

**MARY: GRACE AND HOPE IN CHRIST**  
**THE ANGLICAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION**  
**AN AGREED STATEMENT**  
**2005**

## INTRODUCTION

The Agreed Statement<sup>1</sup> on Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ (also known as the Seattle Statement) is the most recent in a series produced by the present commission. It arose from a request made by a meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops under the leadership of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, at Mississauga, Canada, in 2000 which specifically asked for “a study of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church.”<sup>2</sup> The request, it is pointed out, recalls the observation of the Malta Report (1968) that “real or apparent differences between us come to the surface in such matters as...the Mariological definitions” promulgated in 1854 and 1950. More recently, in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), Pope John Paul II identified as one area in need of fuller study by all Christian traditions before a true consensus of faith can be achieved “the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ’s disciples and for all humanity”.<sup>3</sup> ARCIC had addressed this topic once before. In paragraph two of the present statement it was noted that *Authority in the Church II* (1981) already records a significant degree of agreement:<sup>4</sup>

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 doctrines of Christ and the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotókos*), 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 (para. 30)

The same document, however, pointed out remaining differences:

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

The co-chairmen of the present commission (The Most Revd Alexander J. Brunett, and the Most Revd Peter F. Carnley) in commending *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* state:<sup>5</sup>

In framing this Agreed Statement, we have drawn on the Scriptures and the common tradition which predates the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. As in previous Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) documents, we have

attempted to use language that reflects what we hold in common and transcends the controversies of the past. At the same time, in this statement we have had to face squarely dogmatic definitions which are integral to the faith of Roman Catholics but largely foreign to the faith of Anglicans. The members of the ARCIC, over time, have sought to embrace one another's ways of doing theology and have considered together the historical context in which certain doctrines developed. In so doing, we have learned to receive anew our own traditions, illumined and deepened by the understanding of and appreciation for each other's tradition.

With regard to the status of the document it is stated that it is a joint statement of the Commission. The authorities who appointed the Commission have allowed the statement to be published so that it may be widely discussed. "It is not an authoritative declaration by the Roman Catholic Church or by the Anglican Communion, who will study and evaluate the document in due course."<sup>6</sup> It is within this context that the Standing Committee appointed a committee to consider the document and draft a response that might be brought before the General Synod of 2006.<sup>7</sup>

The document is in four sections, dealing respectively with Mary according to the Scriptures, Mary in the Christian tradition, Mary within the pattern of grace and hope, and Mary in the life of the church. After reaffirming the agreements reached previously by ARCIC in *Authority in the Church II.30*, the document affirms,

We are convinced that any attempt to come to a reconciled understanding of these matters must begin by listening to God's word in the Scriptures. Therefore our common statement commences with a careful exploration of the rich New Testament witness to Mary, in the light of overall themes and patterns in the Scriptures as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

- This study has led us to the conclusion that it is impossible to be faithful to Scripture without giving due attention to the person of Mary (paragraphs 6-30).
- In recalling together the ancient common traditions, we have discerned afresh the central importance of the *Theotókos* in the Christological controversies, and the Fathers' use of biblical images to interpret and celebrate Mary's place in the plan of salvation (paragraphs 31-40).
- We have reviewed the growth of devotion to Mary in the medieval centuries, and the theological controversies associated with them. We have seen how some excesses in late medieval devotion, and reactions against them by the Reformers, contributed to the breach of communion between us, following which attitudes toward Mary took divergent paths (paragraphs 41-46).
- We have also noted evidence of subsequent developments in both our Communions, which opened the way for a re-reception of the place of Mary in the faith and life of the Church (paragraphs 47-51)
- This growing convergence has also allowed us to approach in a fresh way the questions about Mary which our two Communions have set before us. In doing so, we have framed our work within the pattern of grace and hope which we discover in Scripture - "predestined...called...justified...glorified" (Romans 8:30) (paragraphs 52-57).

Under the heading “Advances in Agreement” the document states,<sup>9</sup>

As a result of our study, the Commission offers the following agreements, which we believe significantly advance our consensus regarding Mary. We affirm together

- ❑ the teaching that God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory as consonant with Scripture, and only to be understood in the light of Scripture (paragraph 58);
- ❑ that in view of her vocation to be the mother of the Holy One, Christ’s redeeming work reached “back” in Mary to the depths of her being and to her earliest beginnings (paragraph 59);
- ❑ that the teaching about Mary in the two definitions of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, understood within the biblical pattern of the economy of hope and grace, can be said to be consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions (paragraph 60);
- ❑ that this agreement, when accepted by our two Communions, would place the questions about authority which arise from the two definitions of 1854 and 1950 in a new ecumenical context (paragraphs 61-63);
- ❑ that Mary has a continuing ministry which serves the ministry of Christ, our unique mediator, that Mary and the Saints pray for the whole Church and that the practice of asking Mary and the saints to pray for us is not communion-dividing (paragraphs 64-75)

We agree that doctrines and devotions which are contrary to Scripture cannot be said to be revealed by God nor to be the teaching of the Church. We agree that doctrine and devotion which focuses on Mary, including claims to “private revelations,” must be moderated by carefully expressed norms which ensure the unique and central place of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church, and that Christ alone, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is to be worshipped in the Church.<sup>10</sup>

Our statement has sought not to clear away all possible problems, but to deepen our common understanding to the point where remaining diversities of devotional practice may be received as the varied work of the Spirit amongst all the people of God. We believe that the agreement we have here outlined is itself the product of a re-reception by Anglicans and Roman Catholics of doctrine about Mary and that it points to the possibility of further reconciliation, in which issues concerning doctrine and devotion to Mary need no longer be seen as communion-dividing, or an obstacle to a new stage of our growth into visible *koinonia*.<sup>11</sup>

In making its response as a particular church among the thirty-eight provinces of the Anglican Communion, the Church of Ireland does so as a body which in its most fundamental constitutive document, “The Preamble and Declaration prefixed to the Church Constitution” (1870) describes itself in a twofold manner as both “Ancient, Catholic, and Apostolic” and “Reformed and Protestant”.<sup>12</sup> This involves, on the one hand adherence to the historic faith “once for all delivered to the saints” and affirmed in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds and, on the other hand commitment to a scriptural understanding of that faith as recovered at the Reformation.<sup>13</sup> Papers produced by members of the preparatory committee cover both aspects, including a study of Mary in Celtic Christianity by the Revd Gillian Wharton (Preparatory Paper A) and one on Mary in the period of the Reformation by the Very Revd Norman Lynas (Preparatory Paper B) [For reasons of space the Preparatory Working Documents do not appear in this printing, but are available separately]

## AFFIRMATIONS

From a Church of Ireland perspective there is much to welcome in this document. It is helpful to have a report which goes a long way towards portraying Mary more of a bridge than a barrier between our two communions. The Church of Ireland, following the tradition affirmed by the Lambeth Conference of 1958 of “honouring the saints without invocation”<sup>1</sup> in its liturgical practice authorizes the following holy days in the 2004 edition of the Prayer Book<sup>2</sup>:

(1) *Festivals of Christ with a particular association with the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

	1st January	The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
	2nd February	The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (called in the 1926 Prayer Book the Purification of St Mary the Virgin)
	25th March	The Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary
	25th December	Christmas Day (Principal Holy Day)

The Post Communion prayer of the Annunciation reads,

God Most High,  
whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:  
We thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption  
you visit us with your Holy Spirit  
and overshadow us by your power.  
May we like Mary be joyful in our obedience,  
and so bring forth the fruits of holiness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Christmas Collect reads,

Almighty God,  
you have given us your only begotten Son  
to take our nature upon him  
and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin:  
Grant that we, who have been born again  
and made your children by adoption and grace,  
may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(2) *Festivals of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

	31st May	The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
	8th September	The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Collect of the Visitation reads,

Mighty God,  
by whose grace Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary  
and greeted her as the mother of the Lord:  
Look with favour on your lowly servants  
that, with Mary, we may magnify your holy name

and rejoice to acclaim her Son our Saviour,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Post Communion of the Visitation reads,

Gracious God,  
who gave joy to Elizabeth and Mary  
as they recognized the signs of redemption at work within them:  
Help us, who have shared in the joy of this eucharist,  
to know the Lord deep within us  
and his love shining out in our lives,  
that the world may rejoice in your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary reads,

Almighty God,  
who looked upon the lowliness of the blessed Virgin Mary  
and chose her to be the mother of your only Son:  
Grant that we who are redeemed by his blood  
may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Post Communion of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary reads,

Almighty and everlasting God,  
who stooped to raise fallen humanity  
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary:  
Grant that we who have seen your glory  
revealed in our human nature,  
and your love made perfect in our weakness,  
may daily be renewed in your image,  
and conformed to the pattern of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### (3) *Sundays*

The Collect of the fourth Sunday of Advent reads,

God our redeemer,  
who prepared the blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of your Son:  
Grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,  
so we may be ready to greet him  
when he comes again as our judge;  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Other relevant liturgical texts include the Penitential Kyries, the Introduction to the Peace, the Proper Preface, and the Blessing appointed for the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>3</sup>, as follows,

*Penitential Kyries*

Lord God, mighty God,  
you are the creator of the world.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary,  
you are the Prince of Peace.  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit,  
by your power the Word was made flesh  
and came to dwell among us.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

*Introduction to the Peace*

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;  
and his name is called the Prince of Peace.

*Proper Preface*

You chose the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of your Son  
and so exalted the humble and meek;  
your angel hailed her as most highly favoured,  
and with all generations we call her blessed:

*Blessing*

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,  
fill you with his grace  
to trust his promises and obey his will:  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Particularly significant is the appointment of the Magnificat<sup>4</sup> - the “Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary” - as the canticle following the first reading at Evening Prayer (Evensong) following the tradition of Anglican worship back to the original edition of the Prayer Book (1549), where it forms the climax of the evening office, and, normatively, is used daily.

The 2000 edition of the Church Hymnal<sup>5</sup> contains a number of hymns, particularly those dealing with the incarnation, which honour Mary. She is mentioned specifically in 180 v3 referring to “Christ to us through Mary given”, and 181 v3 where Mary is depicted as “singing a sweet lullaby”, 183 “The holly and the ivy” in which four verses end with the words “and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to be our sweet Saviour”. Hymn 184 “Unto us is

born a Son” includes the wish “O that Mary’s gentle child might lead us up to glory”. Hymn 185 addressed to the Saviour, celebrates the role of Mary, as follows,

Virgin-born, we bow before thee;  
blessèd was the womb that bore thee;  
Mary, maid and mother mild,  
blessèd was she in her child.

Blessèd was the breast that fed thee;  
blessèd was the hand that led thee;  
blessèd was the parent’s eye  
that watched thy slumbering infancy.

Blessèd was she by all creation,  
who brought forth the world’s Salvation,  
blessèd they, for ever blessed,  
who love thee most and serve thee best.

Hymns related to the sanctorale (the calendar of saints) also refer to Mary. Hymn 460 “For all your saints in glory” contains inserts celebrating the role of particular saints in the Church of Ireland calendar. That appointed for September 8, the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, reads,

We celebrate the birthday of Mary, chosen one  
to be the virgin mother of God’s incarnate Son,  
She loved you and she raised you as God’s great plan unfurled,  
then saw you die on Calv’ry as Saviour of the world.

Hymns 462 “For Mary, mother of our Lord”, 470 (appointed for the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, May 31) “Let God’s people join in worship on the Virgin Mary’s feast” and 472 “Sing we of the blessed mother”, all explicitly celebrate the role of Mary. The last of these refers to “Mary’s sorrows” and “the joys of Mary” and concludes with a reference to her “chiefest joy”,

Sing the chiefest joy of Mary  
when on earth her work was done,  
and the Lord of all creation  
brought her to his heavenly home:  
where, raised high with saints and angels,  
in Jerusalem above,  
she beholds her Son and Saviour  
reigning as the Lord of love.

A significant emphasis upon the Annunciation, including the specific role of Mary as a model of motherhood is found in the wisely supported women’s organization in the Church of Ireland as in other parts of the Anglican Communion, the Mothers’ Union. A study of this by the All-Ireland President of the Mothers’ Union, Mrs. Patricia Wallace, may be found in Preparatory Paper C.

The document is helpful insofar as it reflects the ongoing commitment of our two communions to work, pray and study together. The *Common Declaration* of 1966 of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey spoke of a “serious dialogue...founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions” and the ARCIC enterprise is the main expression of this (although there have also been ongoing discussions in several parts of the world on a more local basis). As members of the Church of Ireland we can identify with the concluding words of this present document in which it is said<sup>6</sup>,

It may [also] in itself prove a valuable study of the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God incarnate. Our hope is that, as we share in the one Spirit by which Mary was prepared and sanctified for her unique vocation, we may together participate with her and all the saints in the unending praise of God.

The attempts made in the document to explicate the place of Mary and doctrines associated with Mary in a scriptural context<sup>7</sup> are also appreciated, the concept of “a trajectory of grace and hope” - which is the main thrust of the argument - being particularly helpful. From the teaching of Romans Chapter Eight (vv29-30) members of the Church of Ireland are familiar with the idea of believers as those whom God “foreknew”, “predestined”, “called”, “justified”, and even “glorified”. The relevance of the concept of the covenant is well brought out, with its emphasis on the love affair between God and Israel, the virgin daughter of Zion, bride and mother. God, in Christian understanding, is one who is experienced in a reciprocal relationship of love as well as reflected upon in philosophical theology. Section 11 helpfully sets the role of Mary as the mother of the Saviour both within the context of the Christological fulfilment of the hope of Israel and also within the context of God’s election, calling and sanctification in the line of those holy women, such as Sarah and Hannah, whose sons fulfilled the purposes of God for his people. All of this part of the report, including the [helpful] assembly of evidence of the calling by God of particular persons, such as David, Elijah, Jeremiah and Isaiah in the Old Testament and John the Baptist and Paul in the New Testament, is relevant and helpful and bears witness to the gift of the Spirit or the presence of God in the lives of such persons enabling them to accomplish God’s will and purpose. The treatment of the birth narrative in Matthew brings out its theological significance including its context in salvation history (which includes the unlikely role played in its providential ordering by four women, each of whom stretches the boundaries of the covenant); and the section on “Mary in Luke’s birth narrative” rightly emphasizes the importance of the stories of the annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth not only within their original context but for reflection on the place of Mary in the life of the Church. The treatment of Mary in John’s Gospel, in which she appears both at the beginning of Our Lord’s ministry (at the Wedding Feast at Cana of Galilee) and at its conclusion (at the foot of the Cross) indicates that a sense of her special significance is not confined to the Synoptic tradition but is common to the four Gospels. All the passages concerned, with their powerful affirmation of the role of Mary repay careful and prayerful reflection.

It is helpful that the treatment of the doctrine of Mary in ancient conciliar statements is affirmed.<sup>8</sup> The “Nicene Creed” (actually in its received form the Creed accepted at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D.) declares<sup>9</sup>,

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man...

As indicated in the document (para 34) a further step in the recognition of the role of Mary in the incarnation was that taken by the Council of Ephesus (431). The Council used the term *Theotókos* (literally “God-bearer”, in Latin, *Deipara*) to affirm the oneness of Christ’s person by identifying Mary as the Mother of God the Word incarnate. The rule of faith on this matter takes more precise expression in the definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451): “One and the same Son...was begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to the humanity from Mary the Virgin *Theotókos*.” In his divine aspect Jesus, as the one “through whom all things were made” has a priority of being even over his mother “in the flesh”. We would identify with the statement that “in receiving the Council of Ephesus and the definition of Chalcedon, Anglicans and Roman Catholics together confess Mary as *Theotókos*”.<sup>9</sup>

It is important in this connection to emphasize that the first four General Councils of the Church (Nicaea, 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus, 431; and Chalcedon, 451) are regarded by Anglicans as authentic and authoritative<sup>10</sup> because they explicate and confirm the teaching of Holy Scripture which, according to Article Six (of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion) contain all things necessary to salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Other (non-conciliar but authoritative) creedal statements are also relevant:

The Apostles’ Creed, which is the baptismal Creed of the Western Church, affirms<sup>12</sup>,

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord.  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried...

The Creed attributed to St Athanasius (actually another Western Creed), which has been printed in successive editions of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland as a witness to the faith of the church but (since 1878) without any rubrics directing its actual use, says<sup>13</sup>,

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation:  
that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
For the right Faith is that we believe and confess:  
that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;  
God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;  
and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world;  
Perfect God, and perfect Man:

of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;  
Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead:  
and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood,  
Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ;  
One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh:  
but by taking the Manhood into God;  
One altogether, not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person,  
For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man:  
so God and Man is one Christ...

The affirmation of the uniqueness of Christ is welcome, especially the mediatorial and salvific emphasis in paragraph 2 of the report. This statement, given above, from *Authority in the Church II* (1981), is extremely significant and represents a doctrine of Mary which is consonant with the teaching of the Church of Ireland, and other Anglican churches. This accords with Scripture itself in which we read that “there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony to which was borne at the proper time” (1 Tim. 2: 5,6). Whatever respect and honour are due to Mary as the *theotókos*, the God-bearer, and whatever recognition may be given to any role of intercession ascribed to her, as suggested in the report, must be viewed within this context and must be of such a character as to give full weight to this fundamentally important scriptural teaching.

The acknowledgement that some of the non-scriptural devotions associated with Mary have been to “excess” is welcome, and it is also helpful to recognize that on the Anglican side there has in many places been a lack of attention to the importance of Mary in the “economy of salvation”, and this is something to which further thought needs to be given. From the Roman Catholic side an authoritative recognition of the limits of legitimate devotion to Mary as cited in the report (par 48) is significant. Pope Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* (1974) affirmed that devotion to her is properly located within the Christological focus of the Church’s public prayer, and must be in accordance with the Scriptures and the liturgy of the Church; it must be sensitive to the concerns of other Christians and it must affirm the full dignity of women in public and private life. He cautioned those who in his opinion erred either by exaggeration or neglect<sup>14</sup>. More recently, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) issued a warning about supposed “private revelations”, cited in the report (73). Although a value for these was claimed, it was also said,

The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is...its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand it has to be said that the full significance of the role of Mary as the *theotókos* or God-bearer has sometimes been lacking in the consciousness of some Anglicans. A renewal of interest may be seen, liturgically, in the observance of festivals with a Marian significance. In addition to those mentioned above, in some Anglican provinces, although not in the Church of Ireland, provision is made for the observance of August 15th as a general feast of Mary and of December 8th as a celebration of her conception (as in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer where it was a black-letter day)<sup>15</sup>. Some widely used, although unofficial office books, such as *Celebrating Common Prayer* include traditional forms of devotion to

Mary such as the Angelus and the Regina Coeli. A wide range of books by respected authors on the significance of Mary has appeared, including, *Chosen by God - Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, edited by David Wright and with several Anglican contributors; and *Mary for all Christians* by John Macquarrie. Particularly valuable from an historical perspective is a book by A.M. Allchin, *The Joy of all Creation - An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary* with chapters summarizing the views of such classical Anglican writers as Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, Herbert Thorndike, and Thomas Traherne, as well as a discussion eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century writers, including the poet T.S. Eliot.

A number of Anglicans belong to the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary whose publications include *An Ecumenical Office of Mary, the Mother of Jesus*.

It is important to set any recognition of the special position of Mary within the context of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, an essential element in the Christian faith affirmed in the Apostles' Creed, and properly part of the experienced reality of that faith. In the first instance this refers to the special kind of fellowship, called in the Greek New Testament *koinonia*, between all those who are Christ's and who are known in the New Testament as "saints" (hagioi, those who are holy). It also refer in a special way to the relationship between the church on earth and the church in heaven, as in the well-known hymn by Charles Wesley,

One fellowship in him we dwell,  
one church, above, beneath,  
though now divided by the stream,  
the narrow stream, of death.

The significance of this relationship is emphasized not only by the existence of the calendar of saints (in which the focus, in the Book of Common Prayer, 2004, of the Church of Ireland, is upon biblical and national saints)<sup>16</sup> but particularly in the provision for All Saints' Day (Nov 1).<sup>17</sup>

Almighty God,  
you have knit together your elect  
in one communion and fellowship  
in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord:  
Grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints  
in all virtuous and godly living  
that we may come to those inexpressible joys  
that you have prepared for those who truly love you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Introduction to the Peace in the Prayer Book is a quotation from Ephesians 2:19,17

We are fellow-citizens with the saints  
and of the household of God,  
through Christ our Lord,  
who came and preached peace to those who were far off  
and those who were near.

The Preface reads,

In the saints

you have given us an example of godly living,  
that, rejoicing in their fellowship,  
we may run with perseverance the race that is set before us,  
and with them receive the unfading crown of glory.

The Blessing reads,

God give you grace  
to share the inheritance of ... and of his saints in glory.

Special provision is made for Irish Saints (BCP pp.235-6)<sup>18</sup>

An essay by Bishop P. F. Barrett on devotion to Mary and the communion of saints may be found in Preparatory Paper D.

## **RESERVATIONS**

It is difficult in even so comprehensive a report to cover all aspects of the topic. However, it is felt that there are some significant omissions. For example, there is no treatment of the relationship between art, devotion and theology, especially the role of art in the portrayal of theological concepts, in this case where Mary is concerned. An essay on "Mary as the subject of religious art" by Mrs. Mary Evans, a member of the committee appointed to examine the Report, is included in a Preparatory Paper E.

There seems to have been insufficient attention given to pneumatology, the study of the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to Mary and the saints, despite the emphasis in Luke 1:35, echoed, as it is, in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.<sup>1</sup> Insofar as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is neglected this would appear to give scope for the mistaken idea that there can be an independent salvific initiative on Mary's part. Language such as "co-redeemer" would be theologically impossible for members of the Church of Ireland.

It is felt that there should have been a clearer explanation of the methodology used by the commission, and there seems even to be a lack of consistency in methodology. In some areas it would appear that arguments and methodology were being used to back up a pre-determined outcome. An essay on the philosophical aspects of the relation of doctrine, scripture and tradition in the document by Dr Susan Patterson is included in Preparatory Paper F.

Although the document sets forth some helpful principles relating to the interpretation of Holy Scripture (par 7) it appears that in practice its approach at times seems to border on the simplistic and to disregard the broad weight of biblical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> At times it is difficult to avoid an impression of lack of balance and even some "special pleading".<sup>3</sup>

A further problem arises from the ambiguity of a number of statements made in the document. For example, what does it mean to say that "the teaching about Mary in the two definitions of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, understood within the biblical pattern of the economy of hope and grace, can be said to be 'consonant' with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions (paragraph 60)"? To what extent can doctrines be said to be in agreement (consonant) with scripture and ancient common traditions if an adequate basis for them can be found in neither? That Mary was "assumed

body and soul” into heaven when the course of her earthly life was over is not to be found in scripture, the last glimpse of her being that in the first chapter of Acts where, following the Ascension and prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost she is to be found in the company of the other disciples and engaged in prayer. Were there to be an independent historical source of information indicating that either with or without dying she was assumed “body and soul” then this could perhaps indeed be said to be “consonant” with scripture. But there is no such source, the legend of her assumption being found, so far as can be determined, in entirely fictional, apocryphal, and even heretical writings of a kind familiar to scholars of the early church and generally regarded as valueless<sup>4</sup>. Apocryphal writings cannot in any case be regarded as part of the “ancient common traditions” shared by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

The statement that “God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory” is equally ambiguous. If this is simply an indication that Mary is with her Son in heaven, as understood in the light of Scripture (par 58) then this does appear to be consonant with Scripture and may be assented to in good conscience. But if “the fullness of her person” means that Mary ascended/was assumed in a flesh and bones manner then one must ask what is the evidence for this assertion and what are the grounds for affirming it as a dogma of faith? It is hard to avoid the impression that an ambiguous formula has been used to cover both those who affirm ... that the physical remains of Mary are, with the certainty of faith, to be deemed no longer to be on earth and those for whom there is no historical basis and absolutely no necessity for making any such assertion.

