

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMAGES OF THE VIRGIN MARY HELD BY  
SELECT ANGLICAN WOMEN CLERICS IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA,  
WITH RESPECT TO SELECTED HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN MARIOLOGY**

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## ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the question of Mariology in the Anglican Church in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It focuses on how Anglican women priests relate to the Virgin Mary within the patriarchal structures and African context of the Anglican Diocese of Natal. It aims to ascertain the perceptions of the Virgin Mary held by a sample group of ordained, doctrinally informed, Anglican women. The premise is that because the Anglican Church is closer to Roman Catholicism than other Protestant churches, these clerics might be more open to the dogmas of Mariology as proclaimed by the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

The depths of the subjects' knowledge of Marian dogma are ascertained, as well as the extent to which their spirituality and devotions are affected by this. An attempt is made to establish the potential advantages of an enhanced Marian presence in The Anglican Church in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

This study is intended not merely to establish the dogmatic similarities in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and underscore those issues which inhibit Marian veneration among local ordained Anglican women. Its intention is to elicit the effects of dogma on spirituality and worship, and to discern whether the subjects feel an affinity with Catholic Marian dogma and see any possibility of ecumenical progress between the two Churches.

Roman Catholic Marian dogma is elucidated and examined. The four main dogmas are presented: the *Theotokos*, her Perpetual Virginity, her Immaculate Conception and her Assumption into Heaven. The Protestant and Anglican reservations regarding these dogmas are examined, and ecumenical dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Churches is discussed, including the bilateral ARCIC discussions with the Anglican Communion.

Nine Anglican priests are interviewed, and the data and its implications for Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenism are examined. The findings indicate that the subjects do not subscribe to Roman Catholic dogma and praxis on Mary. It is proposed that Marian dogma *per se* is not a hindrance to ecumenism, but the fact of the dogmas reflecting the teachings on more fundamental theological issues such as the nature of sacraments, the trinity, the nature of grace and eschatology in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Many factors affect perceptions of the Virgin Mary all of which may have a profound effect on the believer. Anglicans, in particular, are caught between Catholic Marian dogma, on the one hand, and a Reformed praxis, or lack of praxis, on the other. Anglican women clerics are in a unique position in that they are the only ordained women who are confronted simultaneously by a conservative Marian doctrine and a relative paucity of Marian devotion. This dichotomy is likely also to impinge on their spirituality.

My interest in this field is motivated by my own experience in the Anglican Church where, apart from Advent and Christmas, relatively little attention is paid to the Virgin Mary, and my academic experience in the world of Catholic Theology where the Virgin is venerated to a greater extent. I became aware of the complexity of the issue in view of the catholicity of Anglican Marian doctrine in the face of almost no Marian devotion in the Anglican Church.

Anglican Marian dogma has affinities with Roman Catholic dogma but Marian observance is influenced more by the Reformed churches. This dichotomy is problematic for Anglican spirituality, as I believe a greater Marian presence would enhance spirituality, especially women's spirituality, and offer a dimension to worshippers which is currently lacking. It would also offer a feminine aspect to those who need such an identifying figure in the church.

Anglican Mariology originated in pre-Reformation doctrine, but significant modern dogmas, notably *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854, and *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950, have been proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church without reference to non-Catholics. Apart from the resultant ecumenical problems there has been an estrangement, not only between the Catholic and Anglican traditions, whose objections to papal inerrancy are well documented, but also between Anglicans and other Reformed churches, to whom Anglicans are still perceived to be Catholic in tradition. This has also resulted in the Anglican Church's lacking the feminine face that is appealing to many Catholic women.

My orientation concerns the interface of formal Roman Catholic dogma with Anglican praxis within the context of the traditionally English framework of the Anglican Church and its location in KwaZulu-Natal. Despite the universality of the Catholic and Anglican teachings, my research is located within an African, specifically South African, milieu and it is likely that this will determine the results of the research and hence the discourse which may be contingent on it. The reason for the feminine focus of this study is better to understand the African feminine approach to the first Christian disciple.

The focus of the research, therefore, will be to evaluate the perceptions of ordained Anglican women regarding the Virgin Mary. The key elements in the evaluation are the extent of the subjects' knowledge and understanding of Marian dogma, the extent of their Marian devotions, the relationship between these two elements, and finally, the perceived spiritual advantages of a Marian presence to Anglican spirituality in the African context.

The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), formed in response to Vatican II, on March 24, 1967 by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey, had as its goal to analyse those disparities which divide Catholicism and Anglicanism and to investigate the possibility of any compromise. The first phase of ARCIC ran from 1970 to 1981 and produced four statements. *Eucharist* (1971), *Ministry and Ordination* (1973), *Authority and the Church I and II* (1976 and 1981). The second phase ran from 1983-2005 and issued five statements: *Salvation and the Church* (1986), *The Church as Communion* (1990), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* (1993), *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (1998); and *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004).

The most recent of these, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (known as *The Seattle Statement*, produced in 2004) has highlighted the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and this research has prompted me to consider its implications for local Anglican women. The Statement is revolutionary in its de-emphasis on Marian scriptural texts in favour of ecumenical texts, which allows for an increased Anglican acceptance of Mary in tradition. It also advocates a retrospective angle on the economy of salvation, with fulfilment in Christ as the starting point, and working back to the fall.

Roman Catholic Marian dogma is well documented. The Roman Catholic Church has four proclaimed dogmas regarding the Mother of Jesus: the *Theotokos*, at the Council of Ephesus in 431; her Perpetual Virginitly at the First Lateran Council in 649; her Immaculate Conception proclaimed by Pius IX in an "ex cathedra" proclamation, *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854; and her Assumption into heaven proclaimed by Pius XII in *Munificentissimus Deus*, in 1950. The dogmas are copiously analysed by, inter alia, Neuner and Roos,<sup>1</sup> Ratzinger,<sup>2</sup> Rahner<sup>3</sup> and Schillebeeckx.<sup>4</sup>

Anglican Marian Dogma is, significantly, undocumented. There is scant mention of the Virgin in The Thirty-Nine Articles. The Anglican Church generally follows the Marian teaching of the Roman Catholic Church though neither the teachings nor the criticisms of the teachings is unanimously accepted.

The bases of the contentious issues are dealt with by Denaux and Sagovsky,<sup>5</sup> Gaventa and Rigby,<sup>6</sup> Macquarrie,<sup>7</sup> O'Meara<sup>8</sup> and Thurian,<sup>9</sup> amongst many others. These criticisms are less concerned with the substance of the dogma than with the manner of their proclamation. The lack of consultation with non-Catholics is a bone of contention, as is their perceived lack of scriptural foundation. The material differences concern the nature of grace: the Protestant notion of grace

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Neuner, and Heinrich Roos, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Alba House, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Daughter of Zion* (New York: Ignatius Press, 1983). and Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Karl Rahner, *Mother of the Lord* (Glasgow: Anthony Clarke Books, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption: The Religious Bases of the Mystery of Mary* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Adelbert Denaux and Nicholas Sagovsky, eds. *Studying Mary: Reflections on the Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotions: The ARCIC Working Papers* London: T & T Clark, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby, eds. *Blessed one: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*. Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002), 232, 931.

<sup>7</sup> John MacQuarrie, *Mary for all Christians* (Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Thomas O'Meara, (1966) *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Max Thurian, *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church* (London: Faith P, 1963).

as an extrinsic attitude of God towards humanity, unlike the Catholic view of grace as an intrinsic share in God's life.

Mariology is an enduring issue in theological circles, and it is not anticipated that this research will do more than highlight the dogmatic similarities in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and draw attention to those issues which inhibit Marian veneration among local ordained Anglican women. This study is exploratory and might serve as an indicator as to whether or not a larger study is warranted.

The feminist context of this study has its foundations in numerous publications. Those authors that have proved particularly helpful are Boff,<sup>10</sup> Gebara and Bingemer,<sup>11</sup> Johnson<sup>12</sup> and Reuther.<sup>13</sup>

Each has a unique approach but they all challenge the traditional perceptions of Mary as the passive receptive agent of God's will, and the continued exploitation of this symbolism in the modern Church. Boff's Marian pneumatology insists on the relevance of Mary in the modern era while still maintaining the devotional aspect of her cult. He, somewhat revolutionarily, compares the hypostatic union of Christ with that of Mary and the Holy Spirit. Gebara and Bingemer emphasise the innovative Mary: not only the mother of God but also the mother of the people, especially the poor, and an activist in the Reign of God.

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<sup>10</sup> Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and the Religious Expressions* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Ivone Gebara and Clara Bingemer, *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. Phillip Berryman, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: the Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad, 1992) and Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary – the Feminine Face of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1979).



Johnson's concern is less with doctrinal theology and more with the personhood of Mary, and her faith journey. This approach might well be the most relevant for the Anglican subjects of this study.

Although each of these addresses Mariology from a feminist liberation approach, their contexts do not include the interface of Anglican praxis with the Catholic dogmatic foundation. In addition, although much of their work is located outside of the mainstream orthodox tradition, none deals with the African perspective. Holness' thesis<sup>14</sup> is interesting in that its locus is post apartheid South Africa. Although its emphasis is the development of a Christology 'from within', her reference point for much of the work is the Virgin Mary. However, her focus does not concern the interface of orthodoxy and praxis. An attempt to document this interface in a local context might offer another application to the feminist theological debate.

The methodology of my research is determined by its nature. A large part of the study will concern systematic synthesis of published material, as outlined above. The empirical material will be secured by interviews with select candidates. I interviewed all those ordained women in the KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg area who agree to be interviewed. The nature and method of such interviews has established protocols that are outlined in most sources that deal with research methodologies. Those authors that I consulted are Mouton<sup>15</sup> and Terreblanche & Durrheim<sup>16</sup>. In addition, the work by Willig,<sup>17</sup> although intended for research in the field of psychology, has proved invaluable. Willig's Interpretative Phenomenological Approach is the most comprehensive information on this topic that I have found.

Feminist theology, demands a structure that foregrounds women's experience, that favours praxis over traditional wisdom and logic, and that insists on a voice for the oppressed. This is the

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<sup>14</sup> Lyn Holness, "Christology from Within: A Critical Retrieval of the Humanity of Christ, with Particular Reference to the Role of Mary" (PhD diss., UCT, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Johann Mouton, *How to Succeed in your Master's and Doctoral Studies: A South African Guide and Resource Book* (Pretoria: van Schaik, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Martin Terreblanche and Kevin Durrheim, eds., *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001).

preferred approach of most of the feminist writers who have informed my own view. These include the work of Mary Daly,<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Johnson,<sup>19</sup> Rosemary Ruether,<sup>20</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye<sup>21</sup> and Ivone Gebara and Clara Bingemer.<sup>22</sup>

In this dissertation the text concerns Mary, and the discourse concerns the relationship of women to Mary. The context of the dialogue is the South African setting of the Anglican Church. This demands a theoretical framework that accommodates both feminist and Africanist perspectives.

The essence of this research is the Virgin Mary. The pre-occupation with her virginity and her motherhood, has tended to obscure her role as disciple. As a disciple, Mary is a model for women and is seen as identifying with their struggle and participating actively in their lives. As an activist Mary offers to the poor a model of discipleship for women that is frequently lacking in a patriarchal church.

In the same way that Latin American feminist theology focuses on the poor, so does African feminist theology.<sup>23</sup> Within the context of the Anglican Church, this becomes especially significant. Anglicanism traditionally has been a middle class Church, and for it to sustain credibility in the context of a post colonial South Africa, this focus needs to broaden to embrace the poor and the oppressed to a greater extent than it presently does. Notable efforts to achieve this have been restricted by patriarchal church structures, and vestigial colonial practices.

The female subjects of this study are, nominally at least, part of the ecclesial structure even as some of them may be critical of it. Unlike traditional feminist theology, where the subjects, as

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<sup>18</sup> Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Women's Press: London, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *She Who Is.*; Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*.

<sup>20</sup> Ruether, *Mary – the Feminine Face of the Church*; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM-Canterbury Press. 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary Mother of God*.

<sup>23</sup> Oduyoye, *Introducing African Womens' Theology*; J.N. Njoroge and W.M. Dube. eds., *Talitha Cumi: Theologies of African Women* (Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 2001); D. Ackermann, A.J. Draper and E. Mashinini, eds., *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church of Southern Africa* (Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 1991).

Catholic women, are outside of the formal hierarchy of the church, these women are remarkable in that they function within the patriarchal structure. This simultaneous experience of being church and being women in an African situation is significant.

Although the recent ordination of women has facilitated a greater feminist emphasis in the Anglican Church, this is only the beginning of a long road. These clerics have a position that is unique among women doing theology, and their lived experience of the Virgin needs to be documented in this light.

African feminist theology, like its Latin American counterpart, is also identified by its methodology.<sup>24</sup> The first act of any liberationist theology is to contemplate and to experience. Only then does theory become pertinent. In this research, the starting point for the empirical information is the experience of the subjects. This experience and its relation to Marian dogma form a large part of the investigation.

While transformation is a logical successor to contemplation, analysis, and theory, it is not the purpose of this investigation. An incidental shift in understanding might occur, though it is not specifically anticipated. Transformative action, always the purpose of the womanist premise, is not the specific goal of this study.

This study is executed in six chapters. The second chapter, *Mary in Scripture*, isolates those New Testament passages that concern the Virgin. It is not an exegesis of the scripture, merely a commentary on, and background, to the study. The third chapter, *Marian Dogmas*, forms the bulk of the theoretical and contextual framework of the study. The nature of dogma and revelation, doctrine and faith are considered, and the Catholic Marian dogmas are presented and analysed. Chapter four, *Mariology and Ecumenism*, deals with those areas of Mariology that are contentious and which are seen to curtail ecumenism. The Reformed objections are outlined in

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<sup>24</sup> D.A. Ackermann, "Forward from the Margins: Feminist Theologies for Life," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 63-67.

some detail, and the Anglican reservations are separated and examined, and some suggestions are made regarding a way forward in Anglican Roman-Catholic ecumenism. Chapter five, *Anglican Perceptions of the Virgin*, is an analysis of the response of the nine subjects who were interviewed for this study. Attempts are made to find common threads and these are examined and related to their own perceived spirituality. Chapter six, the conclusion, draws some epigrammatic conclusions about the nature of Roman Catholic and Anglican Mariology within the local context. It postulates that, with increased ecumenism, the Virgin Mary might become a greater spiritual impetus for Anglicans than is presently the case.

## CHAPTER 2: MARY IN SCRIPTURE

In considering the scriptural Mary<sup>1</sup> it is necessary to take into account the actual words of the writers, as well as the subsequent cultural and ecclesial traditions which have influenced the interpretations of them. This is particularly so in view of the post Reformation West where mariological exegesis has diverged considerably. Rather than impose, anachronistically, on the scriptures the understandings of these subsequent traditions with all their potential misconstructions, it is perhaps more productive to read them anew in the hope that flexible attitudes will reveal more of Mary's role in Christology.

Considering the Virgin's significance in Christology, it is surprising that her coverage in scripture is as meagre as it is. Because the Gospels are the main source of Marian scripture, it is these that contribute overwhelmingly to a theology of Mary. She is not mentioned by name at all in the letters of the apostle Paul, though there are five direct references to her. Other biblical references, Gen 3:15, Is 7:14 and Mic 5:2-4, Rev 12:1-17 are more oblique and their contribution to a coherent Mariology is limited. This chapter will therefore focus mainly on the Gospels, with only brief mention of Paul's letters.

### 1. The Gospels

The Virgin Mary appears in all four gospels, though in all of them the references to her are intended to elucidate Christ, rather than to establish an explicit Mariology.

#### Mark:

3:31-35<sup>2</sup>; 3: 20-35<sup>3</sup>; 6:1-6a<sup>4</sup>; 15:40, 47<sup>5</sup>; 16:1<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are taken from *The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>31</sup> Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters \* are outside, asking for you.' <sup>33</sup> And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' <sup>34</sup> And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

The first of these, Mark 3:31-35 is clearly an apophthegm within the narrative context of v 31-34. Jesus states that his own family is now relative to his eschatological family and as such this statement talks not of Mary per se, but of elemental Christianity. It does not exclude his natural family, but includes them as far as they are part of the new Kingdom. The omission of Joseph here emphasises Jesus as the Son of God. This redefinition of the family is radical in its first century environment. The new eschatological family is no longer patriarchal, but includes women, some of whom confront and alter Jesus.

Mark 6:4 is another apophthegm within the context of 6:1-6a. In this pericope, it is the people of Nazareth who reflect the Markan view of Mary: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” as a humble person in contrast with his growing reputation as a healer and teacher. In this Gospel Joseph is not mentioned. Jesus is referred to only as the son of Mary. This reflects the Markan

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<sup>3</sup> <sup>20</sup>and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, ‘He has gone out of his mind.’ <sup>22</sup>And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He has Beelzebub, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.’ <sup>23</sup>And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, ‘How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. <sup>27</sup>But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. <sup>28</sup> ‘Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup>but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin’— <sup>30</sup>for they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’ The True Kindred of Jesus <sup>31</sup> Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers and sisters\* are outside, asking for you.’ <sup>33</sup>And he replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ <sup>34</sup>And looking at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup>Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’

<sup>4</sup> <sup>1</sup>He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup> On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, ‘Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! <sup>3</sup>Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary\* and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?’ And they took offence\* at him. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.’ <sup>5</sup>And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their unbelief.

<sup>5</sup> <sup>40</sup> There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>47</sup>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

<sup>6</sup> When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

desire to stress the humanity and humility of Jesus in the face of some supernatural claims in the community. It also suggests, there being no infancy narrative in Mark, that his virginal conception is accepted and taken for granted by Mark.<sup>7</sup> It also suggests that Jesus' natural family did not fully understand his mission.<sup>8</sup> This theme occurs in the other gospels as well.

## Matthew

1:1-17<sup>9</sup>; 1:18-25<sup>10</sup>; 12:46-50<sup>11</sup>; 13:53-58<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 218.

<sup>9</sup> <sup>1</sup>An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham. <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup>and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, <sup>4</sup>and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup>and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, <sup>7</sup>and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph <sup>8</sup>and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos and Amos the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup>and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup>and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, <sup>15</sup>and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup>and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. <sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

<sup>10</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' <sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

<sup>11</sup> <sup>46</sup> While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup>Someone told him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' <sup>48</sup>But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' <sup>49</sup>And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!' <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

The genealogy (1:1-17) is important for Mariology. In v 16 is written “Mary of whom was begotten Jesus” rather than Joseph begot Jesus by Mary in harmony with the pattern of the rest of the genealogy. In addition, the names of four women are mentioned: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, who were non Israelites and Bathsheba, who is mentioned by her own name, not that of her husband. This insists not only that the gospel message is for foreigners and outsiders, but also for sinners. All of these women had unusual marriages, and were unusually pro-active, so Matthew is indicating Mary as the instrument of God in God’s messianic plan. God acts through the outcasts in order to secure redemption.

Matthew 1: 18-25 shows the Matthean belief in the virginal birth, as well as Jesus’ being a true son of David. The actions of both Mary and Joseph are therefore instrumental in salvation. The focus on Joseph’s naming the child ensures Jesus’ is regarded as a child of Joseph. So, amid the scandal of Mary’s condition in a patriarchal culture, the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit, prepares us for the resurrection.

## Luke

1:26-38;<sup>13</sup> 1:39-56;<sup>14</sup> 2:1-20;<sup>15</sup> 2:21-40;<sup>16</sup> 2:41-52;<sup>17</sup> 3:23;<sup>18</sup> 4:16-30;<sup>19</sup> 8:19-21;<sup>20</sup> 11:27-28.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <sup>53</sup>When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place. The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth. <sup>54</sup>He came to his home town and began to teach the people\* in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? <sup>55</sup>Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup>And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?’ <sup>57</sup>And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honour except in their own country and in their own house.’ <sup>58</sup>And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief. **The Rejection**

<sup>13</sup> <sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’\* <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’\* <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born\* will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God.’ <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.



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## The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

<sup>14</sup> 39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. *19* <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? *Cf 2 Sam 6:9-11* <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be\* a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

### Mary's Song of Praise

46 And Mary\* said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, <sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. <sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, <sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.' <sup>56</sup> And Mary remained with her for about three months and then returned to her home.

<sup>15</sup> <sup>2</sup> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. The Shepherds and the Angels. <sup>8</sup> In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah,\* the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,\* praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' <sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

<sup>16</sup> <sup>21</sup> After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. Jesus Is Presented in the Temple. <sup>22</sup> When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), <sup>24</sup> and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.' <sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon;\* this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.\* <sup>27</sup> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon\* came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup> Simeon\* took him in his arms and praised God, saying, <sup>29</sup> 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant\* in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' <sup>33</sup> And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon\* blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup> so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and

The Lukan view of Mary is shown in the infancy narrative, in the importance of the annunciation, the visitation, the birth at Bethlehem, the presentation in the temple, and the finding of Jesus in the Temple (1:26-38). Luke parallels Jesus' conception, birth and infancy

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a sword will pierce your own soul too.' 36 There was also a prophet, Anna\* the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child\* to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. The Return to Nazareth. 39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

17 41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents\* saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' 49 He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

18 23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli,

19 16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' 20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' 23 He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum." ' 24 And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine This would be Rahner's position (the "supernatural existential") but not Aquinas who understood grace as an entirely supernatural gift of God. over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers\* in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

20 19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. 20 And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.' 21 But he said to them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.'

21 27 While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!' 28 But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'

with that of John the Baptist, to contrast and highlight the greater significance of the former. Of necessity Mary appears more in this gospel than in the others, which has no doubt led to her primary association with Jesus as his mother. The similarity in structure of this annunciation to others in the Old Testament – to Abraham in Gen17: 1-8, to Samson’s parents in Judges 13: 3-7 and to Moses in Exodus 3: 2-15 - is intended by Luke to show the action of God through the Holy Spirit. The annunciation is a literary device to explain the virginal birth and to offer a sign.<sup>22</sup> Mary’s response to the annunciation establishes her as the first disciple. Like those who have received an annunciation before, she responds of her own free will and sets out in faith in the company of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

The *Magnificat* (1:39-56), which Luke assigns to Mary, is Luke’s own Marian vision.<sup>24</sup> The lowly handmaid who is exalted to bear the Saviour represents the poor and lowly who become, like Mary, filled with good things. This is the Lukan Christology, and presents Mary as the first one who is worthy of being a disciple of Christ.

Luke 2:19 and 2:51 reminds us of Mary who ‘kept all these things, pondering them in her heart’. The things referred to are many, and could include the angelic revelation, Jesus’ rebuff to his parents in the Temple, or the words of Simeon. The ultimate importance of these utterances was their effect on Jesus, not Mary, rendering her discipleship more poignant. Mary’s holding the words in her heart implies an ongoing effort to understand the nature of Jesus.

## John

1:13;<sup>25</sup> 2:1-11;<sup>26</sup> 2:12;<sup>27</sup> 6:42;<sup>28</sup> 7:1-10;<sup>29</sup> 7:41-43;<sup>30</sup> 8:41;<sup>31</sup> 19:25-27.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Neuner , Mary – Mother of the Saviour, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, Truly Our Sister, 258.

<sup>24</sup> Neuner , Mary – Mother of the Saviour, 36.

