

Article

Is a Theological Synthesis Still Possible? The Paradigm of Objective Mariology

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Abstract: As a “doctrinal synthesis of the Christian faith” (St. John Paul II), the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God could serve as a focal point that brings together various theological concepts and approaches pertaining to salvation history. For that to happen, however, it is necessary to delve into and discover the richness of Mariology. Often regarded as a secondary discipline, as a context for other disciplines or even as a source of difficulties in ecumenical dialogue, Mariology nowadays needs a revival of its own. The call for constructing an “objective Mariology” presumes that the autonomy of theology as an academic discipline will be preserved and that theological reflection on the Virgin Mary will be objectivized in terms of both form and content. To meet these demands, one must strive to respect the supernatural purpose and sources of theology as such, and strengthen and develop biblical Mariology as well as the reflection of the Church Fathers. Furthermore, there is a need to draw from the rich legacy of the Franciscan school when reflecting on the unity of God’s plan of creation and Redemption in His eternal reasons. Finally, one must not accept a departure from the “hermeneutic of continuity” in the Catholic doctrine on the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Immaculate and Assumed. The article sets out to describe the essence of the above assumptions and proposes specific conditions that would foster the development of an “objective Mariology”. In that respect, it is important to establish the First Person of the Holy Trinity as the starting point for any reflection on the plan of salvation—of which the Immaculate Conception is the ultimate origin and ultimate goal.

Keywords: theology; Franciscan school; God’s eternal reasons; hermeneutic of continuity; objective Mariology



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1. Introduction

In recent years, the development of all sciences has greatly accelerated, with the different disciplines claiming ever broader spheres of influence. The reasons behind this shift are diverse, including technological advances and their implications. In addition, this process has certainly been fostered by the virtualization and digitization of life in all its aspects. New specializations have emerged, and individual disciplines of science have expanded to such an extent that it is now difficult to find a person whose expertise covers an entire field of research; experts’ knowledge is becoming deeper but, at the same time, narrower. Considering this state of affairs, one has to wonder whether it is still possible to maintain a single theoretical model of reality that suits all scientists and conforms both to their convictions and to the results of their specialist studies and experiments. The answer seems to be very complex, exceeding the capabilities of any single individual who might be interested in providing it.

Nevertheless, one may attempt to offer an answer within the constraints of one discipline; in this case, theology. Is it possible to outline a theological vision that brings together the achievements of various disciplines and, at the same time, focuses on a specific point? Will that point be located closer to God (top-down theology) or to the human person (bottom-up theology)? It may be worthwhile to search for and identify a single element

that appears central to the development of a theological synthesis. First, however, one needs to ask a supporting question: Is it possible to return to reflection on the objective current of salvation history in theology?

As John Paul II noted on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1988, “one could say that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a marvelous doctrinal synthesis of the Christian faith” (Jan Paweł II 1999).¹ A synthesis is a unique way of summarizing and focusing on what is important. Therefore, in the Pope’s view, the Immaculate Conception is a focal point for all the beams that represent theological theorems and truths of the Church’s faith (De Fiores and Serra 1996).² Can this intuition provide an answer to the questions put forward in this article? Importantly, in order to build a Mariological synthesis of theology, one must first overcome certain difficulties: “At present, Mariology follows a rather rigid Christotypical or ecclesiotypical pattern. This pattern, however, does not appear to be the most appropriate solution. A renewed Mariology should instead be integral in character” (Napiórkowski 2016, p. 12). What needs to be done in order to overcome this difficulty and thus restore Mariology to its rightful place among other theological treatises?

This article attempts to answer the question whether it is justifiable to build a Mariological synthesis of all Catholic theology. First, it presents the three main assumptions: the preservation of the autonomy of theology as an academic discipline and the objectivization of content and form in Mariology. Then, it proposes specific conditions for the development of an “objective Mariology”. It can be argued that many of the problematic issues which preoccupy Catholic theologians today stem from the lack of full objectivity in Mariology. Key questions include Mary’s priestly dignity,³ the role of the Mother of God as Co-Redemptrix (Miravalle 1995; Manelli 2002; Most 2019), and the Creator’s eternal reasons and recapitulation (Bartnik 2012, pp. 44–45; Santorski 2012, p. 23).

