THE ASSUMPTION DOGMA: SOME REACTIONS AND ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE THOUGHT OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING THEOLOGIANS

A Doctoral Dissertation in Sacred Theology with Specialization in Marian Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Sacred Theology

by

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Vidimus et approbamus.

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DEDICATIO

Optimis Octo
Et Petro
Multitudinous ascend I,
   Dreadful as a battle arrayed,
For I bear you whither tend I;
   Ye are I: be undismayed!
I, the ark that for the graven
   Tables of the law was made;
Man's own heart was one; one, Heaven;
   Both within my womb were laid.
For there Anteros with Eros,
   Heaven with man, conjoined was, —
Twin-stone of the law, Ischyros, Agios Athanatos.

Francis Thompson, Assumpta Maria.

+ In gratitude to

   The Distinguished
   Marianist (IMRI, Dayton)
   and
   Jesuit (Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley)
   Theological Faculties
   With Much Esteem

+ In filial recognition of
   three faithful sons of Mary
   +John R. Quinn
   Archbishop of San Francisco
   +William J. McDonald+
   Deceased Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco
   Former Rector of the Catholic University of America
   and
   +Daniel F. Walsh
   Bishop of Reno-Las Vegas
   Former Auxiliary Bishop of San Francisco
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The Assumption Dogma in Retrospect: An Analysis and Commentary on Munificentissimus Deus

On All Saints Day, 1 November 1950, Pope Pius XII infallibly defined the truth of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven in his Apostolic Constitution, Munificentissimus Deus. According to P. J. Hamell’s 1951 observation, the papal bull described the state of belief in the truth existent before the definition, presented the history and development of the doctrine, and cited the pope’s reasons for the doctrinal definition. The definition concluded with the actual proclamation of the truth as a matter of divine faith: Mary’s Assumption anticipated the fate of all the blessed at the time of the parousia. The doctrine, then defined as a dogma, concerned the glorification of the Virgin in heaven. At the end of her time on earth, Mary’s body and soul were assumed into heavenly glory. In 1950, G. Mitchell clarified the difference between a doctrine and a dogma, and the concomitant degree of assent required by a believer for the latter:

A dogma is a truth of revelation proposed as such for our belief by the infallible teaching authority of the Church. By the Church’s definition of Our Lady’s Assumption we are solemnly assured by infallible authority that the doctrine is contained in the revelation given to us by God, and hence we can and must accept it on God’s authority. The assent we give to it is the assent of divine faith.

Munificentissimus Deus attested to Pius XII’s personal feelings and devotion for the Mother of the Lord. It was carefully historical, cautious in the use of Scripture. The style was reserved in comparison to the effusiveness of Pius IX’s Ineffabilis Deus which defined the Immaculate Conception.

The clearest summary of the definition is found in the words of the pope in the
Chapter I

apostolic constitution itself:

Since the Universal Church, within which dwells the Spirit of Truth Who infallibly directs it towards ever more perfect knowledge of revealed truths, has expressed its own belief many times over the course of the centuries, and since the Bishops of the entire world have almost unanimously petitioned that the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven should be defined as a dogma of divine and Catholic faith — this truth which is based on the Sacred Writings: which is thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful; which has been approved in ecclesiastical worship from the most remote times; which is completely in harmony with other revealed truths; and which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science and the wisdom of the theologians — we believe that the moment appointed in the plan of divine providence for the solemn proclamation of this conspicuous privilege of the Virgin Mary has already arrived.5

The purpose of the following treatment of the dogmatic bull of definition is to present the nature, method, and scope of Munificentissimus Deus as a general background for closer study of the christological and eschatological dimensions of the dogma of the Assumption.

Preparation for the Definition

God's Providence

In 1956, G. W. Shea remarked that the opening words of the document, as in a poem of Homer, provided the focus of Munificentissimus Deus: God most bountiful.6 The definition primarily gave honor to God. Pius XII introduced the theme of God's caring providence for his creatures at the outset. He described how the Lord, in his loving wisdom, interjects tempering joys in people's lives as they progress toward their final goal, thus compensating for the travail of this life. Recognizing that discouragement, despondency, apathy, and apostasy were prevalent at that time, which resulted from contemporary social problems, Pius XII wrote: "Our pontificate is weighed down by ever so many cares, anxieties, and troubles, by reason of very severe calamities that have taken place and by reason of the fact that many have strayed away from truth and virtue."7

The pontiff knew that consoling inspiration could be derived from the Assumption definition; in God's providential care all things would "work together unto good for those who love him."8 This doctrine, according to Shea, addressed not only Mary but every person, both in this life and the next: "Far from being an exclusively Mariological truth, the dogma has powerful overtones, profound implications, for Christian anthro-
pology and eschatology. That is to say, it teaches us not only about Mary but also about ourselves and our final lot."

In *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), Pius IX clearly referred to the incarnation of the Son and the predestination of Mary as comprising one eternal act of God’s predestination: “God, by one and the same decree, had established the origin of Mary and the incarnation of Divine Wisdom.” Pius XII paraphrased this thought in *Munificentissimus Deus*: “The revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ, in one and the same decree of predestination.”

Mary’s predestination by God included all those factors which are contained in God’s normal dealing with humankind: his eternal, divine choice respected the integrity of her personality; Mary exerted freedom of choice in accepting the privilege of divine maternity.

**Immaculate Conception**

When defining the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX doctrinally asserted that Mary had been preserved from sin and corruption; thus the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption shared the same foundation. Christ had conquered sin and death by his own death and resurrection; but his followers, reborn supernaturally through baptism, normally do not attain their ultimate victory, their glorification, until the end of time. Then, their corrupt bodies put on an incorruptibility in union with their already glorious souls: “And so it is that the bodies of even the just are corrupted after death, and only on the last day will they be joined, each to its own glorious soul.”

In God’s providence, the Virgin was graced with the unique privilege of overcoming sin in the Immaculate Conception. Consequently, she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave. She did not have to wait until the end of time; rather, she received an immediate and full redemption of the body in heavenly glory. Hence, the words of the encyclical were not strictly about death; rather, they distinguished between death and corruption:

\[
\text{Quae quidem, singulari prorsus privilegio, immaculata conceptione sua peccatum devicit, atque adeo legi illi permanendi, in sepulcri corruptione obnoxia non fuit, neque corporis sui redemptionem usque in finem temporum exspectare debuit.}^{13}
\]

Pius XII did not follow *Ineffabilis Deus* in every respect. While *Munificentissimus Deus* declared that Mary was already in heaven, it did not refer to her presence there as being unique. Although Pius IX had referred to the Immaculate Conception as a singular privilege, Pius XII confined himself to stating that the Assumption was an outstanding privilege, the crown of Mary’s privileges. *Ineffabilis Deus* declared that the entire person of Mary, not just her soul, was the subject of immunity from original sin.

Pius XII’s argument for the Assumption drew from the 1854 dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception which declared a necessary connection between Mary’s
sinlessness and her present state in glory:

That privilege (the Assumption) has shown forth in new radiance since Our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX, solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the loving Mother of God’s Immaculate Conception. These two privileges are most closely bound to one another. Christ overcame sin and death by his own death, and one who through baptism has been born again in a supernatural way has conquered sin and death through the same Christ. Yet, according to the general rule, God does not will to grant to the just the full effect of the victory over death until the end of time has come. And so it is that the bodies of even the just are corrupted after death, and only on the last day will they be joined each to its own glorious soul. Now God has willed that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be exempted from this general rule. She, by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin by her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body.

The Assumption is necessarily included in the Immaculate Conception: sin causes corruption; Mary was free from sin; Mary was not corruptible. Some theologians held this view along with the pope. More theologians saw the connection as an implicit revelation in the concept of the New Eve. Still others saw it in the divine Motherhood.

In 1874, M. Scheeben had discussed the Assumption under the aspect of Mary’s exemption from the bonds of death. This involved a consideration not only of her Assumption, but also of her twofold exemption from the power of death and from bodily decomposition. Scheeben believed that Mary really died, but since she was free from all sin, original and actual, her death was different. It was a painless act of love, a true falling asleep in conformity to Christ, a “temporary retreat from bodily life.” Hers was “a flesh divinely and spiritually glorified.” Scheeben considered the first effect of the act of redemption to be the bodily resurrection of the Lord. The final effect would be the resurrection, in body, of all the just at the end of the world. Mary, a second Eve who undid the work of the first Eve, shared in that redemptive action of her Son. She also benefited from his redemption; because of her anticipated freedom from sin, Mary was the most perfectly redeemed human being and immune to the effects of death. She was also that redemption’s principal human instrument, whose mediation would continue in heaven: “In a manner her part likened her more to Christ than to the other redeemed. So her own resurrection should be more like her Son’s — not postponed to the end of time.” Scheeben presented other considerations that lent credence to the early resurrection of Mary. Since her body was the instrument of Christ’s birth, it was fitting that this body should share in the soul’s life in glory in light of the fourth commandment, for the Son to watch over her entire existence. Scheeben’s theological reasoning demonstrated the
necessary positing of this doctrine as a consequence of Mary’s God-given privileges.

J. Pohle argued in 1909 that the incorruptibility of Mary’s body was intimately connected with its early resurrection. It was inconceivable to him that Jesus Christ would have to wait for the general resurrection of the dead to rejoin his Mother’s virginal body to her pure soul: “As the Mother of God Mary was conceived without original taint, free from concupiscence, and absolutely exempt from personal sin; therefore she could not possibly be subject to the dominion of death up to the time of the general resurrection.” He applied the Scotist syllogism of *potuit, decuit, ergo fecit* to the Assumption of Mary as well as to her Immaculate Conception. It should be noted that the parent form of *potuit, decuit, ergo fecit* is *potuit, si ergo voluit, fecit.* “It is possible; if God therefore desires it, he accomplishes it.” In its application to the Assumption, the original form of the axiom has significant ecumenical importance, as it considerably modifies the often twisted understanding and arbitrariness of its contemporary form.

Mary’s enmity against Satan was directed not only at sin but also at its effects: concupiscence and death. Pohle maintained that the protoevangelium foretold both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Mary joined her Son in his triumph over death. If she had been subject to bodily decay, and her resurrection postponed until the last day, then death would have been the victor over “the woman.” Hamell remarked in 1948 that because of an interdependency, the definition of the Immaculate Conception had reinforced what was already believed in the Assumption. This reinforcement not only increased interest in the doctrine but also hope for its early definition.

In 1948, G. E. Carter recalled how clearly the resurrection of the body was stated in the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds. He described this resurrection as a part of the triumph of Christ and of the Mystical Christ, i.e., of all Christians, over the empire of sin and death. The Immaculate Conception had extended the dogmatic belief in Mary’s sinlessness to the moment of her conception and her special freedom from original sin. She had crushed the head of the serpent of the *protoevangelium.* Carter believed that in putting these two truths together, the implication of the Assumption was an inevitable conclusion:

> Why should the body of Mary remain in the grave? Why should she who triumphed so fully over sin be yet denied the full results of her triumph? How can it be said that she crushed the head of the serpent if Satan may proclaim that, through his success with Adam, the body of Mary is not yet in triumph.

Carter further perceived the virginal Motherhood as a compelling reason for the Assumption. Her virginity was a sign of God’s gracing action: by the Father upon the Daughter, by the Son upon the Mother, and by the Spirit upon the Spouse. Through an exemption to the laws of nature, God preserved Mary’s bodily integrity that she might bear the Eternal Word fittingly in his sacred humanity: “Does it not seem equally important that the precious body of Mary should never see the corruption of the grave
but should be immediately placed in glory beside the body of the Son to Whom it had
given birth.”

Theologian G. Roschini acknowledged, prior to the Assumption definition in a
lecture over Vatican Radio in 1950, that the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception
were so intimately intertwined that it could be logically said that Mary was assumed
because she was immaculate. Because of her Immaculate Conception she had been
totally removed “from the atmosphere of fault” and consequently she was completely
“outside any atmosphere of punishment or death” which had come into the world
through original sin. In God’s present dispensation there is an essential connection
between original sin and death — death being the punishment for sin. Roschini recalled
the words of Paul to the Romans (5:12) and drew the conclusion that one who had not
sinned in Adam, as in the case of the Immaculate Conception, would not be subject to
the dominion of death: “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin
death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned.” Roschini continued,
regarding the causal link of death and personally contracted original sin:

... the unbreakable link which so unites the Assumption to the
Immaculate Conception as to authorize us to say that she was assumed
because she was immaculate. She who began her life in the light of the
cradle could not terminate it in the shadows of the tomb.

In 1951, J. J. Wright, then Bishop of Worcester, presented a persuasive scriptural
consideration for the Assumption: in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 Paul stated that all the
faithful will have a bodily resurrection. Further, Romans 4:25, 5:12-19, and 6:23, and
1 Corinthians 15:56 recalled that death is a punishment for sin. When these are taken in
context with the Immaculate Conception, the following line of reasoning is developed:

Paul teaches that the resurrection of the body is the final stage of the
triumph over sin and death; that the deferring of this resurrection of
the body until the Last Judgment is connected with sin and death —
that it is a punishment for serious sin, either personal or original.
Implicitly, therefore, it follows that anyone perfectly and completely
free from personal and original sin is free from the deferment of the
resurrection of the body. Such, of course, is the case of the sinless
Virgin and Immaculate Mother of God.

Victory over sin and death does not exclude the concept of death, the separation of body
and soul. Jesus Christ, the all holy one, gave up his spirit and died on Calvary. But victory
over sin and death does exclude the corruption of the body and a permanent state of death.
If Mary, the sinless one, was to be victorious over death, she would of necessity enjoy
an anticipated resurrection of her body, free of a permanent death or bodily corruption.
Her Son obtained the victory through his own power and merits; she shared the victory
through these same merits and power.
Later, in *Fulgens Corona* (8 September 1953), his encyclical on the Marian Year of 1954, Pius XII recalled the connection originally made in *Munificentissimus Deus* between these two truths. He recounted the then compelling desire of the faithful that the dogma of the corporal assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven should also be defined as soon as possible by the magisterium. The Assumption was seen by him essentially as a complementary culmination of the prerogative of the Immaculate Conception, wherein God had expressed the desire that the Virgin Mary should be free from all stain of original sin. These two special gifts, bestowed freely by God upon Mary as pure graces, accent the beginning and the end of her life upon earth:

For the two dogmas are intimately connected in close bond. And now that the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven has been promulgated and shown in its true light—that is, as the crowning and complement of the prior privilege bestowed upon her—there emerge more fully and more clearly the wonderful wisdom and harmony of the divine plan, by which God wishes the Most Blessed Virgin Mary to be free from all stain of original sin. 28

**Ineffabilis Deus**

In 1950, the Catholic Church embraced a vibrant devotion to Mary, especially under her title of the Assumption. Since the time of definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, a hope had grown that the bodily assumption of the Virgin would also be declared an article of divinely revealed faith. In 1940 Pius XII had stated:

Thus, when it was solemnly proclaimed that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, was from the very beginning free from the taint of original sin, the minds of the faithful were filled with a stronger hope that the day might soon come when the dogma of the Virgin Mary’s bodily Assumption into heaven would also be defined by the Church’s supreme authority. 29

While the object of this hoped-for definition was not always precise, there was nevertheless almost unanimous agreement on the fact of the bodily assumption among those who sought it. 30

Although Pius XII became known as the Pope of the Assumption, he was not the modern initiator of the definition. 31 At the time of his definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, Pius IX was convinced of both the reality and the revealed nature of Mary’s bodily assumption and glorification. William Hentrich observed in 1942 that the first two petitions Pius IX received for a definition of the Assumption came from the Bishops of Malines and Osma as an addendum to the inquiry about the definition of the Immaculate Conception. In addition to many other petitions, on 27 December 1863, Pius IX received a request for immediate definition from Queen Isabella II of Spain, made at
the suggestion of her confessor, later sainted Antonio-Maria Claret. The pope stated in his refusal that God would provide the appropriate time in the future. He had determined that, in God’s providence, his was not the opportune day for the definition. A considerable number of the Fathers at the First Vatican Council also expressed the strong desire for this definition. One petition came from 187 Council Fathers, over one fourth of those in attendance, who believed that Mary had overcome death by her immediate Assumption, just as she was victorious over sin and concupiscence in her Immaculate Conception and virginal maternity:

Since . . . Christ’s victory over Satan . . . is made up, as of three integral parts, of a victory over sin and its two fruits, concupiscence and death; since moreover in Genesis the Mother of God is shown to be singularly associated with her Son in His triumph; we do not doubt — and our consent is unanimous — that in this prophecy the same Blessed Virgin is prefigured in glorious triple victory and that this text announces to us that as she was to triumph in an extraordinary manner over sin in her Immaculate Conception and over concupiscence in her Virginal Maternity, so also she would triumph over hostile death by an anticipated resurrection in the likeness of her divine Son.  

Munificentissimus Deus

Referring to the deep devotion of the faithful throughout the centuries for the Queen of heaven, Pius XII requested an increase in this Marian piety and a greater recognition of Mary's privileges in the twentieth century, which had ushered in such an increased understanding of the privilege of the Assumption: “Piety toward the Virgin Mother of God is flourishing and daily growing more fervent, and almost everywhere on earth it (the Catholic faith) is showing indications of a better and holier life.” He had concluded his encyclical of 29 June 1943, Mystici Corporis, with the words that address the assumed Mary in heaven, body and soul, as the Church’s intercessor:

Let us beseech the most holy Mother of all the members of Christ, to whose heart we have with confidence consecrated all men and who now in heaven shines in the glory of her body and soul and reigns with her Son, that she will multiply her entreaties with Him, so that her most efficacious patronage may protect the Church today as formerly. 

This contemporary desire for the definition had grown out of the Assumptionist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Slow but steady progress of this movement was traceable through the regular flow of petitions to the Holy See from the time of Pius IX to that of Pius XII. In 1945, T. F. Doyle wrote that over the previous twenty years 1,700 bishops had mailed petitions in response to the requests of their people. Pius XII had attributed this outpouring of petitions over the past century to the
vibrantly popular Marian devotion. In the twentieth century, the only two years in which no petitions were sent to the Holy See were 1914 and 1927: “In 1900 there were 67 petitions received at the Vatican: in 1901, 213; in 1902, 114; between 1900 and 1940 the year when most were received was 1934, with 352. Other figures: 1923, 18; 1930, 108; 1932, 138; 1933, 188; 1935, 127.” In retrospect, in 1969 D. Flanagan perceived the pronouncement of the Assumption belief to be “the real term of the Marian movement,” the final privilege of Mary.

Petitions received between the First Vatican Council and 1942 were published in 1945. Hentrich, a compiler of the collection, referred to the work of theologians and universities in providing a consensus for the Ecclesia docens. He cited the fact that in the previous five years petitions were received in Rome from the following institutions: nine of the ten pontifical universities and Athenaei of Rome; nineteen of the twenty-five canonically erected Athenaei and faculties of ecclesiastical studies; two pontifical theological academies of Rome; theological societies of the United States, Poland, Spain, Belgium, and Holland; the Naples Almo Collegio del Teologi; all fifteen of the theological faculties of the state universities of Austria, Yugoslavia, Poland, Switzerland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia; the theological faculties of five public German colleges; the professors of dogmatic theology of the universities of Monaco, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, and Bonn; the rectors and professors of twelve major seminaries; six theological faculties of the archdiocese of Dublín; twenty religious order theological faculties; the rectors and professors of seventeen of the eighteen regional pontifical major seminaries, as well as those of seventeen other regional major seminaries, ninety diocesan seminaries, and eighty theological colleges of the various orders.

Hentrich commented on the minuscule dissent among this group, pointing out the public refutations that already had been published by Filograssi in the Gregorianum, Ternus in Scholastik, and one later to be published by Philips in Ephemerides Theolicae Lovanienses. In his estimation the dissent did not constitute a threat to the definition:

If one or two theologians who seem to have lost the true concept of the dogmatic tradition... have dissented in recent articles, these few exceptions underline the consensus of the other theologians. Moreover, the Theologische Revue of Munster, publishes in its latest number (1950, No. 2, col. 106) a solemn declaration in which the editors protest that they do not wish to be identified in any way with the articles of Professor Altaner, recently published, or with the thesis he maintains, or with his arguments, or with the judgments given by him on the opinion of others and on their own arguments.

Hentrich remarked that the movimento assunzionistico had become stronger after World War II than before the war began: “It seemed that the tide of enthusiasm, contained by the recent cruel war as by a dyke, sought to overflow with greater velocity and force, so as to overthrow even the last difficulty and, that having been done, to attain to the end
so much desired.” Ninety-six percent of the petitions received by the Holy Office were in favor of the definition. An immediate definition of Mary’s glorification was being sought.

Massive and varied publication ensued during the ten-year period prior to the definition. The painstaking and scholarly works of two men stand out as being monumental. These authors, M. Jugie and C. Balic, were appointed to the papal committee to investigate criteria for the dogmatic definition. Jugie was a distinguished researcher in the fields of Patristics and, in particular, Mariology, as shown in two books he wrote on “L’Assomption” and “L’Immaculée Conception.” Balic, in addition to producing two volumes on the Assumption, was instrumental in organizing several Franciscan congresses in preparation for the definition.

The teaching of these theologians was of special significance since their consensus on both the definition and its timing represented the consensus of the ecclesia docens. Their near unanimous agreement was shown in the flood of books, articles, and theses during the years immediately preceding the definition. In 1951, the editors of the London Tablet observed this consensus as a collegial fact:

... The theologians of some thirty nations, therefore, have jointly — collegialmente, said Fr. Hentrich — sent their petitions, after rigorous studies; whence it seems clearly possible to say that the definition of the dogma of the Assumption will follow the virtually unanimous consensus of Catholic theologians all over the world.

With characteristic devotion and resolve of purpose, Pius XII instigated various other efforts to establish the definability of the doctrine. Special studies by individual theologians and university faculties were published in journals and periodicals. As successor of Peter, Pius XII’s task was to teach the entirety of God’s revelation. Consequently, on 1 May 1946, he addressed his encyclical Deiparae Virginis to all bishops throughout the world, seeking their counsel and requesting their reply. Since petitions so far had reflected the belief prevalent in only certain parts of the world, his purpose was to verify the existence of a universal belief in the Assumption. He asked if his bishops and their people wanted an infallible dogmatic definition. “We wish to know if you ... consider that the bodily Assumption of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith and whether in addition to your own wishes this is desired by your clergy and people.”

The petitions received theological value only when the magisterium made a theological evaluation of the universality of belief in this doctrine. The 1,181 replies from the bishops to the Holy See included only twenty-two dissents. Six of the twenty-two, or .0051% of the total, opposed the definition. The other sixteen stated that it was inopportune.

On 30 October 1950 Pius XII told the Cardinals in Consistory that the matter of the definition of the Assumption had been entrusted by him to a commission of experts who had been collecting, examining, and evaluating all the replies that had
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been returned. The commission evaluated all the petitions received by Rome from 1849 to 1950 as well.49 “They studied . . . all the attestations, indications, and references in the common faith of the Church, as well as lastly in the writings of the Fathers and the theologians, and with the admirable harmony of this with other revealed truth.”50 Upon completion of this evaluation, Hentrich concluded that the bishops “as the witnesses and custodians of revelation, have declared with virtually complete unanimity that the Assumption of Our Lady is a truth contained in revelation, and that its definition is opportune.”51

Hentrich believed that countries with the highest population of Protestants were best qualified to evaluate the opportuneness of the definition in relation to the separated brethren. The bishops of England and Wales, one month before the issuance of Deiparae Virginis, requested the definition from Rome, and a collection of signatures followed. Nearly the entire Catholic population of the countries as well supported the definition and its opportuneness. “Con una percentuale quasi del cento per cento dei cattolici praticanti.”52

The reaction of the Eastern Rite Churches in communion with Rome was of great interest: opposition of Eastern Christians could have been inimical to the cause of reunion, and such opposition would render the definition inopportune from this viewpoint. Of the fifty-four replies from the patriarchs and residential Catholic bishops of the Eastern Church, all save one were favorable.

When the body of scholars concluded its painstaking research on every aspect of the dogma, its verdict was overwhelmingly in favor of the definition: “These studies and investigations have brought out into even clearer light the fact that the dogma of the Virgin Mary’s Assumption into heaven is contained in the deposit of Christian faith entrusted to the Church.”53

In reviewing the response from the diocesan ordinaries of the world, the editors of the London Tablet commented that the pope had no doubt about the advisability or opportuneness of the definition. They had declared in unison that the Assumption was a truth contained in God’s revelation: “We have, therefore, the proof that the residential Bishops, as the witnesses and custodians of revelation, have declared with virtually complete unanimity that the Assumption of Our Lady is a truth contained in revelation, and that its definition is opportune.”54

The fact that Mary’s death was not included in the dogma was attributed to the influence of scholar Jugie of the advisory committee. Pohle considered the arguments from tradition so decisive that, when he wrote in 1914, the formal definition was just a matter of time. He thought that the day of the definition would be hastened by leaving aside the matter of Mary’s death.

The pontiff realized a growing concern among ecumenists regarding formalization of the dogma of the Assumption. A. Fischer, K. Rahner, F. Heiler, B. Altaner, K. Adam, E. Schlink, and W. Kuenneth were among those who expressed fears that the definition would terminate Catholic-Protestant dialogue.55 He was equally aware of the over-
whelming conviction of the believing and teaching Church.

H. Graef later pointed out that the second third of the twentieth century saw the beginning of publication of a variety of periodicals on Marian research and spirituality, including *Mariale Dagen* (Tongerloo, 1931), *Ephemerides mariologicae* (Madrid, 1951), *Marianist* (Dayton, Ohio, 1942), the *Marianum* (Rome, 1948), and *Marian Studies* (Dayton, Ohio, 1950). The Marian *Alma Sociæ Christi* congress of 1950 in Rome initiated similar national and international congresses.56 R. Laurentin commented that never had so much been written about Mary. G. Besutti listed the increases in the number of titles in his *Bibliografia Mariana*: 982 for 1948 and 1949; and 2,209 for 1950 and 1951. From 1952 to 1957 the number of titles totaled 5,758. These titles averaged about one thousand per year, excluding those not of a scholarly, scientific nature.57

**Sources of the Sensus Fidei**

**The Ordinary Magisterium: Depositum Fidei**

The bodily assumption of Mary had been accepted by the faithful for centuries without a serious challenge. When Pius XII uttered his infallible pronouncement, he did not extract some hidden section of the so-called deposit of faith and make a new *doctrinae* of it. Instead, he proclaimed a universal belief *that had already been reflected upon and prayed over in the living history of the Church.* The concordance between what-is-taught and what-is-believed was a necessary requirement for an infallible definition concerning a matter of faith:

Hæc "singularis catholicorum Antistitum et fidelium conspiratio," qui Dei Matris autummat corpoream in Caelum Assumptionem ut fidei dogma definiri posse, cum concordem Nobis praebat ordinarii Ecclesiae magisterii doctrinam concordemque christianorum populi fidem — quam idem magisterium sustinet ac dirigit — idcirco per semet ipsum ac ratione omnino certa ab omnibusque erroribus immuni manifestat eiusmodi privilegium veritatem esse a Deo revelatam in eoque contentam divino deposito, quod Christus tradit Sponsæ suæ fideliter custodiendum et infallibiliter declarandum.58

Pius XII did not trace evidence for the Assumption historically in a straight unbroken line back to the time of Mary, as Pius IX had attempted in *Ineffabilis Deus.* Rather, he relied upon the convergence of historical data from a variety of sources to demonstrate participation of the faithful in the prophetic role of the Church: "Various testimonies, indications, and signs of this common belief of the Church are evident from remote times down through the course of the centuries; and this same belief becomes more clearly manifest from day to day."59

In 1950 J. Me Vann and others wrote that explicit justification for the Assumption
did not exist in Scripture. John Damascene and Thomas Aquinas, among others, already had stated that explicit justification was not contained in Scripture. McVann believed certain biblical figures could be applied to the Virgin's resurrection, such as the ark of the covenant, fashioned of imperishable wood and borne triumphantly from Egypt to Mt. Sion, and the woman in heaven clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of seven stars. Yet such scriptural references have their use only in illustrating the doctrinal implications of a truth elicited from another source.

Prior to the definition McVann quoted Batie, rector of the Franciscan Athenaeum in Rome and a consultor to the Holy Office, who stated that "the Church does not need an unbroken chain of historical proof that a tradition existed all the way to apostolic times." Sufficient evidence was found in the acceptance by the Church Universal in a given age. This approach reflected the Christiani populi fides so as to bring to an explicit stage what it contained implicitly. Although the pope stated that all the proofs and considerations of the popes and theologians were based upon the Scripture as their ultimate foundation, he called upon the faith of the Church, communis Ecclesiae fides, rather than any scriptural passages, for dogmatic foundation.

Thomas Aquinas had clearly taught that theology did not establish Church dogmas but only accepted dogmatic formulae for discussion. In 1909 Pohle observed that "to attempt to solve a dogmatic problem by purely historical proofs, which had been tried more than once, involves the worst possible methodology." According to McVann, historic proof of continuity from apostolic times was not the only way to prove a tradition: sufficient proof could be established by the living belief of the present Church. Revelation of the New Covenant was principally contained in tradition. Paul wrote to the new Christians of Thessalonica: "Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have heard by word or by epistle" (II Thess. 2:14). Some revealed truth was committed to the Scriptures; much was not. This was clear from the end of John's gospel (21:25). Paul addressed Timothy: "The things that you have heard from me through many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others . . . O Timothy, guard the trust committed to your care." (II Tim 2:2; I Tim 6:20). The committed trust, or deposit of faith, contains many truths. Some have been officially defined by the Church. An unknown amount remains to be understood by ages to come and declared dogmas of faith by future guardians of the Church. Those which have already been defined are dogmas equal to the dogmas of holy writ. McVann proposed that all dogmas taken from tradition are formaliter present in revelation, the deposit of faith, given by God to the apostles and for safekeeping in the Church. Those explicitly revealed are self-evident. Those implicitly revealed are slowly recognized either as involved in some other clearly seen dogma as in a universal principle or recognized by comparison of two other revealed truths.

The faithful are aware that a truth belongs to tradition in two ways. First is the extraordinary teaching power of a general council or of the pope: "So the Council of Nicea defined that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, with the same divine nature as the
Father; so Pius IX defined that Mary was immaculate of original sin from the first moment of her existence. Second is the ordinary teaching authority, evidenced in the universal agreement that a certain truth has been revealed by God: through bishops of the world, Church Fathers, the constant teaching of theologians, liturgy, and the belief and devotion of the faithful. The tradition is recognized as part of God’s revelation. McVann wrote: “Christianity of the first century, or the first four centuries, is not the only witness to Tradition. The Church in 1950, being equally the Church of Christ’s promises as the Church in 325, is equally the custodian of His unwritten Revelation.”

In a decree from the Holy Office of 18 September 1861, Pius IX enunciated that the Church was obliged to teach the truth and protect, free from error, the deposit of faith entrusted to her by Jesus Christ. Earlier, in his encyclical Qui Pluribus of 9 November 1846, Pius IX declared that the Church was not an innovator of dogma. The First Vatican Council declared that the Church can only ask for the acceptance of doctrines that definitely have the approval of divine authority; there cannot be an infallible definition unless it concerns that which has been divinely revealed as true. The Council of Trent some three hundred years previously delivered the same message: “Supernatural revelation is contained in the Scriptures and in the unwritten tradition.” The Church can only draw her definable truths, as matters of divine and catholic faith, from the source of Scripture and apostolic tradition.

The formal content of revelation is the meaning that God intends to convey. In 1922, R. M. Schultes affirmed that dogma can embrace only those truths “which are the faithful expressions of what the Holy Spirit himself has directly made known to us.” Upon the death of the last apostle the entirety of public revelation had been given. In the course of her history the Church has relied on the tools of human language to penetrate more deeply into revealed truth. While the Church remained faithful to the meaning she attached to her formulae, Thomas Aquinas taught that over the years she clarified and brought forth deeper insights into the meaning of those dogmatic formulae.

In 1902, J. B. Terrien stated in his La Mère de Dieu that the resurrection of Mary in advance and her triumphal entry into Heaven with her living and glorified flesh, even though it is not yet a matter of divine faith, cannot be denied or doubted without incurring at least the reproach of... a most blame-worthy temerity.” This certitude springs from the unanimous agreement expressed in the Church since the beginning period of scholasticism. Unanimous belief was evidenced throughout the world by the faithful. The liturgy not only celebrated Mary’s passing away and the glorification of her soul, but the added double privilege of her physical being: the incorruptibility of her body — an exception to human fate — and her immediate entry into a new birth delayed for others until the end of the world. The belief reflected the universal moral testimony of the Church Fathers, homilists, and writers.

In 1925 V. Bainvel wrote that the Assumption of Mary had reached a point of maturity wherein an infallible definition could be expected. P. Renaudin had written the same in 1913. G. Matiusii and F. X. Godts followed with the same assessment in
1924. In 1921 J. Ernst attacked Renaudin's position, maintaining that neither the liturgy nor the evidence of the Fathers and theologians led to the conclusion that the Assumption was implicitly revealed. Later, in 1950, J. Duhr pointed out that the mistake of Ernst was "to falsify the perspective which dominates the evolution of all revealed doctrine and in particular of belief in the bodily Assumption of Mary." In 1928 F. J. Friedel wrote: "The universal belief of the faithful, the tradition of the Church, its teaching through the Liturgy, gives this doctrine such a character of certainty that the only thing wanting is the express, formal definition of the Infallible Teacher of Christendom." The Assumption was an exception to the general law by which God had decreed that all shall rise on the last day, and an anticipated application of the law in favor of the Virgin. Consequently, the Virgin similarly escaped the corruption of the tomb to which all are condemned as reflected in the command: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" (Genesis 3:19).

In 1928 L. de Grandmaison wrote that the magisterium did not depend on either theology or history. Rather, the Church, as the guardian of God's revealing word, had a twofold responsibility: she must protect the totality of revelation, and she must explicate that revelation gradually to its fulness. Any curtailment would be tantamount to sacrilege, and any addition would be apostasy. Immutability does not imply inflexibility. Grandmaison envisioned the development of dogma to include the right of the Church to define truths whose presence was not formally obvious in the deposit of faith, "a truth which would always remain for us virtually implicit."

In 1939 B. H. Merkelbach observed a moral unanimity among biblicists and theologians in their agreement that no explicit passage existed in Scripture concerning the Assumption. Jugie, however, believed that there had been considerable exaggeration pertaining to the "alleged barrenness of the Scriptures relative to this mystery." In 1948 Govenlock reflected the consensus of the time, that the Church must decide the propriety of any usage of holy writ in the definition of the Assumption. According to Jugie's statement in 1944, the Assumption mystery, through the action of the Holy Spirit indwelling within the Church, now took an ever more important place in the liturgical and theological life of the Church. Consequently, there had been a growing insistence that this "doctrine should acquire a new and vastly more significant status in the framework of orthodox Faith." In 1946 Duhr stated that the only way an historical fact could become a dogma would be through the most intimate association with revelation. A dogma could be pronounced even when no historical evidence existed. In 1948 Govenlock observed that prior to the definition, an individual Catholic, in good conscience, could refuse to believe in the Assumption without becoming a heretic. But the flood of petitions to the Holy See urged that the Assumption be defined by the Church "as a matter of explicit and obligatory Faith, . . . a dogma of divine and catholic faith." Govenlock proposed that the Assumption could not be defined on the basis of historical fact; rather, it would have to be formally contained in revelation, at least implicitly in another truth that had been explicitly revealed. For
Govenlock the development of dogma consisted in showing clearly and precisely what previously was only implicit in the body of revealed doctrine.

In 1948 Carter reaffirmed that the Holy Spirit resides permanently in the Church, that the universal Church can never fall into error, and that her every judgment is attributable to the Spirit, the custodian of truth: “An error of such proportion on such a subject would be the triumph of error in the teaching Church, which is of course an impossibility: Securus judicat orbis terrarum.” R. Garrigou-Lagrange had previously described God’s revelation as unfolding somewhat obscurely, “so that until the end of time the Church may infallibly propose these mysteries without ever changing their meanings.”

In 1951 Hamell observed that Pius XII did not ask exactly where the dogma could be found in Scripture or tradition in order to demonstrate that the Assumption was a revealed truth. The pontiff’s starting point was the magisterium, the teaching Church, and the belief of the members of the Church. He saw here the exercise of the ordinary magisterium, another source of the infallible guidance of the Spirit. The function of the ecclesia docens from the beginning was not to initiate new truth but to formulate and to interpret that which had been revealed by the apostles. True faith is not formulated by the investigation and findings of theologians and the faithful; it is formally established by the official guardians of revelation, the pope in union with the bishops. “The Magisterium,” Hamell asserted, “teaches that the Assumption is a truth revealed by God, and its teaching establishes with infallible certainty the revealed character of the doctrine.” He offered a summary of Pius XII’s presentation: all arguments are traceable to the bible, which described Mary’s intimate association with her Son and his sharing his destiny. His conclusion was that both Scripture and tradition taught that Mary’s assumption in body and soul constituted her complete conquest over sin and death:

We cannot believe, in the light of this, that Mary, after her earthly life, could be united with her Son only in her soul; her body too must share His glory. As it was in Christ’s power to honour His Mother by preserving her from the corruption of the grave, we are compelled to believe that He did so honour her.

In 1948 Carter suggested that one reason the Assumption had not already been defined was that it was so readily accepted within the Catholic Church and so little criticized outside. It had become such an integral part of Catholic thought that it had simply been presumed by many to have been a formal article of faith, a part of the commonly received credence of the Catholic Church. In light of this, G. Mitchell wondered what would be gained by formally defining the Assumption. If it were desirable to have a definition, why had that dogma not already been defined? Many believed that the Assumption already was a matter of faith taught by the ordinary magisterium.

In 1948 Lonergan posed the question: is the Assumption definable? His was a categorically affirmative answer. From at least the seventh century the universal belief in the Assumption had been increasingly accepted both in the universality of its belief and
the precision of its expression.91

According to Jugie, some doubts existed concerning the existence of this feast in the years prior to the middle ages.92 Lonergan relied on the historical scholarship of Jugie's classical work, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, but noted its diminished value because of the author's favoring of improbable theological opinions. In Jugie's estimation, theologians of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries clarified the teaching concerning the Assumption in the medieval period, and the Renaissance completed the removal of any obscurity remaining from the dark ages. Lonergan considered the Renaissance a pivotal point in the history of the doctrine: it was not denied prior to that time and not denied afterward. Lonergan agreed on this. This historical affirmation of the Church provided a theological basis for acceptance of the truth.93 If the Assumption were false, then God would be responsible for preserving his Church in error: an intrinsic impossibility. The overall unanimity of the petitions presented to Rome, regardless of possible difference of interpretation, "preponderantly affirm the Assumption definable as a matter of faith."94 The universal acceptance of the truth through the ages by the Church in general constituted the theological affirmation of the doctrine.

Lonergan offered the following logical summary for the Assumption: it is Christian belief that all will rise on the last day from the dead, and a matter of faith that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion. Similarly, it is a matter of faith that the body of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, never knew corruption and, like her Son, received the gift of an anticipated resurrection. "By dogma of the Assumption is meant precisely that incorruption and anticipated resurrection from the dead."95 Lonergan emphasized the difference between explicit and implicit revelation. Catholics accept not only the word of revelation but also its meaning. What is read is explicit; what is understood is implicit:

> While it is explicit that Peter is the rock, still it is only implicit that Peter is to have successors, that after Peter's death the Church is not to be moved from its rock foundation and foolishly be rebuilt upon a foundation of sand; one must not merely read but also understand.96

Lonergan noted the risk in understanding the meaning of revelation — dealing only with the literal words is safer. But the latter course would bury the talent in the ground and necessitate living as if there were no revelation. The meaning must be addressed. Catholics reject the notion that public revelation should be interpreted privately, or that they must accept the meaning discovered by private inspiration or upheld by private judgment. God's Church is for all persons from all levels of society. God did not confide his word to biblical scholars or theologians; he confided it to the Church.

Lonergan referred to the criticism that the Assumption depended upon the apocrypha, a collection of legendary writings that appeared in the fifth and sixth centuries. Gelasius I (492-496) condemned one such account of the Assumption as not reliable and so not acceptable. Lonergan then referred to the announcement of the Feast of the
Assumption which was read in the Roman Martyrology for a number of centuries:

The Falling Asleep of Mary the Holy Mother of God. Though her most sacred body is not to be found on earth, still Holy Mother Church celebrates her venerable memory with no doubt that she has left this life. But as to where the venerable temple of the Holy Ghost has been hidden by divine Providence, the sobriety of the Church prefers pious ignorance to any frivolous or apocryphal doctrine.\(^{97}\)

This cautious statement was read each year in the Basilica of St. Peter’s in Rome for eleven centuries, from the decree of Gelasius to the reform of the Roman Martyrology by Baronius in 1584. According to Lonergan, it would not make sense that, if Mary were full of grace, she would be deprived of the fuller grace of an anticipated resurrection with her Son, participating instead in the lesser grace of resurrection on the last day with the rest of sinful humankind:

But if Our Lady was free from original sin, which is the ground of death and corruption, if throughout her life she was in the grace of God, and grace is the ground of resurrection, if she was freed from the curse of Eve and the pangs of Motherhood and so blessed among women that the fruits of grace were revealed not only in her soul but also in her body, then how could she be subject to the curse, “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return”?\(^{98}\)

This argument could be endlessly developed. Its main value was to establish not only the bodily incorruption of Mary but also her anticipated resurrection. The ordinary teaching authority of the Church had committed itself during the previous eighty years to the belief in the Assumption as a matter of faith. This, in comparison with the opinion of theologians, was the significant factor: the Church had been given the Holy Spirit to keep it from error in these matters. The replies of the bishops throughout the world convinced Pius XII to make the definition so that a part of the deposit of faith could be preached clearly to the universal Church.

McVann believed that the greatest assurance of the doctrine, beyond that of the definition, was that it was taught by the ordinary teaching authority and that it was believed by the Church throughout the world. It suffices for the Assumption to be accepted universally by the Church during the period of a given age. It was the answer Pius XII received from the universal hierarchy.

In 1950, G. Mitchell made the following observations concerning the definition of the Assumption. The faithful believed it and theologians sought evidence of this in the sources of revelation. Christ had not presented his Church with a predetermined set of propositions in precise formulae to be handed over intact until the end of time. Rather, he gave his Church a living teaching authority to transmit his truth with fidelity through the centuries. The magisterium is a vibrant, living, personal authority that presents the
word of God in language appropriate for the faithful at their particular point in history. The *consensus fidelium* becomes more explicit over the years through a deeper understanding of the mysteries and through a gradual unfolding of their implications. This did not have to be expressed through the extraordinary magisterium, an *ex cathedra* papal pronouncement or ecumenical conciliar definition in union with the pope. It was sufficient that this infallible guidance from error and keeping in the truth be expressed by the bishops throughout the world in union with Peter's successor.\(^9\)

In 1950, according to J. M. Fraunces, the individual believer had the support of the Church's entire teaching authority concerning the Assumption and was not left to discern the truth privately. The Church saw the entire context, the complete significance of this mystery. The Church does not isolate a text of Scripture or writings from patristics nor deal with bits of information in isolation; the evidence is not added up to arrive at a sum total. Rather, the Church takes the totality of given data and uncovers further details gradually that had been originally contained in that data, through her reflection and as occasion mandates. For example, it was always taught in the Church that sin can never be associated with Mary and that all freedom from sin comes through the merits of Christ. Over the years it became clear that original sin is actually a form of sin: the merits of Christ can preserve from sin as well as forgive sin after the actual commission. Once the concepts of sin and redemption were clarified, it became obvious to Fraunces that the teaching on the Immaculate Conception had always been contained implicitly in revelation. Likewise, the Church knew that her belief in the presence of Mary's glorified body in heaven was simply the result of the privileges Mary possessed as the virginal and all holy *Theotokos*, "who followed her Son from earth to heaven step by step."\(^10\)

While the number of dogmas grows in the sense of becoming explicit, public revelation ended with the death of the last apostle; consequently, that revelation is changeless. The Holy Spirit did not hand over to the apostles a fully developed and recognizable set of truths. The Lord compared his kingdom to a mustard tree, grown from the tiny seed, that would increase in the knowledge of God's word. Thus duality of immutability and of doctrinal growth was discerned by the time of Vincent of Lerins. Around the year 430 he wrote his *Commonitorium* which included the well known passage *Crescat igitur*:

> So the understanding, knowledge, and wisdom not only of individuals but of the whole Church as well must grow and mightily advance throughout ages and centuries, but only in its own kind, that is, in the same dogma, the same sense, and the same meaning. Let the religion of the soul resemble the growth of the body, which, though it develops its parts in the progress of years, yet remains what it was originally.\(^10\)

In the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman, in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, expressed a belief that there necessarily must be a development of dogma: "From the necessity of the case . . . and from the example of Scripture, we may
fairly conclude that Christian doctrine admits of formal, legitimate, and true developments, that is, of developments contemplated by its divine author. 102 McVann was of the opinion that valid Christianity is not a sterile, shackled intelligence. There must be a supreme authority to pronounce upon the legitimate contents of revelation. Christ gave this charism of infallibility to Peter and his successors.

E. R. Carroll recalled that to demonstrate that the Assumption was a part of revelation, Pius XII appealed in his encyclical primarily to “the concordant teaching of the Church’s ordinary doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of all the Christian people which the same doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of the Christian people sustains and directs.” 103

Carroll outlined the development of papal approval for this dogma over the years. According to Carroll, the Church acts infallibly when she constructs her liturgy. “The Apostolic See has used its authority to encourage the feast of the Assumption and to explain its true sense.” 104 From this universal consent of the ordinary magisterium of the Church the pontiff drew his certain and firm argument for the promulgation of the Assumption as a dogma of faith. His intention in Munificentissimus Deus was to trace throughout the centuries all the converging indications of the acceptance of this doctrine in the Ecclesia docens and Ecclesia discens. In the later words of Igino Cardinale, that would constitute for him a “formidable and irrefutable argument” for the definition: “The belief of the faithful, the liturgy, the feast in the Western Church, the witness of the Eastern and Western Fathers and of the Doctors of the Church, the constant belief of the Church in a truth which was prefigured in Scripture.” 105 The pontiff appealed to the First Vatican Council to substantiate his judgment:

All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written word of God or in tradition, and which are proposed by the Church, either in solemn judgment or in its ordinary and universal teaching office, as divinely revealed truths which must be believed. 106

This common belief of the faithful, the sensus fidelium, including the belief of theologians, had been experienced in the Church community from the beginning. It required the formal endorsement and binding proclamation of the successor to Peter. The purpose of the ensuing definition was not to defend some essential formulation of faith from heretical attack. Neither were Church members asked to believe in it because of then present world conditions. Nor did the pontiff ask his flock to believe simply because it had been defined. Rather, the Assumption was proclaimed to unfold what was already believed, to intensify the pious fervor of the faithful. 107

It was finally defined to be believed because of the already existing belief. The testimony of Church Fathers in both the East and West, the prefiguration in both Testaments, the faith, and the liturgical and prayer life of God’s people all attested to the Assumption and made belief in the resurrection both stronger and more active. There was
an active transition, not from belief to life, but from the lived to the believed.

J. M. R. Tillard, in 1975, recounted this *de facto* transition from the existential to the theological expression of the dogma. Through a gradual development of this dogma, the Spirit prompted the precise moment in God's providence for a precise expression of faith:

This register which goes from the data of faith to faith lived, in a movement from the content of faith to the forms that manifest its translation in the concrete life, exists in osmosis with another register which works in the opposite direction. This time one goes from the lived to the believed.¹⁰⁸

Pius XII looked upon the Church as a living organism, something dynamic and not static. He knew the Church was under the constant surveillance and custody of the Holy Spirit. Christ himself had promised that the Spirit would keep the Church from any taint of error in her teachings and would guide her into the truth. In the contrary view, the Church would be a static one, similar to a cadaver in its refusal to respond to the Spirit. Pius XII perceived the definition as a response to the Spirit's invitation to proclaim with the authority of God, speaking a truth originally given to the apostles.

The statement of the Irish hierarchy was an example of the great joy that the definition of the Assumption brought to the hearts of the faithful. The bishops reiterated that the Assumption was not something new. Rather, the liturgy, art, and teaching of the Church had engraved the belief on the hearts of the faithful over the centuries. After the statement of Ephesus concerning the divine maternity, the *ecclesia discens* and *orans* gradually unfolded the fullness of meaning inherent in Jesus' complete victory over death and sin on her behalf. The Irish bishops pointed out that the Assumption was a supernatural fact guaranteed by God's word. The Churches of the East, not in union with Rome, ardently maintained the same belief: "In common with the faithful throughout the world they have for centuries held firmly to the belief that the virginal body of Mary, Mother of God conceived without sin, was not allowed to suffer corruption but was taken up into heaven and throned above the angels."¹⁰⁹

Over the centuries, in belief and in devotion, the teaching and believing Church had consistently believed in that golden Marian thread that ran the course of salvation history: Mary, predestined by God to be Theotokos, was conceived without sin, remained always a virgin, and was finally assumed into glory. Members of the Church had believed from the beginning that Mary suffered like her Son in this life and had passed from this life to join him in his resurrection. They believed in addition that while she did leave this world, Mary did not undergo bodily corruption. "But this in no way prevented them from believing and from professing openly that her sacred body had never been subject to the corruption of the tomb, and that the august tabernacle of the Divine Word had never been reduced to dust and ashes."¹¹⁰ With God's assisting grace the faithful perceived even more clearly the order and the wonderful harmony existent
within the exceptional privileges that God had bestowed upon Mary as Mother of his Son and as participant in humankind’s salvation, “privileges which reach such an exalted plane that except for her, nothing created by God other than the human nature of Jesus Christ has ever reached this level.”

Supporting evidence for this persistent belief was illustrated in manifestations of faith over the centuries: sacred images of Mary that had evoked devotion; her patronage over cities, regions, and dioceses under the title of her Assumption; religious communities named after that mystery; and finally, the Rosary, whose traditional fourth Glorious mystery is that of the Assumption.

The editors of the London Tablet described the great surprise of so many non-Catholics that the Assumption had not been defined as a dogma long ago. The feast was customarily celebrated in an elaborate manner throughout the world, and non-Catholics had grown accustomed to seeing churches and religious orders dedicated to the Assumption.

The Liturgy

Pius XII recalled that in general, the liturgies of the East and West manifested belief by bishops and laity in the Assumption:

The holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church have never failed to draw enlightenment from this fact since ... the sacred liturgy, “because it is the profession, subject to the supreme teaching authority within the Church, of heavenly truth, can supply proofs and testimonies of no small value for deciding a particular point of Christian doctrine.”

Liturgical books expressed the belief that it was fitting for the virginal, immaculate Theotokos, in accordance with God’s will, to be assumed after this life in bodily incorruption into glory. The Assumption became the principal Marian feast by the year 700, celebrating the day of her death, or “birthday,” as was the case with the martyrs and all the other saints. According to the Liber Pontificalis, dating back to the year 508, Mary’s Assumption originally was observed in the Eastern Church on the same day as observed now throughout the Catholic world — 15 August. The Assumption was celebrated on 15 August in Rome, according to Graef’s estimation from research, by the year 650. It was introduced in Rome during the reign of Pope Theodore between 642 and 649.

Sergius I, who had initiated the four processional stations in Rome in about the year 700, requested a prayer be prepared to honor the departure of Mary from this world. He directed that it be recited on 15 August, with the text: “Veneranda nobis, Domine, huius est diei festivitas, in qua sancta Dei Genetrix mortem subiit temporalem, nee tamen mortis nexibus deprimi potuit, quae Filium tuum, Dominum nostrum, de se genuit incarnatum.” Adrian I (772-795) quoted this Veneranda, which he had taken from the Sacramentarium Gregorianum, in a letter to Charlemagne. Pius XII quoted it in his encyclical.
The Gallicanum Sacramentarium offered a more exacting description than the Gregorianum Sacramentarium. It emphasized the unique aspect of the mystery and described it as "an ineffable mystery all the more worthy of praise as the Virgin’s Assumption is unique among men." According to J. Terbovich, the Byzantine liturgy described the causal link between Mary’s final triumph and her virginity, as well as her divine maternity. He recalled the words of Pius XII: “God, the King of the universe, has granted thee favors that surpass nature. As He kept thee a virgin in childbirth, thus He has kept thy body incorrupt in the tomb and has glorified it by His divine act of transferring it from the tomb.”