<sup>25</sup> <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>26</sup> <sup>2</sup>On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ <sup>6</sup>Now standing there were six stone

The Johannine view of Mary presents the most developed Mariology, in spite of her not being mentioned by name.

The wedding at Cana (22.1-11), although presenting an assertive Mary, still has a Christological focus. It is Mary's intercession that causes Jesus to change his mind and work his first miracle. Her words to the servants support the fact of her motherhood and its role in the miracle.

Mary at the cross (19:25-27) is absent from the other gospels and John uses it to express the importance of the Church for the Johannine community. This event foresees the post resurrection period and the community of believers. Mary's presence is vital as the founder of the universal

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water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. <sup>9</sup>When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' <sup>11</sup>Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

<sup>27</sup> <sup>12</sup> After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there for a few days.

<sup>28</sup> <sup>42</sup> They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?'

<sup>29</sup> After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. <sup>2</sup>Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. <sup>3</sup>So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; <sup>4</sup>for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' <sup>5</sup>(For not even his brothers believed in him.) <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come.' <sup>9</sup>After saying this, he remained in Galilee. **Jesus at the Festival of Booths**

<sup>10</sup> But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret.

<sup>30</sup> <sup>41</sup> Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' But some asked, 'Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? <sup>42</sup>Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?' <sup>43</sup>So there was a division in the crowd because of him.

<sup>31</sup> <sup>41</sup> You are indeed doing what your father does.' They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.'

<sup>32</sup> <sup>25</sup> And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

church. The spiritual role as mother of the disciple, and hence all disciples, confirms her role as mother foretold in Genesis 3:15 who stands at the side of her son in triumph over Satan.<sup>33</sup>

## 2. The Letters of Paul

Philippians 2:6-11<sup>34</sup>; Romans 1:3-4<sup>35</sup>; Galatians 1:1-19<sup>36</sup>; Galatians 4:4-5<sup>37</sup>; Galatians 4:28-29.<sup>38</sup>

Mary is similarly unmentioned by name in the Pauline epistles, and the references which are assumed to refer to Mary concern her role in Jesus' birth.

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<sup>33</sup> Neuner, Mary – Mother of the Saviour, 42.

<sup>34</sup> <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup>he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>35</sup> <sup>3</sup>the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup>and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

<sup>36</sup> Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— <sup>2</sup>and all the members of God's family\* who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: <sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. There Is No Other Gospel

<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel\* from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! <sup>10</sup>Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant\* of Christ. Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

<sup>11</sup> For I want you to know, brothers and sisters,\* that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; <sup>12</sup>for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup>You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. <sup>15</sup>But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son to me,\* so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days; <sup>19</sup>but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother.

<sup>37</sup> <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

<sup>38</sup> <sup>28</sup>Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. <sup>29</sup>But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

Philippians 2:6-11 suggests the possibility of the pre-existence of Jesus but does not link it to virginal birth.

Romans 1:3-4 concerns Jesus' Davidic descent and his status as the risen Son of God, rather than the nature of his conception and birth.

The Galatians 1:1-19 text precedes the gospels and raises the question of the possibility of Mary's other child(ren), without resolving it in any way.

There Is No Other Gospel

In Galatians 4:4-5 Paul relates redemption to the incarnation but stresses the humanity of Christ, and his relationship to Israel, rather than the condition of his birth. His concern with Mary is minimal. She is simply the Christ-bearer.

Even in Galatians 4:28-29, the reference to Mary is imprecise at best. It tells of the freedom that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The scriptural Mary does not present us with a developed theology of Mary. Given the meagreness of their extent it is unsurprising that much Marian veneration has its origin in tradition. Although Marian scriptures are essentially Christological, they offer a foundation for a considered Mariology. It is the purpose of the following chapter to determine the origin and purpose of the Marian dogmas, and their foundation in scripture and tradition.

## CHAPTER 3: MARIAN DOGMAS

This chapter looks at the nature of dogma in the Roman Catholic Church and seeks to clarify the relationship between revelation, faith, belief and dogma. Thereafter it details the nature, origins and development of the four Catholic Marian dogmas and clarifies the relationships between the dogmas. Finally some feminist responses to Marian dogma are assessed.

Presently, the Church has proclaimed four dogmas regarding the Mother of Jesus:

- *Theotokos*: her maternal role in the birth of Christ, the Son of God, making her truly Mother of God. Council of Ephesus, 431.
- Perpetual Virginity. First Lateran Council, 649.
- Immaculate Conception. Pius IX, "*ex cathedra*" proclamation, 1854.
- Assumption into Heaven. Pius XII, "*ex cathedra*" proclamation, 1950.

### 1. What is dogma?

#### 1.1 Definition

According to Neuner 'Dogmas are doctrines which have been declared by the authentic Magisterium of the Church as revealed by God'.<sup>1</sup> Although the exact nature of the revelation is not explicit, both scripture and tradition are the source of these revealed truths.

Gerald O'Collins defines dogma as 'divinely revealed truth, proclaimed as such by the infallible teaching authority of the Magisterium, and hence binding now and forever on the faithful'. Quoting *Lumen Gentium* 12, he asserts that this occurs when 'The Bishops ... proclaim infallibly the doctrine of Christ on the following conditions: namely, when, even though dispersed throughout the world but preserving for all that among themselves and with Peter's successor the bond of communion, in their authoritative teaching concerning faith and morals, they are in agreement that a particular teaching is to be held definitively and absolutely.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981) 188,189.

The nature of dogma, while enjoying a long history, was settled only comparatively recently at Vatican I in 1870. Here it was stated that ‘all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgement, or by her ordinary and universal Magisterium, proposes for belief as having been divinely revealed’.<sup>3</sup>

Dogmatic formulas are not dictated by God. They are the consequence and expression of the perceived truth of divine revelation. Divine revelation occurs through God’s creation and acts in human existence and these require interpretation and translation into dogma. Early examples of such interpretation occur in Dt 32:3 and 36 where the canticle of Moses speaks of God’s greatness and compassion.

The interpretation and understanding of dogma is not a matter of merely semantic elucidation, but is the result of reflection on the nature of God and of God’s action in the world.

The Roman Catholic Church insists that God’s revelation is to *all* humankind, not only to Christians, and that consequently the interpretation of this revelation is the task of all people. This is particularly apposite in the natural law. ‘The whole body of the faithful *who have an anointing* (my italics) that comes from the Holy One cannot err in matters of faith’ (LG12).<sup>4, 5</sup> By this must be understood, that, while all people are recipients of revelation, only the ‘faithful’ can determine the dogma. This distinction is the basis of much debate and the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Josef Neuner and Heinrich Roos. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, ed. Karl Rahner. (New York: Alba House, 1967), 91.

<sup>4</sup> Ironically, one of the main objections to the two main Marian dogmas, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, is that they were proclaimed *without* reference to people outside of the Catholic Church.

<sup>5</sup> All quotations from the documents of Vatican II are from W.M. Abbot and G. Chapman, eds., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966).



While all of humanity is the recipient of revelation and while its interpretation and expression are protected by the Holy Spirit, the Magisterium is nevertheless required to articulate it. Gerald O'Collins expresses the relationship between revelation and the Magisterium as follows. '...believers not only confidently commit themselves to a personal relationship with Christ, but also confess the divine self-communication which they experience in him. They respond to that definitive revelation of God by expressing and formulating their experience of faith. In the first instance the members of the Magisterium belong to that believing and confessing church. But they also serve to express in a fully visible and authoritative way the common faith. Among the general body of believers the Magisterium enjoys an obvious visibility and clarity when it formulates matters of faith'.<sup>6</sup>

It is not the purpose of the Church to impose dogma on its members, but to articulate the faith of believers. This is particularly so in the case of the two modern Marian dogmas, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which were the result of extensive inquiry into the actual beliefs of the Christian faithful. They are, therefore, an articulation of existing belief rather than an imposition by the Magisterium. This distinction is vital as it accords the basis of belief to the people of God, and not to the Magisterium. Dogma belongs to the people. This is frequently misunderstood by Protestant critics of dogma who object to them on the grounds, not of their content, but on the basis of their proclamation by an 'infallible' pope.

Two essentials constitute dogma: content and form. Its content must be held to be revealed to all people, and the dogma must be formally proclaimed by the church. This ensures continuity and protects the faith from radicalism. One example of such radicalism was the Albigensian heresy of the 13<sup>th</sup> century which claimed a dualistic reality in which the material was evil, and only the spiritual was considered good. Dogma is not punitive or juridical though it is frequently perceived as such to the detriment of the Church's dialogue with other faiths, and indeed with itself.

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 187.

## 1.2 Dogma and revelation.

Dogma and revelation occupy essentially the same role: the engagement of the human with the truth. This sacramentality of dogma is pivotal if it is not to degenerate into a mere repetition of formulae. This is why it is important that the believing community is instrumental in the interpretation of truth, and that the church leadership, having consulted the community, enunciate what is held by them to be true. Crucial is the fact that dogma is based on God's revelation in Christ, and not on human reason. In addition, the revelation occurs within history and must also be understood within the 'currency of its time'.<sup>7</sup>

A common misunderstanding of this fact is responsible for the dogmatic disagreements between the Catholic and Reformed traditions. When dogma is considered intellectually, its articles are inclined to be understood juridically, which trivialises their intent. The intent of dogma is that people engage existentially with God's truth. Although dogma is an expression of revealed truth it is not intended to replace the ultimate truth of divine mystery. God remains ineffable.

The First Vatican Council insisted that

“The divine mysteries by their very nature so transcend the created intellect that, even when they have been communicated in revelation and received by faith, they remain covered by the veil of faith itself and shrouded as it were in darkness.” (DS 3016).<sup>8</sup>

Thus it can be simplified that revelation presents the mystery, dogma states the truth of the mystery, and doctrine tries to explain the statement without ever exhausting its truth.

Dogmas are often enunciated to clarify misconceptions and to establish the parameters of revelation. For example, the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople answered the misconceptions of Arianism by declaring the divinity of Christ. Some truths of revelation have never been stated dogmatically as they have never been questioned. These include the Mystical Body of Christ, and the reality of grace<sup>9</sup>. It has also never been formulated as dogma that Christ is universal Redeemer. These truths are so commonly held that they do not require proclamation. In addition

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987) 294.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 19

<sup>9</sup> Komonchak, Collins and Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 295.

it was only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the canon of the Bible was dogmatically proclaimed at the Council of Trent, after its challenge by the Reformers.

Dogma and doctrine, though frequently used interchangeably, are different. Dogmas relate the truths of revelation while doctrines explain how they may be understood. The latter may vary as theological interpretations develop, but the former may not.

Doctrine, too, is intrinsic to the community and may take a number of forms; these include preaching, liturgy, papal encyclicals, the work of theologians, and the example of the lives of holy people. Its purpose is to enable people to ‘internalise the meaning of the world that God has revealed in Christ’.<sup>10</sup> So, whereas dogma is immutable, doctrine is more dynamic and contextualised.

Revelation, especially in modern, post-Enlightenment times, has been popularly misunderstood to threaten reason. Although revelation is not always explicit in the scriptures it is fundamental to the Christian (and other) traditions. It is the disclosure of mystery which broadens the scope within which humanity is liberated to pursue the literal truths of other disciplines. It is not a challenge to, or a denial of, intellect, reason or science.

Revelation and reason are not opposed if one understands revelation as the communication of the mystery of God to the world. This is perpetually incomplete, and though particular revelations have occurred in specific historic times and places, revelation is not to be understood as privileged information awarded to a few select favourites. Such a Gnostic notion would reduce revelation to the appeasement of curiosity rather than to the human need for hope. A more accurate concept of revelation would be to see it as God’s self-giving to the world. It is God’s continual, universal love, beginning with creation and unlimited by time and place. This giving by a prevenient God of Godself takes the form of a promise: a promise of ultimate fulfilment in a seemingly indifferent universe.

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<sup>10</sup> Komonchak, Collins and Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 293.

This promissory nature of revelation was renewed at Vatican II, which also re-emphasised the importance of the scriptures in revelation. The Church still holds that ‘sacred tradition and sacred scripture’ together form ‘one sacred deposit’ of the word of God.<sup>11</sup> Vatican II’s document on revelation encourages the faithful to view revelation ‘not as a collection of timeless formulas, but as an always enlivening embodiment of God’s word that can illuminate and transform each new situation in a special way’.<sup>12</sup>

O’Collins claims that ‘in every transcendental experience we encounter the divine mystery and God’s saving presence, even if this dimension of the experience is not specifically reflected upon’.<sup>13</sup> He asserts that ‘[in] all knowing, willing and acting we experience the reality of God and of ourselves. A primordial divine self-communication takes place. This self communication summons us to “obey” and hear with a primordial faith the reality, truth and goodness we encounter. We can call this dimension of every experience the primordial revelation which invites our primordial faith.’<sup>14</sup> Revelation, then, is simultaneously the object of faith (the self-revealed God) as well as the content of theology (what God has manifested to humanity). The interactive nature of revelation is significant. The self giving of God enables humanity to enter by faith into an encounter with God. This existential, as opposed to cognitive, understanding of revelation as a sacrament also affects our understanding of grace, and it is this that remains one of the prime points of misunderstanding between the Catholic and Reformed understanding of the Marian dogmas.

Faith, in the Catholic tradition, is similarly interactive. Aquinas says of faith, ‘To believe is an act of the mind assenting to divine truth by virtue of the command of the will as this is moved by God through grace; in this way the act stands under the control of the free will and is directed towards God’.<sup>15</sup> This understanding of faith is as a cognitive act undertaken at the command of the will and motivated by God. It requires the interplay of intellect and the will and this

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<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (Dei Verbum) 1965. DV 9.

<sup>12</sup> Komonchak, *The New Dictionary*, 886.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology*, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Komonchak, *The New Dictionary*, 378.

relationship is facilitated by grace. Conversely, the reformed understanding of faith reverts to the biblical notion of faith as a surrender to God, and neglects the intellect and its engagement with the will. With Luther, faith is God driven, whereas the Catholic understanding of faith is of an interaction of humanity in response to God's initiation. The cognitive dimension becomes crucial in the dogmas of the faith.

The term dogma has its roots in the Greek word *edoxen* and was used by the early church to settle conflicts between the Judaizers and the non-Judaizers. The First Council of Jerusalem in Apostolic times conveyed its position with the words 'It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and ours too...' (Acts 15:28), (in this case the 'ours' referred to the Apostles) with the purpose of securing the unity of the faith in the truth of the gospel, rather than of being rigid or doctrinaire. The significance of dogma in this sense is its perpetual openness to the *sensus fidelium* without compromising the original revelation in the mystery of salvation. Dogma is always an expression of commonly held belief, yet is not merely an articulation of this. The Magisterium is charged with assessing the beliefs and discerning their validity. It is not dogma merely because it is popular. It needs also to be true.

To perceive dogma as formulaic is to misunderstand its intent. It is, therefore, quite possible to speak of an evolution of dogma in the service of a deepening of the Christian mystery.<sup>16</sup>

It is with this understanding of dogma that the Marian dogmas need to be re-evaluated to unearth their unifying, multi-dimensional aspects which support the essence of the dogma. However, revisionist interpretations do not alter the theology of the Marian dogmas – essentially that Mary was the mother of God, Virgin, immaculate, and was assumed into heaven. This mystery is not isolated within history. It is related ultimately to the mystery of God, but recent interpretations offer a new perspective from which to contemplate it. 'She is Our Lady *because* she is Virgin, queen, wisdom, tabernacle of God...' <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ivone Gebara and Clara Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. Phillip Berryman. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989),90.

<sup>17</sup> Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and the Religious Expressions* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 15.

## 2. Marian Dogmas

It must be always borne in mind that Marian, as all dogmas, are intended as a basis of faith *in action*. All belief, to be valid, must translate into ministry and must therefore have a pastoral dimension. The person of Mary is pivotal in the understanding and implications of the Marian dogmas. Mary was poor<sup>18</sup>, simple<sup>19</sup>, and dispossessed<sup>20</sup> and it is these facts which are exalted in the dogmas. Thus, the person of Mary is essential to the mystery of the Church as a community of salvation, which is striving to be a sign in the world of the Kingdom of God. It also lends credibility to the work of the church, seen in Mary, among the poor and the dispossessed and allows humanity to appreciate the uniquely feminine gifts which are part of God's creation. These truths are seen in the titles which have been given to the virgin over the centuries: The Greatest of all Creatures, The Sole Boast of the Human Race, the Dawn of Our Salvation and Tower of David.

### 2.1 Mary, Mother of God: the *Theotokos*

Mariology begins not with Mary alone, but with Mary in relation to Jesus. The divine motherhood, unlike other Marian dogmas, has deep scriptural roots. There are twenty-five New Testament references to the mother but only two gospel texts that refer to her as virgin. The primary view of Mary is as the Mother of Jesus, which locates Marian dogmas within the ambit of Christology - the divine and human nature of Christ. The term *Theotokos* appeared first in the Provincial Council of Alexandria, preparatory to the Council of Nicea in 319-320, but was proclaimed officially only in 431 at the Council of Ephesus. Prior to this, elements of the theology were visible at the Councils of Constantinople I in 381 and Chalcedon in 451. More recently, it has been developed by Vatican II (1962-1965).

Neuner examines the nature of the *Theotokos* in great detail and begins by looking at the nature of Christ. Mary and Jesus are inseparable and the question of who Jesus is, is the focus of the

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 1: 53 'he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty'

<sup>19</sup> Luke 1: 48 'for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant'

<sup>20</sup> Luke 1: 52 'He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly'

gospels. Jesus is not a prophet who receives a mandate from God. He is unique in that his person and his mission are the same.<sup>21</sup>

Notions of Mary's motherhood are affected and determined by the Alexandrian and Antiochian Christologies which disagreed about the nature of Christ, and which resulted in both Nestorianism and Monophysitism.<sup>22</sup> The implications for Mariology concern the *Theotokos* giving birth to Jesus' divinised body, or the *Anthropotokos* giving birth to the man Jesus.

The Council of Ephesus expressly declared Mary the *Theotokos* – the Mother of God - and this statement has been a key to the understanding of the two natures of Christ.

Not an ordinary man was born first of the holy Virgin on whom afterwards the Word descended. What we say is that, being united with the flesh from the womb, the Word has undergone birth in the flesh making the birth in the flesh his own ... Thus the holy Fathers have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin "Mother of God".<sup>23</sup>

The Council of Chalcedon did not add to this doctrine, though it gave it more weight. Its statement reads 'the Son [is] born of the Father before all times as to his divinity, born in recent times for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, as to his humanity'.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of this statement was to accentuate the reality of the maternity of Mary in the face of Monophysitism whose claim of Christ's one nature after the incarnation would render impossible Mary's motherhood of Christ. It also continues to support Christ's hypostatic union.<sup>25</sup>

John Paul II is explicit on this issue: 'Mary's divine motherhood refers only to the human begetting of the Son of God but not to his divine birth. The Son of God was eternally begotten of

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<sup>21</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 43-55.

<sup>22</sup> Nestorianism held that Christ had two natures; divine and human. Monophysitism, which arose in reaction to this belief, held that Christ had only one nature as the human nature was part of the divine nature. Both positions were condemned as heretical at the Council of Chalcedon.

<sup>23</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 52.

<sup>24</sup> Neuner and Roos. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 252.

<sup>25</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 97.

God the Father, and is consubstantial with him. Mary, of course, has no part in this eternal birth. However, the Son of God assumed our human nature 2000 years ago and was conceived by and born of Mary ...'.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, Mary did not create Jesus' divinity, but the *homoousios* nature of Christ ensures Mary's motherhood of his totality in the world.

This title, *Theotokos*, also proclaims the nobility of woman and her unique vocation. God treated Mary as a free and responsible person and did not bring about the Incarnation of his Son until after he had obtained her consent.

Early Marian devotions refer to Mary as the mother of God, *Theotokos*, as early as the third century. In *The Liturgy of the Hours* we find 'We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God: despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all evil, O glorious and blessed Virgin'.<sup>27</sup>

Her only mention at Constantinople I is 'incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary' which is more a statement of her maternal role in the incarnation than about her virginal motherhood. The juxtaposition of Virgin Mary and Holy Spirit in this statement is intentional. It is doctrinal as well as semantic. The two are co-responsible for the incarnation. The dogma insists that Mary's literal being, as the mother of the Son of God, and her spiritual being, as an instrument of salvation, are indivisible. Jesus became Messiah through his bond with Mary. Her biological motherhood gave rise to her spiritual motherhood so the message humanity takes from Mary's *fiat*, is the indivisibility of biological and spiritual existence.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos: Mary, Mother of God: A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*. (Boston: Pauline Books, 2000), 150,151.

<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos*, 148.

<sup>28</sup> Ironically, modern science accords her a higher status than do Judaic notions of conception which held that the creative life force was solely from the father, with the mother providing only the locus and the nutriments for growth. So the modern view of Mary relates her more closely to Jesus than the earlier views. Interesting, too, would be the fact that, according to modern understanding, Jesus' entire DNA would be derived from Mary.



Vatican II devoted Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium* to Mary, and, besides further emphasising the divine motherhood, insists upon its soteriological aspect. This renders Mary a figure of the Church for all time, rather than a figure located at a fixed point in time. Mary's motherhood thus becomes an instrument in the salvation of all people, including those who pre-deceased her.

The decision of Vatican II to situate Mary in the context of the Church has vast ecumenical significance. In this locus she becomes one of the faithful instead of a separate entity, and this has had considerable ecumenical impact.

The implications of this dogma are vast. By accepting the *Theotokos*, therefore, one is forced to accept that Jesus is Son of God. Anthropologically, therefore the motherhood of all women is simultaneously both physical and spiritual, and inseparable, as they are in Christ. It is within the frailty of the flesh that the transcendence is experienced, and, ironically, upon which it depends. The divine presence which hitherto, in the Judaic tradition, had been available only to the high priests, became, through Mary, a universal truth for everyone.

The statement was important in that the dogma of the *Theotokos* formalised the understanding of the *Logos* as being united hypostatically with human flesh. It makes both Jesus and Mary unique. The word of God was not simply imposed on a person. The person of Christ is the union of the divine nature of the *Logos* and the human nature of the son of Mary. This relational feature is pivotal in Christianity.

That the function of the *Theotokos* is performed by a poor young virgin has crucial social and political implications as well. It enables the poor and the oppressed of the whole world, not only the Jews of the Old Testament, to engage with God in relationship. It exalts women as it was through one woman that Christ became incarnate. So, through Mary the Church is called to be the servant of the people and to stand beside those who suffer.

Insofar as Mary represents the church as redeemed humanity, a new paradigm comes into being. Rather than the typology of Christ and the church as dominant male and submissive female, we now have the kenotic Christ self-emptying divine power out into the human situation of suffering and hope, and the church being empowered and lifted up as the transformed community of the poor and those in solidarity with them.

Together Christ and church/Mary/we ourselves begin to live the reversal of values characteristic of the coming reign of God.<sup>29</sup>

This liberational aspect of the *Theotokos* is not new, but is being re-interpreted by feminist theologians to understand Mary as liberator as well as servant. This liberation Mariology is based largely on the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55)<sup>30</sup> and the new model transforms the Mary-Christ relationship.