2. The Identity and Autonomy of Catholic Theology in the Context of Mariology

The current trends in culture and science are characterized by a blurring of boundaries. Years ago, Joseph Ratzinger—who was later to become Pope Benedict XVI—emphasized that seeking a seamless connection between “the Church and the world means failing to appreciate the essence of the Church and the essence of the world” (Ratzinger 2016, p. 945). In his view, it is not possible to subordinate being a Christian to the rational structure of some specific period: “Today, more than ever, a Christian must be aware that he belongs to a minority and that he largely stands in opposition to what conforms to ‘the pattern of this world’ (Romans 12: 2)” (Ratzinger 2016, p. 945). In the early days of Christ’s Church, St. Paul delivered a similar warning when he wrote that “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1: 18). Then, he added even more forcibly: “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Corinthians 20). While times change, the temptation to blur important boundaries between things which are by nature different is always present.

Referring to the social changes over the past few decades, Ratzinger noted that “the ability and courage to be in opposition, the strength to learn to be in the minority is becoming the most urgent task in a Christian’s relationship to the world in the coming years—renouncing the post-conciliar euphoria that erred the most in that very respect” (Ratzinger 2016, p. 945). Over time, admiration of the world turned into uncritical emulation, causing the apostolic zeal of Christ’s modern-day disciples to abate. St. Paul once reminded the faithful of the need to cling to God’s truth despite opposition from the world: “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1: 22–24). How much of the Apostle’s message has remained in the minds of the modern Christians?

In view of the above, it is necessary to return to the fundamental question: Who is Jesus Christ? The deliberations of the early Church on that subject were mainly soteriological,

even though they stemmed from a reflection on ontological issues. The debates of that time were, above all, about presenting the mystery of Christ and His works so as to demonstrate that He was the Redeemer of man—every man—in all of his spiritual and corporeal existence. This entails an important Mariological question, since such an approach requires a “realistic treatment of Mary’s motherhood with all its implications. This, in turn, is a precondition for a realistic approach to the question of salvation, which is nowadays shifting perilously from the primary meaning of Christ’s humanity as the ‘instrument’ of salvation towards some idealistic view of the salvific question” (Królikowski 2005, p. 284). In view of the above, it is important to focus attention on Mary as the Virgin Mother, since this will serve to defend the realistic soteriology from the unwavering threat posed by the Monophysite interpretation. This leads to the conclusion that faith in Mary’s motherhood of God guarantees a correct soteriological concept. Thus, Mariology precedes an appropriate understanding of soteriology, which in turn directs one towards a correct Christological concept. Even at this level, it becomes apparent that there is a need to recognize a special kind of theological autonomy, since the Incarnation, Redemption, and Virgin Motherhood of God’s Mother go beyond the verification framework typical of other historical or linguistic sciences, or even philosophy.

Following the path set by the Scripture, the Church Fathers drew an image of the Virgin Mary as an exceptional being. It is thanks to Her and through Her that the Son of God took on His human nature.⁴ “The reference to the Fathers in Mariology is therefore a path that leads to regaining the most authentic approach, that is, one which leads directly to the word of God, thus validating all the deliberations on Mary and Her role in the work of salvation” (Królikowski 2005, pp. 278–79). It is important to note that the theology of the Church Fathers—including their Mariology—is founded on the Bible. For that reason, it “is set in the perspective of the most current demands concerning a renewal of theology, the most prominent one being the call to return to the Scripture” (Królikowski 2005, p. 279). Biblical Mariology must meet the requirements of theological hermeneutics, which does not stop at the edge of sense but seeks a deeper truth and follows the principles of biblical analogy and analogy of faith.

It is commonly accepted in the Church that “through Her special relationship with Christ and with the Church, Mary has played and continues to play a special role in God’s economy of salvation taking place in the world” (Krupa 1968, p. 117). One must not, therefore, omit to include the Immaculate Virgin in any discussion of the Creator’s plans concerning the course and ultimate goal of the history of the creation’s salvation. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council emphasize that by giving praise to its Lord and Savior, the “holy Church honors with especial love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image, that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be” (Second Vatican Council 1963, Sect. 103).⁵ The perspective of Mary’s participation in the work of the Son—and the work itself—may only be understood appropriately in the light of the Divine Revelation, which must not yield to the pressure of secularized “restrictions” or be disregarded on account of any given world view.