[A discussion of the doctrine of the Assumption, specifically as defined in the Roman Catholic tradition may be found below]

Similarly, with regard to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, it has to be said that the conception of Mary is not mentioned in Scripture, and is not to be found at all in the “ancient common traditions”. It seems to have arisen from a very widespread (but not absolutely universal) belief in Mary’s actual sinlessness in the early<sup>5</sup> Church which itself is neither to be found in Scripture nor necessarily implied in it, the doctrine, specifically, of her exemption from original sin (which is what the Immaculate Conception involves) being a piece of medieval speculation which appears not to be in accordance with the teaching of three of the greatest “doctors” of the faith recognized in the Roman Catholic Church itself, St Augustine, St Bernard of Clairvaux, and, above all, St Thomas Aquinas. The process by which this doctrine came to prevail in the Roman Catholic tradition is itself problematic as it appears to have involved, not a genuine discussion, but the gradual suppression of dissent<sup>6</sup>. The doctrine contradicts the scriptural teaching that, except for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”<sup>7</sup>.

Since, as indicated above, it also appears to be contrary at least implicitly (and in the case of St Thomas Aquinas quite explicitly) to the teaching of some of the greatest authorities it cannot, therefore, be said to be in any real sense “consonant” with scripture and with the ancient common traditions, although some of the early Fathers certainly use language implying Mary’s absolute purity.

The statement “that in view of her vocation to be the mother of the Holy One, Christ’s redeeming work reached ‘back’ in Mary to the depths of her being and to her earliest beginnings” is also ambiguous. If this means simply that Mary, like others (including the prophet Jeremiah<sup>8</sup> and the apostle Paul<sup>9</sup>) was chosen by God from the moment of her

conception, this may be affirmed not only for Mary but in a sense for all Christians, and this would appear to be a doctrine fully in accordance with scriptural teaching. However, that this involves actual sinlessness let alone exemption from “original” sin would go far beyond biblical evidence and is in no way required by it. Once again, a form of words seems to have been used which covers both those who believe it necessary to affirm the view that Mary was exempt from “original” (as well as “actual”) sin and those for whom this is neither necessary, nor requisite.

An examination of the biblical material by Dr Maurice Elliott may be found in Preparatory Paper F.

[A discussion of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, specifically as defined in the Roman Catholic tradition may be found below]

It is not entirely clear that, from the Anglican point of view, sufficient attention is given to the significance of Article Six (of the Thirty-nine Articles), *Of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation*.<sup>10</sup> This affirms the location of all things necessary to salvation as the Bible without denying the necessity for what is in scripture to be interpreted and applied within the church's living tradition.

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. [A list of these follows in the article]

And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine [A list of these follows in the article.]

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them for canonical.

It is one thing to recognize the significance of the figure of Mary in the New Testament, and even to allow for a development in the doctrine of Mary within the early church in accordance with biblical norms. The dogmatic description of her as the *Theotókos* by the Council of Ephesus (431) and confirmation of her status as mother of God in the proper sense by the Council of Chalcedon (451) falls within this category. However the line of doctrinal development leading to the two particular dogmas of the Roman Catholic church, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption does not appear necessarily to be derived from authentically biblical norms and is lacking in the kind of “proof” referred to in the article. The argumentation of the report falls far short of establishing a biblical basis for either doctrine, the “trajectory of grace and hope” so eloquently expounded being one which applies not only to Mary but to other biblical figures and in some measure to all Christians<sup>11</sup>. In general there would appear to be an absence of recognition of the lack of historical evidence in relation to some of the doctrinal claims made about Mary. These considerations apply particularly in relation to the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which are discussed below.

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was defined for Roman Catholics by Pope Pius IX in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, promulgated on 8th December 1854 and raised to the status of a dogma of faith.<sup>1</sup>

To the glory of the holy and undivided Trinity, to the honour and renown of the Virgin Mother of God, the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of Christian religion; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and our own authority, we declare, pronounce and define: the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and, therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful.

A number of arguments have been advanced, from time to time, in support of this doctrine:<sup>2</sup>

### *Argument from Scripture*

It is admitted, even by supporters of the doctrine, that no direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma can be brought forward from Scripture.<sup>3</sup> But Genesis 3:15 “she (he) shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her (his heel)” has been cited. The reading “she” is a fourth century mistranslation in the Vulgate (Latin) translation of the Bible. Even if the passage is regarded as prophetic of the role of Christ as Redeemer (which is a view that appears to have been read back into the text in church tradition) it does not say anything about any possible role of Mary as the “New Eve” (a piece of early Christian typology) let alone the nature of her being “highly favoured” (one who has been and remains endowed with grace). There is nothing in the text which suggests that the mother of the redeemer shall be exempt from actual sin, let alone that a further implication is that she must necessarily be immune from original sin.<sup>4</sup>

Other Old Testament texts sometimes cited in this connection (Proverbs 8 and The Song of Solomon 4:7) are not relevant, referring in their original context to the Wisdom of God and to the King’s bride. Nor does Ecclesiasticus 24 (in the Apocrypha) refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is also part of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament era. Even if, poetically, these texts might be regarded as fulfilled in the person of the mother of Jesus this would not establish any actual sinlessness let alone any exemption from original sin.<sup>5</sup> Nor does the angelic greeting (Luke 1:28) necessarily imply a state of grace totally dissimilar from that of all other Christians.<sup>6</sup> The seven, traditionally regarded as the first deacons (Acts 6:3) are described as “full of the Spirit and of wisdom”, and St Stephen in particular (Acts 6:5,9) is referred to as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” and as one who is “full of grace and power”. What makes this exegetically significant is that Luke-Acts is regarded by most biblical scholars as a two-volume work by the same author.<sup>7</sup>

### *Argument from Tradition*

Although the view that Mary was actually sinless was widely held in the early Church (for example by Saints Ephraem, Ambrose, Augustine, and John Damascene)<sup>8</sup> this was not, apparently, universal since neither Origen nor St John Chrysostom seem to have held it<sup>9</sup>. But belief in her exemption from original sin is not found at this period, and appears to be contrary to what was taught by St Augustine<sup>10</sup>. In medieval times the doctrine was espoused by Duns Scotus, but was contradicted by St Thomas Aquinas<sup>11</sup> and St Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>12</sup>.

As late as the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century one of the theologians present declared that “all the saints who speak of it, say with one voice, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin”<sup>13</sup>. A doctrine which is not in accordance with what was taught by three great “doctors” (teachers) of the faith recognized as such by the Roman Catholic Church cannot validly claim to be part of the “ancient common traditions” upon which ARCIC is supposed to draw let alone to be essential to a common understanding of a shared faith. The desire to honour Mary as the Mother of the incarnate Son of God is fully appreciated, but there must be some attention to "controls" based upon historical evidence.

It may well be that belief in the immaculate conception arose from an inclusion of the earliest stage of Mary’s existence within what was believed to be her actual sinlessness; but in the absence of any scriptural support for such a view this cannot be considered adequate. There is no sufficient basis for the development of this into a doctrine such as occurred from the period of the Middle Ages onwards and reached its culmination in the dogma as defined in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. Nor does the further reflection in the ARCIC document remove the difficulty.

#### *Argument from reason*

This is essentially an exercise in a priori thinking, as expressed in the axiom of Pseudo-Anselmus (Eadmer) developed by Duns Scotus, *Decuit, potuit, ergo fecit* (it was fitting, he was able, and therefore God did it). It was becoming that the Mother of the Redeemer should have been free from the power of sin and from the first moment of her existence; God could give her this privilege, therefore he gave it to her.<sup>14</sup> But this assumes that we know the mind of God in the matter. “His ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8). Much of what constitutes the essential character of the Christian faith is counter-intuitive even paradoxical in character, such as belief in God who is Three-in-One, in the Person of Christ who is God and Man, and in the Christian believer being *simul justus et peccator* (at one and the same time “justified” – right with God – and also a sinner). The question is not what God could have done, nor what we think we might have done had we been God, but what he has actually done - and for that we need original evidence. This is not to be found in Scripture; and the (sometimes quite extravagant) devotional language of a number of the early Church Fathers, while appealing to some, does nothing of itself to establish the truth of the matter in such a way as to provide a basis for the dogma itself. There is a difference between the language of poetry and that of fact.

## THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was defined for Roman Catholics by Pope Pius XII in the dogmatic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*<sup>1</sup>, promulgated on All Saints' Day 1950, as follows:

We, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and Our Own, pronounce, declare and define it to be a dogma divinely revealed, that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin, Mary, when the course of her earthly life was run, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.

A response, in the form of a Pastoral Letter from the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland<sup>2</sup> and signed by the Archbishops of Armagh (J.A.F. Gregg, who had drafted the letter)<sup>3</sup> and Dublin (A.W. Barton) which was read in all churches dealt with the doctrine as follows:

If we ask what historical evidence has come down to us that, as a fact, such a taking-up into the heavenly glory of the Mother of Jesus, body and soul, did actually occur, the only answer that can be given is that there is no historical evidence whatsoever. The death of the Blessed Virgin, whensoever and wheresoever it took place (and undoubtedly it must have taken place some time before the later books of the New Testament appeared) is entirely without contemporary record whether within or without the New Testament.

The belief in her Assumption appears to be a development resting principally in the first instance on an imaginative Oriental document of the Fourth Century known as *On the passing of the Virgin Mary*, and classed as apocryphal in a decree attributed to Pope Gelasius (Conc. Rom. sub Gelasio, A.D. 494. Labb   & Cossart, Ven. 1728. Vol. 5, p.390. Migne, P.L. lix, 162).

However, having firmly rejected the doctrine of the Assumption and explained carefully the position and role of Mary in the New Testament, the letter went on to say,

Her place and function in relation to the taking of flesh by the Eternal Word are unique. She stands solitary in the mysterious privilege with which she was favoured. It can be shared by no other. High honour is due, and rendered, to one so chosen as to give Him birth and to pass some thirty years in His company in the life of the home. To her as being the mother of Him who is the Word made Flesh, and thus the earthly agent and seal of the uniting of the Divine and Human Natures in One Person, was given by the Church the title of *Theot  kos*<sup>4</sup> (Greek) and *Deipara* (Lat.), which means “Bearer of (Him who is God...)”

The faith of the Church of Ireland, therefore, as expounded in the bishops' letter of November 14 1950 combines a high doctrine of Mary as defined at the Council of Ephesus (431) with resistance to a “doctrine which possesses the acceptance of only a section of Christendom, resting as it does on no scriptural authority or historical evidence, and not even on any support from the writings of the most ancient fathers”.

The question raised by the Agreed Statement, “Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ” is whether reflection on the Scriptures and the common tradition which predates the Reformation and the Counter Reformation has enabled this Roman Catholic doctrine to be understood in such

a manner that it may be regarded as part of a consensus of faith. This is what the ARCIC commission evidently believes,

58. Thus, given the understanding we have reached concerning the place of Mary in the economy of hope and grace, we can affirm together the teaching that God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory as consonant with Scripture and that it can, indeed, only be understood in the light of Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

It will be seen that this statement is highly ambiguous, if not tendentious. That Mary is in heaven is not disputed between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland. That the manner of her transition was that of a bodily assumption is not, however, part of the teaching of the Church of Ireland, because of a complete lack of evidence, the final authentic reference to Mary being that found in Acts 1:14 where, after the Ascension of Christ “All these (the apostles) with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” No doubt, had the Assumption occurred this would be “consonant” with Scripture, but the problem is that there is no evidence of such an event. The most recent scholarly examination of the whole tangle of apocryphal stories about Mary in the early Church - *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption*<sup>6</sup> by S.J. Shoemaker (OUP, 2002) confirms the lack of historical substance in any of them. It is clear that interest in the Blessed Virgin Mary arose early, not least in heretical (Gnostic) sources, and that this came to the fore in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. But neither the narratives nor the existence of supposed archaeological sites (the “Tomb of Mary” in Jerusalem) are historically trustworthy.

Christianity is an historical religion, and stands or falls by the truth of its assertion of the historicity of the key events in the life of Our Blessed Saviour with an especial focus upon his death and resurrection. To affirm as equally authentic events such as the Assumption of his Mother, for which there is no historical evidence, could only have the effect of undermining confidence in the well attested events which constitute the core of faith.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as pointed out by the bishops in their pastoral letter of November 14 1950 it is illegitimate to define such an understanding as a dogma of faith. The terms of reference of the ARCIC process as defined in *The Common Declaration* in 1966 of Pope Paul VI and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, relate to a “serious dialogue...founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions.” The Gospels are silent on the subject of the dormition (“falling asleep”) of Mary still less her body-and-soul “Assumption”. Other scriptural texts sometimes adduced in support of the doctrine such as the picture of the woman in travail in Revelation chapter 12<sup>7</sup> are not relevant - even if they referred to Mary, which is unlikely, they have no bearing on the issue, and the “ancient common traditions” must be understood as those historically founded and not based on the imagination of the faithful. Scripture, reason, and tradition must support matters of faith, and the ambiguous formulae of the ARCIC document do not give any ground for supposing any such thing.

## A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

The two distinctively papal dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Bodily Assumption (1950) rest, within the Roman Catholic tradition, not only on the validity (or lack of it) of arguments from scripture, tradition, and reason, but upon the presumed authority of the Pope as Bishop of Rome to make a definitive decision on what the doctrine of the Church is. According to the definition following the preamble in Chapter IV of the *Dogmatic Constitution* of the First Vatican Council (1870)<sup>1</sup>,

Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Saviour, the exaltation of the Catholic Religion, and the salvation of Christian peoples, the Sacred Council approving, We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him to blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals: and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from consent of the Church.

However, the preamble to this declaration states that “the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by His revelation they might make known new doctrine; but that by His assistance they might inviolably guard and faithfully expound the revelation delivered through the Apostles or the deposit of faith<sup>2</sup>. ”

The problem of resting on authority for the authenticity of the two Marian dogmas is twofold. They do appear, in biblical terms to be new doctrines. They do not appear to arise from a faithful exposition of the revelation delivered through the apostles and contained in Holy Scripture which “containeth all things necessary to salvation”, and they do not form any identifiable part of the original deposit of faith. The effect of appealing to the doctrine of infallibility as defined by the First Vatican Council to confirm the Marian dogmas is to call in question the validity of “infallibility”.

The Church of Ireland does not subscribe to the doctrine of infallibility (defined for Roman Catholics by the First Vatican Council, 1870). Article 20 *Of the Authority of the Church* explicitly asserts that General Councils “may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.”<sup>3</sup> Papal infallibility, insofar as it may be deemed to rest on the authority of the declaration of a General Council (Vatican 1) is not thereby established, not being itself based on Scripture; and the exercise of papal authority in relation to the two dogmas therefore, does not, in the mind of the Church of Ireland establish them either. The doctrine of infallibility, despite what the definition says, was not part of the “tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith”, and is not the best way to express the scriptural teaching that “the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth.” The Church is led into all truth *in spite of* its errors and not through having an immunity from them<sup>4</sup>.

## NOTES ON THE MAIN TEXT

### THE INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>*Mary – Grace and Hope in Christ*, The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: An agreed statement, © 2005 by the Anglican Consultative Council and The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Morehouse Publishing.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit. para 1

<sup>3</sup>*Ut Unum Sint* para 79.

<sup>4</sup>*The Final Report* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Windsor, September 1981, © H.R. McAdoo and Alan C. Clark, 1982, SPCK, Catholic Truth Society, "Authority in the Church II" para 30.

<sup>5</sup>*Mary – Grace and Hope in Christ*, op. cit. Preface ppIX, X.

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit. "The Status of the Document" p.xiii.

<sup>7</sup>The membership of the Committee comprised,

The Rt. Revd. P. F. Barrett, M.A., M.Phil., Bishop of Cashel and Ossory, Chairman to December 2005.

The Rt. Revd. M. G. St A. Jackson, M.A., Ph.D., D. Phil., Bishop of Clogher, Chairman from January 2006.

The Very Revd S. M. Patterson, B.A., B.D., Ph.D., Dean of Killala

The Very Revd N. N. Lynas, M. Theol., Dean of Ossory.

The Revd Canon M.C. Kennedy, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Rector of Lisnadill and Kildarton, Prebendary of Yagoe, St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

The Revd M. J. Elliott, M.A., B. Th., M. Phil., Ph.D., Rector of Shankill, Lurgan.

The Revd G. V. Wharton, B. Th., M.Phil (Ecum), Rector of Booterstown, and Mount Merrion.

Mrs P. Wallace, M.A., All-Ireland President of the Mothers' Union.

Mrs M. J. Evans, B.A, Dip. Hist. European Art, Dip. Catech., A.D.T.

Convener and Hon. Secretary, The Revd D. R. Nuzum, B.Th., Rector of Templebreedy.

<sup>8</sup>Op. cit. para 77

<sup>9</sup>Op. cit. para 78

<sup>10</sup>Op. cit. para 79

<sup>11</sup>Op. cit. para 80

<sup>12</sup>Book of Common Prayer 2004, pp776-7

<sup>13</sup>The Preamble, in part, states,

We, the archbishops and bishops of this the Ancient Catholic and Apostolic Church of Ireland, together with the representatives of the clergy and laity of the same, in General Convention assembled in Dublin in the year of our Lord God one thousand eight hundred and seventy...declare as follows:

The Declaration, Section 1, 1-3 affirms:

The Church of Ireland doth, as heretofore, accept and unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as given by inspiration of God, and containing all things necessary to salvation; and doth continue to profess the faith of Christ as professed by the Primitive Church.

The Church of Ireland will continue to minister the doctrine, and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded; and will maintain inviolate the three orders of bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons in the sacred ministry.

The Church of Ireland, as a Reformed and Protestant Church, doth hereby reaffirm its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship, whereby the Primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced or overlaid, and which at the Reformation this Church did disown and reject.

In section 1:1 it is clear from amendments not passed by the General Convention that the words "Primitive Church" are to be taken not in the sense of the Church of the New Testament only but as a reference to the early Church of the first four centuries (the period of the first four General Councils). The Church of Ireland is therefore committed to the universal or "catholic" faith as taught by the early Church and "proved" by Holy Scripture.

In section 1:3 it is important to note what is not said. It is not stated that all innovations in doctrine and worship are illegitimate, but that those are rejected "whereby the Primitive Faith hath been from time to time defaced and which at the Reformation this Church did disown and reject." Nor is the word "Protestant" to be understood in a negative sense only, deriving as it does from "pro-testare" to "witness on behalf of" in the sense of so witnessed to the Lordship of Christ over the world, the church, and the individual. Nor is there anything in this passage contrary to the concept of an ongoing "reformation" as in the phrase "ecclesia semper reformanda".

## AFFIRMATIONS

<sup>1</sup>*The Lambeth Conference 1958 – The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports*, SPCK/Seabury Press, 1958, Report of the Sub-Committee on The Book of Common Prayer, "Features in the Book of Common Prayer which are most effective in maintaining the traditional doctrinal emphasis of the worship and witness of the Anglican Communion", 2.81

<sup>2</sup>*The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of the Church of Ireland together with the Psalter or Psalms of David pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches, and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops Priests and Deacons*, Dublin, The Columba Press, By Authority of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2004, Festivals, pp63f, 303f

<sup>3</sup>BCP 2004, Seasonal Variations, pp224f

<sup>4</sup>BCP 2004, p.93 (Morning and Evening Prayer One), and p.110 (Morning and Evening Prayer Two).

<sup>5</sup>*Church Hymnal*, Fifth Edition, OUP, 2000. This is the authorized hymn book of the Church of Ireland approved by the General Synod by means of resolution and bill. For a commentary on all 719 hymns in the book individually, see Edward Darling and Donald Davison, *Companion to Church Hymnal*, The Columba Press, 2005. Commenting on Hymn 472 "Sing we of the blessed mother, it is said,

The author [George Timms] was obviously aware of the five "Joyful Mysteries", the five "Sorrowful Mysteries" and the five "Glorious Mysteries" that make up the three equal sections, known as "chaplets, which comprise the devotion of the Rosary. While on the

whole those who are not Roman Catholics do not pray the Rosary, Timms, as an Anglican priest, would have been aware that its devotion focuses on certain aspects of Mary's life in connection with her son...Clearly the last two of the "Glorious Mysteries" [The Assumption of our Lady and The Coronation of our Lady] would not be acceptable to most Anglicans and Protestants and that is why the Rosary does not form part of our private devotion or worship; but the other events described in the chaplets are truly scriptural and are deserving of spiritual meditation.

<sup>6</sup>para 80

<sup>7</sup>*Mary – Grace and Hope in Christ*, Section A, "Mary According to the Scriptures".

<sup>8</sup>Op. cit., Section B, "Mary in the Christian Tradition", para 31-34

<sup>9</sup>BCP 2004, p.205. After much discussion, first on the Liturgical Advisory Committee and then at the General Synod the wording referring to the incarnation was chosen as the most acceptable translation of the original Greek, "For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

<sup>10</sup>Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), one of the all-time "greats" of the Anglican tradition, and Bishop of Down and Connor (from 1660), and Dromore (1661) stated, "The Church [of England] receives the four first Generals [i.e. General Councils] as of highest regard, not that they are infallible, but that they have determined wisely and holily." No 76 in *Anglicanism*, compiled and edited by P.E. More and F.L. Cross, SPCK, 1957.

<sup>11</sup>BCP 2004, p.779.

<sup>12</sup>BCP 2004, pp.112, 365 et al.

<sup>13</sup>BCP 2004, p.772.

<sup>14</sup>This assurance is particularly welcome as there remain very serious reservations about the cultus as represented in Marian shrines such as Lourdes and Medjugorje. There appears to be some evidence that such unusual disclosures as the "Third Secret" of Fatima were taken quite seriously at the highest level within the Roman Catholic Church, as described by the respected writer John Cornwell in *Breaking Faith – The Pope, the People, and the Fate of Catholicism*, p.238f. Other practices associated with the cultus continue to cause the utmost concern to members of Reformed Churches, most notably the declaration of a "plenary indulgence" by Pope Benedict XVI on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005 to mark the 40 years since the closing of the Second Vatican Council. *Independent Vatican News*, Vatican City, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2005 at [www.indcatholicnews.com/plendulg.html](http://www.indcatholicnews.com/plendulg.html)

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, *Common Worship – Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, pp12, 16, where August 15<sup>th</sup> "The Blessed Virgin Mary" is a red letter day, and December 8<sup>th</sup> "The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary" is a black letter day. The Episcopal Church of Scotland observes both, and the Church in Wales August 15<sup>th</sup> only. The Episcopal Church of America keeps August 15<sup>th</sup>. The Anglican Church of Canada keeps August 15<sup>th</sup> as a "Holy Day", and December 8<sup>th</sup> as a "Memorial". However, when the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland, 2004 was drawn up neither August 15<sup>th</sup> nor December 8<sup>th</sup> was included. There would be a concern lest the feasts concerned would be understood as implying the doctrines of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception as defined within the Roman Catholic tradition.

<sup>16</sup>BCP 2004, pp20,21. See also the list of commemorations on pp22,23.

<sup>17</sup>BCP 2004, pp323-4

<sup>18</sup>BCP 2004, pp235-6

## RESERVATIONS

<sup>1</sup>For the Creeds, see above. The Book of Common Prayer 2004 includes a pneumatological emphasis, for example in the penitential kyries used at the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where the third petition is,

Holy Spirit,  
by your power the Word was made flesh  
and came to dwell among us.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

The seasonal addition for saints' days, including feasts of Mary in Eucharistic Prayer 2 (corresponding to the Proper Preface in Eucharistic Prayer 1) reads,

You have called us into the fellowship of (...and) all your  
saints, and set before us the example of their witness  
and of the fruit of your Spirit in their lives.

