MARY:
THE NEW ARK OF THE COVENANT IN REVELATION 11:19-12:6

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Introduction

The Ark of the Covenant was the most significant object in the Old Testament. Its importance is all the more amplified by the fact that it was made based on the instructions of the Lord himself and was strictly followed by Moses as narrated in Exodus 25:10-22. "The Ark was the mark of the Lord's intimate presence among his people."[1] According to Hebrews 9:4, it contained three important things that signify God's loving covenant with his people namely, the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed, the golden vessel of manna, and the rod of Aaron that had blossomed. Solomon made the Temple of Jerusalem in order to enshrine the Ark there.[2] "The Ark remained in the Temple approximately for four hundred years until the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (cf. Jer. 3:16)."[3] The Second Temple and the Herodian Temple did not have the Ark because it was never returned there. In other words, the Holy of Holies was empty, pointing towards the future, that one day the Ark will return.

The Ark, though significant, was not an end to itself. It was pointing towards a greater presence of God among his people. It points to the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Word made

[1]Scott Hahn, gen. ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 69.

[2]See Joseph Jensen, OSB, *God's Word to Israel, New and Augmented Edition* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2021), 159.

[3]Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 69.

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flesh, Jesus Christ. If the Ark in the Old Testament contained three important things that signify the Old Covenant between God and his people, then Mary, as the Ark of God's New Covenant, carried the Messiah. This typology was evidently present in the Gospel of Luke when the evangelist made a parallel connection with the Ark in 2 Samuel 6 and Mary's visitation to Elizabeth in 1:39-56.

The book of Revelation narrates the appearance of the Ark in God's temple in heaven in 11:19 and immediately links it to the Woman with Child in 12:1-2. This passage is interpreted differently by many biblical scholars. The purpose of this study is to examine the plausibility of this passage as a biblical reference to Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant. Both affirmative and negative interpretations of Revelation 11:19-12:6 as a biblical reference for Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant will be examined in the third and most important part of this study, the exegetical-theological commentary of the said biblical passage.

The Ark in the Old Testament

The Ark of the Covenant "has a rich biblical history. It symbolizes God's presence and the place of atonement (cf. Lev. 16:2 ff.; Heb. 9:3 ff.; 10:20), but when used wrongly, it becomes the source of the Philistines' plagues (cf. 1 Sam. 4:8) and Jericho's fall (Josh. 6:1-20). Its proper place was within the second veil of the tabernacle (Heb. 9:4, 24) and in the inner chamber of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:6)."[4] "The Ark is described in Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9. It was a chest made of acacia wood, about 4 feet long, 2 1/2 feet wide, and 2 1/2 feet high. It was covered with gold plates and had rings attached, through which the poles used for carrying it could be passed. Over the Ark was a

[4]Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 114.

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plate of gold of the same size as the Ark, called the *kapporeth*, which is sometimes translated as 'propitiatory' or 'mercy-seat'; in accordance with the meaning of the verbal root and the role the *kapporeth* played on the Day of Atonement (*Yom ha-kippurim*: Lv 16). Two cherubim stood at the end of the kapporeth and covered with their wings."[5] "The Ark of the Covenant was holy because of what was held inside of it, and its presence became synonymous with the presence of God among the Israelites. Where the Ark of the Covenant was, there also was the presence of Yahweh."[6]

"When the Ark was carried in the open, it was covered by a veil of badger skins, and a blue cloth, concealed even from the Levite priests who were assigned to carry it"[7] (See Nm. 4:6). Later on, the blue covering cloth of the Ark will have a great influence on Marian iconography from about 500 A.D. Since the nascent Church venerated Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant, she is depicted in icons wearing blue clothing, which bears the same color with the blue covering cloth of the Ark in the Old Testament.[8]

Around 960 B.C., Solomon constructed the temple of Jerusalem[9] in order to be a "fitting edifice to house the Ark of YHWH of Hosts."[10] For three centuries, the Temple housed the

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[5]Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 297-298.

[6]Tim Gray, "Mary, the God-Bearing Ark," in S*cripture and the Mystery of the Mother of God, Catholic for a Reason II,* eds. Scott Hahn and Leon J. Suprenant, Jr. (Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2006), 60.

[7]"Ark of the Covenant," accessed Nov. 6, 2022, https://www.theopedia.com/ark-of-the-covenant.

[8]See John Kubasak, "Mary and the Importance of the Color Blue," *Cora Evans Blog*, accessed November 8, 2022, https://www.coraevans.com/blog/article/mary-and-the-importance-of-the-color-blue.

[9]See Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 891.

[10]Jensen, OSB, *God's Word to Israel,* 159.

Ark and was considered as God's dwelling place on earth. But with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:8-9, 13-17).[11] Based on the narration of 2 Kgs 25:13-17, "the Ark was not accounted among the spoils claimed by the Babylonians."[12] According to 2 Macc 2:5, the Ark was saved by Jeremiah from destruction and hidden in a cave[13] in the mount of the Lord, Mount Nebo. According to 2 Macc 2:7, the Ark would stay there "until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy."

"In 538 B.C. Cyrus authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild their Temple."[14] In 515 B.C., the restored Temple, also known as the "Second Temple", was finished. In 20 B.C., Herod the Great commissioned a monumental renovation and expansion of the Second Temple.[15] According to John 2:20, it took 46 years for this Temple renovation and expansion to be completed. Despite the beauty, splendor, and magnanimous size of the Herodian Temple,[16] there was something lacking in it: the Ark of the Covenant - the Holy of Holies was empty. "First-century Jews knew full well that the current Jerusalem Temple was lacking two crucially important features. First, it was missing the glory cloud, which had departed from the Temple shortly before it was destroyed by Babylon (see Ezekiel

[11]See Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 893. Also, Wilfrid J. Harrington, S.J., *Revelation* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 126.

