

Charles De Koninck on ‘The Scandal of Mediation’

Charles De Koninck was born in Belgium in 1906.¹ His parents immigrated to the USA in 1914, although he returned to Belgium in 1921 to complete his education. From 1934 until his death in 1965, he taught at Laval University in Quebec City. Among the most distinguished of Thomists working in either the French- or English-speaking worlds, he is particularly known today for his writing Mariology and on theology and natural science.

The Presses de l’Université Laval has collected several volumes of De Koninck’s works.² *Le Scandale de la Médiation* appears in volume three. Ralph McInerny produced two volumes of English translations for Notre Dame Press.³ If this was to be an ongoing project, it had not reached the book on mediation by the time that it was cut short by McInerny’s death in 2010.

Several portions of what was to be *Le Scandale de la Médiation* were published between 1952 and 1959 in the journal *Laval théologique et philosophique*, which De Koninck had founded in 1945 with Alphonse-Marie Parent (1906-70). The book-length work was published in France in 1961, and dedicated to General George P. Vanier, the Governor General of Canada. The portion of the book translated here (sections III, IV and V of chapter four) was the final section to be published as a paper in the journal.⁴ From time to time, De

¹ For further biographical information, see Charles De Koninck, *Mélanges à la mémoire de Charles De Koninck* (Quebec City: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1968) and Thomas De Koninck, ‘Charles De Koninck: A Biographical Sketch’, in *The Writings of Charles De Koninck*, ed. Ralph McInerny (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 69–97.

² *Œuvres de Charles De Koninck*: I.1, *Philosophie de la nature et des sciences* (2009); I.2, *Philosophie de la nature et des sciences* (2012); II.1, *Tout homme est mon prochain* (2009); II.2, *La primauté du bien commun* (2010); II.3, *Le dilemme de la constitution* (2015); III, *Écrits théologiques sur Marie* (2018); IV, *Inédits et témoignages* (2020).

³ *The Writings of Charles De Koninck*, vol. 1 (2008) and vol. 2 (2016).

⁴ It was published as ‘Le Scandale de la Médiation (II)’ in 1959 (vol. 15, no. 1, 64–86). The first part of this chapter appeared in 1958 (vol. 14, no. 2, 166–185). Chapter 1 appeared as ‘Pour nos frères éloignés’ (vol. 14, no. 2, 1958, 157–165), chapter 2 as ‘La perfection de l’Incarnation et l’autorité du Souverain Pontife’ (vol. 8, no. 1, 1952, 130–135), chapter 3 as ‘Le sacrement du mystère de la foi’ (vol. 12, no. 1, 1956, 75–83), chapter 5 as ‘La part de la personne humaine dans l’œuvre de Rédemption’ (vol. 10, no. 1, 1954, 44–53), and annex I as ‘Réponse à une demande de précision’ (vol. 10, no. 1, 1954, 107–120). To avoid confusion, it is worth noting that not only the book as a whole, but also chapter three, and section three of that chapter, all bear the title ‘Le Scandale de la Médiation’. I have translated the text as given in *Œuvres de Charles De Koninck. Tome 3. Écrits théologiques sur Marie* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2018). See footnote 28 for an example of a minor variation from the Paris edition.

Koninck responds to a Protestant interlocutor. This article, criticising Catholicism, is by Etienne de Peyer, and was published in the *Journal de Genève* in July 1958.⁵

The theme of mediation has recently been described as ‘the distinguishing mark of Christianity’ by David. C. Schindler, yet remarkably little has been written about the topic as broad theological category.⁶ While De Koninck’s book retains a definite doctrinal focus, on the Blessed Virgin Mary, he also explored the nature of mediation *per se*. This is particularly the case in the philosophical heart of the book, and it is therefore that section which is translated here.⁷

III. The Scandal of Mediation

In the light of scripture, Mary’s place in Catholic doctrine appears as a form of sin natural to humanity: a man in his natural state [*l’homme naturel*] cannot bear for his salvation to be accomplished outside of himself, by pure gratuity, without having a hand in it himself. They do not want to owe God everything; they protest it to the end. They want their part in the work of redemption.⁸

The Catholic should recognise the full significance of this observation by a Protestant author. It is offered without rancour, seeking clarification concerning that which separates us. We do not always recognise – and repeating this is necessary – the confusion into which our beliefs would fall were the only light strengthening our faith a personal one, rejecting the tradition, and forgetting that ‘no prophecy is a matter of personal interpretation’ (2 Pet. 1.20). That would place us in the position of those who ‘always being instructed, never come to knowledge of the truth. Following the example of Jannes and Jambres, who opposed Moses, others rose against the truth: people with corrupt minds, lacking assurance in matters of faith’

⁵ Etienne de Peyer, ‘Lourdes et la foi réformée’, *Journal de Genève*, no. 166 (18 July 1958), 5.

⁶ Schindler, D. C., ‘Mediation: The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity’, *Communio*, 2021, 6–29. This edition of *Communio* is dedicated to the theme of mediation. I am currently working on volume on this topic.

⁷ I am grateful to Mr Matthew Nini for his advice on a draft of this translation, and to Dr Jenny Harris, with whom I began reading and discussing the earlier chapters of De Koninck’s book.

⁸ De Peyer, ‘Lourdes’, 5.

(2 Tim. 2.7-8).⁹ We might be tempted to boast about such uncertainty, cloaking it with the name of ‘freedom’: calling it even ‘the freedom of the children of God’. Go down that road, however, and one can readily uncover numerous arguments in favour of entirely incompatible interpretations.

An attitude of personal indifference or haughtiness, however, towards those who are in this separated state, yet seek the truth, would show serious ingratitude towards the Magisterium of the Church as the origin of our certitude. We are not permitted to believe that *we*, better than anyone else, draw the meaning that God gives to his word from our own personal depths.

Salvation was given to us by ‘pure gratuity’, but does it follow that man’s salvation was ‘accomplished outside of him’? ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ (John 1.14). ‘A saviour is born to you, who is Christ the Lord’ (Luke 2.11). ‘Now, all this took place to fulfil the prophecy of the Lord: “Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, who will be called ‘Emmanuel’”, which means “God with us”’ (Matt. 1.22). Why did God wish to be born as ‘God with us’? Why become ‘Son of Man’, descendant of Adam, offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Had God not sworn by an oath to the prophet David ‘to place a descendent of his own blood upon his throne’ (Acts 2.30)? Why did he enter covenants with humanity? Does not the Person of the divine Word say that ‘salvation comes from the Jews’ (John 4.22)?

To suggest that the salvation of man is ‘accomplished outside of him, by pure gratuity, without having a hand in it himself’ is to suggest that the Word was made flesh in vain, and that he became man in vain, and in vain offered himself as ‘a propitiation for our sins’ (1 John 2.2). After all, there is no doubt that a man was born among us: a man whom men killed. ‘This man was delivered according to the well-founded design and foreknowledge of God, you took and killed, by nailing him to the cross, by the hand of profane men. But God raised him from the dead, delivering him from the pains of Hades’ (Acts 2.23-24). But why his only Son? ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life’ (John 3.16).

