

THE STARTING-POINT OF MARIAN DOCTRINE¹

CORNELIUS ERNST, O.P.

IT cannot be said that English Catholicism has entered with mind and heart into the stream of doctrinal development which is so noticeable a feature of the Marian movement in the Church today. Any attempt to dismiss this movement and the doctrinal development within it as a Continental exaggeration runs the risk of so emphasizing the Englishness of our Catholicism as to compromise its Catholicism. The needs of apologetics in England are sometimes urged in favour of a minimalistic approach to Marian doctrine. There is one decisive answer to this suggestion: the only truth which we as Catholics must proclaim is the whole truth. Our duty as Catholics is not to minimize Marian doctrine but to present it as an integral part of the totality of saving truth which it is the Church's office to preach to the world.

It is in view of this unsatisfactory situation in England that, so it seems clear to me, the central problem to be examined is the point of departure of the development of Marian doctrine. What I feel is most needed is not a more or less academic study of explicit Mariological structures, the technical elaborations of doctrine, but a disclosure of the motive force and impetus of the development, so that by renewing our living contact in faith and love with our Lady we may be able actively to contribute to the development, this active engagement being the essential precondition of any more objective theological assessment of the sense of that development.

It is true that a similar state of affairs has held and still holds in many other fields of Catholic theology, especially in England. Put very simply, our task is to learn where to look when we practise theology, how to open the eye of faith, how to make the practice of theology an exercise of faith. I shall simply state here, leaving the doctrinal implications of the statement for later discussion, that if we want to see in faith the Mary who is the source and starting-point of Marian doctrine, we must turn to Christ. Mary only comes into view for the theologian, and for the

¹ The substance of a paper read to the Conference of Ecclesiastical Studies, Easter 1959.

believer, if his gaze is fixed upon Christ. The methodological implications of this doctrinal statement are frighteningly comprehensive. The problem or rather the task now is how to turn our gaze towards Christ, how to animate our contact in faith with Christ. If the doctrinal significance of our Lady can only be defined in terms of her relationship to our Lord, then methodologically we can only explore the procedures by which we re-actualize our awareness of her by exploring the procedures by which we re-actualize our awareness of him. Briefly the main purpose of this paper is to achieve some sort of *reflexive* understanding of the process of re-actualization. I take it that the process of re-actualization, as it is concretely and more or less unreflexively exercised in history, is itself the development of doctrine, an *anamnesis*: the theological problem of development is the explicitation, the entering into reflexive awareness, of the process of *anamnesis*. In other words, I shall attempt to analyse explicitly the methodological procedures of *anamnesis* in order to throw light on the process of *anamnesis*.

I feel bound at this point to introduce some brief philosophical preliminaries, since it seems fairly clear to me that uncriticized philosophical assumptions have frequently exerted an unfortunate influence on the theology of the development of dogma, so much so that the ordinary run of scholastic treatises on this topic (it would be more prudent to mention no names) have a curious air of being not so much inadequate as irrelevant: certainly I find it almost impossible to read them. These uncriticized philosophical assumptions are of an anthropological kind. Man, it appears, is a rational animal, in the sense that he has the intellectual power of rational discourse, a power sharply distinct from the affective powers which, no doubt in a somewhat modified form, he has in common with irrational animals. Now since the truths of faith are in the strictest sense true, they can only be entertained in the intellectual power; and since this is essentially the power of rational discourse, it follows that any 'development' of these truths must consist essentially in the syllogistic manipulation of propositions. I maintain of course that this is a base and pathetic travesty of the philosophical anthropology of St Thomas and even of Aristotle; but I trust that this account is not too unfair an outline of the assumptions which appear to have dominated the theology of development until recently (always excluding Möhler

and Newman, of course, whose contributions have only comparatively recently been given any serious attention).

But whether the account is unfair or not, this scheme is unsatisfactory on at least two accounts. Even supposing that man's intellect and his other powers may be distinguished as naively as this account suggests, his intellectual activities cannot be confined to the syllogistic manipulation of propositions, or even to this manipulation plus the preliminary acquisition (by a process of 'abstraction' conceived of as a sort of photographic reproduction) of concepts and propositions. Aristotle himself, followed and developed by St Thomas, has a highly sophisticated view of the explication of the principles of a science from experience: this view is to be found not only in the *Posterior Analytics* but also in the methodological passages in a number of the physical works;² and here we have at least an alternative model for the transition from implicit to explicit within the world of scholastic thought which one might have thought would be worth exploring. I shall return briefly to this point later.