3. Towards the Objectivization of Content in Mariology

An important part of the motion towards “objectivization” in contemporary Catholic Mariology is the return to the legacy of the Franciscan school (Pontoglio 1994). A point of fundamental importance to studies on the Virgin Mary is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, which is not explained exhaustively within the soteriological discourse—as emphasized more prominently in the Dominican tradition.⁶ According to the Blessed John Duns Scotus (+1308), the Incarnation had been intended by God the Father from eternity. This view has a very rich interpretational tradition of its own (Burns 2001; Martelet 1984; Bolewski 2012). According to the Subtle Doctor, the Incarnation “is the fulfilment of creation and enables every creature, in Christ and through Christ, to be filled with grace and to

praise and glorify God in eternity" (Benedict XVI 2010). In his mind, the Redemption of the man affected by original sin had taken place through the passion, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Furthermore, he considered the Incarnation to be "the greatest and most beautiful work of the entire history of salvation that it is not conditioned by any contingent fact" (Benedict XVI 2010).⁷ Even man's sin did not affect God's actions; on the contrary, it was cleansed by these actions—planned from eternity and carried out throughout history.

In recent times, a rich chapter in the history of the Franciscan school was written by Father Maximilian Maria Kolbe (+1941), the founder of Niepokalanów (a religious community named after the Immaculate Virgin) and a martyr saint. During a homily on the day of Father Maximilian's beatification, St. Paul VI recalled that he had been "an apostle of Marian devotion" and that his spiritual legacy "does not raise any trace of hesitation or doubt, although today, it is Marian piety that sometimes gives rise to a certain distrust towards two theological trends: the Christological trend and the ecclesiological trend, which appear to compete against it. Quite the contrary, in Father Kolbe's Mariology, Christ occupies the most prominent place, one that is necessary and sufficient for the economy of salvation" (Paweł VI 1972, p. 239). In his writings and conferences, Father Kolbe draws a picture of Mary who is completely devoted to Her Son's work and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, he makes his readers sensitive to the Trinitarian interpretation of the Mariological dogmas. "In accordance with all theological doctrine, all liturgy and theology of inner life, Father Kolbe perceives Mary to be included in God's plans of salvation as the 'end of the eternal purpose,' as the Fullness of Grace, as the Seat of Wisdom, as the eternally-destined Mother of the Word Incarnate, as the Queen of the Messianic Kingdom and, at the same time, as the Handmaid of the Lord, chosen to offer her irreplaceable contribution to the work of salvation as the Mother of the Man-God" (Paweł VI 1972, p. 240). The founder of Niepokalanów created an original method of pursuing Mariology that cannot be separated from a Marian lifestyle. Father Kolbe used to say that a person who "cannot bend a knee and, in humble prayer, beg Her for the knowledge of who She is, should not expect to learn anything more about Her" (Kolbe 2008, Sct. 1109). It may seem that the founder of Niepokalanów followed a "maximalist" trend in Mariology, but did he—as a result of this—stray from the teaching of Christ, the continuous Tradition, and the piety of the Church?

Mariology is a journey towards discovering the mystery of God in His works, among which Mary is the Masterpiece. It is important to find a rightful place for Her in the consciousness of the Church. In the light of the charismatic renewal, it is important to reveal that "the first charismatic is the Church, and within the Church, the first charismatic is Mary. She was the first person to experience in Her soul and in Her body what the Church had been called for; remaining in unity with the entire Church, Mary is—as the Council says—"the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come"" (Suenens 1988, p. 14; Second Vatican Council 1964, Sct. 68). Endowed beforehand with the grace of the Immaculate Conception and assumed into Heaven upon the end of her earthly life, Mary heralds the triumph of the Church. Her "fiat"⁸ is the most important of all the words that man has ever spoken, because it "paved" the way for the Redeemer to carry out the work of Redemption.