A Gothic missal used in Gaul prior to the eighth century contained a passage concerning Mary’s incorruptible return to heaven:

Fratres carissimi, fusis precibus Dominum imploremus, ut eius indulgentia illuc defuncti liberentur a tartara, quo beatae Virginis translatum est corpus de sepulcro. . . . Quo (tempore) Virgo Dei genitrix mundo migravit ad Christum, quae nec de corruptione susceptit contagium nec resolutionem pertulit in sepulcro: pollutione libera, germine gloriosa, assumptione secura, paradiso dote praelata. . . . Recte ab ipso suscepta es in assumptione feliciter, quem pie susceptisti conceptura per fidem, ut quae terrae non eras conscia, non teneret rupes inclusa.

The popes, ever conscious of their duty to confirm the faith of their brethren, took steps over the years to solemnize certain aspects of the feast, so that the faithful could appreciate more fully and clearly the magnitude of the mystery it commemorates. The first step consisted in raising the feast’s liturgical rank. In the seventh century, a reference in the Liber Pontificalis made mention of the fact that Pope St. Sergius I had extended the privilege of the stational procession in about the year 700 for the feast of the Purification to the already celebrated feast of the Dormition of Mary, as well as to the Nativity and Annunciation. In the ninth century, Pope St. Leo IV (d. 855) instituted the liturgical vigil and octave for the feast, which was already being celebrated under the title of the Assumption. In the ninth century Pope St. Nicholas I (d. 867) made reference to the ancient custom of the vigil fast for the Assumption as one of the principal fasts “which the Holy Roman Church has observed for a long time, and still observes.” The encyclical also referred to the solemn liturgical offices in the East. It had certainly been celebrated there during the sixth century, and most likely at some point during the fifth.

C. Morin noted in 1948 that when Emperor Maurice decided upon 15 August for the uniform date of the feast of the Assumption, he restored the church structure that had been built a hundred years before upon the Virgin’s tomb at Gethsemane. The Byzantines considered that site as Mary’s grave. Morin stated that in the homilies of that era “Mary’s resurrection is also mentioned and commemorated with her assumption and unceasing mediation in heaven.” According to the writing of S. Salaville in 1949, the Assumption...
was celebrated in Jerusalem from about the year 450.\textsuperscript{127}

The Assumption is the most ancient Marian feast that celebrates an individual mystery of the Mother of God. During the first three centuries, the period of persecution, the liturgy was the weekly dominical celebration of Easter Sunday. Only after the year 200 was Christ honored in his heroic witnesses to the faith, the martyrs, at their place of interment and on their \textit{dies natalis}, the day of their birth into heaven. With Constantine the Church was free to develop a liturgy. The mysteries in Christ's life included Mary as an integral part. The devotion of the faithful for Mary was expressed first in the universally observed feast of the Memory of Saint Mary, a synthesis of her mysteries. This feast was never celebrated in the Gallican Church; but in the first half of the sixth century it celebrated a feast of the Assumption wherein Mary’s death, resurrection, and assumption, body and soul, into heaven were clearly articulated. Morin noted in 1948 that this exception was found in the Eastern Churches, \textit{in Egypt and Syria} (i.e. the celebration of the Feast of the Assumption without a prior celebration of the Feast of the Memory of Saint Mary).\textsuperscript{128}

The liturgical feast and its theology had been well developed by the year 600. The Preface, or \textit{Contestatio}, of an old Gothic Mass supported this view. In 1941 W. McGarry referred to the connection established by these words in relation to Mary’s final end and her sinless beginning:

\begin{quote}
It is meet and just, Almighty God, that we give great thanks at this day and time, honorable above others, when faithful Israel went out from Egypt and the Virgin Mother of God passed from earth to Christ. She inherited no touch of corruption, and felt not its effect in her grave. She was free from all stain, glorious in her Conception, made secure in her Assumption, and crowned with her reward in paradise. She had suffered no virgin’s loss in marriage, yet had her desire in the fruit of her womb. She endured no pains in her travail, nor fatigue in her transit to heaven. In life she was unstained through acts of her own, and in death undissolved by the forces of nature.\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

In 600 Emperor Maurice, discovering that the feast had gained such popularity in certain areas during the previous century, issued an imperial decree for its celebration throughout the empire. He directed that this be done on 15 August under the title of the Dormition of Our Lady.\textsuperscript{130} In 1958 Terbovich stated that, since the feast had been celebrated in Ephesus during the first century, it was the oldest feast of the Virgin. He mentioned that some found its origin in the establishment of a church in Kathisma, which was situated between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, by a Roman lady named Ikelia, during the fourth century.\textsuperscript{131} In 1928 S. Hogan agreed with Dom Cabrol, a liturgical expert, that the origins of the liturgical celebration could be traced to the pilgrims who came to the tomb of Our Lady in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{132} According to O’Carroll and Hegener, the feast of the Dormition was known in Jerusalem from about 430.\textsuperscript{133}
A feast in the fifth century celebrated the Memory of the Mother of God. In some countries it was celebrated on 15 August. Davis observed that some believed that this feast was celebrated in Ephesus after the council in 431, since it had an obvious connection with the Theotokos doctrine.\textsuperscript{134} The feast must have been locally established before the Councils of Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 541, since the Ethiopians, Nestorians, and Armenians broke from the Church shortly after these two councils yet maintained the feast on 15 August. At the beginning of the sixth century a basilica in Gethsemane was claimed to be in possession of the Virgin Mary’s tomb. It celebrated the feast of 15 August that had been decreed, but a parallel interest developed in the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Mary’s death.\textsuperscript{135}

From the seventh century, Jugie reported a series of Marian liturgical feasts.\textsuperscript{136} In 620 John of Thessalonica remarked on the widespread character of the Assumption feast. The \textit{Wurzburg Comes}, the oldest known lectionary dating from the seventh century, listed the feast in a document for the first time.\textsuperscript{137} In the eighth century St. John Damascene with other homilists declared that the object of the feast was not only the death of Mary but also her glorification in body and soul.\textsuperscript{138} In 920 the Council of Union declared that the Dormition, along with Easter and the Nativity of the Lord, constituted the three primary feasts of the liturgical year.\textsuperscript{139}

The liturgy emphasized the entry of the Virgin into heaven. Yet according to Hogan, the Collect, Secret, and Post-Communion prayers for the feast in the old Roman Missal seemed to insist more on Mary’s mediation and intercession rather than on her personal glory and triumph:

\begin{quote}
Forgive, O Lord, we beseech Thee, the sins of Thy servants; that we, who by our own deeds are unable to please Thee, may be saved by the Intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, Our Lord;

May the prayer of the Mother of God aid us, O Lord; and, although we know that she passed away from this life to fulfill the lot of her mortal flesh, may we nevertheless experience her intercession with Thee in the glory of Heaven;

We who have been made partakers of Thy heavenly banquet implore Thy mercy, O Lord our God, that as we honor the Assumption of the Mother of God, so through her intercession, we may be freed from all the evils that threaten us.\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

Many names have been given to this feast. Mary’s “falling asleep” (\textit{koimesis} in Greek; \textit{uspenie} in Russian) was the traditional name given. The Latin Church later translated these literally using \textit{dormitio} or \textit{pausatio}, or sometimes \textit{transitus} or \textit{depositio}. The feast was named “sleep” (\textit{dormitio}), the “ending” or “birthday” of the Virgin, or the deposition, ascension, or exaltation of the Mother of God. Oriental liturgies commonly referred to it as the Assumption or the Journey of the Blessed Mother of God into Heaven,
and believed in the bodily assumption. Hogan stated that the name Assumption had rightly prevailed: "No other term so fittingly expresses the triumphant entry of Our Lady into Heaven, since it does not refer to her bodily assumption only, but to the whole mystery of her unique and sublime exaltation." Among the Byzantines the feast dealt both with the death, or *transitus*, of Mary and her assumption. In the eleventh century, J. Mauropous described the object of the feast in the following words: "Today we celebrate the dormition of the Mother of God, her deposition, the translation (*metastasis*), and the exaltation of her ascension (*anabasis*)." The church of the Armenians declared in their 1342 symbol of union: "The Church of the Armenians believes and holds that the holy Mother of God was by the power of Christ assumed with her body into Heaven." The Greek Orthodox church retained the custom of solemnizing the festival of the Assumption at a council held in 1672 at Jerusalem, proclaiming: "Though the immaculate body of Mary was locked in the tomb, yet, like Christ, she was assumed and migrated to Heaven and on the third day."

**The Voice of the Church Fathers**

The preaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church on the feast of the Assumption was derived primarily from the existing *sensus fidei*. Homilies developed more precisely than liturgical books not only the fact that Mary's body remained incorruptible, but also that she triumphed over death in imitation of her Son through her heavenly glorification. According to Fraunces, the Church in early times celebrated only the death of Mary and the entry of her soul into heaven. A clear statement was made by St. Gregory of Tours (d. 596) in about 590: "The Lord commanded the holy body (of Mary after her death) to be borne on a cloud to Paradise, where, reunited to its soul, and exulting with the Elect, it enjoys the never ending bliss of eternity." Fraunces considered that this statement exhibited the influence of the apocrypha. Yet in his opinion, that source had an indirect influence on the verification of the doctrine. Fourth century Christians were sensitive to heresy which flourished at that time. Beliefs concerning Mary developed into the great dogmatic controversy of Nestorianism, essentially a christological issue addressed at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Fraunces believed that the Assumption apocrypha could not become immediately widespread unless the Assumption belief was already a widespread belief among the faithful. He noted too that the Church condemned the apocrypha but never condemned the Assumption. The Church was aware that any evidence for the doctrine had come from the Church herself. Testimony may have come from St. Gregory of Tours and others, but they learned of it only from the Church. While the feast celebrated only the death of Mary and the entry of her soul into heaven, while the apocrypha are fictional (although their authors had learned the fact of the Assumption from the Church), while Scripture may appear to be silent on the subject, the Church alone celebrated Mary's unique entry into heaven, and Scripture does not deny this heavenly event. According to Fraunces, the Church Fathers based their belief on Mary's perpetual virginity and her divine maternity. These
promised her incorruptibility and a singular dignity within the human race.

Pius XII eclectically but purposefully chose for his encyclical the selected writings of representative authors over a span of many centuries to demonstrate the constant presence of common belief of the faithful. Sermons that appeared in *Munificentissimus Deus* attempted to show that Mary's Assumption was congruent and coherent with her divine maternity, with her virginity, and with her original source of holiness or blessedness, the Immaculate Conception. They also saw the Assumption as a corollary of Christ's going to glory and of his divine power.

John Damascene (d. between 749-753) was the great doctor of the Assumption. This was illustrated by his three homilies on the subject. The encyclical quoted a passage from his second homily, which connected the Assumption with the *virginitas in partu* and the union of Mary with her Son:

> It was fitting that she who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse whom the Father had taken to Himself should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she who had seen her Son upon the Cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in the act of giving birth to Him should look upon Him as He sits with the Father. It was fitting that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the Handmaid of God.147

This quotation can be completed by two other texts of John Damascene which are taken from his first and third homilies but are not included in *Munificentissimus Deus*:

> But even though, according to nature, your most holy and happy soul is separated from your most blessed and stainless body, and the body as usual is delivered to the tomb, it will not remain in the power of death and is not subject to decay. For just as her virginity remained inviolate while giving birth, when she departed from life her body was preserved from destruction and only taken to a better and divine tabernacle which is not subject to any death.148

In the third of John Damascene's Assumption homilies, he stated:

> Today the living city of God was transported from the earthly Jerusalem into the heavenly Jerusalem. She who gave birth to the Firstborn of every creature, the only Begotten of the Father and her only Son, herself was given dwelling in the church of the first born.
Chapter I

The animated and rational ark was transported to the abode of her Son. Is it true that the source of life, that the Mother of my Lord died? Yes because it was necessary that that which was of earth return to the earth, and be thus transported from earth to heaven, after having received immortal life. It was necessary that the incorruptible and immaculate flesh (of the Virgin) pass like gold through the crucible of death, to lay aside the opaque earthly mass of mortality and rise from the grave all radiant with the brightness of incorruptibility.  

Clearly, Pius XII avoided using any texts that made reference to the Apocrypha. Yet John Damascene and other homilists used these legends, as evidenced in John Damascene's second homily. However, that part of his homily which tells the “Euthymiac Story” is an interpolation; furthermore, the author of this legend has still to be identified. Nevertheless, this legend has its interest. According to this so-called Historia euthymiac, when St. Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, was at the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Emperor Marcian and Pulcheria expressed to him their wish to possess the body of the Mother of God because they had heard that this body was buried in the Church of the Theotokos at Gethsemane. Juvenal explained to them that Mary died in the presence of the Apostles, but that her tomb, when opened upon the request of St. Thomas, was found empty. Juvenal added that the Apostles concluded that the Lord of Glory honored the virginal body of his mother with the privilege of incorruptibility and took her away.

In John Damascene's authentic texts, we see that he used the Apocrypha only by allusion, in order to pass to theological reflection. It also inspired his poetical prose style. M. Jugie notes the various expressions (“it seems to me,” etc.) by which the Damascene introduced “historical conjectures” without giving them a true historical value.

M. Jugie also makes an interesting comparison between John Damascene and two other homilists of the same period: Germanus of Constantinople and Andrew of Crete:

By his style and his doctrine John is much nearer to Germanus than to Andrew. Like the first, he has a simple, clear style and uses freely, but more discreetly, some apocrypha. At the same time, with the same frankness as Saint Andrew of Crete, he warns us that the various details about the death and burial of Mary — the words which are put on the lips of some people, even at the tomb of Gethsemane — are mere conjectures or rhetorical figures.

Besides John Damascene, the Holy Father quotes two other Greek homilists: Germanus of Constantinople and “another very ancient writer.” From St. Germanus of Constantinople (c. 635-733), the Pope takes only a theological consideration and ignores the description of the Dormition which is heavily dependent on the Apocrypha. However, this is a faithful use of the homily of Germanus because this author used the legend only as an interesting background (that he believed historical) to develop the divine reasons for the glorification granted by Jesus to his Mother in her soul and her
body. The Pope cites the particular reason of "the special holiness (spiritual beauty) of (Mary's) virginal body":

You are she who, as it is written, appears in beauty, and your virginal body is all holy, all chaste, entirely the dwelling place of God, so that it is henceforth completely exempt from dissolution into dust. Though still human, it is changed into the heavenly life of incorruptibility, truly living and glorious, undamaged and sharing in perfect life.\textsuperscript{154}

The Pope also quotes "another very ancient writer," a text attributed to St. Modestus of Jerusalem:

As the most glorious Mother of Christ, our Savior and God and the giver of life and immortality, has been endowed with life by Him, she has received an internal incorruptibility of the body together with Him who has raised her up from the tomb and has taken her up to Himself in a way known only to Him.\textsuperscript{155}

While the encyclical did not name Modestus as the author, it quoted the text to continue the same theme of immortality. Jugie, a member of the encyclical's drafting committee, objected to the authenticity of the text because of internal evidence; however, he was convinced that it was certainly a work of the seventh or eighth century.\textsuperscript{156}

A careful reading of these texts indicates a singular difference between Mary's passing away and the birthday of the saints in heaven. While the Fathers praised Mary's soul, they further directed their attention to her body, incorruptible and resurrected. This is clear in a passage from John Damascene:

O admirable passing, which gives admittance to the presence of God. For though it be granted by God to all the servants filled with God, . . . there is, however, an infinite difference between the servants of God and His Mother. How then shall we name the mystery accomplished in thee? Dead, without doubt? Nevertheless, if in the natural course of events her holy and blessed soul is separated from her venerable and spotless body, and if her body has been consigned to the grave, according to the prescriptions, still it will not remain in death and will not be prey of corruption.\textsuperscript{157}

Again, he speaks of the presence of her incorruptible body in heaven:

Your pure and spotless body has not been abandoned in the earth. But after your transference into the royal abode of heaven, there you sit as queen, mistress, sovereign, true Mother of God.\textsuperscript{158}

Pseudo-Modestus of Jerusalem also spoke of Mary's incorruptibility because of her divine maternity: "O blessed Falling Asleep, which knows not at all the decomposition
of the tomb because the all powerful Lord Jesus Christ has preserved untouched the flesh from which He was born.”

According to Duhr, the Fathers invariably associated the maternity and virginity of Mary; they pointed toward her Assumption not separate from but in union with these. St. Andrew of Crete (d. 740) praised Mary and associated great things with her:

Blessed in heaven, and glorified on earth. For every tongue with grateful sentiment and piously, preaches about thee, glorifying thee as Mother of life. Every creature is filled with thy glory. All things have been made holy by the odour of thy fragrance; through thee the occasion of sin has been abolished; the ways of the first parent have been transformed into joy. Through thee all the angels sing with us: “Glory in heaven; peace on earth.”

The three homilies of John Damascene presented the Assumption as a long accepted belief of the Church. The only purpose of the Damascene was to honor the Theotokos by developing the doctrinal reasons for the tradition passed “from father to son” in Jerusalem. The Greek Fathers, in Pohle’s opinion, considered the Assumption a reunion of Son and Mother in heaven. According to St. Theodore Studita (d. 826):

The true mountain of Sion on which . . . God condescended to dwell, migrates from among these terrestrial hills and approaches the celestial mountains. Today the terrestrial heaven, clothed in the garb of immutability, is transplanted to a better and eternal habitation. Today the divinely illumined spiritual moon ascends towards the sun of justice and takes leave of this life to re-arise in the splendor of immortality. Today the golden shrine which God Himself made is removed from the terrestrial tents to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Fathers who treat the Assumption present an orthodox Christology. They see the Church, in giving Mary the title Theotokos, as propounding the hypostatic union, that of the divine and human natures in the person of the Eternal Word, Son of God and son of Mary. The implications which flow therefrom constitute the foundation for their belief in the Assumption. Mary and her Son are so intimately united that they are inseparable on earth and in heaven. Mary conceived her Son physically and in faith: Mary was united to her Son at Bethlehem, in Resurrection, always.

Scrutiny by Scholastic Theologians

As the popularity of the feast of the Assumption became widespread, bishops, preachers, and theologians felt obliged to explicate both the mystery and its harmony with scriptural revelation. They believed that Jesus Christ willed that Mary be assumed into heaven, and the basis of their proof was her divine maternity and ensuing prerogatives which included “her exalted holiness, entirely surpassing the sanctity of all
men and of the angels, the intimate union of Mary with her Son, and the affection of preeminent love which the Son has for His most worthy Mother.\footnote{162} Pius XII stated that often theologians and homilists imitated some of the Church Fathers in their liberal interpretation of some scriptural expressions and events.\footnote{163}

The scholastic Doctors taught that Mary was prefigured, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well, as the Woman clothed with the Sun, contemplated by John on the isle of Patmos. The New Testament words “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women” were significant. In the mystery of the Assumption the scholastics saw the special gracing of Mary by God and the special blessing that countered the curse of Eve.

The pope referred to the following cited authors in his encyclical. Amadeus, Bishop of Lausanne and disciple of St. Bernard at Clairvaux (1110-1159), wrote eight sermons on Mary, one on the “Ascension and Assumption to Understanding.” He taught the bodily assumption of the Virgin and understood Mary to have taken the place of the angels who had fallen from heaven “in the realm of eternal light and on the highest throne, first after her divine Son, who had taken flesh from her as a humble servant.”\footnote{164} Amadeus thought it incongruous to believe that her body ever saw corruption since it had been reunited with her soul and brought directly to the great glory of the heavenly abode: “For she was full of grace and blessed among women. She alone merited to conceive the true God of true God, whom as a virgin, she brought forth, to whom as a virgin she gave milk, fondling Him in her lap, and in all things she waited upon Him with loving care.”\footnote{165}

St. Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) included six sermons on Mary, one on the Assumption, in his \textit{In Laudem B. Mariae}. Pius XII quoted a summary statement from it in his encyclical: “Thus you have it clearly that the Blessed Virgin in her body . . . was assumed.”\footnote{166} Still referring to the golden age of scholastic theology, Pius XII spoke of St. Albert the Great, \textit{Doctor Universalis}, offering the source of the following proof for the Assumption that had been gleaned from Scripture, tradition, liturgy, and the reasoning of theologians. But \textit{Munificentissimus Deus} quoted the summary of all the preceding thought that had been made by a Pseudo-Albert: “From these proofs and authorities and from many others, it is manifest that the most blessed Mother of God has been assumed above the choirs of angels. And this we believe in every way to be true.”\footnote{167} In his Eve-Mary comparison, another Pseudo-Albert, of the fourteenth century, stated that Mary was exempted from the fourfold curse that had been laid upon Eve. He believed that since, in his opinion, Jesus’ first post-Resurrection appearance was to his Mother, Mary subsequently was assumed body and soul into heaven.\footnote{168}

St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, never treated the subject of the Assumption. The encyclical commented, however, that “whenever he touched upon it, he always held together with the Catholic Church, that Mary’s body had been assumed into heaven along with her soul.”\footnote{169} St. Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, accommodated the words of Scripture, “Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved,” to Mary in soul and body; otherwise, her happiness would not be
complete. He was certain that since God kept Mary a virgin before, during, and after childbirth, he would certainly keep that pure body from decaying into dust and ashes:

From this we can see that she is there bodily ... her blessedness would not have been complete unless she were there as a person. The soul is not a person but the soul joined to the body is a person. It is manifest that she is there in soul and body. Otherwise she would not possess her complete beatitude.170

Later Doctors

The pontiff also referred to the following authors in his encyclical. In the scholastic theology of the fifteenth century, St. Bernardine was not content with repetition of the earlier medieval writers. He added his own considerations: it was repugnant to think of Christ and his Mother as being separated; it was necessary that she should be only where Christ is. Further, it was fitting that the body and soul of a woman as well as a man should be in glory. And finally, the Church had never searched for the relics of Mary, reflecting the persistent belief of the faithful that she passed from this world. Sometimes his rhetoric tended to be excessive; he perceived Mary’s dignity and privileges at the limit of the possible: “I do not doubt that God wrought all the deliverances and mercies in the Old Testament solely out of respect for this blessed maiden, on account of which he decreed in his predestination from eternity that she should be honored above all his works.”171 It was obvious that Bernardine had been influenced by the thought of Pseudo-Augustine on Mary’s incorruptibility of body.172 Pius XII quoted Bernardine in his encyclical: “As the flesh of the Son was not subject to corruption ... thus the most holy flesh of the Mother, from which the Son’s flesh was taken, should not suffer corruption, be burned or reduced to dust.”173

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, St. Robert Bellarmine collected the witness of the earlier Christians concerning the Assumption. The Assumption was an absolute certitude of faith for him, the logical result of Mary’s many prerogatives and graces during life. He placed her above everyone else in heaven. Like Bernardine of Siena, he considered that, after Christ’s unique intercession, Mary’s was very special. The pope saw a reference to the sensus fidelium and a summary of the tradition in Bellarmine’s rhetorical question:

And who, I ask, could believe that the ark of holiness, the dwelling place of the Word of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost, could be reduced to ruin? My soul is filled with horror at the thought that this virginal flesh which had begotten God, had brought Him into the world, had nourished and carried Him, could have been turned into ashes or given over to be food for worms.174
St. Francis de Sales (1567-1662) dedicated six of his 240 sermons to the Assumption. In dealing with Calvin and the reformers, he once included the Immaculate Conception among the benefits that Mary had received from her Son's saving action: “The most holy virgin ought to have had this particular privilege, for it would not be right that the devil could reproach Our Lord with the fact that the one who bore him in her womb had been subject to himself.”

The pope recalled that Francis de Sales used statements, images, and analogies of Scripture to establish the doctrine of the Assumption. Francis insisted that the death of Mary was a death of love, and that as Munificentissimus Deus held, she was consequently assumed bodily into heaven. He recalled the image of the ark to emphasize the relationship of the Assumption to the Son's love and duty toward his Mother. In explaining Isaiah 60:13, “I will glorify the place of my feet,” Francis concluded that it was definite that the Redeemer had granted immediate heavenly glorification to the Mother from whom he had taken his flesh: “You have here a clear statement that the Blessed Virgin has been assumed in her body, where was the place of the Lord's feet. Hence it is that the holy Psalmist writes: 'Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place; thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified.'”

He also drew the conclusion that just as Christ triumphed over death in his resurrection and ascended to the Father, so too the ark of his sanctification had risen up since on that day the Virgin Mother was taken up to her heavenly dwelling. Francis de Sales saw the value of the via media between the extremes of opinion. He described the Church as stating at times that although Mary was a creature, nevertheless she was so intimately joined to her Son's saving work that it would be impossible to love and honor the Lord without loving and honoring his Mother. While he reserved the cult of latria for God, he described Mary as the most perfectly and most fully redeemed:

For myself, I have been accustomed to say that in a way the Virgin is more a creature of God and of his Son than the rest of the world, in so far as God created in her much more perfection than in his other creatures; that she is more redeemed than the rest of men, because she was redeemed not only from sin but from the power and the very inclination to sin.

Pius XII quoted Francis de Sales, stating that, after recalling that Jesus Christ obeyed the fourth commandment of honoring his parents to perfection, it would be incongruous for Christ not to bring his Mother to paradise with him: “What son would not bring his mother back to life and would not bring her into paradise after her death if he could?”

The pope then added the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori from his sermon on the Immaculate Conception: “Jesus did not wish to have the body of Mary corrupted after death, since it would have redounded to his own dishonor to have her virginal flesh, from which He Himself had assumed flesh, reduced to dust.” In his discourse VII on the Assumption, Alphonsus remarked:
There are three things that render death bitter: attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. The death of Mary was entirely free from these causes of bitterness, and was accompanied by three special graces, which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.  

Alphonsus’ sermons on the Assumption were vivid, picturing her death scene surrounded by the Apostles and entering glory to the greeting of the saints.

After the doctrine was correctly understood, theologians proceeded to analyze the faith of the people of God in this mystery. Pius XII said that the faith of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, was the pillar and ground of truth. These teachers came to consider any teaching opposed to the Assumption as temerarious, if not heretical. The words of St. Peter Canisius to the effect that the Assumption signified the glorification of Mary’s body as well as soul reflected a warning of Pius himself:

This teaching has already been accepted for some centuries, it has been held as certain in the minds of the pious people, and it has been taught to the entire Church in such a way that those who deny that Mary’s body has been assumed into heaven are not to be listened to patiently but are everywhere to be denounced as over-contentious or rash men, and as imbued with a spirit that is heretical rather than Catholic.  

Francis Suarez, the last representative of later theologians, was the founder of orderly scholastic or systematic mariology. His mariology was predicated on the fact that Mary was Theotokos and upon the consequent dignity and predestination involved in the divine maternity. His learning was vast; his method was purely scientific. Suarez considered it rash to deny, or to impugn, the Assumption. “Summae temeritatis reus crederetur, qui tam piam religiosamque sententiam hodie impugnaturet.” Suarez started from this axiom in citing Mary’s privileges: Mary must have whatever was given to any other saint; Mary must have whatever she needed in respect to the functions of her office and to the dignity of her Motherhood. The pope quoted another guideline of Suarez in the encyclical: “Keeping in mind the standards of propriety, and when there is no contradiction or repugnance on the part of Scripture, the mysteries of grace which God has wrought in the Virgin must be measured not by the ordinary laws, but by the divine omnipotence.”
Marian Privilege

Divine Maternity

Pius XII saw a harmony, a coherency, of the Assumption with Mary’s divine Motherhood, virginity, and holiness, as gleaned from holy writ. The sanctity of Mary was fulfilled most perfectly in the Assumption: her involvement in her Son’s earthly and heavenly life was the source of her assumption into glory. Pius XII appealed to the close relationship of Jesus and Mary as evidenced throughout the New Testament to illustrate the appropriateness of Jesus’ honoring his Mother as he did his heavenly Father: “And since it was within his power to grant her his great honor to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that he really acted in this way.”

Early Christians were quick to apply this closeness of relationship of Jesus and Mary beyond the grave to heavenly glory; consequently, they saw the Assumption as a complement to the Ascension, as a mystery revealed in the mystery of her Son. This is the scriptural basis presented in the defining document: “In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word — and he has no more to say.” Munificentissimus Deus also reiterated the thinking of St. John of the Cross, that all was revealed in Jesus the Eternal Word, and that nothing new need be revealed: “For this reason the Father could say to us: ‘Behold him well, for in him you will uncover all these revelations already made, and many more.’”

In Munificentissimus Deus Pius XII portrayed Mary as the loving Mother of God. His doctrinal consideration pointed out that she was intimately joined to her Son; consequently, she always shared his lot. She was Mother of God, the cause of the bodily link between them. The union between Christ and Mary was so intimate that Pius IX declared earlier that they were both contained in one and the same decree of predestination. Pius XII emphasized that the Son had a very special love for his Mother:

These (the Scriptures) set the loving Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her Divine Son and as always sharing his lot. Consequently, it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought him forth, nursed him with her milk, held him in her arms, and clasped him to her breast, as being apart from him in body, even though not in soul. Since our Redeemer is the son of Mary, he could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God’s law, than to honor not only his eternal Father, but also his most beloved Mother. And since it was within his power to grant her this great honor, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that he really acted in this way.

This special love was that of the God-Man and exceeded the intensity and comprehension of human nature. Pius XII made reference to the poetic words of St.
Robert Bellarmine to cite Mary's freedom from bodily corruption, a corruption he did not think possible; it was impossible for the all-holy, virginal flesh of the God-bearer to undergo corruption.\footnote{188}

The pontiff recalled the tradition of the Church that Christ was the Son of the Father in his divinity and the Son of Mary in his humanity. In accordance with his own divine law of parental respect, the Son was bound in filial piety to honor both his heavenly and earthly parents. Since it was possible for the Son to keep his Mother free from bodily corruption at the time of her departure from this world, he necessarily did so because of the intimate bond between them. The cause for the Assumption and Mary's freedom from bodily corruption was the love of Christ for his Mother and their resultant intimate union.

Implicitly the Church viewed the Assumption and the divine maternity as one supernatural entity under the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Since Mary was \textit{Theotokos}, she was to be assumed in God's plan. The Assumption was an essential ingredient, a crowning privilege, of Mary's immaculate and virginal divine maternity. In 1947, E. Wuenschel wrote:

\begin{quote}
... they all involve this fundamental principle: the Assumption is implicit in the revealed notion of the Divine Maternity taken in its concrete historical reality. ...
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
In this revealed notion of Mary's immaculate, virginal Motherhood the Church sees her bodily Assumption as her crowning privilege. The Church sees it there, not as the result of a logical deduction, still less as a mere \textit{convenientia}, but as one element of that miracle of miracles which God willed His Mother to be.\footnote{189}
\end{quote}

Wuenschel asserted that Mary's maternal care was an historical reality: she cared for Christ to the extent of tending to his infant needs. Mary's crowning grace — bodily preservation and integrity — was linked to her virginity and freedom from all sin.

In 1748 Benedict XIV listed five principal theological reasons for the Assumption of Mary: "The dignity of the Mother of God, her excellent virginity, her surpassing holiness beyond that of men and angels, her close union with Christ her Son, and Christ's own regard for His most worthy Mother."\footnote{190} In 1950, prior to the definition, McVann maintained that these reasons could be reduced to one: the divine maternity of Mary. He recalled the assertion of Thomas Aquinas that since Mary is \textit{Theotokos}, she has a "certain infinite dignity from the infinite good that is God," a unique position among creatures.\footnote{191}

\textbf{New Eve}

A second doctrinal synthesis of \textit{Munificentissimus Deus} considered the Eve-Mary parallel that originated in the second century:

\begin{quote}
We must remember especially that, since the second century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the Holy Fathers as the new Eve,
\end{quote}
who, although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the *protevangelium*, would finally result in that most complete victory over sin and death which is always mentioned in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles.\(^{192}\)

From the second century the Church Fathers, such as St. Justin Martyr (d. around 165), St. Irenaeus (d. after 193), and Tertullilnan (d. after 220) had portrayed Mary as the New Eve, subject to her Son, the New Adam, but closely joined with him in his redemptive task, the overcoming of sin and death. Irenaeus compared the faith and obedience of Mary in contrast to Eve:

> So also we find the Virgin Mary obedient, saying, “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me.” Eve in contrast was disobedient, she did not obey, even while she was a virgin. . . . So it was that the knot which Eve’s disobedience had tied together was unravelled by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound fast by her refusal to believe, the Virgin Mary has unbound by her belief.\(^{193}\)

L. Billot, writing in 1922, referred to the Eve-Mary parallel as a fundamental principle: “It is generally to be held about the Virgin Mother that in the order of restoration she holds the place that Eve held in the order of perdition.”\(^{194}\)

The principal scriptural reference of *Munificentissimus Deus* was taken from Genesis 3:15, commonly referred to as the *protevangelium*: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” *Munificentissimus Deus* stated clearly that the foundation for the definition of the Assumption rested in Scripture. The pontiff did not teach that the Assumption was formally revealed in the *protevangelium* or in any other text; yet in his estimation the passage foretold the victory of the New Adam and the New Eve over the evil forces: “All proofs and considerations of the Holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundations.”\(^{195}\)

According to Fraunces, writing in 1950, Scripture gave indications of Mary’s final eschatological triumph. He considered it certain that Mary was referenced in the prophecy, given in Genesis 3:15, of the ultimate triumph over the serpent. Christ’s ultimate, complete victory over sin and death was wrought through his glorious resurrection and return in glory to the Father. Mary’s similar victory in her role as the New Eve was accomplished by a parallel glorification. Fraunces considered this to be the teaching of Pius IX in *Ineffabilis Deus*: “The complete victory of Christ received its final touch in the resurrection and ascension, and if one is mindful of the parallel between Christ and Mary it is almost impossible not to pass from his resurrection and ascension to her Assumption.”\(^{196}\) Fraunces compared Genesis 3:15 with Apocalypse 12:1ff., “a
woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars,” who together with her child was pursued by the dragon. He considered the comparison not accidental. Only twice, at the beginning and at the end of Scripture, is there such a grouping: “the woman, her seed and the serpent” and “a woman, her child and the dragon.” Fraunces continued:

Nor can it be fortuitous that the glorified woman in the Apocalypse, who is the Mother of Christ, is seen in heaven and is divinely protected from the dragon. One must read Scripture without any eye to the meaning of the whole if one is to say that it contains no indications of the Assumption.¹⁹⁷

Eve cooperated in the sin of Adam, in bringing sin and death into the world. Mary cooperated in Christ’s redemptive action, the overcoming of sin and death, not only by accepting the divine maternity but by being a woman of faith and the foremost disciple. In the words of Pius XII:

We must remember especially that, since the second century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the Holy Fathers as the New Eve, who, although subject to the New Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in the struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium, would finally result in the most complete victory over sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Consequently, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part of the final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body, for the same Apostle says: “When this mortal thing hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.”¹⁹⁸

Mary was always subordinate to her Son; yet, acting in unison, they effected the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness. Paul had taught that death came into the world through sin, and as a result, death had a mastery over humankind: “Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all men sinned” (Romans 5:12). The powers of hell had control over all members of the human race through death, to which all who sinned were subjects: “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23).

This redemption will be accomplished completely only on the last day when the dead will rise and a transformation will occur:

When the perishable put on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on
immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory. (I Corinthians 15:53-55)

It was the will of the Father that the Son, in freedom, subject himself to death. In so doing he overcame death; Satan gained no dominion over him. Jesus died so that the empire of death might be conquered. As a penalty for sin, according to Everett, death involved a separation of soul from body. It also involved a bodily corruption which necessitated that all, including the saved, should undergo bodily corruption. This would then involve a period of waiting till the last day for the body to be freed from the corruption so that it might enter God’s presence: “It was through Christ’s anticipated resurrection that He destroyed the empire of death, making His victory over Satan complete and perfect.”

The Church Fathers have asserted that Mary herself overcame death through her Assumption, just as her Son’s glorious resurrection was the final symbol of his victory over sin and its consequences. The Assumption was the outgrowth of Mary’s participation in the same eternal decree of predestination as her Son. As immaculate and all holy Theotokos, Mary was assumed as the harmonious culmination of her privileges resulting from God’s abundant gracing action:

Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine Motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, finally obtained, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven, where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages.

The encyclical did not use the term co-redemptrix, but spoke of Mary as “the noble Associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences”:

This anticipated resurrection or bodily glorification effected the union of her sacred body with her already glorified soul and “since a glorified body must be where the soul is, and Mary’s soul is certainly in heaven, therefore Mary is in heaven with her glorified body and soul.”
The Assumption means that Mary, like her Son, overcame the powers of darkness: Satan, death, and bodily corruption. The same eternal decree of predestination, in which God the Son was to redeem the world, was the course for the greatest gracing action that God bestowed upon Mary, her Assumption. The pope’s analysis basically depended upon Jesus’ triumph over sin and its consequences, the ultimate act of glorification. Mary figured in this because of the intimacy of their relationship. The universal belief of the Church is that Jesus and Mary both triumphed over the prince of this world and reduced him to a state of powerlessness.

Expectations

The pope concluded the encyclical with an historical summary of doctrinal considerations by appealing first to the guidance that the infallible Spirit demonstrated over the teaching of the Bishops concerning the Assumption. In his doctrinal summary Pius XII concluded the preliminaries before the formal ex cathedra definition:

This truth which is based on the Sacred Writings, which is thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful, which has been approved in ecclesiastical worship from the most remote times, which is completely in harmony with the other revealed truths, and which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science, and the wisdom of the theologians — We believe that the moment appointed in the plan of divine providence for the solemn proclamation of this outstanding privilege of the Virgin Mary has already arrived. 202

This survey affords an interesting example of the development of dogma illustrating the respective functions of magisterium, scripture, tradition, theologians, and the faithful.

Roschini, speaking over Vatican Radio in September 1950, indicated practical and relevant lessons to be learned from the Assumption. The first was the great need in every age for faith, hope, and charity: “The Assumption is in fact a pressing invitation to faith in the resurrection of the body, to hope in life everlasting, and to charity, which is the indispensable condition for a glorious resurrection and happy eternal life.” 203 Second, this dogma necessarily implies the survival of the soul after the body, and the body’s reunion with the soul to complete the human person: “As Christ our Head is risen, as Mary, the neck of the Mystical Body, which unites all other members to the head, is risen, so must our bodies also rise and be reunited to their souls for participation in their eternal destiny.” 204

Roschini stated that this privilege of Mary teaches the reconciliation of the spiritual with the material, the harmonization of heaven with earthly things, the life of the spirit with the life of the body, all of which coalesce into a true hope for eternal life. Through the manifestation of love in this life our resurrected bodies will be able to participate in a joyful future life. Mary in heaven teaches her children that death is the echo of life and
that to a life of love a death of love cannot fail to correspond: “For this the glorious Assumption of Mary is also a pressing invitation and a life of sincere and practical love for God and neighbor, a love which constitutes the synthesis of the whole law.”

Immediately prior to the solemn pronouncement, Pius XII stated that the definition would redound to the benefit of the human race since it was being made for the glory of God, to whom Mary was so uniquely united. His prayer was that it would result in a stronger devotion to Mary, bring a sense of the value of a life spent in fulfilling God’s will in ministry, and, in the midst of the world’s materialism and lax morals, recall humankind’s heavenly destiny for body and soul. Above all, this definition would make belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective.

Later, Cardinale described Pius XII’s evaluation of the world situation and his call for exemplary imitation in a universal way. The pope had presented Mary to the modern world with significant relevancy. His focus on the assumed Mary, prompted by the action of the Holy Spirit, took the form of a hope-filled protest of God’s people against the contemporary degradation of the individual person, against the rampant denial of God-given human dignity and intrinsic worth:

He trusts that the definition will offer to the Church, rocked by adversity and threatened with tempest, another sure pledge of hope; to the faithful a glorious example of the full reward given in anticipation to a humble creature, whose life was dedicated to fulfilling the will of the Heavenly Father and to caring for the welfare of others; and to all men a solemn reminder of that deep respect we should feel for human life, God having destined both body and soul to such a lofty goal . . . and prompt us to live good Christian lives.

**Dogmatic Definition**

Pope Pius XII introduced the actual definition by recalling that its purpose was to give glory to God, to honor the Son, to increase the glory of Mary, and to bring joy to the Church:

For which reason, after We have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished His special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church, (We have declared and defined the dogma of her Assumption.).
Then he finally and formally declared the doctrine of Mary’s Bodily Assumption a
dogma of the Catholic Church:

... auctoritate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Beatorum Apostolorum
Petri et Pauli ac Nostra pronuntiamus, declaramus et definimus
divinitus revelatum dogma esse: Immaculatam Deiparam semper
Virginem Mariam, expleto terrestris vitae cursu, fuisse corpore et
anima ad caelestem gloriam assumptam. 209

The *ex cathedra* statement had two objects. It first defined the fact that the
Assumption was a dogma of the Church. It was contained in the deposit of faith, the
deposit of public divine revelation. Consequently, it was to be believed with the assent
of divine Catholic faith. Second — and this is the object of immediate interest — it
defined the fact that at the conclusion of Mary’s time on earth she was taken in body and
soul to heavenly glory. The meaning of the words was clear: Mary was exempted from
the general law of humankind that mandated that the just must wait until the end of the
world for their bodies to be joined to their already glorious souls. Mary, the virginal and
immaculate Mother of God, was exempted from the corruption of the grave. Her lot was
an immediate and privileged total glorification. A statement declaring that everyone who
deliberately and willfully denied Mary’s Assumption into glory was outside the true
faith, concluded the body of the defining document. 210

In 1935 A. D. Sertillanges had noted that Mary’s passing from this life was an
exception to the normal rule; hers was a passing of great joy, incorruptibility, and
immortality: “We believe then that the ‘way of all flesh’ has come to an end in whatever
concerns the Virgin; the epic of the worm has not been chanted. We sing another song;
and it is the *Magnificat*, not a *De Profundis*, that bursts upon us from above this tomb.”211

In 1948, Carter described the meaning of the Assumption in these words:

When we say that Our Lady was assumed into heaven, we mean that
contrary to the general law by which the bodies of the faithful are
condemned to corruption and to the earth until the time of the general
judgment, the virginal body of Mary was by a special privilege
transported to its heavenly abode and united to the soul of Our Lady
if indeed it was ever separated therefrom. 212

With the last phrase Carter raised the question of Mary’s death. Her death did not have
to enter into the mystery of the Assumption. If she did not die, she was transferred similar
to the conditions of original justice, from earthly to heavenly life without the experience
of bodily death. If she did die, and this was the accepted belief of the faithful and the
common opinion of theologians, she was assumed into heaven after a brief but
undetermined lapse of time and reunited with her soul. The emphasis of the Assumption
was the presence of Mary’s glorified body in heaven. Morin believed that any mention
of the death of Mary should be a corollary to rather than a part of the definition. Lonergan
analyzed the petitions received concerning the inclusion of the matter of Mary's death:

Out of the 3,019 petitions of what may be termed the teachers in the Church, 2,344 do not mention the issue, 5 seem to doubt our Lady's death, 24 seem to affirm her death but do not do so clearly, 434 (including 264 residential bishops) affirmed that our Lady died, do not wish her death defined but rather placed in preambulatory argument or exposition; finally, 212 (including 154 residential bishops) wish her death included in the definition itself of the Assumption.\(^{213}\)

**Assumption Prayer**

The pontiff composed a special prayer for the ceremony of the formal proclamation of the dogma, and recited it twice. On the Tuesday evening preceding the pronouncement he recited it following a procession with the image of the Virgin, *Maria, salus populi Romani*, the painting which had been piously attributed to Luke. On the proclamation day thousands of copies in a dozen languages were distributed to the faithful who recited the prayer in their own language together with the pontiff. Patterned after the *Salve Regina*, it offered a valuable description of the spiritual significance of the Assumption for the members of the believing Church:

O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Men: we believe with all the fervor of our faith in your triumphant assumption in soul and in body into Heaven, where you are acclaimed Queen by all the Choirs of Angels and by all the ranks of the Saints. And we unite ourselves with them to praise and bless the Lord, Who exalted you above all other pure creatures, and to offer you the craving of our devotion and of our love. We know that your glance, which maternally caresses the humble and suffering humanity of Christ on earth, sates itself in Heaven at the sight of His humanity, glorious in its created wisdom, and that the joy of your soul in contemplating face to face the Adorable Trinity causes your heart to beat with beatifying tenderness. And we, poor sinners, we to whom the body weighs down the flights of the soul, we beseech you to purify our senses, so that we below may learn to take delight in God alone, in the disenchantment with creatures. We are confident that your merciful eyes will gaze upon our miseries and on our anguish, on our struggles and on our weaknesses; that your lips will smile on our joys and on our victories; that you will hear the voice of Jesus tell you of each one of us, as He once did of His beloved disciple: here is your Son. And we, who invoke you, Mother of ours, we take you, as John did, as guide, strength and consolation
of our mortal life. We have the life-giving certainty that your eyes, which have wept on the earth soaked by the Blood of Jesus, may turn once more towards this world in prey of war, persecution, oppression of the just and of the weak. And we, amidst the darkness of this vale of tears, await from your Heavenly light, and from your sweet piety, comfort for the griefs of our hearts, for the trials of the Church and of our nation. We believe, at last, that in the glory in which you reign, garbed in sun and crowned by stars, you are, after Jesus, the joy of all the angels and of all the saints. And we who on this earth pass as pilgrims, comforted by the faith in future resurrection, look upon you, our life, our sweetness and our hope; draw towards you with the gentleness of your voice, to show us one day, after our exile, Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb, O gracious, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary.
The Contemporary Situation: Extrinsic and Intrinsic Forces for Definition

As Pius XII ascended the Chair of Peter in 1939, clouds of the worst war in human history had quickly formed. His reign was to span many agonizing years during and after the war.

Intrinsic and extrinsic forces prompted the definition of the Assumption. In 1950, shortly before the definition of the Assumption, the pontiff felt constrained to issue a warning encyclical, *Humani Generis*, to the universal Church. This constituted an effort to preserve the faith by clarifying what he considered novel, disturbing opinions concerning the magisterium, relativism in doctrine, incorrect evolutionary hypotheses, and a form of historicism.\(^1\) To restore tranquility to the Church and to revitalize her, Pius XII declared a Holy Year, a year of pardon and return. In 1950, as part of that Holy Year of reconciliation, Pius XII defined the Assumption dogma. The declaration of a Holy Year was not an innovation. Pope Boniface VIII had declared the first one in his papal bull *Antiquorum* for the year 1300.\(^2\)

The totalitarian spectre of communism, which was to prove such an albatross for so many countries, appeared as a new world power while Europe was being razed by the Allied World War II effort to defeat nazism and fascism. The Iron Curtain imprisoned much of Europe after the war in a Church of Silence. Among many victims of oppression, the imprisonment of Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac of Yugoslavia in September 1946, and of Archbishop Jozsef Mindszenty of Hungary in December 1948, was a special source of grief to the pontiff. They were raised to the cardinalate by Pius XII in 1952 and 1956.\(^3\)

In 1953, A. Carr mentioned in his article, “Mary and Russia’s Mother Soil,” that in the
prophetic novel *Darkness at Noon*, authored by the former communist A. Koestler, the latter had referred to his contemporary Russians as a generation without an umbilical cord. The novel described the concept of men without mothers. In the natural order this would be unnatural; in the supernatural order it would sever the cord of personal salvation. The communists despised Mary; the people of the land did not. *Bogoroditza*, the giver of life to God, lived in the hearts of the Russian people, in the liturgy, and in the literature of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.\(^4\)

Later observers documented the fact that the pope mourned the extermination of six million Jews and four million Christians in the crematories and forest grave pits. There was a pervading horror of additional nuclear holocausts following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where 200,000 Japanese had died. The democratic governments of Italy, France, England, and other countries faced the communist challenge.

The Assumption definition followed in the wake of this sad tale of World War II. The interval had been brief between the killings and brutality of the two world wars. In 1950, the year in which *Munificentissimus Deus* was promulgated, the wanton destruction of World War II was vividly remembered: the damage to homes and cathedrals in Munich and Cologne, St. Lorenzo in Rome, the library at the University of Louvain, much of Rotterdam, the London hospitals, the University of Bonn, and the monastery at Monte Cassino. According to the evaluation of T. J. Mullaney in 1951, the pope had asserted the glorification of matter in this environment of fear and despondency, of insecurity, desolation, and depression. He had asserted further that the grace of God would bring to humankind the same type of glorification that Mary already possessed. Mullaney described the materialistic world situation of the time in terms of its relationship to the Assumption: “Our disintegrating culture is in opposition to almost all the implications of Mary’s bodily Assumption. For our age is characterized by two marks especially: cruelty and carnality.” \(^5\) In Mullaney’s opinion, the preceding thirty-five years had blatantly displayed more brutality than had all the centuries of previous history: “One indication is the situation of God’s Church today. Never in all her long history, not even in the days of the Roman persecution, has the Church been tortured as at this hour.” \(^6\)

If the Assumption had not been in dispute for several centuries, and if it was not a matter of current controversy, why did the pontiff make a formal, infallible pronouncement at this particular time? Such pronouncements had been rare, normally provoked historically by erroneous teaching. Only twenty ecumenical councils had been held in the twenty centuries of the history of the Catholic Church. The two most recent had been the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which treated in general the issues raised by Protestantism, and the First Vatican Council (1870), which declared the doctrine of papal infallibility to be a matter of divinely revealed truth. In the instance of these councils, the faith of the Church had been under attack and the pronouncements were a response to these attacks. But no heresy concerning Mary’s Assumption was currently in opposition; no General Council had sought its definition; the voice of Scripture and tradition had not been explicit from the earliest times; further, the ecumenical spirit would be dampened.\(^7\)
Yet the pope declared that the time had come, in God’s providence, for the definition. Pius XII concluded his encyclical by proclaiming, under the penalty of an anathema, a truth revealed by God and preserved infallibly by the Church since apostolic times. According to G. W. Shea, the middle of the twentieth century was the correct moment in salvation history for the proclamation of the Assumption dogma since, in God’s providence, the world was in need of the consolation and the inspiration that the doctrine would provide. With this dogma, Pius XII reaffirmed the resurrection of the body and upheld Mary as the symbol of that embodied glorified life of complete personhood in response to the universal belief of the *ecclesia discens*.

The Catholic Church had emerged from the catastrophic setting of World War II as a dynamic structure, with a unity of purpose and a vibrancy of Marian devotion. The pontiff held up the “woman clothed with the sun” at this precise moment in history. It was the pope’s desire to emphasize belief in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, which in turn would reaffirm the value of the human body. The intention of the encyclical was to impart a respect for humankind’s physical nature and to reject rampant sensuality. The Virgin Mary’s fortitude and chastity were upheld as an encouragement to the faithful in their search for sanctification in and through their particular Christian vocation. The definition reaffirmed the resurrection of the body to its true life in presenting Mary, in the totality of her personhood, as the symbol of humankind’s future embodied, glorified life.

