

PERSPECTIVES OF MARIOLOGY

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Introduction.

"Nothing amuses Catholics more than the suggestion in so much of the old Protestant propaganda, that they are to be freed from the superstition called Mariolatry, like people freed from the burden of the daylight." *(G. K. Chesterton, **The Catholic Church and Conversion.**)

Since my arrival and involvement in a predominantly Roman Catholic community, I have become more and more aware of a lack of knowledge (and possibly, understanding) of Mariology. My evangelical Protestant upbringing has been confronted with the devotion to Mary, expressed by newly-found friends. This has fostered the determination to examine the subject. The following pages are the product of an attempt to investigate the background to, and the continuing influences and effects of Mariology.

At the outset, I assumed that my venture would follow a pathway of 'Mariolatry;' but I was assured by a Roman Catholic priest that 'Mariology' was the topic to be addressed. Impressions of Mary have been taken from various quarters and commentators, in order to present a survey of Mary's place, privileges, attributes and reputation, from historical vantage points, (from antiquity until the present), manned mainly by Fathers of the Church and churchmen.

Together with the Roman Catholic Tradition, those of the Orthodox persuasion, the Reformed Churches, the Anglo-Catholics, (and Muslims), have provided their own varying perceptions of the subject; all of which have to be considered within the evolution of ideas that have emanated from a variety of sources. The Graeco-Roman religious beliefs and practices, Jewish teaching, interpretation of the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, (and the Apocrypha), together with new philosophical concepts, have had their respective influences on the Marian discussion. The comparatively recent attempts to concentrate on the Scriptures, in order to vindicate the Marian cult, have not overcome the problems raised by historical speculations. Obviously a gulf will always exist between those who formulate their 'doctrine' on the bases of Scripture and Tradition, and those who depend solely on Scripture.

This exercise has been undertaken within the latter inclination. While the result, for myself, has been a more comprehensive appreciation of its evolution, coupled with a better understanding of Mary's place in popular devotion, the quest, so far, has also strengthened the conviction that the theme, as a whole, will remain contentious. On the other hand, the polemic, provoked by non-

Scriptural claims, may well lead to the diminution of a more balanced appreciation of Mary's rôle in God's purposes.

*(Quotation from G. K. Chesterton in, **Mary, A Marian Anthology**, by Patrick Murray, CSSP..)

CHAPTER I.

DIVERGENT OBSERVATIONS AND IMPRESSIONS.

An overview of the Marian Cult, comment and criticism.

According to Hans Kung, Marian devotion (outside Scriptural assistance) has been greatly influenced by literature, art, customs, feasts and celebrations. (To these he may have added archaeology). Its development "has been shaped by a variety of extra-biblical factors,"¹ such as: the cult of the Near Eastern mother divinities: the stories of Celtic and Germanic goddesses (associated with ancient mountains, water and tree sanctuaries, and with miracle-working images of remarkable origin): theological rivalries, (such as Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies): ecclesiastico-political antagonisms (for example, between the patriarchs of Alexandria and Constantinople), and sometimes personal intervention by churchmen, as in the case of Cyril of Alexandria, at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

The Marian movement had its origins in the East "in the form of a cult of the 'perpetual virgin,' the 'Mother of God,' and the august 'Queen of Heaven.'"² Mary, eventually, was invoked in prayer and introduced into the liturgy. Papers read at the International Mariological Congress in Lisbon, in 1967, suggested that Mary may have found a place in the liturgy at an earlier time than previously supposed. Archaeological research in Nazareth, has uncovered the remains of a Third century Jewish-Christian Church, built in the synagogue style; and with inscriptions that may indicate dedication to Mary; one inscription, probably a name beginning with 'M,' and another, "left by a pilgrim, which has Maria, with an abbreviation of Luke's *Chaire* (1: 28), (*Xe*), before it."³ O' Carroll supports the idea that worship in the grottos beneath this Church, may have been directed to Jesus Christ and to Mary. Legends of Mary were first related in the East; hymns were composed to her; churches were named after her; feasts introduced and images produced in her honour. The inevitable assimilation of these ideas by the West was not without some resistance.

That the modern Catholic cult of Mary was rooted in the Christendom of the high Middle Ages, is the conviction of Ashe, who also views the Mary of this period as "a major irruption of the Eternally-Womanly."⁴ Marian trends made stronger impressions in the West during the period of the

Crusades. Contact with the Byzantine Church then "gave substance to what may have been no more than a sentiment."⁵

In the forties of this present century Marian theologians endeavoured to present Marian themes in the light of Scripture. O'Carroll regards René Laurentin's, '**Court traité de théologie mariale**' as a first successful example of this type of literature. However, the term Mariology was not readily received. Suspicions were aroused that a new discipline was being introduced, with its own methodology, and accompanied by conclusions of 'dubious validity.' The search for a fundamental principle of Mariology may even have misled many; but, according to O'Carroll, those directives presented to Marian theologians by Pope Pius XII (in an address given to the International Mariological Congress in October, 1954), and also represented in the '**Lumen Gentium**' of Vatican II, were sufficient to allay any fears. The Council, borrowing textually from Pius and from '**Ad Caeli Reginam**;' echoed his warning that " the falsity of exaggeration, on the one hand, and the excess of narrow mindedness, on the other,"⁶ had to be avoided. Sources to be studied were listed and a Christocentric outlook recommended. Pius said, " Consequently when we admire the Mother's eminent gifts and praise them, we are admiring and praising the divinity, the goodness, the love, and the power of the Son."⁷ From **Lumen Gentium** came the encouragement to explain correctly "the offices and privileges of the Blessed Virgin, which are always related to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity and piety."⁸ However, the relationship, at first perceived, and then subsequently promoted, between Jesus and Mary, has witnessed the development of reciprocal rôles, and now struggles with the problem of identity.

The passages of time, together with catalysts of traditions, events and ideas, have conspired to serialise a variety of perspectives of Mariology. In the historical sequence Mary has not only drawn to herself strong popular devotion, but has also accumulated many titles and privileges. The encouragement of a Bishop Pearson to "keep the language of the primitive Church," to let Mary "be honoured and esteemed," and Jesus "be worshipped and adored,"⁹ has been accepted by some, exceeded by others, or received with some reticence. Catholics can agree with Augustine's comment that "God who created thee without thyself, will not save thee without thyself;"¹⁰ but not with Luther's remark that " Mary does nothing, God does (all)."¹¹

Geoffrey Ashe concludes that, after four centuries of growth, Christianity reached completion in its essentials, that is, when the cult of Mary was made part of it. He goes on to compare the Catholic Church of the Fifth century to its (present) contemporary counterpart. But he also concludes that the Christianity, "shaped in the Ephesian mould,"¹² was really a combination of two religions. The Church of Christ, as a dominant partner, had developed powerfully in a society that was ruled by men. They in turn provided the priesthood for the worship of a male Saviour and a male Godhead. Alongside, appeared a 'dissident body' composed mainly of women, claiming its dependence on the Gospel events, and paying homage mainly to the Virgin as 'Queen of Heaven', (in effect, a form of the goddess). These later adherents may have been caught up in the mystery of Mary's passing, together with the subsequent suggestions about her immortality. Ashe is convinced that the women, together with the 'Eternal - Womanly' as the Mother of God, saved Christianity as an effective religion. He is also of the opinion that several Marian themes in the Fathers, (as far back as **Justin Martyr**), make better sense when recognised as evidence borrowed from a school of thought outside the Church. In the 360's, **Ephraem**, having borrowed for poetic purposes, introduced the notion of Mary, as a living intercessor in Heaven. The 'Cappodicians,' **Basil** and his brother gave substance to it in Christian terms. About 379, **Gregory of Nazianzus** introduced the custom of praying to Mary. In 431 the Church absorbed its 'shadow religion.' The Church's view of these variations has been represented by Newman who said that "the glories of Mary are for the sake of her Son."¹³

Set prayers, which the Church initiated, appeared to link Mary firmly to Christ and to the approved pattern of redemption. The '**Ave Maria**', composed in the Fifth or Sixth century as a salutation, was greatly favoured:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, because thou didst conceive the Redeemer of our souls.¹⁴

(Later, the last part was shortened to "blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus;"¹⁵ and a petition was added: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."¹⁶ A number of the Fathers of Vatican I, unsuccessfully, petitioned for the addition of the words **Virgo Immaculata** to the 'Hail Mary'.

