

THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY:  
THE MORTALIST AND IMMORTALIST TRADITIONS  
IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE DOGMA DEBATE FROM 1944 TO 2021

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THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY: THE MORTALIST AND IMMORTALIST  
TRADITIONS IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE DOGMA DEBTE FROM 1994  
TO 2021

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## ABSTRACT

# THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY: THE MORTALIST AND IMMORTALIST TRADITIONS IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE DOGMA DEBTE FROM 1994 TO 2021

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Pope Pius XII did not define the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary in his 1950 Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*. Theologians have debated her death since then in the context of *Munificentissimus Deus*. The question of the death of Mary has been seriously debated between the Mortalists and Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The aim of this thesis was to find the theological differences between two Mortalists and four Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and four Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. There are two major theological differences that separate them: 1. The Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church understand the unity of body and soul differently from the Mortalists of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. 2. The Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church also argue for their position from the persepective that Mary did not have Original Sin. The theologians from the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches approach the question differently. The theologians of the Roman Catholic Church rely on the Magisterium. The theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Church do not believe in formal definitions and so rely on the experience of the Divine Liturgy and the Tradition of the early Church. This thesis

therefore looked at the question of the death of Mary in the early Church and found that the records on the topic date back to the second century in the Dormition Apocrypha. The Dormition Apocrypha were narratives that detail the end of the life of Mary. The narratives describe her dying before being assumed body and soul to heaven. Nine Church Fathers who wrote in Greek and came from the East are shown to be Mortalist and the early Byzantine Liturgy is also shown to be Mortalist. Notable exceptions to the majority Mortalist opinion include Saint Epiphanius of Salamis and Saint Modestus of Jerusalem, who both say that only God knows where the Blessed Virgin Mary resides now. Timothy of Jerusalem and possibly Theoteknos of Livias are Immortalist and do not believe that Mary died. Four Church Fathers who wrote in Latin and came from the West are Mortalist. Nine Church Fathers and early medieval theologians did not write about what happened to Mary at the end of her life. The Church Fathers and early writings that were chosen flourished before and during the year 866, the year that Pope Nicholas I wrote a letter to Bulgarians, since this was a major split in relations between the Byzantine Church and Latin Church. This thesis finds that the Immortalists used only one Church Father, Timothy of Jerusalem, in their arguments for their position. This thesis could not find use of the early Church Fathers in the arguments of the Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church. The Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches cite the Church Fathers and the Divine Liturgy in their defense of their position. Further research can be done from the findings in this thesis.

Dedicated to Our Lady, Mother of the Church

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### 1.1.1 Overview

Pope Venerable Pius XII famously defined in his 1950 Apostolic Constitution

*Munificentissimus Deus*:

... by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.<sup>1</sup>

Pope Pius XII thus declared the dogma of the Assumption for all the faithful of the Catholic Church to believe. One might notice in the above text from *Munificentissimus Deus* that Pope Pius XII did not mention the death of Mary. The Pope only defined that at the completion of her earthly life, the Mother of God was assumed into heaven body and soul.

Pope Saint John Paul II would appear to answer the question of whether or not Mary did die in one of his General Audience Addresses when he says “Could Mary of Nazareth have experienced the drama of death in her own flesh? ... Reflecting on Mary’s destiny and her relationship with her divine Son, it seems legitimate to answer in the affirmative...”<sup>2</sup> Thus Saint John Paul II apparently asserts that the Blessed Virgin Mary did indeed die; Pope John Paul II says that the Fathers of the Church and Tradition had

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950, 44, [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_apc\\_19501101\\_munificentissimus-deus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus.html). *Munificentissimus Deus* will be abbreviated to *MD*.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, “General Audience,” (Speech, Vatican, Vatican City, June 25, 1997), 2, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1997/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_25061997.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_25061997.html).

“no doubts” that Mary experienced death.<sup>3</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II argues that even though Mary was freed from Original Sin, it does not mean she received physical immortality; since she is involved in the Redemption of mankind by the Son, she would also take part in death like her Son who also underwent death.<sup>4</sup> Pope John Paul II then comments that it is more important for the Christian to focus on the spiritual attitude of Mary during her departure from life on earth; by undergoing what all of humanity undergoes, i.e. death, she can more properly exercise her Spiritual Motherhood over mankind.<sup>5</sup> It appears that throughout his General Audience, he was not defining the death of Mary as an infallible teaching for all Catholics to believe as he does not say that Catholics must believe in the event of the death of Mary.

Catholics are therefore still free to believe that Mary did not experience death. Theologians have developed their own arguments to say whether Mary died or did not die; the group of theologians who assert that Mary died are called “Mortalists” while the group of theologians who argue against the death of Mary are called “Immortalists.”<sup>6</sup> Mortalists call the death of Mary and her subsequent Assumption “the Dormition,” her having “fallen asleep” with the word “Dormition” is a euphemism for death.<sup>7</sup> From the records that are known from the Early Church, it appears that Timothy of Jerusalem is only known Church Father to state definitely that Mary did not die.<sup>8</sup> Also it appears that

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, “Audience,” 2.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, “Audience,” 3.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, “Audience,” 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Manfred Hauke, *Introduction to Mariology*, trans. Richard Chonak (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 288.

<sup>7</sup> Christian W. Kappes, *The Immaculate Conception: Why Thomas Aquinas Denied, While John Duns Scotus, Gregory Palamas, & Mark Eugenius Professed the Absolute Immaculate Existence of Mary* (New Bedford, Massachusetts: Academy of the Immaculate, 2014), 213.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon Et In Textum Evangelii, Nunc Dimittis Servum tuum Et In Beatam Mariam Virginem*, vol. 86A of *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865), 245C.



the Immortalist position was taken up again in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> The debate between the Mortalists and Immortalists on the end of the life of Mary was debated again in the few years leading up to the definition of the Assumption in 1950.<sup>10</sup> There are both Mortalists and Immortalists in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches approach the death of Mary differently. According to Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of the Greek Orthodox Church (c. 1934 - 2022), the Eastern Orthodox Churches hold on to the Mortalist position; they affirm that her body was assumed into heaven after her death and that is why her grave is empty.<sup>11</sup> The belief in the Mortalist position is found in their hymns that they sing during the Divine Liturgy.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches do not find it necessary to officially declare the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.1 Objectives

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<sup>9</sup> Manfred Hauke, review of *Stärker als der Tod. Warum Maria nicht gestorben ist*, by Florian Kolffhaus, *Forum Katholische Theologie* (2017): 72. The theologians in the early modern period that argue for the Immortalist position is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 288.

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: New Edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 260. Metropolitan Ware says that there are a few Eastern Orthodox theologians who doubt the Assumption but they are “certainly not representative” of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Metropolitan Ware published this book before becoming Metropolitan. Telegraph Obituaries, “Kallistos Ware, world-renowned scholar-bishop who did much to raise the profile of the Orthodox Church in Britain – obituary,” *The Telegraph*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2022/08/24/kallistos-ware-world-renowned-scholar-bishop-who-did-much-raise/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 260.

<sup>13</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 260. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Glossary, the “Orthodox Churches” are those Eastern Churches not in communion with Rome. The definition from the Catechism did not distinguish the differences amongst the Eastern Churches. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: United States Bishops’ Conference, 2000), 838, 1399. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Glossary, s.v. “Orthodox Churches.” Henceforth, the *Catechism for the Catholic Church* will be abbreviated to CCC. According to Metropolitan Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches are those churches who are in communion with Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Ware, *Orthodox Churches*, 7.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the theological differences that exist between the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. This thesis does not answer if the Blessed Virgin Mary died before she was assumed to heaven. Rather, this thesis will also cover some Mortalists from the Roman Catholic Church. There are theological differences that separate the Immortalists, who use Sacred Scripture and Thomistic philosophy, and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, who use their understanding of the Church Fathers; those differences include the understanding of Original Sin and the understanding of the unity of body and soul.<sup>14</sup>

This thesis also attempted to answer several questions in the course of analyzing the main objective: Why the West seemed to come to different understanding for the context of the Assumption? Why the West was slow in its acceptance of the Assumption? This thesis also sought to understand why the East was so quick in its acceptance of the Dormition.

This topic was chosen to understand the theological similarities that may arise from the two understandings of Original Sin and the unity of body and soul. In order to make clear the precise meaning of certain words throughout this thesis, such as East and West, the definitions will be given here; defining the terms used will explain the structure and method that this thesis will take.

### **1.3.1 Definition of Church Teaching according to the Roman Catholic Church**

A Church will be defined as the assembly of people gathered to celebrate the Eucharist under God.<sup>15</sup> Since this thesis is talking about separate Churches, who are not

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<sup>14</sup> The research done for this thesis did not find arguments from Scripture for the Mortalist side.

<sup>15</sup> CCC, 752. CCC, Glossary, s.v. "Church."

assembled together, the definition of schism must be given; a schism is when a Church splits off from another Church.<sup>16</sup> A little historical explanation will be given in this thesis about the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church split in chapter three of this thesis but how the two Churches approach Church Teaching must be explained now in order to understand how they approach the Assumption and/or Dormition as a part of Church Teaching. The issue of Church Teaching is a complicated matter because the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches approach the teachings of the Church differently.

For the Roman Catholic Church, the teachings revealed by God are officially interpreted by the teaching office of the Church alone and the Church alone has the right to exercise the authority to interpret those teachings in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup> The teaching office of the Church is called the Magisterium, which include the Pope and the bishops in union with the Pope; the Magisterium is not superior to divine Revelation but is subject to it and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, teaches only what is handed on from divine Revelation.<sup>18</sup> The members of the Church faithfully receive those teachings from the Magisterium.<sup>19</sup> The Magisterium of the Church exercises the authority most fully when she defines dogma which are teachings that oblige Christians to believe in an irrevocable truth that is a part of or has a necessary connection to divine Revelation.<sup>20</sup>

For the Roman Catholic Church, infallibility is

The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church whereby the pastors of the Church, the pope and bishops in union with him, can definitively proclaim a doctrine of faith or

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<sup>16</sup> CCC, 2089. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 239. Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Churches differ on how the schism happened.

<sup>17</sup> CCC, 50, 85. CCC, Glossary, s.v. "Revelation."

<sup>18</sup> CCC, 86.

<sup>19</sup> CCC, 87. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not clarify what theologians do.

<sup>20</sup> CCC, 88.

morals for the belief of the faithful. This gift is related to the inability of the whole body of the faithful to err in matters of faith and morals.<sup>21</sup>

The Roman Pontiff, by virtue of his office as the successor to Peter, exercises this infallibility when he definitively proclaims a teaching as part of divine Revelation; the college of bishops, when in union with the successor of Peter, also exercise infallibility when declaring a teaching at an “Ecumenical Council.”<sup>22</sup> An Ecumenical Council is a “gathering” where, in union with the Pope, the universal collection or college of Bishops meets together.<sup>23</sup> The bishops have this authority to teach because their authority has been directly passed down throughout the centuries straight from the twelve Apostles in what is known as Apostolic Succession.<sup>24</sup> This brief summary of Church Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church differs in several aspects from the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

### **1.3.2 The Belief in Church Teaching According to the Eastern Orthodox Churches**

According to Metropolitan Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches approach Church Teaching or doctrine not from reasoned statements or moral rules; Ware states that

The Orthodox approach to religion is fundamentally a liturgical approach, which understands doctrine in the context of divine worship: it is no coincidence that the word ‘Orthodoxy’ should signify alike right belief and right worship, for the two things are inseparable.<sup>25</sup>

According to Ware, “Dogma” is not an intellectual system expounded by the clergy and laity but a “a field of vision” where all of creation is seen in relation to heaven, foremost in the Divine Liturgy.<sup>26</sup> According to Silviu Bunta, a Romanian

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<sup>21</sup> CCC, 92, 889-891. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Infallibility.”

<sup>22</sup> CCC, 891-892.

<sup>23</sup> CCC, 884. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Ecumenical Council.”

<sup>24</sup> CCC, 861.

<sup>25</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 266.

<sup>26</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 266.

Orthodox priest, the liturgy insists that the inexpressible God is only partly unutterable because God entered creation; all knowledge of God is experiential and cannot be defined as God overwhelms the human being in superabundance.<sup>27</sup> According to Bunta, “formalism and self-definitions do not exist in Scripture and Tradition.”<sup>28</sup>

According to Metropolitan Ware, while the Eastern Orthodox do not formally pronounce dogmas like the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches reject the notion that the teachings passed down are a matter of private opinion; therefore, the way the Eastern Orthodox Churches treat teaching is like the Roman Catholic Church in that the Eastern Orthodox Churches also emphasize Apostolic Succession.<sup>29</sup> According to Ware, while the Roman Catholic Church has the Pope and the college of Bishops under the authority of the Pope who define dogma, the Eastern Orthodox Churches stress that Churches share in divine Revelation.<sup>30</sup> Divine Revelation is the person of Christ Himself.<sup>31</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches are self-governing; the Patriarch of Constantinople enjoys special respect amongst the other patriarchs, the name for the leaders of the Church, but he cannot interfere with how the individuals in the communion of Churches within Eastern Orthodoxy govern their Churches. The Patriarch of Constantinople and the other 14 Patriarchs of Eastern Orthodox Churches all have the same level of authority.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Silviu Bunta, “Tradition: Generated by or Generating Scripture,” in *The Orthodox Handbook of the Bible in Orthodox Christianity*, ed. Eugen J. Pentiuc (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2022), xiii, 238-239.

<sup>28</sup> Bunta, “Tradition,” 230.

<sup>29</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 239.

<sup>30</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 239-240.

<sup>31</sup> Bunta, “Tradition,” 230.

<sup>32</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 6-7.

According to Ware, the idea of Church teaching follows from how they view the individual person in relation to the Trinity; each person is an icon of the Trinity and so the whole Church is an icon of the Trinity; the Ecumenical Councils and authority of bishops express the Trinitarian nature of the Church because as all three persons of the Trinity are equal, so too are all the bishops equal to each other.<sup>33</sup> The sacraments are how all the Bishops in the Eastern Orthodox Churches remain united; Metropolitan Ware believes that the Eastern Orthodox Churches, having been given the authority by the Apostles, could summon an Ecumenical Council to teach a definitive teaching but have chosen not to do so since their separation from the West.<sup>34</sup>

Having no central authority to proclaim Church Teaching has not stopped the Eastern Orthodox Churches from expressing belief in the Dormition of Mary.<sup>35</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches in local councils have drawn up creeds that affirmed that the Dormition of Mary is worthy of belief and various Patriarchs placed the belief of the Dormition in individual creeds.<sup>36</sup> One example is the “Orthodox Confession” which was drawn up by Peter Mogila, Metropolitan of Kyiv, (d. 1647) as a Catechism for the Russian Orthodox Church and revised at the 1643 Provincial Synod of Kyiv; another example is the “Confession of Dositheus” which was drawn up under Patriarch Dositheus of Jerusalem (fl. 1672) at the 1672 local synod of Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> However, the expression of belief in the Dormition in the Eastern Orthodox Churches primarily resides in the

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<sup>33</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 240-1.

<sup>34</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 247.

<sup>35</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 260.

<sup>36</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 288. Phillip Schaff, *The History of Creeds*, vol. 1 of *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes* (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1878), 58, 61.

<sup>37</sup> Schaff, *Creeds*, 58, 61. Mogila is no longer referred to as he was accused of being Calvinist. Hauke, *Mariology*, 292.

Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, i.e., the celebration of the Eucharist and is explained more fully later in this thesis.<sup>38</sup>

#### 1.4.1 The Scope of Place and Time

This thesis defines what is meant by East and West because a distinction must be made with the Church Fathers whom the Mortalists and Immortalists use in their arguments for or against the Dormition of Mary. Following the definition in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Fathers of the Church are “Church teachers and writers of the early centuries whose teaching are a witness to the Tradition of the Church.”<sup>39</sup> The Tradition of the Church is defined as

The living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church. The oral preaching of the Apostles, and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Bible), are conserved and handed on as the deposit of faith through the apostolic succession of the Church. Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup>

For the Eastern Orthodox Churches, a person can still become a Father of the Church.<sup>41</sup> For Catholics, the time that had produced the Church Fathers has ended.<sup>42</sup> This thesis covers Church Fathers that lived until the time of Saint John Damascene (c. 650 – 750), who is considered a Church Father by the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the last Church Father by the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 555. The Divine Liturgy is different from Liturgy; According to Metropolitan Ware, the Liturgy denotes public worship in general while the Divine Liturgy specifically refers to the celebration of the Eucharist.

<sup>39</sup> CCC, 78, 688. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Fathers of the Church.”

<sup>40</sup> CCC, 75-82. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Tradition.”

<sup>41</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204. According to Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches have never formally defined what the Fathers of the Church are.

<sup>42</sup> Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 400.

<sup>43</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 400.

This thesis covers Church Fathers who lived in the East and those who lived in the West of the Greco-Roman world. The Church Fathers lived everywhere throughout the Greco-Roman world during the time after Christ and before the time of Saint John Damascene; they also spoke in a variety of languages.<sup>44</sup> The second chapter of this thesis explores the Eastern Church Fathers who wrote in Greek while the third chapter investigates the Western Church Fathers who wrote in Latin. The Church Fathers wrote about the Dormition in a variety of languages including Syriac but this thesis limits itself to only Greek and Latin.<sup>45</sup>

Because of the importance of the Apocrypha in the spread of the Church teaching on the Assumption and/or Dormition, this thesis will also analyze the Dormition Apocrypha that were written in either Greek or Latin.<sup>46</sup> The Apocrypha are writings that are purported to have a biblical author but cannot be verified and so are excluded from the list of books, or Canon, of Sacred Scripture.<sup>47</sup> Methodologically, if the Church Father or Apocryphon is found in the *Patrologia Latina*, then the Church Father or Apocryphon will be considered western; if the Church Father or Apocryphon is found in the *Patrologia Graeca*, the Church Father or Apocryphon will be considered eastern.

In addition to the Apocrypha and Church Fathers, this thesis will also utilize the Liturgy which appear to be an area of common ground between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. For Roman Catholics, the Liturgy is a “public work” done on behalf of

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<sup>44</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 19-20.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 271-274.

<sup>47</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 82. The Church Fathers may have been able to speak a variety of languages but their writings in only one language are what have been preserved.



the people by the priest and is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>48</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the Liturgy is a “constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition.”<sup>49</sup> According to Ware, for the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Divine Liturgy is the celebration of the worship of God by the Church including the sacraments that have been handed down through the Tradition from the Apostles.<sup>50</sup>

For the period of the dogma debate, the authors for the Immortalists that were chosen for this thesis are Martin Jugie (c. 1878 - 1954), Gabriele Roschini (c. 1900 - 1977), Tiburzio Gallus (c. 1906 - 1982), and Manfred Forderer (c. 1930 - 2005) who are all from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>51</sup> Jugie, Gallus and Roschini were chosen because they were on the committee that helped draft *Munificentissimus Deus* while Forderer was a close disciple of Gallus.<sup>52</sup> For the Mortalists, the authors highlighted are Karl Rahner (c. 1904 - 1984) and Rene Laurentin (c. 1917 - 2017) from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>53</sup> Rahner and Laurentin were the two Roman Catholic Mortalists chosen because they

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<sup>48</sup> CCC, 1067-1069. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Liturgy.”

<sup>49</sup> CCC, 1124.

<sup>50</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204-205.

<sup>51</sup> Antonius Benkö, “Tiburzio Gallus,” in vol. 2 of *Marienlexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, (St. Ottilien, Germany: EOS Verlag, 1991), 577-578. Johannes Roten, “Martin Jugie,” in vol. 3 of *Marienlexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, (St. Ottilien, Germany: EOS Verlag, 1991), 456-457. Michael O’Carroll, “Gabriele Roschini,” in vol. 4 of *Marienlexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, (St. Ottilien, Germany: EOS Verlag, 1991), 547-548. Tiburzio Gallus and Manfred Forderer, *Starb Maria, die Makellose?: oder gilt Vor der Sünde bewahrt, bewahrt auch vor der Strafe* (Stein am Rhien, Switzerland: Christiana-Verlag, 1991). The exact dates for the birth and death of that Manfred Forderer could not be located. Manfred Hauke, email message to Gloria Falcão Dodd, March 5, 2024. The dates given are based on his publication of his thesis and the last recorded book he published as found on Worldcat. Manfred Forderer, “Religiöse Geschichtsdeutung in Israel, Persien und Griechenland zur Zeit der persischen Expansion,” (thesis, Universität Tübingen, 1952), <https://search.worldcat.org/title/60364156>. Manfred Forderer, *Herrlichkeit: die Dreifaltigkeitsikone des heiligen Andreas Rubljov: Glaubensbekenntnisse, Gebete, Hymnen: theologische Betrachtungen* (Mainz, Germany: Trinitas-Verlag, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 290. Rene Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, trans. Charles Neumann (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 336, 338. Hauke, email message to Gloria Dodd, March 5, 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Karl Rahner, “The Intermediate State,” vol. 17 of *Theological Investigations*, trans. Maragret Kohl (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 115. Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340-343. Sam Roberts, “Rene Laurentin, 99, a

directly address the question of the unity of body and soul that the Immortalists use in their arguments. The Mortalists representing the Eastern Orthodox Churches are Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Konstantinos Kallinikos (c. 1910 - 2001), Iuvanelie Ionascu (c. 1979), and Patrick Truglia (c. 1995).<sup>54</sup> Ware, Ionascu and Truglia address the issue of Original Sin while Kallinikos and Truglia utilize the Church Fathers and Apocrypha in their arguments for the Dormition.<sup>55</sup>

Since the dogmatic definition of the Assumption happened in 1950, there is a long stretch of time between the actual event of the Assumption and the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption.<sup>56</sup> To survey the many pieces of literature that exist on the Assumption throughout history is far beyond the scope of this thesis and therefore this thesis restricts itself to the time periods that are analyzed. This thesis will use the method of geographical location of East and West and historical chronology to organize how the Dormition and/or Assumption was written and discussed throughout the history of the Church. The second chapter looks at the East; this chapter will start with the Apocryphon called the *Book of Mary's Repose* which is dated to the second century and end in 787

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Priest Who Evaluated Apparitions," *New York Times*, September 17, 2017, 22. Philip Eadan, *Karl Rahner, Modern Spiritual Masters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 10.

<sup>54</sup> Anthanasios Fourlas, "Kallinikos, Konstantinos Bas., 1910-2001," *Orthodoxes Forum* 16, no. 1 (2002): 97. The birth date for Ionascu is estimated from the date of the first book he published in 1999. Iuvenalie Ionascu, *Starețul Gheorghe de la Cernica și mișcarea paisiană* (Bucharest, Romania: Anastasia, 1999). His death date cannot be located. The date for Patrick Truglia is based on his first publication of an Academic Journal in which he was labeled as a Master of Arts at the time. Patrick Truglia, "Original Sin in The Byzantine Dormition Narratives," *Theological Review/ Revista Teologica*, no. 4 (January 2021): 11-12, [www.revistateologica.ro/04-2021/](http://www.revistateologica.ro/04-2021/).

<sup>55</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 222-225. Patrick Truglia, "Original Sin," 5. Iuvenalie Ionascu, "Incontro circa Maria Assunta con l'oriente Cristiano ortodosso," in *L'Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio: Significato storico-salvifico a 50 anni dalla definizione dogmatica*, ed. Gaspar Calvo Moralejo and Stefano Cecchin (Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2001), vi, 440-441. Konstantinos Kallinikos, "Koimesis," in vol. 3 of *Marielexikon*, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, (St. Ottilien, Germany: EOS Verlag, 1991), 598.

<sup>56</sup> MD, 47.

A.D. with the death of St. John Damascene.<sup>57</sup> The third chapter looks at the West; this chapter will start with the fourth century Church Father Saint Ambrose of Milan and ends with the letter by Pope Saint Nicholas I to the Bulgarians in 866 A.D. as he refers to the Assumption as the Assumption and not the Dormition.<sup>58</sup> Lastly, chapters four and five are restricted to 1944 to 2021 for the Immortalists and Mortalists because theological debate on the question of the death of Mary happened again with the proclamation of the dogma in the six years leading up to and after the proclamation of the dogma in 1950.<sup>59</sup>

### **1.5.1 Definitions for Body and Soul**

The definitions of soul and body is defined by the Roman Catholic Church as thus; the soul is “the spiritual principle,” or life, in man while the body is the matter that is animated by the soul.<sup>60</sup> The soul and body are created at the same time and the unity is so profound that “their union forms a single nature.”<sup>61</sup> “Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit” as the term spirit “signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end can gratuitously be raised beyond all that it deserves to communion with God.”<sup>62</sup> How the soul and body of a human being interact with one another as in relation to Mary from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church is dealt with in chapter four and chapter five respectively with the perspectives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in chapter five.

### **1.6.1 Explanations for Death and Corruption**

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<sup>57</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38-39. Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 400.

<sup>58</sup> Saint Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam Libre II*, vol. 15 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1845), 1574B. Nicholas the Great, *Responsa Nicolai Ad Consulta Bulgarorum*, vol. 119 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1852), 981A.

<sup>59</sup> MD, 47. Martin Jugie, *La Mort et L'Assomption De La Sainte Vierge* (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 70. Truglia, “Original Sin,” 1.

<sup>60</sup> CCC, 363-364.

<sup>61</sup> CCC, 365-366.

<sup>62</sup> CCC, 367.

For this thesis, death is synonymous with the euphemism “fallen asleep,” the language used by Saint Paul throughout Thessalonians and I and II Corinthians to describe death. Because the Dormition is a synonym for death, “death” must be defined. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, death is the separation of the soul from the body; the *Catechism* also adds that the soul “will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead.”<sup>63</sup> While death of the body is natural, it is supernaturally the punishment for sin as seen in Romans 6:23 and Genesis 2:17; to die in Christ is to participate in His redemptive death.<sup>64</sup> In the fifth chapter, this thesis will explore what death does to her soul if Mary did experience death.

According to Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches believe that death is the “disintegration of being” of a person. Death was introduced into the world after Adam rebelled against God; the human is “a unity of body and soul.”<sup>65</sup> Death for the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches is the same as the Dormition.<sup>66</sup> In chapters four and five, this thesis shows the specific Scripture verses that each side uses to justify their position on the Assumption and/or Dormition.

Another term that should be clarified is “corruption.” This thesis defines corruption as the decay of the body in the grave, as stated in *Munificentissimus Deus*.<sup>67</sup> Chapter four in this thesis makes further distinctions in the definition of corruption as corruption impacts how the soul and body are united.<sup>68</sup>

### **1.7.1 Meanings of Original Sin and Culpability**

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<sup>63</sup> CCC, 1005.