**Relevance of the Dogma**

**Humankind’s Bodiliness: Atheistic Communism and Christian Anthropology**

In 1956, G. W. Shea observed that Pius XII had in fact presented Mary to the world of 1950 with a significant relevancy. No substantial division existed within the Church as to the propriety of a formal doctrinal statement at that point in history. The vast majority of hierarchy, theologians, and laity welcomed the definition. Yet it was not greeted with a unanimous rejoicing or universal acceptance within the Church. In 1951 Reformed theologian M. Thurian viewed the pope’s action as a concession to the pious. In 1957 Koester wrote that some looked upon the definition as an example of overly zealous Latin devotionalism. Cardinale observed in 1969 that some theologians expressed doubts about the wisdom or timeliness of the apostolic constitution in its specifically 1950 terms. D. Flanagan stated in 1976 that still others considered the definition as one more privilege of Mary to be worn triumphantly as another jewel in her crown. The few dissidents remained almost unanimously loyal to the faith and accepted the pronouncement as a matter of divine revelation. Most members of the Catholic Church recognized the definition as an opportunity to reaffirm the dignity of the human body and personhood, and to renew faith in the future resurrection of the dead. In retrospect, Cardinale described Pius XII’s evaluation of the then current situation
throughout the world in his universal call for imitation of Mary:

He trusts that the definition will offer to the Church, rocked by adversity and threatened with tempest, another sure pledge of hope; to the faithful a glorious example of the full reward given in anticipation to a humble creature, whose life was dedicated to fulfilling the will of the Heavenly Father and to caring for the welfare of others; and to all men a solemn reminder of that deep respect we should feel for human life, God having destined both body and soul to such a lofty goal... and prompt us to live good Christian lives.\(^17\)

Many prevalent social problems had caused widespread discouragement and despondency. Looking back at recent history, people questioned the purpose and the meaning of life. The Assumption was a reminder that “here we have no lasting city but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14). The coming city comprised a complete victory, and the Assumption guaranteed humankind a share in this victory of the Resurrection, union with the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The Book of Revelation recalled that “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Apoc.21:4). Such a glorification illuminated the problems and questions of daily living with the understanding of faith. The Assumption became a symbol of hopeful reward for the same faith and discipleship that Mary had displayed.\(^18\)

Pius XII saw the timeliness of his definition partially in relation to atheistic materialism, which had been responsible for the disrespect and sinful cult of the body, the denial of humankind’s spiritual nature.\(^19\) In 1954 the United States Bishops were critical of “materialistic communism” for upholding denial of God and indiscriminate animalistic behavior which lacked any spiritual ethic: “Take away respect for God... (and) men consequently find their solace only in the pursuit of pleasure; and then, unleashing their fury, they hurl themselves like beasts on one another in mutual destruction.”\(^20\) The bishops decried the existential tyranny of hundreds of millions of God’s creatures through the various forms of godless communism and secular humanism. Shea envisioned the Assumption definition as a superlative statement concerning the essential Christian concept of humankind and humankind’s authentic goal. He believed that it was no accident that the dogma was proclaimed on the first of November, All Saints Day, with its communitarian implication, rather than on the 15th of August or on some other Marian feast day. The date was chosen to teach something more than its Marian content: it spoke of humankind’s true destiny in light of humankind’s correct dimensions:

The solemn definition of Our Lady’s glorious Assumption stands forth as a timely — indeed, desperately needed — affirmation of Christian Humanism. Over against atheistic materialism and naturalism
on the one hand, and exaggerated spiritualism and ultrasupernaturalism on the other hand, Christian Humanism declares man for what he really is, a creature composed of body and soul, and made to the image and likeness of God; Christian Humanism upholds the value and dignity of human beings in body and soul; Christian Humanism acknowledges the worth of life here on earth but, at the same time, warns that our destiny is not confined to this world; and, finally, as to that destiny — supernatural salvation, Christian Humanism insists that it is not purely spiritual but embraces the whole man, body as well as soul — in short, the human person. 21

St. Thomas had taught that Mary’s bodily glorification verified material and spiritual union of body and soul in the human person, stating that it is “only by reason of such a union that the glorified soul can effect the glorious transformation of the risen flesh.” 22 While the Assumption insisted that humankind lift its horizons beyond earthly things, nevertheless Pius XII recalled that humankind must earn personal resurrection and heavenly glory through a life of the love of God and neighbor. G. Roschini wrote that while the Assumption demanded acknowledgment of this life and of the cooperation of free will with divine grace, the dogma was “a pressing invitation to a life of sincere and practical love towards God and neighbor, a love which constitutes the synthesis of the whole Law.” 23

The Problem of Man: Nature and Dignity

Shea proposed that the Assumption reconciled

\[\ldots\text{the spiritual with the material, things heavenly with things earthly, the life of time with the life of eternity. It exhibits man in his total reality, composed at the same time of body and soul, an individual person and member of society, a citizen of this earth and one chosen for heaven. As a deterrent to totalitarianism, it proclaims the true dignity of the human being — increate spirit, person, image of God, and therefore subject of certain inviolable rights which no State may set aside. As a deterrent to lustful indulgence of one’s own flesh and to violence toward that of others, it underscores the sacredness of the human body — a body raised to the honor of being the dwelling-place and instrument of the Spirit, meant moreover to be on earth God’s special temple, and destined eventually to rejoin the soul in His beatific presence. As a deterrent to pessimism and despair, it reassures the world’s unfortunates and oppressed that “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain any more (Apoc. 21:4). As a deterrent to practical materialism, it admonishes those who rejoice in}\]
this world's goods not to forget that "eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Shea recalled C. Dawson's description of communism as that philosophy of the worst, lustful self-indulgence in history that had spread through the world with epidemic proportion: "incarnate in the communist states, it has been responsible for that cult of violence and the contempt for the value of human life." Shea also recalled Valéry's statement that life is lived in accordance with one's conception of what is the nature of humankind and what is humankind's future destiny: "all systems of politics, of sociology and of morality, are inspired by a single conception which man has of man." In 1946, prior to the Assumption definition, the hierarchy of the United States had pointedly stated that peace would be discovered only through the correct concept of humankind's nature: "At the bottom of all problems of the world today is the problem of man. Unless those who bear the responsibility of world leadership are in basic agreement on what man is, there is no way out of the confusion and conflict which block the road to real peace." The bishops insisted that a correct concept of the social order would imply a correct concept of humankind's nature and dignity. This echoed the words of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI in their labor and social encyclicals, Rerum Novarum (1891) and Quadragesimo Anno (1931): reestablishment of the disintegrated social order would require a fundamental return to the Christian concept of humankind and supernatural destiny in personal resurrection. In 1944, Pius XII anticipated this thought in his Christmas message, proclaiming the Church's responsibility "... to announce to the world, which is looking for better and more perfect forms of democracy, the highest and most needed message that there can be: the dignity of man, the call to be sons of God."

Resurrection of the Body
The section of Munificentissimus Deus immediately preceding the formal definition offered some moralistic reasons for its opportuneness. It expressed hope that the Assumption would increase the faithful's belief in their own personal resurrection. Christians throughout the ages had professed that most incredible article of the Creed, the resurrection of the body. Tertullian offered two classic comments concerning the human body in relation to eternal salvation: "Caro salutis est cardo. . . . Fiducia Christianorum resurrectio mortuorum." Yet it was evident that the importance of the saved body was secondary, at times even insignificant, in comparison with the heavenly life of the soul. In 1951 Shea found no evidence to date that the definition had occasioned, except in isolated instances, a notable increase in scholarly study of the implications of the related doctrine of bodily resurrection. Eschatology would become prominent with the advent of the Second Vatican Council. F. Mauriac, the French Catholic author, deemed it upsetting because of its intimate relationship with a mysterious and almost unbelievable article of the Creed to which the Church rarely referred, a doctrine that held up to the
faithful a radical, overwhelming hope: faith in the resurrection of human flesh:

But we Christians, do we really believe in eternal life? The dogma of the Assumption, so disconcerting for many minds — and, I confess it, for myself — which the Holy Father is going to define on the Feast of All Saints, draws our attention to that article of the Creed, the most mysterious, the most incredible, which is so rarely discussed by the Church and which represents an insane, marvelous hope — the resurrection of the flesh. 32

In 1954 P. Palmer wrote that a misunderstanding concerning the intimate union of the human body and soul, together with an abhorrence of the flesh, appeared in various forms of Docetism, Manichaeism, and Albigensianism, as well as in parts of Protestantism. In more recent years, some few Catholics had been infected with this platonic disrespect concerning the participation of the human body with the soul in God’s creative, salvific action. This misunderstanding refused to recognize the creation of the human body in God’s likeness, or to acknowledge humankind’s sharing in the soul’s heavenly destiny. This error had been even more intensely manifested in quietism, or ultrasupernaturalism, an error which completely ignored the things and inherent values of this earth. 33 Pius XII, in accordance with the social and labor teachings of his predecessors, Leo XIII and Pius XI, previously included the human condition in Catholic teaching: “A supernaturalism that holds itself aloof, and especially one that keeps religion aloof, from economic and political needs and duties, as if these did not concern the Christian and the Catholic, is something unhealthy, alien to the thinking of the Church.” 34

In 1961 K. Rahner wrote that many difficulties concerning the dogma had arisen from a misconception of the content and meaning of the Assumption. 35 In 1963 Rahner wrote that through this belief the Church taught that the physical body, whether idolized or despised, is judged worthy of salvation through the redemption of Jesus Christ and in the woman who gave birth to the Redeemer, the woman who humanized divinity, who herself also suffered and agonized like her Son:

The poor flesh, that some hate and others worship, is already judged worthy to be eternally with God, eternally saved and acknowledged. Not only in the Son of the Father, who comes “from above,” but in one of our race who, like us, was from “here below.” . . . The flesh was created by the Father on high, redeemed by the Son, made holy by the Spirit, and it is already saved forever. 36

K. Rahner then offered a hope-filled description of God’s providential action for the sake of his people:

In the midst of the anguish and distress of this generation, the Church, so readily accused of being political and attached to earthly power, of
liking to install herself far too positively in this world, of being insufficiently eschatological, raised her head and by proclaiming this doctrine of the faith, gazes towards the only hope in which she really trusts, the future of God, who is so far advanced with his Kingdom, that he has already begun to be wholly present. The Church looks on high and greets in Mary her own type and model, her own future in the resurrection of the body.  

Later, *Lumen Gentium* was to propose this same thought: Mary is in heaven bodily, a symbol of hope for the faithful. "The Mother of Jesus, in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven . . . shines forth on earth as a sign of certain hope and comfort to the People of God." According to T. O'Meara, who wrote in 1966, this focus, prompted by the Holy Spirit, took the form of a hope-filled protest of God's people against the contemporary degradation of the individual person and the current errors about the nature of humankind; against the refutation of intrinsic human worth and supernatural, immortal nature. This was to be accomplished through overcoming the travails of this world by a rising from the dead.  

In his later reflection of 1969, D. Flanagan recognized that many looked upon the definition, not as a superficial papal action that supplied another way to say complimentary things about the Virgin Mary, but as a theological verbalization about the human body, including Mary's, and the common destiny of resurrection and future glory. It reminded humankind to have hope for the human person in the body/soul totality created by the will of God for future perfection. According to Flanagan, the entire process from which the definition emanated had been marked by the consideration of the mystery as a privilege of the Virgin Mary. There was no indication that Marian studies would be given an ecclesial orientation shortly after 1950, when Mary would be recognized as principal member of the Church, as well as an honored individual. The definition provided this final Marian privilege; it was soon to conclude her isolated consideration. The theological relationship between Mary and the Church would recognize the value of the Assumption for the community of salvation. It would eventually serve as a catalyst to further consider the question of eschatology, Mary's relationship to it and to the faithful in it.  

**Contents of the Definition**

The defining statement of Pius XII was lean and spare, free from limitations of any particular thought system. Several topics had been left open to legitimate differences of opinion and were not included in the formal pronouncement of the article of faith. B. L. Conway surmised that Pius XII did not attempt to define the "when, where, or how" of the mystery. G. W. Shea pointed out several issues which had been provoked by the
definition but not addressed. Regardless of the usage of scholastic terminology, the terms of the definition were neither precisely delineated nor rigidly contained within set theological perspectives. There was no indication as to whether Mary’s being assumed differed essentially from that of any other human person who had been taken up, or whether she was the only person presently enjoying this personal fulfillment in union with the Risen Lord. The pontiff seemingly anticipated further development and future unfolding of his words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Nothing was stated about the manner of Mary’s being taken up into her new state. Nor was anything said about the time or location of this transfer into the glory of her enduring divine encounter.

*Munificentissimus Deus* was an *ex cathedra* pronouncement concerning the definition of two truths which must be believed by the assent of divine faith. First, it stated that the doctrine was a divinely revealed dogma, i.e., it had always been contained in revelation. This study’s immediate interest is focused upon the second divinely revealed truth: Mary was exempted from the general law for humankind which predicated that the human body must wait until the end of the world to rejoin the already glorious soul. Mary received total glorification in soul and body immediately; she was able to anticipate the Last Day, the occasion of the resurrection and glorification of the redeemed. Shea stated: “After the conclusion of her earthly pilgrimage she was granted that consummation of her existence which we mean when we confess, as our own hope, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.” According to Shea, the popes of both the Assumption and Immaculate Conception respectively kept Marian devotion in the proper perspective of subordination to the Trinity. As Mary’s place in the redemptive act of her Son was gradually unveiled, there appeared a striking coherency of Marian beliefs with each other and the remainder of revelation.

Certain aspects of the Assumption were defined as infallible. The apostolic constitution declared three points to be matters of divine faith. The pontiff referred to the body as well as to the soul of Mary, to the end of her time upon earth, and to the fact that she was taken, or transferred, to heavenly glory.

**Heavenly Glory: A Transformative Theological Event**

With regard to Mary’s entering heavenly glory, the Church has never defined heaven as a place, inhabited by the blessed, as well as a condition of beatitude. According to *Munificentissimus Deus*, Mary was transferred to a condition or a state (heavenly glory), and not to a place (heaven), inhabited by the blessed. In 1934, F. Diekamp wrote in his dogmatic manual that the Church in the past had spoken of heaven in its scriptural, patristic, and creedal writings on occasion as if it were “in the sky.” But, Diekamp explained, that manner of speaking was an accommodation on the part of the Church to the mentality of the particular age. The Church has never intended to speak about, or to provide information about, the location of heaven.

The definition did not include any metaphors referring to the outer regions. In a
in literal sense, there was no upward flight. Rather, *Munificentissimus Deus* simply used the verb *eveheretur*. The only way that this concept of transfer, or change, from this order of space and time, of suffering and death, to the order of eternal beatitude in a joy-filled life after death could conceivably be expressed was by analogy. Even Scripture cannot suitably describe the type of life that the Risen Savior presently lives. The words “lifted up” or “raised up” were used in reference to this mystery to indicate a new and better order, not necessarily a place. Both Old and New Testaments used the word “clouds” repeatedly to convey that thought. After the Resurrection and before Pentecost, Jesus was taken up in a cloud from his disciples during his last appearance to them.

In 1956 Shea recalled the objection made by A. J. Carson, a scientist who maintained in 1950 that if Mary did go “up . . . through the atmosphere . . . she would surely have died of asphyxia the moment she got to 50,000 feet.” Shea attributed the special qualities of impassibility and agility to Mary’s glorified body. The former left her free from pain; the latter enabled her to be without the restrictions of the physical body. These qualities enabled her, as they did the Risen Christ, to move wherever the soul wished and with utmost speed, ease, and facility. Shea concluded that since Mary was not subject to the restrictions of physical laws, any argument taken from the physical sciences would be improper.

In 1960 M. Eliade, an historian of religion, gave his opinion that Mary’s going to heaven did not imply an automatic, immediate divinization. A great person could be brought to heaven without becoming a participant in divinity. Such a person could take on a new existential dimension and still remain completely human. According to Eliade, there are two distinguishing characteristics of this new heavenly existence: the person transcends human imperfection, and fulfills a previously limited potential in total freedom. Eliade denied that the Assumption implied a freedom in the gnostic sense. Rather, Mary in the unity of her body and soul existed freely in the fullness of her Son’s redemption without any possibility of human decay. Since she joined Christ in heaven, there was evidenced a growth in the intensity of her humanness.

At the time of the definition many Christians, as well as agnostics, judged the Assumption to be an idle fantasy, a superstition, an absurd joke. Space was an unchartered and unknown entity at that time; it represented desolation. If the body and soul of Mary were to have simply floated away into this empty space, that fact would have been the very antithesis of God’s proximate presence, which the definition proclaimed. In the later opinion of Macquarrie, the expression “heavenly glory” referred to a relationship with God, to a condition rather than to a place. To be understood properly in the theological sense, the Assumption must be considered as a theological event. Mary had been transferred into a new dimension of existence; God’s action upon her was a transformative, not a destructive, one.

Pius XII used precise language in the formal definition of the Assumption. Filograssi commented that the pope did not declare heaven to be a place as well as a condition: “For it is not a dogma of faith that heaven, besides being a state or condition
of beatitude, involves also some region or place inhabited by the blessed.”

Shea also questioned whether there were persons other than Jesus and Mary who are bodily glorified at present in heaven. The encyclical referred to the Assumption as a singular triumph, whereas *Ineffabilis Deus* had referred to the Immaculate Conception as *singulari prorsus privilegio*. In the historical section of *Munificentissimus Deus* on God’s law detaining the just until the end of the world for the glorification of their bodies, Pius XII spoke of this law as a general and not a universal one. F. Prat, in reference to the bodily resurrection described in Matthew 27:52-53, believed that this resurrection of the dead prior to Christ’s own Resurrection was factual. “They formed the escort of the Conqueror of death in his triumphal entry into the abode of glory.”

Since Pius XII did not explain what he meant by heavenly glory, it was assumed that he wished the term to be understood, as Shea remarked,

... in the light of traditional Catholic doctrine on the subject. According to that doctrine, total celestial glorification consists in the supernatural beatitude of the soul, which results from the intuitive vision of God, and which in turn effects a preternatural transformation of the body.

**In Corpore et Anima: The Person in Relation to Thanatos**

Regarding the nature of Mary’s glorified body and soul, it became evident from the usage of the words *corpore et anima* in the definition that the subject of the apostolic constitution was the person of Mary, “in body and soul.” One problem that arose after the promulgation of the Assumption was this particular word usage in reference to the human body-soul relationship. Scripture had described the human person as a composite of body and soul, yet it more precisely referred to the human person as a living body, that is, a single entity, a unity. There had been a tendency in the past to place an unnatural emphasis upon the soul of a person entering into eternal life and being nourished spiritually there. There had never been a question that Mary’s soul was in glory. The Assumption definition clarified the fact that the body, as well as the soul, retained its integral, unitive existence in heaven. St. Thomas taught that the presence of the body in heaven contributed to the perfection of the soul and its happiness. As previously cited, Pius XII quoted St. Bonaventure in support of the fact that Mary’s body would have to be in heaven: otherwise she would not possess her complete beatitude. Since the soul alone is not a person and since the soul joined to the body is a person, then it is obvious in his estimation that Mary must be in heaven in body and soul.

In 1954 E. Neubert repeated that Mary received her glorification of the flesh, which all humankind will receive at the end of time, at the end of her earthly life in imitation of her divine Son. Neubert found that the disorder in the saints’ lives disappeared in ratio to their acceptance of God’s gracing action. This effect of tranquility is discovered first
in their souls, intellect, and will, and later in “their inferior faculties and even in the movements of their bodies.” Mary was the most perfect human being conceivable. It was proper that her earthly integrity should be followed by her heavenly glorification.\textsuperscript{55}

R. A. Knox wrote in 1960 that humankind had an incorrect impression about the union of body and soul and the persistence of this union after death. He traced the temporary separation after death to original sin; body and soul were made to be formed to each other:

\begin{quote}
We think it the most natural thing in the world that soul and body should be separated after death; that the body should remain on earth and the soul go to heaven, once it is purged and assoiled. But it isn’t a natural thing at all; soul and body were made for one another, and the temporary divorce between them is something out of the way, something extraordinary, occasioned by the Fall.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

According to Knox, in God’s original plan human nature was intended to be unified. After the fall, Mary in her Assumption became the type of humankind’s future self: “In our blessed Lady, not born under the star of that defeat, human nature was perfectly integrated; body and soul belonged to one another, as one day, please God, yours and mine will.”\textsuperscript{57}

**The Sacred Humanity in Glory**

The central truth of Christianity is the reality of the Lord’s Resurrection. He rose in our humanness and was glorified in it. Rahner proposed that heavenly glory is a possibility in this life, since it has already been realized in the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Rahner taught that through faith Mary is seen as

\begin{quote}
\ldots the perfect achievement and work of redemption. Mary \ldots in her life on this earth was the highest, unmatched realization of redemption in a human being endowed with grace, as Mother of God and consequently as the perfect type or representative of redemption in its very essence.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

God’s grace has entered its final stage in Mary; she had completed her earthly destiny. In heaven Mary is no longer challenged in freedom, but in heaven she is rewarded for her earthly conformity to God’s will in all things. The faith of the Church realized in its developmental process that, in view of the bodily resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ, perfect fulfillment in the human unity of body and soul is possible; Mary, the perfect creation, was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven at the end of her earthly sojourn.\textsuperscript{59}

The significance of the Assumption for humankind is, according to Rahner, that the faithful can proclaim for themselves as well as for Mary the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting; this hope acknowledges Mary’s perfect beatitude:
And by affirming of her what we hope for ourselves, because it is impossible to announce anything more glorious, even about her, we in fact praise the boundless greatness of the supreme eternal glory which is to be ours, and in this praise, the greatness of each human being as fashioned by the merciful grace of God.\(^6\)

Rahner explained that in this day humankind is preoccupied with itself being the source of progress and, more specifically, bogged down by humanness. Some idolize the flesh; others detest it. The Church preaches not only abstract truths but also, and more important, the generous mercy of God as manifested in the redemptive act of his Son. This mercy was realized not only in Jesus Christ, but in those in need of salvation. Through the Assumption the Church announced that humankind, in body and soul, has already been saved, not only in Jesus Christ, who came from above, but in Mary, who came from below. Flesh, idolized and despised, has been saved and has been considered worthy to be with God in eternity. The human condition neither separates humankind from God nor is considered something to be destroyed (although it must be transformed to enter into glory in intimate union with the triune Godhead). The human body has been created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, made holy by the Spirit, and is already saved forever.

The Second Vatican Council considered this body/soul duality in the context of a single, unified being within fourteen years of *Munificentissimus Deus*.\(^6\) Philosophers had spoken of the body and soul in regard to their interaction with each other and of the frequent historical conflicts between these human elements. In the Christian view life is not presented as a dualistic conflict between two opposing forces, good and evil. The human being must be envisioned as a unified person who is at times engaged in internal conflict. R. Kress later reflected in 1977 that this was the viewpoint of Pius XII, who supported the contention that the human body was essentially good; it came from God and was in intimate union with its source, the “breath of life.” It presented the concept that the body is both good and important for humankind.\(^6\)

The Death of Mary: An Open Question

Addressing the end of Mary’s earthly sojourn, the pontiff knew the theological arguments that favored either death or immortality for the Virgin. Her death was pointedly not mentioned in *Munificentissimus Deus*. Jugie believed that the pope deliberately avoided the issue.\(^6\) According to Michael O’Carroll, some theologians maintained that Jugie himself, as a member of the Commission, was responsible for this omission.\(^6\)

What Pius XII actually defined was the fact that after Mary’s earthly sojourn had been completed, her body could not be separated from her soul in heaven. While he did not rule out the more common opinion of her death, he remained neutral in the apostolic constitution on the controverted question of Mary’s immortality or death.\(^6\) His predecessor, Pius XI, apparently supported the view that Mary had undergone death prior to
her entry into heavenly glory. He declared that the Virgin had been graced with the redemption of her Son, and not with that of original creation. The grace of redemption did not "confer immortality truly and properly so-called." 66

Mary’s death or nondeath was a matter of great dispute among theologians. It was not discussed by the faithful; they simply presumed her death. Yet Munificentissimus Deus carefully avoided this dispute between the Marian “mortalists” and “immortalists” and did not include it within the parameters of the definition. Consequently, it could not be dogmatically stated whether or not Mary did die. The pontiff’s expression “having completed the course of her earthly life” was noncommittal. When Pius XII spoke personally, he also observed that same neutrality. When he produced texts from theologians and Church Fathers that seemed to indicate that Mary did not die, he did so, according to Shea, “only to put in bold relief the incorruption of the Blessed Mother’s virginal body.” 67

While the encyclical simply used the precise phrase expleto terrestris vitae cursu to describe the time of Mary’s being assumed body and soul into heavenly glory, the apostolic bull stated that Mary had been exempted from humankind’s general lot of remaining in the grave after death in the corruption of the body. 68 From the earliest times death had been referred to as “sleep.” 69 Paul had spoken of his brothers and sisters who had died in the Lord as those “who have fallen asleep through Jesus.” 70 Throughout the centuries death had been looked upon by Christians as a “birthday,” an entry into a new life. 71

Shea stated that the pope used language indicating that Mary’s Assumption was an immediate one in her incarnate spirit, giving the impression that her body entered into heaven simultaneously with her soul. This seemed further to give the impression, in Shea’s opinion, that Mary did not die:

For it is at least theologically certain that, as soon as her earthly pilgrimage terminated, her utterly sinless soul was straightway admitted to the beatific vision, straightway glorified. Hence, if Mary’s body was glorified simultaneously with her soul, this would rule out death, that is, any separation of body and soul even for an instant. 72

The much more common opinion was that Mary’s glorification was total but not immediate, that the pope wished only to deny that Mary’s soul and body assumed into heaven were ever separated in glory. The pope was dismissing anything comparable to the double Assumption theory found in some of the apocryphal stories that taught that while Mary’s soul was taken directly to heaven, her body was detained incorrupt on some earthly paradise until the general resurrection: “Such notions . . . are precluded by the fact that the Pope says Our Lady’s body was assumed into heavenly glory. The celestial glorification of a body presupposed and derives from its union with a glorified soul.” 73

On the supposition of Mary’s death, theologians could only speculate concerning the length of time that transpired between the moment of her death and her glorious
resurrection and bodily assumption. However, the time was insufficient to permit decay, since Mary’s “preservation from all corruption of the tomb is Catholic doctrine.”\(^{74}\) Theologians speculated that the interval was in terms of an instant, minutes, hours, or at the maximum, a few days. The language of the encyclical suggested that Mary’s assumption “occurred fairly soon, if not immediately, after the completion of her earthly life.”\(^{75}\) Consequently, the suggestion of Anglican E. L. Mascall that the resurrection and bodily assumption of Mary may have taken place some centuries after her death would have to be rejected.\(^{76}\)

In Matthew 27:52-53 it is stated that “the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose; and many bodies came forth out of the tombs after His resurrection, they came into the holy city, and appeared to many.” In 1950, Prat assumed that this resurrection was followed by a bodily assumption into glory: “They formed the escort of the Conqueror of death in his triumphal entry into the abode of glory.”\(^{77}\) Earlier, in 1940 and 1941, W. McGarry stated that this thinking led to scriptural and ecumenical support in favor of the Assumption of Mary; if the saints had been granted an immediate glorification, then \textit{a fortiori} it would necessarily have to be granted to the most favored of God’s creatures, the Virgin Mary.\(^{78}\) Rahner believed that Mary’s Assumption would still remain singular in nature since she was preserved from bodily corruption and since her privilege and divine Motherhood were attributable to her unique place in salvation history.\(^{79}\)

The apocryphal authors placed the death of Mary in Jerusalem. They alleged varying miraculous circumstances surrounding her death; for example, her body was assumed enroute to its burial place, or she was raised after three days in the tomb. The date of the Assumption has been placed at different times, from three years to fifty years after the Ascension. One of these works was condemned by the \textit{Decretum Gelasianum} (492-496). However, it may have been condemned because of its gnostic tendencies rather than its teaching concerning the corporal assumption of Mary. A homily, probably delivered by a Timothy of Jerusalem according to several manuscripts in the fourth or fifth century, may possibly indicate that Mary was assumed during her earthly life both in soul and body.\(^{80}\) St. Epiphanius was the only author prior to the Council of Ephesus in 431 who specifically treated this topic. He opted for neither opinion.\(^{81}\) The great writers such as Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome had simply assumed that Mary died.

There was little progress after this beginning for a period. Ambrose Autpert (d. 784), great lover of Mary, considered it improper to be curious about the fate of Mary’s body. He believed that her soul was certainly in heaven, “higher than the angels,” but whether in or out of the body remained unknown. Iona’s St. Adamnan (625-704) described Mary’s being put to rest but denied any knowledge of when or how or by what persons her body was removed from this sepulchre. He believed that no one knew where she waited for the resurrection. This observation influenced Bede (673-735); it negatively influenced the further development of the Assumption. The author of \textit{Cogitis me}, accepted the empty tomb (while rejecting the apocryphal stories), but stated that nothing
was known about Mary’s death except that she left the body and that the disposition of her body remained unknown. This skepticism on the Assumption was reflected in the extracts from *Cogitis me* that found their way into the readings of the Divine Office under the name of St. Jerome. It stifled further development of doctrine on the Assumption for some two hundred fifty years (the appearance of the Pseudo-Augustine). (Another delaying source was the ninth century martyrology of Usuard, a monk at St. Germain des Près in Paris, wherein it was stated that the Church preferred “to remain in ignorance reverently rather than to teach something frivolous and apocryphal.”)

Towards the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century an even more important work appeared. It purported to be written by St. Augustine; yet it was theologically profound. This treatise of Pseudo-Augustine soon outshone the work of Pseudo-Jerome. The great doctors taught the truth of Mary’s bodily Assumption. The following great theologians also taught the same, so that the doctrinal acceptance of the Assumption was nearly universal.82

In 1914 B. L. Conway presumed a universal belief on the physical death of Mary; the location and time remained matters of pure conjecture. Dates assigned for her death, 41 to 48 A.D., did not rest on a certain historical foundation. Both Ephesus and Jerusalem claimed to be the place of her burial. Scholars who opted for Ephesus pointed out that Christ on the cross confided the care of his Mother to St. John. They relied on the false rendering of an obscure text of the Synodal Letter of the Council of Ephesus in 431. According to Conway, Timoni, Bishop of Smyrna, appealed to the doubtful discovery of the house of the Blessed Virgin unearthed at Panaghai Capouli, near Ephesus. Scholars who declared for Jerusalem relied upon certain apocryphal writings valued for their antiquity and unanimity concerning Mary’s death. In a twofold Jerusalem tradition, Conway stated, “some authorities favor Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives while others favor the Cenacle in Jerusalem itself.” B. Begatti’s 1977 research revealed an ancient Jewish sepulchre in the Church of the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Gethsemane. This research seemed to confirm the apocryphal writings.83

Hamell noted in 1951 that Pius XII — though his defining words *expleto terrestri vitae cursu* were not conclusive — used references throughout his papal bull that indicated that Mary’s departure from this life included death, and that her body, though it went to the grave, did not see corruption; her glorious Assumption . . . was a triumph over actual death. This appears from several passages of the Bull — from the illustrations from the Liturgy (quotations from the *Gregorian Sacramentary and the Byzantine Liturgy*); from the Pope’s observations that follow these and introduce the homilists; and from the texts quoted from St. John Damascene and Modestus of Jerusalem. The Holy Father’s summary (after the review of the scholastic theologians) seems to point to the same conclusion, for the parallel between Mother and Son, between her victory and His
victory shared intimately by her, is incomplete unless Mary, like her Divine Son, passed to the glory of Heaven through the portals of death.84

In 1951 J. J. Wright concluded that Mary, like her Son, truly passed from this life through the portals of death. Wright believed that most theologians today teach that the death of Mary truly occurred; but since it was not so stated in the encyclical, her death is held certainly, but tentatively as well.85 By 1952 C. Vollert commented that the subject was a popular one but not a matter of faith. “Whether Mary died or not,” he stated, “is currently a topic of lively debate; we can hardly at present talk about her death, and certainly it is not a matter of belief.”86 T. Gallus believed in 1953 that Pius XII held for Mary’s immortality in that he refused to approve a public prayer that referred to her death.87 In 1954 K. McNamara stated that Pius XII had presupposed that Mary died, as evidenced by his statement concerning her prerogatives. McNamara opined that the Church had consistently held this view with a rare dissenting voice. Her death was necessitated by her role as Mother of the Savior who conquered death through his voluntary submission to it. The cause of her death was “the intensity of her desire to be united with her divine Son.” She was exempted from death by disease because of her likeness to her Son and her freedom from sin. McNamara cited Garrigou-Lagrange in support of the view that Mary had made the offering of her life on Calvary:

It remained but to renew it in that most perfect form which tradition speaks of as the death of love, a death that is to say, in which the soul dies, not simply in Grace or in God’s love, but of a calm and supremely strong love which draws the soul, now ripe for heaven, away from the body to be united to God in immediate and eternal vision.88

A special divine grace was required to overcome the natural longing inherent in Mary’s heart to be dissolved and to be with her Son from the instant of his death and to delay her demise until the providentially decreed moment. In the Dormitio Mariae members of the Church possessed a picture of peaceful death. Consequently, the faithful were able to perceive death in less fearful terms as an entry to union with Jesus and Mary. The Ave Maria’s reference to the moment calls to mind that the death of the faithful will be similar to that of Mary, in spite of human weakness and paucity of love.

McNamara insisted that the separation of Mary’s body and soul was brief. She was subjected to death not because she was subject to sin but rather because of her similarity to the Savior. Consequently, she could not be bound by death for a sustained period of time: “In her case the glory of the resurrection is anticipated, and the qualities which will be the special glory of the just after their resurrection, already adorn her body.”89 Mary had been freed from sin of the flesh and from inordinate concupiscence during her life. Consequently, the Virgin had already been risen and glorified “in incorruption” (see 1 Cor. 15:42ff.); her present state is one in which “death will be no more, nor mourning,
nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more” (Apoc. 21:4); her glorified body, devoid of bodily attraction to sin, had risen, a “spiritual body” now in all respects brought under the dominion of her soul; she is presently endowed with the preternatural quality of agility, glowing with the inherent glory of her soul, youthful and beautiful. Mary participates as queen of heaven in the glory of her Son; she has become a worthy intercessor for the human family before God the Father: “In heaven she is the glory of the saints, who see in her body a model of the splendour which will one day, though in a less degree, grace their risen bodies. On earth she is the hope of Christians, for whom she is the pledge of their glorious resurrection.”

McNamara visualized Mary as beginning her saving work in the Assumption. Christians see in her heavenly presence a great consolation. McNamara considered Mary, in her role of Mother of Mercy, as assisting those in need, especially the faithful on earth and in purgatory:

It has been God’s will that all divine favors which come to men should come through her intercession, and it is thus that her queenly power is exercised. Thus the doctrine of the Assumption leads on, by way of Mary’s queenship, to the doctrine of her Universal Mediation, which is taught by the ordinary magisterium of the Church and may one day be defined as a dogma of Faith.

In 1954, Pius XII, according to Vollert, declared that further research must be made in order to ascertain Mary’s death or immortality with theological certitude. He reminded theologians that the norm of truth is always the teaching Church, the magisterium, with the guidance of the Spirit. Consequently, Vollert stated that the immortalists could continue to express their minority opinion that Mary did not die “with erudition, learning, expertness and piety . . . their desire to see the jewel of immortality placed on the crown of the Queen of Heaven and Earth whose entrance into this world was shrouded in mystery and whose exit was resplendent with glory.”

J. B. Carol wrote in 1956 that it was still permissible after Munificentissimus Deus to consider the death and resurrection of Mary as “integral elements of the prerogative defined,” if the Assumption is considered in its broader concept. Carol admitted that the fact remains that the Assumption of Mary has been defined; her death and resurrection have not. In the 1961 opinion of R. M. Brackett, even though there were no witnesses to the physical assumption of Mary, the Church has always accepted the fact of her death, resurrection, and glorification from the time of the apostles.

In 1967 D. Hickey stated that faith grasped death not as an end but as a beginning; the body fell asleep, as it were, with death, but was awakened reunited to the soul for eternity. Hickey added that consequently, the expression “the dormition of Mary” referred to the Virgin’s death only in a figurative way:

The deep faith that Christians had in life after death and the resurrection
when the body would be eternally reunited to the soul, led them to view death not as the end of everything but as a transition to another life in which the body fell asleep and rested until awakened into eternal glory.\textsuperscript{96}

In 1967 J. W. Langlinais observed that theoretically a case could be made for a belief in the immortality of Mary without falling into heresy. There were some authors, such as Balic, Carol, Coyle, and Filograssi, who insisted that the matter did not come under the purview of the definition and therefore remained an open question.\textsuperscript{97}

Langlinais further observed in 1967 that it was not certain when the dormition of Mary first became an issue among Christians. It was certainly evidenced by the end of the fifth century. No compelling evidence appeared in the writings of the Church Fathers for either opinion. However, a common presumption was that she did die. There were two early incidents wherein Ephraem and Origen, while praising Mary’s virginity, affirmed her death in so doing. The only reference prior to the Council of Nicea in 325 had been by Origen: “With respect to the brethren of Jesus, there are many who ask how He had them, seeing that Mary remained a virgin until her death.”\textsuperscript{98}

In 1981 Macquarrie repeated the observation that the question of whether Mary actually experienced the formality of death had been a much discussed problem by the theologians, but not by the faithful.\textsuperscript{99} E. R. Carroll summarized the topic by remarking that what is definite is what the Church has taught and celebrated for 1500 years: the Mother of Jesus is with her Son, in body as well as in soul, in a state of glory; and this occurred after the time allotted to her by God upon earth had expired.\textsuperscript{100}

\section*{Doctrinal Considerations}

\subsection*{Mary’s Prerogatives}

Pius XII proposed several doctrinal considerations in support of the validity of the Assumption truth: Mary was joined with her Son in the same act of God’s predestination; she remained perfect in that divine maternity; she was immaculate in her conception; she was nobly associated in the work of her Son’s redemption; and now she reigns as queen in heaven next to her divine Son.\textsuperscript{101}

\subsection*{Mother of the Lord: Foundation}

Shea observed that Mary’s predestination for divine maternity was the source of her other supernatural privileges, which placed her above the angels and any other saints. He pointed out that the popular article of Graham Greene that appeared in a 1950 issue of \textit{Life} magazine was mistaken in that it tended to attribute the foundation of the belief in the Assumption to private revelations and apparitions.\textsuperscript{102} The doctrinal consideration that the pontiff most emphasized, according to Shea, was the Virgin Mary’s intimate association with her Son in his action of salvation.\textsuperscript{103} Leo XIII had declared that “the
Immaculate Virgin (was) chosen to be the Mother of God and thereby associated with Him in the work of man’s salvation.” Pius XI had enunciated that Mary was predestined to be the Mother of the Lord precisely “so that she might be made His associate in the redemption of the human race.” The patristic parallel to the proto-evangelium was the teaching concerning the New Eve. Theologians predicated Mary’s immunity from sin and her role as co-redemptrix upon this concept. Pius XII used it to establish Mary’s queenship and the revealed nature of her conquest of death and assumption into glory.

Carol stated in 1956 that since Christ was “an accomplished exemplar of perfect obedience to the law of God,” in terms of the fourth commandment, he necessarily loved and honored his Mother in a most perfect manner. It was a logical assumption, although not an apodictic argument, that the Son’s intention was to grant Mary an anticipated bodily assumption and glorification in heaven after her preservation from bodily corruption in the grave.

Varying opinions surfaced among theologians concerning the relationship of the divine maternity to the Assumption. Healy avoided the extremes concerning the meaning of the divine maternity, and understood it as “not only the physical act of conception and generation of the Son of God, but the supernatural and meritorious consent which preceded conception and the consequent quasi-infinite dignity that necessarily accompanies it.” J. Bonnefoy saw no necessary connection between the two Marian prerogatives and consequently perceived only an argument of simple convenience. C. Friethoff, in 1938, supported this view: “Tamen ex sola assignatione maternitatis divinae non haberi videtur argumentum necessarium pro assumptione. Unde maternitas divina non est ratio nisi convenientiae, quamvis permagnae.” In 1950, L. Laurent wrote that all arguments for the connection between the divine Motherhood and the Assumption amounted to nothing more than those of the highest convenience.

Some theologians insisted that a necessary connection existed between these two prerogatives. Healy attributed to G. Frenaud the belief that there was a necessary connection between the divine maternity and Mary’s subsequent Assumption: the latter was implicitly contained and revealed in the former. C. de Pamplona taught in 1947 that it would be inconvenient — that is, impossible — for Mary to remain in death, because of the intrinsic contradiction between death and the dignity of Mary as the Mother of God. At the Franciscan Congress in Italy in 1947, E. Caggiano rejected the notion that the Assumption was implicitly revealed in the divine maternity and, as Jugie had proposed, there was an absolute connection between them; yet he suggested a strict moral connection between the two prerogatives so that the Assumption was certainly a result of the divine maternity.

H. Esteve and Jugie held the extreme view that the Assumption was formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity and that there was an intrinsic connection between the two truths. Healy believed that because of the wide divergence in opinion,
it was not possible to hold in the sense stated that there was a necessary connection between these two Marian privileges. The arguments were not convincing enough to insist that the Assumption was formally implicitly revealed in the divine maternity. According to Healy, the proposed arguments were those of "high convenience," based on the perfect love of the Son for his Mother. As a consequence, it would be inconceivable that Christ's perfect love would permit Mary's body to remain in the grave, when that love could congruently glorify her body in heaven immediately after her death. Healy did not find this to be a convincing or necessary argument either for the Assumption. God's ways are not the ways of humankind; who can decide in what manner the love of Jesus for his Mother must be manifested? Healy disagreed with Jugie, whose argumentation led to the conclusion that Jesus would sin against the fourth commandment if he did not grant the privilege of the Assumption to his Mother Mary.

Healy concluded that an argument of the highest convenience existed for the Assumption in the divine maternity. He considered it most fitting that the body that gave birth to the Word Incarnate should be preserved from bodily corruption and lasting death. It was improbable that the implications of filial piety would permit the Son to exclude the Mother from glory, an honor "that He could easily grant and one which is in perfect harmony with her quasi-infinite dignity."

**Immaculate Conception**

Addressing the Immaculate Conception, in 1951 Wright presented the view that Mary's freedom from sin through the merits of her Son by a unique privilege of God was the principal reason for Mary's body remaining incorruptible and for her bodily assumption to heavenly glory. He contended that the evidence of scriptural, patristic, theological, historical, and liturgical experts was that the doctrine of the Assumption was clearly contained in the content of God's revelation.

Healy pointed to theologians who taught that while *Ineffabilis Deus* comprised an explanation and definition for the Immaculate Conception, it also implicitly contained the Assumption teaching. They argued that Mary's "immaculate soul seems to demand as its natural consequence an immaculate body." Pius IX seemed to support this view when he replied to Queen Isabella II of Spain, who had requested the pontiff to make a formal definition on the Assumption: "Dubium non est, quin Assumptio eodem modo consequitur.

Various theological opinions arose concerning this question. P. Renaudin saw the connection only as a fitting consequence: "Assumptio immaculatam conceptionem non necessario comitatur licet illi convenienter respondeat." Carol was among those theologians who saw a necessary connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, whereby the latter may be deduced as a theological conclusion from the former: "We believe that the doctrine of Mary's Assumption may be drawn from her Immaculate Conception by a somewhat different process, which would give us a theological conclusion." E. Longpré considered the Assumption followed necessarily from the Immaculate Conception, as effect and cause. Roschini saw the necessary
connection between the two Marian truths as proof that the Assumption was implicitly revealed in the Immaculate Conception.\textsuperscript{128} Jugie believed that the Immaculate Conception constituted the finest argument for the truth of the Assumption.\textsuperscript{129} Healy admitted an existent harmony between these two truths: Mary’s immaculate soul demanded, as a complement, an immaculate body free from any corruption of the grave; if God preserved Mary from sin, would he not preserve her body from the penalty of sin, bodily corruption? Healy saw something more than a fittingness here; he saw a necessary connection between the two privileges, but not an implicit revelation.

Healy believed that the minor premise was not revealed; consequently the conclusion followed, not as from revealed premises but through theological, deductive reasoning. Healy stated that the minor premise is valid only when applied to those who have contracted original sin. C. Boyer asked whether bodily corruption could come to Mary, not through sin but through her intimate association with the death of her Son.\textsuperscript{130} Healy insisted that there was no other cause than sin for Mary to undergo bodily corruption. Mary’s role as co-redemptrix demanded that she die, but not permanently. There would be no spiritual significance for the world, the Church, or Mary in the Virgin’s bodily corruption.

Addressing the sanctity of Mary, Merkelbach stated that Mary was always without sin: “from the first moment of her life her sanctity was superior to the initial and final sanctity of the angels and saints.”\textsuperscript{131} In \textit{Ineffabilis Deus} Pius IX spoke of the eminent degree of Mary’s holiness: “She possesses a fullness of innocence and holiness that, except God’s, no greater than hers can be conceived, and that no mind but the mind of God can measure.”\textsuperscript{132} Healy asked whether this special sanctity demanded Mary’s bodily glorification shortly after death. Further, he questioned whether it consecrated the body and in any way preserved it from corruption.\textsuperscript{133} There was no doubt that Mary was full of grace, free of sin and concupiscence. It seemed that God would accord her freedom from bodily corruption, the penalty for sin. Furthermore, Healy considered grace to be the “seed of glory”; it was inevitable that Mary’s soul would enter the beatific vision and eternal glory. Would not the glory of her soul necessitate the “immediate resurrection of her body so that it might share in this eternal glory?”\textsuperscript{134} Healy agreed with the opinion of Garrigou-LaGrange, Friethoff, Roschini, Luis, and others, that a demonstrative argument for the Assumption — that it is formally implicitly revealed therein — is found by joining the sanctity of Mary with her privilege of being especially blessed among women. The arguments from Scripture and tradition were traceable to the two phrases, “Hail, full of grace,” and “Blessed art thou among women” (Lk. 1:28, 42). Pius IX used this argument for the definition of the Immaculate Conception. He summarized the various interpretations of the Fathers in \textit{Ineffabilis Deus}:

\begin{verbatim}
Cum vero Patres Ecclesiaeque Scriptores animo menteque reputarent, Beatissimam Virginem ab Angelo Gabriele sublimissimam Matris Dei dignitatem ei nuntiante, ipsius Dei nomine et iussu gratia plenam
\end{verbatim}
In 1963 Rahner taught that from the moment of her conception, Mary was full of grace and that this grace was continually increased throughout her lifetime in view of her conformity to God's will. Consequently, the presence of the Father became more intense in her; the action of the Holy Spirit dwelling in her made Mary increasingly a temple of the Spirit: “The Father came to dwell in Mary from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, and then in an even more perfect way at the time of the Annunciation, at the birth of her Son, on Mount Calvary, on the day of Pentecost, and finally at her Assumption.” 136

**Virginity**

Concerning Mary’s virginity, before, during, and after the birth of Christ, this state was traceable to the divine maternity. Mary’s virginity also necessitated for its perfection and fulfillment both bodily incorruption and an anticipated resurrection. The question of whether or not Mary’s virginity demanded bodily glorification was disputed among theologians. Some, including Jugie, saw only an argument of convenience, not a connection of necessity: “C’est en brouillant les notions, en faisant intervenir d’autres privilèges, que certains théologiens essayent de tirer de l’virginité de Marie une conclusion théologique proprement dite en faveur de l’ Assomption glorieuse.” 137 Healy saw no reason for God to deny Mary bodily preservation that would perfect her virginal integrity. He saw many arguments in its favor and none opposed. If God preserved Mary in the birth of the Eternal Word, he would certainly anticipate her bodily resurrection and preserve her body from decay. But Healy agreed that this was an argument from fittingness.

Friethoff proposed that since pain in childbirth and bodily corruption in death were both punishments for original sin, Mary should be free from both aspects of that punishment. 138 Healy believed that this argument led only to a conclusion of noncorruption of the body in the grave, which could also be attributed to some of the saints. Furthermore, it was only probable that Mary’s virginity should free her from all punishments due to original sin. Her freedom was due to the Immaculate Conception, not to her virginity.

Balic argued for a necessary connection between virginity and the Assumption: bodily incorruption, the highest form of virginal incorruption, preserved virginal flesh from any form of corruption. Since Mary was always a virgin, her Son preserved her from
bodily corruption. Furthermore, bodily incorruption necessarily implied an anticipated resurrection. Healy maintained that this was only an argumentum convenieniae; virginity does not necessarily imply that for its highest perfection the body of Mary would have to be taken to heavenly glory; the perfection of virginity could have been accomplished by a nonresurrected but incorruptible body.\textsuperscript{139}

There appeared to be only an argument of convenience in Mary’s virginity for her bodily assumption. Garrigou-Lagrange recalled that some theologians attempted to argue for the Assumption from Mary’s virginal maternity, a combination of her virginal and motherly privileges. He considered these arguments to be of the highest convenience but not demonstrative of necessity.\textsuperscript{140}

New Eve

Regarding Mary’s association with Christ, Boyer stated in June 1950 that while it was not a matter of faith, it was generally accepted that “Mary at least remotely was associated with Christ in the redemptive sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{141} She had been called the New Eve from the earliest Christian times. Healy asked if this “intimate and indissoluble union with Christ the Redeemer” had in any way caused the Assumption. Did the association of Mary in body and soul with the Redeemer on earth involve that same association in glory? Healy quoted A. Tanqueray to the effect that it did. Tanqueray afforded the following argument to provide a connection between the two prerogatives:

\begin{quote}
Christ obtained a complete victory over the devil, sin, concupiscence, and death. Mary, the Mother of Christ, who is intimately and indissolubly associated with the victory of her Son over the devil, sin, and concupiscence, ought to be associated with Him in the complete victory over death by the anticipated resurrection and bodily Assumption.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

Jugie and Bonnefoy opted for the opinion that the New Eve argument was either inconclusive or overemphasized.\textsuperscript{143} Healy stated that many others found the privilege of association a demonstrative argument in favor of the Assumption and believed the latter was formally implicitly revealed in the former. Of the bishops who petitioned the Holy See for the definition of the Assumption, one hundred forty-four bishops based their reasoning upon the complete victory of Mary, in association with her Son, over the devil and sin.\textsuperscript{144} This argument had been put forth by the Fathers and also by Pius IX in \textit{Ineffabilis Deus} to support the Immaculate Conception definition:

\begin{quote}
Just as Christ, the Mediator between God and men, having assumed our human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree which stood against us and triumphantly affixed it to the cross, so likewise the most Holy Virgin, united with Him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, together with Him and through Him waged a perpetual warfare against the poisonous serpent and, completely
triumphing over him, crushed his head with her immaculate foot.\textsuperscript{145}

In 1900 Terrien had recalled that some two hundred Fathers of the First Vatican Council used this argument for an Assumption definition at that time, demonstrating not only the certainty but also the formally implicit revealed nature of the dogma. In 1930, F. S. Mueller repeated this argument.\textsuperscript{146} Garrigou-Lagrange considered it a convincing theological argument, especially in view of its revealed source.\textsuperscript{147} The teaching was defended publicly at the Gregorian University on 12 December 1946 \textquotedblright in the presence of many Superiors of Religious Orders and Church dignitaries, including nine Cardinals.\textsuperscript{148} The association of Mary with her Son was presented by the Carmelite Order on 16 May 1946 in one of its \textquotedblleft petitions to the Holy See for the definition of the Assumption.\textsuperscript{149} What Paul had taught (Rom. 5-8; 1 Cor. 25:24, 26, 54, 57; Heb. 2:14-16) was repeated by the Church Fathers and subsequent theologians: Christ’s victory over the devil consisted of a triumphal trilogy over sin, over concupiscence, and over death. Healy remarked that Mary was \textquotedblleft associated intimately and uniquely with Christ in this complete threefold victory over Satan.\textquotedblright Over a period of time that truth was fully revealed. Healy concluded that Mary should then be associated with her Son in the victory over death, just as she had been in the victory over sin and concupiscence:

But victory over death is obtained for the associate of Christ only by a glorious Assumption into heaven. Both premises are revealed and the conclusion follows not as an effect from a cause but as a part contained in the whole. Victory over death is only part of the total victory over the devil.\textsuperscript{150}

Healy considered his conclusion an explanation of the premises, not a new truth deduced from them. Mary’s association with Christ in his triumph over Satan formally, implicitly contained the further revelation of the Assumption. The Assumption was not a consequence of the Virgin’s relationship with her Son’s redemptive action; rather, it was contained in that action as a part is implied in the whole. If there were no Assumption, then there would be no privilege of association in the complete victory of Christ over Satan. Healy commented: \textquoteleft The parallelism between Christ and Mary would cease on Calvary. Christ would conquer the devil by His resurrection. Mary, if still held by the bonds of death, would be conquered by the devil.\textquoteright\textsuperscript{151}

According to Mullaney, to comprehend the intrinsic beauty of the mystery of the Assumption, one must reflect upon the significance of the dogma in terms of Mary’s union with God. On three occasions Mary rendered to God a special service corresponding to three aspects of the Assumption wherein Jesus generously rewarded that obedience and love. At the moment of the Incarnation, the Son of God took to himself Mary’s flesh; only Mary gave a body to this Son, and so he undoubtedly resembled, even in appearance, his only human parent. Mullaney saw that in the Assumption Jesus returned, in a glorified way, to Mary even more than she had given him:
By the Assumption Christ returns to her, glorified now a thousandfold, what she had given Him. His Body had come forth from hers, and had been like unto hers; now through His power her body returns to her soul, her body made now after the likeness of His glorified Body. He had been like her physically. As by the Incarnation the Son had been like the Mother, so now by her Assumption, the Mother is like unto the Son . . . for in her Assumption all proceeds from Christ, all is modeled on Christ. At the Incarnation she became the living tabernacle of God; now by the Assumption she is His perfect Temple, His everlasting dwelling place.\textsuperscript{152}

Mary’s birth and existence participates in God’s plan of predestination and grace and is inexorably intertwined with that of her Son.

Consequently, God’s same eternal decree predestined Jesus to be savior and Mary the mother of the Redeemer. Mary’s birth is therefore inserted at the very core of salvation history.

The hidden life of Nazareth was a foreshadowing of that future life together, a life of boundless love, a life of common beatific love in body and soul. Mary ministered to her Son in a way that no other human could match. Consequently, to return this love he took her to himself before the ordinary time set for humankind:

At this moment, in the case of each of them, each glance, each motion, each bodily action is directly and totally God-centered — an explicit act of love of God. Between them there flows now the uniquely perfect human community: a oneness, in the love of God, a oneness of mind and heart, of soul and bodily activity that is ultimate, complete.