The Post Communion for the Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Blessed Virgin Mary reads,

God Most High,  
whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:  
We thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption  
you visit us with your Holy Spirit  
and overshadow us by your power.  
May we like Mary be joyful in our obedience,  
and so bring forth the fruits of holiness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

<sup>2</sup>This is best illustrated by comparison with the outstanding collaboration between Roman Catholic and Lutheran biblical scholars, resulting in the publication *Mary in the New Testament*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and John Reumann, and published by Geoffrey Chapman, 1978. This was an ecumenical and critical *tour de force* which has lost none of its relevance in the intervening years in spite of advances in biblical scholarship since that date.

<sup>3</sup>"Special pleading" seems particularly evident in the approach to the interpretation of Mary in St John's Gospel, specifically in the account of the crucifixion where Jesus' dying words are said to "give Mary and motherly role in the Church and encourage the community of disciples to embrace her as a spiritual mother." (para 27). One may set over against this the comment by David Wright in the very positive *Chosen by God – Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, edited by David F. Wright, Marshall Pickering, 1989, in which he says,

The Roman Catholic notion of Mary as mother of the Church is probably for Protestants one of the most baffling features of Mariology. It rests on a simple chain of dogmatic reasoning. Mary is the mother of the incarnate Christ; the Church, the body of Christ, is an extension of the incarnate Christ; therefore Mary is the mother of Christ's continuing body, the Church. But it can scarcely claim any exegetical support

from John 19. As *Mary in the New Testament* points out, if the unnamed beloved disciples is to be interpreted symbolically, so should the unnamed "woman"...

### PERPETUAL VIRGINITY?

Another example of what appears to be "special pleading" may be found in the footnote (3) to section 19 of the document in which the perpetual virginity of Mary seems to be implied. the possibility that "brothers" may be interpreted as "near relatives" being used to buttress the view that Jesus had no natural brothers or sisters. For a careful discussion see *Mary in the New Testament – A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, eds Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfriend, Joseph A. Fizmyer, and J. Reumann; Geoffrey Chapman, 1978. The "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus could, in theory, be cousins, or, as sometimes speculated, children of Joseph by an earlier marriage (for which, however, there is no evidence). However, the most natural interpretation is that these were later children of Joseph and Mary. The otherwise unexplained rise to prominence in the apostolic Church of "James the Lord's brother" (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 2:12 etc), who was not one of the twelve, is consistent with his having been the Lord's actual brother. This seems to be supported by the Jewish historian Josephus (assuming the passage to be genuine) who in his *Antiquities* stated "(Ananus) assembled the sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

<sup>4</sup>A summary of the most recent scholarship, represented by S.J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, OUP, 2002 appears below in the section on the Assumption. This book contains select translations of early Dormition narratives in which their entirely fanciful character is only too evident. An older publication of ancient apocryphal texts translated by M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, includes some of the legends about the Assumption, including, for example, a Coptic text that reads in part (pp196-7)

Jesus ascended with Mary's soul in the chariot of the Cherubim. We took up the body, and when we came to the field of Jehoshaphat, the Jews heard the singing and came out intending to burn the body. But a wall of fire encompassed us, and they were blinded: and the body was laid in the tomb and watched for three and a half days. At mid-day on the fourth day all were gathered at the tomb. A great voice came, saying: Go every one to his place till the seventh month: for I have hardened the heart of the Jews, and they will not be able to find the tomb or the body till I take it up to heaven. Return on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Mesore. We returned to the house.

In the seventh month after the death, i.e. on the 15<sup>th</sup> Mesore, we reassembled at the tomb and spend the night in watching and singing. At dawn on the 16<sup>th</sup> Mesore, Jesus appeared. Peter said, We are grieved that we have not seen thy Mother since her death. Jesus said: She shall now come. The chariot of the Cherubim appeared with the Virgin seated in it. There were greetings. Jesus bade the apostles go and preach in all the world. He spent all that day with us and with his Mother, and gave us the salutation of peace and went up to heaven in glory. Such was the death of the Virgin on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Tobi, and her assumption on 16<sup>th</sup> Mesore. I, Evodius, saw it all.

The popularity of such tales, evidenced by their dissemination, helps to account for the acceptance of belief in the Virgin Mary's Assumption/Dormition, but does nothing to establish their authenticity. Historically, they are valueless.

<sup>5</sup>For a fuller discussion see below, in the section entitled "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

<sup>6</sup> For example, in 1497 the University of Paris decreed that henceforward no one should be admitted a member of the university, who did not swear that he would do the utmost to defend and assert the Immaculate Conception of Mary - and other universities followed suit. Pope Paul V (1617) decreed that no one should dare to teach publicly that Mary was conceived in original sin, and Gregory XV (1622) imposed absolute silence upon the adversaries of the doctrine until the Holy See should define the question. Alexander VII declared in 1661 the immunity of Mary from original sin in the first moment of the creation of her soul. All of this prepared the way for the promulgation of the dogma on 8th December 1854 by Pope Pius IX.

<sup>7</sup>Romans 3:23

<sup>8</sup>Jeremiah 1:4

<sup>9</sup>Galatians 1:15

<sup>10</sup>For the (equally authoritative) Latin and English texts and an exposition of Article VI see E.J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, Third Edition, revised by H.J. Carpenter, Longmans, 1955, p125ff.. See also, W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology – An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1930, p103ff.

#### NOTES ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

<sup>1</sup>*Ineffabilis Deus*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1854, in J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, Revised Edition, Collins 2001, no 709 (2803-4 in Denzinger-Schönmetzer). There is a long preamble to the declaration, written by the Jesuit G. Passaglia in grandiloquent and baroque Latin, which is long on rhetoric but short on historical evidence, which extols Mary but fails to give any convincing reason why the doctrine should be true, let alone defined as a dogma of faith. For example,

As a matter of fact, this doctrine (the splendour of the holiness of Mary) so dominated the minds and hearts of our forefathers that a wholly extraordinary way of speaking came into vogue among them. Frequently, they referred to the Mother of God not only as immaculate but as entirely immaculate, not only as innocent but as most innocent, not only as spotless but as most spotless. They called her holy and completely recovered from every stain of sin, all pure and all but the very archetype of purity and innocence, more beautiful than beauty, more gracious than grace, more holy than holiness, and alone holy; more pure in soul and body who transcends all integrity and virginity, who alone and in her entirety has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the Holy Spirit, and who, God alone excepted, is superior to all, and by nature more fair, more beautiful, and more holy than the very Cherubim and Seraphim and the entire angelic host; she whom all the tongues of heaven and earth cannot sufficiently extol.

<sup>2</sup>For the sake of convenience this section draws upon the article in the Catholic Encyclopedia, internet version. The article is most comprehensive, and deserves to be read in full. The doctrine is carefully explained and qualified.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit. p.2 in printed out A4 format (plain text)

<sup>4</sup>It is unfortunate that Pope Pius IX made considerable use of a mistranslation of the text from Genesis as a foundation for his argument.

<sup>5</sup>Although these texts have been cited from time to time in relation to the doctrine, they are not relevant, and it is significant that no reference was made to them in the papal bull. Song of Songs 4:7 says of the king's bride, "You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you", but this is no more to be taken literally than any of the other poetic references in the book. There is no connection whatever with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 1:28 is best interpreted by Luke 1:30. Mary is "favoured" but this does not necessarily make her free from actual sin let alone "original" sin.

<sup>7</sup>Philip F. Esler, "The Acts of the Apostles", in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, edited by R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden, SCM, 1990,

That Luke should have chosen to continue the Christian story beyond the ascension remains the threshold observation for the interpretation of Acts.

<sup>8</sup>Catholic Encyclopedia, op. cit. pp3,4. For example, St Ephraem (c306-373),

Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity..., alone made in thy entirety the home of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit, and hence exceeding beyond all compare even the angelic virtues in purity and sanctity of soul and body..my Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolate, spotless robe of Him Who clothes Himself with light as with a garment... flower unfading, purple woven by God, alone most immaculate [Precationes ad Deiparam in Opp. Graec. Lat., III, 524-37]

However, even the Catholic Encyclopedia, after citing a number of instances of such language – from sources ranging from St Ambrose to St John Damascene - cautions,

From this summary it appears that the belief in Mary's immunity from sin in her conception was prevalent amongst the Fathers, especially those of the Greek Church. The rhetorical character, however, of many of these and similar passages prevents us from laying too much stress on them, and interpreting them in a strictly literal sense. The Greek Fathers never formally or explicitly discussed the question of the Immaculate Conception.

<sup>9</sup>The danger of relying too much on the language of poetry is shown in the case of Origen (c185-c254). On the one hand, like others in the early Church he uses extravagant language in praise of Mary, calling her worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, most complete sanctity, perfect justice, neither deceived by the persuasion of the serpent, nor infected with his poisonous breathings ("Hom. I in diversa"). But, at the same time he thought that at the time of Christ's passion, the sword of disbelief pierced Mary's soul; that she was struck by the poniard of doubt; and that for her sins also Christ died (Origen, "In Luc. hom. xvii"). St Basil of Caesarea, "the Great", one of the Cappadocian Fathers, whose prestige remains immense in Eastern Orthodoxy also saw in the sword of which Simeon speaks, the doubt which pierced Mary's soul (Epistle 259). St John Chrysostom (c.347-407) a "Doctor of the Church" accused Mary of ambition, and of putting herself forward unduly when she sought to speak to Jesus at Capernaum (Matthew 12:46; Chrysostom, Hom. xliv; cf. also "In Matt.", hom. 4).

<sup>10</sup>Kenneth Ross, *Why I am not a Roman Catholic*, Mowbray, 1953, p.38.

<sup>11</sup>His difficulty was that he could not reconcile the doctrine with the biblical teaching that "all have sinned".

<sup>12</sup>St Bernard treated this as a new teaching. Not adverting to the possibility of sanctification at the time of the infusion of the soul he wrote that there could be question only of sanctification after conception, which would render holy the nativity not the conception itself (Scheeben, "Dogmatik", III, p.550)

<sup>13</sup>Ross, op. cit. p.38.

<sup>14</sup>Catholic Encyclopedia, op. cit. p.5

## NOTES ON THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

<sup>1</sup>The official Latin text *Munificentissimus Deus* as published is as published in the official organ of the Holy See, the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 42, 1950, No 15, pp753-773. English translation here as in P. F. Palmer, S.J., *Mary in the Documents of the Church*. (London, Burns and Oates, 1953), pp94,95. Another translation of the definition, in the context of the final theological synthesis given by the Constitution, may be found in J Neuner and J Dupuis, *The Christian Faith - in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, Revised edition 2001, no's 713-5, pp206-7,

From all eternity and by one and the same decree of predestination the August Mother of God is united in a sublime way with Jesus Christ; immaculate in her conception, a spotless virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble companion of the divine Redeemer who won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, she finally obtained as the crowning glory of her privileges to be preserved from the corruption of the tomb and, like her Son before her, to conquer death and to be raised body and soul to the glory of heaven, to shine resplendent as Queen as the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of ages *cf. 1 Tim. 1.17*)

The universal Church, in which the Spirit of truth actively dwells, and which is infallibly guided by Him to an ever more perfect knowledge of revealed truths, has down the centuries manifested her belief in many ways; the bishop from all over the world ask almost unanimously that the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven be defined as a dogma of divine and catholic faith; this truth is based on Sacred Scripture and deeply embedded in the minds of the faithful; it has received the approval of liturgical worship from the earliest times; it is perfectly in keeping with the rest of revealed truth, and has been lucidly developed and explained by the studies, the knowledge and wisdom of theologians. Considering all these reasons we deem that the moment preordained in the plan of divine providence has now arrived for us to proclaim solemnly this extraordinary privilege of the Virgin Mary...

Therefore, having directed humble and repeated prayers to God, and having invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth; to the glory of almighty God who has bestowed His special bounty on the Virgin Mary, for the honour of His Son the immortal King of ages and victor over sin and death, for the greater glory of His August mother, and for the joy and exultation of the whole Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we proclaim, declare and define as a dogma revealed by God: the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.

Wherefore, if anyone - which God forbid- should willfully dare to deny or call in doubt what has been defined by us, let him know that he certainly has abandoned the divine and Catholic faith.

<sup>2</sup>*The Roman Catholic Dogma of the Assumption - Pastoral Letter from the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of Ireland to be read at Morning Prayer in all the Churches of the Church of Ireland on the Second Sunday in Advent, December the Tenth, 1950.*

<sup>3</sup>For the part played by the Archbishop of Armagh see George Seaver, *John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, Archbishop*, The Faith Press, 1963, pp312-314. In a letter to Revd (later Canon) R. E. Turner, the Archbishop said,

The real gravamen is the definition. It is difficult to limit pious speculation, but to make it *official* doctrine is nothing short of heretical. We must be careful to distinguish between what *has been* said, what *may* be said, and what *must not* be said. I think our Pastoral states the position very fairly and truly.

<sup>4</sup>The Church of Ireland recognizes the Council of Ephesus (431), at which the concept of Mary as the *theotokos* was accepted, as one of four authentic General Councils of the early Church, the other three being Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Chalcedon (451). The Second Letter of St Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, which the Council of Ephesus endorsed, includes the words,

It was not that an ordinary man was born first of the holy Virgin, on whom afterwards the Word descended; what we say is that, being united with the flesh from the womb, (the Word) has undergone birth in the flesh, making the birth in the flesh His own... Thus (the holy Fathers) have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin "Mother of God" (*theotokos*). This does not mean that the nature of the Word or His divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word united to Himself according to the hypostasis (*hath'upostasin*), was born from her, the Word was born according to the flesh.

<sup>5</sup>*Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ - The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, An Agreed Statement*, published by Morehouse for the Anglican Consultative Council and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Rome, 2005, p

<sup>6</sup>Stephen J. Shoemaker is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of Oregon. A series of abstracts from his book, available from *Oxford Scholarship Online* ([www.oxfordscholarship.com](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com)) (copyright OUP 2005) indicates the scope and approach of this seminal study.

#### *General Abstract*

The ancient Dormition and Assumption traditions, a remarkably diverse collection of narratives recounting the end of the Virgin Mary's life, first emerge into historical view from an uncertain past during the fifth and sixth centuries. Initially appearing in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, these legends spread rapidly throughout the Christian world, resulting in over 60 different narratives from before the tenth century preserved in nine ancient languages. This study presents a detailed analysis of the earliest traditions of Mary's death, including the evidence of the earliest Marian liturgical traditions and related archaeological evidence as well as the numerous narrative sources. Most of the early narratives belong to one of several distinctive literary families, whose members bear evidence of close textual relations. Many

previous scholars have attempted to arrange the different narrative types in a developmental typology, according to which the story of Mary's death was transformed to reflect various developments in early Christian Mariology. Nevertheless, evidence to support these theories is wanting, and the present state of our knowledge suggests that the narrative diversity of the early Dormition traditions arose from several independent "origins" rather than through ordered evolution from a single original type. Likewise, scholars have often asserted a connection between the origin of the Dormition traditions and resistance to the Council of Chalcedon, but the traditions themselves make this an extremely unlikely proposal. While most of the traditions cannot be dated much before the fifth century, a few of the narratives were almost certainly composed by the third century, if not even earlier. These narratives in particular bear evidence of contact with gnostic Christianity. Several of the most important narratives are translated in appendices, most appearing in English for the first time.

*Chapter One: The Earliest Dormition Traditions: Their Nature and Shape.*

The first four Christian centuries are remarkably silent regarding the end of the Virgin Mary's life. Only in the later fifth century do we encounter the earliest Dormition traditions. At this point, there are suddenly several diverse narrative traditions describing the end of Mary's life. They include representatives of three distinct narrative types, the Palm of the Tree of Life narratives, the Bethlehem narratives, and the Coptic narratives, as well as a handful of atypical narratives. The traditions of Ephesus and Constantinople are also briefly considered.

*Chapter Two: The Ancient Palestinian Cult of the Virgin and the Early Dormition Traditions*

The earliest centre of Marian cult in Palestine appears to have been an early Nativity shrine known as the Kathisma church, which by the early fifth century had become a focus of Marian piety. Not long thereafter, the traditional site of Mary's tomb just outside the Jerusalem city walls emerged as a second important centre of Mary's veneration. In the early sixth century, a third Marian shrine was added to the Holy City, the Nea church, completed during the emperor Justinian's reign. The earliest feast of Mary in Palestine was 15th August, initially a celebration of Mary's role in the Nativity that eventually developed into a commemoration of her Dormition and/or Assumption. By the seventh century, this festival had expanded to encompass several days in mid-August, in a stational liturgy that linked together all three of Jerusalem's Marian shrines.

*Chapter Three: Rival Traditions of Mary's Death: The Independent Origins of the Ancient Dormition Traditions.*

Many interpreters have argued that the earliest Dormition traditions did not include Mary's resurrection and Assumption, and that these features were only added to the narratives later on, as the early Christians increasingly came to believe in these events. Alternatively, many other scholars have proposed that Mary's resurrection and Assumption were original features of the Dormition traditions that fell away as later Christians departed from the primitive orthodoxy, resulting in later narratives that omit these features, ending only with Mary's death and the disappearance of her lifeless body. The evidence for either of these developmental typologies is lacking, however, and it seems instead that the different narrative types emerged almost simultaneously and independently of one another. The liturgical traditions of Palestine do not support either developmental schema. It seems likely that the different fates ascribed to Mary at the end of the various Dormition narratives may have their source in the diversity of opinion in late antiquity regarding the eschatological significance of Paradise.

#### *Chapter Four: The Prehistory and Origins of the Dormition and Assumption Traditions*

Many previous interpreters have sought to locate the origins of the Dormition traditions within ancient “Jewish-Christianity”. Although they are quite correct in identifying a number of heterodox features present in some of the narratives, Jewish-Christianity is a highly problematic construct that does not offer the best explanation for these features. Contact with some sort of gnostic Christianity can better explain these elements. Most importantly, these traces of contact with early Christian heterodoxy very strongly suggest that the narratives in question most likely were composed by the third century at the latest. This early date, along with several other features, makes very unlikely the frequently suggested hypothesis that the origin of the Dormition traditions is somehow linked with resistance to the Council of Chalcedon.

<sup>6</sup> Care is taken by those parts of the Anglican Communion which authorize the observance of August 15<sup>th</sup> as a general feast of Mary to use only such liturgical resource material as is compatible with the teaching of Holy Scripture. See *Common Worship - Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 2000, The Calendar, p.12; Collect and Post Communion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 15 August, pp438-9

#### *The Collect*

Almighty God,  
who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
and chose her to be the mother of your only Son:  
grant that we who are redeemed by his blood  
may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### *Post-Communion*

God most high,  
whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:  
we thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption  
your visit us with your Holy Spirit  
and overshadow us by your power;  
strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience  
and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The widely used *Exciting Holiness - Collects and Readings for the Festivals and Lesser Festivals of the Calendars of the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales*, Canterbury Press, Second Edition 2003, in addition to the prayers above, contains an introduction, readings - Isaiah 61:10-end, or Revelation 11:19-12:6,10, Galatians 4:4-7, and Luke 1:46-53 and verses from a psalm (43). The relevance of the reading from Revelation may be questioned (see below note 7) The introduction reads,

Mary was a young Jewish girl living in Nazareth when a messenger from the Lord announced that she was to be the bearer of the Son of God to the world. Her response “Let it be to me according to your word” revealed her natural sense of obedience to God

and her reverence for his world, showing her worthy to be the bearer of the Word made flesh. This day is now celebrated as the major feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout most of Christendom.

<sup>7</sup>For an examination, within an ecumenical context of the significance of Revelation 12 see *Mary in the New Testament*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfriend, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann - a Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1978, pp219-239. From this it is clear that the primary reference in the passage is most likely to be that "the woman is a personification of Israel, the people of God of the Old Testament, and that the Christian adaptation of the symbolism involves having the woman, after the birth of the messianic child, become the Church, the people of God of the New Testament." The difficulty of the woman being "in heaven" may be accounted for as a "reflection of the apocalyptic sense of simultaneity, i.e., heavenly and earthly reality depicted at the same time." A secondary reference to Mary in Revelation 12 is regarded as "possible but uncertain", so far as the intention of the seer himself is concerned. However, "what is more certain is that his symbol of the woman who is the mother of the Messiah might well lend itself to Marian interpretation, once Marian interest developed in the later Christian community. And eventually when Revelation was placed in the same canon of Scripture with the Gospel of Luke and the Fourth Gospel, the various images of the virgin, the woman at the cross, and the woman who gave birth to the Messiah would reinforce each other."

#### NOTES ON "A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY"

<sup>1</sup> Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* on the Church of Christ (1870) passed at the Fourth Session of the First Vatican Council. The translation given here is that drawn up in 1870 by Cardinal H. E. Manning and published in his book, *The Vatican Council and its Definitions*. For a more modern version see J. Neuner, and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church, Revised Edition*, Collins, 2001 839 (Denzinger-Schönmetzer 3074). For the history of the Council see Dom Cuthbert Butler, *The Vatican Council 1869-70*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1930. For a critical examination of "The Ultramontane Dogmas of the Vatican Council" see E. A. de Mendieta, *Rome and Canterbury – A Biblical and Free Catholicism*, London, 1962, Chapter Seven.

<sup>2</sup>Manning, op. cit. Neuner and Dupuis, op. cit. 836 (DS 3070).

<sup>3</sup>BCP 2004, p.783.

<sup>4</sup>John 16:13 There is no hint in the text of the Discourse of any preconditions for the fulfilment of this declaration, which referred in the first instance to the disciples interpreting the things of Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The question of how the Holy Spirit does this and what are the preconditions for it were to be the task of later theology. The carefully hedged about interpretation of the "infallibility" of the Roman pontiff claimed at the Vatican Council of 1870 (see the authoritative exposition by Bishop Gasser in Butler, op. cit. pp386f) are the Roman Catholic contribution to the debate insofar as it relates to the Bishop of Rome. But there are alternative models, not involving "infallibility".

<sup>5</sup>The test of such an alternative model, common to all churches which do not subscribe to doctrines of infallibility must necessarily be an referral to the events of ecclesiastical history. H. Burn-Murdoch in his magisterial study *The Development of the Papacy*, Faber & Faber 1954, set forth chapter by chapter what he believed to be the common ground between historians of different persuasions and then followed this by Affirmative and Negative appraisals from alternative viewpoints, the "Affirmative" comments being drawn as far as possible from the writings of distinguished Roman Catholic historians, the "Negative" (only

in the sense of non supremacist and non infallibilist) being drawn from Anglican writers and his own reflections. A useful test case is the account given of the Council of Chalcedon (451) where it seems clear that the enthusiastic reception of the "Tome" of Pope Leo I "Peter has spoken through Leo" etc, was followed by a careful examination and confirmation of the document by the participants individually. In other words it was accepted not because of the authority of the person who had written it, despite his prestige, but because it was, in the judgement of the assembled bishops individually as well as collectively, in accordance with the historic faith. Op. cit. Chapters XXXIX "Leo the Great, A.D. 440-461", XL "The Robber-Council of Ephesus", A.D. 449, XLI "Chalcedon, A.D. 451, The 4<sup>th</sup> General Council", esp. p.246.