But the anthropological scheme sketched above suffers from a far more radical defect, in that it ignores the authentically *metaphysical* 'nature' of man ('nature' being here used analogically). Man is not merely an object of metaphysics, a reality among other realities which exhibit a metaphysical dimension in virtue of being subjected to the special intellectual considerations of the metaphysician; he is himself, existentially and in his very being, a *metaphysicum*. His bodily being is a participated mode, an expression, of a spiritual being which *can* be exercised independently of the body; and the token of this peculiar metaphysical status (to cut matters extremely short) is his capacity for history, for sustaining a creative advance into the novelty of event, to happen and to come to be by choice: his being is transcendence.

Man has a capacity for history: that is to say not merely a capacity for reading and writing books about past events, but an ontological capacity for enacting the events whose significance it is the historian's business to exhibit. The fully human historical act (*actus humanus*) is, prior to any special intervention by God, already 'revelation' and disclosure; it is the emergence of a radical and unrepeatable novelty, specifically distinct from the cyclic repetition of the merely organic world. The fully human act is a

2 Cf. J. M. Le Blond, *Logique et Méthode chez Aristote* (Paris 1939).

'revelation' not only because it is the conclusion of a deliberation conducted 'in the head' of the free agent, illuminating his own being to himself and the requirements of the situation with a new light; it is also a revelation because it is normally (though not necessarily) translated into bodily visibility. This revelatory translation of interior novelty into manifest exteriority is characteristically achieved in the word, which gives intelligible sense to human gesture by explicating it; or conversely, the human gesture in the public world is the medium in which the creative decision is concretely realized. This is obviously the basis of the inter-subjectivity in which the larger movements of the ontological process of history take shape. Creative communion, revelation to another, is enacted and achieved in the human gesture made definitely, and deeply, meaningful in the word.

The point of this brief and rather highly-coloured philosophical rhapsody is to insist on the 'natural' basis of the *divine* Revelation, the possibility latent in human history (in the ontological sense) of becoming *saving* history, *Heilsgeschichte*. There are other consequences or tokens of man's peculiar metaphysical status which also call for consideration here; for instance, his mythopoeic faculty, the power to translate into symbolic archetypes his continuity with the organic world and the consequent possibility of a symbolic hermeneutics of the cosmos; but such considerations would take us still further from the main theme of this paper. It may, however, be of use briefly to recall certain basic positions of St Thomas on faith if we are to see in more detail how human history can become so significantly charged as to acquire the enacted density of saving history.

It will be remembered that according to St Thomas (II-II, 1, 1) the *formalis ratio* of faith is *veritas prima*, upon which we rest or rely (*inmittitur*) for our assent of faith to that material multiplicity of all that is ordered to God, in so far as it is ordered to God or we are ordered to God by it; St Thomas gives as examples Christ's humanity or the Church's sacraments, or what is contained in Scripture (ad 1, ad 2). What I wish primarily to point to here is that the concrete paradigm of which this account is the analysis is faith in the Incarnate Word himself as the culmination of saving history. The analysis is not in fact a piece of supernatural metaphysics but a piece of Christian theology, presupposing an adherence to God in Christ before analysing it. The whole article

becomes irretrievably obscure unless we bear in mind the objective reality in function of which the analysis is performed: the purpose of the article is the analysis of the intentionality of *Christian* faith. Certainly, the analysis is such that it permits of generalization in the direction of a *less* than Christian faith or a further *definition* of faith as Catholic, i.e. defined by the Church's rule of faith; but the core of the analysis is faith in Christ. Corresponding to this simplicity in complexity of the divine Word in his Incarnation—an Incarnation foreshadowed in the Old Testament and represented in the Church—there is the simplicity of the object of faith *ex parte rei creditae* and its expression *ex parte credentis* in the complexity of the human enunciations through which the believer attains the reality on which his faith rests (1, 2 corp., and ad 2).

One other point should be noted. In making a systematic use of the description of faith given in Heb. xi, 1, St Thomas clearly indicates the *eschatological* character of the object of faith and of faith itself. 'Fides principaliter est de his quae videnda speramus in patria' (1, 6 ad 1); it is the 'prima inchoatio rerum sperandarum' (4, 1 corp.). So the reality, *ipsa res*, with which we enter into contact by the assent of faith, is not simply the *past* reality of the historical manifestation of the Incarnate Word, nor is it the First Truth in some purely metaphysical timelessness: it is a plenitude which we already possess in anticipation and for whose total manifestation we *hope*.

