

MARY'S CHARISMA

BIBLICAL FULFILLMENT, ROLE ORDAINED

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INTRODUCTION

Mary, the mother of Jesus, occupies a singular role in Christian Theology; she gave birth to the Messiah and was present at the beginning of the Christian Church, Pentecost. In both of these moments, foundational to Christianity, the Bible records the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. In ecumenical dialogue, the Biblical significance of this Spiritual endowment is often overlooked. In the account of the Virgin Birth (Matthew 1: 18, 20; Luke 1:35) we read how the Holy Spirit came upon Mary. In the Pentecost account (Acts 2: 1-13) we read how the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary and the Apostles. The Holy Spirit coming upon significant figures in Salvation History has a long and rich tradition in Scripture.¹ Spiritual endowment, the bestowal of the Spirit, is at the core of the meaning of the term, "Charismatic Leader".

Background of the Theological designation, "Charismatic leader"

The term "Charismatic Leader" was formed and popularized by noted sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920). He writes of "Charismatic Leadership" in several places, but the following is, perhaps, his most concise definition.

"The term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them, the individual concerned is treated as a leader. . . ."²

Weber continues to explain the claim or responsibility that is entailed in such an endowment.

"It is the recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of Charisma. This is freely given and guaranteed by what is held to be a 'sign' or

¹ For the purposes of this study, the Spirit of the Lord (OT) will be treated as the Biblical precursor to the Holy Spirit, or Paraclete, (NT). To make a distinction, if any exists at all, between these two Biblical forces would take us far afield from our present work.

² M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, T. Parsons, ed. (NY: Free Press, 1947), 358.

proof, originally always a miracle, and consists in devotion to the corresponding revelation, hero worship, or absolute trust in the leader. But where Charisma is genuine, it is not this which is the basis of the claim to legitimacy. This basis lies rather in the conception that is the *duty* of those who have been called to a charismatic mission to recognize its quality and to act accordingly.”³

Therefore, Weber argues that “Charisma” is an endowment whose validity rests on the extraordinary nature of the deeds of the recipient and the assent of those who bear witness to the results. This term, though anachronistic, has been effectively appropriated by Biblical scholars in studying the accounts of those who received the Divine Spirit.

Charisma in the Old Testament

The Old Testament contains many accounts of the great leaders who led Israel. However, the term “Charismatic Leader” is reserved for a select group of people. These are people who were endowed with or had the “Spirit of the Lord”, also known as the “YHWH Spirit”, come down or rush upon them. Charisma was the dominant form of leadership in the period of the Judges, Saul, and David.

The YHWH Spirit comes down upon Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (Judges 13:25, 14:6, 19, 15:14). Saul is depicted as a Charismatic Leader, though not quite of the same type as the Judges. (1 Samuel 11:6). The nature of the Charisma will change with David, in that his Charisma is permanent (1 Samuel 16:13). The period of the Judges constitutes the closest thing to a “Heroic Age” that Israel ever experienced. It reflects an era of settlement in Israelite history, before the establishment of the Monarchy and extensive writing. For this reason, many scholars dismiss the Judges’ accounts as being of low historical value and quality. However, in the stories of these great heroes, the YHWH Spirit is a dominant factor. As J.L. McKenzie states; “The heroes of Israel are . . . simple peasants. They are not heroes and warriors by profession; they become heroes because the Spirit of YHWH seizes them”.⁴ In the original stories and the later redactions, YHWH raises up saviors by conferring the Spirit to preserve His people and the land. The Spirit, according to McKenzie, moves these men to deeds above and beyond their normal capacities, powers, and attainments. It is a Divine impulse that is unpredictable and uncontrollable. McKenzie continues:

“The Spirit becomes the moving force of history in the stories of the Judges. It plays the role here which the Word of YHWH assumes in the books of the Prophets and the history of the Monarchy. . . The Charisma comes to equip them for their mission of deliverance and then leaves them. The concept of the Charismatic Leader becomes highly important in subsequent development of Israelite belief, for the King is the one upon whom the Spirit rests permanently, and the King in turn is the type of the Messiah. Thus the power of YHWH to save is affirmed in the stories of the Judges.”⁵

McKenzie turns his attention to Samson. He writes;

³ Ibid., 359.

⁴ J.L. McKenzie, *The World of the Judges* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 11.