Mariology is inextricably linked to, and grounded in, Christology. Mary's *fiat* implies not only the bearing of Jesus, but her sharing in his mission and suffering. According to Augustine, Mary's *fiat* links her to Jesus more as a disciple than as a mother. 'It is more important that Mary is Christ's disciple than that she is his mother ... Mary is blessed because she listened to God's word and kept it. More important is that she conceived his truth in her mind than his flesh in her womb. Christ is truth, Christ is Flesh: Christ the truth is in Mary's mind, Christ the flesh is in Mary's womb.'<sup>31</sup>

Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* 56, has the final contemporary word on the *Theotokos*. She became the mother of Jesus through her consent to the divine word. With her whole heart, unhindered by sin, she embraced the salvific will of God and consecrated herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son under whom and with whom, by the grace of the Almighty, she served in the mystery of the redemption. Justly, therefore, the holy Fathers consider Mary not merely as a passive instrument in the hands of God but as freely co-operating in the salvation of mankind by her faith and obedience.

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 37.

<sup>30</sup> And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

<sup>31</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 46

## 2.2 Mary's Virginit

Like her motherhood, so also must Mary's virginit be seen in the context of salvation. Salvation occurs as a result of a gift given by God but accepted by humanity. Mary's virginit represents this openness to grace: total dependence, coupled with her free response.

Virginit in most religions is more than merely abstinence from sexual relations.<sup>32</sup> It expresses a purity and self control which is the base of spiritual growth. In the case of Mary, unlike the mother-goddess figures of Mediterranean mythology, this virginit is permanent and juxtaposed with motherhood. Old Testament concepts of virginit are associated with sterility<sup>33</sup> and the New Testament abounds in examples of sterile women being made fertile. Interestingly, several patriarchal ancestors of Jesus were sterile: Sarai, Rebecca and Rachel.

Judaic virginit was entirely different from the rest of the ancient world. It was not regarded as untapped potential, but implied helplessness and dependence on God and it is within this context that Mary's chosen virginit must be examined. Mary's acceptance of the gift of virginit transforms this Judaic understanding. The Judaic bonds of family are relativised in the face of the gospel message. The relation to God through Christ supersedes the family, and discipleship surpasses human relations, so virginit means 'the orientation of the whole person to this ultimate goal beyond the natural bonds of family'.<sup>34</sup>

What is perhaps more significant still in the question of virginit is the change between Old and New Testament concepts of it. In Old Testament theology, the virginal bride was symbolised by Israel and her relation to Yahweh. This metaphor evolves in the New Testament and becomes a symbol of the Church's relation to Christ. The Church becomes the New Jerusalem and in this ecclesiology lies the significance of all Mariology.

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<sup>32</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Leon DuFour (Dictionary of Biblical Theology), quoted in J. Neuner *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*. 59, 60. "In the view of God's people, in their orientation towards their own increase, virginit was equivalent with sterility"

<sup>34</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 59-61.

There are three aspects to Mary's virginity: the virginal conception, the virgin birth and her virginity after birth. Each has its own theology.

**2.2.1 The Virginal Conception** is scripturally based (Mt 1:18-25<sup>35</sup> and Lk 1:26-38<sup>36</sup>) and affects both Mariology and Christology. Both texts agree on this point and both point to the messianic mission. Joseph's Davidic ancestry, which would have been 'convenient' for both writers, is negated by their insistence on the virginal conception. It is Mary's surrender to God which renders Jesus' kingship divine, not his Davidic ancestry. Neuner questions the frequent perception that Mary's virginity was chosen by her. He maintains that her Judaism would make it unlikely, and insists that the texts which inspire this belief should be read as a comment on her betrothal to Joseph.<sup>37</sup>

The virginal conception, claims Neuner,<sup>38</sup> despite being scripturally based, traditionally accepted (Chalcedon, Constantinople III, Lateran IV and Lyons II) and underpinned in the Creeds, has

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<sup>35</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; \* and he named him Jesus.

<sup>36</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.\*' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?\*' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born\* will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

<sup>37</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 65.

been challenged since Vatican II on the grounds that the account of the virgin birth is a *theologoumenon* and not a historic account, and the two should not be confused. Neuner considers these challenges, responds to them in some detail and concludes that the biological fact of her virginal conception is unresolved, and that modern rationalistic apprehension of the supernatural should not be allowed to cloud the issue. He also insists that the biblical accounts, whatever their origin and motivation, cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the matter is important. It cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant as compared with the importance of her intention. The body is theologically necessary to this debate. If it were not, Mariology would be an abstraction, and by implication, so would the church. However, Neuner<sup>39</sup> concedes that even if the virginity were not a fact, the truth of Christ as the Son of God would not be compromised.

This sentiment is echoed by Gebara and Bingemer '[Virginity] refers to the creation in Mary of a new people, a virgin people in the sense that it is not given over to idolatry, a people begotten by the "power of the Most High"...questioning who the human being is in God's presence.'<sup>40</sup>

Despite these challenges to biological virginity, Pope John Paul II echoes the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with the explicit affirmation of 'the virginal conception of the biological order, brought about by the Holy Spirit'.<sup>41</sup>

**2.2.2. The Virginal Birth** gives rise to the debate regarding Jesus' humanity. The emphasis on Jesus' full humanity would suggest a natural delivery, while the Gnostic notion of a miraculous birth would preserve both Mary and Jesus from 'contamination'. Scripture does not offer a definitive solution, though Lk 2:6-7<sup>42</sup> suggests an active process of birthing rather than a passive receipt of a divine gift. While early Christian writers, inter alia Irenaeus and Athanasius wrote similarly, the apocryphal gospel of James sparked the suggestion of a miraculous delivery and this became tradition until modern times when scientific rationalism demanded a more factual solution.

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<sup>39</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 71.

<sup>40</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos*, 115.

<sup>42</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Neuner holds that belief in a miracle which is not scripturally based is precarious and that the true virginity consisted in Mary's total involvement in her surrender to God. Gebara and Bingemer also see virginity in a spiritual sense.

Mary's virginity is not therefore simply a genital or sexual matter or an amazing exceptional case of parthenogenesis; nor does it entail disdain for sexuality and marriage. It is emphatically a message of deepest significance, utterly in agreement with the good news of the gospel and with the way God tends to act with God's people... Mary's virginity is about the glory of the almighty God made manifest in what is poor, impotent, and disdained in the eyes of the world.<sup>43</sup>

**2.2.3 Mary's perpetual virginity.** There is only ambiguous support in the scriptures for Mary's continued virginity, although it was supported by tradition from the third century. The questions of Mary's relation with Joseph and of Jesus' brothers do not necessarily affect her virginity. More significant than the literal virginity is the significance of it. Karl Rahner believes that her vocation as the mother of God was so complete that apart from it 'she was nothing ... and remained still the same, total receptivity of the free gift of grace from on High'.<sup>44</sup> Gebara and Bingemer concur, 'the Holy Spirit finds a definitive human vessel only once – and that vessel is Mary's virginity ... The mystery of woman finds in the paradoxical mystery of Mary's virginity a trace of her own unrestricted and unlimited vocation.'<sup>45</sup>

It would appear, too, that the fact of Jesus' siblings might prove awkward. The claim of blood relationship to Christ could be problematic in the Church and perpetual virginity, as dogma, would preclude this claim.

It is important not to allow the notion of Mary's virginity to degenerate into biological claims and counterclaims. As with any matter of theological significance there is a thin line between

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<sup>43</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 107.

<sup>44</sup> Rahner, Karl. *Mother of the Lord*. (Glasgow: Anthony Clarke Books, 1974),69.

<sup>45</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 107.

revealed truth, genuine piety and unjustifiable exaggeration and none of these alone informs faith. The question of belief in Mary's virginity is not one that exists alone. It occurs within a framework of doctrines all of which are grist to the mill of the good news of the gospels. The significance of Mariology lies in Christology and to trivialise it by spurious curiosity is to reduce it.

### 2.3 Mary's Immaculate Conception

The dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception did not occur until 1854, though it was accepted long before then in the Oriental Church, and has given rise to a number of misunderstandings, not only in ecumenical circles but within the Church as well. Mary's Immaculate Conception informs the faithful of Mary's holiness. It proclaims that she was born without original sin, and remained sin free throughout her life. Inevitably, the theological implications are extensive. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 in *Ineffable Deus*.

‘We declare ...that the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception was, by the unique grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the saviour of the human race, preserved intact from all stain of original sin.’<sup>46</sup>

All believers are called by God and are free to respond to this call. However, their response does not affect God's plan of salvation. Mary's call was different. Her unique vocation as Mother of the Saviour means that she is included in the plan from the beginning and as such enjoys a different relation with God. Yet she remains fully human and suffers and doubts as all people do. Her role in God's plan of salvation has to be particularised. Her holiness is described by Max Thurian as ‘symbol of mother Church is holy because in her the gospel sees the living sign of a unique and predestined choice of the Lord, the response of faith from a perfectly human creature, but one who was absolutely obedient.’<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1957), 1641.

<sup>47</sup> Max Thurian, *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church*. (London: Faith Press, 1963), 25.

The theology of the Immaculate Conception originates in Gen 3:15.<sup>48</sup> Although modern exegesis no longer sees the reference here to Mary, it nevertheless was effective in shaping the thought of the time of the proclamation of *Ineffabilis Deus*. The biblical text which irrefutably states her holiness is Lk 1:28.<sup>49</sup> The grace here is God's grace, not Mary's.

Mary's sinlessness is expressed as being from the first moment of her conception. This is not to refute those who believed it to be from the second moment in order to safeguard her need for redemption, or to fix her in time, but rather to ally her to eternity and her part in salvation. Mary is sanctified by God *before* she makes her personal decision. This predestination does not absolve her from her *fiat*, which is freely chosen and has to be sustained throughout her life. Similarly, she is not freed from redemption. She is redeemed so that Christ's work of redemption can take place in her.

In all the translations of the Annunciation, the angel states at the beginning that Mary is favoured and that the Lord is with her (in grace). Therefore she is not ordinary, but exceptional. Consequently these qualities, (being favoured and being graced) must be innate in her, and from God. This makes the dogma scriptural. However, it is also supported in tradition.

Tradition should not be misconceived as the passing down of history. According to Vatican II tradition 'comprises everything that serves the people of God to live their life in holiness and increase their faith' (DV 8) so Marian tradition is not considered to be a doctrinal addition to biblical revelation, but its evolution and development among believers which is guided by the Holy Spirit and is only then sanctioned by the Magisterium.

In traditional Mariology concerning Mary's holiness there are two significant relationships. The first of these is the relationship of Mary and Eve. Mary has come to replace Eve who became a cause of sin and death, who listened to the serpent and who challenged God. She is contrasted with Mary who listened to Gabriel and who became the new source of life.

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<sup>48</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

<sup>49</sup> And he came to her and said, Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.



The Feast of Mary's nativity, instituted in the seventh century, celebrates the tradition of her conception by the sterile Anna – hence Mary was conceived naturally but as a result of God's intervention. Elizabeth's conception of John the Baptist was similar. Through this action, God's intervention sets the stage for the incarnation of Christ and for human redemption.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception cannot be understood unless it is considered alongside the doctrine of original sin. Humanity develops in an existential paradox: the original sin of the human condition and the redemption to which it is called. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception separates Mary from the rest of humanity, in that she was not born into a situation of possible non-salvation. Her whole being, body and soul, is graced and she becomes the sign of the redeemed world.

Misunderstandings of this dogma have occurred over time, particularly in relation to the controversies on original sin. Augustine, in trying to sustain the fact of salvation through grace alone, implied the sinfulness not only of the saints, but of the Virgin as well. His response that Mary had conquered sin nevertheless implied that she had been created sinful, and his insistence on this being resolved through the 'grace of rebirth' increased the problem in the Western Church. If Mary is human, she is a sinner and her sanctification can only be subsequent to her conception. We are caught in a double bind. Original sin, claims Augustine, is inherited through natural generation, and therefore includes Mary. Thomas Aquinas states the problem thus. 'It was proper that Christ should be conceived by a virgin ... on account of the dignity of his humanity in which sin had no place ... But it was impossible that in a nature which is already corrupt through cohabitation, a flesh was born free from the infection of original sin. Thus Mary is in need of healing.'<sup>50</sup>

The problem was resolved in some measure by separating the sinfulness of the body and the sinfulness of the soul. So Mary's soul was created sinless, though her physical conception was natural.

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<sup>50</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 87.

The second relationship that gave rise to debate was that between Mary and Jesus. Mary's special relationship to the sinless Jesus requires her to be sinless as well. But if Mary were sin free she would not require redemption, and this would negate the universality of Jesus' redemptive work.

Because it cannot be risked that Mariology outrank Christology, the question of Mary's sinlessness has been resolved, though not to the satisfaction of all, by asserting two levels of grace; healing grace and preventive grace. Mary did not need forgiveness from sin, but she needed redemption from the effects of sin in the world.

This issue can be resolved if one remembers that Jesus' redemptive work is free of both time and space.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, although in worldly terms Jesus' redemptive act took place after Mary's conception, in the divine order it takes place simultaneously. The eternal present renders the distinction irrelevant.

The matter remained controversial until the Council of Trent exempted Mary from original sin and cleared the way for *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854. Gebara and Bingemer see this as a utopia.

The immaculate conception is therefore a utopia that energizes people's overall endeavour and sustains their hope in their God. At the end of a long history of grace and sin, love and passion, is the woman inaugurating a new era which already bears within itself the anticipation of the end, when God will be all in all. In the figure of Mary, the church, the new people of God, sees its yearnings and its longings, the divine proposal for humankind, already achieved.<sup>52</sup>

The Law of the Jews has been superseded by the covenant with humanity, and the God of the temple in Jerusalem is now available to all people. The utopia represented by Mary is the Kingdom of God. This kingdom includes not only the spiritual. God has chosen the *body* of

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<sup>51</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos*, 150,151.

<sup>52</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 112.

Mary to introduce His kingdom. This goes some way to redeeming the corporeality of women, which had been denounced in Genesis as the cause of original sin. This same body, animated by the Holy Spirit, is the locus of the incarnation and hence of human redemption. So, in the Immaculate Conception the Judaic law is superseded by the gospel.

**2.4 Mary's Assumption into glory** is the most recent of the dogmas, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII only in 1950 in *Munificentissimus Deus*, stating that 'the immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven'. It goes on to state that '...as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, in like manner the struggle which the Blessed Virgin endured in common with her Son was to end in the 'glorification' of her virginal body.'<sup>53</sup> The scriptural bases for this dogma are extensive: Psalm 131,<sup>54</sup> Revelation 12,<sup>55</sup> and Luke 1;28,<sup>56</sup> and connect this dogma with the previous one. However, the message of this dogma is

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<sup>53</sup> Neuner and Roos. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*,334c,334d.

<sup>54</sup> O LORD, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvellous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time on and for evermore.

<sup>55</sup> 12A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup>Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup>And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule\* all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; <sup>6</sup>and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. <sup>7</sup> And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup>but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!' <sup>13</sup> So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued\* the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup>But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. <sup>15</sup>Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. <sup>16</sup>But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup>Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Then the dragon\* took his stand on the sand of the seashore.

eschatological. Mary's assumption is not the final stage of her life, but the rendering of its eternity, its final revelation. Thus it is also the mystery of the Church in which is received the assurance of our own destiny.

The final biblical reference to Mary's life occurs in Acts 1:14.<sup>57</sup> There is no biblical reference to her death so her assumption is based on tradition which originated in the fourth century and became more concrete by the sixth century with the feast of Mary's Dormition. By the tenth century the tradition had become unanimous. The liturgical texts concerning Mary's Dormition express three distinct features: the participation of both body and soul in Christ's resurrection, Mary's unique relationship to Jesus as virginal mother, and Mary's intercession for humanity. The definition of the Assumption occurred largely, and logically, as a result of *Ineffabilis Deus*. Extensive consultation, through the encyclical *Deiparae Virginis* in 1946, secured almost total consensus within the Catholic Church. Neuner presents the basis for the belief as biblical

‘[Thus] it is biblical teaching that those who are united with Jesus Christ in their life and work are sure to share also in his glory. The same Bible presents Mary linked to Jesus in a unique manner, not only giving him his earthly life but also sharing in his saving mission. So she is with him also in his resurrection. It is right, therefore, to say that the faith in Mary's assumption has a basis in the Bible.’<sup>58</sup>

In addition this, of all dogmas, is seen as having weighty traditional support in the form of churches, and religious communities which are dedicated to the assumption, numerous works of art as well as in devotions to the virgin.

The text of *Munificentissimus Deus* is non-committal on the subject of Mary's death, possibly to accommodate theological differences regarding her exemption from death as a result of her sinlessness or the fact of her human suffering having been completed. What is crucially implied is the fact of bodily resurrection, and of whether such resurrection is a privilege. These touch the basis of Christian theology.

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<sup>56</sup> “And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’”

<sup>57</sup> ‘All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers’

<sup>58</sup> Josef Neuner, *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*, 101.

Traditional understandings of eschatology, based on Platonic dualism, separate the material body and the spiritual soul at death and re-unite them in resurrection. Biblical understanding sees death as the destruction of the whole person and resurrection as ultimate fulfilment from God. So this dogma is the final assertion ‘that anthropology leads to eschatology, and that a unifying and holistic anthropology unveils new and hope-inspiring horizons for the final destiny of human beings whom God so loves.’<sup>59</sup> In Mary is the realisation in history of the journey towards God. The journey undertaken in hope is fulfilled in Mary. Mary exists both within history and beyond it. She is the earliest member of the Church, as well as its destination. Mary’s assumption locates eschatology in history and offers a relationship of hope to all people. She is the human, and also the feminine, face of the church. She rescues women – in their bodies - from the Judaeo-Christian shame and offers hope within that same bodiliness. Gebara maintains that this rescued Mary offers hope to women in her relationship with Christ, but suggests that her assumption is so elevated as to render her less accessible to the poor and dispossessed.<sup>60</sup>

I find it difficult to concur with this. The existence of a beacon of hope in a troubled life is just that. The fact of its relationship to Christ, its conception, its holiness and its assumption, only reinforces its availability to women. Mary’s experience in history: her poverty, her giving birth in a stable, her humiliation, her suffering at the crucifixion is what makes her accessible to the poor. Her Assumption exalts her, and offers hope and solidarity to those poor women who have found her.

The question of whether or not the Assumption was a privilege is imperative as it encompasses the question of whether resurrection takes place at the time of individual death, or at the end of history. Mary’s Assumption must be seen as a privilege and as immediate or she would join the rest of humanity in waiting for the end of time to be saved, and people in history would have to do without the benefit of her assumption. Ratzinger disagrees with the contemporary notion that all human resurrection occurs at the moment of death. He supports the Old Testament notion that life is not ended while the effects of that life are still alive. Realisation of a human existence is

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<sup>59</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 118.

<sup>60</sup> Gebara and Bingemer. *Mary Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 120.

only possible when all of creation history is fulfilled. ‘The fulfilment of the entire history affects each individual; it is realised in the universal judgement which places the individual into the totality and gives him his (sic) proper place.’<sup>61</sup> Ratzinger does not account for Mary’s immediate assumption.

It is significant that the time of assumption is not stated in *Munificentissimus Deus*. Dogmatically, it is irrelevant. What is significant is that her *fiat* has guaranteed the resurrection of all. The matter of the time of resurrection is insoluble if one persists in the notion of measured time. The eternal present of the Kingdom renders the question unnecessary, and allows us to enjoy the benefits of the assumption without losing the significance of our own lives in history.

### **3 Some Feminist Responses to Marian Dogma**

Feminist theologians have been responsible for recent re-reading of Marian dogmas. Their work has arisen partly out of liberation theology but also in response to the needs of women for whom the patriarchy of the church has been unsettling. In addition, modern scientific developments have created a paradigm shift in some perceptions. The field of evolution has relativised the notion of immutability, and while the latter is not a prerequisite for the understanding of dogma it has nevertheless been a feature of much theological, and mariological, understanding.

Feminist interpretations of Marian dogma in the 70’s tried to establish an independent status for Mary. It was felt that her status needed to be more autonomous, and not defined by her relationship to Jesus. Early feminist criticism of Mariology originated with Mary Daly in 1973 and centred on the notion of Mary as a domesticated goddess. Goddesses of pre-Christian times were autonomous and exploited men for their own agenda. Psychologists, inter alia Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung, noted that the image of Mary was a reconstruction of the mythical Goddess Diana. Christian theology was seen by early feminists as enslaving the ancient goddesses and using them in the service of an androcentric Christian religion. Donal Flanagan analyses early feminist perceptions of Mariology as ‘token feminism at the heart of a fundamentally patriarchal,

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<sup>61</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Exchatologies, Tod und Eewiges Leben*, in “Kleine Katholische Dogmatik”, 1977, quoted in J. Neuner *Mary – Mother of the Saviour*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004, p 108.

anti-feminist religion, Christianity...the doctrine of the tamed feminine, the doctrine which affirms as much about the creativity and power of woman as a male-dominated patriarchal religion can allow itself'. Flanagan continues that 'the historical shaping of Mariology took place in a male-conditioned mould, in a male-oriented thought-world. The figure of Mary in the tradition took on certain symbolic accretions. She came to express the male idea of what women should be'.<sup>62</sup>

Such an interpretation now has little credibility. Women have always been represented in religions, and Mary's being female does not necessarily imply her derivation from pre-Christian goddesses. Moreover, Mary's role is not deistic nor power seeking. The essence of Mary is her humanity, her youth and her simplicity. She is not autonomous. Her role in salvation is entirely relational. To lobby for autonomy for Mary would be to lose the crucial relational aspect of Christianity.

Christianity is essentially relational, albeit the relationship is freely chosen. Autonomy implies independence and self determination, both of which contradict the intense spiritual aspects of relationship with God. Autonomy is a term that is frequently equated with liberation, though the two are not similar. Radical freedom is the purpose of relationship with God. Autonomy precludes this relationship, and hence limits freedom.

Nevertheless, Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Letter *Marialis Cultus* , acknowledged that contemporary people, particularly women, feel alienated from Mary because traditional piety understands her as a 'timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others' and suggested that Marian devotion should also be anthropological, and resonate with modern realities. In the same Apostolic Letter he reveals 'she was a woman who did not hesitate to

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<sup>62</sup> Donal Flanagan, "An Ecumenical Breakthrough – Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ," *Doctrine and Life* 55 (2005): 20-27.

proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of the world from their privileged positions'.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of Mary's virginity, feminist analyses of virginity tend to de-emphasise the literal aspect of virginity and understand it instead as a committed dedication to her task. This is hardly revisionist. In this sense, the feminist grasp is entirely within the understanding of existing Marian dogma. It is not Mary's virginity that is emancipatory, but her relationship with God.

The *Theotokos* is less discussed among feminist scholars. The motherhood of God is the oldest dogma and consequently a challenge to it is unlikely to be taken seriously. Apart from this, it is the title that elevates Mary, and all women, to a realm far beyond any claimed for or by them in any other religion. It is also the Marian dogma that most insists upon the relational aspect of Mary's *fiat*.

Motherhood per se has a mixed reception among feminist thinkers. In some circles it is seen as incompatible with autonomy, and such a critique would be incompatible with Catholic dogma. However, the unique nature of the *Theotokos* puts Mary's motherhood beyond criticism of this nature.

