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A COMMENTARY ON *MARY: GRACE AND HOPE IN CHRIST*  
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In Chapter III of *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II named five doctrinal topics which need fuller study to promote movement on the way from the present basic doctrinal unity toward a true consensus in faith between the Catholic Church and her partners in ecumenical dialogue. Among areas needing examination, one is "the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ's disciples and for all humanity" (UUS 79). Here, on the Virgin Mary, Catholic convictions of faith and devotional practice seem to have little resonance in the churches and communities whose faith and life was shaped by Reformation.

The importance of Mary in the quest for full communion was further underscored in Summer 2000, when the special consultation of Anglican and Catholic bishops, held at Mississauga, Canada, requested that the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) turn its attention of the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church.

To this request the Commission has responded admirably in the present document, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (henceforth, MGH), which offers to the churches a lucid proposal (1) that in faith convictions about Mary, Anglicans and Catholics are in substantial agreement, while (2) their differences over prayers which invoke Mary's aid are not ecclesially divisive.

#### *Starting Point*

One reason for the success of this latest phase of dialogue is that it did not begin from zero in examining Anglican and Catholic convictions concerning Mary. The 1981 Windsor Statement of ARCIC, *Authority in the Church II*, while registering Anglican difficulties over the biblical basis of the Marian dogmas of 1854 and 1950, could still sketch a foundational starting point for further study:

Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree in much of the truth that these two dogmas are designed to affirm. We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognizing that Christian understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doctrines of Christ and the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotokos*), in observing her festivals, and in according her honor in the communion of saints. We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of the Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory. We further agree in recognizing in Mary a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to regard her as a prophetic figure of the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation. (*Authority II*, no. 30).

The present statement, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, after citing the passage just given (MGH 2, also in no. 76), revisits this cluster of shared convictions and extends them, by first developing a solid biblical theology of Mary (Part A) and then reviewing the history of Marian faith and practice, both in the common history and during the centuries of Anglican-Catholic divisions (Part B). Part C offers a creative theological analysis of Marian doctrine from the surprisingly fruitful perspective of the eschatological teleology of God's work of grace and salvation, before Part D examines the respective practice of prayer and devotion to Mary among Anglicans and Catholics.[1]

This commentary will begin by examining selected insights formulated in the four parts of the statement, before a second section looks more in detail at two points of particular interest, namely, the biblical methodology of Part A and the eschatological perspective of Part C. A third section will offer two further considerations stimulated by *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* which may help other ecumenical exchanges on Mary.

#### **1. Mary in Scripture, History, Theology, and Devotional Practice**

An important methodological point, stated in MGH 3, concerns the ongoing reception of the Tradition of Christian faith and life delivered once and for all by the Apostles. Here ARCIC draws on its previous text, *The Gift of*

*Authority* (1999), to highlight the paradoxical combination of continuity and renewal in such reception, for in any given age the church and its members lay hold of the meaning of the apostolic heritage in ways that fall short of a full vision of salvation in Christ. We see through a glass clouded by our historical limitations. But ongoing biblical study, especially when linked with the basic structures of worship and promoted by fresh spiritual insight ("the wisdom of holy persons"), can bring the church both to new understandings of the meaning of God's saving word and work as well as to corrections of previously held imperfect understandings.[2]

As we live in unfolding history, there are thus events of *re-reception* of transmitted doctrines and components of Christian practice. Today, in the setting of our ecumenical commitment, renewed reception takes place along with our ecumenical partners, as we probe together the Christian sources to lay hold afresh of the significance of events and persons in the economy of salvation – specifically here of Mary's role in this work of God's grace through Christ -- in ways that promote greater communion in faith and reconciliation of church practices.

### *Mary in Scripture*

ARCIC's new text sets the stage for its biblical reconsideration of Mary by positing in MGH 8-10 the theme of God's covenant with Israel, which stands in service of an intended blessing for all the families of the earth (Gen 12:3, 26:4, 28:14; Sir 44:22). But within this universal vision, the Scriptures of Israel prepare more directly the consideration of Mary by telling of individuals granted God's calling and enabling grace for particular roles in the unfolding of God's purposes (no. 10). The coherent line of preparation leading to Jesus' messianic and universal saving action includes as well the roles of Sarah and Hannah, "whose sons fulfilled the purposes of God for his people" (no.11).

In the Gospels, Mt 1-2, treated in MGH 12-13, sketches a movement from Abraham and the fulfillment of Israel's messianic expectation to the coming of the Magi from beyond the borders of Israel to do homage to the child whom they find with Mary his mother. The opening narrative of Jesus' virginal conception, birth, and revelation elegantly anticipates the overall movement of the First Gospel from Jesus' teaching in Galilee and Jerusalem to the confession of Jesus as Son of God by the Roman centurion (Mt 27:54) and to the Risen Lord's mandate to the eleven to make disciples of all nations (28:20).