⁵ Ibid., 16-17

“Samson in the list of Judges. . . clarifies the Israelite idea of the Charismatic hero. The hero as such is morally neutral: he is neither good nor bad, he is neither better nor worse than other men. He is simply the instrument through which YHWH works his deliverance. He need not be apt; YHWH does not have to seek aptness- He confers it. When the Spirit of YHWH moves, it makes the person apt to execute His will.”⁶

The Hebrew term for “Spirit” is *ruach*. The root of the Hebrew term, depending on its context, can connote “breath” “wind” or “spirit”.⁷ J.L. McKenzie states;

“The spirit in the OT, originally the wind and the breath, is conceived as a divine dynamic entity by which YHWH accomplishes His ends: it saves, it is a creative and charismatic power. . .”⁸

In the early period of Israelite history, the Spirit was seen as a gift that was given for the purpose of executing an extraordinary task. Significantly, the Spirit touches someone *without* human intervention and the person, in turn, inspires others and later generations. With David, the Spirit became tied to the Kingship and became static, or permanent. Later, this concept became tied to the Messianic King, whose actions were based on the authority of the Spirit which was bestowed on him.

Charisma in the New Testament

The Greek phrase for “Holy Spirit” is *hagios pneuma*. The usage of this term varies among the New Testament writers. However, in reference to Mary the usage seems to rest squarely on Old Testament concepts of the “Spirit of the Lord”, or Charisma.

The NT Concept of “Holy”

The Greek root of the word “holy” is *αγιος*. Originally, the word had cultic connotations and referred to “the qualities possessed by things and persons that could approach a divinity”. It often indicated a thing that was “dedicated to God, holy, sacred”. It refers to something worthy of God. When applied to persons, the connotation encompassed being “consecrated to God”.⁹

For our purposes, understanding the events around Mary, we must point out other connotations of “holy” or “holiness” found in the New Testament. The fundamental meaning, of both noun and adjective, is a “separation to God”. Furthermore, it is the resultant state of those being thus separated. Related to the concept of “sanctification”, the term connotes “the state predetermined by God for believers, into which in grace He calls them, and in which they begin their Christian course and so pursue it”. Moreover, the adjectival meaning connotes a

⁶ Ibid., 158. McKenzie is a strong detractor of Samson, as his words indicate. However, he is valuable to our study because of his extensive writing and understanding of OT Charisma.

⁷ The three meanings are intricately related; wind is the breath of God, God breathed life into man, and human breath is seen as an indication of human energy (cf. Judges 15:19) and the Spirit is an indication of Divine activity. Often, as we will see, breath and wind are indications of the presence of the Spirit.

⁸ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Chicago: Bruce, 1966), 841.

⁹ W. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, “*ἅγιος*”, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 9.

“separation from sin”. The adjective is used of both persons and things, in that they are dedicated to God. The term, used as an adjective, is seen as a “quality, as attributed to God, [and] is often presented in a way which involves divine demands upon the conduct of believers.”¹⁰

Overall, the Greek term, “holy”, can be understood as an attribute of something of God, such the Holy Spirit, or a quality given to a person or thing. As in the Old Testament, this connection with the Divine demands a response and actions in accord with the will and purpose of God. However, the New Testament builds upon the Old Testament understanding in that this quality is not transient, but a permanent quality. It sanctifies the person and separates them from sin. This concept, echoing the Holy Warrior ideal in Ancient Israel, seems to indicate a type preparation for the life journey ahead.¹¹ The quality becomes part of the fabric of one’s life and its influence is enduring.

The NT Concept of “Spirit”

The Greek term for “Spirit” is πνευμα. It closely corresponds to the Hebrew term for “Spirit”, רוּחַ. This term has a wide and varied semantic field. In a material sense it means “movement of air” or “wind, breath, life-spirit, soul” or that which gives life to the body. It can connote a spiritual state, state of mind, or disposition. The New Testament usage demarcates an extended range of meanings. While the term kept its physical connotations among Greek-speaking Gentiles, it was becoming an exclusively religious term among early Christians.¹² In a theological sense, when it is seen to have a heavenly origin it is called the “Holy Spirit”. The Spirit is that which differentiates God from all that is not of God. As a Divine power it is a creative force and is the “divine element in which all divine life is carried on, as the bearer of divine will.” The Holy Spirit manifests his presence, in those to whom he comes, in various ways. He inspires a righteous conduct and the proclamation of Divine Revelation.¹³

Due to the wide semantic field of the term, Greek and New Testament scholars have often argued that to obtain the true meaning of any occurrence the determination of the context of the occurrence must be determined. That the Holy Spirit came upon Mary establishes its own context. The bestowal of the Spirit invokes the images of the Charismatic Leaders throughout the history of Israel. Yet, there is a forward orientation of the endowment that is unique to Mary. The results of her spiritual endowments came to fruition in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus and the faith which generated the Christian church. The Mariological context of the Holy Spirit combines Biblical fulfillment and the establishment, or ordination, of a specific role.

