clarify, explain, and protect in the first place. They lack the “referential” authority of the affirmations made by the inspired writers of Scripture. When we take this primary language as our own, and speak it fluently, then we will speak with authority.

And what I have sketched here is only the merest of beginnings. Theologians will ultimately wish to pursue types and other created images to their uncreated realities. That, after all, is what creation and revelation are for. Theologians who have thoroughly engaged the type, the image, and the dogma can then ask: “Who is the *true* Eve who is ever new, conceived immaculately from all eternity?” This has been the ultimate stage of speaking about God and of the Virgin Mary for our ancestors in Mariology, ever since the beginning.

In the third century, Methodios of Olympus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the “rib of the Logos”¹⁹—the uncreated archetype of humanity’s primordial mother. In our own century, the great Franciscan Maximilian Kolbe spoke of the same divine Person, the Holy Spirit, as the “uncreated Immaculate Conception” and spoke of the Blessed Virgin as a “quasi-incarnatus of the Spirit.”²⁰ To pursue these lines of thought is to respect

¹⁹ Saint Methodios of Olympus, *Convivius decem virginum*, III. C.8; PG XVIII, no. 73, as quoted in M. J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (St. Louis: Herder, 1946), 185.

²⁰ Saint Maximilian Kolbe, as quoted in H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of Father Kolbe* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 96. The “quasi” is what salvages this expression, since the Spirit and Mary are not united “hypostatically,” but as two distinct persons, one divine

Mary's place more perfectly; for she always points beyond herself, to God. And she herself is the human person who most truly conforms to the divine image.

It is not blasphemous to speak of Mary this way, to draw out her relations to the divine. Indeed, it can be blasphemous *not* to speak this way. God, after all, did not create Mary because her perfections were lacking in the Blessed Trinity. He created her to be an immaculate image of something He had from all eternity. What is it? That is the sort of question we must ask ourselves, and explore in Scripture, Tradition, and through the Magisterium of the Church.

Again, our reticence can be a species of blasphemy. We in Mariology are no less susceptible to this than one of my favorite theologians in the Reformed tradition, Jonathan Edwards—a man who was hardly short on reverence and awe for almighty God. Yet, in several places, Edwards writes that “the ultimate end of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for His Son, Jesus Christ, that might enjoy Him, and on whom He might pour forth His love.”²¹

We must say, respectfully, “No, Dr. Edwards.” God is not a heavenly bachelor in search of a spouse. God has no need, no want or lack that is not eternally satisfied within the Trinity. If He has created Eve, Mary, the Church, and human marriage, He has done so not for His own sake, but for ours—to show us something of the eternal and divine. This is the true end of any truly biblical theology of Mary. For it is the only end that is truly theological.

* * *

Where should we begin such exalted theologizing? That is the great secret of the theologians of the Great Church, is it not? And I came upon it only recently. Many of you know that I was raised in the Presbyterian Church and that I spent my formative adult years as an evangelical pastor. So I was trained

and the other human. More preferable, perhaps, is the notion of Mary as “icon” or “created replication” of the Holy Spirit.

²¹ Jonathan Edwards, “Miscellanies,” no. 710, as quoted in Jeffrey J. Meyers, *The Lord's Service* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 126.

in a tradition that is decidedly anti-typological and certainly anti-Mariological. The Swiss Protestant theologian Emil Brunner identified the unraveling of spiritual exegesis as the very substance of the Reformation: "To argue that it is right to use typology as exposition because it was used by the Apostles . . . can only be described by the word 'terrible.' We can only warn people most urgently against this confusion of thought, which inevitably leads us back to a religious position which the Reformers had overcome; indeed, this victory constituted the Reformation."²²

I was trained to believe that Brunner was right, and I did believe him—until my own reading, first in the Bible itself and then in the Fathers, showed me another way. Brunner was right, I concluded: the Protestant Reformation was utterly dependent on its opposition to typology. But that was one of many reasons I found the Reformation project to be at odds with the living Tradition of the Christian Church.

Once I gave in to Christianity's typological imperative, the Scriptures opened up new vistas to me, and I began to see the historical continuity not only between the key moments of the Old and New Testaments, but also between the entire Bible and life in modern times. I remember discussing these discoveries with my Baptist brother-in-law, Bill, who soon shared my enthusiasm and immersed himself in the Old Testament, looking for anticipations of the New, and in the New Testament, finding countless realizations of the Old.

Bill and I were standing in the same stream of salvation history not only as the Fathers and the apostles, but also as the patriarchs and the prophets of Israel—and the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. The living Tradition of the People of God flows from the first moment of creation—through the Exodus and the kingdom—and it will continue to flow strongly and steadily until the final consummation of history.

And *all* the people of God stand midstream in that current. The typological tradition washes over *the whole assembly*, as

²² Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 213.

constantly and inexorably as the Jordan flows and Niagara falls. Where does that current run? Where is living Tradition most surely alive? In the liturgy. In the living waters flowing from the right side of the Temple, from the wounded side of Jesus Christ and from the “throne of God and of the Lamb” in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1).

In the liturgy, the living Tradition washes over the people of God as we hear the typological arrangement of the Old and New Testament readings, brought together for all time in the streambed of the Church’s calendar. In the pericopes of the Mass we hear the histories, the Prophets, the Psalms linked authoritatively with their Gospel fulfillment.

