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# Dogmatic Development by Abridgement or by Concentration?

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## DOGMATIC DEVELOPMENT BY ABRIDGEMENT OR BY CONCENTRATION?

*Is the union of Churches possible without the common acknowledgment of Mary as immaculate and assumed into Heaven? Development or dogmatic abridgment?*

Gradually, as divers ecumenical dialogues proceed, certain questions are being asked within the framework of doctrinal pluralism which one would have deemed unthinkable ten years ago. Some think that "the interplay of central issues and differing theologies surely offers as much room for a vital *sensus fidei* as does the older notion of dogmatic development."<sup>1</sup> The suspension of such a development would "only mean that the Church would concentrate more fully on the most central issues of the Christian faith."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in the province of Mariology, several theologians, some of whom wish to place themselves within the framework of the Catholic faith, wonder if the perfect communion<sup>3</sup> among the Churches might not be re-established without adherence to the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. They know that for the Orthodox and for certain Protestants, especially Lutherans, neither the divine maternity nor the perpetual virginity of Mary create an obstacle. Since Vatican II reminds us that there is a "hierarchy of truths in Catholic doc-

*Editor's Note:* This paper was translated from the French by J. B. Carol, O.F.M.

<sup>1</sup> K. Rahner, S.J., *Pluralism in Theology*, in *Concilium* 6 (1969) 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> As opposed to the imperfect communion now existing. The perfect communion would be signified by, and would suppose, the gathering together of Christians "in a common Eucharistic celebration into that unity of the one and only Church . . ." (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 4).

trine,"<sup>4</sup> why should the Church of Rome insist on these "secondary points"?

If such a tendency is undoubtedly quite widespread, few theologians explicitly pose the question as we have just done. Two, however, have treated it expressly and clearly. Even if one does not agree with them, one cannot but profit from the analysis of their thought, of their presuppositions and consequences. That is what we will endeavor to do here apropos of the stand taken by the American Lutheran, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, and the English Jesuit, E. J. Yarnold. The former is concerned with the ecclesiological aspect, and the latter with the hermeneutical angle of the above-mentioned dogmas. After examining the thought of these theologians and its implications, we will see briefly that it helps us indirectly to better perceive certain data of the ecclesiology and theological anthropology of the Catholic Church; we shall also understand better the "development by way of concentration" through which the latter would lead to a discovery of Mary.

#### THESE TWO DOGMAS AND ECCLESIOLOGY

I.—Have Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption become "obsolete" as a result of the evolution of Catholic ecclesiology?

Such is the viewpoint, or rather the hypothesis, which Prof. Piepkorn envisages without necessarily making it his own. Let us quote from his text:

It might be well to recognize from the outset that agreement on the revealed character of the definitions<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* (henceforth: *U.R.*) 11.

<sup>5</sup> Evidently the author means the object and not the intimate nature of these definitions.

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>6</sup>

There you have, then, the very interesting question raised by Prof. Piepkorn. Evidently, the Lutheran theologian is alluding to the double consultation, by Pius IX and Pius XII, of the Catholic bishops concerning their personal judgment and the belief of their respective flocks before the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, respectively. He insinuates that, in light of Vatican II's ecclesiology, a Catholic today may deem such a consultation insufficient: neither of these two Popes consulted the Protestant world, all those baptized in good faith who "in some way belong to the People of God" (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3, *sub fine*). Neither of them consulted the Orthodox bishops. He intimates that, both as regards the past and the future, every doctrine will always remain open, reduced to the level of a "theologoumenon," unless it is the object of an assent, prior to definition, on the part of all those who call themselves Christians and who believe to be such.

It may well be that Prof. Piepkorn, who is a noted specialist of the Lutheran confessions of faith, is developing here the consequences of their own ecclesiology, or at least is influenced by it in his analysis of the consequences of Vatican II's ecclesiology.

<sup>6</sup> A. C. Piepkorn, *Mary's Place Within the People of God*, in *Marian Studies* 18 (1967) 82. The emphasis is the author's. Strangely enough, Dr. Piepkorn is not surprised that the whole Church was not consulted before the definitions of Nicaea and Chalcedon, although he doesn't regard them as being still "open questions."

Before showing that the latter does not justify the conclusions which he thinks may be drawn from it, we would like first of all to point out that neither do they flow from the New Testament nor from the ancient history of the Church.<sup>7</sup>

Paul did not cease to combat the "false brothers," the Judeo-Christians who pretended to force Christians to return to the slavery of the Law of the Old Covenant: that's the whole message of the Epistle to the Galatians. Now, these "false brothers" were baptized Christians just like Paul himself. Likewise, in his pastoral epistles Paul fought the false doctors who preached a hellenized and syncretist Judaism, some of whom at least were apparently baptized.<sup>8</sup> "Some have made shipwreck of the faith, among whom are Hymeneus . . ." "They have erred from the truth in saying that the resurrection has taken place already, and they are destroying the faith of some" (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:18). These examples show us clearly that Paul did not judge it at all necessary to consult the Judaizers, or Hymeneus or Alexander (who nevertheless called themselves Christians), nor to obtain their assent in order to present the doctrine of Christ and of His Person. And yet he was not ignorant of the reality of their baptism nor of its consequences (cf. Eph. 4: 4-6: "[there is but] one body and one Spirit . . . one faith and one baptism").

We have recalled Paul's polemic with the false doctors ("Christians" who disfigured Christianity by excess more than by default) because the Pauline texts mentioned here are precisely the very ones implicitly cited by Pius IX in his bull defining the Immaculate Conception:

<sup>7</sup> Let us recall with L. Bouyer that "neither the Orthodox in general are schismatics, nor Protestants mere heretics like Valentinus and Arius" (*L'Eglise de Dieu* [Paris, 1970] 627); cf. *U.R.* 3: "Those who are presently born into these communities separated from the full communion of the Catholic Church cannot be accused of the sin of separation."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. C. Spicq, O.P., *Les Epîtres Pastorales* (Paris, 1949) 355. Likewise, apropos of the First Epistle of St. John, B. Vawter, C.M. notes: ". . . the errors were heresies within the Church, not the propaganda of hostile Jews" (*Jerome Biblical Commentary* 2 [Englewood Cliffs, 1968] 410, par. 62).

If anyone should presume to think contrary to our definition, let him know that, condemned by his own judgment, he has suffered shipwreck in the faith (allusion to I Tim. 1:19) and ceased to be in the unity of the Church (Denz.-Sch. 2804).

It is clear that Pius IX had in mind, not the Protestants or the Orthodox who were not in full communion with the Church before the definition, but rather the Catholics who might refuse to adhere to it. The same way Paul reminded Timothy of the impossibility of being orthodox in the faith and of preserving the deposit of revelation while affirming that the resurrection of the faithful had already taken place, similarly in his bull Pius IX was saying in substance: "You cannot remain in the unity of the Church if you don't believe in the Immaculate Conception as a divinely revealed truth; not to believe in it is identical with losing the Catholic faith, suffering shipwreck in the faith." What is involved in both cases is not a dialogue between baptized and non-baptized persons, but the dialogue among baptized Christians. In the eyes of Pius IX, as of Paul, not to believe in certain particular truths taught by Christ, or by Paul in communion with the Twelve, even if one affirms at the same time that he believes in Christ Himself, is to suffer shipwreck in the faith, not to preserve intact the deposit of revelation, not to be in the unity of the Church.

