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## PAPAL INFALLIBILITY AND THE MARIAN DOGMAS: AN INTRODUCTION

There is widespread agreement among theologians involved in ecumenical discussions that the major remaining obstacle to church reunification is the papacy.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in 1967, Pope Paul VI in typical candor and anguish referred to it as the "gravest obstacle to unity."<sup>2</sup> In November of 1978, the newly elected John Paul II, addressing the Secretariat for Christian Unity, explained that the suffering caused by division among Christians "must stimulate us to overcome the obstacles that still separate us. . . . We cannot be dispensed from resolving together these questions which have divided Christians." During that very same month, newspaper headlines carried the news of the most recent Roman Catholic/Lutheran statement on papal infallibility: "Important Agreement Reached by Catholics and Lutherans" and "Both Catholic and Lutheran Scholars Support a Renewed Papacy." The participants in the Lutheran and Roman Catholic dialogues have recorded a surprising degree of *rapprochement* on the question of the infallibility of the Church. The Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission has attained a substantial consensus on conciliar infallibility, and the Canadian Anglican and Roman Catholic Dialogue has even shown signs of convergence on the issue of papal infallibility.<sup>3</sup> Most of these commissions have, however, not yet taken up the difficult ques-

<sup>1</sup> See Leonard Swidler's preface to volume 11, no. 2 (1974) of the *JES*, devoted to ecumenism and the papacy (p. 207).

<sup>2</sup> *La Documentation Catholique* 64 (1967): 870. Pope Paul made this comment in a speech given on 29 April 1967 to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

<sup>3</sup> To be published soon in the *JES* with comments by Reumann (Lutheran), Dulles (Roman Catholic), McKenzie (Reformed), Küng (Roman Catholic), and Constantelos (Greek Orthodox).

tion of the Marian Dogmas (1854 and 1950) which are always raised in connection with the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this essay is to introduce—for little more can be done with such a complex set of questions—the notion of papal infallibility as defined by Vatican I and as interpreted by Vatican II. The two Marian dogmas will then be discussed from two perspectives: the *sensus fidelium* and the “hierarchy of truths.” Finally, a few reflections upon the ecumenical possibilities will be offered in the light of a nuanced understanding of papal infallibility and the Marian dogmas.

## I

It is important not to assume that most people, even scholars, have a properly-nuanced understanding of papal infallibility.<sup>5</sup> Most people seem to have ignored the observation Newman made in *A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* where he wrote that the “principle of minimizing” was necessary “for a wise and cautious theology.”<sup>6</sup> Instead, since the definition of 1870, there has been, according to B. C. Butler, a sort of “creeping infallibility” among theologians and clergy,<sup>7</sup> or again, in the words of Con-

<sup>4</sup> The ARCIC took up this question in August of 1981, but its report has not been published yet.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Hans Küng, *Infallible? An Inquiry* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971); Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972); and August B. Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible: Pius IX and the Politics of Persuasion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981). All of these authors exaggerate what actually was defined. See, for example, my critique of Hasler's book in *Commonweal*, 3 July 1981, pp. 412-413, and my critique of Tierney's book to appear in a forthcoming issue of the *JES*.

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Stephen Dessain, “What Newman Taught in Manning's Church,” in *Infallibility in the Church: An Anglo-Catholic Dialogue* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1968), p. 80. Newman stressed this point over against the interpretations of several of the ultramontanists (especially Manning) who exaggerated what actually had been defined.

<sup>7</sup> B. C. Butler, “The Limits of Infallibility,” *The Tablet*, 17 April 1971, p. 374.

gar, a tendency to "inflate the category of infallibility"<sup>8</sup> so that it has come to include almost every sort of papal utterance. Rather than see in the text of Vatican I's definition, and in the immediate context of the *expositiones* which are necessary for a sound interpretation of the text, a limited and carefully circumscribed notion of papal infallibility, many have maximized the actual scope of the definition in the direction of an infallibility which is separate, private and absolute, an interpretation of infallibility that was explicitly rejected at Vatican I. What follows is a brief examination of (1) what the bishops at Vatican I actually defined, and (2) clarifications of the doctrine of infallibility that can be gleaned from the teachings of Vatican II.

First, the infallibility of the pope is not absolute. On 11 July 1870, one week before the actual definition, Bishop Vincent Gasser, in the name of the deputation of the Faith, gave an official interpretation of the proposed text in a famous four-hour presentation. Some of the Fathers of the Council had asked in what sense the pope's infallibility could be considered absolute. Bishop Gasser stated:

Papal infallibility is in no sense absolute, for absolute infallibility belongs to God alone, the first and essential truth, who is never and nowhere able to deceive or be deceived. Every other infallibility, inasmuch as it is communicated for a certain purpose, has its limits and conditions, under which it is thought to be present.<sup>9</sup>

One of these limitations is the object of infallibility, namely, matters of "faith and morals." The phrase is not easy to interpret exactly.<sup>10</sup> The Council of Trent had used the phrase in a much

<sup>8</sup> Y. Congar, "Infaillibilité et indéfectibilité," *RSPT* 54 (1970): 608. See also the second paragraph of the common statement of *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI*, ed. P. C. Empie, T. A. Murphy and J. A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), p. 12. (Hereafter cited as *Teaching Authority*.)

<sup>9</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1214; trans. E. C. Butler, *The Vatican Council, 1869-1870* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1962), p. 389.

<sup>10</sup> See M. Bévenot, "Faith and Morals in the Councils of Trent and Vatican

broader way which included matters of custom, as well as ecclesiastical and liturgical discipline. Vatican I, however, distinguished between "faith and morals" on the one hand, and matters "which pertain to discipline and Church government" on the other.<sup>11</sup> It would seem therefore that the scope of infallibility would include doctrinal matters rather than governmental and liturgical practices.

In the official *expositio*, Bishop Gasser explained that infallibility has a direct and an indirect object:

As I said before, since other truths, which in themselves may not be revealed, are more or less intimately bound up with revealed dogmas, they are necessary to protect, to expound correctly and to define efficaciously in all its integrity the deposit of faith. Truths of this nature belong to dogmatic facts insofar as without these it is not possible to protect and expound the deposit of faith, truths, I repeat, that do not belong directly to the deposit of faith, but are necessary for its protection.<sup>12</sup>

According to Gasser then, infallibility extends first to those truths which are revealed, and then to those truths which are not directly revealed, but which are necessarily connected to revelation. The Fathers of Vatican I, however, disagreed over the precise content of the indirect object of infallibility. They all agreed that it extended to truths necessarily connected with revelation, but they interpreted the words "necessarily connected" in different ways.<sup>13</sup> Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* states that the church's

I," *Heythrop Journal* 3 (1962): 15-30; see also J. David, "Glaube und Sitten, eine missverständliche Formel," *Orientierung* 35, no. 3 (15 February 1971): 32-34, and the exchange on this topic in *Orientierung* 35, no. 6 (3 March 1971): 70-72.

<sup>11</sup> *D-Sch*, 3060 and 3064. See Avery Dulles, "Moderate Infallibilism," *Teaching Authority*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1226.

<sup>13</sup> In noting that the object extended to these moral truths "which pertain in every respect to the deposit of faith," Gasser explained that this was not the case with respect to *all* moral principles (*Mansi*, 52: 1224). He noted the teaching of theologians that infallibility concerned only revealed truths, while all

infallibility extends "as far as the deposit of revelation. . . ." <sup>14</sup> Here, Vatican II attempts to clarify in the promulgated text itself what Vatican I had left in the commentary.

While the object of infallibility is therefore limited to matters of faith and morals, there does not seem to be any consensus to this day as to which unrevealed truths are in fact necessary to protect revealed ones.

Secondly, the infallibility of the pope is not personal. Misunderstandings about the pope as personally infallible were avoided mainly because of the interventions of Phillip Cardinal Guidi, Archbishop of Bologna, formerly a professor of Old Testament and systematic theology. He spoke of the infallibility of the dogmatic definitions of the pope rather than of the infallibility of the pope himself. He explained that otherwise one would be speaking about infallibility as if it were a prerogative which inhered in him personally and habitually, and in effect would be attributing to a man a property which belongs properly to God alone. <sup>15</sup> Guidi's intervention caused the title of chapter four of the constitution to be changed from *De Romani Pontificis Infallibilitate* to *De Romani Pontificis Infallibili Magisterio*. Guidi's intention was to transfer infallibility from the subject (the pope) to the object (the definition). In the last analysis, the Council did not go the entire distance with Guidi's sugges-

other definitions were only "theologically certain" (*Mansi*, 52: 1316-1317); see Gustave Thils, *Infalibilité pontificale, Source, conditions, limites* [Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1969], p. 246).

<sup>14</sup> Article 25. The commentary to the Vatican II text reads: "The object of the infallibility of the Church, thus expounded, has the same extension as the revealed deposit; it therefore extends to all those things and only to those things which either directly touch upon the revealed deposit or which are required for religiously guarding and faithfully explaining the revealed deposit" (*Schema constitutionis de Ecclesia* [Vatican, 1964], p. 97; cited by Harry McSorley in *The Infallibility Debate*, ed. John J. Kirvan [New York: Paulist Press, 1971], p. 86). (Hereafter cited as *Infallibility Debate*.)