Another prayer that found a place in the Roman liturgy was based on the petition found on an early papyrus fragment:

Under thy protection we seek refuge, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us continually from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.¹⁷

The prayer was first used in Byzantine circles; and reached the West through the Eighth century monk, **Ambrose Autpert**. He may have been responsible for the introduction of the '**Sancta Maria**', which has portrayed Mary as an 'independent agent.' (Towards the end of 1099 the '**Salve Regina**' appeared and was supported by the religious Orders). But a change of emphasis had been occurring. The person honoured primarily was being replaced in the eyes of the faithful. Mary was the one to unite them with Christ: "but Mary is active and Christ is passive."¹⁸ Ashe is compelled to reflect on Isis, (whom he can imagine) "summoning us to approach the child Horus, whom she cradles in her arms."¹⁹

Romanos, who, together with **Jacob of Sarug**, shared in a "second flowering of poetry"²⁰ in Syria, during the Sixth century, had hinted at Mary's independence (from Christ). He composed the first major Marian hymn, '**Akathistos**'. In twenty-four stanzas Gospel events were recalled, Christ and Mary were acclaimed. Mary was extolled as the 'source of all Christian truth,' 'the bridge leading from earth to heaven,' 'the vanquisher of demons,' 'the opener of Paradise,' 'the citadel of the Church,' 'the healer of bodies' and 'the rescuer of imperilled souls.'

From the Twelfth century onwards, the Church was being presented as on its own, and not included in Jesus Christ. Earlier images of Mary holding the babe or being crowned by Christ, were succeeded to some extent, by the solitary figure of Mary, with open arms, (as reported, for example by visionaries).

'Protestant' Reaction.

Congar quotes a reaction from Karl Barth, that

we should not be surprised at what has been made of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church, where she has become a second centre beside Christ, and where, as the mother of God, she is the object of a particular doctrine.²¹

Pierre Maury concurs, and criticises the privilege conferred on Mary -- 'co-redemptrix,' ("another presence at the side of Christ to secure salvation"²²). In response, Congar suggests that there has been a complete misunderstanding. He admits that the blame does not lie entirely outside the promoters of the idea; but he also believes the title to be inappropriate.

Miegge demonstrates how the unfolding of Marian doctrine through the centuries has been clearly reflected in "the principle of analogy with Christ,"²³ which is an integral part of contemporary Mariology. For example, Mary was portrayed by **John of Damascus** as 'true vine' and 'reconciler of God with men:' by **George of Nicomedia** and **James the Monk**, as 'head of our salvation:' by **Anselm**, **Bonaventura** and **Albertus Magnus**, as 'saviour of the world:' by **Gregory of Neo-Caesarea**, as 'liberator from death and conqueror of death:' and in the Office of Lent, 'propitiator for our sins.' The labarum of the Marian Congress of La Salette was dedicated to Mary, 'co-redemptress'. Miegge describes the banner, with Mary represented as

stretched out upon the body of the crucified, slightly lower than Him, her arms extended under His and partly supporting His, in the gesture of offering. Jesus dies leaning His head upon that of His mother, who dies spiritually with Him, offering Him to death. Mary's face is serene and piteous; Christ's face is disfigured with pain. It is clear that He is the victim offered up and she is the officiating priest—.²⁴

'**Analogy**' is one of four secondary principles listed by G. M. Roschini in a summary of the development of the Marian system. The others were:

'**Singularity**,' since the uniqueness of Mary made her "an order apart."²⁵ She could claim for herself "privileges entirely singular which can fit no other creature."²⁶

'**Propriety**,' because all those perfections, which genuinely became the dignity of Mother of God and Mediatrix of man, had to be attributed to Mary, "provided that they have some basis in revelation, and are not contrary to faith and reason."²⁷

'**Eminence**,' since all the privileges of nature, grace and glory, granted by God to the other saints must have been granted in some way to the "Queen of the Saints."²⁸

These four succeed a primary principle, **the divine maternity**, from which "are divided all the various conclusions of mariology and to it they all lead again."²⁹

Miegge is convinced that with these principles it is possible, not only to justify all the historical developments of Marian piety and dogma, but also to open the way to new expressions. As he finds in Roschini the view that Mary was above everything except God Himself. It has also been argued that Mary has completed the Trinity by making it fruitful. The scheme of redemption requiring the participation of both sexes, through Mary, was supplied with the female aspect of human nature.

Veneration.

The veneration of Mary belongs to the zenith of Catholic devotion "from the point of view of richness of liturgical content, number of festivals, the exalted tone of dedication, which all combine together."³⁰ Thomas Aquinas established the distinction between the cults of 'Iatris' (adoration devoted to God), 'dulia' (veneration devoted to saints), and 'hyperdulia'-- a 'superveneration' reserved for Mary alone. The distinction arose out of a dispute with the opinion that King and mother deserved similar honour, (as with John of Damascus and Pseudo-Augustine). Miegge is of the opinion that "the inventive faculty of popular piety"³¹ has been adjusted in favour of the Virgin Mary, and especially with reference to her 'pure humanity.' All the traditional religious canons would concede that this is "the essence of idolatry."³² Attributes, manifested in the person of Jesus, that prompted earnest devotion and loving gratitude, have been transferred to Mary, although without His divinity. The promoters of the worship of Mary, in believing that through the veneration of Mary, faith in the Son can be revived, have suffered "a dangerous illusion."³³ In Miegge's judgment, the development of Marian devotion has been a contributory factor in the "continually increasing hyperbole in the glorification of Mary."³⁴ The 'sublime projection' of Mary, on the part of successive generations of devotees, has produced a piety which has induced the dilution of authentic Christian values. A respectable reality, maintained through sentimental and intellectual content, may yet be criticised as "typically profane, exclusively human and not religious."³⁵ A German reviewer of Miegge's work has emphasized the criticism that the theocentric and christocentric character of early Christianity has been 'humanized.' Consequently Christianity has taken on "the character of self-redemption."³⁶ Miegge finds modern Catholicism in this dangerous position. The only means of escape is a "decisive return from Mary to Christ."³⁷