<sup>64</sup> CCC, 1006.

<sup>65</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 222-223, 232.

<sup>66</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204.

<sup>67</sup> MD, 14, 3, 40.

<sup>68</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340-342.

According to the *Catechism*, “Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience...”.<sup>69</sup> The definition of Original Sin for this thesis, also taken from the *Catechism*, is the sin that the first human beings chose when they disobeyed the commandment of God and instead chose to follow their own wills; the consequence for the first sin is the loss of the original holiness, and the introduction of sin and death into the world.<sup>70</sup> Original Sin also caused concupiscence which is the intense desire for sin and is contrary to human reason.<sup>71</sup>

According to Metropolitan Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches also believe that Original Sin introduced death into the world and that the will is weakened as a result.<sup>72</sup> Panayiotos Nellas (c. 1936 – 1986), a lay Eastern Orthodox theologian, adds that “sin ‘dissolved that inspired harmony of the choir,’ ... and so man fell and was mixed with the mire, he deserted to the serpent, dressed himself in dead skins and became a ‘corpse.’”<sup>73</sup>

For the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Roman Catholic Church believes in the Immaculate Conception or that Mary never had Original Sin; the Eastern Orthodox Churches have not made a formal pronouncement about the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>74</sup> How Original Sin is dealt with by the Immortalists and Mortalists will be discussed more fully in chapter four and chapter five respectively.

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<sup>69</sup> CCC, 1849.

<sup>70</sup> CCC, 396-412. CCC, Glossary, s.v. “Original Sin.”

<sup>71</sup> CCC, 405, 2515.

<sup>72</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 222-223.

<sup>73</sup> Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russel, ed. Christos Yannaras, Costa Carras, and Kallistos of Diokleia (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 9-10, 53.

<sup>74</sup> CCC, 491. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 259-260. The Roman Catholic justification and Eastern Orthodox discussion on the Immaculate Conception is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Imputability, i.e. the responsibility for an action a man commits, is also discussed in chapters four and five in relation to Original Sin.<sup>75</sup>

### **1.8.1 Final Introductory Remarks**

Sacred Scripture does not explicitly state the event of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Tradition of the Church Fathers explains belief in the Assumption through the use of typology.<sup>76</sup> Typology is the implicit prefigurations found in people, places, and events throughout Sacred Scripture that find their fulfillment in Christ.<sup>77</sup> The typology used by the various theologians and Church Fathers will also be discussed.

In order to classify whether an author or writing is Mortalist, Immortalist, agnostic, or silent on the death of Mary, the following method will be used. The author or writing is Mortalist if he or it writes “death” or “Dormition.” The author or writing is Immortalist if he or it says that Mary did not die. The author or writing is considered agnostic, or that one cannot know what happened at the end of the life of Mary if he or it says that one cannot know what happened to Mary at the end of her life, or silent if the author or writing does not comment on if Mary died or not. The second chapter will now analyze Church Fathers found in the East and what they said about the Assumption and/or Dormition.

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<sup>75</sup> CCC, 1735.

<sup>76</sup> Pope Pius XII, *MD*, 26.

<sup>77</sup> CCC, 128.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DORMITION IN THE EAST

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the history of the theological development of the understanding of the Dormition in the Eastern Church. As mentioned in chapter one, if the Church Father wrote in Greek or if the work was written in Greek, then he or the work will be considered Eastern and will be analyzed in this chapter. History has not preserved any possible writings of the Dormition from the Church Fathers in the first four centuries of the Church though the account of the Dormition is told in the Apocrypha as early as the second century.<sup>78</sup> Due to the uncertain historical origins for the records of the Dormition in terms of both doctrine and the celebration of the feast, this chapter focuses on how the Eastern side of the Church came to accept the Dormition as Church teaching. From the patterns of similarities and differences will arise theological distinctions among those who accept the Mortalist position and the small minority of the Immortalists.

#### 2.1.2 The United Church.

While the Eastern Orthodox are separated from the Roman Catholic Church now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the centuries that will be discussed in this chapter, the Roman Church was united with the Church in the East through the Pope.<sup>79</sup> The communion shared between the Churches is still so profoundly close that the *Catechism of the*

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<sup>78</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: A Study in Schism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 47.

*Catholic Church* says that little needs to be done to attain full communion again.<sup>80</sup> The Christian East and West were one Church back then, since they shared communion with the Pope, and so the Church Fathers that come from the Eastern side of the world are all recognized as authoritative in the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.<sup>81</sup> Because the Church Fathers talked about are shared by the Churches, for the sake of simplicity, the Church Fathers will be mentioned as coming from the Eastern Church and not with the labels of Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic. The Church Fathers in this chapter include patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, priests, and Christians who wrote anonymously. The physical churches located in the geographical area of the Eastern Mediterranean around Greece from this time will simply be called the Eastern Church too.

### **2.1.3 The Division of Mortalists and Immortalists**

The development of the dogma of the Dormition and Assumption has a long and complicated history. As with all events and people in history, the division of the people and writings who accept the Dormition and the Assumption of Mary do not fit into nice labels or compartments. While the Dormition originated in the East, there is at least one Eastern Church Father who takes the Immortalist side and there are Western Church Fathers who take the Mortalist camp.

The research done here aims to draw out of the complicated history certain patterns of similarities and differences so that one may observe how the development of

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<sup>80</sup> CCC, 838. The issues of what led to the schism between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Catholic Church and the historical development of the Eastern Churches who are in communion with Rome are far beyond the scope of the research conducted here. The research in this chapter aims to find common ground and not sow further division.

<sup>81</sup> CCC 816-817, 838. Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 126.



the dogma of the Assumption came to be. Because there are Church Fathers who do not seem to be for the Mortalist or Immortalist side, this chapter will look at all sides but focus only on Church Fathers that lived or flourished in the East. This chapter will also take into the account the Greek Dormition Apocrypha, the first records of the death of Mary.<sup>82</sup>

## **2.2.1 Second Century: The First Records for the End of the Life of the Blessed**

### **Virgin Mary**

The records that were preserved from the earliest Church were not theological treatises written by the Church Fathers but historical fiction of the end of the life of Mary found in the Apocrypha; forty different Apocryphal narratives still exist today.<sup>83</sup> The first written record that deals with the end of the earthly life of Mary is called the *Book of Mary's Repose*, also known as the *Liber Requiei*, written in the third century although complete works date from the fifth century.<sup>84</sup> As to the origin of the *Book of Mary's Repose*, the first traditions were probably written in Greek but the complete transcripts are known only in Syriac and Ethiopic; the earliest complete manuscript of the Greek dates from the sixth century.<sup>85</sup> The *Liber Requiei* was the first of the "Palm" traditions of the Assumption narrative that would inspire other Greek works such as those written by

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<sup>82</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38-39.

<sup>83</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Death and the Maiden: The Early History of the Dormition and Assumption Apocrypha," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006), 59-97, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001515239&site=eds-live>.

<sup>84</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38-39. The *Book of Mary's Repose* was given a Latin title as the work was unpublished at the time and the original discoverer was unable to identify which tradition the *Liber Requiei* belonged to even though the *Liber Requiei* was written in Greek.

<sup>85</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35-39. The *Liber Requiei* may itself be based on a work titled *Obsequies of the Holy Virgin* though this was written originally in Syriac. Other manuscripts exist in Georgian and Coptic so debate exists in which language the original was written.

John of Thessalonica (c. 7<sup>th</sup> century); it would also influence St. Gregory of Tours (c. 538 – 594), Psuedo-Melito of Sardis, and other Latin versions in the West.<sup>86</sup>

### **2.2.2 The “Palm” Narratives as Mortalist Literature**

The presence of a palm branch is why these narratives are called the “Palm” narratives and all follow the same basic format. Before her Dormition, the Blessed Virgin Mary is told by an angel that her death is coming soon and is given a palm from the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is the tree in Genesis 3:22 that would have given Adam and Eve eternal life if they ate of the fruit that came from that tree. The angel also recounts some past events in her life. Mary returns to Jerusalem and tells her loved ones that her end is near; the Apostles are brought miraculously on clouds from the ends of the earth. The Apostle John arrives first and Mary gives him the palm. The other Apostles come and Peter is distinguished as the leader. St. Peter gives a lengthy discourse and then Mary prepares for her death the next morning.<sup>87</sup>

In the morning, everyone present is miraculously put to sleep except for the Apostles. Jesus Christ arrives and receives the soul of Mary into heaven; the soul of Mary appears as an infant dressed in white clothes and Jesus hands her over to the Archangel Michael. After her soul is received by Christ, the Apostles carry her body outside of Jerusalem to a tomb located beneath the Mount of Olives near the Garden of Gethsemane. On their way to the tomb, the Jewish leaders plan to ruin the body of Mary. They are all struck with blindness when they attempt to destroy her body, and only one,

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<sup>86</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 33.

<sup>87</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 37-38.

Jephonias, reaches the funeral bier. An angel cuts off his hand and he converts; he is healed and preaches repentance back in Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup>

The Apostles finally reach the tomb and place her body inside. The Apostles also expect Christ to return for her body and wait for his coming into the tomb. St. Paul is present and starts an argument over how the Gospel should be preached. After three days have passed, Christ returns and vindicates the way that St. Paul has preached the Gospel. Jesus takes the body of Mary to paradise along with the Apostles so they can witness the joining of the soul and body of Mary in Heaven. The narrative concludes with a description of the places and rewards in heaven and the Apostles go back to Earth; Mary remains in heaven with her body and soul joined.<sup>89</sup>

The word that is used for Palm suggests a Greek origin for the earliest Assumption Apocrypha. In the Greek narrative, the word used for palm is βραβεῖον, or *brabeion*, and the use of the word here is unusual because the word usually signifies a prize which the early Christian martyrs received with their heavenly reward. St. Paul in Philippians 3:14 uses *brabeion* to signify the prize of new life in Christ for faithful Christians who persevere until the end of their lives. In the context of the Dormition narratives, one would expect the use of φοῖνιξ, or *phoenix*, as *phoenix* translates literally to “a palm frond.” The use of βραβεῖον raises questions about the identity of the object that is given to Mary from the Angel. The object remains in Western narratives as the Latin word *palma* is used; the ambiguity in the Eastern narratives reflect the tradition of palms representing royalty and the belief that the date palm was the kind of tree that the Tree of

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<sup>88</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38

<sup>89</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38.

Life was in the Book of Genesis.<sup>90</sup> Regardless of the use of the word βραβεῖον, the earliest narrative of the Dormition shows a tradition that is Mortalist. In the narrative, Mary underwent a natural death as her body only later joined her soul in heaven; the body did not undergo a corruption or decay in the grave at the time when her body was still on earth. Also, Mary was assumed on the third day like Christ; the “third-day” motif is based on the ancient Jewish belief that the body starts decaying after three days.<sup>91</sup>

### **2.3.1 Fourth Century: Saint Epiphanius of Salamis**

Outside of the Apocrypha, the first undisputed written historical record that still exists on the Assumption comes from the Church Father, St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. 310/320 – 403).<sup>92</sup> In their works that are truly attributed to them, Origen (c. 185-253) and St. Ephrem (c. 306-373), Church Fathers who lived earlier than St. Epiphanius, Origen and St. Ephrem, both mentioned the earthly death of Mary without any kind of Assumption for her. The authorship of the works in which Origen and St. Ephrem mention the Assumption is disputed. Of his writings that remain and are attributed to him, St. Epiphanius wrote two times in his work the *Panarion* on the question of whether Mary was assumed into heaven; St. Epiphanius seems to be open to the Assumption; he admits that Scripture does not tell what happened to the Blessed Virgin Mary but he uses typology and makes the connection of Mary to the Woman in Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse. He uses Revelation 12:13-14 which is when the woman flees into the desert where the dragon could not chase her; the woman going out into the

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<sup>90</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 40-41.

<sup>91</sup> Martin Pickup, “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 3 (2013): 520-521.

<sup>92</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 11.

desert is analogous to the Blessed Virgin Mary as she leaves the earth and enters heaven; both are making a physical movement from one place to another.<sup>93</sup>

The second time in the *Panarion* he writes on the Assumption, he says that she is like Elijah who was taken and has not seen death.<sup>94</sup> He seems more doubtful about what happened to her body though because later on in his *Panarion*, the verb he uses to describe the attainment of heaven by Mary implies a future tense which may seem like a denial of the Assumption of her body.<sup>95</sup> He also describes three ways in which the life of Mary could have ended; firstly, she could have died a virgin with honor. Secondly, she could have died a martyr since that was common at the time and it would be a fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon from Luke 2:35; lastly, she could have remained alive by the grace of God. He says that ultimately no one knows which of these three ways had happened to her.<sup>96</sup> Since no one knows what happened to the Blessed Virgin Mary at the end of her life, he cannot definitively affirm or deny the Assumption took place.<sup>97</sup> Since he does not take a position on what happened to her body, he cannot be said to be Mortalist or Immortalist, but rather agnostic.

### **2.3.2 Saint Epiphanius and His Connection to the Six Books Apocryphon**

St. Epiphanius appears cautious about what happened to Mary because he was writing against heresies during his time; he did not want to make the heresies more prominent than they already were.<sup>98</sup> He was writing against the Antidicomarians who

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<sup>93</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 126.

<sup>94</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, trans. Frank Williams (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J Brill, 1997), 624.

<sup>95</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 124.

<sup>96</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 619.

<sup>97</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 609.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Haffner, "The Assumption of Our Lady," in *Mariology: A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*, ed. Mark Miravalle (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing, 2007), 320.

denied the virginity of Mary and in order to refute her virginity emphasized her humanity.<sup>99</sup> He also wrote against the Kollyridians who he thought held the view that Mary should be worshipped but recent research has instead suggested that the practice of the Kollyridians worshipping Mary could have been an early example of veneration of the saints.<sup>100</sup> St. Epiphanius is known to have criticized veneration of the saints.<sup>101</sup> According to Shoemaker, the Kollyridians could also have been confused with the Six Books Apocryphon.<sup>102</sup> The Six Books Apocryphon is another Dormition Narrative known mostly from Syriac sources.<sup>103</sup>

The Kollyridians can be traced to the Six Books based on the various liturgical practices described in the text; the Kollyridians celebrated December 24<sup>th</sup>, May 15<sup>th</sup>, and August 13<sup>th</sup> as Marian feast days, the same Marian feast days found in the Six Books Apocryphon, and both the Six Books Apocryphon and the Kollyridians call for the offering of bread in their celebrations.<sup>104</sup> St. Epiphanius notes that he heard of the Kollyridians as word of the sect travelled from Thrace and Scythia.<sup>105</sup> The story of the Six Books Apocryphon travelling throughout Greece could also explain why the Six Books Apocryphon would have been also thought to be a sect of worshippers instead of a book as the narrative could have been told differently similar to the game of telephone

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<sup>99</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 601-602, 620.

<sup>100</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 621. Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 375.

<sup>101</sup> Shoemaker, "Kollyridians," 382. St. Epiphanius says Christians must only honor saints while only the three Persons of the Trinity can be venerated in order to avoid undue excess of the saints and give proper veneration to God. The word he uses to show honor in Greek is *τιμῆ*, or *tīmē*, while the Greek word he uses for veneration is *προσκυνεῖσθω*, or *proskyneistho*.

<sup>102</sup> Shoemaker, "Kollyridians," 385.

<sup>103</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 187-188.

<sup>104</sup> Shoemaker, "Kollyridians," 620.

<sup>105</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 620.

where each person told the next person the narrative with slight variances from what he or she originally heard.

According to Shoemaker, even though St. Epiphanius may have gotten his source for the Kollyridians from Syriac sources, the earlier source for the Six Books Apocryphon is probably in Greek; the source likely comes from the work “The Birth and Assumption of Our Lady the Immaculate Theotokos” in a collection of works called the *Tübingen Theosophy* that may date from the same time as Epiphanius in the fourth century.<sup>106</sup> The complete Greek source survived only in Syriac sources. The manuscripts for the Six Books Apocryphon make a second group of Dormition narratives called the “Bethlehem” narratives because many of the important narrative elements take place in Bethlehem instead of Jerusalem. Unlike the “Palm” Tradition which differ from one manuscript to the next, the Bethlehem collection of narratives all seem to be influenced by each other as the two complete Syriac manuscripts may have influenced future manuscripts to be written very similarly.<sup>107</sup> The Bethlehem Narrative then influenced the *Transitus* attributed to St. John the Evangelist.<sup>108</sup>

Also known as the *Discourse on the Dormition*, the only surviving manuscripts of the *Transitus* date much later in the tenth century though the use of certain liturgical practices indicates that the original text dates to the late fifth or early sixth century. This Apocrypha follows the same narrative as the other Bethlehem narratives but also includes the Palm from the “Palm” narratives.<sup>109</sup> The *Transitus* is the most popular of the

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<sup>106</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 54. The work itself may come from an older unnamed lost transcript that are related to the *Protoevangelium of James*. The two works share a preface.

<sup>107</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 46-47.

<sup>108</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 47, 51.

<sup>109</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 51.

Dormition Apocrypha with over 100 manuscripts surviving to the present day; the *Transitus* is a condensed version of the narrative told in the Six Books Apocryphon.<sup>110</sup>

### **2.3.3 The Bethlehem Dormition Narrative in the Six Books Apocryphon**

The more expanded narrative found in the Six Books Apocryphon starts with an introduction on how the Books were found after having been lost for some time. A group of men living on Mount Sinai were interested in how Mary came to the end of her life and asked the Bishop of Jerusalem if Mary died and, if so, how did she die. The Bishop could not find the book and so ordered the men to look for the book throughout the world. After many journeys, the men arrive at Ephesus at the house of St. John where, after they had fallen asleep, St. John appears and gives the Book to them.<sup>111</sup>

The fictional book in the narrative states that Mary had a custom of praying at the tomb of Christ much to the chagrin of the Jewish leaders. They convince the Roman authorities to post sentries around the tomb in order to stop her from praying near the tomb. When Mary next arrives at the tomb to pray, she is driven away from Jerusalem to her house in Bethlehem. She is told of her coming death by an angel and leaves on her own accord. In Bethlehem, she performs many miracles and gains the attention of the Jewish leaders; they convince the Roman authorities to capture her and the Apostles who have joined her. Mary and the Apostles are miraculously swept away into the air by the Holy Spirit and are transported back to Jerusalem.<sup>112</sup>

The soldiers sent by the Romans find no one at her house in Bethlehem but the Jewish leaders eventually find her in her house at Jerusalem; the Jewish leaders proceed

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<sup>110</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 53.

<sup>111</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 53.

<sup>112</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 52



to burn her house down. The fire blazes out of the doors though and kills many of the leaders and bystanders. Following the great fire, the Roman governor decides to host a debate between the believers of Christ and the unbelievers. After the debate, the governor awards the believers as the winners and, in some narratives, converts to Christianity himself while ordering the Jewish leaders to reveal the location of the relics used in the Crucifixion of Christ.<sup>113</sup>

Similar to the “Palm” narratives, the Apostles carry Mary towards her tomb near Gethsemane albeit she is still alive; also like the “Palm” narratives, she is attacked by a mob and the leader Jephonias has his arm cut off. In this narrative, he is healed through the intercession of Mary. While the apostles take care of Mary at her tomb, Christ comes and receives the soul of Mary into heaven. In the Bethlehem narratives, there is an omission of her body joining her soul and some do not have her body join her soul until the General Resurrection. Similar to the “Palm” narratives, the narratives conclude with a description of the rewards in heaven for the righteous.<sup>114</sup>

The Bethlehem narratives that have her body reunite with her soul at the General Resurrection disagree with both the Mortalists and Immortalists. The Mortalists and Immortalists both agree that Mary was taken into heaven body and soul but here the omission of her body rising to heaven makes these types of narratives disagree with them. The omission of her body going to heaven is seen today as heretical since the present day Roman Catholic Church ruled on her bodily Assumption into heaven at the end of her earthly life.<sup>115</sup> The omission of her body going to heaven was probably an honest attempt

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<sup>113</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 52.

<sup>115</sup> *MD*, 44-46.

to explain what happened to the Blessed Virgin Mary as there was no authoritative ruling back when the narrative was first written.

#### **2.4.1 Fifth Century: *Act of John* by Psuedo-Prochorus**

Other Dormition Apocrypha traditions exist outside of the “Palm” narratives and the “Bethlehem” narratives though their origins are outside Greece.<sup>116</sup> After the fourth century with St. Epiphanius and the Six Books Apocryphon, the fifth century is mainly silent on the issue of the Dormition until the end of the century with a fragmentary narrative on the Dormition called the *Act of John* by Psuedo-Prochorus (fl. fifth century). Focused mostly on the life of St. John, the apocrypha details the wondrous activities that he performed on the island of Patmos; the Apocrypha by Psuedo-Prochorus takes many of the same stories from an earlier Apocrypha dated from the second century also called the *Act of John*.<sup>117</sup> What makes the fifth-century Apocrypha *Act of John* special for the Assumption is that the narrative refers to the Dormition of Mary.<sup>118</sup> Unlike most of the earlier “Palm” and “Bethlehem” narratives which have the Apostles going forth to preach the Gospel before the death of Mary, the *Act of John* has the Apostles leaving to preach the Gospel after the death of Mary; Shoemaker says that the Apostles leaving after the death of Mary in the *Act of John* points to a later date for when the *Act of John* was written since the dispersal contradicts the earlier narratives.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 57. There exists a group of narratives that come from the Coptic Tradition but are united through their prescription of liturgical practices. Many other narratives, such as a narrative in a homily by the Syriac Church Father, Jacob of Serug, do not follow any of the three mentioned collection of Traditions. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 63.

<sup>117</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 26-27.

<sup>118</sup> Psuedo-Prochorus, “The Travels of John the Son of Zebedee,” in *Acta Mythologica Apostolorum*, ed. Agnes Lewis Smith (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1904), 37, <https://archive.org/details/actamythologica00guidgoog/page/36/mode/2up>. This Apocryphon is also known as “The Travels of John the Son of Zebedee.”

<sup>119</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 26-27.

The mention of the end of the life of Mary is very brief but the passage does lend some insight into the Dormition. The passage relevant to the Dormition starts off with the scene of the disciples being present at Gethsemane after Christ has ascended. The Ethiopic translation of the Apocrypha mentions that they are at the grave of Mary though the resting place of Mary is absent in the Greek. The opening scene then has St. Peter urging the rest of the Apostles to start preaching the Gospel after the death of Mary as they are filled with sorrow over the departure of Mary from this life. The rest of Apocrypha then details the adventures of St. John and his disciple Prochorus but does not refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary after the initial proclamation by St. Peter.<sup>120</sup> Since the *Act of John* mentions the demise of Mary, the *Act of John* is an example of a Mortalist writing.

#### **2.4.2 Fifth Century: Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite**

Another mention of the Dormition is by Pseudo-Dionysius who is an anonymous author of a collection of fifth century works that has had a profound impact on spirituality in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>121</sup> One work in this collection of the Apocrypha attributed to him, *The Divine Names*, implies the Dormition of Mary even though the text is mainly focused on Hierotheus, the fictional teacher of Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>122</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius does not describe the exact events that happened in the Dormition but he does report a vision in which he, his teacher, and the Apostles saw the mortal body of the Blessed

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<sup>120</sup> Pseudo-Prochorus, "Travels," 37.

<sup>121</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 29. Jaroslav Pelikan, introduction to *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, by Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite, 11, trans. and ed. Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

<sup>122</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite, *The Divine Names*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 69-70.

Virgin Mary in an unspecified time and place; he also affirms that St. James, the brother of the Lord, and St. Peter can attest to witnessing the vision of Mary.<sup>123</sup>

There has been some debate over whether the term “body” is a reference to Mary or the Eucharist but recent scholarship has suggested that the reference is about Mary. Evidence for the reference being Mary is based on early commentaries on Psuedo-Dionysius that affirm the reference as being about Mary. Original scholarship thought that this interpretation of this passage from Psuedo-Dionysius came from Saint Maximus the Confessor (580-662) but recent scholarship has instead demonstrated that the interpretation came from the early Church figure John of Scythopolis (fl. 536 – 550). John of Scythopolis lived much closer to the time range to when Psuedo-Dionysius is thought to have been written. Because of the use of the word “mortal” to describe the state of her body, this implies a Mortalist view and so is one instance of the many Mortalist writings that developed in the East.<sup>124</sup>

### **2.5.1 Sixth Century: Timothy of Jerusalem**

Timothy of Jerusalem (c. 6<sup>th</sup> century) was the name given to the priest of a homily, tentatively dated at the sixth century, on the Presentation of Jesus; nothing else is known about the life of Timothy of Jerusalem.<sup>125</sup> The homily focuses on the prophecy given by Simeon to Mary explaining the sorrows she will experience as the Mother of God but the priest makes a passing reference to the Assumption of Mary.<sup>126</sup> Timothy of

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<sup>123</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagate, *The Divine Names*, 70. Psuedo-Dionysius does not clarify if he meant the mortal body of Mary was alive or dead when the Apostles saw her. Psuedo-Dionysius also does not clarify what he meant by vision.

<sup>124</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 30.

<sup>125</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Tradition*, 15. Martin Jugie, who has written on the Assumption for the Vatican, argued that the homily dates from the fourth or fifth century although Bernard Capelle argued for a sixth to eighth century date. This thesis follows the dating of the sixth century by Shoemaker.

<sup>126</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 15.

Jerusalem says that “Therefore the Virgin is immortal to this day, seeing that he who dwelt in her transported her to the regions of her Assumption.”<sup>127</sup> Unlike other dormition texts from the East which told of Mary falling asleep before her body entered heaven, Timothy says that she remains immortal; she remains immortal because she was holy in all ways, she was blameless above all people, and she was the Mother who held Jesus in her. Timothy of Jerusalem notes that even though the sword prophesied by Symeon pierced her, she remains alive unlike what would typically happen when a sword pierces somebody, i.e. he dies.<sup>128</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem also compares Mary to the biblical figures of Elijah and Enoch as Elijah and Enoch were taken alive to heaven.<sup>129</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem does not write more on how the Blessed Virgin Mary remains immortal or in what way her body arrived to heaven. The presence of the word “immortal” sides with the Immortalists but the homily does not elaborate further on what he means by immortal.

### **2.5.2 Sixth Century: The Byzantine Liturgy**

Other than the Apocrypha and Church Fathers, another witness to the devotion of the Assumption lies within the liturgy. The first definitive Marian feasts, other than the possible Kollyridian liturgical celebrations, were of generic character and celebrated during the fourth century; the current hypothesis for the origin of the celebration of the feast is an August 15<sup>th</sup> celebration entry in the Armenian lectionary that was celebrated in a now abandoned sanctuary dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Lectionary was used by a Church called the *Kathisma*. *Kathisma* translates to “seat” because it is where

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<sup>127</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon*, 245C, translated by Michael O’Carroll, in Michael O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazer, Inc., 198),

<sup>128</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon*, 245C.