<sup>15</sup> G. Thils, "La *Locutio ex cathedra* et l'assistance du Saint-Esprit," in *Ecclesia a Spiritu sancto edocta: Mélanges théologiques, hommages à Mgr. Gérard Philips* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1970), p. 120, n. 22.

tion, lest it fall into the Gallican distinction between *sedes* (the Roman Church) and *sedens* (the series of popes). Instead, the Council Fathers accepted the reasoning of Bishop Bartholomew d'Avanzo who stated that "if *personalis* is understood in the sense of a private person (whence we have that odious word *personalitas*), then personal should be rejected. But if the word is understood as a person bearing the Church with him (*pro persona ipsam ecclesiam gestante*) then (that faculty) is personal."<sup>16</sup>

Although Bishop Gasser, representing the Deputation of the Faith, said that the infallibility of the pope was personal in some sense, the ambiguity of the word "personal" was avoided. Instead, a phrase was added: "Acting in his supreme office as doctor of all Christians." Thus, the pope must be speaking as a public and not as a private person. Avery Dulles explains:

He is not infallible as a private theologian, as bishop of the diocese of Rome, as metropolitan of the Roman Province, as Patriarch of the West, or in any other capacity than as primate of the universal episcopate.<sup>17</sup>

Gasser clarified further that the source of infallibility is the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Guidi had described it as an "auxilium actuale" and a "lux transiens." Gasser explained it as a special act of divine providence in virtue of which the person of the pope is preserved from the danger of error when, and only when, he makes a judgment *ex cathedra* on faith and morals.<sup>18</sup> Thus, *Pastor Aeternus* does not state simply that the pope is infallible, but that he enjoys infallibility, and that only when ("solummodo quando") he is in the act of defining.

The divine assistance which is promised the pope is therefore to be distinguished from revelation and inspiration. Unlike the writers of the Scriptures, the pope does not rely on inspiration.

<sup>16</sup> Cited by Kilian McDonnell, "Infallibility as Charism at Vatican I," in *Teaching Authority*, p. 279.

<sup>17</sup> Dulles, "Moderate Infallibilism," *Teaching Authority*, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1213.

His definitions are not revelations.<sup>19</sup> He is assisted so that he will not be mistaken.<sup>20</sup> This help, in the words of Louis Bouyer, is "entirely negative in character."<sup>21</sup>

Thirdly, papal infallibility is not separate. The official explanation of the definition opposes any notion of an "infallibilitas separata."<sup>22</sup> Properly understood, papal infallibility is fundamentally "relational."<sup>23</sup> In preparing the definition of a dogma, the pope is therefore obligated to use all the means available to him to search out the meaning of the truth, even though he is not bound to his choice of means:

Hence, the pope by his office and by the gravity of matter is bound to use apt means for the correct investigating and adequate enunciation of the truth; and among these means are councils, the counsel of bishops and cardinals and theologians.<sup>24</sup>

It is the reality of ecclesial infallibility which, more than any other element, brings out most clearly the reason why any notion of a "separate infallibility" is a misunderstanding of what Vatican I actually defined. The Council's definition stated clearly that the infallibility of the pope is the same "infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed for the defining of doctrine concerning faith and morals."<sup>25</sup> There are not two infallibilities, one of the Church and

<sup>19</sup> *D-Sch*, 3070.

<sup>20</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 741 ("Assistentia divina . . . qua fit, ut errare non potest").

<sup>21</sup> Louis Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu, Corps du Christ et temple de l'Esprit* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970), p. 443.

<sup>22</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1213-1214; also see Heinrich Fries, "Ex sese, non ex consensu ecclesiae," in *Volk Gottes: Zum kirchenverständnis der katholischen, evangelischen und anglikanischen Theologie*, Festgabe für J. Hofer, ed. Remigius Bäumer and H. Dolch (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), p. 490. (Hereafter cited as "Ex sese.")

<sup>23</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Le complex antiromain: essai sur les structures ecclésiales* (Apostolat des Editions, 1976), p. 227 (Originally published as *Der antirömische Affekt* [Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1974]).

<sup>24</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1213.

<sup>25</sup> *D-Sch*, 3074.



one of the pope. The infallibility promised to the pope "when he defines" is first and fundamentally that of the Church. Ecclesial infallibility, according to Edward Schillebeeckx, "provides the key to all other forms, including the dogma as defined by the First Vatican Council."<sup>26</sup> It might be said that the infallibility of the pope is grounded in the infallibility of the Church.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, as Gasser's explanation makes clear, the consensus of the Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, is, for the pope, the rule of faith. It is the faith of the whole Church which limits the magisterium. Thus, in a recent article,<sup>28</sup> Congar quotes with approval the words of Luther in his reply to Prierias: "I don't know what you mean when you call the Roman Church the rule of faith. I have always thought that the faith was the rule of the Roman Church and of every Church, as the Apostle says: Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule (Gal. 6:16)." In his *ex cathedra* definitions, the pope has the same source as the Church: the Scriptures read within the Church's living tradition. Before promulgating any definition, the pope therefore ought to consult the leaders of the Church in order to be certain of the consensus of the Universal Church. It is true, Gasser explained further, that the agreement of the present preaching of the entire magisterium of the Church united to its head constitutes the rule of faith to which the pope ought to submit his definitions.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, "The Problem of the Infallibility of the Church's Office," *Truth and Certainty*, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel, *Conc*, 83 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> H. Fries, "Ex sese," p. 486. The role played by the *sensus fidelium* will be examined in Part II of this article.

<sup>28</sup> Y. Congar, "Magisterium, Theologians, the Faithful and the Faith," *DoCLf* 31 (1981): 552-553.

<sup>29</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1216. During the council, Pope Paul VI asked that a statement be inserted into *Lumen Gentium* (Art. 22) explaining that the pope is "answerable to the Lord alone" in his actions as the vicar of Christ. The Theological Commission did not accept his proposal and stated that "the Roman Pontiff is also bound to revelation itself, to the fundamental structures of the Church, to the sacraments, to the definitions of earlier councils, and other obligations too numerous to mention" (cited by Dulles, "Moderate Infallibilism," *Teaching Authority*, p. 87).

Granting all this, Gasser nevertheless stressed that the pope was not bound juridically by a strict and absolute necessity to consult the bishops in order to know the faith of the Church,<sup>30</sup> because the consensus of the Churches can very often be derived from the Scriptures, from the consent of antiquity, that is, from the Fathers of the Church, from theologians and from other private ways, all of which suffice for full information.<sup>31</sup>

It is in this context that the phrase "ex sese, non ex consensu Ecclesiae" can best be understood. What the Deputation of Faith wished to exclude, according to Gasser, was the strict obligation to consult the *bishops* before and after a definition as the *juridical* condition of its validity.<sup>32</sup> Consulting the bishops remained the "ordinary means" of procedure. The pope, however, was still required to ascertain the faith of the Church, whatever the means, before defining it. Gustave Thils distinguishes, for example, the "act of assent," which is not juridically required, from the "agreement in fact in the doctrine" defined, which must be present.<sup>33</sup>

Vatican II indicates that it does not think that this controversial and much misunderstood formula meant that the pope is in any way to exercise an "infallibilitas separata." The Theological

<sup>30</sup> *Mansi*, 52: 1216.

<sup>31</sup> Harry McSorley, "Some Forgotten Truths About the Petrine Ministry," *JES* 11 (1974): 233, citing *Mansi*, 52: 1216-1217. Another example of the necessity for the pope to consult the faith of the Church is found in Gasser's response to the question of what should be done when doctrinal disagreement arises in the Church. McSorley again explains: ". . . Gasser does not say: go to the pope and he will have the answer. Nor does he say recourse is to be had 'to the mind of Rome' or 'the mind of the pope.' Rather, he says, recourse is to be had 'to the *consensus* of antiquity, that is, to Scripture and to the holy fathers, and from the *consensio* of antiquity the dissent of present preaching is to be resolved'" (*Infallibility Debate*, pp. 84-85).

<sup>32</sup> G. Thils, *L'infailibilit  pontificale*, p. 250.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* *The Common Catechism: A Christian Book of Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), ed. Johannes Feiner and Lukas Vischer, states that the "ex sese" excludes "the view that papal doctrinal definitions derive their irrevocability from a particular legal procedure like ratification by parliamentary vote" (p. 647). (Hereafter cited as *The Common Catechism*.)

Commission of Vatican II recognized the misleading character of the phrase, and emphasized in the *relatio* attached to article 25 of *Lumen Gentium*, where the Vatican I phrase is repeated, an important clarification. It explained that these definitions "do not require the approbation of the people, but they carry with them and express the consensus of the whole community."<sup>34</sup> Re-stated positively, Thils formulates the intention of the statement as follows: "The previous acquiescence of the Church, or her concomitant or subsequent acquiescence, can be considered as a habitually and relatively necessary condition to the infallible judgments of the popes."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, even though the pope's definitions are irreformable "ex sese," they are in no way imposed upon the faith of the people. Papal infallibility is to be situated within the larger context of the infallibility of the whole Church. In fact, Vatican II speaks of the pope as "one in whom the charism of the infallibility of the Church herself is individually present."<sup>36</sup> This formulation stresses that there is in fact "only *one* infallibility in the Church, that of the Church as a whole, but it is given effect in a variety of forms, one of which is the particular doctrinal decisions of the pope."<sup>37</sup> At the same time, it would not be accurate to think of the pope as merely the spokesman or the mouthpiece of the infallibility of the Church, for he has a special charism and responsibility for maintaining unity and orthodoxy in doctrine.<sup>38</sup> All the same, this responsibility is exercised in communion with the entire Church.

<sup>34</sup> *Schema Constitutiones de Ecclesia* (1964), cited in *Infallibility Debate*, p. 98. B. C. Butler explains the sense of this *relatio* by quoting Vatican II when it states that "the assent of the Church (to *ex cathedra* definitions and dogmas defined by ecumenical councils) can never be wanting on account of the same Holy Spirit who assists council or pope in the exercise of the Church's infallibility, where the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith" ("Authority in the Church," *The Tablet*, 21 May 1977, p. 479).

<sup>35</sup> Thils, *L'infailibilit  pontificale*, p. 175, cited by McDonnell, "Infallibility as Charism at Vatican I," *Teaching Authority*, p. 274.

<sup>36</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, article 25 ("in quo charisma infallibilitatis ipsium Ecclesiae singulariter inest").

<sup>37</sup> *The Common Catechism*, pp. 646-647.

