

Mary, the Mother of God, in the Holy Scriptures and their history of interpretation

During the Second Vatican Council – after an extensive and intensive process of preparation – the Council Fathers fervently discussed about the Mariological question. The reason of the debate that ensued was mainly the difficulty to find the golden mean between Mariocentrism and Mariophobia. The schema “De Beata Maria Virgine Deipara in mysterio Christi et Ecclesiae” was finally promulgated after many discussions, corrections and integrations by the Holy Father, Paul VI on 21 November 1964 as the eighth chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church – *Lumen Gentium*. On the same day, the Holy Father proclaimed (coram Concilio ma extra Concilio) Mary to be the “Mother of the Church”.

Salvatore Perrella OSM writes: “Adopting the historico-salvific model, the Second Vatican Council has recentered Mariological doctrine and reflection, taking them away from isolationism and abstraction: now, it will be a question of Mary “in context”, that is, in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, both united by *historia salutis*.” (history of salvation)

“The eighth chapter of the dogmatic constitution, *Lumen Gentium* is in a certain sense at the Magna Charta of Mariology for our times.” The doctrine of the Second Vatican Council has been connected to the patristic tradition, which favours the history of salvation (*via biblica*/through the bible), as a necessary web (connection) for every doctrine or critical reflection of faith (*via teologica*/through theology).

Unlike the pre-conciliar theological/mariological manuals, it is no longer dogma that constitutes the starting point of investigation but the revealed Word, and not only as a starting point but as the guiding principle of the whole magisterial and theological proposition. Thanks to the recovery of the normativity of the Scriptures undertaken by Vatican II, today's exegetical and theological studies are more and more focused on fathoming and studying in depth how the Virgin of Nazareth has not been absent in any of the decisive moments that have concretized the historical event and the messianic ministry of Jesus Christ.

In this sense, we will consider Mary of Nazareth in the way the Holy Scriptures speak of her, even the Old Testament, because the Old Testament contains the prefigurations of the person and the mission of Mary, the mother of God.

Mary in the Old Testament: is the question legitimate? In response, we shall rely on the authors of the New Testament, especially the Gospels. They are the first exegetes of the person and of the work of Christ Jesus, Messiah Savior. Starting from the greatest revelation of the Easter event, they returned to the words and deeds concerning Jesus of Nazareth. To understand the profound identity of the Crucified and Risen Master, the writers of the New Testament also resorted to the Scriptures of the Old Covenant. The Risen Jesus did the same thing also, placing himself at the side of the two disciples of Emmaus (cf Lk 24,27). And he did the same appearing to all the disciples gathered in Jerusalem (Lk 24: 44-45).

In close connection with the person of the Risen Christ, the early Christian Church began to question itself also about Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus according to the flesh, still alive in the community of Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). The Marian question also erupted like this from Easter as from its epicenter. The role and identity of this Sister was reconsidered and understood from the very Scriptures of the First Covenant. Following the canonical writings of the New Covenant, we can deduce that the presence and function of Mary in the economy of the First Covenant was intuited according to multiple approaches, all wrapped up in the chiaroscuro (that is, artist technique) of prophetic preparation. In short, it was felt that at the stroke of the fullness of time (Gal 4: 4), in the person of the Mother-Woman of Jesus several, instances connected to the Old Covenant flowed together.

The judgment of the French biblicist André Feuillet is always current: “Anyone who wants to deepen Marian doctrine from the biblical point of view can only do so through a more extensive exploration of the history of salvation. On the other hand, anyone who wants to understand more deeply the history of salvation must necessarily meet the mother of the Redeemer, united with indissoluble bonds at the very center of the history of salvation”.

We will also intensively study the history of the interpretation of the Bible text (Cant, Prov 31,10-31; Luke 2,8-20; usw.). Our interest is focusing in a special way on the history of the interpretation during the patristic and the medieval time. These comments, catechesis and sermons form a rich treasure in the Church tradition which will be discovered. A lot of these texts have gone unheeded.

Sometimes however, we will start with a title given to Mary by the Church tradition (like *mater unitatis*, *mater ecclesiae* etc.) and search for its biblical roots for a better comprehension of its real meaning.