After apostolic times, the great trinitarian and christological councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon proceeded in the same way as Paul toward the Judaizers, Hymeneus and Alexander. Arius was a priest, Nestorius a bishop, Eutyches a monk. They all believed to be in the truth; they were members of the Church. Nevertheless, no one imagined that their assent was necessary for the definition of the consubstantiality of the Word, of the divine maternity of Mary, of the two natures in the one Person of the Incarnate Word. Afterwards, the Arians and the Nestorians claimed that they, too, were Christians. They were baptized—and today we acknowledge the validity of Baptism conferred even by those who deny the Trinity, provided they

have the intention of doing what the Church does;<sup>9</sup> the same must be said about every other error professed even publicly by the minister of Baptism. The validity of their Baptism was not doubted by the Roman Church. On the part of the Church never did anyone consider the agreement of all the baptized or the ministers of the separated Churches as a *sine qua non* condition to the dogmatic acknowledgment of a revealed truth.

Now, it is important to note that not only the Orthodox Churches but even many of the ecclesial communities of the West accepted the doctrinal value of the decisions taken at these councils.<sup>10</sup> Why should they be surprised if the Catholic Church, in the past and still today, regards adherence to her dogmatic definitions as a condition for full communion with her? Lutherans, for example, always reject Arianism; an Arian in good faith is not considered by the Lutheran Churches as being "in the unity of the Church."<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the insistence of the Catholic Church on an integral profession of faith is now the same as it was in the first centuries. Just as she exacted from Arius the recognition of Christ's divinity, and from Nestorius the recognition of Mary's divine motherhood, she always exacts the same doctrinal adherence from modern unbelievers if they wish to join the fulness of her communion. For the rest, she makes this demand in harmony

<sup>9</sup> *D.-S.* 1617; 3100-3102; 3126. Thus, Baptism conferred by the Unitarians, who deny the Trinity, is valid if they intend to do what the Church does. This doctrine of the validity of Baptism conferred by heretics had already been held by Stephen I (*D.-S.* 110-111); it permitted Pope Liberius to recognize the validity of Baptism conferred by Arians. The Orthodox have rejected the teaching of Stephen (cf. Congar, in *Irenikon* 45 [1972] 160).

<sup>10</sup> That was the case especially with Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. Cf. M. Thurian, in *Etudes Mariiales* 20 (1963) 87-88.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, they make theirs the symbols of Nicaea and Constantinople. Cf. *The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church*, theological consultation published in common by the representatives of the U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the American Episcopal (Catholic) Commission for Ecumenical Affairs (Washington, D.C., 1965, 6-15).

with the Orthodox Churches and the ecclesial communities which have retained these fundamental dogmas. And she still makes this demand from these same Churches and communities, as it emerges clearly from the decree on ecumenism of Vatican II. The latter, in effect, seems very explicit on this point. Nowhere does it envisage some doctrinal compromise, some "union at a bargain." On the contrary. On the one hand, the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* reminds us that

it is to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that, according to our faith, all the riches of the New Covenant were entrusted in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those must be fully incorporated who in a certain way already belong to the People of God.<sup>12</sup>

And it is precisely thus that the immediately preceding statement of the council has an explanation: "It is through Christ's Catholic Church alone . . . that the fulness of the means of salvation can be obtained." She is "the all-embracing means of salvation" ("generale auxilium salutis"), while the other Churches or separated communities are "means of salvation whose efficacy derives from the fulness of grace and truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church" (*U.R.* 3). A little further (*U.R.* 4) the council again underlies that "the Catholic Church has been enriched by God with all revealed truth," which of course does not at all exclude further progress in the knowledge, understanding and presentation of this fulness of truth. We shall return to this point.

In any case, it is clear from the texts quoted that any Church or ecclesial community wishing to become perfectly incorporated into the one Body of Christ must profess, as truths of faith, all those truths which Peter has defined as such, either alone or

<sup>12</sup> *U.R.* 3; the sense of this text seems to us to have been quite well interpreted by L. Bouyer in *L'Eglise de Dieu* (Paris, 1970) 634-639: "The identification of the Church with the People of God is not total at present. It will be such only in the eschatological Church."



with the College whose head he is—including the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

On the other hand, the same decree further specifies that the dynamism itself of baptismal grace, with which the members of these Churches and communities are endowed, urges them precisely to embrace this duty:

Baptism is the sacramental bond of unity existing among those who have been regenerated by Him (i.e. by Christ). But Baptism, of itself, is only the beginning, the point of departure, for it wholly tends to the acquisition of the fulness of life in Christ. It is, therefore, oriented to the integral profession of faith, to the total incorporation into the system of salvation, such as Christ has willed it to be, and finally, to the complete insertion in the Eucharistic communion (*baptismus ordinatur ad integram fidei professionem, ad integram incorporationem in salutis institutum*) (U.R. 22).

One cannot but appreciate the ontological aspect of this text. Going beyond the deontological viewpoint of the preceding ones, the council has here expressed the profound (even when unconscious) aspiration of every baptized soul, namely, the fulness of life in Christ, which presupposes the adherence of the mind to all the truths which He has revealed.<sup>13</sup> Once 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 without professing the totality of her faith. Any other form of communion with her will never exceed the level of a partial communion, even if it reaches the level of almost total communion, as is the case with the Orthodox Church.<sup>14</sup>

To put it differently: Not to adhere to these truths, even if they are in a certain sense secondary (cf. U.R. 11) in reference to the central object of the Christian faith, objectively implies,

<sup>13</sup> *Dei Verbum* 2.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the letter of Paul VI to Patriarch Athenagoras in February 1971, in *A.A.S.* 63 (1971) 214.

for Vatican II, a rejection of the full communion in the faith received and proclaimed by the one Church of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

But it is not only the decree on ecumenism; it is the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* as well which *a priori* disavows the hypothesis envisaged by Piepkorn (without making it his own) on the basis of these two documents. In effect, this constitution has been careful to reaffirm explicitly both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary, not without citing in a footnote the definitions of Pius IX and Pius XII:

The immaculate Virgin, preserved by God from all stain of the original fault, having completed the course of her earthly life, was taken body and soul into the glory of Heaven (*L.G.* 59).

There is more. The same constitution has thoroughly demolished the reasoning which allowed Prof. Piepkorn to think that these two Marian privileges could remain as "open questions," as *theologoumena* for "the whole Church." For it recalls the definition of Vatican I in the following precise manner:

The definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves and not in virtue of the consent of the Church, since they are pronounced under the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised him in the person of Peter, Therefore, they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment (*L.G.* 25).

In other words, the definitions of Pius IX and Pius XII, expressing and specifying the prior faith of the universal Church, did not need the subsequent approbation of even a Catholic bishop (*a fortiori*, of all those who were separated from the full communion of the Church) in order to proclaim the divinely revealed truth in an obligatory fashion for all, precisely because the Holy Spirit does not need the approval of men.

Explaining the assertion just noted, Vatican II continues further:

<sup>15</sup> *U.R.* 4: "... in unius uniceaque Ecclesiae unitatem."

In effect, the Roman Pontiff does not pronounce judgment as a private person; rather, as supreme teacher of the universal Church, as one in which the charism of the infallibility of the Church herself is individually present, he expounds and defends the doctrine of the Catholic faith (*L.G.* 25).

As in the case of Adam and of Jesus, we have here a "corporate personality;" Christ and His *whole* Church have spoken through the mouth of Peter,<sup>16</sup> in order to proclaim the divinely revealed truth.

We believe to have shown sufficiently the absolute impossibility of seeing "the maturation of ecclesiological intuitions which have found their initial and seminal expression in *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*" leading us to recognize (against the express affirmation of the first of these documents especially) the character of "open questions for the whole Church" of the two dogmas of the Catholic faith: the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The supposed "intuitions" concerning the alleged need of the whole Church's assent to dogmatic definitions are expressly rejected by *Lumen Gentium*. In this constitution one would search in vain for the least affirmation in this sense, whereas it has wished explicitly to affirm the two mentioned dogmas. The immaculate<sup>17</sup> Church, destined to be assumed into the glory of Christ, has in no way "left behind" the definitive, irreformable and irreversible affirmation of the Immaculate Conception and of the already accomplished bodily Assumption of her type and Mother: the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

Prof. Piepkorn was perfectly correct, therefore, in stating that

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium* (henceforth: *L.G.*) 23: "... all the bishops together in union with the Pope represent the universal Church in the bond of peace, love and unity." Which doesn't mean that the Pope is the vicar of the Church; he represents the Church precisely inasmuch as he is the vicar of Christ. Cf. B. de Margerie, S.J., *Le Christ pour le Monde* (Paris, 1971) 328-329; American edition: *Christ for the World* (Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), ch. XIII.