<sup>38</sup> The second section of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973) explains that the teach-

In a commentary written by Edward Yarnold and Henry Chadwick on the Agreed Statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission on *Authority in the Church* (1976), our interpretation of papal infallibility is neatly summed up:

. . . (T)he official exposition of the decree at the Council by Bishop Gasser made it clear that the pope's infallibility is not *absolute*, for the definition confines the exercise of this prerogative strictly to matters of faith and morals where there can be no question of legitimate options being left open to any true Catholic, and where he speaks manifestly as teacher of the universal Church on doctrinal issues concerning which it is indispensable to preserve the deposit of faith; nor is it *personal* in the sense of belonging to the pope as an individual, for it belongs to him only in the exercise of his office at particular moments; nor is it *separate* as if the pope were exempt from the need to consult.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, one last major difficulty arising from the definition of Vatican I is that presented by the word "irreformable." Many have assumed that this means that any further reformulation or reinterpretation is ruled out. The Fathers of Vatican I did not discuss as such the historical conditioning of dogmatic definitions; it is more of a twentieth-century question. In our century, and in an especially clear way since the publication of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973), definitions of doctrine can be seen to be at one and the same time true and still in need of constant reformulation. *Mysterium Ecclesiae* mentions a fourfold historical conditioning due to (1) the limited state of human knowledge at the time of definition, (2) changeable conceptions and thought patterns that belong to a certain period in time, (3) the specific con-

ing office of pope and bishops "is not reduced merely to ratifying the assent already expressed" by the faithful, but that it "can anticipate and demand that assent." However, it cannot anticipate or demand something other than what the faithful, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, can assent to.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Yarnold and Henry Chadwick, *Truth and Authority: A Commentary on the Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Authority in the Church"* (Venice, 1976) (London: Cath-

cerns that motivated the definition, and (4) the limited expressive power of the language used.<sup>40</sup> What then becomes irreformable cannot be the words of the definition, which are open to improvement, but its meaning. The purpose of any reformulation is to bring out more clearly the original meaning. Similarly, the development of doctrines in the Catholic tradition "does not primarily mean the addition of *truths*, but the clarification of *the truth*."<sup>41</sup> All of this new emphasis on historical conditioning does not lead to relativism, for as Roger Aubert has explained, "it is only through recognizing the relativity of what is in fact relative that one can clearly distinguish what can justly claim to be of absolute value."<sup>42</sup>

## II

We now turn from an interpretation of the dogma of papal infallibility to a consideration of two important theological con-

olic Truth Society/SPCK, 1977), p. 27. Some of the persistent misunderstanding of the dogma can be traced to the wording of the definition itself. For example, the *ex sese* clause, added on at the last moment, taken literally seems to remove the faith of the whole Church from the process of making a definition. Also the word infallible connotes for many "impeccability" and "perfection"; it is not surprising that the Lutheran/Roman Catholic statement prefers, in the words of the Roman Catholic participants, "to place the doctrine of papal infallibility in the theological categories of promise, trust, and hope rather than in the juridical categories of law, obligation, and obedience" (*Teaching Authority*, p. 39). Finally, and perhaps most serious of all the reasons for the persistent misunderstanding of this doctrine is, in the view of Karl Rahner, that "Rome normally presents and pushes doctrinal decisions that are *per se* reformable as though there were no doubt whatsoever about their definitive correctness, and as though any further discussion about the matter by Catholic theologians would be inappropriate" (K. Rahner, "Open Questions in Dogma Considered by the Institutional Church as Definitively Answered," *Catholic Mind* 77, no. 1331 [March 1979]: 20, an address originally delivered on 27 August 1977 at the Seventh International Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists in Frankfurt, West Germany, and printed in an English translation by Michael Fahey in the Spring 1978 issue of the *JES*).

<sup>40</sup> *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, section 5.

<sup>41</sup> J. M. R. Tillard, "Sensus Fidelium," *One in Christ* 11, no. 1 (1975): 22.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Aubert, "Church History as an Indispensable Key to Interpreting

cepts which have become, especially since the Second Vatican Council, inseparable from any discussion of the Marian dogmas: the *sensus fidelium* and the "hierarchy of truths." The Catholic participants of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue mention in their report on their discussions on Infallibility that both of these ideas are key concepts for the reinterpretation of Vatican I's definition.<sup>43</sup> Concerning the *sensus fidelium*, they write:

Vatican II made it clearer than had Vatican I that the infallibility of the pastors (pope and bishops) must be related to the *sensus fidelium* or the "sense of faith" possessed by the entire people of God. The popes and bishops are infallible insofar as they are assisted in giving official expression and formulation to what is already the faith of the Church as a whole. This theme of Vatican II underscores what is implicit in the assertion of Vatican I that the pope has no other infallibility than that which Christ conferred upon the Church.<sup>44</sup>

Ever since Newman's treatise *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*,<sup>45</sup> published five years after the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the importance as well as the elusiveness of the idea of a *sensus fidelium* has exercised

the Decisions of the Magisterium," in *Church History in Future Perspective*, ed. R. Aubert, *Conc.*, 57 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 107. As complex as all this may render the proper interpretation of any definition, the value, necessity, and truth of propositions should not be minimized. Luther's famous dictum reminds us of this: *Tolle assertiones et Christianum tulisti* ("Take away assertions and you take away Christianity"), quoted in *Teaching Authority*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>43</sup> Besides these two, other key ideas of Vatican II which provide a fuller context for papal infallibility are: (1) emphasis on the college of bishops; (2) the *ex sese* clause seen in the context of a *sensus fidelium*; (3) the idea of a pilgrim Church with teachings that inevitably will need reinterpretation; (4) the clearer recognition that the Church is sinful; and (5) the greater willingness to consult other Christian Churches ("Roman Catholic Reflections," *Teaching Authority*, pp. 44-45).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> J. H. Newman, *On Consulting*. . . Edited and introduced by J. Coulson (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

theologians. Newman's treatise can be read not only as a theological reflection on the role of the laity in the formulation of the teachings of the Church, but also as a Marian document, since its publication was occasioned by a statement that associated the *sensus fidelium* with the 1854 definition: "In preparation of a dogmatic definition, the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the Immaculate Conception."<sup>46</sup>

After discussing how the *sensus fidelium* has acted historically as a balance over against hierarchical decisions (e.g., the Arian crisis), J. M. R. Tillard explains how this encompasses more in Roman Catholicism than just providing a complementary force within the people of God. It is, along with the unanimous consensus of the Fathers and the doctors, "one of the major threads making up the fabric of Tradition. . . ." It is "one of the privileged means of discovering the content of revelation." It is "the element upon which the Roman Magisterium, subsequently appealing to pontifical infallibility, based itself in the only two dogmatic definitions that it has made."<sup>47</sup>

In an article entitled "Papal Infallibility and the Marian Definitions: Some Considerations,"<sup>48</sup> Eamon R. Carroll describes the nature and extent of the consultation processes that preceded the formulation and the promulgation of these two dogmas. In both instances, popes sent out encyclicals to all the bishops of the world asking what was the faith of their clergy and people and whether they wanted to see the matter defined by the Holy See. The response in both instances was overwhelmingly posi-

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> Tillard, "Sensus Fidelium," p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> E. R. Carroll, "Papal Infallibility . . .," *Carmelus* 26, no. 2 (1979): 213-250. Carroll often cites the essay of Tillard mentioned above and an article by René Laurentin, "The Role of the Papal Magisterium in the Development of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception," in *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. E. D. O'Connor (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), pp. 271-324. This is an abridgement of his "L'action du Saint Siège par rapport au problème de l'Immaculée," in *Virgo Immaculata: Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Romae 1954 celebrati* (Rome, 1956), 2: 1-99.

tive. For example, of the 603 bishops consulted by Pius IX in 1849, 546 were in favor; of the 56 or 57 opposed only 4 or 5 thought the matter could not be defined; 10 asked for an indirect definition that would not condemn those who held Mary not to be immaculately conceived.<sup>49</sup> In the weeks immediately preceding the definition, representative bishops from each country were invited to Rome to deliberate further on the formulation of the dogma. There was a disagreement among them as to whether the proposed bull should state explicitly that the bishops had given their consent to the definition. Given the atmosphere at the time, it was judged best to state that the pope rather than the bishops issued the definition, in order to make it clear, in the words of Bishop Malou of Bruges, that if issued by the pope alone, it would underscore the supreme authority of the teaching Church. Thus, as Carroll explains, "the doctrine was proclaimed by the pope without reference to the consent of the episcopate, though that consent had in fact preceded the papal act, and the pope had sought it."<sup>50</sup>

A similar consultation process preceded the definition of the Assumption in 1950. *Munificentissimus Deus*, the apostolic constitution which defined the dogma, appealed to the *sensus fidelium* as its main support for the definition: "the concordant teaching of the Church's ordinary doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of the Christian people which the same doctrinal authority sustains and directs." Of the 1,181 residential bishops consulted, 1,159 were in favor of the definition; of the 22 opposed, only 6 questioned the revealed character of the As-

<sup>49</sup> Carroll, "Papal Infallibility," p. 216.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219. It was Bishop O'Connor of Pittsburgh who, among others, requested that the bull state that the bishops had consented to the definition. Carroll explains why Andrea Charvay of Genoa opposed the idea and stated: "To speak of the consent of the bishops where an infallible papal decree was concerned sounded to him like Protestantism." Unfortunately, O'Connor yielded (p. 221). From what we have seen above, one wonders what Bishop Charvay would have thought of Vatican I's emphasis on the pope's submission to the rule of faith and Vatican II's statement that the pope's definitions express the consensus of the whole community.



sumption, and the rest wondered if it was opportune.<sup>51</sup>

There should be little doubt then about the central role played by the *sensus fidelium* in the Marian definitions. The process used to prepare for the definitions has forced theologians to examine much more closely an important facet of the Church's self-understanding that, in the words of Congar, was always maintained by the Catholic Church both East and West, namely, that "what the body of the Church, together with its pastors, agrees in holding as of faith is part of revelation, since the Church filled and assisted by the Holy Spirit, cannot be wrong in a matter of faith."<sup>52</sup> This is the way in which the Church has described ecclesial infallibility for centuries. The exact relationship between it and the *sensus fidelium* is an interesting question, but not the point of this article. It was, however, only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the *sensus fidelium* became explicit in the consciousness of the Church.