Saving history, then, is the sapient and economic intervention of God in the enacted course of human history, an intervention which reaches its final culmination in the Incarnation, where God personally assumes not only a human nature but also a human history. Such a human history, as we have seen, is already 'revelatory', prior even to its assumption by God: it is revelatory in virtue of being a growing disclosure of the meaning of concrete human existence, and of the manifestation of this personal maturity in word and gesture. Consequently a human history can serve the eternal purposes of God's wisdom by revealing them in the concrete variety of human experience, personally realized and externally expressed: the *significance* of human experience can open out upon the infinite depths of God's wisdom. Christ's redemptive history, as it is announced to us in the

Apostolic preaching and its developments, is revelatory *before* it is announced to us in that preaching.

This point may be made clearer by a brief consideration of the problematic introduced by Rudolf Bultmann, a problematic which, so it would seem from a recent article by Fr B. Rigaux, O.F.M., on the historicity of Jesus in recent exegesis,³ has dominated the thoughts of exegetes on this matter for the last twenty years. The essential point here is Bultmann's distinction between *Historie* (we shall say 'the historical') and *Geschichte* (we shall say 'the historic').⁴ The historical is that which can be verified by the objective techniques of the historian; the historic is the significance of which the verifiable event is merely the occasion, and which can only be appropriated by the subjective, the existential act of the interpreter or believer in his own present. Thus Christ's death on this view is at most historical: it is only God's Word for us if we accept it in faith and thus 'realize' (in both senses of the word) its eschatological import. Thus Christ's history was merely 'ontic', possessing a reality like that of natural objects; its 'ontological', historic meaning has to be personally enacted by the believer in order to be at all. This historic meaning is what is testified to in the Apostolic kerygma, and expresses the creative faith of the primitive community.⁵

It is in opposition to such a view that the *ontological* character of enacted history is being maintained here: historic significance is the authentic expression of the historical event, and does not become actual for the first time in the creative witness of the Apostle. Behind the Scriptural word there stands not a *res facta* merely, but a *res gesta*, a fully human, fully historic event, already revelatory before its human intelligibility is seen as the manifestation of the Son of God.

But does not this insistence on the ontological character of Revelation, above all in the Person of Jesus, raise difficulties with regard to Scriptural revelation? How are Scripture and the witness of the Church generally related to the Event of Jesus Christ?

A partial answer to this question may be indicated in terms of

³ *Revue Biblique* 65 (1958), pp. 481-522.

⁴ Cf. L. Malevez, *The Christian Message and Myth* (London, 1958).

⁵ Cullmann's objection to this view, in regard to the particular problem of Christ's self-consciousness, is very much to the point: 'Die Urkirche glaubte an Jesu Messianität nur deshalb, weil sie daran glaubte, dass Jesus selbst sich für den Messias gehalten hatte' (*Die Christologie des neuen Testaments*, Tübingen, 1957, p. 8).

recent investigation into the New Testament notion of Apostleship.⁶ Here I shall do no more than make use of a brilliant and fascinating study by A. M. Denis, O.P., on the investiture with the Apostolic function by 'apocalypse'.⁷ The interest of St Paul's claim to Apostleship is that while he clearly lacks what is laid down in Acts i, 21-2 as an essential qualification, namely having been an eye-witness of the whole of Jesus's public life from the baptism in the Jordan to the Ascension, yet he must possess *some* essential qualification if his claim is to be accepted at all, although this qualification is not sufficient by itself to make him into the thirteenth Apostle. As Geiselmann has pointed out,⁸ it is not sufficient for the Apostolic witness that the Apostle should have been merely an eye-witness of the historical course of the life of Jesus: 'The decisive element which constitutes someone a witness is the fact that he gives witness of God's revealing word, which interprets the events connected with the name of Jesus as saving events, *Heilsereignisse*.' We may say that St Paul's claim to apostleship is based on what may be called the *formal* element of the witness, the *ἀποκάλυψις* of the eschatological reality of Jesus, in the light of which the historical life of Jesus, as St Paul learned of it by human tradition, could be seen in its evangelical import, as *εὐαγγέλιον*. We cannot here follow Fr Denis's analysis of the notion of *apokalupsis* in St Paul: first as a term for the *parousia* itself, then (as in Gal. i, 16) as referring to a private *parousia* by a privileged and personal anticipation, then as a gnostic charism, and finally as a revelation of the *mysterion*. What particularly concerns us here is his extremely attractive hypothesis to account for the literary relationships between Gal. i, 16 and the Synoptics, especially Matthew. Briefly, the suggestion is that three stages may be detected in the development of the theme of investiture by apocalypse. There is first of all the 'hymn of jubilation' in Matt. xi, 25-7 (Luke x, 21-2), 'Confiteor tibi Pater . . . because thou hast *revealed* these things to little ones', probably for Matthew the Twelve, a revelation within the context of the preaching of the Kingdom. Secondly we have Gal. i, 16, where the climax of a vocation like that of the Servant of Yahweh and of Jeremias