Miegge expresses some concern at the trend in Mariology to gain more privileges for the Virgin Mary. Co-redemption and Mary's regality, for example, have been under discussion. The end result could be the definition of dogmas, "in the most exalted sense for Catholic common people, and for the greater offence of the non-Catholics."³⁸ The "fecund matrix of popular piety" together with the "docile instrument of the principles of propriety, eminence, singularity and analogy with Christ,"³⁹ will possibly generate other dogmas. Attempts could be made to integrate Mary totally into the Trinity, and thereby complete the Trinity, since, with her 'divine Maternity,' she "procures for the

divine Persons a new and unique glory."⁴⁰ At any rate, increasing veneration of Mary could possibly minimise the figure of Christ in the Catholic mind. History harbours precedents where symbols have been substituted.

von Loewenich examines the '**Encyclical Mystici corporis**' of **Pius XII**, (June 29th 1943), where the redemptive events from the Nativity to Pentecost were enumerated. Mary's part in all of them was defined. At her intercession the Holy Spirit was granted to the Apostles at Pentecost. "Mary's merits are no longer subordinated to Christ but put on the same level as His."⁴¹ Since the **causa instrumentalis** was becoming the **causa efficiens** of redemption, von Loewenich fears that Catholic theologians, in following precedents, will accept the definition of the Co-redemptorship of Mary. (The Scriptures depict Mary as the 'vessel of grace' not its 'mediatrix'). **Leo XIII**, in his '**Encyclical Octobri mense**,' September 22nd 1891, had propounded the thesis, that "as no one can come to the Most High Father except through the Son, so, generally, no one can come to Christ except through Mary."⁴² (**D 3033**). von Loewenich argues that, thereby, the Holy Spirit has been replaced in the New Testament by Mary. In his '**Encyclical Fidentem**,' September 20th 1896, Leo XIII called Mary the 'mediatrix of the Mediator.' This reference, taken in conjunction with **Cyprian's** statement that "He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother,"⁴³ leads von Loewenich to the conclusion that Mary was being portrayed as the personification of the Church. He observes that all subsequent papal pronouncements have shown the same tendency.

Pius X extended to Mary the privilege of **reparatrix perditis orbis** (restorer of a fallen world), and the **dispensatrix** (dispenser of all the gifts of grace that Jesus won for us by His death). She has inherited for us **de congruo** (by congruity), what Christ has won for us **de condigno** (by right), ('**Encyclical Ad diem**,' February 2nd 1904). **Benedict XV** (March 22nd 1918), said that Mary had redeemed the human race in co-operation with Christ. His successor **Pius XI** approved of the custom of calling Mary, 'Co - redemprix.' (**D 3034**). At the International Mariological and Marian Congress in Rome, 1950, theses were advanced, asserting that "Mary's dignity and glory are enjoyed not only **de congruo** but actually **de condigno**."⁴⁴

Reformation Responses.

The leaders of the Reformation were insistent on the unity of the Church catholic. But since, (as far as they could determine), neither the pope nor the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church

were prepared to make real concessions, doctrinal divisions became inevitable within a generation of Luther's 95 Theses. "You are vainly attempting to patch old cloth with new," **Luther** wrote in 1541, "and are being induced to restore the old idols. I prefer to resume the struggle."⁴⁵

One of the old idols was the cult of Mary. **Luther** and the other Reformers had observed Mariology in its origins, as "a doctrinal safeguard of a fully biblical christology,"⁴⁶ and therefore as "a doctrine to be subsumed under christology."⁴⁷ But the Church's preaching and teaching had suffered the effects of popular Marian devotion through the "perverted development of the principle of *lex orandi lex credendi*."⁴⁸ Orthodox faith became synonymous with popular devotion. The Reformers sought a new pattern, faithful to the original gospel. **Calvin** wrote to Cardinal Sadoletto, "All we have attempted has been to renew that ancient form... which was mangled and almost destroyed by the Roman Pontiff and his faction."⁴⁹

Three centuries later, a Protestant scholar **Roger Mehl** (in 1957), described Mariology "as a fatal dislocation of the evangelical faith, in which all the heresies of Roman Catholicism were to be found."⁵⁰ Calvin feared the dangers of a rampant Mariology. "We do not honour Mary," he insisted, "by adorning her with sacrilegious titles."⁵¹ Yet neither Calvin, nor any of the other Reformers, was content simply to reject what they regarded as the excesses of the Marian cult. In faith and order alike, and therefore, by definition in their understanding of Mary, they sought to renew the ancient form.

Any trace of the goddess in Mary faced elimination "when the Sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation took the cult of Mary to its logical conclusion."⁵² The doctrines of salvation, so carefully worked out in the Twelfth century, was being undermined by the promised protection of Mary from the harsh demands of God. In Protestantism, the images of the Twelfth century, 'Queen of Heaven' and great 'Mother of the Redeemer,' gave way to that of the humble virgin of the Gospels, "the paragon of faith."⁵³ The reformers declared that whatever Mary had was not the result of any merit of her own, but rather a reward given by her Son for her faithfulness. They criticised claims, that Mary could have had a rôle in the redemption process. Any detraction from human dependence upon God would introduce idolatry. By the grace of God, Mary's virtue of perfect obedience to God was made possible. "Mary was the perfect receptacle for the Male Word incarnate, and any initiative on her part was not only impossible but also unnecessary."⁵⁴

Protestantism had no psychological need for an object of celibate fantasy. Mary now was the model of the ideal housewife, humbly serving her husband. If women had to leave the home, as Mary had, when she visited her cousin Elizabeth, they were to serve as examples to other women; "she did not stop every five paces to strike up conversation as do so many of our maids and matrons The mother of our Lord was no gossip. She went with haste."⁵⁵

The Reformation co-incided with major new developments both in the politics of church and state, and in a growing independence from Rome on the part of some European powers. The invention of the printing press undermined the monopoly on information hitherto exercised by the church. The power of Rome to mediate between God and man, and to confer political authority upon the rulers, was being questioned. The new authority structures were in a position to undermine

any remaining hope there might have been in the Roman Catholic and Eastern traditions of Mariology of the potential goodness of redeemed human nature in association with the grace of God.⁵⁶

Mackenzie can find at least four convictions which aroused Protestant and Reformed opposition to the Marian cult of the Sixteenth century:

First of all, it was not grounded on scripture. "On the scriptures alone," Calvin insisted, "our faith should be founded."⁵⁷ Using the '*sola scriptura*' principle, Calvin promoted his central theological idea of the majesty and glory of God. Prayer to Mary, or prayer by Mary for us, was rejected; she was not in any position to be honoured with such names as Life, Light, or Hope.

Secondly, it was religiously dangerous. The Reformers were consistent in their insistence on the central teaching of the early Church, (expressed notably by the Greek theologians from Irenaeus to Athanasius), that our Lord Jesus Christ became what we are. (By Christ's human nature we have been saved, not by Mary's).