There are obviously some difficulties that surround the idea of a *sensus fidelium*. Just as Newman considered the argument of his *Essay on Development* "an hypothesis to account for a difficulty," namely, the variations in Church teaching and practice from the time of the Apostolic Church to the Catholic Church of the nineteenth century, so too the notion of the *sensus fidelium*, at least methodologically, seems to be "an hypothesis to account for a difficulty," namely, how to show that the recent Marian dogmas are indeed contained in the deposit of faith.<sup>53</sup>

Another difficulty is posed by the problem of how to discern the *sensus fidelium*. In the matter of doctrines for which there are no explicit and obvious biblical bases (such as papal infalli-

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 231. Carroll lists 1169 of 1181 as affirmative. Presumably the number 1169 should be either 1159 or the number 1181 should be 1191. In either case, we are speaking of an overwhelming majority.

<sup>52</sup> Y. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), p. 203.

<sup>53</sup> J. T. Ford, "Newman on *Sensus Fidelium* and Mariology," *MS* 28 (1977): 136.

bility, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption) the Protestants and some Catholics will wonder how the *sensus fidelium* can be kept from going in arbitrary directions and from settling upon a doctrine that actually is against Scripture. It could be answered, in the words of Vatican II, that the Holy Spirit, who assists the pope in his *ex cathedra* definitions, preserves the entire Church in a unity of faith.<sup>54</sup> In the 1966 edition of the *Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter Abbott, there is a footnote to this previous statement which asks: "What if the Pope were to define something to which the rest of the episcopal college or the faithful did not agree?" It answers this by saying that:

. . . the case is a purely imaginary one, since one and same Holy Spirit directs the Pope, the college of bishops, and the whole body of the faithful.<sup>55</sup>

In a somewhat different context, that of the Church teachings on the family, the same question—that of the nature and correct discernment of the *sensus fidelium*—was raised recently by Cardinal George Basil Hume who, on September 29, 1980, spoke at the International Synod of Bishops about the necessity of consulting the laity on matters that have to do with the family. He explained that the prophetic mission of husbands and wives is based on their experience as married people "and on an understanding of the sacrament of marriage of which they can speak with their own authority." Both their experience and their understanding constitute, the Cardinal suggested, "an authentic *fons theologiae* from which we, the pastors, and indeed the whole Church can draw." It is because, the Cardinal continued,

<sup>54</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, article 25.

<sup>55</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott (New York: Corpus Books, 1966), p. 49, n. 125. The note continues on to explain how in practice the pope always consults. It could also have been answered that if the "unimaginable" were to take place, the pope, if he persisted in his position, would be in heresy.

married couples are the ministers of the sacrament and "alone have experienced the effects of the sacrament" that they have special authority in matters related to marriage. Finally, citing the synod working-document which stated that "parents themselves must commit themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit who also teaches them anew through their children," the Cardinal stated that "*a fortiori* it would seem that pastors should listen to the parents themselves."<sup>56</sup>

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, recently appointed the Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, attempted as the official relator of the Synod to summarize at the end of the first week the discussion of the bishops. He noted two tendencies which he said must not exclude each other: "the problem," he stated, "is to reconcile them so that they complement each other." The first tendency was represented by those participants (certainly including Cardinal Hume) who

. . . have insisted that the usual formulas not be repeated, as if the doctrine had been made once and for all closed. They claim that the doctrines must not consist only of theoretical principles, but must be considered in the history of God's people. The criteria for the doctrine must be the *sense of faith* of God's people, the experience of couples, the work of theologians and philosophers, the progress of human sciences and the evaluations of the Church's magisterium.<sup>56a</sup>

Crucial for this tendency, explained Ratzinger, are history, which manifests itself in the signs of the times, and experience, which is clarified by the sense of the faithful.

The second tendency was represented by those participants who say that the "Church must not be overwhelmed by current opinions, as if it were a sociological doctrine, but must propheti-

<sup>56</sup> G. B. Hume, "Development of Marriage Teaching," *Origins* 10, no. 18 (16 October 1980): 276.

<sup>56a</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275; quotation from Cardinal Ratzinger, found in outside margin-column.

cally preach the medicine of the Gospel to the ills of the world." These participants recognize the development of doctrine, continued Ratzinger, "only when faith penetrates the life of men and converts them."<sup>57</sup>

It should be evident from these reflections that the idea of the *sensus fidelium* has become very important, especially in the last 150 years. Nevertheless, much theological work needs to be done to clarify further its nature, its relationship to ecclesial infallibility, and how it is to be properly discerned. As Tillard remarks, theologians approaching this idea enter a field of research, many parts of which remain unexplored.<sup>58</sup> The same would have to be said about theologians who wish to understand the meaning and significance of the notion of a "hierarchy of truths." Article II of Vatican II's decree on ecumenism, *Re-dintegratio unitatis*, states that when comparing doctrines, Catholics who together with Protestants are searching into the meaning of revelation "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."<sup>59</sup>

The statement about a "hierarchy of truths" found its way into the final text only during the final redaction. It was the most important of all the changes which were introduced because of the *modi*, and was well received by non-Catholic Christians.<sup>60</sup> Oscar Cullmann considered the passage "the most revolutionary to be found . . . in any of the schemas of the present

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275-276. Ratzinger further suggested that one way the two tendencies could be reconciled is to find out how to use Church doctrine in people's lives; in other words, how to build bridges "to reduce the distances between the Christian vocation and concrete life." (p. 276) Without the text of Ratzinger's talk, it is difficult to know whether he would mean, for example, the adjustment of the practice of most married couples to *Humanae vitae* or of *Humanae vitae* to the practice of most married couples, or if indeed there would be some "higher synthesis."

<sup>58</sup> Tillard, "Sensus Fidelium," p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 354.

<sup>60</sup> *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. H. Vorgrimler, 5 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967-69), 2: 118.

Council."<sup>61</sup> It represents an effort to balance the formal element common to all doctrine with the significance of its content. When the decree says that doctrines "vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith," it asks in effect how closely connected they are to the mystery of Christ, who in turn can be properly understood only within the mystery of the Trinity. Those engaged in ecumenical discussion should, therefore, weigh rather than enumerate the truths on which they agree and disagree.<sup>62</sup> On 25 November 1963, during the discussion on the schema on Ecumenism, Bishop Pangrazio, who had introduced there the idea of the hierarchy of truths, went on to distinguish between means and ends:

There are truths which belong to the *order of the end*, such as the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the word, the redemption, divine love and grace towards sinful mankind, eternal life in the perfection of the kingdom of God, and others. But there are other truths which belong to the *order of the means of salvation*, such as the truth that there are seven sacraments, the hierarchical structure of the Church, the apostolic succession, etc.<sup>63</sup>

When theologians attempt to apply this concept to the Marian dogmas, some of the complexities become immediately apparent.<sup>64</sup> For example, there was the suggestion of Edward Yarnold who on 7 March 1971 gave a University Sermon in Oxford

<sup>61</sup> Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism," *The Ecumenical Review* 17 (April 1965): 94.

<sup>62</sup> H. Mühlen, "Die Lehre des Vaticanum II über die *hierarchia veritatum* und ihr Bedeutung für den oekumenischen Dialog," *Theologie und Glaube* 56 (1966): 304.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Vorgrimler, *Commentary*, 2:120. Pangrazio continued: "It is a fact that the differences in doctrine between Christians concern not so much those truths which belong to the order of the *end*, but rather those which belong to the order of the *means*, and are undoubtedly subordinate to the former" (pp. 120-121, n. 49).

<sup>64</sup> Carroll, "Papal Infallibility," p. 236. See also Y. Congar, "On the *Hierarchia Veritatum*," in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Georges Florovsky on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. D. Neiman

on the "Marian Dogmas and Reunion."<sup>65</sup> He stated at the beginning of the sermon that there is no such thing as an inessential article of faith and that in no way can there be a Church without a concept of doctrinal orthodoxy. Next, he explained that most doctrines, and in particular the Marian dogmas, may be understood on a symbolic level and on a theological level, the former being its historical formulation and the latter its ulterior, deeper, lasting meaning. While the theological meaning is to be centered upon Christ and Redemption, the historical formulation does not need to be. In view of this, he wondered if the Marian dogmas might be accepted by other Christians on the theological level without requiring of them acceptance on the symbolic level, regarding the formulations of 1854 and 1950. The basis of the theological argument could be

. . . that it is of faith that God's grace requires human cooperation, provides the conditions which make the human response possible and fruitful, and results in sanctification, so that the holiness of the Church will be verifiable in the lives of its members and will overflow from member to member, and finally that all that is truly of value in human existence continues after death, when it is transformed in heaven.<sup>66</sup>

Another example of the complexity involved in applying the hierarchy of truths to the Marian dogmas may be found in the lecture, presented in December of 1974, by Avery Dulles in Cincinnati, where he asked if the idea of the hierarchy of truths would permit a way for Catholics and other Christians to be truly one "in faith in a united Church without the requirement

and M. Schatkin (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973); and, more recently, three articles in *MS* 27 (1976): F. M. Jelly, "Marian Dogmas within Vatican II's Hierarchy of Truths," pp. 17-40; D. Dietz, "The Hierarchy of Truths about Mary," pp. 41-63; and Bertrand de Margerie, "Dogmatic Development by Abridgment or by Concentration?," pp. 64-98.