<sup>129</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon*, 236C, 240A. Timothy of Jerusalem does not cite Scripture verses.

it is believed to be the place where Mary sat on her way from Nazareth to Jerusalem and the feast also honors the dedication of the sanctuary of the Church.<sup>130</sup> The Lectionary dates to around the mid-fifth century during the reign of Bishop St. Juvenal of Jerusalem (c. 422 – 458). One homily that was apparently preached at *Kathisma* was attributed to St. Proclus of Constantinople (c. 390-446) who had lived earlier and came from farther away; while St. Proclus does not say how the Blessed Virgin Mary died, he does title his homily “the Dormition” which would make this homily on the Mortalist side.<sup>131</sup>

The Byzantine empire eventually adopted the feast and, the celebration of the feast was transferred over from Jerusalem to the supposed tomb of Mary in Gethsemane in the year 500; the title of the feast contained the Greek word κοίμησις or *koimesis* which translates to Dormition and was celebrated to specifically commemorate the death of Mary. The feast gained so much popularity that in 602, the Byzantine emperor Maurice (c. 539 – 602) had the feast spread throughout the entire empire.<sup>132</sup>

The name of the feast was ἀνάλημψις or *analepsis*, literally meaning “being taken away” and gives the English translation as “Assumption,” emphasizing the aspect of her removal from the Earth to Heaven; the word *análepsis* implies that a removal of a person

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<sup>130</sup> Danilo Maria Sartor, “Assunta: III. Celebrazione Liturgica,” in *Nuovo Dizionario Di Mariologia*, ed. Stefano De Fiores and Salvatore Meo (Turin: Edizioni Paolini, 1985), 179-180. Rina Avner, introduction to *The Kathisma Church and Monastery of Mary Theotokos on the Jerusalem – Bethlehem Road: Final Report of the 1992, 1997, 1999 and 2000 Excavation Seasons*, by Donald T. Ariel et al., (Jerusalem, Israel: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2022), 3-4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2gjwmpj.5>. The aim of the research is to analyze the Greek –speaking East. While the Armenian lectionary predates the adoption of the feast by the Byzantines, the chronology looks at the timeline of the celebration of the feast of the Dormition by the Byzantines the Greeks. The section of the liturgy will therefore be analyzed and placed in the sixth century and not the fifth century.

<sup>131</sup> Mary B. Cunningham, *The Virgin Mary in Byzantium, c. 400-1000 CE: Hymns, Homilies and Hagiography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 70.

<sup>132</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 274-275.

was done through the power of someone else.<sup>133</sup> A homily during the feast given by Theoteknos the Bishop of Livias in 550 utilizes the word *análepsis*.<sup>134</sup> The Byzantine Liturgy is Mortalist.

### **2.5.2 The Homily of the Assumption Given by Theoteknos of Livias**

Theoteknos was bishop of the city of Livias and gave a homily, tentatively dated to c. 550, on the Assumption of Mary.<sup>135</sup> Not much is known about Bishop Theoteknos and the homily given by him spends more time praising the Ever-Virgin Mary. Since the homily was orated during the feast of the Assumption, the Bishop does attempt to argue doctrinally for the Assumption.<sup>136</sup> The Bishop throughout the course of the homily affirms several times that Mary was assumed into heaven bodily and makes references to previous Apocrypha stories.<sup>137</sup> Doctrinally, Theoteknos makes the following argument:

It was fitting that her most holy body, that body which bore God, a body divinized, incorruptible, illumined with divine light and full of glory, be transported by the Apostles, in the company of the angels, entrusted for a short time to the earth and elevated to Heaven in glory, with her soul welcomed by God.<sup>138</sup>

To justify the Assumption, the Bishop connects Mary as the Mother of God and her Perpetual Virginity to the Assumption; since she was the Mother of God and inviolate, it was fitting that her soul and body were received by God.<sup>139</sup> The Bishop also uses other lines of theological arguments in order to justify the Assumption of Mary; the Bishop refers to the biblical figures of Enoch and Elijah who also underwent a type of

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<sup>133</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., ed. Henry Stuart Jones, (Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1961), 111.

<sup>134</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275. Livias was a city on the west bank of the Jordan which ceased to be a bishopric later in 649 after the Muslim invasion so the homily by Theoteknos was preached before then.

<sup>135</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275.

<sup>136</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 65.

<sup>137</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275.

<sup>138</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275.

<sup>139</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275.

Assumption, and the Bishop parallels the Assumption to the Ascension of Christ. The word *análepsis* implies that a removal of a person was done through the power of someone else. In the gospels that relate to the Ascension of Christ, the passive forms of the word *análepsis*, *anelēmphthē* and *analēmphtheis*, are used to denote that the humanity of Christ was taken up to heaven passively through the active power of the divinity of Christ. He ends the homily by stating that Mary intercedes for us now that she is in Heaven.<sup>140</sup>

In another part of the homily, Theoteknos orates that her body and soul were taken up to heaven by the angels.<sup>141</sup> Because of the use of the *análepsis*, it is possible that this passage implies that her body and soul were taken up at the same exact time although more research can be done to clarify if the Church Fathers used *análepsis* to demonstrate that Mary rose body and soul to heaven at the same time. It is also possible that if he wanted to show that Mary left her body on earth for a few days, he would have used *koimesis* instead. If Bishop Theoteknos were to imply that her body and soul were taken up at the same time, the homily would be another Greek text that shows Immortalist tendencies. The homily by Theoteknos paired with the homily by Timothy of Jerusalem could show a line of Immortalist thought as early as the Sixth Century.

### **2.6.1 Seventh Century: *The Life of the Virgin***

The authorship of a biography on the Blessed Virgin Mary titled *Life of the Virgin* has been highly debated.<sup>142</sup> The *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Saint Maximus the

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<sup>140</sup> Francesca Dell'Aqua and Marianna Cerno, "The Earliest Homilies on Mary's Assumption: Ambrose Autpert and the Byzantine Tradition," *Viator* 51, no. 2 (2020): p. 30. <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.5.128748>.

<sup>141</sup> Dell'Aqua, "Ambrose Autpert," 30.

<sup>142</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 73-74. This thesis will follow the opinion of Shoemaker who accepts this work as being authentically written by Maximus. The authorship of *Life of the Virgin* by St. Maximus



confessor, a monk of Constantinople, is the first known complete Dormition account that has survived in Greek.<sup>143</sup> Saint Maximus, the attributed author, appears to have been influenced by the Dormition Apocrypha as he recounts much of the same narrative in his *Life of the Virgin*; for example, he seems to be inspired by the “Palm” tradition as he has Mary receiving a date palm from the tree of life from the angel; the angel also announces that the end of her life is near.<sup>144</sup>

He also uses earlier Dormition writings as he names Dionysius the Aeropagite and says that in addition to all of the Apostles, many other disciples were present at the death of Mary as Hierotheus, the teacher of Dionysius, was also present.<sup>145</sup> The Apostles and disciples also witness Christ receiving the soul of Mary; then both Jesus and the soul of Mary go to heaven.<sup>146</sup> The Apostles and disciples do not witness to the Assumption of Mary; they discover her empty tomb and conclude that Christ brought her body up to heaven.<sup>147</sup> The *Life of the Virgin* presumably from Saint Maximus details the Dormition and so would be on the Mortalist side.

### **2.6.2 Seventh Century: Saint Modestus of Jerusalem**

A homily on the Dormition given by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, St. Modestus (d. 634), in 634 tries to justify that the event of the Assumption of Mary took place based on

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has been highly disputed as many favor the pseudonymity of this work. Truglia, “Original Sin,” 11-12. Stephen Shoemaker, “Introduction,” in *The Life of the Virgin*, trans. Stephen J. Shoemaker (London, England: Yale University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>143</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 73.

<sup>144</sup> Maximus the Confessor, “The Dormition,” in *The Life of the Virgin*, trans. Stephen J. Shoemaker (London, England: Yale University Press, 2012), 130.

<sup>145</sup> Maximus, *Life of the Virgin*, 133. Dionysius is the orthonym for Psuedo-Dionysius the Aeropagite of the previous collection of works mentioned section 2.4.2 of this thesis.

<sup>146</sup> Maximus, *Life of the Virgin*, 136.

<sup>147</sup> Maximus, *Life of the Virgin*, 141.

certain doctrinal points while implicitly excluding the Apocrypha.<sup>148</sup> St. Modestus indirectly omits the Apocrypha by stating that only God knows how the Assumption took place; he further argues that Jesus is the giver of life and he also says that Jesus reclothed Mary with incorruptibility.<sup>149</sup> St. Modestus is the first Church Father to argue for the Assumption using the Incarnation of Christ; Christ assumed flesh from Mary and, at the end of her life, clothed her with incorruptibility so that she could join Him in heaven in fulfillment of Psalm 45:9 where the Queen stands at the right hand of the king.<sup>150</sup> The rest of the homily is mostly in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary with his use of the word glorious to describe Mary as he does not expand his argument for the Assumption.<sup>151</sup> Since he states that only God knows how the Assumption took place, his homily cannot be attributed to either the Mortalist or Immortalist side but rather agnostic.<sup>152</sup>

### **2.6.3 Seventh Century: John of Thessalonica**

A homily preached by John the Metropolitan of Thessalonica is dated anywhere from 610 to 649 and draws heavily from the “Palm” tradition of Dormition narratives.<sup>153</sup> He does omit what he thinks are the more doctrinally incorrect portions of the Apocrypha in order to make them more in line with the Church teaching at the time and usable for the Liturgy.<sup>154</sup> The biggest issue that John of Thessalonica wants to correct is the previous incorrect identification of Jesus as a “Cherub of Light” since Jesus is not an

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<sup>148</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 275-276. The date and authorship of the homily was somewhat debated in the past as the homily may have been given in the end of the seventh century. The homily can now be truly attributed to St. Modestus.

<sup>149</sup> Modestus of Jerusalem, *Dormitionem Sanctissimae Dominae Nostrae Deipare semperque Virginis Mariae*, vol. 86B of *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865), 3312B.

<sup>150</sup> Modestus, *Dormitionem*, 3289C.

<sup>151</sup> Modestus, *Dormitionem*, 3289C.

<sup>152</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 276.

<sup>153</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35.

<sup>154</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 54.

angel.<sup>155</sup> John of Thessalonica blames the heterodox errors as the reason why the Church had until his time not officially written much on the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary but the time had come to find the correct story to praise God and the saints.<sup>156</sup>

The homily follows the same narrative structure of the “Palm” narratives as the homily includes an account of the Blessed Virgin Mary leaving the body and Christ putting her soul into the hands of Michael for safe passage to heaven.<sup>157</sup> Miraculously, the body of Mary continues to verbally praise Jesus even though her soul is gone from her body as the Apostles look on in amazement; Jesus promises Mary that he will not abandon her.<sup>158</sup> The narrative in the homily then follows the same pattern of the earlier “Palm” narratives with the funeral bier but the homily ends with the Apostles checking on the tomb of Mary after three days similar to how Christ resurrected after three days; they find the tomb empty with only her funeral garments left and come to the realization that Christ returned again to reclaim her body which is now reunited with her soul in heaven.<sup>159</sup> The homily is one of the biggest proponents of the Mortalist argument because the body of Mary in the homily is shown to be distinct from the soul of Mary and is left behind for three days to “sleep” before being reunited with the soul again in heaven.

### **2.7.1 Eighth Century: Saint Germanus of Constantinople**

Saint Germanus, the Patriarch of Constantinople (c. 639 – 740), was the first Church Father in the eighth century to write on the Assumption of Mary; the Patriarch

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<sup>155</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 217.

<sup>156</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 210.

<sup>157</sup> John of Thessalonica, “The Dormition of Our Lady, The Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary,” in *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies*, trans. Brian E. Daley (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 63.

<sup>158</sup> John, “Dormition,” 64.

<sup>159</sup> John, “Dormition,” 67.

was primarily known for his defense of veneration of images and the Saints during the iconoclastic period, and he defended the veneration with several homilies on the topic of the Assumption. Saint Germanus draws heavily from the Homily by John of Thessalonica but, compared to John, adds more doctrinal statements. He argues that Mary being assumed into heaven was fitting since she was the vessel through which Christ entered the world. St. Germanus makes a more compelling argument that Mary was privileged as the Mother of God, and Christ, out of filial piety, would not let her suffer corruption in the grave; Theoteknos also made the argument for the Assumption based on the Divine Maternity, although St. Germanus adds the corollary of filial piety to his argument. Moreover, St. Germanus adds that God also gave to Mary the gift of the Assumption so that she could better intercede for men on earth.<sup>160</sup>

In an example of a writing for the Mortalist side, St. Germanus argues that it would be normal for Mary to undergo death since all of humanity, even Christ, experienced death due to his Incarnation as a man who shares in all bodily conditions; similar to how Christ experienced death and resurrected, so too does Mary experience the Resurrection through the power of Christ. Therefore, Mary had to die in order to confirm the reality of the Incarnation; St. Germanus argues that if Christ who truly became flesh ascended, then so too does the physical Mother who housed the incarnated flesh of Christ have to ascend in order to complete the mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>161</sup> St. Germanus argues for the Mortalist position through doctrinal arguments which differs from the previous Apocrypha that believed in the Mortalist side through the use of narratives.

### **2.7.2 Eighth Century: Saint Andrew of Crete**

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<sup>160</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 384.

<sup>161</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 385-386.

Saint Andrew of Crete (c. 650- 740) was the Metropolitan Archbishop of the island of Crete until his death in 740 and a famed hymnist who wrote five homilies on the death and Assumption of Mary. St. Andrew uses the same arguments from St. Germanus that Mary conformed the end of her life to Christ but also argues that the death Mary underwent was not a punishment for the sin of Adam. She died in order to bring hope to men that death is not punishment but instead leads to the ultimate end in Christ.<sup>162</sup>

St. Andrew does not clarify if her body was assumed into heaven before or after she fell asleep as he does not know the correct response; he does argue for the death of Mary which would be the Mortalist position. St. Andrew points out that everyone can see that Mary did not undergo corruption as shown with the empty tomb, linen wraps, and witnesses from the Apostles. He notes three possibilities as to what happened at the Assumption. First, her body and soul recomposed into a unity together at the same time. Second, the body stayed on earth and the soul in heaven and, then either the soul or body were joined with the body or soul respectively. Last, her body and soul underwent a supernatural experience and were completely renewed since she received Christ in a mystery beyond human understanding.<sup>163</sup> In addition to Saint Germanus and Saint Andrew of Crete, Saint John Damascene also provides theological arguments for the Assumption.

### **2.7.3 Eighth Century: Saint John Damascene**

The last of the Church Fathers, St. John Damascene (c. 675/676 – 749) offers three homilies on the Dormition; he was a priest and monk in Jerusalem. He explicitly affirms that the Assumption happened; he teaches that she put on incorruptibility and

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<sup>162</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 391-396.

<sup>163</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 396.

turned aside her mortal life to conform herself to Christ in his death. She put on incorruptibility as a result of her virginity; since Mary was untouched by birth so too does her body remain untouched by corruption in the grave. He also uses the same arguments of St. Germanus and St. Andrew of Crete who argue for the Assumption based on the fittingness and privilege of being the Mother of God.<sup>164</sup>

In his second homily, Saint John Damascene lists seven arguments that the Assumption happened: (1) the flesh of Mary cannot undergo corruption from punishment due to her flesh comingling the divine flesh of Christ; (2) she was not bound to the punishment of physical birth pains found in Eve and gave birth to Christ free from pain; likewise, she was not bound to the chains of death when she died; (3) Jesus preserved the virginity of Mary and could do the same with her in the grave by preserving her from corruption; (4) “Mary must be in heaven not only in the soul but also in the body;” (5) the promise of Jesus being with his disciples applies most appropriately to Mary; (6) Christ saves his disciples from being lost which would apply most appropriately to Mary; (7) anyone who denies the Assumption needs to provide reasons against the Assumption. In addition to the Apocrypha, St. John Damascene was influential in the reception on the Dormition and/or Assumption from the East into the West due to presenting arguments entirely from reason. He assumes the death of Mary happened and so reveals Mortalist tendencies.<sup>165</sup>

### **2.8.1 The Migration from East to West of the Celebration of the Assumption**

The Eastern part of the Church has a rich tradition of stories which seek to explain what happened to Mary at the end of her life and the many examples of the story show

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<sup>164</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 400-404.

<sup>165</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 279. Saint John Damascene does not elaborate more on his fourth argument.

widespread devotion amongst the faithful. The Apocrypha could be an extension of how the laity sought to explain devotion of the Assumption as passed down from the oral tradition of the Apostles.<sup>166</sup> Due to the popular devotional tradition, the Magisterium, i.e. the bishops, had to clarify what was orthodox and what was not as seen with the previously covered homilies in the later centuries that celebrated the Dormition. The response of the Church hierarchy and magisterium in its acceptance of the Dormition and/or Assumption as shown in the Church Fathers and liturgy drove Church teaching in the Assumption and/or Dormition in the first few centuries of the Catholic Church.<sup>167</sup>

From the records that are extant, it appears that due to the popular demand of celebrating the Dormition and the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the devotion went from laity-led belief in the Dormition to public celebration; Emperor Maurice of Byzantium had extended the liturgical celebrations of the Dormition to the entire Byzantine Empire by ascribing the feast to August 15<sup>th</sup> in order to satisfy demand.<sup>168</sup> The government policy of extending the celebration of the Dormition worked to establish the Dormition as a universal feast as shown by the many homilies with the examples of John of Thessalonica and Theoteknos of Livias.<sup>169</sup>

### **2.9.1 Conclusion**

This chapter ends with the Church Father St. John Damascene because the Roman Catholic Church considers St. John Damascene the last of all the Church Fathers.<sup>170</sup> From

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<sup>166</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 19.

<sup>167</sup> Mary B. Cunningham, "The Use of the Protoevangelion of James in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God," in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011), 203-204.

<sup>168</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 274-275.

<sup>169</sup> John, "Dormition," 67. Hauke, *Mariology*, 275.

<sup>170</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 400.

the Eastern Apocrypha and Greek Fathers, the explanation of the Dormition and/or Assumption does not fall into strict categories of the Mortalist and Immortalist debate. However, a general pattern appears that the early Apocrypha, especially from the “Palm” traditions, contained the narrative that Mary fell asleep before her body was reunited again with her soul.<sup>171</sup> The narratives affirming that Mary fell asleep are in contrast to the Church Fathers who were generally more hesitant in ascribing how Mary was assumed into heaven; Church Fathers like St. Epiphanius would not explain how the body of Mary joined with her soul.<sup>172</sup> The homily by St. Modestus even urges the listeners to accept that only God knows how the Assumption took place.<sup>173</sup>

The Eastern Church Fathers exercise caution in affirming the Assumption since the teaching of the Assumption was not declared in their time. The Eastern Church Fathers teach what was handed down from them and would try to teach in consistency and fidelity with the Church Tradition; the teachings of the Assumption would have been passed down as shown with St. Andrew of Crete using the same arguments with St. Germanus of Constantinople.<sup>174</sup> Some of the Eastern Church Fathers, like St. Epiphanius, lived in the time when the Church Teaching of Mary being the Mother of God was still being argued amongst the bishops.<sup>175</sup> The Western Church Fathers exercise the same caution as the next chapter demonstrates.

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<sup>171</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 38.

<sup>172</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 619.

<sup>173</sup> Modestus, *Dormitionem*, 3289C.

<sup>174</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 391. CCC 78, 688

<sup>175</sup> CCC 436. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 11. The Council of Ephesus which declared Mary as being the Mother of God was declared in 431, several decades after St. Epiphanius had died.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE ADOPTION OF THE ASSUMPTION BY THE WEST

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

The third chapter covers the theological and liturgical adoption of the Assumption in the Western part of the Church. Like the history of the Dormition in the Eastern part of the Church, the Western side of the Church does not follow the strict delineation of sides between Immortalists and Mortalists. This chapter looks at the development of the understanding of the Assumption in the West in chronological order from the Apocrypha written in the fourth century to a letter written in 866 by Pope Saint Nicholas.<sup>176</sup>

The earliest writings on the Assumption and/or Dormition in the Western Church predate the acceptance of the feast by Pope St. Sergius as the earliest year for the Western celebration of the Dormition could be 650.<sup>177</sup> The references are useful in understanding how the West at first understood the feast. This chapter will therefore take a chronological approach starting with the earliest references in the Western side of the Church at that time in order to draw out an understanding of the Mortalist and Immortalist distinction. Considering the earliest sources in the West about the Assumption will also draw out a general pattern of how the understanding of the Assumption changed over time in the early part of the Latin Church.

#### 3.2.1 Fourth Century: The “Palm” narrative found in the West

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<sup>176</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35. Hauke, *Mariology*, 277. Pope Nicholas, *Responsa*, 981A.

<sup>177</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 277.

The “Palm” tradition of narratives is the only group of Dormition Apocrypha found in the western side of the church.<sup>178</sup> The Apocryphon that originate from the West belonging to the “Palm” narratives are important for understanding the development of the understanding of the Assumption of Mary during this time in the Western part of the Church.<sup>179</sup> These earliest Latin sources on the Assumption were Mortalist as shown by the use of “Dormition.” Although other versions of the *Transitus* exist in the western side of the Church from the fourth century, the most common apocryphon from the Latin part of the West, the *Transitus* of Psuedo-Melito of Sardis.<sup>180</sup>

The *Transitus* was a Dormition Apocrypha that originated from an anonymous Latin writer and is dated to the fifth century.<sup>181</sup> Psuedo-Melito was writing against a supposed earlier work which he attributes to a certain Leucius who had heterodox opinions on the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>182</sup> The *Transitus* follows the same narrative style as the other “Palm” narratives with the Blessed Virgin Mary receiving a palm branch from the Tree of Life by an angel; there are some slight differences in the

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<sup>178</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35. It is possible that there were more traditions present in Latin but they have been lost.

<sup>179</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 36-37.

<sup>180</sup> Pseudo-Melito of Sardis, *De Transitu Virginis Mariae*, vol. 5 of *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857), 1231C. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35-37. The other prominent Latin Dormition Apocryphon, the *Transitus* by Psuedo-Joseph of Arimathea, is dated anywhere from as early as the sixth century to as late as the 13th century. Due to the very uncertain time range, Ps-Joseph is excluded. Daniel Najork, “The Middle Translation of the *Transitus Mariae* Attributed to Joseph of Arimathea: An Edition of Oxford, All Souls College, MS 26,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117, no. 4 (October 2018), 480.

<sup>181</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 35-36. The fifth century date is contested, and the work may be dated as late as the sixth or seventh century. A fifth century date for the *Transitus* is probably the most accurate as the location of the house of Mary is near the Mount of Olives which is dissimilar to the later narratives placing her house at Zion or Gethsamane.

<sup>182</sup> Pseudo-Melito, *Transitu* 1231C. Leucius may not be a historical figure as the author was more concerned with the doctrinal irregularities than the accurate historical origin of the perceived unorthodox beliefs. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 210.

Western *Transitus* as the Dormition takes place only two years after the Ascension of Christ similar to Pseudo-Prochorus in the East.<sup>183</sup>

Like the other “Palm” narratives, Christ receives her soul first and gives the soul of Mary to the Archangel Michael for safe passage to heaven though in this narrative the Archangel Gabriel accompanies Michael and Mary.<sup>184</sup> Also like the Greek “Palm” narratives, Christ returns to the funeral bier of Mary to receive her body in the presence of the Apostles.<sup>185</sup> What makes the *Transitus* of Psuedo-Melito unique amongst the other narratives is that the Pseudo-Melito narrative is of Latin origin and not of Greek origin even though the *Transitus* was influenced by earlier Greek narratives.<sup>186</sup> The earliest references of the Dormition in the Western Church definitively state that Mary fell asleep first before being taken up to heaven, and are thus Mortalist.

### **3.3.1 Fourth Century: Saint Ambrose of Milan**

In the Western Church, the earliest record that still exists and concerns the end of the life of Mary comes from St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) which is about the same time as St. Epiphanius in the East. St. Ambrose wanted to refute the error that Mary was martyred like the other early disciples.<sup>187</sup> In a commentary on the prophecy by St. Simeon in Luke 2:25-35, St. Ambrose wrote that no books or histories teach that Mary suffered a physical passion. He used the word *passione* which is probably a reference to the martyrdoms suffered by other Christians but then he used the term *corporalis necis*

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<sup>183</sup> Pseudo-Melito, *Transitu*, 1233A. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 14.

<sup>184</sup> Pseudo-Melito, *Transitu*, 1235B.

<sup>185</sup> Pseudo-Melito, *Transitu*, 1238D-1239A.

<sup>186</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 33.

<sup>187</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 14.

which translates to “of a physical death.”<sup>188</sup> Saint Ambrose does not elaborate further on what he means by a physical death or the end of the life of Mary nor does he provide context to make that claim; so he cannot be said to be Mortalist or Immortalist and is therefore silent.

### 3.4.1 Sixth Century: Saint Gregory of Tours

The first Church Father in the West to definitively affirm the Assumption of Mary is St. Gregory of Tours (d. 594) who was the bishop of Gaul during the sixth century.<sup>189</sup> He received his information about the Assumption from a lost Greek apocryphon that was translated into Latin.<sup>190</sup> In his book *Libri Miraculorum*, or *The Book of Miracles*, St. Gregory writes a similar narrative to the earlier Greek Apocrypha; he reports that the Apostles were whisked from the ends of the earth on clouds and they kept watch over her as Mary prepared her body for death. Also like the earlier Greek narratives, Jesus comes to receive the soul of Mary and gives her soul to St. Michael for safe passage, the Apostles bring her body to a tomb, and Jesus comes back to receive the body of Mary into heaven where she rejoices with all of the elect.<sup>191</sup>

St. Gregory uses the narratives from before his time to reflect on theological doctrine such as the eternal reward shared by all disciples who are in heaven. St. Gregory also seems to believe that the narrative is accepted as fact even though the narrative is from an Apocryphon.<sup>192</sup> Because he is using a lost Greek Apocryphon as a source, St.

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<sup>188</sup> Saint Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam Libre II*, vol. 15 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1845), 1574B.

<sup>189</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 352-353.

<sup>190</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 353. St. Gregory of Tours does not specify what the lost apocryphon was.

<sup>191</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Libri Miraculorum*, vol. 71 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. and trans. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1858, 708C.

