

THROUGH MARY'S MEMORY TO JESUS' MYSTERY

• José Granados •

“The theology of Mary becomes, once centered in her memory, a theology of the mysteries of Jesus seen through the eyes of Mary.”



1. *The upsurge in memory*

The new conception of time that appeared in modernity brought with it a crisis for the value of memory and history. What emerged as most important was the future, with all its attendant promises of progress and fulfillment. Since the past was viewed as completely alien to the challenges facing modern man, it was considered incapable of offering any new orientation for the days to come.

For this reason, it is all the more surprising that the question of memory and the need for remembering has arisen once again in our day with increasing urgency. According to the French historian Pierre Nora, in the last two decades we have participated in what can be called an upsurge in memory.¹ “Memory” is something that is strongly present in our society: we are interested in commemorative events and museums that keep the past alive because we need to

¹Cf. P. Nora, “The Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory,” *Transit (Europäische Revue)* 22 (2002); cf. P. Ricoeur, “Pierre Nora: Strange Places of Memory,” in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, 2004), 401–411.

feel attached to our roots. In some countries, remembering has even become a duty or moral obligation for certain events.

Let us note, however, that this change occurs simultaneously with a reduction of the meaning of memory. No longer something alive, which might allow the past to be active in the present, “memory” now means instead the sum of accumulated historical data stored in massive archives placed at our disposal by technology. The past thus becomes little more than a picture in black and white. When an attempt is made to view the past as completely separate from the present, however, the temptation arises to attempt to transform the past into simply one region of the present. Since it is no longer alive, however, it is liable to manipulation. The recent upsurge in memory, then, appears as a phenomenon marked by paradox and ambiguity.

Indeed, many groups maintain a strong link between the custody of memory and their own identity. Unfortunately, the fight to preserve or recover memories can proceed at times without any concern whatsoever for the past; the sole desire in these cases is rather the affirmation of a present identity within the immense sea that is our globalized society. While this is a legitimate endeavor, there exists, too, the risk of forgetting real history, of making up the memories we require to strengthen our power over the present and to shape our identity in the future; we then arrive at a memory that, instead of uniting us to our predecessors, isolates us from our contemporaries and leaves our descendants enslaved to the phantoms of our own desires.

The final book published by John Paul II points to this set of problems in its very title: *Memory and Identity*. An entire chapter is devoted precisely to the question of memory: the maternal memory of the Church.² Here we find the claim that the Church is a place where a special memory is preserved. How can we understand this memory correctly? How exactly does it emerge not only as the memory of Christians, but also the memory of all humanity? Is it possible that the answer to these questions could shed light on the paradoxical situation we are experiencing, which seems to combine a need for the past’s recovery with the incapacity to keep it alive?

²Cf. John Paul II, *Memory and Identity. Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium* (New York, 2005), 147–152.

2. Mary's place in history

Our intention is to explore this issue by taking into account the figure of Mary. It is John Paul II who offers us this initial clue when he underscores the relationship between the memory of the Church and that of the Mother of Jesus. But this idea is not new—it has long been affirmed that the position of Mary has to do with the question of time and history in a special way. St. Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus of Lyons related Mary to the origins of history by associating her with Eve.³ Some recent theologians, too, have stressed the necessity of contemplating Mary according to a temporal pattern.⁴

The relationship between Mary and time could prove useful for arriving at a correct understanding of Mariology. Indeed, one of the most important problems a theology of Mary must address is the place of Mary within the overall theological picture. When reflecting on Mary's role in the work of salvation, the question of structure and approach is fundamental—possibly more so than with other theological issues. This is due to the relational character of Mary, which is located, according to the Second Vatican Council, in “the mystery of Christ and the Church.”⁵ In stressing this double relationship, the council wished to overcome the opposition between the christotypical and ecclesiotypical tendencies that divided the assembly in the famous vote concerning the chapter on Mary in *Lumen gentium*.⁶

Let us note that in speaking of the mystery of Christ and the Church the council had already evoked the question of salvation history. The “mystery” is the hidden plan of God, which is manifested and carried forward in human time. Given this connection,

³Cf. J. M. Canal, “María nueva Eva en Justino, Ireneo, Tertuliano y Agustín,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 45 (1996): 41–60.

⁴Cf. especially J. Guittou, *The Virgin Mary* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1952); R. Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary* (Washington, N.J.: AMI Press, 1991); H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3: *Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

⁵Cf. the interesting commentary by C. Pozo, *María en la obra de la salvación* (BAC 360) (Madrid, 1974), 51–64.

⁶Cf. R. Laurentin, *The Question of Mary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

the best synthesis is achieved by locating the place of Mary within history. Mary's position in the mystery of Christ and the Church can be considered at greater depth if we understand it as it emerges within the time of Jesus and the time of the Church.⁷

How should we approach this task? The ideal method will include a reflection on the precise point at which the mysteries of Christ and of the Church come together, since this focal point allows a theological contemplation of history as a whole. It is becoming clear in modern Christology that this point is the living presence of the Risen One among his disciples on the morning of Easter: his glory revealed to them. Even though Christology may be expounded beginning with the preexistence of Christ and following the order of the Nicene Creed, and even though this approach has advantages and is preferable for a systematic exposition,⁸ it is nonetheless true that from a genetic point of view an account of the development of the first confessions of faith must begin with the disciples' paschal encounter with the Risen One.⁹

The formulas of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God must maintain a vital link with the fact of the Resurrection if they are to preserve their full meaning. The presence of this link ensures the continuity between the earthly history of Jesus of Nazareth and his eternal preexistence as Son of God.¹⁰ This maintains, too, the

⁷Her importance, as J. Guitton remarks, is not that of being in the visible center; she has an authority of influence more than an authority of position. Cf. Guitton, *The Virgin Mary*, 48–49.

⁸Cf. in this regard the remarks by C. Schönborn, "Aporie der Zweinaturenlehre? Überlegungen zur Christologie von Wolfhart Pannenberg," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 24 (1977): 428–445; cf. also Schönborn's *Christology*: C. Schönborn, *Dio invio suo Figlio* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2002).

⁹Cf. J. Ratzinger, "Theses for Christology," in *Dogma and Preaching* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), 3–5. Cf. thesis 6 (4f): "The primary function of the formula *You are my son, today I have begotten you*, is to interpret the event of the Resurrection; it says, that is, that the Resurrection is the elevation of Jesus to his throne, the proclamation of his kingship and sonship. But since the Resurrection was at the same time seen to be essentially a confirmation of Jesus' claim to divinity, a claim for which he had to undergo death on a cross . . . it became evident that the title of Son must in principle be applicable to him even before the Resurrection and that it is a valid description of what Jesus was."

¹⁰This importance of the genetic approach does not mean that we are accepting a Christology from below. R. Haight, *Jesus, Symbol of God* (New York, 2002), claims that a genetic Christology must always start from below, that is, with the

connection between the Jesus of history and the Christ preached by the Church.

If this link is important for Christology and ecclesiology, might it not also be necessary with regard to the figure of Mary? Perhaps it might give us a better understanding of the role of the Mother of the Lord, especially concerning her relational position vis-à-vis Christ and the Church. Could this provide an approach that encompassed the historical significance of Mary, as well? Let us begin developing our answer by further elaborating the importance of the Resurrection for the genesis of Christology. We will then consider Mary's position within this horizon in an attempt to determine whether this viewpoint can help us better understand her place in the work of salvation.