¹⁰ W.E.Vine, “holiness, holy, holily”, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 308.

¹¹ A related term, *hagioi*, is often used for people who are considered “saints”. It seems to refer to each person’s conversion, repentance, or awakening of faith event.

¹² W.R. Schoemaker, *The Use of רוּחַ in the Old Testament and of πνευμα in the New Testament*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1904), 46.

¹³ Arndt/Gingrich, 674-677.

MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Matthew and Luke detail Mary's encounters with the HOLY SPIRIT. However, each Gospel writer presents the encounters in different ways. This will speak to the theology and purposes of each writer.

Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew makes two references to the Holy Spirit, 1:18 and 1:20. In both passages the Greek term, "εκ", meaning "from, out of, away from", is used to describe the event of Mary's pregnancy. This Greek term specifically indicates the nature of the event. It denotes separation or a severing of persons and things. More importantly, it denotes "origin, cause, motive, reason".¹⁴ Matthew, being acutely aware of the polytheistic religions of the Romans, would take great pains to avoid confusion with some of the mythic figures who were conceived by the copulation of gods and humans. Therefore, by using this term in conjunction with the reference to the Holy Spirit, Matthew is making a powerful statement that there is a Divine origin and purpose for this pregnancy. He is echoing the aspect of salvation, the power of YHWH to save, that was introduced by the Charismatic Judges and formulated in Isaiah 7:14, the Immanuel Prophecy. Matthew is joining this to the concept of separation that became intrinsic to the theology of the Holy Spirit. By building his narrative on the memory of the Charismatic Leaders, and beliefs in the Spirit, Matthew is also able to avoid using the personal name, YHWH.¹⁵

Matthew can also avoid any problematic images of conjugal relations. Matthew echoes the sanctification process of the Holy Warrior of ancient Israel, Matthew can speak of chastity as being part of the process in preparing for the Holy Child.¹⁶ Matthew also establishes a foundation for the theological concept of the perpetual virginity of Mary, as Mary has now been touched by the Holiness of God through His Spirit. Mary is now consecrated to God and her future actions and conduct will reveal this consecration.

Furthermore, Matthew is focusing on the, life changing, duties and responsibilities that attend to Spiritual endowment. He is aware of the Greek rendering of the term and is using it, effectively, in a Jewish context. In other words, he is imposing a Greek construct onto an Israelite/Jewish image. It is a masterful piece of writing that, although aimed at a Jewish audience, can have appeal to the Greek audience as well. Matthew is using a proper, or technical, Greek term to explain how the Virgin Birth of Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. One of the connotations of the term, according to many linguists, entails a sense of completion. The choice of the term was purposeful and is consistent with Matthew's overall writing and, specifically, with the Joseph-Mary narrative. Matthew was concerned with Jesus, and all things around Him, fulfilling Scripture. To this end, Matthew based his presentation on the Law and Prophecy. Therefore, we

¹⁴ Arndt, "εκ", 234.

¹⁵ Matthew would avoid this name because of the Jewish prohibitions about the Divine name and to avoid further confusion between YHWH and Zeus, as the Temple had been dedicated to the idol (2 Mc 6:2)

¹⁶ We see the abstinence from sex in the account of David and Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11).

can understand this Charismatic event as a fulfillment of the events typified in the period of the Judges.

Luke

Unlike Matthew, Luke was a Gentile writer and he wrote to a Gentile audience. Luke, would see the pagan threat to Christianity in a very different way than Matthew and his response, in the accounts surrounding the Virgin Birth, reveal a different way of dealing with the threat. Matthew linked the birth of Jesus to the authority of Scripture; the law and the Prophets. Luke chose a narrative response which evoked images of some of the great figures of the Old Testament. We would suggest that Luke chose this method because it was closer to the writings of the Greco-Roman world in which he, and his audience, lived. This, in stark contrast to the Matthean focus on Jewish Law and Prophets, would allow a universal appeal of Christianity. A universal message was at the core the Lukan theology.