Who demanded a propitiating victim for our sins? The offence of sin is towards God. ‘Against you, you alone, have I sinned’ (Ps. 51.6). So it is that God could forgive sin without

⁹ De Koninck typically only mentions the first verse of a multi-verse Biblical citations. I have given the full range [translator’s note].

demanding that justice be done: without sacrifice, without a human being meriting the pardon. Nevertheless, his Son

was an object of derision and the scorn of men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering, like one from whom people hide their faces, he was mistreated and reviled. But it was our sufferings that he bore, and our sorrows that burdened him. And we considered him chastised, struck by God, and humiliated. He was pierced on account of our sins, crushed on account of our misdeeds. The chastisement that brings us peace was upon him, and it is by his wounds that we are healed (Isa. 53.3-5).

Only a human being could receive such a sentence: a person as truly human as we are. ‘See my hands and my feet: it is I! Touch me and see that a spirit has no flesh or bones, as you see that I have (Luke 24.39). It was a human being, surely, who has ‘become a curse for us, for it is written “Cursed are all who hang from a gibbet”’ (Gal. 3.13).

What does the word ‘redemption’ mean? The human being is not redeemed if she is pardoned without paying the price. ‘You were truly redeemed’ (1 Cor. 6.20), ‘redeemed without money’ (Isa. 52.3), by human blood.

Since the children shared blood and flesh, he likewise also shared in them, so that he might render powerless, by his death, the one who had the power of death, namely the devil, and to free all those who, their whole lives, were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is not the angels who are charged with this, but the descendants of Abraham. As a result, he had to become like his brothers and sisters in all respects, in order to become, in their relation to God, a great priest, merciful and faithful, to expiate the sins of the people. For, since he endured trials, he is able to come to the aid of those who are being tried’ (Heb. 2.14-18).

How then could one affirm that man’s salvation is achieved ‘outside of himself’? Of course, Christ is not a human *person*, but that does not prevent him from being truly human. Indeed, it is to the glory of humanity that they were redeemed by one of their own. Justification consists precisely in that. A human being who was only human could not accomplish this; but is the Word-made-flesh less human because he is God?

God cannot become a debtor to himself, since he cannot be inferior to himself in his divinity. If God demands that justice be done, he must be able to take on the character of a debtor. Whatever method might be chosen for human redemption, it is always from him that forgiveness will come. ‘It is I, it is I who can blot out all, and remember your sins no more’ (Isa. 43.25). Since, in his great mercy, God wished that humanity should pay the price for redemption, he who is ‘of divine status’ ‘humbled himself, taking on the condition of a slave... becoming one in human likeness’ (Phil. 2.6). It is the human will of the Son of God that submits to the Father, in spite of everything! ‘But, let it not be according to my will, but yours’ (Luke 22.42). The passion was meritorious on account of this obedience.

Mercy, therefore, has chosen justification for us through the God-Man. This in no way suggests a gratuity somehow inferior to forgiveness without propitiation. Was the sinner forgiven less perfectly because she was forgiven by the merits of Christ?¹⁰ Are we saved less mercifully because ‘since by man came death, by man comes also the resurrection of the dead’ (1 Cor. 15.21)? ‘If, by the fault of one man, many have died, how much more has the grace of God and the gift conferred by the grace of a single man abounded for the many’ (Rom. 5.15).

Forgiveness through redemption is abundantly free. ‘They were justified by the favour [Greek *dôrean* = Latin *gratis*] of his grace, through the redemption accomplished in Christ Jesus’ (Rom 3.24). If, in this expiation, God fills human beings with a greater glory – if he wishes them to reach life having merited it, and by his favour to become a cause of their own restoration – then an ineffable mercy manifests itself, in an ultimately yet more perfect way. This it is – the principle and root of God’s works – that would need to be denounced [by de Peyer, our Protestant interlocutor]. On this account, however, the Church professes, at the offertory of the Mass

God, who has marvellously created the dignity of human nature, and has yet more wonderfully redeemed it, grant us, by the mystery of this water and wine, to have a part in the divinity of him who deigned to have a part in our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour, who being God, lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

¹⁰ This sinner is a woman [*la pécheresse*], perhaps the woman caught in adultery (John 8.2-11), or the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7.36-50), whom De Koninck mentions below [translator’s note].

‘Jesus, who was humbled for a moment beneath the angels, we now see crowned with glory and honour, because he suffered death’ (Heb. 2.9). Yet, this death would not have defeated death had it not been that of the author and principal cause of grace. ‘It was necessary that, by the grace of God, he should taste death for all humanity’ (Heb. 2.9). In his humanity, the Son of God merited grace for ‘those whom he was not ashamed to call brothers and sisters’ (Heb. 2.11).

Who wished that human nature, so lowly, should be glorified – with a glory which comes only from God (John 5.44)? Listen to what the Son of Man says: ‘If I glorified myself, my glory would be nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say: “He is our God”’ (John 8.54). It is the power of our Lord, ‘that has made him known to us who called us by his own glory and virtue. Through these things, the precious and great promises were given to us, so that you too may become participants in the divine nature’ (2 Pet. 1.3). This power achieves its effect, since it has raised human beings, from the condition of slavery, above all God’s works. And God has not wished this exaltation other than by the Word made flesh: he who was divine, ‘having acted like a man, humbled himself yet further, being obedient even to death, to death on a cross! Therefore, God has exalted him, and has given him the name which is above every name’ (Phil. 2.7-9).

Who then, let us ask again, made human nature glorious, and by whom was it achieved?

For it was not to angels that he subjected the world to come, of which we speak. As someone has written somewhere (quoting Ps. 8.5), ‘What is man that you should remember him, or the Son of Man that you should consider him? For a moment, you lowered him below the angels. You crowned him with glory and honour. You have put all things under his feet’ (Heb. 2.5).

If, therefore, we do not accept that our salvation is ‘accomplished outside of’ humanity, that is not because we refuse the pure gratuity of God, nor that we wish to ‘have a hand in it’, wanting humanity to ‘have its part in the work of redemption’. No: we know that this redemption was accomplished by a human being because Truth itself has said so, and we hold fast to it by faith in the blood of the Son of God.