<sup>192</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 353-354.

Gregory believes that the rising of the body and soul of Mary happened by way of Dormition and so he would be an example of Western Church Father who would be on the Mortalist side.

### **3.5.1 Seventh Century: Saint Isidore of Seville**

The only other Western Church Father to address the Assumption was St. Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636) who was bishop of Seville, Spain, in the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>193</sup> St. Isidore takes a similar approach to St. Ambrose and St. Epiphanius; he refrains from speculating on the end of the life of Mary.<sup>194</sup> Like Ambrose, he takes up the issue of the end of the life of Mary in a commentary on the prophecy by St. Simeon.<sup>195</sup> St. Isidore believes that no one can be certain whether Simeon meant a physical sword that cut through the heart of Mary or if Simeon meant that the word of God will pierce her heart; he emphasizes that no historical accounts exist on the end of the life of Mary and that no one can say if she was martyred or came to her death naturally.<sup>196</sup> Even though St. Isidore does not comment on how the Blessed Virgin Mary died, he does seem to accept that Mary did indeed die which would make him agree with the Mortalist side.

### **3.5.2 Seventh Century: Psuedo-Ildefonsus of Toledo**

In a group of seventh-century homilies which would influence later Church Fathers and writings, the anonymous author of one of the homilies attributed to St.

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<sup>193</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 374.

<sup>194</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 375. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 619. Ambrose, *Lucam*, 1574B.

<sup>195</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum in Genesin*, vol. 83 of *Patrologia Latina*, trans. and ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1862), 216A. Ambrose, *Lucam*, 1574B.

<sup>196</sup> Isidore, *Quaestiones in Genesin*, 216A.

Ildefonsus refers to the Assumption.<sup>197</sup> The homily looks to highly praise the Blessed Virgin Mary for her perpetual virginity and spends little time on theological details of the Assumption.<sup>198</sup> The homilist does make typological connections to the Assumption by using several verses from the book of Psalms and the book of Canticles to justify the Assumption; he uses Psalm 72:24, 33:3, 26:13, 34:9 and Canticles 2:10-12, which all refer to someone being taken up, though he does not elaborate on the specific connections between the verses and the Assumption.<sup>199</sup> From the Scripture verses, he does not spend any time discussing what happened to the body of Mary. Because he does not discuss how her body joined the soul of Mary, he cannot be said to be a Mortalist or Immortalist.

### **3.5.3 Seventh Century: Liturgical Celebration by Pope Saint Sergius of the Assumption**

Up until the seventh century when Pope St. Sergius I decreed that the Assumption should be celebrated, the Assumption had little mention in the West; although from the historical records that are not lost, the Latin “Palm” narratives and St. Gregory of Tours appear to show Eastern Greek influence.<sup>200</sup> The Eastern side of the Church would have great influence on the general celebration of the liturgy as the next 300 years would be dominated by Popes that came from the East; the Roman liturgy always had elements that derived from the East but the Popes at this time in the pontificate included many

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<sup>197</sup> Psuedo-Ildefonsus of Toledo, *Sermones Dubii*, vol. 96 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1862), 268. The sermon was collected with two other homilies by Alanus of Farfa in the eighth century in order to discuss more about the Assumption from the wisdom of the Church Fathers since there are no narratives about the Assumption in the Bible. Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homilies,” 6.

<sup>198</sup> Ps-Ildefonsus, *Sermones*, 268B.

<sup>199</sup> Ps-Ildefonsus, *Sermones*, 267D.

<sup>200</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 14. Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 353.

liturgical prayers and feasts from the East.<sup>201</sup> Due to the influence of the Greek Popes, the Dormition would make its way to the West when Pope St. Sergius codified the feast of the Dormition on August 15<sup>th</sup> in addition to universalizing the feast of the Purification for February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the feast of the Annunciation for March 25<sup>th</sup>, and the feast of the nativity of Mary for September 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>202</sup> The adoption of these feasts reflect the adoption of Mary as the protectress of Rome and the special intercessor for the pope.<sup>203</sup>

The implementation of the celebration of the feast of the Assumption and/or Dormition by the popes did not follow from one piece of writing from which all the traditions of the Assumption in the Western Church followed. The intercessory role of Mary had become linked to her Assumption but no standardized concept of Mary was adopted from the acceptance of Mary in her Assumption and intercessory role. The narratives and texts that came after the adoption of the feast emphasized different aspects of the Assumption and/or Dormition. The narratives and texts would influence icons which depict the Assumption and/or Dormition showing her supernatural transition to heaven. Since the earlier Greek texts had used different words to describe the Assumption and/or Dormition, such as the use of the word ἀνάληψις or *análepsis*, or “Assumption,” that emphasizes the removal of Mary to heaven rather than the word κοίμησις or *koimesis*, or “Dormition,” for her falling asleep, the acceptance of the Assumption and/or Dormition created different emphases within the Western Church.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Thomas F.X. Noble, “Greek Popes: Yes or No, and Did It Matter?,” in *Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Cultural Transfer in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 400-800 AD*, ed. Andreas Fischer and Ian Wood (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 84.

<sup>202</sup> Noble, “Greek Popes,” 84. Pope St. Sergius is remembered for adopting the “Agnus Dei” into the Latin Mass. *Liber Pontificalis*, trans. Raymond Davis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 86-87.

<sup>203</sup> Noble, “Greek Popes,” 84.

<sup>204</sup> Francesca Dell’Acqua, *Iconophilia: Politics, Religion, Preaching, and the Use of Images in Rome, c. 680-880* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 242. The vast range in concepts of the intercessory roles for Mary resulted in many different artistic icons scattered throughout the West.

The record of the exact year when the feast of Dormition and/or Assumption was first introduced into Rome is lost. Since Rome had lacked a liturgy for the Assumption, Rome would have looked to the East in areas like Asia Minor where the feast was already being celebrated for how to celebrate the feast. Other than the undated decree from Pope St. Sergius, a seventh century date can be given to the homily by John of Thessalonica. Despite Thessalonica being a Greek-speaking area, hence its inclusion in the previous chapter, Thessalonica was a suffragan diocese of Rome which would have meant that the Bishop John would have probably wanted to enact the feasts from Rome such as the Dormition. Other evidence for the adoption of the Dormition by Rome include various Greek homilies that were translated into Latin.<sup>205</sup>

#### **3.5.4 Seventh Century: Saint Bede the Venerable**

The only direct evidence that may exist on the transfer of the Assumption and/or Dormition from the East to the West is the widely attested circulation of a Greek homily that traveled to Rome all the way up to seventh century Britain into the hands of the medieval Doctor of the Church St. Bede the Venerable (d. 735).<sup>206</sup> St. Bede wrote two homilies dedicated to the Assumption; in the first homily, he does not spend much time

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<sup>205</sup> Francesca Dell’Acqua, *Iconophilia*, 258. If John of Thessalonica were to speak as if the celebration was already established by the Pope, then that would push the acceptance of the feast of the Dormition by Rome to before Pope St. Sergius in the early seventh century. Homilies that were translated from Greek to Latin include the *Homiliary of Agimundus* and the *Mariale of Reichenau*; the Greek homilies were the ones attributed to St. Proclus of Constantinople mentioned in the second chapter. That John of Thessalonica would have wanted to enact the feast days celebrated by Rome is the suggestion by Dell’Acqua; since he was the Bishop of his own diocese, he could have also had his own feast day for the Assumption without getting approval from Rome first.

<sup>206</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 19, 35. The Greek homily is attributed to St. Sophronius of Jerusalem. The homily was widely reprinted in Rome and would have travelled throughout the West into Britain. This is the same Gospel used for the feast of the Dormition in the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. It is possible that this passage of the Gospel was the reading used during the Mass at this time for Bede. “The Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary,” in *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 528.



on theological discourse on the Assumption as he provides an exegesis on the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10: 38-42 with Mary representing the contemplative life and Martha representing the active life.<sup>207</sup> The homily of the Assumption by Bede is an example of the celebration of the Assumption and not the Dormition though St. Bede does not mention what he means by the Assumption of Mary.<sup>208</sup>

The second homily that St. Bede wrote on the Assumption details more theological discourse on the how the Assumption happened though the title of the homily is only labeled as *De Sancta Maria Virgine*. He follows the narrative of the Greek Apocrypha in which he states that the Apostles were sent from the ends of the earth to witness the end of the life of Mary. He also comments that the Apostle John prayed to God to allow the Apostles to serve Mary until the end her the life.<sup>209</sup>

St. Bede does not answer the question of how the body of Mary was united to her soul in the Assumption.<sup>210</sup> St. Bede does offer several clues how he saw the Assumption taken place; firstly, he uses the word *translata* which means “was translated” in the English; the use of the word “translation” also recalls the language used in the Greek Apocrypha as the meaning of “translated” is that her body was removed from the earth to heaven.<sup>211</sup> He might have been also influenced by the Greek narratives motif of Christ appearing to Mary telling her that He has come to elevate her above all the angels so that she is always in his presence in heaven.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Bede the Venerable, “Homilia LVII,” in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Paraenetica*, vol. 94 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1862), 420B – 421B.

<sup>208</sup> Bede, “Homilia LVII,” 420B.

<sup>209</sup> Bede the Venerable, “Homilia LIX,” in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Paraenetica*, vol. 94 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1862), 422B – 423B.

<sup>210</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 35.

<sup>211</sup> Bede, “Homilia LIX,” 422B.

<sup>212</sup> Bede, “Homilia LIX,” 423B.

St. Bede adopted much of the Greek Dormition Apocrypha narrative structures that were circulating around during his time and affirms the Assumption took place; however, he does not adopt from them an answer on how the body was united to the soul of Mary during the Assumption and so cannot be said to be Mortalist or Immortalist.<sup>213</sup> His silence on the topic may have had an influence on later homilists such as the monk and theological writer Ambrose Autpert.<sup>214</sup>

### 3.6.1 Eighth Century: Ambrose Autpert

The next known record that has been passed down for the Assumption would not be written until 50 years later with an Assumption homily by Ambrose Autpert (d. 784); Ambrose Autpert was a monk who lived in the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno in Central Italy; Ambrose Autpert draws upon both Latin and Greek sources to discuss the Assumption and, he would influence later theological understanding of the Assumption in the West. Autpert admits that he was not aware of any early Latin sources that describe the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary but the sources he uses were probably influenced by a Greek tradition.<sup>215</sup>

Ambrose Autpert quotes St. Isidore directly who took the approach of doubt in regards to the end of the life of Mary; even though Ambrose follows St. Isidore, he thinks that one must still believe in the Assumption without knowing what happened to her

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<sup>213</sup> Bede, "Homilia LIX," 423B.

<sup>214</sup> Ambrose Autpert, "Sermo Ambrosii Avtperti Prebyteri et Monachi De Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae," in *Ambrosii Avtperti Opera*, vol. 27b of *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. Robert Weber (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1979), 1028. Bede may have had only a small influence on Ambrose as Ambrose seems to be more inspired by the Greek Apocrypha. More research can be done on the influence of the silence on the Assumption by St. Bede on Medieval thought.

<sup>215</sup> Dell'Acqua and Cerno, "The Earliest Homily," 1-3. Ambrose Autpert, "Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae," 1027. He was influenced by the same collection of homilies that were by Alanus of Farfna; this is the same collection that contained the homily on the Assumption by Psuedo-Idelfonsus. Dell'Acqua and Cerno, "The Earliest Homily," 6.

body.<sup>216</sup> Ambrose uses many of the same themes from previous homilies that addressed the Assumption but he does add an original theme in which he connects the humility of Mary to her virginal maternity by examining how she praises God in the Magnificat.<sup>217</sup> The use of the Magnificat may have been inspired from Greek sources which heavily relied on the Magnificat to praise the Blessed Virgin Mary; Autpert uses the Magnificat to highlight the humility of Mary as she was assumed into heaven.<sup>218</sup>

Perhaps the biggest indicator that Autpert was influenced by the Greek tradition is his use of the celestial ladder and the gate of heaven from Genesis 28:17; earlier Greek writers used the two images as typological metaphors for how Mary intercedes for the faithful in heaven.<sup>219</sup> The use of the celestial ladder was rarely used in other Latin homilies and the image of the gate of heaven was referenced only by early Latin writers.<sup>220</sup> Autpert utilizes the heavenly ladder imagery to convey the assumption of Mary into heaven; he praises God who has elevated the humble Blessed Virgin Mary to be received into heaven.<sup>221</sup> There are also similar phrases shared between Ambrose and the earlier Greek Church Father St. Andrew of Crete as both refer to Mary as the “flower of immortality.”<sup>222</sup>

The approach of Autpert to the Assumption is very similar to the Greek Church Fathers but there are no direct Greek quotations evident in the homily of the Assumption

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<sup>216</sup> Autpert, “Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1028.

<sup>217</sup> Autpert, “Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1030-1031.

<sup>218</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 10.

<sup>219</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 10-11. Autpert, “Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1034. It is also possible that Genesis 28:17 was simply the first reading of the mass.

<sup>220</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 10-11. The only other writer to reference the celestial ladder was the sermon by Ps-Augustine found in the same collection of homilies by Alanus of Fafna and the gate of heaven was referenced in a hymn attributed to Venantius Fortunatus.

<sup>221</sup> Autpert, “Adsvmptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1034.

<sup>222</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 16-17.

by Autpert.<sup>223</sup> There is also no direct evidence that Autpert had access to the Greek Church Fathers but circulation between the West and the East is well attested to during this time.<sup>224</sup> His line of thought does line up with the earlier Greek Fathers in that he refrains from explicitly stating how the Assumption happened.<sup>225</sup>

The emphasis on the removal of Mary to heaven and not on the final state of her body shows a hesitance seen earlier with St. Bede.<sup>226</sup> He does use the word *Adsumpta* throughout the text of his homily which could linguistically reflect the Greek word ἀνάλημψις if Ambrose had access to the Greek texts; his access to the Greek is uncertain and more research has to be done on the linguistic connections between *Adsumpta* and ἀνάλημψις.<sup>227</sup> Regardless if he had access or not, the use of the *Adsumpta* would influence later writers in emphasizing the removal of the body of Mary over the death of Mary as shown in the later authors covered in the third chapter. Since Ambrose Autpert refrains from commenting on what happened to her body, he would be classified as “Silent.”

### 3.8.2 Eighth Century: Paul the Deacon

Ambrose Autpert would influence Paul the Deacon (fl. 787 – 799) in writing homilies on the Assumption as Paul the Deacon called Autpert “most learned;” Paul the Deacon was a church official who spent time in the court of King Charlemagne of the Carolingian Empire (c. 748 – 814) and would later write homilies on the Assumption

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<sup>223</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 18.

<sup>224</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 18-19. The best evidence is the presence of Greek liturgical texts quoted directed in the aforementioned Homiliary of Agimundus though the Homiliary was completed after the death of Autpert in 800. The circulation of theological ideas could have occurred through pilgrimage routes or reports from Church Councils which as a monk Autpert would have access to.

<sup>225</sup> Autpert, “Adsumptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1028.

<sup>226</sup> Bede, “Homilia LIX,” 423B.

<sup>227</sup> Autpert, “Adsumptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1027-1028.

after his time in the court of Charlemagne. By the time that Paul the Deacon wrote his homilies on the Assumption, the court of Charlemagne was engaging in theological dispute with the Church over the question of the fact of the Dormition and/or Assumption. The Carolingian court wanted the Church to exercise more caution in affirming the Assumption as there were no Scripture stories that covered the Assumption. The homilies on the Assumption were written by Paul the Deacon after his time in the Carolingian court.<sup>228</sup>

In the homilies on the Assumption by Paul the Deacon, Paul follows much of the same theological points about Mary and the Assumption that Autpert makes. Paul the Deacon highlights Mary as an intercessor in heaven for the faithful like Autpert but unlike Autpert, Paul the Deacon elevates Mary to an intercessory role for the universal Church and the entire world.<sup>229</sup> Paul the Deacon takes the same approach as Autpert in regard to how the body of Mary was taken up to heaven; he believes that humanity is unable to know what happened during the Assumption; Paul does say that her body was taken up since the grave of Mary is empty and open according to the Church Fathers and does affirm that belief in the Assumption is not illogical.<sup>230</sup>

Paul the Deacon does not mention which of the Church Fathers he is referring to when he says that the tomb is empty; also like Autpert, Paul the Deacon was influenced by the use of Magnificat in the other Eastern Church Fathers.<sup>231</sup> His hesitance to affirm

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<sup>228</sup> Dell'Acqua and Cerno, "The Earliest Homily," 20-22. The Carolingian court was exerting more influence on the popes when compared to the influence of Byzantium.

<sup>229</sup> Autpert, "Assumptione Sanctae Mariae, 1034-1035." Paul the Deacon, "Pauli Winfridi Diaconi Homiliae," in *Venerabilis Bedae, Opera Omnia*, vol. 95 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1861), 1565D.

<sup>230</sup> Lidia Buono, "Le omelie per l'Assunzione di Paolo Diacono: Introduzione ed edizione," *Studi Medievali*, 58 no. 3 (2017): 754. The section that refers to the body of Mary is missing in the edition from Migne.

<sup>231</sup> Dell'Acqua and Cerno, "The Earliest Homily," 10. Paul, "Diaconi Homiliae," 1567. He may have been also influenced by the Liturgical readings for the Mass.

the how the body was assumed into heaven echoes the hesitation in Autpert.<sup>232</sup> His use of the word *Assumptione* would imply an emphasis on the removal of the body of Mary as he does not comment on if Mary fell asleep or not before her rising.<sup>233</sup> One cannot say that Paul the Deacon would have been on the Mortalist or Immortalist side since he also refrains from addressing how the body of Mary was assumed into heaven.

### 3.9.1 Ninth Century: Saint Rabanus Maurus

The debate on the Assumption reached its zenith in the Carolingian Court between the years 822 and 826 A.D., the monk St. Rabanus Maurus (c. 780 -856) composed a homily for the Assumption; the debate on the Assumption had become intense.<sup>234</sup> Maurus spends most of his time praising the Blessed Virgin Mary for being glorious.<sup>235</sup> Maurus does use the word *translata* like St. Bede to describe the Assumption but, Maurus also uses the word *migravit*, or “has moved,” to describe the Assumption of Mary; *migravit* only has the connotation that Mary moved from an earthly life to the heavenly life.<sup>236</sup> Maurus refuses to answer the question of how the bodily Assumption happened perhaps because debate was so intense in the Carolingian Empire.<sup>237</sup> Because Maurus does not say what happened to her body during the Assumption, he cannot be counted as a Mortalist or Immortalist.

### 3.9.2 Ninth Century: The Gregorian Sacramentary Revised under King Charles the Great

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<sup>232</sup> Autpert, “Assumptione Sanctae Mariae,” 1027-1028. Buono, “Le omelie,” 754.

<sup>233</sup> Paul, “Diaconi Homiliae,” 1565.

<sup>234</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 22-23.

<sup>235</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, “Homilia XXIX,” in *B. Rabani Mauri Opera Omnia*, vol. 110 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1861), 55C.

<sup>236</sup> Maurus, “Homilia XXIX,” 55B.

<sup>237</sup> Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 22-23.

Eventually the Carolingian Court would rule in favor of the celebration of the Assumption as shown by the Gregorian Sacramentary. The Gregorian Sacramentary is a collection of books used for the Liturgy that date back to the time of Pope St. Gregory I (c. 540 - 604) though the final version of the book dates to the time of King Charles the Great; the original sacramentary had not included the feast of the Assumption.<sup>238</sup> By 826, the revised Gregorian Sacramentary gifted to the son of Charles the Great, King Louis the Pius (c. 778 - 840), would list the Assumption amongst the liturgical celebrations to be celebrated in the Carolingian Empire.<sup>239</sup> This later Gregorian Sacramentary was cited as evidence for the long celebration of the Assumption in the West by Pope Ven. Pius XII 1100 years later.<sup>240</sup>

Two other sacramentaries dated from the same time also have an entry for the Assumption: the Gelasian Sacramentary and the Gothican manuscript of the Gallican Sacramentary. The earliest Gelasian Sacramentary predates the first Gregorian Sacramentary but the entry for the Assumption only appears in latter editions and was copied from the Gallican Sacramentary. The Gothican manuscript of the Gallican Sacramentary dates to the same time as the Gregorian Sacramentary and does not address the question of the bodily Assumption of Mary.<sup>241</sup>

The entry in the Gregorian Sacramentary for the celebration of the Assumption is dated differently from the modern feast day as the Gregorian Sacramentary lists the

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<sup>238</sup> *Gregorian Sacramentary*, xvi. Sartor, "Assunta: III. Celebrazione Liturgica," 180.

<sup>239</sup> Dell'Acqua and Cerno, "The Earliest Homily," 4, 23. The Gregorian Sacramentary was gifted anywhere from the year 800 to the year 850 though a year closer to 850 is more probable. *The Gregorian Sacramentary Under Charles the Great*, ed. Henry Bradshaw Society (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1915), xxiii.

<sup>240</sup> Pius XII, *MD*, 17. Pope Pius XII claims that the Gregorian Sacramentary was given to King Charles the Great by Pope Hadrian I (c. 700 – 795), but Hadrian I had died before 826.

<sup>241</sup> Sartor, "Assunta: III. Celebrazione Liturgica," 180. *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church*, ed. J. M. Neale and G. H. Forbes (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 57-60.

celebration for September 15<sup>th</sup> instead of August 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>242</sup> The Latin word used for the title of the feast for the Assumption is *Adsumptio*, the same word used by St. Bede; the word emphasizes her death as shown in the following prayer directly translated from the Latin:

Venerable to us, O Lord, is the festivity of this day on which the holy Mother of God suffered temporal death, but still could not be kept down by the bonds of death, who has begotten your Son our Lord incarnate from herself.<sup>243</sup>

The rest of the prayers in the Sacramentary in the entry for the Assumption beseech the Blessed Virgin Mary to intercede for those her pray to her for help since she is the Mother of the God who frees them from sin, the same theme shared with Paul the Deacon.<sup>244</sup> The other prayers in the Sacramentary do not refer to the question of her bodily Assumption. Since the above prayer explicitly says death, the Gregorian Sacramentary would be Mortalist.

### **3.9.3 Ninth Century: Further Acceptance by the Popes of the Celebration of the Assumption**

After the great debate of the Assumption in the Carolingian Court, the popes continued to emphasize the importance of the feast; Pope Saint Leo IV gave the feast of the Assumption an Octave, or a celebration of the feast eight days after the actual day of the feast, and a Vigil, or a watchful celebration of the feast before the actual date of the

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<sup>242</sup> *Gregorian Sacramentary*, 97. The entry in the Gelasian Sacramentary for the celebration of the Assumption is listed as September 18<sup>th</sup> while the Gothican Manuscript does not list a date for the celebration of the Assumption. H. A. Wilson, ed. *Gelasian Sacramentary* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1894). 193. H. M. Bannister ed., *"Missale Gothicum" A Gallican Sacramentary* (London, United Kingdom: Harrison and Sons, 1917), 30.

<sup>243</sup> *Gregorian Sacramentary*, 97. Bede, "Homilia LIX," 423B. The direct Latin Sentence is *Veneranda nobis domine huius est diei festiutas in qua sancta dei genitrix mortem subiit temporalem nec tamen mortis nexibus deprimi potuit quae filium tuum dominum nostrum de se genuit incarnatum qui tecum*. Translated by author.

<sup>244</sup> *Gregorian Sacramentary*, 97. Paul, "Diacini Homiliae," 1565



feast.<sup>245</sup> When he first proclaimed the edict to celebrate the vigil, the *Liber Pontificalis* reports that he urged the faithful and clergy to not cease praising the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout the night until the morning of the feast. The *Liber Pontificalis* also reports that Pope St. Leo IV celebrated the feast with great magnanimity as he joined the faithful in exalting the Blessed Virgin Mary on the feast.<sup>246</sup>

By the time that Pope St. Leo IV gave the Octave and the Vigil to the Assumption, the name of this celebration in the West was called “the Assumption” and not “the Dormition” as in the undated seventh century decree from Pope St. Sergius.<sup>247</sup> When Pope St. Leo IV gave an octave for the feast of the Assumption, he did not declare that the Assumption happened or how the Assumption happened, only that the feast of the assumption is an important feast for the Blessed Virgin Mary; he did not clarify whether Assumption happened as according to the Mortalists or as according to the Immortalists.<sup>248</sup>

### **3.9.3 Ninth Century: Letter from Pope Saint Nicholas the Great to the Bulgarians**

While the Papacy and the Carolingian Empire were on speaking terms with one another, relations with the papacy had already begun to sour with church officials and the Patriarch Photius in Byzantium (c. 810 - 893) whose election to the Patriarchy was disputed during 866; a schism between Patriarch Photius and Pope Nicholas the Great had already happened in 863. Afterwards, Rome had sent missionaries to Bulgaria which

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<sup>245</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Louis Duchesne (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1892), 112. Even though the Assumption was accepted in the Carolingian Court, theologians in the Carolingian Empire would still argue over the event of the Assumption. St. Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865) argued against the Assumption since there are no stories in Scripture that tell of the Assumption. Dell’Acqua and Cerno, “The Earliest Homily,” 38.

<sup>246</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 112.

<sup>247</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 112. Hauke, *Mariology*, 277.

<sup>248</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 112.

the Patriarch did not like since the Patriarch believed that his Church had jurisdiction over the Bulgarian Empire.<sup>249</sup> Khan Boris I of the Bulgarian Empire (c. 827 - 907) approached Pope Nicholas I with questions on how to celebrate the liturgy which made Patriarch Photius angry.<sup>250</sup> The questions pertaining to the rules on how to fast are what prompted Pope St. Nicholas the Great to comment on the Assumption.<sup>251</sup>

In an answer on how many days in the year one should abstain from meat, Pope St. Nicholas the Great lists a number of feasts that the Roman Church had required fasts before the feast days. In the list of feasts, Pope St. Nicholas the Great lists the Assumption among the number of those feasts. He then states that the Church has for a long time now celebrated the feast of the Assumption which the Church will continue to do. The Pope does not mention the feast of the Assumption again in the letter he wrote in 866 to the Bulgarian consort sent by Khan Boris I.<sup>252</sup>

It is possible that by 866, Rome was truly celebrating the feast of Assumption and not the Dormition as evidenced by the decree from Pope Leo IV.<sup>253</sup> Whatever the intentions of Pope St. Nicholas the Great were, when he referred to the Assumption in the letter, it cannot be known if he was making a claim for the Mortalist or Immortalist side as he was concerned with the fasting on the day before the feast and not what happened to Mary during the Assumption.

