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*Theotokos: The Place of Mary in the
Work of Salvation*

E. L. Mascall

IT is always important that there should be the closest connection between Christian devotion and Christian doctrine, and between any one department of Christian doctrine and the dogmatic corpus as a whole. Nowhere is this truer than in those realms of doctrine and devotion that concern the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is because they cannot see any connection between Mariology and the rest of Christian doctrine that most Protestants look upon any kind of Marian devotion as not only dangerous but also pointless; while, at the other extreme, when Catholic devotion to Mary has become distorted or unbalanced it has nearly always been because its connection with the main body of Christian truth has fallen out of view. It is thus a most welcome fact that two of the most readable recent books on Mariology—Père Congar's *Le Christ, Marie, et l'Église* and Père Bouyer's *Le Trône de la Sagesse*¹—are firmly based upon the doctrine of the Incarnation and of the Church. 'No Mariology without Christology' is a very good maxim in this field of study, and in accordance with it I shall take as my starting point the declaration made by the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 that Mary is the Mother of God. This is still what might be called her official liturgical title in the Eastern Church (in contrast to the Catholic West, for which she is 'Blessed Mary the Virgin' liturgically, and usually 'our Lady' more informally)—*Theotokos* in Greek, *Bogoroditsa* in Slavonic, and in Arabic *wālidat allah*: mother of Allah or God.

Some English writers have claimed to see some subtle in-

accuracy in the translation of *Theotokos* by 'Mother of God' and have coined the barbarism 'Birth-giver of God' in its place. ('Godmother' is clearly excluded as having already acquired a different meaning, and 'god-bearer', owing to the ambiguity of the English verb 'bear', would as adequately render the term *theophoros*, which the orthodox used to describe the Nestorian heretics' concept of Christ, as the term *theotokos*, which they used to describe their own concept of his mother.) In fact there is little substance in the objection and still less in the implied divergence between East and West. Latin has the terms *Deipara* and *Dei genetrix*, and every Greek and Russian icon of the *Theotokos* bears on her halo the contraction ΜΡ ΘΥ for *Mētēr Theou*, quite literally 'Mother of God'.

The truth that Mary is Theotokos was proclaimed at Ephesus against the heresy known as Nestorianism, which not only distinguished but separated the human and the divine nature of our Lord, so as in effect to make him not one Christ, but two. Whether this view was in fact held by Nestorius is a matter of dispute among historians today, but of the existence of the heresy there is no doubt. Our Lord, on this view, was a very holy man with whom the Second Person of the Holy Trinity formed a very, and indeed uniquely, close association; but Jesus and the eternal Son of God were no more one person than a very devoted husband and wife are one person. They were no doubt 'two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one', but they were two distinct beings, so that the things which happened to our Lord in his earthly life happened not to the divine Logos, the eternal Son, but to Jesus, his human partner. It was the special boast of the Nestorians, and one which their opponents did not find it very easy to meet, that their doctrine of the Incarnation safeguarded the impassibility of God.

It was in order to rule out such views as this and to defend the unity of Christ that the Church found it necessary to insist that Mary was not only *Christotokos*, the Mother of Christ, but *Theotokos*, the Mother of God; not just the mother of a man with whom the eternal Son formed a specially close partnership but the giver of human nature to God himself, since he who took human nature in her womb and to whom she gave human birth was none other than the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

¹ Translated into English as *Christ, our Lady, and The Church and Woman and Man with God* respectively.