<sup>65</sup> Yarnold, "Marian Dogmas and Reunion," *The Month* 3, 2nd n.s. (June 1971): 177-179.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

of an explicit acceptance of the Marian Dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, say by Lutherans and others?"<sup>67</sup> While personally professing belief in these dogmas, Dulles asked that the fact of their truth be separated from the necessity that every Christian in communion with the Catholic Church should have to accept them. In support of his suggestion, he noted that certain beliefs "are primarily and directly ordered to salvation and others . . . are only secondarily or indirectly connected with salvation." Thus he suggested that the Marian dogmas should be taught without anathemas, especially since they concerned "relatively minor and highly subtle doctrinal differences." He concluded that it was "inexcusable for the churches to be mutually divided by doctrines that are obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith."<sup>68</sup>

Both the proposals of Yarnold and Dulles have received critical comment. One author saw in Yarnold's suggestion a sort of reductionism which risks turning the Marian Dogmas into "mere abstractions."<sup>69</sup> The same author disagreed with Dulles' description of the Marian Dogmas as "obscure and remote truths," and stated instead that they were "necessary for the proper understanding of the central mystery."<sup>70</sup>

The sharpest criticism of the two proposals has come from the French Jesuit, Bertrand de Margerie, who states that since the "Church has recognized the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption as divinely revealed, there will never be a way (whether we like it or not) of being totally incorporated into her

<sup>67</sup> A. Dulles, "A Proposal to Lift Anathemas," *Origins* 4 (1974): 418-421.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>69</sup> F. Jelly, "Marian Dogmas," p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36. I believe that Jelly slightly overstates his case when he says that the Marian dogmas are "necessary for the proper understanding of the central mystery." Leaving aside the fact that these doctrines could be believed and celebrated liturgically without being formally defined as dogmas, I would suggest that they *help* a person see the full soteriological ramifications of the central mystery. On the other hand, Dulles understates their value in referring to them as obscure and remote.

without professing the totality of her faith."<sup>71</sup> Yarnold's proposal he criticizes as "essentially a neo-Gnosticism tainted with Modernism"<sup>72</sup> and Dulles' suggestion as a reduction of the Marian Dogmas to "merely optional 'theologoumena'" which substantially changes their doctrinal status.<sup>73</sup>

Both the proposals of Yarnold and Dulles and the critique of the same by de Margerie and Jelly have merit. The difficulty is that it is not easy to talk about secondary truths or peripheral doctrines without sounding as though one is saying they are less true or less important than the primary or core doctrines. To speak of a hierarchy of truths is, in the opinion of MacQuarrie, not perhaps as

. . . helpful as it is sometimes supposed to be, for Christian truth is really one, though we express it in a number of doctrines; and because it is really one, all of these doctrines are mutually implicative or coinherent.<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, it is still possible to speak, as indeed that same decree on Ecumenism does in Article 20, of some doctrines at the very foundation of the Christian faith, and others which are a consequence of them:

We are indeed aware that among them (Christians who confess Jesus as Lord and the Trinity) views are held considerably different from the doctrine of the Catholic Church even considering Christ, God's word made flesh, and the work of redemption, and thus con-

<sup>71</sup> B. de Margerie, "Dogmatic Development," p. 71.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>74</sup> MacQuarrie, "The Immaculate Conception," *Communio* 7, no. 2 (1980): 102. To establish the Immaculate Conception he states that it will be necessary to show that it is "an implicate of these other Christian truths [the major Christian doctrines]. . . . [T]he mariological doctrines will, in turn, throw new light on the truths from which it has been derived and will also show new connections among them and so will strengthen the coherence of Christian theology. This is one reason for believing that mariology is worthy of study" (p. 103).



cerning the mystery and ministry of the Church and the role of Mary in the work of salvation.<sup>75</sup>

We seem to be caught between those who stress the *quod*, that is, the content of those doctrines which form the foundation of the Christian faith, and those who stress the *quo*, or the authority by which any doctrine has been promulgated. When one stresses the *quod*, one concentrates on its closeness to the mystery of Christ; when one stresses the *quo*, one emphasizes the fact that it is true and therefore must be believed.<sup>76</sup>

A way out of this dilemma may be found in the realization that besides the *quod* and the *quo* there is also the *qui*. Congar writes that "the character of truth is an absolute, which as such and in a formal way does not permit a more or less. From this point of view there could be no degrees in truth. But truth is truth of *something*, and it is recognized and confessed by *somebody*."<sup>77</sup> There is perhaps what Cardinal Hume referred to, in a 1978 address to the first joint meeting of the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Episcopal Con-

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Stransky orders Christian doctrines as follows: "Grace has more importance than sin, sanctifying grace more than actual grace, the Holy Spirit more than Our Lady, the resurrection of Christ more than his childhood, the mystical aspect of the Church more than its juridical, the Church's liturgy more than private devotions: baptism more than penance, the Eucharist more than the anointing of the sick" (cited in Vorgrimler, *Commentary*, 2: 119).

<sup>76</sup> More than any other scholar, Congar has shown (see especially his *Tradition and Traditions*.) that the emphasis has shifted from the *quod* to the *quo*, particularly from the time of the early Church to that of the Counter-Reformation. Even in the late Middle Ages, John XXII (1316-1334) repeatedly told his opponents in the still-open Beatific Vision controversy to pay attention to the cogency of his arguments and the biblical texts he had assembled and not to the fact that he was the pope: "non quis sed quid." (See my "The Historical Origins of Papal Infallibility," *CTSAP* 35 (1980): 210.) By the time of the Reformation, however, the authority by which something was said became more important than what was said. Thomas Stapleton (†1598) went so far as to say, "In the teaching of the faith, believers should pay heed not to what is said but who says it" (Congar, "Magisterium, Theologians" [See n. 28 above.], p. 554).

<sup>77</sup> Congar, "On the *Hierarchia Veritatum*," p. 418. Congar's observation is consistent with the purposes of the Decree on Ecumenism which asked in Ar-

ferences, when he stated that besides a theological hierarchy of truths, "there is another and 'existential' sense in which we can speak of a hierarchy of truths."<sup>78</sup> He then noted that some Christian churches emphasize one strand of the inexhaustibly rich Christian revelation. When Congar spoke of "somebody," he was drawing attention to the variety of Churches, each of which is subject to some historical limitations. In the light of this recognition, one must begin to deal then not only with the *quod* and the *quo*, but also the many "historical forms which the Christian churches have used for dogmatic expression."<sup>79</sup> These considerations only suggest a way out of some of the difficulties which have appeared in initial reflection on the meaning and use of Vatican II's notion of a "hierarchy of truths." The possibilities are rich, but their realization is plainly for the future.

### III

This article by its title indicated that only an introduction to infallibility and the Marian dogmas would be attempted. The complexities inherent in each topic, to say nothing of their ramifications for other areas of theology and Christian life, allow only for an introduction. What remain are a few reflections on the ecumenical possibilities that they provide.

(1) *Papal Infallibility and Ecumenism*. Twenty-five years ago, very few could even have anticipated the extent to which

ticle 11 that "the manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed should in no way become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren." Speaking of the ecumenical method of dialogue, Bishop de Smedt explained on 19 November 1962 to the Council Fathers that "the distinctive feature of this method is that it is not limited to a simple affirmation of the truth, but that it also gives some thought to how a truth of faith can be so presented that others may understand it. Christians of different denominations help each other in this dialogue to obtain an increasingly better understanding of doctrines which are not their own" (cited in Vorgrimler, *Commentary*, 2: 115).

<sup>78</sup> G. B. Hume, "The Churches: How Can Visible Unity Begin?," *Origins* 7 (1978): 711.

<sup>79</sup> Congar, "On the *Hierarchia Veritatum*," p. 419.

Protestant and Catholic theologians would not only be able to discuss papal infallibility, but also be able to attain some real agreement about its nature and importance for all Christians. In 1973, for example, Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars published a study entitled *Peter and the New Testament* which concluded that although the Petrine images in "the New Testament do not constitute the papacy in its later technical sense . . . one can see the possibility of an orientation in that direction, when shaped by favoring factors in the subsequent Church."<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, "the line of development of such images is obviously reconcilable with, and indeed favorable to, the claims of the Roman Catholic church for the papacy. The same may be said of some images of Peter which appeared in early patristic times."<sup>80a</sup> The Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue has progressed to the point where all the participants seem to agree that what is most needed is a restatement, not a rejection of papal infallibility. In the United States' Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue, the Lutheran scholars stated that they "can no longer simply repeat their traditional objections to infallibility."<sup>81</sup> From their dialogue with their Catholic partners, these Lutheran theologians concluded that the Catholic doctrine of infallibility seemed to them little different "from the affirmation which we share, that God will not permit the Church to err definitively on any issue vital to the faith; 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"<sup>82</sup>

One important factor which has led to such consensus statements has been a careful interpretation of papal infallibility, stressing, as we have already seen, that it is not absolute or per-

<sup>80</sup> Hans Küng stated in *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), p. 677, that the consensus among ecumenical biblical scholars does not confirm Vatican I. He seems to have overlooked completely the 1974 U.S. Lutheran/Roman Catholic study on Papal Primacy (See H. McSorley, "The Küng Controversy," *The Canadian Forum* [November, 1980]: 21).

<sup>80a</sup> *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V*, ed. P. C. Empie and T. A. Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), p. 41.

<sup>81</sup> *Teaching Authority*, p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

sonal or separate from the faith of the whole Church. Moreover, *ex cathedra* statements are subject to fourfold historical conditioning, which opens "the possibility of eventually finding new expressions faithful to the original intention and adapted to a changed cultural context."<sup>83</sup>

A second important factor has been the discovery by Protestants that infallibility is not just a Catholic concern. George Lindbeck, a Lutheran theologian at Yale, stated in 1971, in a critique of Küng's book on infallibility, that while it would be convenient for Protestants to agree with him, "probably every religion, and certainly Christianity, is committed to affirming the infallibility of at least some of its central affirmations."<sup>84</sup> While at the beginning of their dialogue the Lutheran theologians, for example, saw infallibility as "an inner-Catholic problem to which Lutherans had little to contribute," they soon came to realize that it was "anything but a solely Roman Catholic problem":

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44. We noted in the first section of this paper how carefully circumscribed was Vatican I's definition. We noted also that there has been a tendency on the part of some in the hierarchy to present definitions in a way that would seem to preclude any further discussion (note 39). It would help considerably ecumenical dialogue if Catholic bishops and theologians would stress the traditional Catholic doctrine on the primacy of conscience in the acceptance of even infallibly defined doctrines. Secondly, and related to this, it would help if the legitimate grounds for dissenting from authentic non-infallible teachings were presented. See for example the following articles which interpret, among other things, *Lumen Gentium's* statement that "religious submission of will and mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*": B. C. Butler, "Authority and the Christian Conscience," *The Clergy Review* 60 (1975): 3-17, and his "Infallible: Authenticum: Assensus: Obsequium," *DoClf* 31 (February, 1981): 77-89; J. A. Komonchak, "Ordinary Papal Magisterium and Religious Assent," in *Contraception: Authority and Dissent*, ed. C. E. Curran (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 101-126, and "*Humanae Vitae* and Its Reception," *TS* 39 (1978): 221-257; and Harry McSorley, "Right of Catholics to Dissent from *Humanae Vitae*," *Ecumnst* 8, no. 1 (Nov/Dec 1969) and also his "Some Forgotten Truths" (See n. 31 above.), pp. 228-231.