6 For a review of this see E. Kredel, 'Der Apostelbegriff in der neuen Exegese', *ZKT* 78 (1956), pp. 169-73; 257, 305.

7 'L'investiture de la fonction apostolique par "Apocalypse". Étude thématique de Gal. i, 16', *RB* 64 (1957), pp. 335-62; 492-515.

8 'Die Tradition', *Fragen der Theologie Heute* (Einsiedeln-Zürich-Köln, 1957), pp. 84-5.

is the apocalypse of the Son with a view to the evangelization of the Gentiles. Thirdly there is the investiture of Peter (Matt. xvi, 13-20), where, as Fr Denis suggests, the redactor of Matthew has expanded an old *logion* to provide a counterpart to the Pauline claims: Peter is the foundation-stone of the whole Church in virtue of the revelation to him by the Father of the Son. I leave it to the exegetes to decide on Fr Denis's hypothesis of the stages of development of this theme; what may be retained here is the theme itself, that the apocalypse of Jesus introduces the subject of the revelation himself into the heavenly domain, τὰ ἐπουράνια of eschatological realities, and thereby constitutes him a privileged witness through whom those who hear his word in turn share in those realities by their faith. *Apokalupsis* is the bridge between the revelation-reality of Jesus and the revelation-word of the Apostle. This account, brief and inadequate as it is, would need to be completed by a suitable theory of inspiration: it seems to me that at least the elements of this theology are to be found in Fr Karl Rahner's striking study, 'Über die Schriftinspiration'.⁹ Fr Rahner's basic thesis is that God wills the Scriptures by the same act of formal pre-definition with which he wills the primordial Church (*Urkirche*): he wills the primordial Church *as* primordial (we may compare the place of Adam as *principium* of the human race), and thus he wills it with the fullness of what it requires in order to be the *principium* of the post-Apostolic Church. He wills a whole context of relationships between the members of the primordial Church, in which context we find the New Testament (and by derivation the Old Testament) literature; his intervention in saving history in the Incarnation is not to be separated in his predestining purpose from his intervention in calling up witnesses to that incarnate divine history and his intervention as author of the literary deposit of that witness. God does not write a letter to Philemon; but he 'inspires' St Paul to write such a letter, St Paul's literary activity being one element in this culmination of saving history.

To sum up: the *evangelium* is the power, *dunamis*, of God unto salvation for everyone who believes (Rom. i, 16). This *evangelium* is expressed in the total intelligibility of that Event of saving history which is the foundation of the primordial Church: in the revelation-reality of Jesus himself, in the revelation-word of the

⁹ *ZKT* 78 (1956), pp. 137-68, and now published separately in an expanded form.

Apostles' spoken witness, in the revelation-word of the inspired Scriptures. It is in this *evangelium* that we must find Mary.

As has already been suggested, the process of finding Mary consists in an *anamnesis*; and we must now try to develop this concept further.¹⁰ *Anamnesis*, theologically speaking, is a movement within the saving dimension of the *evangelium*, the re-actualization of the saving Event (as reality and as word) within the divine purpose for which that Event is the inauguration of the Last Times, the inchoation, in the obscurity of faith and of sign, of the reality already consummated in Christ (and in Mary). It is, that is to say, the significant re-presentation of an Event which as historical is past but which as historic can be made present because its historic character is *already* realized in a celestial 'present' to which our historical present looks forward as something to be realized in the future.¹¹ In this theological sense, then, *anamnesis* is not a two-term but a three-term relationship: it is not merely a recalling of an historical past, but a re-actualization in our historical present, by the hierarchical ministry and the faithful, of an historic past which is open as a virtuality to a future which is already actively 'present' celestially. The third term of this three-term relationship is neither simply future nor simply timeless: it is the *futura gloria* of which we already possess the pledge in the sacrament and in the betrothal gift of the Spirit, but it is not future for the realities of the glorified humanity of the *Kurios* (and the Queen of Heaven). It will not do either in the theology of the sacraments or in the theology of Tradition to confine our attention to the relation of our historical present to *one* of the other two terms: the historical past *or* the celestial present-future. Without doing more than touch on the problem in sacramental theology of the mystery-presence, the *Mysteriengegenwart*, it is easy to see that the sacramental presence is neither simply that of the historical Christ nor of the glorified Christ: we have to see the sacramental presence within the intrinsic teleology of the historical gestures of Christ with regard to his glory in his celestial present, our future. In rather the same way as it was possible in virtue of the intrinsic teleology of Christ's historical life to manifest his glory