A reciprocity was immediately gleaned. This is the return from Christ for Mary’s single-hearted devotion to Him. In return for that there flows to her now from Christ a perfection of light and life and love.\textsuperscript{153}

On Calvary, Mary intimately entered into the sufferings of her Son. During his time as the Man of Sorrows, Mary was certainly the Sorrowful Mother. Through the cross Christ gained his victory and exaltation at the right hand of his Father. Mullaney asked if it was not proper that Mary, having participated in the darkness, share in Christ’s eternity of light:

As the Virgin Mother of Sorrows had been faithful unto Christ in agony — so the zealous, overpowering love of that same Christ has reached out to catch up into His exaltation even her body. From Him there had once descended upon her the silent mantle of sorrow; now in return she is forever more than the “woman clothed with the sun.”
Forever . . . she . . . is clothed with something of the glory that he had before the world was. 154

In Jesus' final hour his mother was again influenced by the spirit; she renewed her consent as type-disciple and mother of all who are one with Jesus.

In a singular way Mary cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Therefore she is our Mother in the order of grace. 155

The principal function of her motherhood was to lead all her son's followers to his obedience. On Calvary Mary is not only his mother but that of the disciples brought together by his obedience, vivified by his Spirit, in order to be brought to the Father.

Concerning Mary's role as co-redemptrix, in 1956 Carol wrote that Mary "was indissolubly associated with the Redeemer in His redemptive role and mission." One aspect of Satan's reign, the destruction which was confronted in Christ's redemptive action, was the permanent state of death until the end of the world. It must be assumed that Mary was not subjected to this permanent state of death and bodily corruption; otherwise, Mary would have been the victim of and not the victor over the devil. "Mary's complete triumph, then," Carol pointed out, "closely followed the pattern of Christ's triumph: like her own Son, she defeated death, not by dying, but by not remaining dead." 156

An Irrefutable Argument

In 1957, L. Everett perceived that the close proximity of Mary in her Son's work of redemption necessarily required her anticipated resurrection and bodily glorification. This resulted in the union of her body and soul in heaven. 157 In 1951 B. Leeming emphasized that the Assumption belief resulted in an accentuation of human freedom in the significance of redemption. He saw in the Assumption "an assertion that God's plan of salvation is to save men through men, that human cooperation is basic to the whole plan." 158 Shea felt, however, that the Assumption emphasized the very fundamental, primary efficacy of the redemptive act of Christ. 159 In addition, the privilege of Mary's being taken up illustrated the totality and completeness of the Word's domination over sin and death. St. Ambrose had held up the Theotokos as the first among the redeemed, since she was the first to benefit from the effects of the salvific action of her divine Son: "The Lord, when He undertook to redeem the world, began His work with Mary, in order that she, through whom salvation was prepared for all, might be the first to enjoy the fruit of salvation from the hand of her Son." 160

In the fifteenth century, nominalist G. Biel remarked that if Mary, who was the most deserving to profit from the saving action of her Son, was not assumed, then Christ's victory over sin and death was an incomplete one. In fact, it would appear to be a defeat. 161 Pius XII's definition made even the semblance of defeat impossible; the efficacy of Christ's cross and resurrection was evidenced in Mary's Immaculate
Conception and being taken into glory. 162

According to Friethoff, Mary was then the manifestation of complete redemption, the supreme witness of Christ’s victory: “Mary’s Assumption crowns the work of salvation, since it shows that the salvific work of it is now absolute and perfect in at least one person.” 163

Healy concluded that when all the privileges of Mary were related to the Assumption, they constituted something more than a fittingness: “They present an irrefutable argument that the body of Mary has been assumed into heaven and joined with her soul.” When the Assumption is accepted, the “wonderful harmony and coherence that the divine plan has worked out in the order of Mary’s privileges” is readily seen:

It is the final privilege in a series of privileges that proclaim for the Mother of God and the Mother of the Redeemer her absolute immunity from all corruption. By her Immaculate Conception and consequent sanctity she is free from all sin, by her virginal Motherhood she is preserved free from corruption of the body in childbirth, and by her Assumption she is spared the corruption of the body in the grave. 164

Healy considered that from this perspective, the Assumption became the “logical consequence and the crowning achievement of all Mary’s prerogatives.” The Assumption is truly appreciated only when compared to the Ascension of Mary’s Son:

Just as the Ascension of Christ into heaven crowns and seals the role of the Redeemer in the order of objective redemption, so the glorious Assumption of Mary crowns and seals the role of Mary, Mother and Co-redemptrix, in the order of objective redemption. Together with Jesus, although subordinate to him, Mary, the second Eve, from her place of honor in heaven not only proclaims her complete victory over the devil and his works, sin and death, but proclaims the wisdom and goodness of God Who has done great things unto her who reigns as Queen of Heaven and Earth. 165
Mary and the Church

In 1961, Hugo Rahner considered the close relationship between Mary and the Church in the context of the Assumption as a “foreshadowing of what is to come for the whole Church” and as a fulfillment of what had already occurred in the Lord. He viewed the Assumption as something offered to the entire People of God, and not only in relation to Mary in isolation as a singular privilege. This mystery had already partially begun its realization, “albeit for the present hidden in sacramental terms, since the way back to paradise through the redemption of the flesh is already open.” According to Rahner, Scripture confirmed that the eschaton had already commenced. “Thus the final glory of Mary, which we recognize with the eye of faith, is a recognition of the final glory of the Church.”

Heaven and future glory were realized in the present moment, Rahner contended, wherein the mystery of Mary and Church were most intimately experienced. He referred to Apocalypse 12:14, 17 as evidence that the Church Fathers identified the Mother figure as a symbol for Mary as well as Church; Mary had experienced in her own body the complete victory over the devil and the reconquest of paradise lost through Eve’s negligence and as a symbol of the Church’s own struggle toward final glory. Rahner recalled the words of Ephrem the Syrian: “The child whom I carried took me by his eagle’s wings and carried me up through the sky; and a voice said to me: ‘The heights and the depths which thou seest, shall all belong to the child!’” Rahner again cited Ephrem to illustrate that for the early Christians:

... the picture of Mary and the picture of the Church are mutually transparent, and are constantly seen as one. Mary is saying to Jesus:
“Shall I call thee my son? Or my brother, my spouse or my Lord? For thou has given birth to thy Mother; rebirth through water. But truly I am thy sister; from the seed of David like thee. And truly I am thy Mother, for I conceived thee in my womb. Thy bride am I, for thou hast paid the price with thy death, thy daughter in rebirth through thy baptism. The son of the Most High came and rested within me, and I became his Mother. Born of me, he in turn has given me rebirth, for he has clothed his Mother with a new garment; he has absorbed her own flesh into himself, and her he has clothed with the sunshine of himself. 4

The descriptions of Mary and the Church were intimately conjoined: the Mother of God in glory was born again, for the mystery of rebirth by baptism (which belongs to the Church) was fulfilled in the glory of Mary’s body, united to the risen Lord. Mary’s new birth into the glory of heaven was described as already complete through the redemption of her Son; it symbolized also the redemption and the glory of the Church:

We can see in Mary what is to come for the Church: in the end it will be “as before,” namely when Adam and Eve possessed paradise at the beginning. So it will be at the resurrection, for Jesus and Mary are already preparing for us the new paradise, that is the Church in glory. 5

Rahner described the Church as being already in glory in the sense that “the last day and the judgment are already here.” Yet the militant Church remains engaged in her struggle with the forces of evil. “There is, however, a powerful but mysterious influence of the Church in heaven upon the Church on earth, of Mary upon her children in danger, of the risen Christ upon his still imperfect body.” 6 Rahner made a connection here with the doctrine of Mary’s universal mediation of graces. This teaching could be correctly understood only “in the context of the mystical and symbolic place of Mary in the Church,” which did not detract from the sole mediatorship of her Son. Rahner appealed to the 1904 statement of Pius X which reflected the thought of the Church Fathers:

Everyone knows that the great woman of the Apocalypse represents the Virgin Mary, who without blemish gave birth to our Head. But the Apostle continues: “Being with child, she cried travailing in birth and was in pain to be delivered.” John therefore saw the holy Mother of God, who indeed already possessed eternal beatitude, nevertheless in pain at a mysterious birth. What birth was this? It was indeed our own birth, for we are still in exile and in a state of being born for the perfect love of God and for everlasting happiness. And the woman’s pain also symbolizes the Virgin’s love, because of which she labours with unceasing prayer from her place in heaven, to fill up the number of the elect. 7
Mary was construed as the servant of the Lord and the handmaid of the Church; Mary’s mediation over “the rest of her seed” could not decrease the efficacy of Christ’s sole mediatorship or the Church’s transmission of grace through the sacraments. In 1943, J. Beumer clearly stated:

There is therefore no ground whatever for thinking that Mary’s position through the privilege of her mediation in any way detracts from the grace within the Church or from the special place of the divine Redeemer in the work of salvation. There is only one mediation of grace; and what appears in mankind as the reception in a creaturely way of an influx of grace from Christ appears in Mary as a readiness to receive and the power to undertake her Motherly task. She is always present within the Church, and her position is expressed in the title “Mother of Divine Grace,” since from her flows blessing upon the whole Church.⁸

Rahner pointed out that the mystery of the Church was understood through the mystery of Mary, for the Church is at once glorified and struggling. The Church daily completes the mystery of the Incarnation, since Jesus Christ simultaneously enjoyed the beatific vision and lived his life on this earth. As John stated in his first letter, “We are sons of God even now, and what we shall be hereafter has not been made known as yet” (1 Jn. 3:2). Mary comprehended the dual nature of her son, in its humanity and in its divinity. Ephrem the Syrian described Mary as speaking to the Church and teaching this lesson:

When I look at thee from without, and can cast my loving eyes upon thee, my spirit contemplates what is hidden within thee. With my eyes I see the form of Adam, while within thee I see the Father dwelling in thee. To me alone hast thou granted the glory of both visions. And may the Church also, like thy Mother, come to see thee both visible and invisible!⁹

The goal of the Church throughout her history of travail in this world has always been the vision of the Lord Jesus in glory. This goal Mary already attained and remains completely fulfilled. The rest of human nature, which Mary shared, awaits fulfillment. In 1932, S. Bulgakov indicated that this thought had been preserved in the eschatological theology of the Russian Orthodox: “High in the heavenly glory stands the Virgin Mother of the human race: she has sanctified the whole world of nature, and in her and through her all things shall be gloriously transformed.”¹⁰

Russian theology, according to Rahner, found this unity between Mary and Church in the Sophia icons. Sophia included Mary, “and within Mary the Church, and within the Church the Christian soul rising slowly . . . towards everlasting glory.”¹¹ The Creed’s reference to the resurrection of the body and life everlasting found fulfillment within the
Church, born at the same time into this opaque world and into the glory of Christ's Resurrection in heaven. In the fifth century, Pseudo-Caesarius of Arles made a comparison between Mary and the Church: "two great women . . . who are one in Christ and one with us." The Virgin was identified as existent in the Church and the individual hearts of the faithful:

Let the Church of Christ rejoice, for she like Mary has been graced by the power of the Holy Ghost and has become the Mother of a divine child. Let us once more compare these two Mothers; each of them through giving birth strengthens our faith in the child of the other. Upon Mary came in mysterious stillness the shadow of the Holy Ghost, and the Church becomes a Mother through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at baptism. Mary without blemish gave birth to her son, and the Church washes away every blemish in those she brings to birth. Of Mary was born he who was from the beginning, of the Church is reborn that which from the beginning was nothing.  

Revelation: Foundations for the Magisterium

Implicit Revelation: Development of Dogma

The question concerning revelation as the foundation for the magisterium's teaching of the Assumption is important. In his search for establishing the Assumption as a dogma, Pius XII began not by asking if it could be found explicitly in Scripture or early tradition, but by stating that the Assumption was a belief of the Church that had been taught by the magisterium for at least the preceding fifty years. P. J. Hamell observed in 1951 that if the magisterium, past and present, taught that the Assumption was revealed truth, then there was an infallible certainty that the Assumption had been de facto revealed.

For the Magisterium is a personal and living authority, enjoying today, as certainly as in the first years of Christianity, the infallible guidance of the Spirit of Truth in its sacred charge. It proclaims no new truths; it interprets and formulates what was revealed to the Apostles.  

The faith is taught by the bishops, successors of the Apostles — not by theologians — and by the pope, successor of Peter.

Following Lonergan, K. Healy wrote in 1951 on the agreement that the Assumption belonged to the science of theology; consequently, it could not be proved by historical method. While theoretically witnesses could be provided for Mary's death and the departure of her body from this world, it is impossible to have witnesses of her glorification, in body and soul. The only manner in which the faithful could learn of the
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glorified state of Mary’s body and soul in heaven would be through revelation by God.\textsuperscript{14}

Pius XII has ignored any attempt at a historico-theological line of proof in his Bull, i.e., tracing a continuous belief from the apostolic period. Instead, he presented an order of proofs that stood in relation to each other and that exhibited an underlying unity premised on the divine Motherhood. He emphasized: (1) the dignity of the divine maternity, which in itself precluded any corruption of Mary’s body; (2) the similarity of the Theotokos to her divine Son, which mandated Mary’s placement in heavenly glory with the fullness of her personality, in body and soul; (3) Mary’s human participation in her Son’s divine act of redemption, which demanded that in her glorified body she joined the Redeemer before his Father; (4) the love of Jesus Christ for his Mother, which would render any dissolution of her body intolerable; (5) Jesus’ respect for the fourth commandment; (6) the Immaculate Conception, which included not only Mary’s freedom from original sin but also from its consequence, the corruption of the body in the grave; (7) the virginal conception and virginal birth, which entailed a continued divine intervention beyond death to ensure Mary’s bodily integrity; (8) Mary’s association with Jesus Christ in his victory over sin and its consequences — concupiscence, the slavery of death and bodily corruption; and (9) the angelic greeting of blessing, which guaranteed her freedom from the curse to bear children amid travail and from returning to dust.

The pontiff proceeded to demonstrate how the doctrine, at first only implicit in those truths known through revelation about the Virgin, developed in time into an explicit belief of the Church. This survey of Pius XII exemplified the development of doctrine through the various functions of Scripture and tradition, theologians, and the faithful.

In 1956 J. B. Carol asked if the revelation concerning the Assumption were explicit or implicit. He considered that it obviously was not explicit, since there was no extant evidence of belief in the truth for the first few centuries:

Only in the hypothesis of an implicit revelation is it understandable why it took so many years before the faithful (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by a process of analysis and/or logical deduction) became more and more conscious of the fact that this doctrine was actually implied in other Marian truths taught by the Church.\textsuperscript{15}

The Ascension was part of the Lord’s paschal mystery, his salvific action. Mary’s Assumption was construed to be part of the fruits of her Son’s Redemption. Christ rose through his own power; Mary was carried up through the power of her Son, the Redeemer. Mary could not then be construed as a co-redeemer.

Two modes of revelation differentiated between the two dogmas by declaring that “the christological dogmas were revealed in the original deposit with immediate implicitness (discoverable by a simple resolution of terms), whereas the Assumption was only revealed with mediate implicitness (discoverable by methods of inference).”\textsuperscript{16} In the first case, the dogma was evidently included in the original words of revelation, and
was so proclaimed. In the second case, the dogma was believed and proclaimed as a part of the original deposit of faith by the faithful before they understood precisely how it was contained in that original deposit. According to Newman, such dogmas as the Assumption were “informally deduced from the original revelation long before one is able scientifically to articulate the actual process of reasoning.”

Inner Coherency and Unity: Redemption, Divine Maternity, Holy Spirit

The faithful already had come to know Mary personally from the original fonts of revelation as Mother of the Lord, the graced and immaculate Virgin, the one associated with Jesus Christ in the work of humankind’s redemption against the forces of evil. The great works of God were manifest in her. Through reflective prayer and with faith in God’s love and fidelity, the faithful had come to understand the Assumption in a process of implicit, spontaneous reasoning. This process had been stimulated and cherished by the force of divine love, in the grace of the Holy Spirit. While outsiders might consider the result of this process as coming from an inner religious experience, or as a form of new revelation, the faithful accepted the Assumption only as originally revealed by the Holy Spirit, something always present in revelation, but only understood in all its implications at the present moment. Such a belief was guaranteed through the action of the Holy Spirit within the body of the Church. Newman pointed out:

Such growth in understanding on the part of the faithful is not infallibly guaranteed until there is evidence that it arose under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church. But we do not know that any particular development has been actually watched over by the Spirit until this fact is guaranteed by some solemn declaration by the Teaching Church that the dogma in question is part of the revealed deposit.

Customarily, a formal definition is not delivered by the Church in the first case of development. Heresy is usually the provocation. The christological and trinitarian formulae were clearly held from the beginning; they had been formalized as dogmas in response to the heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries. No compelling reason existed for the formalization of dogma in the second form of development, because the faithful can endure for long periods of time without reflecting upon certain aspects of revealed truths. In the case of the Assumption, the Church was involved in establishing an orthodox doctrine of humankind’s redemption through the orthodox doctrine of Trinity and Incarnation; consequently, the first five centuries were christological. The great, directly Marian doctrines began to be explicated only in the sixth century:

Those aspects of the Atonement immediately affecting man’s faith in salvation through Christ would come before doctrines which, however important in themselves, and however intrinsic to the predestined
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manner and effect of the incarnation, would not be directly necessary for man's faith in christ.19

E. Neubert concluded in 1954 that the Assumption of Mary was believed because of a concordance of teachings that the Son had his Mother share in all of his privileges. As a result, when Christians asked what happened to the body of Mary, the reply was that “Christ must have associated His Mother in His own glorification by an anticipated resurrection.”20

According to H. F. Davis, some persons outside the Catholic Church insisted that historical evidence be presented for the Assumption. But Davis reminded them that the Assumption, very much like the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection, was a matter of faith. If it were a matter of history, then the claims of the apocrypha would have to be corroborated by witnesses. While the apocryphal accounts were untheological attempts of unhistorically-minded laity to express the wonders that must have accompanied Mary’s last moments, nevertheless these accounts described the fact that Mary’s predestination was similar to that of her Son. Just as she lived and suffered and died, as he did, so the details of her passing were like those of his. They served the purpose of recalling the departure of Mary from this world and of giving the faithful a helpful focus for their thoughts.

The apocryphal stories did some harm in relation to the development of belief. Since they were legendary, some of the faithful perceived the doctrine as legend. A decree of Pope Gelasius (492-496) condemned a Latin version of the doctrine. Pseudo-Jerome, identified sometimes as Paschasius Radbert (c. 780-865) created a skeptical attitude toward the bodily Assumption.21

In 1882 the Anglican scholar J. B. Mozley, in Reminiscences of Oriel, declared that the Assumption did not rest upon the Transitus Mariae stories; quite the contrary was true: “The belief was never founded on that story. The story was founded on the belief, and testifies to the fact of that belief: the belief, which was universal, required a defined shape, and that shape at length is found.”22 Davis recalled the concern of many theologians that the faithful in the first centuries were slow to recognize that the Assumption had been implicitly contained in revelation. B. Capelle wrote in 1950 that the silence of the first six centuries about the Assumption did not allow for basing that dogma upon the foundation of tradition.23 But the homily of Bishop Theoteknos of Livities in Palestine, published for the first time in 1955, was discovered to have been written within five centuries of the death of the last apostle. Consequently, it served as a definite and valuable witness to the dogma. Yet Davis found that Capelle’s opinion remained valid in principle; it was unlikely that other findings would bridge the earliest five centuries to an explicit belief.24

The silence of these centuries was broken by the teaching of the Assumption. Protestants and others opposed to the doctrine attributed this fact to the uncritical acceptance of the apocryphal accounts of Mary’s death which arose sometime around the fifth century. However, for the first centuries the Church’s task was to defend the divinity
and humanity of Jesus Christ. Only subsequent to the Theotokos definition by the Council of Ephesus in 431 could the Church study the Mother of God in an orderly, detailed manner.

**Implicit Reasoning: Converging Probabilities**

Davis commented that Dillenschneider and Capelle were among modern theologians who found the key to the manner in which Christians reasoned in what Newman had written over a hundred years earlier on implicit reasoning and development.25 People normally argued in a spontaneous rather than an analytical way. For example, St. John Damascene and Pseudo-Augustine had argued that Mary was taken up to heaven bodily. The reasoning was not formal in nature but an argument from converging probabilities. This process was similar to the intuitive leap to a conclusion posited by the vitalist H. Bergson, wherein one reason is supported by a mass of evidence that points to a conclusion in absolute conviction. Capelle cited an example of this type of reasoning by Herbert, Bishop of Norwich, toward the end of the eleventh century: “Impossible, that the flesh from which the Word was made flesh should corrupt by lasting death. . . . Holy, brethren, with full and unshaken faith that she was made immortal in body and soul, and sits at the right hand of God.”26 John Henry Newman explained this “personal, spontaneous informal method of arguing” in the following way:

> The mind passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next, seizing on a testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a clamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind, and unable to teach another.27

In reply to the question that this type of reasoning may not be sufficient for the foundation of dogma, Davis emphasized that the Holy Spirit ensures that the Church will be convinced only if a doctrine is *de facto* contained in revelation. It was the Church that reached this conclusion by “the reasoning of her children. The Holy Spirit protects her from thus reaching a false conclusion.”28

A comment by Newman clearly pointed out the ability of Christian piety, when Catholics dialogue concerning the certitude of their faith with regard to the Assumption belief, to arrive at the truth:

> Mary has no chance place in the divine dispensation; the Word of God did not merely come to her and go from her; He did not pass through her, as He visits us in holy communion. It was no heavenly body which the Eternal Son assumed, fashioned by the angels, and brought down
to this lower world: no; He imbibed, He absorbed into His divine Person, her blood and the substance of her flesh; by becoming man of her, He received her lineaments and features, as the appropriate character in which He was to manifest Himself to mankind. The child is like the parent, and we may well suppose that by His likeness to her was manifest her relationship to Him. Her sanctity comes, not only of her being his Mother, but also of His being her son.

... Who can conceive, my brethren, that God should so repay the debt, which he condescended to owe to His Mother, for the elements of His human body, as to allow the flesh and blood from which it was taken to smoulder in the grave? Do the sons of men thus deal with their mothers? Do they nourish and sustain them in their feebleness, and keep them in life while they are able? Or who can conceive that the virginal frame, which never sinned, was to undergo the death of a sinner? ... She died, then, as we hold, because even our Lord and Saviour died; she died, as she suffered, because she was in this world, because she was in a state of things in which suffering and death are the rule. ... She died, but her death was a mere fact, not an effect; and when it was over, it ceased to be. She died that she might live.

It would be mistaken to predicate background stories as the basis for the Assumption. It would be impossible for respected bishops and theologians over the course of centuries to choose the Assumption from a mass of legends without a basis of Scripture and tradition. The colorful details disappeared, but the fact of Mary's assumption in body and soul to glory remained. Pius XII's statement, that all the considerations in support of the Assumption have a common basis in Scripture, precluded the necessity of searching for a chain of witnesses reaching back to the beginning. Davis surmised that the Christians of the first centuries were too preoccupied to explicate the fact that the doctrine had been implicitly contained in revelation because of "the troubled condition of the times and the life-and-death struggle with christological heresies."

In 1963 K. Rahner, in his work _Mary, Mother of Lord_, remarked that it was not necessary for the Church to know the details of Mary's life: the Church must only acknowledge the action of God's grace in her life and the truths of faith concerning her. God's grace effected several privileges: Mary's constant virginity, through which she abandoned herself to God's will and providence, and to none other; her sinlessness and holiness, the fruit of the perfect redemption that was accomplished in her; and her divine maternity. Rahner also included her departure from this world and subsequent glorification. He concluded that the one thing that the Church must know about this transition is the fact that Mary, the Mother of the Lord, was the most perfect work of his redemption. Belief in Mary's Assumption, under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, was an intrinsic element of the faith of the Church in the triumphant accomplishment of
redemptive grace in the Church. The Holy Spirit brings to the Church not only the fullness but the dynamic explication of revelation:

As a consequence of allowing herself to be led by that Spirit, and of her having the superhuman courage to believe that that Spirit is always with her and is ever active with power in the ever renewed understanding of the unchanged revelation of Jesus Christ, the Church knows that she is not led and determined by theological subtleties and merely human wishes and longings, but by the infallible Spirit of God, which leads her into the depths of the one, ever identical and yet never ossified revelation of our Lord, and unfolds this revelation more and more before the believing mind of the Church.\textsuperscript{32}

Rahner insisted that the Assumption was not a new doctrine; rather, its definition verified the fact that it belonged to the content of revelation which had been entrusted to the “keeping and progressive exposition of the Church.” The truth was not new to the consciousness of the Church. Rahner emphasized the Church’s growth in certitude over the centuries concerning the Assumption:

Not only has this truth been taught and believed indisputedly for centuries in the Church; not only had the question of the precise character of Mary’s consummation been expressed some fifteen hundred years ago and answered in the sense of the present dogma, with increasing firmness, despite some hesitation and opposition at first; but anyone who really has the Catholic belief in the dignity of the Mother of God, her importance in the history of redemption, her sinless holiness, her role as exemplar and type of the perfection of redemption as such, has at least by implication, in such belief, a knowledge of the perfect consummation which the present dogma expressly formulates, even if such a believer has not yet succeeded, or without the help of the Church would not have succeeded, in drawing out this content of what is believed.\textsuperscript{33}

The Church knew that Mary played a significant part in God’s plan of redemption. Since the time of the Resurrection of the Lord, humankind had entered the final phase of history. Mary had gone before in body and soul; she had already obtained that “perfect fulfillment which every Christian hopes for from the grace of God, as the one outcome and fruit of his own human life.”\textsuperscript{34}

Most Perfect Work of Redemption:
Predestination; Intimate Association of Mother with Son

Pius XII declared that all the considerations for the Assumption were founded ultimately in Scripture, which portrayed Mary as most intimately associated with her
Son and sharing in his destiny. Hamell concluded from the pope's words that it was necessary for Mary to join, not only in soul but in body as well, her divine Son in glory. "As it was in Christ's power to honor his Mother by preserving her from the corruption of the grave, we are compelled to believe that He did so honor her." 35

Pius XII reasoned that the perpetual virginity and the Immaculate Conception were bestowed on Mary because of the sublime, intimate association between Mother and Son. He further reasoned that the privilege of the Assumption was clearly demanded by an intrinsic necessity within God's salvific plan concerning this association. The many theological proofs for the Assumption were interwoven and complementary. Their common basis was the decree of predestination which united Jesus and Mary in the work of salvation. After the pontiff traced the history of this belief through the centuries, he summarized his case in favor of the dogma with the concept of Mary's association with Jesus Christ and unraveled varying aspects of this relationship.

Theoteknos

It is probable, but not certain, that the oldest statements directly addressing the Assumption were in the apocryphal legends of the fifth (and earlier) centuries. Wenger restored the oldest outline of this legend, which dated at least from the fifth century. While the legends have no historical value, they nevertheless did reflect the belief of the faithful concerning Mary and the uniqueness of her predestination and death. The earliest version was in either Greek or Syriac, later discovered in Arabic, Coptic, Gaelic, and Latin versions. The Catholic Dictionary of Theology summarized Wenger's basic form of this legend:

It includes an announcement by an angel of Mary's approaching death; Mary's assembling together of her friends; the arrival of St. John and later of the other Apostles, including St. Paul; the arrival of Jesus; Mary's death, her funeral, an attack on the mourners by Jews who were struck by blindness by angels and healed on believing; the burial; the return of Jesus after three days; the carrying up by angels of the body of Mary to paradise followed by Jesus and the Apostles; the placing of the body under the tree of life and the return to it of the soul; with, finally, the return of the Apostles to earth. 36

But Wenger also published what constitutes presently the earliest and more explicit testimonies for the Assumption. They were discovered among the sermons of Theoteknos in his "Encomium for the feast of the Assumption." Wenger proposed the second half of the sixth century as the date for the sermon. 37 While Theoteknos accepted the principal characteristics of the apocryphal legends, he relied solely upon arguments that had been taken from Scripture and theology.

Theoteknos surprisingly called his homily not the dormitio or pausatio of Mary, but her assumptio, 38 and wrote as if the belief were universal. He based his belief in the
Assumption not on the authority of legends, even though he used some of these, but upon faith in Jesus and Mary as revealed in Scripture: “Let not anyone be incredulous, as though it were impossible for the all-holy body of the Mother of God to work this miracle. (Such a thing was possible) because she remained a virgin and knew no corruption.”

Theoteknos began his *encomium* with the Resurrection. Jesus Christ accomplished the redemption of humankind and then ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father. Through his exaltation in the purity of flesh received from his virginal, immaculate Mother, Mary became queen of heaven, surrounded by all the saints. She was the second Eve. “She found what Eve lost. She found what Adam had forfeited through his disobedience.” Throughout the Old Testament Theoteknos found references that were in accord with the glories of Mary. Newman later expressed this principle: “The glories of Mary for the sake of her Son.”

Theoteknos concluded that the close association of Jesus and Mary in the accomplishment of salvation did not permit a separation from one another:

For it was fitting (he said) that the holy one who begot Him should see her Son upon a high throne, raised above all, and should see every knee bend before Him of those above the earth and of those upon the earth, and every tongue confess Him that will come to judge the living and the dead.

He considered it essential that Mary must be exalted beyond all the other prophets and saints:

It was fitting . . . that her all-holy body, her God-bearing body, receiver of God, godlike, undefiled, shining with the divine light and full of glory, should be carried by the apostles in company of the angels, and, after being placed for a short while in the earth, should be raised up to heaven in glory with her soul so loved by God.

Theoteknos felt no compulsion to defend the Assumption before nonbelievers as the doctrine had not been defined a dogma. If he thought that it had no basis in Scripture and tradition, he need not have defended it; *de facto* he did. His arguments were not detailed; yet his conclusions were explicit, and his scriptural associations were spontaneous. He saw Mary as the mediatrix in heaven beseeching the favor of her Son on the behalf of all the faithful. Four times Theoteknos declared that Mary’s body had been taken with her soul into the glory of heaven. He illustrated the parallel between Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension and the Assumption of Mary. He argued that any privilege granted to one of the saints must be applied of necessity to Mary:

Since Mary was greater than Henoch and Elias, who had been taken directly by God from this world to glory, *a fortiori* then Mary had to be assumed since Mary was greater than they or any member of the heavenly court. For if the God-bearing body of this holy one knew
death, it did not suffer corruption and kept free from stain, and raised to the heavens, by the holy archangels and powers, together with her pure and immaculate soul, and is now higher than Henoch and Elias, higher than all the prophets and apostles, higher than the heavens, with the exception alone of God, who, in his kindness has disposed all things in view of our salvation. 45

Theoteknos recalled many scriptural passages: the contrast of Mary with Eve; Paul’s declaration that woman would be saved through childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15); the queen who goes to her King, desirous of her beauty (Ps. 44); her Son enthroned before every bended knee in heaven and on earth (Ph. 2:10); the belief that if Jesus departed to prepare mansions for his followers, he would necessarily prepare a greater one for Mary (Jn. 14:2). Theoteknos emphasized too that Mary was in a very special relationship with the Trinity: “This holy one pleased God the Father; this Virgin pleased the subsistent Word; this Virgin pleased the life-giving Spirit that enlightens all and makes all the citizens of heaven.” 46

Davis et al. described other arguments used by Theoteknos for the Assumption: ... from the fact that Mary was an ambassadress with her Son during her life, from the fact that she was the spiritual ark containing the vessel of manna and the rod of Aaron, and a second time from the fact that she was the second Eve who had found all that the first Eve had lost. 47

Toward the end of the sermon Theoteknos quoted twenty passages from the Old Testament, all of which typified graces which Mary later received. His final description of Mary was as the earth which bore the good fruit of fidelity in which justice and peace have kissed:

Our earth is Mary, who is our sister and our sovereign. She has given her fruit in its time, the bread which will never fail, Christ who said, “I am the bread of life. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” . . . Our earth, the Mother of God and ever-virgin, has brought forth her flower. 48

Post-Thirteenth Century Universal Belief by Ecclesia Docens et Discens

In his 1956 Dictionary of Mary, D. Attwater asserted that there were no serious challenges to the Assumption after the thirteenth century. Benedict XIV (d. 1758) declared that the belief was a probable opinion and that any denial of it would be “impious and blasphemous.” Attwater considered the Assumption to be “a most striking manifestation and exemplification of the truth affirmed in the baptismal creed: ‘I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.’” 49 He quoted V. White, stating that the Assumption belief concretized the abstract concepts of the reassimilation of
matter and the body’s salvation: “The doctrine of the Assumption ‘concretizes’ and particularizes the universal abstract ideas of the reintegration of matter, the rehabilitation of nature, the taking up of the feminine principle into the divine Principle, the redemption of our body.” The continued profanation of matter had isolated religion, making everything else nonspiritual and even, in the case of the body, “dirty.” Attwater stated, “The definition of Mary’s bodily Assumption recalls all men and women to their wholeness: body, matter, is destined to life in ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ when the old heaven and the old earth are no more (Apoc. 21:1). Mary has attained her — and our — destiny.”

A Converging Accumulation Through the Action of the Holy Spirit

The strongest supporters of the Assumption in post-Reformation days proved to be St. Peter Canisius and Francis Suarez, quoted by Pius XII. T. Bartolomei stated in 1951 that Suarez had not only presented a most complete summary of the reasons afforded by the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, but had also afforded Pius XII a preview for Munificentissimus Deus.

Continental Protestantism had difficulty comprehending the Catholic reasoning for the Assumption and for its inclusion in the deposit of faith. Lutheranism and Calvinism had reduced Christianity to a justification by faith alone, in the strict sense. It was impossible for those Protestants who adhered to the stance articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae in its original form to comprehend that the grace of Christ was powerful enough to bring about a reflected glory in his saints. From the Catholic point of view, the completeness of Christ’s victory was seen in his saints; by honoring them the Christian honors Christ; the Christian honors Christ most fully in Mary. The attitude of some English evangelicals coincided with the attitude of continental Protestantism. Calvinists interpreted Paul’s letter to the Romans in a way that rendered impossible a literal understanding of the angel’s words to Mary and to Elizabeth or a Marian understanding of Genesis 3 or Apocalypse 12. Yet some English Anglicans had no difficulty in retaining the Catholic doctrines and devotions concerning Mary.

Davis et al. considered that this discovery of the inner meaning of revelation as enunciated by Newman was enhanced through faith and the influence of the gracing action of the Holy Spirit. In Dillenschneider’s Le Sens de la foi, for example, the author presented the view that important personal reasoning is accomplished in an informal, spontaneous way which is difficult to imitate. Previous efforts that portrayed such truths as the Assumption as merely logical analyses of what was earlier understood explicitly, or even as syllogistic deductions from earlier dogmas, were unsatisfactory. Different people may arrive at an identical conclusion through a variety of thought processes. According to Newman, people under the influence of the Holy Spirit can argue to the same conclusion and still express those arguments differently: “It is natural . . . that millions of Catholics should agree on the fact of the Assumption, while there is still no general agreement on which arguments are most effective, nor on the most effective way
Davis concluded that the arguments presented by a Theoteknos, Pseudo-Modestus, Germanus, or Damascene displayed converging probabilities that arrived at the same conclusion:

One alone of these reasons might not suffice. Two might not suffice. A certain number of them, when they all point to one converging centre, is seen to be adequate; though most ordinary people would find it difficult to express articulately why they find such a converging accumulation adequate.

This process possesses only a moral certitude even though the magisterium used human prudence in arriving at its conclusion through the Christian sense of the faithful. But ultimately, since the Church possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the truth, the conclusion that is reached is not only that the Assumption is true but also that the Assumption belongs to the original revealed deposit of faith.

Davis responded to the Protestant concern that Catholics who did not believe in the Assumption before its definition could be saved whereas those who did not accept it after the definition cannot be saved. He pointed out that Catholics, in their acceptance of the definition, are merely demonstrating their belief in the active guidance of the Holy Spirit that enables the Church to persevere in the truth:

Before the doctrine was defined, they had only their own learning and reasoning, together with any evidence they had of the “mind” of the faithful, to guide them. They may or may not have been convinced that, say, the Assumption was part of the original revealed doctrine. After the definition, they are certain, because they always accepted the doctrine of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church.

The objection, according to Davis, that the Church demands that the Catholic sacrifice reason and history for the word of the Church implies that the true believer must accept such a truth as the Assumption solely on the word of God, and not on the basis of reason or history. In the cooperation of the Holy Spirit with free will, the Church utilizes not only the believer's sense of faith but also reason and history to arrive at the truths to be defined. When the Assumption was defined, it was seen as part of the Church's living tradition. This was considered to be "a living and developing understanding" of what had been originally contained in the deposit of faith. Arguments for the Assumption that were presented over the centuries could be reduced to the following:

1. Mary in her predestination is always associated with her Son.
2. Immaculate conception and sinlessness imply exemption from corruption in the grave, and so imply immediate resurrection and glory.
3. Perpetual virginity, as fleshy incorruption, involved exemption from physical corruption after death.
(4) The filial piety of the divine Son implied that He would do this for her, if it were otherwise possible and fitting.

(5) Mary at her death was more exalted in dignity than other creatures will ever be. If other Christians had been destined to be bodily with Christ in heaven, then this prerogative must have applied to Mary shortly after her death.

(6) The doctrine of the Second Eve implies Assumption as the final and complete victory of the woman.

(7) The woman of Apocalypse is already seen in her glory, after being taken by the Eagle.

The dogma of the Assumption then rests primarily upon its constant, universal acceptance by the ecclesia docens and the ecclesia discens.

Pius XII recognized a close association between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Revelation had clearly taught that suffering, death, and bodily corruption came into the world through humankind’s rebellion. If Mary did not know sin, she would not be the recipient of these defects. She was subject to suffering and death because of her common predestination with her Son; similarly she was exempted from corruption because of that association. Pius XII maintained that these considerations provided for the faithful a hope but not a certainty, for the Assumption definition.

H. F. Davis suggested that the “integral Motherhood and virginal purity” did not provide rigid proof through syllogistic reasoning. Further, no Scripture scholar would insist that there was a definite connection between the protoevangelium or any other scriptural text and the Assumption.

Considerable misunderstanding has persisted concerning the method whereby the faithful arrive at truth. The process by which one arrives at the truth, Davis pointed out, is not confined to either leaders or experts. The Church, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, is not any one group, whether bishops, theologians or laymen. The bishops indeed have the teaching authority, but the faith lives in the minds and hearts of all the faithful.

Eschatology in Light of the Assumption

Symbol of Hope

In 1954 Ronald Knox described the period in Christ’s life from his resurrection to glorification in ascension.

His answer was to rise from the dead; and then, for forty days in the world’s history, that supernatural life which he had preached to us flourished and functioned under the conditions of earth. A privileged few saw, with mortal eyes, the comings and goings of immortality, touched with their hands the impalpable.
Through his own Resurrection Christ overcame the various manifestations of sin and death forever. In his goodness, God had created humankind in his own image and likeness; humankind therefore was good. In 1972, R. Kress observed that the fruits of the Resurrection are presently being enjoyed by at least one human person:

The Assumption is most important for us, then, because it reminds us that God’s original plan to give us the gifts of life and being has not been undone by sin and the obscurity of life and death caused by sin. The gift of life and being, given originally in creation and regiven insuperably in the Resurrection of Christ, is already being enjoyed perfectly by at least one human being, Mary. And since Mary is the Mother of all believers, the Assumption also teaches us that we, like her, are destined not for the deep pit of death, darkness and despair, but for the glory of heaven and everlasting life. In her, we are able to see what God intends and is doing for all of us.\(^6^1\)

According to Kress, Mary’s death\(^6^2\) in the context of the Assumption must not be looked upon as merely a passive happening; rather, it is the model of hope and confidence in God’s loving benevolence that we, like Mary, can reject sin, death, and nothingness, and freely choose God and future life. Like Christ’s Resurrection, the Assumption implied the transformation of a body-person into an entirely new dimension of existence.\(^6^3\) Rahner emphasized that human flesh was taken up and glorified with Christ. From the earliest days of Christianity it had been stated that “eternal glory is even now a possibility in the history of the world, this humanity and this flesh; already a possibility because in the flesh of Christ, which is a part of the world, it is already a reality.”\(^6^4\) Rahner saw the Assumption as nothing more than the completion of Mary’s redemption by her Son;\(^6^5\) and so redemption was accomplished for, and is a glorification of, the whole person. In this life we are God’s children; it is more certain that we shall be God’s children in the next life, even though we do not know the precise manner in which this will be accomplished (see 1 Jn. 3:2; also the writings of Paul). Consequently, heaven will have a transformative influence. And yet the faithful shall retain their personal identity in body and soul: “Not that we would be unclothed,” Paul states, “but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life” (2 Cor. 5:4).\(^6^6\) A continuity existed between Mary’s earthly and heavenly life, in that Mary retained her own body-soul identity. Rahner wrote in 1961 that part of the fear associated with death is the fact that there is a loss of body that can never be regained: “Everything depends on the fact that our own reality itself is transformed and not simply replaced by another, one which could no longer be our own selves and our world.”\(^6^7\)

Humankind’s ultimate heavenly destiny will be a complete transformation from this world, not simply a replacement by another world. There is a radical connection between the present earthly and future heavenly life. The taking up of Mary’s physical body verified an indissoluble union between what is and what is to come. Consequently,
according to Rahner, the Communion of Saints is reality, not merely symbol:

What is glorified retains a real connection with the unglorified world . . . an occurrence of glorification possesses objectively its determinate place in this world’s time, even if this point in time marks precisely the point at which a portion of this world ceases to endure time itself, insofar as it is different from all others while remaining in unity with the whole.68

Mary’s Assumption, the expression for her being changed over in body and soul to a new order of existence, has a relevance like Christ’s Resurrection for Christian anthropology.69 Mary realized the fulfillment of her personhood in body and soul, a human person already living and enjoying this transformation in the fullness of her humanity. Mary was always open to union with God, always open to the self-gift of her humanity to the divinity in a nuptial giving.

In his bull of definition Pius XII referred to Mary’s life that included difficulty and sorrow; yet it also included a determinative life without inclusion of sin, with a constant open responsiveness to the will of the Lord. While Mary conceived the Lord in her fleshly womb and bore him without sin, she ultimately knew him through bodily assumption into glorified life. Mary’s earthly present and heavenly future were accomplished perfectly in her body-soul entity. The Assumption could be a meaningless, even frustrating, source of humiliation if it held no meaning as a universal transformation from the tragic, sinful, human condition.

Death is usually considered an unknown, definitive separation of matter and spirit from the earth, a consequence of sin.70 Yet H. M. McElwain observed in 1967 that the human person yearns for transcendence, a translation into heavenly glory without the negative human concept of death.71 As Jesus approached death he transformed rather than destroyed bread; he changed it into his own body, given as a gift of self. Consequently, in consonance with the mystery of Eucharist, the Assumption can be seen not as a destruction followed by a new reality and identity, but rather as a transformation of continuity.

Cyril of Alexandria insisted upon the hypostatic identity of Jesus with the pre-existent Logos. This served as the Christological foundation for Marian devotion after the fifth century. The Word became man’s savior. Since his “humanization” came about through Mary, she became inseparable from her Son’s person and mission.

Since in Jesus there is no human hypostasis, and since a mother can be mother only of “someone,” not of something, Mary is indeed the mother of the incarnate Logos, the “Mother of God.” And since the deification of man takes place “in Christ,” she is also — in a sense just as real as man’s participation in Christ — the mother of the whole body of the Church.72
Mary’s bodily assumption was discussed by poets and preachers as an eschatological sign, both pursuant to Christ’s resurrection and as an anticipation of the general resurrection.

Vatican II essentially repeated the words of the Assumption dogma: “Having completed the course of her earthly life [Mary] was assumed in body and soul to heavenly glory.”73 It joined the dogma with the typology of Mary-Church: “In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle.”74 It further spoke definitively concerning the eschatological function of the whole Mary in glory: “In the bodily and spiritual glory which she possesses in heaven, the Mother of Jesus continues in this present world as the image and first flowering of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise Mary shines forth until the day the Lord shall come [2 Pet 3:10] as a sign of sure hope and comfort for the pilgrim People of God.”75

**Most Fully Redeemed**

In 1954 Rahner pondered the meaning of the dogmatic formulation concerning Mary’s bodily assumption into heaven. He considered the topic important for two reasons. First, one must understand precisely what one believes. Second, the epistemological and psychological difficulties that seemingly precluded the inclusion of this dogma in the content of revelation were illusory. To understand that someone is corporeally glorified in heaven required an understanding of the Resurrection of the Lord and the future general resurrection. It was necessary that God’s Son be a son of Adam; this eschatological event of salvation took place through Mary’s flesh and through her faith; Jesus the Christ was born of a woman; he was also born through voluntary acceptance of God’s will by Mary:

Her objective service, by means of which her bodily reality is delivered to the Word, is also her subjective action, one in the other. Her faith is called blessed because it admitted the Word into the region of the flesh, and her bodily Motherhood is not only a biological occurrence but the supreme action of faith, through which she becomes blessed.76

Mary enabled the Word to enter the physical world, in and through the power of his grace, only because he desired to be with sinful humankind; Mary’s instrumentality was the work of the grace of his coming. Nevertheless it was Mary who accomplished this. Mary was unable to do anything except by his grace; his gracing action in her body and in her faith simultaneously prompted the beginning of the world’s salvation. In Mary, God finalized his dialogue with creation and commenced the final phase of humankind’s salvation. The phrase “born of the Virgin Mary” meant something more than the biological occurrence of the Incarnation, or that God “used” the womb of the Virgin to accomplish the hypostatic union of his Son. Rather, it meant that
... in her and through her Christ’s salvation was bestowed upon the world. This does not mean that theirs was a synergistic sharing in the redemption. She has received in her flesh the salvation of the world from the Holy Spirit through the consent of her faith. She has received for all men and in the most “corporeal” way the whole Christ.77

**General Resurrection**

Rahner reasoned that this was why the Church has perennially believed that in Mary “the redemption which took place in her and through her in the world has reached its fullest and most radical perfection.”78 When the Church realized that Mary had been preserved from all actual and original sin, it indicated that the original grace that humankind had in Adam was not lost in Mary; but it also indicated that she was the radically redeemed, in whom Christ’s special grace overcame human sinfulness:

And that is how she is the second Eve, the Mother of all the living, the type of perfect redemption and the representation of what redeemed humanity, what the Church can be. God’s grace achieved its most incomprehensible and unsurpassable work where it laid hold of the world most closely and in the most “fleshly” way: in Mary.79

Being born of the Virgin Mary implied the descent of Jesus Christ into “hell and his fleshly resurrection.” There was a resurrection of the body only because Christ died and rose. His acceptance of death, with infinite implication, ensured the resurrection and was the cause of humankind’s salvation: “The heart of the earth has accepted and received the Son of God; and it is from a womb so consecrated, this womb of the ‘hellish’ depths of human existence, that the saved creature rises up.”80

Through Christ’s victory over death, definitive salvation came to humankind. Christ, though, is not the firstborn of the dead in the sense that he is the only one to have attained complete human fulfillment. The Church’s belief in Christ’s descent and in the resurrection of the dead presumed a multiple sharing in the complete victory over sin and death. K. Gschwind and K. Prumm in 1935 had already concluded, without any preoccupation with the Assumption, that Christ’s victory was shared in by others and that it was implied by his descent and resurrection.81 Rahner wrote that it was impossible for the Lord to have risen by himself:

It is quite impossible for the Resurrection to be an individual event, because our “bodily condition” (whether glorified or not) is simply the outward aspect of the spirit, which the Spirit forms for itself in matter so as to be open to the rest of the world, and which in consequence necessarily includes a community of a bodily kind with a bodily Thou (and not just with God’s Spirit).82
Transforming Glorification

It is illogical to assume that Jesus Christ’s glorified bodily condition could exist in solitude until the end of the world. The support of Matthew 27:52 was anticipated: “If definitive salvation has already been unshakably founded, death was conquered; a man, for whom it is never good to be alone, has entered upon the fulfillment of his whole being.”

Rahner reiterated that it was impossible for an imperfect being to perceive a bodily condition like this, perfected and gloriﬁed. In his bodily resurrection the Lord appeared to his followers, not in the reality of his glorified bodily condition, but only in a mode in which the glorified may appear to the ungloriﬁed, in “flesh and bone.” Rahner stated: “For the inner nature of his glorified bodily condition could only be made deeply evident for ‘what it is in itself’ to those who themselves live in this new mode of existence.” Rahner repeated the scholastic axiom, quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur, to prevent the idea, for example, that the Lord’s Ascension, as the apostles witnessed it, continued after his disappearance above the clouds and concluded in this manner in heaven. Paul reminded the faithful that little is known about the new condition required for entry into glory. Yet humankind will possess an incorruptible, glorious, spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42), and reflect upon visions of a new heaven and a new earth (Apoc. 21). Prior to the nineteenth century, prescinding from defined matters of faith, theologians pictured heaven in space, existent prior to the Resurrection, an abode for the glorified body, goal of the Resurrection: “Time ran its course . . . in space; in virtue of being glorified the body came to its new place, a place connatural to it, existing prior to it and possessing the properties of glorification.”

According to Rahner, heaven must be considered instead as a condition. If a concept of spatiality must be retained to localize humankind’s bodily condition, the place cannot be named. Spatiality must be conceived as a function of saving history, of the time which shapes this space. Heaven is not a goal to attain but rather the result of Christ’s victorious Resurrection. Time, an historical event, previously had been considered a function of space in which it moved. Rahner stated that on the contrary, space should be considered as a function of time; they both arise from the positioning of an historical happening. Transforming glorification, no longer commensurable with space, cannot be represented; it must be postulated, since the true bodily condition of someone who has risen in glory must not be dissipated by a false spiritualization. The world has been given a new heavenly dimension, a new order, through the Resurrection. The world has obtained a new mode of being, beginning with the glorified body of Christ, by means of its history in Christ, which is material and spiritual at once, of flesh and person in the one Spirit of God which renews all things. Rahner insisted that heaven is not necessarily deprived of a “space concept” because “time and history shape space, and do not intrinsically presuppose it.”
Eschaton

The reality of Christ and the saints in new life possesses a cosmic bond with present unglorified reality. It is an objective one, which is capable of describing future glory. The eternity of God and humankind in glory is not comparable, since God’s eternity is equally immediate to every point in time and cannot have any applications of time made to it. The eternity of the earthly in glory is a result of God’s saving action in time and history, which projects the temporal into eternity through a discrete process:

What is glorified retains a real connection with the unglorified world, it belongs inseparably to a single, ultimately indivisible world; and that is why an occurrence of glorification possesses objectively its determinate place in this world’s time, even if this point in time marks precisely the point at which a portion of this world ceases to endure time itself, in so far as it is different from all others while remaining in unity with the whole. ⁸⁸

The phrase “born of the Virgin Mary” implied more than the fact that Mary was the Mother of the Lord and has consequently bestowed upon the Son of God his earthly existence from her flesh. In addition, Mary became Mother; in her flesh and through her faith the eschatological event of salvation took place, drawing after it everything else as its inner consequence, so that Mary appears as herself the perfectly redeemed and the representation of perfect redemption. The concept of perfect redemption is dynamic rather than static, subject to continual growth in understanding.

Although there may be yet thousands of years in which to live, the end of time in Christ has already commenced. Since Mary was the ideal representation of full redemption through her exemplary place in salvation history, she is today in perfect communion with God “in the glorified totality of her real being (‘body and soul’) which certainly exists even now.” ⁸⁹

Rahner concluded the Assumption was explained by the two articles of the creed, “born of the Virgin Mary” and the “resurrection of the flesh.” Mary received the fullness of salvation in faith; she received it in body for herself and the faithful. She received salvation of body and soul, a salvation that had already begun. In her entire being Mary “is already where perfect redemption exists, entirely in that region of being which came to be through Christ’s Resurrection.” ⁹⁰

Rahner considered two privileges in relation to Mary’s Assumption. First, she had a unique right to the Assumption because of her divine maternity and special place in salvation history. Second, the interval of time between her death and bodily glorification was briefer than that of the saints who had seen corruption (Mt. 27:2). ⁹¹ The future of the Church rests in the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ and already has been actualized in Mary as the Church’s most perfect representation. The Church has been totally redeemed, actually in some of her members but not in all. Bodily salvation has already commenced in its final form: “The world is already in transition to God’s eternity, not
only in the ‘spirit’ of those who have gone to their everlasting home and not only in the body of the Son who came ‘from above,’ but also in the bodies of those who are simply ‘from below.’” Rahner believed that the Assumption is a clarification of a state of existence and salvation already achieved and constituted by the power of God, the reign of God, already manifested through its hold on this world and no idle dream of the future. According to Rahner, Protestantism basically cannot accept the Assumption dogma since its only theology is one of the cross, which does not include a theology of glory: “For Protestantism this is ultimately only a promise, and not something which exists ‘even now,’ although it has not embraced everything yet and for us here below has not yet come apparent.” Those who believed that salvation was wrought in Mary through her faith consent — and its most perfect effect was manifested here — will find it acceptable to attribute to her an amplitude of redemption.