<sup>17</sup> *L.G.* 6: "... sponsa immaculata Agni immaculati."

a Roman Catholic would be bound to feject as impossible the eventuality which he envisaged. For it would mean, in the last analysis, admitting a heterogeneous evolution of Catholic dogma, equally rejected by Vatican I and Vatican II.<sup>18</sup>

But . . . would it not be possible to distinguish, with Father Yarnold, between the symbolic and historical letter of the dogma and its transcendent and theological meaning?

#### THE MEANING OF THESE DOGMAS?

II.—Could the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption be considered as purely symbolic dogmas which, in a fully united Church, one would be free to reject, provided one admitted the transcendent sense toward which they are oriented?

Such is the query posed by E. J. Yarnold, S.J. in a sermon delivered in Oxford on March 7, 1971 in the very church where Newman (still an Anglican) preached so many times his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*; in this church of "Saint Mary, the Virgin" where he bid his moving farewell to the Anglican Church (*The Parting of Friends*).

Yarnold, who is a member of the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Theological Commission, gives a substantially affirmative answer to that question, while stressing that, there would always be some Christians in that united Church affirming these truths as divinely revealed. Here is the essence of his answer:

Many doctrines have two levels: the symbolic level and the theological level . . . Certain doctrines, formulated in historical or quasi-historical terms, can have an ulterior sense which could be expressed without these terms. Let us call the historical formulation the symbolic sense, and the ulterior sense the theological sense.

The theological sense has a direct reference to Christ and to the Redemption. Which is not necessarily the case of the symbolic sense.

<sup>18</sup> *D.-S.* 3020; *Gaudium et Spes* 62: the meaning must remain the same in the different ways of expressing revealed truth.

If there is agreement on the theological sense, but disagreement of the interpretation or even the value of its symbolic expression, it is not necessary either for the ones to accept the symbol, or for the others to stop believing its literal truth.

Having enunciated these general principles, the author applies them to the case of the Marian dogmas:

Roman Catholics *may believe*<sup>19</sup> as of faith that Mary was preserved from original sin and assumed into Heaven; other Christians may be unable to accept that these doctrines so expressed can be part of the Gospel. Both convictions could co-exist in a fully unified Church, provided there was agreement about the theological level of the doctrines, which seems to me to be this: it is of faith that the grace of God requires human cooperation, provides the conditions which make the human 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>20</sup>

According to this, the theological meaning of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption would not have any special reference to Mary herself, but rather to the terrestrial efficacy of divine grace in the Church and to the eschatological survival of human values. If one accepts these affirmations, the faith of the Church in the Immaculate Conception and Assumption would be sufficiently professed even if one held that Mary was conceived in original sin and that her soul was still separated from her non-glorified body.

Although the consequences of these theses appear altogether incompatible with the Catholic faith—to the point that it is surprising to see them considered as admissible by a theologian

<sup>19</sup> The emphasis is ours.

<sup>20</sup> E. J. Yarnold, S.J., *Marian Dogmas and Reunion*, in *Month* 131 (1971) 177-179; the quote is from p. 179.

who is careful about orthodoxy<sup>21</sup>—it will not be useless to state with precision, even briefly, their sense and presuppositions.

1) Such a position not only nullifies the historicity of Christianity and in particular of the virginal birth of Christ<sup>22</sup> by eradicating the history of transcendence, but it even declares as without real object, and hence absurd, the centuries-old controversies<sup>23</sup> in the Church concerning the privileges of Mary in her conception and her death. At the same time that it reduces Mary to the level of ordinary Christians (not to say of ordinary men), it is essentially a neo-Gnosticism<sup>24</sup> tainted with Modernism.

2) It evidently contradicts the Marian definitions of Pius IX and Pius XII who had every intention of affirming not only the

<sup>21</sup> In effect, the author begins his sermon and article with the following declaration, alluding to Rahner: "Although one of my most distinguished German colleagues—if he is correctly reported in the press—seems to have preached recently a high degree of pluralism in the faith within a unified Christian Church . . . it surely is not sufficient to share together the supernatural gift of faith on a level preceding all verbal formulation; each tradition must be able to guarantee to the others that its formulas of faith articulate in an exact manner the pre-conceptual faith, and each will want to verify the similar value of the formulas of other traditions. As the Apostle John acknowledged when, catching sight of the heretic Cerinthus, he left the public baths unbathed, there are limits to theological pluralism. Rather than give up the concept of doctrinal orthodoxy, it would be better for the Church to close shop." It couldn't have been said better. And yet it is paradoxical that, without being aware of it, the author goes on to join the position of Rahner and (unlike the latter) applies it to the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. A summary of Rahner's stand may be found in *Month* 131 (1971) 139.

<sup>22</sup> Father Yarnold alludes to it: "It sometimes happens that some Christians accept the literal truth of the symbolic form of a doctrine, while others do not, though without ceasing to affirm the doctrine. This seems to be the situation with regard to such doctrines as the Virgin Birth or the Ascension" (*art. cit.*, 179).

<sup>23</sup> The fruitfulness of these discussions is mentioned by Yarnold (p. 178) who stresses the contribution of John Duns Scotus. Here again he doesn't seem to have perceived the consequences of his pluralistic thesis.

<sup>24</sup> H. Schlier recalls that the "gnosis employs the allegorical exegesis guided by the myth which renders it explicit" (cf. art. *Gnose*, in *Encyclopédie de la Foi* 2 [Paris, 1965] 181).

efficacy of grace and the meritorious eschatological value of human acts performed in the state of grace, but also that Mary, unlike every other human person, had been preserved free from the real catastrophe of original sin, and enjoyed the privilege of a bodily glorification before the end of time.

Such an intention has been clearly manifested and is contained in the terms themselves of the definition. It is in this context (and we have shown it in connection with Prof. Piepkorn's hypothesis) that Pius IX and Pius XII have plainly affirmed the necessity to profess Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption in the same sense in which they were defined, as divinely revealed truths, in order not to suffer shipwreck in the faith and in order to remain within the unity of the only ark of salvation, which is the Church.<sup>25</sup>

3) To sustain, therefore, that later on, *certain* members of a "unified Church"<sup>26</sup> could at one and the same time be in full communion with her and not profess these truths in the sense in which they have been defined, means in reality that adherence to the Immaculate Conception and Assumption would not be necessary for *any* member of the Church. And, as a consequence, that the present or future Church would have ceased to believe them as divinely revealed truths contained in the public Revelation which all are bound to believe. There is, then, a contradiction in the very terms of the envisaged hypothesis. At the same time there is an implicit admission of a heterogeneous evolution of Catholic dogma which the Church

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sup. 466 and *D.-S.* 3904: "Si quis id vel negare vel *in dubium vocare* voluntarie ausus fuerit, quod a Nobis definitum est, noverit se a divina et catholica fide *prorsus* defecisse." Emphasis ours.

<sup>26</sup> For Fr. Yarnold this expression undoubtedly means the organic union of several Christian Churches into only one. The expression is ambiguous, for it seems to insinuate that the Church is now divided—which could be said of the People of God, but not of the Church: "... that unity of the one and only Church which Christ bestowed on His Church from the beginning. We believe that this unity dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose" (*U.R.* 4).

would be free to interpret in one sense today and in a totally contrary sense tomorrow. This is the essence of Modernism.<sup>27</sup>

However, if such a re-interpretation is totally unthinkable within the framework of Catholic orthodoxy, it contains, like every error, a particle of truth. Let us endeavor to extract this jewel from the gangue of error which surrounds it.