In the third instance, it was regarded as a distortion, dogmatically. The sufficiency of Christ's salvation was in debate. In late medieval theology the co-operation of the Virgin Mary with her Son included His passion; she had participated in the sacrifice of His cross, that is, "she had co-operated in the work of redemption, and may therefore be spoken of as the minister of his sacrifice, or 'Co-Redeemer.'"⁵⁸

Then Mackenzie emphasizes that protestant position which disallows any suggestion that Mary has contributed in any way to our salvation, in her own right. Neither she nor any other saint has been

able to substitute for Christ. The thought that Mary's 'Be it so,' implied that she co-operated in our redemption, was met by Calvin's response: "To seek other patrons or advocates than our Lord Jesus Christ, we hold not to be in our choice or liberty."⁵⁹ Luther, who declared his own devotion to Mary, offered as her response, (in his tract on the Magnificat): "I am but the workshop in which (God) performs his work."⁶⁰ He also said:

O blessed Virgin, Mother of God, you were nothing and all despised; yet God in his grace regarded you and worked such great things in you. You were worthy of none of them, but the rich and abundant grace of God was upon you, far above any merit of yours.⁶¹

The Reformers were not content to attack the excesses of the Marian cult. In a "severely circumscribed way,"⁶² they attempted to develop a scriptural doctrine of Mary. Each of them followed the Church's Creeds in affirming that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. None of the Reformers or their immediate followers questioned the biblical foundation of these two phrases of the ancient creeds. **Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin** also taught the perpetual virginity of Mary. Neither did any of the major Reformers appear to have been willing to depart from traditional belief at this point.

The biblical designation, "the one highly favoured,"⁶³ for all of the Reformers was a witness, not to what she was in herself, neither to her virtues, nor to her virginity, but to what God had done in her. The Reformation insight perceived God's grace coming to us "precisely in our weakness."⁶⁴ (Since God's power is strongest when we are at our weakest, the Holy was revealed "not in the heights but in the stable; not in the thrones of princes but in the flights and fears of the lowly"⁶⁵). Luther wrote, "Mary seeks not her own glory, but goes about her usual household duties, milking the cows, cooking the meals, washing pots and kettles, sweeping out rooms."⁶⁶ Yet Mary was not passive. She responded, (and for Calvin, a true moral response): "Happy Mary, to have embraced in her heart the promise of God, to have conceived and brought into the world for herself and for all --- salvation."⁶⁷ The strong reaction of the Reformers to excessive piety demonstrated in external practices, particular meditations and doctrinal pronouncements, precluded any acceptance of Mary's soteriological rôle. This negative attitude has remained in Protestantism, which becomes "obdurate under polemical stress."⁶⁸

In regard to the title, 'Mother of God', the early Reformers adhered with some reserve to the designation, 'Theotokos,' attributed to Mary by the ecumenical councils. Calvin disapproved of the use

of the title 'Mother of God' because of its associations; but accepted the formula approved at the Council of Ephesus. In Congar's view, Calvin had very little experience of Catholic life.

The Reformers differed from one another over the question of invoking the Virgin in prayer. Luther opposed the use of the 'Ave Maria.' (According to Congar he kept his devotion to Mary, and also retained the 'Ave Maria' for praise, but represented her solely in relation to Christ). Zwingli defended its use, adding: "the more honour and love for Christ Jesus grows amongst humankind, the more also esteem and honour will grow for Mary."⁶⁹ Luther allowed his followers to ask for her prayers, provided they did not think that her prayers were effective because of her merits. The humanist scholar **Philip Melanchthon**, believed that the Mother of God continued to pray in heaven for the churches.

The Separation of Mary from Protestant spirituality

The separation of Mary from Protestant theology and spirituality which began in the Sixteenth century has become almost complete in the Twentieth. Even the singing of the Magnificat caused the Puritans to be ill at ease; and the recitation of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds was discontinued because of the mention of the Virgin and of the offensive adjective 'catholic'.

Protestant art generally avoided representations of the Virgin. But Luther wanted the Virgin to be portrayed in humility, to show "that henceforth (God) will not despise us poor and lowly ones, but graciously regard us also, according to your example."⁷⁰ Immediately preceding the Reformation, Nuremberg had witnessed a renewal of interest in the cult of the Virgin Mary; and **Albrecht Durer**, a German renaissance painter and close to Luther in spirit, produced a woodcut series, '**The Life of the Virgin**,' (1511). Yet when he later painted '**The Four Apostles**' for the town hall, the Madonna was eliminated, and the 'papal' Church subordinated to the Bible. The only major artist who felt the influence of the Reformation was **Rembrandt**, whose late paintings, notably '**The Virgin and Child with Cat**' (1654), and '**Christ between his Parents**', of the same year, intensified "the mystery of Christ's human nature."⁷¹

Protestant music and hymnody rarely celebrated the Virgin. An exception was **Bach's** '**Magnificat**.' Spitta his biographer wrote: "Scarcely ever has the idea of virgin purity, simplicity, and humble happiness found more perfect expression."⁷² Luther's own hymn '**Der aller Weltkreis nie**

beschloss der liegt nun in Mariae Schoss ('He whom the whole world could not contain is now in Mary's womb'), served to explain the role of the Virgin in God's self-emptying. The hymns of **Paul Gerhardt** (1607 - 76), and **Gerhard Tersteegen** (1697 - 1769), have been "among the best literary fruits of pietism,"⁷³ but neither says much about Mary; after them, Protestant hymnody has been mostly silent about the Virgin. Whatever has been written or sung by Protestants has often been edited out. For example, the popular hymn, '**Fairest Lord Jesus**,' usually sung to a Silesian folk tune, addresses Jesus: 'O Thou of God and man the Son.' But the German original was '**Gottes und Marien Sohn**.'

The other-worldliness and self-renunciation of Marian piety in the Middle Ages, ran counter to the human creativity and achievement which marked the Renaissance. The Reformation continued something of the latter's humanism and world-affirmation. A number of Protestant scholars in the 19th century maintained the conviction that developments in Marian doctrines, which took place in the early Church, could be attributed to "the chronic catholicizing of the primitive faith,"⁷⁴ which the church historian, **Adolf von Harnack**, blamed for that "superstition practised among the masses,"⁷⁵ (namely, the worship of Mary).

Recent Reformed opinion.

O'Carroll expresses the opinion that Karl Barth (1886-1968), has presented a critique of Catholic Marian theology "with logical fidelity to his own basic position."⁷⁶ He dismissed the new Eve concept as an early aberration. Even if the parallels between Eve and Mary deserved some notice, the interpretation of Genesis 3 did not allow Eve to play an independent part alongside Adam in the story of the Fall. In his '**Church Dogmatics**' (1932 - 62), and elsewhere, Barth has commented on the place of the Virgin Mary in salvation, "and showed how in the event of Christ the initiative rested with God from first to last."⁷⁷ Mary was **gratia plena**, only if it is accepted that, in faith, she gave herself wholly over to what God was doing in her. She was the favoured one; blessed, because God's Spirit evoked her 'Yes' to God's act. Barth admitted that Mary was raised above all the other figures of the Advent, that is, the Old Testament figures; he looked on her as "an indispensable factor in Biblical proclamation;"⁷⁸ yet was prepared to declare that the Church of Christ did not exist where

Mary was 'venerated.' Her importance lay in the fact that she was the one who received and was blessed.