<sup>84</sup> Cited by McSorley in *Infallibility Debate*, pp. 107-108. In another article ("The Küng Controversy"), after describing the extent of the recent ecumen-

The very nature and truth of the gospel, the verification and authority of its proclamation and interpretation, and the credibility of the Church's preaching and teaching ministry are involved in this question.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, the intense research into this dogma, especially over the past ten years, has made it clear that there are a number of important questions that still need to be explored. For example, just what is infallibility? According to Avery Dulles, the Church has never addressed itself thematically to this question: "Vatican I stated that the pope enjoys that infallibility with which Christ endowed the Church—without ever saying just what the infallibility of the whole Church was."<sup>86</sup> Such questions, of course, would press us to explore further the larger questions of the nature of truth and revelation.

(2) *The Marian Dogmas and Ecumenism.* In the minds of most Protestants, the Marian dogmas represent a great stumbling block to reunification. The attitude among Protestant theologians after the definition of the Assumption was, according to Reformed theologian Donald Dawe, anything but irenic:

Protestant theologians viewed this new Definition as more than biblical. They decried it as anti-biblical. Rumors were spreading among Protestants that the Catholic theologians were ultimately aiming to replace the doctrine of the Trinity with a doctrine of quaternity . . . Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Blessed Virgin.<sup>87</sup> Serious

ical consensus on papal infallibility, McSorley states: "Of the many fascinating paradoxes that appear in ecumenical discussions, one that presents itself here is that if Küng could accept the definition of terms and the affirmations concerning infallibility that are now being made by representative Anglican and Lutheran theologians, the Roman censure would no longer apply to him" (p. 21).

<sup>85</sup> *Teaching Authority*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>86</sup> Heft, "Historical Origins of Papal Infallibility" (See n. 76 above.), p. 211. Dulles' observation may be found in *Teaching Authority*, p. 95. Note also, on p. 94, the five questions Dulles raises that he thinks important and were not thought through at Vatican I.

<sup>87</sup> Two years after the definition, the famous psychologist C. G. Jung described in his "Answer to Job" how the dogma was "a slap in the face for the historical and rationalistic view of the world," (*Psychology and Religion: West*

question arose as to whether Roman Catholicism was not lapsing into a kind of new paganism centered on a Mother-Goddess. Such musings were not the preserve of a lunatic fringe but issued from the leading and most responsible Protestant theologians. Karl Barth, George Barrois, among others, decried the arrogance of papal power in proclaiming new dogmas. They saw in the new dogmas a rejection of the sole mediatorship of Christ.<sup>88</sup>

What is amazing, of course, is not only that the worst fears of the Protestants have not at all materialized, but also that there is today, thirty years later, widespread ecumenical discussion, even about Mary and the papacy.

A major impetus for this entire ecumenical turn has been the Second Vatican Council and especially chapter 8 of the Constitution on the Church. This reinterpretation of the place of Mary in the Church, as René Laurentin once remarked, presented Mary as "neither understudy for Christ nor substitute for the Holy Spirit." Besides the pivotal importance of this conciliar text, other documents which have emanated from Rome and national hierarchies have gone a considerable distance in promoting a deeper understanding between Protestants and Catholics on the topic. In 1975, the United States' Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue published the exegetical study *Mary in the New Testament*, and are now preparing to take up the Marian dogmas.

According to Dawe, ecumenical discussion is made possible by two major developments: in the Reformed theological tradition there is a greater awareness "of the importance of the recep-

*and East*, Bollingen Series, 20 [New York: Bollingen Foundation, 2nd ed. rev., 1963], p. 467). He proceeded to explain how the definition of the Assumption provides for: (1) a response to a deep yearning for peace in all people; (2) a metaphysical anchor for the equality of woman; and (3) a place for the feminine in God. (See G. O'Collins, *The Case Against Dogma* [New York: Paulist Press, 1975], pp. 80-81.)

<sup>88</sup> Donald G. Dawe, "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in Ecumenical Perspective" (Unpublished paper presented at the International Conference of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Canterbury, England, September 15, 1981), p. 2.

tion of revelation into human forms of thought and life," and in the Roman Catholic theological tradition "a rethinking of the scope and authority of Tradition in the light of the hierarchy of truths which has served to clarify recent Marian definitions."<sup>89</sup>

Related to the questions that are posed by the notion of the hierarchy of truths are those posed by individuals concerned with the degree of consultation necessary for the proclamation of a dogma. The question has been put most forcefully in 1967, by the late Arthur Piepkorn:

It might be well to recognize from the outset that agreement on the revealed character of the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the bodily Assumption cannot foreseeably be reached. . . . The one eventuality that a non-Roman-Catholic can contemplate is so unlikely at this moment that a Roman Catholic would be bound to reject it as impossible. This eventuality is that with the maturing of certain insights in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church that have found seminal and nascent expression in *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, it may some day be realized and recognized that the whole Church was not consulted prior to 1854 and 1950, that the *whole* Church did not concur in and consent to the definitions, and that whatever degree of canonical validity these definitions have for those who accept the authority of the bishop of Rome, they are still open to question for the *whole* Church.<sup>90</sup>

What in 1967 seemed impossible in Piepkorn's opinion for a Catholic to contemplate, actually happened in 1971, when Catholic theologian, Harry McSorley, in a carefully argued critique of Küng's book on infallibility, asked: "Have the Marian dogmas and even the Vatican I dogma of papal infallibility really met the conditions of infallibility?" He also asked if these dogmas "really express the faith of the *whole* Church, or only of

<sup>89</sup> Donald Dawe, "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin and Eschatology" (Unpublished paper, 1978?), p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> A. C. Piepkorn, "Mary's Place Within the People of God," *MS* 18 (1967): 82.

the Roman Catholic Church?"<sup>91</sup> He suggested moreover that the answer Catholic theologians would have given before Vatican II might well be different than the answer given now, especially since *Lumen Gentium* taught that the Church of Christ subsists in, but is not co-extensive with, the Roman Catholic Church. McSorley continued:

If a dogma can only be infallible when it "embodies the Church's unanimity," to use Tavad's phrase, then it is possible, in the light of what Vatican II considers the *whole* Church to be, that these dogmas are not infallible, since they do not "express the consensus of the *whole* community," to use the language of the Vatican II *relatio* . . .<sup>92</sup>

Or, to use Vatican I's own language, were Popes Pius IX and XII acting as the "pastor and doctor of *all* Christians" when they promulgated the Marian definitions?<sup>93</sup>

Also related to questions about the hierarchy of truths are those that ask whether the acceptance of the Marian dogmas is actually necessary for salvation, or, from another perspective, for full incorporation into the Catholic Church. Thus, Avery Dulles concluded in the 1974 lecture that "it would be ecumenically desirable to separate the truth of these doctrines from that of the necessity that every Christian in communion with the Catholic Church should believe and profess these doctrines."<sup>94</sup> Authors

<sup>91</sup> McSorley, *Infallibility Debate*, p. 105, n. 93.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* McSorley adds that this would not mean that the dogmas would not be true, but that they would not be infallible, which, however, means that "they *might* not be true." His primary intention in raising the question was "to open up the possibilities of new avenues that will permit freer ecumenical discussion of the controverted dogmas." See also Luis Bermejo, "The Venice Statement and Vatican I," *Bijdragen* 39 (1978): 244-269. While sympathetic to McSorley's questioning of the ecumenicity of these Councils, Bermejo fails to see any sound basis for conciliar infallibility. The reason for this is that Bermejo lacks the ecumenical basis for ecclesial infallibility which can be found in the Catholic Churches of the East and the West, as well as in Luther, Calvin and the Anglican tradition.

<sup>93</sup> *D-Sch*, 3074, my emphasis.

<sup>94</sup> Dulles, "A Proposal to Lift Anathemas" (See n. 67 above.), p. 419.



with a similar concern ask that the Church insist only on what is essential, and what is clearly related to the foundations of the Christian faith. They emphasize that dogmatic definitions are an unfortunate necessity, and that those which have been made not to oppose some heresy, but to clarify and promote devotion, ought not to be given the same importance as dogmas about Christ, the Trinity and creation.<sup>95</sup> They suggest that the anathemas be lifted since they "refer not to the truth of the statement — but to the canonical effects of their denial."<sup>96</sup> Several have pointed out that eucharistic hospitality has been extended to the Orthodox, despite the fact that they do not accept papal infallibility and the Marian dogmas. But even the most irenic of the Protestants do not see the possibility of acceptance of the Marian dogmas as a condition for salvation. Donald Dawe has recently written that:

The Churches of the Reformed tradition cannot receive the Dogma of the Assumption as a belief necessary for salvation. It cannot be made binding on the conscience of the faithful. While the dogma of the Assumption developed out of traditions found in Scripture, it lacks the full biblical justification necessary for a binding dogmatic assertion.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> These authors find support in the view of John Henry Newman, who, in the words of Dessain, ". . . did not see the need to *define* doctrines about which Catholics were agreed. Definitions were not a luxury but a painful necessity. And he doubted whether the definitions of the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption had led or would lead to an *increase* in devotion" (cited by J. T. Ford, "Newman on the *Sensus Fidelium* and Mariology" (See n. 53 above.), p. 127.