In Lk 1-2, MGH 14-17 notes how Mary's Magnificat anticipates the reversal that is central to Jesus' message of God's reign and how her spirituality of thoughtful pondering of words and events (Lk 2:19-51), coupled with suffering (2:48-50), shows individuals and communities the true inwardness of faith. The annunciation by Gabriel is replete with echoes of previous events and formulations, like the "overshadowing" power of God, which echoes both the brooding Spirit of Gen 1:2 and God's presence covering the Ark and Tabernacle (Ex 25:20, 40:35). The Third Gospel sets clearly the outer framework of action by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, within which Mary declares her *Fiat* to God's work, animated by God's favor that enveloped her life.

The birth narratives of two Gospels give independent witness to Jesus' virginal conception by the Holy Spirit, on which MGH 18 cautions us not to see an empty space of absence, but instead a pointer to the work of the Spirit, who takes initiatives and carries God's saving project through to completion in responsive human beings.

MGH 21 cites a little-noticed Lukan contribution to relating Mary and the church in Acts 1:14, where the eleven await the empowering promise of the Father in constant prayer with Mary and the other women. (From this, medieval Western iconography could give Mary a place in the community of Pentecost, under the tongues of fire, at times with the open Scriptures before her.)

On the Fourth Gospel, where Mary appears at Cana and at the cross of her son, the new document moves to levels beyond a simple narrative reading, that is, to meanings for which the narrative of events is said to leave room (MGH 24). To this we will return in Section 2, below.

At Cana, Mary's pointed observation, "They have no wine," expresses Israel's longing for the feast of the messianic kingdom, while her imperative "Do whatever he tells you," comes from a believer now within the messianic community. Beyond the surface of Jesus' words from the cross to his mother and the beloved disciple, the text of Jn 19:25-27 gives Mary a maternal role in the church, since the Fourth Gospel presents this disciple as the beginning of the church, that is, as object of Jesus' love, faithful follower, and reliable witness (MGH 26).

To complete its biblical study, MGH notes that the "the woman" of Rev 12 seems to be primarily a representative figure of God's people under the onslaught of persecution, but still her giving birth to a child destined to rule has led some to find the text illuminating Mary's association with her son in his eschatological victory (no. 29).

### *Marian Doctrine and Devotion in History*

Receiving early dogmatic developments, Anglicans and Catholics are agreed in holding to Jesus being truly born of Mary, to Mary reversing the fateful legacy of the disobedient "virgin Eve" by conceiving of the Holy Spirit, and to the validity of protecting the oneness of Christ's person by affirming Mary to be the God-bearer, *Theotokos*. Augustine is cited approvingly on God's gift to Mary of an "abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular," which other Fathers see as given from Mary's origin to prepare her for a unique vocation as Mother of the Lord (MGH 38).

By the sixth century Mary was singled out in most Eucharistic prayers as first among the saints, in communion with whom the church praises the Father in the memorial of Christ's saving deed. The popular prayer for Mary's

protection, *Sub tuum praesidium*,<sup>[3]</sup> comes from the fifth century, from the time after the Council of Ephesus when churches, like St. Mary Major, were being dedicated to Mary and days of the year were being marked out as her feasts (MGH 39-40).

While medieval devotion to the humanity of Jesus (Bernard, Francis), along with statuary and stained glass, led vast numbers of believers to also attend lovingly to his mother, in the universities Mary's graces were treated analytically as driving speculation into the causality of redemption pondered the role she has with her son in applying his saving graces to needy humans. While St. Thomas was measured in treating Mary's sanctification, Duns Scotus applied the general notion of prevenient operative grace to conclude to Mary being without sin from the first moment of her conception. Many believers, during late medieval trials, had recourse to Mary's protection, individually and in confraternities, in ways that left little room for her glorified son's high-priestly mediation (MGH 41-43).

While the English Reformation brought a purification of devotional life, it held to Mary as *Theotokos* and ever-Virgin, with only Mary's Assumption being suppressed as wanting in biblical warrant (MGH 44-46).

When Tridentine Catholicism insisted on Marian doctrine and devotion as an identifying characteristic, it had the effect, among others, of solidifying the presence in the lived faith of Catholics of convictions about her Immaculate Conception and Assumption, as was ascertained before the dogmatic definitions of 1854 and 1950. Vatican II brought a paradigmatic re-reception of biblical and patristic Marian themes, exemplified by the choice to make the independently prepared schema *De beata Virgine* into Ch. VIII of the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which thus moves from Christ the light of the nations through eight ample chapters of ecclesiology to conclude with an expression in LG 69 of the ecumenical hope that Mary, a sign of hope and comfort, will by her intercession before her Son hasten the gathering all people into the one people of God (MGH 47).