3. Easter as the starting point for Christology

The Christology of the last two centuries was dominated by the historical investigation into the life of Jesus, a quest to ascertain historical data about his life. It was an attempt to go beyond the dogmatic structures that the Church had developed through the centuries, which were understood as screens that prevented a vision of the true Jesus.

The titles given to Christ in the New Testament, such as Lord, Wisdom, or Son of God, as well as the formulas that confessed the Incarnation of the Preexistent Son (for example, Gal 4:4), were considered foreign to the real Jesus of history. How did they come about? How did the Church transform the figure of Jesus, the preacher of Galilee, into this preexistent, hieratic figure? The history of religions school, led by W. Bousset, attempted to explain this process through a comparison of Christianity with the Hellenistic

earthly Jesus. This latter affirmation must be qualified: a genetic Christology does not start simply with the earthly Jesus but, more precisely, with the *Risen* Jesus. This fact makes the division of Christology into the two categories *from above* / *from below* too narrow. Both of these directions are present if we start with the Risen One. Looking at him we see the Light that comes from the Father, while at the same time contemplating the figure of Christ, who took flesh for us. The starting point of the resurrected humanity of Christ means starting simultaneously from above and from below.

religions of the time. The entire development was conceived as a Hellenization of the simple faith of the first Christians.

However, the efforts to prove that the first formulations of faith came from the Hellenistic environment were unsuccessful. The studies of M. Hengel have been crucial in this regard, for they have shown that the affirmations we find in Paul, which were written only about fifteen years after the paschal experience of the disciples, are so different from the Hellenistic conceptions of the Son of God that they cannot be explained through recourse to the influences of a Greek environment.¹¹

Hengel's conclusions are well known. It is impossible to account for the first confessions of faith in the Son of God unless we concede that something new happened to the disciples at Easter, something that was capable of shaping an understanding of Christ that brought a novelty to, but was also in continuity with, the Jewish understanding of the scriptures. This event is the encounter of the disciples with the Risen One. The new formulas arose out of the effort to translate this surprising experience into intellectual categories.

What happened at Easter? In the encounter with the Risen One, the disciples understood in an extraordinary way that Jesus came from the Father and that in the Resurrection from the dead he had received everything from his Father. This action of the Father was compared to a new generation. In this vein, Paul stated that Jesus was constituted Son of God in the Resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4), while Luke was able to apply the verse of the Second Psalm: "You are my Son; this day I have begotten you" (Acts 13:33) to the event of the morning of Easter. Thus, the Resurrection could be described as the new birth of Christ as Son of God. This was the eschatological action of God in history.

But it soon became clear that the affirmation of this new birth was not able to translate the entire meaning of the glory of the Risen One. In order for Jesus to be the center and explanation of all of history, a fact the disciples clearly perceived when they met him after his Resurrection, his provenance from the Father could not be explained as something that came to existence at a determined

¹¹Cf. above all M. Hengel, *Der Sohn Gottes. Die Entstehung der Christologie und die jüdisch-hellenistische Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975) and the bibliography in D. Bourgeois, *La Sagesse des Anciens dans le Mystère du Verbe. Évangile et Philosophie chez Saint Justin* (Paris, 1983), 181–182.

moment in history. They were not dealing with a Sonship that came to be only in time, that is, without having been there before. As Hengel puts it, he who was Lord in such a way (as the disciples encountered him) at the Resurrection must have been Lord from the very beginning of history; otherwise, he could not be Lord in such a way. This is precisely what the formulas of preexistence and Incarnation convey.

The affirmation of the preexistence and the eternal generation from the Father were thus further developments of this first experience, brought about according to a kind of logical sequence. Let us insist that the perception of these truths was already given at the first moment of the encounter with Christ, so that the formulas emerged as the gradual, conceptual crystallization in time of what was given as a living encounter from the very beginning.

At this point we must note that the Easter experience was not only one of newness and discontinuity. Following Hengel, we can affirm that the proclamation of the Son of God found support in various Old Testament figures, in the pre-paschal experience of the disciples with Jesus, and, especially, in the way Jesus addressed his Father. At Easter the disciples understood at last the meaning of the relationship between Jesus and his Father, the profound ontological meaning of the nights he passed in "the prayer of God" (cf. Lk 6:12).¹² This relationship was the foundation, not only of the salvation offered to the Twelve, but also of all reality and human history from the beginning of the world. The secret of Jesus was this filial love for his Father, a love that was revealed to constitute the bedrock of all of reality.

The way to enter into this mystery was by sharing in the experience of Jesus, which was available only through prayer; that is, by entering into the prayer of Jesus. The fact that the prayer of Jesus was revealed as the way to understand his person opens up to us the way to construct a spiritual Christology, one that is possible only from inside this relationship with the Father.¹³ It is noteworthy that one of the earliest accounts of the Resurrection found in the writings of the Fathers, that of Justin Martyr, interprets Easter in terms of prayer, following Psalm 21: Jesus' praise to his Father for the gift

¹²Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 17–22.

¹³Cf. Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 46.

received.¹⁴ If in the Cross we participate in the last prayer of Jesus who died praying, we can say, too, that the Resurrection was a prayer—a prayer of joy, exultation, and thanksgiving, which was a foreshadowing of the eschatological prayer of the whole Church.

In summary, this was the first confession of faith: the Crucified is the Risen One and the Risen One is the Crucified.¹⁵ This Christ of faith is the same Christ of history we have encountered walking through Galilee, climbing to Jerusalem, dying in the holy City, hanging on a Cross. The glory of Easter contains the historical path within itself, and this historical path was already full of glory. The crucial point of this confession becomes the interrelation between the divine Sonship of the Risen One and the concrete history of Jesus. From this point of view all of Jesus' life can be considered a salvific mystery, the indwelling of God among his people.

It is also from this perspective that we may now pose the following question: where is Mary's place in all of this? Does she have anything to do with this process, with these first steps of the genealogy of Christology? Can she be situated within the fifteen years of initial reflection that saw the crystallization of the core of the Christian kerygma? Such a possibility would constitute an important clue towards a fruitful structuring of a theology of Mary.¹⁶

4. *The place of Mary in the Church's reflection after Easter*

It is important to note that the approach taken here does not attempt to substitute for a more systematic presentation of Mariology. On the contrary, it should reveal to us the proper way to structure a theology of Mary. Given the profound relationship between the genesis of faith and its content, an analysis of the role of Mary in the beginning of the Church's faith can lead in turn to the illumination of her place and role within the larger picture as

¹⁴On Justin and the Resurrection, cf. J. Granados, *Los misterios de la vida de Cristo en Justino Mártir*, Analecta Gregoriana 296 (Rome, 2005), 433–513.

¹⁵Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesus, the Christ* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1977), 197.

¹⁶For all of this, cf. O. González de Cardedal, *Cristología* (Madrid, 2001), 359–360, who speaks of “the process of re-membering, re-cuperation and retro-interpretation of the beginning starting from the end.”

well. Our approach has the advantage of situating the figure of Mary at the precise point at which the understanding of Christ's mystery coincides with the birth of the Church as a community of believers.

*4.1. The Son of God and the Virgin Mother: the role of Mary
in understanding the divine Sonship of Christ*

As we have just seen, the glory of the Resurrection gave its witnesses the knowledge of Christ as the Son of God, the Father's Beloved. It was there that the process of deepening in the profound roots of this divine Sonship began. What unfolded of his being from the Father as the disciples experienced it the morning of Easter? At the heart of the mystery of Jesus was now the question of his origin, an origin that was perceived as the accomplishment of all the hopes of man's heart and the foundation of all reality. The disciples knew that this divine birth was not limited to one particular moment of history. Jesus' origin from the Father explained not only the Resurrection but all the events of his life. It was natural, then, to make the question of Jesus' origin more radical by extending it to the whole of his existence.