¹⁰ The use of 'anamnesis' as a concept to cover the commemoration of Tradition as well as of Sacrament is due to an important though rather loose study by Nils Dahl, 'Anamnesis. Mémoire et commémoration dans le christianisme primitif', *Studia Theologica* I (1947), pp. 69-95.

¹¹ Compare the distinction in scholastic philosophy between the *nunc fluens* and the *nunc stans*.

in the Transfiguration *before* the Passion and Resurrection, so it is possible in virtue of the intrinsic teleology of the historical life of the Church for a human gesture to exhibit by anticipation the virtue that it will permanently and manifestly possess at the *parousia*. The point of theological intelligibility here is that the 'matter' of the sacrament is not just the physical matter but its *use*: the meaningful human *gesture*, now charged with the saving power of the *evangelium* because performed within its dimension.¹² Thus precisely by being linked with the past by her *institutions*, the Church groans for the manifestation of the sons of God, and her groaning takes the form of an *anamnesis*, a re-actualization of the past in the eschatological pause¹³ between the Ascension and the *parousia*. I shall suggest in a moment that because she *now* belongs wholly to the celestial domain, the tension between personal gesture and ritual gesture is wholly overcome in Mary: it is not only intermittently and by institution that her corporal life is the expression of the saving virtue of Christ in her person.

As regards the theology of Tradition, the value of the theological concept of *anamnesis* is that it allows for the views of such writers as de Lubac, Rahner, Liégé¹⁴ who, in the line of Newman, speak of a memory of the Church or a consciousness of the Church, while meeting the criticism that a growing awareness of the revelation-reality which is not controlled by the revelation-word amounts simply to new revelation. For the *anamnesis* of Tradition is the re-actualization of the revelation-word in and in regard to the eschatological presence of the revelation-reality. The revelation-word of Scripture and the apostolic traditions is the *only* route to a development in our understanding of the celestial realities present to us by anticipation in faith. And yet it is precisely these celestial realities in the understanding of which we grow by the *anamnesis* of the revelation-word. The Event of the primordial Church is already an expression of celestial realities, the initiation of the eschatological pause: it is an Event big with the *parousia*. The development of doctrine is an *anamnesis* of a promise *already fulfilled in principle, in principio*.

¹² For all this see the classic work by H. Schillebeeckx, *De Sacramentele Heilseconomie* (Antwerp, 1952); by the same author, *De Christusontmoeting als Sacrament van de Godsonthoening* (Antwerp, 1958). Dom J. Gaillard provides an excellent account of recent work in 'La Théologie des Mystères', *RT* 57 (1957), pp. 510-551.

¹³ I owe this useful expression to Fr Joseph, Bourke, O.P.

¹⁴ Cf. Mgr H. F. Davis, 'Is Newman's Theory of Development Catholic?', *BLACKFRIARS*, 39 (1958), pp. 310-21.

It may be helpful at this point to refer to a concrete example of this *anamnesis*, in the New Testament itself, an example which has recently been put before us with great thoroughness and perspicacity by Laurentin in his study of Luke I-II.¹⁵ What is specially relevant for us here is the midrashic technique of these chapters, for instance the re-animation of the dead metaphor of Sophonias (iii, 16) 'in thy womb', which probably meant no more than the modern English 'in the heart of', but is given by Luke the weight of the promise fulfilled in Mary. On the midrashic technique in general Renée Bloch says very appositely (perhaps a little too appositely), speaking of its practical purpose of 'actualizing' the Scriptures:

'This tendency to actualization arises from the manner in which Scripture has always been understood in Israel—and later in the Church—as the Word of God. The Word is always a living one, addressed personally to the People of God and to each of its members; a Word which manifests divine purposes and exigencies, and which calls for a response in no way theoretical, an engagement, the fidelity of the People and its members to the exigencies manifested by it. Although this Word is revealed at a given moment in history, it is addressed none the less to men of all times. And so it must remain indefinitely open to all the developments of later understanding of the message, to all legitimate adaptations to all the new situations which arise.'¹⁶

The Christian midrash of the *evangelium* of God is the *anamnesis* of God's definitive Word, the purpose of which is summed up ontologically in the celestial realities of Christ and Mary already present to us by anticipation.