With the recent move among Anglicans to mention Mary in eucharistic prayers and to celebrate on August 15th a principal Marian feast (MGH 50), the new document finds a central agreement in our two communions in honoring Mary and believing that she prays for the whole Church, with which she is inseparably linked. On this basis a fresh approach can be made to the Catholic Marian dogmas (MGH 49-51).

#### *Theological Insights into Marian Dogmas*

*Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* establishes a new biblical framework in nos. 52-53 for its theological consideration of Mary's distinctive place in the economy of God's grace, especially the place of one conceived without sin and assumed into heaven. The luminous framework is that of a largely Pauline doctrine of our graced call and destiny, by which our final sharing in Christ's glory has already begun. We will return to this eschatological perspective in Section 2, below.

Scripture knows of God caring for his servants before birth (Ps 139; Lk 1:15; Gal 1:15) and of God's grace even preceding their conception (Jer 1:5) – which casts light on the meaning of Gabriel's address to Mary as "favored" and Elizabeth's declaration that she is "blessed among women" (Lk 1:28,42). Mary then accepted God's call to virginal motherhood in a graced assent for which she was enabled by God's prevenient preparation. In the Pauline perspective, she is emblematically "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand" (Eph 2:10). But all such graces are finally oriented to a destiny of glory (MGH 54-55), which Scripture concretizes in Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), Enoch (Hebr 11:5), and the penitent thief (Lk 23:43). For Mary, the disciple closest to Christ, it is most fitting that her union with God in life lead to her being gathered to God in death to share the new creation (MGH 56-57).

Thus the Anglican and Catholic members of ARCIC arrive at affirming together as congruent with Scripture that God has taken Mary in her whole person into the fullness of glory, as the definition of 1950 stated – both in celebration of God's action in her and in effective demonstration of the destiny and the hope of all those joined in the communion of saints (MGH 58). Moving from Mary's end back to her beginning, ARCIC acknowledges, in the light of Scripture, the reach of Christ's redemptive grace to fill Mary's life from her beginning, making her the prototype of a human being in which grace goes before any good action. This grace, however, is from the one Mediator who has ransomed all humans, whether they are touched and enlivened by his grace before or after he gave himself for all (MGH 59).

To be more precise, ARCIC affirms the specifically Marian content of the dogma of the Assumption as being consonant with Scripture and with the ancient common tradition (MGH 58), while the Immaculate Conception is "not contrary to the teaching of Scripture, and can only be understood in the light of Scripture" (MGH 59). Both dogmas fit well with the biblical theology of grace and hope developed in MGH. Anglicans, however, must ask if these truths about Mary are revealed by God in a manner requiring those who profess the Church's Creed to hold them as well in faith. This question is raised in MGH 60, leading to considerations of revelation, Scripture, and authoritative teaching in nos. 61-63.

The papal documents that solemnly defined the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption cast these truths in the mold of propositions authoritatively issued as expressing particular contents of God's supernatural revelation. The definitions exemplify the account given by the First Vatican Council of truths belonging to the object of divine and Catholic faith.<sup>[4]</sup> But today a new Catholic context of understanding surrounds Vatican I's account of revealed truths, situating differently the particulars of God's revelation, as the latter has been set forth in Vatican II's account of the word of God in the history of salvation. The culminating center of revelation is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, which makes revelation preeminently salvific in its content and message.<sup>[5]</sup> God reveals himself as liberating us

from sin and death and as raising us up to new life in Christ, in an economy of grace and hope, much as MGH developed this.

The teaching authority is called to “preserve, expound, and disseminate” the saving word of God attested in Scripture and communicated by tradition (DV 9). It does not therefore announce new revelations but interprets the economy of salvation in Christ, that is, when with the help of the Holy Spirit “it listens to this devoutly, guards it reverently, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed it draws from this sole deposit of faith” (DV 10). In the words of ARCIC, “the definitions are understood to bear witness to what has been revealed from the beginning” (MGH 61). The obvious way to show that this is true in a given case is to examine the content of teaching in the framework of Scripture to test its congruence and homogeneity with the inspired, prophetic-apostolic, and authoritative biblical teaching – just as MGH has done.

But here one can well recall how Catholics and Anglicans approach belief in Mary’s Assumption and Immaculate Conception. ARCIC registers a positive appreciation of their Marian content when framed by the biblical context developed in MGH 52-56. But for Catholics there is another dimension, different from an enhanced understanding of the meaning of the two doctrines. Catholics have *certainty* about the truth of the doctrines. This exemplifies what Vatican II said while treating Tradition and the Magisterium, namely, “the church does not draw its certainty about all revealed truths from Holy Scripture alone” (DV 9). The living tradition fostered growth in Catholic understanding of God’s economy, and the Papal Magisterium, in 1854 and 1950, defined the two truths as constitutive parts of this economy. Tradition and Magisterium interacted to give certainty about Marian contents of revelation.