When we ask about the origins of a person, despite whatever answer may be given, there always exists a further "why." Ultimately, there is the question of the childhood of this person and, more radically, of his birth. For the birth of a man, the way he comes into this world, is not just one date among others, but rather attests to the mystery of his provenance, a provenance that the Bible links to God in a special way: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you" (Jer 1:5). The question of Jesus' origins thus passed through his birth at Bethlehem.

Given this fact, it was natural to put the question to Jesus' family, and in a special way, to his mother, in order to know more about his origins. The disciples' memories could extend back to a certain point in time, to the first encounter on the banks of the Jordan River (cf. Jn 1:35–51). This limit was not only temporal; the impossibility of going beyond this point of time meant the impossibility, too, of knowing Jesus better in each moment of his life. For it is true that there is a lack of depth in the way we look at a person

when our gaze is not filtered through the whole of this person's history.¹⁷

There was therefore at least one area of knowledge regarding the provenance of Jesus, and indeed an important one, that was passed on through the accounts that only Mary could give. Her witness alone could supply the key to unlock this door.¹⁸ It was to her, then, that this question about the origins of Jesus was directed, one that was deeply related to the paschal question.

Certainly, Mark was able to deal with the question of Jesus' Sonship, of his provenance from the Father, without taking his temporal birth into account.¹⁹ In fact, Mark's Gospel begins with John the Baptist's preaching in the desert. But for Matthew, Luke, and John, and especially for the latter two, the presence of Mary becomes a crucial element of the witness to the Risen Jesus. Let us consider them separately.

Even if Matthew gives more prominence to the figure of Joseph, it is clear that here the virginal birth proves the mysterious origin of Jesus. The line of genealogy from father to father is broken when we arrive at Joseph, the spouse of Mary, that is, the point where the prophecy of Isaiah is accomplished. In this way, Mary's virginity points to the birth of Jesus from above, to an origin that is not identified with the course of history even though it is connected with all the generations.²⁰

¹⁷Cf. the comments of the Spanish philosopher Julián Marías, in *La mujer y su sombra* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), 104–105. The beauty of a woman's face is discovered in a more profound way by those who have known her for a long time. This is especially clear in the case of aged women, who remain beautiful for their husbands.

¹⁸It is interesting to note that the need for Mary's witness is attested to by Thomas Aquinas, in *ST III*, q. 30, a. 1. According to Aquinas, the Annunciation occurred *inter alia* so that Mary might be a more certain witness to this mystery: "posset esse certior testis huius sacramenti."

¹⁹The reason for this silence can be found in the particular perspective of Mark, who underscores the novelty of God's action in Christ that forces everyone to a change of mentality: cf. K. Stock, *Maria, la Madre del Signore, nel Nuovo Testamento* (Rome: Edizioni ADP, 1997), 126–131. It is noteworthy that this Gospel, which considers the figure of Mary in a special way, treats the Resurrection, too, in a special way: its account finishes (before the canonical ending) with the fear of the women, and not with a confession of faith.

²⁰Cf. R. E. Brown, K. P. Donfried, J. A. Fitzmeyer, and J. Reumann, eds., *Mary in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978): "the Lucan annunciation

The same is true of Luke. For him it is clear that the Virgin Birth is related to the divine Sonship of Jesus: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. *Therefore* the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). Mary's account, then, is an answer to the paschal question, which is concerned with Jesus' divine origin.

Let us also take into our account the Gospel of John, which deals continually with the question of the origins of Jesus. The seventh chapter is a case in point: here we find a debate about Jesus' origins, a question that is a cause of division among the people (cf. Jn 7:43). "But we know where he is from. When the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from" (Jn 7:27). We read, also, in John 7:41–42: "Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' But others said, 'The Messiah will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not scripture say that the Messiah will be of David's family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?'" This latter passage is an example of Johannine irony; the mystery is hidden from the people, even if they claim to know it (cf. Jn 7:52). This mystery, the origin of Jesus, the source from which he draws his teaching, is ultimately the Father. The Christian reader knows that Jesus' interlocutors are wrong here. Just as they are wrong in their knowledge of the Father, the enemies of Jesus are wrong, too, in their pretended knowledge about his origins from Nazareth and not from Bethlehem.²¹ The figure of Mary appears here in an implicit way, and again in relationship with the paschal question, which is the question of Jesus' origins.²²

message is a reflection of the christological language and formulas of the post-resurrectional church. To put it in another way, the angel's words to Mary dramatize vividly what the church has said about Jesus after the Resurrection and about Jesus during his ministry after the baptism. Now this christology has been carried back to Jesus at the very moment of conception in his mother's womb. We found a very similar situation in Matthew . . . for both evangelists Jesus is God's Son from the very inception of his life" (118–119). The same was true for the first Fathers, Justin, Irenaeus, and the like. The virginity of Mary has a theological significance from the very beginning: it expresses the divine Sonship of Jesus, the fact that he comes from the Father not only spiritually but also in the flesh.

²¹Cf. J. McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 273.

²²Cf. the analysis of I. de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant* (New York: Alba House, 1992). De la Potterie also comments on John 1:13, which he

Regarding Paul, let us note that the only text in which the apostle speaks implicitly of Mary, Galatians 4:4, is located at a crucial point of the letter, precisely where the Sonship of Christ comes together with the adoption of Christians as children of God: “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” According to A. Vanhoye, Paul is using paradoxical language regarding these two questions: (a) How can the coming under the Law of Jesus save those who are under the Law? and (b) How can the fact of Jesus being born of a woman give us adoption as children of God? We know the answer to the first question from other passages of the letter: the death of Jesus, who was apparently condemned by the Law, was the saving sacrifice offered for all mankind. What about the second question? Unlike in the first case, here we are not given an answer. Paul merely establishes the paradox. But if we read his words within the context of the entire New Testament, we see again the figure of Mary associated with Jesus’ divine Sonship in a mysterious way through the virginal motherhood. This connection makes sense if we note, with Vanhoye, the parallel structure of the passage: just as the death of Christ under the Law was a saving event because it is the obedient Son of God who dies on the Cross, in the same way his being born of a woman was connected with our filial adoption as children of God because of Mary’s virginity.²³

Let us summarize. Our first claim was that the development of faith in Jesus as the Son of God, inasmuch as it refers to his human birth, passed naturally through Mary, and we found evidence for this in the different Gospel accounts. We can thus see how Mary helped to protect the truth about Easter in two primary ways. First, Mary was able to account for the ontological interpretation of Easter by attesting, already at Bethlehem, to the divine Sonship. Jesus’ origins are to be found in the Father not in a moral sense alone; the Father is also the foundation of the whole of Jesus’ humanity, determined already in his very birth. Secondly, Mary preserved the identity of

sees as related to the Virgin Birth. Here we have set aside consideration of this possibility, which would provide further evidence in support of our claim.

²³Cf. A. Vanhoye, “La Mère du Fils de Dieu selon Ga 4,4,” *Marianum* 40 (1978): 237–247.

the Risen One with the Jesus of history, born under Herod and crucified under Pontius Pilate. Jesus was no ghost, as the disciples were tempted to assume when they first saw him (Lk 24:39).