‘Mary [our Protestant interlocutor supposes us to think] is glorified humanity: she is virtue and human purity that sin has not contaminated, which [it is supposed] is the same as denying

that sin is as serious as Scripture claims.’¹¹ We do not dispute that, in Mary, humanity has been glorified; we even think that the human person finds itself supremely elevated in her. But where the author supposes that the humanity glorified in Mary ‘is human virtue and human purity, that sin has not contaminated’, we make a distinction. Where did this virtue and purity come from? It is certainly a matter of the purity of a human person, but from whom, and in virtue of what, is she said to have been conceived Immaculate? What would she have been, left to herself? Had she been conceived in sin, subject to the decree that stands against everyone, then death would have fallen upon her, as upon them. Therefore, we do not speak of her virtue and purity as if it were some as yet uncovered land [*terre vierge*], which God then found. To the contrary, we believe that it was God, the Ineffable, who formed the Immaculate Virgin, since it pleased him to prepare for his Son a dwelling worthy of him. Not that he fashioned her in the same way that he fashioned Adam: although she was Adam’s daughter, ‘the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, was preserved and exempted from every stain of original sin, by a grace and special privilege of Almighty God, in view (*intuitu*) of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race’ (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*).

In other words, the Mother of God was formed in grace in an analogous fashion to how Eve was formed from Adam, the figure of the one [Christ] who was to come. And is not the grace of Christ sufficient thus to establish hostility between the serpent and this Woman?¹² Or would we prefer for God to chose a dwelling place that was, from the beginning, subject to the enemy of mankind?

Sin, indeed, is ‘as serious as Scripture says’,¹³ but it is hardly stronger than the preserving power of the Word of God. ‘For the foolishness of God is wiser than human beings, and the weakness of God is stronger than human beings’ (1 Cor. 1.25). Could not the Son of Man, by his abasement, merit such a preserving grace, accomplishing the redemption of his Mother more sublimely than that of the sons of wrath? If we glory ourselves in Mary, that is because of what her Son has wrought in her. We would understand nothing of the Blessed Virgin – let

¹¹ De Peyer, ‘Lourdes’, 5.

¹² Alluding to Gen. 3.15 [translator’s note].

¹³ How can one suppose that the Church of Rome is of another mind, when one is aware, in particular, of how faithfully it refuses the dissolution of marriage and forbids the use of contraceptives, as being against laws natural and divine. Here, she justly frustrates the most common vice among human beings, namely intemperance (to the point that Kinsey would probably recognise in this something antidemocratic). These offences, since they are mortal sins, set the difference between heaven and earth firmly before us.

us repeat – if we set her Son aside, since without him she is nothing of what we truly take her to be. Her glory, like that granted to anyone, is that of the cross.

Saint [Louis Marie] Grignion de Montfort placed the following statement at the beginning of his *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*:

I confess with the whole Church that Mary, being purely a creature proceeding from the hands of the Most High, is less than an atom compared with his infinite majesty, or rather is nothing at all, since he alone is the One Who Is. Consequently, this great Lord, always independent and sufficient in himself, did not have, nor yet has, any absolute need of the Blessed Virgin for the accomplishment of his wishes, or for the manifestation of his glory. He need only will it, and he can accomplish anything.¹⁴

As for the natural man who ‘does not want to owe everything to God, protesting to the end’, is not his disposition that which was once decried as Pelagianism? Others might object that God, because he could save us in a way that is ‘outside’ humanity – even without our involvement [*sans les oeuvres*] – has in fact saved us that way. But how could this be determined, other than by standing in God’s place? Consider here also the attitude of someone who declines mercy on that grounds that it would constitute an admission of inferiority: the man – that is – who does not recognise the implicit superiority in a gift of pure grace.

In short, the person in her natural state [*l’homme naturel*] is able to ignore the mercy of the Almighty, as standing against a conception of the universe where divine and human ways would be equivalent: where the last would be last, and the first would be first; where people, still attracted to an appearance of priority, would wish even they may be last themselves, so that no-one might be first. As St Augustine has it, no one is more closed to mercy than one who is both proud and miserly.

In any case, it is not the Virgin Mary who obfuscates the role of mercy: ‘For he has cast his eyes upon his lowly servant... Holy is his name, and his mercy extends from age to age upon those who fear him’ (Luke 1.48). Whoever she may be, whatever she may accomplish, do we

¹⁴ This quotation is from part I, ch. 1, section 1 (paragraph 14 of the work as a whole) [translator’s note].

really believe that she monopolises divine mercy? Do we think that the meaning of the Catholic faith?

[Again de Peyer, our author Protestant, raises concerns:] ‘The cult of Mary allows the introduction of a sentimental element into the faith: of a filial tenderness, of emotions that displace the problem that God poses for humanity. Love for Mary takes the place of love for Jesus Christ.’¹⁵

A love for Mary that substituted for love for her Son would indeed be a perversion of the order of grace, an abomination before God: such at least, we believe, according to the doctrine of the Catholic faith, and even the most pastoral directives of the Roman Magisterium.

However, the Son of Man, as we have seen, did not disdain tenderness, even feminine tenderness. Similarly, ‘the LORD [*Yahvé*] is tenderness and mercy, slow to anger and full of love: the LORD [*Yahvé*] is good to all, his tenderesses are towards all his works (Ps. 145.8). We do not read that Jesus shunned the disciple whom he loved – and to whom he was going to give the Woman for Mother – when the disciple was ‘at the table, reclining close to his breast’ (John 12.23). Would not the description ‘sentimental’ befit the one who praised the great love of the sinner: that woman who wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, who did not stop covering his feet with kisses, pouring perfume on them? This feminine emotion does not seem to have created a problem since, after the signs of tenderness, he says to the woman: ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace (Luke 7.50).

Our interlocutor’s reflections on the Virgin Mary conclude with the following lines:

Given that Jesus said ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love’, we need not establish an additional intermediary to protect us from judgement. Did not Jesus say ‘I have come not to judge the world, but to save it’ (John 12.47)? We need no way that leads to him, nor any love that would make up for what might be lacking in the love of Christ.

This calls for broader reflection. Why, let us ask, is it absolutely impossible to love God without loving one’s neighbour? ‘These two commandments connect the whole of the Law

¹⁵ De Peyer, ‘Lourdes’, 5.

and the Prophets (Mt. 22.40). ‘If anyone says: “I love God”, but hates her brother or sister, she is a liar. She who does not love her brother, whom she sees, cannot love God whom she does not see. This is the commandment we received from Him, that she who loves God must love her brother or sister also’ (1 John 4.20). Would it not have been simpler for God to have left out the neighbour here? Why does God distance himself from us as soon as we turn away from those who stand before our own eyes? What is the relationship between the visible and the God who is gloriously invisible? God, after all, did not make us simply so that we could see others! Look at your neighbour: is it credible that we need to take her into account, even when all we want is to love the Sovereign Good? Did not the Son of Man say, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone’ (Mark 10.18). There, it seems, is a divine saying that removes the neighbour, and all her baggage. And is it not true that the neighbour can be an important obstacle to faithfulness? ‘The woman whom you placed by my side gave me of the tree, and I ate!’ (Gen. 3.12).