We may find some support for the position so far reached in terms of the Tridentine decree on the source of Revelation. The synod—'hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens, ut sublatis erroribus puritas ipsa *Evangelii* in Ecclesia conservetur, quod promissum ante per Prophetas in Scripturis sanctis Dominus noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius proprio ore promulgavit, deinde per suos Apostolos tanquam *fontem* omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae omni creaturae praedicari iussit'—receives and venerates the books of the Old and New Testaments and the

¹⁵ R. Laurentin, *Structure et Théologie de Luc I-II* (Paris, 1957).

¹⁶ *DBS*, V, col. 1266.

traditiones conserved in the Church with equal devotion and reverence (Denz., 783). What force can be given to *Evangelium* in this decree has already been seen; I wish here only to point out that *fons* is to be taken in a strong sense, since it replaces the *regula* of the decree originally proposed by the minor theologians:¹⁷ *norm* has become *source*.¹⁸ The Lord of the primordial Church, fulfilling the promises of the Prophets, promulgates an *evangelium* of salvation which he orders the Apostles to preach as the one source of all saving truth.

If what has so far been said is regarded as merely the preamble of a paper on Marian doctrine, it must seem intolerably and even insufferably long. To my mind, however, it is required by the methodological principle laid down at the beginning, to the effect that in order to discover the starting-point of the development of Marian doctrine, to 'see' Mary in faith, we must reflexively discuss the process by which we see Christ in faith. A question now suggests itself, the legitimacy of which may be contested. What in fact do we see? Suppose that all we have so far said is an analysis of the *formality* of the revelation of Mary: is there some *content* which is neither the data of that revelation nor the explicit theology which articulates these data in the light of the Church's definitions? Is there, that is to say, some indistinct *whole* with which (with whom) we are in contact by faith, and which we can point at rather than analyse, by making use of explicit theology and the Church's definitions? Obviously I wish to answer this question in the affirmative: I wish to assert that something can be said, with the help of the particularized teaching of the Church, to re-actualize the presence of Mary as a person, whose personal existence is presented to us in the *evangelium* as possessing saving significance: we can perform an *anamnesis* of Mary the person, and thus reach out towards the starting-point of Marian doctrine. The essential point here is that her doctrines do not develop away from Mary but into her: they do not take her place but re-actualize our *conversatio* with her. What is offered here is an attempt to delineate the *mysterium* of Mary, her person as a saving reality; we shall attempt to speak concretely of what

¹⁷ Eheses V, p. 31.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Geiselmann, 'Das Konzil von Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen', in *Die mündliche Überlieferung*, ed. M. Schmaus (Munich, 1957), p. 135. Oddly enough, Geiselmann makes no use of this point in his study of Tradition cited earlier, and develops a rather complicated theory of reciprocal norms, *FTH* p. 98.

has so far been discussed formally. Our assumption, briefly discussed earlier in this paper, is that a human person cannot be neatly dissected into two layers, the lower of which is the proper object of empirical psychology, and the upper, the *persona*, meant to form the exclusive concern of metaphysics: human psychology opens upon the mysterious depths of metaphysical personality, and human experience is intrinsically metaphysical.

Mary, then, is a person wholly in the celestial domain (the dogma of the Assumption), whose personal destiny on the way to that consummation we have learned gradually to understand from its first moment (the dogma of the Immaculate Conception). The virtualities of that personal destiny achieved their highest intelligibility for us in her personal consent of faith, wherein she put herself by her *Fiat* unreservedly at the service of the life of her Son.

In putting herself at the service of the human life of her Son, Mary in the freedom of faith supplied the physical possibility of that life: she entered by faith into the physical constitution of the *Ursakrament*, the primordial sacrament, Jesus Christ. As Schillebeeckx puts it, Mary is the chosen one, redeemed by the profound *fiat* of faith exteriorized in her bodily conception of the primordial and universal sacrament.¹⁹ It was for that personal act of reception and conception, that act of human history in which human history became indivisibly saving history, that she had been prepared by her own unique conception. By her freely personal act Mary became for nine months the 'ark of the Lord',²⁰ performing in this way the most basic service of life to which every mother consents, a continuing human gesture in which the entire sacramentality of the Incarnational economy was temporarily embodied.