The Immaculate Conception is more acceptable to feminist theologians as it is a negation of the female sin that had come to be associated with Eve. It can also be read as a rejection of patriarchy. The sinless Mary's *fiat* occurs independently of men and has come to be interpreted as a metaphor for women creating themselves. Mary and the Holy Spirit are the medium of salvation.

Not all voices are unanimous here. The Immaculate Conception puts Mary on a pedestal and creates of her a model which is impossible to achieve. It is felt that it leaves women caught between Eve and Mary, and neither is realistic. This is true, but it is also the point of the dogma. Mary is a model, not only for women, but for the Church as well. Models by their nature are unattainable. It is not only women who have unattainable models. The model of Jesus for

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<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 133.



humanity - men and women - is similarly idealistic, but remains the ideal for which to strive. In addition, Mary's qualities are not intended as a model for women only, but for all humankind. However, the essence of the early feminist argument remains valid. Both Daly and de Beauvoir underscore that one does not arrive in the world as a woman, one *becomes* a woman.<sup>64</sup> In this evolutionary understanding of creation can no longer be understood the fixedness of human nature or human gender. Similarly our view of an immutable God who grounds an immutable order has been revised. Hence the notion of a fixed model of perfection becomes disconcerting, and with it any pre-suppositions regarding an ideal society or an ideal church in the world. However, this does not render the dogma invalid, it merely insists on a more profound sacramental understanding of the relationship of humanity and truth as expounded in the dogmas. Some positive outcomes of feminist revisionist analyses have been that the traditional gender-based language and symbolism have been highlighted and re-examined. It has helped modern believers to grasp the importance of Mary's qualities for all people. Receptivity, obedience and discipleship are required of all. Feminist theologians have helped to highlight the 'feminine' qualities that are fundamental to relationship with God. The servanthood of Jesus is testimony to this, too.

One of the more significant features of feminist Marian understanding is its emphasis on the feminine identity of the church. Although the church is considered in the feminine, its structures in the Catholic Church are patriarchal. While the gospel has always been egalitarian, and the faith liberating, the Church has frequently suffered the lack of a feminine face. The renewed emphasis on the personhood of Mary and of her association with the poor has offered an added dimension for many believers, both men and women.

#### **4 Conclusion**

All four Marian dogmas have both scriptural and traditional foundations. Various facets of each dogma have been carefully considered and the conclusion reached that Marian dogma is informed by Christology, exists to serve Christ and to give hope to humanity. The dogmas

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<sup>64</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Bk. 2, Pt. 4. (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 267.

address and resolve the eschatological issue of assumption for all in Christ. Marian dogmas are therefore deeply Christological, as, at every point Mary's life coincides with, and is dependent upon, Christ.

Not all believers have accepted these dogmas or the doctrines that surround them. The Reformed tradition challenges them on numerous issues. The grounds of these challenges will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: MARIOLOGY AND ECUMENISM

### 1 Introduction

Mariology is a perennial issue in discussions between Roman Catholic and other Christians. There exist already some areas of agreement concerning the role of Mary in the economy of salvation, and the Marian feasts are honoured to varying degrees in the Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and some Reformed traditions. This is partly a result of post modern feminist promptings, and the realisation that the church has, throughout large parts of its history, been expressed in exclusively masculine terms. This is true especially in Protestant assemblies which have previously almost ignored Mary.

Having said this, a breach still exists between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches on the one hand and other Christian denominations on the other, but it has been the Roman Catholic church that has been more active than others in the attempt to uncover some areas of common understanding. This in itself is significant as Mariology is more problematic for Protestants than it is for Catholics in ecumenical circles. Catholic theologians regard Mariology as less significant in ecumenism than the more basic issues of theology such as the nature of God, the Trinity, Christ, and the sacraments. On the other hand Protestant theologians are more preoccupied with Mariology because, in the Marian dogmas, they see the confluence of many of these important issues. Mariology and its development are informative of the respective positions of Catholic and Protestant theology.

Max Thurian claims

...doctrine and veneration of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church create[s] extreme difficulties for ecumenical thought ... One can see no way through the problem posed by Mariology and the veneration of the Blessed Virgin in the

Church. ... Catholic Mariology poses the most agonizing problem for ecumenical thought.<sup>1</sup>

Jean Daniélou writes similarly

‘Devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the mediation of Mary are strongly contested by Protestants, and there is no aspect of Christianity which they approach with more cautious reserve...Just as the merits attributed to the supernaturalised human acts, in their opinion, diminish the completeness of divine causality, they believe that the efficacy which we recognise in the merits of the blessed Virgin somehow detracts from the mediation of Jesus Christ. I think that this ... is the heart of the problem, and is the point where the Protestant mind and the Catholic mind are most opposed.’<sup>2</sup>

The basic dogmatic differences which split the Church in the Reformation are reflected in Mariology. Ironically the ecumenical issues in Mariology do not concern Mary, except by implication. What they do concern are the basic principles of Catholic theology: grace and justification, scripture, revelation and tradition, papal infallibility, and the human and divine natures of Christ. These are the basic issues of the Reformation.

O’Meara confirms this and states ‘...the theology of Mary assumes an existential importance in the dialogue far beyond its position in the total scheme of revelation and theology.’<sup>3</sup> Vatican II insists that ‘the church has endorsed many forms of piety towards the Mother of God, provided that they were within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine’<sup>4</sup> yet avoids elaboration on what it considers ‘sound and orthodox doctrine’. The problem here, for Protestants, is that Marian devotions and doctrines are largely traditional as opposed to scriptural, and are seen as threatening to the unique place of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Thomas O’Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Bosc, Jean Guitton and Jean Daniélou, *The Catholic Protestant Dialogue* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1960), 124-5.

<sup>3</sup> O’Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> W.M. Abbott and G. Chapman, eds., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 94.

## 2 Protestant Objections to Catholic Marian Doctrine

Two of these Marian doctrines have comparatively recently been elevated to dogma, that of the Immaculate Conception in *Ineffable Deus* (1853) and that of the Assumption in *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950). While they had been widely believed for a long time, their new dogmatic status in the Roman Catholic Church has been seen by some Protestants as a hindrance to ecumenism.

Although the Immaculate Conception found favour with Luther himself, other Protestants, Calvin for example, objected on the grounds of the doctrine of Original Sin. The Immaculate Conception is seen by Protestants as not only absent from the scriptures, but contrary to New Testament teaching.<sup>5</sup> While Protestants agree with Catholics on prevenient grace they see no reason to link this with a sinless conception when such a link separates Mary from solidarity with the world of forgiven sinners.

The stumbling block with these two crucial dogmas, however, is not Mary, but papal infallibility. While the teaching of Vatican II is tolerable to many Protestants, acceptance of the doctrines is prevented by their rejection of papal infallibility. The Group des Dombes pleads for tolerance from Catholics on the grounds that these two dogmas are post Reformation dogmas and did not form part of the faith at the time of the split, and were not supported at that time by notable theologians. The Protestant suggestion by the Group des Dombes<sup>6</sup> therefore, is to respect the difference and not to allow the dogmas to prevent ecumenical progress as, in the final analysis, they do not subvert the scriptures. Such a stance is not without precedence. Joseph Cardinal

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<sup>5</sup> Jared Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," *Gregorianum* 81 (2000): 45.

<sup>6</sup> The Group des Dombes Group is a gathering of 20 Roman-Catholic and 20 Protestant theologians that has met regularly since 1937 in a small monastery near Lyon, France. It was founded by Paul Couturier (1881-1953), a French priest who worked in ecumenical circles. Its intention is a spiritual approach to ecumenism, and a call to conversion to the churches on both sides. Therefore Couturier established the Week of Prayer for Church Unity. The "Groupe des Dombes" has published several monographs, most notable for this study is *Mary in the plan of God and the Communion of Saints (Marie dans le Dessein de Dieu de la Communion des Saints)* by Alain Blancy and Maurice Jourjon. Published first in French in 1997, it was published in English in 2002 in New York, by Paulist Press. The Group des Dombes stance is that although the Virgin Mary was not the cause of the separation between the churches in the West, she has unfortunately become the sign of such separation. The Group des Dombes work concludes that, "at the end of our historical, biblical and doctrinal study, we do not find any irreducible incompatibilities, despite some real theological and practical divergences. Finally, our entire work has shown that nothing about Mary allows her to be made the symbol of what separates us."

Ratzinger himself proposed, in 1985, that a union of Orthodox and Catholic churches need not depend on acceptance of post schism dogma.<sup>7</sup>

This introduces the current most significant issue in Marian ecumenism. Is it possible for the Magisterium to accept the reservations of the Reformed churches regarding certain doctrines? Can it allow a measure of freedom in this area in view of more basic unity regarding Christ's salvation and in view of the Protestant absence from consultation in the assessing of the *sensus fidelium*? Is ecclesial communion feasible where one church retains the position it took prior to the definition of the other while still agreeing to respect the subsequent dogma? The question remains open. While ecumenical commissions might recommend this stance, public opinion might be more hesitant.

## 2.1 The Immaculate Conception

In spite of continuing powerful opinion outside of the Catholic Church to the contrary, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated by Pius IX in 1854 in *Ineffabile Deus*.

‘We declare ...that the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception was, by the unique grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the saviour of the human race, preserved intact from all stain of original sin.’<sup>8</sup>

Although the doctrine is founded in tradition rather than scripture, there are, nonetheless, a number of biblical texts which are believed to support it. These, Gen 3:15, Lk1:42 and Lk1:28, were given by Pius IX as reasons for the dogma having been revealed.

Because of the relatively few scriptural texts in its favour, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception has had a troubled record, not only for Protestants, but for notable Catholics as well. It was rejected by Thomas Aquinas largely on the grounds that it isolates Mary from the need for

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 48.

<sup>8</sup> Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1957), 1641.

salvation by Christ.<sup>9</sup> It was only when the notion of preservative redemption was introduced that the dogma found more favour.

The Eastern Orthodox Church also rejected the dogma, in spite of their long veneration of the Virgin. For them it is important that Mary remain fully human and her purity an exception rather than a privilege. It is her purity, combined with her personal liberty, which makes her venerable in this tradition.

The important truths that are contained in this declaration are, firstly, that Mary was free from sin from the beginning of her existence *in utero*, though the specific point at which that occurs is not defined, though it is widely accepted as the first moment of her conception. Secondly, the phrase ‘by a *singular* grace and privilege’ designates that she is the only human person (Jesus is a divine person) who has been immaculately conceived. Thirdly, and significantly, the phrase ‘in view of the merits of Jesus Christ’ does not exempt her from redemption.<sup>10</sup> These three truths are crucial. Their implication is that Catholic believers attribute the birth of Christ to a combination of God’s will *and* the free will of Mary, though her free acceptance of the role of Mother of God does not actually depend on her immaculate conception. Protestant believers see it as entirely the work of God. It must always be borne in mind that *Ineffable Deus* does not exist alone. It must be seen alongside other Catholic dogmas concerning incarnation, grace and redemption. This is true of all dogmas but particularly so where the dogma is meagrely supported by scripture. This doctrine is a logical necessity of other, more fundamental, doctrines, namely the *Theotokos*. Theologically, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is essential if Mary is predestined to carry the title of *Theotokos* because of the dignity afforded to Jesus through the title.

Not only the substance, but also the language of the statement remain disturbing to many Protestants, and strike other chords which are related to other doctrines. For example, in

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<sup>9</sup> St Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, ed., Timothy McDermott. (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1989), 513.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 508.

Macquarrie's opinion, the use in the declaration of the terms 'stain' and 'preserved' implies an inevitability regarding original sin that perhaps rests uneasily in Protestant belief. The prominence in the document of original sin is as disquieting to Protestants as the dogma itself.<sup>11</sup> Macquarrie points out that the term 'stain' implies an attitude to sin that perhaps is not intended in the definition. He indicates that if sin is an alienation from God, and if original sin is that communal alienation of humankind from God and the resultant distortion of society, then the term 'stain' is not apposite. 'Stain' has the implication of physical imperfection rather than spiritual estrangement. This term is thus burdened by implications which are unrelated to the doctrine as expressed in *Ineffable Deus*.

A life 'preserved' from this alienation, implies a life that is not distorted or deformed by alienation in the way that all of humanity's is. This accords Mary a unique relationship with God that is a model for humanity. The difference is subtle but important. It is not only a more personal view of Mary, but a more positive understanding of the truth of the Immaculate Conception. Freedom from sin is closeness to God and to God's grace.

It would seem therefore, that a different approach to the personhood of Mary might be more acceptable to Protestants. This would be an approach that, while maintaining the centrality of the Marian dogma, uses terminology that is more affirming of Mary's uniqueness without refuting the centrality of God.

Relevant here might be the reflection that Macquarrie's observations limit themselves to the dogma as expressed in English. It might be a peculiarity of English semantics that render the meaning in the way that Macquarrie, and other Anglicans, perceive it. A fuller hermeneutic of the text in Latin and other languages into which it has been rendered might not support Macquarrie's reading.

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<sup>11</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 93.



Although the doctrine of Original Sin has been the focus of theologians over the ages, it has not completely expunged the notion of the original *righteousness* of humanity which has been created in God's image. Total corruption has never been a part of Christian belief, but a firmer emphasis on the essential rectitude of humanity would enable a broader understanding of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, in Macquarrie's opinion. So the negative implication of the preservation from original sin might well be seen as a re-institution of that divine grace which signifies the end of the alienation of the fall and the preparation for the incarnation.

This brings us to another very real concern of Protestants in the issue of Mariology: the danger of the amplification of the attributes of Mary to the extent that she becomes so imbued with Christ-like qualities as to make Christ redundant, or, in view of her special graces, to set her in opposition to Christ. This notion began to emerge during the Counter-Reformation and was an objection to the dogma's largely traditional foundation at the expense of scripturally based theology. Here, the *sensus fidelium*, of which the Catholic Church was so considerate, became instead a cause for concern and was viewed as giving undue credibility to mere superstition.

A careful reading of the official formulation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception makes it clear that this is not so. It declares that Mary's grace and privilege were hers 'in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race'. It is indisputable that the meaning of Mary is indivisible from, and informed by, the meaning of Christ.

However, and pivotally, Macquarrie reminds us that Mary's righteousness is also different in essence from that of Christ's. Mary's righteousness was essentially Jewish. She represented the old dispensation in her obedience to God. While Christ is also obedient to God, his righteousness is qualitatively different. It has a new intention: dynamic, creative and innovative, it points the way forward to an eschatological future that is no longer Jewish. This is why the truth of the Incarnation of Christ supersedes the Immaculate Conception of Mary.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, 95.

This point has been troubling to feminist thinkers over the years. Mary's righteousness is receptive and passive whereas Christ's is pro-active and creative. Mary represents Israel the bride, beloved of God, whereas Christ's righteousness goes beyond this and shares in the creativity of God. This view of Mary's righteousness has the unfortunate effect of setting the two as competitors in salvation history and such an understanding would be flawed in both Catholic and Protestant traditions.

## 2.2 The Assumption

Similarly, the dogma of the Assumption has been disquieting to Protestants and it is hoped that further ecumenical rapprochements will be similarly productive.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII pronounced as dogmatic, in *Munificentissimus Deus*, Mary's bodily assumption into heaven '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>13</sup>

The phrasing of this statement is such that it implies the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception, the Motherhood of God, and the perpetual Virginity, and demonstrates their indivisibility. In reality, the idiom of the statement demonstrates numerous other theological complexities as well, such as those dealing with eschatology and resurrection. Importantly, by using the phrase '...having completed the course of her earthy life...' allows for further exegesis about her death. In addition, '...was assumed...' precludes the possibility of any competition between her assumption and Christ's ascension. It also emphasises her essential humanness. She could not *ascend*, which would imply her own power, but had to 'be assumed;' the passive is intentional, to express her dependence. The phraseology of '...body and soul...' enforces the entire personhood of Mary and precludes a dualistic anthropology.

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<sup>13</sup> Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum*, 3903.

*Munificentissimus Deus* supports the traditional opinion that Mary underwent death in the Lord, ‘was probably buried near the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, and, in the likeness of her son’s resurrection, Mary’s body did not decompose after her death and burial, but she was gloriously assumed intact’.<sup>14</sup>

It seems clear, that in this statement, Pope Pius XII formalised the understanding that the new Eve, so heroic in the struggle against evil, be accorded a special place in the resurrection of Jesus, the new Adam. Again, the basis for this dogma is not biblical, but based in a *sensus fidelium* originating in the 5<sup>th</sup> century in the Eastern Church with the celebration of the Dormition, understood as Mary’s “falling asleep”, and recognised finally in *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950, thus expressing the widely held belief of the faithful in the resurrection of all humanity.

The Protestant objection to this dogma was immediate and forceful. Predictably, the primary criticism was based on the lack of a biblical foundation for the dogma. The other concern was that the elevation of Mary to a level parallel with Christ would remove her from her essential place in humankind and hence with her association with the poor and the oppressed. Another objection and one perhaps more deeply felt, addressed the infallibility of the Pope. The Protestant concern was that the Catholic doctrinal tradition was being eroded because, not only was the dogma unscriptural, but also because it did not represent the belief of all (including non-Catholics). This was less an attack on dogma as it was on papal infallibility, which had been under attack since its definition in 1870 and was seen as a severe threat to ecumenism. Although the Vatican believed the doctrine had addressed these issues, part of the problem was the perceived lack of consultation with believers *outside* of the Catholic Church. This fact has further enlarged the rift to the point of an ecumenical threat. A more consultative, educative approach might have lessened this somewhat. Interestingly however, when, in 1998 Pope John Paul II convened an ecumenical group of theologians to consider whether Mary as “Mediatrice of all graces” should be proclaimed infallibly, the consensus was against it.

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<sup>14</sup> Komonchak, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 70.

### 2.3 Mary's Perpetual Virginity

Mary's perpetual virginity is another doctrine dealt with by the Group des Dombes. Jesus' brothers, as presented in the gospels (Mk 3:31-32, Mt 12:46, Lk 18: 19, Jn 2:12, 7:3, 5:10), have been regarded as scriptural evidence against the perpetual virginity of Mary. The reformers have chosen to read the scriptures literally, and to treat the proclaimed virginity as literal rather than symbolic. The Group des Dombes' solution to this is to refer to the hierarchy of truths.<sup>15</sup> 'Since orthodox Protestant faith is clear on the Christological truth of the Divine Word being "conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary", can a suspension of faith in the mariological tenet of perpetual virginity be compatible with ecclesial communion?'<sup>16</sup> The Group suggests that it might, but recommends further exegesis, and increased respect for the tradition.

### 2.4 Mary as Intercessor

Mary as intercessor has long been a Catholic tradition. Despite its perceived lack of scriptural basis (although Mary's intercession at Cana<sup>17</sup> had the effect of changing the mind of Jesus), Trent deemed it 'good and useful'<sup>18</sup> and Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* 50, 5 calls it 'supremely fitting', but carefully distinguishes between worship of God and invocation of Mary (LG 66). Catholic doctrine does not attribute salvific power to Mary or the saints. It merely accords them an intercessory role 'in Christ' in the certain knowledge that all benefits derive from God alone. Despite this, the Reformed churches reject the invocation of the saints, regarding such practice as non-biblical, and as detracting from Christ, by replacing trust in him with trust in a human creature. While conciliation on this issue seems unlikely, the objection to Mary as intercessor need not impede ecumenism, since, while such prayers are encouraged in the Catholic Church, they are not obligatory. Both traditions praise God in communion with angels and saints, and the

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<sup>15</sup> This phrase refers to Vatican II's decree on Ecumenism, of 21 November 1964 'When comparing doctrines with one another they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith'. (U.R.11) In essence, the truths are all reducible to the twelve articles of the creeds.

<sup>16</sup> Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," 45.

<sup>17</sup> John 2:1-11

<sup>18</sup> Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," 49.

Catholics add to this their intercessory aid. Protestants find the latter a threat to the triune God but accede to veneration and imitation of Mary. The Group des Dombes finds hopeful the shared faith in God's grace and the mutual desire for salvation as Mary received it, but can offer no more concrete base for ecumenism in this question.<sup>19</sup>

These stated objections to ecumenism are also informative of the differences between the two traditions in terms of faith. Catholic piety seems to foster a more communitarian approach. Christ, in the Catholic mind, is always seen with disciples, and in a group, so worship of Christ, in the company of saints, does not appear foreign. The Reformed tradition, conversely, persistently holds to the more individualized relationship with Christ which places more weight on individual faith and sanctity. Future focus on this disparity, as well as amplified self criticism from both parties would contribute considerably to future accord.

## 2.5 Mary and the Communion of Saints

More recent ecumenical dialogues,<sup>20</sup> while focussing on a broad range of ecumenical issues, have also considered Mary and the Communion of Saints. In spite of notable agreements, namely on the question of justification, the Lutheran Catholic dialogue foundered on the question of figures other than Christ for their work in salvation. The Group des Dombes' exhaustive study highlights the issue of Mary's co-operation with God. To Protestants this implies parity with God in the work of salvation. Karl Barth, inter alia, objected vehemently to this elevation of a human creature into a co-redemptive role. Such an elevation leads reformed theology to question whether God depends on Mary, or whether Mary's *fiat* depends on God's grace. The Catholic response to this is that Mary is *not* the co-redeemer, or even the 'mediatrix of all graces' in spite of some pressure for this proclamation in Catholic circles. The Catholic intention in reference to

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<sup>19</sup> Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," 53.

<sup>20</sup> The Lutheran/Catholic dialogue in the United States (1983-1990) produced a study entitled *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary* which was published as *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue, VIII* edited by G Anderson, J F Stafford, and J A Burgess and published by Augsburg Press in 1992. Then in 1997 and 1998 the Group des Dombes produced *Marie Dans le Dessein de Dieu de la Communion des Saints* published by Bayard and Centurion in 1999. There is also the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue in Europe which produced the "Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith" in 1999.

Mary as co-redeemer reflects rather Christ's empowering of *all* people to serve freely in the economy of salvation. So it would seem that Protestant aversion to human mediation rests on a faulty Christology. The Catholic response is that Mary's, and all human, mediation is derived from Christ. Similarly, Mary's co-operation is made possible by the prevenient grace of Christ. Even Mary's sinlessness is a unique redemption achieved by Christ.<sup>21</sup> In spite of these differences, the Group des Dombes offers a compromise understanding of the term *co-operation* that reconciles Protestant and Catholic opinions. The co-operation of Mary is to be understood as the initiative of God, the kenosis of the Son, and the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit which together form faith. Such an understanding of mediation would be able to support a mutual appreciation of Mary's co-operation.

### **3 Theological Bases for the Protestant Objections to Catholic Mariology**

#### **3.1 The Lack of Scriptural Foundation**

The *sola scriptura* basis of Reformed theology and the acceptance of tradition in revelation by Catholic theology are difficult to reconcile. The chief, and seemingly insoluble, objection is the paucity of scriptural basis for the Marian Dogmas. In addition to this lack is the fact that the gospel texts are less favourable to Mary than Catholic dogma would have us believe. The Biblical texts on their own do not support the Mariology that the Catholic Church has developed. The nature of revelation in the Catholic theological mind is essentially different from the Protestant and to reject the Catholic Marian dogmas as heresy is to misunderstand this fact. To expect an explanation of the dogmas in scriptural terms is equally mistaken. Catholic theology, according to O'Meara, includes an understanding of the means of transmission of revelation, as well as an appreciation of the compliance to the Magisterium. The absence of such an understanding is the obstacle to ecumenism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," 43

<sup>22</sup> O'Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 28.