He did not attempt to prove that the Marian cult had arisen from the pagan mother goddess, since "you can establish everything and nothing from the history of religion."⁷⁹ Any attempt to use apparently similar episodes in heathen mythology, in order to make parallels with the Virgin Birth of Christ, were rejected. Barth maintained that the similarity could never be more than verbal, "because the divine agents in the miraculous births spoken of, in this connection, are definitely not God, in the full and strict sense of the word."⁸⁰ At best they were gods, that is, "hypostatisations of the feelings of man for nature, or his reflections on history."⁸¹

Although, in his view, the description of Mary as 'Mother of God' was overloaded with so-called Mariology of the Roman Catholic Church, Barth affirmed and approved of it "as a legitimate expression of christological truth."⁸² Even the early attribution of 'perpetual virginity' was ascribed in a Christological sense. He accepted that the operation of the Holy Spirit at the conception of Jesus was mediated through Mary's faith. (In conceiving Jesus she can only represent man "in his reception of God." ⁸³) Neither should the Holy Spirit (by whom Mary became pregnant), be regarded as "a kind of divine spirit,"⁸⁴ nor as an "apotheosised husband."⁸⁵ The miraculous act of God Himself, should only be understood "as a spiritual and not a psycho-physical act."⁸⁶ He explained that, in the Incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ had come to belong to the unity of the human race through His mother. Yet He is God's eternal Son, Himself. Her low estate and the Glory of God (and not her own person), "can properly be made the object of a special consideration, doctrine and veneration."⁸⁷ The nativity stories were accepted as historically true; Barth was emphatic that Mary's place in the Christmas story, should be viewed in a christological context. He argued that God was not bound to have become incarnate in this way - "not the only conceivable way, but it is the most appropriate."⁸⁸ Appropriate, since it demonstrated that man was utterly incapable of saving himself.

Karl Barth's rejection of Mariology, because "it has been an arbitrary innovation in the face of Scripture and the Church," an innovation that has consisted "essentially in a falsification of Christian truth,"⁸⁹ reflects a strict Protestant opinion. He defined Mariology as "an excrescence - a diseased construct of theological thought,"⁹⁰ "an excrescence to be excised."⁹¹ He concluded that revealed truth had been obscured by this teaching. His critique, resting on the principle that the creature cannot co-

operate in any way in his own salvation, has been objectionable to Catholic theologians. He concluded that, revelation, and therefore the Word of God, and therefore God Himself, could not be sought anywhere else "save in Him who was born of the Virgin Mary."⁹² O'Carroll notes that he took no account of the Eastern tradition.

Ecumenical Exploration

John de Satgé, (an Evangelical Anglican), in 1976, published a book which, for Ross Mackenzie, has come to occupy a quite unique place in recent Marian studies. In '**Mary and the Christian Gospel**,' de Satgé although appreciative of Barth, endeavours

to find an attitude towards the Lord's mother which will include the essentials of Catholic teaching and at the same time do justice to the central impulses of evangelical Christianity.⁹³

His re-examination of such divisive and disputed matters such as the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, and the place of Mary in the communion of saints, is refreshing for Mackenzie. Recently, a broader sense of the fulness of Christ and of the Spirit-given communion in life, love, and truth, (in Mackenzie's view) has been pervading the doctrine of the (whole) Church, in Protestant circles. This has provided Protestantism an opportunity for ecumenical conversation about disputed matters, allowing the possibility of a fresh approach to the mother of Jesus, who is designated in '**Lumen gentium**' as "a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God."⁹⁴ Significantly, for protestants, this document of the Second Vatican Council did not separate the schema on the Blessed Virgin from the schema on the Church. Mary was included within a context which brought out her importance in God's work of redemption. Commenting on this decision, **Albert C. Outler**, the Methodist theologian, noted:

The identification of the Blessed Virgin as the foremost of all those who have shared in, and who still enrich, the communion of saints may well have the effect, among other things, of recalling Protestants to an important aspect of Christian faith, that they have tended to underestimate, in their reaction to what was deemed the excesses of conventional Mariology.⁹⁵

Recent protestant interest in Marian issues may have been kindled by "a renewed and larger understanding of the 'history-centredness' of faith."⁹⁶ For the 'central question' posed by the Reformers, 'What does it mean to live by faith?' the witness and response of Mary is of great importance. "What Mary has, must in the ultimate resort be ours too."⁹⁷ (Karl Rahner). Mackenzie

concludes that Mary helps us to see what it means "to keep a grasp on our first confidence right to the end,"⁹⁸ (Heb. 3:14). He cites The Apostolic Exhortation, '**Marialis cultus**' (1974), which portrays Mary as "the attentive Virgin who receives the word of God with faith."⁹⁹

It was faith that was for her the cause of blessedness and certainty in the fulfilment of the promise: 'Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'¹⁰⁰ (Lk. 1: 45).

With faith she meditated upon those events in which she was playing a part. (cf Lk. 2: 19,51).

The Church also may be seen to act in this way, especially in the liturgy, as the word of God is received and distributed to the faithful as the bread of life; and in the light of that word, "the Church examines the signs of the times and interprets and lives the events of history."¹⁰¹

Mackenzie looks on Mary as one of the poor of Israel. At the purification she fulfilled the Levitical regulations by presenting and redeeming her firstborn at the Temple, with the offering of the poor (Lev.5:7). Yet she was the first witness to the self-emptying of God in Christ. Her own self-abandonment to God was the human counterpart to the 'ecstasy of God,' (a phrase of St. **Maximus**), "when God became what we are, in order that we might enter through Christ into the reality of what God is."¹⁰² Luther had written, "She does not desire herself to be esteemed; she magnifies God alone and gives all glory to him. She leaves herself out and ascribes everything to God alone, from whom she received it."¹⁰³ Mackenzie counts Mary's wholehearted self-giving, her willingness to conceive and bear the impossible possibility, and the totality of her trust, as making her the primary witness to the new reality that became flesh in Christ.

From the promise given to Abraham and Sarah that, by them, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Ge 12: 3), (and since only a particular mother, and not a nation, produces a child), Mackenzie argues that Mary "became the concrete embodiment of Israel as, uniquely, she became the mother of Jesus."¹⁰⁴ To refuse her the designation 'Theotokos' would deny that she was a daughter of Abraham and Sarah, and that the Messiah was born in Israel. The prophets of Israel had promised that God would renew his Messianic community, Israel, by a universal outpouring of his Spirit. Isaiah had prophesied that the Lord would cleanse Jerusalem and would rest on those who were gathered on Mount Zion (Is. 4: 4-6), that God would pour out his Spirit on Israel and give a blessing to its children (Is. 44: 3-5). Ezekiel promised that, even though Israel had become like a dead people, the Spirit of the Lord would come and arouse the dead to life (Ezek 37: 1-14).

Mary was the one "to whom that cleansing, life-giving and energising Spirit"¹⁰⁵ came (Lk. 1: 35), and through her He came "to Israel and to the whole human race."¹⁰⁶ She had experienced the Pentecostal empowering when the Spirit was poured out on all humankind; and "through the 'Yes' she uttered in the power of that Spirit, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."¹⁰⁷

Pregnant with Divine indwelling the Virgin ran to Elizabeth whose unborn babe at once recognised her embrace, rejoined, and with leaps of joy as songs, cried to the Mother of God: Rejoice, purification of all the world!

Rejoice, favour of God to mortals

Rejoice, access of mortals to God.¹⁰⁸

(Orthodox Hymn).

Mary in Mackenzie's opinion "is witness and interpreter of the God to whom we have access in Christ."¹⁰⁹ We have communion with her "in that community of the Spirit which lives, with her, the new life in Christ."¹¹⁰ He has also reminded his readers of Calvin's encouragement to his followers to venerate and to praise Mary as "the teacher who instructs them in her Son's commands."¹¹¹ It has to be remembered that as late as 1655, the Waldensian Confession stated that Mary and the glorified saints were "blessed and worthy both of praise and imitation."¹¹²

Yet John de Satgé has also opposed the attempts of Anglo-Catholics and of some Protestants to re-introduce Marian doctrines and piety into "the practice of the faithful."¹¹³ His opposition has been on four convictions:

- 1.that Marion devotion is not grounded on Scripture;
- 2.that, dogmatically, it is a distortion;
- 3.that, religiously, it is dangerous;
- 4.that it is a phenomenon best explained in terms of comparative religion and psychology.