**RESPONSE TO ARCIC DOCUMENT ON MARY  
ESSAYS (ORIGINALLY PREPARATORY WORKING DOCUMENTS) REFERRED  
TO IN THE MAIN TEXT**

ESSAY ONE

Gillian Wharton: Mary in Celtic Spirituality

*Pre-Christian Society in Ireland*

In pre-Christian times in Ireland, there had been a vibrant matricentred society, before the patriarchal church and society. In this pre-Christian society, unlike, many European countries, there were many strong, charismatic, independent women, who were worshipped as goddesses. ‘Folklore tells the stories of Brighid bhoidheach, Bride the beautiful, Brighid, or Bride, who is the tutelary goddess of the Gaelic peoples of the western Isles, where she is still well loved and worshipped under the guise of the Christian Saint Bridgid.’<sup>1</sup>

As such she is the feminine principle and represents the potential of all women for she is the eternal flame that burns in the heart and hearth of every woman of the Gael, ‘moon-crowned Brighid of the undying flame’.<sup>2</sup> This principle of the undying flame continued even after the coming of Christianity into Ireland. At the fifth century sanctuary of St. Bride of Kildare, the sacred fire within was attended by her devoted maidens and was never allowed to go out. Saint Brigid is also the Good Shepherdess who watches over her flock, Brigid presides over the cradle of the new born infant. In some parts of Ireland, most specifically on the western sea-board, the custom of hanging rowan crosses over the cradles of babies whilst reciting a charm or prayer to Brigid to invoke her protection, still happens.<sup>3</sup>

*Influence of Brigid*

In looking at the Virgin Mary in Celtic Spirituality, one realizes that Brigid was a key female figure in Irish Society and in Christianity; Christianity could never have succeeded in Ireland if it had not acknowledged Brigid to be the Mary of the Gaels, which she was known as. When the goddess Brigid first came to Ireland maybe two thousand years before Christianity, she had taken over all of the old Irish goddess shrines and up to the twelfth century, there were more churches in Ireland called after Brigid than there ever were called after Mary. Saint Brigid and her personality, influenced the way in which Irish Christians related to Mary. However, Brigid was a feisty, strong-willed woman. The goddess Brigid was never the good obedient servant of the gods, and Saint Brigid was an independent woman – independent in relation to spirituality, and in her treatment of bishops, and others in authority. She also ‘bore out’ in her personality, the goddess Brigid’s trait of representing ‘the potential of all women for she is the eternal flame that burns in the heart and hearth of every woman of the Gael’. Hence the principal female role model in Christianity in Ireland was an earthy, strong, feisty woman.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Condren, *The Serpent and The Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, Harper, San Francisco, 1989

<sup>2</sup> Mary Condren, *The Serpent and The Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, Harper, San Francisco, 1989

<sup>3</sup> Mary Condren, *The Serpent and The Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, Harper, San Francisco, 1989

### *Influence of Monasticism, Rome and Normans*

In the twelfth century, there were considerable changes in Irish Christianity. The Irish church came under the influence of the Gregorian renaissance and reform began. Diocesan and parochial structures were put in place, synods were held, and the introductions of monastic orders, specifically the Cistercians and to a lesser extent, the Benedictines, and the appointment of papal legates, brought the Irish Church into greater contact with Rome, giving rise to a strong influence to European ideas and Latin practice. While there had been devotion to Mary prior to the twelfth century, these external influences brought the Latin practice of devotion to Mary with them which had a different complexion to the devotion given to Mary and to ‘Mary of the Gaels’ prior to that. The monastic orders projected an image of Mary as the perfect mother, the perfect virgin (and continuing virgin even after the birth of Jesus); a ‘pure as the driven snow’ image rather than the more earthy, strong, image that would have been known before.

It was only after the rise of monasticism that churches began to be dedicated to Mary. This emerging patriarchal centralized power within the church, also changed the existing laws and customs in Ireland, in relation to simony, improper administration of the sacraments, marriage laws and sexual customs, divorce, marriage within forbidden degrees, the existence of bishops with no fixed abode, clerical marriage or concubinage, and clerical subservience to lay superiors and lay judges.<sup>4</sup> This connection with Europe was furthered by the Norman Invasion, with the Normans becoming patrons of the various religious orders and the influx of religious orders from Europe between from the middle of the twelfth century up to the middle of the fourteenth century.

The virginity of Mary and the control of sexuality of women was tied up in this emerging patriarchal power. This emerging patriarchy is, in some schools of thought, reflective of the early emerging patriarchy within Judaism. The story of Adam and Eve reflected the change in Jewish society’s understanding of sexuality and reproductive consciousness. Eve was the temptress and so ‘punishment’ for her disobedience was labour in childbirth and control by her husband, her “master”. (*Genesis 3: 16*) Eve was the ‘downfall’ of all women and Mary was the redeemer – obedient, subservient, suffering – of all woman, and therefore the role model for all women.

### *The Sanitising of Mary*

It would appear that this control of women’s sexuality in Judaism and Christianity was driven by emerging patriarchy in the respective traditions; and that the desire to have a ‘pure’ role model for women in Christianity, led to a sanitising of Mary that gave rise to the idea of the immaculate conception of Mary and later, the assumption of Mary.

### *Motherhood of Mary*

However, in spite of the aforementioned changes and sanitising of Mary, Irish Christianity and Irish Society in particular, still retained much of the earthy influence in their devotion to Mary. The motherhood of Mary is the prevailing aspect of devotion to, and understanding of, Mary within Celtic and specifically, Irish, Spirituality. This is reflected in much of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ed. Michael Maher, *Irish Spirituality*, Veritas, 1981, Peter O’Dwyer O.Carm., Ch. 5 ‘Irish Medieval Spirituality’ pp. 57-58

prayers and poetry written down through the centuries.<sup>5</sup> But most specifically in the way in which Mary is addressed. European influences use the term ‘Our Lady...’ widely but in the Irish language, Mary is never referred to as ‘Our Lady’ but as ‘Muire’ which is (and has been from possibly the thirteenth century), the name that is specially reserved for the Mother of God. Another widely used and ancient title for Mary is ‘Muire Mháthair’ (Mary Mother). The emphasis on Mary as the Mother of Jesus is reflected in the title for Jesus of ‘Mac Muire’ (Mary’s Son) which is still widely used in the Irish language.<sup>6</sup> In the Irish language, Mary is not isolated from her Son. The greeting still used in Irish today is ‘Dia dhuit’ (God be with you) to which the response is ‘Dia’s Muire dhuit’ (God and Mary be with you). If one is initially greeted with ‘Dia’s Muire dhuit’ (God and Mary be with you), the customary response would be ‘Dia’s Muire dhuit is Phádraig’ (God, Mary and Patrick be with you). These greetings in full would be preceded by “Go mbeannaí...” which means “May the blessing of...”

This is also reflected in the Hiberno-English of today. In a small survey carried out for the purpose of this article, the results showed that ‘Holy Mary, Mother of God’, ‘Mother of God’ ‘Mary, Mother of us all’ were phrases that were used more in prayer to Mary than ‘Our Lady’ - a reflection of the widespread use of and knowledge of the Rosary, amongst Roman Catholics, and also the acquaintance of those of the Protestant traditions of the words of the Rosary.

When asked, what image sprang to mind upon hearing the word ‘Mary’, over 70% replied ‘Mary with the infant Jesus’, while 17% replied ‘Mary at the foot of the Cross’. 7% replied that the image of Mary as seen in various statues sprang to mind. Again, this reiterates the motherhood aspect of Mary.

This emphasis on the motherhood of Mary by Irish people, may also be a reflection of our understanding of incarnational theology. Mary, in being the mother of Jesus, the mother of God, is the mother of us all. In times of suffering, Mary was appealed to as a child would to their mother. This can be seen in the poetry and prayers written during the Penal Times, particularly through the Cromwellian Wars. In poetry, the island of Ireland was often written about in the guise of a love-poem to a woman. Amongst others, the name ‘Mary’ or ‘Máire’ was often used.

### *Conclusion*

For the Irish, the motherhood of Mary is of primary importance. Mary is rarely mentioned or thought of, in isolation from her Son. It is the motherhood, the nurturing aspect of Mary that people identify with rather than the ‘pseudo-divinity’ of Mary, or the sanitised Mary.

When asked in the survey what the 8<sup>th</sup> December meant to them, over half replied that it was a church holiday so that people could do their Christmas shopping and preparation. Some went on to say that it came from times past, so that those who were ‘in service’ could get the day off or a half-day to go to Mass to prepare for Christmas and then do their shopping. Less than a quarter said that it had anything to do with Mary, and two people questioned why you

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<sup>5</sup> Ed. Michael Maher, *Irish Spirituality*, Veritas, 1981, Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire S.J., Ch. 4 ‘Mary in Irish Spirituality’ pp. 47 - 53

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Michael Maher, *Irish Spirituality*, Veritas, 1981, Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire S.J., Ch. 4 ‘Mary in Irish Spirituality’ p. 47

would have the immaculate conception only seventeen days before Jesus was born, because ‘there was no way, he could only have been in the womb for seventeen days’...

Again, when asked what the 15<sup>th</sup> August meant to them, there was a mixed reply with only a small number knowing anything about the feast of the assumption.

It would seem that the two feasts of Mary which are the contentious ones between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, do not seem to figure highly in people’s understanding of, and/or devotion to, Mary. These two feasts which may be attempts to mark out Mary and set her apart, do not appear to be considered essential by those surveyed.

Mary Condren, *The Serpent and The Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, Harper, San Francisco, 1989

Ed. Michael Maher, *Irish Spirituality*, Veritas, 1981, Peter O’Dwyer O.Carm., Ch. 5 ‘Irish Medieval Spirituality’ pp. 57-70

Ed. Michael Maher, *Irish Spirituality*, Veritas, 1981, Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire S.J., Ch. 4 ‘Mary in Irish Spirituality’ pp. 47 – 56

K. N. Ross, *Why I am not a Roman Catholic*, Mowbrays, 1953

Marina Warner, *Alone of all her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Vintage, 1976

## Survey

The following very small, brief survey is being conducted to get a better insight into people's beliefs and understanding of Mary. This is to help me in my part of a response from the Church of Ireland to the ARCIC (Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission) Agreed Statement on Mary which was published recently. My section is on 'Mary in Celtic Spirituality'. Thank you for your assistance. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

Gillian Wharton

1. What phrase do you use most when speaking of Mary?

Our Lady

Holy Mary, Mother of God

The Blessed Virgin

Holy Mary

The Virgin Mary

Mother of God

Other (*please state*) .....

2. If you pray to/through Mary, what phrase do you use most when praying to/through her?

Our Lady

Holy Mary, Mother of God

The Blessed

Virgin

Holy Mary

The Virgin Mary

Mother of God

Other (*please state*) .....

3. Which title do you think best describes Mary?

Our Lady

Holy Mary, Mother of God

The Blessed Virgin

Holy Mary

The Virgin Mary

Mother of God

Other (*please state*).....

Please give reasons for your answer.....

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4. What image springs to mind when you hear the name ‘Mary’? And why

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5. What does 8th December mean to you? Explain your answer.

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6. What does 15<sup>th</sup> August mean to you? Explain your answer.

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7. What does the 'Immaculate Conception of Mary' mean to you?

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8. What do you understand 'The Assumption of Mary' or 'The Dormition of Mary' to mean?

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9. If there is anything about Mary that has been significant in your life that you would like to add, please do.

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10. If there is anything that you wish to ask or share in relation to Mary, please do.

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Thank you for your help.

## ESSAY TWO

### Norman Lynas: The place of Mary at the period of the Reformation 1450 – 1600

Prior to the commencement of those ideas which became known as the New Learning or the Reformation, the mediaeval Church held seven festivals in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The two oldest of these are based upon the Gospel story and are expressions of reverence for her who is '*blessed among women*' Luke 1:28 (*benedicta tu in mulieribus* – Vulgate) namely, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 25<sup>th</sup> and the Feast of the Purification of St. Mary the Virgin on February 2<sup>nd</sup> commonly called Candlemass.<sup>7</sup> Both these celebrations were in place by the sixth century A.D. within the Western Church, with the Eastern Church referring to the Purification as the Feast of Presentation of Christ in the Temple.<sup>8</sup>

Other festivals included the feast of the Assumption on August 15<sup>th</sup> which grew out of an Ephesian Church tradition of the fifth century but was not received in the Western Church before the ninth century. The feast of the Visitation – July 2<sup>nd</sup> – was not known before the fourteenth century, with the commemoration of the Blessed Virgin's birth – September 8<sup>th</sup> – being observed in the Eastern Church from the eighth century but not in the West until the '*countries of the Gallican Rite adopted the Roman Liturgy*'<sup>9</sup> Although known in Roman usage<sup>10</sup> as early as the seventh century it was not widespread until much later.

The feast of the Presentation of Mary – November 21<sup>st</sup> – was observed in the East from the eighth century but cannot be found in the Western Church much before the fourteenth century.

The feast of the Conception of Mary resting upon the notion that the Blessed Virgin was not '*sanctificata*', but '*sancta*' was instituted as a feast by the Canons of Lyons on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1150. It was formally fixed by the Council of Basle in 1439 to that date, as well as sanctioning the doctrine of the immaculate conception as '*a pious opinion*'. Although there remained opposition to this view, Pope Sixtus IV in 1476 declared it an open question.

In short for the period under consideration, Marian devotion was both popular and widespread, exemplified in the adoration of Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura, covering the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Blessed Virgin is viewed in such a manner that in her '*is all our hope of salvation and that she has obtained half the kingdom of God*'.<sup>11</sup>

Bonaventura proclaims her '*porta caeli, quia nulla potest jam caelum intrare nisi per Miriam transeat tanquam per portam*' He goes further and is attributed with adapting both the Psalter and the Te Deum to the worship of the Virgin Mary.<sup>12</sup> Even Wyclif is reputed in

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<sup>7</sup> pp302, 303 A History of the Book of Common Prayer: Proctor MacMillan & Co. 1870

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>9</sup> p273 Christian Worship: its origins and evolution: Msgr. Duchesne SPCK 4th English Edition 1912

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas p290 Dictionary of the Bible T&T Clark 1902

<sup>12</sup> '*All the Earth doth worship thee, Spouse of the Eternal Father; Vouchsafe, O sweet Mary to keep us now and ever without Sin'*

an early sermon to have declared ‘*It seems to me impossible that we should obtain the reward without the help of Mary. There is no sex or age, no rank or position, of any one in the whole human race, which has no need to call for the help of the Holy Virgin*’<sup>13</sup>

The salutation ‘Ave Maria’ was first ordered to be used as a Church formula by Odo, Bishop of Paris in 1196. The ‘ora pro nobis’ was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was directed to be used daily at the 7 canonical hours by Pius V in 1568. The Angelus is claimed to have been introduced in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and The Rosary was introduced by St. Dominic in 1210.

In hymnody and poetry the exaltation given to the Blessed Virgin is prominent, evidenced in the traditional carols such as *Puer Nobis Nascitur* 15<sup>th</sup> century, ‘I saw a maiden sitting’ 15<sup>th</sup> century Basque carol and *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* 13<sup>th</sup> century. The anonymous poems ‘*Our Lady’s Song*’ c1375 ‘*A Hymn to the Virgin*’ c1300, reflect the nuanced scholastic theology combined with popular devotion.<sup>14</sup>

Marion devotion along with the invocation of the saints was not without its opposition. From the time of Augustine of Hippo concern was expressed about the honour rendered to the saints, that belonged to Christ.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, western universities were flooded with texts hitherto unseen, reviving interest in classical and Biblical studies. Thus by the end of the fifteenth century there were indications that the old ideas concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary were becoming untenable.

In Dean Colet’s ‘*Preceptes of Livinge*’ this change was made evident.<sup>15</sup> He writes ‘*byleve and trust in Chryst Jesu. Worship hym and his moder Mary*’ Viewed in the light of his favourite principle ‘*Keep to the bible and the Apostles Creed and let divines dispute about the rest*’ and the fact that he is charged with denying the worship of images, the climate of change has been flagged.

Erasmus both in his ‘*Encomium Mariae*’<sup>16</sup> and ‘*Peregrinatio*’<sup>17</sup> ridicules pilgrimages to the shrine of St. Mary of Walsingham, the prayers offered to her and generally scholastic speculations concerning her virginity and sinlessness.

Sir Thomas More condemns image worship in his ‘*Utopia*’<sup>18</sup> and expresses to Erasmus his disgust at the manner of Marian devotion which he witnessed in Conventry. Furthermore in a letter to an unknown monk in defence of Erasmus he vilifies a band of assassins who knelt to the Virgin and then proceeded ‘*piously to commit their crimes*’,<sup>19</sup>

With respect to their Biblical scholarship in the period under scrutiny it suffices to state that the view of the New Learning in regard to Mary remained respectful, refusing to give credence to former speculations. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Articles of the Church of England as

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<sup>13</sup> Lechler’s Wyclif p299 English translation.

<sup>14</sup> pp10 -11 The Oxford book of English verse 1250 - 1918

<sup>15</sup> written 1512

<sup>16</sup> written 1509 in the home of Thomas More.

<sup>17</sup> Written 1509- 1516

<sup>18</sup> written 1516 in Louvain.

<sup>19</sup> p290 Dictionary of the Bible T & T Clark 1902

originally put in 1553 states respectively ‘*of Christ alone without sin*’ and ‘*The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory*’ the Scriptural position is regarded as normative.<sup>20</sup> Under the influence of Bucer, Melanchthon and Luther the refusal to speculate beyond the warrant of Scripture is voiced by Calvin in his ‘*On a Harmony of the Gospels*’ which first appeared in 1555 in French and in 1584 in English. On Matthew 1.25 he states

‘*Let one thing suffice for us, that it is foolishly and falsely inferred from the words of the Evangelist what happened after the birth of Christ..... what followed after he does not tell. We know quite well that this is normally Scripture’s way and we may be sure that no one will ever raise questions on such a matter except from curiosity: and certainly none but a contentious troublemaker will press it all the way,*’<sup>21</sup>

This cautious respectful approach without denying the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the economy of salvation, is attempting to avoid the excessive language of the schoolmen and of popular devotion. On the development of the King’s book of 1549 – the first book of Common Prayer, the process included the saying of the Ave Maria in English in the King’s injunctions of 1538 which were read in St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny by order of the then Archbishop of Dublin, George Browne.

This was removed in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer although Mary alone is named in the prayers praising God for the saints, which occur between the *Ter Sanctus* and the Consecration of the elements in the Communion Rite.

The seven feasts in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary were reduced to two, although the calendar retained 5 days, omitting the presentation of Mary (Nov 21<sup>st</sup>) and the Dormition (Aug 15<sup>th</sup>). Collects are provided in the 1549 Book for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and the Annunciation only. This reflects the concern to place Christ at the centre of all salvific purposes and not to ascribe to anyone that which is due to him alone.

The ‘*Magnificat*’ the song of the Blessed Virgin Mary, retained at Evening Prayer given the structure of the service was the acknowledgement of her place within the salvific purposes of God, as understood by Anglican reformers. Subsequent revisions of the Prayer Book remove the naming of Mary in the Communion Rite except where a proper preface was provided.<sup>22</sup>

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) also evidenced a guarded approach towards the Blessed Virgin Mary particularly in its language. Session XXV *De Invocatione Veneratione et reliquias Sanctorum et sacris imaginibus* whilst commanding that ‘*the people be taught that the saints reigning with Christ offer their prayers for men to God...*’ it is followed by a warning against superstition. It did not however change the position of Mary within the salvific scheme as the faithful are enjoined to pray to the most blessed Mother of God *ut nobis peccatoribus sua intercessione conciliaret Deum, bonaque tum ad hanc tum ad aeternam vitam necessaria impetraret*’<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> see E.J. Bicknell 39 Articles

<sup>21</sup> p70 ‘Calvin’s Commentaries - A Harmony of the Gospels’

<sup>22</sup> see also the Collect for Christmas Day and Proper Preface 1549

<sup>23</sup> p291 Dictionary of the Bible T & T Clark 1902

By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Church in all of its variety of traditions held to a common view on the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary was a figure of importance but differed markedly on the emphasis that should be placed on that importance. In all, the foundations for the furthering or lessening of her importance are laid as each tradition defines its own identity not paradoxically upon the Living Rock of Christ but upon the veneration afforded His Blessed Mother.

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## ESSAY THREE

### **Paddy Wallace: Mary, Mother of our Lord, as perceived by the Mothers' Union in Ireland**

This paper attempts to explore attitudes within the Mothers' Union in Ireland to Mary. Three main sources have been used; information from the archives in Mary Sumner House (MSH), responses to a questionnaire sent to the 12 diocesan presidents in Ireland and finally an analysis of what Mary means to the Mothers' Union (MU) by Fleur Dorrell (Head of the Prayer and Spirituality Unit at MSH).

#### **Background**

The Mothers' Union was founded in 1876 and the vision of its founder, Mary Sumner, was to “win the homes of the nation for Christ”.

While society of that time saw the mother as the lynch pin of the home, Mary Sumner believed that motherhood involved more than providing for the physical needs of children. The primary responsibility of mothers was to raise their children in the love of God with their lives firmly rooted in prayer. To that end she was inspired to start the organisation.

The growth of the MU was rapid and by 1887 the first branch had opened in Ireland. Anglo Irish families seemed to influence the spread of the society and the ‘big house’ played a significant part in the development of the MU in those early years. This inevitably meant close links with what ever was happening in England and elsewhere in the Empire. By 1904 the organisation was sufficiently strong in Ireland to decide on an annual meeting in Dublin.

One assumes that Mary had been highlighted as a role model from an early stage. There is certainly evidence in the records that the Feast of the Annunciation or Lady Day quickly became an important date in the MU calendar. From the archives at MSH we learn that although the idea was first suggested to the MU in 1895 at the annual committee of presidents in London (and that meeting would have had representation from Ireland) and agreed to by Central Council in 1897 it took some time to be adopted across the membership. Holy Communion was the central feature of the day. At a Central Council meeting in 1902 the president of St David's plaintively asked how to surmount the difficulty of obtaining due observance of the day. In the same year however, it was reported that the day was celebrated as far afield as Armagh, Antananarivo and Sydney. In the 1909 annual report it was declared that in the past year the *Feast of the Annunciation* had almost universally been recognised as a great day of *intercession and thanksgiving*. Of equal significance was that 'many bishops' had held special services in their cathedrals to mark the day.

The MU leadership seems to have been quite reticent about why they choose the day and generally about the organisation's view of Mary despite the use of the Madonna and Child on membership cards, banners etc.

#### **The Feast of the Annunciation in Ireland**

The Constitution (2002) of the Mothers' Union and the Constitution (2004) of the Mothers' Union in Ireland both declare that “the Feast of the Annunciation shall be observed annually as a special day of prayer and thanksgiving for the Mothers' Union”. The name ‘Lady Day’, although used commonly in England, Scotland and Wales, is not generally used in MU

circles in Ireland. Whatever the terminology, the occasion is currently accepted as an important date in the calendar.

In preparation for this paper a survey of current MU practice in the Church of Ireland was carried out amongst the twelve diocesan presidents. Eleven replied giving a varied picture but one which reflects a geographical as well as political spread.

It is apparent that observation of the 25<sup>th</sup> March is varied. In the southern dioceses there are no diocesan services but the day does not pass unmarked as branches usually celebrate with a service of Holy Communion or of prayer. There is a marked contrast in the northern dioceses. One diocese actively encourages the branches to mark the day and is having response from some branches. The two largest dioceses choose to have their Festival Services on the 25<sup>th</sup> or on the Sunday closest to that date each year. The focus of these services may well be more on MU activity unless material is supplied which focuses on Mary and the Feast of the Annunciation. The other two dioceses acknowledge that the date passes unnoticed in MU circles.

In the dioceses where the branches mark Lady Day with a service of Holy Communion this would appear to be a more honest and open celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation.

#### Indicators of Mary as a significant figure to the MU

There is an obvious shying away from all reference to Mary on the part of most MU members. Yet as indicated above, the Madonna and Child were depicted on the early Membership cards. They appear on many MU banners – including the original banner of the society which hangs in Mary Sumner House.