<sup>96</sup> K. McDonnell, "Infallibility Again?," *Worship* 52 (1978): 65. He adds that "in doing so, care would have to be taken not to create a mentality of 'take your pick among the dogmas.'"

<sup>97</sup> Dawe, "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in Ecumenical Perspective," p. 24. Since Dawe admits that "the dogma of the Assumption developed out of traditions found in Scripture," the question can be asked: just how much biblical justification is necessary for a binding dogmatic assertion? How biblically justified is the *homoousion* teaching or the doctrine of infant baptism, both of which are accepted by the Reformed and Lutheran traditions?

What then can be said about the Marian dogmas and ecumenism? I wish to make four observations. First, I think that it will be impossible for Catholics, if they are to retain their identity, to "rescind" the Marian dogmas, or to conclude that they are false. I think rather that what will take place will be what is taking place in discussions about papal infallibility: careful efforts at reinterpretation worked at in dialogue with other Christians will help to clear away much misunderstanding if not produce full agreement.<sup>98</sup>

Secondly, concerning the line of thought based on the teaching of Vatican II that the Church of Christ extends beyond but subsists in the Roman Catholic Church, Roman Catholics will be forced to reassess whether councils of the Church can be fully accepted when Christians representing the whole Church have not been present.

Thirdly, ecumenical ecclesiology will increasingly stress that what actually constitutes the source of infallibility is not the consent of the Church or even of the Churches, but the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not, therefore, a question of a majority vote or the least common denominator that will produce the longed-for unity among Christians. Such thinking represents a false notion of ecumenism and substitutes quantity for quality. However, I also suspect that if the ecumenical discussions continue to

<sup>98</sup> In a recent address, Karl Rahner indicates some ways in which the Marian dogmas might be reinterpreted. "As for the first Marian dogma, I would dare to suggest that one can indicate much more easily the connection of this with revelation as such, by further possible orthodox developments concerning original sin in general." Concerning the Assumption he said: "If today we use a way of thinking that differs from a platonizing interpretation of the 'separation of body and soul' at the time of death and hold that everyone at death takes on his or her resurrection body already 'even at that very moment' (to the extent that the use of such a temporal concept is legitimate), which view is frequently proposed even in Protestant theology, and which, with some appropriate demythologizing, can be quite legitimate, then what is stated in the dogma of Mary's assumption is not an exclusive occurrence since, as a matter of fact, it happens to all the saints" (Rahner, "Open Questions in Dogma" [See n. 39 above.], pp. 23-24).

make progress, we will in effect be working our way first toward formulations arrived at together, and second toward, let it be hoped, an ecumenical council representing the entire Church, where together Christians may forge a more adequate vision of the Church and of Mary's role within it.<sup>99</sup>

Fourthly, the phrase "truths that are necessary for salvation" presents, if not as many difficulties as the famous dictum *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, enough difficulties to require today considerable reworking. When discussing the concept of the hierarchy of truths, Macquarrie refers to secondary doctrines, such as the Marian dogmas, as "part of the fullness of Christian truth" brought to its "maximal expression."<sup>100</sup> If indeed they represent a maximal expression of the Christian faith it would be foolish, in my opinion, to suggest that they are not important for a full grasp of the Christian truth. At the same time, to insist that a

<sup>99</sup> Even De Margerie, who is very critical of the suggestions of Piepkorn, Yar-nold and Dulles for new ecumenical formulations, looks to the possibility of a Unity Council which might, taking into consideration new needs, redefine truths already once defined (De Margerie, "Dogmatic Development," pp. 80 ff.). Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism has paved the way for this possibility when it explained the obligation of the Catholic participants in any ecumenical discussion. As the Vorgrimler commentary explains: "If the partners in the dialogue are to have a right understanding of Catholic doctrine, it must not only be set forth fully, but also, in the words of the second paragraph (of article 11), more profoundly (*profundius*), more correctly and more precisely (*rectius*), and explained, unfolded (*explicanda*), and set forth in a language which the partners in the dialogue can understand. These statements once again reflect the experience of ecumenists who for decades have carried on a theological dialogue with representatives of other denominations; the dialogue repeatedly forced the partners on both sides to undertake a more fundamental reflection upon their own point of view, to make more precise statements with clearer distinctions, to use more comprehensible language, and, in short, to speak in the words of the text of the decree, *profundius, rectius, comprehensibiliter*" (Vorgrimler, *Commentary*, 2: 116). As this is achieved, the next step could be a Unity Council where, in the words of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, a "magisterial mutuality" would provide "a more unified voice for Christian witness in this world" (*Teaching Authority*, p. 36: par. 55 of the Common Statement).

<sup>100</sup> MacQuarrie, "Immaculate Conception" (See n. 74 above.), p. 103.

full grasp and acceptance of them is necessary for salvation, even for Catholics, stresses too much the noetic and formal acceptance of doctrine, almost to the exclusion of the existential realities of day-to-day piety and the pastoral need that all be allowed a gradual appropriation of the "finer" but nonetheless true doctrines of the Catholic faith. Every revealed truth is necessary for salvation, when that revealed truth is confronted by the believer who understands its significance. The burden here, however, is not primarily upon the ordinary believer, but rather upon pastors and theologians to preach and teach more cogently the place and importance of Mary in the Christian life. As this is achieved, we can speak of an even more important responsibility that belongs to all Catholics, and that is the willingness to share with other Christians their devotion to Mary. Speaking for the Reformed tradition, Donald Dawe explains the intimate relationship that exists between the piety of a people and the capacity of that same people to understand and accept certain doctrines:

What a particular Christian community can confess in its theology about Mary and her function in salvation is shaped decisively by the place Mary is given in its piety and worship. The ambiguities of modern Reformed theology on Mary are a function of the deep ambiguities in its piety and liturgy. The disbelief in the Virgin Mary found in much modern Reformed theology is a function of the loss of a vital place for Mary in the religious life of the Reformed churches. It is this shift in religiosity, far more than the advent of modern rationalistic and scientific arguments against the virgin birth, that created the present situation in Reformed theology. It was dysfunction that created disbelief and not vice versa.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Donald Dawe, "From Dysfunction to Disbelief: The Virgin Mary in Reformed Theology" (Paper given at the Meeting of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Washington, D.C., 30 April 1977), p. 3. Later in the same paper he states: "The confusion over Mary has continued in the Reformed tradition. Most theologians and pastors treat the question with silence. Their silence is seldom challenged since a liturgy and piety that give no function to Mary never raise the question of her meaning" (p. 7).

It is, in this perspective, a question of spiritual ecumenism preceding theological ecumenism. Recent world events have shown the importance the Catholic faith and Marian devotion have for the Polish people. Catholic Christians of all nationalities need to find ways to share that devotion with other Christians. If the *lex orandi* provides a basis for the *lex credendi*, then it is unwise to expect other Christians to accept doctrines for which there is at present little or no tradition of liturgy and devotion.<sup>102</sup>

(3) *The Use of Scripture and Ecumenism*. One of the areas which before Vatican II Protestant and Catholic theologians were sure would always divide them was that of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. It is true that Vatican I spoke of Scripture and Tradition as the source of revelation. While the precise relationship between them was not discussed at Vatican I, and while there were debates among theologians concerning the exact relationship between them, the Council Fathers did not consider them as two parallel sources which, like railroad tracks, would never intersect. Even less did they think that Tradition could oppose or contradict Scripture. The very fact that the Fathers of Vatican I could agree only on the "direct object" of infallibility, namely revealed truths, indicated, as we have seen, just how restricted was the scope of the infallibility they had defined.

Vatican II's constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Dei Verbum*

<sup>102</sup> John MacQuarrie's lecture on the Assumption offers an example on the part of a theologian of the willingness to share in a personal way his journey of faith. He tells of his visit to the Church of the Assumption in the Holy Land in 1946, his reflections in 1950 on the newly proclaimed dogma, and his understanding of what Vatican II achieved in *Lumen Gentium*, chapter 8. He has come to understand the Assumption as "not just a personal dogma about Mary (though it remains that) but a dogma about the whole body of the faithful of whom Mary is the type. Mary's glorious assumption is the first moment in the glorious assumption of the Church." And again: "The Feast of the Assumption must be reckoned one of the most humanistic festivals in the Church's calendar" ("Glorious Assumption," The 1981 Assumption Day Lecture: Parish Church of St. Mary and All Saints, Walsingham [Burnley, Lanc.: F. H. Brown Ltd., Litho Div., 1981], 7 pp.).

suggest to some Catholic theologians<sup>103</sup> that Scripture is the *norma normans non normata* for the faith of the Church and for the *ex cathedra* definitions of the pope. The dogmatic definitions expressing the faith of the whole Church by popes and councils become, in this perspective, the *norma normans* for the individual believer. That Vatican II leaves open the possibility for such an interpretation can be seen in article 25 of *Lumen Gentium*, where it is explained that when "the Roman pontiff or the body of bishops together with him defines a judgment, they pronounce it in accord with revelation itself. All are obligated to maintain and be ruled by this revelation . . . as written or preserved by tradition. . . ." Tradition is understood here as the preservation and explication of Scriptural revelation. When *Lumen Gentium* states that dogmatic definitions are pronounced "in accord with revelation" and that those defining are to be "ruled by this revelation . . . as written or preserved by tradition," it is necessary to be very clear about what is being said. Karl Rahner explains:

This revelation is in Scripture or tradition—the "or" (*vel*, not *aut*) does not insinuate any material discrepancy between the content of Scripture and Tradition, since this is deliberately excluded by the Council in the Constitution on Revelation.<sup>104</sup>

Even clearer is *Dei Verbum*, which states in article 10:

The teaching office is not above the Word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

<sup>103</sup> For example, Harry McSorley. See *Infallibility Debate*, pp. 88-89, where McSorley cites Karl Rahner with approval.