Luke 1: 26-38

Before approaching the Spirit passages, we must look at the overall literary style in which Luke couches the story of the birth of Jesus. The style, or motif, is called the "Child of Promise" motif. This motif is common in the Old Testament, it seems to have been only used to speak of the birth of men vital to the plan of Salvation; Isaac (Genesis 18), Samson (Judges 13), arguably Samuel (1 Samuel 1) and John the Baptist (Luke 1). This motif employs four main characteristics. First, there is a childless couple or woman. Second, there is an announcement of the birth. Third, there is reference to the role which the boy will play in Salvation History. Fourth, there is a fulfillment of the announcement. The birth account of Samson is the fullest version of this motif in the OT. Mary completes this tradition. While not barren, Mary is a young girl and, therefore, childless. Mary finds favor with God, as did the women of antiquity, and receives the announcement. At the announcement, Mary clearly defines her virginity. The earlier women were seen as barren or, in the words of Luke the Physician, sterile. The earlier children were to help build the nation of Israel and prepare for the Kingdom of God. Mary's child will reign over Israel. Jesus is born, fulfilling the announcement. Shepherds, a universal symbol in antiquity, arrive to pay him homage.

Mary and Virgin Birth embody the "Child of Promise" motif. Mary gives the motif its fullest expression in Biblical narrative. Not only does she share the elements with the earlier women, her circumstance will surpass them all. By imposing this narrative construct on the traditions surrounding the birth of Jesus, Luke is accomplishing two tasks. He is explaining the birth in a format, or motif, with which the pagan peoples of the Roman Empire are comfortable. Also, he is connecting Jesus, literarily and theologically, to Scriptural traditions from the history of Israel. For Luke, Jesus is not only the Child of Promise given to Mary, but he is the one who was promised through the children of promise from of old.

Luke 1:35

Perhaps the key to understanding Luke's account of the Virgin Birth, this verse presents a couplet of thoughts. The Greek specifically states, "the Holy Spirit will come up upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

"THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UP UPON YOU"

The imagery of this passage rests squarely on the Charismatic Judges and Kings. The phrase "to come upon" is in every Spirit passage in the accounts of the Judges and Kings. In Hebrew some form of the term על or לא is used. The former term is the more common and does not, quite, carry the theological authority of the latter. This is why the latter term was used in reference to David (1Samuel 16:13), wherein we read that the Spirit came upon him *permanently*. It serves as a point of contrast to the transient endowments of the previous leaders.

The Greek term for "come upon" is επελευσεται. It is a future tense of επερχομαι, *eperchomai*. The word entails connotations of "come over, from above". The components, or roots, of the word further support the concept of coming upon, or a sense of motion toward, someone. It seems to connote an advent. In the linguistic background of the term seems to be a connotation of power, control, or authority. The use of this term is unique to Luke, and will be seen again in the Pentecost account (Acts 1:8). According to J. Fitzmyer, "the use of it here in connection with the conception of Jesus is unique and is not to be understood of any sexual union". He continues; "the phrase is intended to convey that the child to be born will be a 'gift' in a full sense".¹⁷ Once again we see that God is separating Mary from others and from sin. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, and her assent, she is now under Divine authority and control. She is completely subordinating her ego to the duty, which is intrinsic to spiritual endowments, bestowed upon her.

"THE POWER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL OVERSHADOW YOU"

This is the second of the thought couplet. Clearly, the term "Most High" is a reference to God, in a narrative circumlocution to avoid any form of the Divine Name. Fitzmyer calls this a "semitic parallel for the Holy Spirit".¹⁸ The parallelism is "intended to let the phrases explain each other". The phrase "indicates that the Spirit is understood in the OT sense of God's creative and active power present to human beings." It is a literary device that is "reminiscent of Hebrew poetry".¹⁹

The Greek term for "power" is δυναμις. Aside from the basic meanings of "power, might, force", the connotations attached to this word include "true strength in contrast to mere word or appearance". It can be understood as "ability, capability". It was seen as an "outward expression of power".²⁰

¹⁷ J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*. (NY: Doubleday, 1970), 351.

¹⁸ Ibid., 351

¹⁹ Ibid., 350

²⁰ Arndt, 207-208.