The actual facts of the Immaculate Conception and of the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God are, like the substantial and real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,<sup>28</sup> symbols signifying other actual facts to which they are ordained in the history of salvation. Of which realities of grace and glory are the Immaculate Conception and the corporal and spiritual Assumption the signs and, in some way, the secondary and dependent causes? Of the initial and final sanctity of the universal Church and of its members in their Baptism and in their glorious resurrection.

This is insinuated by Vatican II with respect to the Immaculate Conception, and at the same time explicitly said in connection with the Assumption:

The Church, in contemplating the mysterious sanctity of the Virgin . . . all holy, free from all stain of sin, fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new creature, adorned from the first instant of her conception with the splendors of an entirely unique holiness . . . becomes herself a mother; by Baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born to God;<sup>29</sup> meantime,<sup>30</sup> just as the Mother of

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *D.-S.* 3020; 3043; 3541; 3549.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *D.-S.* 1638: The Eucharist is "the symbol of this unique Body whose head is Christ." Analogously and in scholastic terminology one could say that the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary are the "res et sacramentum" in regard to the "res tantum" of the baptismal grace and of the glorious resurrection of all the predestined members of the People of God, like the Real Presence in regard to the unity of the Church.

<sup>29</sup> *L.G.* 64 and 56.

<sup>30</sup> The word is undoubtedly a voluntary evocation of what is convention-



Jesus, already glorified in Heaven as to body and soul, is the image and the first flowering of the Church as she is to be perfected in the world to come, so does she shine forth on earth as a sign of sure hope and solace for the People of God in pilgrimage until the Lord's day shall come (*L.G.* 68).

Thus the Church affirms that the person of Mary is, even in her privileges, a sign of the collective destiny of the People of God. Not an empty sign, but a real sign pointing to other realities.

Such a perspective is in perfect harmony with the Christian understanding of biblical symbolism. The historical realities of the Old Testament prefigure, prepare and announce those of the New Testament which in turn signify the ultimate eschatological datum which will burst forth when the figure of this world will have passed. The Blessed Virgin, immaculate and assumed into Heaven, is the New Eve, prefigured in the old Covenant. She is the immaculate and incorruptible ark containing Him who is Himself the new and eternal Covenant. In the reality of her holy and immaculate conception she prefigures the Church which is born entirely immaculate in the waters of Baptism received from the Heart of the Lamb; the Church which in Baptism brings forth the souls stained by original sin into a life which is spotless and immortal in itself and in the reality of her body; the glorified Church of all risen bodies. The Marian privileges cannot be isolated from the fulness of Revelation and from the totality of the mystery of salvation.

These perspectives lead us to a more eschatological consideration of the mystery of Mary immaculate and assumed into Heaven, a premonitory "sign"<sup>31</sup> which leads the People of God in hope to the final, complete revelation,<sup>32</sup> to the full unveiling of

ally called "the intermediate eschatology" and of the privileged position held by the Blessed Virgin in it.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: "... signum spei et solatii." Cf. Apoc. 12:1: "... a great sign appeared..."

<sup>32</sup> *Dei Verbum* 4: "... we now await no further public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

its own total and mysterious sanctity on the day of the coming of her Son.

### POSSIBLE ADVANCE

III.—How can the Churches and ecclesial communities advance toward the final and definitive encounter with Mary immaculate and assumed into Heaven, toward a “*development by way of concentration*”?

All the Churches and all the Christian ecclesial communities have their eyes fixed on Christ’s second coming in glory “with all his saints, in order to be glorified” in them (cf. I Thes. 3:13; II Thes. 1:10)—and consequently with Mary and in Mary.

The perspective of the second coming of Jesus (and of His Mother) already binds these Churches together and hastens their tension toward a total communion in faith and in cult.

Of all the Churches and ecclesial communities, the Oriental Churches (notably the Orthodox) and the Anglican communion are the ones which seem nearest a total communion with the Roman Church.

Nevertheless, for divers reasons they are still far from professing an explicit faith in Mary’s Immaculate Conception and Assumption. Without going into details which would take us far afield, it must be noted that no Church or ecclesial community has rejected these two doctrines in declarations which they themselves regard as infallible and irreversible. If, for example, the Pan-Orthodox Synod of Moscow in 1948 listed the Immaculate Conception among the “three Roman heresies” which it enumerated,<sup>33</sup> such a declaration should not be overestimated. It must be borne in mind that, in the understanding of the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. D. Stiernon, A.A., *L’Immaculée Conception dans la théologie russe contemporaine*, in *Ephem. Mariol.* 6 (1956) 261. The first official manifestations against the Immaculate Conception date back to the sixteenth century in the Greek Church, and to the seventeenth century in the Russian Church.

Orthodox Church, only an ecumenical council is infallible.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, a curious evolution must be observed. The Byzantine theology of the Middle Ages has in some cases professed the Immaculate Conception, celebrated notably by Gregory Palamas who was canonized by the Greek Orthodox Church shortly after his death, in 1368.<sup>35</sup> However, since the definition of 1854 this doctrine has been the object of an "almost unanimous opposition" on the part of Orthodox of the most diverse shades and for the most varied reasons. Many think that such a doctrine separates Mary from sinful humanity,<sup>36</sup> an accusation which coincides with that of the Protestant world.

Nevertheless, certain modern Orthodox have admitted the Immaculate Conception either as a *theologoumenon* of licit opinion, or even as an undeniable doctrine. The most important is V. Iljin in a lecture given in Paris on January 20, 1950, in which we read:

Just as the Church is infallible and impeccable both in her principle and historically, so *a fortiori* the Virgin Mother of God cannot have either original or actual sin. From the beginning her status is that of vessel of the Incarnation; she is in the state characterized by Blessed Augustine as inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) . . . It is altogether unthinkable that this mystery of a creature giving birth to her Creator could have its origin in a creature wounded by sin or who, even without being affected by sin, could have been so affected.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Jugie, A.A., *L'Immaculée Conception dans l'Écriture Sainte et dans la tradition orientale* (Rome, 1952) 312.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-240.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. D. Stiernon, A.A., *Marie dans la théologie orthodoxe*, in H. du Manoir (ed.), *Maria* 7 (Paris, 1964) 304-305.

<sup>37</sup> Stiernon, *art. cit.* (n. 38), 271-272. To our knowledge, the best presentation of the theological evolution concerning the Immaculate Conception in the Orthodox Churches is that by Stiernon in his extensive article in the 7th volume of *Maria* (1964). Likewise to be consulted is Ivo Omrcanin, *De Immaculata Conceptione B. V. Mariae in Ecclesia Serbica et Russica* (Rome, 1967) 299pp. with a rich bibliography.

On the contrary, the doctrine of the Assumption (as distinct from its "dogmatization" by the Catholic Church) is professed almost unanimously by the Orthodox Churches.

Both doctrines are rejected by the vast majority of Protestants, even by the Anglicans. Certain Anglicans, however, admit them as pious opinions, as *theologoumena*, adding that they cannot consider them as articles of faith since "they cannot be proved from the Scriptures"<sup>38</sup> which, according to the 39 Articles, "contain all things necessary for salvation."<sup>39</sup> Are they aware that, for the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, these two truths do have their ultimate foundation in Sacred Scripture?<sup>40</sup> In numerous cases it is permissible to doubt it.

In the particular case of the Immaculate Conception, the Catholic doctrine of the ontological permanence of grace also creates a difficulty for the Protestant world.<sup>41</sup> For them, like for many Orthodox, this privilege raises problems of theological anthropology: original sin, grace—points on which the position of our separated brethren of the East<sup>42</sup> and of the West most often does not coincide with that of the Council of Trent. intermediate eschatology.