[12]Ibid., 69.

[13]See Andrea Spatafora. *From the 'Temple of God' to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1997), 182.

[14]De Vaux, *Ancient Israel, 323.*

[15]See Hahn, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 849.

[16]See Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography* (London: Orion Books, 2012), 102.

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10:18-22, 11:22-23). Second, and equally devastating, it was missing the Ark."[17]

Exegetical - Theological Commentary on Revelation 11:19-12:6

Revelation 11:19 (Text and Commentary)

> [19] *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there was flashes of lighting, loud noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail (RSVCE2).*

According to R.L. Thomas, "verse 19 is a transition verse having a close connection with what precedes and with what follows."[18] Verse 19 begins a new section and is essentially connected with verse 1 of the following chapter. "Although most English translations insert 'chapter' break between the appearance of the Ark and the appearance of the woman, no such division exists in the original Greek text."[19] This essential connection is more evident in the original Greek text of Revelation; both v. 19 and 12:1, 3 use the same Greek word for "appeared": *ophthe*.[20] "The repetition of the word *ophthe* (appeared) links the manifestation of the Ark in 11:19 to the heavenly signs of 12:1-2."[21] According to Craig Koester, "Some interpreters discern a sharp break between 11:19 and 12:1 or regard 11:19 as a bridge between the vision series", but he

[17]Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah* (New York: Image, 2018), 53.

[18]Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 113.

[19]Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary,* 61.

[20]See Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 113. See also, J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 146.

[21]Craig Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 524.

continued to argue that such interpretation is not the most plausible since "the action in the heavenly temple introduces the new series, as it does in other cycles (4:1; 8:3-5; 15:5-8; cf. 19:11)."[22] This contradicts the interpretation of Adela Yarbro Collins that there is very little, if anything that links chapter 12 to the previous chapter.[23] For Koester, 11:19 is the starting verse for the fourth cycle of the book of Revelation (11:19 - 15:4), the cycle of the dragon, the beasts, and the faithful. It is the first verse of the first major section in the second half of Revelation (11:19-15:4).[24] Therefore, to isolate 11:19 from the succeeding chapter would lead to missing an important message of the last book of the Bible, "The conflict between the Creator and the destroyers of the earth"[25] which commences with the vision of the Ark's appearance in the heavenly Temple.

The appearance of the Ark in the heavenly Temple is of great significance since the holiest place in the Old Testament "was a restricted area, with access granted only to the high priest on determined occasions."[26] This heavenly appearance of the Ark marks God's self-disclosure to his people.[27] "The flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, and earthquake are typical cosmic manifestations of the revealed presence of God (Ex.19:16-18)."[28] "The Ark of the Covenant corresponds to the rewarding of the

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[22]Ibid.

[23]See Adela Yarbro Collins "Revelation," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century,* 3rd fully rev. ed., eds. John, Collins, Gina Hens-Piazza, Barbara Reid, OP and Donald Senior, CP(Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2022), 1872.

[24]See Koester. *Revelation,* 524.

[25]Ibid., 523.

[26]Roland J. Faley, *Apocalypse Then and Now: A Companion to the Book of Revelation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 101.

[27]See Michaels, *Revelation,* 146-147.

[28]Collins "Revelation," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 1872.

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faithful."[29] God is now accessible to his people. "The first view into the heavenly ναος (*naos*, "temple") and the revelation of the long-lost Ark of the Covenant make this an unusually decisive moment."[30] Since the Ark was lost during the destruction of the Temple of Solomon, to see it appear after being lost for hundreds of years would really be a dramatic and decisive experience for a first-century Jew. St. John's dramatic narration caters to the Jews' longing and excitement to see the Ark once again.[31] "This appearance of the heavenly Ark indicated that the Messianic crisis was now at hand, God's covenant people and His dealings on their behalf being central subjects of the visions to follow."[32]

Revelation 12:1-6 (Text and Commentary)

> [1] *And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman cloth with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;*
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> [2] *she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.*
>
> [3] *And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads.*
>
> [4] *His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the* woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth;

[29]Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 113.

[30]Ibid., 114-115.

[31]See Scott Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 54.

[32]Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 114.

> *5 she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,*
>
> *6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days (NRSVCE2).*

The previous commentary proves the point that Rev. 11:19 is essentially linked or connected to chapter 12, especially that of the vision of the woman and her child and the dragon. Now, the purpose of the present commentary is to examine whether the interpretation that the woman can be identified as Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and at the same time, the Ark in the heavenly Temple of 11:19 is a plausible and tenable biblical interpretation.

According to Koester, "Revelation 12 depicts a cosmic struggle of good and evil. The protagonist is a woman clothed with the sun, who has the moon under her feet and a wreath of twelve stars on her head; she labors to bear the child who is to rule the nations. The antagonist is a seven-headed dragon that prepares to devour her child."[33] "Interpretation has often focused on the identity of the woman and her significance for readers."[34] Koester pointed out four interpretations of the identity of the woman. First, she symbolizes the people of God. Second, she is identified with the Church. Third, she is identified as Mary since she gives birth to the Messiah. And finally, she is identified as Israel.[35] Yarbro Collins wrote almost the same interpretations as that of Koester but with a greater emphasis that the most likely interpretation is that the

[33]Koester. *Revelation,* 525.

[34]Ibid.

[35]See Ibid., 525-527.