God establishes a rule – no doubt related to his commandment – that appears completely at odds with his eagerness to listen to us, and make his dwelling within us: ‘He who abides in me, as I in him, will bring forth much fruit: for apart from me you can do nothing... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and you shall have it’ (John 15.5, 7). How can we reconcile that with his teaching elsewhere: ‘Truly, I say to you, if two of you on Earth should join their voices, and ask for anything, it will be granted to them by my Father in heaven. If two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst’ (Matt. 18.19). Was this condition really necessary? It seems to confuse things considerably, and seems simply not to align with the power of the one who admired the faith of the centurion, who said ““Speak only a word, and my servant will be healed.” Then Jesus said to the centurion: “Go! Let it be done to you according to your faith.” And the servant was healed at that hour’ (Matt. 8.8).

Let us, however, adopt a radical point of view. Everything seems easy when we hear: ‘As the Father has loved me, so also have I loved you. Remain in my love’ (John 15.9). But this is complicated by the statement:

Truly, I say to you, ‘you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not stand against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of

heaven: whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven' (Matt. 16.19).

What is the point of founding a Church? Indeed, could not Christ have founded many Churches – perhaps even many entities or groups containing a single member (to borrow the vocabulary of modern logicians)?¹⁶ How could it be that to this one Church – whose members are, alas, so often the cause of scandal and a stumbling block – he nonetheless gives such power? Consider also that St Paul clearly presents the Church to us as a Body with greatly varied members, one dependent upon the other, with a complexity almost impossible to untangle, but also as a seamless robe. And in its own way, the communion of saints does indeed end in a personal possession of God, beyond all mediation.

The sign of contradiction is not lacking. Why does God have recourse to the mediation of preachers, when he has no need for it? 'Go into all the world; proclaim the Good News to the whole creation' (Mark 16.15). 'Faith is born of preaching', says St Paul (Rom. 10.17). Why this mediation, if Jesus says: 'All power has been given to me in Heaven and on Earth' (Matt. 28.18), which means he has no need for anyone else. He adds, however, 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And I am with you always, even to the end of the age' (Matt. 28.19). Since he is with us always, until the end of the world, does he have any reason to maintain this mediation, even to the point of saying: 'Whoever listens to you, listens to me, and whoever rejects, you rejects me' (Luke 10.16)? This he said to the disciples who, overcome with fear, were soon to flee, and among them we find Simon Peter, who was to deny him: 'I do not know this man of whom you speak' (Mark 14.71).

It is certainly astonishing that God, who speaks all things – 'God spoke... and it was so' (Gen. 1. 7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30) – should have used so many intermediaries to make his plan known, and to carry it out. Could not his voice of thunder reach us without the means of prophets? Why did God not announce his coming without the angel? 'Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the House of David, and the virgin's name was Mary' (Luke 1.26). Furthermore, since he could have saved the world without a mediator, why did God assume the condition of a slave, at such remove

¹⁶ The reference here may be to set theory, and to sets containing only a single member, such as the set of even prime numbers [translator's note].

from divinity, thereby creating a distance which – for all he was utterly free to act that way – was nonetheless an object of scandal: ‘Blessed are those for whom I will not be an occasion for falling’ (Luke 7.23). Could Jesus not have come immediately ‘with power and great glory’ (Matt. 24.30), not needing to be ‘crucified on account of his weakness’ (2 Cor. 13.4)? ‘You are all going to be scandalised’ (Mark 14.27). Yet, in all of that, does humanity of the Son of Man, does the scandal of the cross (Gal. 5.11), conceal the divine power of the Word?

Without a doubt, Jesus said, ‘If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, it is not I who will condemn him, for I have not come to condemn the world, but to save it. Whoever rejects me and does not receive my words has his judge: the word that I have spoken, that will judge him on the last day...’ (John 12.47). He also said that ‘the Father judges no one: he has handed over all judgment to the Son, so that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father.’ And he established him as sovereign judge because he is the Son of Man (John 5.22-27). ‘Whoever believes in him is not condemned; whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and humans loved the darkness better than the light’ (John 3.18).

Christ came to save the world, but not all will be saved. ‘Then he will say to those on the left: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels”’ (Matt. 25.41). The reason for this is that: ‘I was hungry, and you did not give me anything to eat; I was thirsty, and you did not give me drink; I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me, naked, and you did not clothe me, sick, and a prisoner, and you did not visit me’ (Matt. 25.42). Astonishingly, this remains unclear to us, although it is given by the Light itself. So, ‘the goats on his left’ (Matt. 25.33) will then ask him in turn: ““Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or a prisoner, and not help you?” Then he will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of these little ones, neither did you do it to me.” And they will go away, those ones, to eternal punishment, and the righteous to eternal life’ (Matt. 25.44). Why, then, does the Son of Man hide in the neighbour? Is that not ‘extraneous’ [*supplémentaire*]?¹⁷

¹⁷ This takes up the comment of de Peyer (his Protestant interlocutor) that ‘we need not establish an additional intermediary [*intermédiaire supplémentaire*] to protect us from judgement’ [translator’s note].

In the end, for all God has handed over all judgment to the Son – the sovereign ‘judge appointed by God for the living and the dead’ (Acts 10.42) because he is the Son of Man – we also encounter a new stumbling block, in that Jesus declares to the apostles: ‘Truly, I say to you who have followed me, that in the restoration, when the Son of Man sits on his throne of glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matt. 19.28). What is this surfeit of judges doing here?

As we have said, the conclusion that ‘we need not establish an additional intermediary to protect us from judgement’ raises a larger problem. For it does seem that we can shield one other from this judgment. Does not Christ’s injunction ‘pray for those who mistreat you’ (Luke 6.28) mean that we must ask God to grant them his grace? ‘Truly, I say to you, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven’ (Matt. 5.44). Thus, therefore, we must believe that God can render prayer for our neighbour effective. Scripture tells us that we have great need of each other in obtaining God’s grace. ‘Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent supplication of the righteous person has great power’ (James 5.16).

This mediation is hardly irreconcilable with ‘the one Mediator’ or the ‘one oblation’ to which prayer owes its efficacy. Charity demands such intercession, ‘for we are God’s co-workers’ (1 Cor. 3.9). It remains baffling that the one who is uniquely almighty should want this, and that he should want it of us: but he it is who says it.

On the other hand, if we believe that by virtue of the merits of their earthly life – attained through the grace of the one Mediator – the saints can intercede for us, would we deny such power to the Mother of the Saviour, as befitting her whose ‘Son will sit on his throne of glory, to judge the living and the dead’? The Church – here let us be careful – teaches that the ‘obedience to God [of the new Eve] made our salvation possible’, but it never says that she will sit as a judge.¹⁸ Nor was it Queen Esther who revoked the decree issued against her people. However, it has she – although not subject to it – who asked the king to withdraw it. ‘[Mordecai] instructed the queen to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead the cause of the people to whom she belonged: “Pray to the Lord; speak for us to the king; save us from

¹⁸ The reference to the new Eve in square brackets is De Koninck’s own [translator’s note].

death’” (Esth. 4.8 / B.4.8).¹⁹ It was the king himself who revoked the decree, but who will say that the queen did not protect her people from judgment? Did this mediation conceal the king? Did she diminish his authority in the slightest? ‘Esther, the irreproachable companion of [his] kingship’ (Esth. 13.12n / 16.13 / E.23.13), far from having separated her own people from their lord, obtained recognition from him, by a decree of rehabilitation, as being ‘children of the Most High, of the great living God...’ (Esth. 13.12q / 16.16 / E.23.16). ‘For this day, which was to be a day of ruin, has been changed by the supreme sovereignty of God into a day of joy for the chosen race’ (Esth. 13.12 / 16.12 / E.29.21).