The Church in Light of the Assumption

Mary and Church: Single Mystery

From the beginning, Mary and the Church have been closely associated; Mary in her being taken up provided only one phase of that linkage, but one that has been considered in depth since the definition of the Assumption. H. de Lubac insisted that the relationship is an internal and essential one. Mary and the Church are explanatory of each other so that they form “one single unique mystery. Both are — after Christ — the dwelling place of wisdom, and even wisdom herself, both are a ‘new world’ and a prodigious creation, both rest in the shadow of Christ.”

At the end of the world, the Church will join Mary in her perfection as the Bride of Christ. In the completion of God’s redemptive action, Mary’s going to heaven indicated that not only she but an entire community of persons will be assumed into glory. Shea insisted that the most forceful argument of Pius XII for the Assumption was the intimate association of Mary with the Lord in his redemptive effort. Why should Mary be assumed? Was it not sufficient that the Christ alone, in his humanity and divinity, had attained the completion and fulfillment of supernatural destiny? Shea replied that the Eternal Word is divine, while Mary is human, and therefore there was revealed an entirely different eschatological concept. Consequently, he posited not only the possibility but the principle of the eventual glorification of all those who had been redeemed. The dual relationship of sin in the original Adam and Eve and reconciliation in the second Adam and Eve, in the process of redemption and in the association of the Lord and his Mother, was postulated. With the proclamation of the doctrine of the Assumption, a community dimension within that glorification was affirmed: a proclamation of the fulfillment of the human person eschatologically as witness for all generations.

St. Cyprian (d. 256) had insisted that in accord with the dictates of human reason, the saved in glory will be able to know and to love their own:
Chapter 3

What man, stationed in a foreign land, would not want to return to his own country as soon as possible? Well, we look upon paradise as our country, and a great crowd of our loved ones awaits us there, a countless throng of parents, brothers and children long for us to join them. Assured though they are of their own salvation, they are still concerned about ours. What joy both for them and for us to see one another and embrace? O the delight of that heavenly kingdom where there is no fear of death? O the supreme and endless bliss of everlasting life!97

The relationship in heaven between Mary and the glorified saints can be appreciated in the context of the title Bride of Christ as applied to both Mary and to the Church. This title has been given from the earliest Christian times by the Church. The Old Testament offered evidence of the covenant relationship between God and Israel.98 The New Testament emphasized this truth through descriptions of the Church as the new Israel and the Bride of Christ.99 The Church Fathers went beyond Pauline teaching to interpret the Old Testament in this manner.

Healy, in 1982, mentioned the tradition that goes back to St. Hippolytus:

As early as the third century St. Hippolytus refers to the Church as Bride of Christ, and so prepared the way for future commentaries that would depend on him. By the middle of the third century we have an explanation of the Song of Origen which is considered one of his masterpieces. He speaks not only of the Church, but of each soul as the bride of Christ. This interpretation continued down the centuries so that by the twelfth century, the golden age of contemplation in the West, it is common among writers. St. Bernard, who owes much to Origen, in eighty-six sermons applies the Song to Christ and the Church — first, to the Church in general, then to single souls, and finally to Mary.100

Since the title Bride of Christ had been applied to both the Church and to her individual members, the title easily applied likewise to Mary, the first member of the Church. Christ had died for his Mother; he redeemed her; he had sanctified her in an anticipatory fashion at the moment of her fiat. All-holy, Mary was predestined to be the virginal Theotokos. She was his most obedient servant, a preeminent woman of faith, the most faithful disciple. In this sanctity, as Bride of Christ, she was the type for the Church.

C. Feckes made known the work of M. J. Scheeben, who had initiated the term "Mary's bridial Motherhood." The value of this insight was that in addition to the physical mother-child relationship, there was existent between Jesus and Mary a bond of love, a union of a mystical nature, that symbolized the union of bridegroom and bride. Feckes emphasized the uniqueness of Mary's bridial relationship in comparison to the rest of humankind:
Mary is the bride of the Word Incarnate in a higher sense than we are; she is this bride in a manner which is unique. We may say that in her God gave his son a bride like unto himself, even as he gave Eve to the first Adam. Mary is so raised up to Christ. . . .

Mary in her Assumption was seen as the personification of the Church. At the end of the world the Church will join her in her perfection as the Bride of Christ. Shea proposed that an entirely different eschatological concept had been revealed: the Eternal Word is divine, while Mary is human. He posited the principle of the eventual glorification of all the redeemed. J. Galot postulated the dual relationship of sin in the original Adam and Eve and reconciliation in the second Adam and Eve, for redemption and for the association of Son and Mother.

Vasey drew a parallel between Eve being taken from the sleeping Adam and the “new spouse of Christ, the Church, being born as the new Adam falls asleep upon the Cross.” Mary persevered in the faith until the end of her time on this earth. Her glorification can be construed not only as a personal victory, but as a victory for the Church and a promise of humankind’s heavenly inheritance: “Her corporal assumption, a personal triumph, is a victory for the entire Mystical Body and a pledge of the good things to come. From heaven she intercedes for the Church that fights here below, and she crushes all heresies in God’s own good time.”

In view of Mary’s Assumption, members of the Church behind the Iron Curtain who were at the Lourdes congress were able to look to her “for deliverance from the oppression of atheistic communism.” Vasey emphasized the likeness of Mary and the Church: they both overcome the forces of death and evil; they both give a new birth to humankind:

In one word, we cannot have God for our Father if we refuse to have Mary and the Church for Mother. The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation; hence it is the abiding place of Mary. All things have come to the Church and to each soul in the Church through Mary. The Church wants us to return to God by the same way He came to us, through Mary.

Mary: Type of the Church

Mary presents a paradox: She is simply a creature and yet has singular relationships with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Regardless of the debates of theologians concerning Mary’s quasi-infinite dignity or her entrance into the very essence of the hypostatic order, the faithful know and believe that Mary is Theotokos and in some way touches the hypostatic order. Vasey anticipated the problem that would soon face the Second Vatican Council: Is Mary to be placed on the side of Christ or on the side of humankind? Mary was an intimate participant with Christ in the mystery of salvation. Is Mary to be compared more to Christ or the Church? Vasey saw as one task of theology
the determination of the most suitable metaphors to describe Mary.

The interior life of the Church has always been appropriately expressed in her liturgy. In 1960, O. Semmelroth stated that the mystery of the Assumption was celebrated within the earliest liturgical feast that was dedicated to Mary. The dogmatic definition of 1950 merely presented evidence that the mystery had been accepted as self-evident and undisputed in every age. The theological foundation for the Assumption was less evident. Semmelroth attempted to demonstrate that the mystery of the Assumption is concordant with the entire teaching of the Church concerning Mary in presenting her as a type of the Church. In the Assumption, God’s providence brought the harmony of Mary’s tasks in salvation to a meaningful conclusion.

Contemplation of Mary in her physical glory led to a consideration of the visible Church’s corporeality. The visibility of the Church, if Mary were taken to heaven as a type of that visible Church, must be attributed to the Church as part of her essence. In his encyclical letter *Mystici corporis*, Pius XII had already enunciated the visible nature of the Church: “They err in a matter of divine truth who hold that the Church is invisible, intangible, something ‘pneumatalogical,’ as some say.”

The complete human being exits only when the *substantiae incompleatae* of body and soul have been intimately associated within a substantial union. Bodiliness is an integral part of humankind. Body was made for soul, and soul for body; the soul was made to reside in the body. It is erroneous to teach that the body functions only as an instrument of the soul, although the body is an enabler of the soul’s activities. Similarly, according to Semmelroth, the body is an essential part of the Church’s divine life principle. While it is fitting for the Church to be visible in her mission to bring divine life to humankind through the senses, the Church actually is visible according to her very essence. All the aspects of redemption of necessity take place within the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Any redemption can be accomplished only through the Church since the redeemed must be drawn into the Church and constitute her essence. This is why the Church must have a physical aspect and why

... the physical cosmos must be included. The Church must be visible, tangible, sensory, material — not only spiritual. Once corporeality has been included in the Church it ceases to be ‘the body of this death.’ The somatic body becomes ‘pneumatic,’ a body enlived by the Spirit of Christ. The physical nature of the world becomes the *sacramentum*, the covering with the Divine Life of grace.

The body participates in the redemption in relation to the extent that grace reigns in the Church corporately and individually. Christ dwells bodily in glory. The Church will be with her physical nature when she enters into glory with the faithful. Redemption will be completed only at that moment in heaven when a new heaven and a new earth have come into being in the faithful.
Archetype of Church

In Mary the Church has most fully received redemption. As an archetype of the Church, Mary typifies the essence of the Church, a community of humankind and the Mystical Body of Christ, in whom the divine life of Christ dwells. The grace of God is given to every member of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. “The Church has performed her receptive co-redemption in Mary, her representative.”

Semmelroth observed that the Church saw the human body in its perfectly redeemed state in Mary. This did not mean that Mary did not die, since every person takes on the work of redemption and its fruit, grace, through a giving back of one’s entire being to the Lord in personal death: “Mary fulfilled this subjective, receptive and co-redeeming role of the Church when, by dying, she made Christ’s redemptive death her own and subjectively co-enacted it.”

In an act of perfect obedience Christ surrendered his human will to his Father through death, in recognition of Adam’s disobedience to God’s sovereignty. Nothing historical was known about Mary’s death, but it seemed a logical outgrowth of her position as type of the “receptive, co-redeeming Church.” Christ’s death enabled humankind once again to approach the Creator; but to be effective, humankind must accept that sacrificial death by the co-redemptive action of surrendering one’s whole being to the Father: “It will be taken from him anyway when he dies; man cannot prevent physical death. Morally, however, he can renounce the death with which he is burdened. Man can liken himself to the dying Redeemer, sacrificing and thus receiving Christ’s redeeming death.”

Mary died as the archetype of the co-redeeming Church. Each day the Church reenacts the death of the Redeemer and rises with him to eternal life. It is appropriate, then, that Mary, as the perfect embodiment of the Church’s functions, should have undergone death, as did the Savior, both by her constant moral affirmation and by a physical, bodily death. Just as Mary subjectively underwent the death of her Son in her body, she also reflected there the fully redeemed body of the Church. “At the same time the redeemed state of the physical cosmos at the end of time shines forth in her body.”

In her role as the archetype of the Church, Mary is revelatory of the redemption in intensive and extensive capacities. In the intensive sense, of necessity Mary most fully possesses the grace of Christ that makes her what she is. She participates most fully in the divine life in an obvious manner because as archetype she depicts the Church’s essence as redeemed. The faithful also possess the grace of Christ in this life, but it is veiled, a pledge of what will occur in heaven and for which they are in anticipation of its unfolding in fulfillment. The faithful’s incomplete redemption on earth is explained by the fact that their bodies, because of the struggle with their souls, have not been drawn into complete redemption. “The redeemed state of the body will be perfected in eternity after the resurrection of the flesh,” Semmelroth stated; meanwhile, humankind struggles to control the body through a redeemed soul and to reveal the soul’s adoptive status through the body. Yet the Church, in her essential structure, includes the body and its redemption.
In the extensive sense embracing the bodily element, Mary as type exemplifies the nature of the Church redeemed. She must represent and signify in every respect the hidden fundamental reason of the Church as redeemed Bride of Christ. Mary reflects to the faithful that they are essential parts of the Church, the abode of the Holy Spirit upon earth, and that they are in their bodies temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 1:16). Mary reflects the fact that the Church is the redeemed Bride of Christ:

This is why the Church believes that her Archetype dwells body and soul in perfection. Mary, the highest representative and Archetype of the Church, brought her body and soul to the Bridegroom to be redeemed. Now she must stand in eternity next to the God-man-Bridegroom revealing to the faithful that this soul and body belong to the one whom Christ has sanctified and healed in the water by means of the Word and made into a Church in all her glory, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but rather that she might be whole and without blemish.\(^{113}\)

It was necessary for Mary to gain perfection in both body and soul for the following reasons: her Son was eternally glorified in his sacred humanity; he gained this same transfiguration for the entire Church, his Mystical Body; the Mystical Body received its personal oneness and archetypical stature in Mary; she distributes to the Church the graces that she has received from her Son as she stands next to him in her capacity as the archetype of his redeemed body, the Church.

**Reaction to the Dogma**

The churches not in union with the Holy See reacted in a variety of ways to the Assumption definition. Since the Orthodox reaction was then limited to a few issues, a detailed chronological examination of that position will not be presented. The varied stances of the Anglican position will be situated within the context of Protestantism, although there are Catholic expressions within this inclusive position. The main concentration on the Assumption in Protestantism will be found in its Calvinistic and Lutheran expressions, with special emphasis on the English and American formulations.\(^{114}\)

**A Corollary on the Orthodox Church**

A. Schmemann\(^{115}\) expressed surprise that, after the opening session on Chapter Eight of *Lumen Gentium* at which he served as an observer, a *peritus* announced his intention to be rid of mariology in the immediate future. Mary had become a separate cult in the West; consequently, she had little practical influence on current difficulties. Schmemann believed that if the world understood its present condition, it would realize that its problem was oriented toward the “Christian vision of God, world, and man” rather than toward the relevance existent between Church and world. In this vision,
contemporary society would find what had been expressed over the centuries in terms of devotion to Mary, Schmemann pointed out:

The veneration of Mary permeates...the entire life of the Church; it is a “dimension” of dogma as well as piety, of Christology as well as ecclesiology. . . . Something is expressed in mariology which is fundamental to the Christian faith itself, to the Christian experience of the world and of human life.\textsuperscript{116}

The Orthodox had no trouble accepting the substance of the newly defined Marian dogma of the Assumption. The belief had been even stronger in the Orthodox than in the Catholic tradition, consistently held in the East, persisting from early Christianity to the present time. Pius XII quoted the Greek Fathers at length in his bull. The evidence he presented in support of the doctrine and devotion for the first thousand years came from the Greek Fathers. Faith in the Assumption was professed by Catholic and Orthodox alike, but the latter did not express it in a dogmatic definition. This belief constituted a tradition dissimilar to the Protestant tradition.

G. Alastruey wrote in 1952 that the Eastern Church had never denied the Assumption of the Virgin. Two Orthodox councils had approved the belief. The Armenian Council of 1342 declared that the Church of the Armenians “believes and holds that, by the power of Christ, the holy Mother of God was assumed bodily into heaven.”\textsuperscript{117} The Synod of Jerusalem (1672), conducted against the followers of Calvin, expressed the same teaching concerning Mary’s bodily assumption.\textsuperscript{118}

In 1931 S. Bulgakov made the pronouncement that a correct ecclesiology necessarily implied a mariology. A reunion of Orthodoxy with any churches which denied a place to Mary would be impossible:

As long as there exists this mysterious antipathy against any Marian devotion on the part of Protestantism, a true reunion of the churches is impossible—a correct doctrine of the Church is impossible without a Mariology. The Mother of God is the personal head of the Church (though certainly in a different sense from Jesus Christ himself), namely as head of mankind, as the creaturely centre.\textsuperscript{119}

Christian unity was impossible since traditional Orthodox and Protestant positions were mutually exclusive. Bulgakov, possibly the greatest modern Russian Marian writer in the opinion of M. O’Carroll,\textsuperscript{120} thought that in a lack of devotion to Mary, Protestantism

. . . differs in almost equal measure from both Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Love and veneration for the Virgin is the soul of Orthodox piety, its heart, that which warms and animates its entire body. A faith in Christ which does not include his virgin birth and the veneration of his Mother is another faith, another Christianity from that of the Orthodox Church.\textsuperscript{121}
Bulgakov considered Mary to be the culmination of the sanctity expressed in salvation history: "Thus the Church of the Old Testament had for its purpose the elevation, the conservation, and the preparation of a holy humanity worthy to receive the Holy Spirit, that is, worthy of the Annunciation in the person of the Virgin." He saw Mary in her personification of the Church as being elevated beyond the stain of any sin.

V. Lossky, a Russian Orthodox theologian, stated that if one does not admit the fact of the Assumption, then that person is not yet perfectly united with God, failing to appreciate the mystic center of the Church. There is one human person who is already united with God after resurrection and judgment, and that person is the *Theotokos*:

But death had no further hold on her: like her Son, she was raised to life and taken up into heaven — the first human person who realizes in herself the last end for which the world was created... The Church and the whole universe have from now on their completion, their personal summit, which opens the way for the deification of every creature.

The Orthodox had two difficulties with the formal definition. The first problem concerned the exercise of papal infallibility. The second concerned the death of Mary. If there were to be a definition, the pronouncement should include the actual dormition, or death, of Mary. The falling asleep of Mary was one of several controversial points not included in the definition. But the death of Mary constituted the much more commonly held tradition in the Catholic Church.

In the estimation of the Orthodox, their Catholic counterparts had missed the inherent eschatological mystery in an attempt to explain it rationally and to elaborate it appropriately. The Orthodox simply accepted the fact that Mary was risen with Christ. They did so without explanation of the procedure that occurred after her death. Schmemann observed:

The Orthodox Church does not “explain” what happened when Mary died. It simply states that her death signifies the “morning of the mysterious day” that Mary, in virtue of her total love for God and surrender to him of her absolute obedience and humility, is the beginning of that common resurrection which Christ announced to the world. Mary is the ultimate doxa of creation, its response to God. She is the climax, the personification, the affirmation of the ultimate destiny of all creation: that God may be finally all in all, may fill all things with himself. The world is the “receptacle” of his glory, and in this it is “feminine.” And in the present era, Mary is the sign, the guarantee that this is so, that in its mystical depth the world is already achieving its destiny.
Ware wrote in 1963 that in the Orthodox liturgy Mary is honored as *Theotokos*, *Aieparthenos*, and *Panagia.* The Orthodox look upon mariology as one aspect of christology. Mary's title of divine maternity was granted only to protect the divine nature of her Son. The hypostatic union was a great mystery, but it had been effected only through the cooperation of the Virgin. Mary is honored by the Orthodox as the all-holy one, since she typifies the perfect example of the synergy existent between God's foreordained providence and human freedom; divinity did not desire to become human without that freedom of consent. If Mary had refused, the Incarnation would not have occurred. N. Cabasilas wrote:

> The Incarnation was not only the work of the Father, of His Power and His Spirit . . . but it was also the work of the will and faith of the Virgin. . . . Just as God became incarnate voluntarily, so He wished that His Mother should bear Him freely and with her full consent.

Ware observed that after Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption, some few Orthodox expressed doubts about and even denial of Mary's Assumption. Yet Orthodoxy itself expressed credence in the Assumption: “Like the rest of mankind, Our Lady underwent physical death, but in her case the Resurrection of the Body has been anticipated: after death her body was taken up or ‘assumed’ into heaven and her tomb was found to be empty.” Mary already had experienced death and judgment and now lives in a glorified state in union of body and soul. She is still a member of the human race, since her present glory is fulfillment of the latter’s promise. Orthodox hymnology affirmed the Assumption, although the Church had never announced the doctrine as a dogma.

Lossky described the Trinity and the Incarnation and Redemption as belonging to the Church’s public preaching; they were necessarily dogmas. But the Assumption belonged to the inner tradition of the Church:

> It is hard to speak and not less hard to think about the mysteries which the Church keeps in the hidden depths of her inner consciousness. . . . The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the Apostles; while Christ was preached on the housetops, and proclaimed for all to know in an initiatory teaching addressed to the whole world, the mystery of his Mother was revealed only to those who were within the Church. . . . It is not so much an object of faith as a foundation for our hope, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition. Let us therefore keep silence, and let us not try to dogmatize about the supreme glory of the Mother of God.

According to Ware, Orthodoxy views heaven and hell as the two basic realities humankind confronts at the end of the world, the *apocatastasis*, or “restoration,” when Christ will return in great glory to judge both the living and the dead.” At this time the
bodies of the righteous will be redeemed and glorified in a spiritual, transfigured manner. Ware considered that the parousia incipiently existed, for the Lord had already come in the liturgy of the Church and had enabled the faithful to enjoy his incipient graces.

Capuchin J. B. Terbovich in 1960 repeated the exaggerated observation of N. Berdyaev that “Russian religion is more a religion of Mary than of Christ.” After the consecration in the liturgy, the Orthodox priest would pray a song, “Especially for our most holy, pure blessed, glorified Lady, Mother of God, and ever Virgin Mary.” Terbovich recalled that a symbol of hope for the Russian people remains today in the Kremlin, an unused chapel dedicated to the Assumption of Mary.

L. Bouyer in his 1958 article “Devotion to Mary in the Church” expressed the view that the Catholic Church has always considered the spirituality, theology, and liturgy of the Eastern and Western Churches to be equally valid. Consequently, there should be no disagreement, although there have been areas of disagreements over devotion to Mary since the eleventh century.

In 1963 R. Laurentin wrote that since the definition of the Immaculate Conception, Orthodoxy had become uncomfortable with Catholic mariology. While Protestants emphasized “the absolutely gratuitous nature of grace to the exclusion of all value in human works,” the Orthodox tended to give a Pelagian emphasis to Mary’s freedom and merit, in contrast to the unearned nature of her graces. In 1955, Wenger wrote that Cabisilas had reflected this tendency; it could have been expressed even more emphatically by Demetrius Chrysoloras. The latter wrote that Mary “had acquired ... a spiritual beauty greater than that of the first man ... not by grace but by her own effort.” H. Barré described the error of Protestantism as that of Nestorianism, while the tendency of the Eastern Churches was toward Monophysitism. Yet their antithesis had been recently somewhat ignored because of their common schism from Rome and mutual opposition to the doctrines of infallibility and papal primacy. Laurentin believed that a basic agreement existed between Catholic and Orthodox concerning the Assumption: the belief had originated in the East, as had the feast, and the first theological consideration of the Assumption originated there. Some Orthodox questioned whether it was actually a dogma or only a theologoumenon; some criticized the Latin formulation by Pius XII; others resented the interjection of papal infallibility. Yet Laurentin affirmed that “as concerns belief in the corporeal assumption, there is no real problem.”

Liturgical hymns in honor of the dormition of Mary reflected the traditional belief in the East about Mary’s translation from earth to heaven. These chants were composed principally in the eighth and ninth centuries by Saints John Damascene (d. 749), Cosmas of Maiuma (d. 760), and Theophanes Graptos (d. 845). The principal points of the Byzantine tradition and liturgy were collected by Ruthenian Nicholas Russnak (1872 - 1952) and were submitted to the pope by Bishop Gojdich of Prjashev (1927 - 1960) on 25 January 1932 in support of a formal definition. H. R. De Moos stated:
The importance of this petition is obvious since it comes from the Ruthenian Hierarch, well versed in the Greek and Old Slavonic liturgical texts which, starting with the ninth century, are in constant use by both Catholics and Orthodox. And these texts “clearly and absolutely” contain the doctrine of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{140}

The Assumption, based on holy writ, was a logical development of the centuries-old tradition deeply rooted in the liturgical prayers and hearts of the people.

The Byzantine rite celebrated Mary’s Dormition in a solemn fashion. From the ninth century a two-week period of fasting preceded the celebration of the feast. In the liturgy there was one day beforehand and eight days afterward wherein the mysteries of the Dormition and Assumption were celebrated.\textsuperscript{141} Flowers and herbs were blessed after the liturgy. The flowers recalled that Mary’s tomb was filled with a heavenly fragrance; herbs recalled the healings of body and soul granted to the pilgrims at Mary’s tomb. John Damascene spoke at the tomb of Mary, stating that neither the grace of God nor the grace of Mary are restricted to the physical limitations of the tomb but are universal for all: “Divine power is not circumscribed by any place and neither is the inexhaustible goodness of the Mother of God. For if the graces were restricted only to Her tomb, only a few people would gain them. Now Her graces are poured out in every place throughout the world.”\textsuperscript{142}

The Orthodox believe that the only dogma concerning Mary is the \textit{Theotokos}, the conciliar confirmation of the divine maternity of the Virgin. The proclamation of \textit{Theotokos} was a strictly christological statement aimed against the heretical Nestorians in order to preserve the hypostatic union when the Eternal Word in fact did in time become human. It would be impossible for God to permit an abstract \textit{Deipara} to occupy Mary’s unique position without the warmth of subsequent devotion that would give glory to God through Mary. Lossky affirmed:

\begin{quote}
It is . . . impossible to separate the dogmatic data . . . from the data of the Church’s cultus, in a theological exposition of the doctrine about the Mother of God. Here dogma should throw light on the cultus, and the cultus should enrich the dogmatic aspect of the subject with the Church’s living experience.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

\textbf{The Ecumenical Climate}

Between the Council of Trent and the middle of the twentieth century there had existed a split in Marian attitude. In a series of polemical doctrinal confrontations, the role of the Virgin Mary was emphasized by Catholics and deemphasized by Protestants. The writings of prominent Protestant theologians gave little cause for any Marian ecumenical optimism.

In \textit{Munificentissimus Deus} Pius XII proposed an ecumenical concern as one of his
reasons for the definition: "The definition gives rise to the hope that all who glory in the name of Christ will experience an increase of desire to participate in the Mystical Body of Christ, and a growth of love towards her who has a maternal heart for all members of this exalted Body." Several papal documents from 1895 to 1953 expressed the anticipation that Mary would be the source of reconciliation for the Christian Churches.

The papacy appeared to many non-Catholics to have followed a dogmatic course in the past century with a bravado that bespoke a reactionary neglect of contemporary thought. Finally, in 1950, when the Church unity movement was gaining strength, the pope defined a doctrine foreign to the Reform Churches. Former Calvinist Max Thurian, of Taizé, who had recently become a convert to the Catholic Church and was ordained a priest, expressed discouragement and noted:

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception has now been followed by that of the Assumption. It is here that the most unshakable obstacles for all ecumenical thought occur, and the promulgation of the Assumption as a dogma seems to be a serious error from the point of view of unity.

A faculty member of the Department of Religion at Stanford University later made the same lament at the time of the Second Vatican Council, stating that mariology, especially in relation to the two recently defined Marian dogmas, was the source of serious theological division between the Christian Churches. R. McAfee Brown observed: "The problem centers on the most recent papal pronouncements, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, so that she was freed from the taint of Original Sin, and the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin into heaven immediately after death."

In general, the Protestant reaction was negative to the definition. Various opinions were expressed in Protestant circles concerning the pope’s motivation in announcing the dogma. Since the pontiff was held in high regard by the Protestants of that era, this fact undoubtedly affected their evaluation. Yet it was nevertheless a time of tension among the churches. E. Doyle stated: "With the exception of the doctrines of papal primacy and infallibility, probably no topic is more calculated to arouse feelings of anger and fear in ... parties to the dialogue, than the place of Mary in the life and piety of the church."

Protestants considered that one important reason for the definition was a practical one, a papal response to the pleading demand of the flock. The pontiff would not only strengthen and consolidate the faithful in opposition to atheism, secularism, and Marxism, but would also answer a need felt by the faithful. G. Ebeling in 1968 was quoted by H. Koester as affording several other reasons for the definition: an effort to remain aloof from Protestantism; an attempt to placate the Eastern Churches rather than to alienate the Protestant ones; a trend within the Church away from Christ and toward his Mother who was seen as a Mother of mercy rather than of justice; a political attack upon materialism; an outgrowth of the God-Mother concept of historical Mediterranean paganism and its subsequent cult. Koester wrote that the fissures within Christendom
were accentuated “at the very time when the Una Sancta movement had caused man to hope for a gradual reconciliation among Christian sects. The feelings of Protestants are repeatedly expressed in such terms as sadness, indignation, consternation and shock.”\textsuperscript{148}

In 1949, G. A. Barrois, in objecting to any dogmatic definition through the singular exercise of papal infallibility, presented a common Protestant opinion:

So far as the Assumption of Mary is concerned, it is our opinion that Scripture offers no justification for it, that the witness of tradition is unreliable, and that the arguments of convenience developed by Roman theologians are neither decisive nor deduced from incontrovertible premises. The virgin of Nazareth, whom the angel hailed as full of grace, is not to be honored by fictions. She needs no false jewels.\textsuperscript{149}

A. Huxley criticized the Assumption in 1956 as an obstacle to the reunion of the churches, “an act of intellectual immorality, which the world cannot tolerate.” He placed human freedom only in the advance of scientific knowledge, not in religious dogma.\textsuperscript{150}

The more principal opposition by Protestants was attributed to the fact that “there was no direct evidence of Mary’s assumption in Scripture or in the teaching of the early Christian community.”\textsuperscript{151} In 1962 W. Burghardt observed that the Protestant mind could not understand that while original revelation came from the mouth of God, infallible propositions of dogma come from the Church. “It is this passage,” Burghardt stated, “this seeming lyric leap, from Scripture to dogma, and from dogma to dogma, that scandalizes the Protestant.”\textsuperscript{152}

In 1967, McCarthy described the basic attitude of Protestantism as one of distrust for the Catholic Church; Protestants pictured every papal promulgation as a personal attack on the premises of the Reform. “The general reaction running through all of the Protestant denominations,” McCarthy pointed out, “ranged from contempt for the thought of the Assumption dogma to a mild theological opinion in its favor.”\textsuperscript{153} However, Lutheran theologian J. Pelikan in 1969 counseled prudence, since he realized that it was impossible even to articulate a complete doctrine of Christ or Church without the inclusion of Mary’s place in salvation history.\textsuperscript{154}

S. J. Bonano, a Catholic priest, responded in 1951 to the Protestant criticism of the Assumption as an obstacle to ecumenism and reunion on the basis of its dogmatic relativism. Bonano perceived that doctrinal unity was essential to Christ’s Church. Any truth that Protestants would drop from the Church’s teaching, including the Assumption, would rend the Church’s seamless unity and present an obstacle to reunion:

If the truth of the gospel is to be conditioned and defined in its objectivity by the temperament, intellectual environment, and religious learning of the individual, that truth may very easily generate into a series of beliefs directly opposed to both the letter and the spirit of Christianity. Any union that would result from the combined interests
and efforts of an interfaith convention whereby each participating religious body must agree to accept truths hitherto alien to it, or drop others which it has always professed, or change them substantially, would be nothing more than Christian syncretism — not the organically identical doctrine of Christ — and an implicit avowal that Christ has failed in His promise of perpetual abiding with His church and of teaching it all truth.\textsuperscript{155}

A flood of literature was published on the Assumption between 1950 and 1958. J. Carol opined that the enormous amount of material printed before and after the definition provoked a profusion of discussion as had no other theological subject. Many of these publications looked with concern upon the topic and attempted to predict its effect upon the future of ecumenism. Carol pointed out the complexity of the material and the variety of opinions concerning Mary:

Our Lady’s bodily Assumption . . . continues to engage the almost undivided attention of Catholic scholars everywhere. The result is that anyone wishing to survey the field with even a semblance of completeness is at once faced with a formidable task, for the current literature on the subject is overwhelmingly vast and varied.\textsuperscript{156}

The storm of publication subsided by 1958 with the end of the Assumptionist period.\textsuperscript{157} Pelikan recalled that the Sacrifice of the Mass had once been the principal focus of Protestant criticism. But criticism of the Mass had been replaced by criticism of the veneration of Mary, primarily in its culmination in the Assumption dogma, as “the most obnoxious feature of Catholicism. Protestant theology . . . sees in [the Catholic] cult of Mary, as it has climaxed in the dogma of the Assumption, one of the chief barriers between Roman Catholics and Protestants.”\textsuperscript{158} Later, T. Clark in 1971 used a scriptural symbol to describe the situation:

Today, in many quarters Simeon’s prophecy is being verified with a peculiar twist. She is the sign of contradiction, the rock of scandal. . . . The processions of Lourdes and Fatima, the papal definition of the Assumption have become for many Protestants the symbol of Rome’s apostasy from the unique Mediator Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{159}

\textbf{Protestantism}

In the Anglican Church, Geoffrey Francis Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury and senior bishop of the Anglican Communion in 1950, was granted a priority of respect in that community. In anticipation of the definition of the Assumption, Cyril Foster Garbett, Archbishop of York, joined his Canterbury colleague in opposing it. The London \textit{Times} carried the following statement:
The Church of England renders an honour and reverence to the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. But there is not the smallest evidence in the Scriptures or in the teaching of the early Church of belief in the doctrine of her bodily assumption. The Church of England refuses to regard as requisite for a saving faith doctrines or opinions which are not plainly contained in the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{160}

Archbishop Garbett of York expressed his own opinion at the York Convention, adding a note of inadequate historical as well as biblical foundation to the criticism:

The Anglican Church has always honored Our Lady, but a Marian dogma cannot be defined which lacks scriptural and historical foundation. The main Roman Catholic argument is a deduction from the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which also has little scriptural and historical basis. Moreover, its definition is the most inopportune and would create another obstacle to the Ecumenical Movement.\textsuperscript{161}

Some leaders and members of the Anglican Church did not actually deny the truth of the Assumption. Like the Orthodox, they considered the dogma to be a unilateral action on the part of the Catholic Church; they wondered why it had to be defined. From the Anglican point of view, a belief in the Assumption had been maintained for many centuries in both the Eastern and Western Churches. But its formalization constituted further divisiveness between Anglicans and Catholics. Since in the recent past the belief had been gaining an even wider adherence in their communion, their opinion was that more could have been accomplished by its clarification rather than by its definition. The Church of England made no provision for the liturgical celebration of the Assumption. But in two branches of the Anglican Church, 15 August is observed: In Scotland as the Feast of the Dormition, and in the United States as the Feast of St. Mary the Virgin. In general, definition was described as an unnecessary precision and multiplication of dogma. If a proposition belonged integrally to the Christian body of truth, then there was a certitude that it would eventually be believed. The Anglican reaction was that the efforts of authority could hinder that progress. In 1982, K. Healy observed that there were many who rejected the formalization of the doctrine, believing simply that Mary was in heaven. They found no reason to doubt it:

For, there are many people outside the Roman Catholic Church who believe that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is in heaven. They see no reason to doubt this, but no reason either to inquire about the nature of her heavenly presence. It is enough to know that she is there. . . . They rejected the dogmatic definition of the Holy Father. For them as a magisterial declaration, it is unnecessary, unscriptural, inopportune, and even offensive.\textsuperscript{162}
G. Corr remarked in 1975 that some Anglicans sensed a majority of their communion would readily accept the new dogma. According to Corr, they wished that their bishops had taken a more conciliatory approach to the question:

The fact that the Catholic Church has considered the matter so important as to merit the proclamation of a dogma will certainly compel their attention. . . . They will think more purposefully about this great truth. To that extent they will be brought nearer to the Church.\textsuperscript{163}

McCarthy noted that the Anglican criticism in the wake of \textit{Munificentissimus Deus} found a twofold basis, in doctrine and practice. Much confusion arose over the meaning of the dogma, and much criticism revolved around papal infallibility, philosophical assumptions, and the encyclical \textit{Humani Generis}, rather than the Assumption.\textsuperscript{164} Anglican minister M. H. Shepherd wrote in 1950 that the Assumption belief was nothing more than a myth:

It is merely a tradition which first emerges in legendary literature of the sixth century, and then for the first time appears in the liturgical observance of the churches East and West. No one should think that any reasonable person could see that a belief resting upon so slender a historical foundation cannot be erected into an article of faith necessary to eternal salvation, without serious compromise with the authentic gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{165}

C. P. Morehouse, editor in 1950 of \textit{The Living Church}, the major publication of the High Anglican Church in the United States, blamed the lack of Marian devotion in the Anglican Church on the overemphasis placed upon it by the Catholic Church. He admired the direct simplicity of the prayer to Mary by the Orthodox Churches at the World Council of Faith and Order: “It must have been a revelation to many present to hear, perhaps for the first time, Our Lord’s Mother addressed as a living person, free from the extravagance of Roman Catholic devotion on the one hand, and the Protestant conspiracy of silence on the other.”\textsuperscript{166} G. A. Stamm, in 1951, commented that the inclusion of the visitation and the nativity of Mary in the Anglican Church’s liturgical calendar of feasts accentuated the omission of her “heavenly birthday” and capacity as bearer of the Eternal Word:

Our Lady, by her willing cooperation in the plan of Redemption, has earned her rightful place “with all the company of heaven” and that we cannot take from her. We say that she is “higher than the cherubim” and “more glorious than the seraphim,” and we certainly can help to set forth correct teaching concerning her conception and death.\textsuperscript{167}

In 1950, P. Day offered a fair evaluation of the Episcopal Church’s summary
position concerning Mary in general and, specifically, the Assumption:

The Blessed Virgin belongs to all of us. The Episcopal Church honors her in two major feast days and Holy Scripture teaches us to acclaim her as full of grace, whose purity and obedience made her the bearer of the Eternal Word. Beyond the details we have been told, it is not right to attempt to thrust aside the veil of reticence, nor to make of her history a stumbling block on the road to her Son. . . . [Concerning the Assumption] tradition is the encrustation of speculation and romance. 168

Baptists joined the Calvinists in their opposition to the Marian doctrine of the Assumption because of the same apparent lack of scriptural reference and silence of the very early Church. Baptist minister R. J. McCracken in 1950 preached that the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption was a “perversion of the Gospel.” He considered the definition in terms of papal infallibility, the assertion of faith in dogmatic formula, and the usurpation of adoration due to God alone:

About each of these there is in Protestantism a clearly defined, historic standpoint, and each new generation of Protestants should be reminded of it. . . . [The Assumption’s] acceptance involves defiance of all the canons of historical scholarship. There is no mention of it among orthodox writers before 400 A.D. The festival of the Assumption was not instituted until the seventh century. . . . Protestants have the greatest reverence for Mary. . . . She was chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God and she was hailed as one who “had found favor with God.” We reverence her but we reserve our adoration for God as made known in Christ. 169

In 1956 Bonano replied that the test for this revelation was not history:

Historical proof is not the decisive factor in determining . . . whether her fullness of grace implied an interior renovation and elevation to a higher order of being. It is important to study the general divine plan for mankind’s redemption, so that the Assumption, if it is historically true, may be so as the inevitable consequence in the doctrine of the Incarnation, a consequence, together with the Immaculate Conception, of her unique and special role in the Incarnation. But to Dr. McCracken that means theology, and a corruption of the scriptural content of revelation. 170

Thurian was quoted in 1951 as stating that the Protestant mind could not comprehend how the Church had built its mariology upon a foundation of silence over the first five centuries. He found a disproportionate connection between the material presented
in Scripture and the Church’s veneration of Mary. French Orthodox theologian Lossky responded that a rejection of traditions rejects Marian devotion. Lossky considered tradition the complement of Scripture, the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New. It brings understanding and enrichment to Scripture; it is an implicate of the continual operation of the Spirit of Truth within the Church which directs the faithful in what must be heard and believed from God’s revelation:

It is only in the Church that we find that we are capable of tracing the inner connections between the sacred texts which made the Old Testament and the New Testament into a single living corpus of truth, wherein Christ is present in each world. It is only in the Church that this fruitfulness of truth, as well as its capacity for being fruitful, is called tradition. The cultus of the Mother of God which, viewed externally, might seem to be in contradiction with the biblical data, is spread far and wide in the tradition of the Church and is the most precious fruit of tradition.\(^{171}\)

Thurian further criticized the Assumption from several points of view. He cited that Mary had been removed from the Church and placed above to an eschatological level, since her body did not know corruption and was glorified. She had been placed between God who makes preparation for the parousia and the Church which anticipates it.\(^{172}\) P. Palmer countered that this sort of reasoning could impugn the bodily resurrection of the Lord; if no creature could enter into a state of bodily glorification and be a “buffer” between Trinity and Church, could an exception be made for Christ’s sacred humanity?\(^{173}\) Thurian objected to the disproportionate worship of Mary, gleaned from meager biblical information, and to the theological method that could lead to a definition of the Assumption.\(^{174}\) In 1962, R. Schutz expressed the Reformed hope that in the future, Catholic mariology would reflect christology more clearly and that there would be no further Marian definitions which would widen the differences between Catholics and Calvinists.\(^{175}\)

From the Lutheran perspective, it was believed that the Assumption would obfuscate the distinction between the sole mediator and his creatures; it would obscure the entire redemptive task of the Lord. The doctrine would place the Son behind the Mother in the order of redemptive importance. Again, Lutheran witness placed great emphasis on the original apostolic kerygma for its doctrinal formulations. The most frequent stance observed then in American Protestantism was an attitude of general indifference to the Assumption. Lutheran R. A. Seboldt in 1967 observed that the common position of Protestantism and recent Lutheranism had been “to ignore Mary altogether. Even the mention of Mary in the Gospel of the Annunciation or in the Christmas Gospel causes some embarrassment.”\(^{176}\)

E. Schlink in 1951 did not believe that Mary was co-mediator or co-redeemer; he
was fearful that as a logical outcome the new dogma would lead to the definition of these titles. The Assumption resulted from an exalted Mary in perfected humanity, an image which Scripture did not permit to be realized except in Christ himself. The Evangelicals, in Schlink’s view, construed the Assumption to be an obfuscation of the unique salvific work of the Lord:

The dogma of the Assumption of Mary, however, would destroy the eschatological antithesis of Jesus Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection, and the human race looking for His coming, the eschatological antithesis of the returning Redeemer and the redeemed who await him. ¹⁷⁷

This in tum would obscure the relationship between the sole mediator and humankind. Even if there were an emphasis placed on the created nature of Mary, she nevertheless had been taken away from humankind awaiting redemption, and would stand with Christ facing those who were awaiting their salvation and future glory. It would parallel the way, the work, and the title of Christ with a set correspondence in each case with Mary: “Jesus Christ is without original sin — so also Mary. Jesus Christ is bodily arisen and ascended into heaven — so also Mary. Christ is Lord and King — Mary is Lady and Queen. Jesus Christ is Mediator and Redeemer — Mary is Co-Mediator and Co-Redeemer.” ¹⁷⁸

In 1951 Schlink considered the Assumption only from the viewpoint of Evangelical theology, which comprised for him both Reformed and Lutheran evangelical theology, and not from the vantage point of Catholic doctrine. ¹⁷⁹ He considered that the Assumption was the result of theological inference, “the attempt to prove the propriety or necessity of certain acts of God by logical inferences from theological premises.” ¹⁸⁰ He stated that the Catholic Church had broken from apostolic tradition since there was a silence concerning Mary in Scripture and early tradition; the Church on her own authority had posited conditions necessary for salvation. The definition had removed Mary from the Church, the faithful in via, and placed her in an exalted and entirely different order, equal to her Son. In short, the definition represented a compromise concerning the honor due to Christ alone.

E. Ruff reasserted in 1950 that the bible is the “one, dependable textbook of truth.” ¹⁸¹ Bishop Nygren of Sweden also considered the dogma to be an attack on the gospels: “The essential point of the Gospel is that in Christ, God came to us in a true human life. The attempt to raise the Virgin Mary into the heavenly sphere means at the same time that our Saviour receded from us. It means that the Gospel is obscured.” ¹⁸²

In the same context, the American Lutheran Conference condemned the Assumption at its 1950 convention held on 8 - 10 November at Sioux Falls, South Dakota:

To bind upon the conscience of Christians as an article of faith any doctrine not clearly revealed and taught in the divinely revealed
inspired Scriptures is a palpable and presumptuous sin, which widens still further the cleavage in the Holy Christian Church. In the face of this superstitious error we must again assert that it is Christ alone who saves us and who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is to be honored with prayers and adoration.\textsuperscript{183}

K. E. Skydsgaard repeated in 1957 that the Assumption belief was not contained in the biblical apostolic witness but was a development of post-apostolic faith that was contrary to its biblical basis: “Mariology shows Evangelical theology that not Scripture and tradition, but tradition alone can be a source of revelation in the Roman Church.”\textsuperscript{184} Skydsgaard maintained that Scripture was the only source of faith and that the apostolic church never knew the Assumption as a truth necessary for salvation.

Schimmelpfennig observed that while there were certain indications of the Assumption in Luther’s teaching, he did state in 1522 that holy writ had nothing to say about how Mary is in heaven, nor whether it is a necessary truth beyond the fact that the saints are in heaven, a truth that must necessarily be known.\textsuperscript{185} F. Heiler afforded a quotation from Luther that purported his denial of the dogma: “We know nothing about any Assumption . . . save that of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{186}

The Methodist reaction attacked the Assumption from the point of view of spiritual truth rather than ecumenism. T. O. Hall in 1950 paraphrased Pastor P. Maury, head of the National Council of the French Reformed Church. He criticized the fact that the first infallible pronouncement from the pope, after the declaration of infallibility, should address Mary:

It is as if the development of doctrine were aiming at throwing into a relief hitherto not clear enough the Mother of our Saviour, and not him who was the saviour of all, including his Mother. The Protestant is, therefore, profoundly roused to see how in this way not only Roman piety but Roman faith itself are trained to an object and an intercession other than those of the one and all-sufficient Mediator.\textsuperscript{187}

Hall accused the Church of setting up another canon, comprising papal infallibility and tradition, next to Scripture. He added that the Assumption had been placed on the level of the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. “It is curious that Rome appears to be moving in obscurantist and liberal directions at the same time.”\textsuperscript{188} Hall further said that there was a need within Protestantism for the revival of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. However, he considered that the Roman Church’s unscriptural exaggerations concerning Mary, the definition of the Assumption as a truth necessary for salvation, and the impending definition of the queenship of Mary “make it difficult for Protestants to take seriously the Communion of Saints.”\textsuperscript{189}

Concerning the Presbyterian reaction, less comment was published than in other denominations. Presbyterians prioritized the difficulties and differences of opinion
between Catholicism and Protestantism which arose because of the new dogma. C. Adams claimed in 1950 that the new definition opposed the Protestant insistence upon human freedom of conscience before God. “The schism of Christendom cannot be healed by adding to the complexity of legendary doctrines that grow out of superstition and imagination unsupported by the Divine revelation in the natural order.”

In 1951 J. M. Currie, a member of the editorial committee of the Presbyterian Tribune and one who respected the faith of the Catholic Church, criticized that there was no historical or biblical proof for the Assumption. The Church had established instead arrival faith to Christianity in which Marianism “and a Goddess . . . has in devotion largely displaced Christ.” Currie also criticized the basis of papal infallibility. “Mary’s body was taken to heaven on the word of a pope, and it is impossible for him to err because of another pope’s word.”

Presbyterian minister R. A. Lapsley described the Assumption definition as clearly pointing out three distinctions between Catholic and Protestant belief concerning Mary: “Our Saviour is Christ, not His very human Mother; our authority the Bible, not a very human prelate; and our criterion of belief our own conscience, and not the Roman Catholic Church.”

R. McAfee Brown wrote that the Presbyterian Church needed to oppose the Assumption for reasons of fidelity to the gospel: the dogma had no scriptural basis; it was a recent innovation; and Mary’s co-redeemership in the unique and saving work of Christ suggested that Christ needed assistance. Brown criticized the papal argument of fittingness by decrying that it was an equal sin for the Catholic to deny the bodily assumption or the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection of Christ. According to Brown, the Protestant mind rejected the Assumption not on the basis that one wished to “believe less about Mary than the Catholic, but because he wants to believe more about Jesus, and the uniqueness of his once-for-all redemptive work.”

P. Palmer responded that the Assumption of Mary did not deny or even obscure the trinitarian or christological truths: “It is only within the context of these Christological dogmas that the Marian dogmas have meaning. Can Dr. Brown truthfully say that Protestants who deny the dogma of the Assumption actually believe more about Jesus Christ than Catholics who accept the dogma?”

J. A. Mackay wrote in 1955 that the Assumption had no basis in fact and no connection with Christ or Scripture. He saw the theology of Mary passing through stages of development: as part of the theology of Christ; as an appendage to that theology; as completely independent from the theology of Christ, wherein “Mary of Nazareth has become the Co-redemptrix with Christ.”

For P. Palmer and W. Cole, it was not surprising that the ultra-liberal Protestant theologians rejected mariology, for in a very real sense the question of Mary’s Motherhood did not exist for them: Christ is not divine; God is revealed in Christ. Another consideration for some Protestants was an emphasis on the human element: it was immaterial whether or not the Assumption was true; the correct question to ask is whether
or not it has helped humankind in daily living.\textsuperscript{197}

Jung made the remark, although not widely accepted in Protestant circles, that in Mary “the desire of an archetype is satisfied.” The pope’s announcement had willingly met this desire. This psychiatrist considered the papal definition of the Assumption to be the most significant event in the history of religion since the time of Luther. He considered the Church and the world to be in need of a feminine symbol, since the spiritual heritage was being threatened with annihilation by materialism and technology. In the extreme, Jung considered Mary to be almost divine. He considered the Assumption to be of particular significance for humankind since it fulfilled the highest human aspirations. Catholics could not accept Jung’s opinions. For example, he had hoped that the papal definition would place Mary in the Trinity. He was convinced that through the definition of the Assumption the Mother archetype had been dogmatically established.\textsuperscript{198}

**Summation:**

Some concluding observations can be made concerning the Protestant reception of the Assumption definition. The assembled bishops of the Second Vatican Council issued a direct statement, in general very favorably received, concerning ecumenism and basic Marian positions to which their Church was committing herself. Robert McAfee Brown, in a somewhat parallel reflection to the later thought of J. Macquarrie, exhorted his fellow religionists to respond to this overture and to examine what the New Testament said about the place of Mary in Christian faith. In this way Protestants might understand why and how Catholics could go beyond the literal text to additional affirmations that meant so much to their devotional life in judging the signs of God’s love and care for his creatures:

Catholics have gone a first mile in trying to reestablish theological rapport on this issue. Protestants have an obligation to go a second mile in opening themselves to an examination with their Catholic brethren of what the New Testament says about the place of Mary in Christian faith, and then trying to understand how Catholics can be led beyond that direct evidence to further affirmations that clearly mean so much to them in interpreting the signs of God’s loving concern for his children.\textsuperscript{199}

In 1957, Skydsgaard observed that the divided Christian churches then agreed in more areas concerning the role of Mary in Christian theology, but that the differences became more evident through sudden divisive spurts of doctrinal statements by the Roman Church.\textsuperscript{200} Pelikan remarked that continued Protestant criticisms of Mary would only be an exercise in debate until Mary would be considered only from the biblical viewpoint.\textsuperscript{201}
Foundations of Protestant Opposition to the Assumption Definition

In the Protestant mind, the action of Pius XII appeared to be a direct attack on the very bases of Protestantism. The Assumption had been promulgated as a belief revealed by God and so, if it were known, acceptance of it was necessary for salvation. The implication was that the Protestant churches did not have either revelation or the means of salvation in toto. The Protestant reaction was to defend and preserve the Protestant faith in the Christian world by developing a stance of opposition. In addition to the actual dogmatic disagreement, this reaction unfortunately carried with it an element of bitterness. Many issues of fundamental theology were at stake. Two fundamental premises of Protestant theology were involved: sola scriptura and sola fides. In addition, the third premise sola gratia was involved when the infallible definition spoke of human cooperation with the event of salvation.

Three Solas

Addressing first the premise of sola scriptura, Catholic apologists did not deny that it was impossible to demonstrate Mary’s corporal assumption into heaven as divinely revealed, immediately and explicitly, from Scripture, nor from the tradition of the Church of the first century. Koester observed: “The Catholic Apologists do not deny that neither from Sacred Scripture nor from the tradition of the ancient Church can it be immediately demonstrated that Mary’s corporal Assumption into heaven has been divinely revealed.” Koester referred to the Protestant theologians’ belief that the argumenta convenientiae of the encyclical was useful to demonstrate a propriety for this revelation. But they denied that those considerations could establish what they considered new revelation. The duty of the Church’s magisterium was to guard rather than to explain God’s revelation. They insisted that the Church had gone far beyond the tradition of the apostles in this case by acting on her own authority to proclaim a pious myth as belief necessary for salvation.

In 1959 E. R. Carroll presented a concise prelude to the investigation of the subject of ecumenism and of the reaction of the Protestant churches:

It is obvious that there is no explicit reference to the Assumption in the Bible itself, no more than there is for the Immaculate Conception. Yet the Pope insists that the Scriptures are the ultimate foundation for this truth. For the correct understanding of the scriptural evidence in favor of the Assumption, we must be guided by Catholic tradition and the sacred teaching authority of the Church.