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woman is the heavenly Israel.[36] Like Yarbro Collins, this is also the interpretation being held by Harrington.[37] R.L. Thomas argues that "the woman who constitutes the sign is not an actual woman, but symbolically represents some other entity or group," and to identify her as Mary, a single individual, is quite implausible.[38] Faley would simply interpret the woman as "Israel-Church, which gives birth to the Messiah."[39] For Mounce, "The woman is not Mary, the mother of Jesus, but the messianic community, the ideal Israel."[40]

The majority of the biblical scholars that are consulted above would be cautious, if not at all, to identify the woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the exemption of Koester. But another group of biblical scholars and theologians would argue on the contrary. According to Mitch Pacwa, Protestant commentators would immediately identify the woman as the nation of Israel or the Church. But for him, this interpretation is quite problematic, first because "the Church did not give birth to Christ; he brought the Church into existence"[41] (without a doubt, the male child in Rev. 12 is being identified as the Messiah/Christ).[42] Second, "a nation does not get pregnant with a child; an individual woman does. Understanding the woman as a collective is therefore problematic, though she

[36]Collins "Revelation," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 1873.

[37]See Wilfrid J. Harrington, O.P., *Revelation (*Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 130.

[38]Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 119.

[39]Faley, *Apocalypse Then and Now,* 108.

[40]Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 236.

[41]Mitch Pacwa, S.J., *Mary: Virgin, Mother and Queen, A Bible Study Guide for Catholics* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2014), 141.

[42]See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation,* 238. See also Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 121. See also Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen,* 56.

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can easily be a symbol of both the Church and Israel."[43] Both Mounce and Thomas would easily identify the woman giving birth to the messianic child as Israel but never as Mary.[44] This is quite inconsistent as pointed out by Pacwa, since a nation does not give birth to an individual child, but an individual mother does. Giving birth to a child is more applicable to an individual woman than to a nation. A child only becomes a son or daughter of a nation if and only if he/she was born of an individual woman.

Furthermore, Scott Hahn argues that the woman can be identified as Mary by examining the other important figures in Rev. 12, the male child and the dragon. No doubt, the male child in the vision is a single individual. "John tells us the child 'is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron,' and this is a reference to Psalm 2:9, which describes the messianic king promised by God. John also adds that this child 'was caught up to God and to His throne,' which can only refer to Jesus, who ascended into heaven."[45] Hahn also explains that the dragon is not only "an allegory but a specific person"[46] and that is the Devil or Satan (Rev. 12:9).[47]

The symbolism of the seven heads and the ten horns of the great dragon refers to individuals that tried to hinder the restoration and re-establishment of the Davidic Kingdom by Jesus. The seven heads refer to the seven Herods who ruled in the line of the founding father Antipater, and the ten horns refer to the

[43]Pacwa, S.J., *Mary: Virgin, Mother and Queen,* 141.

[44]See Mounce, *The Book of Revelation,* 238. See also Thomas, *Revelation 8-22,* 121.

[45]Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen,* 56.

[46]Ibid.

[47]See Edward Sri, *Rethinking Mary in the New Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 198.

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ten Caesars in Rome's imperial line from Julius to Vespasian.[48] In other words, Satan was trying to undermine God's kingdom through the help and cooperation of certain individuals in history. Now, if the two figures, the male child and the dragon, are referred to as individuals, then it is consistent to argue that the woman is also an individual. Edward Sri has the same argument, "If the child and the dragon are individuals, then the woman should be seen, at least at some level, as an individual as well."[49] Juan Luis Bastero also made the same point, "Now, if Satan and the Messiah are historical, we should also hold as equally historical the other personages involved in the struggle - the Woman, Michael and his angels, and the devil's followers. Therefore, the woman is no mere symbol, is not just a piece of imagery, but is a real person - the Mother of the Messiah, that is, Mary."[50]

Now, the important questions that need to be answered are these: Which interpretation is plausibly correct and acceptable? Is it the interpretation that solely identifies the woman as Israel or the Church? Or the interpretation that identifies the woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus? Rene Laurentin, one of the great Mariologists of the 20th century, admits that Rev. 12 is quite an obscure passage since St. John's prophetic style mingles events and perspectives.[51] However, he argues that there is no such conflict between the interpretation that favors the woman's identity as the Church or Israel (collective) or the one that identifies her as Mary (individual). He says, "The

[48]Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen,* 57-58.

[49]Sri, *Rethinking Mary,* 199.

[50]Juan Luis Bastero, *Mary, Mother of the Redeemer: A Mariology Textbook*, trans. by Michael Adams and Philip Griffin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 152.

[51]See Rene Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven: A Short Treatise on Marian Theology*, trans. from the French by Gordon Smith (Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1956) 34.

twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse has Mary in view *primarily*, but *also* the Church. John has chosen to describe the one in terms appropriate to the other. It is a regular procedure of his, and he uses it to indicate a typological relation between two realities. (Compare, for instance, the discourse on the *bread of heaven*, which is at once manna, faith, and the sacrament of the Eucharist)."[52] Hugo Rahner is in agreement with Laurentin in this perspective, "This vision represented Mary, Christ's Mother, who at the foot of the cross had been entrusted to the Seer of Patmos, but only in so far as she is at the same time a symbol of the Church and the Church's fate that is both earthly and heavenly."[53]

Furthermore, Lucien Deiss, being of the same line of thought as that of Rahner and Laurentin, explains that exclusively identifying the woman solely as Mary or as the Church/Israel is to do great harm to the text. Both collective and individual identification of the woman are advantageous exegeses of the text. An interpretation that exclusively favors one and rejects the other "fragments the unity of the 'sign in heaven'... The problem of 'Mary or the Church' is a false issue; as we know, every false issue remains unresolved. We must isolate a single reality that embraces the entire ensemble of truths relating both to Mary and to the Church, a reality that can explain how the Woman is crowned with stars and clothed with the sun, cries out in the anguish of her delivery, and gives birth to the individual Messias, while yet remaining the mother of the rest of the offspring and, finally, passing a period of time in the wilderness."[54] Both the collective (Church) and individual

[52]Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven,* 34-35.