The Greek term for “overshadow” is derived from επισκοτεω, meaning to “throw a shadow upon, darken, obscure”. The term should be understood in a figurative sense, indicating “God’s presence in Mary”.²¹ This term echoes OT images of the Storm-Theophany, typified by the giving of the Covenant to Moses on Sinai. The collection of clouds and the darkness that results, theologically, indicates the presence of God and nature’s response to His presence. This is not a symbol or an indication of God using a force or medium of nature to do his will or desire. This is an illustration of God’s authority over nature.²²

Therefore, we can, unequivocally, state that these terms have no connection to conception or sexual implications. According to Fitzmyer, “they are otherwise unattested in a context that would suggest these nuances. They are figurative expressions of the mysterious intervention of God’s Spirit and power which will bring about Jesus’ Davidic role and his divine filiation”.²³ R. Brown argues that there is no evidence for sexual connotations and the Lukan account is “less open to sexual interpretation than Matthew’s”.²⁴ This means that, once again, we are seeing distinct Greek linguistic constructs placed on Jewish/Hebrew theological images.

Luke 1:41

This is the account of Mary’s visit to her relative, Elizabeth. At Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit”. The Greek term is derived from πιμπλημι, *pimplemi*. It is rendered in the passive voice and connotes “filled”. Figuratively, the term can connote “fulfillment”, as in prophecies. Fitzmyer points out that Elizabeth, as a result of the being filled with the Spirit, cries out a blessing that echoes “that of the prophet Deborah (Judges 5:24) over Jael. . . [and] that of Uzziah over Judith (Jdt 13:18)”.²⁵

This verse seems to present another form of fulfillment to words given to Zechariah (Luke 1:15). Fitzmyer argues that “this ‘filling’ is the source of her inspiration. Because of it she understands Mary’s condition”.²⁶ Clearly, as Fitzmyer argues, the text is connecting Jesus to John the Baptist. More importantly, Mary is depicted as a catalyst for inspiration. It is her presence that triggered Elizabeth’s inspiration.

Although we do not want to place too much weight on one verse, it seems that this reference to Mary and Elizabeth typifies Luke’s theology, which bases itself not only on past theological traditions but looks forward. The account of the Virginal Conception and Birth will fulfill and build on to established traditions. This short reference indicates that Mary’s role is not simply to fulfill the prophecies of Scripture, but to have an inspirational, perhaps forward oriented, role.

²¹ Fitzmyer, 351.

²² For a fuller discussion of the Storm-Theophany, cf. Roskoski, J. “The Storm Theophany: A Theology of the Storm” *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 13:40 (Sunday, September 23, 2012) <http://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/RoskoskiJ03.pdf>

²³ Ibid., 337-338.

²⁴ R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*. (NY: Doubleday, 1972,1990), 290.

²⁵ Fitzmyer, 358.

²⁶ Ibid., 363

The Presentation of the Virginal Conception

R. Brown points out that it is unlikely that the two evangelists, Matthew or Luke, knew each other's "infancy narrative". Yet, Mary's Virginal Conception "is one of the few points on which they agree". This means that the tradition antedated both accounts.²⁷ Outside of the "Child of Promise" traditions, to which all scholars allude in some form, "there is no exact parallel or antecedent in the material available to Christians of the first century who told of this [type of] conception".²⁸ Therefore Brown, in trying to assess the evidence, concludes that "no search for parallels has given us a truly satisfactory explanation of how early Christians happened upon the idea of a virginal conception- unless, of course, that is what really took place."²⁹

Each writer depended on the OT traditions. Mary, in both infancy narratives is presented as peasant girl who finds favor with God. She is a chaste virgin. Matthew makes this clear by citing Isaiah 7:14, the Immanuel Prophecy. Hebrew has two terms for "virgin"; *betulah* and *almah*. The former denotes girls of marriageable age, maids, with no implications of virginal status. The latter term denotes a chaste virgin. This is the term used in the Immanuel Prophecy and, therefore is the term used by Matthew to describe Mary's chastity at the time of conception.

Luke, undeniably, used the basic form of the "Child of Promise" traditions. However, Luke has to contend with the linguistic problem which the result from the Greek term for "virgin", *parthenos*. Unlike Hebrew, that contains two terms for "virgin", Greek only has the one term. Therefore, by building upon the "Child of Promise" traditions, Luke was able to clearly state that Mary was a "chaste" virgin at the time of conception and that this was the result of Divine intervention.