Revelation, in Catholic terms, is dynamic and on-going.<sup>23</sup> It is not the result of one distinctive event which has become codified in the scriptures. The work of the Holy Spirit is the prime mover in revelation and cannot be limited to historic events. To attempt an understanding of Mariology without this is to trivialise it. Reliance on scripture alone for Marian understanding results in contradiction. The gospels offer Catholics a beginning for Mary, but lack the eschatological dimension of subsequent revelation that is such an important feature of Mariology.

### 3.2 Nature and Grace

The essence of Catholic Mariology is an understanding of grace. It is also, unfortunately, the source of ecumenical discrepancy. Not only is grace manifest in Mary, but the theology of Mary is the crystallisation of the Catholic concept of grace: the elevation of the human to the perfection of life in God. Problematic here is the Protestant concept of grace. Without a dogmatic Protestant definition of grace, we are left with a number of notions, not all of them in complete agreement. Nevertheless, Protestant notions dwell on the activity of God, on what has been done *for* humanity, on the act by means of which humanity is redeemed. It is closely associated with justification. O'Meara explains that the Protestant notion of grace is of an extrinsic attitude of God, not an intrinsic share in God's life.<sup>24</sup>

For this reason the expression 'full of grace' expresses to the Protestant God's gift to Mary, not Mary's relationship with God. Grace is God's work alone. Humanity's efforts are irrelevant. But more significant still is the concept of what is *done* with the grace. O'Meara explains that Protestants hold that grace does little to change the person. It is a guarantee of forgiveness and a hope of heaven. It initiates a new relationship with Christ but it does not change the behaviour of the Protestant. Conversely, the Catholic understanding is that grace is intrinsic to humanity.<sup>25</sup> It

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<sup>23</sup> Vatican II stressed in *Dei Verbum*, "It is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws its certainty about everything that has been revealed. Therefore both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence" (DV 9).

<sup>24</sup> O'Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> This would be Rahner's position (the "supernatural existential") but not that of Aquinas who understood grace as an entirely supernatural gift of God.

represents the image of God in persons as well as the gift of God. It is dynamic as it initiates a new way of life and is not merely a pardon for sins. It offers a new dimension to life, an extraordinary depth. In this sense Mary's grace was fundamentally involved in her immaculate conception, as it was in her sinlessness, her merit and her intercession. This is why the Protestant view does not place Mary within the economy of salvation. Grace is granted to humanity in spite of their sins, whereas Roman Catholics see it as a new experience which enables Christ-like activity, freely chosen. Such an interpretation is foreign in Protestant thinking as it assumes too much trust in the world and in humanity and hence minimises eschatology at the expense of the present. For Protestants, Mary is human and therefore sinful. Her grace does not change that, so she cannot be a part of the economy of salvation. For Protestants, revelation concerns Christ and the Kingdom, not the newness of life that is wrought in humankind.<sup>26</sup>

To this extent Catholicism is less concerned with eschatology than the Protestant churches are. The Catholic, empowered by the incarnation and the resurrection, is to a large extent, answerable for personal salvation. While Christ has secured the final victory, the living battle still has to be fought but the means with which to wage the battle offer cause for optimism. Protestant optimism lies less in the battle but more in the certainty of salvation. This divergence is fundamental and the reason for ecumenical pessimism in some circles.

However it should not be seen that the Catholic Church is unconcerned with salvation. For the Catholic, the kingdom of God begins in the present and on earth. It has a time and a place in history. It is possible to begin a new and divine life here and now. It exists in the Church, and, as symbol of the Church, Mary's assumption is fundamental to this theology.

Karl Barth sees such a notion as heresy. For him Catholic Mariology is the central heresy from which originate all others. For Barth, Mary is essentially human. She is 'the principle, type and essence of the human creature co-operating servant like in its own redemption on the basis of

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<sup>26</sup> O'Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 31.



prevenient grace.’<sup>27</sup> Her *fiat* is more remarkable for this. While the Protestant understanding credits her act to her creation and her grace, it objects to the dynamic interaction of this grace. Skydsgaard encapsulates it.

At the basis of Roman Catholic thinking we find a certain conception of the relation between God and man (sic), between grace and nature, the notion of co-operation, a most difficult word which has raised tremendous problems in the church. The reality contained in this word is the ... [crucial] point in Roman Catholic theology, which influences the understanding of many dogmatic items, e.g. in Mariology: co-operation in the incarnation between God and the Virgin Mary; co-operation in the work of salvation between Christ and his mother. We may cautiously call this notion the hermeneutical principle of a genuine understanding of Roman Catholic dogmatics.<sup>28</sup>

It seems that the two models of Mary are irreconcilable: on the one hand the sinful woman who has been forgiven by God, on the other, the new, perfected creature and model for humanity.

### 3.3 Papal Inerrancy

Not surprisingly, it is Karl Barth who is most articulate in this area as well. He sees a logical connection between *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854 and the proclamation of Papal Infallibility in 1870. His perspective is that a church that would venerate a human being would have to defend itself from criticism by asserting its infallibility. He sees the subsequent Marian dogma, *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950 as continuing in this tradition. Protestant theologians see these two dogmas not only as unsupported by scripture, but as a declaration of a new Christianity. The Magisterium is criticised for using its authority too much in the creation of the first of these dogmas, the Immaculate Conception, and too little in its inability to resist the clamour for the

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<sup>27</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics. V.12* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956), 143-146.

<sup>28</sup> Skydsgaard (1962) 15, quoted in O’Meara, *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology*, 32.

second, the Assumption. They are seen as the legitimation of naïve piety to the level of dogma by theologians, including a Pope, who ought to know better.<sup>29</sup>

It is held that the recent – post Reformation – doctrines of Mary are a direct result of the proclamation of Papal Infallibility, and this fact is the basis of much criticism of the dogmas. It is frequently difficult to distinguish between criticisms of the Marian dogmas, and criticisms of the papacy. This, naturally, has ecclesial and ecumenical implications as well.

Marian dialogue has assumed great ecumenical importance in the last two centuries. One of the prime reasons for this is the fact that much of Marian dogma has occurred in a divided church. For this reason, any theological pronouncement will be suspect, but particularly one which impinges so forcefully on the basis of all theology. A biased theology, such as this is perceived to be by Protestants, implies an unfortunate deficiency.

Also, the fact of these two Marian dogmas being pronounced without ecumenical consultation has been damaging to ecumenism. The timing of each dogma is also seen as threatening. The late nineteenth century was home to rampant nationalism and growing liberalism, and the 1950's saw a growth in the ecumenical movement. This lack of concern for secular thought has been perceived as high-handed and insensitive. This is more the pity as the main issues in ecumenism, ecclesiology and Christology, are being compromised by the impasse in Mariology.

#### **4 Anglican Concerns in Mariology**

The Anglican theology of Mary sits uneasily in both the Catholic and the Reformed camps, and, until comparatively recently, there was minimal effort to reconcile any differences. In spite of seemingly incompatible differences, there exists an evangelical Marian theology which is trying to find points of reconciliation with Rome. Such pro-Marian initiatives do not have a large following, but are nevertheless important, and have the potential to initiate a transformation in lay opinions. Notable among such Anglican theologians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were John Henry

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<sup>29</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 143-146.

Newman (before he became a Roman Catholic) and E B Pusey whose stance has done much to enlighten believers regarding Mariology, an issue which had had limited exposure in the Anglican Church since post Elizabethan times.

Newman's intense Christology saw the Incarnation as the essential justification of all the Marian dogmas. For him, the *Theotokos* implied all her privileges. Her sinlessness was essential for that of Christ. The faith in Christ that was central to his life, inevitably sustained a Marian devotion that had to be expressed within certain limits within the Anglican Church of his day. Those limits he saw as being defined christologically as the devotion of Christ to his mother.<sup>30</sup>

Another such influential Anglican theologian is E.L. Mascall whose Mariology is Catholic in most respects although his authority is unapologetically ecumenical.

The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), formed in response to Vatican II, on March 24, 1967 by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey, had as its goal to analyse those disparities which divide Catholicism and Anglicanism and see if any sort of compromise could be reached. This produced a series of documents on such topics as the Eucharist (9/7/71), Christian ministry (12/13/73) and authority (1/20/77, 9/3/81) which were compiled together as *The Final Report*.<sup>31</sup> In 1974, in *Marialis Cultus*, Pope Paul VI observed that

Catholics are also united with Anglicans, whose classical theologians have already drawn attention to the sound scriptural basis for devotions to the Mother of our Lord, while those of the present day increasingly underline the importance of Mary's place in the Christian life. (#32)

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<sup>30</sup> Fr Nicholas, "John Henry Newman's Mariology: A Key to Unlocking John Paul II's Theology of the Body," in *The Virgin Mary and the Theology of the Body*, ed. Donald Calloway. (West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2005), 286-287.

<sup>31</sup> The first phase of ARCIC ran from 1970 to 1981 and produced four statements: Eucharist (1971), *Ministry and Ordination* (1973), *Authority and the Church I and II* (1976 and 1981). The second phase ran from 1983-2005 and issued five statements: *Salvation and the Church* (1986), *The Church as Communion* (1990), *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* (1993), *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III* (1998); *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (2004).

Subsequently, in 1981 *Authority in the Church II* also commended some consensus between the Churches, but underlined the major differences in the Catholic and Anglican Marian doctrine.

The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption raise a special problem for those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by the dogmas are sufficiently supported by scripture. For many Anglicans the teaching authority of the bishop of Rome, independent of a council, is not recommended by the fact that through it these Marian doctrines were proclaimed as dogmas binding on all the faithful. Anglicans would also ask whether, in any future union between our two Churches, they would be required to subscribe to such dogmatic statements. (#30)

Again, the issue is the lack of consultation of believers outside of the Catholic Church. In 1995 in his Encyclical on ecumenism Pope John Paul II insisted that Marian themes were ‘... in need of fuller study by all Christian traditions’. (#79)

Against this background it was decided, in 2002, by a special consultation of Anglican and Catholic bishops, to request ARCIC to study the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church, and this produced the *Seattle Statement* in 2004. Inevitably, its reception has been mixed, but it has nevertheless stimulated further dialogue. The purpose of the Commission was not to resolve doctrinal differences, but merely to produce a more complete statement of the Marian beliefs which are shared by Anglicans and Catholics, and to this degree it was successful. The fundamental question was ‘to what extent does Marian doctrine or devotion concerning Mary belong to a legitimate “reception” of the apostolic Tradition, in accordance with the Scriptures?’<sup>32</sup> In the end, the Commission produced ‘significant’ though not ‘substantial’ consensus.

The *Seattle Statement* deals with four areas.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Brendan Leahy, “The Achievements and Challenges of Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ,” *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008): 123.

<sup>33</sup> Leahy, “The Achievements and Challenges of Mary,” 123ff.

## 4.1 Scriptural Sources

The first of these, *Mary According to the Scriptures*, provides a logical starting point and immediately deals with the Anglican concern over the lack of scriptural base for the dogmas as required in Article VI of *The Thirty-nine Articles*. The *Seattle Statement* finds that ‘it is impossible to be faithful to Scripture without giving due attention to the person of Mary’ (MGH 77)<sup>34</sup> and identifies the scriptural issues in MGH 30. However, it offers no solution or even suggestion as to a resolution of these sticking points. Perhaps of more significance than these scriptural issues is the ‘ecumenical hermeneutic’ of the Commission which is particularly attentive to the desire for unity.

## 4.2 Mary in Tradition

Secondly, *Mary in the Christian Tradition* examines the common Anglican and Catholic traditions. Complete accord is found on those Marian issues that pertain to pre-Reformation theology, notable the *Theotokos*, but less accord is found in issues of Marian devotion, and how some of the medieval excesses of these contributed to the division. Articles 47-51 of MGH deals with more recent developments and emphasises both the Catholic re-reception of Marian doctrine since Vatican II, and the new Anglican prominence awarded to Mary in recent liturgical renewal.

## 4.3 Mary, Grace and Hope

Thirdly, *Mary within the Pattern of Grace and Hope* suggests a more creative Pauline approach to ecumenism as expressed in Rom 8:30. ‘...those whom God predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified’. This de-emphasis on the scriptures concerning Mary, and a new emphasis on ecumenical texts, are being seen as a breakthrough in some circles. Notable is the Jesuit Jared Wicks who sees it as attentive

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<sup>34</sup> Leahy, “The Achievements and Challenges of Mary,” 123.

to the analogy of faith in *Dei Verbum* 12.3. Others are less hopeful,<sup>35</sup> seeing it as a futile attempt to placate critics without achieving any meaningful reconciliation.

The *Seattle Statement* also proposes a retrospective angle on the economy of salvation, beginning with fulfilment in Christ and working back to the fall, rather than vice-versa. This would locate Mary more amenable to both groups. This proposal is not outlined in great detail, but might offer a more satisfying compromise if it were explored more fully.

The Commission ultimately affirms that the dogmas of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception are scriptural (MGH 60) ‘...can be said to be consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions’. This is not quite the breakthrough it would seem. While the Marian content of the dogmas are accepted, the Papal authority by which they were defined, is not. Nevertheless, the new ecumenical context remains promising.

#### **4.4 Mary and the Church**

Fourthly, *Mary in the life of the Church*, pertaining to Marian devotions, addresses the Anglican and Catholic views of Mary. The former continue to regard her as a model of response to God’s call, while the devotions of the latter feature her continuing role in the economy of salvation. Both traditions have recently seen new developments. Vatican II has influenced Marian devotion, while Anglican proposals to include Mary in Eucharistic prayers and to celebrate 15<sup>th</sup> August as a feast are radical changes and indicative of the ecumenical intentions on both their parts. These developments enabled the Commission to affirm that ‘...together we agree that in understanding Mary as the fullest example of the life of Grace, we are called to reflect on the lessons of her life recorded in Scripture and to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ’. (MGH 65)

Notwithstanding this, both agree that that Mary’s ministry occurs in the service of Christ and is to be understood thus in the Communion of Saints. Accordingly, MGH 75 states

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<sup>35</sup> Miller, Peter “The Futility of ARCIC: Chasing False Unity with a Faltering Sect,” *Seattle Catholic* 4(1) (2002):1.

‘Affirming together unambiguously Christ’s unique mediation, which bears fruit in the life of the Church, we do not consider the practice of asking Mary and the Saints to pray for us as communion dividing... We believe that there is no continuing theological reason for ecclesial division on these matters’.

The Seattle Statement is not without its detractors and poses several challenges. Leahy outlines these.<sup>36</sup> He points out that the re-reception of Mary after 450 years of divergence requires an attention to the Holy Spirit of ‘today’, and a new leap in faith so that Marian issues are not isolated, but seen as theological and anthropological as well.

A second challenge, he stresses, concerns the Trinitarian perspective. Mariology ought not to be perceived as a challenge to the Trinity, but rather as an example of its application. He insists that communion with God happens paradigmatically in Mary.

A third challenge concerns the re-discovery of the Church’s Marian Principle. Cardinal Kasper, among others, stresses that Marian divergence stems from a fundamentally different understanding of the Church.<sup>37</sup> Recent Popes have emphasised that the Marian dimension is even more basic than the Petrine dimension in the church, though the two are inextricably linked. It is in this area that future Mariology needs to focus.

Regrettably, though areas of commonality have been found, the Commission has suspended its activities. Pope John Paul II suspended official talks as the result of consecration as Bishop of a non-celibate homosexual man in the USA. This, as well as the continued ordination of women, including to the episcopate, is seen by Walter Kasper, *inter alia*, as antithetical to unity. In addition to this, divided factions within the Anglican Church, and perceptions of imminent schism have limited the Commission’s progress.

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<sup>36</sup> Leahy, “The Achievements and Challenges of Mary,” 28-134.

<sup>37</sup> Leahy, “The Achievements and Challenges of Mary,” 133.

In spite of this, whatever accord was, or might have been, achieved, its implications for Anglicans would have been limited. Whereas the Catholic Church has the authority, the hierarchy and the infrastructure to institute change, the Anglican Church does not. The Archbishop of Canterbury, while a significant figure, has no authority outside of his own diocese. There is simply no mechanism for instituting change, or indeed, even for effective communication. The Lambeth Conference is a discussion group, and has no authority to amend *The Thirty Nine Articles*. Indeed it does not have the authority to compel any diocese to ordain women, or to desist from ordaining non-celibate homosexual clergy. While this is seen as a strength in many quarters and certainly allows for frequent debate, discussion and interpretation, it limits the dissemination of information on important matters and, while effective in preventing schism, it compromises the unity of the Church,

## **5 A Way Forward – Mary as Disciple**

Interestingly, it is the feminist writers, notably Elizabeth Johnson, who posit a way forward. Her suggestion is to demystify Mary by returning her to the realm of history and situating her firmly in the Communion of Saints. She claims that the relative paucity of Mary in the scriptures has resulted in her becoming mythologized. She claims that while Christology is firmly grounded in scripture, Mariology's dearth of scriptural support exposes her to the vagaries of theological trends. Johnson believes that the symbolic Mary, while on the one hand, focussing the faith of Catholics, on the other it is what hinders Marian ecumenism. She supports Pannenburg's proposal of a view of Mary as the ideal disciple.<sup>38</sup>

Raymond Brown concurs, and believes that the starting point should be her location by both Luke, (at the annunciation), and John, (at the foot of the cross), as the ideal disciple. Brown's<sup>39</sup> stance is that the Church over the years has used the image of Mary to render accessible the ideal of Christian discipleship. In the Middle Ages she was the fair lady and symbol of chaste love;

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 96.

<sup>39</sup> Raymond Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 105.



during the Renaissance the tender mother of spiritual children. In the twentieth century she first appeared as part of the 'holy family' – now seen as the church's rebuttal of divorce, and during the seventies she became the symbol of the liberated woman. He articulates it as follows; 'One cannot historicize all these diverse and even contradictory pictures of Mary; but in having her assume these symbolic roles, the Church has been contemporizing the ideal of Christian discipleship. The Church has been diagnosing a way in which Christians of various times needed to hear the word of God and keep it.'<sup>40</sup>

The current proposal to relocate Marian emphasis on her discipleship would have the advantage of linking Mary with the faithful of all times, but more particularly, it would animate her into a personal, co-operative relationship with God rather than assuming the roles of handmaid, virgin and mother. While it is true that these roles have been elevated by the association with Mary, they have become problematic in recent times, and the focus of criticism by feminist thinkers. Renewed emphasis on Mary's discipleship would retain the advantages of the former and address the issues of the critics.

The link between Mariology and ecclesiology offers a fertile base for ecumenism. Mary, the figure and symbol of the Church, typifies redemption by the grace of Christ through faith alone. Rosemary Radford Ruether, in *Mary, Feminine Face of the Church*, argues that, as the feminine face of the church, Marian symbolism is implicitly critical of ecclesial androcentrism and demands a more participatory role for women in the Church.<sup>41</sup>

Like Macquarrie, Elizabeth Johnson argues that a large part of the ecumenical divide regarding Mary stems from the symbolic use of language. She uses Paul Ricoeur's definition of symbol as having dual intentionality - literal and metaphorical - and suggests a re-reading of the main Marian dogmas in this vein. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption interpreted in this way would not be seen as isolated privileges but as mysteries with implications for all of humanity. The beginning of her life, her Immaculate Conception, is marked by God's offer of

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<sup>40</sup> Raymond Brown, *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 107.

<sup>41</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary – The Feminine Face of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1979).

grace, and the end of her life, the Assumption, is marked by her symbolism of the Church as perfected through union with Christ. *Lumen Gentium* (68) expresses this as ‘a sign of hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God’<sup>42</sup> and that salvation for humankind is assured.

The symbol of Mary as disciple, while enjoying considerable support, has not found universal favour because of its lack of ability to accommodate sin. If Mary were the ideal of discipleship, and the symbol of the Church, there would need to be some reconciliation between the sinless Virgin and the sinning Church. In addition, the ‘new’ role of Mary as perfect disciple should not invalidate earlier traditions of Mary as ideal woman and mother, or of Mary the maternal reflection of God.<sup>43</sup>

Another criticism is that a completely symbolic Mary ignores to a large extent the historic Mary. Her alliance to the Church overshadows her essential Jewishness and to ignore this fact in favour of the symbolic compromise would be to diminish the Church’s commitment to the truth. It would also diminish the role of other significant women disciples such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and the Samaritan women in the scriptures, as well as the early church leaders Phoebe of Cenchreae, the apostle Junia of Rome and the missionary Prisca.<sup>44</sup>

Johnson also has reservations about the nature of symbols. She believes that symbols become distorted over time by historical interpretations, and that in the Church these “interpretations are largely patriarchal”.<sup>45</sup> While symbols have their uses, there is a danger of losing the essential Mary in this practice.

Another way forward offered by Johnson, among others, to the ecumenical movement is to place Mary within the Communion of Saints. This would mean that she is part of the communion of all holy people who have ever lived or who have yet to live. This situates Mariology in the third

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<sup>42</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 68 quoted in Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 99.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 100.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 100.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 100.

article of the Apostles' Creed which testifies to God and the Holy Spirit. Johnson proposes this as the ideal interpretation of Mary.

The paradigm of Mary as Spirit-filled friend of God and prophet within the circle of disciples, this grand company of Saints, living and dead, situates her within the basic Christian confession without distortion and with new potential to empower the praxis of liberating faith to the benefit of women's flourishing, even now. The primary angle of vision will be pneumatological, seeing Mary as a graced woman. She is embraced by and responsive to Spirit-Sophia, she is sister to all who partner with the Spirit in the struggle for the coming of the reign of God.<sup>46</sup>

Such a proposal is finding increasing favour in ecumenical circles.

So, while Protestant theologians see in Mariology the convergence of opposing dogmatic issues which limit ecumenism, this is not so for those Catholics concerned with ecumenical matters. Their concerns are more foundational and concern the Trinity, the nature of God and the sacraments. The Anglican position in Mariology is unstated in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and this fact has led to some uncertainty amongst Anglicans about their theology. Much has been made of the difference between the Mariology of Anglicans and that of Roman Catholics, and these differences become overt in the matter of veneration. However, the implications are wider than this and, besides curtailing ecumenical accord also impinges on other beliefs, most notable those concerning grace and eschatology.

The following chapter looks at those perceptions of Mary held by ordained Anglican women in the KwaZulu-Natal area of South Africa and attempts to elicit their Marian theology within the context of their personal spirituality and their locality and experience.

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<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 104.

## CHAPTER 5: ANGLICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE VIRGIN MARY

This chapter sets out to analyse in detail the content of the nine interviews in order to establish exactly where the subjects, as women, stand in relation to the influence of the Virgin Mary in their lives. This influence is not a consistent whole, but varies according to different areas in their lives. For example, I have found that some of the subjects relate to the Virgin in the context of childbirth and children, yet not in the context of daily spirituality.