The presence of Mary at the core of this mystery is attested to by the development of Christian dogma. The Fathers, in the same vein as the Gospels, saw in the virginal birth the theological significance of preserving the divine origin of Jesus.²⁴ At the same time, Jesus' being born of Mary, daughter of Abraham, related Jesus to all of her race and so to the contingencies of human history.²⁵ The primitive Mariology was, thus, completely linked to Christology as a mystery, as the manifestation of the eternal Son within the frailty of our human time.

4.2. *Mary's testimony of faith in the divine Sonship of Christ*

We must now take another step forward in order to understand correctly Mary's position in this process.

Let us turn our attention to Luke's Gospel. It becomes plausible that Mary was a source of all the information the evangelist was able to gather, one of "those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word" (Lk 1:2).²⁶ These witnesses are not only the apostles, but also the main characters of the infancy narratives. Luke's insistence on Mary's memory (Lk 2:19; 2:51) strengthens this conclusion. We are not interested here in backtracking from Luke to Mary. For our purposes it is enough to see that Luke implicitly presents Mary as one important source of information, and that this fact carries consequences for the theological importance he ascribes to her.

²⁴For the second century, cf. J. A. Aldama, *María en la patristica de los siglos II y III*, BAC 300 (Madrid, 1970), 81–102.

²⁵Cf. Granados, *Los misterios*, 168–177.

²⁶Cf. K. A. Kuhn, "Beginning the witness: the *autoptai kai hypēretai* of Luke's infancy narrative," *NTS* 49 (2003): 237–255; cf. A. Laurentin, *The Truth of Christmas. Beyond the Myths* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 461–463: "there is enough convergent testimony to establish Mary as the source for these chapters, but not enough to allow us to determine in exactly what way she contributed to Luke's Gospel."

Luke provides the grounds for affirming that the process of deepening the paschal question passed not only through Mary's history, but also through Mary's personal testimony. In this regard, let us recall that Luke is concerned with giving Mary a place of relevance, as a comparison between the Magnificat (focused on Mary, and not directly on the child) and the Benedictus (focused on the child, and not on Zechariah) makes evident. The Annunciation is more than a revelation of God's plan; it is also the story of a vocation, of Mary's "yes."²⁷

Thus, it is not only that Mary, as a privileged eyewitness, gave an historical and accurate account of Jesus' origins. From a reading of Luke 1–2 it becomes clear that what the evangelist receives from Mary is much more than mere data for an archive. Mary becomes a point of view from which the events of Jesus' life can be contemplated. What we find is both the affirmation of a historical event and the interpretation of this event given by faith, specifically by paschal faith.

This becomes evident if we note that the account in Luke 1–2 has a paschal significance, that is, it is written in the light of Easter. There is a correspondence between the apostles (shepherds of the Church), who rush to the empty tomb and encounter the Resurrected Christ, and the shepherds of Bethlehem, who are also full of joy, who hear the angelic song of Glory, run to the crèche in order to see the sign proclaimed to them by the angel, and then announce the good news in the surrounding regions.²⁸

This process can be followed all along the infancy narrative, and it becomes especially clear in the episode of the child lost in the Temple. Here again we have a revelation of Jesus' provenance, of the Father's importance in his life. Mary did not understand at that moment, but she kept the words of Jesus in her heart. In a sense, this marks the difference between Mary and the other characters of Luke's Gospel. Like the disciples, Mary did not immediately grasp the meaning of Jesus' words; the difference is that she retained his answers and kept meditating on them, while the others were afraid to ask. This is the special way in which

²⁷Cf. K. Stock, "Die Berufung Marias (Lk 1:26–38)," *Biblica* 61 (1980): 457–491.

²⁸For this analysis, cf. A. Serra, *Nato da donna . . . (Gal 4, 4) Ricerche bibliche su Maria di Nazaret* (Rome, 1992).

Mary becomes, for Luke, an eyewitness and preacher of the Word (cf. Lk 1:1–4).²⁹

In this regard, it is important to note the presence of Mary among the disciples as they prayed (Acts 1:14). After the Ascension, the first attitude we find in the Church is one of profound prayer. This prayer is understood as the way of being introduced into the mystery of Jesus, the Son of God, whose prayer was the clearest indication of his special relationship with the Father.³⁰ Thus, for Luke, the fact that Mary was praying is a connection with Jesus' prayer, which is related to his mysterious provenance from the Father. Mary is portrayed then as the one who entered into the mystery of her Son in a spiritual way, by understanding gradually what constituted the most profound core of Jesus' mystery: his total provenance from the Father. Mary becomes an interior witness to Jesus, important in her own right because of her answer of faith.

This also applies to the understanding of the virginal conception. The virginal way of life of Jesus and his teachings on virginity have surely helped form this picture. He introduced a new way of understanding virginity by linking it to the new fecundity for the kingdom of God, a fecundity which was lived out later by Paul and others. This remembering of Jesus' virginity, which expressed his total commitment to the Father, naturally had to be linked with Mary's virginal conception of him. Mary's virginity thus points to the Father not only because of the virginal birth as a physical fact, but also because of Mary's commitment to God, which was implied in her virginity and understood in light of Jesus' virginal life. According to St. Augustine's expression, Mary conceived first in her heart and then in her body. But we must remember that these two cannot be separated; they are joined in the person of Mary and they serve the same purpose, which is the total indication of Jesus' origin from the Father. This fact reaffirms the profound harmony between the bodily and the spiritual in Mary.³¹

²⁹Cf. K. A. Kuhn, "Beginning the witness."

³⁰Cf. Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 25, thesis 3: "Since the center of the person of Jesus is prayer, it is essential to participate in his prayer if we are to know and understand him."

³¹In this regard, cf. the following sentence by J. Ratzinger: Mary is "the woman in which biology is theology (that is, Motherhood of God)" (cf. J. Ratzinger, "Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine and Piety in Faith and Theology as a

We could say, therefore, that the account Luke received from Mary is her living memory, enriched by the experience of Jesus' life, and especially by his death and Resurrection. Reflecting on her memories in light of Easter, Mary is able to understand the birth of Jesus as total provenance from the Father, as a testimony consistent with the paschal experience.

All of this vision can be confirmed, too, by the witness of John's Gospel.³² The disciple received Mary into his house, an expression that also means "among his spiritual heritage" (Jn 19:25–26). This scene is followed by the fulfillment of a prophecy to which the beloved disciple witnesses with solemnity: "they will look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). At this moment the disciple remarks on the openness of Jesus' heart, from which the Spirit flows. It is the solemn moment of the profound deepening of the mystery of Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of the prophecies.

If, following de la Potterie's suggestion,³³ we link the two scenes and refer the plural "they" of the prophecy to Mary and John, we may conclude that receiving Mary as part of his spiritual heritage is for the Beloved Disciple a condition of his special penetration into God's mystery as revealed in the Cross of Christ. Mary, who is connected to the mysterious origins of Jesus in Bethlehem, origins that were unknown to the enemies of Jesus, is for John the gate to Jesus' mysterious origin in the Father, which was fully revealed when he was raised above the earth.

Thus, the testimonies of Luke and John point in the same direction. What Mary provides is not just an historical account, but a vision of faith where the revelation of the Sonship of Jesus in his life and the faithful memory of his mother coincide. Let us point out some of the points that follow:

(1) In Mary we find a perfect mirror of what happened at Easter when the disciples encountered the Risen Lord. What was their experience? The same Jesus who walked with them along the roads of Galilee in the days of his mortal flesh was now full of the power of God. Their crucial discovery was the identity between the Resurrected One and the one they had known: it meant that God

Whole," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 30 [2003]: 147–160).