The declaration of the Council of Ephesus was, as we have seen, intended primarily to ensure the truth about the Incarnation and about the incarnate Lord, but once this has been made clear certain consequences inevitably follow about his mother. It is well known that one of the results of the Ephesian definition was a great efflorescence of devotion to the Mother of God, and it has sometimes been alleged that this was due to an illicit transference to her of an emphasis which Ephesus intended to place upon her Son. Ephesus, it is said, named Mary as *Theotokos* not to give glory to her but to safeguard the truth about him. It is, however, surely truer to say that devotion was simply drawing the logical consequences of the more explicit understanding that the Church had now acquired of the nature and the circumstances of the Incarnation. If, so far as his conception was concerned, Jesus had been an ordinary human being, with whom the eternal Son entered into some specially close association, there would be no difference between the relation which his mother had to him and the relation which any mother has to her son; and this would still be the case even if the circumstances of his birth were miraculous. But if what took place in the Incarnation was not just the bringing into existence of another human being but the actual taking of human nature by the pre-existent Son of God, if the Word *became flesh*, then the relation between Mary and her Son was radically different from the relation which any other human mother has to her son, and indeed the relation between Mary and the Holy Trinity, between Mary and God, was radically different from the relation which any other human being has to God. So there are immediate implications regarding Mary which arise out of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation. So true is this that when people object to devotion to Mary it will often be found that underlying their objection is an erroneous view of the Incarnation.

This is not always the case. People are often influenced by misunderstanding or prejudice, or simply by the fact that they have never thought through to their conclusion the implications of the beliefs which they explicitly hold. I have, however, a vivid memory of a devout Christian who argued *a fortiori* against devotion to Mary on the ground that even her Son, as man, was not a legitimate object of devotion, since his manhood was

(it was alleged) simply the passive instrument of the godhead. This was, of course, a quasi-monophysite rather than a Nestorian objection. Heresies have, however, an extraordinary way of turning inside-out into their opposites; and I have argued elsewhere² that almost *any* Christological heresy weakens the link between Mary and her Son.

Mary, then, has quite a unique place in the scheme of redemption; as the divine Word can never become incarnate as man more than once, nobody can ever have the relation to him and the place in the whole scheme of redemption which is held by Mary. One of its most striking aspects is that Mary is located within the process of redemption from the start. Whereas other human beings have to wait until the process is complete before it can be applied to them and before they can become God's agents in its extension to the rest of the human race, Mary has been involved in the very process which has redeemed her.

Furthermore, it must be observed that, although Mary had a quite definite physical role in the Incarnation (that is to say, she was the agent and instrument which the Son of God employed in order to become man), she had a moral role as well. God did not merely seize her and use her for his purpose without any choice on her part, though no doubt he could have done so had he wished. Mary might, without being consulted in the matter, have found herself to be the mother of the incarnate Word. This would have been a most wonderful privilege, but it would have carried no special moral connotation with it. If, as the result of the death of a rich relation in Australia, a man in England finds that he has inherited an enormous fortune, he is no doubt to be envied, but not necessarily to be admired; it has just come his way without his being consulted. However, in the Incarnation Mary was consulted. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost, as the first versicle and response of the Angelus tells us. But the second versicle and response remind us that she was not a passive instrument: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' Mary was not only told that God had chosen her for her stupendous function; she also had to accept or reject it. And only when she had uttered her

² *The Mother of God: A Symposium*, p. 40.

Fiat were the third versicle and response fulfilled: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." We are, of course, here confronted inescapably with the mystery of the relation between God's foreknowledge and predestination on the one hand and human freedom on the other. The choice of Mary to be the mother of the Incarnate Lord was the culmination of a process of preparation which had been going on ever since man's first fall from grace, and which indeed we may suppose was foreseen by God from the creation of the world. God, foreseeing man would fall, would also prepare for man's redemption; and the long history of the Jewish race was the gradual preparation of a setting in which it would be possible and fitting for the Son of God to become incarnate in human nature in order that the human race might be re-created and renewed.