[53]Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Our Lady and the Church*, trans. Sebastian Bullough, O.P. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), 104.

[54]Lucien Deiss, C.S.Sp., *Mary, Daughter of Sion*, trans. Barbara T. Blair (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1972), 138-139.

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(Mary) identification of the woman[55] attest to the depth and inexhaustible riches of the book of Revelation. The proper way to interpret the text is not by means of an *either /or* (*aut/aut*), but by a *both/and* (*et/et*) position, which is more in line with a Catholic perspective of interpreting the biblical text.

In a discussion between Catholic and Protestant scholars led by Joseph A. Fitzmyer on *the Woman in Revelation 12*, what was pointed out was the fact that the reference to Mary as the woman of Revelation remains possible but uncertain, so far as the intention of the seer of Patmos himself is concerned. They further argued that it is unavoidable to lend a Marian interpretation to the said biblical passage because the woman in the vision is presented as the mother of the Messiah.[56] They concluded their discussion by saying, "When Revelation was placed in the same canon of Scripture with the Gospel of Luke and the Fourth Gospel, the various images of the virgin, the woman at the cross, and the woman who gave birth to the Messiah would reinforce each other."[57] Therefore, the final canon of the sacred text and the essential connection of the biblical passages to each other due to the fact that the Bible now is a *one book,* are indispensable and essential principles to consider in doing exegesis, either the biblical text to be interpreted is of a Marian import or not.

Another important issue that has to be addressed in this study after establishing the biblical soundness and plausibility of the interpretation of identifying the woman of Rev. 12 as

[55]See Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 66-67.

[56]See Robert E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and John Reumann, eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 219-239.

[57]Ibid., 239.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is to examine whether the Ark of Rev. 11:19 and the Woman (Mary) of Rev. 12:1ff. are of the same identity. Alternatively, to express it more precisely in question form: "Is the Woman/Mary the Ark of the Covenant in the heavenly Temple?"

The essential connection or link between the Ark in 11:19 and the woman of 12:1ff is quite well established above, especially by considering the Greek word for "appeared" *ophthe* as noted by Koester and Thomas. Andre Feuillet explains further that the formula "and there appeared" (*kai ophthe*) is found only three times in the book of Revelation, and all three instances are here in 11:19, 12:1, and 12:3. "Now it is difficult to dissociate the first 'and there appeared' from the others. The two apparitions of the Ark of the Covenant and the Woman are seen as directly linked."[58] According to Brant Pitre, "Although Revelation does not explicitly refer to Mary as the true Ark, the fact that it describes the Ark and the woman so close to one another is remarkable... The woman is in the same place the true Ark is - the heavenly Holy of Holies."[59]

A counterargument might say that the woman being in the same place the Ark does not establish clearly that the woman is truly the Ark. But to such protest, Pitre has a further argument, that is the use of dual symbols of St. John in his writings as already mentioned above by Laurentin. "The woman and the Ark are *dual symbols* for the same person. This makes sense given John's love for dual symbols: just as the 'dragon' and the 'serpent' are dual symbols for 'the Devil' (Rev. 12:3, 9), and the 'male child' and 'the Lamb' are dual symbols for Christ (Rev. 12:5, 11), so the 'Ark' and the 'woman' are dual symbols for

[58]Andre Feuillet, *Jesus and His Mother: The Role of the Virgin Mary in Salvation History and the Place of Woman in the Church*, trans. Leonard Maluf (Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1984), 23.

[59]Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary,* 62.

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Mary, the mother of the Messiah (Rev. 11:19, 12:1)".[60] He also employs the use of dual symbols in his Gospel. A good example of this is John 10:7, 14 wherein the symbol of the "door of the sheep" and the "Good Shepherd" are both applied to the person of Christ.

The identity of Mary as the new Ark is further supported by comparing the contents of the Ark in the Old Testament and the person of Jesus in the New Testament. This is the argument presented by Scott Hahn,[61] Edward Sri,[62] Tim Gray[63] and Brant Pitre. Below is the table of comparison between the O.T. Ark and Mary, the N.T. Ark as presented by Pitre in his book *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*[64]:

The Ark of the Covenant	Mary, the New Ark
1. Ten Commandments	1. "Word" made "Flesh"
2. Golden Urn of Manna	2. "Bread of Life" from Heaven
3. Staff of Aaron that Budded (Hebrews 9:4)	3. Heavenly "High Priest" (John 1:14; 6:53-58)

Supporting Parallel Biblical Accounts

The *Canonical Criticism* of the Scripture is a way of interpreting the sacred text that focuses on the biblical canon itself as a finished product. This is an approach popularized by Brevard Childs.[65] It interprets a certain biblical text in the context of

[60]Ibid., 62.

[61]See Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen,* 60-61.

[62]See Sri, *Rethinking Mary,* 84-85.

[63]See Gray, "Mary, the God-Bearing Ark," *Scripture and the Mystery,* 61.

[64]Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary,* 64.