³²Cf. de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*.

³³*Ibid.*

is present in our history and fate, that he shares our time and embraces it with his own hands.

Now, this is precisely what Mary is able to read retrospectively in her own life. A child has been born and she is the mother of this child; but, at the same time, this child is the Son of the Father, as Mary's own body witnesses by the virginal conception and birth. The fact of her being virgin and mother attests (as does the Resurrection) to the fact that God wishes the human body, the concreteness of human history as the summit of all the material and historical world, to enter into his realm and to be in communion with him.

(2) Mary also reflects the disciples' answer. The revelation of the Risen Lord at Easter brings about the confession of faith of the Twelve, who turn back from their abandonment of the Lord. The power of the Risen Lord is shown in its ability to convert sinners, the sheep that were dispersed when the Shepherd was struck (cf. Mt 26:31). Therefore, the acceptance of faith on the part of the disciples forms part of the Easter mystery.

In Mary, too, we find a confession of faith, an answer to the Word addressed to her by God, and so we can say that her account of Jesus' birth is also a mirror of the Easter mystery. It includes not only the first revelation of Jesus' divine Sonship, but also the acceptance of the mystery of this divine Sonship, although, to be sure, not yet in the finished and perfected form it will assume at Easter. Let us develop this latter point further.

Mary's account is not an Easter account, but the account of the birth of the Messiah interpreted in light of Easter. And yet, even if at Bethlehem we do not have the fullness of redemption, we do participate in the first manifestation of Christ who is the Son of God. Bethlehem is, thus, the first step of a process that will last the entire life of Jesus and attain its fulfillment at Easter.

But let us remember that in order to have a real revelation, a human answer is also necessary. The response of faith belongs to the very essence of revelation.³⁴ The great event of Easter is not only

³⁴Cf. the remarks by J. Ratzinger on this point: "revelation always and only becomes a reality where there is faith. The unbeliever remains under the veil of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 3. He can read scripture and know what it contains. He can even understand, purely conceptually, what is meant and how its statements cohere, yet he has no share in the revelation. Revelation is in fact fully present only when in addition to the material statements which testify to it, its own

the glorious apparition of Christ, but also the openness of the hearts of the disciples, who are able to accept him in faith. If this is true, then in order for Bethlehem to be a preparation for Easter, it, too, must include the human answer to the revelation of God.

Some scholars speak of “retrospect” in the understanding of the mystery of Christ: going backwards from Easter to Jesus’ birth, and then to his preexistence. If there is a vision “in retrospect” of the Sonship that is fully revealed at the Resurrection, there is also a vision in retrospect of the Church’s answer of faith. This retrospective response is Mary’s.

These considerations lend weight to the proposal of grounding a starting point for Mariology within Mary’s faith. Let us insist that this faith is the faith of Easter, even if in its initial stage, that is, as its prefiguration. The full form of this faith is clear only at the Resurrection, when Mary’s faithful memory, which holds the events of Jesus’ life, is illumined by a light from above. Here we can see the profound meaning of the circularity of *ad Jesum per Mariam, ad Mariam per Jesum*: Jesus explains Mary, Mary leads us more fully to Jesus. The Resurrection illuminates Mary’s memories, and Mary’s memories become a source for understanding her Son.

4.3. *Mary’s maternal memory, access to Jesus*

From here we can see that the link uniting Mary and the Church is present from the very beginning and cannot be conceived as an addition to or deviation from the origins. In the global context of the Resurrection (which means, of an original light that comes from the Risen One), Mary is present as the one who makes it possible to enter more fully into Jesus’ mystery. And this happens not only because of the historical data she could provide—Mary herself becomes a witness, a perspective on the life of Jesus that is able to grasp his mystery from the beginning of his life in history. In Mary

inner reality is itself operative in the form of faith. Consequently revelation to some degree includes its recipient without whom it does not exist. Revelation cannot be pocketed like a book one carries around. It is a living reality which calls for the living man as the location of its presence (cf. J. Ratzinger and K. Rahner, *Revelation and Tradition*, *Quaestiones disputatae* [English ed.] 17, [New York: Herder and Herder, 1966], 36).

the first community was able to find a way to understand the mystery of Jesus as the Son of God made glorious in the flesh.

We return now to the hermeneutical category that is capable of summarizing these ideas, which we set forth at the outset: memory. It is the memory of Mary, understood in its full meaning as memory of the heart, which becomes for us a means of access to Jesus.³⁵

A philosophical look at the phenomenon of memory can help us develop this point further. In his recent study on memory and history, Paul Ricoeur poses three questions regarding the essence of memory: (a) what is the object of memory (what do we remember?); (b) what is the process of memory (how do we remember?); and (c) what is the subject of memory (who remembers?).

As to the first question (what do we remember?), according to the Aristotelian conception (memory is of the past), memory is related to time. This link makes evident the crucial difference between memory and imagination. Memory provides us with the only available contact with our past and is linked to the quest for the historical truth.

The second question arises when Ricoeur, following Aristotle, makes an important distinction between memory as *pathos* and memory as *praxis*. Memory is, on the one hand, something we receive and, on the other, something we must fight for. It includes the effort of remembering. In this way, the act of remembering can become an imperative that requires the engagement of human freedom, which opens the way for the question of the *way* of remembering (how).

In response to the third question, Ricoeur offers important considerations on the subject of memory (who), which can be personal or collective.

³⁵For this idea of Mary as memory, cf. John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, 147–152; H. U. von Balthasar, *Mary for Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 35–45; B. Leahy, *Marian Profile: in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000), 153–155. The connection between memory and Mary was made also by Cardinal Newman, cf. P. Gauthier, *Newman et Blondel: tradition et développement du dogme*, *Cogitatio fidei* 147 (Paris, 1988), 414–417. The valuable book by W. T. Brennan, *The Sacred Memory of Mary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), studies this issue focusing on the memory the Church has of Mary. But here our question is primarily one of Mary's memory concerning Jesus. Because Mary remembers Jesus, our memory of Mary in the Church becomes crucial.

All of this can help us to arrive at a properly delineated definition of memory in reference to Mary. Consider the following points: (a) Her memory has to do with the historical truth about Jesus and is not simply a subjective interpretation of his reality (memory as different from imagination). (b) It is not a question of passive remembrance; all of Mary's freedom is exercised in this process, so that her account is faithful, that is, engaged with the total commitment of faith. (c) Moreover, the consideration of the subject of memory, which can be personal or collective, opens up the way for a study of the relationship between the memory of Mary and that of Israel and the Church, which we will attempt to develop in the following sections.

In light of the above, it is important to note that Mary's memory cannot be understood simply in terms of the human experience of memory. Let us consider the following:

(a) On the one hand, the Old Testament background, the memory of Israel, contains particular resources. Since its object is God's action in the world, this memory is of a different nature from our general remembering of things. The same is true for the memory of Mary, who witnessed the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. The memory of Mary, in fact, points not only to the temporal beginning of the Son, but also to his transcendent beginning because of the Virgin Birth. It points thus to the mystery of God, to his eschatological presence in human history.

(b) On the other hand, it is important to stress that Mary's memory grew with time and was finally enlightened by the Resurrection. This means that ever since the beginning at Nazareth it was a pilgrim memory, which changed as it walked along following Jesus and is able now to see the past from a different perspective. As noted, this memory is in no way passive; we are speaking of an activity that required the whole of Mary's energies³⁶ and is closely bound up with faithfulness.³⁷

³⁶“[R]emembering is not only welcoming, receiving an image of the past, it is also searching for it, ‘doing’ something. The verb ‘to remember’ stands in for the substantive ‘memory.’ What the verb designates is the fact that memory is ‘exercised’” (Ricoeur, *Memory*, 56).