Some Protestants saw the main problem as being a different interpretation of Scripture by the churches. Others maintained that Scripture did not contain all answers.
to questions that might be asked; but they still denied the possibility of a development of dogma. Sucker phrased the *sola scriptura* argument thus:

> The Gospel confronts me with the truth of God and at the same time with the terrible disclosure of my own reality. . . . When one realizes that the testimony of the Gospel is the sole cause of salvation, he sees that all the cogitations of the Catholics are plainly erroneous.\(^{204}\)

Bornkham and Asmussen stated in 1957 that within the Protestant family there was an uncertainty in some quarters about the self-sufficiency of the *sola scriptura* principle, an awareness that it was oversimplification to deny the possibility of any development of doctrine from a fixed gospel.\(^{205}\)

The second premise of *sola fides*, the belief in the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ, involved the third fundamental principle, *sola gratia*. Koester pointed to the Protestant insistence that the interposition of Mary interfered with the basic relation between Creator and creature, between Redeemer and redeemed, and with the notion that by grace alone is humankind enabled to share in the divine nature and in the kingdom of Jesus. To substantiate this, Protestants appealed to the Assumption as setting Mary entirely apart from the human race, in a deification process, interjecting her into the Trinity and attempting to make of it a quarternity.\(^{206}\) Asmussen insisted that the Assumption, for Catholics, was supposed to contain all the characteristics of the Lord’s Ascension:

> It is easy to see why, according to Scripture, One alone ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ. For His Ascension into heaven is not just another unimportant fact; it is the beginning of His reign over the whole world, . . . an outstanding mark of His divinity. Since our Catholic brethren assert the same, or at least a similar fact for Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are we to believe that Mary shares this reign with Jesus?\(^{207}\)

Several professors at the University of Heidelberg pictured the Assumption as a detrimental threat to the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ. They believed that Catholics viewed Mary’s position as that of a mediator, parallel to that of her Son. Some Protestants rejected the distinctions made by Catholic theology; others accepted them but pointed out that these distinctions still detracted from the honor that was due to Christ, the Redeemer, alone. The Assumption was interpreted in the Protestant mind as an interruption to the eschatological plan of God in that Mary removed the tension existent between the Redeemer and the waiting period of the redeemed.

According to W. J. Cole, noted Catholic ecumenist of the Marian Library, many Protestants pictured the Assumption definition as a result of an ongoing process of theological development, totally independent of objective revelation, that would eventually culminate in a co-redemptrix devotion and so eclipse, or even displace, Christ.\(^{208}\) Their opinion was that in scriptural silence and in an arbitrary exercise of magisterium, a peripheral truth had been given centrality and declared necessary for salvation, quite
contrary to their own doctrine of the one mediator.\textsuperscript{209}

In 1973, L. Vischer, executive secretary of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, expressed a fear that the upcoming holy year of reconciliation, declared by Paul VI, might not make a positive contribution to Christian unity:

Will it bring the churches closer together? Or will it recall, on the contrary, their deep and permanent division? We still remember very clearly the holy year of 1950. Pope Pius XII profited from that solemn year to define \textit{ex cathedra} the assumption of Mary as a dogma. It is a decision which weighs heavily today on the relationships of the Roman Catholic Church with all other confessions.\textsuperscript{210}

**Ascension/Assumption**

As indicated, there was a protest that the Church was identifying these two mysteries of the Ascension and the Assumption as being of the same degree and nature. What could be attributed to Christ could then be attributed to Mary. Hogan insisted that the Church had described a clear difference in the "howness" of the presence of the Redeemer in heaven and that of his Mother. He is God and ascended into glory by his own power. Regardless of her many prerogatives, Mary was always the Lord's handmaid; it was he who raised her up. Mary was always a creature, although a perfect one; she had been assumed, or taken up, by the power of the Lord.\textsuperscript{211}

An "ascension" is a going up, implying self-propulsion. The involved person is the source of the action, the creative agent for the upward movement. An assumption connotes being lifted up, implying an inactive role on the part of the one being lifted up — or assumed — but an active role on the part of the initiator. In Mary's Assumption, God was the active agent and Mary was the passive recipient; this is in accord with the fourth gospel. In John 3:13 the faithful are advised that God the Son, he who descended from heaven, was the only one who has ever ascended on his own initiative from us to the Father. While the word assumption literally means a taking up, doctrinally it teaches that the Mother of the Lord was reunited before her time with Christ, her Son, in body and soul and in glory. This faith mystery goes beyond itself to an investigation of her relationship with Christ, the Church, and the life hereafter. Unlike Christ who ascended to heaven by his own will and through his own power, Mary was lifted up by God to her present degree of glory. The term assumption includes this essential distinction.

To be assumed means to be taken into a new dimension of existence. It does not refer to a vertical sort of ascent, or to an event that can be described in terms of the space and direction of present existence on earth. It does not suggest that the dwelling place of God is "up" or "over" the earth. It is possible in this world to speak about life after death only in limping terminology, using analogies.

Usage of the general concept of assumption in a theological sense is not a twentieth century innovation of the Church. Rather, it finds a solid basis in Scripture. Enoch and
Elijah (Gen. 5; 2 Kg. 2) were approved by God and so were taken up to heaven. Assumption also has been used with a religious connotation in the Jewish tradition. The Assumption of Moses was a first century work which in Deuteronomy 34 attempted to explain the mystery of Moses’ death in the light of the Jewish tradition.212

Coherency of Assumption with Christian Truth

The reason for the Assumption was the love of God for Mary. Everything in her was grace. In liturgical prayer the Church substantiated the fact that Mary’s Assumption was a freely bestowed gift in God’s wisdom and providence. The Collect prayer for the feast of the Assumption declared, “In the plan of your wisdom she who bore the Christ in her womb was raised in glory to be with him in heaven.”213 Paul described a providential sequence of being called and predestined, of being justified and glorified: “And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). The Evangelist John wrote of this divine calling, “You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you shall go and bear fruit” (Jn. 15:16). Again in John’s gospel the Lord declared, “I have gone forth from the Father and have come into the world. Now I will again leave the world and return to the Father” (Jn. 16:28). The Son accomplished this on the occasion of the original paschal mystery. He does it repeatedly through history in taking humankind along with him back to the Father, Mary and the Church in glory. The redemptive task of the Son would have been aborted if he had not taken humankind back with him to the Father to be with him in the glory that the Father had generously given, “so that they too may be where I am and that they may see my glory, which You, just Father, have given to me” (Jn. 17:24).

Cardinal Newman, as previously cited, saw in the mystery of the Assumption the purposefulness of God’s design as it unfolded within the context of the divine plan in its entirety: “Mary has no chance place in the divine dispensation; the Word of God did not merely come to her and go from her; He did not pass through her, as He visits us in holy communion.214 This doctrine provided another link for him in the wonderful harmony and coherency within the works and truths of God. Consequently, it was appropriate that after a life of sanctity Mary’s body enter glory immediately, free from corruption of the flesh: “It was surely fitting then, it was becoming, that she should be taken up into heaven and not lie in the grave till Christ’s second coming, who has passed a life of sanctity and of miracle such as hers. All the works of God are in a beautiful harmony.”215 Newman saw a harmony between God’s foreknowledge and the Assumption. It was fitting in his estimation that Mary’s death should resemble her sinless life: “I say, it would be a greater miracle if, her life being what it was, her death was like that of other men, than if it were such as to correspond to her life.”216
Newman remarked that when God the Father called Mary into being, she was blessed with the trinitarian presence, habitual grace, as his chosen daughter. The Son’s redemption offers this destiny to all humankind. God’s plan provided a similar sanctity and likeness between Son and Mother. There was of course always a difference in the degree and nature: “The child is like the parent, and we may well suppose that by His likeness to her was manifest her relationship to Him. Her sanctity comes, not only of her being His Mother, but also of His being her Son.”

Pius IX and Pius XII both taught that Mary held this special place in God’s providential plan. In addition they called attention to the inner coherence of the Marian doctrines within themselves and in relation to the remainder of God’s revealed word. Pius IX explained how God foresaw the fall of Adam and the ensuing sinfulness of humankind which would require restoration by the second Adam. Mary’s origin as the holy, the appropriately immaculate Mother of God’s Son, was foreordained in the same eternal, divine decree as the Incarnation. The new Adam, together with his Mother the new Eve, triumphed over Satan. Pius XII clarified the thought of his predecessor by describing Mary’s participatory role in redemption, her predestination, and the coherence of Marian and other Christian truths in Munificentissimus Deus.

R. Knox had visualized Mary as the culmination of Old Testament history; many titles and symbols had been applied to her:

She is the second Eve; in her the serpent’s head is crushed. She is the new Ark of our salvation, ready to re-people the world with the seed of grace. She is Jacob’s ladder, by which our prayers go up, and graces come down upon us in return. . . . She is the King’s daughter of whom David sang, and the faithful Sulamite of the Canticles, and Respha, the daughter of Aia, weeping for her sons who were crucified. She is the Rod of Jesse, and the well of living waters, and the gate shut up, save only for the prince, Daughter and Crown of the Old Testament.

As Mary conjoined the Old Testament with the New, the present covenant commenced with her. God providentially showed forth his love for both the new and the old Israel; his promise was fulfilled in the gift of his Son to Mary, the most worthy one chosen from Zion, and in her resurrection and assumption into glory:

When the Son of God came to earth, he came to turn our hearts away from earth, Godwards. And as the traveller, shading his eyes while he contemplates some long vista of scenery, searches about for a human figure that will give him the scale of those distant surroundings, so we, with dazzled eyes looking Godwards, identify and welcome one purely human figure, close to his throne.

Knox continued his description of the Virgin with other rich figures about Mary and her foreordained role:
Her virginity is the bush which Moses saw, burning ever, yet never consumed. She is the Ark of the new covenant, where God keeps tryst with man. She is Gideon’s fleece, wet with the dew of heaven when all around was dry. . . .

In 1960, T. de Ruiter saw Mary’s fiat as response to the redemption, included in the Incarnation, stating that the pure Virgin can “respond to God’s call in humble subservience; and . . . she is able to yield herself completely to the mystery of the Redemption which is included in the Incarnation.” He posited that Mary, when chosen to express her fiat to the very possibility and act of Incarnation, was asked in addition to accept freely the entire mystery of the Redemption in her regard. In this second offering of his divine life to humankind, God desired that the entire mystery of his loving incarnational, redemptive action be accepted in obedience and in freedom. God had providentially preserved Mary from sin since her conception. This preparatory preservation permitted her to acquiesce unconditionally to the mystery of Christ. De Ruiter noted that the self-gift of God’s love, the diffusiveness of his all-goodness, was evidenced in the incarnation, which was the beginning of salvation. The purpose of Christ’s salvific action was to restore humankind to unity and harmony not only with God, but also with others and the rest of creation. De Ruiter saw the birth of the Church as taking place in the Incarnational act. God did not impose or enforce redemption; he offered it to be accepted freely, actively, and willingly.

In his work *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, Rahner stated that salvation history reached its climax through Mary with the coming of the Eternal Word into this world. Mary’s Son, in the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, had truly risen. Eternal glory, a reality for the risen Lord and his Mother, was now a possibility for every person.

As noted in the introduction of *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pius XII referred to increasing the Church’s faith in personal resurrection. He grounded his reasons for the opportuneness of the definition primarily upon moral principles. He gave no indication that he was ushering in a new era of mariology, wherein Mary would be considered not just as a privileged individual but as the foremost member and type or model of the ecclesial community. Yet after the definition of the Assumption, an enlightened reappearance in theological writing of Mary and the Church surfaced, tantamount to a return to patristic thought. (In fact, prior to this date much evidence had been noted). The Assumptionist Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from which the definition evolved, placed emphasis upon Marian prerogatives. Various emerging factors, already cited, led back to an ecclesially oriented mariology of earlier days in the Church. This was the beginning of a theology of Mary as an ecclesiological doctrine. Consequently Vatican II presented a theology of Mary as an ecclesiological doctrine.

The pope had not pointed out the relationship in theology between Mary and the Church. While he did not treat the exemplary character of the Assumption in relation to community, he did so in relation to the individual. D. Flanagan later intuited here the narrow demarcation of thinking in the formulation of the definition. At that time, many
Catholics and other Christians did not possess a precise understanding of the ecclesial significance of the dogma. The Assumption appeared to be more of an isolated truth about Mary than a basic truth about humankind's personal and communal salvation.228

Shortly prior to the definition of the Assumption, the theological faculty at the University of Heidelberg acknowledged that the churches shared a common guilt for the agreements and disagreements within the Body of Christ; yet they pointed to the Roman Church for having increased that division through the proclamation of the doctrine of the Assumption. While contemporary Protestants vary in their attitudes toward Christ and while they are generally opposed to any display of devotion to Mary, there is not the same unanimity of opposition that had been displayed in the sixteenth century.229 In 1963 Pelikan reminded fellow Protestants that regardless of their attitudes toward Mary, it was impossible to enunciate a theology of Christ or Church without some theology of Mary:

Protestant theology must ask itself whether this connection between Christology and Mariology was a historical coincidence or whether there was in fact some ineluctable obligation in the orthodox confession of Jesus Christ that compelled the Church to speak as it did for His Mother.230

In 1958, G. Baum wrote that the letter Adjutricem Populi of Leo XIII explained that since Mary was the Mother of Christians, she remains their Mother when they leave the Church. By God's providence Mary was selected to bring the Eternal Word into the world of the flesh; she was also predestined to bring other “Christs” into the world of flesh and blood: “Wherever Mary sees the traits of Christ obscured in the face of a Christian, she intercedes that he will be drawn again into the greater likeness of Christ. Besides individual perfection, Mary desires a unity and perfection of the whole Mystical Body.”231

In 1959 E. R. Carroll counseled that Catholics must become more attentive to the Protestant concern that Christ was being replaced in the Church by his Mother. Carroll expressed a belief that this should be done at least to avoid misunderstanding and to enable Catholic theologians to express true Catholic doctrine.232

Pelikan in 1969 recalled the New Testament request that “Christians honor the cloud of witnesses who surround them as they run the race of faith” implied that the first witness of the life and work of Jesus Christ — his Mother — was in heaven. Pelikan considered Mary not as a divine being but as

. . . an outstanding member of the communion of saints. When Protestants begin to say this out loud in their teaching and worship, and not merely to whisper it in their hearts, as most of them indeed do, then they will be better prepared to speak a word of fraternal warning to their Roman Catholic brethren. Then they will be able to say that their regard for Mary is so deep that they must protest against the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary.233
Challenge of Catholicism

There has emerged from the foregoing discussion one principal reason for the selection of this particular dissertation title. It is evident that the Catholic Church has no intention of rescinding the dogma of the Assumption. It is evident too that the other Christian churches do not seriously anticipate her doing so. In referring to the devotion of the two most recent Marian dogmas, Carroll pointedly described a purpose of this paper when he wrote of the necessary *explica fusius*, the explication of Catholic teaching in their regard:

What has been suggested, however, on both sides of the ecumenical divide is that further elucidations might be supplied of those doctrines, that more efforts might be made from the Roman side to explain precisely what they mean. That is not too difficult a task, it seems to me. But even more is required — and this is more difficult — to know how they fit into the total pattern of Christian belief.
Ecumenical Implications of the Assumption Dogma: Developments in Understanding Among English-Speaking Theologians

The Hierarchy of Truths

History

The Council Fathers at Vatican II offered no precise definition of the phrase "hierarchy of truths" which was explored at that council. This section offers an exploratory probe into the meaning of that phrase to stimulate further ecumenical discussion. Theologians have attempted to consider the Marian dogma of the Assumption in a coherent fashion within the foundational truths of the Christian faith.

E. R. Carroll suggested that the hierarchy of truths is not an easy doctrine to apply; it also is more familiar within Catholic circles than among members of other denominations.1 D. Carroll remarked in 1977 that the hierarchy of truths of the Second Vatican Council evolved from less important documents. In its eleventh chapter, Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism) stated:

When comparing doctrines with one another, they (Catholic theologians) should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith. Thus the way will be opened whereby this kind of "fraternal rivalry" will incite all to a deeper realization and a clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ.2

The importance of the hierarchia veritatum went beyond ecumenism and denominational comparison of doctrine to a renewed understanding and formulation of the Christian faith itself.
While the expression “hierarchy of truths” became popular in theological parlance only around the time of the Second Vatican Council, the idea of a differentiation in the scale and value of individual truths had been recognized by theologians for a long time. Luther placed a centering concept around the dead and resurrected Christ through his theory of justification by faith alone. Reformers and Anglicans attempted to articulate a continuity of this thought in their basic articles of faith. Thoughts on the articles of faith, or the fundamental centering of faith, reached another form of expression within the context of the hierarchy of truths expounded by Vatican II. D. Dietz insisted that any hierarchy of truths concerning Mary depended on the hierarchy of all Catholic Christian truths: “The path to follow in charting the hierarchy of truths begins with the Scriptures and passes through the first seven ecumenical councils and through Eastern and Western liturgies in the various ecclesial traditions.”

B. Lonergan distinguished between faith and beliefs, between religious conversion — which requires faith — and moral and intellectual conversion. Truth, of course, is an absolute in the logical and noetic senses; consequently, truth can admit no degrees. But faith is a truth about something; this something expresses a relationship to Christ. Faith is always articulated by a person. Articulation has been expressed over the years in a variety of historically developed forms. To these particular forms the hierarchy of truths applies in its stratified conceptualizations.

Throughout history, Christian truths have always been viewed organically. All aspects of Christian belief are seen in relationship to the centrality of the Christian mystery. The special genius of patristic writings was in their ability to synthesize the truths of that mystery. Congar pointed out: “For instance, when they speak of the eucharist, they never do so without the idea of redemption, the mystical body, the church, our divinization, indeed, some evocations of the holy trinity.” This centrality continued in the Latin framework epitomized by scholasticism, which recognized a centering of truths around several main articles of faith. Thomas Aquinas recognized that Christianity had an essence and that revelation, and consequently dogma and faith, had an essential and central content. The scholastics made a vital distinction between the essential content of an assertion (the material principle, the quod) and the principle which determined its value (the formal principle, the quo).

The theology of sixteenth century Reformers was concerned with the quod. Luther’s “analogy by faith” referred everything to the dead and resurrected Christ as the center of Revelation. G. Aulen stated: “A doctrine is not recognized as authentically Christian because it has excellent references nor because it has been accepted by a large number of Christians. All depends upon its intimate, organic, living rapport with the fundamental fact of Christianity.” Such a history of Christianity was centered only on the dead and resurrected Christ, and on him alone, relating to a saving character of faith but neglecting a theologia gloriae. In an effort to preserve the faith of the early Church, the Reformers sought to make distinctions within the material content of the faith:
Not all the articles of two doctrines are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion. . . . There are other articles of doctrine disputed among the churches, which still do not disrupt their unity.9

François Junius, a professor at Leyden, coined the phrase “fundamental articles,” which was to cause much discussion in later years. Pius XI and Pius XII rejected the idea of fundamental articles since it would impose an exclusive criterion for the Church’s unity and faith. This notion would leave no room for an internal development of an accessory or peripheral doctrine; rather, it would depend on theologians instead of the living magisterium of the Church.

The way the Church and the Western world from the Middle Ages to Vatican II used the notion of fundamental truths had been in recognizing “truths necessary for salvation.” The quo (“by what authority”) predominated over the quod (“what has been said”). If one becomes inordinately concerned with the formal consideration of authority, then one runs the risk of not granting the assertions and articles of faith the place they deserve. Yet from the point of view of content, the quod, one can criticize both fundamentalism and an interpretation which minimizes fundamental articles and a hierarchy of truths. Revelation and faith hold the center, which is faith’s totality and fullness as well as its unity.10 Congar offered the example of a tree, having roots, trunk, main and smaller branches, and leaves at the end of these branches. To cut off and reject what one does not want is to amputate an organism of the entire member. That branch belongs to the whole by a logic which is the very integrity and fullness of the whole. The development of shoots is not an extrinsic operation, like decorating a Christmas tree with ornaments, but is a development beginning with the trunk and its roots. Certainly the central and the peripheral, the radical and the ramified must be acknowledged, but all belong to the tree and its life. One can apply these considerations to articles touching upon the saints, the sacraments, or religious life. Since the Second Vatican Council there has been a recognition of a common sharing in baptism and a search for the actualization of total communion. Confrontation of all Christian communities with the disbelief of the secular world has had a great influence in leading the various communions back to the essentials they fundamentally share. The relationship of a truth to Christ is that his truth is a truth of something; similarly, the perception and expression of supernatural truth by humans (and therefore by the Church) are subject to historicity. Only God expresses or perceives supernatural truth perfectly. Therefore, differences in expression and in perception of Christian truths can exist, both historically and between the churches. The hierarchy of truths may be understood, then, in reference to the historical forms which the Christian churches have used for dogmatic expression.

In the hierarchy of truths and the commandments of God, in the law of love given to us by Christ in the New Testament, even within the Church herself, there is a hierarchy
of the first truth, with the second being similar to it. The law of love supersedes the expression of the Ten Commandments; the commandments serve to specify the law of love.

Hierarchies are also found in ethical truths in the natural law of tradition. Within the councils of the Church are found different levels of value. The first four ecumenical councils, for example, were fundamental, and their dogmatic work corresponded to the essentials of faith. Further, a classic distinction existed between the major sacraments and the others. Sacraments are ordered toward the eucharist; ministries are ordered toward the presbyterate, with the supreme act being the eucharistic celebration. Further hierarchies of ministries can be found in the Church, and all bear ecumenical implications.

Only in the final redaction did the statement of the hierarchy of truths appear in the Vatican II documents. Heft, with Vorgrimler, observed that it was the most important of all the changes introduced because of the modi. Heft further cited Mühlen, stating that the hierarchy of truths did not represent an effort to diminish the formal element attributable to all dogma; rather it was an effort to establish dogmatic relationship to Christ and Trinity.

When the decree says that doctrines “vary in their relation to the foundations of the Christian faith,” it asks in effect how closely connected they are to the mystery of Christ, who in turn can be properly understood only within the mystery of the Trinity. Those engaged in ecumenical discussion should, therefore, weigh rather than enumerate the truths on which they agree and disagree.

For Vorgrimler, the secondary and even tertiary aspects of Catholic doctrine and practice colored the Protestant view of Catholicism. This view emphasized the form of doctrines (e.g., the veneration of the saints), while obscuring the central issue of revelation. This jaundiced view was emphasized in the context of a flood of Marian literature to the neglect of christological and soteriological material. Vorgrimler considered this view erroneous, but one that had a decisive effect on non-Catholic Christians.

The statement in the decree called upon all Catholics to consider not only the formal element common to all truths — that they are revealed — but also to bear in mind the significance of their content. The hierarchy of truths was based on the relationship of truths to the foundation of the Christian faith, and not on the degree to which those truths were theologically binding. The first order of truths spoke to the foundation and center of the Christian faith, with all subsequent orders of truths evaluated in light of the fundamental, first order truths of faith.

Those truths brought up in ecumenical dialogue should be weighted rather than enumerated so that those which fundamentally bear on the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation become the object of discussion. If Catholics keep in mind the weight of the fundamental truths of the hierarchy, then non-Catholic Christians will be able to grasp the meaning of mutual links between the churches. Ecumenical unity exists in fact
in the common faith and profession of those truths which are of the order of the end, that is, the more central, fundamental truths. Through this focus, Catholics would ascertain that the main difference rests between those who profess a belief in the divinity of Christ and those who do not. In this context, denominational differences become secondary. Christian witness in a non-Christian world calls for unity by Christian churches based on the core truths of the gospel.

Carroll referred to the hierarchy of truths as a seminal statement because “Nobody seems to know quite how to apply it.” There had been little consideration of it from either ecumenical side, especially in relation to the Assumption, at the time he wrote. The Vatican II statement differed from the 1928 statement Mortalium animos, which severely limited Catholic participation in ecumenical dialogue to minimize the danger of indifferentism. Rejecting the notion that the faithful could pick and choose among dogmas, Mortalium animos denied the distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental truths. Vatican II taught that Christ is the foundation of Christian belief, but the Council Fathers did not permit the random selection of truths as more or less true. Rather, faith rests solely “on the authority of God as revealer, as understood in the Church,” and not on human choice.

De Oecumenismo: Statement of Ecumenical Hope

In a 25 November 1963 address concerning the schema on ecumenism during the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Pangrazio adverted to the presence of an historical and divine dynamism within the Church. He maintained that the Holy Spirit always works providentially regardless of human resistance or cooperation; the way that God designates is not necessarily the path we visualize as a logical or likely possibility. Whenever the Church is conceived as too abstract or static, harm is certainly rendered to the cause of ecumenism. Complete reunion is a seemingly impossible task today, but it can be effected if Christians respond to the prompting grace of God. “Through this dynamic force,” Pangrazio observed, “God can produce events, developments, and changes, not only in separated communities but also in the Catholic Church, which our generation and our Council as well simply cannot foresee.” In any effort to evaluate the inherent truths present in non-Catholic denominations, the centrality of Christ as heart and bond must be the fundamental premise. The great good accomplished in these communities is not by the work of humankind alone but involves the action of the Holy Spirit:

To arrive at a fair estimate of both the unity which now exists among Christians and the diversity which still remains, it seems very important to me to pay close attention to the hierarchical order of revealed truths which express the mystery of Christ and those elements which make up the Church.

In these words Pangrazio presented a concept of the hierarchy of truths as a hierarchical order of revealed truths wherein the mystery of Christ and the constitutive
elements of the Church are expressed. Pangrazio made a vital distinction between truths revealed by divine faith on the level of the final goal, such as the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Redemption, and those on the level of means toward salvation, such as the seven sacraments, truths concerning the hierarchical structure of the Church, and the apostolic succession. Those truths on the level of the final end he regarded as primary and, even though all truths must be believed, those on the level of means are secondary. Pangrazio found doctrinal unity in those Christian truths pertaining to the final goal of the faithful; he found doctrinal difference within the subordinated truths at the level of means. The latter were given by Christ as ancillary to the Church’s mission on earth and will vanish in the final kingdom:

If we explicitly make these distinctions in conformity with the hierarchy of truths and elements, I think the existing unity among all Christians will be seen more clearly, and it will become evident that all Christians are already a family united in the primary truths of the Christian religion.

In their statement concerning this issue, the Council Fathers did not display the same clarity or precision as Pangrazio had in establishing his original parameters of the concept. The Council merely acknowledged a variety of relationships between Church doctrines and their foundational characteristics:

In ecumenical dialogue, when Catholic theologians join with separated brethren in common study of the divine mysteries, they should, while standing fast by the teaching of the Church, pursue the work with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or “hierarchy” of truths, since these vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith. Thus the way will be open whereby this kind of “fraternal emulation” will incite all to a deeper awareness and a clearer realization of the unfathomable riches of Christ.

No reference to the hierarchy of truths appeared in the draft schema of De Oecumenismo. Pangrazio intervened in the debate to propose a hierarchy of truths which expresses the mystery of Christ and the Church.

The inadequacy of all language about the inner nature of belief in the Godhead had been well described by Augustine:

We do not dare to say one essence, three substances; but one essence or substance and three persons; as many Latin writers of authority on the subject spoke, since they could find no better way to put into words what they understood without words. In truth, since the Father is not
the Son, and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor Son, there are three... Nevertheless, when one inquires three of what, then speech reveals its inadequacy. The expression used, however, is three persons, not that thereby the truth is positively expressed, but only it is not left in complete silence.27

The way of formulating truths of faith may differ from the faith itself. Cardinal Bea remarked:

The first task of the dogmatic theologian is to grasp accurately, deeply, and in its different bearings the content of the truths of faith, as they are contained in Scripture and tradition and authoritatively taught by the Church. Next he must distinguish the timeless and eternal content amid the historically conditioned interpretations and formulations of past centuries; and in doing this he must avoid any dilution of the truth and any over-emphasizing of the nonessential.28

This delicate and important task requires attention not only to the texts of the Councils but to the Acta and to the whole historical situation.29

A symbolic character, however, in creeds and definitions should be recognized. In Greek and Latin a creed is still called a symbolum. Creeds, definitions, and even theological formulations are not merely statements of fact or a catalogue of faith propositions; they also point beyond themselves, conveying a transcendent meaning which is evocative not merely of the assent of the mind, but of the response of the heart. In the liturgy, the Nicene creed is not merely a declaration of faith but also a hymn of praise expressing human awe before the majesty and the mystery of God, recalling, asserting, and anticipating the whole of the divine ecstasy in which God's goodness descended to us, dwells among us, and lifts us up to the life of the world to come.30

The Decree on Ecumenism partially clarified the concept of the hierarchy of truths in the context of an ecumenical profession of trinitarian and christological faith:

Our thoughts turn first to those Christians who make open profession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as the sole mediator between God and men, to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are aware indeed that there exists considerable divergencies from the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning Christ himself, the Word made flesh, the work of redemption, and consequently concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church, and the role of Mary in the plan of salvation.31

Cullmann discovered this statement in a certain hope for future ecumenical dialogue. He considered it the most revolutionary statement in all the Council's documents:
In accordance with this text, it will be possible to place dogmas concerning the primacy of Peter or the Assumption of Mary (without denying them, of course) on a different plane than dogmas concerning Christ and the Trinity . . . a point of departure for ecumenical developments which justify every hope. 32

Cullmann realized that the faithful were not free to accept some defined truths and to reject others. “The Council would not be in favor of allowing the possibility of denying a defined truth.” 33 In accord with the thinking of Cullmann, Anglican E. Mascall remarked at the Zagreb Congress:

From a theological and from an ecumenical standpoint, one of the most significant statements made by the Second Vatican Council is contained in the brief sentence in chapter two of the Decree on Ecumenism which says that “there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of truths of Catholic doctrine, since they have different connections with the foundation of the Christian faith.” 34

Basically, what the hierarchy of truths stated is that the central truth, like the center of a circle, is Christ himself in the power of the Spirit. Around this center circle are concentric circles of other dogmatic truths, ordered according to their inherent degree of centrality to the Christian message. Since they have all been revealed by God, they are equally true; God is their common source for the truth of their testimony. Yet, as E. R. Carroll would later say, they do not bear the same importance since their importance is determined by their proximity to the core Christian truths. 35 He considered it obvious that the Assumption does not have the same centrality to our beliefs as does the fact that Christ is redeemer and savior. 36 God is one; Christian truth is only one. Although doctrines are described in a variety of ways, Christian truth is essentially only one. Since truth is one, all of these doctrines are then mutually implicative or coinherent. 37 Secondary truths 38 can be tested as dogmas by seeing if they form a coherency within the single Christian truth; this is established by determining if they are implicative of those major central doctrines which are rooted in Scripture and have been taught in the ecclesial tradition. 39 If the Assumption can be doctrinally established ecumenically, it will be by this method of proving that it is an implicate of other Christian truths. The Assumption in turn will illuminate new facets of the doctrines whence it was derived and will further establish the essential coherency within God’s revelation as it is theologized. 40

It is not so important to attend to an actual formulation of Catholic theology in this study; it is more important to advert to the basic meaning. Writers in each generation try in their own way to best express the encapsulated thought. 41 If today theology can express in a personal fashion the implications contained in the idea of the Assumption, then it will become a vibrant doctrine for all the faithful and its connection with other doctrines of faith will become evident. 42
Piepkorn wrote that each faith community must ask itself if its view stands so high in the hierarchy of truths and so central to its understanding of the gospel that it justifies preventing “a common participation in the sacrament of the altar.”

R. Boehler observed that the hierarchy of truths points to a fruitful hermeneutical principle, Jesus Christ; but he inquired if it is truly a life and death matter to believe in the Assumption (and the Immaculate Conception). In reference to Mühlen, he replied yes, as it pertains to justification and to the resurrection. He added that perhaps when narrowed down to the individual person of the Virgin Mary, a *fides implicita* would suffice for both Marian dogmas. Boehler concluded from his comparison of dogma with Scripture that confessional formulae may converge despite apparent differences between churches and apparent differences in phraseology. He added that Protestants may possess the whole in concentration on the central declaration of the New Testament, while Catholics possess the whole in developed form. Consequently, he concluded, certain “borderline” dogmas need not be held explicitly by a Christian.

**Subsequent Church Documents**

Since Vatican II did not explain exactly what was meant by the hierarchy of truths, the meaning and usage of that phrase has varied in interpretation since the Council. On 16 April 1970, the Secretariat for Unity identified the hierarchy of truths in terms of the relationship of a particular truth to the very foundations of the Christian faith:

We should always preserve the sense of an order based on degree or of a “hierarchy” in the truths of Catholic doctrine which, although they all demand a due assent of faith, do not all occupy the same principal or central place in the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ, since they vary in their relationship to the foundations of the Christian faith.

The Secretariat made a further distinction between revealed truths and theological doctrines:

Students should learn to distinguish between revealed truths, which all require the same assent of faith, and theological doctrines. Hence they should be taught to distinguish between “the deposit of faith itself, or the truths which are contained in our venerable doctrine,” and the way they are enunciated, between the truth to be enunciated and the various ways of perceiving and more clearly illustrating it, between the apostolic tradition and merely ecclesiastical traditions. Already from the time of their philosophical training students should be put in the frame of mind to recognize that different ways of stating things in theology too are legitimate and reasonable, because of the diversity of methods or ways by which theologians understand and
express divine revelation. Thus it is that these various theological formulae are often complementary rather than conflicting.\textsuperscript{46}

On 18 September 1970, the Secretariat for Unity made an apparent distinction between a hierarchy of truths based on their different relationships to the foundation of Christian faith and another hierarchy of truths related to the actual existential life of the Church. It is possible then for the position of a given doctrine in the life of Christians to differ from its theoretical place in relation to Christian foundations:

One will remember “that there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of the truths of Catholic doctrine based on their different relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.” All does not present itself at the same level in the life of the Church as well as in her teaching; indeed, all the revealed truths demand the same adhesion of faith; yet, according to their more or less close nearness to the foundation of the revealed mystery, they are in a diverse situation in relation to one another, and they entertain different relationships among themselves. For instance, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which must not be isolated from what the Council of Ephesus says about Mary, Mother of God, pre-supposes — in order to be grasped adequately, in an authentic life of faith — the dogma of grace, to which it is linked and which is necessarily grounded in the redeeming incarnation of the Word.\textsuperscript{47}

Several later official Church documents referred to the hierarchy of truths. Ecumenism in Higher Education, like Unitatis Redintegratio, weighed doctrinal truth in relation and closeness of approach to the center of the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ. D. Carroll observed that this document referred to several hierarchies in speaking of revealed truths and theological doctrines, which constitute an invitation to a more subtle distinction between the central truths and those less central:

They are not of equal importance. Again, it mentions the deposit of faith, its enunciation, its reception, its illustration. Neither do these stand on the same level. The document orders apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical traditions. Finally, it acknowledges a certain theological pluralism rooted in diversity of method, understanding, and expression.\textsuperscript{48}

Another document, Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue, made the important distinction between a hierarchy in the Church’s life and in its teaching: “All does not present itself at the same level in the life of the Church as well as in her teaching.” Since dogmas are understood properly in their relationship within the “authentic life of faith,” a difference may be seen between the hierarchies of teaching
and living the faith. The document insinuates that “the closeness of a truth to the center of faith is best shown by the importance it is accorded in the ‘authentic life of faith.’” However, the principal criterion is always a truth’s relation to the revealed mystery of Jesus Christ; this “determines the relations of truths and elements to each other.”

The Congregation for the Clergy, which published the General Catechetical Directory in 1971, stated that the Church, in composing the symbols of faith, had always recognized an order of truths. Hierarchy implies that “some truths are based on others and are illuminated by them.” The Directory, unlike documents of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, did not propose a criterion for the ranking of truths; instead, it offered a fourfold grouping within which the truths could be placed:

The four basic heads are: “the mystery of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all things; the mystery of Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered, died and rose for our salvation; the mystery of the Holy Spirit . . . and the mystery of the Church.”

This document took the order of truths from ecumenism and situated it in the practical life of the Christian, “in the area of preaching, teaching, and mediation of the faith within one’s own ecclesial communion.”

**Various Dynamic Hierarchical Systems: Central Symbols of Faith**

D. Carroll believed that the Second Vatican Council related all truths to the foundation of Christian faith — Christ — and “invites us to situate our beliefs and doctrines against the background of Christian life in the community of faith.” Carroll suggested that certainty on essentials, coupled with a plurality of approach to nonessentials, is the ideal. Dulles spoke of the single vision of the Christian message which focuses on the core of Christianity and which “must be refocused in a way that speaks immediately and directly to the deepest concerns of the present.” Baum followed this thought in suggesting that Vatican II attempted to reply “to the contemporary threats to human existence.” Beyond the movement from implicit to explicit truth, Baum referred to an “original Spirit-created formulation — tested again and again by the Apostolic witness — of the self-identical Gospel spoken by God in the Church.” Baum continued that the core teaching of Christianity is “the point of departure for understanding anew the entire teaching of the Church in a way appropriate to our own time.” The varied elements of Church doctrine and life must be compared to the central truth that “God is redemptively present to man’s making of man”; this redemptive presence has become evident in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

Faith and the expression of faith have two dimensions. According to Carroll, faith “and its affirmations go out to the divinity. Yet faith and the expression of it grows out of man’s God-given and grace-signed search for integral fulfillment.” Any formulation of faith must address the mystery of God as revealed in his Son as well as humankind’s search for “abiding meaning and fulfilling value.”
In contemporary theological discussion there is a variety of emphasis in relation to the hierarchy of truths. Some theologians categorize truths on the basis of how explicit they are in Scripture or in the magisterium. Others evaluate truths on the basis of their necessity for salvation. Still others contrast “nuclear” beliefs which are basic to the psychological function of a person’s belief system with “peripheral” beliefs which have few ramifications in a person’s life. Numerous principles and methods of evaluating and ordering are possible. Consequently, the position of a particular revelatory truth may vary from one hierarchical system to another.\(^{58}\)

The explanation given in Tavard’s *Reflections and Suggestions* of 1971 is particularly noteworthy and valuable for two reasons. First, the hierarchy of truths refers to the teaching of the Church and also to the life of the Church; consequently, the difference of levels in truths applies to both of these areas. No correspondence between the same truth in these areas is cited but the two areas are clearly stated. For example, all the articles of the Creed are important in Church teaching but not necessarily in Church life. There is given the case of the descent into hell — important in the Creed, but ignored in life. Conversely, there are doctrines concerning the Virgin Mary, such as the Assumption, that are not in the Creed, but which do hold a very important place in the life of the Church.

Second, an insightful example of the Immaculate Conception is offered. This doctrine is to be seen in connection with the *Theotokos* of Ephesus and with the teaching on grace, both of which have christological and soteriological dimensions respectively. Furthermore, this is not simply an intellectual exercise but is rather a demand upon the authentic life of faith: “The meaning of the example is clearly that christology and soteriology, the dogma of Ephesus and the doctrine of grace and salvation, are more central to the revealed mystery and their application to Mary in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.”\(^{59}\)

U. O’Neill considered, in light of the process through which it became a part of the document, that almost by chance the statement on the hierarchy of truths was included; yet she emphasized its ecumenical, homiletic, and catechetical importance.\(^{60}\)

According to G. H. Tavard in 1971, Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, was responsible for proposing a *modus* that indicated which controverted and uncontroverted truths within ecumenism should be “weighted” rather than enumerated. The weight referred to the relevance to salvation history and the mystery of Christ. After revision, this proposal was accepted by the Secretariat for Unity as follows: “In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or ‘hierarchy’ of truths, since these vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.”\(^{61}\) We have seen that other Church documents adopted this concept of the hierarchy of truths. The 1976 instruction, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests*, emphasized that the “essential must be distinguished from the unessential.”\(^{62}\) The instruction continued that central truths must not be lost amid the fragmentation of theological knowledge. The *General Catechetical Directory* clarified the statement that the hierarchy of truths does not mean that some truths “pertain to the
faith itself less than others, but rather that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them.”

In 1970, the Secretariat for Christian Unity pointed out that there is not just one hierarchy of truths; the hierarchy of revealed truths is one among many: “The deposit of faith itself, or the truths which are contained in our own venerable doctrine, and the way in which it is enunciated; between the truth to be enunciated and its reception and illustration; between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition.”

In 1976, Rahner proposed a distinction between a subjective and an objective hierarchy of truths. In his view, the Church could preach her own hierarchy, while individual members could preach another, which he recommended when “this ‘subjective attitude’ is healing and liberating in its effect.” This presupposed that individual Christians may live according to their own personal hierarchy while the collective Church proclaims another. Tavard indicated that an inquiry into those truths which are important in the lives of the members of the Church might distinguish them from the Church’s official hierarchy of doctrines. O’Neill believed that there should be a balance between the subjective and objective hierarchies, “between heart and head. To canonize a subjective hierarchy is to decide that intellectual conversion in the realm of things religious is for the few, while the many are best left to indulge in devotion dictated solely by the affective power of symbols.”

A comparative hierarchy has also been proposed, wherein such doctrines as the Resurrection of the Lord, habitual grace, the Holy Spirit, and the eucharist would be more important than the infancy of Christ, actual grace, Mary, and the sacrament of the sick. The process for evaluating doctrinal priority, while not specified, is undoubtedly based in some way upon “the intensity of the power and presence of Christ.”

The General Catechetical Directory indicated that in composing the creeds and symbols of faith, the Church has always recognized a hierarchy of truths. In addressing the social and cultural problems of each age, the Church also has spoken of an objective or ecclesial hierarchy. Pangrazio’s Vatican II statement achieved an added importance by his emphasis on the importance of the object of belief rather than on the degree of adherence to the Church’s teaching authority: “The importance of a doctrine is to be determined not by the extrinsic norm of teaching authority expressed in a theological qualification but rather by its inner relation to the central mystery of Christianity.”

O’Neill wrote that neither faith nor the Church is static, and consequently it is impossible to capsulize the essence of belief in a definitive manner. Rahner proposed in 1964 that symbols are always significant universally and are open to determination within the particular age in which they are preached. Basically, the content of the Catholic faith “consists in a few quite simple, comprehensive realities which penetrate all the rest and from which they are derived.” In 1972, T. Schneider affirmed the centrality of the mystery of Christ “which reveals the Triune God in his grace, and there are applications of this truth to concrete areas in answer to more peripheral and culturally conditioned questions.”
Reflecting on what constitutes the central symbols of faith, Rahner presented Trinity, Incarnation, and grace, the essence of Christian belief being that God has communicated to humankind in Christ and through the agency of the Spirit. This trinitarian dynamic has a solid foundation in the tradition of the Church. Others such as D. Grasso offered the opinion that the person of Jesus Christ enables the Church to see the many truths of faith in a single light and to establish a hierarchy among them. There is an apparent agreement between these views in that those who look upon the Trinity as the central symbol do so because of Christ himself: “It is only because of him that one can speak of trinity in the first place and the claim that ‘Jesus is Lord’ would seem to be the symbolic statement which implies the whole of Christianity and all the other truths of faith.”

P. Schoonenberg attempted to be more specific, distinguishing between central and peripheral doctrines. His effort resulted in a large number of “central truths” and a less significant group of “peripheral truths,” such as the Marian, papal, and moral teachings. He considered “all statements about God, his creation, his Christ, his redemption, grace and the Holy Spirit” to be central, and the “Marian, ecclesiological, and the moral dogmas” to be peripheral to the Christian faith. The General Catechetical Directory proposed: “The various aspects of the mystery are to be explained in such a way that the central fact, Jesus, holds first place, and from him the other truths of Catholic teaching derive their order and hierarchy.” The concept of a “hierarchy,” according to O’Neill, “may have compounded the difficulty of establishing the relative importance of truths” in that it provokes the image of a compilation of truths in descending order. In 1966 A. McBride wrote, “Religious realities arranged themselves in a hierarchy at the summit of which is the Father.” Schneider suggested in 1972 that this concept of hierarchy might be replaced by the notion of concentric circles to present a more precise and symbolic image. His suggestion permitted the overlapping of the truths, and avoided a scientific measurement, which is more in accord with the symbolic nature of theological formulae.

In O’Neill’s analysis:

In these terms the Trinity would occupy the inner circle. Truths concerning the mission of Christ, redemption, incarnation would occupy a second. A third might consist of the church, sacraments, while doctrines such as those of infallibility and the assumption of Mary would occupy an outer circle.

Rahner pointed out that in their subjective hierarchies the faithful use symbols that relate to their life experience; while they profess the Trinity as a matter of faith in the creeds, they shunt it to the peripheral section of their lives: “The doctrine of the Trinity, in spite of its being so often extolled as the fundamental system of Christianity, plays a very modest role, if it occurs at all, in the actual life of Christians and in the teaching which they hear.” O’Neill concluded that in her catechesis, the Church must present the hierarchy of truths:
... not only from its so-called objective theological significance, but also in the degree to which it is relevant in the life of the Christian. It must be evident to the individual how those truths which are declared to be central do in fact explain and illumine the human condition.83

In the 1975 Hoover Lectures, R. E. Brown recalled that in the hierarchy of truths the Church has posited some dogmas as more central to the Christian religion than others. Only when the Marian dogmas are primarily christological, for example in the declaration of Mary’s divine maternity, would they rank high on the hierarchical list of truths. Otherwise, they simply reflect the “application of redemptive grace within the Church to its most prominent citizen.”84

Brown believed it was more precise to speak of hierarchies of truths, rather than merely one hierarchy of truths. The hierarchy that Brown described had for its criterion “centrality within the Christian mystery.” But there could be other criteria for other hierarchies: self-identity of a Christian group; spirituality, or cultus.85 Catholics would perceive the papacy and the Marian dogmas near the top for hierarchies based respectively on ecclesiastical identity and devotional impact. The Marian dogmas and the papacy constitute “a point of major concern for the ecumenical future.”86

In 1967 W. Pannenberg wrote that mariology should have a central place in ecumenical discussion since Mary plays such an important part in the life and devotion of the Catholic Church, which many of the Protestants see as a principal obstacle to unity:

If we expect Roman Catholics to be flexible and open to change regarding their mariological dogmas, we too must make a much more serious effort to understand structures of thought which seem strange to us. Only in this way can Christians begin to envision a new and true Catholic mariology: a mariology which is neither a foreign imposition upon evangelical thought nor an intolerable break in the continuity of Roman Catholic thought.87

Assumption: Logical Implicate of the Foundational Christian Truths

Macquarrie claimed that the term hierarchy of truths was not entirely accurate: “The Christian truth is really one, though we express it in a number of doctrines; and because it is really one, all of these doctrines are mutually implicative or coinherent.”88 The Marian truth provides precious insight into the one essential truth, Macquarrie insisted, that truth dealing with God in Christ: “It is not, therefore, innovative, perverse or pointless. I think that its essential truth, its ‘governing intention,’ is a clear implicate of basic Christian doctrines which we all accept.”89
The subject of Mary is seen not in isolation but in the context of other related truths, sharing a common source, distinct but inseparable; truths which form concentric circles that interact with each other. E. Leiva-Merikakis commented in the preface of von Balthasar's book *The Threefold Garland*:

The unity of the Paschal Mystery is certainly the determining source of this vision ... and, in extending this principle of concentric unity to all the mysteries of faith, von Balthasar ... is exhibiting his theological obedience to the actual manner God has chosen to redeem man, a manner reflecting the very interior nature of God himself.90

Mary Assumed, Mother of God, must be seen in her relation to the soteriological mysteries of her Son. The goal of the Church and the individual is to enter into the reality that Mary already possesses; she is the handmaid of the Lord, especially in her glorification. Consequently, Mary cannot possibly be a goal or purpose in herself.

One circle within the hierarchy represents the real Christ; another represents the real Mary. Yet by God's decree these circles cannot be separated from one another. By his very nature the circle of the Eternal Word contains his creature, his Mother. By the free grace of God, Mary comes in turn to contain her Creator. The Eastern liturgy states, "You are wider than the heavens, for within yourself you have confined the unconfinable God."91 Catherine of Siena stated, "We are Your image and you are our image."92 Mary, the human Mother of the *Verbum Dei*, made God's suffering and ultimately the entire act of redemption a possibility:

The uncreated Lord cannot have a Mother; the redeeming Lord must. And, because there are not two lords but one Lord, Mary unexplainably becomes both the Mother of God and the Mother of all those redeemed by the incarnate God, who wills that man should receive from Mary the life he has deposited in her corporeally. But because this life is actually himself, no one can be found in Christ who is not also found in Mary.93

St. Irenaeus, in opposition to the efforts of the Gnostics to spiritualize the Incarnation, upheld the reality of the Lord's humanity and its salvific value by stating that through Mary's act of obedience, which resulted in the conception of the Son, she became "the cause of salvation both for herself and for all mankind."94 Consequently, he desired that all humankind share in his divinity, holy people — in the same place that he became human — in the obedient heart of Mary. As von Balthasar was to comment in 1982, "Mary already is what we may be, and being the physical Mother of the God-Man she provides the indispensable chamber for the espousals of God and man."95 Mary is fully appreciated, then, only in the fullness of the light and splendor of her Son. Additional ecclesial and eschatological implications will flow from this premise.

In a 1980 article, Macquarrie placed the Immaculate Conception in the context of
the hierarchy of truths. He discussed how, while the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception may not rank high on the hierarchy, they are logical implicates of dogmas that rank higher on the scale of truths. Macquarrie presented the difficulty of the two recent Marian dogmas in the mind of Anglicans, noting that special difficulties are created by those dogmas “because Anglicans doubt the appropriateness, or even the possibility, of defining them as essential to the faith of believers.” Not so much the content as the form of dogmatic expression disturbed Anglican theologians.

Macquarrie took exception to the view of L. Ott, who saw no explicit scriptural basis for the validity of the Immaculate Conception. This exception could also be applied to the Assumption. Macquarrie stated that the typical appeal to Scripture, tradition, development, and reason, while appropriate in the case of the major Christian doctrines, is inappropriate in regard to those lower in the hierarchy. The test for such doctrines is to consider whether they form part of the one truth of Christianity: that is, whether they are implicates of doctrines found in Scripture and which are acknowledged in the universal tradition of the Church. Macquarrie proposed to establish the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by demonstrating that it is, in fact, like the Assumption, an implicate of other Christian truths. He accomplished this by removing theology from the language of the nineteenth century and personalizing it, looking for the “governing intention.” Conception, in this case, cannot be understood as a biological event but must be seen theologically as the absolute origination of a person. Mary was conceived in the mind of God to be that moment in history when “the human race would be so cleared of sin and filled with grace that it would be ready to receive the gift of himself.” Long before her historical conception Mary was conceived and sanctified in the mind of God, bringing the universal and the particular together.

Since 1955 it has become obvious that the theology of Mary is a determining factor in fundamental theology, in the nature of revelation, and in methodology. This became quite clear in the definition of the Assumption. Since tradition is interpretative of Scripture’s content, its role necessarily requires the guidance of the Spirit for discernment of the truth and its valid interpretation. It has been seen that, according to A. B. Vaughan, the sensus fidelium is invaluable in regard to truths that relate to the devotional aspects of the faith:

The hierarchy of truths does not mean that truths of a lesser centrality, but organically united with the core of Revelation, are less needed to bring us salvation. Truths that are better described as devotional may be of more practical importance to many people than some elements in the Creed, and hence may be more salvific in terms of their direct and immediate effects.

The doctrine of the Assumption offers a clear example of this. It should be remembered, though, that defined doctrines are “guaranteed as correct formulations of Revelation and are salvific for all times and places.” By accepting the doctrine of the Assumption, “one
affirms the value of all those dogmatic truths."\(^{100}\)

The love of and devotion to Mary has played an important historical role in Catholic life. The dogmatic statements of the Catholic Church concerning Mary can be summarized thus: Mary is the Mother of God; she is ever-virgin; she is free, through the grace of Christ from the instant of conception, of all sin and so is all-holy; she is with her Son in his glorification, body and soul. The foundation of the Marian cult, according to R. P. McBrien, is the fact that she is *Deipara*, “God-bearer,” recognized from earliest Christian times. In endorsing various forms of devotion to Mary, the Church has always insisted, while recognizing the diversity of ethnic background, that devotional expressions be within the limits of orthodoxy. McBrien recalled that *Lumen Gentium* reminded theologians and homilists to avoid the extremes of exaggeration or narrow-mindedness. Devotion given to Mary must always be within that context of veneration due to the saints of God, never the adoration or worship given to God alone. When Mary is honored, God is adored a thousand times over. McBrien asserts.\(^{101}\)

Marian beliefs have played an important role in ecumenical relations in the modern world. There had been a serious rupture at the time of the Reformation and Counterreformation periods. McBrien pointed to two extremes to be avoided in one’s personal relationship with the Virgin: minimalism and maximalism. The former would never permit any veneration to be given to a human, no matter how worthy, because that would detract from honor due to God and Christ alone. The latter sets no limit on the help that Mary can provide in her personal approach to the just God and her Son.\(^{102}\)

**The Mystery of Christ and His Church**

*Lumen Gentium* indicated a certain flexibility in terminology as theologians describe various truths in relationship to the core Christian message and still maintain an elementary agreement in truth. In this sense it is impossible to speak of an “inessential article of faith” if by that we mean a dogmatic statement about an inessential part of Christian truth. No article of faith is inessential since all belief resides ultimately in Christ, the One who redeems, who points to the Father and sends the Spirit. Consequently, in order for the Assumption dogma to be a Christian dogma, it must shed some light upon various mysteries of Christ.