The Patriarch Photius would eventually condemn Pope St. Nicholas the Great as a heretic for his defense of the insertion of the filioque into the Creed; the separation of the

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<sup>249</sup> Nichols, *Study in Schism*, 231.

<sup>250</sup> Nichols, *Study in Schism*, 231-232.

<sup>251</sup> Pope Nicholas, *Responsa*, 981A.

<sup>252</sup> Pope Nicholas, *Responsa*, 980D-981A.

<sup>253</sup> *Liber Pontificalis*, 112.

Patriarch Photius and Pope St. Nicholas the Great would be one of the major schisms that would eventually lead to the division of the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.<sup>254</sup> The papal legates that Pope St. Nicholas the Great had sent to the Byzantine representatives were from the Carolingian Empire; besides the recognition of the Assumption in the Carolingian Empire, the Carolingian Empire had introduced the Filioque into the creed which the Patriarch Photius disliked.<sup>255</sup> The Carolingian Empire had become rivals with Byzantium by 866 as Byzantium had not recognized the claims of the imperial status of King Charlemagne.<sup>256</sup>

The Carolingian Empire had much influence on the papacy by 866 but the influence of Byzantium on the Roman Papacy was not completely over as Pope St. Nicholas the Great had ordered the papal archivist Anastasius Bibliothecarius (c. 810 - 878) to translate Greek treatises and Hagiographical works into Latin. Many in the Roman Church by 866 had accepted that the Assumption and/or Dormition happened in part to the influence of Byzantium but the Roman Church and the Greek East had developed different ideas as to how the Assumption and/or Dormition happened. The Eastern Mediterranean had accepted the Dormition which was often represented with icons of the Apostles surrounding Mary around her deathbed. Meanwhile, the Roman Church in the Western Mediterranean was hesitant to accept versions of the events that may have happened during the Assumption and often depicted the Blessed Virgin Mary in frescos that portrayed her already in heaven body and soul; the Latin Church had some

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<sup>254</sup> Nichols, *Study in Schism*, 241.

<sup>255</sup> Nichols, *Study in Schism*, 237. The issue of theology of the Filioque is beyond the scope of the paper.

<sup>256</sup> Nichols, *Study in Schism*, 237.

frescos of the funeral of Mary but those frescos were painted in the context of Byzantium.<sup>257</sup>

### **3.10.1 Conclusion**

The acceptance of the Assumption and belief in how the Assumption happened in the Western Church followed a general pattern that was quite different compared to the Eastern Church. In the Western Church, the general pattern seemed to be that the early Latin Church had believed in the Dormition like the East as exhibited by St. Gregory of Tours and the Latin versions of the “Palm” narratives. The Dormition would be adopted as a feast by Pope St. Sergius I. After the adoption of the feast, there is a noticeable hesitation from later Western theologians on how the Assumption happened; they do not refer to the Assumption as the Dormition and remain silent on how the Assumption happened despite still being influenced by the Greek tradition as shown by St. Bede and Ambrose Autpert.

Debate on the Assumption intensified within the Carolingian Court and the Carolingian Empire during the ninth century but the Assumption would eventually be accepted. Pope St. Leo IV would emphasize the importance of the feast of Assumption when he gave the feast an octave and a vigil, while Pope St. Nicholas the Great deemed the feast important enough to mention how to celebrate the feast in the letter that had high stakes to the Bulgarians. Even by 866, the fact of the Assumption was accepted as worthy of belief but the question of how the body of the Blessed Virgin united with her soul was still unanswered. When Pope St. Nicholas the Great sent the letter, he was anxious to establish Bulgaria as part of the Roman Church and would have wanted them to have

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<sup>257</sup> Dell’Acqua, *Iconophilia*, 303.

Latin traditions of the Assumption and not the Dormition that had become associated with the Eastern Church.

The historical analysis ends with the adoption of the octave and vigil for the Assumption for the entire Western Church in 866. The addition of an octave and vigil of the feast with the name of the Assumption marks a good ending point because the acceptance in the change in title showed a shift in emphasis for the Assumption in the Western Church as compared to the Eastern Church with their name for the feast, the Dormition. The year 866 occurs 117 years after the death of St. John Damascene; the figures in the third chapter therefore roughly coincide with the figures in the second chapter. The western side of the Church developed differently than the eastern side of the Church from the year 600 to 800 as the western side of the Church was developing in the early medieval age which contrasts with the eastern side of the Church which was still experiencing the patristic era until the death of Saint John Damascene in 749 A.D.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> This is from the Roman Catholic perspective. Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 400. According to Ware, the Eastern Orthodox Churches never formally defined when the Patristic era ended. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE IMMORTALISTS

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

Now that the Church Fathers, the Apocrypha, and the early liturgies from the East and the West have both been analyzed, the theological differences that appear to exist between certain understandings of the Assumption and/or Dormition can now be detailed. Chapter two demonstrated that many of the Church Fathers and writings from the East appear to agree with the Mortalist side. Chapter three demonstrated that, for the most part, the Western Church Fathers and Theologians did not say whether her body stayed in the grave without corruption before joining her soul in heaven or if her body was assumed immediately into heaven with her soul. In the Church Fathers and writings that were analyzed from the East and West, only one writing, the homily by Timothy of Jerusalem, could definitively be said to be Immortalist.<sup>259</sup>

To find shared beliefs about the Dormition and/or Assumption between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, this chapter analyzes the theological arguments from Systematic theology and Scripture made by certain Immortalists from 1944 to 2021. The only Church Father these authors mentioned is Timothy of Jerusalem and so he will be discussed in this chapter. The Immortalists that are covered in this chapter include Martin Jugie, Gabriele Roschini, Tiburzio Gallus, and Manfred Forderer; Jugie, Roschini, and Gallus worked on the theological commission that helped Pope Venerable Pius XII declare the dogma of the Assumption while Manfred Forderer

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<sup>259</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon*, PG 245C. Theoteknos is a possible Immortalist but the Immortalists in this chapter do not utilize his homily. Dell'Aqua, "Ambrose Autpert," 30.

worked closely with Gallus on expanding the Immortalist argument.<sup>260</sup> Their arguments must be unpacked to understand the Immortalist position and so will be analyzed in the following pages.

#### **4.2.1 Why the Immortalist Position Is Allowed by Rome**

The Church has not censured the Immortalist position when defining the Dogma of the Assumption for two reasons. First, the Immortalist position was expressed by a Church Father, Timothy of Jerusalem.<sup>261</sup> Neither Timothy of Jerusalem nor anyone else was censured by Rome for expressing his Immortalist position. Tiburzio Gallus was responsible for highlighting the fact that Timothy of Jerusalem wrote for the Immortalist position and bringing Timothy of Jerusalem to the discussion on the dogma of the Assumption. Laurentin reports that Pius XII himself encouraged Gallus to research the position of Timothy of Jerusalem when Gallus was helping Pius XII draw up the definition of the Assumption.<sup>262</sup>

Second, the Tradition did not all agree on what happened to the body of Mary at the end of her life. The Immortalists point to St. Epiphanius of Salamis who did not affirm or deny the death of Mary.<sup>263</sup> Other Church Fathers did not affirm or deny the death of Mary and they include St. Modestus of Jerusalem from the East and many of the Western Church Fathers such as St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Isidore of Seville.<sup>264</sup> With these two points considered, Catholics can embrace the Immortalist position.

#### **4.3.1 Timothy of Jerusalem**

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<sup>260</sup>Hauke, *Mariology*, 290. Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 336, 338.

<sup>261</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem, *In Prophetam Symeon*, 245C.

<sup>262</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 336. Theoteknos of Livias, a possible Immortalist, was also not censured.

<sup>263</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 337-338. As shown in chapter two, St. Epiphanius held many views and possibilities on what could have happened to the Blessed Virgin Mary during the Assumption.

<sup>264</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 276. Saint Ambrose, *Lucam*, 1574B. Isidore, *Quaestiones in Genesin*, 216A.

Other than Gallus, Roschini and Jugie also use Timothy of Jerusalem to argue for the Immortalist position. Roschini says that Timothy of Jerusalem clearly argues for the Immortalist position but points to Jugie for more information.<sup>265</sup> Jugie was a French priest who extensively studied the Christian East with an emphasis on the Dormition which he did not accept as true; he believed that the death of Mary is neither historical nor theological. Alongside Gallus, he popularized Timothy of Jerusalem which likely influenced the definition of the Assumption so that the question of her death was left out.<sup>266</sup>

Jugie argues that Timothy of Jerusalem is the first known supporter of the Immortality of Mary and deserves special attention.<sup>267</sup> Timothy of Jerusalem was overlooked in the past because his homily was sometimes misattributed to Saint Methodius of Olympus (d. 311).<sup>268</sup> Jugie admits that the only thing that is known about Timothy is that he is a priest from Jerusalem.<sup>269</sup> Jugie then uses biblical typology and connects Mary to the Woman in the Apocalypse in Revelation 12; Jugie says that Timothy of Jerusalem, like several scriptural commentaries on Revelation 12, speculates that Mary could be like Elijah and Enoch who were taken alive to heaven to become a victim of the Antichrist back on earth at the end of the world; Jugie then adds that Mary is unlike Enoch and Elijah as she will not come back to die nor be a victim of the Antichrist.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Gabriele Roschini, *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, (Frosinone, Italy: Tipografia Editrice M. Pisani, 1961), 307.

<sup>266</sup> Roten, "Jugie," 456.

<sup>267</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 70.

<sup>268</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 71. Jugie says that Timothy of Jerusalem is the correct author since most manuscripts list his name as the author of the homily.

<sup>269</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 73.

<sup>270</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 75. He does not cite which scriptural commentaries.



The biggest indicator for Jugie that Timothy of Jerusalem was of the Immortalist position is because Timothy uses the word *μεταναστεύσαντος*, or *metanasteúsantos*, to describe the movement of Mary from the earth to heaven; Jugie translates *metanasteúsantos* to “a change in residence” that does not have the connotation of death. Jugie, like Timothy of Jerusalem, also does say that it would be fitting for Mary to not die because of her Divine Motherhood; Jugie also notes that most of the manuscripts that preserve the homilies of Timothy of Jerusalem had not been altered despite the Tradition of the Church affirming the Dormition. Jugie then concludes from this typology of Enoch and Elijah that Timothy of Jerusalem was the first Church Father to definitely state the Immortalist position. Jugie also believes that Timothy of Jerusalem must be the only priest in Jerusalem to hold to the Immortalist position.<sup>271</sup>

#### **4.4.1 The Spiritual Death of Mary at the Foot of the Cross as a Type of the Church**

According to Laurentin, the Immortalists argue that Mary remains alive because she already died a spiritual death at the foot of the cross and her staying alive better represents the immortal Church.<sup>272</sup> Laurentin does not specify which Immortalists; Laurentin is a Mortalist and his arguments are covered in chapter 5.<sup>273</sup> The role of Mary at the foot of the Cross has biblical roots in Luke 2:35 when Simeon predicted that a sword will pierce the heart of Mary. She seems to have “died in spirit,” a popular expression with its origin in the twelfth century figure Arnold of Chartres.<sup>274</sup> If she “died in spirit,” then her connection between Christ and the Church is made more apparent as

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<sup>271</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 75-76. Timothy of Jerusalem did not refer to the Book of Revelation in his commentary. Jugie translates *metanasteúsantos* into French as *faire changer de résidence*.

<sup>272</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>273</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

<sup>274</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 337-338

she will appear as the model for the Church from which all the faithful can connect to Christ.<sup>275</sup> Laurentin summarizes the Immortalist argument on how Mary fulfills her model of the Church as such:

Since she did not die on Calvary at the same time as Christ did, but was configured to his death spiritually, as is the Church by faith and the bath of regeneration, it would be fitting that she share also with the Church the privilege of immortality.<sup>276</sup>

Through the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church as a collective will also receive immortality without losing her mortal body at all. In acquiring immortality without losing her body, she resembles the Church who originated without blemish and will be glorified on the day of the General Resurrection. In order to uphold the argument that the Blessed Virgin Mary models the glorified Church, several Scriptures are used to justify that the Church will not end but be glorified on the day of the *Parusios*.<sup>277</sup>

According to Laurentin, the Immortalists utilize several Pauline Scripture verses to justify the incorruptibility of the Church and therefore the immortal incorruptibility of the Blessed Virgin Mary so that her body is not separated from her soul during the Assumption.<sup>278</sup> The first verse cited is I Thessalonians 4: 17.<sup>279</sup> The verse says “Then we who are alive, who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Earlier in I Thessalonians 4:15,

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<sup>275</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 337-338.

<sup>276</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>277</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>278</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>279</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338. Laurentin cites Lucien Cerfaux who was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and a peritus at the Second Vatican Council. Karim Schelkens, “Exegesis in the Wake of Vatican II: Lucien Cerfaux and the Origins of Dei Verbum,” *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 25, no. 2 (December 2008): 169-170.

St. Paul was referring to *παρουσία*, or the *Parousia*, which usually signifies an arrival of some kind of presence, in this case the arrival of Christ.<sup>280</sup>

St. Paul was referring to himself and his readers in this verse who at the time were alive but, he was not writing that the *Parousia* will happen in the immediate moment. Rather, he was writing that when the day does come, those who meet the Lord will have glorified bodies to go and meet the Lord; those who go to meet the Lord will be with Him forever in their glorified bodies.<sup>281</sup> The Greek word that St. Paul uses is *ἀρπαγησόμεθα*, or *harpagēsometha*, which translates to “we will be caught up” with *εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ Κυρίου*, or *eis apantēsin tou Kyriou*, which translates to “in the clouds to meet with the Lord” to emphasize how the bodies of all the faithful will go and meet the Lord.<sup>282</sup> According to Laurentin, the Immortalists see Mary as the first to have experienced her glorified body going to meet the Lord.<sup>283</sup>

I Thessalonians and I Corinthians frame the understanding that St. Paul has of the *Parousia*. When St. Paul uses the word “Lord” or *Kyrios* when talking about the Resurrection, St. Paul thinks of the Resurrection in terms of the *Parousia*; when glory is mentioned in the Resurrection, St. Paul is framing it in the glory of the *Parousia*. The glory is stated to be how the Son of God appears during the final days through the power of the Father. In chapter 15 of I Corinthians, St. Paul therefore stresses that that glory

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<sup>280</sup> Lucien Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of Saint Paul*, trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 32. The Scripture verses will use the translation by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker; this translation will be used for section 3 of this chapter in order to accurately report the theological arguments of Lucien Cerfaux. Cerfaux does not mention the Blessed Virgin Mary in this work on St. Paul.

<sup>281</sup> James Gavigan, Brian McCarthy, Thomas McGovern, eds. *The Navarre Bible: St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians and Pastoral Epistles*, (Ireland: Four Courts Ltd., 1992), Navarre Bible, 50-51.

<sup>282</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in Saint Paul*, 41-42.

<sup>283</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

plays an essential role in the Resurrection of the body.<sup>284</sup> The glory of the faithful in the undying Church helps explain the use of the next Pauline verse used to defend the Immortalist position from the viewpoint of the incorruptibility of the Church.<sup>285</sup>

The second Pauline verse that the Immortalists use to argue that the body of Mary did not separate from her soul during the Assumption is I Corinthians 15:21.<sup>286</sup>

According to Laurentin, the Immortalists derive the Immortality of Mary as this Scripture verse says “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being.”<sup>287</sup> Since Christ has risen, all the dead will rise and St. Paul will go on in the next verse to say that since death was brought on by man, then Christ as man had freed men from death; the Resurrection of Christ becomes the cause of the future resurrection of the body.<sup>288</sup>

The intrinsic connection between the Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the faithful is made more explicit in Romans 8:17 where it says “we shall be glorified by Him;” The faithful become identified in the image of Christ in the connection of the Resurrection that actively diffuses the Holy Spirit in us until the final resurrection of the body.<sup>289</sup> Thus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, if she remains immortal as the Immortalists describe, would anticipate the glory of the Resurrection in the *Parousia* even though the verse mentions death.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 81-84.

<sup>285</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>286</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>287</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>288</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 86.

<sup>289</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 87.

<sup>290</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

According to Laurentin, the third Pauline verse that the Immortalists use to argue their position on the Assumption from the Incorruptibility of the Church is II Corinthians 5:2-4 which says:

For in this tent we groan, longing to be further clothed with our heavenly habitation if indeed, when we have taken it off, we shall not be found naked. For while we are in this tent we groan and are weighed down, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.<sup>291</sup>

According to Cerfaux, these verses must be read in the context in which St. Paul is writing. St. Paul explains the hope of the Resurrection in 2 Corinthians 4:14 and the hope which Christians can expect with the glory that will clothe their bodies; St. Paul delves into the hope for the glory of the Resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Philippians 3:8-11 and Romans 8:18-39.<sup>292</sup> I Thessalonians 4:13-18 talks about how those who have fallen asleep, or died, will awake, or arise, in Christ. Philippians 3:8-11 is about St. Paul losing all things for the sake of Christ. Romans 8:18-39 talks about the hope that creation has for God. The glory of the Resurrection will clothe the mortal body of the Christian on the day of the *Parousia*; all created things groan in anticipation of future glory of the Resurrection. Much like I Corinthians 15:21, II Corinthians 5:2-4 anticipates the glory of Resurrection that radiate in body of the Christian who has become identified with Christ.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, according to Laurentin, the Immortalists say that Mary would be clothed in new life with her mortal body becoming integrated in that new life as all of the faithful of the Church would even though this verse seems to also go against the Immortalist position since the verse explicitly states the word “mortal.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>292</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 63-64.

<sup>293</sup> Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 64.

<sup>294</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

#### 4.4.2 Mary as the New Eve Who Did Not Have the Primary Penalties for Sin

According to Laurentin, the Immortalists argue that the Blessed Virgin Mary did not fall asleep, i.e. because she did not have Original Sin which death is a punishment; the Blessed Virgin Mary was free even from the penalty of sin which is death.<sup>295</sup> The Immortalists begin by saying, as taught definitively by the Church, that Mary was free from the principal penalties of sin which include "... concupiscence, servitude to sexual libido, the pains of labor ...." The Immortalists cite Genesis 3:16 as evidence that the Blessed Virgin Mary was exempt from these punishments inflicted on the offspring of Eve by God.<sup>296</sup> They believe that Mary is "the point of departure from the new creation" and so would not incur the penalties of sin of the first Eve.<sup>297</sup> They argue that Immortality to be one of these exemptions.<sup>298</sup>

According to Laurentin, the Immortalists are not saying that Mary was exempt from all suffering in the world; they rightly point to several explicit Scripture verses to demonstrate that the Blessed Virgin Mary suffered during her life on earth. She apparently suffered from the doubt of St. Joseph in Matthew 1:19. She also went through pain from the trip to Bethlehem and the following persecution from King Herod in Luke 2:1-7 and Matthew 2:13-19. She endured pain from a life of poverty in Nazareth and the loss of Jesus at the temple in Luke 2:41-50. She also experienced pain during the crucifixion of Jesus in John 19:25-27. They also point to Acts 1:14, 4:1-7, 5:33-42, 12:1, and 12:25 since the bible implies that Mary was present at the work and persecution of the Apostles after the Ascension of Christ. Last, according to Laurentin, the Immortalists

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<sup>295</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338. Laurentin does not specify which Immortalists.

<sup>296</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

<sup>297</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 333.

<sup>298</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338.

use typological interpretations of Revelation 12:2 and Revelation 12: 13-15 to justify that Mary experienced suffering in the sense of pain.<sup>299</sup>

From these Scripture passages, Mary dealt with the pain that all people share. According to Laurentin, the pain of persecutions and wickedness by people and trials that come from the disorder of the fallen world are called external sufferings which Mary suffered; Mary did not however have internal “pains” that arise from the degradation of human nature that comes from Original Sin.<sup>300</sup> Because Christ suffered for both external and internal “pains,” and Mary suffered all that Christ suffered, then one would expect that Mary should suffer a violent death like Christ; no records that still exist can confirm that Mary did indeed die a violent death.<sup>301</sup> The Immortalists argue that if the Blessed Virgin Mary underwent martyrdom then God would have revealed her Martyrdom; they say that because she did not experience Martyrdom, it would be hard to argue that her soul from “an excess of love” should separate from her body rather than undergoing a deathless Assumption of her virginal body.<sup>302</sup>

#### **4.5.1 Roschini: Hypothesis of Partial Separation of the Soul**

Immortalist Gabriele Roschini offers one distinction on what the Immortalist position could mean on the separation of body and soul; Roschini was the first rector for the Marianum in Rome and spent most of his life on the study of Mary.<sup>303</sup> For Mary, a real separation occurred but it was not death that Mary experienced. Roschini

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<sup>299</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 338-339. They do not specify what kind of pain Mary experienced.

<sup>300</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 339.

<sup>301</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 339.

<sup>302</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 339.

<sup>303</sup> O’Carroll, “Roschini,” 577. Laurentin talked about an “excess of love” when talking about the separation of the soul and body; Laurentin did not cite Roschini when discussing an “excess of love.” Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 339.

distinguishes two kinds of separation of the soul from the body. The first is a separation that is properly called death when the soul is taken from the body and substantial corruption occurs. The second is the temporal separation of the spirit from the body without corruption. This second separation is only a temporary separation as the soul enters a contemplative rapture.<sup>304</sup>

While proper death is complete separation of the soul from the body, in ecstasy, the second type of separation, the soul does not completely detach itself from the body. According to Roschini, the soul has a more select part that is directly related to contemplation. This part of the soul leaves the body when ecstatic contemplation occurs. In the Blessed Virgin Mary, her soul was overflowing with the love of Christ and was able to enter into this ecstatic kind of separation more than any other creature.<sup>305</sup>

Roschini appears to have been influenced by the private revelations of Maria Valtorta as he wrote his belief of the soul in his commentary on the letters of Maria Valtorta.<sup>306</sup> Two things are to be noted from this fact; first, theology does not use private revelations as only public revelation is binding of the faithful.<sup>307</sup> This thesis refers to this book only because that is where Roschini got his argument. Second, the writings of Maria Valtorta were condemned by the Catholic Church because of the errors in her writings

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<sup>304</sup> Gabriele M. Roschini, *La Madonna Negli Scritti di Maria Valtorta* (Frosinone, Italy: Tipografia Editrice M. Pisani, 1973), 307-308. If the soul is understood to be the form of the body, then the human person is indivisible according to Classical Thomism. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 76, a. 4, *Summa theologiae: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, vol. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981), 377. The question of the soul and body will be explained more fully later. *Summa Theologiae* will be abbreviated to ST.

<sup>305</sup> Roschini, *La Madonna*, 307-308.

<sup>306</sup> Roschini, *La Madonna*, 307-308.

<sup>307</sup> CCC 67.



and placed on the index of Forbidden Books.<sup>308</sup> Therefore, the writings from Maria Valtrota should be used with caution when talking about theology.

However, this teaching on the separation of the soul from the body is not completely unheard of in the Roman Catholic Church. Saint Teresa of Avila, the great mystic and Doctor of the Church, teaches similarly on the soul; she admits that the soul is one but that one detects subtle interior effects in contemplative life depending on how the Lord acts on the person. St. Teresa calls the ecstatic rapture the “flight of the spirit” which seems as if the soul has truly separated from the body. The soul believes itself to be in a different region as it is no longer bound to the physical limitations of the body. According to Roschini, during the Assumption, Mary experienced this kind of separation which lifted her to heaven in an ecstasy of love.<sup>309</sup> St. Francis de Sales also states that Mary was “transported” to heaven by love for Jesus although St. Francis believes that Mary died.<sup>310</sup>

#### **4.5.2 Roschini: The Freedom of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Original Sin**

In another paper and in a separate argument, Roschini argues that it seems one cannot deny the absolute connection between the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. Roschini points out that death and bodily corruption are the penalty of sin and, he also says that death is only a natural occurrence for man in any other order of reality outside the supernatural; in the realm of the supernatural, death is a punishment.

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<sup>308</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis Commentarium Officiale*, vol. 52 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960), 60. The Index of Forbidden Books, which is a list of books that the Holy See has deemed as harmful to the faithful, has since been abrogated; the books on the list no longer carry ecclesiastical censure. Alfredo Ottaviani, “Abolizione dell’Indice dei libri proibiti,” in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. 58 (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1966), 445.

<sup>309</sup> Roschini, *La Madonna*, 308.

<sup>310</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 290-291.

He first argues from the basis that the Tradition of the Church has taught the connection between the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception; the Church Fathers include St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. Andrew of Crete, and St. John Damascene. They all argue the same belief that Mary was free from sin and would not incur the penalties of sin and could then leave earth without death. He does admit that these three Church Fathers taught that Mary died but he wants to focus on the connection on the Assumption to the Immaculate Conception.<sup>311</sup>

Roschini then points to evidence from Scripture to show that there is a link between sin and death. He first quotes Genesis 2:17 which states that if Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he will die. He then quotes Wisdom 1:13 and Wisdom 2:23 which say “For God made not death...” and “God created man incorruptible ... but, by the envy of the devil, death came into the world.” The connection between sin and death is also made apparent in Ecclesiasticus 25:33 which says “From the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die;” in the New Testament, St. Paul makes the connection clear too in Romans 5:12 when he says “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.”<sup>312</sup>

From these Scripture verses, Roschini concludes that death is not the natural condition but an imposed penalty for sin. Therefore, if anyone had not sinned in the line of Adam, e.g. the Blessed Virgin Mary, that person would not experience death. The condition of nature, or the inherent nature of the human being, is not a good enough reason to justify the obligation to die. Original Sin *originans*, or “Original Sin

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<sup>311</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 59-61.

<sup>312</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 66.

originating,” from Adam and inherited by his descendants while Original Sin *originatum*, or “Original Sin originated,” is the first sin committed by an individual.<sup>313</sup>

The second argument for Mary being free from the penalty of death for sin is that the Second Council of Orange in 529 taught that death is the penalty for sin; the second canon from the council states:

If anyone asserts that Adam’s sin injured himself alone and not his progeny, or certainly profess that corporeal death alone, which is the punishment of sin, and not sin itself, which is the death of the soul, was transmitted through one man to the entire human race, he attributes injustice to God and contradicts the Apostle who declared “Through one man sin entered the world...”<sup>314</sup>

Roschini sees two statements being asserted in this canon; first that the sin of Adam injured all of his descendants and, second, that bodily death is not transmitted without original sin also being transmitted or God would be unjust. The fact that Adam sinned is not enough to necessitate death for everyone and there has to be individual contraction of fault; there is an injustice present if the body died without an individual commission of sin. Roschini then notes from these premises that one must conclude that one dies not because one is merely a descendent of Adam but also that everyone commits a sin equivalent to the first sin of Adam; i.e. even after baptism one free from Original Sin commits his first sin.<sup>315</sup>

Roschini believes that Mary is preserved free from the stain of Original Sin as a matter of *de fide* and was therefore free from the requirement of death. Roschini then says that the Immaculate Conception is the “root” of the Assumption but that Mary must have been sinless all through life also to be free from death; he then concludes by saying that

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<sup>313</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 66.