<sup>104</sup> Vorgrimler, *Commentary*, 1: 213.

Having said all of this, Vatican II nevertheless intentionally left open the question of the exact relationship between Scripture and Tradition.<sup>105</sup> When faced, however, with the Marian dogmas, Catholic theologians have appealed to the *sensus plenior*, the fuller meaning of the biblical text.<sup>106</sup> A purely historical critical reading of the texts would not provide an explicit basis for either papal infallibility or the Marian dogmas.<sup>107</sup> The recent common statement of the United States' Lutheran/Catholic dialogue admits that "some of our remaining differences may be rooted in the content of certain dogmas and their basis in Christian revelation (e.g., the Immaculate Conception and her Assumption). Moreover, our theologies may still differ about the way the Scriptures are normative for faith."<sup>108</sup>

Catholic theologians readily state that the Marian dogmas are not explicitly revealed in Scripture.<sup>109</sup> Some theologians will argue that the Immaculate Conception is, for example, implicit in the *protoevangelium* of Genesis. John Macquarrie, who accepts the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as "yet another pre-

<sup>105</sup> Rahner, "Open Questions in Dogma," p. 11.

<sup>106</sup> J. H. Newman represents the Catholic tradition on the necessity of a biblical basis for all dogmas when, in 1845, he wrote: "Nor am I aware that later Post-tridentine writers deny that the whole Catholic faith may be proved from Scripture, though they would certainly maintain that it is not to be found on the surface of it, nor in such sense that it may be gained from Scripture without the aid of Tradition" (*Essay*, p. 343, cited by John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* [New York: Doubleday, 1975], p. xli).

<sup>107</sup> René Laurentin has written that the authors of *Mary in the New Testament* represent a team of exegetes "parmi les seuls adeptes de la méthode historico-critique qu'il semble tenir pour la seule scientifique, en contraste avec l'Europe (lieu de naissance de l'école en question), où cette méthode génétique et diachronique est de plus en plus discutée, ou du moins resituée dans ses étroites limites. Le revers de ce choix, c'est que les Orthodoxes, allergiques à cette voie-là, n'ont pas été appelés à participer au symposium. C'est donc un oecuménisme réduit à une école et à deux confessions. Cela donne au livre une belle homogénéité" (*RSPT* 65, No. 1 (1981): 125).

<sup>108</sup> *Teaching Authority*, p. 58.

<sup>109</sup> For example, H. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis: Herder, 1954), p. 200, and Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* (München: Max Hueber, 1955), 5:226.

cious insight into the one fundamental truth of God in Christ,"<sup>110</sup> represents the thought of many theologians, Catholic as well as Protestant, when he writes that

. . . it can hardly be denied that the exegesis of these passages is somewhat strained. They could hardly be used as a support for the dogma, and it is only in the light of the dogma itself that retrospectively we might see them as having a measure of symbolic appropriateness.<sup>111</sup>

We might think that here there remains yet another obstacle between Protestants and Catholics: the biblical basis for the Marian dogmas. But even here there have been surprising advances, especially once it was seen, in the words of a Catholic and an Anglican scholar written in 1976, "that neither Protestant *Sola Scriptura* nor Catholic 'two sources' can give a satisfactory account of Revelation. . . . Scripture and tradition are inextricably intertwined."<sup>112</sup>

One of the Protestant criticisms of papal infallibility is that it separated the pope from and placed him above the Church. It is paralleled in some of the Protestant objections to the Marian dogmas: that they separated her from the Church and raised her almost to the level of the Godhead. The ecumenical work of the last two decades has made great progress in making more explicit the proper context and place of Mary and the Papacy. Much theological dialogue lies ahead, but it can be carried on in

<sup>110</sup> MacQuarrie, "Immaculate Conception," p. 112.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>112</sup> Yarnold and Chadwick, *Truth and Authority* (See n. 39 above.), p. 10. See also John McHugh's introduction (pp. xxii-xlvi) to his book *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (See n. 106 above.), where he shows how a careful reading of Trent on the doctrinal content of Scripture and Tradition permits any Roman Catholic who would respect the teaching authority of the Church as of equal authority with Scripture, also to "maintain that all truth necessary for salvation is also contained in Scripture" (p. xxxv). Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum* (art. 10), describes Scripture and Tradition as forming "one sacred deposit of the Word of God. . ." McHugh's introduction was written to help Catholics and Protestants discuss the place of Mary.



an atmosphere more promising than at any time since the Reformation.

POSTSCRIPT: I would like to add a few comments on the recently released final statement of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission, "Authority in the Church II." The thirty-three paragraph agreed statement took up the four difficulties mentioned in the 1976 Venice Statement, *Authority in the Church*: "the interpretation of the Petrine texts, the meaning of the language of 'divine right,' the affirmation of papal infallibility, and the nature of the jurisdiction ascribed to the bishop of Rome as universal primate" (par. 1 of 1981 statement). This final statement represents, in this author's opinion, an extraordinary ecumenical achievement, especially given the difficulty of the questions examined. What the next step shall be remains at this time, of course, a matter of speculation. Whatever happens, the work of this commission has not only helped to clarify difficult and intricate theological problems which stand between the two Churches, but in most instances has overcome them. In the light of the concerns of this paper, I wish to make only two observations on this new document.

First, paragraph 31 seems, in view of what was said in earlier paragraphs of the document, confusing. Paragraph 25, for example, explains that "although it is not through reception by the people of God that a definition first acquires authority, the assent of the faithful is the ultimate indication that the Church's authoritative decision in a matter of faith has been truly preserved from error by the Holy Spirit." Again, in paragraph 27, concerning the teachings of the universal primate, we read that "these statements would be intended to articulate, elucidate or define matters of faith which the community believes at least implicitly." Moreover, "any such statement would be intended as an expression of the mind of the Church, understood not only in the context of its time and place but also in the light of the Church's whole experience and tradition." In describing conditions that need to be met if the judgment of the bishop of Rome is to be a "decisive discernment of the truth," paragraph 29

states as one of them that the bishop of Rome has "sought to discover the mind of his fellow bishops and of the Church as a whole. . . ." Given all of this emphasis on the importance of consultation and this explanation of how the faith of the Church is the norm of papal definitions, it is surprising to read at the beginning of paragraph 31 the following:

In spite of our agreement over the need of a universal primacy in a united Church, Anglicans do not accept the guaranteed possession of such a gift of divine assistance in judgment necessarily attached to the office of the bishop of Rome by virtue of which his formal decisions can be known to be wholly assured before their reception by the faithful.

It seems that the explanations just cited from the previous paragraphs would have led the authors of the common statement to have written that "neither Anglicans nor Roman Catholics accept such an alleged gift . . . ," precisely because of the crucial part the faith of the whole Church plays in the formulation of any papal definition of faith. There are of course inherent difficulties, as the statement says later on in paragraph 31, with the idea of reception. Nevertheless what Anglicans and Roman Catholics say together about reception in paragraph 25 is an affirmation of fundamental importance. One can only lament that this affirmation did not control what is said in paragraph 31. Had it done so, the consensus would have been even broader than paragraph 31 suggests.

My second observation concerns the document's treatment of the Marian dogmas. It may well be that the hesitancy to believe that papal definitions reflect the consensus of the Church stems from the Anglicans' experience of the Marian dogmas. These are treated in paragraph 30, which begins by stressing what Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree upon:

We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognizing that Christian understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doc-

trines of Christ and of the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotokos*), in observing her festivals, and in according her honour in the communion of saints. We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of our Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory. We further agree in recognizing in Mary a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to regard her as a prophetic figure of the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation.

The Marian dogmas nevertheless create a special problem for "those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by these dogmas are sufficiently supported by Scripture." Moreover, many Anglicans do not "recommend" that such dogmas, binding on all the faithful, be proclaimed independent of a Council. Finally, the Anglicans ask if a future union between them and the Roman Catholic Church would require them to accept such dogmatic statements. The paragraph concludes by noting that there has been a tendency for both Anglicans and Roman Catholics "to exaggerate the importance of the Marian dogmas in themselves at the expense of other truths more closely related to the foundation of the Christian faith."

A preliminary response to "those Anglicans" who do not consider the Marian dogmas "sufficiently supported by Scripture" would point to the overwhelming consensus among Roman Catholic theologians today recovering what they are convinced is the authentic pre-Reformation Catholic belief, namely that all dogmas are efforts to expound the revealed truth attested in the Scriptures. Accordingly, these theologians, at the behest of Pius XII himself, think that there is no other legitimate interpretation of the dogma of the Assumption, or for that matter any other dogma, except that which is "sufficiently supported by Scripture." See for example the biblical interpretations of the Assumption offered by Karl Rahner ("The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption" in *Theological Investigations*, Volume I), as well as those of John MacQuarrie and Donald Dawe mentioned already in the article.

To the second difficulty mentioned above, it can be said that

there are many loyal and informed Roman Catholics who agree that such dogmas should not be promulgated independently of a Council, while still conceiving of possible situations where a pope may be forced to offer a decisive dogmatic definition, when conditions prevent summoning an ecumenical council. The third and fourth difficulties have already been discussed in the article.

The conclusions of the final ARCIC statement underscore, in this writer's opinion, the importance of (1) always placing the Marian dogmas in the larger context of foundational doctrines (the "hierarchy of truths"), (2) exploring further whether and how dogmas not explicit in Scripture but nonetheless "implicates" (in MacQuarrie's words) of foundational doctrines shed light on important dimensions of the Christian revelation, (3) examining the way in which the complex realities of consensus and reception function before and after dogmatic pronouncements, and (4) finding ways for Roman Catholics to share their experience of Mary with other Christians. Part of the great achievement of the ARCIC dialogue is that besides its extraordinary agreements, it points to further aspects of the doctrine of papal infallibility and the Marian dogmas which require more study. It would seem that such study will be more fruitfully undertaken, as paragraph 33 suggests, when "our two Churches have lived together more visibly in the one *koinonia*."

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