He goes on to assert that 'Evangelicals' cannot find, in the Biblical references to Mary, an adequate foundation for the astonishing superstructure of the Roman and of the Orthodox Mariology. They have discovered a typological skill, "with which Tradition has augmented them," (and which is) "more ingenious than convincing."¹¹⁴ The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption have no more warrant from the implication of the Incarnation than they have from the Scriptures.

Evangelicals feel the necessity of a strong emphasis on the unique glory of the Incarnate Son of God, and believe that the Marian developments continue to detract from this. The aggregate of relevant Scriptural references enables the Evangelical to affirm "a truly Scriptural appreciation of Mary."¹¹⁵

Although the distinction between 'Latria' and 'Hyperdulia' may be recognised by definition, in practice, safe-guards against idolatry cannot be guaranteed.

de Satgé regards Mary's position in the Scriptures as unique, but obscure. To remove her from the province of ordinary human beings would only "alter the proportions of faith and dishonour her in the process, by making her something the Scriptures do not."¹¹⁶ Yet a strong suspicion remains that the deepest roots of the Marian culture cannot be found in the Christian tradition. The religious history of mankind reveals a recurring tendency to worship a Mother-goddess. Consequently the cult of Mary may be looked upon as an intrusion from the dim recesses of natural religion into Christianity. de Satgé notes three factors that support such an observation:

1. It is possible that the earliest traces of Marian devotion seem to have emerged from those Christian circles which had suffered some effects of syncretizing Gnosticism.

2. Devotion associated with local holy places developed with such ease that prayers were readily made to our Lady of a particular shrine. The question could then be asked, 'Do we have here a continuity of paganism, but under a thin Christian veil?'

3. There is an apparent correlation between Marian devotion and an elevation of chastity to a point of esteem "where marriage and sexual intercourse are depreciated if not reprehended."¹¹⁷

Perhaps the resulting vacuum found some compensation in a female object of devotion!

The assertion is made consistently that the Incarnation of the Saviour depended upon the freely given response of Mary, accompanied by her willingness to enter the daunting unknown, with its possibilities of misunderstandings or worse. de Satgé suggests that the instructed Catholic's devotion to Mary has derived from this. Gratitude deepens into affection and then, "when the awe-inspiring cause of the gratitude is understood, into reverence."¹¹⁸ The Evangelical finds it difficult to concur, because his appreciation of God's working in the plan of salvation has been developed through an interpretation of St Paul, together with the teachings of Augustine, Luther and Calvin. The gulf between strictly evangelical Protestants and devotional Catholics may be illustrated from the will of Blaise Pascal. The famous scientist, theologian and apologist, recommended his soul to God, pleading "the merits of the precious blood of our Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ, for eternal salvation;"¹¹⁹ but also implored, "to this end, the intercessions of the glorious Virgin Mary and all the saints of

Paradise."¹²⁰ The 'anguish' of Pascal demonstrates a propinquity to, but also a remoteness from, evangelical Protestantism.

de Satgé takes up the more positive approach of a **Professor Franz Leenhardt** of Geneva to Pascal's incongruous conceptions. In his work '**Two Biblical Faiths**,' Leenhardt has attempted "to do justice to the Christian integrity of Catholic as well as Protestant ways, by seeing them as developed stages in two different traditions of obedience to God."¹²¹ The chief constituent of Protestantism, God's spoken word, goes back to Abraham, whose faith and obedience were commended. Subsequently, "those dynamics, which at the Reformation broke out of the Catholic synthesis,"¹²² derived from St. Paul, (who was "the Abrahamic champion under the New Covenant"¹²³). On the other hand, the Catholic system has found its prototype in Moses, whose life was "fulfilled in the Law, which bound the life of faith together with a network of detailed obedience."¹²⁴ Here the chief constituent has been the Divine Presence, with St. Peter as the New Testament exemplar.' (Leenhardt has found greater reverence in Catholic prayer than in Protestant, noting the Catholic preference for intermediaries, in particular 'the mediatrix of all graces,' the Virgin Mary).

Surprisingly de Satgé admits of a particular personal reflection on Mary. By honouring her among her son's people, and coming to an understanding of her as Mother,

I found her prayers, which I requested, throwing light into corners of human experience, which hitherto had been dark - (leading) to an enhanced understanding of what it means to acknowledge Him as the Lord of all time.¹²⁵

Comment.

It will be seen that the convergence of various influences, enhanced by a fascination produced by persuasive writers and Churchmen, has either encouraged the acceptance of the accumulating Marian ideas, or, on the other hand, has provoked controversy and opposition.

Those possible early sources and impressions, outside the Scriptures, that have laid a foundation for the elevation of Mary, have always disturbed the Protestant mind. When Marian devotion takes hold of the public imagination, a new and popular piety emerges, (especially, for example, in the Middle Ages). This has been fostered throughout the centuries, sometimes regulated by the

constraints of theology, sometimes exaggerated by the whims of popularity. Consequently differences have been aroused; Christendom continues to parade its divisions of mutual opposition.

The antagonists of mariological propositions have not been able to expound a firm consensus of opinion. Even the designation 'protestant' or 'evangelical' has not indicated the existence of a consistent level of concurrence, as evidenced, for example, among the Reformers and in the sentiments expressed by successive observers. Consequently the spectrum of Mariology promotes a variety of perspectives.

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CHAPTER II

OUTSIDE THE PROTESTANT ETHOS.

The Orthodox Church.

(Viewpoints of Archimandrite Kallistos Ware and Sergius Bulgakov).

The Orthodox tradition has always attempted to consider Mary only in relation to her Son. Therefore, because of possible exclusiveness, the term Mariology has been avoided. She, as the Mother of the Saviour, (explains Ware), was one from whom God the Word took His humanity. It had been ordained in the Godhead that the manner of His birth would be different from all births; and so, in her 'divine Motherhood,' Mary's Virginity would be preserved unimpaired. In adoring the humanity of Christ, Bulgakov argues, "we venerate His Mother, from whom He received that humanity."¹ In her person the whole of humanity has been represented; she continues to be regarded as a paradigm of what each Christian hopes to be.