Really, there is no danger that the wife will conceal the husband, or the mother her son, or the queen her sovereign,²⁰ as long as she is the sort of woman described in Scripture. It is when the woman lends herself the rank of second master that the house is divided against itself, as in a kingdom where the queen would be another king. The passage in St Paul, which recalls the formation of Adam and the helper assigned to him, applies rigorously to him of whom the first man was the figure, as much as to the spouse from whom the Son of Man was born:

The man must not cover his head, because he is the image and reflection of God, whereas the woman is the reflection of the man. For man was not taken from the woman, but the woman from the man; and it is not the man, indeed, who was made for the woman, but the woman for the man. That is why the woman must have a sign of subjection on her head, because of the angels. Moreover, in the Lord, the woman does not go without the man, nor the man without the woman;²¹ for if the woman was taken from the man, the man in his turn is born of the woman, and all things come from God (1 Cor. 11.7-12).²²

This does not prevent the same apostle from writing that ‘there is neither man nor woman, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3.28).

¹⁹ Esther with its Greek additions goes by various numbering systems. I have added others to those given by De Koninck [translator’s note].

²⁰ See especially M.J. Nicolas, O.P., ‘La Vierge-Reine, *Revue Thomiste* (1939), 1-29, 207-231.

²¹ The phrase ‘ne va pas’ may indicate both ‘does not lack’ and ‘does not proceed or act without’ [translator’s note].

²² With regard to the outward signs that depend on the habits and customs of a time, the Apostle notes in verse 16: ‘For if any man will quibble, it is not our custom, nor that of the churches of God.’

IV. The Reason for Intermediary Causes

The informed reader knows perfectly well that the preceding pages do not add anything new – or at least very little – to what is taught by even nuns at primary school. One could, moreover, recognise the content of these pages in more than one treatise on Marian theology and, in large part, already in the *Adversus Haereses* of St Irenaeus, who knew St Polycarp, disciple of the apostle whom Jesus loved. The reader also knows that nothing we say here is contrary to the teaching or practice even of the schismatic churches. The criticism [from our Protestant interlocutor] that elicited this response is marked by a highly commendable effort at objectivity

Nevertheless, we will end with a few considerations of a quite different order, drawing at liberty on Saint Thomas and the one called the Philosopher in order to complement this doctrine. It will be noted that by drawing upon philosophy in theology, we depart from the common practice of many writers, even of Catholics.

God, as we know, the absolutely universal cause, is more intimate to things than they are to themselves, and he acts in them more they do themselves. This truth, however, has given rise to confusion, since some have thought it necessary to conclude on this account that God is the very existence of the creature, or that it acts only in appearance, to the extent that its causality has to be attributed to God alone: creatures would then be entirely passive. Put another way, the error consists in wanting to remove from creatures their faculty of communicating their participated actuality and own goodness. This error is already found among the first philosophers, and by the Middle Ages it had spread among highly reputable theologians, as St Thomas shows, notably in *Contra Gentiles* III, chapters 69-70. We find it, at its height, in the occasionalism of Malebranche.

St Thomas shows that such ideas imply an impoverishment of the work of God, to the detriment of the excellence of the first cause. Since the perfection of the effect demonstrates the perfection of the cause, we judge the craftsman by the quality of his work. Now God is the most perfect of causes, and from such a cause creatures receive their perfection. Were creatures to lack causal powers, that would undermine our sense of God's communicative power, as goodness diffusive of itself. It is more perfect to be able to cause goodness in others than merely to be good in oneself. In this way, the person who really knows is the one who can teach, and how much more knowledgeable is the master who can transmit his knowledge in such a way that his disciples can teach it in turn.

We must add that things are good in as much as they imitate God, who is goodness in his very essence. In achieving this likeness [*en cette assimilation*], they reach their ultimate end. Now, on account of the superabundance of good – which, as we have said, is *diffusivum sui* by its nature – God, if he wills, communicates himself beyond himself (*ad extra*).²³ The diffusion of good, however, is to be understood in two ways: first, insofar as its causality consists in attracting things to itself (*trahendo res ad se*), stirring the agent to the action that finds its end in the good and, second, insofar as it is a producer of other goods (as efficient cause): thus it is that God produces good works, always however with his own goodness in view.²⁴ Thus goodness is found, on the one hand, in the works produced and, on the other – and subsequently and more profoundly – in the teleological ordering of God’s works to the good that is God himself.

This superabundance and diffusion of good is attributed to God and – analogously and in an infinitely diminished way – to his creatures. As we have seen, God’s creature, by producing good works in turn, and particularly by directing them towards the supreme good, joins itself [*s’assimile*] more closely to its creator, to the divine good. Thus, to the extent that it is a cause, it participates in divine government. For it is by governing that God orders the works of his art to his own goodness, since he does not produce his works for the sole purpose of giving them being, which is the distinctive effect of his art,²⁵ but creates them with the intention of communicating to them a goodness that makes them as they ought to be: ordered to him according to the good. This is the effect of the government of which he himself is the

²³ We say ‘if he wills it’, since God would not be good in essence if that were to depend on some participated [*participé*] good. It is on this condition that the diffusion of his goodness *ad extra* is an effect of pure gratuity.

²⁴ This ‘thus’ seems to apply to God both of the senses of the diffusivity of the good just mentioned [translator’s note].

²⁵ Saint Thomas, unlike several of his interpreters, attaches great importance to the distinction between the *ratio artificis* and the *ratio gubernantis* (cf. *Summa Theologiae* [hereafter *ST*] I, q. 22, a. 1, 2; II-I, q. 93, a. 1), between the *causa essendi*, as the agent, and the *causa bonitatis*, i.e. the end (cf. *de Veritate*, q. 5, a. 2). Nor should we overlook his distinction between what gives any creature a relative goodness, *secundum quid*, and what makes it good absolutely speaking, *simpliciter* (cf. *ST* I, q. 5, 1; *de Veritate*, 21, especially a. 5). The emphasis that is sometimes placed on ‘creativity’ betrays a forgetfulness of these distinctions; thus it is that one will even hear talk of the ‘creativity of the Passion of Christ’. This insubordination of art was characterized by James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: ‘The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails’ (Edited by Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 181).

end. In the execution of the divine plan, the creature participates in this government by diffusion to others of its own good, in this way imitating and proving the excellence of its maker, who is the ultimate end of its action.