In addition few special MU services take place without the inclusion of Mary's exultant song, the Magnificat, in some form or other.

The most open and frequent acknowledgement of the significance of Mary is in the branch banner. Banners in the southern dioceses do not in general feature the Madonna and Child. Certainly no southern diocese has Mary on the diocesan banner and branch banners feature many things other than Mary.

In marked contrast two dioceses in the north have Mary on their diocesan banner and a very high proportion of the branches feature Mary on their banners. Interestingly the percentage of banners featuring Mary in each of the northern dioceses is as follows:

Armagh 20%;	Clogher 12%;	Connor 75%;
Derry and Raphoe 12%;		Down and Dromore 50%

The diocesan banners seem to date from soon after the second World War, although precise information was not available. The bulk of the other banners with Mary would date from that period and the following two decades. There is no comprehensive study of this but some information to hand would suggest that many of these banners were ordered from England. (There was a well known supplier in Manchester at that time). It would have been a period when people were not so keen to do their own design but happy to take what was available. From the distinct similarity in all these banners – Mary and Child on a blue background with a surround of lilies and enough space for the parish and branch names to be displayed.- it would appear to have been the generally accepted style of MU banner, probably in the north

of England and therefore supplied to dioceses in Northern Ireland. I hasten to add that this is a presumption or interpretation on my part.

Recent banners tend to reflect the family unit. MU thinking and work, while still conscious of the important role of the mother definitely concentrates greatly on the family as a unit and the role of both parents in that unit.

Again many MU banners would nowadays depict their parish church or something of the locality. These would be individually designed and often hand made. One branch in Clogher Diocese has recently introduced a banner depicting Mary.

### **Worship Material featuring Mary**

We are fortunate in Ireland to receive a wealth of excellent worship resources from the Prayer and Spirituality team at MSH. (It should be said that some of our members in fact contribute to that material so in all honesty it cannot be defined as ‘English’ material as some would want to suggest! ) Most years there is something for Lady Day. Diocesan Presidents were asked to comment on the reaction to and use of such material.

All commented positively on the quality of the general material which is produced from MSH. There is an awareness that it now reflects the more global nature of the MU and must obviously serve as well as reflect very diverse views and traditions. That material is sent out worldwide. One diocesan president expressed the general attitude well when she said she would study carefully the material for Lady Day and adapt to suit her diocese. She would be conscious of the sensitivity of many of her members to any thing which over emphasised Mary and therefore suggested being ‘too Roman’.

A detailed analysis of the use of that material indicates that it is generally accepted and used with minor adjustments. One diocese referred to disregarding the material more through apathy than anything else. One particular order of service entitled ‘Walking with Mary’ caused more hesitation than others. Those who studied it carefully found it quite suitable once a couple of phrases were excluded. Others were influenced by the title and did not explore the possibilities.

This last comment is perhaps more telling than might at first appear. Over sensitivity and anxiety around focusing on Mary seem to reflect a gap in understanding. There is an unwillingness or hesitation to confront something that might be contentious rather than explore it and be confident in what we believe.

It would appear that most branches have members who would be less comfortable with such material than others. The northern dioceses indicated a stronger anxiety around the material. Two indicated negative reactions from key leaders in their dioceses. One of those was particularly negative about service outlines and prayers for Lady Day which have come from MSH.

I quote the responses- “ Some diocesan officials felt the material was inappropriate and not relevant to us. – It was for England! Most branches did not use the material and felt it was not relevant to here. Some clergy thought that too much emphasis was being put on Mary”  
In that dioceses much of the Lady Day resources would be disregarded.

Another northern diocese had only encountered difficulties with certain clergy. Clergy attitudes undoubtedly are important in how the average branch regards Mary. One diocese commented that some clergy are prepared to be more open than others. Certainly clergy attitudes are a key factor in this. (The relationship between the incumbent and the branch leader in itself could make an interesting study!)

I have been informed that complaints from Ireland to Mary Sumner House about the worship material for Lady Day have come from clergy not from members or leaders. In some cases the complaints have been very strong and on the grounds of encouraging members to be ‘papish’.

### **What Mary means to the MU**

There are reports of many sermons being preached on Mary and her significance to us as members of the MU. These appear to be well received.

Fleur Dorrell’s work is highly regarded by our Diocesan Presidents. She has a theological background and is admired greatly for her ability to lead a Bible Study. She has worked with members in Ireland and has spoken here on several occasions and understands the issues which would concern us.

Fleur has written on aspects of Mary and what they mean to the MU. What she wrote was sent with the questionnaire to the diocesan presidents for their comments. It is copied below.

**Motherhood** – Christian care for families worldwide is our strap-line but the role of the mother in this care is vital; bringing with it all the qualities that are essential to mothers and mothering – patience, unconditional love and affection, sacrifice, respect and tolerance, wisdom and judgement, the bigger picture, stability and constancy, self-worth, personal strength and resourcefulness, education and formation, happiness, sorrow, grief, pain and courage etc... see parenting project and all project, policy and faith work that empowers women in the home through parenting and in work through a healthy work/life balance!

**Holiness** – faith and desire for God, relationship and prayer life with God, desire to please, obey and be close to God, reflecting God as the model for our behaviour... – see prayer, spirituality and faith formation work that enriches our beliefs and our relationship with God.

**Vocation and service** to others but especially to and for God – annunciation was about listening and responding and about the awareness of others’ needs and pro-active commitment to helping them, discernment and understanding of our vocation and how to nourish it – see project work but also gender equality and empowerment work through church leadership by women - especially the lay women; and our calling to the MU, to ordination and to speaking out on behalf of the organisation in the public sphere.

**Relationships** between people especially in our families – go-betweens and peace-makers between disputes, creators of harmony, reflectors and prayers of all things... – see parenting and peace & reconciliation work

**Building bridges** between communities – dialogue and sharing of experiences provides friendship models and conversations for transformation – see peace & reconciliation work

and inter-faith dialogue between esp. Christians and Muslims in Rochester, Leeds, Bradford dioceses as well as many of our African countries

***Ordinary versus the extraordinary*** – getting on with life and all its joys and sorrows but finding the beauty and wonder of God in daily grind... – see ordinary branch work and local community transformation by MU in small, quiet church and public domains.

***Local, national and international essence*** – Mary was able to transcend all boundaries across the world because she was a mother and mother to the most important person in the world, the MU exists all over the world because everywhere needs strong families and strong family support – so Mary's universality enhances the MU's universality of family life – see website ([www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org)) for this relationship between the local, national and international work and life of the MU and of course the wave of prayer system.

***Mary and Elizabeth*** – Mary's friendship with her cousin Elizabeth was a huge source of support to her particularly as a pregnant mother. Similarly, our worldwide fellowship and hospitality roles mirror this fellowship and friendship, wherever the MU is – our members are welcomed and cherished.”

There was general agreement that this expresses our perception of Mary as a role model. One diocesan president hesitated to endorse all of this but said she would emphasise motherhood, holiness and friendship.

There were individual comments from two others, drawing attention to personal moments when in one case a painting and in another a scene at the Oberammergau Passion Play had made great impact.

The painting had confirmed the incredible ordinariness at the same time as the wonderful obedience of Mary – all in sharp contrast to the “too good to be true” image which is portrayed in the Roman Catholic church.

The Oberammergau play brought home the simple reality of Mary's feelings as a mother and depth of love for a son who was suffering..

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it would be wrong not to acknowledge that there is an underlying apprehension around or discomfort with anything visual or liturgical which would suggest ‘Roman’ practice.

There is a negative correlation between the number of banners in a diocese depicting Mary and the ease with which that diocese uses material about Mary.

However there is a tradition in the Mothers' Union to be nurtured and an undoubted willingness in most places to accept material which focuses on Mary and to adapt if necessary to suit the context.

There is a desire to reflect on Mary and value what we learn from her. Equally there is a need to understand fully what we believe and take away some of the stigma around Mary.

A closer working relationship between clergy and MU could well be a positive force in clarifying thinking around Mary.

## ESSAY FOUR

### **PETER F. BARRETT: DEVOTION - MARY & THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS**

Alongside formal teaching, diocesan study courses and a variety of parochial contexts, the primary setting for nurture in Anglican devotion is that of worship. The cycle of the Church's calendar permeates the balanced offering of word and sacrament broken and shared for our growth in Christ, Sunday by Sunday. Through hearing and receiving the scriptures; in reception of the sacraments; through prayer and praise, the worshipper encounters the central truths about God, self and the cosmos and is encouraged to "go in peace to love and to serve the Lord".

The form of such worship is Trinitarian and its focus is Christocentric. In and through all, we seek to receive the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in service of and witness to our Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of the Father. In such public worship and in personal prayer where do Mary and the Communion of Saints fit in?

The Communion of Saints includes not only the 'authorised' Saints to be commemorated in our liturgical calendar. It also includes those, living and departed in the Lord Jesus, whose holiness is known only to God. We do well to recall that in the New Testament, the word for saints, *hagioi* (Latin: "sancti"), meant all holy people, specifically church members. People whom we know to be far from perfection in many instances, but whom God had called in Christ for his good purposes.

Further, it was always used in the plural. The New Testament knows little of the solitary Christian. When the phrase, the 'Communion of Saints' began to appear in the Western Church's baptismal creeds from the fifth century onwards, the original Latin, 'Communio Sanctorum', meant not just the fellowship of holy people, but also the fellowship in 'holy things'; i.e. the eucharist. These two understandings merge beautifully in the eucharistic prayers of the Church as we shall see, where the living and departed by with and through Christ, blend their praises as one to God the Holy Trinity.

In keeping with our scriptural foundations and parameters, 'Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness' (Heb 12:1), the Church of Ireland celebrates and commemorates such a bountiful and glorious presence in Christ, by keeping the fast and feast days of the Incarnation and the Saints' Days of apostolic, New Testament and national honour, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially prominent. Indeed, we honour their memory and witness, often unto martyrdom. We seek to learn from and to imitate their examples of courage and perseverance. We hymn their praises in thanksgiving to God the blessed Trinity.

In short, our liturgical celebration, encircling and emanating from the central truths of Christ, acknowledge their fellowship as befits our creedal affirmations of belief in 'The Communion of Saints'. Well do we sing – ' O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia!' (Church Hymnal 459; v.4)

Within such scriptural, liturgical and Christological contexts in the eternal embrace of the unfolding, generation by generation, of the loving purposes of God, where is Saint Mary the Virgin, Mother of our Lord and Saviour, to be located? Mary whose Magnificat of praise and

thanksgiving is said/sung daily/weekly in the office of Evening Prayer throughout the Church and whom scripture encourages us forever to call ‘Blessed’ (Luke 1: 48).

Our creedal affirmations assert our belief that the Lord Jesus was ‘Born of the Virgin Mary’ (Apostles’ Creed); and ‘Was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary’ (Nicene Creed). The Creed of Athanasius asserts:

For the right Faith is that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world.

Moreover, in keeping with the respected place of the seven General Councils of the Church (especially the role of the first four) in Anglican theology and in keeping with our patristic traditions, the description of Mary as Theotókos, ‘God bearer’ by the consecutive Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon in 431 and 451 respectively, is accepted by the Church of Ireland as definitive. They find a locus, as is to be expected, in our liturgy.

Nearly all the Marian commemorations are Eastern in origin and were established by the late seventh century in the Church of Rome. Outside of the Principal Holy Days of the Church, where Mary figures prominently Christmas, (where in its first Collect Mary is described as ‘A pure Virgin’), Easter and Pentecost, the following commemorations are also kept by the Church of Ireland. The Feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, (also known as The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin), on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on May 31<sup>st</sup>; and the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

But it is to be noted that there is no authorised, official provision for the other two main western commemorations: the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8<sup>th</sup> or the Feast of the Assumption on August 15<sup>th</sup>, (although it is worth noting that several churches of the Communion observe August 15<sup>th</sup> as the Blessed Virgin Mary). This is because there is no agreement in our Church that these Festivals of the Roman Catholic Church, which celebrate dogmatic beliefs relating to the Blessed Virgin Mary, are sufficiently grounded in scripture as to be pronounced ‘De Fide’: ‘necessary to salvation’. (See Article 6 of the 39 Articles which has a fundamental role in matters of official doctrine in our Church but which, it should be noted, does not prohibit the holding of personal, private opinion on such areas of controversy).

A further area where Mary is acknowledged christologically, is that of the sensual: in particular the aural and visual. Alongside churches and Lady Chapels dedicated to her, windows and Mothers’ Union banners portray her. Statues and icons are to be found, but rarely. However, our store of anthems, hymns and motets have an enduring tradition. Bearing in mind the important part that good hymns play as ‘sung theology’, here is an important source of mariology (The study of Mary) within the Church of Ireland. See, for example, hymns no 462, 470, 473, 476 and 477.

In hymn 472 v.2, Mary is praised in terms which echo the early Church’s teaching of ‘Hyperdulia’: Mary venerated as ‘First of the Saints’; and as we have mentioned ‘Theotokos’: God bearer:– ‘O higher than the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim, lead their praises, Alleluia! Thou bearer of the eternal Word, most gracious, magnify the Lord Alleluia!’

In the last verse of hymn 472, there is no doubt where Mary is now; nor is there any doubt of who is Lord - ‘ Sing the chiefest joy of Mary, When on earth her work was done, And the Lord of all creation, Brought her to his heavenly home: Where, raised high with saints and angles , in Jerusalem above, She beholds her Son and Saviour, Reigning as the Lord of Love’.

These indications of an often unacknowledged, almost hidden place for Mary in our Church’s public devotions may surprise us. Further, set in the broader context of Anglican devotional writing of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, (Caroline Divines such as Andrewes, Taylor, Frank and poets like Traherne), there is an even richer vein of devotion to deepen our understanding of the vital role Mary played and continues to play in our Christology.

Scripture, creed, liturgy and tradition all support the assertion that the Blessed Virgin Mary holds a distinct place of honour. It is fair also to say that, in the light of this weight of valid testimony from our perspective, any undervaluing of the Christological role of our Lord’s blessed Mother is unreasonable. In short, Mary’s honour within the Communion of Saints is compatible with the honour she received on earth from God.

Yet, there is a sturdy reluctance in the Church of Ireland to ascribe anything to the Mother of the Lord that would detract from her ‘creatureliness’ and above all, her Son’s divinity. This is well summed up by these words of Bishop Pearson of Chester (1613-1686) - ‘We cannot bear too reverend a regard unto the Mother of our Lord, so long as we give her not the worship which is due unto the Lord himself. Let us keep the language of the primitive Church: Let her be honoured and esteemed, let him be worshipped and adored’ (Exposition of the Creed; ed J. Burton; p.634).

Further, in a wider specifically Irish context, where in anglican/protestant circles, mariology is often equated with mariolotry, due to excesses in practise, actual or perceived, there has been an understandable cultural reaction to any overt expression of devotion to Mary. This can be seen negatively. However, this ‘scriptural/cultural’ reserve is itself a form of devotion in that it seeks to honour Mary without detracting from the definitive centrality of her Son in all things pertaining to His work as Saviour of the world, including being her Saviour too.

At the heart of any treatment of Mary and The Communion of Saints lies the vast and deep subject of prayer. In particular, prayer as ‘comprecation’, (praying with someone for something) and prayer as ‘invocation’ (asking someone for something). In short, prayer with the Saints and prayer to the Saints. But as has been constantly stressed throughout this paper, Christology is central to our treatment of this matter also. Just as Mary is inseparable from her ‘only begotten Son’ ( and how easily things can go wrong theologically when there is a separation), so no prayer of the Christian or of the Church is possible without the intercession and unique mediation of Christ. Two texts in particular are of supreme importance in this context –

‘For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human’ (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2: v. 5). ‘(Christ) always lives to make intercession for us’ (Hebrews 7v.25).

In relation to invocation, there is no official approval or encouragement to support this form of prayer in the Church of Ireland. Further, there is very little evidence that invocation plays a role in the prayer life of the majority of members, along with the angelus or rosary. In support of this position, Article 22 condemns amongst other things, ‘the Romish doctrine of

..invocation of Saints'. (However, it should be noted that there is considerable discussion about whether all invocation is being condemned, or only its 'Romish' expression).

There is stronger support for comprecation as being compatible with Anglican teaching, not least because it is a natural development of what is already found in our eucharistic texts (see above on 'Communio Sanctorum'). Again, we underscore the role of worship in the whole devotional life of the Anglican Christian. In the eucharistic prayer, we affirm the majesty of God by saying ' With angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, forever praising you and saying...'.

The questions that this joyful expression raise are helpful and relevant, if complex. For example, if heaven and earth can join in praise and witness together ('since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses'), then why not join in prayer, a perfectly natural devotional aspect of the life of the Church? If in worship and witness we are alive together in Christ in 'one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord' (Collect of All Saints' Day), would it not be equally natural in Christ to ask the Saints; a Saint; Mary to pray with you for your particular concern or thanksgiving, in the same way as you would ask a Christian friend or neighbour to pray? Seen in such a context, the saints are not absent and unseen. Rather, they are surrounding us; are ever near and are part of the one Christian family, in time and eternity: 'They all pray for all and all ask the prayers of all' (A. M. Ramsey. *Be still and know*; p.116). Perhaps invocation and comprecation are not separate and opposite? Rather they interweave in the many coloured tapestry that is prayer by, with and through Christ in the midst of the 'great cloud of witnesses' of which we ourselves are a living part?

In conclusion, it is worthwhile pausing for a moment and reflecting upon these passages from the Non-Juror Bishop of Thetford, Bishop George Hickes (1642-1715). In his 'Speculum Beatae Virginis: a discourse of the due praise due praise and honour of the Virgin Mary by a true catholic of the Church of England', (published in pamphlet form in 1686 when Dean of Worcester), Hickes admirably expresses the limits of due Anglican reserve in speaking about the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is our duty who have the benefit of her example to honour and celebrate her name and commemorate her virtues and set forth her praises...So divine, so righteous a person ought to be had in everlasting remembrance and blessed among women from generation to generation. We ought not to mention her name without honour, her name which ought to be like precious ointment wheresoever the gospel is preached.. if the names of the saints are distinguished with miniature, hers ought to shine with gold.

But there are important restraints,

Yet we ought to take care that we do not honour her too much in thinking and speaking of her more highly than we ought to speak of another human creature. Indeed there is a particular respect due unto her, upon the account of her eminent graces and as she is Mother of God. But we must not let our respect for her commence into worship, or romance her into a deity. We must not to pay such homage and veneration to her under the character of the queen, as is only due to the King of heaven.

## ESSAY FIVE

### Mary J. Evans: Mary as the subject of religious art

It is highly probable that women outnumbered men in the early Christian churches. Some of these women came from high-ranking families and chastity was valued by them as a supremely Christian ideal which set them apart from the pagan world. It is within this context and against the background of the Councils of Nicea (AD 325), Ephesus (AD 431), and Chalcedon (451) which defined the virgin Mary's divine maternity and declared her to be the mother of God, that the early images of Mary should be considered.

Mary's virginity was central to Christian doctrine from the fourth century onwards for without it there could be no 'Son of God' and Jesus would have been a man like other men. The councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon declared Mary not just 'Christ bearer' but 'God bearer' or Theotokos, the Mother of God. Ephesus was the supposed burial place of Mary and was also the site of the great temple of Artemis/Diana. The cult of Artemis had only recently been officially suppressed but still survived in practice, which prompts the question as to whether the incipient cult of the virgin Mary was an instance of the recurrence of an ancient archetype to which Artemis/Diana and other manifestations of the immemorial mother goddess all belong.

It was only after the Council of Ephesus that images of the virgin began to proliferate. Earlier paintings are very doubtfully identified as depicting the virgin and child even when they occur in a Christian context as for example the third century wall painting **Mother and Child**, catacomb of Priscilla, Rome. When Sixtus III founded his great new church in Rome, **S. Maria Maggiore**, in the year following the Council of Ephesus he dedicated it to the Virgin and great prominence was given to her in its decoration. Sixtus III's intention in glorifying her as the Virgin Mary and Mother of God are clearly shown in the mosaics on the arch over the High Altar. At the Annunciation she appears enthroned and dressed in the robes of a Byzantine princess with a diadem and jewels almost as if giving an imperial audience. This regal depiction of Mary is also evident in a number of locations in Ravenna, for instance the mosaics on the left wall of the central nave in the 6<sup>th</sup> century **Basilica of S. Apollinare Nuovo**.

During the middle ages the cult of the Virgin Mary came virtually to eclipse in importance that of Jesus himself in Christian worship. Alongside paintings of the crucified Christ, the most common religious image of the times were images of the virgin and child which emphasised in particular Mary's status as the mother of god. She was seen to be the instrument of the incarnation and her status as a virgin lent her special sanctity. In the west her cult was greatly encouraged by the Franciscans. Duns Scotus formulated the doctrine that she was free from original sin which was to be given official recognition by a Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV in the fifteenth century, but not promulgated as the dogma of the immaculate conception until 1854. An example is Bartolome Murillo's painting depicting the Immaculate Conception c. 1678, **Museo del Prado**, Madrid.

The Annunciation is one of the most enduring images of Christianity in western art. It is a pivotal moment: Mary is able to say 'yes' to god and 'yes' to the need for the divine to communicate in human form. An unnamed artist known as The Master of the Northern Rhine emphasises Mary's unquestioning acceptance that she was to bear a holy child. This painting dates from 1420, during which time Christian teaching emphasised Mary's untroubled acceptance of the angel's revelations. Other artists developed alternative interpretations to

produce more realistic scenes of how she might have reacted to the news, for example, the Venetian Artist Lorenzo Lotto, located the scene c. 1335 in a peaceful room overlooking a garden and full of ordinary domestic objects. The Archangel Gabriel kneels on the right holding a lily as he announces to Mary the birth of Jesus “and when she saw him she was troubled” (Luke 1:29). Mary taken unawares turns around to face the viewer while her equally startled cat jumps away from the heavenly apparition.

A thirteenth century Franciscan wrote the most popular hymn to the virgin ‘Stabat Mater Dolorosa/Juxta Crucem Lacrimosa’ - the image of the sorrowful mother weeping at the foot of the cross has proved a pervasive image in religious art depicted by many artists: Giotto, **Arena Chapel**, c. 1304, Padua; Grunewald, **The Crucifixion**, 1515; Rogier van der Weyden, **The Descent from the Cross** c. 1435.

The Virgin Mary outlived her son. Her death described in Acts was witnessed by the apostles at her bed side. Artists such as Caravaggio and Hugo van der Goes depict the scene, however, much more common in art is the Assumption of the Virgin. Described in the Apocrypha but not in the Bible, it is the moment when her body and soul were taken up to heaven. The iconography of this event evolved from her suspension in the sky with the apostles beneath her to a more dynamic presentation of her ascent, as in Titian’s version 1518, **S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari**, Venice. Mother and son are reunited for all eternity and a rejuvenated Mary is represented in art being crowned Queen of Heaven by Christ. Fra Angelico, c. 1400 - 1455, painted the scene as did Enguerrand Quarton in 1449, here the virgin is crowned by the Trinity and not just Christ who is made to look identical to God the Father. This is because the patron Jean de Montagnac, a canon at the Charterhouse at Villeneuve-les-Avignon, was at that time engaged in negotiations over the nature of the Trinity with the Byzantine church.

Although so little is known about Mary, she is the mother of Jesus, present throughout his life and afterwards. She is the chief Saint of the Christian church - the person who said ‘yes’ to God, she is revered by all Christians as both Eastern and Western Christian art demonstrates.

## ESSAY SIX

### **SUE PATTERSON: PHILOSOPHICL ASPECTS OF THE RELATION OF DOCTRINE, SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION IN MAY, GRACE AND HOPE IN CHRIST**

In his essay ‘Scripture, Consensus and Community’ George Lindbeck describes the relationship between Scripture and community (or church) as one of mutual interpretation.<sup>24</sup> It makes sense that we should view the relationship between Scripture and Tradition (as essentially the product of community) in the same way.