Through the Grace of God in her, Mary may be seen as a human person, yet entirely deified by divine Grace, and living in complete unity with God, after, and in spite of, the fall of the Church of the Old Testament. That Church had for its purpose "the elevation, the conservation and the preparation of a holy humanity,"² that would prove to be worthy of the Annunciation and then, consequently, of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the person of the Virgin Mary. Thus Mary experienced her Pentecost; and, in making her submissive response, was not merely the instrument, but also "the direct and positive condition of the Incarnation."³

'Theotokos' has provided the key to the whole Orthodox understanding of Mary, in that it makes evident the close link between devotion to Mary and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Ware argues that since the Mother is honoured specifically on account of the Son, then "it is impossible that such honour should in any way detract from the worship due to Jesus Christ."⁴ At the same time, Mary may be presented as a most fitting offering to Christ, by fallen and redeemed mankind. Throughout her life she displayed the ideal example of those who "hear the Word of God and keep it."⁵ She revealed the full meaning of Church membership. The Church, an all embracing unity in Christ, has expressed and realized that unity, particularly through prayer. Since, for the Christian, the bond of mutual intercession continues beyond the grave, "to whom should we turn more frequently and fervently than

to the Holy Virgin?"⁶ asks Ware. Nevertheless, to speak of praying to Mary in this context is regarded by Ware as misleading. He offers the explanation that, while we pray only to God, we invoke or call upon His Mother; the important distinction being, that we do not pray to Mary, but we ask her for her prayers. The Virgin's intercession for the needs of mankind is expressed, (for an Orthodox Christian), in the words:

**Thou art the joy of all who sorrow,
The champion of all who suffer wrong,
Food to the hungry,
Comfort to the stranger,
A staff for the blind,
Visitor of the sick,
Protection and aid to all in trouble,
And the helper of orphans.⁷**

Orthodox devotion depicts Mary as '**panagia**' (all holy), '**panamomitos**' (without blemish) and '**achrontos**' (without spot or immaculate).

Immaculate Conception

The Orthodox Church does not accept the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in the sense that Mary was exempt from original sin at birth. That would have separated her from the human race and would have interfered with her ability to transmit true humanity to her Son. Yet Orthodoxy does not admit of any individual sin in the 'All-pure Virgin.' That would only debase the dignity of the Mother of God. Yet, during the 17th. and 18th centuries, a number of Orthodox theologians adopted the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, (or something indistinguishable from it). **Elias Miniati** (1651-1714), among the Greeks, and **St. Dimitri of Rostov** (1651-1709), among the Russians. were prominent among the teachers of the theory. The Great Council in Moscow (1666 - 67), praised the exposition on the subject by **Symeon of Polotsk**. However an Orthodox Christian is free to believe the Latin doctrine as a private opinion.

Within its own milieu, Orthodoxy has decided that the Latin doctrine of the Immaculate Conception not only separated Mary from the rest of the descendants of Adam, but also placed her in a different class from the Old Testament saints; and, consequently, has destroyed the continuity of history. That doctrine has precluded Mary from sharing in the destiny of fallen mankind and removed her from the Old Dispensation. From her conception she was placed proleptically, and by a special privilege, under the New Dispensation. (In reality she was the culmination of a process under

God). Such a notion, in Orthodox eyes, has obscured her true place in the scheme of redemption and has misunderstood the real significance of her response to the archangel.

Because of its understanding of original sin, the Orthodox Church could not approve of the definition of the Immaculate Conception which was prepared and presented in 1854. In the Eastern Church less emphasis has been placed on the idea of inherited guilt. Rather, the consequences of the fall, (seen primarily as an enslavement to the devil), were judged to have caused a liability to sickness and physical pain (which was fatal), together with a possible weakening of the will. Man's basic freedom to choose between good and evil was never removed. Ware maintains that while Augustine's understanding of original sin demanded the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Eastern view has rendered it unnecessary.

The purity and holiness of the Mother of God belong not to her nature but to her state - to her attitude toward sin and her personal victory over it.. For the Virgin, as for John the Baptist, this holiness consists, not in an abstract privilege of exemption from guilt, but in a real transformation of human nature, progressively purified and raised by grace during previous generations.⁸ (from Fr. Sergius Bulgakov)

Ware would also query the commonly held understanding of the words of the Virgin to Bernadette of Lourdes. He suggests that her reference to the Immaculate Conception may have been made with her own pregnancy in mind.

Bulgakov rejects any impression that the connection between Mary and her Son ceased with birth. It continued "in the degree that the divine and human are inseparately united in Christ."⁹ Although Mary remained in the background during His earthly ministry, she walked and suffered with Him during His Passion. When she died a natural death, she was not subject to corruption, but was raised up by her Son. Now she lives in her glorified body at the right hand of Christ in Heaven. In this state of Glory, the Virgin remains Mother of the human race, for which she prays and intercedes. Especially at the Last Judgment, she will plead with her Son for pardon. Vladimir Lossky begs a sensitive handling of this subject and offers the reminder that, although the Apostles proclaimed the Christ in their public preaching, without any reference to Mary, "the mystery of His Mother was revealed,"¹⁰ but only to those who were within the Church. Here then is represented a 'foundation of our faith,' or 'a fruit of faith ripened in tradition,'(rather than an 'object of faith').

The Orthodox Church considers Mary as Divine Wisdom in the created world. In her, God is already all in all.

It is in her that Divine Wisdom is justified, and thus the veneration of the Virgin blends with that of the Holy Wisdom. As the justification, the end and the means of creation, she is the glory of the world.¹¹

Prayers to the Virgin have a prominent place in the Orthodox services. Every office contains innumerable prayers addressed to her. Her name is constantly spoken in the temple, together with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mother of God.

The mystery of the Mother of God, in this tradition, is a liturgical mystery. Two icons in particular sum up the Christological and ecclesiological aspects of Mary. A large icon stands on the iconostasis (a screen which hides the sanctuary), in every Orthodox Church. This icon of the Incarnation depicts Christ as a child in the arms of his Mother. The other appears frequently on the upper part of the iconostasis. Here Christ sits enthroned. To his right hand stands Mary, to his left, John the Baptist, both with heads bowed and with hands raised in intercession. Thus Mary together with John is, as a member of the Church, "interceding with confidence on behalf of all the world,"¹² but standing in submission, not only to her Son, but also to her Creator and God. Her icons may also be found in various positions in each Church and in the houses of the faithful.

Bulgakov has observed the shocked reaction of outsiders to the deep veneration of Mary in Orthodoxy, because of the parallels with paganism. The prototype of the Virgin has been detected in Isis and in other female deities. Even the admission of some 'obscure prescience' in paganism does not destroy the difference between these goddesses and the Virgin, "who is a glorified creature, completely deified."¹³ The 'sober spirit' of Orthodoxy knows nothing of the chivalric cult of the Madonna or of the 'belle dame' which characterise the cult of the Virgin in the West.

Mary in the Syrian Tradition.

Throughout the Syriac literature the view has been taken that, without Mary, the Incarnation would not have taken place. This vital role of Mary has been developed by **Jacob of Serugh** (d. 521), in a series of metrical homilies. In his estimation, Mary, "the most perfect mortal"¹⁴ to have ever lived, was worthy of Gabriel's visitation. Even though some other woman may have been acceptable to God, He would have chosen her instead. Jacob rejected the view that the Word had entered Mary's

womb before the angel had spoken, (thus implying that her answer was a foregone conclusion). "The moment she replied in the affirmative, she conceived in her womb."¹⁵ Ephraem also represented the Syriac tradition in suggesting that "through her ear the Word entered and dwelt secretly in the womb."¹⁶ In his exegesis of St. Luke 1:35, Jacob differentiated between the 'Spirit' and the 'Power.' The former was the Holy Spirit who first sanctified Mary's womb; and the Power being the Word who entered and dwelt there. ('Ruha' the Syriac word for spirit is feminine; and in early Syriac literature, the Holy Spirit, 'ruha-d-qudsha' was construed, grammatically, mostly as feminine. The word for power was masculine) The Syriac writers stressed Mary's perpetual virginity, but regarded the matter as a mystery which had to remain as such. Such a commentary satisfied the early Syriac mode of Biblical interpretation, which favoured historical, typological and symbolical methods.