All of this, of course, was, at first, inaccessible to my brother-in-law Bill and me. We were two evangelicals with absolutely no experience of liturgy. So we went about our typological work laboriously. But we met with remarkable success. I was so pleased with myself, for example, when I made the connection between the “keys” that Jesus gave Peter in Matthew’s Gospel and the keys that the Davidic king gave to his prime minister, mentioned in the prophecies of Isaiah. Inevitably, I happened upon the Marian types as well, and I mapped my own way to the corresponding Marian doctrines. I felt like Sergeant York as I rounded up hundreds of prisoners all by myself.

Then I experienced the Mass. I experienced the Mass, first as an observer, a Protestant bystander. But it was not long before I realized that none of my great typological discoveries were new, and none of them were mine. What I was constructing laboriously had all along been accessible to Catholic scholars and Catholic electricians and Catholic homeless people who wandered off the street and into any ordinary weekday Mass. For them and for their many millions of Christian ancestors—for two whole millennia!—the lectionary has brought together Old Testament types and New Testament fulfillment as the Church celebrates her dogmas of faith.

My brother-in-law Bill was not willing to follow me as I first waded into that stream. Try as I might, I could not persuade him to consider the great Church’s sacraments and Marian dogmas, for example, as the doctrinal expressions of timeless

truths that were typologically concealed in the Old Testament and evangelically revealed in the New. Nor could I get Bill to accompany me to Mass. I tried my best, but Bill would not budge. In fact, he worried that my Catholic tendencies might be leading me astray. But I persisted. And I finally talked him into coming with me to Mass—on the vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And there he heard, one by one, the readings that I unfolded for you earlier. About midway through the Gospel, he leaned over toward me and whispered: “Did you have anything to do with the selection of these texts?”

Of course, I did not. Those readings had been established in the lectionary. Bill and I were discovering what Dom Gueranger discovered as he launched the modern liturgical movement. “It is in the liturgy,” he wrote, “that the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures speaks again: the liturgy is Tradition itself at its highest degree of power and solemnity.” I have to agree with Yves Congar who read that definition and pronounced that “no finer expression of the truth could be found.”²³

Liturgy enjoys a unity with Scripture that is indissoluble. Their relationship is both material and formal. It is formal in that all of Scripture is intrinsically liturgical. The first chapters of Genesis establish the sabbatical rhythm for all subsequent history, and order all human work to the worship of God. Abel offers his sacrifice to God, and he is followed in liturgical worship by every generation that follows. The Exodus of the Israelites is itself ordered not so much to liberty as to liturgy. Their conquest of Canaan is not for the purpose of dominion alone, but ultimately for the sake of free and orderly worship. *Simili modo*, the kingdom of David is not about empire-building, but about Temple-building—and the Temple’s liturgical worship, supervised by the Son of David and his *gebirah*.

Liturgy and Scripture possess a material unity as well. For both the Old and New Testaments were canonized—not for the sake of private study so much as public reading. The canon was primarily the rule for the liturgy. It was and is the exclusive list

²³ Dom Gueranger’s *Institutions liturgiques*, as quoted in Yves M. J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (San Diego: Basilica Press, 1998), 434-35.

of books that could be read in the liturgy. That was true of Israel as it is true of the Church.

So it has always been understood, and so it has always been observed in the assembly—the *qahal*, the *ekklesia*, the people of God. Liturgy is the *living memory* of the Church. Liturgy is where the living Tradition is most alive—where life *continues*, uninterrupted and unchanged, even as it undergoes truly vital and organic development. Tradition is only *living* Tradition insofar as it is consecrated in the liturgy. This is what Christians mean when they appeal to Tradition's great and golden law: *Lex orandi, lex credendi* ("as one prays, one believes"). The Church was worshipping Jesus in the Eucharist and proclaiming John's prologue centuries before councils began to experiment with the language of *hypostases*. Ordinary people sang the Akathist for centuries before the pope solemnly defined the dogma of the Assumption.

I have come to learn what so many of you have known instinctively since childhood: that the lectionary and the liturgy are authoritative acts of exegesis—canonical exegesis and typological exegesis. Thus, it is the liturgy that establishes biblical theology as normative and not merely another specialty in the academic mix. It is liturgy that gives us a flexible but infallible framework for the conduct of a biblical Mariology, a biblical theology of Mary.

Tradition celebrates Mary as "Seat of Wisdom" and "Mother of the Church," and, as such, she is mother of theologians. She is not merely an object for men and women in our academic field. She is our mother. Moreover, she is herself one of those normative theologians whose words are canonized, from her first *fiat*, through her *magnificat*, to her final *quodcumque dixerit, facite* in John's Gospel.

She, then, is at once a mirror, an icon, and a model for our work as we integrate exegesis, liturgy, and dogma. And it is somehow right that we carry on our labors—even our most arduous labors—in the context of countless festivals. After all, what is a Mariologist's calendar but a string of feast days? Immaculate Conception, Annunciation, Nativity, Epiphany, Presentation, Assumption, Coronation, and so many approved apparitions—this must be what Origen meant when he called theology "a continual feast." It does not get any better than this. I thank you for inviting me to feast with you.