A purpose of this research is to present the Assumption in its relationship to the core truths of faith as revealed in the totality of God’s soteriological plan. Jelly described the necessary connection of Mary in her Assumption with these truths: “The triune God revealed in the Incarnate Word, our Redeemer, and also in the intimate relationship with the mystery of the Church, the members of His redeemed Body of which she is a part.”\(^{103}\)

In the estimation of E. Doyle, this research must be construed as one small part of that quest for the proper place of Mary in the Mystical Body, the People of God, under Christ and through the Spirit: “The study of the Virgin Mary is a study of the meaning
of salvation and of the Church in history. It is about a concrete person in whom God’s grace was beautifully victorious.” While the Assumption is necessarily about Christ, it must contain additional insights about his paschal mystery. C. Hay saw a value for the hierarchy of truths for the theologian in verbalizing and conceptualizing the particularities of Christ’s soteriological mission: “Upon the Roman Catholic theologian rests the particular task and responsibility of showing that the doctrines particular to his Church are, in fact, fairly immediate consequences of our common and basic affirmation that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

B. Leeming insisted that the Assumption of Mary had an integral connection with the entire Christian message. It cannot be denied without prejudice to the core truths. The privilege is interlocked, not only with Marian but also with other truths. D. Flanagan concluded that Marian dogmas, when properly understood, do not simply impart information about Mary but rather speak of the very nature of salvation, as accomplished through Christ and in his faith community. A compelling characteristic of the writings of von Balthasar is that he refused to consider a subject in isolation. In his “concentric vision” he saw related subjects emanating from a common center. This core is seen as the unity of the paschal mystery. His method reflected God’s interior nature and his redemptive dealings with humankind in a realistic fashion. Von Balthasar presented his visio Christi et Mariae: Mary seen not in isolation but in the context of the fullness of revelation. The entire deposit of faith shares a common source. The truths are distinct but inseparable, concentric circles that interact continuously one with the other, “and, in extending this principle of concentric unity to all the mysteries of faith, von Balthasar . . . is exhibiting his theological obedience to the actual manner God has chosen to redeem man, a manner reflecting the very interior nature of God himself.”

The one central mystery that has been revealed to humankind is that of the saving Jesus Christ, truly God, truly human. Healy reflected that when God wished to reveal his plan for humankind’s final salvation he did not use words; he acted. God sent his Son. He revealed a person, the human and divine Jesus Christ. The sum of all that was received from him and through the apostles is what de facto constituted revelation. The apostles were aware of the relationship of Mary with the soteriological mission of her Son and her overall place in his life. Other mysteries of faith are contained in the revelation of the Lord Jesus. In a certain sense this is inclusively true of the Trinity. The mystery of Mary is found in the mystery of her Son; consequently there is implicit revelation.

E. R. Carroll did not consider the hierarchy of truths to be at a stalemate. Instead, he found other avenues open. The Second Vatican Council reminded Christians of the communion that already existed on the basis of baptism and which offered understanding of ecumenical action as a means of total communion. The hierarchy of truths has an ecclesiological context. Congar wrote, “We deal with the truth of something that is confessed by somebody under the aspect of ‘something.’” The “somebody” aspect refers to the churches defined by their historicity. The hierarchy of truths may additionally be used to understand the historical forms which Christian churches have used for
dogmatic expressions, which not only vary from church to church, but from epoch to epoch within the same church.

Acceptance and Anathemas of the Marian Dogmas

An Explicit Acceptance

In a 1971 sermon at the Oxford Church of St. Mary the Virgin, E. J. Yarnold addressed the question of reunion of the Churches on the basis of common acceptance of trinitarian and christological teaching, without acceptance of the Marian dogmas. He cautioned:

Loose thinking about a hierarchy of doctrines may encourage (the feeling that) the doctrines connected with Mary are of the second rank and therefore need be no obstacle to reunion. It is surely closer to the truth to say that there can be no such thing as an inessential article of faith, meaning by that term an article of faith about inessential areas of Christian belief. All articles of faith must be about Christ, about the way He saves, the way He reveals the Father, and the way He sends His Spirit to His Church. The onus is upon Roman Catholics to show how articles of faith about Mary cast light upon the essential Christian beliefs about Christ... where there is a hierarchy is in the immediacy of the connection of the saving work of Christ with a particular verbal formulation of doctrine.¹¹²

Another example of the complexity involved in applying the hierarchy of truths to the Marian dogmas may be found in the lecture presented in December 1974 by Dulles. He asked if the idea of the hierarchy of truths would permit a way for all Christians to be truly one “in faith in a united Church without the requirement of an explicit acceptance of the Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, say by Lutherans and others?”¹¹³ While personally professing belief in these dogmas, Dulles asked that the fact of their truth be separated from the necessity that every Christian in communion with the Catholic Church should have to accept them. In support of his suggestion, Dulles noted that certain beliefs “are primarily and directly ordered to salvation and others... are only secondarily or indirectly connected with salvation.” Thus he suggested that the Marian dogmas should be taught without anathemas, especially since they concerned “relatively minor and highly subtle doctrinal differences.” He concluded that it was “inexcusable for the churches to be mutually divided by doctrines that are obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith.”¹¹⁴

B. de Margerie asked the question: “Is the union of the Churches possible without
the common acknowledgment of Mary as immaculate and assumed into heaven?"\textsuperscript{115} Lutheran Piekporn considered whether, in the context of the hierarchy of truths in Catholic doctrine, in view of the evolution of Catholic ecclesiology, the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption have become obsolete. As a result of his analysis of Vatican II ecclesiology, Piekporn presented the position that the whole church — including Orthodox and Protestant — was not consulted prior to 1854 and 1950. The whole Church did not concur in and consent to the definitions; these definitions perhaps are still open to question for the whole Church. De Margerie maintained that Piepkorn’s analysis of the Vatican II ecclesiology flowed neither from the New Testament nor from the ancient history of the Church. The insistence of the Catholic Church on an integral profession of faith is now the same as it was in the first centuries. From an ecumenical viewpoint it is evident that

Any Church or ecclesial community wishing to become perfectly incorporated into the one Body of Christ must profess, as truths of faith, all those truths which Peter has defined as such, either alone or with the College whose head he is, including the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.\textsuperscript{116}

L. Bouyer observed in 1970 that there is not a complete identification of the Church with the People of God; this will be realized only in the eschatological Church.\textsuperscript{117}

In \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio} the Second Vatican Council expressed:

\ldots the profound aspiration of every baptized soul, namely, the fullness of life in Christ, which presupposes the adherence of the mind to all the truths which He has revealed. \ldots Not to adhere to these truths, even if they are in a certain sense secondary in reference to the central object of the Christian faith, objectively implies \ldots a rejection of the full communion in the faith received and proclaimed by the one Church of Christ.\textsuperscript{118}

In his citation of \textit{Lumen Gentium}, de Margerie maintained that:

The definitions of Pius IX and Pius XII, expressing and specifying the prior faith of the universal Church, did not need the subsequent approbation of even a Catholic bishop in order to proclaim the divinely revealed truth in an obligatory fashion for all, precisely because the Holy Spirit does not need the approval of men. \ldots Christ and his whole Church have spoken through the mouth of Peter.\textsuperscript{119}

Concerning the meaning of these dogmas, Yarnold asked whether the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption could be considered as purely symbolic dogmas which, in a fully united Church, one would be free to reject, provided one admitted the transcendent sense toward which they are oriented. According to Yarnold, many
doctrines have two levels. The theological sense has direct reference to Christ and to the redemption. This is not necessarily the case with the symbolic sense. Yarnold did not believe that varying acceptance of these levels necessitated religious diversion:

If there is agreement over the theological meaning, but disagreement over the interpretation or even the validity of the symbolic form in which it is expressed, there is no need for the one side to give way and agree to accept the symbol nor for the other side to renounce it or cease to believe in its literal truth.

Yarnold saw seven stances that could be taken toward acceptance of the Assumption. He believed that agreement could be discovered through discussion of these. The Assumption is considered as: unscriptural and incapable of being defined — possibly false; a legitimate conclusion but not adhered to; a theologoumenon; expressive of truth but not an article of faith; essential to the faith but incapable of definition; definable but stated in a variety of ways; essential to the totality of faith. Yarnold sought a compromise among these choices:

If the Churches of the Reformation will at least accept the two Marian doctrines as legitimate “theologoumena,” still more if they accept the truths underlying them as integral Christian faith concerning salvation, and if Roman Catholics on their side will accept that this essential doctrine can also be expressed in non-Marian terms, it should not be too difficult to discover common ground.

De Margerie believed that:

According to this, the theological meaning of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption would not have any special reference to Mary herself, but rather to the terrestrial efficacy of divine grace in the Church and to the eschatological survival of human values.

According to de Margerie, Yarnold’s position nullified the history of Christianity by eradicating the history of transcendence. Further, it declared absurd the controversies, centuries old in the Church, concerning the privilege of Mary in her conception and in her death. De Margerie considered Yarnold’s opinion essential neo-Gnosticism tainted with Modernism. Further, it contradicted the Marian definitions of Pius IX and Pius XII who intended to affirm that Mary had been preserved free from original sin and was bodily glorified. To state at this point in history that certain members of a unified Church could be in full communion and at the same time not profess these truths as they had been defined implied that adherence to the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption is not necessary for any member of the Church. This pointed to a contradiction in Yarnold’s hypothesis, and to “an implicit admission of a heterogeneous evolution of Catholic
Ecumenical Implications of the Assumption Dogma: Developments in Understanding Among English-Speaking Theologians

dogma which the Church would be free to interpret in one sense today and in a totally contrary sense tomorrow.”

De Margerie did find, however, a “particle of truth” in Yarnold’s position. In *Lumen Gentium* the Church had affirmed that Mary is, even in her privileges, a sign of the collective destiny of the People of God, a perspective which agrees with the Christian understanding of biblical symbolism. “The Marian privileges cannot be isolated from the fullness of revelation and from the totality of the mystery of salvation,” de Margerie stated.

**Development by Way of Concentration**

De Margerie questioned how the Churches and ecclesial communities can advance toward the final and definitive encounter with Mary, immaculate and assumed, toward a “development by way of concentration.” Of all the ecclesial communities, the Orthodox and Anglican Churches are closest to full communion with Rome. While they have not expressed an explicit faith in the Marian dogmas, neither have they irrevocably rejected such faith. In 1950, V. Iljin reaffirmed the Immaculate Conception in a lecture on Orthodoxy:

> Just as the Church is infallible and impeccable both in her principle and historically, so *a fortiori* the Virgin Mother of God cannot have either original or actual sin. From the beginning her status is that of vessel of the Incarnation; she is in the state characterized by Blessed Augustine as inability to sin (*non posse peccare*). . . . It is altogether unthinkable that this mystery of a creature giving birth to her Creator could have its origin in a creature wounded by sin or who, even without being affected by sin, could have been so affected.

De Margerie asked if the Protestant communions were aware that “for the Magisterium of the Catholic Church these two truths do have their ultimate foundation in Scripture.” One could not additionally exclude the possibility of an evolution among Protestants and Orthodox toward the acceptance of these two doctrines through a reflection on Mary in the context of Christ and the Church from Catholic perspectives concerning theological anthropology and revelation.

Concerning possible reunion, J. B. Duprey stated that it may be only necessary to ask the Eastern Church not to exclude *a priori* “the possibility of an accord in the formulation of these truths in the context of a renewal of normal relations between the two Churches.” It is not possible, however, “to resume living together” while divergences of faith, and not only of theology, remain. In recalling the method used by the reconciliatory Council of Florence, Duprey recalled: “There is no reason why an eventual council of reunion, while demanding adherence to the previous definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, could not simultaneously promulgate new expressions of these two dogmas.”
De Margerie concluded that the Church will continue her mission on this earth, not by an abridgment of her Marian dogmas, but through a concentration on foundational mysteries that will emphasize Mary’s association with Christ and his mystery of salvation in relation to these two truths:

Everything seems to indicate that the future Church will go forward to meet her immaculate, risen and glorified Mother, not through the impossible and dead-end path of an abridgment of already defined dogmas concerning her, but rather by concentrating her attention on fundamental mysteries, and especially on the privileged cooperation of the New Eve with the New Adam with a view to her own foundation and origin. Such a concentration cannot but lead her to underline the paschal and Christocentric sense of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Mother of God.

In 1976 de Margerie suggested a Unity Council wherein the Marian dogmas would be restated in terms of contemporary conditions. He cited a precedent for this, when the Council of Florence refined the affirmation of the Second Council of Lyons concerning papal primacy, as well as the remarks of Paul VI at Constantinople in July 1967:

The points on which we still differ must not keep us from perceiving the profound identity of our faith. Charity must help us, as it helped Hilary and Athanasius, to recognize identity of faith above and beyond differences of vocabulary at a moment when serious disagreements were dividing the Christian episcopate.

De Margerie further stated that while Christians are not always obliged to profess explicitly all defined truths, they are bound to profess them implicitly by adhering in a general way to all the truths of the Church, in the sense and to the extent that the Church teaches them. The Church has never taught that it is permissible to deny any single dogma and still remain in communion with the integral faith of the Church. De Margerie admitted that the two recently defined Marian dogmas may not be related in a primary fashion to the foundational truths of the Christian religion:

... yet they are not secondary with reference to other truths of the faith. These Marian truths are related to the paschal mystery foundationally because of the intimate union of Mary as the New Eve with Jesus as the New Adam. It is precisely as immaculate and assumed into Heaven that Our Blessed Lady is, according to an ancient metaphor, the Heart of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

De Margerie saw a contradiction in Dulles’ proposal since, in asking for a free, nonobligatory assent, he reduced these doctrines to the level of not dogma but theologoumena.
Anathemas: Obstacles to Eucharistic Intercommunion

The proposal to lift the anathemas attached to the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption seems beside the point. Vatican II reiterated the Church’s belief in the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption without any mention of anathemas. The question is whether there can be unity of faith without acceptance of these Marian dogmas. Put another way, can one accept the trinitarian and christological dogmas as being at the heart of the faith and simply consider the Marian dogmas on the periphery and be free to hold them or not even though they are defined doctrines? Yarnold had previously issued (1971) a useful caution in this regard.

In a final analysis, then, if the Church’s doctrine on the hierarchy of truths would not facilitate the acceptance of defined Marian doctrines to be a matter of individual freedom in order to foster unity by means of ecumenical pluralism, then what would be the function of this hierarchy of truths? According to Jelly, who commented at length on the hierarchy of truths, the function would be to foster dialogue about the relationship of Marian doctrines to the chief mysteries of faith and redemption in Christ; in other words, to bring out the christocentric and ecclesiotypical significance of the Marian dogmas.

It would seem that one reason why certain ecumenists would wish to have the Marian dogmas considered as a matter of free choice is that they see them as obstacles to eucharistic intercommunion. A 1979 report on the Lutheran-Catholic consultation in America addressed this problem directly. In both the Lutheran and Catholic portions of a joint statement, reference was made to Mary, particularly to the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

In the Catholic comment notice was made of Lutheran difficulties with the definitions of 1854 and 1950, as well as with the definition of 1870. These doctrines, claimed the Lutherans, must be seen in relationship to the entire vision of the saving work of God. A question was raised concerning the ecumenical utility of lifting the anathemas attached to the three dogmas. The Lutherans asked whether this in fact would promote ecclesial communion, or would instead give the impression the Catholic Church no longer teaches these dogmas.

De Margerie observed that there was no correlation between lifting the anathemas and eliminating the obligation of professing the totality of Christian faith. There was no way in which the Church could reduce the sinful errancy of a deliberate, contumacious refusal of full communion, particularly a conscious refusal to profess these two truths, revealed by God for the salvation of humankind.

According to de Margerie, while lifting the anathemas was possible, that would not help those Catholics who de facto had been anathematized in the past. In the future, any Catholic who would deny the Marian dogmas would be guilty of the formal sin of heresy; by that very fact one would be excluded from the Catholic Church. Since the penalties were never intended for non-Catholics, there seemed to be little ecumenical value in Dulles’ proposal. Lifting the anathemas would create confusion in the minds of non-
Catholic Christians since it would be impossible to convince Catholics or non-Catholics that “the elimination of the anathemas does not mean the elimination of the two dogmas themselves, or of the obligation to accept them.”

De Margerie saw a certain value in Dulles’ suggestion in that it had effected serious reflection upon the necessity of accepting the two dogmas in the ecclesial and eschatological context of the anathemas. The purpose, however, of the anathemas was “medicinal,” meaning for the “spiritual recovery” of those who denied Mary’s special place in salvation history; the anathemas were intended

... to lead such persons to join the Church in the praise of her Mother, immaculate and assumed into Heaven. But couldn’t one say — shouldn’t one say — that to the extent that they wish to adhere to everything that Christ has revealed for our salvation, they adhere implicitly and formally ... to these two Marian dogmas? ... Such is the implicit faith of all the churches and ecclesial communities in imperfect communion with the Roman Church, and to the extent of that communion. If the Catholic Church regards Mary’s Immaculate Conception and Assumption as important aspects of Christ’s Gospel which she could not reject without announcing a “different Gospel” from that which she has received from Him, thus being anathematized by Him, this same Church rejoices here on earth at the thought that this one Gospel is implicitly embraced by all those who are still only imperfectly united with her; and she rejoices also while contemplating the constant and merciful intercession of the preredeemed and preglorified Virgin on behalf of all the baptized.

In 1982, T. P. Rausch asked Lutherans, if they were released from the anathemas, whether they would then recognize the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption as entirely legitimate examples of doctrinal development, “not to be considered as heretical or as contrary to the Gospel even if the Lutherans themselves are not bound by them?” He noted that Dulles suggested that, since in his opinion not all Christians “need to be bound by doctrinal developments” special to the Catholic Church, the anathemas associated with the definitions of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the Assumption in 1950 could be lifted. Rausch questioned whether Lutherans would agree to consider these dogmas as proper doctrinal developments in the Catholic Church “even if Lutherans themselves are not bound by them?”
The Assumption for our Times: John Paul II on the Mystery of the Assumption

The Assumption: Its Historicity and Relevance Today

With the passage of time since the dogmatic pronouncements concerning Mary’s Immaculate Conception (1854) and her Assumption (1950), the significance of these two important truths has come into perspective in relation to the whole body of truths held by believing Christians.

As evidenced by the thousands of scholarly works written through the ages, Mary, Mother of the Lord and the first among the faithful to be fully redeemed, has been a rich source of theological reflection. Similarly, she has been an abiding source of inspiration and devotion for the faithful within the greater Christian community.

Since the days of the Reformation, serious debate has ensued concerning the appropriateness and degree of assent required of the faithful regarding Mary’s Assumption; the theological, ecclesial, and ecumenical impact surrounding this Marian belief has been enormous. Theologians of all communions have brought their scholarly and spiritual integrity to bear on a meaningful understanding of this highest privilege known to any human person to date. As documented in the present work, not all such writers agree on the historicity or the relevance of Mary’s Assumption in the Church and world today. Noted mariologist, René Laurentin wrote in 1973:

Both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are subsidiary doctrines, and these pronouncements, whose significance was considerably exaggerated in the writing of the time, which implied
that they would be vital sources for a new era in the Church, appear in retrospect as of minor importance. Nothing indicates that they have prompted any renewal, even where devotion to Mary is concerned. On the contrary, the definition of the Assumption was followed by a kind of distaste, both for the dogma and for the feast. 1

At the Core of Redemption

Yet since the time of the Second Vatican Council, significant progress has been made in establishing a meaningful role for Mary among the faithful in an increasingly unchurched world. John Paul II has frequently pointed out, especially in his homily at Lourdes in 1983, that Mary can be found at the very core of the mystery of redemption. Her Assumption is the substantial promise to the world that humankind can indeed know the fullness of life in this most sublime transformation. Mary's life, so imbued with the Spirit of God and so responsive to that Spirit, serves as a model of human life lived in loving selflessness before God and for the building up of the human community as it moves toward the parousia. Desirous that ardent devotion to Mary not lapse among the faithful, John Paul II has visited many Marian shrines. On the Feast of the Assumption in 1983, some 250,000 persons heard his homily before the Lourdes grotto. He had come in pilgrimage to Lourdes under the sign of the woman adorned with the sun (Apoc. 12:1). He described Mary as having attained the fullness of this sign in her Assumption, since she has “for her mantle the sun of the unknowable divinity; the sun of the impenetrable Trinity. . . . She is full of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The sign of the woman in heaven is the sign of the Assumption of Mary into heaven; it occurs above the earth and simultaneously the sign arises from the earth. The pope declared that the two mysteries of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary into heaven come together here and “reveal their mutual complementarity.” 2

The pontiff expressed his desire to live the jubilee year (1983), marking the Year of the Redemption, near Mary. He had come to Lourdes to be in Mary’s presence so that he could be brought closer to the mystery of the redemption. He stressed some important lessons of a tradition that goes back to the Fathers. More than any other person, he declared, Mary is immersed in the core of the redemption. Since she is at the heart of the mystery, she more than any other person can draw the faithful closer to that mystery. The Church declared on this day the glory of Mary’s definitive birth in heaven. The pope described the liturgy’s consideration of the Assumption from three aspects. At the Visitation, Mary believed the words that had been spoken to her in the name of the Lord by Elizabeth, that she would be blessed by the presence of the Word, the fruit of her womb. The redemption of the world had depended upon the fiat of Mary at the time of the Annunciation; the redemption had begun its realization with the Incarnation. The entire Magnificat, pronounced at the Visitation, became with the liturgy the hymn of the Assumption of Mary into heaven. The Virgin had announced the greatness of God’s
action toward her when she cooperated in the birth of the Son of God upon earth. With great force Mary pronounced that greatness again as manifest in our salvation.

The pope stated that the liturgy revealed a second aspect of the Assumption mystery found in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. The Assumption was a part of Christ’s victory over death, which victory had its beginning in his Resurrection. Christ’s work of redemption enabled humankind to overcome the inheritance of sin and death (see 1 Cor. 15:20, 22, 23). No one was of more concern to Christ or more redeemed by him than his Mother. The pontiff continued that Mary’s present victory over death, her Assumption, lies at the heart of the redemptive act on Calvary and within the power of salvation accomplished through the Resurrection.

John Paul II referred to the responsorial psalm to illustrate the third point of the liturgy: “Your throne, God, shall last for ever and ever, your royal sceptre is a sceptre of integrity” (Ps. 6:7). The reign, or rule, of God began with creation; humankind lashed at it through sin; God’s reign renewed itself through the redemption. Mary was the first person to participate, soul and body, in the reign of God’s eternal glory. Her presence has become a sign of hope for the faithful: “Her birth in heaven is the definitive beginning of the glory which the sons and daughters of this world have to attain in God himself in virtue of the Redemption of Christ.” Redemption has become the very foundation for the transformation of humankind into the reign of God. Since Mary was the first redeemed, the transformation of the history of the cosmos in God’s reign has already begun, in a human person. Mary’s Assumption in heaven, in both body and soul, is the mysterious sign of our new creation.

Mary’s Advent and the Celebration of the Second Millennium Jubilee

In keeping with the Church’s tradition of celebrating anniversaries and jubilees, the Holy Father pointed out, the Church chooses to celebrate first the second millennium of Mary’s birth prior to the celebration of the second millennium of Christ’s birth. The Jubilee of the Redemption recalls, after 1,950 years, the death of Christ on Calvary and his resurrection. The Church concerns herself primarily with the saving event rather than the historical date. The current jubilee is seen, he said, as a preparation for the second millennium, the year 2000, and is consequently an advent, an expectation of the jubilee of the Lord’s coming. The advent concerns itself with Mary: “It is in her alone that the hope of the entire human race, in relation to the coming of Christ, attains its culminating point. She brings this expectation to its fullness: the fullness of Advent.” The pope desired that the jubilee of the salvation of humankind, with its advent aspect, would honor the Lord’s own human birth, the commencement of the saving advent season. He recalled that he had come on pilgrimage to Lourdes not only to honor the Virgin in her
heavenly birth but also in her earthly conception and birth. In Lourdes Mary had spoken to Bernadette, proclaiming her own Immaculate Conception.

**A Prayer for the Church**

John Paul II concluded his homily by seeking Mary’s intercession for all the faithful: to comprehend her mystery in Christ and the mystery of Christ himself, to permit the light of the Trinity to overcome darkness, to protect the Church of which Mary is the type, to assist the Church to become a true Mother in reflection of the Virgin, to keep the souls of the faithful from hell, and to be witnesses of God. He addressed her in words of sound doctrine and devotion:

Beautiful Lady.

O woman who has the sun for her cloak. Accept our pilgrimage in this year of the Advent of the Jubilee of the Redemption.

Help us through the light of this Jubilee, to penetrate your mystery: the mystery of the Virgin Mother; the mystery of All-Powerfulness which makes itself suppliant.

Aid us to discover always more fully in this mystery, the Christ, the redeemer of the world and of man.

You have the sun for your mantle, the sun of the inscrutable divinity. The sun of the impenetrable Trinity. “Full of grace” even to the limits of the Assumption in heaven.

And at the same time . . .

For us who live on this earth, for us, poor children of Eve in exile, you have the sun of Christ as your mantle since Bethlehem and Nazareth, since Jerusalem and Calvary. You are vested with the sun of the redemption of man and of the world through the cross and the Resurrection of your Son.

Make the sun resplendent without ceasing for us, on this earth.

Make certain that it will never be darkened in the soul of men.

Make the sun shine on the earthly paths of the Church of which you are the first figure.

And may the Church, in fixing her gaze on you, Mother of the Redeemer, learn constantly to be herself a Mother.

Behold! Here is what was spoken about in the book of the Apocalypse: “The Dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was having the child, so that he could eat it as soon as he was born from its Mother” (Rev. 14:4).
O Mother who, in your Assumption to heaven, has experienced the fullness of victory over death in body and soul, guard your sons and daughters on this earth against death of the soul! O Mother of the Church!

Before humanity which always seemed to be fascinated by the temporal — and at that time when “the domination over the world” hides the perspective of man’s eternal destiny in God — be yourself God’s witness.

You, his Mother! Who can resist the testimony of a Mother? You who are born for this earth’s hard toil: conceived immaculately!

You, who are born for the glory of heaven! Went up to heaven!

You, who are vested in the Sun of the unfathomable Divinity, in the sun of the impenetrable Trinity, filled with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You to whom the Trinity gives itself as the only God, the God of creation and Revelation! The God of the covenant (union) and of the Redemption! The God of the beginning and the end. The alpha and omega. The Truthful God. The Loving God. The God of Grace. The God of sanctity. The God who completely surpasses all yet embraces all. The God who is “all in all.”

You who have the sun for your mantle! Our sister! Our Mother! Be the witness of God!

Before the world of the millennium which ended,

Before us, children of Eve in exile, give testimony to God. 5

An Eschatological Sign of Faith and Hope for the Pilgrim Church

On 21 August 1983, John Paul II welcomed a cosmopolitan group of visitors in his courtyard at Castel Gandolfo. He recalled that just a few days prior, the mystery of the personal glorification of the “Mother and Cooperator of the Redeemer” immediately following her departure from this world had been celebrated in the feast of the Assumption. The Church joyfully celebrates the feast annually, he explained, since in it she sees the “perfect image of that final destiny of glory towards which she is advancing.” Mary began the glorification of the Church; that glorification will culminate on the last day. The pope recalled the ecclesial implications of this mystery that had been set forth by the Second Vatican Council: “The Immaculate Virgin of Nazareth not only constitutes the first and perfect member of the historical Church, but with her immediate glorification represents also the beginning and perfect image of the Church of the future age.” 6

The Assumption remains an eschatological sign of hope for the People of God on pilgrimage toward the parousia. By presenting Mary as the beginning and image of the
Church in final glory, the Council Fathers taught that the Assumption was the beginning of the final manifestation of the Mystical Body of Christ on the last day in its fulfilled and perfect reality.

The pontiff described the Assumption, unique in some respects, as being a sign for the entire People of God of sure hope for the complete attainment of the kingdom of God. The Church, having received courage from this sign, patiently works toward its ultimate realization through the evolving process of history among the travails of this world.

The pope expressed the certainty that the faithful can rely upon the assumed Mary’s intercession in heaven. It was the Lord’s intention, in granting her this privilege of bodily glorification, as sister to humankind, for her to continue with the Church that maternal function in favor of all humankind already begun during her earthly life at the side of Christ the Redeemer.

**The Year of Jubilee**

Recently, John Paul II has announced a Jubilee Year, extending from Pentecost 1987 to the solemnity of the Assumption in 1988 to remind the faithful of the work of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the Assumption. Hopefully, this Jubilee Year will serve as inspiration for the greater Christian community to participate in the movement of the Spirit in its own transformation.
Conclusion

Summary

This dissertation attempted to present a wide view of the theological situation concerning the definition of the Assumption dogma, with its problems and implications of a doctrinal, historical and ecumenical nature.

The choice of English language materials serves well the ecumenical considerations as in the United States and England. English-speaking theologians do not constitute a specifically theological group. Although they do reflect a common ecumenical interest in their approaches, they also embrace a broad spectrum of theological positions.

The focus of Munificentissimus Deus is the most bountiful and generous Lord. The same providential decree that from eternity provided for the incarnation of the Eternal Word similarly predestined Mary, in freedom, to be Theotokos. As a result she is intimately associated with her divine son, not only as Mater Dei but also as Socia Christi, throughout the paschal mystery.

The intimate life of the Trinity ad intra is summa caritas. This love is necessarily diffusive of itself. Maria Assumpta is the resulting action of God ad extra, the essential effusiveness of God’s love. Munificentissimus Deus taught that through God’s gracing action the assumed Mary, in the privileged light of her singular union with Christ as his mother, is also immaculate, all-holy, virgin, Socia Christi, New Eve.

Munificentissimus Deus is a christological statement with implications for Christian anthropology and eschatology. Maria Assumpta is coherent with all Christian and Marian truth. All will rise from the dead on the last day; Jesus the Christ rose on the third day; Mary never knew bodily corruption for she, like her Son, received the gift of an anticipated resurrection.

The Apostolic Constitution dissociated the Assumption from the apocryphal leg-
ends. The dogma was founded upon magisterial teaching and the sensus fidelium. The Assumpta was implicitly contained in scripture and explicitly founded upon the traditionary fonts: Liturgy, Fathers, Doctors and Theologians. The Spirit, with infallible guidance today as for example at the Council of Nicea in 325, is ever-present to the Church. A doctrine can be defined dogmatically only if it is upheld by the universal Church during a certain period of time and with the approval of the magisterium. The Assumption had been implicitly contained in revelation from the beginning. Progressively the dogma was more explicitly articulated; at the same time the belief became more universal.

The survey of the Apostolic Constitution afforded an interesting example of the development of doctrine, illustrating the respective functions of magisterium, scripture, the tradition, theologians and the faithful. The definition was verbally sparse, free from limitations of any particular thought system. The pontiff’s words were theologically open to future unfolding. Mary’s death was not included in the definition. There was not an attempt to define the “when, where or how” of the mystery of the Assumption. Additional research may conclude that Mary joined her Son and humankind in death.

The date of definition was not on the fifteenth of August or on another Marian feast. All Saints Day may have been selected to teach something more than its Marian content: it speaks of humankind’s destiny in accord with theological anthropology. Humankind’s bodiliness and intrinsic dignity were guaranteed through the human natures of Jesus Christ and his mother, who shine forth in their glorification as a beacon of hope in anticipation of the future kingdom amid the travails of this life.

Further study of the selection of 1 November 1950 for the date of definition may indicate an implicit papal effort to place Mary within the context of the Church. Some students of the Assumption see here an incipient transition from personal to communitarian eschatology.

Future ecumenical discussion should include many essential concerns. For example, the sensus fidei, compositely formed from the sensus fidelium and universal episcopal teaching, received its theological efficacy only from the required papal magisterial approval. The sensus fidei is not developed solely from the consensus fidelium in a democratic process: matters of faith demand the consent of the universal episcopal magisterium in consonance with Peter’s successor. Theologians in consensus do not create dogmatic belief: research in freedom is recognized as their valuable contribution. Further, the office of the papacy has its own limitations and restrictions in relation to infallible declarations.

The second chapter situated the study. The necessity for Humani Generis (12 August 1950), the cruelty and carnality attributable to the Second World War and emerging atheistic materialism were the forces that prompted the promulgation of Munificentissimus Deus at that precise moment within God’s providence. The Assumption is a statement on behalf of Christian anthropology. The dogma reminded humankind of life’s meaning and purpose and became a symbol of that future glorified goal for the same faith
and discipleship that Mary displayed. The importance of the saved body had been secondary, even insignificant, in comparison to the heavenly life of the soul. Through the redemption of Jesus the Christ and in the woman who gave birth to the Redeemer, the woman who humanized divinity, the physical body is now judged worthy of salvation. The contemporary tragic human condition prompted the pope to reaffirm the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

In its attempt to avoid an historico-theological proof for the Assumption, *Munificentissimus Deus* presented an order of proofs that demonstrated an underlying unity premised on the divine motherhood. These included: the divine maternity which precluded any corruption of Mary’s body; the similarity of the *Theotokos* to her Son, which necessitated her going in body and soul to heavenly glory; her participation in her Son’s action of redemption, which mandated her glorified bodily presence with her Redeemer before his Father; the love of Jesus the Christ for his mother, so that any bodily dissolution would be incongruous; Jesus’ respect for the fourth commandment; the Immaculate Conception preserved Mary from original sin and thus from bodily corruption; the virginal conception and birth resulted in divine intervention beyond death to guarantee Mary’s bodily integrity; Mary as *Socia Christi* predicated her victory over sin and its consequences of concupiscence, death and bodily corruption; the angelic greeting of blessing which guaranteed her freedom from the punishment to bear the pain of childbirth and from returning to dust.

People normally argue from converging probabilities, an intuitive leap to a well-founded conclusion, rather than in a formal, analytical manner. In the development of dogma the Church’s *sensus fidei* was always protected by the guiding action of the Holy Spirit into the truth. It was more necessary for the Church to understand the action of God’s grace in her life and the truths of faith concerning her than it was to be aware of the details in Mary’s life. *Maria Assumpta* was the most perfect work of God’s creation and was perfectly redeemed by her Son’s salvific action. The *sensus fidei* received its theological efficacy from the required papal approval.

In heaven Mary transcends human imperfection and fulfills limited earthly potential in total freedom. She becomes more intensely human and exists freely in the fullness of her Son’s redemption without possibility of human decay. The Assumption was a transformative event that transferred the Virgin into a new dimension of existence. Further study may discover the specific meaning of the reference to heavenly glory and to the general, not universal, law concerning the detention of the just till the end of the world. Further research too is required in the philosophical matter of the body/soul relationship and what *de facto* constitutes the unity of the human person. Body and soul were made for union with each other in personhood; their temporary separation after death is attributable to original sin.

In evaluating the reactions to the 1950 definition, Chapter Three illustrated why Mariology may be called a microcosm of the macrocosm which is all theology, at least all systematic (dogmatic/doctrinal) theology. Both *Munificentissimus Deus* and the
reactions to it have produced numerous doctrinal, theological and spiritual questions. This chapter explored the movement beyond 1950 “from position of privilege to member in glory.” Many have perceived in this period a sudden transition from the Marian privilege and personal eschatology of *Munificentissimus Deus* to Mary as first disciple, woman of faith, that is, to a communitarian, ecclesiotypical eschatology.

A sudden cessation of the prolific writing during the *movimento assunzionistico* was observed between 1952 and 1957. Contributing factors were: the Assumption had been the culmination of all personal Marian privilege; a certain saturation with this feast surfaced; a renewed study of the Church, and the Mary/Church relationship, commenced even prior to 1950. New perspectives in christology developed. A Mariology followed wherein our Lady became more the perfect follower instead of woman of prerogative, member of the communion of saints rather than standing isolated with Christ, aloof from her fellow humans, and eventually more sister than mother. This reaction was consonant with the return to scriptural and patristic sources of thought. The liturgical and ecumenical movements, sometimes in opposition to Mary as an isolated figure of privilege, presented her as member of the Church in accordance with the Calvary and Pentecost pericopes. The revised Preface of the Assumption (4 February 1974) clearly presents this transition.

*Munificentissimus Deus* proclaimed a future with God, who is so far advanced with his kingdom that he has already begun to be present in it. The Church looks to heaven and sees Mary as its own type and model, its own future in the resurrection of the body. The Church was preparing to consider Mary as principal member of the Church as well as honored member.

The central truth of Christianity is the reality of the Lord’s passion, death and resurrection in our humanness and his glorification in it. Heavenly glory then is a possibility for human beings. Since Mary is the perfect work of creation and redemption, the Church teaches that humankind has already been saved in body and soul, not only in Jesus the Christ who came from above, but in Mary who came from below. Her human body has been created by the Father, redeemed by the Son, made holy by the Spirit, and is already saved forever. Mary, in her transition from position of privilege to member in glory, and the Church are conjoined in the incipient eschaton here below in anticipation of the plenitude of future glory.

In her Assumption Mary foreshadows what is to come for the entire Church and fulfills what has already occurred in the Lord. The resurrection of the flesh is something offered to the people of God; it is not a singular Marian privilege. The mystery has already inchoately begun its realization in sacramental terms. Redemption through the flesh is already open. The final glory of Mary is the final glory of the Church. The mystery of rebirth by baptism, which belongs to the Church, was fulfilled in the glory of Mary’s body, united to the risen Lord. The mystery of the Church is understood through the mystery of Mary since the Church is at once glorified and struggling. Mary has attained the vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; the rest of humankind, of which Mary is member,
awaits fulfillment.

The relationship between Mary and Church is internal and essential; they are explanatory of each other and form a unique mystery. The relationship between Mary and the glorified saints can be understood through the application of the title Bride of Christ to each of them. Mary, Bride of Christ in her sanctity as first member of the Church, became type for the Church. Since the Church is the continuation of the incarnation, it is the abiding place of our Lady. All things have come to the Church and to each member through Mary. The Church wants us to return to God in the same way that he came to us, through Mary.

As archetype of the Church, Mary typifies the essence of the Church in whom the divine life of Christ dwells. Perfection in body and soul was necessary for Mary: her son had become eternally glorified in his sacred humanity; redemption made this same transfiguration possible for his Mystical Body; the Church received its personal oneness and its archetypical stature in Mary, who distributed the graces that she has received from her son as she stands next to him in her capacity as the archetype of his redeemed body, the Mystical Body of Christ.

The reality of Christ and the saints in transformed glory possesses an ontological bond with present unglorified reality; it is an objective bond, capable of describing future glory. “Born of the Virgin Mary” implies something more than her divine maternity. She became mother, since the eschatological event of salvation took place in her flesh and through her faith, drawing after it everything else as its inner consequence, so that Mary appears as the perfectly redeemed and the representation of perfect redemption. Since Mary was the ideal representation of complete redemption through her exemplary place in salvation history, today she is in perfect communion with God in the totality of her being. Maria Assumpta is a clarification of a state of existence already achieved through the reign of God, no idle future dream. The Church has been totally redeemed, actually in some of her members, but not in all. Mary’s amplitude of redemption is attributable to her faith consent. The taking up of Mary’s body verifies a radical connection between the present earthly and future heavenly life; consequently the Communion of Saints is reality, not merely symbol. For Christian anthropology the Assumpta in her complete transformation into a new order of existence has a relevancy similar to the resurrection/ascension.

The Second Vatican Council joined the Assumption to the typology of Mary-Church; in the latter the former has already reached perfection without stain; Mary as a sure sign of hope is present to the world as the image and the first flowering of the Church’s future perfection in glory.

Current study in Mariology tends to concentrate on the role of Mary in relation to her Son’s redemptive work rather than her role in his incarnation. Ephesus’ Theotokos offered Mary the additional possibility of being type and model of the Church. Our Lady’s fiat emphasizes that her faith-openness to the redemption would work not only in her but in all humanity: “prius mente quam ventre.”
The early Church considered Mary as more than a metaphor for the Church; she was intended by God to be its objective representation. Mary lives in her own person the life joined to Christ that is lived by the Church. The foundational relationship relies upon our Lady’s consent at the annunciation, which opened her to receive the Redeemer and his gifts.

The Church Fathers used the New Eve concept, consistent with biblical thought, to describe the relationship between Mary and Church. Christ as the new Adam points to the new Eve, who can, in a parallelism and contrast to the first Eve, be interchangeably Mary or Church. The Fathers stress Mary’s obedience in opposition to Eve’s disobedience, so that the former frees what the latter had placed in bondage. The emphasis is on Mary’s attitude as believer, her active faith response to the gift of life in her Son. This Mary-Eve typology combines Mary’s dual roles as mother and believer of the Word.

Theologians sometimes refer to the existence of a “Marian problem” in ecumenical discussion. While Mariology is not the most discussed topic in ecumenism today, there appears to be more agreement about the scriptural/patristic Mary. The principal problems that prevent further progress in ecumenical dialogue are fundamentally two: the development of dogma and the teaching authority of the Church, especially in relation to the personal infallibility of the Pope. Continued investigation by scholars and such forums as the Anglican-Catholic and the Catholic-Lutheran commissions, and particularly the Consultation on Church Union (C.O.C.U.) conferences, will lead to additional ecumenical agreement and understanding.

Protestants founded their opposition to the Assumption dogma upon their Sola theories.

Sola Scriptura. God/Incarnation/Redemption is the core of Christian life. In discerning the place of Mary in faith, it is necessary to approach humankind first and then Mary to discover the perfect human, “the all” that God intended in man’s creation. Peter’s office in the Church is to interpret tradition as it explicates scripture, both of which form God’s single source of revelation. Protestants do maintain the primacy of scripture but not all maintain its exclusivity. On the other hand, Anglicans and Lutherans, for example, are beginning to realize in their interfaith dialogues with Catholics that God’s revelation not only transmits but also transcends scripture. The apostolic tradition is required to interpret the scriptures as traditionary embodiment. There is an urgency to enunciate better the respective relationship of tradition to scripture as a single source of God’s speaking to humankind. There is need for continued discussion also concerning non-defined Marian teachings, which could lead to the realization of a common ecumenical vision.

Sola gratia, sola fides. The Assumption is tantamount to the assertion that God’s plan of salvation is to save men through men, that human cooperation is basic to the entire plan. The Assumption became the logical result, the crowning achievement of all Marian privilege. God’s grace alone was the source of these prerogatives. The ascension of Christ crowned the role of the Redeemer in the order of objective redemption. Similarly, the Assumption sealed the role of Mary in that same order. Together with her Son, but
subordinate to him, the Second Eve proclaimed her victory over the devil, sin and death, which announced the gracing action of the wisdom and goodness of God.

_Sola fides. Theotokos_ is a theological statement about the trinitarian God: God's action always comes first. Any Marian privilege comprises a God-statement. The _ad-intra_ Trinity includes the non-trinitarian Mary in an _ad-extra_ manner in the Council of Ephesus definition, again a God-statement. In the wonderful woman Mary we learn what God is about and what we are about. God remains the fundamental focus; Christ alone is Redeemer. Humankind must first go to God and then to itself to approach Mary (and Church); it may then go to eschatology and our glorified Lady. Any statement about Mary speaks of God, Christ and us.

Devotion to Mary, according to _Marialis cultus_, has a Christian origin, for it is an expression of Christ and it leads to Christ. In Mary everything is relative to her Son. Since Mary was granted gifts of the Spirit given to no one else, she has always been conjoined, in a subordinate manner, with the Redeemer in Christian belief.

In the liturgy Mary is an ecclesial person. The liturgy is the proclamation of the paschal mystery in its entirety. The separate celebration of Easter and Ascension demonstrates that in reality there is only one Mystery of Christ: the Son of God became flesh to redeem every member of humankind; through his life, death, resurrection and ascension he is the way for every member, including Mary, of his Mystical Body.

In this perspective, who is _Maria Assumpta_? The tradition insists on one mystery of Mary, mother of the Son of God who became our Savior through her divine maternity. In his plan for humankind's salvation God's action accomplished the Incarnation to restore the _imago Dei_ in us. In this plan Mary was simultaneously to be _Theotokos_, as perfect disciple of Jesus the Christ, as his mother for the restoration of our perfect union with God in Christ.

Chapter Four reminded that there is no inessential Christian truth, since all faith is related to Christ and his redemption. All Christian beliefs must be considered in relation to the central foundational truths within the Christian mystery. All Christian truth is one, and so all its doctrines are mutually implicative or coinherent. _Maria Assumpta_ is considered in the context of her Son's soteriological mystery because of the Unity of the Paschal Mystery. The Assumption is an implicate of the doctrines found in Scripture and in the universal tradition of the Church.

The union of churches is impossible without the common acknowledgment of Mary as assumed into heaven, since perfect incorporation into the one Body of Christ requires acceptance of all that Peter has defined. Not to accept in faith the Assumption dogma objectively implies a rejection of the full communion of faith proclaimed by the one Church of Christ. Perfect identification of the Church in this world and the celestial Jerusalem will come only in the eschatological kingdom.

Concerning reunion with the Orthodox Church it is primarily necessary for the formulation of a consensus between the two Churches on the Assumption not to exclude _a priori_ the possibility of accord in a common formulary. A Council of Reunion, while
insisting upon adherence to the previous definition of the Assumption, could simultane­ously promulgate a new expression of the truth, agreeable to Anglicans and possibly to the Evangelical and Reformed. The Church must continue her mission here on earth, not by an abridgment of the Assumption, but through a concentration on the trinitarian, christological and soteriological foundational mysteries that will emphasize Maria Assumpta’s association with Christ and in his mystery of salvation.

The various reactions to the definition and the post-conciliar literature on the Assumption present the opportunity to express the doctrine in the perspectives opened by Lumen Gentium, Chapter Eight, and by the indications of Marialis cultus concerning Marian devotion.

Mary doctrinally appears more as a person, and therefore the dogma does not treat of abstractions. Maria Assumpta appears in the context of the revelation of the history of salvation. From a more anthropological view, modern theology expresses a preference to speak about persons and not about abstractions: about Mary assumed, in body and soul, into heaven, and not about the theories of assumption.

Marialis cultus indicates some orientations for Marian devotion that may also guide the doctrinal presentation of the mystery of Mary, and consequently the study of the mystery of the Assumption. Marialis cultus stresses that devotion to Mary must be trinitarian, christological, ecclesial, and therefore pneumatological, a specific emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit.

These orientations from Chapter Eight of Lumen Gentium and Marialis cultus assist in the theological study of the doctrine of the Assumption. It becomes evident in such a presentation that the proclamation of God’s plan for salvation would be incomplete without the mystery of Maria Assumpta. Unfortunately, in the study and presentation of this aspect of God’s revelation, the Assumpta is too often transformed into an addendum.

Modern theology is correct in its insistence upon the integration of the doctrine of the Assumpta into the general theological presentation of our faith. Those who study the hierarchy of truths attempt to demonstrate the relationship between the principal articles of the Creed and Maria Assumpta. This helps to present God’s action in his revelation of the divine plan: the mystery of Christ as the mystery of Christ in head and members. The assumed Mary consequently becomes the most eminent member of the People of God. She is not an exception: rather she is a living hope for all humankind. This approach is more in keeping with tradition and true theology.

The Church, believing in God and in the mystery of the incarnation, proclaims this faith under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and tries to make it more explicit. This explicitation is trinitarian, christological, ecclesial and pneumatological. Therefore, this comprehensiveness in approach avoids the isolation of some parts of the Mystery of Christ. Specializations within theology can become a threat to the coherency of an integral theology, since they reject the hierarchical unity and mutual congruity of Christian truths.
New Creation in the Heavenly Kingdom

An important orientation for future research is to view Maria Assumpta in the “new creation.” The plan of God is for a new creation. The “Christian climate” of his creation had been emphasized by Gaudium et Spes. This is a biblical theme (as found in Philippians 3, 20, Ephesians 2, 6 and Colossians 3, 1-4); it is traceable, as the New Jerusalem, to Isaiah, Ezechiel and the Apocalypse.

In order to avoid a misconception concerning the “punitive justice” of God, the doctrine of the redemption is explained today primarily as a work of love. This love is revealed in the hypostatic union at the incarnation and in the self-oblation at Calvary, as the expression of the mutuality of love between the Father and the Son, who became our New Adam. In this new creation we are more than ever the “image of God.” Christ is the New Adam, the head of his mystical body. His soul is united with the body of a male in the mystery of the Incarnation. The gospel of John reveals the presence of Mary at Calvary and the words of Jesus to her and to the beloved disciple. Jesus and Mary are united by their mutual love for the will of the Father, for the divine plan of salvation.

Tradition discovered the implicit revelation of the New Eve. She had been united as mother with our savior, the Son of God. She, the mother of God who was risen from the dead, was transferred to heavenly glory in body and soul after the completion of her time on this earth. This is the perfect restoration of the creation of mankind, created male and female by the Father in his own image.

Jesus the Christ is the Son of God who became our Redeemer. He became savior to give back to us dignity in our divine filiation. This was accomplished in a new way: in union with the Eternal Word who assumed his perfect humanity from his mother Mary. It was accomplished in a new way: in a union with the Son of God, our brother.

In himself Christ, as the risen Lord, ascended into heaven, restored our vocation to reign over material creation. As Son of God made man, he reigns even over the angelic choirs. Christ gave back to us our entire vocation. This was done first of all to his mother according to her union with him. As mother of God, restored in her whole person, she reigns as queen of the entirety of creation.
Endnotes

1 Pius XII, “Munificentissimus Deus.” *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 42 (1950): 769. “Munificentissimus Deus” hereafter cited as MD; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* hereafter cited as AAS. Joseph C. Fenton, “The ‘Definition’ of a Dogma,” *The Catholic Mind* 49 (1951): 11-12. The Assumption definition created great interest in the Christian world. Much of this was generated by the stories and headlines circulated by the newspapers. Unfortunately, some of the articles were inaccurate or at least misleading. In ordinary conversation, a definition describes the distinguishing characteristics of some object or the meaning of a word. Theologically, definition connotes the sense of finality, for example, when the Church irrevocably settles a revealed matter of faith. The Church defines a dogma when declaring that a certain truth has been revealed by God as something which all the faithful are bound to accept with an act of divine faith. Denial of an infallible doctrine constitutes heresy. Throughout the bull of definition and in the definition itself, the pope referred to Mary only by those titles which had already been accepted in the Church: Immaculate Mother and Ever Virgin. He did not use any titles for Mary that could have been considered innovative, for example, mediatrix or co-redemptrix, nor did he leave the impression that other definitions concerning Mary would follow.


5 Pius XII, MD, ASS 42 (1950): 769.
7 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 769.
8 Ibid., 753.
11 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 482.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 493; O.L.-I.C. 66; and Heinrich Denzinger (ed.), Enchiridion Symbolorum (Rome: Herder, 1957), 2800-2804. For a later discussion see Kilian J. Healy, The Assumption of Mary (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 18ff. Healy presents a summary of two “open questions” that were discussed after the definition by theologians. Healy is of the opinion that Pius XII intended to portray, in his defining words, that the Assumption was de facto a privilege that was particular to Mary. Other theologians, according to Healy, appealed to the Matthean (27:52) text that refers to the raising of the dead from the graves at the time of Jesus to deny that an exclusive sense was intended by the pope. They maintained that theirs was the common early interpretation in the Church; it has been constituted a probable opinion by theologians from the scholastic period to the present. The pope never clarified the issue. It is not certain whether the appellation of singular or exclusive can be applied to the Assumption. If the Assumption were only a very special privilege, then, unlike the Immaculate Conception, it could be possessed by others.
16 See G. M. Roschini, “The Assumption and the Immaculate Conception,” The Thomist 14 (1951): 65, for a list of theologians who held the same opinion as the pope.

24 Ibid.


28 Pius XII, "Fulgens Corona," AAS 45 (1953): 577-592. Here, in his encyclical letter of 8 September 1953, Pius XII clearly indicated that the subject of the Assumption was the entire person of Mary, just as the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception taught that the person of Mary, not just her soul, was the subject of immunity from original sin.