Pentecost: Acts 2: 1-4

The people who received the Holy Spirit are listed in Acts 1:12, Mary is among them. Widely considered the "birthday of the universal church", through the "outpouring of the Spirit the Church is empowered to address herself to all nations and to be understood by them. . . By the Spirit the Church is now empowered to fulfill the mission which was committed to her by Jesus."³⁰ We read that Mary and Apostles "were filled" with the Holy Spirit. This is a form of the same Greek word that occurred in Luke 1:15 and 41.

The imagery surrounding the "Descent", or "tongues of fire", echoes the Creation account (Genesis 1).³¹ The rush of the wind that was heard was the same force that swept over the primordial waters. It is a creative force, the force that brought forth the earth and all that inhabit it. Now, it is bringing forth the Church. Figuratively, we can see that the wind, the breath of God, now speaks through the Apostles and Mary. The Church is a new Creation, completing the old. The work of the church is just starting with Pentecost; therefore we see the forward orientation of Luke's Theology again.

²⁷ R. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (NY: Paulist, 1973). 53.

²⁸ Ibid.,. 62

²⁹ Ibid., 65.

³⁰ McKenzie, Dictionary, 658.

³¹ The Hebrew word for "wind" as well as "breath, Spirit" is *ruach*. The wind is often compared to and seen as a sign of the presence of God.

It is significant that Luke should include Mary in this company. Indeed, throughout his Gospel he writes of the women that were involved in Jesus' ministry. This seems to be part of the universal message intrinsic in the Luke-Acts composition. This empowering by the Spirit seems to be a strong complement to the commission given to Mary from the Cross (John 19:25-27); to be the Mother of all Christians. It is impossible to determine if Luke knew of John's Gospel, and the pronouncement from the Cross. However, both Evangelists end their presentations of Mary in the same way; with a universal role. John has Jesus bestowing upon Mary the role of Mother of all Christians, represented by the "Beloved Disciple". Luke has her first charismatic endowment linked to the birth of the Savior, her second to the birth of the Church.

The occurrence of more than one spiritual endowment, in the Bible, is rare. The Virgin Birth seems to echo the transient charisma of the Judges and the Pentecost narrative parallels the permanent endowment of David. Two types of endowment, transient and permanent, place Mary in a very select company. Only one charismatic leader's account contains references to multiple endowments and the two types of endowments; Samson.

Samson and Mary; The Fullness of Charisma

Characteristically, Charismatic Leaders receive the Spirit immediately preceding their actions which deliver Israel. If the Charisma is permanent, the man receives it at the beginning of his mission, as in the lives of David and Jesus.³² We see this two-fold pattern of Charisma foreshadowed with Samson, the invincibly powerful Judge of Israel. There are strong parallels between the Charisma of Samson and of Mary. The Charisma of Samson and Mary indicates the commonality of the *roles* they played in Salvation History.³³

Samson and Mary each encountered the Spirit in the two characteristic ways; transiently and permanently. Samson is compelled by the YHWH Spirit in a Camp of Dan (Judges 13:25). Structurally and theologically, this notice serves as an introduction to his charismatic career, as it seems to place all his further actions under the authority of the YHWH Spirit, and indicates an aspect of permanence. This aspect was a forerunner to the permanent Charisma of David. Throughout his career against the Philistines, Samson receives the YHWH Spirit three more times (Judges 14:6, 14:19, and 15:14). These seem to be transient endowments of the YHWH Spirit that manifested in times of crisis or battle. Mary, on the other hand, seems to receive the Holy Spirit in the opposite order as that of Samson. The endowment of the Holy Spirit that allowed the Virgin Birth seems transient, though life changing for Mary as it now eternally separated her from sin according to the Greek usage. The descent of the Spirit on Pentecost seemed to have been a permanent endowment. It is this spiritual endowment which generates and gives birth to the Church. The Holy Spirit is still part of the foundation of the Church and

³² Jesus receives the Holy Spirit as it descends upon him like a dove (Luke 3:22). The common factor is that the Spirit came to these men in the beginning of their careers and remained with them. This concept of permanence is in stark contrast to the transient endowments of some of the Judges and Saul.