So the making of Mary is the climax of God's working within the history of the human race. His choice of the Jewish people and the whole great process of the Old Dispensation culminated in the birth of a girl to whom it could be said that God had chosen her to be the mother of his Son. Mary is the climax of God's working within the process of history. To put the matter briefly, we might say that what the 'evolutionary Christologists' taught about our Lord, namely that he is the highest product of God's immanent working in history, is quite true, but that it is not true about him but about his mother. She is, in Wordsworth's words, 'our tainted nature's solitary boast'. We may perhaps think that in defining the Immaculate Conception, the Roman Church was fastening too narrowly upon one particular aspect and element in the whole process, but the dogma at least stresses the fact that God prepared a mother for his Son.³ He did this by his action within the long process of history; and it was inevitably a long process, because throughout it God was working through, and not against, human free will, making use of men's freedom and not overruling it by force. And even when the climax had been reached and Mary was there, the choice was put to her for her to accept

3 Whatever we may think about either the truth or the definability of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, neither of these doctrines removes Mary from the realm of human existence. The former asserts that in her conception she received the grace that we received in baptism; the latter that shortly after death she was raised into the condition in which we shall be at the general resurrection.

or reject.⁴ As I have said above, the great mystery of God's predestination and human freedom faces us here in the bluntest way.

The question naturally comes to our minds, "Suppose Mary had said "No"?; and it is the kind of question to which philosophers and theologians have devoted a great deal of attention. It is, however, in no way different from a host of other questions of the same kind. What would have happened if Judas had not betrayed Christ? Or if Peter had not denied him? Or if Pilate had acquitted him? 'The Son of Man goes as it has been told of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.'

Whatever answer we may favour to this wide and general problem, one thing which we can say quite definitely is that, although God works through human beings as his instruments, we can never remove the human responsibility by appealing to the foreknowledge and predestination of God. This is true about the acts for which men are blamed, and about those for which they are praised. It is as true about the acceptance by Mary of her vocation to be the Mother of God, an act for which she deserves praise above that which we give to any other human being, as it is of the act by which Judas betrayed his Master, an act for which he has received lasting shame and disgrace.

So we have the two sides of the medal: on the one hand, the preparation of Mary by God throughout the history of the human race for her stupendous vocation and, on the other hand, Mary's free personal acceptance of that vocation in the words *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. Mary is at the same time the recipient of the greatest dignity to which God has ever exalted a human being and is also, with her Son, the supreme example of human obedience, courage, and fidelity. Therefore, while we glorify God for his wonderful work, we may surely rightly feel towards Mary the most intense human gratitude.

It will be well to say something more about the uniqueness of this process, for it is linked with the great mystery of the Virgin Birth or, as it is more correctly called, the virginal conception of our Lord. What was to take place in his conception

4 Cf. J. R. H. Moorman, *The Path to Glory*, p. 10.

made it different from any other conception of a human being. Our Lord was indeed fully and perfectly man, and there is a sense in which we may say that he was more fully and perfectly man than any other man who has ever lived. But in his conception there was not the coming into existence of a new human person who did not previously exist, but the taking of a new human nature, a perfect and complete human nature, by a divine Person who already existed from all eternity. God, without ceasing to be God, was becoming man. And this was quite unlike anything that had ever happened before throughout the history of the human race. It was quite unlike what happened in the conception of Mary, for even if we believe that her conception was immaculate we do not believe that it was virginal. We believe that she had a human father as well as a human mother, whereas her Son had a human mother but no human father. She provided him with his human nature, but not with his existence, for he already existed. It should therefore be clear that the virginal conception of our Lord, the fact that he had a human mother but no human father, is more appropriate to the circumstances and needs of the case, is indeed more 'natural', in the ordinary sense of that word, than would have been a birth from two human parents. It gives him a real and complete human nature, not just a human appearance as the docetic heresy held, but a full and concrete human nature, with body and soul, with flesh and blood, like any other human being. Thus, for example, it is theologically perfectly legitimate that, in discussing the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin, marked as it is with a 'photographic negative' of a human body, one should take account of the physical and chemical changes which any human body would naturally undergo in the particular circumstances to which Christ's body was subjected both in life and in death. Jesus is literally human, and he took his human nature by the physical process of gestation and birth from a human mother. But because, although she gave him his human nature, she did not give him his existence, the virginal conception was thoroughly congruous with the circumstances of the case. It was not a 'stunt', whose purpose was to be striking and startling; it fitted in perfectly with the process that was actually taking place, the incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary's part in our redemption was, as we have seen, thoroughly real and genuine. It was none the less secondary to the part played by God and by Christ. In certain theological circles in recent years the word 'co-redemptrix' has been frequently applied to Mary. It is no doubt open to misunderstanding, but Père René Laurentin has shown⁵ that it has gradually replaced the older term 'redemptrix' precisely in order to avoid the suggestion that Mary's role is on the same order as her Son's. He is *redemptor*, not *co-redemptor*; she is *co-level* as her Son's. He is *redemptrix*, not *redemptrix*. The force of the prefix *co* is to indicate not equality but subordination, as when St Paul tells his Corinthian disciples that 'we are God's fellow-workers', his *synergoi*, his *co-operators*.⁶ Mary is thus described as *co-redemptrix* in order to bring out the fact that, while Mary has a real part in the redemptive process, because she is morally and physically associated in it with her Son, yet her part is, and must be, essentially subordinate and ancillary to his.