<sup>38</sup> H. S. Box, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, Essays by Anglican Writers, edited by E. L. Mascall and H. S. Box (London, 1963) 77, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Art. 6; Box, *art. cit.*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> D.-S. 3900 (*Munificentissimus Deus*); and Pius XII, *Fulgens Corona* (1953), apropos of the Immaculate Conception, cites Gen. 3:15 and Lk. 1:28, showing in a precise manner why these texts serve as a basis for the doctrine of the Church. Cf. *Enseignements Pontificaux: Notre Dame* (Desclée, 1958) 347-348, par. 590-591.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. M. Thurian, *op. cit.*, 83, n. 8 bis.

<sup>42</sup> After presenting the arguments of modern Orthodox theologians against the Immaculate Conception, D. Stiernon (*art. cit.*, 307) observes: "These arguments reveal that the misunderstandings which divide us concerning the Immaculate Conception go beyond the limits of the polemic which delighted Franciscans and Dominicans in former times. The difficulty lies not only in this, that the Oriental mind has never succeeded in harmonizing the spotless purity of Mary with her need of redemption by Christ (Journet, *Essai sur le développement du dogme marial* [Paris, 1954] 123). The fraternal dialogue must center, above all, on the nature of original sin, on the relationship between freedom and grace, on the possi-

With regard to the Assumption, its acceptance by the Protestants is often blocked by the frequently hazy state of their

None of this, to be sure, hinders a well-disposed Protestant from recognizing the biblical foundations of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption, and from professing them as divinely revealed truths, precisely in virtue of the personal (and not arbitrary) interpretation of the Sacred Book.

Hence, one cannot exclude the possibility of a slow, spontaneous evolution, among Protestants and Orthodox, toward the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption,<sup>43</sup> not only in a direct way, i.e., by a greater attention given to the theological reflection on the mystery of Mary within the mystery of Christ and His Church, but also indirectly, i.e., by a rapprochement with regard to the theological anthropology of the Catholic Church (original justice, original sin, grace, intermediate eschatology), or her doctrine on the sources of revelation and the criteria for recognizing it. However, it must be admitted in all honesty that an abyss which seems humanly insurmountable separates the great majority of Protestants and an important segment of the Orthodox world from the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. And as much must be said of Protestants as regards the Assumption.<sup>44</sup>

bility of an increase of charity in Mary beginning with the fulness of grace *in conceptione*, on the sense of history. It is the whole of anthropology and soteriology which is involved in the controversy regarding Her whom both sides proclaim Immaculate." It is well known how much the doctrine of original sin has been contested in the West after the above lines were written. Cf. J. M. Alonso, C.M.F., in *Ephem. Mariol*, 23 (1973) 95-120.

<sup>43</sup> We have in mind here, above all, the Protestants, but also several theologians of the Greek, Russian and Bulgarian Orthodoxy (A. I. Bulgakov, Malinovskij, D. W. Djulgerov, H. Alivizatos, J. Karmiris, P. Trembelas), and even certain bishops, like Irénis de Samos, for whom the Assumption, as we understand it, is in no way contained in the Scriptures or in Oriental Tradition (Cf. D. Stiernon, *art. cit.*, 309-310). Their position equals that of the Protestants.

<sup>44</sup> T. O'Meara, O.P., *Mary in Protestant and Catholic Theology* (New York, 1966), Ch. 6, shows at length how for the majority of Protestants the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption seem to be unauthentic de-

And yet . . . that which is impossible for men is possible, even easy, for God. Is not the Holy Spirit giving us certain pre-saging signs of the evolution which He is disposed to promote among our Protestant and Orthodox brothers, not only in the biblical renewal of Catholic Mariology, but also in the notes of Vatican II recalling (especially with regard to the separated East) the testimonies of the Greek Fathers concerning the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption?<sup>45</sup> Will not this Spirit of Truth, of Unity, and of Love press the Orientals to reflect on the witness given by their Saints, before and after<sup>46</sup> the separation, to the Immaculate Conception of the Theotokos, and to rediscover, under the ashes of a recent anti-immaculist polemical tradition, the light and fire of the authentic immaculist tradition of Byzantium and Moscow? Will He not urge the ecclesial communities of the West to a deeper understanding not only of the biblical data on Mary, but likewise of the reasons why a Luther preached and celebrated the Immaculate Conception in 1527,<sup>47</sup> a Bullinger continued to believe in Mary's bodily Assumption,<sup>48</sup> and some Anglicans today affirm both?<sup>49</sup>

velopments of the N.T. Marian data—when the notion itself of development does not present difficulties to them. Upon reflection, Protestants who admit the doctrine of consubstantiality proclaimed in Nicaea as an authentic development of a truth contained in the Scriptures, could be induced to draw nearer the Catholic developments of Marian truths. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are contained in the doctrine of the New Eve which is entirely primitive since it dates back to the second century.

<sup>45</sup> On the Immaculate Conception, see *L.G.* 56, n. 5, giving specific references to Sts. Germain of Constantinople, Anastasius of Antioch, Andrew of Crete and Sophronius of Jerusalem. On the Assumption, see *L.G.* 59, n. 13, quoting with equal precision from Sts. John Damascene, Germain of Constantinople and Modestus of Jerusalem.

<sup>46</sup> We are thinking especially of St. Dimitri of Rostov (1651-1709) who regarded the Immaculate Conception as pertaining to faith, praised it in his writings, and presented it in the liturgical context of the feast of December 9 (active conception of Anne). See Jugie, *op. cit.*, 412-413.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. M. Thurian, *op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> See M. Thurian, *Marie, Mère du Seigneur, figure de l'Eglise* (Taizé, 1962) 280.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. footnote 38 above, and besides, the texts of Mascall quoted by

Let us return to the Eastern tradition.

We know how decisive the witness of the Saints was in the eyes of separated Easterners, notably at the unionist council of Florence.<sup>50</sup> The verification of the doctrinal convergence of the Saints of the East and the West contributed much to overcome the last hesitations. When the Greco-Russian East reflects more intensely on the teachings of its Saints (e.g., "Mary has always been in grace with God; she was similar to Eve before the latter's fall; she was justified in her maternal bosom; she was always blessed, the only blessed one"), will it not conclude with the Saints of the modern West<sup>51</sup> that "Mary was preserved from original sin from the first instant of her conception"? Will it not be responsive to the mystical and Marian experiences of the two great Pontiffs, Pius IX and Pius XII (both on the way to beatification) immediately after their dogmatic definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, respectively?<sup>52</sup>

O'Meara, *op. cit.*, 308-311; likewise the unpublished dissertation of F. Kelly Nemeck, O.M.I., *Anglican Reaction to the Definition of the Assumption* (Ottawa, 1962).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. J. Gill, S.J., *Florence, council*, in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* 5 (Washington, 1967) 972-973, and the works of the same author on the same subject.

<sup>51</sup> Like St. Lawrence of Brindisi and St. Francis de Sales, both doctors of the universal Church, in the sixteenth century; St. Alphonsus Liguori, also a doctor of the Church, in the eighteenth century; St. Bernadette and St. Catherine Labouré in the nineteenth century, among many others. It does not seem that any Saint ever professed the maculist thesis after the genial solution of Blessed John Duns Scotus to the objections of St. Thomas and others. From this point of view, perhaps the apparently adverse witness of these Doctors is a witness in favor of the universality of the Redemption, of the ransom of Mary by Christ, rather than a maculist profession of faith as such. This could be an answer to the objection raised by an Orthodox concerning the Saints of the Catholic Church who opposed the Immaculate Conception.—The formulas in which we sum up the teaching of the immaculist Saints of the East and West are taken from Jugie, *op. cit.*, 473-474.