<sup>314</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 67.

<sup>315</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 68.

being free from Original Sin and personal sin means that death is not a requirement for Mary and therefore there is a possibility that she did not die.<sup>316</sup> He explains this as “she was assumed because she was immaculate.”<sup>317</sup> Roschini argues for the Immortalist position via the Immaculate Conception like Gallus.

#### **4.6.1 Gallus: The Freedom of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the “Divine Aspect” of Sin**

Tiburzio Gallus, a Jesuit and a professor for the *Collegium Germanicum-Hungaricum* in Rome, argues much like Roschini, i.e. that there is a possibility that the Blessed Virgin Mary did not die because she did not have Original Sin.<sup>318</sup> Gallus cites Genesis 3:19 as evidence because God imposed death only after Adam and Eve had eaten of the fruit. The other penalties that God imposed previously in Genesis 3:17-18 are accessory aspects to the primary penalty of death; Gallus says that the accessory aspects are those effects of sin which impact others while the “divine aspect” relates to God alone.<sup>319</sup>

With Original Sin, the primary aspect was the disobedience of man to God (Genesis 3:6) while the accessory aspect of sin, according to Gallus, is that Adam listened to Eve (Genesis 3:17). Because Adam ate of the fruit, he will die which is the primary penalty while the associated penalty of working the land is an accessory penalty. Because Adam received corresponding penalties to each aspect, his progeny will receive the

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<sup>316</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 67-68.

<sup>317</sup> Roschini, “Assumption,” 68. Roschini also answers an objection that the essence of death is corruption not the mere separation of the soul from the body but he responds that corruption is only a necessary consequence of the separation of the soul from the body and not part of the essence of death. The separation of the soul from the body is the punishment from God. The issue of corruption after death will be explained more fully later. Roschini, “Assumption,” 70-71.

<sup>318</sup> Benkö, “Gallus,” 577.

<sup>319</sup> Tiburzio Gallus, “Perche la Madonna non poteva morire,” *Palestra del Clero* 34, (1955): 842.

corresponding penalties. According to Gallus, every human being receives the primary penalty of death which corresponds to the “divine aspect” of sin that Adam had committed.<sup>320</sup>

Gallus then states that in order for one to avoid death, God has to actively intervene and prevent the separation of the soul from the body. Man appears in celestial glory when God intervenes; Gallus points to the Transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-2 as an example. Gallus also states that those who are free from this punishment cannot have passibility, or the ability to suffer, in the transfer from a life on earth to life in heaven unless that passibility was divinely revealed. Both the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ have human nature but do not carry the stain of sin. God divinely revealed the reason why Christ died in John 10:17-18; he lays down his life for his friends and so has been given authority from the Father to lay down his life and rise again. According to Gallus, for the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sacred Scripture implicitly revealed that Mary would experience spiritual death when a sword would pierce her heart as told in Luke 2:35.<sup>321</sup>

According to Gallus, since the work of Mary in the redemption was not primary, she did not have to taste death. Jesus bore the primary or divine aspect of sin and so died. The work of Mary corresponds to the accessory aspect of sin when she stood at the cross of Jesus. If Mary were to experience death, then she would take on the primary penalty of death which would make her the Coredemptrix. Gallus is hesitant to accept Mary as the Coredemptrix since Gallus believes that Mary could not do what was reserved for

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<sup>320</sup> Gallus, “Madonna,” 842.

<sup>321</sup> Gallus, “Madonna,” 843. Gallus does not explain how this Scripture verse implicitly revealed that Mary would experience spiritual death.

Christ as the Redeemer. Gallus sees taking on the primary punishment of death as the role for the Redeemer, i.e. Jesus. He calls the Coredemptrix a “theological short circuit” and concludes that the Blessed Virgin Mary could not die or the role of Christ as the Redeemer would not make sense.<sup>322</sup>

#### **4.7.1 Jugie: The Right to Immortality for the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Another 20<sup>th</sup> century Immortalist to argue against the death of Mary due to her Immaculate Conception was Martin Jugie; he says that since the Immaculate Conception has been explicitly revealed, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception has revealed other truths of Church teaching and one of those teachings is the Assumption; Jugie argues for the Immortality in Mary due to her role from the foot of the Cross but instead connects her role at the foot of the cross to the Immaculate Conception and not as a type of Church.<sup>323</sup> The Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved from all guilt of Original Sin and so would not entail the penalties associated with Original Sin.<sup>324</sup> She would have enjoyed the preternatural and supernatural graces that Adam enjoyed before his fall which includes freedom from death.<sup>325</sup>

The Blessed Virgin Mary having been freed from the stain of Original Sin means she could have died only by a violent death as illnesses and old age are also a consequence of Original Sin.<sup>326</sup> Following the belief that Mary experienced a kind of death at the foot of the cross, she did not have to die as the primary role of Jesus was to

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<sup>322</sup> Gallus, “Madonna,” 844-845. Gallus seems to think that elevating Mary to the Coredemptrix makes her equal to Christ.

<sup>323</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L’Assomption*, 559-561, 623.

<sup>324</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L’Assomption*, 623.

<sup>325</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L’Assomption*, 539-540. Jugie relies on the Scripture passages of Romans 5:12, 19, 24, Romans 6:23, and I Corinthians 15:56 which all say that death is the consequence of sin.

<sup>326</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L’Assomption*, 555.

die; because Jesus fulfilled the role of death, the end of Mary would have only secondary importance. Jugie asks what Mary would add to the primary death of Jesus; death, even in the sweet hypothetical death of the Dormition stories, is still the most terrible and painful event that a human being experiences. According to Jugie, Mary could not be expected to experience a second death when her accessory role at the foot of the cross was the New Eve. Once her role at the Cross was over, she had the right to immortality as conferred on her through her Immaculate Conception and continued sinlessness.<sup>327</sup>

#### **4.8.2 Forderer: The Spiritual Death of Mary**

Manfred Forderer was an Immortalist and layman who took up the thesis by Gallus and, he also argued that the Blessed Virgin did not die because she was Immaculately conceived.<sup>328</sup> Forderer argues that Christ began the work of His Redemption for mankind when He completely sanctified the Blessed Virgin Mary at the moment of her conception. In the Blessed Virgin Mary, the entire creation is restored so that Jesus as the second Adam could emerge and redeem sinners as a sinless person. Forderer also quotes Genesis 3:15 as evidence for the Immaculate Conception since the Blessed Virgin Mary was the offspring promised to crush the head of the serpent. She therefore should be exempt from all the penalties of sin including death. Forderer also cites the Church Father Saint Epiphanius of Salamis as to why the question on the death of Mary remains unanswered.<sup>329</sup>

Forderer admits that the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary may be possible as death has taken on a different character for the Christian. The Christian takes on “a death

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<sup>327</sup> Jugie, *Mort et L'Assomption*, 562.

<sup>328</sup> Hauke, email message to Gloria Dodd, March 5, 2024.

<sup>329</sup> Manfred Forderer, *Königin ohne Tod in den Himmel aufgenommen: Das Siegel der göttlichen Offenbarung*, (Stein am Rhein, Switzerland: Christiana-Verlag, 1988), 149-150.

after Christ” where he participates in the work of Redemption of Christ. Death becomes a gateway into heaven in which the Christian can join Christ. He retorts to this suggestion about the possibility of death for the Blessed Virgin Mary that death is not a trivial matter. Following into the death of Christ means to enter into death that results from sin which is horrible by itself; if everything was fine after death then there would be no need for the Resurrection of the body. He points out that death still causes something that God did not intend for man which is that the soul is torn from the body. He asks three questions from this. First, if Mary did not die, is she missing something in her following of Christ? Second, if she did die, how was her death possible and, third, is this according to the will of God?<sup>330</sup>

Forderer says that divine Revelation would have revealed the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, there are three places in the Bible where Mary is confronted with death. The first is when Mary stood at the foot of the cross of Jesus in John 19:25-27 and the second is when the prophet Symeon prophesized that “a sword would pierce her heart” in Luke 2:35. Forderer then uses a typological analysis and says the third time Mary confronted death is in Apocalypse 12:1-6, 9, 13-17. Forderer equates Mary with the woman in the apocalypse and says she confronted death as the great dragon pursued her; she also experienced spiritual birth pains in giving birth to her Son in a sinful world.<sup>331</sup>

Using these three Scriptural passages, Forderer then implicitly answers these questions by pointing out that Mary’s following of Jesus was as complete as everyone else’s. Mary experienced these birth pains during the Crucifixion of Christ when she

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<sup>330</sup> Forderer, *Königin*, 151-152.

<sup>331</sup> Foderer, *Königin*, 153-155. Forderer does not say how Mary specifically dealt with death in Luke 2:35 and Apocalypse 12: 1-6, 9, 13-17.



screamed in spirit as Jesus died on the cross; Jesus escaped the dragon as he was taken up to the Father after his death. Christ alone redeemed the world through his death, but Mary participated in the death of Jesus by standing as his mother near Him at the foot of the cross; therefore she died a spiritual death while Jesus died a physical death. Because the sword that pierced Mary's soul had been prophesied by Simeon, who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, Mary's spiritual death fulfilled God's will. Therefore, Mary remained immortal as she would not need to undergo death again.<sup>332</sup>

#### 4.9.1 The Problem of Defining Death

Perhaps the strongest argument for the Immortalist position is their argument from the unity of the body and soul. According to Laurentin, the Immortalists presume the Thomistic understanding of death as the separation of the soul from the body with the body's corruption as soon as the soul leaves the body.<sup>333</sup> The body corrupts because the soul is the intrinsic form of the body; therefore, the Immortalists are seeking to understand not the distinction between soul and body, but the distinction between the soul and the matter that the soul informs.<sup>334</sup>

A corpse is no longer a body philosophically speaking because the substantial form is no longer linked to the body.<sup>335</sup> A corpse is merely the figure of what once was there and has no unity inside and, the matter of a corpse no longer belongs to the body but to the cycle of nature.<sup>336</sup> Philosophical corruption is thus defined as "the movement in

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<sup>332</sup> Forderer, *Königin*, 156-157.

<sup>333</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340.

<sup>334</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340.

<sup>335</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340. For Aquinas, the form is the act itself as opposed to the matter which is the potentiality that exists in relation to the act. *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 1, trans. English Dominican Province, 372. Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

<sup>336</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 340.

which the substantial form is lost.”<sup>337</sup> How the soul can be separated from the body is what Roschini was trying to figure out when analyzing the “flight of the spirit” in the teaching by St. Teresa of Avila.<sup>338</sup>

The Mortalists, Immortalists, and the Tradition of the Catholic Church all agree that the Blessed Virgin Mary did not undergo corruption. However, there are three kinds of corruption that must be distinguished and then compared to what Christ experienced; the first is the philosophical corruption of the soul’s separation from the body, which Christ underwent. While his unity as the person of Christ was not lost since he is hypostatically united as the Divine Word, he did lose the unity of his human nature; he lost the unity of his human nature since his soul no longer informed his body as his soul was separated from his body.<sup>339</sup> Aquinas says that the body on the cross that died was the same body that was laid in the tomb; Christ truly underwent death and had true philosophical corruption.<sup>340</sup> Aquinas appears to follow St. John Damascene who had distinguished the different kinds of corruption; Damascene denounces the heresies of Julian and Gaian for saying that Christ had not undergone philosophical corruption.<sup>341</sup>

The second kind of corruption is empirical corruption which is known as decay, i.e. the dissolution of the elements in the body. Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary did not undergo this kind of decay as stated in Psalm 15:10, “You will not allow your faithful

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<sup>337</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 341.

<sup>338</sup> Roschini, *La Madonna*, 308.

<sup>339</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 341-342. How Christ as a person retains his unity remains one of the divine mysteries.

<sup>340</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Thomas Aquinas’s QuodLibet Questions*, trans. Turner Nevitt and Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 350.

<sup>341</sup> *ST*, III, q. 50, a. 5, trans. English Dominican Province, 2291.

one to see corruption.”<sup>342</sup> The Roman Catholic Church definitively teaches that Christ did not allow his Mother to undergo decay.<sup>343</sup>

The third kind of corruption also pertains to the question of the death of Mary.<sup>344</sup> For a human being, the soul informs the body so that a human being exists; without the soul, the body cannot exist on its own.<sup>345</sup> Even if Mary wanted to imitate Christ in death, death implies a dissolution in what was once there because the substantial form is gone, in this case, the soul as the form of a human body.<sup>346</sup>

According to Aquinas, the body of Christ had remained *idem numero ratione suppositi*, translated literally to “the same numerically by reason of the person that assumed it,” but it no longer remained *idem numero ratione specie*, translated literally to “the same numerically by reason of the species.”<sup>347</sup> Aquinas means that the body of Christ kept its identity as a human body because of the hypostatic union of his divine personhood, but not through his human nature for the corpse no longer can be said to be properly human.<sup>348</sup>

According to Laurentin, following this line of argument on corruption, “the residue of the body” of the Blessed Virgin Mary could no longer be a human body.<sup>349</sup> Nothing present would have connected the Mother of God to what was left since the corpse does not philosophically belong to her and her Divine Motherhood would have been changed for at least a brief moment. For Aquinas, Christ was true man and so would

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<sup>342</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 341.

<sup>343</sup> *MD*, 40.

<sup>344</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

<sup>345</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I, q. 76, a. 1, trans. English Dominican Province, 377. Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

<sup>346</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

<sup>347</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342. See *ST*, III, q. 50, a. 5, ad. 2 trans. English Dominican Province, 2291.

<sup>348</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342. Aquinas, *ST*, III, q. 2, a. 2, 2028.

<sup>349</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

have acquired the matter of his humanity, i.e. his body, like any other human being which is supplied from the body of the mother who conceived Him. One would have to ask then if Christ would allow the body of his Mother as the ark that held Him to be permitted this kind of alienation.<sup>350</sup>

#### **4.10.1 Conclusion**

The arguments for the Immortalist point of view on the Assumption were brought up again in the Church during the few years before the dogma of the Assumption was defined by Pope Pius XII; Hauke states that previously “the death of Mary was taken for granted” as shown in the analysis from the previous Church Fathers and early writings of the Church in chapters two and three.<sup>351</sup> The Immortalists made three main arguments for the possibility that Mary did not die with Forderer being the only to argue that Mary was not able to die; first, bodily death was not necessary for Mary since she did not have Original Sin. Second, the Blessed Virgin Mary already suffered a spiritual equivalent of death with Christ at the foot of the Cross and so would not need to undergo a second death; and third, Mary also anticipates the *Parousia*, or the second triumphant coming of Christ, when all the faithful of the Church living on earth will be transformed with new bodies without having died at the Resurrection of the body.

The Immortalists argue for their position based on the systematic theology and Christian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and the Scriptures. They retain a consistent theological and philosophical system that had informed their theology as evidenced by their problem with the identity and the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The belief in the

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<sup>350</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342.

<sup>351</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 288. It was previously brought up during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hauke, review of *Stärker*, 72.

death of Mary by the Church Fathers and early Church Writings was excluded in the arguments by the Immortalists with the exception of Timothy of Jerusalem as the Early Church had sided with the Mortalist position which will be covered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE MORTALISTS

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

Now that chapters two and three have analyzed the historical background of the Dormition and/or Assumption of the Eastern and Western Church Fathers respectively and that chapter four has analyzed the Immortalist position, chapter five discusses the Mortalist position. This chapter first analyzes the arguments of two Roman Catholic Mortalists, Karl Rahner and Rene Laurentin. This chapter then looks at some of the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Because the Mortalist position utilizes the Tradition of the early Church in their arguments, this chapter explores more fully the theology on the Assumption and/or Dormition from the Church Fathers and early writings from chapter two and three. The aim of this chapter is to find the theological differences of the Mortalists from the Eastern Orthodox Churches when compared to the Mortalists and Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church.

While this chapter aims to describe the Mortalist position inside the Eastern Orthodox Churches, an analysis of two Catholic Mortalists, Rahner and Laurentin, is also presented as they engage in the dialogue of the issue on the question of the death of Mary. After the Catholic Mortalist positions are explained, this chapter studies the Mortalist positions of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in an effort to find ecumenical ground between the two positions. Chapter six of this thesis proposes areas of ecumenical similarities for further research that may arise from these differences explored in chapter five. In addition to Rahner and Laurentin of the Roman Catholic Church, this chapter covers the Eastern Orthodox theologians Metropolitan Ware, Kallistos Kallinilkos,

Iuvenalie Ionascu, and apologist Patrick Truglia in addition to the Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Churches. These representatives were picked because they directly dialogue and comment on the question of the death of Mary.

### **5.1.2 Why the Dormition and/or Assumption Are Important for Ecumenism**

That the Christian churches reach ecumenical understanding with each other is important as Jesus said in John 17:20-23; he prayed that who believe in Him may be one. Any kind of theological division between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches is detrimental to unity. The person of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one way in which ecumenical agreement can happen; much work has been done on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the modern Eastern Orthodox Churches.<sup>352</sup> Members of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches agree on the typological language of John 19:25-27 as Jesus giving Mary to the Church to be her spiritual Mother.<sup>353</sup> Because Jesus Christ gave the Blessed Virgin Mary to all Christians as their Mother, then the Blessed Virgin Mary is a good place to discuss one aspect of ecumenical relations between the two Churches. The goal of this thesis therefore is to discuss the differences in understanding between the minority Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches so that more research into ecumenical similarities can be made.

### **5.2.1 Rahner: Mary the Most Fitting to show the Resurrection of the Body**

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<sup>352</sup> CCC 666. MD 44. Hauke, *Mariology*, 291.

<sup>353</sup> John Behr, *John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 183. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, "The Orthodox Services and their Structure," in *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 64-65. Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 302-304. Edward Sri, *Rethinking Mary In the New Testament* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 182-183.

The Roman Catholic Church has not infallibly defined that Mary died, only that she was assumed into heaven both body and soul without experiencing corruption in the grave; according to Hauke though, the Mortalist position is the majority opinion of theologians in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>354</sup> Rene Laurentin directly engages with the Immortalists and represents the common position that most Mortalists takes; Karl Rahner presents an interesting argument for the Mortalist position but his argument for the Mortalist position is not representative of what the Roman Catholic Church believes. Karl Rahner, a German Jesuit and peritus at the Second Vatican Council who studied historical theology, argues that Mary in her Assumption is the exemplar of the “Resurrection-in-Death;” Rahner wants to examine the content of the dogma of the Assumption in order to find the inner meaning that this dogma has for all Christians.<sup>355</sup> His theological points on the dogma of Resurrection explain the glory of the Resurrection that is exhibited through the Blessed Virgin and are the backdrop of scriptural verses used in the theological arguments by the Immortalists in chapter four with I Thessalonians 4:17, I Corinthians 15:21, and II Corinthians 5:2-4.

Karl Rahner notes the unique role that the Blessed Virgin Mary had in salvation history. Because of her flesh and her assent in saying yes to the incarnation, the Logos became flesh and, Mary participates therefore in a special way in salvation history through her perfect reception of Him.<sup>356</sup> She receives Christ perfectly through the singularly unique grace that Christ gives to her; Rahner explains this singular grace is by saying,

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<sup>354</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 291

<sup>355</sup> Matthew Levering, *Mary's Bodily Assumption* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 52. Eadan, *Rahner*, 10.

<sup>356</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 52.



Christ's single and unique grace exhaustively surpassed man's sinfulness, even 'temporally' in a certain way, so that she can in no way (not even as to sin) call anything her own which is not the gift of the incomprehensible grace of the Father in the Son of her womb.<sup>357</sup>

Because she received Christ and all graces from God, she is the Second Eve from whom all are spiritually descended; Mary is therefore the model of the Church. Rahner says that as the Church is the Mother of all Christians "who live in Christ" so too does Mary become the Mother of all the living.<sup>358</sup>

Rahner also argues that death is the furthest away in being that a human can be from God. Jesus Christ died to overcome this depth in distance between man and God and through his resurrected body has brought the entire human race back to God. Man can now live with God in undivided unity. Because Christ experienced the same death as man, his body shares a relation to all other resurrected bodies. Rahner then makes the argument that because the unity of humanity and Christ in the Resurrection is a relation, Christ can no longer be alone in his glorified body. He cites Matthew 27:52 which says "... tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised" as evidence that the glorified saints now enjoy a glorified life with Christ; the crux of the argument set forth by Rahner is that glorified bodies fulfill their being when they, i.e. glorified bodies, are put in relation with other glorified bodies.<sup>359</sup>

### **5.2.2 Rahner: The Glorified Body in the General Resurrection**

Admittedly, Rahner notes that only the glorified can know what a glorified body is. What is known about glorified bodies is that they will be raised "imperishable," have

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<sup>357</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption," in vol. 1 of *Theological Investigations*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), 218.

<sup>358</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 53.

<sup>359</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 53. *κεκοιμημένων*, or *kekoimēmenōn*, is the Greek word in Matthew 27:52 for "having fallen asleep" and is the middle passive perfect of *koimesis*. The use of the word *koimesis* is another example of Karl Rahner being a Mortalist.

glory and power, be spiritual, and are the image of Christ as in I Corinthians 15:42-44, 49. The Resurrection of Christ inaugurated heaven as the new standard of being which transforms creation; the new ordering of heaven did not replace or even refurbish creation but radically transformed the old creation into a new creation.<sup>360</sup>

The relationship of the glorified Christ with other glorified bodies in the new heaven of creation is explained by Rahner:

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.<sup>361</sup>

The eternity of the faithful has a beginning point but the eternity of God absolutely transcends any point of history; Rahner says that from our point of view in history, the glorification of Christ takes place in a certain part of history alongside the Church and the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>362</sup> The glorification of Christ happened at the Resurrection and so the "end of time" began at that particular point in the past, according to St. Paul.<sup>363</sup> Individual humans enter into the end of time when they are raised and glorified in the flesh; Mary represents the totality of redemption through the totality of her being which is the glorified unity of body and soul with God. The Blessed Virgin Mary experienced what all other men will experience, i.e. death, because in his glorified body, Christ is joined by all members of the new bodily community. The Blessed Virgin

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<sup>360</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 54.

<sup>361</sup> Karl Rahner, "Dogma of the Assumption," 224.

<sup>362</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 54.

<sup>363</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 54. Cerfaux, *Christ in St. Paul*, 84-85.

Mary represents the perfected Church; the Church herself is redeemed totally and this reality of the perfect Church exists already in the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>364</sup>

### 5.2.3 Rahner: An Unusual Mortalist Position

In explaining why Mary died before her assumption into heaven, Rahner looks at the 1336 Apostolic Constitution *Benedictus Deus* which states that the saints enjoy the beatific vision of Christ before they have taken up their bodies in the General Resurrection.<sup>365</sup> The interpretation of this doctrinal statement has led theologians, unnamed by Rahner, to propose that there exists an intermediate state in which the separated soul waits for the Resurrection of their body at the end of time. Rahner does not intend to dogmatize the intermediate state as it serves only as an “intellectual framework” that helps theologians understand the Resurrection of the Body.<sup>366</sup> He only wants to point to an issue in doctrine in which theologians can hold a variety of opinions.<sup>367</sup>

Rahner explains the theory on the intermediate state as such:

The single and total perfecting of man in ‘body’ and ‘soul’ takes place immediately after death; that the resurrection of the flesh and the general judgement take place ‘parallel’ to the temporal history of the world; and that both coincide with the sum of the particular judgements of individual men and women.<sup>368</sup>

According to Rahner, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the rest of the dead have already received the redemption of their body and soul and have entered heaven. All humans at their moment of death enter the bodily resurrection and final judgement, so the rest of humanity, like Mary, would have received their resurrected bodies. The dogma of

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<sup>364</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 54-55.

<sup>365</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 55. Apparently, this Church teaching on the Beatific Vision and the body was first defined in this Apostolic Constitution. The Catechism does cite a 1334 letter by John XXII as the earliest date where this teaching on the body and Beatific Vision appears. CCC, 1022.

<sup>366</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 56.

<sup>367</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 56.

<sup>368</sup> Karl Rahner, “The Intermediate State,” vol. 17 of *Theological Investigations*, trans. Maragret Kohl (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 115.

the Assumption of Mary therefore confirms what all human beings will go through at the end of their life.<sup>369</sup>

Rahner points out that when Scripture speaks about the Resurrection, it talks about the whole person rising and that Christ assures Christians that He will be with them when they die. Rahner points to Luke 23:43 when Christ assures the penitent thief that the thief will be with Him today in paradise. Rahner also cites John 5:24 in which Christ tells His disciples that those who believe in Him have eternal life, and Christ also says that the believer will not receive judgment or condemnation but pass from death to life. While the Old Testament does not develop much theology on the Resurrection of the body, it depicts the people in Sheol as disembodied spirits who are thoroughly unhappy. Rahner does not cite any Scripture verses to back his claim about Sheol in the Old Testament.<sup>370</sup>

Rahner also says that Patristic and Medieval sources provide evidence against the intermediate state. Rahner then claims that the Patristics referred to the harrowing of hell, or the escape of the righteous from hell with Christ, as a physical Resurrection and not only the freeing of the soul. By the late medieval period, theologians argued that either the soul received perfection prior to the General Resurrection or that the General Resurrection will perfect the soul. The intermediate state arose during the Medieval period to reconcile these two beliefs.<sup>371</sup>

Rahner also notes that the intermediate state solves the problem of the separated soul. If the soul is the form of the body, and that soul and body make up the substantial

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<sup>369</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 56.

<sup>370</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 56-57.

<sup>371</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 57.

unity of the human being, then the soul is the act of the body. Rahner claims that if one takes away this act that constitutes the substantial unity, then one would be taking away the soul. Rahner at first thought that in order to solve the problem, one would have to posit that the soul is related to the matter of the entire universe so that even bodily death would not take away the soul as the form of the body. He later changes his view and states that the problem of the separated soul is a false issue in that the separated soul does not exist at all.<sup>372</sup>

One obvious problem with the solution by Rahner is how to reconcile that the body is decomposing in the grave at the same time when the body has been raised up at the same time. Rahner answers this objection by stating that identity between the glorified and the dead body does not depend on material consistency. Rahner points out that matter is not the principal of identity; there is no problem in stating that the decomposing body can exist at the same time as the glorified body in heaven as the matter is not the principle of identity holding the human being together. Rahner believes that the soul is the principle of identity; the dead body does not seem to make a difference because death has moved the soul to the new life in a glorified body; Matthew Levering points out that this position significantly downplays the value of the human body in history.<sup>373</sup>

Rahner thinks that the distinction between body and soul can still be made since the human being cannot be free to be the “subject of what is transcendence without limits.”<sup>374</sup> He believes that fundamentally that the human being an embodied being; a

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<sup>372</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 57.