When Anglicans question the binding character of the definitions of 1854 and 1950 because the Popes acted independently of a Council of the whole church, Catholics point to the active support of the Catholic bishops, first in witnessing to convictions regarding the two truths held by the *sensus fidelium*, and then in re-affirming them at Vatican II (MGH 62). But ARCIC also recognizes that post-Reformation controversy has disturbed perceptions on both sides of the place of Mary. Balance has been restored by Vatican II and presentations such as Pope Paul VI’s *Marialis cultus* (1974), which hierarchize truths about Mary under the Incarnation and her role as *Theotokos*.

Today ARCIC looks to a common re-reception of Marian doctrine deepened by the eschatological perspective on our graced call and destiny, which features God’s prevenient preparation for his service and then a personal renewal oriented to total sharing in Christ’s glory. In such a framework, the Commission expresses the hope that the two bodies can recognize in each other’s convictions genuine expressions of Christian faith, even though the same formulations are not used, namely, those of the definitions of 1854 and 1950, which however Anglicans would respect as legitimate.[6]

#### *Mary in the Devotional Life of Anglicans and Catholics*

In their lived religiosity, Anglicans have taken Mary principally as an exemplary disciple in responding life-long to God’s call, while Catholic devotion features her ongoing role in the economy of salvation. But a shared basis, more evident in recent developments in both communities, is that Scripture and tradition set forth Mary “as the fullest human example of the life of grace,” and consequently one to whom believers are called “to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ” (MGH 65). The principal link of Anglican and Catholic believers with Mary is in fact shared in the prayer of praise, both by praying her Magnificat and by explicating our association with her in the communion of saints during our Eucharistic prayers.

The Reformation rejected an intercessory role for Mary because it threatened the unique and all-sufficient mediation of Christ and had no biblical basis, to which Catholic doctrine responded by reaffirming the long-standing practice of invoking her aid and, in Vatican II, placing her action not beside but within the unique action of her Son (LG 60).

MGH moves ahead in nos. 68-69 by reflecting on the incorporation of ecclesial ministries, rooted in Christ’s mediation, in the application of salvation to believers. Scripture is also clear on believers requesting prayer and praying for each other in solidarity before God, which unfolds as mutual support in Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit. The natural extension of such requests to the departed saints “is not to be excluded as unscriptural, though it is not directly taught by the scriptures to be a required element of life in Christ” (MGH 70). Naturally such petitions must not obscure that the help we seek comes indeed from the Father, through the Son our Highpriest, in the Holy Spirit.

MGH approaches “from below” the particularization of Mary’s role in the communion of saints, by noting that many Christians are drawn to seek her help, e.g., by her intervention at Cana, and how they simply find her close to them in responding to God’s call, in the poverty in which she gave birth, and in her suffering on Calvary. As she was mother of the Savior, Christians have come to sense that she has an ongoing maternal concern in the unfolding of his redemptive work. Simply put, “Many Christians find that giving devotional expression to their appreciation for this ministry of Mary enriches their worship of God” (no. 73). ARCIC finds no reason to reject such devotion, while specifying that it should be a possible but not required practice.[7]

From its review of Mary’s place, a different place and role in the devotional lives of Anglicans and Catholics, ARCIC concludes that the practice of asking Mary to pray to God for us should not divide our two communions.

The analysis in MGH of invoking Mary has led to a “reconciled diversity” because, (1) what Anglicans have feared to be intrinsic to Catholic devotion, that is, encroachment on Christ’s atonement, is not the case, while Catholic fears of Anglican antipathy to Mary are also not verified. Also (2) the deeper concern of Anglicans to stress the sufficiency of Christ’s salvation is not denied when Catholics stress how from Christ God empowers others as

intercessors, nor do Anglican reservations about obligatory appeals to Mary entail a denial of the Catholic concern to feature the solidarity of the communion of saints. [8]

There is no need here to review the Conclusion of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, since the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission does this succinctly but no less informatively in nos. 78-79.

## Two Particulars of Special Interest

At least two characteristics of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* make it unique among documents produced recently by bilateral ecumenical commissions. Its biblical interpretation goes in places beyond results of historical-critical interpretation to retrieve Mary's significance from Scriptural meanings that lie beyond the original communicative intent of the biblical author. This calls for notation and even critical review. Secondly, for its theological reflection on Mary's initial grace from God and her condition after death, ARCIC works creatively from an eschatological perspective given by a largely Pauline account of salvation entering our human lives.