<sup>52</sup> For the case of Pius IX, see P. Fernessole, *Pie IX* (Paris, 1963) 2 vols. For the case of Pius XII one may recall the testimony of Cardinal

Perhaps a long period of maturation and inter-confessional discussion will precede a "council of reunion," if one ever takes place. Father Duprey feels that it will be necessary only to ask the still-separated Church of the East not to exclude *a priori* "the possibility of an accord in the formulation of these truths in the context of a renewal of normal relations between the two Churches. Both sides would undertake "a reciprocal, irrevocable commitment to resume living together in an endeavor to fathom, guided by the Holy Spirit, this common faith in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the particular theological traditions of the East and West." (Undoubtedly without deluding himself as to the additional difficulties of his inquest, he added these words: Evidently, all this is seen in the context of an accord between the Catholic Church and *all* the independent Orthodox Churches.)<sup>53</sup> Shortly before, Father Louis Bouyer had suggested an analogous hypothesis.<sup>54</sup>

Although for reasons already mentioned we thought it im-

Tedeschini in 1954 at the time of his diplomatic mission to Portugal. (Cf. *Documentation Catholique*, 1954).

<sup>53</sup> Duprey, P. B., *La France Catholique* (Jan. 21, 1972) 11-12; document No. 70.

<sup>54</sup> L. Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu* (Paris, 1970) 679. This position is undoubtedly tied to another, namely: "The Catholic Church of the West and the Orthodox Church of the East have never ceased being one Church" (*ibid.*, 678). Even if you share the author's views on the jurisdiction implicitly permitted to the Orthodox bishops by the Catholic Church (see the famous *nota preaevia* appended to *L.G.*), it doesn't seem that Vatican II considered the Catholic and Orthodox Churches as being already one, as enjoying perfect unity. This is shown by the very title of Ch. 3 of *U.R.* Since the Orthodox Church does not as yet recognize the fact that Christ rules His entire visible Church through the Supreme Pontiff, one doesn't see how the Orthodox could be considered as being fully incorporated into the universal Church. The council is clear on this point: "They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and through union with her visible structure are joined to Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. This joining is effected by the bonds of professed faith, of the sacraments, of ecclesiastical government, and of communion" (*L.G.* 14).



possible "to resume living together" without admitting, if not beforehand, at least simultaneously, *all* the truths defined by the Catholic Church after the separation, we also feel that it would be the task of a council of reunion to return to the method used in Florence; after a free and in-depth discussion, the faith of both Churches could be reformulated together "in a more complete manner and using expressions in which both will fully rediscover their traditional faith illuminated and enriched," to quote again from Fr. Duprey.<sup>55</sup>

"To resume living together" is not possible while divergences of faith (and not only of theology) remain. A common life which would allow every Christian to profess or not to profess truths irrevocably defined, far from being a progress, would be an unthinkable chaos, the "shipwreck" of the bark of Peter, and not only of some of its passengers. It is, therefore, just as impossible as such a shipwreck. The Church is indefectibly holy<sup>56</sup> in its fidelity to the Revelation of her Spouse. She could not follow a course which she herself rejected in Vatican II:

Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false conciliatory approach which harms the purity of the Catholic doctrine and obscures its authentic and incontestable sense (*U.R.* 11).

No Catholic dogma can be "held in suspense" until the assets exceed the liabilities. No one desires a return to the weakness of Popes Liberius and Honorius, nor to the confusions they occasioned.<sup>57</sup> The plurality of theologies admitted by a Basil and a Cyril<sup>58</sup> cannot but recognize its limitations within the necessary dogmatic unity.

<sup>55</sup> Duprey, *op. cit.*, n. 56.

<sup>56</sup> *L.G.* 39; cf. *L.G.* on the subject of the Church's fidelity to Christ.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *D.-S.* 138-143, formulas which wrongly sought to avoid the Nicene consubstantial, but which contained no error; *D.-S.* 487-488 and 550f; and the article *Liberius* in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C., 1967).

<sup>58</sup> See E. Lanne, *Les différences compatibles avec l'unité dans la tradition de l'Eglise ancienne*, in *Istina* (1961-1962) 227-256; idem, *Pluralité et*

On the other hand, to "reformulate together" and even, eventually, to define again in common ((as in Florence) would be very desirable for all concerned. In this way, the fidelity "to the truth received from the Apostles and from the Fathers," and the conformity "to the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed" (*U.R.* 24) would be insured in a dynamic tension "toward the fulness to which the Lord wishes His Body to grow."

There is no reason why an eventual council of reunion, while demanding adherence to the *previous* definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, could not *simultaneously* promulgate *new* definitions of these two dogmas, as was done in Florence apropos of the papal primacy already defined in Lyons.<sup>59</sup> Vatican II expressly foresaw the possibility of reformulations as an element of the "permanent reform which the Church always needs as long as she is a human and earthly institution."<sup>60</sup>

These eventual new definitions could, on the one hand, reformulate the doctrines in terms of the expressions used in the Byzantine liturgy concerning Mary's conception ("the Blessed one, the only Blessed one, the always Blessed one");<sup>61</sup> they

*unité, possibilité d'une diversité de typologie dans une même adhésion ecclésiastique*, in *Istina* (1969) 171-190. The legitimacy of pluralism in theological formulation is treated in *U.R.* 17. Paul VI alluded to it, while mentioning Basil and Cyril, in his address of July 1967 in Constantinople (*A.A.S.* 59 [1967] 841).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *D.-S.* 861; 1307.

<sup>60</sup> *U.R.* 6. Immediately after the passage already indicated, the text adds the following words: "Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies in conduct, in Church discipline or even in the formulation of doctrine (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit itself of faith), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment." Which evidently doesn't mean that the need for a continual reform entails the need for a continual reformulation!

<sup>61</sup> Jugie (*op. cit.*, 143) thinks that these formulas have a meaning equivalent to: "(Mary) has never fallen under the curse which strikes all the descendants of Adam"; "the blessing, the effect, is opposed to the curse, that is, to original sin, following the testimony of Greek theologians, which

could also define the fact of Mary's red mption by Christ. It isn't certain that this was defined by Pius IX, although it is at least *proxima fidei*.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, they could take into consideration certain exegetical advances,<sup>63</sup> and place the mysteries of Marian protology and eschatology in the background of the general picture of revealed anthropology.

For the rest, it is quite possible that centuries will elapse before this council of reunion takes place. The Holy Spirit, who is the Master of time and guides the Church toward the fulness of revealed truth, took a long time to prepare the Church for the definition of 1854. We cannot get ahead of the Spirit of Truth as to "the time and moment" chosen by Him to make our separated brothers arrive at the faith-acceptance of the mystery of Mary immaculate and assumed into Heaven.<sup>64</sup> We can only pray to Him to hasten His hour.

is also the terminology of liturgical texts." The reflection of the Orthodox on their own liturgy of December 9 (feast of the conception of Mary by Anne) could, notwithstanding Lossky (*One Church* 25 [1971] 277-280), lead them to admit that it celebrates not only the active conception of Mary, but also her passive, immaculate conception in the womb of her mother (Jugie, *op. cit.*, 135-141). They could recognize that Mary is not only, as they already admit, immaculate in the positive sense of "full of grace," but also in the negative sense (which they still deny) of having been preserved free from original sin; in a word: the coming into a *holy* existence of the future Mother of God.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J. Alfaro, S.J., *La f rmula definitoria de la Inmaculada Concepci n*, in *Virgo Immaculata* 2 (Rome, 1956) 269-271. Cf. D.-S. 3908-3909.

<sup>63</sup> Thus the Assumption could be formulated in the biblical terms of a being taken up, of an anticipated and privileged ecstasy; cf. Gen. 5:24; I Thes. 4:17. Cf. A. Feuillet, P.S.S., *Le ravissement final des justes et la double perspective eschatologique dans I Thes.*, in *Revue Thomiste* (1972) 533-559.