³⁷Cf. Ricoeur, *Memory*, 55: “This search for truth determines memory as a cognitive issue. More precisely, in the moment of recognition, in which the effort of recollection is completed, this search for truth declares itself. We then feel and indeed know that something has happened, something has taken place, which

(c) Let us note here the importance of the Holy Spirit, whose theological role is also associated with memory (cf. Jn 14:26). In this insistence on Mary's memory we do not cancel out the work of the Spirit, as some scholars would have it, who protest against what they see as an excessive role of the Mother of Jesus in theology. The Spirit does not work independently of the humanity of Christ.³⁸ It is the proper work of the Spirit to remember everything said by Christ (to become "*communicatio Christi*," according to St. Irenaeus's expression in *Adv. haer.* III, 24, 1). Thus, it is natural for the Spirit to be associated with Mary, who keeps in her heart the memories of the earthly life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is in Mary in the same way as he is in the Church, enabling the memory of Jesus to remain a living one. In the association of both Mary and the Spirit with memory, we find the same dynamic Ricoeur locates between memory as pathos or gift, and memory as task.

(d) One more aspect determines the special character of Mary's memory: in *Memory and Identity* John Paul II speaks of maternal memory.³⁹ The fact that Mary is mother is not neutral to the concept of memory. It means that this memory is profoundly rooted in the person, written in the body that nurtured the Child and bore him. We could say that the body of a mother is in itself a memory, in a way that impregnates her own being and resists any kind of abstract intellectualization.

Let us conclude this section by referring to what could be called an icon of the theological approach described here. We find it in the upper room, where Mary is gathered in prayer with the disciples. Entering via Mary, in the spiritual space which enjoys the influence of her presence, is revealed as an easier access to Jesus. Mary preserved in herself the traces of the Incarnation, from both the human and the divine side. And, in addition, she held the progressive understanding and progressive answer to the revelation of the Son of God in her memory.

implicated us as agents, as patients, as witnesses. Let us call this search for truth, faithfulness. From now on, we will speak of the faithfulness of memories, of memories being true to . . . , in order to express this search, this demand, this claim, which constitutes the veridical-epistemic dimension of the orthos logos of memory."

³⁸Cf. L. F. Ladaria, "Humanidad de Cristo y don del Espíritu Santo," *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 51 (1976): 321–345; here, 344–345.

³⁹Cf. John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, 149.

Mary was there, touching the original event and belonging to it, containing in herself the beginnings of the mystery that the disciples were experiencing in the Risen Lord. Therefore, Mary is the memory of the Church from the very first moment; she has treasured in herself the mystery of Jesus and becomes, in a very concrete way, an access to this mystery for the disciples.⁴⁰ It is this question of the subject of memory, which is both individual and collective, that will be developed in what follows.

4.4. Mary's memory and the Old Testament

Let us start by considering the principal source that the first Christians used to interpret the mystery of Christ: the Old Testament scriptures. From the very beginning, they found in these writings not only the prediction of the events of Jesus' life, but also the interpretation of these events. Hengel's account of the emergence of the first formulas underlines the use of Old Testament figures that had a preparatory role, such as the Wisdom of God, his Glory, and his Name.

Let us note two dimensions of the Old Testament scriptures in regard to the Christian interpretation:

(a) In the Old Testament, the first Christians found prophecies about Jesus, the Word of the Father, according to which Jesus himself wanted to be interpreted. In the scriptures we have the witness of the One who sent Jesus into the world. This becomes clear especially in the Gospel of John. By referring to the scriptures, Jesus makes it clear that he does not wish to be his own interpreter. He depends on another testimony, the one recorded in the scriptures: the prophecies that contain the Father's design for his life. This is why its fulfillment is a fulfillment of God's will that does not take place in an automatic way, but rather takes the form of the Son's obedience.

(b) At the same time, this Word of God was interwoven with the history of his people. It was a Word written in the life and action

⁴⁰It is interesting in this regard to note P. Ricoeur's dedication of his book on memory (quoted above, note 1) to his wife: "dans la memoire de Simone Ricoeur." Personal memory appears here as a place from which we can think and speak in the public square.

of Israel, in powerful deeds and continuous offerings of mercy and forgiveness. This Word of God had been recorded in the scriptures, which now constituted, in a sense, the crystallization of Israel's memory.

If we take these two aspects into account, we will see that the category of memory fits well into a proper understanding of the Old Testament. Memory includes history; it is not a subjective elaboration of what we have lived. On the other hand, it surpasses the objective fact in order to arrive at a deeper meaning. Memory is the epistemological category that can allow us to see the past as mystery, as God's saving action.

We can see an example of this in the Book of Psalms, where we have the Word of God, because it testifies to the action of God. But it is also written on behalf of the People of God, so that Israel can pray to the Lord. It is God who speaks, but he does so by putting his words in the mouth of his People Israel. The Book of Psalms, as is the whole of scripture, is thus a living memory of God's action in history whose unity is preserved throughout.

The result, then, is that the memory of Israel and the memory of Mary point to the same object. They both reveal, in consonance with the Easter message, the mystery of Jesus as the One who proceeds totally from the Father, as the Son of God, as the definitive act of God in the midst of human history. The Old Testament is, in effect, as we have just seen, the action of God preserved in the memory of Israel. For her part, Mary kept in her heart and also in her body the memory of God's actions as the accomplishment of what was prophesied to Israel.⁴¹

Just as St. Jerome could claim that ignorance of the scriptures (referring to the Old Testament) was ignorance of Christ, so we could say that not knowing the memories of Mary would have the same effect: something crucial would be withheld from our knowledge of Christ. At the same time, just as Christ is the key for interpreting the scriptures,⁴² he is also the one who illumines Mary's memories.

⁴¹Cf. A. Orbe, "La revelación del Hijo por el Padre según San Ireneo (Adv. haer. IV, 6) (Para la exégesis penicena de Mt 11, 27)," *Gregorianum* 51 (1970): 5–83.

⁴²Cf. Manlio Simonetti, "Scripturarum clavis notitia Christi. Proposta per una discussione sulla specificità dell'esegesi patristica," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 4 (1987): 7–19.

In fact, the memory of Mary is presented as a continuation of the memories of Israel, as may be seen in the *Magnificat*. For Luke, both memories (that of God's action in the Old Testament and that of Jesus' birth and life) become one in the spiritual experience of Mary. Just as the Scriptures were Israel's memory of God's deeds, so Mary becomes a memory, a memory that is now extended to contain the experience of the prophecies' fulfillment.

Thus, from the point of view of a genetic Christology, which starts from the encounter with the Risen One, it is natural to draw a comparison between Mary and Israel, since the memories of both serve the same theological function. This is what Luke and John accomplish by presenting the Virgin Mary as Daughter Zion.⁴³

In this way new light is shed upon the relationship between collective and singular memory. The fact that the memory of the people is made concrete and personal through Mary avoids the danger of the sort of collective memory that fails to respect the individual; that is, one that runs the risk of becoming an impersonal memory that might differ only little from an ideology. On the other hand, the individual's remembering is not isolated in itself: in Mary we find the total openness of an individual memory to the experience of her people.