We should note here, moreover, that by communicating itself in this way, the creature imitates – in a much-reduced sense of the term, and according to a much-divided mode – the superabundant fecundity of God, which is first expressed in the processions *ad intra* of the divine Persons.²⁶

St Thomas teaches that the inherent perfection of the universe manifests itself precisely in the diffusion of good from one creature to another. When it comes to created things, to remove their order is to deny that which is best about them:

Individual things are good in themselves, but all things together are best because of the order of the whole. Indeed, the whole is always better than its parts, and is their end. Now, if actions be taken away from things, the mutual order among things is removed, for, in regard to things that are different in their natures, there can be no gathering together into a unity of order unless by the fact that some of them act and others undergo action. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say that things do not have their own actions.²⁷

The causality of God extends indivisibly to all creatures, as also to the fullness of their causality. Now, among created beings, the power of some extends to a great range of effects than that of others. Those, in particular, whose good and action reaches simultaneously to multiple effects, in number and in kind,²⁸ resemble God in that, as a universal cause. Creation owes its intrinsic unity especially to inherent universal causality. If there were only particular causes in the universe, its overarching unity in relation to those causes would only be accidental, and we would have to attribute this perfection to chance, to fortuitous causality, for all God orders the casual and fortuitous just as much as effects that spring from determined causes. Consequently, in as much as creation contains universal causality, it is

²⁶ Cf. *ST I*, q. 27, a. 5, *ad 3*.

²⁷ *Summa Contra Gentiles* (hereafter *SCG*), III, ch. 69, n. 17 (not ch. 79, as given by De Koninck). De Koninck uses the translation of Marie-Joseph Gerlaud O.P. (Paris: Lethielleux, 1950). The translation here and below is by Vernon J. Bourke (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). Nothing in the French translation is significantly different [translator's note].

²⁸ Here the Presses de l'Université Laval edition gives *en nombre et en espèce* (p. 320), while the Nouvelle Editions Latines text (*Le Scandale de La Médiation*, Paris, 1962) has *en nombre ou espèce* ('in number or kind') [translator's note].

perfect and resembles the divine good. This amounts to saying that God likewise joins his external manifestation to himself.

The plurality and variety of its effects in no way split God's action, and so it is, in its own fashion, with every universal cause, however limited it may be. Besides, to attribute to God the causality of creatures diffusing their own good in no way diminishes the proper activity of these causes. Conversely, in producing the same effect, the plurality and variety of causes does not further divide this effect, even if we must refer this effect to those causes, distinguishing in it various dimensions. Socrates is not several persons on account of his various causes, even the principal ones, such as God, the first and universal cause of all others, or his parents and ancestors, as particular causes – to say nothing of his subordinate universal causes. It is clear, says St. Thomas, that

the same effect is not attributed to a natural cause and to divine power in such a way that it is partly done by God, and partly by the natural agent; rather, it is wholly done by both, according to a different way, just as the same effect is wholly attributed to the instrument and also wholly to the principal agent.²⁹

Surely God could make a Socrates from scratch, without a subordinate, principal or instrumental agent, parentage or genealogy, so as to be connected to no one other than God. It does not follow, however, that subordinate agents, as to their multiplicity, become superfluous. We have seen the reason for this: God communicates and manifests his superabundant goodness in producing effects that are causes in their turn, thus constituting the unity of the whole for the greater intrinsic perfection of the universe.

Let us note that the effect of subordinate agents is achieved in a deeper and more effective way (*vehementius influit*) by the higher, universal cause. For

in every agent, in fact, there are two things to consider: namely, the thing itself that acts, and the power by which it acts. Fire, for instance, heats by means of heat. But the power of a lower agent depends on the power of the superior agent, according as the superior agent gives this power to the lower agent whereby it may act; or preserves it; or even applies it to the action, as the artisan applies an instrument to its proper effect, though he neither gives the form whereby the instrument works, nor preserves it, but simply gives it motion. So, it is necessary for the action of a lower agent to result not

²⁹ SCG III, ch, 70, n. 8.

only from the agent by its own power, but also from the power of all higher agents; it acts, then, through the power of all.³⁰

Subordinate agents are also called ‘intermediaries’. God is said to rule the universe through the mediation [*par l’intermédiaire*] of secondary causes. (However, we must be careful not to reduce every subordinate cause to the level of a mere tool that separates a principal agent from its effect, as the pen is ‘between’ the writer and the letters she writes. Although they can be called instrumental in the sense that everything that is a means is in some way an instrument – *communiter dictum* – one should not, as a matter of course, deprive every subordinate cause of the nature of a principal agent.) However, this mediation does not prevent the higher agent from being an *immediate* cause when it comes to the production of the effect. This is what St Thomas explains in the remainder of the chapter we have just quoted:

And just as the lowest agent is found immediately active, so also is the power of the primary agent found immediate in the production of the effect. For the power of the lower agent is not adequate to produce this effect of itself, but from the power of the next higher agent; and the power of the next one gets this ability from the power of the next higher one; and thus the power of the highest agent is discovered to be of itself productive of the effect, as an immediate cause. This is evident in the case of the principles of demonstration, the first of which is immediate. So, just as it is not unfitting for one action to be produced by an agent and its power, so it is not inappropriate for the same effect to be produced by a lower agent and God: by both immediately, though in different ways.³¹

In this way, one can distinguish between degrees of immediacy: the higher cause reaches the effect in an even more immediate way than the lower agents. We accept this kind of distinction routinely, without having to think about it. Thus, we say that Socrates is a man, that he is a mammal, an animal, a living thing, a body. The individual is equally and immediately all of these. This man is this animal. Yet the order of these attributes is not unimportant. If Socrates is a man, he is consequently everything else. But his nature as a body does not make him either alive, or an animal, or a man; not all animals are mammals, and not all mammals are men. Similarly and proportionately, in any effect we distinguish

³⁰ SCG III, ch, 70, n. 5.

³¹ This is not the conclusion of SCG I, ch. 70, but of the paragraph just quoted just (n. 5) [translator’s note].

many formalities, according to the diversity of the agents to which we relate the whole; hence, each of the agents may be considered the ‘total’ cause of the same effect.

To oppose the mediation of secondary causes in the execution of the design of providence is to misunderstand the wisdom of God, as manifest in his works and their ordering towards him: to misunderstand that very thing in which God demonstrates the superabundance of his goodness and power. For it is characteristic of the wise to establish an order. Now the order of causes is nobler than that of effects, since a cause can only act in virtue of what it already is, whereas an effect exists only insofar as it depends on the cause. The cause is therefore superior to the effect, precisely as the relationship between cause and effect requires. Thus, the order of causes is a special sign of God’s wisdom: ‘if there were no intermediary causes carrying out divine providence, there would not be an order of causes in reality but only an order of effects. Therefore, the perfection of divine providence demands that there be intermediary causes as executors of it.’³²

Perhaps the infatuation that tends to neglect intermediate causes comes from a certain anthropomorphism: we attribute to God the ambition of one who, in praiseworthy things, prefers to accomplish everything alone, fearing that were she, out of magnanimity, to have someone else act in her place, or be associated with her, that would occlude her own merit in the eyes of the crowd. Such an approach is undoubtedly mediocre, but it appears sure and within her grasp.