In all the best Mariological writing of the present day the utmost care has been taken to preserve the unity of the redemptive act, to insist that there are not two acts, one performed by Christ and one by Mary, but one act, whose principal agent is Christ, and in which Mary's part is organically related and subordinated to his. To use a phrase which came recently, I believe, out of the discussions of a group of continental theologians, Mary was redeemed in a special way in the body of the Church and is associated in a special way with the Mediator and so is become the mother of all his members. This seems to me to be an admirably balanced statement. It stresses the fact that Mary herself was redeemed, though redeemed in a special way; as I have said above, she was in the redemptive act from the start. It stresses also the unique relation which she has to the Redeemer. And it locates her not over but within the body of the Church, tracing the Church's basic reality back to the moment when the Divine Word took flesh in Mary's womb. Concerning her motherhood of the Church's members I shall have more to say below.

In the early Church the fact about Mary's part in redemption which seems to have struck the minds of Christians most forcibly was that her obedience reversed the disobedience of Eve. Thus

⁵ *Le Titre de Corédemptrice: Étude historique*. Rome, 1951.

⁶ I Cor 3:9.

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St Justin Martyr, who died about the year 165, made a very telling use of this notion, when he wrote:

Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, conceiving the word which was from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death, but the virgin Mary, taking faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel told her the glad tidings, answered 'Be it unto me according to thy word'.⁷

And St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who was martyred round the year 200, writes to much the same effect:

Mary the virgin is found obedient, saying, 'Behold thy handmaid, O Lord, be it unto me according to thy word', but Eve was disobedient, for she did not obey when she was yet a virgin. . . . And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was unloosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith. If the former disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to obey God, in order that the virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by reason of a virgin, it was rescued by a virgin, virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience.⁸

Mary's *Fiat* was thus the act of human obedience which reversed the whole pattern of human disobedience and so made it possible for God to set in operation his work of re-creating the human race.

One could instance many other illustrations of the way in which Christian writers have expressed the place which our Lady has in the work of redemption. I have, however, space only to refer to two recent theologians of our own Church of England. The first is Sir Edwyn Hoskyns.

In his commentary on St John's Gospel he writes as follows:

At the time of the Lord's death a new family is brought into being. If the unity of the Church is symbolised by the seamless robe, the peculiar nature of that unity is indicated here.⁹ The

⁷ *Tryph.*, c. 100.

⁸ *Contra Haer.*, iii. 22. 4.

⁹ That is, in the third word from the Cross, 'Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother.'