<sup>373</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 58.

<sup>374</sup> Rahner, “Intermediate State,” 120.

sign for embodiment is that all of the intellectual actions of the human being cannot be separated from the body. Humanity seeks transcendence and, man finds transcendence in God when God transforms the human in his whole being. Philosophy or divine Revelation cannot therefore suggest the existence of a disembodied person nor can there even exist an intermediate state.<sup>375</sup>

Rahner claims that the Blessed Virgin Mary is no exception to this rule; she does not hold a special privilege when compared to the rest of mankind; only that she underwent the Resurrection of the body first among all the blessed. She entered into the Resurrection in the totality of her being; she possesses a glorified body while her body remained in the grave for a short time. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger does offer a criticism of the Resurrection-in-death by Rahner but does so without mentioning the Assumption; Ratzinger thinks that if the Resurrection-in-death would be true then the burial and descent of hell by Christ is meaningless as the death of Jesus accomplishes the Resurrection of Christ immediately. The hypothesis of the Resurrection-in-death was explained here to detail Rahner's justification for the Mortalist position.<sup>376</sup>

However, Rahner seems to contradict *Munificentissimus Deus* which also affirms the General Resurrection on the last day.<sup>377</sup> Catholic belief is that the General Resurrection of the body will happen at the end of time.<sup>378</sup> The Resurrection-in-death is a theological opinion held by Rahner and does not represent the majority of the Catholic Mortalist position as shown by Laurentin who directly engages with Rahner.<sup>379</sup> Hauke

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<sup>375</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 58-59.

<sup>376</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 59, 73.

<sup>377</sup> *MD*, 4-5.

<sup>378</sup> *CCC*, 1001.

<sup>379</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

also disagrees with Rahner; Hauke says that the Resurrection-in-death holds the “conviction that the future resurrection will not happen at the site of the mortal remains still in existence, in particular the relics of saints.”<sup>380</sup> Rahner was only included in this thesis to show the diverse range of justifications that Roman Catholics have on the question of the end of the life of Mary.

### **5.3.1 Laurentin: A Typical Mortalist Position**

Rene Laurentin, a French priest and peritus at the Second Vatican Council who studied Mariology, takes an approach not unlike St. Epiphanius or St. Modestus in which he is open to what happened at the end of the life of Mary but says that the Mortalist position is the “plausible opinion.”<sup>381</sup> He does critique a separate position from Rahner on the Assumption which states that Mary was glorified at the moment of her death, a death without corruption.<sup>382</sup> Laurentin does not think that this explains the Assumption well enough since this proposed solution only highlights the paradoxical nature of having her die at the same time she is not dead.<sup>383</sup>

Rene Laurentin then says that there are number of opinions out there on how Mary died; he points out that people in the early history of the Church said she died a martyr, that she died of old age, that she died of sickness, that she died out of consuming love and more. Laurentin then holds that the Church, other than the fact of Assumption, knows nothing about the event. Even though a death for Mary is the plausible opinion, the question on how Mary died is more open-ended than either side likes. He emphasizes

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<sup>380</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 287.

<sup>381</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, xxii-xxiii, 343.

<sup>382</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 342-343.

<sup>383</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

that one has the right alongside St. Epiphanius to believe that the end of the life of Mary is hidden and that the Christian will not know in this life.<sup>384</sup>

He offers one more solution; he mentions the proposed hypothesis by Rahner that every soul at the moment of death would find a new body in the new creation because of the Resurrection of Christ. The new bodies will be risen and will not be bound to the matter of the earth. The empty tombs of everyone will become what Laurentin calls “an embarrassing element.”<sup>385</sup> Laurentin questions this solution though as Laurentin thinks that this solution is also too radical.<sup>386</sup> With the Mortalist position of Laurentin covered, this thesis will now cover certain Mortalist theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

#### **5.4.1 Liturgy: The Eastern Orthodox Churches**

Opposition and acceptance to the 1950 declaration of the Assumption in *Munificentissimus Deus* was divided amongst theologians from the Eastern Orthodox Churches. While some theologians criticized the declaration, other theologians from the Eastern Orthodox Churches voiced agreement with the declaration; what the majority of Christians in the Eastern Orthodox Churches believe about the Assumption must be stated first in order to explain their positions on the death of Mary.<sup>387</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches share the conviction with the Roman Catholic Church that Mary underwent the bodily Assumption into heaven and belief in the Dormition had first appeared in the East.<sup>388</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches agree with the Roman Catholic

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<sup>384</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 337, 343. He seems to disregard the Apocrypha.

<sup>385</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343. Laurentin does not clarify why the empty graves of the all the newly risen will be embarrassing.

<sup>386</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

<sup>387</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 292.

<sup>388</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 291-292.



Church that she did not corrupt in the grave.<sup>389</sup> Most opposition from the Eastern Orthodox Churches to the teaching of the Assumption by the Roman Catholic Church is directed against the papal authority that declared the dogma.<sup>390</sup>

However, some opposition from theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches goes further than just the issue of papal authority. Manfred Hauke, a professor of Dogmatic Theology and a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, states that some theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches emphasize the “poetic exaggeration” of the words chanted in the Divine Liturgy for the Assumption to the point of losing the literal meaning of the words.<sup>391</sup> This thesis explores what Hauke meant by the “poetic exaggeration” emphasized by some theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and sees how this impacts the understanding of the death of Mary in the Eastern Orthodox Churches; this chapter first explores what the Eastern Orthodox Churches as a community believe in regard to the Dormition.<sup>392</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Churches: Belief in the Dormition**

*The Festal Menaion* is the name for a book that contains the offices, or Liturgy of the Hours, and some parts of the Divine Liturgy, or the Eucharistic celebration, for the immovable feasts used by those Christians which follow the Byzantine Rite such as the Eastern Orthodox Churches; the *Festal Menaion* contains a section on the Dormition of Mary.<sup>393</sup> The celebration of the feast day of the Dormition is set on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the same

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<sup>389</sup> D. A. A. Stiernon, “Theologie Mariale Dans l’Orthodoxie Russe,” vol. 7 of *Marie*, ed. Hubert du Manoir (Paris: Beauchesne, 1949), 275.

<sup>390</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 292. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 260.

<sup>391</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, xv-xvi, 292. Hauke is referring to Eastern Orthodox theologians who wrote during the time of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary in 1950.

<sup>392</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 292.

<sup>393</sup> “Dormition,” *Menaion*, 504. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204-205. The Eastern Catholic Churches that follow the Byzantine Rite also use the *Menaion* in their liturgy. Adrian Fortesque, “Menaion,” vol. 10 of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), 177. “Menaion – August 15<sup>th</sup>,”

date as the celebration of the Assumption in the Roman Catholic Church. Metropolitan Ware, who translated the *Festal Menaion*, admits that the Dormition is extra-biblical but cites Psuedo-Dionysius to explain how the Dormition happened. Metropolitan Ware notes that the aim of the liturgy for the Dormition is not to affirm every single event that happened in the Apocrypha as literal but to show that all Christians will undergo the General Resurrection of the dead; Metropolitan Ware affirms that Eastern Orthodox Tradition has always believed that the Dormition happened in fact.<sup>394</sup>

Metropolitan Ware notes that the Blessed Virgin Mary underwent a physical death like her Son but was resurrected also like her Son. She now lives in heaven with both her body and soul; she is beyond death and judgement and lives in the Coming Age after this one. Her Dormition anticipates the fate of all of Christians; all the faithful will rise on the last day and be reunited with their bodies. The Blessed Virgin Mary is not to be placed in a different category of being as she enjoys the glory that all the faithful will one day possess.<sup>395</sup> This language in describing the Dormition is not unlike that of the Catholic Theologian Karl Rahner who said that the Blessed Virgin anticipates the future of all faithful Christians; in his introduction to the *Festal Menaion*, Metropolitan Ware does not delve into the distinctions between body and soul like Rahner does.<sup>396</sup>

The expression of belief in the Dormition in the Eastern Orthodox Churches is experienced in the Divine Liturgies of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.<sup>397</sup> The three

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Metropolitan Cantor Institute, Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh, last modified July 29, 2009, <https://mci.archpitt.org/menaion/08-15.html>.

<sup>394</sup> Mother Mary and Ware, "Orthodox Services," 64. Metropolitan Ware does not cite which page or section number from Psuedo-Dionysius.

<sup>395</sup> Mother Mary and Ware, "Orthodox Services," 64.

<sup>396</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 56.

<sup>397</sup> *Menaion*, Mother Mary and Ware, 555. The Divine Liturgy is different from Liturgy; According to Metropolitan Ware, the Liturgy denotes public worship in general while the Divine Liturgy specifically refers to the celebration of the Eucharist.

Divine Liturgies celebrated by the Eastern Orthodox Churches are the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil, and the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Liturgy.<sup>398</sup> The belief in the Dormition is celebrated throughout the Divine Liturgy on the feast day of Dormition on August 15<sup>th</sup> and is expressed in the Kontakion, a stanza that is sung after the Small Entrance when the deacon carries the Book of the Gospels through the north doors of the Church.<sup>399</sup>

### **5.4.3 *The Festal Menaion on the Dormition***

In *The Festal Menaion* itself, the section on the Dormition uses the Psalms as prayers to recite which reveal typological interpretations of the Dormition from the Bible; for Small and Great Vespers, it cites Psalm 131:8 which states “Arise, O Lord, into thy rest: Thou and the Ark of Thy holiness” and identifies Mary as the Ark that held Jesus.<sup>400</sup> The typological interpretation as Mary as the Ark that was lifted into heaven continues into Matins when the *Festal Menaion* makes use of 2 Samuel 6:6-7; as God kills Uzzah when he touched the Ark on its way to Jerusalem, so too does God “cut off the sacrilegious hands of the presumptuous believer” who denies Mary as the Ark that carried Christ before she came to heaven.<sup>401</sup> Throughout the antiphons of the Divine Liturgy, the Psalms are extensively used which also all affirm the typological interpretation of Mary as the Ark; the Antiphons said throughout the Divine Liturgy use Psalms 65: 1-2, 104:1, 47:9-10, 75:3, 86:2, 45:5, 107:2, and 115:3.<sup>402</sup> The Ark is praised

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<sup>398</sup> *The Digital Chant Stand of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*, v. 8.2.1 (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2024), iOS 14.0 or later, audio recordings by Stacey Dorrance.

<sup>399</sup> *Digital Chant Stand*, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, v. 8.2.1. Mother Mary and Ware, *Menaion*, 550, 554.

<sup>400</sup> “The Dormition,” *Menaion*, 505, 509.

<sup>401</sup> “The Dormition,” *Menaion*, 516.

<sup>402</sup> “The Dormition,” *Menaion*, 526-528. This edition of *the Festal Menaion* had the prayers sung during the Divine Liturgy.

in all of these psalms; however, the psalmist does not name the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Since there is no account of the Dormition in the Bible, the Gospel read during the Divine Liturgy is Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28; this passage is respectively about the Mary and Martha ministering to Jesus and the woman who praised His Mother.<sup>403</sup> This thesis has explored what the community of Eastern Orthodox Churches believe about the Dormition and now an analysis of the claim by Hauke against certain theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Churches can be analyzed.

### **5.5.1 Kallinikos: A Poetic Nature in the Celebration by the Eastern Orthodox Churches of the Dormition**

Hauke points to the Eastern Orthodox theologian Konstantinos N. Kallinikos who details a poetic element in the belief of the Eastern Orthodox Churches about the Dormition; Kallinikos was a professor at the University of Athens in Greece.<sup>404</sup> Kallinikos affirms that early Church celebrated the Dormition of Mary. Kallinikos cites Church Fathers including St. John Damascene, St. Andrew of Crete, St. Germanus of Constantinople and John of Thessalonica. Kallinikos also emphasizes the importance of the fifth century celebration of the feast during the reign of Juvenal of Jerusalem. Kallinikos notes that by as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Eastern Orthodox Churches have the Dormition featured in hagiographical icons. Hagiographical icons written by members of the Eastern Orthodox Church show the Blessed Virgin Mary on her funeral bier with the risen Christ standing above her. There are many examples of these icons

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<sup>403</sup> "The Dormition," *Menaion*, 528. This is the same Gospel passage that Saint Bede covers. Bede, "Homilia LVII," 420B-421B.

<sup>404</sup> *Marielexikon*, vol. 3, ed. Remigius Bäumer and Leo Scheffczyk, (St. Ottilien, Germany: EOS Verlag, 1991), 7. Hauke, *Mariology*, 292.

such as those at the Daphni Monastery, Chora Church, and the Peribleptos Monastery in Greece.<sup>405</sup>

Kallinikos notes that many of the scenes within the Dormition stories come from the Apocrypha but, even though they are a part of Apocrypha, are still a part of the Tradition of the Church.<sup>406</sup> The Christian therefore must ignore the contradictions between the various Dormition Apocrypha as Kallinkos believes the icons of the Dormition are meant to be symbolic and in his words “as works written for the common people and popular piety.”<sup>407</sup> Kallinikos believes that the Dormition as a symbolic event was the opinion of the Roman Catholic Church before the 1950 declaration of the dogma in *Munificentissimus Deus*.<sup>408</sup> Kallinikos then states that the Eastern Orthodox Churches reject the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption by the Roman Catholic Church; he believes that the declaration will cause confusion over the role of Mary in salvation history.<sup>409</sup>

### **5.6.1 Ionascu: According to the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Dormition**

#### **Happened Because Mary Had Original Sin**

Besides Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, another Eastern Orthodox priest and theologian, Iuvenalie Ionascu, of the Romanian Orthodox Church, also affirms that the Eastern Orthodox Church believes in the Dormition of Mary.<sup>410</sup> Ionascu says that the

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<sup>405</sup> Kallinikos, “Koimesis,” 598.

<sup>406</sup> Kallinikos, “Koimesis,” 598-599.

<sup>407</sup> Kallinikos, “Koimesis,” 599. Since he is Eastern Orthodox, Kallinikos does not say whether he believes the Dormition itself is only a symbolic event or that he thinks the Eastern Orthodox Church teach that the Dormition is only a symbolic event. His belief that the icons are for the “common people” is not representative of most Eastern Orthodox. Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 30-32. Silviu Bunta, email message to author, March 5, 2024.

<sup>408</sup> Kallinikos, “Koimesis,” 599.

<sup>409</sup> Kallinikos, “Koimesis,” 599.

<sup>410</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 439.

Eastern Orthodox Churches share this belief with St. John Damascene when the Orthodox Churches recite his Kontakion to the Blessed Virgin Mary on the celebration of the day of the Dormition; the Kontakion is a hymn that says that the grave did not hold her back from going to eternal life.<sup>411</sup>

Ionascu then details what he thinks the Eastern Orthodox Churches believe about the Dormition of Mary. According to Ionascu, the Eastern Orthodox Churches believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary was subject to corruption and death like every other human being even though she did not bear the “weight of individual sins from her ancestors.”<sup>412</sup> Ionascu states that the Eastern Orthodox Churches follow Saint Gregory Palamas who stated that only Christ, who was not conceived by a man, was free from the consequences of Original Sin and the sins of his human ancestors.<sup>413</sup>

However, Ionascu goes on to say that the Blessed Virgin Mary has a fundamental role in salvation history because her “Yes” to the angel helps bring about the salvation of mankind. The Blessed Virgin Mary corrected the mistake of Eve as Mary was able to do what no other human during the time before her has done. She was able to complete the purpose that man was created for, i.e., to follow God and become holy. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first among creation to accept Christ and she continues to give graces to the faithful in the Church through Christ. Therefore, because of her fundamental role in salvation history, she was assumed into heaven after having fallen asleep. Ionascu thinks that the belief of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the role in of Mary in salvation history and her body being in heaven is shared by the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 440.

<sup>412</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 440.

<sup>413</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 440-441.

<sup>414</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 441.

Ionascu has a problem in how the Roman Catholic Church proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption; Ionascu believes that the Pope should not declare dogmas without the assent of all other Christians. The task of declaring dogmas, he believes, belongs to ecumenical councils; the Pope must agree with the four other Orthodox Patriarchs before the dogma of the Assumption could be declared.<sup>415</sup> Ionascu also has an issue with the Pope declaring the dogma of the Assumption because Scripture “says nothing” about the Assumption and/or Dormition.<sup>416</sup> For Ionascu, even though the Tradition of the Church has affirmed the Assumption, the Assumption cannot be considered a dogma because the Dormition is not found in Scripture; Ionascu believes that for a teaching of the faith to be considered a dogma, the teaching must be found in both the Tradition of the Church and in Scripture. Ionascu proposes that the Roman Catholic Church should hold an international forum where the Catholic Church asks other Churches about the worthiness of belief in the Assumption.<sup>417</sup>

Ionascu points to St. Gregory Palamas as a source as to why the Eastern Orthodox Churches believe that Mary had Original Sin.<sup>418</sup> This difference in understanding of the presence or lack of Original Sin in Mary is one way in which the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches differ on their respective understandings of the Assumption of Mary. The theology of Original Sin by Saint Gregory Palamas and other Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches must therefore be analyzed in order to find these distinctions in the understanding of the Assumption and/or Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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<sup>415</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 443.

<sup>416</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 443.

<sup>417</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 443.

<sup>418</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 440.

### 5.7.1 Ware: Original Sin According to the Eastern Orthodox Churches

The understanding of Original Sin in the Eastern Orthodox Churches shapes their belief in the Dormition of Mary; Metropolitan Kallistos Ware recounts that there are similarities between the Eastern Orthodox understanding of Sin and the Roman Catholic Church understanding of Original Sin. Adam, the first human, had disobeyed God and from his disobedience introduced death and disease into the world; by turning away from God, who is immortality and life, mankind put themselves into an unnatural condition that leads to disintegration of their being, i.e. death. The consequences of the disobedience of Adam extends into all of his descendants; since all of humanity is shared in the one body of Christ, if one member suffers then all suffer; because Adam had introduced death, now all must suffer the consequence of death.<sup>419</sup> Adam not only introduced physical death into the world but, according to Ware, also the “spiritual effects of sin” which all of humanity also suffer; falling into sin is much easier for humanity because of the weakened will that chooses sin over God.<sup>420</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Churches also affirm that mankind is created in the image of God and so free will, although restricted after the fall, is still retained.<sup>421</sup>

Metropolitan Ware then notes the differences between the Eastern Orthodox understanding of Original Sin and the Roman Catholic understanding of Original Sin; Metropolitan Ware states that unlike Roman Catholicism, Adam fell not from a state of perfect knowledge of God but from an underdeveloped understanding of who God was and so cannot be judged too harshly.<sup>422</sup> According to Metropolitan Ware, “Orthodox,

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<sup>419</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 222-223.

<sup>420</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 224.

<sup>421</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 222-224.

<sup>422</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 223.



however, do not hold that the fall deprived humanity entirely of God's grace, though they would say after the fall grace acts on humanity from the outside, not from within."<sup>423</sup>

According to Ware, the Eastern Orthodox disagree with St. Augustine who said that humanity because of the fall were completely enslaved to sin in their nature.<sup>424</sup>

Metropolitan Ware claims that the Eastern Orthodox Churches disagree with the Roman Catholic Church on their idea of "original guilt" as held by Augustine. The Eastern Orthodox Churches teach that all of humanity inherit corruption and death but not the guilt of Adam; a human only incurs guilt if he or she out of his own free will chooses to imitate the sin that Adam committed. He claims that many Western Christians used to believe that all of mankind incurred the guilt of Adam as he cites the 39 articles of the Anglican Church. Metropolitan Ware also affirms that the Eastern Orthodox Churches never held to the view of limbo where unbaptized babies go if they die unlike Aquinas of the Roman Catholic Church. Metropolitan Kallistos does affirm that even though every human person is still capable of good actions, sin has set up a barrier between God and mankind which mankind cannot break down; God had to come to mankind to break the barrier set up by sin.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 223. Ware does not capitalize the word "fall."

<sup>424</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 223-224.

<sup>425</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 224-225. Saint Augustine at the beginning of his writings does not distinguish between the various Latin words for "guilt" as he uses the Latin words *culpa*, *reus*, and *reatus* interchangeably for "guilt." Saint Augustine seems to state the term "Original Guilt" as Augustine uses the term *originali reatu*. Augustine later clarifies that he thinks that *reus* is the personal fault of Adam while *reatus* is the condition acquired from Adam. Man incurs the *reatus* of Original Sin and not the *reus*. This seems to be in line with the modern-day Catechism of the Catholic Church. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, in *Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, Opera Omnia*, vol. 32 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865), 1293. Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus Ad Simplicianum*, in *Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, Opera Omnia*, vol. 40 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865), 125-126. Augustine, *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, in *Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, Opera Omnia*, vol. 44 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1865), 696. Nathaniel McCallum, "Inherited Guilt in Saints Augustine and Cyril," in *Treasures Old and New: Themes in Orthodox Theology in Memory of Fr. Matthew Baker*, ed. Alexis Torrance and Dylan Pahman (Jordanville:

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware does say for the Blessed Virgin Mary that the Eastern Orthodox Churches understood Mary to be free from actual sin and calls her “immaculate” or “All-Holy.” However, the Eastern Orthodox Churches do not agree with the Roman Catholic Church that she was free from Original Sin according to their understanding of Original Sin. The Eastern Orthodox Churches think that making her free from Original Sin would make her free of the death and corruption in all of humanity, which is what they understand Original Sin to be, and so would put her in a class above mankind.<sup>426</sup>

### **5.8.1 Truglia: The Patristic Teaching of Original Sin in Mary**

Metropolitan Ware notes that the Church Fathers are highly respected in the Eastern Orthodox Churches as they witness to the faith of the Church; therefore an analysis of how the Eastern Orthodox Churches view Original Sin in their interpretation of the Church Fathers must be done.<sup>427</sup> Patrick Truglia, who is an Eastern Orthodox apologist out of Columbia University, provides an interesting analysis of how the Eastern Orthodox view the Church Teaching of Original Sin as expounded by the Church Fathers and the Dormition narratives; in doing this, Truglia advances the argument of the Dormition.<sup>428</sup> He claims that the Catholic Immortalist Martin Jugie has clouded the true doctrine of Original Sin; Truglia uses the words of “unconcealed analyses,” “theological prejudices,” and “out of context,” to describe the previous work of Martin Jugie.<sup>429</sup>

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Holy Trinity Seminary Press, forthcoming), <https://journal.orthodoxwestblogs.com/2018/12/03/inherited-guilt-in-ss-augustine-and-cyrl/>. CCC, 405.

<sup>426</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 259-260.

<sup>427</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 204.

<sup>428</sup> Truglia, “Original Sin,” 5.

<sup>429</sup> Truglia, “Original Sin,” 6.

Truglia first notes that most of the Dormition narratives and the Church Fathers in Byzantium use the theological anthropology of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Saint Cyril held that the corruption of the body and death given to Adam was because of his sin and corruption passed down to each human being; through sin, corruption entered the world. Jesus Christ voluntarily assumed death that was present in Adam and his descendants. However, because of the hypostatic union to the divine person, Christ ceased to be subject to corruption.

Truglia notes that Christ ceasing to be subject to corruption borders on the heresy of aphantodocetism, or the heresy that the body of Christ only appeared corruptible, but because Christ voluntarily took up the corruption of Adam, Saint Cyril avoids committing this heresy. The doctrine of voluntary assumption of the corruption of Adam by Christ became the doctrine of the Church in Byzantium as shown in the third canon of the Council of Constantinople III; Truglia uses the theological anthropology of Saint Cyril to justify the Eastern Orthodox position that all of humanity including Mary, but not Christ, were prone to corruption and death from Original Sin due to Adam.<sup>430</sup>

The pre-Cyrrilline *Book of Mary's Repose* and *Six Books Apocryphon* shows a Gnostic understanding of Original Sin where Mary has Original Sin; the two Apocrypha say that Mary had Original Sin due to her inherited nature from the descendants of Eve.<sup>431</sup> Post-Cyrrillian, the next Dormition narrative is the *Transitus* by Psuedo-Melito of Sardis; the narrative implies that Mary had Original Sin since she can visually see Satan because, as the *Transitus* says, "of the law of human nature."<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Truglia, "Original Sin," 7-8.

<sup>431</sup> Truglia, "Original Sin," 9-10. Understandably, the two apocrypha existed before St. Cyril and so can be excused for not showing the anthropology of St. Cyril.

<sup>432</sup> Truglia, "Original Sin," 11-12.

The Monothelite controversy made the Church further clarify Saint Cyril's theological anthropology; Monothelitism stated that Christ had two natures but one will. Dyothelitism, or the belief that Christ had two wills with one will for each nature, prevailed in the Byzantine Church and had its main champions in St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John Damascene; the consequence for theological anthropology is that a will that does not follow God is a fallen will. According to Maximus, the Fall had introduced many passions that the will chooses over God and so leads the person to corruption and death which Truglia says includes Mary. Damascene also asserts that the human will chooses the passions over God. Truglia then claims that Damascene would have understood the will of Mary to be postlapsarian since Mary was subjected to sinful desires in her will while Christ would not have even contemplated sinful desires.<sup>433</sup>

According to Truglia, the understanding shared by St. Maximus and Damascene of Mary having Original Sin is also implied in the homilies of John of Thessalonica and Theoteknos of Livias; Theoteknos stated that Mary's "yes" to the angel at the Annunciation gained Mary a "spiritual baptism" which would have washed Original Sin away.<sup>434</sup> John of Thessalonica stated that all of humanity will experience death as a consequence of the Sin of Adam. Truglia then admits that Damascene said that Christ had preserved Mary from corruption. Truglia also cites St. Germanus and St. Andrew of Crete as evidence that Mary had Original Sin because they say she underwent corruption since she inherited corruption from Adam. Truglia then concludes by saying the Church Fathers delineated between the prelapsarian flesh of Christ and the postlapsarian flesh of

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<sup>433</sup> Truglia, "Original Sin," 15-19. Postlapsarian means "after the Fall."

<sup>434</sup> Truglia, "Original Sin," 20.