### *Scripture in the Light of Tradition*

ARCIC states forthrightly that "our use of Scripture seeks to draw upon the whole tradition of the Church, in which rich and varied readings have been employed," and to integrate the valuable results of different approaches (MGH 7). In fact the variety of "readings" is said to be needed to correct imbalances arising from a single method: "typology can become extravagant, Reformation emphases reductionist, and critical methods overly historicist" (*Ibid.*).

The integration of results of different methods or "readings" seems to presuppose achieving some degree of connection between them, so that the result is more than just a juxtaposition of the biblical narrative and different "spiritual" meanings of words, events, and persons.[9]

However, it must be said immediately that goodly portions of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* elaborate quite soberly a biblical theology of God's dealings with his people and of Mary's role as Mother of the Messiah. Sobriety marks the accounts of Mt 1-2 and Lk 1-2, with the latter being enriched in MGH 15 by attention to how Gabriel's word about the Spirit "overshadowing" Mary echoes Septuagint terms describing the cherubim over the Ark (Ex 25:20), God present over the Tabernacle (Ex 40:35), and the brooding Spirit over the waters (Gen 1:2).[10] In receiving afresh the biblical witness, ARCIC laid hold of significant meanings without engaging in spiritual interpretation.

But on the Fourth Gospel in MGH 22-27, sober narrative gives way to retrievals of symbolic meanings, beginning with the new wine of Cana, "symbolizing the eschatological marriage feast of God with his people and the messianic banquet of the Kingdom" (no. 23). "They have no wine" is taken as John's ascription to Mary of the messianic people's longing for salvation (no. 24), while her instruction "Do whatever he tells you" is the word of a believer now placed within the messianic community (no. 25). Similarly, the surface meaning of Jn 19:15-27 "invites a symbolic and ecclesial" reading of the narrative, in which Mary as "woman" is seen corporatively, or perhaps as the antitype of Eve, or "on a spiritual level" as the mother of all born anew of water and the Spirit (nos. 26-27).

This commentator has written appreciatively of how the Groupe des Dombes situated its *relecture* of New Testament Marian texts in the framework of the three articles of the Creed, thus relating Mary to the Creator, to the incarnate Son who came to glory in his resurrection, and to the Holy Spirit of Pentecost.[11] Since participants in bilateral dialogues work as representatives of their churches, their biblical work should be concerned to honor ways in which texts, in their history-of-effects, have been received by the communities of faith in ages past and present.[12] But the churches have also deemed necessary the work of disciplined recovery of the meanings that the biblical authors intended to communicate in the historical setting of the first redaction, which for a Catholic is easily recalled by mention of *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943) and recent works by the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Ecumenically fruitful biblical work is thus not easy when it seeks to respond to the two imperatives just mentioned. The difficulty may have been felt by members of ARCIC. At any rate, the Commission seems not to have fully appropriated the symbolic meanings found in John 2 and 19, since the resumés of its biblical section, in MGH 30 and the first part of no. 51, make no mention of symbols and types but remain almost totally within the framework of the sober gleanings from Luke. The Johannine paragraphs remain in the text, but the symbolic meanings found in them have not contributed substantially to the central doctrinal outcome of this phase of dialogue.

### *Mary in the Grace and Hope of the Economy of Salvation*

One will ask just how ARCIC reached the significant conclusions of MGH 58-59, which express agreement on Mary's Assumption and Immaculate Conception. The answer is found in nos. 52-57, which articulate the "pattern of grace and hope" made manifest in Mary, but known from the development of this pattern in a central New Testament source, that is, a largely Pauline understanding of how salvation comes into human lives.

This commentator recommends that readers of MGH 52-57 have the New Testament open before them for reading and pondering the many biblical passages to which these paragraphs refer as they weave their web of theological understanding concerning the economy of God's saving grace. These paragraphs are the hinge on which the argument of the document turns, as is indicated by taking the title of the whole from what is stated in no. 54: "This is the pattern of grace and hope which we see at work in the life of Mary."

The gain of this approach comes from prioritizing the perspective of the final destiny of graced human beings, that is, a consideration "in the light of what we are to become in Christ, ... We thus view the economy of grace from its fulfillment in Christ 'back' into history, rather than 'forward' from its beginning in fallen creation." (MGH 52).

Attention to this economy leads to a perception of the coherence of God's saving work, which is not fragmented into parts or elements simply juxtaposed. The future is especially relevant, for by faith, we are "a resurrection people" convinced of the present glory of Jesus Christ, with whom believers have become "joint heirs" (Rom 8:17) already raised with him (Eph 2:6; Col 3:1), as they were intended to be by God's choice before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3-5).

There is thus a pattern of grace and hope in the unfolding economy. By grace believers, and particularly Mary, are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand" (Eph 2:10, cited in MGH 55). God's intent goes before and his work anticipates what comes to be in history. As believers we live in hope, firmly based on the "first fruits of the Spirit," looking to "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23, referenced in MGH 57), which was no less the well-grounded hope of Mary.