V. The Nobility of Divine Friendship towards the Human Race

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the treatise on friendship, Aristotle suggests a form of love that analogous to how divine government proceeds by means of subordinate agents. Having distinguished between disordered love of oneself – a deplorable attachment to oneself – and well-ordered love of self, he sets out to show how the latter is the root and measure of perfect friendship: of love towards another self. The more friendship is disinterested, the more it proves the noble character of the love that the friend holds towards himself. He who loves himself rightly shows himself quick to sacrifice, for the benefit of his country or his friends,

³² *SCG*, III, ch. 77, n. 6.

all the goods that the human community hold as supreme: wealth, honour, rank, even mortal life. In this way, he shows his nobility: a preference for what is truly worthy of praise. This, for example, is the nobility of the person who would not commit the slightest evil, even if it were believed that this evil would save the whole world, since it is never permissible to sacrifice one's spiritual good, the most divine thing in us, no matter for whom or for what.³³

In particular, the Philosopher indicates how the good man can manifest the highest degree of friendship: 'it may be more noble for him to become the cause of his friend's action than to act himself – *kallion tou auton praxai to aition tô philô genesthai*'.³⁴ By granting his friend an action, or a share in some action, which he could accomplish on his own, the good man acts more commendably than by doing it himself. This is especially the case since, 'in all praiseworthy actions, the good man assigns to himself the larger part of that which is noble. This, then, is how one must love oneself, and certainly not in the egotistical fashion that is far more common.'³⁵ Now the noble gesture of which we speak, far from implying a dissipation of the good man's power of action is, on the contrary, a striking sign of the extent to which he joins himself [*s'assimile*] to the spiritual good, a mark of very close union with oneself according to reordered love.³⁶

For the Catholic, this teaching of the *Ethics* illustrates the nobility of the friendship of the Son of God towards humanity. This nobility is attested first of all by the redemptive Incarnation, in which man is called to save himself in the God-Man. Yet there is more. The Saviour desired to be born of the race of Adam, -who is the 'figure of the one who was to come', and he became the new Adam by the mediation of the Woman. Now, from the beginning he formed the Virgin Mary as 'a helper given to him', granting her the grace commensurate with her condition as the Mother of God and his companion in life, and she never ceased to be his helper.

³³ De Koninck may be alluding here to *ST II-II*, q. 26, a. 4 [translator's note].

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book IX, chap. 8, 1169a30. See St Thomas' commentary on this passage, lect. 9.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book IX, chap. 8, 1169b1.

³⁶ One finds theological application of this doctrine in *ST II-II*, q. 25, a. 4. It must be understood that the love of charity, *virtus unitiva*, uniting us to God according to his deity, also makes us love our own person, which is here united all the more to itself; in contrast, in the case of egoism, the person is divided against himself, and the self is debased, *ubi umbra mortis, et nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabit* [where dwells the shadow of death, and no order, but rather everlasting horror – Job 10.22, Vulgate].

Already by virtue of her motherhood, which is a natural physical reality, albeit miraculous, Mary *naturally* loves her Son: the very same One who proceeds eternally from the Father. (Let us note in passing that Aristotle uses precisely the love of a mother for her child to illustrate the unselfish character of perfect friendship.)³⁷ Thanks to Mary, there is as a result a *natural* friendship between human persons and their God. Besides, since the evil inflicted on the child bears upon the parents as a personal evil – so that they feel not pity, but pain³⁸ – the evil of the Passion of the Son of God *naturally* reaches Mary as a personal evil. Already, therefore, simply on account of her maternity, the Virgin sympathises [*compatit*] with the sufferings of the Saviour, which affect her in her person as Mother. This is why the Church calls her *Mater Dolorosa*. On the other hand, the union of grace with her Son, insofar as she is mother of God, and companion of the Saviour, heightens this natural participation in the life of the Redeemer, and all the more so since grace, which perfects nature, has as its measure the union of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

May they be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may all be one, as we are one: I in them and you in me, that they may be perfectly one, and that the world may know that you sent me and that I have loved them as you have loved me (John 17.21-23).

It is not possible to be closer to God than Mary is, both through her motherhood and through the grace commensurate with her unique state. It is not possible to be more intimately associated with the Redeemer.

If the new Adam had not chosen ‘a fitting helper’, he would have been no less noble, but his nobility would have been less obvious, less clearly demonstrated *ad extra*. No doubt his nobility demanded that he should be able to do everything alone, but it also required that he

³⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VIII, ch. 8, 1159a25. See the commentary of St Thomas, lect. 8.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 8 (1386a15): ‘[where the ties that bind us to persons of our acquaintance are close] we feel about them as if we were in danger ourselves. For this reason Amasis did not weep, they say, at the sight of his son being led to death, but did weep when he saw his friend begging: the latter sight was pitiful, the former terrible, and the terrible is different from the pitiful; it tends to cast out pity, and often helps to produce the opposite of pity’. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts, in *Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by J. Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. vol. 2, 2208. De Koninck quotes a translation by Dufour.

should be able to show it with even greater generosity, which he did by associating himself with a partner in the great matter of human salvation. We should note, however, that the one with whom he joins forces is not another redeemer: ‘we have no need’ of a second new Adam. The Church understands that even and especially of the new order that: ‘The LORD [Yahvé] God said “It is not good that man should be alone. I must make a fitting helper for him”’ (Gen. 2.18). God wants Mary to be associated with the Incarnate Word

in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of ‘recapitulation’ in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely associated with its death.

The Church insists that Mary ‘had been chosen Mother of God “in order that she might become a partner in the redemption of the human race”’.³⁹

Just as Eve was the first to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, by which she was a mediator of evil, so Mary, recapitulating for the good the mediation of the first woman, is also the first to gather the fruits of the tree of salvation.

It is, therefore, wrong to think that co-redemption distances us from ‘the one Mediator’, or that it divides his ‘one oblation’. The opposite is true. It is the friend who leads his friend to action. The mediation of the new Eve has universal causality, even if subordinated to that of the humanity of Christ, as the instrumental cause of grace. Now, as we have said, a universal cause is not divided by the multiplicity or variety of its effects, nor by their subordination in a diversity of ways. Moreover, action coming from an effect in addition to the overarching cause – and notably from the one in addition to the universal cause – demonstrates in due measure the superabundant unity of the agent to which this effect-cause remains subordinated. This demonstrates its nobility in an eminent fashion.