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Church proceeds from the sacrifice of the Son of God, and the union of the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of the Lord pre-figures and foreshadows the charity of the *Ecclesia of God*. Mary, the Mother of the Lord, becomes the mother of the faithful.¹⁰

He goes on to remark that, whereas the other Evangelists describe our Lord's death by the phrase 'He gave up the ghost', St John uses a different word which gives the meaning 'He handed over the Spirit', and he sees this as providing the reason why the First Epistle of St John, in its reference to the 'three who bear record', mentions not only the water and the blood which flowed from the Lord's side, but also the Spirit. And he says:¹¹

If it be assumed that the author intends his readers to suppose that the Beloved Disciple and Mary the Mother of Jesus remain standing beneath the cross, the words *He bowed his head* suggest that he bowed his head towards them, and the words *He handed over the Spirit* are also directed to the faithful believers who stand below.¹²

In another writing Hoskyns comments on our Lord's words at the marriage feast at Cana, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come', and says:

Because Mary is the mother of Jesus, she will become the mother of those who believe in him. This second motherhood of Mary is anticipated, whose hour will come when the sacrifice on the cross has been offered. 'Woman' is a far better translation than 'Lady'. When, therefore, the fathers say that Mary is the new Eve, they have caught the meaning of the passage far better than modern commentators; for, while Eve was the mother of a sinful people who ceased to have real contact with God, Mary is the mother of believers, who, redeemed from sin, are reborn and abide with God.

Referring to the passage from Justin, Hoskyns says that there is no reason to suppose that he was the first to make the comparison of Mary with Eve and suggests that the mother of Jesus may have been of far more importance in the primitive Church than modern critics have allowed. He continues:

¹⁰ *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 530 (O.U.P.).

¹¹ I Jn 5:8.

¹² *Op cit.*, p. 532.

The idea of re-creation and rebirth therefore underlies St John's account of the death on the cross, and Mary herself as the mother of the faithful, shares in this rebirth. If this be accepted we can hardly dismiss as fantastic the allusion implied in the account of the reclining of the head of Jesus in sleep, followed immediately by the rebirth of Mary from his side. The account suggests Genesis 2:21-22 [the birth of Eve from the side of Adam] . . . and Tertullian's comment, *De Anima* 43, represents real insight, 'For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, that from the wound inflicted on his side, might, in like manner [as Eve was formed], be typified the Church, the true mother of the living.'

Hoskyns then refers to that remarkable figure in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, the woman standing on the moon and crowned with the stars, and he insists that this is not, as some have suggested, just a symbolic figure of the Church but is the new Eve, who is in one respect Mary and in another respect the Church: Mary who reversed the disobedience of the first Eve, and the Church which was born from Christ's side on the Cross as Eve was born from the side of the sleeping Adam. And he writes:

The Mother of the Messiah is also the mother of the believers, and is persecuted by the serpent, but in contrast to Eve protects her seed from the serpent's power. The suggestion is that the mother of the Lord and of those who believe in him is the new Eve, still persecuted by the serpent; but, where Eve failed by handing her seed over to death, the new Eve is victorious by bearing children who possess eternal life.¹³

The other modern Anglican to whom I shall refer is R. H. Lightfoot, whom certainly no one ever described as an extreme Anglo-Catholic. His commentary on St John's Gospel was edited after his death by Professor C. F. Evans and was published in 1956. Like Hoskyns, Lightfoot comments on the third word from the Cross; he writes as follows:

Through the destruction of the shrine of his physical life, which he has consecrated and offered for their sakes (17:19-21), a new shrine will arise (2:19), in which a spiritual and true worship

¹³ 'Genesis 1-3 and St John's Gospel', in *J.T.S.*, April 1920, p. 210 f.

will be offered to the Father (4:21-24). In connection with 19:25-27 it was suggested that this new shrine is there set before us in the persons of the Lord's mother and the beloved disciple. Mary, the Lord's physical mother, now becomes, at the Lord's bidding and as a result of his work, the spiritual mother of all those who are or are to be reborn in him, these being represented at the moment by the beloved disciple who with her stands beneath the cross and takes the Lord's place as her son. . . . We are not, it seems, to understand 19:27 as implying that the new son at once takes his new mother away. The hour mentioned is likely to be the hour of the Lord's death, and until this has taken place, and for some time after, they remain at the foot of the cross; and to them primarily when the Lord inclines his head to rest, in the peace of his union with the Father and of his accomplished work, he hands over the new dispensation of Spirit.¹⁴

So on the Cross the Lord commits his mother to St John. Mary and John together are the nucleus of the Christian Church, and she is given to the household of the Church as its mother. To them, that is to say to the Church under the motherhood of Mary, Christ hands over the new dispensation of the Spirit.