Thus ARCIC took what it calls an "eschatological perspective" (mentioned in MGH 52, 54, 56, 59, and 63), to deepen its understanding of Mary by placing her in a horizon of truths expressed in New Testament letters which make hardly any mention of her. This is both to take Mary as "the fullest human example of the life of grace" (MGH 65) and, methodologically, to operate from a conviction of the unity of the diverse New Testament works. Because the collection makes up a coherent whole, one can allow the letters to illumine the figure of Mary known principally from the Gospels.

The great gain of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* thus comes by making fruitful for doctrinal understanding – and agreement – a biblical interpretation that is attentive to the "analogy of faith" as *Dei Verbum* recommended (DV 12.3).[13]

## 2. Further Considerations of Sources and Doctrine for Dialogue on Mary

Ongoing ecumenical exchanges on Marian doctrines and on Mary's place in prayer can, I want to suggest, be aided by two further considerations touched on but not extensively developed in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*.

### *Liturgical Sources of Doctrine and Models of Devotion*

The recent Marian study of the Groupe des Dombes included the observation that the adage *Lex orandi [est] lex credendi* should not be applied to popular piety but to the official liturgical prayer of the church.[14] *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* agrees when it refers to Paul VI's insistence in *Marialis cultus* that the Christological focus of the Church's public prayer should give Marian devotion its proper location (no. 48) and ARCIC noted how recent Anglican additions of Marian feasts are significant because of the "definitive role of authorized liturgical texts and practices" for Anglicans (no. 49).

MGH notes that liturgical forms of prayer involving the saints are not addressed to the saints as sources of grace and help, but to them as intercessors before God in gaining help to come from Him (no. 70). But more can be gleaned for dialogue from liturgical prayers said on Marian feast-days.

It can help in further dialogue of Catholics on Mary to keep in mind the themes actually expressed in the liturgical collects of the Marian feasts of the Roman Missal. A review of eleven such prayers, all addressed to God the Father, shows three thematic clusters concerning Mary.[15]

(1) On January 1, both the regular and alternate collects invoke the *ongoing prayers of Mary*, asking that they may be always beneficial and be a source of joy for the people of the church, but this is asked in reference to her role in bringing us life and salvation through Jesus the Son whom she conceived and bore. The alternate collects of March 25 and of the evening of August 14 both ask that "the prayers of this woman [may] bring Jesus to the waiting world," while the regular collect of the latter formulary asks that her prayers may bring us to Christ's salvation and raise us to eternal life. A sixth collect, that of December 8, moves to ask of God the Father, "Help us by her prayers to live in your presence without sin." Mary, who lives among the redeemed, does pray for the world and for the church still *in via*.

(2) The collect of September 8, for Mary's Nativity, moves directly to *petition God* with reference to both the birth of Jesus and Mary: "Father of mercy, give your people help and strength from heaven. The birth of the Virgin Mary's Son was the dawn of our salvation. May this celebration of her birthday bring us closer to lasting peace."

(3) In these collects, the more common form of petition is expressly theocentric. This appears in the subordination of a request of particular graces or helps to *what God effected in Mary* as commemorated on a given day. On May 31, feast of the Visitation, which occasioned the *Magnificat*, the mention of God's inspiration of Mary to go to help Elizabeth leads to asking, "Keep us open to the working of your Spirit and with Mary may we praise you forever."

Both collects for the evening of August 14 speak of God's work in making Mary the mother of God's Son, with the regular collect adding God's crowning her with glory, before asking that her prayers may benefit the world and the church as indicated in (1) above. The collects for the day of August 15 refer to Mary's assumption into glory, which in the regular prayer is God's work directly ("you raised ...") and in the alternate collect God's work by a theological passive ("she ... was raised ..."), before asking that we may see heaven as our final goal (regular) or may follow her example in reflecting God's holiness and join her hymn of endless life and praise (alternate).[16]

On December 8, the regular collect narrates God's work ("You prepared ... let her share beforehand ... kept her sinless") before asking that her prayers may help us live without sin, while the alternate collect of the Immaculate Conception offers the following abundance of doctrine, narrative, and petition, with even a connection with the Advent season in which the feast falls:

Father, the image of the Virgin is found in the Church. Mary had a faith that your Spirit prepared and a love

that never knew sin, for you kept her sinless from the first moment of her conception. Trace in our actions the lines of her love, in our hearts her readiness of faith. Prepare once again a world for your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

These theocentric prayers of the Marian collects highlight God's initiative and the range of his work in the life and person of Mary. This, along with the previous two thematic clusters of the collects, can surely serve well in further Catholic contributions on Mary in ecumenical dialogues.