29 AAS 32 (1940): 484.

30 Healy, *Assumption*, 16, 22, 67-68. This constitutes a later collection and evaluation of much of the writing that was contemporary to the definition.


33 M. Jugie, "L'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge," in H. du Manoir, ed., *Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge I* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses Fils, 1949), 649. The *Postulata* were presented to a screening committee and were rejected by it on 14 March 1870. The commission explained that the dogma was already believed and its definition would be inopportune because of the resultant Protestant-Catholic antagonism. Approximately 130 bishops had come to the Council with the intention of opposing the definition of the Assumption and consequently to prevent the subject from reaching the deliberations of the Council. It was recommended instead that the petitions should be preserved "in the archives to Our Lady's greater glory." See also M. O'Carroll, "Vatican I," in his *Theotokos*, 350, for a later analysis.

34 AAS 32 (1940): 482.

35 Pius XII, "Mystici Corporis," AAS 35 (1943): 247-248. This was the first time that a pope had definitely, although noninfallibly, stated that Mary was in the glory of heaven in both soul and body.

36 T. Doyle, "The Assumption," *America* 73 (1945): 369. Millions of signatures were forwarded to the Holy See. The author recalls a moving one from Poland in 1936. The
bishops, representing twenty-three million faithful, reminded Pius XI that as their Papal Nuncio in 1920 he witnessed the victory of the Polish Army ("The miracle of the Vistula") over the invading Russians on the Assumption feast.


38 Donal Flanagan, “Eschatology and the Assumption,” in E. Schillebeeck and B. Willems (eds.), Concilium 41 (1969): 121-143. In retrospect the author sees the definition as an end and a beginning, as the turning point in modern theology of Mary, rather than 1958, the year of Pius XII’s death. It ended the period of consideration of Mary in isolation and in her privileges and commenced a period of concentration of her in relation to the Church. The Assumption was an eschatological statement, but it had been divorced from eschatology in general prior to and in the definition itself.

39 Henrich and de Moos, Petitiones, as cited by the Editors in “The Assumption in the Mind of the Universal Church,” Catholic Mind 49 (Jan. 1951): 4. The 3,019 petitions represented 8,086,396 signatures:

(1) 1,332 évêques résidentiels représentant 830 sièges, soit le 73 de sièges de l’univers catholique, par 1,859 pétitions; (2) 26 abbés et prélat, soit le 72, par 29 pétitions; (3) 261 vicaires apostoliques, soit, le 81, par 349 pétitions; (4) 61 supérieurs généraux d’Instituts religieux représentant 50 sociétés, par 67 pétitions; (5) 251 vicaires capitulaires, coadjuteurs apostoliques avec succession, administrateurs apostoliques, etc.; (6) 67 préfet apostoliques par 70 pétitions; (7) 8 supérieurs de missions par 8 pétitions; (8) 39 facultés ecclésiastiques et séminaires par 40 pétitions; (9) deux conciles pléniers, 5 conciles provinciaux, 8 synods diocésains, 36 congrès où des évêques se sont trouvés réunis.

40 Ibid, 7.


42 T. Doyle, “Assumption,” 369. The movement was not so prevalent in the United States and England as it was in Europe and Latin America. At the time of the definition there were nine countries which claimed Mary as their patroness under her title of the Assumption. See also H. Cardinale, “Pope Pius XII and the Blessed Virgin Mary,” text of a lecture given to an annual general meeting of the ESBVM in Central Hall, Westminster, 4 March 1969 (Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1969), 3. The approach of Pius XII to mariology was one of careful theology. He did not speak on the level of mere piety but rather spoke on the level of scripture, tradition, and history. He considered Mary as part of the total mystery of her son; consequently she deserved prerogatives. This interlocking and coherency of doctrine necessitated a foundation of solid theology. See also Healy, Assumption, 16, 22, 67, 68. The strongest devotion to Mary toward the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries was under the title of her Assumption.


45 Healy, *Assumption*, 16. The pope had declared a Holy Year of pardon and return for 1950. He believed that Mary could exert the same influence on the Universal Church during this year as she had on the lives of the faithful at Lourdes and Fatima and under her titles of Assumption and Immaculate Heart. He had already confided the world to God’s providential care under these Marian models. See also Lonergan, “Assumption and Theology.” The author’s conclusion was that the Assumption was definable since it was revealed implicitly.

46 Pius XII, “Deiparae Virginis” (1 May 1946), as quoted in MD, AAS 42 (1950): 782-783. See O.L.-I.C. 57: the same procedure was followed by Pius IX when he defined the Immaculate Conception. See his encyclical “Ubi Primum,” O.L.-I.C. (2 Feb. 1849): 55-58. See also M. O’Carroll, “Pius IX,” in his *Theotokos*, 289. Pius IX and his predecessor Pope Gregory XVI had received innumerable petitions for the pronouncement of the Immaculate Conception as infallible doctrine. See M. O’Carroll, “Ineffabilis Deus,” in his *Theotokos*, 182-183. This demand for a definition came from “bishops, the secular clergy, religious orders, sovereign rulers and the faithful.” The pope formed a commission of cardinals and priests who were qualified theologians to study the matter and to prepare a report. In 1848 the pope queried twenty theologians and seventeen gave a reply favorable to definition. He then asked his special commission if he should define the Immaculate Conception and, if so, how he should proceed. They also gave a favorable reply for the definition and further suggested that he send an encyclical to all the bishops of the world to discover their opinions. On 2 February 1849 Pius IX sent his encyclical letter “Ubi Primum” to the world’s bishops. This “delighted Cardinal Newman, then in Rome, because it asked the bishops to inform the Pope about the devotion of the faithful” in regard to this doctrine and their pleasure for a definition. Of 603 bishops 543 were in favor of the definition. Only four opposed it. The other fifty-three were uncertain if it were inopportune or how to propose the dogma semantically. Additional consultation followed with theologians and cardinals before the formal definition.


50 M. O’Carroll, “Munificentissimus Deus,” in his Theotokos, 160. The author named the members of the theological committee: A. Ottaviani, P. Parente, A. Bea, H. Lennerz, R. Garrigou-Lagrange, S. Tromp, K. Balic, M. Jugie, Compagnone, and Hurt. Balic and Jugie were writers on the history of the doctrine; Bea headed the Biblical Institute; Garrigou-Lagrange published on Mary and the definability of the doctrine; Tromp wrote on the Mystical Body and was rumored to have assisted in the drafting of the encyclical letter “Mystici Corporis Christi” of Pius XII, and was editing the works of Robert Bellarmine who was quoted in “Munificentissimus Deus”; Lennerz at the Gregorianum had objected to the lack of an historical foundation for the Assumption (he stated that it was necessary to establish a long “unbroken historical tradition to Our Lady’s death and Assumption” before the definition should be made), although he did accept the dogmatic definition after the fact with an act of faith. O’Carroll further stated that although the proceedings of this council were kept secret, it was known that there were differences of opinion among its members.


59 Ibid.

60 McVann, “Crowning Jewel,” 125.

61 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, 1, 6 and 3; I, 1, 7 and 8. See also L. de Grandmaison, Le dogme chrétien (Paris: 1928), 251.


63 McVann, “Crowning Jewel,” 125.

64 Ibid.
65 Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1675. See also 783 for the statement of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent.

66 Ibid., 1636, 2080.

67 Ibid. for c. ii of the Third Session of the First Vatican Council.


70 J. B. Terrien, *La Mère de Dieu et la Mère des hommes* II, 1, viii, 240.


75 J. Ernst, *Die leibliche Himmelfahrt Maria* (Regensburg, 1921), as cited in J. Duhr, *Glorious Assumption*, ix-x.

76 J. Duhr, *Glorious Assumption*, ix-x.


79 Ibid., 256.


83 Jugie, *La Mort*, 584.


85 Govenlock, “Problem of the Assumption,” 381. Concerning the petitions, see Henrich and de Moos, *Petitiones*.


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89 Ibid.
92 Jugie, _La Mort_, 274-285.
96 Ibid., 1. Lonergan gave a series of examples from the history of heresies to illustrate this point. Heresy, according to Lonergan, is the heeding of words rather than meaning. The Arians agreed that the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son is not in scripture. The Council of Nicea (325) knew that it was not explicitly in scripture but still defined it because of its implicit presence. The Council of Ephesus (431) defined that Mary was _Theotokos_ and the Nestorians claimed that this title was not explicitly in scripture. At the definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451) the Monophysites claimed that there was no mention of person or natures in scripture, so how could it be declared that Christ was one person in two natures. The Orthodox East broke with the West in 1078 over the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father on the basis that scripture did not refer to the former procession. And of course scripture does not mention it explicitly. In the 16th century Luther and Calvin broke with the Church in order to return to the purity of God’s revelation. What that revelation was, they could not agree. But on one thing they did agree, namely, that the Catholic Church had proposed a number of dogmas not explicitly in scripture.
97 Jugie, _La Mort_, 208, 361, 428.
101 Ibid., 127.
102 Ibid.


MD, AAS 42 (1950): 757. In *Munificentissimus Deus* the pontiff presented an argument of his own that was christological in nature. Mary’s motherhood was the reason for the Assumption, for all that Mary had come from her relationship to her divine Son through a lavish, freely bestowed gift of God. Christ is seen as the focal point of our faith; it is only because Mary is *Theotokos* that she was also virgin, and also all holy and bodily assumed. See also: Healy, *Assumption of Mary*, 68-69. The eighth chapter of the Constitution on the Church in the Vatican II documents reflected almost literally the thoughts of Pius XII. See also: Cardinale, “Pius XII and the BVM”, 3-4. Cardinale quoted Albert C. Outler as picturing Mary as “the foremost of all those who have shared in, and who still enrich the Communion of Saints.” He also emphasized the theological balance in the pope’s approach to mariology: to avoid the unfounded and exaggerated, yet to honor Mary without a fear of detracting from her Son (Pius XII, radio message, 24 Oct. 1954; encyclical “Ad Caeli Reginam,” 11 Oct. 1954). The pope reminded his flock that while Mary belonged to the Church, hers was a unique membership. Both he and the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council emphasized the fact that the Virgin belonged to the human race and that every prerogative that she had came from the One Mediator, Jesus Christ her Son. As a result, any honor expressed toward Mary is fundamentally an expression of adoration for the divine nature of her Son.


MD, AAS 42 (1950): 758.

Ibid.

Ibid. See also F. Thornton, *Catholic Shrines in the United States and Canada* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1954), 63-64, 235-237, 253-256, 315-316. There are several indications of the belief in and devotion to the Assumption by the faithful in the United States.

In the late 1700s the Bishops of the United States chose the Assumption as their titular feast. (This was changed to that of the Immaculate Conception in 1846 at a Council of Baltimore.) The Cathedral in Baltimore is under the title of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. It was begun by Bishop Carroll in 1806 and completed by Archbishop Marechal, the third archbishop of Baltimore, in 1821. In 1937 Pius XII “raised the Cathedral to the rank of a Minor Basilica.”

Assumption Chapel, Cold Spring, Minnesota, was built immediately after a locust plague in the summers of 1876 and 1877. Father Winter told his people: “If this plague is removed we will bind ourselves to build a shrine to Our Lady of the Assumption and offer frequent Masses there for fifteen years.” The farmers agreed and “overnight the grasshoppers disappeared.” A Bavarian parishioner named Ambroziz carved a wooden
statue of Our Lady of the Assumption and had it placed over the altar. Visits to the shrine were regularly made by the farmers on the occasion of illness or other difficulties. They would make their pilgrimage on foot, "sometimes from ten miles away." Saturday, Mary’s day, became the popular day for these pilgrimages. In 1894 a tornado destroyed the shrine, but the statue escaped harm. In 1952 the shrine was restored and the original statue was once again placed in its place of honor over the altar.

The Directory for the Archdiocese of San Francisco states that Saint Mary’s Cathedral of San Francisco is under the title of Mary’s Assumption. The original cathedral was built in the 1800s and the present one completed in 1971. Two hundred thirty-six churches in the United States are named after the Assumption.

113 L. Pfaller, “Assumption College (Richardton, N. Dak.),” New Catholic Encyclopedia (hereafter cited as NCE) (New York: MacGraw Hill, 1967): 1, 970-971. Assumption College, Assumption Abbey, and the Abbey Preparatory School are located near Richardton, in the diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota. The two-year college and preparatory school are operated by the Benedictine Fathers of Assumption Abbey. Its origin can be traced back to the foundation of a priory in 1893 under the auspices of the later Bishop Paul Wehrle. See also C. E. Grady, “Assumption College (Worcester, Mass.),” NCE 1, 971. Assumption College was founded in 1904 by the Assumptionist Fathers (Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption) at Worcester, Massachusetts.

114 G. H. Tavard, “Assumptionists,” NCE 1, 975-976. See also M. D. Blanchere, “Congregation of the Assumption,” NCE 1, 970.

115 M. O’Carroll, “The Rosary,” in his Theotokos, 313-314. “In 1483, a Rosary book written by a Dominican, Our Dear Lady’s Psalter, reduced the fifty points to fifteen, all of which, except the last two, correspond to the present mysteries: The Coronation was combined with the Assumption and the Last Judgment was the fifteenth mystery.” In 1569 Pope St. Pius V officially approved the present form of the rosary. The Assumption is the fourth glorious mystery in the traditional enumeration.


119 H. Lietzmann, Sacramentarium gregorianum, n. 147, 88; A. G. Martimort et al., L’Église en prière: introduction à la liturgie (Paris: Desclée, 1961), 757; MD, AAS 42 (1950): 759. The Veneranda was included in the Carmelite liturgy until recently.

120 Sacramentarium gallicanum; see also MD, AAS 42 (1950): 759.


122 PL 77, 245. See also Schenew, Dogmatick, 3, 1757.

123 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 759. See also M. O’Carroll, “Liturgy,” in his Theotokos,
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221; Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 111-139.


131 Terbovich, “Mary All Glorious,” 5.


134 H. Francis Davis, “Our Lady’s Assumption,” in K. McNamara, ed., *Mother of the Redeemer* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 193. The author proposes that it was only when the christological heresies were addressed that the full dignity of the Mother of God could be appreciated. These two councils established clearly who Mary was. As Newman was to say in the nineteenth century: “He who charges us with making Mary a divinity is thereby denying the divinity of Jesus. Such a man does not know what divinity is.”


141 Ibid. See also Hickey, “Dormition,” NCE 4: 1017; McGarry, “Virgin Mother,” 487; Terbovich, “Mary All Glorious,” 5-6.
142 PG 120, 1080A.
144 Ibid.
145 PL 71, 708.
152 Ibid., 245-46.
153 M. O’Carroll, “St. Germanus of Constantinople,” in his *Theotokos*, 156, points to the influence of the Apocrypha.
155 PG 86 bis (14), 3311: attributed to Modestus of Jerusalem, the *Encomium in Dormitionem Sanctissimae Dominae Nostrae Deiparae semperque Virginis Mariae*.
158 Ibid., 720.
159 Pseudo-Modestus of Jerusalem, *Encomium in B. Virginem* 7, PG 86 bis, 3293A.
161 St. Theodore Studita, *In Dorm.* 1, PG 99, 720D-721A.
162 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 761.
163 Ibid. The pope gave examples of Psalm 131:8 and Canticle of Canticles 3:6. The former described the incorruptible wood of the Ark of the Covenant as a type of the pure body which was preserved from corruption and raised to glory. This same verse was used to describe Mary’s triumphant entry into heaven and the taking of her seat at the right hand of her Son. The latter verse of the Canticles, “that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar
of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense,” is applied to the coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven upon her arrival there.

164 SC 8, 210.
165 Ibid. “De Beatae Virginis Obitu, caelum, Exaltatione ad Filii Dexteram.”
166 Locatelli (ed.), In Assumptione, Sermons, 729. See also O’Carroll, “St. Anthony of Padua, Doctor of the Church,” in his Theotokos, 35. See also Graef, Mary: A History.
167 See A. Fries, “Die unter dem Namen des Albertus Magnus überlieferch mariologischen schriften.” (Munster: Aschendorffische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1954), 37. B. Korosak, Mariologia sancti Alberti Magni ejusque coaequalium (Rome: Bibliotheca mariana medii aevi, 1954), 8. In 1954 Fries and Korosak proved in independent studies that the Mariale super missus est from which the encyclical quoted Albert was a spurious source. There was a decided difference in style from the other works of Albert. It is undecided among authorities who is the author. Pseudo-Albert tried to explain all of Mary’s privileges from her fullness of grace. Mary was seen to have any privilege she ought to have in an arbitrary manner. There are valid insights in the work. He defends the bodily Assumption of Mary and so is a source for that continuing tradition. See also O’Carroll, “Pseudo-Albert,” in his Theotokos, 298-299.
169 Ibid.
171 Serm. 61, 1, 4, S. Bernardini Sen. opera omnia 2, 373-374.
172 Serm. 51, 1, 2, S. Bernardini Sen. opera omnia 4, 540.
173 M. O’Carroll, “Bernardine of Siena,” in his Theotokos, 77-78.
175 “Serm. pour l’Assomption,” 1602, in Oeuvres completes 10 (Annecy, 1892) 404.
176 Ibid.
177 Oeuvres Completes 7, 459.
178 Ibid., 4, 269.
179 Ibid., 4, 442.
182 Francis Suarez, De Myst. Vitae Christi, disp. 21, sect. 2.
183 Disput. 4, 4, 31, 44.
184 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 768.
185 Ibid.
While Irenaeus did not teach Mary’s final glorification, the mystery nevertheless follows logically from his premises. Mary entered Irenaeus’ synthesis because of her close association with her Son; she thus became a cause of salvation for herself and all humankind. Irenaeus’ theory of recapitulatio, taken basically from Paul, is the taking up of all things from the beginning, including the fall of Adam and its consequences, into the preexistent Christ, who renews and restores, as the Second Adam, all that had been lost. In God’s providence Mary, as type of Eve, undoes original evil in a similar manner through a process of recirculatio: the knot of Eve’s disobedience was freed by the obedience of Mary; the latter loosed through faith what Eve had bound through disbelief. It is Mary’s responsibility to regenerate humankind into eternal life; consequently she should share that glory. Should not the “First born of the dead” anticipate the entry of his virginal mother into heavenly glory? Christ’s recapitulatio of Adam resulted in his resurrection and glorification. Should not Mary’s recapitulatio of Eve necessitate the Virgin’s resurrection and assumption to glory?


195 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 768. The Fathers accommodated many texts from the Old Testament such as the Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 3:6; 4:8; 6:9; Isaias 60:13; Psalms 44 and 131, as well as Psalm 45:10, 14-16, and Psalm 132:8. Latin and Greek theologians also appealed to the New Testament, for example, to the Annunciation scene in Luke 1:28 and to the woman of Revelation 12. The pope indicated that some of the theological interpretations from scripture in support of the Assumption were rather loose. The Revelation text has been the subject of much controversy over its scriptural support for the Assumption, but at present it is indeterminate if the woman is Mary or the Church. Yet the Church is quite ready to apply in the liturgy the image of the Mother of the Lord in heaven to the woman clothed with the sun. And Pius XII prayed right after the definition in the following words: “We believe finally that in the glory where you reign clothed with the sun and crowned with stars, you are, after Jesus, the joy and gladness of all the angels and the saints.” Cf. O.L.-I.C., 324.

197 Ibid.
198 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 768.
200 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 769.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 769.
207 Cardinale, Pius XII and the B.V.M., 8.
208 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 770.
209 Ibid.
210 For a discussion of the value of the individual arguments, see articles by C. Friethoff, G. Roschini, and K. Healy in The Thomist 14 (1951); J. B. Carol, “Definability,” 161-177.
211 A. D. Sertillanges, Mois de Marie (Juvisy, 1935), 120.
213 Ibid.


6 Ibid

7 Dawe, Assumption and Eschatology, 12-13. Some theologians, such as Rahner, Altaner, Adam, and Kuenneth, opposed the definition from a practical point of view, stating that it would close dialogue between the Churches. Protestants feared further definitions concerning Mary, such as her co-redeemership, and ultimately as some sort of goddess. There was strong ecumenical activity and some basic agreements in relation to Mary. Mary belonged to the history of God’s dealing with the world; the word of God, patristics and the creeds all affirmed the action of the Spirit upon Mary in giving birth to the Son of God; the virgin birth was accepted as a protection for the mystery of Christ, so that the fact of his being true God and true man could not be compromised. See also von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, 188-239; Donald G. Dawe, “From Dysfunction


9 An allusion to Apocalypse 11.

10 Mullaney, "Union Perfected," 183.

11 AAS 42 (1950): 23. See also G. W. Shea, "Assumption," 104; Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism, 1:882. Later, McBrien observed that the pope did not declare the dogma of the Assumption on 15 August, the day of the actual feast in that Holy Year. Rather, he did so on 1 November, the feast of All Saints. The author drew the implication that for the pope the dogma was something more than a simple tribute to Mary. In addition, it had christological, ecclesial, and eschatological dimensions.


15 Cardinale, Pius XII and the B.V.M., 7.

16 Donal Flanagan, The Theology of Mary (Hales Corners, WI: Clergy Book Service, 1976), 62. From his later perspective Flanagan reflected that the definition was the result of the Assumptionist movement's insistence to honor her. It was an isolationist sort of mariology that placed too much emphasis on her and not enough on the emphasis she placed upon her Son. Yet in God’s providence this very insistence later developed into a new theology of Mary. Vatican II emphasized the christological aspect but also added the ecclesial and eschatological implications. Marian theology made the turn from one of privilege to that of faith and discipleship. As early as 1951 the French Mariological Society was turning its attention to the theme of Mary and the Church; German theologians followed suit and sought implications of anthropology and ecclesiology. See also E. R. Carroll, Understanding the Mother of Jesus (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979).

17 Cardinale, Pius XII and the B.V.M., 8.

18 AAS 42 (1950): 32.

19 Ibid.


22 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 105. See also St. Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate 26, 10 ad 2, 16.
25 Ibid., 99.
26 Ibid., 97.
28 Christmas message of Pius XII, 1944. AAS 37 (1945): 5-10.
34 Pius XII, in an address to members of *Pax Christi* (20 Sept. 1952), *Catholic Mind* 51 (1953): 565.
37 Ibid., 92.
38 *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 8.
39 O’Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 93. Some of these evil manifestations of the degradation of the human person were seen under different forms in various locales: impersonalism, conformism, denial of the individual’s worth, prejudice because of racial or national origin, etc.
43 Ibid., 67.
44 AAS 42 (1950): 770.
47 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 74. See also *Catechism of the Council of Trent* 1, 7 where the nature and the qualities of the glorified state are described.
50 Filograssi, “Constitutio Apostolica,” 520, n. 54.
54 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 765.
57 Ibid., 252
58 K. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 89.
59 Ibid., 89-90.
60 Ibid., 90.
65 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 72. The author accepts Mary’s death as factual since it is the much more common opinion. The majority opinion is accepted by this author as well.
67 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 73. Since the death of Mary was not part of the definition, technically it is not part of this study.
70 See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.
73 Ibid., 72.
74 Ibid., 73.
75 Ibid., 73-74.
76 E. L. Mascall, “Gedanken eines Anglokatholiken euber die Definition der Himmelfahrt Marias,” 140.
77 Prat, *Jesus Christ*, 399. See also H. Zeller, “Corpora Sanctorum: Eine Studie zu


79 Rahner, Das “Neue” Dogma, 34-35.


81 See J. W. Langlinais, “Assumption of Mary,” NCE 1: 975. There were some few theologians of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries who, because of Mary’s Immaculate Conception, were Marian immortalists. Their influence in the mainstream of Church belief was insignificant.

82 O’Carroll, “Assumption,” 58.


84 Hamell, “Munificentissimus Deus,” 5.


87 T. Gallus, “Ad quaestionem mortis post Bullam M.D.,” Marianum 15 (1953): 124-125. His opinion was that the silence was deliberate.


89 Ibid., 504.

90 Ibid., 503-504.

91 Ibid., 505.

92 Vollert, “Place of Our Lady,” 174.

93 Ibid.

94 Carol, Fundamentals of Mariology, 183.


97 Langlinais, “Assumption,” NCE 1, 973. Some authors (e.g., Balic, Carol, Coyle, Filograssi) still insisted that the matter remains an open question since it did not come specifically under the definition.

98 Langlinais, “Assumption,” NCE 1, 975.


100 Carroll, Understanding the Mother of Jesus, 88.

102 Ibid., 80.
103 Ibid., 82-83.
109 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 74. Some claimed that there is a necessary connection between the two mysteries, whereby the Assumption flowed directly as a consequence of the divine motherhood; others maintained that the Assumption was implicitly contained in the divine maternity. See G. Roschini, Compendium Mariologiae (Rome, 1946), 48-51. The convenience posited here is called “simple convenience,” whereas the opposite is not “inconvenient.”
114 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 75.
115 Crisostomo de Pamplona, “La Asuncion basada en los grandes privilegios marianos,” Estudios Marianos 6 (1947): 64-65. The author referred to Roschini and Jugie as supporting this opinion.
weak and too subjective.

119 Ibid. Healy is using the words “highest convenience” in the sense of simple convenience, of which the opposite is not inconvenience. He gives the example that it would not be contrary to God’s perfections if, in his providence, he had not created.

120 Ibid.

121 Wright, “Dogma of the Assumption,” 81-82.


123 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 78.


125 P. Renaudin, Assumptio B. Mariae Virginis Matris Dei (Taurini-Romae, 1933), 145. See also R. Garrigou-Lagrange, The Mother of Our Savior (St. Louis, 1948), 170, wherein he opts for at least an argument of convenience.

126 Carol, “Definability of Mary’s Assumption,” 169.


128 Roschini, Compendium Mariologiae, 469.

129 Jugie, La Mort et l’Assomption, 623-638.


131 B. Merkelbach, Mariologia (Paris, 1939) 84: 173-175.


133 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 84-85. Healy cited the fact that of the number of petitions from the bishops of the world between 1863 and 1940 for the definition of the Assumption 160 petitions were prompted by Mary’s holiness.

134 Ibid., 85.

135 Acta et decreta sacrorum conciliorum conciliorum recentiorum, col. sac. (Friburgi Bresgoviae, 1882) 4, 839.

136 Ibid., 114. K. Rahner, Mary Mother of the Lord, 89.

137 Jugie, La Mort et l’Assomption, 654. See also Garrigou-Lagrange, Mother of the Savior, 170.

138 Jugie, La Mort et l’Assomption, 654.


142 A. Tanqueray, Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae 2 (Paris: Desclée), n. 1264.

143 Jugie, La Mort et l’Assomption, 647-649; Bonnefoy, “Definibilité de
l’Assomption,” 348.

144 Hentrich and de Moos, Petitiones, cited in Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 78.


146 Mueller, Origo divino-apostolica doctrinae ejectionis Beatissimae Virginis ad glorian coelestem quoad corpus (Innsbruck, 1930), 75.


150 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 90-91. It was vaguely known in Genesis 3:15; then in Luke 1:38, 43, and Luke 2:35, and in John 19:25, 27. It was seen in the Church Fathers, after St. Irenaeus, in the Eve-Mary antithesis. It was reflected in the liturgy, especially in the feasts of the Compassion of Mary and the Seven Sorrows. It was taught by the theologians as well as by the ordinary magisterium of the popes (especially Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XII). See also Merkelbach, Mariologia, 80-84; Garrigou-Lagrange, “L’Assomption est-elle formellement revelée,” 48-50; J. B. Carol, “Mary’s Co-redemption in the Teaching of Pope Pius XII,” AER 121 (1949): 353-361.

151 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 91.

152 Thomas Mullaney, “Union Perfected,” 179.

153 Ibid., 180.

154 Ibid., 180-181. In this quotation the “woman clothed with the sun” was taken from Apocalypse 12:1.

155 L.G. 61

156 Carol, Fundamentals of Mariology, 194-195. See also Carol, “Definability of Mary’s Assumption,” 170-177; Carol, “Apostolic Constitution ‘Munificentissimus Deus,’” 137-156.

157 That is, bodily glorification, if Mary died; anticipated bodily glorification, if she did not die. See Lawrence P. Everett, “Mary’s Death and Bodily Assumption,” in Juniper B. Carol, ed., Mariology 2 (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957), 491-492.


159 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 92-93. Duns Scotus and other theologians have indicated that the preservation of Mary from original sin was a most special redemption. So too is her preservation from corruption of the body and the power of death. The fact that she entered the world free from sin, in right relation with God, and left the world glorified in body, in anticipation of the parousia, bespeaks an exaltation rather than a denigration of the supremacy of the might of Christ’s saving act.

160 St. Ambrose, Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam lib. 2, n. 17; PL 15, col. 1559.

161 G. Biel, “In festo Assumptionis B. M.,” Serm. 2, Sermones (Cologne, 1619): 347-


163 Friethoff, “Dogmatic Definition,” 58.

164 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 91.

165 Ibid., 91-92.
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2 Ibid. Rahner cited as evidence: Hebrews 6:5; Ephesians 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:6, 10:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Genesis 3:15; John 12:31; 1 Peter 4:17; and John 16:16 in support of this contention.

3 Ibid., 119. Ephrem the Syrian, Sermo 12, *Opera syriace et latine* 2 (Rome, 1740), 430.


5 See William of Auvergne, Sermo 1 on the Assumption. It is quoted without further reference in Jugie, *La Mort et l’Assomption*, 381.


8 J. Beumer, “Die Analogie Maria-Kirche and ihre Bedeutung fur die allgemeine Gnadenvermittlung der Gottesmutter” (The Analogy of Mary and the Church, and Its Significance for Mary’s Universal Mediation), *Theologie und Seelsorge* (1943): 44.

9 Sermo 2 *Opera syriace et latine* 2, 429.


12 Pseudo-Caesarius of Arles, PL 67, 1068.


17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.


25 Ibid., 201.


30 Even the fact of her death remained uncertain. While a most probable opinion, it has never been defined.


33 Ibid., 85.

34 Ibid., 86.


36 CDT, 172. The authors refer to a closely connected legend, attributed to Galb bios and Candidus and dating back at least to the sixth century, in which Mary’s robe was left behind in her tomb when her body was assumed. They further noted that it was unusual that no rival legends existed referring to any bodily relics of Mary.

37 Wenger, *L’Assomption*, cited in CDT, 174. One reason for the proposed date was the early disappearance of the See of Livia. Further, Wenger attributed this early date to the sermon because the uncommon (and non-technical for the time) name of the Assumption was used rather than the Transition or the Dormition. Also, the arguments were presented in a brief, non-developed, and unrelated manner.

38 Ibid. Wenger believed that this was an indication of an early date. Homilies of the next centuries used this same title for the feast. The meaning of the doctrine was very clear in the sermon, for the speaker stated repeatedly that Mary was raised to heaven in body and soul.

the Assumption consisted of various persistent arguments.


43 Ibid., *Encomium*, cited on 277.


46 Ibid., 12, cited in *Encomium*, 277-278.

47 CDT, 174.


49 Attwater, *Dictionary of Mary*, 114.

50 Ibid., 20.

51 Ibid.


53 CDT, 177.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 177-178. The Church permits her theologians to maintain either of two views concerning the relationship between scripture and tradition. The more prevalent view is that everything found in tradition is fundamentally contained in scripture. Yet it could also freely be held that some of revelation is found only in an independent oral tradition that had never been recorded in scripture.

57 Actually this argument was not used for a long period of time because the Immaculate Conception had not yet been defined.


59 Ibid., 201.

60 Ibid. See Knox, *Pastoral Sermons*, 250.

61 Kress, “Mary’s Assumption,” 73.

62 This is an accepted premise of the present study.

63 There are of course no direct scriptural references to the Assumption of Mary. Further, there are presently no references from early patristic Church literature. Refer to A. C. Rush, “Assumption Theology in Transitus Mariae,” AER 123 (1950): 93-110. It is possible that such literature could be discovered; it is also possible that the *Transitus* literature could be traced back to the second century.

64 K. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 89.

65 Ibid. As Mary was the perfectly redeemed person while she was here in this world, there was no obstacle to her immediately enjoying the glory of the next life at the moment she left this one. Because she received and cooperated perfectly in her redemption, she is seen as being already in heavenly glory in the totality of her personhood, body and soul.
Salvation is presented as the fulfilling self-realization of the person, and the person’s body is one dimension of this fulfillment. There have been many heresies to the contrary in the history of the Church: Encratites, Gnostics, Manichees, Cathars, etc. In one way or another, one of their teachings in common was to the effect that salvation is accomplished as liberation from one’s body.


Ibid., 224.

K. Rahner, Mary, Mother of the Lord, 89.

What this transformation would have been like without the reality of human sinfulness is an unknown. In 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul says the sting of death is sin, but he does not go on to tell us what death would be without the sting of sin. Atheistic and agnostic Existentialists point from the loss of identity and of continuity in this life to annihilation in death; the Assumption presents a transformation into a more wonderful life, rather than annihilation in death.


L.G. 59.

Ibid., 65.

Ibid., 65.


Ibid.

Ibid., 219.


Rahner prescinds from the possible spiritualization of Christ’s condition in an “eternal communion with God.”

Études 267 (1950): 291; Rahner disagreed with the latter’s expressed opinion that since the encyclical’s definition, it is no longer possible to interpret the text “in terms of a definitive eschatological resurrection of these saints.”

85 K. Rahner, “God, Christ, Mary and Grace,” 221.
86 Ibid., 221-222.
87 Ibid., 222-223.
88 Ibid., 224.
89 Ibid., 225.
90 Ibid., 225-226. This difference was more attributable, however, to Christ’s Resurrection than to the involved personages. It was impossible for anyone to rise from the dead before Christ opened up the possibility of glorification. Christ’s descent to the lower regions was a saving event on behalf of the dead; his entry into glory initiated a community in the body of the redeemed. Since the Resurrection, salvation history has witnessed a community of faithful who have overcome sin and death.
91 Ibid., 227.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 H. de Lubac, The Splendour of the Church (New York: Paulist Press, 1956), 200. Both are called the new Eve; both enjoy the title because of their faith and obedience; both participate in the salvific action. Over the centuries both are referred to under the same titles, such as the Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven, Bride of Christ, Virgin and Mother.
95 G. W. Shea, “Assumption,” 82.
98 See the following scriptural texts for evidence of this relationship: Canticle of Canticles 4:1, 8:8; Isaias 62:5; Ezechiel 16:8; Psalm 45.
99 See the following scriptural texts: Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 21, 9:10.
100 Healy, “Assumption Among Mary’s Privileges,” 143-144.
104 Ibid., 4.
106 Pius XII, Mystici corporis, 14.
107 Semmelroth, Archetype, 165.
The section dealing with Anglicanism and Protestantism depends greatly upon the work done at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. in 1967 by Carmelite Leo H. McCarthy. His thesis, *The American Protestant Reaction to the Definition of the Assumption*, was in partial fulfillment of his requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

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117 Ibid., 303.

118 Sergius Bulgakov, *Die Hochkirche*, ed. Friedrich Heiler (1931), 244. This consists of a commemorative volume for the Council of Ephesus in 431.


123 Nicholas Cabasilas, “On the Assumption,” *Patrologia Orientalis* 19 (Paris,
1926): 488.

128 T. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 264. *This reaction was primarily a protest against the Catholic Church and papal prerogative. It was not representative of the Orthodox Church in its entirety.*

129 Ibid., 264-265.


131 T. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 263. *God’s new heaven and new earth will transform not only the human body but the entire material universe.*

132 Ibid., 267-268.

133 John Baptist Terbovich, “Queen of the Kremlin,” *Ave Maria* 27 (1960): 14. Terbovich was originally a member of the Russian Orthodox Church before his conversion and has studied mariology in the Eastern rites. Russia possessed a number of shrines to Mary and in 1917, over a thousand monasteries had been dedicated to her. Veneration of Mary *is* expressed in the liturgy and through icons. Jesuit M. Gordillo recorded that there were 290 icons whose feasts were commemorated in Russia; the liturgy directed that after the incensation of the altar, an icon of Mary would be honored prior to that of the iconostasis, the screen honoring all the saints.

134 Ibid., 27. Franciscan Maximilian Kolbe had prophesied that in tribute to the abiding devotion of the Russian people to Mary, “One day you will see the statue of the Immaculate atop the Kremlin.”


139 Laurentin, *Question of Mary*, 129.

140 Hentrich and De Moos, *Petitiones*, 770-779.

141 Ibid.

142 *St. John Damascene, Hom. on Dorm.*, 2, 19; PG 96, 749.

143 Lossky, “Panagia,” 24. The Orthodox in this discussion mean only the data defined in the ecumenical council. “Ever Virgin” has not been defined specifically by any council, although the term appears in the creeds and is continuously found in the conciliar acts from the Fifth Council. Even though it is not a scriptural name, *Theotokos* provides the foundation of God’s revelation. Anyone who refused to give this title to Mary forfeited the name Christian. From this, in the Orthodox mind, exists an inseparable connection in the Church between this doctrine and devotion to the Virgin. The
Orthodox also find it impossible to keep scripture and tradition separate, just as they found it impossible to keep the theology and devotion to Mary separate.

144 MD, AAS 42 (1950): 769.
145 Thurian, Ways of Worship, 290-319.
146 Robert McAfee Brown, The Ecumenical Revolution (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 298. Brown has undoubtedly been reminded repeatedly that although he was presenting the much more common opinion, the definition did not intentionally treat the matter of Mary’s death. The actual text of the definition used a circumlocution for death when referring to the time when the course of Mary’s life had ended. A Catholic is free to hold either that Mary did or did not die. The opinion that she did die is more consonant with the rest of revelation.

147 Eric Doyle, “The Blessed Virgin and Dialogue with Evangelicals,” Clergy Review 64 (1979): 347-357. See also Dawe, Assumption and Eschatology, 13. The two fundamental criticisms of Marian devotion by Protestants in the classic sense that extend to the present day are that Marian doctrine is not only unwarranted in but opposed to scripture; and Marian doctrine destroys the sole mediatorship of Christ and adds Mary as a second and entirely separate source of grace. In traditional Protestantism Mary was seen solely as a vehicle of her Son’s humanity and without portfolio in the order of salvation. See also von Loewenich, Modern Catholicism, 190-194. The rejection of the veneration of the saints carried in classic Protestantism the rejection of any veneration of Mary, in spite of some few early references to her in the literature of the original Reformation.

148 Koester, “Protestant Reaction,” 105.
150 Quoted in Salvatore J. Bonano, “Mary and United States Protestantism, Ephemerides Mariologicae 6 (1956): 420. Dr. Huxley was an English biologist, winner of a Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1963; he was in attendance at a meeting for biophysical research in Chicago.
151 Leo H. McCarthy, American Protestant Reaction, 62.
153 McCarthy, American Protestant Reaction, 63.
157 It was replaced instead by a series of books on Catholicism. These almost invariably had a chapter on or at least references to mariology in the ecumenical section. Thomas O’Meara wrote that in his day very little was being written on the subject of the
Assumption. See O’Meara, Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology, 10.


160 “New Roman Catholic Dogma,” London Times 4 (18 Aug. 1950). The American Anglican spokesmen repeated the public condemnation of the dogma that had been expressed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York by either quoting them directly or paraphrasing them with comments. See McCarthy, American Protestant Reaction, 63.

161 Cyril Garbett, “Authority in Doctrine,” cited in V. M. Buffon, “La Vergine Maria nel Protestantesimo,” Marianum 19 (1957): 563-564. See also H. F. Davis, “Our Lady’s Assumption,” 188. The author challenged Garbett’s opinion that the dogma of the Assumption did not have a scriptural, historical, or doctrinal foundation through a reminder that some 400 million Catholics and 150 million Orthodox, Nestorians, and Monophysites had believed the Assumption for centuries on those very foundations. It was not an invention of the twentieth century.


164 McCarthy, American Protestant Reaction, 10-18.


170 Bonano, “Mary and United States Protestantism,” 400.

171 Lossky, cited by M. Thurian, Ways of Worship, 289, 266. Losky included the Assumption among those truths that need time and explication by the Holy Spirit to be fully understood. See also P. Palmer, “Mary and Protestant Concern,” 47-48.

172 Thurian, Ways of Worship, 312.

173 Palmer, “Mary and Protestant Concern,” 103-104.

174 Thurian, Ways of Worship, 289.


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Ibid. 178

Ibid., 123-141. Schlink was a professor and the dean of the faculty of theology at the University of Heidelberg. Günther Bornkamm, Peter Brunner, Hans von Campenhausen, and Wolfrid Joest were colleagues on the faculty and joined in the preparation of Schlink’s statement. The translator opined that the definition of the Assumption occasioned the most significant event in the history of dogma since the time of the Reformation, and also considered Schlink’s statement as the most clear expression of evangelical faith concerning the dogma.

Ibid., 129. 180

Elson Ruff, “Protestant Doubts,” The Lutheran 33 (1950): 5. The author was editor of the United Lutheran magazine in the United States at the time of his writing.


McCarthy, American Protestant Reaction, 45.


Ibid., 11-12.

Ibid., 12.


201 Pelikan, “Issues that Divide Us,” 141. Robert McAfee Brown expressed another view: the barrier between Catholicism and Protestantism was not so much seen as papal infallibility as it was seen in the exercise of that prerogative on behalf of the two recent Marian dogmas. See R. M. Brown and Gustave Weigel, *An American Dialogue* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1960), 90.

202 Koester, “Protestant Reaction,” 105. The quote is of Heiler.


204 Sucker, quoted in Koester, “Protestant Reaction,” 376.

205 Koester, “Protestant Reaction,” 376.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid., citing Asmussen.


209 See 1 Timothy 2:5-6: “For there is one God, and also one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, himself man, who sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind, so providing at the fitting time proof of the divine purpose.”


211 Hogan, “Assumption,” 368. The author quoted Cajetan to the effect that Mary bordered on divinity; nevertheless she was fully human.


215 Ibid.

216 Ibid., 369.

217 Ibid., 370.


221 Ibid., 253.

222 Ibid., 446.


224 Ibid.


226 Koehler later wrote of the renewed interest in the Resurrection of Christ,
demonstrated especially in the eucharistic liturgy, in post-Vatican II times. He observed that the pope had not been able to stimulate a renewed faith in the resurrection of the dead, as he had intended, through his definition of an anticipated resurrection of Mary. However, Koehler continued that there has been today a renewed interest in the area of eschatology. See Koehler, "Death and Assumption," 4-5.

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.

233 Pelikan, "Issues that Divide Us," 141-142.
Endnotes

Chapter 4


2 Unitatis Redintegratio, 11.


12 Ibid., 66.


14 Ibid., 119.
15 Ibid., 120.
16 Ibid., 121.
17 E. R. Carroll, “Papal Infallibility and the Marian Definitions,” 236-237. See also the following: Heribert Mühlen, “Die Lehre des Vaticanum II über die ‘hierarchia veritatum’ und ihre Bedeutung für den oekumenischen Dialog,” Theologie und Glaube 56 (1966): 33-35, for a consideration of the topic in relation to ecumenism; Ulrich Valeske, Hierarchia Veritatum: Theologigeschichtliche Hintergründe und mögliche Konsequenzen eines Hinweises im Ökumenismusdekret des II. Vatikanischen Konzils zum zwischenkirchlichen Gespräch (Munich, 1968), for a fleeting reference to the disputed dogma; Yves Congar, “Hierarchia Veritatum.” Oscar Cullmann’s comment on Unitatis Redintegratio 11 was: “... the most revolutionary to be found, not only in the schema de oecumenismo, but in any of the schemas. ... In accordance with this text, it will be possible to place dogmas concerning the primacy of Peter or the Assumption of Mary (without denying them, of course) on a different plane from dogmas concerning Christ and the Trinity. ... a ‘point of departure’ for ecumenical developments which justify every hope.” See Oscar Cullmann, “Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism,” Ecumenical Review 17 (1965): 94.

18 AAS 20 (1928): 5-16.
20 This is reminiscent of the élan vital in the personalistic vitalism of Henri Bergson in his Time and Free Will and Two Sources of Morality and Religion.
21 A. Pangrazio, “The Mystery of the History of the Church,” in H. Küng et al., Council Speeches of Vatican II (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1964), 188-190. The archbishop cited as an example: What theologian from the Church’s golden thirteenth century could have conceivably foreseen the future reform needed within the Church, the far-reaching effects of the Reformation and the renewal launched by the Council of Trent?
22 Ibid., 191.
23 Ibid., 190.
24 Ibid., 191.
25 Unitatis Redintegratio 11.
26 See B. Leeming, The Vatican Council and Christian Unity (New York, 1966), 298-299. See also D. Carroll, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 125, wherein the author recalled that all Christian truths must be received with faith. They cannot be set aside or ignored. Christians already form a family that possesses a unity within the primary truths of revelation. Valeske traced Pangrazio’s thought back to the earlier thought of Congar and C. Dumont. See Valeske, Hierarchia Veritatum. Cardinal Koenig of Vienna proposed an amendment to the Secretariat for Christian Unity several months later in which the rank of doctrinal truth is determined by relation to Jesus Christ, the foundation of Christian faith, and as connected with the history of salvation and the mystery of Christ. See Tavard, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” Theological Studies 32 (1971): 278-289.
27 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5, n. 10; 7, nn. 8-9, quoted in Leeming, *Vatican Council and Christian Unity*, 142.


29 Interestingly, this is particularly true of the Council of Trent. It is not sufficient to quote an anathema from Trent and conclude that the contrary is part of the faith.


31 Decree on Ecumenism, 20.

32 Cullmann, “Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism,” 94.


35 We also include here the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.


37 John Macquarrie, “Immaculate Conception,” *Communio* 7 (1980): 100-102. Macquarrie offered two examples of truths that belong to the core of the Christian teaching and consequently would be at the center of the inner circle that expresses the hierarchy of truths. Creation is clear in scripture. The Trinity and unity of God is not explicitly taught in scripture; yet it is implicit there and does belong to the universal Christian creed.

38 Ibid. Here Macquarrie deliberately refused to use the word peripheral. “Lower in the hierarchy” is an alternative to “secondary” for him. Peripheral implies not important. Mariology is a meeting point for many of the Church’s teachings in the area of eschatology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and soteriology. There is a convergence here of doctrine, connections, or links, and a coherency is established.

39 Ibid. Macquarrie stated that the regular test of scripture, tradition, development of doctrine and reason is not necessary for less central truths. Instead, the mutually implicative coinherency of these teachings illustrate whether they are mere innovations (as Barth would suggest) or whether in their maximal expression they actually do form an integral part of revealed truth.

40 See here R. Brown and his thought on the stream of New Testament thought as developed in his *Menlo Papers*.

41 Macquarrie, “Immaculate Conception,” 100-102. Today a difference is seen in that modern theology would prefer personal to impersonal categories.

42 Ibid.


46 Ibid., 281.
48 D. Carroll, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 127. See also Tavard, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 282. It is pointed out that there are articles of the Creed which have not had an important place in the life of the Church; and at the same time non-dogmatic teachings have been central to the life of the Church throughout its history.
50 General Catechetical Directory, 49. Hereafter cited as GCD.
51 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 128.
54 Dulles, Survival of Dogma, 190.
56 Ibid., 110.
57 D. Carroll, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 130.
59 Tavard, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 282. The most extensive treatment of the issue of hierarchy of truths is to be found in the following: Valeske, Hierarchia Veritatum; Mühlen, “Die Lehre des Vaticanum II,” and Tavard, “Hierarchia Veritatum.”
61 Decree on Ecumenism, 2, 11.
63 Ibid.
66 Tavard, “Hierarchia Veritatum,” 288. See also O’Neill, “Perspectives on the Hierarchy of Truths,” 379. The author warned that personal hierarchies can be dangerous as a privatizing of the theological symbols and as an emphasizing of the peripheral, e.g., the role of Mary over that of Christ.
70 Pangrazio, 149.
71 U. O’Neill, 384; see also Piet Fransen, “Doctrinal Development and Church


78 GCD, 16.


84 Raymond E. Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 84. The Church recognized this by “incorporating the treatment of Mary into the treatment of the Church,” p. 84.

85 Ibid., 84-85.

86 Ibid., 85. See also L. Vischer and J. Feiner (eds.), *The Common Catechism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 66, wherein the authors proposed that ecumenical union would be achieved except for these two disputed points.

87 Pannenberg, *Una Sancta*, 62-68. Pannenberg placed “the papacy and the juridical character of dogma” with mariology as items of the highest priority on the ecumenical agenda.


89 Ibid., 103.


91 Ibid.


94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Macquarrie, “Immaculate Conception,” *Communio*, 101. K. Barth had gone further and suggested that the dogmas are “arbitrary innovation” and that they contradict the principle *sola gratia* “by allowing some part of the creature in the work of redemption.” See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 138,
as quoted in Macquarrie, "Immaculate Conception," Communio, 101.


98 Macquarrie, "Immaculate Conception," Communio, 103-104, Bishop Butler of Vatican I had originally used the phrase "the governing intention."


100 Ibid., 152.

101 Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1980), 889-890. Latria is the cult of adoration given to the Godhead alone: Father, Spirit, and Incarnate Word. The devotion given to the saints is referred to by the Church as dulia. Hyperdulia, a more intensive form of expression, is rendered to Mary because of her divine maternity and eminent position in the Church. There can be this varying degree of intensity in this devotion to Mary. No matter how greatly it increases in intensity, there is always present the difference in kind as compared to the adoration rendered to God alone.

102 Ibid. The former is called mariophobia, which exaggerated God’s role and underplayed human cooperation in salvation. The latter was referred to as mariocentrism. Christ is viewed as being more human than divine, as one who does not so much mediate sin as represent the offended God. No limits are set on Mary’s power of intercession.

103 Frederick J. Jelly, “Marian Dogmas Within Vatican II’s Hierarchy of Truths,” Marian Studies 27 (1976): 17-40. The author would consider it more appropriate to place a greater emphasis on the ecclesiotypical significance of this dogma, while still recognizing the christocentric nature of the truth as well.


107 D. Flanagan, Theology of Mary, 89.

108 Von Balthasar, Threefold Garland, 9-10. Leiva-Merikakis saw von Balthasar expressing the unity of the paschal mystery as it is evidenced in this visio Christi et Mariae at the crib, on the cross, and in exaltation.

109 Ibid., 10.

110 Healy, Assumption of Mary, 47. Christ never asked his apostles to write anything. He told them to preach the good news, to announce the gospel. The apostles remembered the words of the Lord. They were also the recipients of impressions gleaned from his actions and general behavior. Each of the apostles and evangelists was exposed to this mystery of Christ. Each viewed him from the perspective of his own individually developed personhood. They did not learn everything at once, but only gradually. There are evident differences between John and Paul. Christ’s followers watched the relation-
ship between Mother and Son develop throughout the public life to the time of the post-
Ascension period. The sum of all that they received was *de facto* what God actually
revealed. Revelation is not just the written word. They recognized the place that Mary
possessed in her Son’s soteriological mission. The totality of this is what constituted the
deposit of faith.

114 Ibid.
115 Bertrand de Margerie, “Dogmatic Development by Abridgement or by
Concentration?,” *Marian Studies* 27 (1967): 64.
116 Ibid., 70-71.
118 *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22, 11, 4, quoted in de Margerie, “Dogmatic Develop-
ment,” 71-72.
119 Ibid., 72-73.
120 Yarnold, “Marian Dogmas and Reunion,” 179.
121 Ibid., 180.
122 Ibid.
123 De Margerie, “Dogmatic Development,” 68.
124 Ibid., 70.
125 Ibid., 75.
126 Ibid., 77.
127 Ibid., 79. For an evaluation of Orthodox thought, see the following: M. Jugie,
*L’Immaculée Conception dans l’Écriture Sainte et dans la tradition orientale* (Rome,
1952), 312, in which the author pointed out the Orthodox belief in the Immaculate
Conception in the medieval period, especially by Gregory Palamas who died in 1368 and
was canonized a saint shortly thereafter; D. Stiénon, “L’Immaculée Conception dans la
théologie russe contemporaine,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 6 (1956): 261, wherein the
first objections to the doctrine were voiced by the Greek and Russian Churches in the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively; and D. Stiénon, “Marie dans la
128 De Margerie, “Dogmatic Development,” 82.
Development,” 86.
130 Ibid., 87.
131 Ibid., 91.
133 De Margerie, “Dogmatic Development,” 94.
134 Ibid. The author recalled that free consent belongs to the essence of an act of faith.
135 De Margerie, “Dogmatic Development,” 95-96. The rejection of the Assumption
by a Catholic is a sign that the person has separated self from the Catholic tradition and Church. In Canon Law anathemas apply only to Catholics who culpably, obstinately and externally reject a dogma.


137 Ibid., 98.


139 Ibid.


3 Ibid., 3.

4 Ibid., 4.

5 Ibid.

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