³³ I would emphasize the term "roles". I would not propose a similarity between the humble and grace-filled personality of Mary and the "colorful" personality of Samson. Each personality had its function and value. Samson had to withstand a heroic battle and change the course of Ancient Near Eastern history, as the Philistines were in a period of ascendancy and, without Samson, may have conquered the entire eastern Mediterranean coast. Mary, like John the Baptist, had to be fulfilled in the reflected light of the Messiah.

part of its theological tapestry. The authority bestowed on the Apostles and Mary on Pentecost still guides and resonates through the Church. Samson, in the Camp of Dan, was properly disposed to the later irruptions of the YHWH Spirit. Mary, always being disposed to the Divine will, was further sanctified by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit which allowed the birth of Jesus. At Pentecost a permanent Charisma was bestowed on Mary, and the Apostles, that would manifest in the life of the Church.

A second parallel can be found in their roles in preparing for the Davidic King. Samson, as foretold by an angel before his birth, was to begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines (Judges 13:5). Samson gave his life between the pillars of Dagon to make his final stand against the Philistines (Judges 16:23-30). With his last act, at least three of the five Philistine Governors were killed. Historically, this would effectively halt the Philistine ascendancy and give Israel, under Saul, the time to fortify herself to withstand the inevitable Philistine resurgence. This resurgence was met by David, who completely broke Philistine power (2 Samuel 5:17-25). Samson began the war with the Philistines which David completed and in which David brought Israel to her greatest glory. Theologically, Samson's Charisma foreshadowed that of David. In the Samson references, we read that the YHWH Spirit "rushed upon" (Hebrew, *tslach*) Samson. This Hebrew construction only occurs in the Samson, Saul, and David accounts. This is a strong connection between the accounts of Samson and David. It also indicates that Samson was foundational to the Davidic Kingship. David gave national form to the 12 Tribes of Israel. Mary was prepared by God to be the mother of the "son of David", the new David (Mt. 22: 42; Mk 12:35; Lk 20:41). Jesus, in human form given by Mary, embodied the Kingdom of God and initiated the new Israel with His 12 Apostles. The connection, physical and theological, between Jesus and Mary is undeniable. This connection illustrates that Mary was foundational to the Incarnation. Therefore, both Samson and Mary set the human and historical stage for the glory of the Davidic King.

Dramatically and undeniably, the effects of the Charisma of Samson and Mary lasted well after the lifetime of each of them. Unlike the victories of the other Charismatic Judges, the effects of whose victories lasted only a little longer than their lifetimes (Judges 2:18-19), Samson's Charisma had perduring results. The war he waged against the Philistines, under the guidance of the YHWH Spirit, led to him being brought to the temple of Dagon where he could make his final and self-sacrificing stand instead of being sacrificed to an idol. This act led to Davidic victories, the nation of Israel, and the promise of the Eternal Kingship, from which came the Messiah. It also allowed Samson to be placed in the list of Heroes of Faith (Hebrews 11:32). Mary, finding favor with God, being separated from sin through the Spirit's intervention with the Virgin Birth, being defined as the Mother of Christians by Jesus from Cross, now has her role eternally expanded and fixed by the Spirit on Pentecost. Therefore, Samson and Mary both had the effects of their Charisma validated by the coming of the Davidic King and institutions which were built by them.

THE CHARISMATIC MARY

Mary completes the Old Testament image of “charisma” and embodies the model of the New Testament image. Admittedly, the term, “Charismatic Leader” is a sociological construct of a time long after the period of Biblical writing. Yet, it is still appropriate. The term, “Charisma” is derived from the Greek term, *charis* (χαρις). This term, basically, means “grace, favor”. However, it connotes the “exceptional effects produced by Divine Grace”.³⁴ This New Testament corresponds to the Old Testament Hebrew term, *chen* (חן). This Hebrew term, unlike other cognates, focuses the attention on the recipient, not the one who bestows the favor.³⁵ In the Old Testament, once the YHWH Spirit is bestowed, the focus of the narratives is placed on the person and the results of the Charisma. In the case of Mary, the focus shifts to her actions and the actions of her son. However, it is understood, throughout the Bible, that God is always the catalyst and the grace and actions are ordered according to His will.