### *Mary's Participated Role in Christ*

When the document *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* approaches Mary's intercession and mediation, it cites Vatican II's chapter on Mary: "Mary's maternal role towards the human race in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power" (LG 60, in MGH 67). A similar affirmation follows shortly after, concerning ministries which mediate God's grace: "These ministries do not compete with the unique mediation of Christ, but rather serve it and have their source within it" (MGH 68).

These statements call for further consideration of Christ the "one mediator between God and humankind, ... who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5), who then "was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us" (Rom 8:34).

Vatican II did open a further perspective on the Risen Christ's saving mediation in the Marian chapter of *Lumen gentium*, in a dense text which incorporates three steps. First, the Council states the uniqueness of Christ. Then, it offers two comparisons which suggest ways of understanding Christ's saving mediation, first, comparison with sharing in his priesthood, and, second, with the radiation of God's goodness, which is *diffusivum sui*, throughout creation. Third, the same sentence affirms, concerning Christ's saving work, a principle of *participation*, that is, a sharing by others in their own way in what is perfect in Christ. So we read in LG 62:

No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer, but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared (*participatur*) in various ways by his ministers and people, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in one source (*suscitat variam ... participatam ex unico fonte cooperationem*).

The point is that Christ's unique, full, and perfect mediation is such that He actively transmits to others not only the benefits of his saving work but he also gives them a dependent and shared cooperation in his mediation. The grace of Christ radiates among God's human creatures first as redemptive from sin but also as transformative. It is *like-making*. Saving grace from Christ has as well the effect that Paul desired in believers, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ..." (Phil 2:5).

Here, we need to be reflectively aware of our own thought-forms. As persons wholly dependent for salvation on the work of Christ, we have to think and speak *dialectically*, being addressed by Paul, "what do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift? (1 Cor 4:7). But once our dependence is thought through and made clear, we should not shy away from pondering the richness of the gift, where another thought-form can well be introduced, that of *participation*.

I am reminded of the remark of an astute Thomist of the Reformation era, when he responded to the Protestant denial of the meritorious and satisfactory value of human graced good works. The opponents felt constrained to make this denial, lest they call in question the full and perfect sufficiency of the merit and satisfaction of Christ's death for us and for our salvation. The affirmation of Christ had to be guarded by a denial of a creaturely role. But the Thomist, Tommaso de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, answered that ascribing meritorious value to the works of the justified does not come from holding an insufficiency on the side of Christ, but it is done instead precisely because of the singular richness of Christ's merit (*propter affluentiam*). For Christ gives his members a share in his merit, albeit in their order of dependent causes and in their partial and imperfect degree.[17] The key is not to think that a Yes to Christ means simply and solely a No to his members, dialectically, but to admit as well that Christ's influence extends to give others a mode of participation, on their level, in what he is and does.

Thus, Mary's intercession on behalf of the world is dependent on the unique and all-perfect mediation of her Son. It does not serve to supplement Christ's intercession, as if that needed completion. It is rather a manifestation of, or even a testimonial to, the supreme role of Christ that he incorporates others, preeminently his mother, into his ongoing intercession for the graces of his Spirit for us and for our salvation.

Thinking "Thomistically," to be sure, is not natural to many today, even to many Catholics, but in this Marian context, such thinking can surely be beneficial.

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### ENDNOTES

[1] When ARCIC began its new study of Mary, it could also look to two recent dialogue-documents, (1) *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, from the 8th round of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in the US (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press 1992), and (2) *Marie dans le dessein de Dieu and la communion des saints*, by the Groupe des Dombes (Paris: Bayard /Centurion 1999), translated as *Maria nel disegno di Dio e nella comunione dei santi* (Magnano: Qigajon 1998) and *Mary in the Plan of God and the Communion of Saints* (New York:

Paulist 2002). I reviewed these contributions in "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," *Gregorianum* 81 (2000), 25-75.

[2] *The Gift of Authority*, nos. 24-25. The fact – and fruitfulness – of ongoing reception was stated by Vatican II, both in its doctrine of positive developments in grasping the meaning of apostolic tradition ("There is growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. ... Thus ... the church is always advancing toward the plenitude of divine truth." DV 8,2) and in the Council's counterbalancing admission that concerning life, discipline, and the formulation of doctrine, "Christ summons the church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution on earth" (UR 6).

[3] The text is given in MGH 39, note 9.

[4] "All those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which by the Church, either in solemn judgment or through her ordinary and universal teaching office, are proposed for belief as divinely revealed." Vatican II, *Dei Filius*, Ch. III; DH 3011, cited from J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Faith*, 7th edition, ed. J. Dupuis (Bangalore 2001), 45.

[5] The whole Christ-event completes and perfects revelation, which in content manifests "that God is with us to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to eternal life" (*Dei Verbum* 4).