We can summarize, then: because Mary's memory provides an access to Jesus, this memory is related to another source of understanding of the Resurrection that was at hand for the apostles—the Old Testament. For the Old Testament is not only a prophecy of Jesus, but also an explanation, a way to look at the mystery of the Son of God. Since the Old Testament is the memory of Israel, Mary appears as the concrete Israel who keeps in herself the faithful answer to the mystery of God's revelation.

4.5. *Mary's memory and the formation of the New Testament*

Let us now consider how the Old Covenant gave way to the New. On the one hand, Christ, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, came from inside the People, as a son of the patriarchs and a receiver

⁴³Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 31: "Mariology ties the knot joining Old and New. Mariology cannot be found apart from its union with the prophetic theology of the bridal people of God."

of the spiritual heritage of Israel. But, on the other hand, Jesus came from the Father, who was able to make a fresh start within history by sending his Son. However evident the continuity, there is also a greater newness. The Old Covenant could not become the New from itself alone.

This process that took place during the life of Christ can be read as the process of transformation of the Old into the New. The first agent of this transformation is Christ himself; the way he prayed and read the Scriptures was a surpassing of them; however, it was also in utter accordance with their essence because he was the eternal Word of God.

Yet Mary, too, has a particular role in this path of the Old Testament's maturation into the New. Inasmuch as Christ is the Father's representative, the one who reveals the Father's face and his love, he must be understood vis-à-vis his people. Israel is viewed as standing before him as the receiver of his message and, in this sense, resisting a total inclusion in him. This difference accords with the difference between Jesus' natural Sonship and our adoptive one.

We could say, then, that the process of the Old Testament's transformation into the New is represented by both Jesus and Mary. Jesus fulfills the Old Testament both (a) from the point of view of mankind on its way towards the Father, and (b) from the point of view of the Father in his revelation to the world. This double aspect corresponds in the following ways with regard to Mary: (a) an inclusion in Christ as the obedient Servant of God, and (b) a position vis-à-vis Christ, who is the Revealer of the Father.

This particular place of the People of God's answer vis-à-vis Christ can be described once again as the place of memory, the place where God's revelation is received and preserved. Mary is the one who offers the space for such a transformation from the Old to the New Covenant. Let us consider how this is so.

On one side, Mary transmitted Israel's heritage to Jesus. Christ's answer, however, brought this heritage to fulfillment and Mary had then, in turn, to follow her Son beyond the threshold of the Old Covenant. In Mary, the memories of Israel are expanded by the coming of Christ, who brings the fulfillment and interpretation of the old prophecies in himself.

This fulfillment did not occur in a single moment. It had to be assimilated and interpreted step by step in a special pilgrimage of faith, until it arrived at the light of the Resurrection. Only through the Resurrection did this light become transfigured in the total vision of

God's dwelling in man's history. In this process Mary's memory becomes the memory of the Church.⁴⁴

Mary thus preserved the memories of Israel for Jesus and, afterwards, she received them anew from Jesus, fruitful and fulfilled. What we have in her life is the concrete, living process by which the Old Testament becomes the New, giving birth to Christ and then following him to the Cross.

The New Testament is this new memory of the Church, in which the testimony of the apostles is crystallized. This conception of the writings of the New Testament as "memories" is already present in Justin Martyr, who calls the Gospels "the memories of the apostles."⁴⁵ In this context, the careful sedimentation over time of Mary's encompassing memory belongs to the very core of these writings.

In addition, we must also note that Israel's memory was always understood as prophecy. God's action for the sake of his people could not be confined to the past; it always contained the promise of a blessing to be fulfilled. It was the memory of a promise that was always greater than man's expectations. Thus the memory became powerful and creative; it became an expectation for the future, a pledge of things to come. The deeds of God that are remembered always contain more, and in this way are always prophecy. This is why the history of Israel can be called the history of a promise, the promise of the ever-greater action of God in history.

What happened to Israel's memory when it became the memory of Mary and of the Church? It reached its fulfillment because Mary's memory contained the fulfillment of all human expectations, the anticipation of the end of time, which began to be present among us at the Incarnation. The memory of Jesus, rather

⁴⁴In the same sense, Mary's faith is the faith of the Church at its origins. Cf. J. Galot, *Marie dans l'Évangile*, 55: "En recueillant en elle et en perfectionnant la foi du passé, Marie engage la foi de l'avenir. Puisqu'elle représente, au moment de l'Annonciation, le peuple de Dieu dans sa signification la plus large, son acte de foi est accompli plus encore au nom de l'Église qu'au nom d'Israël. Sa foi est identiquement celle qui appartiendra à l'Église, car elle en possède la caractéristique essentielle, distincte de la foi de l'Ancien Testament, qui est de porter directement sur le Christ. C'est pourquoi l'on doit dire que la foi de l'Église est née dans l'âme de Marie."

⁴⁵Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 102, 5; 103, 6; 107, 1 et *passim*.

than being confined to the past, always opens up to the novelty of the future. It is for this reason that the Christian prophet must always be connected with memory. The prophet of the Book of Revelation looks backwards towards the figure of Christ because the spirit of prophecy is the witness to Jesus (Rv 19:10). In the same vein, Mary is portrayed as a prophetess because of her memory. In this way Mary becomes an image of the Church after Jesus; she points to the eschatological end of the Church.

Since memory is always temporal, the memory of Mary allows us to situate her within the mystery of history. As the memory of Christ, in which the mystery of man is fully revealed (cf. GS, 22), Mary preserves in herself the memory of all of humanity. This allows us to see the theology of Mary from the perspective of memory. Let us single out some important points:

(a) We can start by pointing out the difference between Mary's memory and the memory of the rest of the disciples. It belongs to the definition of the Church to follow Jesus on his way to the Father. The disciples began to do so when they were first called by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. But there is no similarity between the steps of Jesus and those of his disciples; their clocks follow different rhythms. The disciples lingered, stuck, on their way to Jerusalem and will even go backwards by abandoning Jesus. In Mark 10:32 we read that they were following Jesus with fear; we can imagine the scene of Jesus walking alone a few steps in front of his disciples.

Now, the case of Mary was different, which is apparent in the way she adapted her pilgrimage of faith to that of Jesus. From the beginning her answer is one of faith and obedience to the message of the Father. Its depiction in Luke's Annunciation accords precisely with the most important teaching of Jesus: obedience to God's will. Thus, the experience of justification, of receiving the grace of the Risen One, was different in her case.

This means that, in contrast to what occurred with the disciples, in Mary we find the encounter of the Old with the New in a progressive way. Her understanding did not come about in an instantaneous flash after the complete darkness of the abandonment of the Lord. On the contrary, it is prepared throughout all of her life. This allows Mary to remember all the events of Jesus' life in a different way, without the total lack of understanding which characterizes the disciples. Mary is, then, the continuity of memory in time, a witness to how the plan of God was to develop from the beginning.

On the other hand, this does not imply that there was no discontinuity experienced by Mary at Easter. No amount of human preparation could anticipate the greatness of God's fulfillment. Mary's presence at the Cross was not yet her fully achieved response to her Son. This answer became perfect only when she received the fullness of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the same Spirit that had already overshadowed her at the Annunciation. Mary's memories were created anew at the sight of the Risen Lord.

All of this makes Mary's memory a distinctive one. Her role is necessary in the structure of the Church's memory, as the following consideration of the Marian dogmas in the light of memory will attempt to clarify.