4. Towards the Objectivization of Form in Mariology

An important issue noted by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is the emphasis on the "hermeneutic of continuity" in the history and theology of the Church. Many years ago, in an interview with Vittorio Messori, Ratzinger strongly emphasized that he did not approve of "the terms *pre-* or *post-*conciliar," arguing that "to accept them would be tantamount to accepting a rupture in the history of the Church" (Ratzinger and Messori 1985, p. 113). This remark is of particular importance with regard to Catholic Mariology. When considering any theological question, it is important to bear in mind the Divine guidance, a pedagogy in a sense, of God's *synkatabasis* that leads one to the fullness of the truth.⁹ In other words, "an attempt to understand one salvific event (and thus a certain truth of the faith) in

isolation from others will result in erroneous observations, or at least in the emphasis being misplaced in the conclusions thus drawn" (Kunka 2011, p. 71). This cannot be permitted.

During the Second Vatican Council, the Fathers asked themselves whether it was appropriate to speak of the Mother of God in a separate document or in the constitution on the Church. The dispute was put to a vote, with the latter option prevailing by a majority of forty votes. "At that time, it proved necessary to undertake great efforts in order to restore the Council's unanimity around what would later become the eighth chapter of *Lumen gentium*" (Sesboüé 2001, p. 481). Obviously, Mariological reflection was not a major subject of interest for the Council: "Mary and Her mysteries came to the surface during a debate on the truth about Christ and the Church, which the Council wished to present to the contemporary public in a new light" (Krupa 1968, p. 117). As a result, it was necessary to address the mystery of Redemption, since it is the single most important subject as regards the Church's awareness and mission in the world. Thus, the question of man's participation in Christ's work of Redemption came into the spotlight. "The latter point has long been a subject of contention between Catholics and Protestants" (Krupa 1968, p. 117).¹⁰ Thus, it needs to be noted that the Fathers of the Council also wished—to a degree—to take into account the opinions of the latter.

Those participating in the deliberations of the Council were well aware of the fact that the question of man's involvement in the work of Redemption was, in the first place, associated with Mary as the Mother of the Word Incarnate. Proclaiming Redemption is an essential part of Christianity, which is why "the Council, as the official and authentic teacher of the revealed truth, neither would nor could disregard the matter or accept a solution which might suggest that, in the face of some difficulties, it had chosen not to proclaim all of Christ's truth" (Krupa 1968, p. 118). Following a long and multifaceted debate, the Council clearly and decidedly spoke in favor of recognizing "Mary's participation in the fulfillment of the work of Redemption" (ibid.). The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states that Mary "became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption" (Second Vatican Council 1964, Sct. 56). In another section, it also states that "predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour" (ibid., sct. 61).¹¹

It must be admitted, however, that ecumenical tendencies "clearly had an impact both on the scope of the Council's teaching about Mary and on the form in which this teaching was given to the faithful to follow" (Krupa 1968, p. 118). As the Fathers conclude, "in expounding the doctrine on the Church, in which the divine Redeemer works salvation, [the Council] intends to describe with diligence both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Mystical Body, and the duties of redeemed mankind toward the Mother of God, who is mother of Christ and mother of men, particularly of the faithful" (Second Vatican Council 1964, Sct. 54). Further on, they explain that the Council does not "have it in mind to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does it wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified. Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her, who occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us" (ibid.). In view of the above, "the Council neither rejected nor modified anything that in other respects—with the exception of Mary's role in the work of Redemption—would be the subject of theologians' unrestricted debate and work" (ibid.). By addressing the participation of the Immaculate Virgin in Her First Born Son's work of Redemption, "also

on account of the separated brethren, [the Council] did not offer it as a dogmatic truth but only—as it noted—intended ‘to describe [it] with diligence—*illustrare sedulo intendit*’ (ibid.). This leads to the important conclusion that it would be unjustified to reduce the scope and perspectives of Catholic Mariology exclusively to what was stated as part of the teaching of the Council.

The proposed objective Mariology can also be described as an integral Mariology, although this name only focuses on one of the features—the ability to encapsulate “in one compact whole all that one should believe about Mary” (Jankowski 2004, p. 35). An important part of this Mariology is the “logic of God’s eternal plan” (ibid.) that has already been mentioned above.