Doctrine is the product of this mutual interpretation. As ‘faith seeking understanding’, it is the synthesis, distillation, and systematizer of Scripture and Tradition. As such, it must be both grounded in reality and fact and internally coherent. Therefore it must exhibit two types of truth: a referential truth based on reality and fact) and an internal truth (to do with coherence). It is not possible to dispense with one or the other, or, for that matter, infer one from the other, because one is the product of inductive (empirical) reasoning and the other the product of deductive (inferential) reasoning.

New developments in doctrine or dogma, or endorsements (‘re-receptions’) of existing ones, need to be consistent with the whole body of doctrine if the coherence of Christian belief is to be maintained. That is, they must be capable of being placed and understood within the context of Christian doctrine as a whole, and in particular the most fundamental of these: Christology and the trinitarian doctrine of God. Yet, if they are to be a part of doctrine according to the above definition, they must also have a grounding in the other sort of truth pertaining to the biblical world of plain sense narrative and history.

As it is doctrine that is at issue in the ARCIC Statement: *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, I propose to use this understanding of the nature of doctrinal truth in an analysis of the methodology and assumptions of that document.

#### Methodology endorsed and utilized in the Statement:

The Marian doctrine endorsed by the Statement depends on syllogistic arguments built up in the scholastic manner on a series of equations:

[1] If Mary is the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, then she is the mother of the Son of God; if she is the mother of the Son of God, *and* the Son of God is none other than God incarnate, then it follows that she is *Theotokos*, the ‘God-bearer’, the Mother of God.

[2] For Mary to be the mother of God, she must be a person of unequalled (unique) sanctity. It follows that she must be sinless, and, consistent with that, she must have always been sinless and therefore unaffected by original sin. Therefore, she must have been conceived without sin, that is, immaculately.

[3] If Mary’s purity is integral to her sanctity, it follows that she is ever-pure, hence ever-virgin [§§37-8, 51].

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<sup>24</sup> In Richard John Neuhaus (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989; pp 74ff; p 78.

[4] If death is a result of sin, yet Mary is sinless, it follows that she could not have experienced death in the manner of ordinary mortals [§57].

[5] If Mary is therefore the perfect exemplar of humanity, then she is the New Eve and, as such, spiritual mother of us all and ‘Mother of the Church’ [§§35-6, 51].

These syllogisms constitute a rationalisation of the Marian traditions read into Scripture by Patristic typological and analogical methods of interpretation. According to this interpretation, Moses, Enoch and Elijah are types (and virgin Eve an anti-type) of Mary, just as Mary herself is a type of the Church, even implicitly of Christ, and represents the New Eve and the New Israel. [§§ 8-10, 27, 35-6, 42, 51, 56] From these typological and analogical interpretations, Marian ministries have been inferred, such as that of Mary, the helper of and intercessor for God’s people [§25].

Another type of inferential rationalisation is employed in relation to the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Inference is made from what makes sense, or is fitting, to what is the case, as a ‘re-reception’ of the Patristic formula ‘*potuit, decuit, ergo fecit*’ (‘it was possible, it was fitting, therefore it was done’)<sup>25</sup> reformulated conveniently as: ‘it is possible, it is fitting, therefore it must be the case’ [e.g. §57].

Both the interpretations and their rationalisations are included in the re-reception of Marian traditions in this Statement. While the Statement rejects some of the more drawn-out later developments of these traditions, it is hard to see how some of the more ‘florid’ aspects of Marian devotion can be avoided, as biblical interpretation based solely on typology and analogy cannot in itself provide a basis for drawing the line. In effect, the standard of truth is whether the interpretation can be read into the story, or the type identified that will fit the belief. The Statement offers no corrective in the form of other interpretative methodologies that would allow Scripture itself to operate as the critical control, and the deductive syllogisms can offer no more than a rationalisation to support the interpretations.

In fact, further support for the traditions is located in the experience of the faithful as expressed in Marian devotion, which is taken as a sort of ‘empirical’ validator of the truths inherent in Marian traditions. Popular experience and the Tradition of the Church are seen to be mutually reinforcing [see §62], in a circular process of self-validation within the community of the Church. Truth is therefore what the community (the people in communion with their teaching authority) says it is.

#### What is assumed or asserted by the Statement:

Reasoning, whether deductive or inductive, has to rest on certain premises or axioms which are taken as self-evident or immune from inquiry. The first of these in this Statement is that the ancient common tradition, in particular the *Theotokos* dictum, may be taken as a basis for present unity [§§2, 51]. The implicit suggestion is that what was held in common then is still held in common today. In other words, the Reformation did not impinge on this deposit of earlier shared belief – or at least not in a lasting way as much was subsequently retrieved [§45]. (A comparison of the articles of religion with patristic doctrine may quickly undercut this assumption.)

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<sup>25</sup> John Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, (2nd ed.), (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), p. 57, Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*. (Mercier press, 1955), p. 200.

In the second place, it appears to be assumed that both churches are thinking in the same direction when they talk about the relationship between Scripture and Tradition [see §58], this in the face of the fact that Article 6 requires that Tradition's 'reading' of Scripture must ultimately be subject to Scripture's 'reading' of Tradition, while the reverse is the case for Roman Catholics [§60]. In the event, the authority of tradition cannot be taken as primary without destroying the literal/evidential/factual biblical yardstick of truth through *eisegesis* – reading into Scripture what it would seek to find there. On the other hand, the authority of Scripture cannot be taken as primary without undermining the authority of the Magisterium. Each turns the other inside out, and this conundrum cannot be solved by suggesting that the two are really in harmony after all [§61], despite appearances.

In the third place, it is assumed, due to an implicit (at least) acceptance of the primacy of Tradition (and experience as in harmony with Tradition), that a consensus fidelium regarding true belief may rest on the negative basis of a particular belief's not being found to be actually contrary to Scripture (referred to in the Statement as being 'consonant with Scripture' [§58-9]), provided that this consensus is ratified by the church's teaching authority. In other words, provided these criteria are met, it is to be presupposed that a belief is true, whether or not there is any adequate basis for it in Scripture, unless that belief is actually *contradicted* by Scripture [§76].

In the fourth place, the Statement asserts that the Marian traditions as presently defined by the RC church do not in any way compromise the coherence and integrity of Christian doctrine, taken as a logical whole and in particular the key Christological and Trinitarian doctrines. [§§ 31, 48, 63, 68 ](see below).

Finally, the Statement implies that Anglican anxieties concerning Roman Catholic Marian dogma can be attributed to the lack of an 'effective teaching authority' in the Anglican communion and that this may thus be remedied by 'the mutual re-reception of an effective [ecumenical] teaching authority in the Church' [§63]. In other words, all may be solved by the re-establishment of a common tradition via a common teaching authority. It stands to reason that such a teaching authority could only operate from a position which assumes Tradition to be primary.

### **Doctrinal ramifications**

If the criteria of doctrinal truth outlined at the beginning of this paper are applied to the Marian traditions, it might be said that there are two tests of their dogmas and associated beliefs: if they can be fitted within the system of Christian doctrine without affecting its coherence, then they do not compromise the integrity of that system, so might be said to be 'intrasyntactically' true. Yet if they do pass this test but are based on tradition alone and lack an adequate basis in the biblical record or other historical/empirical sources, then they fall into the category of mere elaborations that have no doctrinal relevance. The dogma of the Assumption might be seen to fall into this latter category although there is a case for saying that it is not a mere elaboration but chips away at the doctrines of sin and human nature.

On the other hand, if these dogmas are claimed to be true but cannot find their place within the system of doctrine without doing violence to its internal coherence, to include them would be to do just that - introduce *non sequiturs* into the system. Given Christology's maintenance of the uniqueness of Christ as mediator and redeemer, any suggestion, however muted, that Mary might share these roles is contradictory to doctrine and thus conducive to incoherence. Tradition has read into the biblical accounts of Mary a christological pattern

tantamount to taking Mary as a type of Christ. Moreover, the labelling of Mary as ‘New Eve’ implies (however this is disclaimed) a pairing of her with the ‘New Adam’ as co-Saviours. Further, a Marian role as helper of and intercessor for humanity [§25] is problematic for the Christological doctrines of mediation and redemption which permits only one Mediator and Redeemer for humanity, Christ himself. As with any other human person, Mary’s redemptive role can only be by association, only understood through Christ, not alongside Christ. Likewise, to claim that as ‘ever virgin’ (however this might be argued by special pleading to be a spiritual ‘virginity’ not integral to a physical virginity) Mary is the perfect model of Christian faith and witness may be seen to be subtly undermining of the Christian doctrine of the human person, in which sexuality is understood not as implicitly impure and sinful but as part of the goodness of creation.

The difficulties of incorporating Marian traditions within Christology and Christian Anthropology are echoed with the Trinity. There is no place for another mediator, redeemer (or a Queen of Heaven) in this doctrine, in which all salvation rests on the Father’s sending and receiving back of the Son in the power of the Spirit, and which must be effective for us within the Holy Spirit’s gathering into Christ of his elect, his new creation, to be offered through him to the Father.

In the light of these observations, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that Marian dogmas and traditions as presently ‘re-received’ by ARCIC not only suffer from faulty logic and inadequate methods of validation, but also, consistent with these and despite special pleading, at least border on incompatibility with some key tenets of Christian doctrine.

## ESSAY SEVEN

### *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*

#### **Comments on New Testament Exegesis. Maurice Elliott**

##### ARCIC Study Group – *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*

There are a number of difficulties with regard to the way in which this report handles the New Testament. On the one hand, it is to be welcomed that the authors ‘remain convinced that the holy Scriptures, as the Word of God written, bear normative witness to God’s plan of salvation’, and that out of the same Scriptures they have found themselves ‘meditating with wonder and gratitude on the whole sweep of salvation history (#6). This would appear to suggest a clear submission to primary scriptural authority. However, what becomes clear is that such submission is at best lip-service. The main difficulty concerns the precise method of exegesis (ie. the process by which the meaning is drawn out of the text). The underlying rationale is presented as a desire to ‘consider each passage about Mary...in the light of Tradition’ (#7). In other words, whereas this approach may be essential for the purposes of an ecumenical endeavour such as ARCIC, there is no converse sense whereby Tradition might be re-considered in the light of Scripture. The outcome, therefore, would appear to be pre-determined and, as a result, the treatment of Scripture is much more like eisegesis (a reading into the Bible) than exegesis (cf. above).

The authors go on to speak of a trajectory of grace and hope in the overall message of Scripture and this point is well-made (#8,9,10). The emphasis on God’s call and covenant as having been fulfilled in the coming of Christ as Messiah is one which every Christian can happily endorse. His indeed is ‘the *perfect* human response’. To then continue, however, with the affirmation that ‘a similar pattern [can be discerned] in the one who would receive the Word in her heart and in her body, be overshadowed by the Spirit and give birth to the Son of God’ makes for an unjustifiable quantum leap. It is accepted that Mary was and is *theotokos* (‘the bearer of God’), and that this required willingness on her part to co-operate with the choice of God. As can be gleaned from the plain meaning and silence of Scripture, however, this can neither be taken to imply that her position is markedly different from that of other saints, nor that she necessarily warrants either the devotion of later Christians, or indeed that she become the object of those particular dogmas which are under discussion, namely the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

In seeking to explain the birth narrative in Matthew’s Gospel the report rightly draws out the theme of continuity with Israel’s messianic expectation as expressed in the descent from David. The second aspect, that of newness coming through the birth of a Saviour, is again rather less clearly explained. In view of the desired outcome of the report it is expedient to suggest that this is ‘disclosed [by] the virginal conception’. However, this clearly gives insufficient emphasis to the equally unprecedented and unique role of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

It is rightly noted in the report that there is much in Luke’s account which affords prominence to the important place of Mary. She does indeed submit to the message of the angel with ‘humble obedience’. Nevertheless, again there is nothing in the actual language used to suggest that either her response to God or her position be interpreted as set apart from that of other believers. Just as Mary is ‘favoured...in a way that implies prior sanctification by divine grace with a view to her calling’, so we know from elsewhere in the New Testament that all Christians are the recipients of preventer grace (Rom 8:29-30, Eph 2:8, 2 Peter 1:3). Similarly, the same word *makarios*, meaning ‘blessed’, is applied elsewhere in Scripture to

the benefits available made through Christ to everyone who believes (cf. Matt 5:1-11). In fact the report itself makes this same point (#20) where from Luke 8 it is noted that the truly ‘blessed’ is not necessarily Mary, but rather ‘[all] those who hear the word of God and keep it’. That Mary will be called ‘blessed’ does not therefore mark out her place as unique and is certainly not ‘a cause for appropriate devotion to her’. If anything, the very fact of Mary’s willing submission the will of God for her life is undermined by insisting upon her own immaculate conception. If Mary had no pre-disposition towards the possibility of refusing to obey in the first place, how then does this magnify either her or God? Most significantly, it must not be overlooked that in the Magnificat Mary refers to the God as ‘my Saviour’ (Luke 1:47). This cannot be taken other than to imply that the need for redemption was just as evident within Mary’s life as it is within every other sinful human heart.

The report wishes to bolster a case for Mary’s perpetual virginity, and in so doing makes reference to a possible broader meaning of the Greek word *adelphos* (‘brother’, Note 3, #19). There would appear to be no good reason, however, for rejecting the normal understanding, which is used in various places in the New Testament, that *adelphoi* be taken to mean ‘blood siblings’. For example, in Matthew 4:21 James and John are brothers, *adelphoi*, being sons of the one father Zebedee. Again here the report appears to be distancing itself from a straight-forward reading of the Bible – it is silent with regard to any notion of Mary’s perpetual virginity and accepts that Jesus did have a genuine earthly family.

A similar point might be made with regard to the report’s interpretation of Revelation 12 (#28-30). As #28 acknowledges, the majority of biblical scholars favour the description of ‘a woman clothed with the sun’ as referring to the church, not to Mary. Again therefore the way in which the authors are engaging with Scripture out of a pre-determined agenda rather than allowing it to speak in its plain sense is unhelpful. The overall impression is that ARCIC has already decided what needs to be the end point of agreement and is prepared to do whatever may be necessary exegetically in order to reach that objective.

Concerning John’s Gospel it is tenuous to find any allusion to Mary in the Prologue. In #24 the report is right to acknowledge that Mary’s relationship with Jesus takes on a new form with the manner by which she is addressed at the wedding in Cana. This does not however imply that her role has somehow been transformed into that of some kind of mediator: ‘to help the disciples come to her son and to do whatever he tells them’ (#25). Instead Mary herself is now cast much more clearly in the role of a disciple. A similar seismic shift is made in the report’s handling of John’s crucifixion narrative. To infer from what is a self-evident and very touching display of ‘filial affection’ that Mary is somehow afforded ‘a motherly role in the Church’ and that ‘disciples [ought] to embrace her as a spiritual mother’ (#26) is like trying to make bricks without straw. It is, therefore, no surprise to discover that #27, with its treatment of a possible parallel between Mary and Eve, also stretches customary principles of biblical interpretation almost to breaking point.

One final comment concerning this report’s handing of biblical material is the simple fact that the epistles are completely silent with regard to any special role for and understanding of Mary. Without doubt the end of her earthly life must have come before the completion of those texts which now form the remainder of the New Testament canon. Surely therefore it is reasonable to assume that had the Church known and accepted her place to be of such central importance as we are now being encouraged to realise, there might have been at least some reference to this in the writings of Paul, Peter or even James. The deafening silence of the apostles cannot be ignored in terms of how we ought to properly understand her true

significance.

The final mention of Mary in the New Testament comes in Acts 1:14 – ‘They [the disciples] all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers’. There is something very appropriate that this ultimate reference to Mary should number her as a member of the early Christian fellowship and should coincide precisely with the completion of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry in the Ascension. The sense with which we are left is that she too has fulfilled the special role assigned to her: that of being a faithful, loving mother. To attempt, as this report does, to infer more than this out of Holy Scripture is to move far beyond its ‘normative witness’.

## **ESSAY EIGHT**

### **MARY: GRACE AND HOPE IN CHRIST**

#### **MICHAEL C. KENNEDY: REFLECTIONS ON THE TEXT**

#### **PREFACE BY THE CO-CHAIRMEN**

It is stated "we have drawn on the Scriptures and the common tradition which predates the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation". However, it may be noted that the two Marian dogmas on the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1950) are, in their definitive form, recent, and it is not clear that they are in fact based on the Scriptures and upon authentic common tradition. This has to be proven, and must not be treated as a presupposition.

NB that the document itself does not contain a list of members of ARCIC as previous such documents did.<sup>1</sup>

#### **THE STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT**

It is stated, "(The document) is not an authoritative declaration by the Roman Catholic Church or by the Anglican Communion, who will study and evaluate the document in due course".

Accepting the ecumenical imperative implied in the concept of the "one body and one Spirit" together with "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (Eph. 4:4,6) and in the Lord's high priestly prayer "that they may all be one" (John 17:21) does not involve an obligation to accept everything that is proposed in any particular ecumenical document. In other words it would not be unecumenical to be highly critical of certain aspects of this particular document while appreciative of its main thrust. The Church of Ireland has been rigorous in its assessment of several previous ARCIC documents.<sup>2</sup>

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. "In honouring Mary as Mother of the Lord..." This has, historically, been done in different ways in our two communions. The Anglican liturgical tradition, as stated in the Prayer Book report of the Lambeth Conference of 1958 is that of "honouring the saints without invocation".<sup>3</sup> Article 22 declares roundly, "The Romish Doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worship and adoration as well of images as of relicks, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God".<sup>4</sup> There has been some argument as to what the vague term "The Romish Doctrine" means.<sup>5</sup> Whatever is the case, some Anglicans have explicitly and directly expressed their devotion to Mary (there are examples in the highly respected *English Hymnal*)<sup>6</sup> and have not been prepared to exclude some invocation of Mary and the saints at least in their private and personal devotions. The strength of the tradition represented by the Marian shrine at Walsingham indicates that this is a strand of Anglicanism which must be taken seriously even if this involves comparatively few members of the clergy and laity of the Church of Ireland. The widely used office book *Celebrating Common Prayer* contains traditional forms of Marian prayers, including the Angelus and Salve Regina.<sup>7</sup> Common devotion to Mary is also expressed through the agency of such bodies as the Ecumenical

Society of Mary.<sup>8</sup> In a more general sense honour was given to Mary in classical Anglican authors not least the "Carolines" of the seventeenth century, including our own Bishop Jeremy Taylor.<sup>9</sup> Of some importance to the Church of Ireland, given its claim to be "ancient Catholic and apostolic" as well as "Reformed and Protestant" is the prominence of devotion to Mary in Celtic spirituality. The work of the Carmelite friar, Peter O'Dwyer is relevant here, for example in his *History of Devotion to Mary in Ireland*, in which he gathered together the fruits of four previous publications on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

2. The paragraph from *Authority of the Church II (1981)* is extremely significant and represents a doctrine of Mary to which it ought to be possible for the Church of Ireland to give unequivocal consent. This declaration could serve as a starting point and even a basis for a Church of Ireland assessment of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. The title *theotokos* occurs in the second letter of Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius which was solemnly approved by the Council Fathers at Ephesus (431) and also in the Twelve Anathematisms of Cyril against Nestorius. As one of the first four "General" Councils Ephesus is recognized by the Anglicans as having expressed the authentic Christian faith. The relevant declarations are<sup>11</sup>,

It was not that an ordinary man was born first of the holy Virgin, on whom afterwards the Word descended; what we say is that, being united with the flesh from the womb, (the Word) has undergone birth in the flesh, making the birth in the flesh his own... Thus (the holy Fathers) have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin "Mother of God" (*theotokos*). This does not mean that the nature of the Word or His divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word united to Himself according to the hypostasis (*kath' hypostasin*), was born from her, the Word was born according to the flesh.

If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel is truly God and, therefore, that the holy Virgin is the Mother of God (*theotokos*) (since she begot according to the flesh the Word of God made flesh), *anathema sit*.

The reservations expressed in the same document (*Authority in the Church II*) would still be strongly felt by many Anglicans, some of whom would go further and say that the dogmas, specifically, of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption lack any adequate basis in Scripture, Reason, or Tradition and should not in any case have been defined as belonging to the essence of the faith.

3. *Re-reception* seems to be a piece of ecumenical jargon to convey the idea of "thinking again". The question is whether such a process necessarily justifies Anglicans in affirming these doctrines in any shape or form. The use of ambiguous terminology, which is evident at significant points in the document on Mary, will not necessarily serve the interests of truth. It should be noted that opposition to the dogmas comes from the "Catholic" as well as the "Evangelical" wing of Anglicanism.<sup>12</sup>

4. The terms of reference of ARIC are significant and remain valid - "a serious dialogue...founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions." There is, however, no mention of the role of critical scholarship in such an evaluation - which is important for both Roman Catholics and Anglicans as they consider their understanding of "the faith once delivered to the saints" both together and separately.

5. "The Incarnation and all that it entailed, including the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ and the birth of the Church, came about by way of Mary's freely uttered *fiat* - "let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). This is well said, but several caveats may be made,

- ❑ The role of Mary needs to be expressed in a way that does not appear to make our salvation depend on her. We cannot assume that had she refused her vocation the incarnation would not have occurred at another time or place and by means of another person.
- ❑ We need to be careful about placing too great a reliance on the historicity of the infancy narratives - which seem to be late, reflecting material peculiar to Matthew and Luke and which have no parallels in Mark or John. This being the case there seems a certain naivety in treating, for example, the account of the Annunciation as if it were a verbatim report of a conversation, and building on such hints a superstructure of dogma. It is hard to avoid the impression that the treatment of Scripture in much of this document is pre-critical (or at the least non-critical) in character in spite of what is said on p.9.

#### A. MARY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

6. It is, of course, appropriate to set what the New Testament says about Mary within the context of the whole of salvation history, particularly as it is centred on the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But we have to ask ourselves, do the Gospels in fact give us anything more than "a few tantalising glimpses into the life of a great saint"? We need to beware of *eisegesis* - reading into the text what is not there, rather than *exegesis*, reflecting on the significance of what is actually in it.

7. This is a significant and valuable spelling out of the methodology of scriptural reflection in this context. However, we need to be particularly careful about taking at face value scriptural interpretations by the early Fathers which do not withstand any serious form of critical scrutiny. For example, what the Fathers have to say on the alleged sinlessness of Mary, seems to be a by-product of their devotion to her and speculation about her role as the "New Eve"<sup>13</sup> combined with a very negative view of human sexuality leading to a wholly exaggerated emphasis upon her Virginal "purity". The notion of Mary as actually sinless is not to be found in Scripture<sup>2</sup>, let alone that of her immaculate conception, but seems to arise from such *a priori* considerations, and the notion that Mary is properly described as "ever-Virgin" is not necessarily the most natural interpretation of the relevant scriptural texts<sup>3</sup>, in spite of its endorsement by many of the Early Fathers, and, much later, by several of the Reformers.

#### *The Witness of Scripture: A Trajectory of Grace and Hope*

8. This is a useful summary of the scriptural concept of the covenant. One might caution against reference to "the" covenant, since there were in fact a number of "covenants", those with Noah, Abraham, Moses etc. apparently having been originally separate and distinct although they may have come to have been thought of as related and single (see next section).

9. The relevance of the concept of the covenant is well brought out in this section, with its emphasis on the love affair between God and Israel, the virgin daughter of Zion, bride and mother.