[65]See Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 82-83.

the complete biblical canon. In other words, in this kind of criticism, a text must never be isolated from the other text of the Scripture. "The interpreter is forced to confront the authoritative text of scripture in a continuing theological reflection."[66] In this line of thought, the author would like to situate Rev. 11:19-12:6. What other biblical texts aside from Rev. 11:19-12:6 support the doctrine of Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant? Since both Testaments Old and New are connected to each other, and no text must be interpreted in isolation, then it is simply reasonable to consider also these texts, affirming the unity of the Bible in its final form as the Christian community has it today.

For the sake of this study, three biblical passages, the two from the O.T. (Ex. 40:34-35; 2 Sam. 6:2-16) and one from the N.T. (Lk. 1:35; 39-56), would be compared through text parallelism in order to support the plausibility and soundness of seeing and interpreting Rev. 11:19-12:6 as a suitable biblical reference for the doctrine of Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant. The first text parallelism below is the author's extended version of the one found in Brant Pitre's book *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*,[67] and the second is taken entirely from Tim Gray's article, *Mary the God-bearing Ark*.[68]

[66]Ibid., 83.

[67]See Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary,* 58.

[68]Gray, "Mary, the God-Bearing Ark," S*cripture and the Mystery,* 62. See also Sri, *Rethinking Mary,* 89.

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Exodus 40:34-35 and Luke 1:35 (Text Parallelism)

Exodus 40:34-35	Luke 1:35
Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (v. 34).	
Καὶ ἐκάλυψεν ἡ νεφέλη τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου, καὶ δόξης κυρίου ἐπλήσθη ἡ σκηνή·[69]	
And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud **abode** upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (v. 35).	The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.
καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνάσθη Μωυσῆς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ μαρτυρίου, ὅτι **ἐπεσκίαζεν** ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν ἡ νεφέλη καὶ δόξης κυρίου ἐπλήσθη ἡ σκηνή.[70]	πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου **ἐπισκιάσει** σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ.[71]

Pitre makes an important observation by comparing the Greek version of Exodus and the original Koine Greek of Luke 1:35.[72] It is narrated in Exodus 40:34-35 that the cloud of presence *covered* or *overshadowed* the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. This is quite significant because it was in the tabernacle that the Ark of the Covenant

[69]"Septuaginta (LXX)," accessed November 19, 2022, https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/septuagint-lxx/.

[70]Ibid.

[71]"Novum Testamentum Graece," accessed November 19, 2022, https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/novum-testamentum-graece-na-28/.

[72]See Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary,* 58.

was placed, making it the most significant and holiest tent of the Israelites. Later, during the time of King Solomon, after the construction and dedication of the Jerusalem Temple, the same cloud would overshadow, and the same glory of God would fill the house of the Lord where the Ark was enshrined (1 Kings 8:10-11). In the Septuagint or Greek version of Exodus, the word used for *"overshadow"* is *episkiazo*, and this same Greek word will be used by St. Luke for the overshadowing of Mary by the Most High in 1:35. As the Ark in the Old Testament was *overshadowed* by the cloud of presence and *filled* by the glory of God, so it is of Mary, the new Ark in the New Testament. In Mary's womb, it is not simply the staff of Aaron that symbolizes the Priesthood, the urn of the heavenly bread, and the tablets of the Decalogue that are contained, but the great High Priest, the definitive Bread from Heaven and the Law or the Word himself, Jesus Christ.

2 Samuel 6:2-16 and Luke 1:39-56 (Text Parallelism)

2 Samuel 6:2-16	Luke 1:39-56
David arose and went back to Judah (v. 2)	Mary arose and went to the hill country of Judah (v. 39)
How can the ark of the Lord come to me (v. 9)	And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (v. 43)
House of Obed-edom (v. 10)	House of Zechariah (v. 40)
Ark there for three months (v. 11)	Mary stays three months with Elizabeth (v. 56)
David rejoices (v. 12)	Mary's spirit rejoices (v. 47)
Shouting (v. 15)	Loud cry (v. 42)
Leaping and dancing (v. 16)	The babe leaps in Elizabeth's womb (v. 41)

The above several striking parallels emerge when St. Luke's account of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth is read in

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light of the Old Testament story of David bringing of the Ark of Covenant up to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel.[73] One can conclude that when St. Luke wrote the account of Mary's visitation to Elizabeth, he had this passage from 2 Samuel in mind, presenting Mary as the new Ark in a highly subtle and complex way. When Rev. 11:19-12:6 is read in consonance with these other biblical passages, one can immediately see the inner connection of the biblical texts to each other and how passages from other books of the Bible can further elucidate the meaning of a certain biblical text.

Supporting Commentaries of the Church Fathers and the CCC

Church Fathers

The Fathers of the Church were the earliest commentators of the Scripture and witnesses of the living Tradition of the Church. They are a group of men who lived from the later part of the 1st century to the 8th century and were known for their holiness, orthodoxy, and pastoral charity. For the purpose of this study, the writings of the following Church Fathers, namely, Sts. Hippolytus of Rome, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, Athanasius of Alexandria, Jerome, and John Damascene - on the doctrine of Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant would be presented. This is quite important since these writings were interpretations of the sacred text. The teachings of the Fathers were entirely based on their meditation and studies of the Scripture and in their faithful adherence to the living Tradition of the Church.

St. Hippolytus of Rome, who lived from 170 to 236 AD, has this teaching about Mary as the new Ark:

[73]See Ibid., 57.