Besides integrity, another distinct feature of an objective Mariology is its adequacy. This attribute refers to St. John Paul II’s call to construct an adequate anthropology as a theoretical basis for his Theology of the Body. During his Wednesday catecheses, the Pope explained that the purpose of an adequate anthropology is to “understand and interpret man in what is essentially human. The biblical texts contain the essential elements of such an anthropology, which become clear in the theological context of the ‘image of man’” (John Paul II 2006, p. 178). An anthropology built along these lines is rooted in the “origin”, that is, in the truth granted by God to His creation prior to Adam and Eve’s sin. The same applies to an adequate (that is, objective) Mariology, which sees the “origin” of the Virgin Mother of God in the Father’s eternal purpose fulfilled in Her Immaculate Conception.

Personalism as a universal system is very helpful in developing an objective Mariology (Bartnik 2013), and some attempts to conduct a “Mariological renewal” from a personalist perspective are already being made (Guzowski 2003, pp. 59–89; Bartnik 2012).

5. The Foundations of an Objective Mariology: Main Methodological Assumptions

A dogmatic treatise devoted to Mary and Her works—referred to as Mariology—is designed in its objective aspect to lead theologians to the discovery of God’s eternal plans and reasons. God’s wisdom is revealed to man in a manner that respects the limitations of man’s perception. The person of Jesus Christ who took his flesh from the Virgin Mary constitutes a central axis for the fulfillment of the Father’s plans as He brings the world into existence. In his letters, St. Paul sees Christ as the First Born of all creation, the First Born from the dead.¹² To grow and deepen their awareness, which draws from St. Paul’s intuition, the faithful must accept the notion of God’s purpose: a purpose which cannot be restricted in its form, content, or even means of fulfillment by any events or circumstances that take place in the created world. Catholic Mariology focuses on the brighter beams of protological, soteriological, and eschatological interpretation. The aim of Mariology is to present the Mother of the Savior and the events of Her life—as described in the Scripture—in a manner that reveals the extent to which God’s will and His eternal purpose culminated and bore fruit in the created world.

Every treatise is centered around God Himself and His glory as well as around a reflection on the consequences of God’s resolutions, which embody His everlasting love in the created world. Drawing from the experience and Tradition of the Church, Mariology intends to search for and reflect theologically on the signs of the Triune God’s presence, concern, and wisdom as well as His infinite mercy for all His creation. As the Virgin Mother of God and the Immaculately Conceived One, Mary Assumed into Heaven may only find Her rightful place in theology where the original, pure will of Divine creation comes to the fore in order to praise the Creator, live for Him, and find solace and ultimate reason of existence in Him.

6. Conclusions

The following methodological assumptions of an objective Mariology can be identified:

1. Mary is the only person in the created world who—while belonging to the material world—has retained a complete transparency of Her existence so that, through Her

goodness and beauty, She reveals the infinite goodness and eternal beauty that belong to the Triune God alone.

2. Treated as an intermediary in revealing the reasons of the Divine will and in their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, She never overshadows the truth that God alone is worthy of praise.
3. The role of the Immaculate Mother of God in the mission of Christ's Church is to bring together and focus (like a lens) Christ's dispersed brethren and the thoughts and views of Her Son's disciples on the mysteries of the Father's love in the Holy Spirit.
4. Taken into Heaven with Her body and soul, She is a role model and anchor of hope for the pilgrim Church—a promise that the children of the Church will open themselves to and partake in the love of the Eternal Love. Her holiness and blamelessness are signs of the holiness and blamelessness of the Redeemed in Heaven.¹³
5. Each of the Catholic dogmas determines the correct understanding of other truths of the faith and of the faith in general. In that spirit, Rev. Professor Czesław S. Bartnik reiterates that “as a result, Mary's virginity has proven to be one of the fundamental categories in theology and salvation history, one which the hagiographers of the Gospel of Childhood captured with their supernatural intuition and incorporated in the Christian kerygma. Any Christian or theologian who has strayed from this category has thus negated their whole Marian allegiance and, as a result, their Mariology. Over time, rejection of the veneration of the Mother of God, including the truth about Her permanent virginity, obscures many other fundamental Christian truths. ‘Rejoice, oh Virgin Mary, for thou hast destroyed all heresies throughout the world’¹⁴” (Bartnik 2003, p. 407).
6. Objective Mariology strives to avoid defining itself as Christotypical or ecclesiotypical, which is—in most basic terms—the reason for its objectivism. It is simply a theological vision of the Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin eternally chosen by the Father.
7. “The Marian doctrine grows richer in direct contact with piety or spirituality. Any study of Mary must be open to inspirations that spring from prayer, contemplation, asceticism, fasting, alms, service to one's neighbor, or mystical experiences. A Mariology thus inspired and enlivened is also certain to help bridge the deep chasm between dogmatics and Marian piety” (Napiórkowski 2016, pp. 12–13).
8. The objective of theology—including dogmatic theology—is not to understand something that is not lived by or valued. Instead, its goal is to make the mind, will, and heart capable of desiring to live the truth granted to man by the Triune God. By fulfilling that goal, theology will remain free from external compulsions, discipline, and economic rules as well as from being internally constrained by narrowness of the heart, coldness of the soul, and a stench of selfish self-complacency with one's own vanity. Such a theology will be capable of inspiring the desire for the living God; it will be capable of moving the mind, the will, and the heart to know Him, love Him, and serve Him.