Mary's relation to us who are Christ's members is compounded out of her relation to Christ and his relation to us; it is, to use a term of modern logic, the logical product of those two relations. Mary is our mother, because we are members of her son, because we have, not just metaphorically but really, been adopted into him. By our baptism we have been incorporated into the human nature which he took from her and which still continues to exist in its ascended glory. If Christ had ceased to be man at his ascension—and it is to be feared that only too many Christians unreflectively assume that he did—then Mary would have ceased to be his mother, our incorporation into him would be a mere fiction, and so would our relation to her. But the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation declares that the eternal Son of God, who at one moment in the world's history took human nature in the womb of Blessed Mary, is, in that human nature, man for evermore. And so, as both Hoskyns and Lightfoot saw from their study of St John, Mary is the mother of Jesus and of those who are

¹⁴ *St John's Gospel: A Commentary*, p. 319.

incorporated into him, the mother of the Church which is his Mystical Body and which, because a man and his bride are one flesh, is also Christ's bride.

The Incarnation took place at the Annunciation, when in response to Mary's *Fiat*, the Word was made very man in her womb. But the further fact of her relation to the Church and its members had to wait for the Ascension and for the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, when the Church, whose archetypal substance already existed in the manhood of Jesus, was fully and visibly constituted in power. In the Ascension the Lord's human nature was withdrawn from human sight and touch. From then until Pentecost the apostolic group was the Church in expectancy and potentiality, awaiting its activation by the Spirit and the communication to it of the full reality of Christ's manhood. When the Spirit descended in tongues of fire, it was to make the waiting group into the mystical Body of Christ in a way analogous to that in which the descent of the Spirit upon Mary at the Annunciation had formed the natural body of Christ in her womb. Nevertheless, although the Mystical Body came into being by this new descent of the Spirit, there was not a new incarnation. Christ was not becoming man a second time, he was not assuming a new human nature; the human nature which he had taken from his mother, in which he had died for our sins and risen again for our justification, was being made present under a new mode. There are not, strictly speaking, two bodies of Christ, a natural and a mystical, but one body of Christ which is manifested in two forms. Nor does the story end here, for that part of the Mystical Body which is on earth needs to be continually nourished and sustained, as Christ's natural body did before its glorification. It is through the Eucharistic Body of the Blessed Sacrament that this takes place. Here again, there is not a new incarnation, but in the Eucharist the human nature which Christ took from his mother is made present in yet another form, a form through which that part of the Mystical Body which is still *in via* on earth is repeatedly sustained and renewed.

In all these modes of manifestation, the human nature of Christ is the human nature which he took from Mary. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary at the Annunciation first formed it, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at

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Pentecost released it, so to speak, in the world as the Mystical Body of the Church, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharistic elements brings it to us as the Sacramental Body. But in all these manifestations and expressions it is one and the same Body, the Body which was formed in Mary's womb, and so when we return from the Altar, having received the Sacramental Body of Christ and having thereby been received more firmly into his Mystical Body, we can say with a new emphasis the words that, in the Genesis story, Adam said after he had tasted the food given him by the first Eve: 'The woman gave me, and I did eat.' For it is the very body, the human nature, which Christ took from his mother, on which we are fed in the Holy Eucharist. And Jesus and his members are one Body, the *Whole Christ*, and Mary is his mother and theirs.