It is important to insist on the temporary character of this sacramental motherhood. In every maternal destiny there must come a time of physical separation at birth, which is only a prelude to the essential moral separation when the child now grown up to personal adult responsibility turns to his own, and often his father's, business. This fundamentally human situation is found with Jesus and Mary, as is clearly seen in Luke ('Did you not know that I must be about my father's affairs?'—ii, 49) and in John (the

19 *Maria, Moeder van de Verlossing*, ed. 3 (Antwerp, 1957), p. 99.

20 Cf. Laurentin, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81.

marriage feast at Cana), in spite of all the mythologizing efforts to obscure the plain statement of the Gospels. A mother's service of the life of her son must develop according to the rhythm of separation and, later, re-association. The biological service of life, freely consented to before conception, sustained in the womb, continued in the years of infancy, must come to an end, a separation often involving strains of a psychological and moral kind; the mother has to learn to accept the fact that her son has an independent personal destiny, the son has to learn to accept the womb upon which his independent personal life was once dependent. A vast psychoanalytic literature has grown up round the pathological forms of this development. Obviously there is no suggestion that pathological forms were present in the relationship between Jesus and his mother; but there would seem to be no harm in supposing that Jesus's human experience became more particularized within this relationship, and it seems perfectly clear that the life of Mary's faith grew in depth and clarity within it.

A mother's service of the life of her son is inevitably to some extent blind and self-denying. The living being she has brought forth begins to exhibit virtualities of historical life for which she is not the sufficient, though she has been the necessary, cause. The service of life begins to disclose a teleology till then unsuspected: the human person who is the term of her service begins to reveal himself in word and act. If the separation is not to be total and abrupt, the mother's consent to the service of her son's life must be continually renewed, as the comprehensive integrity of that life is more and more variously displayed. She becomes a background-figure, and it is the son who occupies the stage; but she is not simply part of the audience, for her consent to her son's role is all-embracing. And supposing this destiny has been faithfully and loyally lived through, the re-association, if and when it comes, is not simply discontinuous with the life before but is its revealing consummation: a service of life which has reached its culmination. The maternal origination is the human mould within which the son re-acknowledges the mother, an acknowledgment analogous to a man's mature acceptance of his body as his own. And it is especially striking if this re-association of destinies is shown as taking place in the moment of the culmination of life in the body, the personal gesture of death. So in the Gospel homily for the Compassion of our Lady, St Augustine compares

Cana to the 'hour' of the Cross: 'Tunc ergo divina facturus, non divinitatis sed infirmitatis Matrem velut incognitam repellebat: nunc autem humana jam patiens, ex qua factus fuerat homo, affectu commendebat humano'.²¹

If all this is more than pious platitude, it is only so because an attempt has been made to enter into the understanding of Mary's saving significance by seeing her maternal service of life as a personal history. The point which now needs to be made is that this personal history, a rhythm of separation and re-association within the mould of maternal origination, was a *conversatio* with the primordial sacrament of which Mary was the temporary embodiment. Now all the human contemporaries of Jesus entered into a *conversatio* with this primordial sacrament; but that does not necessarily mean, for instance, that St Joseph was immaculately conceived, as I understand is maintained by some Spanish authors. The uniquely distinguishing feature of Mary's *conversatio* is that it was carried on within the mould of maternal origination, and in the form of a maternal service of life. That is to say, although she was only for a time the physical embodiment of the primordial sacrament, her personal relations with Jesus were a continuation of this role: they were personal within a physical bond, a maternal mould: they shared in the sacramentality of the primordial sacrament. It was his human *mother* whom Jesus re-associated with himself on the Cross, and, we may note here, by indicating an object for her maternal solicitude: she was now to enter into the service of her Son's resurrection-life as this is participated in by his members, it is this shared life which she was now to foster, mother of all the living. When we speak of Mary's *merit* here, we must at least mean the renewed personal acceptance of and consent to the living and enlivening purposes of her Son, that is to say a personal act within the maternal mould, a maternal act to which she was virginally dedicated from the first moment of her conception.