10. This section is also unexceptional, and relevant in its helpful assembly of evidence of the calling by God of particular persons, such as David, Elijah, Jeremiah and Isaiah in the Old Testament and John the Baptist and Paul in the New Testament so that within the people of God certain special tasks may be performed, and that this bears witness to the gift of the Spirit or the presence of God enabling them to accomplish God's will and purpose. It may be noted, however that the concept of prevenient grace implied or taught here in no way establishes a principle that any of those concerned are actually sinless or immune from "original sin". Paul himself, though presumably included in the exposition of prevenient grace in Romans 8 in the same epistle is also aware of human imperfection including his own in the words "the evil that I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:15-25). It would seem to be an illegitimate inference from the biblical concept expounded here to suggest that the one chosen to be the mother of the Saviour and indeed the "Godbearer" (*theotokos*) must necessarily be actually sinless (as the Church Fathers, later, seem, for the most part, to have thought) or to have been excluded from the moment of her conception from "original" sin.<sup>14</sup>

11. This helpfully sets the role of Mary as the mother of the Saviour both within the context of the Christological fulfilment of the hope of Israel and within the context of God's election, calling and sanctification in the line of those holy women, such as Sarah and Hannah, whose sons fulfilled the purposes of God for his people. All of this genuinely scriptural material may be strongly affirmed by Anglicans as part of a common biblical faith.

#### *Mary in Matthew's Birth Narrative*

12 This is helpful in bringing out the theological significance of the birth narrative in Matthew, including its context in salvation history (which includes the unlikely role played in its providential ordering by four women, each of whom stretches the boundaries of the covenant) There is, however, no discussion of the extent to which this birth narrative may be regarded as historical, nor of the problem that the prophecy that "the virgin shall conceive" (noted as from the Septuagint Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14) is at odds with the original Hebrew where the distinct Hebrew word for "virgin" is not used, "young woman" being, in the context of the passage, the proper translation.<sup>15</sup>

13 This is a helpful exposition of Matthew's emphasis on the continuity of Jesus Christ with Israel's messianic expectation and the newness that comes with the birth of the Saviour. But are there any problems arising from the Davidic descent being by a kind of legal fiction? How literally is the story of the virgin birth to be taken?

#### *Mary in Luke's Birth Narrative*

14 This is a competent and helpful exposition of the Lucan emphasis on the significance of Mary. How significant is it that this whole section of Luke appears to have been written as a conscious imitation of the style and manner of the Greek text of the Old Testament (specifically, the Septuagint)?<sup>16</sup> To what extent is this to be regarded as real history and to what extent as a literary creation governed by a theological imagination? To what extent is it legitimate to use this as a starting point for doctrinal development, and, if it is, what are the criteria that should govern this?

15 This section rightly emphasizes the importance of the narratives of the annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth not only within their original context but for reflection on the place of Mary in the life of the church. It may be noticed that there is a slight ambiguity in the rather

bland statement that Luke 1:48 "all generations shall call me blessed" provides the scriptural basis for an appropriate devotion to Mary, though never in separation from her role as mother of the Messiah. Is it seriously being suggested (without prejudice to the issue itself) that Luke envisaged devotion to Mary rather than praise to God for her? It could be argued that the Anglican practice of "honouring the saints [including Mary] without invocation", for example by means of the collects that are said on saints' days such as September 8th, is closer to what is implied in the text.

16. This is a helpful section which it should be possible to affirm. It may be noted that the Vulgate (Latin) translation of Luke 1:28 "gratia plena", "filled with grace", which has given rise to much devotional material including the expression "full of grace" in the Angelus misses the nuances of the original Greek, which is correctly translated here as "one who has been and remains endowed with grace". "Grace" in the New Testament being "God's unmerited favour" there is no implication of the transmission of a quasi-substance.<sup>17</sup>

17. This is unexceptional - a careful exposition of the relevant passages which it should be possible to affirm.

### *The Virginal Conception*

18 In favour of its authenticity is the lack of expectation within Messianic expectation of such a mode of divine action. Hostility to sexuality (a feature which greatly marred the writings of many of the Church Fathers, including, for example, Origen, St Jerome, St John Chrysostom, and St Augustine) allied to sheer misogyny, found in the same Fathers, was not a feature of Judaism and never has been. However, Matthew's desire to see everything in terms of fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, however improbable and out of context (see Mt 2:15) should not be overlooked, and the Septuagint mistranslation of Isaiah 7:14 forms a key text in his birth narrative (Mt 1:23). The defence of the concept in footnote 2 is reasonable.

19 The tensions between Jesus and his natural family should not be downplayed. His relationship with his mother was not necessarily idyllic<sup>18</sup> and here is clearly regarded as secondary to the relations of the kingdom and contrasts with the tendency in some quarters to idealize the "holy family" and to make Jesus the guarantor of so-called "family values". There is a minor error here in that it is "brothers" in the plural not in the singular as in the ARCIC document. With regard to the footnote clearly the context is important. There does not seem to be any valid reason for excluding "brothers" in the immediate sense<sup>19</sup>, and one suspects apologetic reasons here for ARCIC distancing itself from the concept - and the early fathers had their own motivation for deeming the Mother of God a non-sexual being. Mary's virginity is indicated in Mt 1:25 as continuing up to the time of the birth of Jesus. There is no concept of a "perpetual virginity" of Mary in the New Testament, and the references to James as "the Lord's brother" who seems to have been the head of the church at its Jerusalem headquarters (not Peter, see Acts 15:13f) indicate a prominence that may have some connection with this relationship as well as deriving from his own very evident qualities of leadership.

It is noteworthy that there is no consideration of Mt 1:25 in the ARCIC document. "Until" (heos) does not necessarily imply anything that may have happened after the birth of Jesus, but it would certainly be "congruous" with this (a favourite word with ARCIC) if given the positive view of sexuality then as well as now within Judaism the begetting of further

children by Mary and Joseph followed naturally, and this would in no way detract from the uniqueness of Jesus or the honour due to him as God's only-begotten Son.

20. Although this correctly mentions the Lord's preference for those who "hear the word of God and keep it" to the gush of praise for "the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked" and the comment that Mary heard the word of God and kept it has scriptural backing (1:38) the comment here smacks of apologetics as it tends to minimize the clear challenge of the Lord's eschatological priorities.

21. In the account of the last authentic glimpse of Mary (in Acts 1:14) no notice is taken of her being mentioned as among the "also rans" - "together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers". The verse does not suggest an awareness at this point of any particular role.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Mary in John's Gospel<sup>20</sup>*

22. Although the Johannine Prologue is immensely valuable in its emphasis on the truth of the incarnation and its context in salvation history in fact Mary is not mentioned and the comment at the end of this section, although no doubt correct, has the appearance of making bricks without straw.

23. The comment on the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee does not deal adequately with the rather obvious tension between Jesus and his mother. The term "Woman" was not brusque, but his question may suggest a questioning of her importunity (even although it does provide him with the occasion for "manifesting his glory" John 2:11)

24. The last sentence is rather ambiguous. If it suggests an exaltation of the role of Mary at this point this would not be the obvious meaning of anything in the passage, and it appears in any case to be reading too much into the use of the word "woman".

25. It is always difficult to interpret what is going on beneath the surface meaning of John. One wonders, however, if too much is not being read here into the final sentence. Mary and the brothers of Jesus are still treated as distinct from those who are called "disciples". The comment here indicates a possible line of approach to the exegesis and an interesting one, but the point made by the order in which the personnel are mentioned at the beginning and ending may be stylistic rather than theological.

26. Once again, this is a possible route to the exegesis of the text (in this case John 19:25-27). The surface events, however, suggest mutual caring ministry between Mary and John, and this is overlooked in the exposition of it in terms of the motherly role of Mary in the Church and the acceptance of this by the community of disciples.<sup>21</sup>

27. A "corporate" interpretation of "Woman" is possible but not necessarily required by the text. It is not clear that there is here any suggestion of a Mary-Eve typology, fruitful as this idea is. We are again dealing with a way of looking at the text which may or may not be that which the author has in mind.

28. This paragraph seems correctly to identify the woman in travail with the Church. It is helpful to have the footnote about Genesis 3:15 which corrects the (influential) mistake in the Vulgate. One has to ask to what extent the traditional mistranslation contributed to the

development of the cult of Mary and one is entitled to ask insofar as this development was influenced by the error to what extent, if any, can it be regarded as entirely legitimate? John Sweet in his commentary on Revelation (SCM 1979) says, "She [the woman] is Mary, but only in so far as Mary embodies faithful Israel, and mothers the Messiah and his community (John 19:26f). She is the church, but only in so far as the church is continuous with God's people from the beginning and with Eve "the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). He refers further on to "Israel, the mother of the Messiah".

29. The sheer obscurity of Revelation makes it difficult for even the most skilled commentator fully to disentangle the threads of thought and interpret the intention of the original writer.

#### *Scriptural Reflection*

30 This is a useful summary, although, strictly speaking Mary is not, in John's Gospel "The woman to whom Jesus entrusted his friends" but one particular friend, John "the beloved disciple", who may, it must be admitted, a representative figure.

### B MARY IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

#### *Christ and Mary in the Ancient Common Tradition*

31 This is a fair summary of the purpose of reflection on Mary's role in the incarnation. However, it should not be assumed that the early Fathers had access to any source of information or understanding which is not available to us, the Scriptures being the original and authentic tradition of faith.

32 This is a statement of the traditional incarnational faith which the Church of Ireland can fully affirm.

33 As with 32. The concept of Mary as the "New Eve" may go some way beyond what Scripture says, but it can hardly be said to be contrary to scripture. It seems genuinely congruous with Scriptural revelation.

34. As with 32 and 33. The heart of the matter lies in the statement that "The ensuing Council of Ephesus (431) used *Theotokos* (literally God-bearer: in Latin, *Deipara*) to affirm the oneness of Christ's person by identifying Mary as the Mother of God the Word incarnate."<sup>21</sup> It is important to stress that the significance of Mary lies in her relationship to her Son.<sup>21</sup>

#### *The Celebration of Mary in the Ancient Common Traditions*

35 A helpful summary

36 A helpful summary of what, at this stage, appears a legitimate theological development.

37 This comment indicates the positive aspect of the concept of Mary as "Ever-Virgin". But there was also a shadow side to the exaltation of virginity by the Early Fathers, namely a most unbiblical negativity towards sexuality and also a hostility towards women which could only be mitigated by a muting of their identity as sexual beings.<sup>22</sup> There is no biblical basis for the idea that Mary was "Ever-Virgin", and there is no reason to suppose that the Early

Fathers had access to any authentic information about Our Lady other than that contained in the documents of the New Testament.

38 The admission that some of the Fathers, including such highly significant figures as Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Ambrose and John Chrysostom did not subscribe to the view that Mary was wholly without sin makes the whole concept questionable. And if Mary was without actual sin then clearly there is no basis for the further proposition that she was immaculately conceived - in other words not subject to the taint of original sin. There is nothing in the angelic salutation, nor in Mary's response to provide a basis for the view taken by other Fathers, that Mary was sinless. Augustine (who appears not to have believed in the immaculate conception) bases his view of Mary's supposed actual sinlessness on the a prior grounds of honour due to Our Lord and general appropriateness. But arguments based on appropriateness suffer from the weakness that "God's ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8).<sup>23</sup> What could be less "appropriate", to human reckoning than the offer of salvation through a crucified carpenter - the whole idea a "stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23). Christianity is a religion of paradox and does not necessarily conform to our ideas of what is reasonable and suitable. However, such a title as *panaghia* (all-holy) may be understood as a poetic way of referring to the pre-eminent holiness of the one chosen to be the mother of our Saviour.

39 This well summarizes the flourishing of devotion to Mary from the fifth century onwards. The question, for Anglicans, is to what extent this represents a legitimate and even desirable development implicit in the dogma of Mary as the *theotokos* as defined at the Council of Ephesus and confirmed at the Council of Chalcedon. Clearly there was a sharp reaction against devotion to Mary and the saints and invocation to them at the time of the Reformation, and this must be taken seriously in a Church which claims to be both "ancient, Catholic and apostolic" and "Reformed and Protestant". Not only is it clear that the centrality of Christ was ultimately to be threatened by this development, but such tendencies may be seen even in contemporary writings. For example, in the very recent (and rather beautiful) little book by Peter de Rosa, *Blessed Among Women - The Book of Mary* (Columba 2005) the author says, "This book shows how Mary helps us cope with the problems of life - sickness, hunger and thirst, failure, despair, bereavement, loneliness". Psychoanalyst Carl Jung thinks of Mary as the Sophia (or Wisdom) that is of God. She stands by mankind as its friend and advocate with God. She reveals, he says "the bright side, the king, just and friendly side of God." Where, one wonders does the Lord Jesus Christ come into this? Is he not the mediator "who ever lives to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25)? And is not the Holy Spirit the paraclete - the one who stands alongside us, and who is, as the Te Deum puts it "our advocate and guide"?<sup>3</sup> This is not necessarily to rule out all Marian devotion as illegitimate - it formed an important aspect of the very Christ-centred Celtic tradition of spirituality - but to indicate the vitally important Christological context in which any such devotion must necessarily be set.

40 This well summarizes the beginnings of liturgical means to the honouring of Mary. In principle, feasts observing her conception (December 8/9), birth (September 8), presentation (November 21) and dormition (August 15) are not contrary to scripture since she was undoubtedly conceived, born, and laid to rest, although there may be a query about her "presentation" since in Jewish tradition only boys were "presented" (Luke 2:22f). However, a warning note needs to be sounded over the (freely admitted) use of non-canonical material in the commemorations, which are entirely fanciful and non-historical as may be seen by referring to the source material contained in such publications as M.R. James *The Apocryphal*

*New Testament*, and the recent scholarly study by Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (OUP 2002).

### *The Growth of Marian Doctrine and Devotion in the Middle Ages*

41 This is a useful historical summary.

42. It would appear that St Augustine, St Bernard, and St Thomas Aquinas<sup>24</sup> were all convinced that Mary was conceived in original sin, and this must be highly significant in that all three are counted as "Doctors" that is Teachers of the Faith in the Roman Catholic tradition. No hint of this appears in the comment here, nor is there any recognition that Duns Scotus, who advocated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception held a very different view from that of the three "Doctors" mentioned above.

43 These late medieval developments appear to have created the conditions for the very sharp reaction against devotion to Mary and the saints at the time of the Reformation when there appeared, in the minds of many students of the Scriptures, to be a huge gulf between what was practiced as part of the Catholic religion and Bible teaching.<sup>2</sup>

### *From the Reformation to the Present Day*

44. This is a helpful and fair summary.

45. It is helpful to remember that the Reformers, like their opponents, lived in a pre-critical era, and this may have a bearing on the acceptance by some Anglican reformers of the concept that Mary was "Ever-Virgin". It is a remarkable idea that a great deal of significance is attached in the comment to the reference to Mary as "a pure virgin" in the Christmas collect. This is undoubtedly recognition of Mary's holiness as the Mother of our Saviour, but does not necessarily imply a concept of sinlessness.

46 There is what appears to be some special pleading here. "Anglican liturgy" (from 1549-1662) refers only once to Mary as "pure" (see above) and gives what can best be described as "due" recognition to her role as the one from whose substance the Son took human nature. The Purification is essentially a Christological feast as seen in the title in successive editions of the Prayer Book "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple commonly called The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin." It may be noted that the Commission seems to have overlooked the point that the Feast of the Conception of Mary is merely a "black letter" day from 1552 onwards and hence had a very lowly status, liturgically speaking. It is unlikely that it was ever widely celebrated. The Commission appears also to have overlooked the (regrettable) omission of the mention of Mary in the Prayer for the Church in 1552. Another flaw is that in the list of successive Books of Common Prayer it has omitted that of 1608. However it is helpful to be reminded of the fuller appreciation of the place of Mary in the Caroline Divines, including Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor and Thomas Ken.<sup>25</sup> And the Catholic revival associated with the Oxford Movement brought about a renewal of Marian devotion, signs of which are to be seen in, for example, the English Hymnal.<sup>26</sup>

47 This is a very significant paragraph. The question, from the Anglican point of view is whether doctrines with such an inadequate foundation as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption should ever have been defined as dogmas. Once defined, they seem to be, in a sense irreformable within the Roman Catholic tradition. Anglicans are not, and should not be

in any way obliged to accept them. However, the positive intent may be recognised by observance by Anglicans of the Feast of the Conception of Mary and a general Feast of Mary on August 15th (as in some contemporary Anglican Prayer Books though not, currently, the Church of Ireland).<sup>27</sup> There can be no objection in principle to such a development (see below, 49), although there would be concern lest such observance be taken as implying acceptance of the two distinctively Roman Catholic doctrines.

48. This presents a very positive view of official teaching by two Popes on the Christological context of the role of Mary in the era following the Second Vatican Council. However, there must continue to be enormous concern, on the part of non-Roman Catholic Christians about the extraordinary prominence apparently given under the late pontificate to such very dubious phenomena as the supposed revelations of Fatima.<sup>28</sup> These could not, under any circumstances, be reconciled with a biblical and patristic faith.

49 The Church of Ireland has been cautious in respect to the role of Mary in its recent liturgical revision which has produced the 2004 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. There is no provision for observance of the 8th December or 15th August, although neither is prohibited, and the means of doing so is available in resource books such as *Exciting Holiness - Collects and Readings for the Festivals and Lesser Festivals of the Calendars of the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales*. The propers appointed for the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (England and Scotland) and the 15th August (England, Scotland, and Wales - the same readings are used by the Church of Ireland on 8th September) are unexceptionable. However, in none of the Churches listed above is the observance a "principal" feast. The 8th December in the Church of England is a "Lesser Festival" and in Scotland is described as V - a very low status. The 15th August is a "Festival" (not the highest category of observance), in Scotland it is described as IV, and in Wales as II. ARCIC appears to have exaggerated, to some extent. It is not clear how widely 15th August is observed across the range of churchmanship in the Anglican Communion. In the Church of Ireland there is some difficulty about getting people to observe *any* of the festivals that fall on weekdays.

50 The word "re-reception" is, by almost any standards, a piece of ecumenical jargon and its use here makes this the most linguistically clumsy paragraph in the document. However, it does focus attention on a certain convergence of thought between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches on the role of Mary in corporate worship. However, many reservations about Roman Catholic teaching are still felt on the Anglican side, most notably with reference to the particular doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. It is significant that the Church of Ireland Gazette, Editorial *ARCIC on Mary*, 10th June 2005 which speaks of the "profound respect for Mary" in the Church of Ireland goes on to express serious reservations about the agreement claimed for the dogmas.

51 This is a helpful summary of substantial agreement on many aspects of Mary in the common tradition. However, not all Anglicans would be happy with the use of the non-scriptural term "Ever-Virgin", particularly if this is to be understood in a literal sense.

#### C. MARY WITHIN THE PATTERN OF GRACE AND HOPE

52 A helpful summary of the eschatological perspective. However, a careful distinction throughout the New Testament needs to be made between the "not yet" and the "but already".

It would be illegitimate to use this line of reasoning to make a qualitative distinction between the Blessed Virgin Mary and other "saints" or "believers" in any anticipation of the *telos* or End.

53 As with 52

*Mary in the Economy of Grace*

54 This is unexceptional as it stands, but the same caveat applies as with 52 and 53.

55 This is a helpful summary

56 It is difficult to avoid the impression of some "special pleading" here, although the scriptural examples given are correctly described as "hints or partial analogies". It is simplistic to regard the accounts of Enoch and Elijah as sufficiently historical to provide a precedent for a body-and-soul assumption. The reference to "paradise" is not necessarily to the granting of a special privilege - some passages in Scripture seem to refer to an immediate entry into glory, some imply an interval, the difficulty being that the relationship between time and eternity can only be spoken of in an metaphorical and analogical manner - it should not be taken literally as this rather simplistic comment appears to do. And lest too much weight be placed on the promise to the penitent thief it may be noted that "paradise" may in fact be a reference to an intermediate state rather than to final glory.<sup>29</sup> Such a concept of an intermediate place of "refreshment, light and peace" is to be found in early Christianity, not least as depicted in the catacombs.<sup>30</sup>

57 The argument that "it is fitting" is both subjective and inadequate, and assumes that what we think is appropriate corresponds to what God has actually done. On the basis of the paradoxes of Christian religion, Jesus as God and Man, God as Three and One, Salvation through a crucified carpenter, it would appear that in some ways revealed truth is counter-intuitive - we cannot create theology on the basis of what we might have done if we had been God.<sup>3</sup> And, in any case we can hardly describe as revealed truth our notions of what this might be. Insofar as there is "realized eschatology" there does not seem to be an adequate basis for making such a radical distinction between Mary and other disciples.

*The Papal Definitions*

58 This is a quite remarkably ambiguous and obscure paragraph, particularly in relation to what Anglicans are supposed to be ready to agree to. The following reflections may be offered<sup>31</sup>,

>If there was an actual, literal, bodily assumption then, in principle, the remains of Mary are not to be found on earth. What is the historical evidence for such an event? It would appear that the story of the assumption is apocryphal, a full study of all the related traditions having been recently made by S.J. Shoemaker, in *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, OUP, 2003. Some versions of the legend may be found in *The Apocryphal New Testament* tr. M.R. James, Oxford, 1924 and it is immediately apparent how historically valueless the traditions are. It was pointed out many years ago by the Catholic Anglican, K.N. Ross, *Why I am not a Roman Catholic*, Mowbrays, 1953 that the first mention of the Assumption by an Orthodox writer appears to have been St Gregory of Tours in his *On the Glory of the Martyrs*, written five hundred and fifty years after its alleged occurrence. This, in turn

was based on an earlier book, *On the passing of Blessed Mary*. That book was on the black-list of "apocryphal books which are not accepted" which was attributed to Pope Gelasius I (492-6).

- ¶ The definition of the dogma of the Assumption may necessarily have to be accepted by Roman Catholic Christians on the basis of the presumed infallibility (under certain carefully prescribed conditions) of the Bishop of Rome. However, this is not binding on Christians who do not subscribe to the concept of infallibility; and, despite earlier ARCIC statements, this includes the great majority of Anglicans.
- ¶ The statement that "God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory" is highly ambiguous. If this is to be taken to mean that there was a literal bodily assumption, this suffers, as pointed out above, from a total absence of evidence. If it does not necessarily mean this then it is not clear what is being affirmed of Mary that cannot be the case for all those who have died in Christ. And if the statement can mean either of these then it seems to be using a common form of words to express at the one and same time totally divergent views. One cannot see how the Church of Ireland could commit itself to approval of anything that is so inherently unclear, not least in the light of the very clear critique of the doctrine made by Archbishop Dr J.A.F. Gregg in response to the dogma when it was first uttered and which has served as a touchstone for the Church of Ireland view of the matter ever since.

59 The entire doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is highly speculative, and the reasons given for it here amount to "special pleading". For example if, according to the New Testament, being "graced" has the connotation of being freed from sin through Christ's blood (Eph 1:6-7) this necessarily applies to all Christians, and not to Mary alone.<sup>2</sup> But since all other Christians, it is agreed, are not immune from sin, then there is no basis in the Ephesians text for exempting Mary from this human condition. Nor does the eschatological perspective entitle us to claim that Mary has anticipated that condition of sinlessness which will belong to all Christians in eternity. Asserting that this is the case does not make it so. That Christ's redeeming work reached "back" in Mary to the depths of her being, and to her earliest beginnings may be claimed for all Christians (Romans 8:28-30), but it does not follow that any or all of them are immune from sin. St Paul, as the author of Romans did not think this of himself, nor did this apply to others in Scripture whose choice by God was said explicitly to have begun in their mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). Such a general consideration as the redeeming work reaching "back" in Mary can certainly be affirmed, but in no way does it necessarily imply her actual sinlessness still less that she was immaculately conceived and was free from the stain of original sin from the moment of her conception.