I have quoted already from two almost contemporary Anglican writers; I will conclude with quotations from two of rather earlier date. The first is Alexander Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, a disciple of Dr Pusey and the writer of a celebrated book on the Thirty-nine Articles. He wrote as follows:

Of course, between the perfection of God, and the perfection of the noblest of his creatures, there is the gulph of infinity fixed. . . . But on the other hand, viewed rightly, and in the analogy of faith, the great honour bestowed on Mary, the recognition of her place in the order of grace, tends very directly to a proper estimate of the Glory of God. As in Alpine scenes one can never estimate the vast distances and enormous magnitudes of the glorious objects by which we are surrounded, from the fact that we have no measure or power of comparison till we see some tree or human form, the comparative insignificance of which forms that measure, so it is with the infinitude of God. We ascend towards it through the contemplation of the Saints. Take the Virgin as the highest of them all, estimate her pure as Eve at the moment of her creation, add to that the miraculous fact of Divine Maternity, exhaust all thought and all positive language in the conception and expression of her august prerogatives, and yet, when you have reached the height, God is still infinitely greater. Thus she becomes a height of created nature, whence to rise to the Divine Humanity of her Son, and thence to the infinitude of God, and the higher ideal we have of her, the more complete is our all imperfect estimate of him. Christ is the glorious

sun of righteousness, shining in his strength, glorious and radiant, from whose heat nothing is hidden; and he shines all the more gloriously and radiantly by reason of, and by comparison with, those derived fires, the Saints who shine in the firmament as the stars of heaven, and specially with her whom an imaginative and poetic Christianity, playing upon a fancied interpretation of her lovely name, has designated as 'the Star of the Sea'.¹⁵

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My final quotations are from Dr Pusey himself:

She was Mother of our Redeemer, and so from her, as the fountain of his human birth, came all which he did, and was, and is to us. She, being the mother of him who is our Life, became the Mother of Life; she was *the Gate of Paradise*, because she bore him who restored to us our lost Paradise; she was *the Gate of Heaven*, because he, born of her, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers; she was *the all undefiled Mother of Holiness*, because the Holy One, born of her, was called the Son of God; she was *the Light-clad Mother of Light*, because he who indwelt her and was born of her, was the True Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.¹⁶

The love of the Mother and Son were essentially different from all other love, because he was her Son after the flesh, but also Almighty God. And that same love must continue on now, only that the God-enabled power of love in the Beatific vision of his Godhead must be unspeakably intensified.¹⁷

Grand and magnificent and highly endowed as may be any the highest creature which God could create none could have the nearness of her, the Mother of God.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 226, 227.

¹⁷ *Eirenicon*, part ii, p. 412.

¹⁸ *Eleven Addresses*, p. 26. I have taken these quotations from *The Blessed Virgin and all the Company of Heaven*, by A. T. Wirgman, p. 104 f.

¹⁶ *Lenten Sermons*, p. 126.

III

Mary, Scripture, and Tradition

Austin Farrer

THE intention of this essay will be critical rather than purely theological. I do not propose, for the most part, to argue from accepted notions or beliefs; as is done when, presuming a faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, we ask what such a faith implies, as to the part played by a human parent in the coming-about of such a mystery. I propose instead to ask what evidence we have about Mary, and how the ecclesiastical interpretations of that evidence can (when and if they can) be justified.

When we think of Mary, or of any saint departed this life, we are thinking of an actual citizen of Paradise. So we may be tempted to speculate about the structure of the heavenly kingdom, and of her place in it. The society of heaven is centred on the Heavenly Man, Jesus, in whom, and as who, the Godhead is personally present. Surely his Mother's seat must be next to his throne. Perhaps, if the King of Heaven has a Mother. By an *a priori* speculation on the heavenly kingdom one would not know that he had; or that if he had, she was more specially related to him than his human father. Her heavenly place must be a deduction from what we know of her earthly place in relation to Jesus. So we come down to Mary's history, and our knowledge of her history. Apart from that basis of fact, we have nothing to build upon.

The earliest and most copious of apostolic writers, St Paul, tells us not a word about her history. There is, however, a passage in his Epistle to the Galatians¹ which contains all the essential themes of the doctrine of Virginal Birth. God is our Father, and (though he had placed us under nursery governors and stewards) has now promoted us to the status of free sons. He has done this by adopting us into the condition and

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