As has already been remarked, it is helpful to attempt to situate Mary in the problematic of the opposition between the personal and the sacramental. Where do we most exhaustively realize our Christian existence in the eschatological pause before the *parousia*? We do *not* adore the most holy sacrament 'in aeternum',

21 In *Joan*. tr. 119; PL 35, col. 1950. Cited by F. M. Braun, *La Mère des Fidèles*, ed. 2. (Tournai-Paris, 1954), p. 57.

the sacraments are for man, sacrilege is not the most grievous of sins—all this because the sacraments are *signs*, institutional ritual gestures. On the other hand, our living union with the Saviour is realized with special efficacy in the sacramental act. Is it that few of us are capable of the intense Christian life of martyrdom, which can have baptismal efficacy? Is it that our ordinary human life in the body is rarely capable of achieving sacramental visibility, except in the institutionalized ritual gestures of the Church's sacraments? Can any of us love and do what we will? I suggest that in Mary the opposition is wholly overcome: that her personal life as mother in the body was and is the perfect expression of her Christian life. She is not one of the Church's sacraments; she shares, by her personal act, in the sacramentality of the primordial sacrament. Wholly in the celestial domain, her maternal service of her Son's glorious life in his members is the perfect expression of her own Christian life; as the 'eschatological ikon of the Church'²² she is present to us with the eschatological and sacramental presence of her Son: she is eternally fixed in the sacramental gesture of her motherhood. This, then, is the *mysterium* of Mary. Surely this throws some light on the vexed question of the causality of her mediation, which is no *less* personal for being corporal: it is *maternal* mediation, the bodily expression of a personal consent to the service of life. Her total personal motherhood, freely corporal, is an expression of God's saving purpose in his Son, and shares its efficacy. This is the mother of power who as a heavenly reality is present to us by anticipation in faith, and this is the mother who is the starting-point of the development of Marian doctrine.

It seems to me that if this view is at all acceptable, there is no particular difficulty about the development of Marian doctrine (there *is* a difficulty about why doctrinal development has not been taking place with anything like the same vigour in, say, Christology). It is only on the assumption that the point of departure must be a set of words, even a set of words having a plenary sense, from which development must proceed in a logically demonstrable way, that difficulties—insuperable difficulties—arise. The view maintained here is that the point of departure is an ontological (not merely 'ontic') reality, Mary

22 R. Laurentin, 'La Vierge Marie', *Initiation Théologique* IV, p. 296. Also published separately as *Court Traité de la Théologie Mariale*.

herself in heaven, present to us by faith; but that the content of our *knowledge* of her can only be re-actualized by an *anamnesis* of the sources (*fontes*) of Revelation, which acquire in this *anamnesis* the plenitude of the spoken word uttered by God in his *evangelium*. The *anamnesis* re-unites word and reality, past word and eschatologically present-future reality, in a given historical present: the old Revelation is ever new, we still encounter God personally in the word. Thus the word is a source of *experience* of the heavenly realities in faith, an experience which is an illumination of our enacted history (in the ontological sense). Faith admits of and demands creative advance, seeking understanding of this experience, which is the living source of the principles, the norms, the *regulae*, which with different degrees of authority are made explicit in the formulations arrived at in the course of the Church's history.²³ The logic at work here is primarily a logic of discovery in the *via inventionis*, not a logic of exposition in the *via demonstrationis, disciplinae*. We need not simply abandon human logic and appeal to a higher 'divine' logic, as Dillenschneider suggests in an extremely valuable book;²⁴ but we have to abandon the pretention and the pretence of explicating revelation exclusively by a logic of exposition. Again, the 'sense of faith' (*sens de la foi, Glaubenssinn*) ceases to be something mysteriously parallel to the activity of reason, and may be seen as the sensitive heart of the *intellectus fidei*. It is interesting to note here that Newman in his Oxford University sermon on development, preaching on the Feast of the Annunciation, took for his text 'But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (Luke ii, 14). The purpose of this paper has been to suggest that in the Church we too can *keep* all these things and ponder them in our *hearts*, in living contact with the celestial realities which we already possess in faith.

23 We should distinguish here between the actual process of development, which has often taken place spontaneously and uncritically in response not to a written word but to an object or a ritual of cult, and the subsequent critical activity of theologians and the *magisterium*, where the written word is explicitly appealed to. We should then also have to discuss the way in which a given response in faith becomes a datum in need of re-actualization by later generations.

24 Clément Dillenschneider, *Le Sens de la Foi et le progrès dogmatique du mystère mariale* (Rome, 1954), pp. 103-4.