[6] MGH 63, note 13, gives two precedents for a consensus in faith which admits ongoing differences in expression: (1) *The Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East* of 1994, which recognizes proper Christological faith, even where Mary is not addressed as *Theotokos* (Neuner-Dupuis, 7th ed., 277), and (2) the Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* of 1999, which states a common conviction held in faith, but then analyzes the two theological accounts of justification to show that the differences are not mutually exclusive and not destructive of the consensus in faith (Neuner-Dupuis, 844-852). – But in both cases two existing bodies of doctrine were compared in considerable detail. Is there such a body of Marian doctrine among Anglicans to set into a dialogical relation with Catholic Marian teaching?

[7] The Lutheran theologian, Robert Jenson, approaches prayer for Mary's intercession from her divine motherhood, in "A Place for God," in *Mary, Mother of God*, eds. Carl E. Bratten & Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2004), 49-57.

[8] The analysis of "fears and concerns" became methodologically important in the reexamination by the German Ecumenical Working Group of the Reformation and Catholic mutual condemnations on the doctrine of justification. The result is the ascertaining of a basic compatibility, which was fundamental for the Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* of 1999. For "Catholic doctrine does not overlook what Protestant theology stresses ... nor does it maintain what Protestant theology is afraid of .... Protestant theology does not overlook what Catholic doctrine stresses ... nor does it maintain what Catholic theology is afraid of ...." *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do They Still Divide?* eds. Karl Lehmann & Wolfhart Pannenberg (Minneapolis: Fortress 1990), 49. The nature and importance of this analysis of fears and deeper emphases is brought out in the study of the agreement on justification by Pawel Holc, *Un ampio consenso sulla dottrina della giustificazione* (Rome: Gregorian Univ. Press 1999), 145f, with reference as well to the Coptic-Catholic Christology study, and 244f. The same author shows the role of such an analysis in demonstrating the existence of a "differentiated consensus" between ecumenical partners, in "'Consenso differenziato' come categoria fondamentale nei dialoghi ecumenici," in *Sapere teologico e unità della fede*, Festschrift J. Wicks, eds. Carmen Aparicio et al. (Rome: Gregorian Univ. Press 2004), 434-450.

[9] The ecumenical approach to Mary with the methods of historical critical study, principally to retrieve the communicative intent of the biblical author in the setting of his original redaction, is fruitfully exemplified in *Mary in the New Testament*, eds. Raymond E. Brown et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress & New York: Paulist, 1978), a study sponsored by the US Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

[10] Perhaps a member of the Commission read the Greek of Lk 1:35 with a Septuagint concordance at hand, as was shown to be fruitful for Paul by the study of Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press 1989).

[11] "The Virgin Mary in Recent Dialogues" (as in note 1), 37-40, where the resemblance was noted to the approach to Scripture proposed by George Lindbeck, in "Two Kinds of Ecumenism: Unitive and Interdenominational," *Gregorianum* 70 (1989), 647-660, at 657-659, and in "Scripture, Consensus, and Community," in R. J. Neuhaus, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1989), 74-101.

[12] A recent essay shows the ecumenical fruitfulness of relating Mary to "the scriptural Christ" of the Church's faith, who is risen and exalted, as was proclaimed in the apostolic kerygma, and not to an allegedly historical Jesus lurking beyond hints given in our Gospels. David S. Yeago, "The Presence of Mary in the Mystery of the Church," in *Mary, Mother of God* (as in note 7), 58-79, at 59-63.

[13] This term is often made obscure by attempts to explain it, but is best taken as referring to "the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of revelation" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 114).

[14] *Mary in the Plan of God* (as in note 1, above), 23 (no. 29).

[15] For Jan. 1, Mary Mother of God (regular and alternate collect); Mar. 25, the Annunciation (alternate); May 31, the Visitation; evening of Aug. 14, Vigil of the Assumption (regular and alternate); Aug. 15 (regular and alternate); Sept. 8, Birth of Mary; Dec. 8, Immaculate Conception (regular and alternate collect). The initial collect for the Annunciation is focused on the Incarnation without mention of Mary.

[16] MGH saw this view in Pius XII's definition of the Assumption: "We note that the dogma ... celebrates the action of God in her" (no. 58).

[17] Cajetan, *De fide et operibus*, 12, translated in J. Wicks, *Cajetan Responds. A Reader in Reformation Controversy* (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press 1978), 237. The Thomist conviction is that created causes do not compete with God's universal causality. Human and divine agents are not a pair which divides the work, with each one's contribution delimiting that of the other. The creature does not supplement a weakness in God, nor does God's universal efficiency reduce the reality of created actions. It is instead a result of God's *abundantia* that he makes creatures active sharers in his own causality, as St. Thomas explains in *Summa theologiae*, I, 22, 3.