At that time, the Savior coming from **the Virgin, the Ark, brought forth His own Body into the world from that Ark**, which was gilded with pure gold within by the Word, and without by the Holy Ghost; so that the truth was shown forth, and the Ark was manifested... And the Savior came into the world bearing the incorruptible Ark, that is to say, His own body" (S. Hippolytus, *In Dan.vi., Patr. Gr., Tom. 10,* p. 648).[74]

Here, St. Hippolytus described Mary as the Ark that brought forth the Savior into the world. The above quotation is quite important since it is one of the patristic writings from the 3rd century referring to Mary as the Ark. In other words, as early as that period, the Christian community had already venerated Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant, as attested in the writings of St. Hippolytus.

St. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem who lived from 316 to 386 AD and who is famous for his catechetical instructions, speaks of Mary as the new Ark in this way:

> We shall see that it is in **the temple of the Virgin, as in an ark that the Word of God took up His abode.** For in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, as the Scripture saith. But the testimonies in the ark were the word of God, and the wood of it was imperishable, and with pure and choicest gold was it beautified within and without" (St. Cyril, *De ador. In Spir. Et Verit,* p. 293).[75]

In this passage, Mary is not simply being referred to as the Ark but also as the Temple where the Word of God made his dwelling. Both the Temple and Ark in Old Testament are seen by St. Cyril as types of Mary.

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[74]"Church Fathers on Mary as Ark of the New Covenant," *Catholic Fidelity*, accessed November 14, 2022, https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/mary/church-fathers-on-mary-as-ark-of-the-new-covenant/.

[75]Ibid.

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St. Ambrose, who lived from 339 to 397 AD, the great bishop of Milan and at the same time the famous mentor and baptizer of St. Augustine of Hippo, has this to say about Mary as the new Ark:

> The prophet David danced before the Ark. **Now what else should we say the Ark was but holy Mary?** The Ark bore within it the tables of the Testament, but Mary bore the Heir of the same Testament itself. The former contained in it the Law, the latter the Gospel. The one had the voice of God, the other His Word. The Ark, indeed, was radiant within and without with the glitter of gold, but holy Mary shone within and without with the splendor of virginity. The one was adorned with earthly gold, the other with heavenly (*Serm. xlii. 6, Int. Opp., S. Ambrosii*).[76]

In this commentary, St. Ambrose compared the contents of the Ark in the Old Testament and the One who was in the womb of Mary to elucidate the point that Mary is truly the new Ark that far surpassed the glory of the former one. In the Ark of the O.T., what was contained was the tablets of the Decalogue, but in the N.T., the Author himself of the Commandments, the Law, or the Word in Person is now the one contained in the womb of the Virgin.

St. Athanasius, who lived from 296 to 373 AD, the great champion of the First Council of Nicaea, the "hammer of heretics" composed this prayer addressed to the Mother of God:

> Be mindful of us, most holy virgin, who after childbirth didst remain virgin; and grant to us for these small words great gifts from the riches of thy graces, O thou full of grace. Accept them as though they were true and adequate praises in thy honor; and if there is in them any virtue and any praise, we offer them as a hymn from ourselves and from all creatures to thee, full of grace, Lady, Queen, Mistress, Mother of God, and **Ark of**

[76]Ibid.

> **sanctification** (*Orat. In Deip. Annuntiat, nn. 13, 14. Int. Opp. S. Athanasii*).[77]

In this prayer, St. Athanasius addressed Mary as the Ark of Sanctification. And in another writing, he would describe her in this way:

> O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all **O (Ark of the) Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which Divinity resides** (*Homily of the Papyrus of Turin*).[78]

St. Jerome (345-420 AD), the greatest biblical scholar of the nascent Church period, the one who translated the majority of the books of the Bible to Latin from its original languages, described Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant in one of his letters:

> Behold one in truth, the handmaid of the Lord. Holy she is, in whom is no guile, all simplicity....**The spouse of Christ is the ark of the covenant, within and without overlaid with gold, a keeper of the law of the Lord.** As in the ark there was nothing but the tables of the Testament, so too in thee no one from outside should be thought of. Over this propitiatory, as though upon the Cherubim, the Lord is pleased to sit....The Apostle thus defines a virgin, that she should be holy in body and in spirit..." (*Epist. Xxii., Ad Eustoch. Nn. 18, 19, 21, 24*).[79]

St. John Damascene (675-749 AD), who is considered as the last Father from the East, commented on Revelation 19:11 in

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[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid.

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one of his famous homilies, identifying the heavenly Ark as Mary:

> Today the holy **Virgin of Virgins** is presented in the heavenly temple.... Today **the sacred and living Ark of the living God [the Ark], who conceived her Creator himself,** takes up her abode in the temple of God, not made by human hands.[80]

The above quotations from the six Church Fathers are far from being exhaustive, but they are enough to prove how the nascent Church saw Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant. It only means to say that this doctrine is not a recent modern invention but a very ancient teaching that the Church continues to uphold. It even entered into the popular piety of the faithful. This is evident in the famous Marian Litany of Loreto wherein one of the titles given to Mary is *Foederis Arca* (Ark of the Covenant).[81]

Catechism of the Catholic Church

After examining some of the writings of the Church Fathers, the author turns now his attention to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[82] in order to see how this catechetical document presented Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant. The passage of concern for this part of the study is the *Catechism's* explanation of one of the lines of the most popular Marian prayer in Catholic tradition, *Ave Maria*:

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[80]John Damascene, *Homily II on the Dormition*, 2, PG 96, 723 as quoted by Benedict XVI in his *Homily on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Homilies, accessed November 14, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011.

[81]See Benedict XVI, *Homily on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Homilies, accessed November 14, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011.

[82] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1993).