Mary.<sup>435</sup> Like Ionascu, Truglia also refers to Palamas for the teaching that the Dormition happened because Mary had Original Sin; this chapter now analyzes certain writings of Gregory Palamas on Mary.<sup>436</sup>

### 5.9.1 Original Sin and the Dormition According to Saint Gregory Palamas

Saint Gregory Palamas was primarily known for promoting the spiritual movement of Hesychasm; Martin Jugie had analyzed the theology of Palamas and was noted for criticizing his theology quite harshly.<sup>437</sup> Palamas wrote separate homilies on the Annunciation and Dormition which is where Ioascu and Truglia thought that Palamas said that the Blessed Virgin Mary had Original Sin.<sup>438</sup>

Ionascu seems to be taking the Palamas homily on the Annunciation that says that if Jesus had been conceived from the seed of Adam, then he would have not been sinless. Earlier, Palamas says that Christ did inherit human nature from the Blessed Virgin Mary. Palamas also says that the Angel at the Annunciation found Mary to be filled with divine grace and so she already received the grace for Jesus to dwell in her.<sup>439</sup> Truglia also seems to think that Palamas taught, in separate homilies, that “Mary did bear our [fallen] flesh” and Jesus “... took upon Himself our guilty nature from the most pure Virgin ...

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<sup>435</sup> Truglia, “Original Sin,” 20. The choice of Theoteknos is an interesting choice because Theoteknos may not have used the Dormition of Mary in his homily as chapter two explains in this thesis.

<sup>436</sup> Truglia, “Original Sin,” 28-29.

<sup>437</sup> Kappes, *Immaculate Conception*, 70. Jugie thought Palamas violated the divine simplicity of God.

<sup>438</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 441. Truglia, “Original Sin,” 28-29. Gregory Palamas, “On the Dormition,” *Mary the Mother of God: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, trans. and ed. Christopher Veniamin (South Canaan, Pennsylvania: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2005), 69. Gregory Palamas, “On the Annunciation,” *Mary the Mother of God: Sermons by Saint Gregory Palamas*, trans. and ed. Christopher Veniamin (South Canaan, Pennsylvania: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2005), 51. Saint Gregory Palamas is also honored on the second Sunday of Lent in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Digital Chant Stand, *Liturgical Guides*, 13.

<sup>439</sup> Palamas, “Annunciation,” 53-55.

He did not receive from us a [postlapsarian] human person, but assumed our [postlapsarian] human nature.”<sup>440</sup>

In a separate homily on the Dormition, Palamas also seems to implicitly teach that Mary had Original Sin. Palamas says that the Blessed Virgin Mary achieved the highest excellence in all the virtues because she outstripped all sin although he does not clarify if Mary was able to outstrip sin because she was conceived without inclination to sin or if she over the course of her life overcame sin. Palamas then continues to praise the Blessed Virgin Mary as he says that she exceeds all men in grace as she was assumed into heaven. Without saying that her soul did not separate from her body, he does use the word “immortal” to describe the state of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in heaven for all of eternity.<sup>441</sup> It appears to be ambiguous whether Palamas taught that Mary had Original Sin or not from these Dormition and Annunciation homilies.

Even though Palamas may have taught the Eastern Orthodox Churches understanding of Original Sin for Mary, he was also influential in teaching that she was all-holy. Palamas designates Mary as “prepurified” and uses scriptural exegesis to demonstrate her prepurification; prepurification means she was purified in light of and before the redemption done by Jesus. Palamas makes a connection to the exception of Mary and Jesus from the Mosaic Law. Jesus as the Incarnate Word is exempt from the Mosaic law but since he also has a human nature, Mary participates in the perfection of the human nature of Christ due to her divine Maternity. Christ provides her perfect flesh so that she is therefore, apparently, exempt from the law of “iniquity and sin.”<sup>442</sup> In

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<sup>440</sup> Truglia, “Original Sin,” 28-29. Christopher Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies* (Dalton, Pennsylvania: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), 34, 480. The brackets are from Truglia.

<sup>441</sup> Palamas, “Dormition,” 74.

<sup>442</sup> Kappes, *Immaculate Conception*, 74, 222.

addition to a difference in understanding of Original Sin, the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches seem to understand the unity of body and soul differently; this chapter now analyzes their understanding.

#### **5.10.1 The Eastern Orthodox View On the Body and Soul Based On Saint Maximus the Confessor**

The theology of Saint Maximus the Confessor is highly respected amongst the Eastern Orthodox Church for his synthesis of cosmology, anthropology, and ecclesiology into one cohesive theology.<sup>443</sup> In order to understand the view of the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches on the unity of the soul and body, one must understand the *logos* in the cosmological anthropology of Saint Maximus the Confessor. Saint Maximus the Confessor rejects the Platonic-Origenistic view where beings pre-existed in the Divine Word, which is *Λόγος* or *Logos* in Greek, before coming into existence. For Maximus though, *λόγος*, or *logos* precedes being; a *logos* is not the substance itself but is the reason that God wills for a substance to exist. The *logoi* of all beings points to meaning of existence which is to be in a relationship with the Divine *Logos* or *Λόγος*; the divine *Logos* is Christ.<sup>444</sup>

Each being has one *logos* that is united to the Divine *Logos* of God which exists on its own. For man, the *logos* is what unites soul and body together as there is a unifying nature that does not make the soul and body lose their distinction in the connection between body and soul. For Maximus, the soul mediates his substance to God; through

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<sup>443</sup> Dragos Bahrim, "The Anthropic Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor," *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science* 3, (July 2008): 11-12.

<sup>444</sup> Bahrim, "Cosmology," 13-15.

this mediation, man fulfills his vocation; since he is both matter and spiritual, man helps unite creation to God.<sup>445</sup>

Other than the idea of *logoi*, Maximus is like Aquinas in his understanding of the body and soul. Maximus first affirms that the soul and body of the human being come into existence simultaneously by an act of creation by God. Maximus denies that the soul pre-existed before the creation of the body of a particular human being. Maximus also affirms that the soul will exist without its body after death and be proper to the particular human being because it is the form of the human being.<sup>446</sup>

However, unlike Aquinas, Maximus believed the body will still belong to the particular human being even during decomposition. When he makes the distinction between the principle of origin and the principle of being, Maximus explains the body can still be properly called a body; the principle of origin deals with the relations a thing has to other things while the principle of being deals with existence and the nature of a thing.<sup>447</sup> Through the principle of origin, the body is still a body because of its relation to the soul which were both created together at the same time through the *logos* of man; for Maximus, it is impossible to talk about body and soul without speaking about the relationship each part has to the other. In regard to the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the body of Mary would still be her body and therefore the Divine Maternity is not jeopardized for Saint Maximus as he still calls the dead body of Mary the Theotokos.<sup>448</sup>

### 5.11.1 Conclusion

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<sup>445</sup> Brahim, "Cosmology, 16-17, 26-29.

<sup>446</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *The Ambigua*, vol. 1 of *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, trans. and ed. Nicholas Constas, (London, England: Harvard University Press, 2014), 137-139.

<sup>447</sup> Maximus, *Ambigua*, 139-140.

<sup>448</sup> Maximus, *Virgin*, 141.



The two Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church covered in this chapter, Rene Laurentin and Karl Rahner, argued differently when compared to the Roman Catholic Immortalists of the previous chapter. The majority of theologians are Mortalists and can be represented with the arguments by Laurentin. Laurentin called the death of Mary the “plausible opinion” but cites the opinion of St. Epiphanius as another possibility that the question of the death of Mary remains a mystery. Rahner thought that Mary died since he was very much against the “intermediate state” where the body and soul are separated from one another. Other than a passing reference to how the Church Fathers understood the descent of hell by Christ, Rahner does not mention the Church Fathers.<sup>449</sup> When contrasted with the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Mortalists in this thesis appear to use less of the Church Fathers in their arguments as it appears that Laurentin and Rahner use systematic theology to argue for the death of Mary.

The Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches used much of the Patristic tradition in their arguments to defend the Mortalist position. They cited many figures including Saint John Damascene and Saint Maximus the Confessor. The Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches also use much of the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas to defend the notion that the Blessed Virgin Mary was not free from Original Sin. The Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches also rely on their use of the liturgy to defend the Mortalist Position; the *Festal Menaion* seeks to praise the Blessed Virgin Mary in their feast day for the Dormition.

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<sup>449</sup> Levering, *Assumption*, 57. Rahner does not cite which Church Fathers he is referring to.

The Mortalist position of the Eastern Orthodox Churches was quite different from the Immortalist position of the Roman Catholic Church for two reasons. First, the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches view Original Sin differently. The Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches disagree with St. Augustine; they believe humanity did not take on the “original guilt” of Adam in his sin. Because all human beings suffer corruption and death from Original Sin, the Blessed Virgin Mary therefore did die.<sup>450</sup> The two Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church did not use the concept of Original Sin in their arguments for the Mortalist position.

The second difference lies in the distinction between body and soul; the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches follow Maximus who say that the body still can be called a human body since it still retains its relation to the soul. This contrasts with the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church who follow Aquinas who thought that the body can no longer be called a body when the soul is separated from it. One Mortalist of the Roman Catholic Church, Rahner, held to the “intermediate state” which is different from the idea of the *logos* as held by the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Laurentin says that a “flood of authors” have made the Mortalist position “respectable.”<sup>451</sup> However, this thesis has discussed the Immortalist position which has its own following in the Roman Catholic Church. The next chapter suggests areas of research and ecumenical dialogue that can result from the arguments presented throughout this thesis.

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<sup>450</sup> Ionascu, “Incontro,” 440-441.

<sup>451</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: FURTHER AREAS OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE AND RESEARCH

#### 6.1.1 Summary and Results Attained

Past authors have compiled a list of what the Church Fathers say about the Dormition and/or Assumption of Mary.<sup>452</sup> Manfred Hauke, also mentioned the theologians that were making arguments for the Mortalist and Immortalist sides during the period of the dogma debate of the 1940's.<sup>453</sup> However, these sources did not state if and how the dogma debate was influenced by the Early Church. This thesis was an attempt to explain how the Early Church influenced the dogma debate with hope that this knowledge might assist the ecumenical efforts between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Original in this thesis was the comparison of the Church Fathers in the Assumption to the dogma debate of the 1940's.

Therefore, this thesis looked first at the belief of the Assumption and/or Dormition of the Early Church in both the East and the West. Then, a review of the 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century debate revealed that one Immortalist of the Roman Catholic Church used one of the Early Church Fathers. The Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches used the Church Fathers, Scripture, Apocrypha, and Liturgy writings in their defense of the Mortalist position. The analysis of these groups provided that there were four positions on the question of the death of Mary; the first is the Mary did die, the second is that Mary did not die, the third is agnostic, or one cannot know if

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<sup>452</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 288-291. Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 125, 375, 383, 395, 403.

<sup>453</sup> Hauke, *Mariology*, 288-292.

Mary died or not, and four, silence, which could mean that they simply presume what the majority held.

Chapter one introduced the topic of the Immortalists and Mortalists and defined terms that were used throughout this thesis. The Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches treat Church teaching differently; therefore, they treat Original Sin, death, the body, and the soul in slightly different ways. For Roman Catholics, Original Sin is defined as Adam's sin that resulted in everyone's privation of original holiness with consequences of weakened will, suffering and death, while for the Eastern Orthodox, according to Ware, Original Sin is Adam's disobedience from an undeveloped conscience resulting in the same consequences with death becoming part of being human in a Fallen world. Also, for the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, they hold that the logos unites body and soul even after death while the Immortalists covered in this thesis do not. These slight differences therefore lead to a different understanding of the end of the life of Mary. The Mortalists Rahner and Laurentin of the Roman Catholic Church, while holding to the papal definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception of the Immortalists, differ in their understanding of body and soul, i.e. Thomistic understanding of death as the separation of body and soul such that a corpse is not philosophically belonging to the soul, to the Immortalists.

Chapter two then analyzed the known records from the Greek-speaking Church found in the eastern part of the Mediterranean up until the time of Saint John Damascene. As shown by the chart in Appendix A, seven Church Fathers, two kinds of Apocrypha, and the Liturgy covered in this thesis supported the Mortalist position, starting with the Dormition Apocrypha and ending with Saint John Damascene. Their main argument is

that it would be fitting for the Mother of God to be assumed bodily into heaven after her death. Two fathers were agnostic; Saint Epiphanius of Salamis and Saint Modestus of Jerusalem held that only God alone can know what happened to Mary. Timothy of Jerusalem and possibly Theoteknos thought it was not fitting for the Mother of God to die, providing an Immortalist perspective.

Chapter three analyzed the records that are not lost from the Western Mediterranean Latin-speaking side of the early Church up until the letter of Pope Saint Nicholas I to the Bulgarians in 866. As summarized in Appendix B, this thesis included five Mortalist sources in the early western Church such as Saint Gregory of Tours who had adopted the celebration of the Dormition from the East. After the introduction of the celebration of the Dormition into Rome by Pope Saint Sergius I, eight other Church Fathers and early Medieval theologians did not discuss Mary's death, as best seen in Ambrose Autpert; the linguistic analysis used for this thesis could not uncover why the nine sources did not say if Mary died or not.

Chapter four then analyzed the Immortalist position that had developed during and after 1944 with the Roman Catholic figures of Jugie, Roschini, Gallus, and Forderer, as represented by the table in Appendix C. Only Jugie used Timothy of Jerusalem as an appeal to Tradition in his defense of the Immortalist position, but he and the other Immortalists rely more on other theological arguments. They argue that Mary did not die because she was exempt from the penalties associated with Original Sin since she was immaculately conceived and remained sinless throughout her entire life; some Immortalists also contend that her soul could not separate from body or else her Divine Motherhood would be altered. Gallus thought that Mary's death would make her role too

close to Christ's unique redemption. Most held Mary's spiritual death at the foot of the cross was sufficient for her human experience as a sinless descendent of Adam.

Chapter five then analyzed the Mortalist position of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches from 1963 to 2021 and found that they have different arguments for coming to the same conclusion. The Eastern Orthodox believe that Mary did die because Mary, as a human descendent of Adam, suffered from Original Sin, i.e. death, and that the soul and body can separate without losing their form from one another; they used the current Liturgy, the Church Fathers, and Apocrypha to justify their Mortalist position.<sup>454</sup> The majority of Roman Catholic theologians believe in the Dormition as the most likely opinion because almost all of the Church Fathers held to the Mortalist position and is "the plausible opinion."<sup>455</sup> Karl Rahner held the Mortalist position because he thinks Mary enters into the Resurrection totally and immediately as all the saints do at the moment of death. There are areas of research that can come from these findings in this thesis.

### **6.2.1 Possible Areas of Further Research on Topics Covered in This Thesis**

This analysis of the Early Church Fathers, the Immortalists, and the Mortalists, also brought up questions that can lead to further research. First, it appears that neither the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church nor the Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches utilized the Scripture verses of John 11:13; In these verses, the disciples thought that Lazarus was asleep but Jesus said he was dead. The Greek word *κοιμήσεως* or *koimeseos*, which is translated to "rest," is used to describe

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<sup>454</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, iv. 1963 was the date of the first publication of *The Orthodox Churches* by Metropolitan Ware; therefore this work from Ware is the oldest work of the Mortalist position of the Eastern Orthodox Churches covered in the Dogma Debate of this thesis.

<sup>455</sup> Laurentin, *Short Treatise*, 343.

Lazarus. More research can be done on whether there are Church Fathers or writings who refer to this passage when describing the Dormition in Greek as κοίμησις or *koimesis*.

Second, this research covered only the Greek-speaking and Latin-speaking parts of the Early Church. However, there are Dormition narratives and writings by the Church Fathers in Syriac; the earliest Dormition narrative that was not lost is preserved in Syriac. Stephen Shoemaker has done research that shows that the narratives of the Syriac traditions of the Dormition arose separately from the Greek and Latin explanation of the events of the Dormition and/or Assumption.<sup>456</sup> However, further research beyond that conducted by Shoemaker alone could be done on whether the Syriac traditions influenced the Greek and Latin narratives.

From chapter two, an area of possible further research is whether the Greek word *análepsis*, or “Assumption,” was used to convey that Mary did not die as in the description of the event of the Assumption by Theoteknos of Livias. *Análepsis* is the root word used in the New Testament to refer the ascension of Christ as shown in Luke 9:51, 24:51, Mark 6:19, and Acts 1:11. It seems that when the Church Fathers wanted to show that Mary died, then they used the word *koimesis* instead. More research can also be done in order to find why *análepsis* was being used and when this word first started being used by the Church Fathers.

From chapter three, two questions arose that can lead to more research. First, it would be helpful to clarify why the Western Early Church opted to use the word “Assumption” over the word “Dormition;” Pope Saint Sergius I celebrated the feast of the Dormition as shown in the liturgy. Why did the two succeeding popes, Pope Saint

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<sup>456</sup> Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 146-149.

Leo IV and Pope Saint Nicholas I decide to use the word Assumption instead of Dormition? Second, why were the Western Church Fathers and Western Medieval Theologians, such as Saint Bede, who wrote on the Assumption, silent on what happened to the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

From chapter four, more research is possible on the use of the Church Fathers by the Immortalist Martin Jugie; Jugie mentions that Timothy of Jerusalem must not be the only priest during his time to state that Mary did not die. However, Jugie mentions two other Church Fathers, Hesychius of Jerusalem (fl. 5<sup>th</sup> century) and Chrysippus (fl. 5<sup>th</sup> century) as Church Fathers who were Immortalists based on the use of the phrase the “garden of immortality” in their homilies as a title for the Blessed Virgin Mary; however, these two priests from the fifth century were not talking about the Assumption and were using the phrase in their respective homilies on the topic of the Theotokos. More research can be done on these two Church Fathers mean when they applied the phrase “the garden of incorruptibility” to Mary.

### **6.3.1 Possible Points of Ecumenism That Can Lead to More Research**

This thesis demonstrated that there are differences in understanding between the Immortalists and Mortalists of the Roman Catholic Church and the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches when looking at the Dormition and/or Assumption of Mary. The differences lie in the understanding of Original Sin and in the distinction and unity of the body and soul. There are however also some possible points for ecumenical dialogue that may arise.

First, on the topic of Original Sin, the Roman Catholic Church has articulated her stance on what is transmitted in Original Sin; the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*



teaches that while Original Sin is in each individual human, the personal fault of Adam is not transmitted and that human nature is not completely corrupted. The Catholic Church teaches that because of Original Sin, each individual man is still subject to sin and death like which is what the Eastern Orthodox Churches also teach. While the Eastern Orthodox Churches teach that Mary had Original Sin, research done by Christian Kappes, a Roman Catholic priest, shows that even the great Orthodox theologian Saint Gregory Palamas teaches that Mary was prepurified before her birth.<sup>457</sup> The teaching of the Prepurification of Mary by Palamas is so close in teaching to the Immaculate Conception that the Thomists at the Ecumenical Council of Florence (c. 1438-1439) argued against the Palamites for their definition of Mary as all-holy before birth.<sup>458</sup> More research can be done looking back at the proceedings of the Council of Florence so that perhaps a shared understanding of the holiness of Mary can arise.

Second, there is a difference in understanding of the unity of the body and soul between Saint Maximus the Confessor, whom the Mortalists of the Eastern Orthodox Churches follow, and that of Saint Thomas Aquinas, whom the Immortalists of the Roman Catholic Church follow. However, ecumenical dialogue can still arise as both Aquinas and Maximus use the Aristotelian categories.<sup>459</sup> For example, both argue for the existence of God from the necessity of motion which Aristotle does too.<sup>460</sup> Work has been done by Vladimir Cvetković on how Maximus influenced later theologians in early Medieval times; it appears that he did not investigate if and how Maximus impacted

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<sup>457</sup> Kappes, *Immaculate Conception*, 74.

<sup>458</sup> Kappes, *Immaculate Conception*, 157-162. Before the definition of the Immaculate Conception, the Thomists were against the teaching.

<sup>459</sup> Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Theodore Berkeley and Jeremy Hummerstone, (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1993), 360.

<sup>460</sup> Maximus, *Ambigua*, 285-287. Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 3, 13.

Aquinas.<sup>461</sup> Corey John Stephan and Jack Maximos in separate dissertations have done research that began to investigate how Maximus and Aquinas can complement one another; however, their research did not consider any possible impact on the Divine Maternity.<sup>462</sup> Further research can be done on how the two understandings relate to the Divine Maternity during her Assumption and/or Dormition, or, if asked explicitly, are Maximus and Thomas in conflict or complementary in regard to the unity of body and soul?

#### **6.4.1 Final Conclusion**

This thesis answered some but not all of the questions that were posed in chapter one. The Eastern Church Fathers celebrated the Dormition in the Liturgy as early as the fourth century. The celebration of the Dormition then had spread into the West from the East. The research done in this thesis could not find a stated reason why the East had accepted the Dormition more quickly than the West. However, the empty tomb of Mary in Jerusalem is where the earliest celebrations were held before being shifted to the church of the Kathisma. The commemorative shrines celebrated what had occurred at these locations in the East. It seems the supposed location of the Assumption may have been the impetus for the East.

This thesis could not find a definitive answer as to why the West had come to a different understanding for the Liturgical and historical context of the Assumption. While

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<sup>461</sup> Vladimir Cvetković, "Maximus the Confessor's View on Soul and Body in the Context of the Five Divisions," in *The Unity of Body and Soul in Patristic and Byzantine Thought*, ed. Anna Usacheva, Jörg Ulrich, and Siam Bhayro (Leiden, Netherlands: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021), 245-276.

<sup>462</sup> Corey John Stephan, "Maximus the Confessor in Aquinas's Christology," (PhD diss. Marquette University, 2022), 1, [https://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations\\_mu/1211/](https://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/1211/). Treydon Lunot and Jack Maximos, "Maximus the Confessor vs Thomas Aquinas on Divine Ideas - Ep.12 (w/Maximos)," interview with Treydon Lunot, June 14, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wbLGbq6jpl>.

Pope Saint Sergius I celebrated the Dormition of Mary, by the time of Pope Saint Leo IV two centuries later, the celebration had turned into the generic Assumption without the mention of her death. After Pope Saint Leo IV, the theologians are silent. Perhaps it was because the West took for granted that Mary had died as believed by the East?

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches share this common history of the Church Fathers and the celebration of the Assumption of Mary.<sup>463</sup> That the Church Fathers wrote on the end of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary reflects their veneration for the Mother of Christ.<sup>464</sup> A certain gratitude can be expressed by Christians to the Eastern Church Fathers in preserving and passing this truth of the Christian Faith to the West that Mary at the end of her life rose both body and soul to heaven. This truth of the faith was preserved in the Divine Liturgy that has been celebrated throughout the many centuries of Church History in which all Christians participate in. *Munificentissimus Deus* has this to add which says

... She [the Blessed Virgin Mary], 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.<sup>465</sup>

Therefore, the Assumption and/or Dormition is an anticipation of that future where all of humanity will be reunited with their bodies in the final victory over death.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> CCC, 78, 688.

<sup>464</sup> Gambero, *Fathers of the Church*, 384, 400-404.

<sup>465</sup> MD, 5.

<sup>466</sup> CCC, 966.

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## APPENDIX A

### Table of Early Eastern Sources

**Table 1.1:** Table for the Eastern Eastern Sources that were either Mortalist, agnostic, silent, or Immortalist. Notable Church Fathers or writings have notes next to them.

Mortalist: 10	Notes for Mortalists	Agnostic: 2	Notes for Agnostic	Immortalist: 2	Notes for Immortalists	Silent: 0
“Palm” Narratives	First written records of the Dormition that have survived; uses <i>koimesis</i> .	Epiphanius of Salamis	First Church Father to have written on the Dormition and/or Assumption.	Timothy of Jerusalem	Mary would be assumed into heaven because she is all-holy.	
“Bethlehem” Narratives		Modestus of Jerusalem	Argues from Christ’s Incarnation	Theoteknos of Livias (?)	Uses <i>análepsis</i> , a word unusual in the Greek.	
Pseudo-Prochorus		Theoteknos of Livias (?)	Uses <i>análepsis</i> , a word unusual in the Greek			
Pseudo-Dionysius						
Byzantine Liturgy	First complete narrative to have survived.					
<i>Life of the Virgin</i>						
John of Thessalonica						
Germanus of Constantinople						
Andrew of Crete						
John Damascene						

## APPENDIX B

## Table of Early Western Sources

**Table 2.1:** Table for the Western Church Fathers that were either Mortalist, agnostic, silent, or Immortalist. Notable Church Fathers or writings have notes next to them.

Mortalist: 5	Notes for Mortalists	Silent: 8	Notes for Silent	Immortalist: 0	Agnostic: 0
“Palm” Narratives	First Church Father in the West to write on the Dormition.	Ambrose of Milan	Represents most theologians in the West; uses <i>Assumptione</i> (Assumption).		
Gregory of Tours		Pseudo-Ildefonsus			
Isidore of Seville		Bede the Venerable			
Pope Sergius I	Ambrose Autpert				
Sacramentaries	Late example of the Mortalist position (ninth century).	Paul the Deacon			
		Rabanus Maurus			
		Pope Leo IV			
		Pope Nicholas I			

## APPENDIX C

### Table of Mortalists and Immortalists During the Dogma Debate of the 20th and 21st Century

**Table 3.1:** Table for the Mortalists and Immortalists during the Dogma Debate for the 20th and 21st Century. Each theologian and the Divine Liturgy have notes listed next to them. Ware, Ionascu, Kallinikos, and Truglia all have the same note.

Mortalist: 7	Notes for Mortalists (RC) = Roman Catholic (EO) = Eastern Orthodox	Silent: 0	Immortalist: 4 (All RC)	Notes for Immortalists
Karl Rahner (RC)	Every person receives glorified body at moment of death and Mary is no different.		Martin Jugie	Immaculate Conception gives Mary preternatural/supernatural grace seen in Adam; Death is most tragic experience.
Rene Laurentin (RC)	“Plausible” opinion.		Gabriele Roschini	Partial Separation of Soul; Immaculate Conception and sinlessness throughout life as a necessary condition for Assumption.
Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy	Expresses belief in Dormition; typological connections between Ark of the Covenant and Mary		Tiburzio Gallus	“Divine Aspect” of sin; opposes coredemption by Mary.
Kallistos Ware (EO)	Argues for Original Sin (death) in Mary since she is human; argues from Tradition.		Manfred Forderer	Mary already experienced spiritual death at the foot of the cross; no need for physical death.
Iuvenalie Ionascu (EO)	Argues for Original Sin (death) in Mary since she is human; argues from Tradition			
Konstantinos Kallinikos (EO)	Argues for Original Sin (death) in Mary since she is human; argues from Tradition			
Patrick Truglia (EO)	Argues for Original Sin (death) in Mary since she is human; argues from Tradition			