In Mary, the traditions of the Old Testament and the theology of New Testament find their transition point. The Charismatic Leaders of old were to help make the name of YHWH known to the nations and show them His power. By defeating the oppressors of Israel in battle the Judges showed the polytheistic world in which they lived the universal power of the God of Israel. This led the way for the Davidic Kingdom. David, by establishing the nation of Israel with Jerusalem as its capitol, provided the first model for the Kingdom of God. By the Virginal Conception and Birth, Mary shows the power of God on a personal level, much like the Charismatic Judges, and provides essential preparation for the Davidic King, Jesus. The Judges led the way to the Davidic Kingdom which was of this world. Undeniably, it formed the foundation for the Messiah, the Christ. Mary subsumed the authority of the Davidic Kingdom into her foundational part in the Messianic and eternal Kingdom of God. The Kingdom which Jesus depicted was not a geographic-political reality that would counter Rome. It was not a Kingdom into which the entry was determined by birthright of birthplace. The Kingdom of which Jesus spoke could be understood as the “Kingship” of God. This term includes concepts such as power, reign, authority, and dominion.³⁶ Entry into the Kingdom was based on faith, a theme that resonates throughout the New Testament. The earthly Davidic Kingdom could be crushed, as we saw in the split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, the Assyrian invasion, and the Babylonian Exile. A Messianic Kingdom, built on faith, cannot be crushed by force of arms or the erosion of time. This type of Messianic Kingdom is dynamic, always growing and ever expanding. By her Pentecostal Charisma, Mary becomes part of the eternal Kingdom to which she was so foundational.

Her role in the Church was, and is, not to be simply foundational. With her Pentecostal Charisma, Mary’s role is established, or ordained, as one of leadership. She is a model for all Christians. The history of Charismatic Leadership, whether transient or permanent, teaches us

³⁴ Arndt, 878.

³⁵ E. Yamauchi, “חן” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:303.

³⁶ Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the Targums- Aramaic “translations” of the Hebrew Bible. The common Targum in Palestine translated the cluster of ideas –power, reign, authority, etc- as “Kingdom”. This is why Jesus could say things such as “the Kingdom is at hand, in our midst, is coming, etc. and not be contradictory. It transcended earthly boundaries.

that the Spirit compels the recipient to action in accord with the Father's will, because each has a specific role to play in the plan of Salvation. The actions are dramatic, powerful, and even world-changing. The Charisma inspires actions which are commensurate with the Divine plan. Therefore, based on the Biblical model we can say that Mary has a role that should be seen as proportionate to the Universal Church.

God is steadfast and consistent. Philosophically speaking, if he were inconsistent or self-contradictory He would not be "God". Therefore, it is logical and reasonable to argue, based on Biblical evidence, that Mary completed the earlier traditions. Moreover, Mary's Pentecostal Charisma was a call to action, and an establishment of a role, and an authority that has been part of the Church from her beginning. In other words, based on Biblical consistency and coherence, Mary's role must be understood as perpetual as the Universal Church. Admittedly, she fades from Scripture after the Pentecost account. But just as the Church's history did not end with the writings of Acts and Paul, we cannot state that Mary's role ended in the upper room. Simply put, and this cannot be overstated, according to the spectrum of Biblical traditions God does not bestow His Spirit on someone just to have that person fade into obscurity. Mary, the mother of the Savior, was not to fade into obscurity and her authority end with the closing of the Scriptural writings. Her role was to be a leader in the Church which was established at Pentecost.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the Biblical models, we have to understand that Mary's role is in direct proportion to the object of her Charisma, much like the Charismatic Leaders before her. The Judges received transient Charismatic endowments to repel the oppressors of Israel. Samson received a "permanent" endowment enhanced by isolated irruptions of the Spirit. This was because he had to begin the liberation of Israel and prepare for the Davidic King. Saul's Charisma matched his role as one who introduced the Monarchy and prepared the way for David. David received a permanent Charisma as he was to unite Israel and begin the Eternal Kingship and Messianic line. Mary was to give birth to the Messiah and become part of the foundational authority of the Universal Church. Her Charismatic experiences reflect these vital roles.

Mary should be understood as a "Charismatic Leader" of the Church. The Church has stood the test of time for over 2000 years, fulfilling Gamaliel's words to the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:38-39); that the new Church has come from God. Mary's Charisma, as those of all the others leaders, came from God. Her role came from God as did the Church. Therefore, her Charismatic authority lives as long as the Church, the Body of Christ, lives.

To deny Mary's charismatic role and authority, as some religious persuasions do, is to deny the Charisma- the Pentecostal and Apostolic Charisma- that stands at the foundation of Church. It is this same Charisma which is still with the Church today. This is the power and guidance, of God, through His Holy Spirit, that moves through the Apostles and Our Holy Mother, Mary.

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