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> *Full of grace, the Lord is with thee*: These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice... O Daughter of Jerusalem... the Lord your God is in your midst" (Zeph 3:14, 17a). **Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells.** She is "the dwelling of God... with men" (Rev 21:3). Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to him who has come to dwell in her and whom she is about to give to the world [emphasis added].[83]

In this paragraph, the *Catechism* describes Mary as "daughter of Zion in person" and the "Ark of the Covenant." These are both indispensable and interesting descriptions since the *Ark* (Exodus 25:10-22) and the *daughter of Zion* (2 Kings 19:21; Psalm 9:14; Isaiah 52:2) are both taken from the Old Testament, but now the *Catechism* applies them to Mary. The first thing to consider is the phrase *daughter of Zion.* According to Haffner, "In the Old Testament, Sion or Jerusalem is depicted as Spouse and Daughter, Virgin and Mother as is Mary in the New. Daughter Sion is the Spouse of Yahweh, Mother of the People of God (Mother Sion), the Virgin Israel."[84] Israel, the community of believers in the Old Covenant, was depicted as the daughter and spouse of Yahweh. One can immediately recall the imagery of husband and wife, of bridegroom and bride that can be found in the prophetic writings: God as the husband and Israel as his wife (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2:1-20). This depiction of Israel is now perfectly personified in the person of Mary. God in the Old Testament did everything to make Israel, that is Daughter/Mother Zion to be his perfect spouse, but the infidelities of the Israelites made this impossible and yet the hope of reaching

[83]*CCC* no. 2676.

[84]Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary,* 28.

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this perfection was never abandoned in salvation history. Now, in the person of Mary, the figure of Daughter/Mother Zion finds its fulfillment and perfection. Here is the perfect daughter of God, the Father, and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit. Both the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Israel, the Church, are now exemplified in the person of Mary. This thought is critical since it is in consonance with the interpretation above that the *Woman* of Revelation refers both to Mary and to the Church, the new Israel.

The second important thing to consider is the *Catechism's* depiction of *Mary* as *the Ark of the Covenant*. Mary as the Ark is justified by the *Catechism* by stating that she is *"the place where the glory of God dwells"* and by quoting Rev 21:3 and applying this passage to the person of Mary. "For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the *dwelling place* where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men."[85] Reading between the lines, the *Catechism* presents Mary as the Ark of the Covenant because what was prefigured by what was inside of the Ark in the Old Testament is now perfectly fulfilled in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, born of the Virgin Mary.

By applying the title of *daughter of Zion* and the *Ark of the Covenant* to Mary, the *Catechism* confirms the interpretation in this study that both the collective identification (Church) and the personal identification (Mary) of the *Woman* of Revelation 12 is correct and plausible. There is no conflict between the ecclesiological and mariological interpretation of the said text because Mary is the perfect personification of the Church and at the same time, the exemplary member of the Church.[86]

[85]*CCC* no. 721.

[86]See Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, accessed November 14, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/, nos. 60-65.

"Everything said about the *ecclesia* in the Bible is true of her, and vice versa: the Church learns concretely what she is and is meant to be by looking at Mary."[87]

Supporting Commentaries by Two Contemporary Theologians

It is without a doubt that Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI (1927-2023) and Bishop Robert Barron (1959-present) are two of the most brilliant and compelling Catholic theologians of this contemporary period. Ratzinger was one of the *periti* (theological experts) of the Second Vatican Council that made significant reforms for the universal Church from the middle of the 20th century to the present times. He is the only *peritus* of Vatican II who is still alive. The others like Karl Rahner, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, and Louis Bouyer died many years ago since they were far older than Ratzinger. He is an expert in Dogma and Fundamental Theology, but his works reveal that his dogmatic and fundamental theology are highly based on a careful exegesis of the Scripture. Scott Hahn made a significant study of his writings reveal a well-developed biblical theology based on a careful and critical exegesis of the biblical texts.[88]

Robert Barron, at present, is the bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester[89] and the founder of the Word on Fire Ministry. An alumnus of both the Catholic University of America and *Institut Catholique de Paris*. Barron is one of the

[87]Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar. *Mary the Church at the Source*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 66.

[88]See Scott Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Michigan: Baker Brazos Press, 2009).

[89]"Bishop Barron to lead Diocese of Winona-Rochester," *La Crosse Tribune*, accessed November 18, 2022, https://lacrossetribune.com/winona/news/local/bishop-barron-to-lead-diocese-of-winona-rochester/.

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most popular religious figures in the Internet, famous for his theological commentaries on Church doctrine, biblical commentaries on liturgical readings, and his rational and compelling engagement with the popular culture expressed in commentaries on political events and current movies. Though an expert in Thomistic theology and philosophy, Barron has written numerous studies and commentaries on the Scripture. He is known for writing a theological commentary on 2 Samuel[90] and for his initiative of creating the *Word on Fire Bible*, a biblical commentary that does not only use commentaries from the Church Fathers, saints, exegetes, and theologians, but also works of art such as pictures of paintings and statues that would help better elucidate the meaning of the biblical texts. At the moment, the Word on Fire Bible Project has produced two volumes, first, on the Gospels[91] and second, on the Acts of the Apostles to the book of Revelation.[92]

In this part of the study, the author would like to examine the commentaries of these two theologians on Revelation 11:19-12:6 found in their theological writings.

Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

During the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 2011, Benedict XVI in his homily commented on the first reading of the said liturgical celebration and fortunately, it is the passage of concern of this study, Revelation 11:19-12:6. It is noteworthy to emphasize that in this homily,

[90]See Robert Barron, *2 Samuel (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible)* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2015).