Consequently, the analysis will be broken down into various categories which will enable conclusions to be reached about what areas of life, if any, the Virgin Mary has, or has had, any influence on the lives of the subjects. Thus a mass of disparate evidence can be put into a format which is more logical and easily comprehensible.

The subjects are all ordained women in the Anglican Church in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. All are South African, and are permanently resident in South Africa.

Subject number	Convert?	Age	Race	Year of ordination	Current work	Marriage status	Children	Previous occupation
1	no	50+	White	1993	Rector	Single	no	Lawyer
2	no	50+	White	2007	Assistant rector / journalist	Married	2	Journalist
3	no	50+	White	1993	Academic/ theologian	Married	no	Soc worker
4	Ex-Presb	70	Black	1999	Assistant rector	Married	3	Nurse
5	no	40+	White	2010	School chaplain	Married	2	Scientist
6	no	50+	White	1996	Rector	Married	2	Teacher
7	Ex-RC	40+	White	2004	Academic / community worker	Single	1	Academic
8	no	50+	Indian	1996	Rector/archdeacon	Single	1	Teacher
9	no	50+	Black	2002	Rector / canon / school chaplain	Single	2	Business

Their ages range from 40 to 70. Six of the women are white, two are black and one is Indian. Five are married (two of them to Anglican priests), four are single. Seven have children, one of whose child is adopted, and two do not. Four receive salaries from the Diocese of KwaZulu-Natal, five do not. Four are rectors of parishes, two are assistant rectors, two are academics and

one is a school chaplain. All of the subjects had other professions before their ordination. These professions include law, journalism, teaching, science, nursing, and academics. All except two of the subjects have been Anglican since birth. One converted from Presbyterianism at her marriage, and one converted from Roman Catholicism in order to be ordained. Neither conversion was prompted by dogma, though neither has problems with Anglican dogma. Subject no 4 converted from Presbyterianism at marriage, though, interestingly, all her children now worship in the Roman Catholic Church. Subject 7, the Roman Catholic convert, is happy with her conversion, as her work as a priest is pivotal in her life. She has never rejected Catholic dogma, though she has severe reservations about some Catholic practice, namely the refusal to ordain women, and the celibate priesthood. Her conversion was a necessary step to fulfil her vocation. However, she admits to still believing in Catholic dogma, and does not see this as problematic in any way. Subject no 6 was born and baptised Anglican, but spent several years worshipping elsewhere before returning to Anglicanism, and, together with her husband, being ordained.

## **1 Vocation**

The question of vocation is fundamental to ordination. Most of the subjects discussed their vocation at some length.

Subject no 2 said

My husband is an Anglican priest and I supported him, I worked at the Theological College in Grahamstown for two years and then the Anglican Church wasn't ordaining so I ... didn't bother to do studies which other wives did and then in the Johannesburg Diocese they voted to ordain women in 1989...and I was involved in parish work and eventually ...my husband said, I think you should explore a vocation. I said not on your life, one cleric in the family is enough. It was a gradual process. Then I started biblical studies at TEE and eventually was upgraded to go to a selection conference, they called it then, now they call it discernment, and was accepted for ordination and was deaconed, still kind of uncertain and certainly, you know, with one fulltime cleric in the family there was no way I could become fulltime as well, because the salary was too low.

I'm a journalist so I just carried on working as a journalist and gradually chipping away at my studies but then a lot of things just went on hold for many years because we couldn't have children, and we needed... fertility treatment but it's incredibly arduous, emotionally, physically, financially, and so I suspended my studies for several years and eventually fell pregnant, had twins at 42, and so everything was on hold for a long time so ... I was deaconed in 1994 and I was only priested in 2007, so we were long journey and I think the discernment of vocation came from others and I think that's the way it should be. I mean as a community we should be praying to have the gift, but it's taken me a long time to earn it and to feel confident in it. One of the most fulfilling things in my life is being a priest and having my children and they have the same sense of calling from God and being upfront and celebrating is just the most amazing sense for me of the presence of God and doing what I'm meant to be doing.

Subject no 3 was ordained in Cape Town in 1993, only a year after the first ordinations of women. She admits to having entered the training for priesthood in faith, without knowing whether ordination would ever be possible.

I was ordained in 1993. I was the second wave. so the first ordinations happened in the July and the September '92 and I was the next year and so the motion, the synod motion to, they had passed the ordination of women, happened in my second year at college so I went to college not knowing if this was really, if I would finish college and be able to be ordained so I went in faith that that was going to happen.

Subject no 4's vocation emerged largely from the community work in which she was already involved. She says,

I had a vocation that I didn't realise by then. I've always been a Hospice Woman Chair, in fact I was one of the members that started Edendale Hospice Association in 1984, ... so I was always involved in that type of ministry, because it involves nursing the terminally ill, it involved counselling, it involved dealing with family, it involved dealing with people's hardships and I found enough time to be involved in that, ... and one Bishop, actually from the Methodists, said to me '... don't you want

to take up ministry?' I said no not on your .....and he said 'Bishop is seeking'.

Subject no 5 had perhaps the most noteworthy vocation. She admits she took a long time to respond to her vocation. Her discernment has taken many years, and she has struggled at almost every point. Her enthusiasm for the priesthood was so great that she was willing even to marry a priest to achieve it by proxy, as it were. She says

I'd always wanted to marry a priest and I think that that was probably because that was the only way that I could have any form of priestly ministry.

Of her vocation she says:

... when I was in the struggle ... I was saying to God 'where is it that you want me to be? what denomination do you want me to be part of?' because he had been part of something so very different and I had what I call my 'calling in the hairdresser' experience which was sitting in the hairdresser one day and suddenly becoming intensely aware of the presence of God and I was wearing the plastic sheet that they put over me was white, it had this little white collar around it, and the weighted thing that they put around me was red and it was coming down both sides, and that's what we wear on ordination to the priesthood, and at that stage I was only aware of the fact that that was worn in three denominations being Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Anglican and so I took that as meaning that God was calling me to be in the Anglican Church as well as calling me to be a priest.

It was back in the early 90's and it wasn't, it wasn't in the sense of 'ooh I've been called by God' it was a sense of 'I really would love to be doing that but I don't know that I'm worthy to be doing that' but it wouldn't, it wouldn't go away and I ... was still studying – I was being a scientist and studying but also having these wonderful opportunities in ministry all the way around in the parish ... at St Martins in the Veld in Rosebank and our rector there was ... who is now Bishop of Johannesburg and he was just amazing at growing people.

I'm a very slow person and it's quite a long story in the sense that after the Sunday night after they had passed the ordination of women to the priesthood at Provincial Synod I'd been asked to preach my first sermon ever, and on the pretence that ... would be far too tired having come back from Provincial Synod to do that, and so I preached my first sermon and after that it went quite well and he said 'oh so do you think you have a vocation to the priesthood?' and I just ignored that and then preached about 6 weeks later and then got a phone call from him... I was a Lay Minister at that point and he said I need to see you and he never ...I wanted to be a priest and maybe that was what God wanted but it seemed so incredibly presumptuous and I'm really quite shy by nature and don't want to push myself forward.

And he - so when I went into his office he said to me 'so how's your work going?' I said well your first three questions are how's my work going, when am I going to finish and what am I going to do afterwards?', and he said to me 'yes I want to know the answer to the third one' and so he said, I said 'Well, science is not my first love' and he said 'Well what is?' and I said 'The Lord' so he said 'so do you have a vocation to the priesthood?' and I didn't want to commit myself on that so I said 'Why? Do you think so?' and he said 'Yes I do'... I spent about four years in the Fellowship of Vocation because I had now met the man that I would later marry and had subsequently discovered that within his family there were members who did not agree with women in the ministry.

Her struggles were not only with herself and her vocation, but with her husband as well.

... what triggered all the pain of my husband's previous experience [was] that lunatic fringe Pentecostalism, and so he couldn't cope with me being in ministry so ... soon after that I fell pregnant with our first child and actually had to withdraw from ministry to save my marriage and ... that was exceptionally painful and so I took off a year, and ... did a year's maternity leave and we sort of lived on one teacher's salary and some savings and towards the end of that time we were talking about where would I be going to and [my husband] talked about chaplaincy and when, when I was talking to the then new rector that we now have he said 'Oh



Bishop Bavin [school] needs a Chaplain' and as a throwaway comment I said I could probably teach biology and he phoned the rector there whose matric biology teacher had resigned two days previously and so ... they got two for the price of one. My husband could see me as a teacher; I could do some ministry and have a place to heal. This was the man who did not believe in the ordination of women to the priesthood and, and so there's blessings and curses in it. The blessing of it was that there was no pressure on me to be priested and so there was time for healing to happen so ...I was able to work through all these processes and all the stuff and come to a place where he could value me and say 'yes I'm very happy for you to be priested'.

Subject no 6 also entered into the priesthood via her husband, another Anglican priest. She had been involved in teaching, both at St Paul's and at St Bede's. She had attended classes with her husband who was in training, but she had withdrawn when she perceived reluctance on the part of fellow-trainees to the presence of a woman in the class.

... because it was all men and they didn't like the fact that there was a, there was a wife who was infringing on their territory and they didn't like the fact that I did well in the assignments and so there was some unhappiness. So eventually for [my husband's] sake I said 'Look I'll just withdraw from this'. So that was the start but I really got involved in the college life and I was, I've always been, you know, keen, and then after ... being in the Ministry for a few years we were invited to go to St Bede's College which was in Umtata, ... and I spent three years there as a lecturer, so I was trained. Again it was all men and I, so un-ordained and I hadn't even been able to explore my vocation at that point.

Her own vocation was held in abeyance for a number of years until her husband's vocation had been dealt with, even though she was considered sufficiently well informed to teach at the Institute.

Anyway so in a sense I got my training by training others. I didn't in fact do a Diploma in Theology even though I was teaching a Diploma in Theology!

I was teaching Old Testament, New Testament, Spirituality, Study Skills and Music! So it kept growing. You know, there were needs and so I kept growing and I got absolutely so passionate about it and, of course, in the process was exploring my vocation, but at that time, although women were being ordained Deacon, in that Diocese, I mean I would have had to go through the Diocese because we were living there ... did the Diocesan process and that Diocese, even now, I don't know if they ordain priests ... If they are it's quite recent ...

Yes so untrained, completely ignorant, except that I had a relationship with God, so I started there and I started reading and it was just that they had a good library there, it was so old, the books were old, but really quite comprehensive library so I just started to devour spiritual books and you know I was kind of one step ahead of the students and I just, you know, took them through the experience that I was going through; that was quite good and challenging for me. So that was my training really. That is how my vocation was realised.

But another delay occurred.

“ ... and later on, well for ten years really, I was, I had been challenged that I needed to consider ordination... and then in the process of exploring my vocation we had another baby. My big surprise, [name], who came nine years after ..., the next child, so suddenly we had another baby and so that delayed things a bit and so when it got to the point of finely accepting my vocation and being ordained the Bishop of Johannesburg, at that time was, ..., he didn't require me to do any more training after that. I mean he just looked at what I'd been doing and said 'you've got sufficient to be ordained.'

Subject no 7 struggled with her vocation. It required her to “ex-communicate” herself from the Catholic Church.

I left [the Church] because I was called to ministry and I struggled with that. I knew from when I was eleven, sitting as a child in St ... Church in Victory Park,... sitting at break knowing that I was called to be 'other'. I didn't quite know what that meant and the nuns saw the ministry and they tried to get me to be a nun but I'm very glad

... that I didn't, because being a mum has been wonderful. So I got to about the age of 28 and eventually gave up and literally said to God 'well I've made a mess of my life you might as well have it' and he really took me at my word, and at that point realised I had to do something because I could not follow a calling to ministry in the Catholic Church, and literally made the incredibly difficult choice as a Catholic to ex-communicate myself. I mean when you're a Catholic you're raised to believe that is the only way to salvation: that Protestants have lost the plot and they're all going to go to Hell - they're terribly misguided...

What I hear when I do go to mass with my family is that this is the only place where the real Eucharist happens this is the only way and when I went back to my Parish priest to get a certificate for my confirmation so that I could go forward for vocation as an Anglican Priest he gave, I didn't even confess that I was going into ministry I just said that I was now an Anglican, and he was devastated he nearly wept. He wanted to know who had failed me, was it the Church or was it my parents? And he went on about the apostolic succession and I was trying to explain that I didn't think that God minded too much about one church or another and for him this, well he had lost me ...

S.B: Did you ever test your vocation in the Catholic Church? Did you not present it to any, any priest and say 'what do I do with my calling?'

Subject No 7: No because, I mean, I knew the system well enough. You either washed and ironed the alter linen or you were allowed to do readings, depending on how conservative or progressive your priest was, or you, you went into some form of lay ministry or you became a nun and I, I knew there were no options for me.

S.B: And that wasn't going to work for you? You knew you wanted to be ordained?

Subject No 7: There was a moment where I had been deaconed and I had to decide whether I was to be a priest or not and because a lot of the work I do could be seen as diaconal, human rights activism, working with people, it could be seen as pastoral as opposed to the preaching and the teaching and that which is, is what the priest does. Now I preach and I'm not bad at it and I love doing the Eucharist but I didn't really know, at that point, whether that was going to figure as a big part of my life and I realised something - that I wanted to be a priest that walks to a different drummer, I

wanted to represent the Church in the world doing something that I felt is under represented in the Church, that the Catholic Church has lots of spaces for people in all sorts of different ministries and you can be a priest and work in activism or whatever and there's space for that but the Anglican tradition is very much focused around parish ministry. I would be an appalling parish priest, in fact, I did it for eight months and we'd sit in parish council and people were fussing about vases and flower arrangements and choirs and I wanted to say 'There are people out there who are dying! Get a grip!' I'd be a horrible parish priest so that's not my calling at all and I realised that there was value in standing up and being seen as not only a woman priest who was not mad, scary, feminist, strident, political, any of those things. I happen to be a woman but primarily I am a priest, and I didn't become a woman priest because it was my right I did it because I didn't have a choice. In the end because others pursued and God ran me to ground, and also because I felt in the sphere I work in where I often don't tell people I'm a priest at all I get on with working with people and I get on with doing the work and eventually they find out sooner or later that I'm a priest. So what if I've been a bit undercover. That speaks volumes about who God is and who his faithful people are, and it's witnessing the world and I realised I needed to be a priest in order to be that. To be a living salt and light in the world within my particular sphere. So that's why I made that choice.

Subject no 8's vocation was also gradual. She was a server, and then lay minister and worker in her parish for many years, while teaching. It was only when the two vocations began to clash and to exhaust her, that she realised a choice had to be made. As she admits, there 'was really only one choice'. However, she admits that this choice was prompted by the Bishop and her Parish Priest.

Subject no 9, conversely, describes her vocation as happening 'by default.' She does not recount a time when she 'knew' she was being called.

... has happened by default. I mean like my becoming Lay Minister for one. I was in the Diocese of Johannesburg and they had what was still is known as Angli Care Counsellors where people from the parishes trained by FAMSA and licensed by the Bishop to be named in this instance mainly just for counselling and so there came a

time when the Bishop of Johannesburg realised there were no black people in Angli Care. Bishop ... asked that Black Parishes send people to be trained as Angli Care Counsellors and there was all three people sent by my Rector, the Parish of ..... Soweto, and I don't think the Rector knew well enough what was happening because after we'd done the training that the Bishop was going to license us and both the Bishop's Secretary and the Rector obviously didn't know what was happening because when she actually prepared a license she made out an ordinary Lay Minister's License with chalice bearing and everything else a Lay Minister does ... and when the date was set a priest, the Rector actually, said to us, get your, buy yourselves cassocks and surpluses you're going to be made Lay Ministers; I hadn't bargained for this but anyway obediently did that and so after I assumed Lay Minister by default I was just meant to be licensed to counselling and so that's how I became Lay Minister in the Parish. But it didn't, it wasn't a problem because for a long time I'd been feeling I wanted to do more in the Church but it had become fashion when you wanted to do more you sing in the choir and you take the Sunday School, you become miscellaneous in the parish and that's what I did and so when I got this other opportunity that you do more than just the counselling, I actually didn't do any counselling in Soweto then, and so that's how I became Lay Minister and, at another stage, notice went out to the Rectors that there was going to be a meeting of the Fellowship of Vocation. Again this was not explained, and the Rector just said he's going to send some people to this workshop for the Fellowship of Vocation and the miscellaneous me went along. ... About '86, and so went to the Fellowship of Vocation and, purely because my rector had sent me to go there, and looking back I doubt if all the people who came to that workshop knew what it was about... I mean he made me even preach, the first person who allowed me to preach, and he then one day said to me 'Oh by the way I've written to the Bishop about you', and I had no idea what he had written to the Bishop about me and I met the Bishop, ...at some diocese ...because I attend all sorts of diocese and things, and he said 'Oh ja we've been wondering when you will eventually offer your name'. It turned out that Joe, the priest, had offered my name for the ordained ministry.

S.B: So it was done without consultation at all?

Subject no 9: Mmm

S.B: And what was your reaction?

Subject no 9: I didn't think I could. I mean there were women priests then but I didn't think I could be one of them - I wasn't perfect enough. I had two children out of wedlock so for me I wanted to do more within the parish and I didn't think, I hadn't thought, of working full time for the Church ...

She consistently felt as though the ministry was not open to her as a woman. It was only when others proposed her that she responded.

No gradual, it was gradual, I talk about people who have had a Damascus Road experience and you hear ...and some of us have had the road to Emmaus experience. It's been more of the road to Emmaus and I often, this comes to mind more for me when I celebrate using the old Prayer Book, South African Book of Common Prayer. I've said to you I went to an Anglican School and as I, when I do that service, I always feel like Father I shouldn't be doing this I shouldn't be doing this, that was just another world for me.

Apart from Subject no. 8, whose vocation was 'natural and easy'; all the subjects had struggled with their vocations at some point. In most of the cases the subjects knew that they were being called, yet in five of them this call was articulated by someone else. All the subjects admitted to being well supported by clergy in the discernment, though Subject no 5 subsequently suffered at the hands of unsympathetic clergy with whom she worked. The youngest vocation occurred at the age of eleven, though it wasn't acted upon until she was twenty-eight, and the oldest was almost sixty. All the subjects had other careers before they entered the priesthood. Though this is not uncommon and is encouraged by the Anglican Church, it is also significant that, subsequent to ordination, some continue in their previous professions. In fact, only five of the subjects are paid by the Diocese, in spite of the fact that they all work in full or part-time ministry. This gives rise to the suspicion, though this was voiced only by two of the subjects that female priests are cheaper to maintain than male priests are. This fact implies a potentially interesting study.

## 2 Opposition to Ordination

All the subjects have received some opposition to their ordination and to their work in the Anglican Church, though none feels that it has inhibited her in any significant way. Subject no 1 received no opposition from her family, but felt a certain reluctance from her congregation, and also from some of the seminarians she taught. She comments on one member of her congregation thus

There was a crusty old lay minister at St ..... in ..... he said he would never ever have anything to do with women priests, but he still exercised his lay ministry when I was the rector there, but he didn't receive when I was presiding for a year, more than a year, and then we were involved in ministering to a mutual friend who was dying and that was a kind of conversion for him. He said, he was very honest, he said you know I've come to place where I recognise that God is working here ...

Of her students, she says

With students I pushed a bit harder, you know, asking theological questions and talking to me theologically about what's going on for you. Is this theological or is this just some kind of prejudice? So helping people to talk through.

Subject no 2 admits of only minor reluctance from her congregation.

I think I'm benefiting from others. There were the forerunners ... who took all the flak and I mean I remember the days at St Benedict's ... in Joburg, where they had to advertise if there was a woman celebrating so that people had the choice not to go. I mean that just isn't happening any more: it's not an issue ... so no, I haven't. Well let me say I haven't met anybody brave enough to tell me they have problems with it. I'm sure there are people ... in our congregation the average age is over 60, so there probably are...

However, she admits that there might be more opposition than she knows about, but she informs the congregation ahead of time who will be celebrating so they can stay away if they want to.

Subject no 3 was ordained earlier than the two above, when there was still fairly vocal opposition to women's' ordination in KwaZulu-Natal, unlike the Cape Province where she had been previously.

Well you see, part of the difficulty is in the early years of the ordination I wasn't here in this Diocese. This Diocese did have a real ...there was a real group of conservatives, under Bishop ... basically, who resisted women's ordination from prior to the motion being passed, and when the motion was passed and subsequent to that, so, yes, other priests had very difficult experiences in this Diocese but my early days, I mean, by the time I got here women had been working as priests... I definitely felt in my early days in the Natal Diocese ...slightly cautious when I went into new situations or events ...in a way that I didn't at all in Cape Town. ‘

S.B.: Are the women priests a united front or are they not so?

Subject no 3: ‘No not at all. Certainly not anymore. I, very quickly had this sort of strong sense of, and, of course, I wasn't part of what had gone on here, but I think... it's ... one of the sadnesses is that, that strong kind of an activist stance towards women's ordination has really dissipated and did very quickly: I would say within five years and as a whole new generation of women came in, and now, I mean, women don't even know that there was a time that women weren't ordained. So if you're a young woman today and you think I've got a calling, you know, you move with it. Whereas I lived for fifteen years saying ‘What am I going to do with my life if I'm called to ministry?’ you know. And there are millions of Catholic women in that position.

S.B.: So academics was really second choice?

Subject no 3: Oh it was. At the time it was, and it's not that anymore, you know ... I think I would struggle to go back into a parish full time now, but acquired those fears precisely because of the nature of the Church. Precisely because the shape and face of the Church, it might have more women in front ...but I mean effectively it hasn't changed. A large number are token men and particularly in this Diocese where, where every, I mean huge numbers of women are getting ordained as Community Clergy and it strikes me they're just glorified lay ministers who are now supposedly able to, to do the Eucharist and they're a lot older and I kind of feel they



sort of, they exude a kind of gratefulness that they've been ordained, and that, that worries me terribly because as a result of that there's no, there's no sense of, of ever seeking to change the basic structures of the Church. And so I don't think women's ordination fundamentally has changed very much. I mean, you know the fact is when you hear the debates around women bishops and you sit in their elective assemblies and watch the one token woman who perhaps has had the courage to allow her name to go forward, just be annihilated, you realise that no one's serious about this. There's no sense of we've got to do this because we really need to be different.

Subject no 4, the convert from Presbyterianism, experienced resistance from the congregation.

There was resistance earlier before I even got on. The older preachers and lay ministers realised they were getting old and some of the not so old were openly saying they do not imagine a woman priest coming on... they said no they don't imagine a woman presiding over them. And then as time went on they were getting old and some of them were dying; they eventually said well, the women can take it, and the women again were sort of scared to get on onto this work because they knew what the attitude was before. But I just decided I'm going to go and see what happens.

Subject no 5's main opposition came from her husband and family, in spite of regular encouragement from her priest. This subject has had, perhaps, the most rigorous vocation of the nine interviewed.