Thus, Mary’s preserving grace, the effect of the Son’s merits – by virtue of which she can, always subject to Him, co-merit with Him the repairing grace for all conceived in slavery – in no way diminishes the sacrifice of the Son. On the contrary, this privilege of Mary reveals in

³⁹ Pius XII, *Ad Coeli Reginam* (translation from https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_11101954_ad-caeli-reginam.html, accessed 30 May 2022), alluding to St Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, V, 19, 1 (PG VII, 1175b) and quoting Pius XI, *Auspicatus Profecto* (AAS XXV, 1933, 80).

a most singular way the magnitude and efficacy of the one oblation of the one Mediator, the universal cause of salvation.

The sorrowful compassion of the Immaculate Virgin is brought upon her by the Passion of her Son. May it please the Saviour to grant his companion all that is needed to make that compassion meritorious universally, which he could not have spared her without removing her motherhood. Who will object to this profoundly noble gesture towards humanity? And if one protests that this is to give rather too much breadth to compassion, one must recall how the Common Doctor answers the same difficulty concerning the Passion of the Son.⁴⁰ He conceded that the passion is not in fact meritorious in itself, since the active principle would in that case be extrinsic to the one who suffers. Voluntary acceptance, in contrast, is an active principle, belonging to the one who suffers, and this is how the Passion of Christ is meritorious. This argument also applies to compassion: ‘It was she... who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always more intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam, sin-stained by his unhappy fall, and her mother's rights and her mother's love were included in the holocaust.’⁴¹

* * *

The Protestant author quoted earlier said that ‘We have no need for a way that leads to [Jesus]; nor for a love that would make up for what might be lacking in the love of Christ’. The first point depends on the following condition: whether it is possible that God might not have left us any choice. Now, as with any truth of faith, only the living Magisterium can show us conclusively where the truth lies. In fact, it teaches that in the work of salvation the role of the Virgin recapitulates, this time for the good, the action of the first woman in the Fall.

As for the second point, we do not believe in the slightest that anything could be lacking in the love of Christ for humanity. Any such suggestion would be heretical.⁴² But we believe

⁴⁰ De Koninck gives no citation to Aquinas here. He may have in mind *ST III*, q. 49, a. 6, on grace and merit in Christ's passion [translator's note].

⁴¹ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*. Translation from https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html, accessed 20 May 2022.

⁴² Cf. St Thomas, *Commentary on Colossians*, on Col. 1.24, lect. 6: ‘*Sed hoc est haereticum, quia sanguis Christi est sufficiens ad redemptionem, etiam multorum mundorum.*’ [But this is heretical [that the sufferings of the saints add to the sufferings of Christ, understood as if it were therefore insufficient in itself for redemption], as the blood of Christ is sufficient for redemption, even of many worlds.]

that his friendship is so magnanimous, so noble, that it bestows activity on the friend [i.e. Mary – *fait agir l'amie*] and gives her a share in the Redemption that he could have accomplished alone. There is a benevolence here that we cannot ignore.

Indeed, we even believe that this renders creation is all the more glorious. Of all the works of God, none is comparable in glory to the humanity of the Word. However, the Word is only part of the universe through the subsistence of the divine Person in his humanity.⁴³ The Person of Christ itself cannot have the character of a part; it is, in fact, like a 'whole prior to the parts'.⁴⁴ For although God is the common good *par excellence*, He is extrinsic to the universe, although more intimate to things than they are to themselves. He is goodness in his very essence, of which the whole universe, however perfect it may be assumed to be, could never be more than a participation. In contrast, Mary is properly said to be part of creation. And even in the supernatural order, any comparison to God that she might suggest is only ever as a part would be compared to a whole that is prior to the parts (in fact, even the soul of Christ could not have a comprehensive knowledge of God). In so far, then, as she is by her motherhood and grace the most elevated of all created persons, the closest to God (through her Son who is 'naturally the same unique and common Son of God and of the Virgin', in whom she sees and loves 'God who has done great things for her'),⁴⁵ Mary (in the universal reign which is hers through the same Son whose reign will have no end) brings to the universe an interior, personal principle, which is an inherent cause of the unity of its order, the goodness of which spreads from one end of the world to the other.⁴⁶

In this, the Virgin Queen demonstrates, in an incomparable way, the wisdom of 'the order established by God' (Rom. 13.2): the superabundance, gratuity, and extent of the mercy of the Almighty, from which proceeds divine government through subordinate agents. In this

⁴³ Theologically, it may be more felicitous to say that the humanity subsists in the existence of the divine Person [translator's note].

⁴⁴ St Thomas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, XII, lect. 3, n. 753: '*Estis membra dependentia de Christo membro, quod quidem dicitur membrum secundum humanitatem, secundum quam praecipue dicitur Ecclesia caput. Nam secundum divitatem non habet rationem membri aut partis, cum sit commune bonum totius universi.*' [You are members depending on the member Christ, who is called a member in virtue of his human nature, in virtue of which, especially, He is called the head of the Church. For according to His godhead He does not have the nature of a member or of a part, since He is the common good of the entire universe.] Translation by Fabian R. Larcher in *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012.) On the notion of *totalitas ante partes*, and its distinction from *totum ex partibus*, see St Thomas, *Commentary on the Divine Names*, ch. 2, lect. 1.

⁴⁵ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*; Luke 1.49.

⁴⁶ An allusion to Wis. 8.1 [translator's note].

respect, the difference separating the churches of the Reformation and the Church of Rome is between remaining in speculation about what remains simply possible (what we might call ‘futable’ [*futurible*]) and attending to what God actually does – and, after all, the former is unrealised, while the latter stands really before us.⁴⁷ The difference here is cosmic in scale. However, it is always possible for someone to prefer that his own will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven, rather than to want to establish what it is that the Lord would wish to do.

* * *

Certainly, ‘it must be said with sadness, but it must be said’ as to why ‘the churches of the Reformation cannot follow their Catholic brethren in the way of the glorification of Mary’, but the reason for our devotion, in the form hyperdulia, is the piety of the Son of Man for the Virgin Mother. Filial piety, as we have seen, is defined as devotion. When this devotion is that of the Son of God towards his Mother, it grounds for us the highest form of dulia.⁴⁸

As for the separation between churches, it rests – at an even more basic level – on the visible authority with which the Father invests the Church of the Incarnate Word: the manifest rule of faith, without which we would not know truly what to think, either of the Son or of the Mother.

And I will pray to the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he dwells with you and is in you. I will not leave you orphans... but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you (John 14.16-18a, 26).

⁴⁷ I have rendered this sentence rather freely: *une entre le pur possible, voire le futurible, et ce qu’en réalité Dieu fait; entre ce qui n’est pas et ce qui est* [translator’s note].

⁴⁸ Our author had said, ‘But from there to give her a cult of hyperdulia (of extra-ordinary honours), we cannot do it without being unfaithful to Jesus Christ.’