(b) Let us consider that, according to M. Hengel, the experience of Easter also provides the foundation for other doctrines of Christianity. For example, Hengel attempts to account for the doctrine of justification by grace, the forgiveness that comes not by our own merits but by the grace of God. It is the experience of having betrayed their Lord, which all the disciples experienced before the scandal of the Cross, as well as the experience of his forgiveness, that made them aware that Christ, "while we were still sinners, died for us" (Rom 5).⁴⁶ The disciples' memory will always return to this point. Peter will remember his tears together with the merciful look of Christ.

Now, we have seen that this experience was different for Mary. On the one hand, her memory is totally dependent on Jesus, not only because what she remembers is precisely his life, but also because her memory was created anew by him in the Resurrection. Far from being the memories of a mother who has lost her son, her memories at Easter became memories of the One who lives and holds the keys of Hades. On the other hand, her memory is pure because she always followed the steps of Jesus and does not have to regret any sort of abandonment at the foot of the Cross. It is an immaculate memory.

We have here an example of how the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception could be related to the first experience of the Church at Easter, that is, by way of reflection on the special way

⁴⁶Cf. M. Hengel, "Der stellvertretende Sühnetod Jesu. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung des urchristlichen Kerygmas," *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 9 (1980) 1–25, 135–147.

in which Mary was present at the foot of the Cross. We see here an immaculate memory that depends totally on Jesus and has been transformed by him, but, at the same time, contains no shadow of sin. This starting point is in continuity with the development of the first Church Fathers on Mary as the new Eve.⁴⁷

Since the significance of the Resurrection brings about a new understanding of the whole of history from the beginning, Mary's immaculate memory could be considered in this light as the memory of what happened at the very threshold of human history, as a memory without forgetfulness because of the preceding forgiveness of Christ.⁴⁸ Because of Mary, the Church contains a memory that extends beyond the threshold of sin and reaches the original plan of God for humanity.⁴⁹

(c) The mystery of Mary's divine motherhood, too, is associated with memory. We can recall here that for some second-century Church Fathers, prophecy was characterized by fruitfulness.⁵⁰ A prophecy bears fruit when it begins to be fulfilled. Taking into account our description of memory, we could say that the seed of prophecy, received and kept in the womb of memory, is called to bring forth fruit in the future. This applies in a special way to Mary's memory. Memory as motherhood is the receiving and keeping of the past that is able to give birth to a new future, because the past already contains a divine promise that exceeds human expectations. In this sense the words of Gertrude von Le Fort are true: "all prophecy is but a form of motherhood."⁵¹

⁴⁷For Justin Martyr, for example, the figure of Mary as the new Eve is related not only to the Annunciation, but also to the Cross. The fact that the comparison between Mary and Eve in the *Dialogue with Trypho* (100, 4) appears in the context of a commentary on Psalm 21 is already a witness to this.

⁴⁸At the same time, Mary's memory is virginal and, in this sense, carefree. She is able to forget herself and the obsession for remembering in order to focus completely on the contemplation of God and his works. Cf. in this regard Paul Ricoeur, who comments on Kierkegaard's praise of forgetting as the liberation of care (Ricoeur, *Memory*, 505).

⁴⁹Cf. John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*, 151: "The Church preserves within herself the memory of man's history from the beginning: the memory of his creation, his vocation, his elevation, and his fall."

⁵⁰Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 88, 8; *Epistle of Barnabas* 1, 7 (SC 172, 78).

⁵¹Cf. G. von Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman* (Milwaukee, 1961), 6: "The sibyl who with 'foaming lips' announces a new aeon is the mother of that which is to come,

This connection allows us to see Mary's motherhood in a dynamic way, as continued in her spiritual motherhood. Her memory is continually bearing the fruit of new life in the Church. The Assumption attests particularly to this fact. It tells us that the memory of Jesus' mysteries has been preserved forever, that they cannot be lost in the darkness of the past, and that, in them, the future is opened and hope has a solid foundation. Between the end and the beginning, the entire drama of humanity is enacted, a drama to which Mary gives witness, from glory to glory.

5. Conclusion

Let us conclude by summing up the two main conclusions of our study concerning the place of Mary in theology and the cultural problem of the need for remembering.

5.1. *Mary's memory and her place in theology*

Our focus on Mary's memory could open up some new perspectives for the study of Mariology, summarized in the following:

(a) The theology of Mary becomes, once centered in her memory, a theology of the mysteries of Jesus seen through the eyes of Mary. By entering into Mary's memory we have access to these mysteries. The historical dimension is fundamental. History—through the aid of the category of memory—is understood not as sheer fact, but as mystery, as saving presence of God among his people. Within Mary's memory there occurs a synthesis between event and meaning, among past, present, and future. What results is a theological presentation of Mary that follows the rhythm of Jesus' life and is fruitful for an explanation of the whole of history, as well.

(b) The faith of Mary plays a very important role in this perspective. We are referring specifically to the paschal faith of Mary, which has been our point of departure. This helps us understand that Jesus always has the first place, that all of Mariology is incarnational, *ad Mariam per Jesum*. But we also need to keep in mind that Mary

for all prophecy is but a form of motherhood.”

becomes a privileged access to Jesus, directly linked to the true core of his mystery: *ad Jesum per Mariam*. The memories of Mary are paschal memories that point in the same direction as the paschal experience of the disciples. In doing so they allow us to understand the whole of Christ's history as the life of the Son of God, the one who proceeds totally from the Father. In this way Mary's memory preserves the truth about Jesus.

(c) A theology of Mary seen in this perspective is located at the very point of connection between the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church. This occurs because the mystery of Easter is not only that of a manifestation of Jesus, but also that of the faith of the disciples. If Christ is revealed as being Son from the beginning, if this revelation has had a preparation in history and is not only a subsequent novelty, then it must preserve from the beginning its entire form as manifestation and corresponding acceptance. The "yes" of Mary performs this important theological function.

(d) This perspective is also able to show the peculiarity of Mary, her special role *vis-à-vis* the entire Church, which is due to her proximity to Christ. The memory of Mary is the only one that is contemporaneous to the life of Christ. This difference is a temporal one. But let us note that since we are speaking of memory, a temporal difference is an essential one. Here we have a memory in faithful correspondence to the event to which it witnesses. Mary's memory is the memory that makes other memories possible, the place in which other memories come to be. In this way we understand how Mary's maternal memory can also be the memory of the Mother of the Church.

5.2. Mary's memory and the upsurge in memory

We began by pointing out the paradoxical situation of memory in our society: an upsurge in memory that corresponds to a devaluation of its meaning. These considerations of Mary's memories can help us to understand the role of the Church's memory and, at the same time, may also shed light upon the place of memory in our society as a whole.

The Church's memory, because of its connection with Mary's, is first of all a memory that is made concrete in a person. It can never become the observation of an inert past, that is, with an objectivity towards something that is completely other to us and at

our disposal, which may be controlled and kept in an archive. To look into the Church's memory is to look into the eyes of someone who keeps the past alive among us.

At the same time, however, Mary also preserves the truth of history against any possibility of delving into the past only in order to justify the present. She remains linked to the historical fact of Jesus of Nazareth, attesting to his life in the flesh. In this way she is the safeguard against any danger of creating a past that may suit us well for solving our problems and needs, but is unable to tell us anything new, that is, anything that comes from God. This memory cannot be measured and absorbed by a utilitarian present.

In addition, Mary's memory (and consequently the Church's, as well) can offer a new look towards the future. As the memory of an event that overcomes every human expectation, it contains within itself guidance for the uncertain tomorrow. Mary can be called with distinction, "Mother of our Way." In an age so worried about the uncertain paths of the future, it is consoling to address to her the words of the ancient prayer: "Prepare for us a safe way." *Iter para tutum.* □

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