.. but I spent about 4 years in the Fellowship of Vocation because I had now met the man that I would later marry, and had subsequently discovered that within his family there were members who did not agree with women in the ministry. He'd been baptized in the Anglican Church earlier but had landed up in a Pentecostal Church. Some of his family members were, what I would consider, lunatic fringe. He wasn't, but he'd been damaged by that in his growing up years and so, and so it became an incredible place of wrestling for me because was God really calling me to be a Priest? Was God really calling me to marry him? Because I knew that these two did

not look like they went together, but yet I was convinced that both of them were what God wanted, and so it took me a very long time to say yes and, and I asked him to go and tell his family first and there was ranting and raving and eventually they said no, well, we love her. ‘

S.B: The bases of the rants and raves?

Subject no 5: ‘It was the very fundamentalist thing that women can’t be trusted because Eve deceived Adam and women shouldn’t speak in Church and umm Well, for me, my understanding of it is that that was almost like sitting in a Jewish synagogue where the women were upstairs and they were chatting too much, and so therefore were not focusing in on what was actually going on. And that women perhaps were not educated enough, and so it had to do with levels of education. But not for his family: they were taking it at a very literalistic level and said [that if the Bible said] women should not speak in Church then that’s what it meant. No context: ja absolute. And so that was the background that he was brought up in, but luckily he’s an historian but it’s taken a long time for him to work through, to look to the sources of where all this stuff came from and he’s managed to come to a place where he can see much more clearly and have a whole stack of context and, and that’s helped a lot, but it’s taken many years.

Subject no 6 had more vocal opposition from her family, particularly her father, than from the church of her congregation.

I think it was just because he is a bit of a ...he’s changed a lot since then but I remember on the actual weekend of my ordination as a Deacon, I didn’t realise he was opposed he’d never said anything, ...my Dad said to me ‘God is not in this house.’ I was so, so hurt and I think I realised then that he was not happy at all with what I’d chosen to do and I don’t think he really started to understand it, at that stage, because quite a few years later when they had, when they started to come and visit us and were there for services and heard me preach and realised and saw me minister the Eucharist that kind of thing then suddenly they realised this is a calling.

Of the congregation, she comments:

What I did find though was that the women, and this surprised me, the women in my congregation were so affirmed by my ordination. It was something that had happened for them.

Interestingly, subject no 7, the convert from Catholicism, felt very little opposition. Inevitably, her Catholic priest was disturbed, but her family and Anglican congregation were supportive. In response to the question, she says

Not at all. I was so lucky because I came in about 10 years after women first were ordained so the very first ones who had to fight the fight were often quite political, often quite strident, feminist women, which is not me at all. I would have shot from that I would not have been ordained if I'd been in that generation and I was very grateful for the fact that they had made the path for me and they'd fought the battle for me and I didn't need to do that. No, the Anglican Church was incredibly supportive and I was in a congregation at St Martin's in the Veld in Rosebank in Johannesburg, which was really kind of a nursery parish where lots of people who went on to ministry were mentored and I had ... who then became the Bishop of Johannesburg was my rector and ... was the Assistant Priest and I really had a lot of support so not at all, from people in power and in authority.

I can tell you of two occasions where I encountered gender bias because I was a woman who was a priest and in both cases I chose not to become aggressive about it I just carried on being me. ... So one of the things I had to do was the Thursday morning service. I was given the Eucharist, pre-consecrated Eucharist, and asked to do services every Thursday morning or there was a roster regularly and what I would do is I'd give the service and when I would come to the part the Eucharistic prayer where you would consecrate it I would then lead us through a visualisation about what was at last supper and what Christ sacrificed for us and what was meant to us and then go straight into the giving of the Eucharist and, it was lovely, the same sort of community almost every Thursday so it was like a little community on it's own and there were about ten people, and one woman came to me and she said 'Listen, please don't take this personally but my husband and I are very uncomfortable with women being ordained in the Anglican Church. My husband, in fact, has left the

Anglican Church - he's gone to the Catholic Church and I really don't feel I can take communion from you'. I said 'That's absolutely fine and if you would like to come up for a blessing I can do that but please don't worry about it.' So I really didn't get all aggressive or offended about it I just thought that was where she was and I carried on and over the months and one day she came up and she said would I mind if she had communion and I...gave communion and then a couple of months later she said to me 'I know my husband is Catholic but would he be able to have communion, have communion as well?' So just for being an ordinary, safe, unthreatening, unscary, 'unpriesty' whatever they thought I was going to be, person, just being myself they were able to see that it wasn't as threatening

Subject no 8 had served a long apprenticeship as a server and lay minister, and her ordination was also celebrated by both family and congregation. There was only one stalwart in her congregation, who, until his death, refused to receive from her. Her comments on the subject, while not explicit, implied a certain personal hurt at this, though she also conceded that it was surprising that it was only one.

Subject no 9 had resistance even to her being an altar server:

... when I was at St Michael's I was an alter server for the five years in High School and so when I came back after my O Levels I went to the man who was Head Server and said I would like to join your servers and he actually laughed at me! And he's a man I've never heard speak English, but on that day he said 'Over my dead body'. He didn't need the priest, you know it didn't get to the priest, it was, it was when what he said over his dead body would he have a woman on the altar there.

Subsequent opposition, she assumes, was because of the fact that she was an unmarried mother rather than a woman.

And eventually then we went into the meeting and .....who she was and she had a big problem with me when we at the meeting was the fact that I had children and I wasn't married.

She attributes her acceptance largely to the fact that she was over 40 by the time she was ordained. However, she is under no illusions about the reasons for her placement in her first parish.

... spoke to me and was saying to me why don't you ask to be transferred from Johannesburg and be ordained? I'd like to place you in the Cathedral and I wanted to know why he wanted me there but it turned out he wanted a black and a woman so I'm a nice package and for me well he didn't want me because of anything [else], ...he wanted to fulfil this quota and with me he could kill the two birds with one stone.

Most of the subjects were not surprised at the resistance they received to their being priests in the Anglican Church. None reacted negatively to the slights, or to being refused having the sacraments received from them. This in itself might be telling of the Protestant nature of their understanding of the sacrament. If the bread and wine are seen as symbolic, and not the real presence, then the role of the priest becomes more prominent. It is the priest who is dispensing the sacrament, and refusal to accept is a rejection of the priest, not of Christ. In the Catholic sacrament the priest is merely a conduit between Christ and the receiver. A refusal under these circumstances would be a far more radical a statement.

Subject no 3 even went to some lengths to explain to the refuser that the refusal *was* personal. The congregant's refusal reflected his rejection of her, despite his protestations to the contrary. Neither perceived it as a slight to Christ, as neither believed in the Real Presence. This is interesting in view of the Anglican practice of genuflecting to the aumbry, or of other actions in the Eucharist that would seem to indicate a belief in the real presence. It is also interesting that, apart from Subject no 1, who challenged her students on the topic, none of the subjects challenged any members of their congregations on theological grounds.

### **3 Education in Mariology**

Not one of the subjects had had any training in Mariology, and most had read very little on the subject. Consequently, their knowledge of the Marian dogmas was sketchy. None expressed any

opposition to any of the dogmas, though most of them voiced reservations of some kind regarding praying to the virgin, or, in fact, to any of the saints. It appears that these reservations were concerned more with an unexpressed fear of idolatry than with dogmatic differences. The fact of Mariology being excluded from all Anglican training for the priesthood is significant. It would seem to indicate that South African Anglicanism leans more to the Protestant than to the Anglo-Catholic tradition, though in other issues this appeared not to be the case. Significantly, too, was the absence of Marian presence in the churches. Apart from one statue in the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity, and a Marian wall hanging in The Church of the Ascension, no church displayed any Marian icons, even St Mary's. In most of the parishes in this study, Marian feast days are not celebrated, though they are noted in the lectionary and the Prayer Book.

This omission of Mariology from the Anglican curriculum is very telling of the differences between Anglican and Catholic theology. In the Marian dogmas can be seen the confluence of important theological issues such as the nature of God, the Trinity, Christ, and the sacraments, so Mariology and its development are informative of the respective positions of Catholic and Protestant theology. In Catholicism, the Marian dogmas are a logical implication of well formed and expressed dogma on these issues, but the Anglican position is different. Its theology is far more flexible and can waver from almost Protestant to almost Catholic. Consequently, Anglican practice with regard to the Virgin varies according to local taste. For this reason, perhaps, most Anglicans are unaware of the Marian dogmas, or even of the objections to Marian dogmas. This applies even to the doctrinally well-informed, such as the group of subjects in this study.

#### **4 Significant Scripture Texts about Mary**

The scripture which was deemed most significant by almost all the subjects, was the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-56). This choice is notable, as this is the passage that expresses at the same time her obedience to God, and her willingness to accept her role, and also her realisation that this event is about to transform history. The most powerful instrument of Christ's grace is his mother – she magnifies it. In spite of this, all the subjects insisted that they did not pray to the Virgin, and though some accepted the practice as legitimate, others felt that prayers to the Virgin were heretical.

This reluctance perhaps indicates a different understanding of intercession from the Catholic one. It is a Protestant belief that praying to the Virgin is idolatry, and certain aspects of this belief are clearly held by some Anglicans as well. Most of the subjects in this study were not of the opinion that prayers to the Virgin were idolatrous, but nevertheless felt a reluctance to do so, perhaps a vestigial feeling that praying to the Virgin Mary would supplant Christ as the redeemer. This is contradictory in the face of the words of the *Magnificat*. The one who is closest to Jesus and who magnifies Him the most is the logical one to whom to appeal for intercession.

The wedding at Cana (John 23:1-11) was also considered a significant scripture by almost all of the subjects, though the reasons for this varied. For some no reason was given, and for two it was considered noteworthy that Mary is presented as assertive and as capable of changing the mind of Christ and as being instrumental in the first miracle. It also comments on her motherhood outside of the context of the infancy narrative. Although Mary's motherhood is important in this text, and can be seen as exalting the role of mother in the discipleship of Mary, this fact was not commented on.

One subject, no 5, indicated that Luke 2:19 "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" and 2:51 "Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart" were important for her. She felt that they were reflective of her life, and particularly her vocation which had been such a long process, and one where she had felt alone for much of the time and had had to discern for herself the nature of God's will.

## **5 Dogmatic issues**

### **5.1 Mary's Virginit**

Mary's perpetual virginity was seen as problematic by several subjects, though for different reasons. For subject no 1 the significance of Mary lies in her "re-capturing the importance of the body and through that an understanding of our own ... God bearers too so I think there many possibilities there." She maintains that "... we (the Anglican Church) are so obsessed with sex at

the moment”. She believes that the Church is losing an opportunity to confront, theologically, the issue of sex. “Our concern with sex presents as gay bashing because that is acceptable, “but actually we’re obsessed with sex” and that Mariology in the Anglican Church has a long way to go.

This would seem to suggest that the subject sees her own hopes of salvation compromised by the Church’s attitude to women. In Catholic Mariology, Mary’s virginity occurs in the context of salvation – her free acceptance of God’s gift of grace. Salvation occurs as a result of a gift given by God but accepted by humanity. Mary’s virginity represents this openness to grace. If the female body is perceived as corrupt, its possibility of salvation must be similarly limited. Hence, what might be an opportunity to understand the Virgin as offering redemption to (female) humanity is missed in the unfortunate pre-occupation with her literal virginity.

This subject, no. 1, believes that the church needs to deal with corporeality, and that the Anglican Church has missed this opportunity. Without such an achievement, she believes, the position of women will remain compromised.

Significant, too, is change in understanding of virginity that is wrought in Mary’s *fiat*. She changes the virginal bride Israel in relationship with Yahweh to a symbol of the Church’s relation to Christ. The Church becomes the New Jerusalem and in this ecclesiology lies the significance of all Catholic Mariology. Yet, according to subject no 1, this understanding of virginity seems not to be prevalent in the Anglican Church. Literal virginity is understood to be the ideal, while simultaneously, so is motherhood. The impossibility of this model renders women perpetually subordinate, even if the scriptures do not support this situation. Until Mary is re-examined and presented as a disciple and as a servant of God, instead of as a human model of unrealistic perfection, the Virgin’s role will remain ‘problematic’.

Subject no 3 believes that we need to ‘de-construct’ Mary before she can become integrated into our spirituality. She would prefer to eliminate the need for a feminine face in the patriarchal church by emphasising the androgyny of God. She believes it diminishes Mary to have her seen as the feminine face of God, rather than as the first disciple.



Well I think ... there's a fine line between, and I suppose a lot of Catholic dogma, spirituality can lead to ... the sense of who God is kind of gets lost in the veneration of the Mother of God and I suppose it is because my feminist spirituality pressures me to rather wrestle with ... God the Mother rather than Mary Mother of God, if you know what I mean, and I think for me a lot of it is that, that yes, I might feel comfortable but in a way I'm glad I wasn't cheated out of the struggle and every Sunday I struggle as we read all this flipping patriarchal language and we pray in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit .....that's not the God that's - I'm not going to give in to this patriarchal God and that I've got to constantly wrestle in the midst of our Liturgical Worship to, to find and, and focus on feminine aspects of God. I'm not certain for it because of this other idea that for me what's much more important is, kind of the feminine face of God and not through Mary but God who is this God who has a feminine side.

S.B.: It's interesting so you think Mary is missing the boat? It takes you from the main issue of God the mother?

Subject no 3: I do. I think I do.

However, she concedes that Catholic Mariology offers more than just the obedient child-bearer. It offers the first disciple.

I mean I try to think if I was a feminist Catholic how would I feel about Mary and I'm sure I'd be much more open to Mariology. But I think there is a need to deconstruct Mary as the virgin mother because I think it does represent women in a certain kind of way. And my guess is Mother's Union women would relate to Mary very well, and maybe not in the traditional kind of Catholic sense of it, but because she role models what they're meant to be ... so I think if Mary is going to be elevated in any kind of way it should only be done in order to deconstruct the role women play in the Church.

And it also diminishes the other role she played because she clearly played roles way beyond what was expected of women at the time and she, you know, I don't know how you'd do that if you, without deconstructing what the Church has set her up to be.

... she's what, what men like, virgins and mothers.... so I don't think it's healthy I don't think, unless we find ways of bringing her, bringing her into the Church that are actually going to force men to face aspects of women but I wonder if we can redeem her for them. I doubt it.

It would seem that this subject's understanding of the *Theotokos* differs from the Catholic one. The person of Mary is pivotal in the understanding and implication of the Marian dogmas. Her poverty, simplicity and virginity are exalted in the dogmas. To ignore this in favour of a transformed understanding of God would be to lose this, and with it part of the essential mystery of the Church as a community of salvation. Perhaps this is the cost of the fluidity of Anglican dogma. The Catholic dogma of the *Theotokos* unites hypostatically the *logos* and the flesh, and while this dogma predated the Reformation and has not been challenged by Anglicans, its understanding appears to be incomplete.

Subject no 9 is also concerned about Mary's perpetual virginity.

Generally I have a thing about icons and worshiping things but I think the feminist in me also battles with the whole Mariology issue because I try to think why what separates Mary from other women and

Sally: What separates Jesus from other men?

Subject no 9: Jesus being the Son of God Jesus being the Messiah I think there was more preparation for the coming of Jesus and his birth life and death were very different from other people separating and for Mary, I think I appreciate Mary as the bearer, it really presents the incubator of the Messiah, but my difficulty with her is the emphasis that's put on her being virgin I mean to the extent that you get theories even about her mother having been a virgin. I'm saying the feminist in me battles with that because as much as I think it's a combination of being feminist and coming out of being surrounded by this very patriarchal tradition where, I mean we still have situations where virginity testing - gynaecological virginity testing - for girls and none for boys and very attached to a woman who has saved herself for marriage and nothings said about the men so there is that ... dual stance.

This gives rise to the issue of the enculturation of the scriptures. While Judaic virginity implied more than sexual inexperience, within the context of South Africa it has come to be reduced to a gynaecological fact in some circles. Virginity testing of young women is perceived by Subject no 9 as demeaning and patriarchal. While it is certain that this was not the intention of the scriptures, we are beholden also to look at their effect within specific contexts. It is unfortunate that at this time and in this context, the example of virginity cannot be interpreted in a positive light for men as well. However, Subject no 9 preaches about her obedience and her humility

... when I speak of Mary it's less about her as the incubator: for me it's more the obedience and the humility and ... God using that insignificant country bumpkin of a girl... And so for me it's more God, God's choice than virtue for her.

Her Protestant understanding of grace is telling. For her, the grace is all God's and is received by Mary, whose virtue is obedience. She does not perceive grace as relational, and for this reason Mary is an example of obedience and humility, rather than of a deep spiritual relationship with God.

## **5.2 The *Theotokos***

The *Theotokos* renders both Jesus and Mary unique, and gives rise, at least in part, to subsequent dogmas. This dogma presents Mary's literal being as the mother of God, and her spiritual being, as an instrument of salvation, as indivisible. This essential statement is in danger of being lost if we dwell on the one, at the expense of the other.

The soteriological implications of this dogma are also threatened if the *Theotokos* is insufficiently understood. In addition, the divine presence which, in the Judaic tradition, had been available only to the high priests became, through Mary, a universal truth for everyone.

Only one subject, no 6, commented specifically on the *Theotokos*.

Well I believe that Jesus, I believe that Jesus was God, so therefore if she was his mother then OK you could say that she was the Mother of God.

Her concern is the logicity of the terminology rather than with Mary's implied instrumentality in redemption. Either way, the *Theotokos* is a radical dogma, yet it received no criticism from any of the subjects. As with all Marian dogmas, its implication is Christological. The *Theotokos* is what separates Christ from the other prophets. It also reconciles the disputes about the nature of Christ. The God and the man are one because of Mary's *fiat*. Yet Mary's virginity remained the focus of much of the comment about her. This is understandable, as she is 'The Virgin Mary'. This is perhaps an unfortunate emphasis as it tends to overshadow her role in salvation and discipleship.

## 6 Perceptions of Mary

The subjects' perceptions of the Virgin Mary had changed over time. When young, all, including the black subjects, had viewed her as Western and white, with an alabaster complexion, and blue shawl. They attribute this to the Eurocentric publishing of Bible stories in English during their youth. '...where the Blessed Virgin Mary was a white bimbo...' (Subject no 6). Subject no 5 comments:

I think it has to do with the statues we had around school of someone wearing blue and white and having a very peaceful looking face. In one of them they even painted her toenails!

However, all had changed their perceptions to a more realistic picture of a very young Arab girl, with dark skin, thick hair and a large nose. This change was credited to a number of factors. Subject no 1 ascribed it to her travels in the Middle East, where she experienced the reality of village life and saw young local women in that milieu. Other ascribed it to logic and maturity. Subject no 3 saw her as behaving as a Jewish man: busy, occupied with local affairs, and travelling widely with Jesus as part of his band of disciples. She sees as significant that Mary's interactions with Jesus outnumber those of His with Joseph.

Subject no 7 (the ex-Catholic) believes that the Virgin has facilitated access to the Church by young Catholics, who, during their formative years were constantly reminded of their unworthiness and of the judgement of God and of their own certain deficiency. She believes that

the Virgin was seen as more gentle and accommodating and less judgemental than God, as God was portrayed to them at that time. She sees Mary as ‘...the saving of many young Catholics ...’ This was my own hypothesis, in part. I postulated that a feminine face in the patriarchal church would be welcoming to devout women, as it undoubtedly is in Latin America and Europe. However, it appears that Protestant reservations outweigh the benefits of a feminine face. Not one subject felt that a greater Marian presence in the Church would enhance their spirituality or the spirituality of women generally. Interestingly, No 7’s own relationship with the Virgin has not persisted.

A significant perception was held by subject no 5 who understands the Virgin as the first priest.

... perhaps she was the first priest because she was the one through whom we first received the body and blood of Christ in her giving birth to Jesus ...

This insight, though profound and obviously very personal, indicates an understanding of the sacraments that is different from the Catholic understanding. Theologically, this sacrament had to be created by Christ at the last supper, but she sees the Virgin as prefiguring the Eucharist. Such an understanding would make it logical for her, as a woman, to respond to her vocation in the way that she did.

Subject no 2 does not think that a greater Marian presence in the Church would help to ameliorate the patriarchy. She says

I think it would entrench it because of the unreal expectations ... and that kind of glorified symbolic understanding of femininity and of women and also the product of projection by celibate men. I think if women were able to re-interpret and create a new image, or a different understanding ... a more realistic one, that they could really identify with in terms of the struggle ... I think it would have more impact ...

Her reservation does not concern Mary, per se, but rather the perception of Mary that has developed over time: not what she was in scripture, but what she has become in subsequent history.

## 7 Marian Devotions and Experience of the Virgin

None of the subjects prayed to the Virgin Mary, seeing such a practice as a threat to the unique place of Jesus Christ. One saw it as ‘changing the trinity into a square’! For some of the subjects, the problem of Marian devotions is their lack of a scriptural basis. They are largely traditional, which is problematic for Anglicans in that their position is neither the *sola scriptura* of the Reformers nor the *sola gratia* of the Catholics, which leaves them, uncomfortably, with no position at all. Subject no 1 saw Marian intercession as

Marian intercession for me is, is bringing to my consciousness the needs of the world. I think by definition the Saints know what the problem is.

Her understanding of prayer is clearly broader than most, but she sees its effectiveness by the changes wrought on the one who is praying. So she sees the Virgin in this instance as affecting her consciousness.

Subject no 6 says

well at times, it depends what I’m praying about, you know, I call God Father sometimes, I call God, I would want to speak to Jesus sometimes, other times I would, if I’m needing inspiration, I would be directly addressing God as Holy Spirit, but I do feel very uncomfortable about praying to anyone but God himself and I don’t think theologically there’s anything in the scriptures that indicate that Mary is actually divine...

This statement seems to indicate that she embraces the *sola scriptura* stance of the Protestants, together with their reluctance to pray to anyone outside of the Trinity. This understanding of intercession is common among Protestants and, similarly, some Anglicans. The notion of praying *through* the Virgin (or the Saints) is confused with praying *to* them. The confusion is more than semantic. It stems from a time when devotions to the Virgin were deemed excessive, even by Catholics, and a consequent reluctance to fall into this practice has had the effect of creating suspicion about it. Subject no 7 says, more realistically,

I think she’s a divine vessel in the same way as you and I are. I think that, you know, as a woman, I think her role is very important and it’s been underplayed by

Protestants in the sense that we haven't understood that, you know, it's very interesting that, that God didn't use a man to be the father.

Ingrid Sally: Do you pray to Mary?

Subject No 7: Oh heavens no I go straight to the top.

Sally: Any of the Saints?

Subject No 7: No straight to God... I don't mess around.

Interestingly enough when I was a child, and that's always been me, I've never, I've never, from the age of being aware of the presence of God, age 11, sitting in the Church and just not even saying anything just sitting there and being aware of the presence of God, just a sense of being on Holy ground, it was always Christ that I spoke to; it was always Christ that I was aware of and sometimes in my life I'm more in touch with God, particularly if I'm fed up like now, because I'm trying to figure out what I'm meant to be doing with my life and God is not particularly being forthcoming so it's God that I moan at, somehow he's my Dad who loves me and he doesn't mind if I moan at him. But when I need comfort and I need God with skin on, it's Jesus that I'm aware of and I sense and I pray to and I've never ever felt that I would pray to either the Saints or to Mary it's always made no sense to me at all and yet I was raised Catholic.

Sally: But you've never even in a Catholic Church you didn't?

Subject No 7: No except when, when we were told we had to say the Hail Mary but I mean it wasn't my choice.