[91]See *The Word on Fire Bible*. Vol. 1, The Gospels (Park Ridge: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2020).

[92]See *The Word on Fire Bible,* Vol. 2, Acts, Letters and Revelation (Park Ridge: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2022).

he identified the Ark of Rev. 11:19 and the Woman of Rev. 12:1 as Mary, the Mother of God:

What is the meaning of the ark? What appears? For the Old Testament, it is the symbol of God's presence in the midst of his people. However, the symbol has given way to reality. Thus the New Testament tells us that the true ark of the covenant is a living, real person: it is the Virgin Mary. God does not dwell in a piece of furniture, he dwells in a person, in a heart: Mary, the One who carried in her womb the eternal Son of God made man, Jesus our Lord and Savior."[93]

In this commentary, Benedict XVI, in his usual profound theological and catechetical homiletic style, is in agreement with the findings of this study as presented in part 3. He identified the Ark of Rev. 11:19 as Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Woman of Revelation. He pointed out, like many of the Church Fathers, that the Ark of the Old Testament was a type of the definitive and new Ark, that God does not so much dwell in a piece of furniture but on a living person. This contrast between the Ark of the Old and that of the New Covenant is highly significant since it only shows that the Old Covenant is not abolished but perfected in the New. In the person of Mary, the Ark of Old has its definitive fulfillment as God's dwelling place among his people. He further said in his homily that the Christian should be like Mary, that in his "modest way," he is "an 'ark' in which the Word of God is present, transformed and quickened by his presence, a place of the presence of God, so that men and women may find God's closeness in the other person, and thus live in communion with God and know the reality of Heaven."[94]

[93]Benedict XVI, *Homily on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

[94]Ibid.

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He further explained why Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant in this way:

> Mary is the Ark of the Covenant because she welcomed Jesus within her; she welcomed within her the living Word, the whole content of God's will, of God's truth; she welcomed within her the One who is the new and eternal Covenant, which culminated in the offering of his Body and his Blood: a body and blood received through Mary...
>
> The passage from the Book of Revelation also indicates another important aspect of Mary's reality. As the living Ark of the Covenant, she has an extraordinary destiny of glory because she is so closely united to the Son whom she welcomed in faith and generated in the flesh, as to share fully in his glory in Heaven.[95]

The use of Rev. 11:19-12:6 as the first reading of the Solemnity of the Assumption is an indication on how the Church understands and interprets this biblical passage. If the Church does not consider it as a passage of a Mariological import, surely it will not be used in one of her most important liturgical celebrations. One has only to remember that whatever is in the liturgy either words, gestures, or symbols, are there in order to express the faith of the Church. This is encapsulated in one of the ancient ecclesiastical axioms written by Prosper of Aquitaine: "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*" (The law of prayer is the law of faith).[96] Furthermore, the homily of the Pope is always an exercise of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church. The authentic interpretation of the sacred text is a task given by God to the Church, especially to the Pope and the bishops, the successors of the apostles.[97] In other words, Benedict XVI's

[95]Ibid.

[96]See *CCC* no. 1124.

[97]See Ibid. no. 85.

interpretation of Rev. 11:19-12:6 has a significant influence on how this passage must be understood by the faithful.

Robert Barron

In the *Word on Fire Bible,* vol. 2, Robert Barron commented on Rev. 11:19-12:1, and it is good to quote his whole commentary in order to show how his biblical interpretation is in line with the findings so far presented in this study:

> In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, John sees a vision of a woman clothed in the sun, with a crown of twelve stars upon her head and the moon at her feet. And at the very end of the eleventh chapter, we hear that John looks into the heavenly temple and sees the ark of the covenant. Keep in mind that the division of this text into chapters came much later, so these two scenes are, in fact, tightly associated.
>
> The ark, of course, was the most sacred object for ancient Israel, since it contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments (see Deut. 10:2). David danced before the ark as it was brought into his capital city of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:14), and frequently, this sacred object accompanied Israel when the nation went into battle (see 1 Sam. 4:3). And so it is easy enough to see the reason behind the juxtaposition of John's two visions, for Mary the Mother of God, in whose womb the Word of God was pleased to dwell, is herself the definitive Ark of the Covenant, the bearer of the divine presence. This is why the infant John the Baptist, still in his mother's womb, performed a David-like dance before the true ark, leaping for joy when Mary greeted Elizabeth (Luke 1:41).[98]

This commentary of Barron shows his agreement with the interpretations of Hahn, Pitre, Sri, Gray, and Pope Emeritus

[98]Robert Barron, "Mary the New Ark," *The Word on Fire Bible*. Vol. 2, Acts, Letters and Revelation (Park Ridge: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2022), 770-771.

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Benedict XVI. In a two-paragraph commentary, Barron was able to encapsulate in a compelling manner the arguments for Rev. 11:19-12:1 as a biblical reference for Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant.

Conclusion

This study has presented the historical background of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament and the biblical arguments and interpretations, both affirmative and negative on Rev. 11:19-12:6 as a biblical reference for the Marian doctrine of Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant. The author also included parallel biblical passages, commentaries of the Church Fathers, the teaching of the Catechism, and the biblical commentaries of Benedict XVI and Robert Barron to elucidate further the main argument of this study. Hopefully, the things presented above will help readers understand why Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant and will aid in the increase of their faith in Christ and in their love and devotion to the Blessed Mother. This study is far from comprehensive and exhaustive; however, the author has tried his best to collect the necessary materials to present a compelling research worthy of giving honor to the Mother of God.

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