Belief in the Immaculate Conception cannot validly be claimed to be part of the common tradition of Christians. St Augustine (354-430) who seems to have been reluctant to acknowledge actual sin in Mary seems to have regarded her nonetheless as not immune from "original" sin. St Bernard actively opposed the concept, and so did St Thomas Aquinas. It remained a matter of argument and controversy, although this gradually tended to die away since the matter was "guided" to its ultimate conclusion by such measures as silencing the opposition.<sup>1</sup> It is not a doctrine that is required by Scripture, and in spite of apologetic to get around the problem it does seem to be contradicted by the affirmation that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

It is no disrespect to Mary to recognise in her an erring human being. Her dignity and honour come from her having been "highly favoured" by God and chosen to be the Mother of His Son, and for this "all generations shall call her blessed". (Luke 1:48)

60 This states the position clearly with regard to the Scriptural foundation that must exist for Anglicans in any matters which are to be considered essential to Christian belief - "necessary to salvation". The argument in subsequent paragraphs fails to establish that either doctrine is truly Scriptural.

61 It is helpful to have it affirmed that when in the Roman Catholic Church a truth is claimed to be "revealed by God", there is no suggestion of new revelation. Rather, the definitions are understood to bear witness to what has been revealed from the beginning. The difficulty here is that there is no evidence to support the view that either doctrine is contained in Scripture. Neither the Immaculate Conception nor the Assumption are taught or implied anywhere in the New Testament, and the kind of general considerations advanced in the ARCIC document do not in any way establish them as even probable let alone as matters to be believed "firmly and constantly" as part of what is to be held in common by all Christians. They are, quite simply, not part of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints". (Jude v.3)

62 This paragraph is full of "special pleading". As noted above, the issue of the Immaculate Conception was vigorously contended within the Roman Catholic church for centuries, and the eventual consensus on it was arrived at to a large extent because of the inhibition of dissent. Nor should it be assumed that where consensus exists this necessarily establishes the truth of what there is a consensus about. It is quite possible for the church to be agreed on something - and mistaken. The Holy Spirit "leads the church into all truth" *in spite of* its errors both large and small, individual and collective, and the proper precondition for this is an awareness by the church of the possibility of its being in error. Belief in any necessary form of infallibility may actually inhibit this work of the Spirit because of an inability to admit the possibility of error.

63 It is difficult to avoid the impression that a precondition for unity between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches is regarded by ARCIC II as agreement upon the essentials of the faith as this is understood within the Roman Catholic communion; and the thrust of this document, as was that of *The Gift of Authority* seems to be to find some methodology for reaching such agreement. This seems to imply acceptance of Roman Catholicism as the norm of Christianity and to make Anglicans unequal partners in the ecumenical dialogue. Such a view would be far from the confident affirmation of the historic Anglican position as one based fully on Scripture (as containing all things necessary to salvation), reason, and tradition. Nor would it concur with the Church of Ireland's view of itself as a Church at once "Ancient Catholic and Apostolic" and at the same time "Reformed and Protestant". It is hard to see how the Church of Ireland could accept such an approach to unity in view of its constant witness to the validity of its own position. A better "model" of agreement for intercommunion from an Anglican perspective is that provided by the Bonn Agreement of 1932 between Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholics.<sup>1</sup> However, the footnote on page 63 is helpful, even if the presupposition appears to remain that indicated above.

## D MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

64 In contrast with the ambiguity and evasiveness of the preceding paragraphs this puts us back on the basis of Scriptural teaching. However, the tendency, through the document, to build a superstructure of doctrine on the Annunciation (found only in Luke) raises the question of a perhaps rather naive approach to the interpretation of Scripture. To what extent is the Annunciation an historical event, and to what extent is it a Lucan construction? Given that two of the four Gospels have no infancy narratives (including the earliest of all, Mark), and that Matthew's version has nothing corresponding to the Annunciation, is there not a danger that far too much is being based on this one account? Even assuming that it does have an historical basis do we not need to reflect that it was presumably not recorded at the time - assuming that a dialogue with an angel could in fact be registered with a third party? It remains possible that Luke was recounting the memories of St Mary herself, but these themselves might have been filtered to us through the prism of Lucan theology, and in any case many biblical scholars discount the "memory" theory and are highly sceptical about the historical value of any of the infancy narratives.

65 A helpful indication of the convergence between Anglican and Roman Catholic practice.

66 This would seem to be an approach that should be acceptable to Anglicans.

### *Intercession and Mediation in the Communion of Saints*

67 It is likely that this is an area where considerable divergences are likely to remain among Anglicans, some of whom see devotion to Mary as a legitimate option within the context of the communion of saints, others (probably including most members of the Church of Ireland) while honouring Mary would wish to do so without invoking her directly. In our liturgical tradition, as represented by successive editions of the Book of Common Prayer, direct devotion to the saints or invocation of them does not have a part. The only "official" Anglican recognition of direct invocation seems to have been in the original form of the Litany (1544) in which the Litany of the Saints had been reduced to three such petitions and the Litany as a whole became focussed on Christ. These petitions were removed from the Litany when it was incorporated into the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer (1549).

68 The principle enunciated here is unexceptional. However, it seems naive to suggest that the only role of invocation of Mary and the saints is in the form of asking our brothers and sisters on earth and in heaven to pray for us. In practice this goes much further, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this does, in fact, infringe the mediatorial status of Our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

69 This is well said, and well expresses what is meant by the communion of saints.

70 This is also well said. However, there seems to be a discrepancy between the general recognition here that those who are now "with Christ," untrammelled by sin, and share the unceasing prayer and praise which characterizes the life of heaven, and earlier statements in the document which make such a status exceptional.

### *The Distinctive Ministry of Mary*

71 In general this comments expresses eloquently the ongoing ministry of Mary. However, one wonders whether some of this, particularly the interpretation of the words of Mary at Cana of Galilee is a reading into the Gospel of something which is not actually there. Is it really likely that John envisaged a heavenly ministry of Mary?

72 Once again, it is difficult to know where legitimate interpretation of John leaves off and Christian imagination takes over even in the realm of theological development.

73 Many Anglicans question the authenticity and value of alleged revelations of Mary in such venues as Lourdes, Knock, Fatima, Guadalupe and so on, especially where these involve small children. Some of these are hardly credible, as for example when the Blessed Virgin Mary is alleged to have said, "I am the Immaculate Conception". At times it is difficult to avoid an impression of mass hysteria, although there may be much genuine faith, as for example that of pilgrims to Lourdes. At the outer fringe, which may in no way be approved by religious authorities, there appears to be much scope for sheer superstition as in the fad for "moving statues" in Ireland some years ago.

74 As feminist theologians have pointed out, the figure of Mary has been, and possibly still is used as a means of keeping women in subjection.<sup>2</sup> Is it entirely a coincidence that opposition to the ordination of women is most vehement in the Church which most exalts Mary and among that Church's fellow-travelers in other denominations as Anglicans know to their cost? Exaltation of virginity may also, at least in the past, have tended to make it difficult for women to come to terms in a positive way, with their own sexuality. In other words there may well be a "shadow" side to the cult of Mary, which should not necessarily be regarded as entirely a positive phenomenon. And although Mary may be said to represent the feminine aspect of religion (sadly deficient in Protestantism) it may be that the figure of Mary, in attracting feminine imagery to herself may have to some extent prevented a development of reflection on the existence of the feminine within the Godhead (God being in a real sense beyond gender and capable of being recognized appropriately in feminine as well as masculine terms).

75. It is not clear whether this agreement within the Commission could be echoed by all the main schools of thought within the Anglican communion. It is questionable how far this would be possible in the Church of Ireland.

### CONCLUSION

76 It should be possible to affirm unequivocally the agreements on the role of Mary reached previously by ARCIC in *Authority in the Church* II.30 as set forth in this paragraph.

77 Similarly, in general terms, what is stated in this paragraph although with some reservations about the working out of these general considerations in the document itself.

### *Advances in Agreement*

78 This is where the difficulties mainly lie. The ambiguities in the reference to "the fullness of her person" with regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary are such that it is not entirely clear what Anglicans are being expected to affirm. Similarly with the redeeming work of Christ

"reaching back" in Mary to the depth of her being which is equally ambiguous. With regard to the actual doctrines it remains difficult to see what these are supposed to be founded upon and what is the evidence to support them. Neither belief in the bodily assumption nor in the Immaculate Conception can be said to be authentic "ancient common traditions", since the Immaculate Conception was not taught in the Early Church, and the Bodily Assumption was apocryphal. The questions about authority, in spite of what is said here, are very much alive. It may be agreed that the practice of asking Mary and the saints to pray for us is not communion-dividing. But this is not to say that the Church of Ireland (or some other parts of the Anglican Communion) would necessarily be willing officially to affirm it.

79 This is helpful, but one has considerable doubt as to whether the "carefully expressed norms" referred to here will in practice be adhered to. There seems some reason to believe that the fantasies of Fatima were taken seriously by the late Pope John Paul II, and if so, this would be a cause for very great ecumenical concern.<sup>1</sup>

80. The final sentences express a hope that all may share, even if the document itself may be open to much (highly legitimate) criticism.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>However, the full list of names is contained in the version published on the internet.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, *The Response of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland to the Final Report of ARCIC-I, May, 1986*, APCK and OUP, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> *The Lambeth Conference 1958 - The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports*, SPCK and Seabury, 1958, Ch. 3:B "The Book of Common Prayer". This included *Features in the Books of Common Prayer which are essential to the safeguarding of the unity of the Anglican Communion; Features in the Books of Common Prayer which are most effective in maintaining the traditional doctrinal emphasis of the worship and witness of the Anglican Communion; and Suggested modifications or additions for the further recovery of other elements of the worship of the Primitive Church*. Section 8 of the second of these is "The honouring of the Saints without invocation."

<sup>4</sup>BCP, 2004, p.783.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, E.J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*, third edition, revised by H.J. Carpenter, Longmans, 1955, 1963, p.291ff

<sup>6</sup>For example, 208, for the Purification, a hymn attributed to Archbishop Rabanus Maurus, 9th century.

All prophets hail thee, from of old announcing,  
by the inbreathèd Spirit of the Father,  
God's Mother, bringing prophesies to fullness  
                                  Mary the maiden.

Also, 213, for the Annunciation (c 9th century)

Hail, O Star that pointest  
towards the port of heaven,  
thou to whom as maiden  
God for Son was given.

And 215 for St Mary the Virgin (c.9th c)

O glorious Maid, exalted far  
beyond the light of burning star,  
from him who made thee thou hast won  
grace to be Mother of his Son.

And 216 for St Mary the Virgin (John Keble, 1795-1866)

Ave Maria! thou whose name  
all but adoring love may claim  
yet may we reach thy shrine,  
For he, thy Son and Saviour, vows  
to crown all lowly lofty brows  
with love and joy like thine

<sup>7</sup>Celebrating Common Prayer- A Version of the Daily Office SSF, Mowbray, 1992, pp265-7

<sup>8</sup>See An Ecumenical Office of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, revised edition, 1990.

<sup>9</sup>Although Jeremy Taylor was very hostile to any actual invocation of the saints. See More, P.E. and Cross, F.L., *Anglicanism - The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, SPCK, 1957, No 240, p.531. Herbert Thorndike distinguished between three sorts of prayers to saints, approving of that which desired God's blessings by and through the merits and intercessions of his saints.

<sup>10</sup>Peter O Dwyer's *Towards a History of Irish Spirituality* is also relevant, for example in its citation of an Irish Litany of Our Lady dating not later than the twelfth century and possibly earlier. It is the oldest Gaelic litany to Mary.

<sup>11</sup>J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, Revised Edition, Collins, 2001, 605, 606/1

<sup>12</sup>See K.N. Ross, *Why I am not a Roman Catholic*, Mowbrays, 1953, Ch 2 "The Assumption", Ch 3 "The Immaculate Conception and the Cultus of Our Lady"; and E.A. de Mendieta, *Rome and Canterbury - a Biblical and Free Catholicism*, Ch 8, "The Veneration of Mary and its Dangers. The Immaculate Conception and Corporal Assumption." Fr Ross was Vicar of All Saints' Margaret St, London, a citadel of Anglo-Catholicism. Dr de Mendieta, a former Benedictine, reputed in his day to have been the most learned patristic scholar in Europe, became a very gentle and eirenic "convert" to the Church of England.

<sup>13</sup>The comparison between Eve (who fell) and Mary (who became the new Eve) was developed by:

- ✉ Justin Martyr (Dialog. cum Tryphone, 100),
- ✉ Irenaeus (Contra Haereses, III, xxii, 4),
- ✉ Tertullian (De carne Christi, xvii),
- ✉ Julius Firmicus Maternus (De errore profan. relig xxvii),
- ✉ Cyril of Jerusalem (Catecheses, xii, 29),
- ✉ Epiphanius (Haeres., lxxviii, 18),
- ✉ Theodotus of Ancyra (or. in S. Deip n. 11), and
- ✉ Sedilius (Carmen paschale, II, 28)

[For the above see the internet article from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: Immaculate Conception]

<sup>14</sup>See especially Mark 3:19-21, the comment of Jesus at Mark 6:4, and the tension between Jesus and his mother implied in Luke 2:48. With regard to the early Fathers, although many pay tribute to Mary's purity and imply or teach her actual sinlessness (for example, Ambrose,

Augustine) this is not a universal view. Origen, although he ascribed to Mary high spiritual prerogatives, thought that, at the time of Christ's passion, the sword of disbelief pierced Mary's soul; that she was struck by the poniard of doubt; and that for her sins also Christ died (Origen, "In Luc. hom. xvii"). In the same manner St Basil wrote in the fourth century; he saw in the sword, of which Simeon spoke, the doubt which pierced Mary's soul (Epistle 259). St John Chrysostom accused her of ambition, and of putting herself forward unduly when she sought to speak to Jesus at Capernaum (Hom. xliv; cf. also "In Matt", hom. iv). See the *Catholic Encyclopedia*: Immaculate Conception, op. cit. The authors of the article hold the Fathers concerned to be in error.

<sup>15</sup>The word used in the Hebrew (Massoretic) text is 'almah, meaning "a young woman of marriagable age". The distinctive word for virgin is b'tulah, found in many places in the Old Testament. The choice by the Septuagint translators of *parthenos* does not necessarily imply a "virgin birth" but may simply indicate that prior to the conception of the child the young woman concerned was deemed to be unmarried and a virgin.

<sup>16</sup>"The change from the excellent Greek of the Preface to the Hebraistic Greek of Luke 1:5-2:52 is noted by all commentators. Semitic idioms and the biblical style of the narratives suggest that the evangelist either is using a Hebrew or Aramaic document or is deliberately adapting his language to that of the Greek Old Testament". Vincent Taylor, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 3, pp181-2

<sup>17</sup>The article by H.H. Esser on "Grace" in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 2, p.119 says, "In the history of doctrine a special significance attaches to the angel's greeting to Mary, "Favoured one!" (*kecharitomene*, Luke 1:28; A.V. "highly favoured"). This does not exalt Mary in her essential being over the rest of mankind. (The same is true of Stephen, for example, who is full of grace, Acts 6:8). But Mary is promised as a special favour of God a unique role in the history of God's saving purposes, of being the handmaid of the Lord..."

<sup>18</sup>Mk 3:21; Mt 12:46-50 // Mark 3:31-35 // Luke 8:19-21

<sup>19</sup>Mark 3:31f//Mt 12:46f, Luke 8:19f; Mark 6:3//Mt 13:55. For a careful discussion see *Mary in the New Testament - A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, eds Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and J. Reumann, Geoffrey Chapman, 1978. The "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus could be cousins, or, as sometimes speculated, children of Joseph by an earlier marriage (for which there is no evidence). However, the most natural interpretation is that these were later children of Joseph and Mary. The otherwise unexplained rise to prominence in the apostolic Church of "James the Lord's brother" (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 2:12 etc) who was not one of the twelve is consistent with his having been the Lord's actual brother. This seems to be supported by the Jewish historian Josephus (assuming the passage to be genuine) who in his *Antiquities* stated "(Ananus) assembled the sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

<sup>19</sup>Contra the papal document *Redemptoris Mater* where the presence of Mary after the Ascension is stated to have been "essential".

<sup>20</sup>A thorough examination of the role of Mary in John may be found in *Mary in the New Testament*, op. cit. Chapter Seven.

<sup>21</sup>David F. Wright in *Chosen by God - Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, edited by himself, Marshall Pickering, 1989, says,

The designation of Mary as *theotokos* is ancient and venerable, claiming the authority of the ecumenical councils of Ephesus in AD 431 and Chalcedon twenty years later. It was the focal term in the decisions of the Ephesus council, comparable in centrality to

*homoousios* ("of one substance with") in the statement of faith about the deity of Christ agreed by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Chalcedon reaffirmed the predication of Mary as *theotokos* in its more comprehensive definition of church doctrine about the person of Christ. *Theotokos* thus entered the vocabulary of ecclesiastical dogma in a context that was through and through Christological...

<sup>22</sup>The misogyny of some of the greatest Fathers in biographies by leading authorities, for example, J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome*, Duckworth, 1975; J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth - The Story of John Chrysostom*, Duckworth, 1995; Peter Brown, *Augustine*, Faber & Faber, 1967. Sexual desire is treated with enmity, as when Jerome, after giving a terrifying list of the ills of old age says "I shall the more readily put up with illnesses provided I am released from that uniquely burdensome tyrant, sexual desire. Admittedly even old age is exposed at times to the incitements of passion...When one is old, the spark now and then glows among the burnt ashes and tries to come to life, but it cannot get the blaze going". Kelly, op cit, p.295.

<sup>23</sup>Pace the argument of John Macquarrie in *Mary for all Christians* Chapter Three "Immaculate Conception", which tends towards the view "it must be so, therefore it is", and the weakness of the argument is in no way lessened by his recourse to the (entirely apocryphal) *Protoevangelium of James*.

<sup>24</sup>Attempts have been made to explain away the opposition of St Thomas Aquinas, for example John Macquarrie, *Mary for all Christians*, op cit, p.52 where he points out that Thomas Aquinas did not deny the sanctification of Mary while she was still in the womb of Anna before her birth, but he did have difficulty in extending this sanctification back to the first moment of her conception. However a doctrine which was contradicted by St Thomas Aquinas and remained controversial for centuries within the Roman Catholic tradition cannot be said to represent "the common tradition which predates the Reformation and Counter-Reformation". The basis for an ecumenical agreement on it therefore appears to be lacking. Nor does belief in "sanctification" whether or not at the moment of conception necessarily imply that the one so "sanctified" is immune from sin. All Christians are "sanctified" (1 Cor 6:11), but this does not necessarily make any of them sinless, as the very epistle in which this principle is established makes all too clear.

<sup>25</sup>See A.M. Allchin, *The Joy of All Creation - An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary*, Foreword by Edward Yarnold S.J., first published in 1984 by Darton, Longman and Todd, second edition substantially revised and with new material, published in 1993 by New City, London, Dublin, Edinburgh, chapters 2-6.

<sup>26</sup>*The Joy of All Creation*, op cit., Chapter Seven. For the twentieth century see chapters 8,9.

<sup>27</sup>See the Calendar in the Church of England's *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 2000, pp12, 8; *The Book of Common Prayer...according to the use of The Episcopal Church*, Church Hymnal Corporation and The Seabury Press, 1979 (15th August only); *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada*, Anglican Book Centre, Toronto, 1985, (15th August and 8th December); *An Anglican Prayer Book*, Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Collins, 1989 (15th August only). For authorized and appropriate propers see *Exciting Holiness: Collects and Readings for the Festivals and Lesser Festivals of the Calendars of The Church of England, the Church of Ireland, The Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church in Wales*, Canterbury Press 1997, 1999, 2003.

<sup>28</sup>John Cornwell, *Breaking Faith - The Pope, the People, and the Father of Catholicism*, Viking, pp238-245.

<sup>29</sup>"Jewish thought divided Paradise into a lower and a higher – the lower preceded the resurrection of the dead, and was temporary; the higher followed the resurrection, and was permanent. Jesus' words naturally referred to the lower: he was not assuring the thief of

"heaven". *Black's Bible Dictionary*, edited by Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, Adam and Charles Black, 1965, entry "Paradise".

<sup>30</sup>"The earliest pictures of Christ, those of the Shepherd and the Teacher, are veiled, symbolic figures, only recognisable to the initiated. [The Shepherd] is generally surrounded by his flock and stands amid the praying souls (*orantes*), quiet and gentle, in the garden of his paradise (*paradeisos* originally meant a small burial garden). For the Christians such a figure was an unambiguous symbol of the peace of the redeemed, of those living in Christ even after death, which, to the baptized, meant only a transition to the rest (*quies*) and the expectation of the Resurrection in the place of refreshment, light and peace (*locus refrigerii, lucis, et pacis*)" F. can der Meer, Christine Mohrmann, *Atlas of the Early Christian World*, Nelson, 1958, p.44.

<sup>31</sup>The Revd Canon Amand de Mendieta, a former Benedictine monk generally regarded as the finest patristic scholar of his generation became an Anglican and examined the issues between the Anglican and Roman Catholic positions in his eirenic *Rome and Canterbury - A Biblical and Free Catholicism*, SCM 1962. In some observations on the dogma of the Assumption, after quoting the papal bull *Munificentissimus Deus* of Pope Pius XII, he says,

If the *body* of Mary really was taken up into heaven, then it is a fact which, like every historical fact, is *capable* of being attested by trustworthy witnesses and duly verified. But no single New Testament writer refers to it. Such recognized Roman theologians as Thomas Aquinas, Peter Canisius, and Francesco Suarez admit that no explicit or implicit mention of it is to be discovered in the Bible.

The whole argumentative strength of the dogmatic Constitution may be reduced to the two things it takes for granted as axiomatic: the infallibility of the present teaching authority of the Roman Church (which actually means, the Pope), and the compatibility of this supreme privilege of Mary with her other privileges. Many non-Roman Christians, included the Orthodox, have insisted on the intrinsic weakness of the whole claim, and protested against the proclamation of the new "dogma" as unnecessary, inopportune, and uncharitable in view of its utter unacceptability for other Christian churches.

So far as regards the historical basis of the new "dogma", it is enough to refer to the first part of Fr. Martin Jugie's work [*La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge. Etude historico-doctorinale*. Vatican City, 1944. He also refers favourably to the historical analysis in Giovanni Miegge's work, *The Virgin Mary*] It will serve to establish, for example, as regards belief in the corporal assumption of Mary, that no ancient or reliable tradition on the subject existed, that the belief was completely unknown throughout the whole Church previous to the beginning of the fifth century, and that it appeared for the first time in legendary and apocryphal stories which began to be circulated during the second half of the fifth centuries.

The most regrettable consequence of insisting on such alleged facts and doctrines, is that it inevitably tends to falsify and even destroy the whole balance of the Christian faith. The resurrection of Christ is a fact firmly supported by historical evidence of the very highest value. The doctrine of redemption from sin by the Cross of Christ is a sure and unquestionable Biblical doctrine. But, if one affirms that "an ancient and constant tradition" has always taught within the Church such doctrines, or rather mere human speculations, in regard to the "privileges of Mary", then the words "ancient and constant tradition" cease to have any meaning at all.

<sup>32</sup>The terms of the Bonn Agreement (1931) which established intercommunion between the Church of England (and subsequently other Anglican churches including our own) and the Old Catholic Churches were,

- (1) Each communion recognizes the catholicity and independence of the other, and maintains its own.
- (2) Each communion agrees to admit members of the other communion to participate in the sacraments.
- (3) Intercommunion does not require from either communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.

<sup>33</sup>Mentioned by J. Macquarrie in *Mary for all Christians*, Collins 1991, p.8, although he calls this a "prejudice". A more positive view is expressed by Rosemary Radford Ruether in *Mary - The Feminine Face of the Church*, SCM, 1979.