<sup>64</sup> The Holy Spirit moves all the baptized, including those who don't accept such a motion, to recognize, under the direction of the Magisterium, the revealed truths (cf. *L.G.* 12: "sensus fidei") even before they are defined as such, *a fortiori* after the definition. *L.G.* 25: "... to these definitions the assent of the Church can never be wanting, on account of the activity of the same Holy Spirit, whereby the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith." This is what K. Rahner seems to have completely forgotten (to put it mildly) when he holds that "only the official

Like the one of Calvary, that hour will be inseparably that of Jesus and of Mary who, from her conception to her death<sup>65</sup> and resurrection, was redeemed in a more sublime and perfect manner than any other person.

The revelation and definition of the two Marian truths had for their price the blood of the Lamb of God. The Spirit prepared its recognition by means of oaths and vows.<sup>66</sup> Their defense and preservation now demanded the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom,<sup>67</sup> a response to the martyrdom of the Revealer who delivered them in His Blood.

Hence it is understandable that the Church, in refusing the common chalice to those who disregard these truths, is imitating the Mother of her Lord in order the more to meditate on her the Message—which, as Man, He had not chosen, but re-

doctrine of the Magisterium still divides Christians [of different confessions], but they are no longer vitally affected by it" (*Irenikon* 46 [1973] 59). The Spirit who has assisted the Church in her definition of dogmas cannot contradict Himself and proceed to move Christians not to attach any importance to them. If many do react in this way, it surely is not under His influence. To deny this would be an error in the discernment of spirits in doctrinal matters.

<sup>65</sup> The solemn affirmation by both the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches of the doctrinal fact of Mary's death would present less difficulty than many others, and it would have the advantage of underlining, for the benefit of the Protestants, that Mary is a creature.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, in *Enseignements Pontificaux* (Desclée, 1958) 45, par. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. J. Stricher, C.S.S.R., *Le voeu du sang en faveur de l'Immaculée Conception* 2 (Rome, 1959) 210-225. We cannot but observe with a certain misgiving the difference in religious climates: when the Immaculate Conception was not yet defined, many were ready to suffer martyrdom for its truth; now that it has been defined as a divinely revealed truth, some seem to attach no importance to it... even though they are obliged to die rather than deny it!

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the declaration of Paul VI insisting on the complete and organic unity of the Churches as a condition for intercommunion (*A.A.S.* 64 [1972] 196), as an indirect answer to the moving appeal of Patriarch Athenagoras. *De facto*, although not *de jure*, the recognition by the separated Churches of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption would go on a par with their adherence to the papal primacy and infallibility. And we are still very far from that.

ceived from the Father.<sup>69</sup>

In transmitting the received tradition, the Church, like Mary and with her, preserves with loving care her memories concerning the Mother of her Lord in order the more to meditate on them always in her heart (Lk. 2:19, 51).<sup>70</sup> It is the intercession of God's Mother on behalf of all His people that obtains for them the grace to consider her personal privileges within the economy of their salvation.

Everything seems to indicate that the future Church will go forward to meet her immaculate, risen and glorified Mother, not through the impossible and dead-end path of an abridgment of already defined dogmas concerning her, but rather by *concentrating* her attention on fundamental mysteries, and especially on the privileged cooperation of the New Eve with the New Adam with a view to her own foundation and origin.<sup>71</sup> Such a concentration cannot but lead her to underline the paschal and christocentric sense of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Mother of God.

"This title of Mother of God," wrote St. John Damascene, "contains the whole mystery of the Incarnation and the whole history of the divine economy in this world."<sup>72</sup> Those who unfold its implications will recognize in it the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. John 12:49-50. Like Jesus, the Church obeys while teaching.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Dei Verbum* 8: "The Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk. 2:19, 51) . . . and through the preaching of those who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth."

<sup>71</sup> On the dogmatic definability of Mary's spiritual maternity, see our article *La maternité spirituelle de Marie et les Liturgies de l'Eglise*, in *Ephem. Mariol.* 1975. Of this *development through concentration*, Vatican II offers us a model short of a dogma.

<sup>72</sup> St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, III, 12; PG 94, 1029-1032.

In the Church of the future, Mary, who is the *raison d'être* of the universe,"<sup>73</sup> will always appear more and more as the invisible and loving Heart;<sup>74</sup> the Heart which, from the first to the last instant of her earthly life and beyond, has never known either spiritual or physical corruption; the Immaculate Heart, victorious over all divisions and all heresies, even over those of which it is the occasion, the inextinguishable Lamp of the true faith.

It will become always clearer, according to the profound statement of V. Lossky, that "the mystery of the Church is centered on two perfect persons: the divine Person of Christ and the human person of the Mother of God."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> We are applying here to Mary, a type of the Church and her most eminent member (cf. *L.G.* 65 and 53), what St. Epiphanius says of the Church in general (*Adv. Haer.* I, 5; *P.G.* 41, 181 B).

<sup>74</sup> It is well known that an important part of Western Mariology (especially Scheeben) and the Russian sophianic Mariology coincide in the following affirmation: Mary is the Heart of the Church, Body of Christ. See B. de Margerie, S.J., *Le Coeur de Marie, Coeur de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1967) 66-70.

<sup>75</sup> V. Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient* (Paris, 1914) 192.

## POSTSCRIPT

*Can and should the Catholic Church, for ecumenical reasons, lift the anathemas attached to the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption?*

On December 6, 1974, in the course of a lecture given at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles offered the following suggestion: Could not the Catholic Church "during the coming Holy Year, consider the possibility that these two Marian doctrines (i.e., the Immaculate

Conception and the Assumption), while still being taught as Catholic doctrine, might be officially acknowledged as demanding only a free assent from those who are personally convinced of their truth?"<sup>1</sup>

After quoting the anathemas attached to these two definitions, the Author had previously admitted their obvious sense: The fulness of ecclesiastical communion is impossible between the members of the Catholic Church and those who do not accept these dogmas as divinely revealed truths.<sup>2</sup>

In order to justify his suggestion, Fr. Dulles invokes the following reasons: The Church has at times (e.g., Vatican II a propos episcopal collegiality) taught a doctrine without sanctioning with an anathema in case of denial. This observation is certainly exact. Again, Catholic tradition recognizes that all the faithful are not bound to profess distinctly "the full content of revelation, as known to the Church, with regard to secondary matters."<sup>3</sup> This, too, is correct. Finally, it is not proper that good Christians anathematize each other on account of doctrinal differences which are relatively minor and highly subtle. Fr. Dulles synthesizes these last two reasons thus: "It is inexcusable for the churches to be mutually divided by doctrines that are obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith."<sup>4</sup>

The second reason alleged overlooks the fact that, while all Christians are not always bound to explicitly profess the totality of dogmatically defined truths nor each of them in particular, nevertheless, in order to remain within the unity of Catholic communion, they are bound to profess them implicitly by adhering in a general fashion to all the truths of the Church in the sense and to the extent that she teaches them. We have in mind, for example, the case envisaged by moralists of the con-

<sup>1</sup> A. Dulles, S.J., *A Proposal to Lift Anathemas*, in *Origins*, NC Documentary Service (Washington, D.C.) Dec. 26, 1974, Vol. 4, No. 27, p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Art. cit.*, 420.

ditions required to baptize a dying person. "Classical" Catholic moralists have never acknowledged the liceity of excluding a single dogma on the part of those who wish to be in full communion with the faith of the Church.

Furthermore, if in a certain sense the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are actually secondary with reference to the paschal mystery of Jesus, they are not secondary with reference to other truths of the faith, as emerges, we believe, from the study which precedes this postscript. The third reason invoked by Fr. Dulles notwithstanding, we believe that these two truths are not "obscure," but (notably because of their definition and in the explicative context in which they have been defined) very clear and illuminating. They are present to the heart of the paschal mystery in view of the privileged, intimate and indissoluble union of Mary as the New Eve with Jesus as the New Adam. As it is evident from our study, the two Marian dogmas in question forcefully express that union and throw new light upon it. It is precisely as immaculate and assumed into Heaven that Our Blessed Lady is, according to an ancient metaphor, the *Heart of the Church*, the Mystical Body of Christ.