It would be a gross methodological error to strip Mariology as a theological discipline of its supernatural character. While constructing a framework of intersubjectively verifiable and communicable claims constitutes the nature of other sciences, it does not exhaust the nature of theology as a field of study. Therefore, Mariology must not avoid its purpose: to interpret data concerning the Revelation, which is considered a source of a supernatural nature and must be interpreted as such.

The goal of the interpretation of the Revelation must also remain within the sphere of the supernatural—going beyond the boundaries of the area of interest and study of non-theological sciences. In addition to this “external” demand, there is an additional “internal” demand to permit Mariology to develop in an objective manner. While “Mariology in context” (Saniewski 2008) is important, what seems even more essential today is a comprehensive, integral vision that comes to the fore when constructing an objective Mariology. A Mariology thus defined could serve as a foundation for the creation of a complete theological vision. This assertion has its factual basis (who is Mary in the Revelation) and

formal basis (how to speak of Her in accordance with the Revelation), as this article has attempted to explain.

Can the truth of the Immaculate Conception become a focal point that brings together all the beams of Catholic theology? If that is the case, it would be necessary to expand and deepen its positive interpretation, focusing on the Merciful Father's reasons (Bolewski 2005). In other words, the reflection must go beyond Mary's freedom from original sin. Mary is the Creator's Masterpiece, the Mother of the Redeemer, and the Temple of the Paraclete, for She is "full of grace" (Greek: *kecharitôméne*, Luke 1: 28). As such, She is the icon of the redeemed human person, the fulfillment of all salvation history. It is in Her that the salvific action of God and the hope of the redeemed human person can be seen most clearly. This image of the Immaculate Virgin Mother—eternally intended by the Father for His Son—is what an objective Mariology strives to capture. The source of its "objectivism" lies in the revealed plan of the "Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1: 17), before whose face—as those chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world"—we will be "holy and blameless" (Ephesians 1: 4).

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Notes

- 1 For more information, see (Serra 2004).
- 2 For a broader context with regard to this intuition, see (John Paul II 1987).
- 3 For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see (Balter 1979).
- 4 See John 1: 14 and Galatians 4: 4.
- 5 For more information, see (Maggiani 2009).
- 6 Regarding interpretations of the Incarnation in St. Thomas Aquinas, see (Strzelczyk 2005, pp. 375–81).
- 7 For more on this subject, see (Veuthey 1988).
- 8 See Luke 1: 38.
- 9 John 16: 12–13.
- 10 As the author argues, "this issue is one of the greatest difficulties in the ongoing ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. Against that background, the Marian question had been faced with significant difficulties from the very beginning. Many Fathers of the Council were even of the opinion that the Council should not address that question at all".
- 11 See also (Second Vatican Council 1963, Sct. 103).
- 12 Cf. Colossians 1: 15, 18.
- 13 See Ephesians 5: 27; Colossians 1: 22.
- 14 Liturgical antiphon, Victor the Blind, 9th century.

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