Sally: Yes it's not something you automatically...?

Subject No 7: No why would I? She's just, she's part of a story. I would never consider for a second to go to her instead of going to Christ.

Subject no 7's relationship with God is paramount. While conceding that intercession through Mary is valid, she does not do it herself. She fully understands the difference between prayer and intercession, but does not feel the need for the latter. Her comment 'she's just part of the story' implies a profound understanding of the nature of myth as ultimate truth, and of humankind's need to explain origins and destinations.

Subject no 2 spoke interestingly of her experience of the Virgin. She insisted that she had had no personal experience of the Virgin Mary, but then went on to recall a very direct experience.

... when Mary was being significant in our lives. We were battling to have children ... my mother-in-law [a Roman Catholic] told us that she had gone and lit candles for her, (the Virgin Mary) which then she was a member of the ...Catholic Church, ...we went you know in the ...service and I went and did the same ..and she then died of cancer at exactly the time that our children were conceived and I still get kind of goose bumps on my back because she, we knew she was praying and praying and praying, really, very hard and earnest, you know, that we would be able to have children ... and I just wonder at the timing of that.

So, in spite of reservations about Mary's association with childbirth, it was in that context, that she experienced the presence of the Virgin in a profound way. In spite of this experience, Subject no 2 claims no direct experience of the Virgin Mary, and does not pray to her, or find her theologically very significant. This gives rise to the question of why the experience of conception after prayers to the Virgin, should not be considered an experience of the Virgin. In spite of her reservations about intercession through the Virgin, and the theological significance of her, she found the experience profound and moving. She did not attempt to explain this dichotomy, merely recounting it as such, but it would seem to enforce the concept that spirituality is related to experience and praxis, and not to theology or dogmas. Even when the experience is counter to personal belief, its effects are intense.

Subject no 9 does not believe that increased Marian veneration in the Anglican liturgy would result in an enhanced feminine presence in the church. She claims it would depend on the approach:

... again it goes back to what end you're approaching Mary from, and if its Mary in her virginity that's a different story but I find myself more and more speaking to women whose children have died - I take them through the stations of the cross where his body is removed from the cross and ... and so I think I use her then as Mother of Son and for women to take comfort from that. They are going through an



unexpected event that held this baby as a baby, newborn baby, with blood and then suddenly they're holding this lifeless body in the same way that Mary had to do it.

Again, it is the maternal aspect of Mary that opens the door in this case. In addition, it seems unlikely that without some veneration of the Virgin Mary, Subject no 9 would be able fruitfully to employ such an exercise with bereaved mothers. Ministry demands a basis in belief, and an unbelieving minister would be unlikely to have conceived of the idea, or to be able to carry it out meaningfully. Subject no 6, too, felt a strong identity with Mary when her own son died.

But I think that the fact, the fact she is his mother it really became so real to me when my son died. Now it's very interesting...

Sally: Did Mary help then?

Subject no 6: Yes very much so. I mean that was the first time that I felt that I actually had a relationship with Mary, which I'd never felt before and I'd never thought we had anything in common... But I felt that she was sharing my pain. I don't know how to explain that because I wasn't praying to her or anything ... But I just sensed that she was there.

Again, this experience is at odds with her insistence that she has had no direct experience of the Virgin Mary. This clearly *was* such an experience. The fact that she does not perceive it as initiated by herself does not nullify it. Her reluctance to label this a transcendent experience has more to do with her reformed practice, than it has with her actual spiritual experience. The divine experience here was, ironically, the result of the *Theotokos* which renders all motherhood both physical and spiritual. This means, of course, that her experience had eschatological implications as well, not only for her late son and herself, but for all humanity. Again, the experience outweighs the theology and the dogma.

In discussing what had affected their spirituality, not one subject mentioned Mary. Nearly all of them mentioned a priest, and two of them even mentioned the same priest. Subject no 7 clearly always had a very personal spiritual relationship with God, but the others mentioned times at which a significant person or an event contributed to their spiritual growth.

## 8 Implications for Anglican Roman Catholic Ecumenism

All the subjects favoured the pursuit of ecumenism between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, but none held out much hope for its realization. The most common reservations of the subjects was the conservatism of the current Pope, Benedict XVI, and the fact of the Catholic refusal to ordain women, or to dispense the Eucharist to non-Catholics.

Not one subject cited the *content* of any of the Marian dogmas as a stumbling block to ecumenism, in spite of qualms about prayers to the Virgin. This is quite logical in view of the fact that the ecumenical issues in Mariology do not concern Mary, except by implication. What they do concern are the basic principles of Catholic theology; grace and justification, scripture, revelation and tradition, Papal infallibility, and the human and divine nature of Christ. These are the basic issues of the Reformation but the Anglican position is ambiguous about many of them.

Generally, Anglicans are more pessimistic about ecumenism than Catholics are, and the latter are more concerned with more basic issues than Mariology: Christology, the Trinity, the nature of grace, the sacraments. Conversely, Protestants – or, more accurately Protestant theologians, are more concerned with Mariology as, converging in it, they see the expression of the differences. In essence what separates the two traditions, Catholicism and Anglicanism, are the belief in the Real Presence at the Eucharist, and the belief in the infallibility of the pope.

The Catholic belief in transubstantiation is a belief in the actual transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ - the whole of Christ, corporeal and spiritual, while the outward *appearance* of bread and wine remains unchanged. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is different from the presence of Christ in the other sacraments where he is present by his power rather than by his real body and blood.

Although many Anglicans believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, this belief is not unified. It ranges from a Catholic belief in transubstantiation, to a belief in a spiritual

presence, to a complete rejection of the Real Presence. The Anglican *Thirty-Nine Articles* contends that

... transubstantiation ... in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith (Article XXVIII).

From some Anglican perspectives, the Real Presence does not imply that Jesus Christ is present materially or locally. This is in accord with the definition of the Roman Catholic Church, as expressed, for instance by St. Thomas Aquinas, who, while saying that *the whole Christ* is present in the sacrament, also said that this presence was not "as in a place"<sup>1</sup>. Real in this sense, does not mean literal or material. Corporeality is not necessarily required for real presence. It is this discrepancy in understanding that accounts for at least some of the reluctance on both sides to reach ecumenical entente. Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians participating in an Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission declared that they had "reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Eucharist". This is a note-worthy achievement. The section entitles *The Presence of Christ* states

1. Communion with Christ in the Eucharist presupposes his true presence, effectually signified by the bread and wine which, in this mystery, become his body and blood. The real presence of his body and blood can, however, only be understood within the context of the redemptive activity whereby he gives himself, and in himself reconciliation, peace and life, to his own. On the one hand, the Eucharistic gift springs out of the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, in which God's saving purpose has already been definitively realised. On the other hand, its purpose is to transmit the life of the crucified and risen Christ to his body, the church, so that its members may be more fully united with Christ and with one another.

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<sup>1</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation*, edited by Timothy McDermott. (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1989) IIIa. 75. (571)

2. Christ is present and active, in various ways, in the entire Eucharistic celebration. It is the same Lord who through the proclaimed word invites his people to his table, who through his minister presides at that table, and who gives himself sacramentally in the body and blood of his paschal sacrifice. It is the Lord present at the right hand of the Father, and therefore transcending the sacramental order, who thus offers to his church, in the Eucharistic signs, the special gift of himself.
3. The sacramental body and blood of the Saviour are present as an offering to the believer awaiting his welcome. When this offering is met by faith, a life-giving encounter results. Through faith Christ's presence which does not depend on the individual's faith in order to be the Lord's real gift of himself to his church becomes no longer just a presence for the believer, but also a presence with him. Thus, in considering the mystery of the Eucharistic presence, we must recognize both the sacramental sign of Christ's presence and the personal relationship between Christ and the faithful which arises from that presence.
4. The Lord's words at the last supper, "Take and eat; this is my body", do not allow us to dissociate the gift of the presence and the act of sacramental eating. The elements are not mere signs; Christ's body and blood become really present and are really given. But they are really present and given in order that, receiving them, believers may be united in communion with Christ the Lord.
5. According to the traditional order of the liturgy the consecratory prayer (*anaphora*) leads to the communion of the faithful. Through this prayer of thanksgiving, a word of faith addressed to the Father, the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that in communion we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood.
6. The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of glory. In the Eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joys of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the first creation become pledges and first fruits of the new heaven and the new earth.

7. We believe that we have reached substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Eucharist. Although we are all conditioned by the traditional ways in which we have expressed and practiced our Eucharistic faith, we are convinced that if there are any remaining points of disagreement they can be resolved on the principles here established. We acknowledge a variety of theological approaches within both our communions. But we have seen it as our task to find a way of advancing together beyond the doctrinal disagreements of the past. It is our hope that in view of the agreement which we have reached on Eucharistic faith, this doctrine will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek<sup>2</sup>.

The position in terms of Papal Infallibility is somewhat less conducive to ecumenism. The Anglican Church is caught in a double bind here. Those Marian dogmas which were proclaimed prior to the schism are accepted by the Anglican Church, whereas the later dogmas are not, even though they follow logically upon the earlier. While the content of the dogmas appear not to be problematic, the manner of their proclamation has given rise to objection. The lack of consultation with Christian churches outside of Catholicism has led to the perception that they are not the *sensus fidelium*. The Catholic Church remains adamant that all members of the true church *were* consulted.

The Anglican Church, after early attempts at similar authority, appear to have abandoned adherence to a common set of beliefs and accepted traditions. Because they have fallen into the gap between Catholicism and the Reformed Churches, their theology and their Mariology is neither. This leaves them without leverage in ecumenical debates.

In spite of this, Marian dogmas need not necessarily be allowed to limit ecumenical progress as, in the final analysis, they do not subvert the scriptures. Such a stance is not without precedence.

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<sup>2</sup> Anglican Roman-Catholic International Consultation, *Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine. The Final Report*, (Windsor: September 1981), 11-16.

Ratzinger himself proposed, in 1985, that a union of Orthodox and Catholic churches need not depend on acceptance of post schism dogma.<sup>3</sup>

The subjects in this study differed considerably in their knowledge and opinions of the Virgin Mary. None believed that an enhanced Marian presence in the Anglican Church would contribute significantly to their, or to any, spiritual development. The reasons for this vary, and will be the speculative subject of the conclusion.

While their spirituality was not in doubt it seems, in all the subjects, to have been more influenced by significant people, notably priests, or events, than by dogma. Inevitably, those who have influenced their spirituality are in turn the recipients of dogma and liturgy that have moulded their own spirituality and ministry.

So, while it cannot be said that the subjects have not been influenced by dogma, it is clear that their major spiritual influences have been significant people who have appeared at crucial points in their lives. The final chapter looks at some of the theologies that account for their perceptions of these influences.

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<sup>3</sup> Ratzinger, J (1982), 199 quoted in Jared Wicks, "The Virgin Mary in Recent Ecumenical Dialogues," *Gregorianum* 81 (2000): 48.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study is based on several premises: that Anglicans are caught between a Catholic Marian dogma and a Reformed praxis, that a greater Marian presence in the Church would enhance spirituality, especially women's spirituality, that the Virgin Mary could offer a feminine face in the Anglican church which might be appealing to women, and that black and white women priests might have different opinions on this matter.

The focus of the research was to ascertain the perceptions of ordained (and therefore doctrinally informed) Anglican women, regarding the Virgin Mary. It was necessary to determine the degree of the subjects' knowledge of Marian dogma, and the extent to which their spirituality and devotions were affected by this. An attempt was made to establish the potential advantages of an enhanced Marian presence in The Anglican Church in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

This study was intended not merely to establish the dogmatic similarities in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and underscore those issues which inhibit Marian veneration among local ordained Anglican women. Its intention was to elicit the effects of dogma on spirituality and worship, and to discern whether the subjects felt an affinity with Catholic Marian dogma and saw any possibility of ecumenical progress between the two Churches.

The women in this study are extraordinary in that they are, nominally at least, part of the ecclesial structure even as some of them may be critical of it. Unlike traditional feminist theology, where the subjects, such as Catholic women, are outside of the formal hierarchy of the church, these priests are remarkable in that they function within the patriarchal structure. This simultaneous experience of being church and being women in an African situation is significant. The effect this has had on their spirituality varies. The unique location of these women, socially, politically theologically and spiritually, would render their opinions invaluable.

The first chapter introduced the scope of the study and outlined its origins and purpose. The second looked briefly at the Marian scriptures. The purpose of this was not exegesis, but merely

a documentation of those scriptures pertinent to the study. Chapter three dealt in some detail with Catholic Marian dogma. Because this issue is frequently misunderstood the chapter covered the nature of dogma, doctrine and revelation, as well as outlining the role of the *sensus fidelium* and the Magisterium in the proclamation of dogma. The dogmas were expounded and examined at some length, in an attempt to clarify some of those issues around them which might be cause for misinterpretation, especially by non-Catholics who are less aware of Catholic dogma. Chapter four discussed Mariology and ecumenism. Because Mariology is the issue where the ecumenical debate is frequently focused, it needs clarification. Mariology *per se* is not a hindrance to ecumenism. This lies in more basic issues; the nature of grace, the trinity, redemption, amongst others, but it is in Mariology where these deeper issues find expression. It is here that the Anglican and Catholic understandings differ, and where the stumbling blocks are perceived to be. This issue is pivotal as it illuminates the two theologies. Chapter five analysed the findings of the interviews and drew together some commonalities between the subjects and their beliefs and practices. Inevitably, complete unity on any aspect of understanding or belief is unlikely, but nevertheless some interesting perceptions arose which demanded profound scrutiny and are enlightening, not only for what they tell of the subjects, but also of their perceptions of important theological issues. The subjects' perceptions of the Virgin, their veneration (or lack) of the Virgin, their understanding of Marian dogma, are all affected by those deeper issues by which they are governed. These include their understanding of grace, of the nature of the sacraments, of the nature of prayer, of original sin, of eschatology and of discipleship. The final chapter attempted to draw some conclusions from the study and to suggest some areas where further research might be indicated.

The results of this study, regrettably perhaps, support almost none of my basic premises. Whereas it is true that Anglicans are located somewhere on the continuum between Protestantism and Anglo-Catholicism, their positions vary considerably in respect of different issues. So, while all the subjects were sympathetic to some degree to Catholic Mariology, not one prayed to the Virgin, or thought that an increased presence of the Virgin Mary would enhance their spirituality or that of other Anglicans.



This perhaps is not surprising. Not one subject had covered any courses in Mariology as part of her training for priesthood. This in itself is telling of the Anglican theology. The Virgin is not seen as sufficiently important to contribute to theological education. She has only a brief mention, though not by name, in the second of *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, in connection with Jesus' birth. Consequently, matters that concern her are not dealt with in Anglican Theology. Her motherhood of God, in itself a radical dogma, is not seen as important. Only one of the subjects knew of this dogma, and did not consider it significant. The *Theotokos* explains the hypostatic union of the *Logos* with human flesh, and links Mariology with Christology. The person of Christ is the union of the divine nature of the *Logos* and the human nature of the son of Mary. This relational feature is pivotal in Christianity. This hypostatic union is also a feature of Anglicanism, but its absence from the curriculum in the Anglican training for Priesthood is regrettable as it affects Christology too.

A dogma that was known and understood by all the subjects' was Mary's perpetual virginity. It was found troublesome by most as it was seen to present an unreal model for women. All the subjects agreed that a greater emphasis on Mary's discipleship and less on her virginity would present a more appropriate model for Christianity. The cumulative effect of her constantly being referred to as 'virgin' and not as 'disciple', directed attention away from her true value.

Corporeality, it was felt, needs to be addressed in the Anglican Church. In addition, sexuality needs also to be dealt with. The debate about non-celibate homosexuality in the priesthood was seen by two subjects as being a red herring for the real issues. They felt that the Church needs to be more explicit about sex and sexuality, especially in South Africa where HIV AIDS is pandemic, and that to emphasise Mary's virginal parturition, and perpetual virginity was not helpful. Another reservation regarding virginity, and one that is important locally, is the practice of virginity testing. While virginity is valued for young girls, it is not overtly valued for boys, and this was seen to present a mixed message.

While Mary's Virginity is mentioned far less in the gospels than her motherhood is, the literal fact of it concerns modern worshippers who have been grounded in a scientific age. The emphasis on Mary's motherhood giving rise to a new 'Virgin' people, the beginning of a new

order, was not seen as the implication of the dogma, perhaps another price for absence of Mariology in the curriculum. To some extent feminist forces are at play here. Several subjects thought that the Virgin Mary had become an instrument of oppression for women as she legitimized obedience and humility. They agreed that this position was not scriptural, but that the scriptures had been enculturated by a patriarchal culture. They felt that the Virgin Mary needed to be de-constructed so that her discipleship and not her humility became focal. Others felt that the humility and obedience of the Virgin was legitimate as an example to all Christians, including men. They saw in her the model for the New Kingdom.

This debate has raged for some time, and it is not the purpose of this study to contribute to it. Nevertheless, it was interesting that none of the subjects commented on the relative liberation of women in the Christian tradition when compared with women in the tradition of other monotheistic religions. Whereas all the subjects indicated that the *Magnificat* was a seminal statement and that it encapsulated the gospel message, some saw it as a liberation cry, while others saw it as a statement of obedience. There was no comment on the possibility of the two being linked.

Anglican understanding of grace is flexible. The Anglican perceptions of the Virgin, it seems, have been more influenced, at least implicitly, by the Protestant perception of grace than by the Catholic. Catholic Mariology demands an understanding of grace as the elevation of the human, by God, to the perfection of life in God. Protestant notions of grace centre on the activity of God, on what has been done *for* humanity by God. The Protestant version is that grace is given by God independently of the human, whereas the Catholic notion requires a reciprocal action on the part of the recipient; it is a sharing in God's life.

This Protestant understanding of grace appears to be what underlies the subjects' attitude to Mary. While acknowledging her importance, their implicit understanding seems to be that her role in salvation history is as a vessel. Her *fiat* is not seen as significant in the same way as the Catholic notion is. Her contribution is as a child bearer chosen by God, not as a partner with God in the initiation of the New Kingdom. In fact, this relational aspect is what renders Anglicans

uneasy about the Virgin. It appears to elevate Mary to the level of deity. For Catholics *all* believers have a relationship with God without threatening God's supremacy.

None of the subjects prayed to the Virgin, and several voiced reservations about it. Protestantism regards it as idolatry, and this opinion seems to influence Anglican understanding as well, at least implicitly. This too, is related to the understanding of God. The Protestant mind seems to view God as not able to be influenced – even by the Virgin Mary. This is not an overt belief, as prayer is highly valued in Protestant practice. However, praying *through* the Virgin is seen as dubious, whereas intercession within the liturgy is not. The reason for this is seldom articulated but might be seen as a reluctance to pray through someone who is dead. This too, would indicate a different understanding of eschatology. Christ as the destroyer of death is accepted in both traditions, so the reluctance is cultural rather than logical or dogmatic.

All of the subjects said that the Virgin Mary was not influential in their spirituality or devotions. All denied any personal experience of the Virgin, but three recounted such experiences. This would raise the question of what is considered a spiritual experience. Spirituality cannot be homogenized to the extent of generalization of such experiences, but it would seem that expectation could play a role. If the human is perceived as the recipient of grace, and not a partner in it, the believers' expectation of spiritual experience would be different from those whose interaction with God was more pro-active. The subjects in this case appeared surprised when confronted with the notion that they clearly had had such an experience. Again, the Anglican tendency towards Protestantism might have been effective here.

Christian spirituality is presented as having two as having two dimensions; a lived experience and an academic discipline. It incorporates the whole human life “as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God, in Jesus Christ, empowered by the spirit. It also indicates the interdisciplinary study of this religious experience, including the attempt to promote its mature development.”<sup>4</sup> The term originated in the Pauline letters where it was intended to mean a life lived in accordance with the Holy Spirit. In this sense it would include all the

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 972.

relational aspects of Christian life and behaviour. "But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor 6:17). The Holy Spirit awards different gifts for the creation of the Christian community and for its union in Christ

Its connotation has broadened over time to include a more individualistic experience of the seeking of perfection by means of spiritual exercises, often under the guidance of experts.

The Christian understanding of spirituality refers to the whole of human existence, filled with the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless many Christians have come to believe that the spiritual life is primarily concerned with the soul. In this view the body, and the world of matter in general, is suspect, while the soul or spirit is elevated above, and separated from, the body. This vestigial Hellenistic notion contradicts the scriptures, and gives rise to an unwholesome attitude to corporeality which has been injurious to many, especially women, in society. The biblical view is that *spiritual* refers to the whole person, body and soul, living under the influence of God's Spirit where matter is not opposed to spirit.

Christian spirituality, then, deals with the whole person, and the call to live life to the fullest. The call and challenge of the spiritual life is addressed to all. That all of humanity shares the same Spirit and is called to the same holiness was stressed by Vatican Council II. Its Decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 5) to this theme.

Just as spirituality concerns the whole person, it concerns too, the whole believing community. Dogmas are lived and experienced, even as they may not be perfectly understood. They are not separate from spirituality or liturgy but are indissolubly integrated with them. In this sense, dogma is more than a concept. It is a way of living one's life.

This does not imply that all spirituality is the same. The actual and varying circumstances of individual lives affects the way that spirituality is lived. But these differences are secondary to the commonality of the call to holiness. The personal response to this call is individual and specific.

The fact that the subjects of this study did not feel that a closer association with the Virgin Mary would enhance their spirituality in any way is indicative of their understanding of the nature of dogma and spirituality. While it cannot be said that spirituality is unaffected by dogma, the

effects of dogma are diffuse and indirect. All the subjects claimed that their most significant spiritual influences had been people, frequently clergy. Inevitably, their behaviour and understanding would be governed by their beliefs and convictions. So, while dogma is not seen to be a direct influence, its effect is nevertheless significant.

Ecumenism was another area where the subjects held similar views. All supported the notion of Roman Catholic-Anglican ecumenism, but not one was optimistic about it. Most of the subjects voiced reservations about papal infallibility and the conservatism of Pope Benedict XVII. They also felt, unsurprisingly, that the ordination of women would remain a stumbling block. No theological reasons were given. The Real Presence was not mentioned. This remains a sensitive issue between the two traditions, and is profound and far too complex to analyse fully here. The matter has been dealt with in great depth by numerous of theologians over time.

Finally, it must be said, that though there was little unanimity on many issues, all the priests in this study were undoubtedly deeply spiritual people. All agreed that the most significant factors in their spiritual development had been people, often priests. All attributed these influences to the sensitive ministry and perceptive behaviour of significant people. None attributed it to dogma, or even scripture. It would be inaccurate to conclude that dogma and scripture are unimportant in spirituality, but their contribution is implicit in the lives and beliefs of those people who minister. In themselves they are less influential than personal interaction with a concerned person.

Each of the issues dealt with in this chapter are far more complex than here presented, and any of them would stand further research. In addition, this study is limited to a few women clergy in one setting. It would serve to support these findings if a similar study of men were to concur. In the same way a study of lay opinions might prove fruitful.

A comparative study of Anglican and Catholic clerics would perhaps lead to more varied opinions and substantial disagreements, but would nevertheless designate other, more specific, theological matters. These would include the nature of grace, eschatology, the trinity, intercession and sacraments in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

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