There is, besides, a certain internal contradiction in Fr. Dulles' suggestion. By asking that the two doctrines defined in 1854 and 1950 be considered as demanding a free assent (hence, no longer obligatory), is he not reducing them to merely optional "theologoumena" and thus substantially changing their doctrinal status, while at the same time pretending to keep them as "Catholic doctrines"? Moreover, isn't the act of faith always a free assent? Doesn't the obligation have reference to a freedom?

But we would like especially to show the uselessness and the ecumenical untimeliness of Fr. Dulles' proposal, and to set off briefly the biblical and ecclesial perspectives which will help us situate better the anathemas in question at the present time.

From the canonical point of view, an anathema is an excommunication. The latter cannot be incurred except in a case of



subjectively culpable crime. This means that the anathemas do not affect non-Catholics, whose submission to the two definitions was not at all anticipated; they envision only those who, up to that time, were in full communion with the Church and who might regrettably refuse to accept the doctrines.

It is possible that the idea of lifting the anathemas came to Fr. Dulles and to others because at the end of Vatican II the Churches of Rome and Constantinople decided to eliminate their mutual excommunications. Now, we could apply to our case the same terms in which Cardinal Willebrands answered negatively a request to lift the anathema against Luther. He said: "The comparison with that which happened in the case of Constantinople applies here only in a very relative manner. In effect, in the case of Constantinople it was a question only of 'removing from the midst of the Church and from our memory' the excommunication of 1054 which, unlike our case, was not tied to any doctrinal question."<sup>5</sup>

It must be noted also that the lifting of the anathemas would in no way eliminate the obligation, on the part of all the baptized wishing to remain in full communion with the Church of Rome, of professing her faith in its totality. Our previous essay has sufficiently shown this. Nor could the Church suppress the objectively sinful character (far from us to say it is always subjectively such) of a conscious refusal of full communion—particularly a conscious refusal to profess these truths revealed by God for our salvation, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Mother of God.

For this reason it is necessary to repeat in this context what Cardinal Willebrands wrote concerning Luther: "The lifting of the excommunication against Luther seems neither possible on the objective level nor appropriate, whether it be in order to express efficaciously the evolution of Catholic judgment on Luther, or in order to promote a rapprochement among Luther-

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Cardinal Willebrands to Rudolf Knecht, in *Documentation Catholique* 69 (1972) 32-33. The letter is dated July 14, 1971.

ans and Catholics.”<sup>6</sup> With this slight difference: While the lifting of the anathemas in question is theoretically conceivable, it could not, of course, have any retroactive effect for those members of the *Catholic* Church who might have incurred them in the past. Besides, it would have no practical effect for the future because, even without the anathemas, any Catholic consciously denying either of these two dogmas would fall into the sin of heresy and would be *ipso facto* excluded from the Catholic Church. We have already shown why these anathemas have never been intended for non-Catholics. Hence we fail to see the ecumenical advantage that would result from the measure proposed by Fr. Dulles.

As a matter of fact, one can perceive the grave pastoral and even ecumenical drawbacks which the measure would present. For, despite all the eventual explanations given, it would be difficult to convince the Catholic faithful or the Christians of non-Catholic ecclesial communities that the elimination of the anathemas does not mean the elimination of the two dogmas themselves, nor of the obligation to accept them. Therefore, the lifting of the anathemas, far from marking an ecumenical progress, would be the source of confusion and, in the end, a regression pure and simple.

That is not to say that Fr. Dulles' suggestion has been entirely useless. On the contrary, it has afforded us the opportunity to reflect more deeply both on the obligation to adhere to the two dogmas—we have just done that—and on the ecclesial and eschatological context of the anathemas.

These anathemas, which are not anti-ecumenical but only

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Concerning the lifting of the anathemas between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, one may consult also the article by J. Ratzinger, *Schisme anathématique*, in *Istina* 20 (1975) 87-99. N.B. In writing this note we have made use of the article *Anathème* in Vigouroux's *Dictionnaire de la Bible*.

The paper which precedes this postscript had already been finished when we became aware of the important article by the Orthodox theologian, A. Stawrowsky, *La doctrine de l'Immaculée Conception des Eglises catholique et orthodoxe*, in *Marianum* 35 (1973) 36-112.

"intra-Catholic," are above all and indeed exclusively medicinal.<sup>7</sup> Their purpose is the spiritual recovery of those who do not acknowledge Mary's privileges in the economy of salvation. They are calculated to lead such persons to join the Church in the praise of her Mother, immaculate and assumed into Heaven.

These anathemas are, therefore, temporary in their very scope. If during her earthly pilgrimage Our Blessed Lady, more than St. Paul,<sup>8</sup> had desired to become anathema for all Christ's brethren who did not acknowledge her as Mother of *the Christ*, but only as Mother of Jesus of Nazareth, how much more now, in the glory of her Assumption, will she refrain forever from all curse and anathema!<sup>9</sup> The Immaculate Virgin does not anathematize any of her children who possess the witness of Jesus in obeying God's commandments, even if they are beyond the visible limits of the Bride of the Lamb.<sup>10</sup>

Among these children of Mary, who in the waters of Baptism are reborn of her and of the Spirit, some undoubtedly do not explicitly acknowledge her as immaculate and assumed into Heaven. Some even deny this explicitly and materially (like the Angelic Doctor as regards the Immaculate Conception). But couldn't one say—shouldn't one say—that to the extent that they wish to adhere to everything that Christ has revealed for our salvation, they adhere implicitly and formally (like St. Thomas in the case of the Immaculate Conception) to these two Marian dogmas? Better still: must we not say that such *is* the implicit faith of all the churches and ecclesial communities in imperfect communion with the Roman Church, and to the extent of that communion?

Such an implicit faith in Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption among all the baptized in the state of grace, either

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 5:5.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 9:3.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ap. 22:3.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ap. 12:17.

individually or as a body, seems to us to flow like a precious fruit from the eucharistic Sacrifice which the universal Church constantly offers for them and through which she offers herself as a victim for them. More than St. Paul,<sup>11</sup> and in imitation of Mary, the Catholic Church, which is Mary's Church, would like to become anathema for her baptized children who do not as yet acknowledge her (and their) Mother in the economy of salvation. Like Paul, and much more than he, the Catholic Church experiences "a great grief and constant pain in her heart" because her dearest brethren are not yet in perfect communion of Marian faith.<sup>12</sup> For want of recognizing Mary as immaculate and assumed into Heaven, they adequately recognize neither the Church, of whom Mary is "the beauty, the strength and the glory,"<sup>13</sup> nor Christ who is, above all and in a more sublime manner, the Redeemer and Rewarder of His Mother and privileged Associate.

In a word: If the Catholic Church regards Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption as important aspects of Christ's Gospel which she could not reject without announcing a "different Gospel" from that which she has received from Him, thus being anathematized by Him,<sup>14</sup> this same Church rejoices here on earth at the thought that this one Gospel is implicitly embraced by all those who are still only imperfectly united with her; and she rejoices also while contemplating the constant and merciful intercession of the pre-redeemed and pre-glorified Virgin on behalf of all the baptized. The Catholic Church, which does not anathematize non-Catholics who reject these two dogmas, sacrifices herself and prays that they all may be eternally "blessed and immaculate" in the presence and loving vision of Mary who has so perfectly overcome sin and death.

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<sup>11</sup> *Rom.* 9:3.

<sup>12</sup> *Rom.* 9:2

<sup>13</sup> In the happy phrase of Peter de Clorivière.

<sup>14</sup> *Cf. Gal.* 1:8.