Typology.

Types or symbols were usually called mysteries. Mary, therefore, proved to be a very suitable subject for this approach. It was assumed, for example that St. Paul's 'First Adam- Second Adam' typology would demand (as a logical extension), the equating of Mary, not with Eve, but with the Earth, from which the first Adam sprang. Ephraem wrote, "The virgin earth of old gave birth to the Adam who is lord of all earth; but to-day another virgin has given birth to the Adam who is Lord of Heaven."¹⁷

A parallelism was also drawn intricately between Adam, 'the begetter of Eve,' and Mary, 'the bearer of Christ:'

Adam brought forth trouble for the woman who sprang from him; but to-day, she Mary, who bore him a Saviour, has redeemed that travail. A man (Adam) who himself knew no birth, bore Eve, the mother; how much more should Eve's daughter (Mary) be believed to have given birth without the aid of a man.¹⁸

Jacob of Serugh followed the same idea. Adam gave birth to the "mother of all living things, without intercourse, thus depicting the birth of our Lord, who is the fountain of all life."¹⁹ Ephraem and Jacob looked on the twofold pattern of Adam - Eve, Mary - Christ, as a chiasmic arrangement. Mary corresponded to Adam in miraculous childbearing, but at the same time, also to Eve; and Christ corresponded to Adam.

Brock notes two different ways of looking at the contrast between Eve and Mary in the long-established Eve - Mary typology. Through the Incarnation Mary, who initially suffered the consequences of Eve's disobedience on mankind, was able to restore mankind to the pre-Fall state. This may be termed the 'dynamic view.' On the other hand, Mary's position may be regarded as similar to Eve's former state, throughout her life - 'the static view.' The 'dynamic' would have been favoured by Ephraem and Jacob and by the early Church Fathers. Increasingly, writers became more interested in describing Mary only in the light of the Incarnation, with the result that she was likened to Eve before the Fall. The 'static' view underlay the various apocryphal lives of Mary, and seems to have been "the basis for some of the less fortunate trends in Western - Marian devotion."²⁰ Among the Syriac poets, parallels and contrasts between Eve and Mary were drawn in great detail, and with a symmetry that required mythological elements.

For example, 'the robe of glory' was a recurring piece of imagery within this tradition. Adam and Eve were stripped of their 'robes of glory.' Jacob explained Mary's role in the restitution of the privilege:

**The child Mary gave her hand to help her aged mother (Eve), who lay prostrate;
she raised her up from the Fall that the serpent had affected.
It was the daughter (Mary) who wove the robe of glory and gave it to her father (Adam), who then covered his body that had been naked ever since the affair of the tree.²¹**

Some Catholic Reflections.

Yves Congar cites an article by Pastor **Herbert Roux** ('**Pour une doctrine biblique de la Vierge Marie,**' in *L'Amitai*, June, 1949, pp. 16-31), as illustrative of a broad Protestant position.

Roux had written,

Jesus does not intend to confer any privileged status on His mother, nor to transfer to her anything whatever of His merits, His power or His holiness. Mary can be only she who believes; she can only be at the side of the disciples, not at Jesus' side. Nowhere do we see her associated like the Apostles with the ministry of the Lord or even committed to any ministry——.²²

For some Protestants the Eve-Mary comparison has reflected the beginning of damnation under the reign of Satan, and the beginning of salvation and the Kingdom of God. Roux has insisted

that, "There is no second Eve, there is only a second Adam."²³ (p. 19). Any suggestion of causality or any soteriological association has been ruled out.

Congar explains that the Catholic understanding of Mary, as a figure of the Church, has led them to attribute more to her than to the Church; whereas Protestants accord her less. For example, Pastor Roux wrote, "Mary, the mother of Jesus, becomes the mother of John; but she will remain an earthly mother here below; only the 'heavenly Jerusalem' the Church, which begets the faith, is our spiritual mother,"²⁴ (Galations 4: 26), (p. 29). He went on to suggest that Mary's 'maternal' relationship with John prefigured the spiritual maternity of the Church for those who would share in the new birth, who would be the fruit of an incorruptible seed, "the living everlasting Word of God."²⁵ (1Peter 1: 23).

Protestants, who have taken their position from Luther's, have concluded that the idea of the spiritual motherhood of Mary in the Church, has led Catholics to replace the Holy Spirit by Mary, and to substitute her action and her inspiration for that of the Holy Spirit. Congar admits that such an allegation may have some justification; but theologically speaking, it remains untenable in the Roman Catholic Church.

The admission or the rejection of human co-operation in God's work of pardon and justification has been reflected, respectively, in the Roman Catholic and in the Protestant convictions about Mary's place in God's saving activity. Pastor Roux has qualified his acceptance of Mary as "the figure of redeemed and pardoned humanity;"²⁶ that depended on her initial recognition "through faith, that she has no part in the work of salvation, and is entirely the object and in no way the author of it."²⁷ (p. 35). A Pastor Maury, commenting on the interpretation of Genesis 3: 15, by Catholic mariologists, has argued,

We object most strongly to the Catholic theory of explanation. It always involves an appeal to elements outside the biblical data, and to arguments which rely either on logic or on what theologians describe as fitting.²⁸

Max Thurian quotes Romano Guardini's 'The Mother of the Lord,' (Le Cerf, Paris, 1962, p 29), where he assessed the Protestant and the Catholic opinions of Mary as Mother. He was critical of the Protestant perception of Mary, which acknowledged her as the Mother of Jesus, the man,

in a purely physical sense, excluding at the same time her status as the Mother of the Son of God Incarnate, and the personal relationship which, as a mother, united her with the Redeemer.²⁹

Guardini considered such a judgment as permitting of change in the perception of Jesus Christ, Himself. For him the definitions of the Council of Ephesus related to Mary just as much as to Christ:

It is finally the role of women in the Church which is thus indicated by the attitude of Mary in the presence of her Son. She is not a priest as He is, she holds herself behind Him, she hides herself, she follows Him. Her function is to take care of Him, to love Him and to prepare the way for Him. She is capable of intuition and daring as at Cana: she is able to be the decisive catalyst of great events: she is compassionate and suffers at the foot of the Cross: she understands everything, she bears everything, she hopes everything, she is indispensable to the work of salvation; but, in her own place, like that other Mary of Bethany, she sits at the feet of Jesus listening to His words. ³⁰

The Protestant assertion that the early Church regarded Mary only in the Christological context is questioned by Congar. He also emphasizes that the Orthodox Church has not followed the Western progression of Marian speculation; but rather, has held to "the great Christological decrees of Ephesus and Chalcedon."³¹

Alan Schreck claims that Roman Catholics believe that not all Christian truths are equally central to the basic Gospel message. Official Catholic teaching has never considered beliefs about Mary as being equal in importance to truth about God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He admits that St. Paul's lack of explicit reference to Mary indicates that the basic Gospel could be proclaimed without dwelling on Mary's involvement. However, since Mary's role received some mention in other New Testament writings outside the Gospels, Roman Catholic Christians have felt it necessary to emphasize the importance of her part in God's plan of salvation. The Catholic Church, therefore, has consistently taught about Mary; and during the past 150 years has made a number of pronouncements about her life and about her place in God's saving purposes.

The general Catholic view would be that "The Church's understanding about Mary has deepened and become more precise over time, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit."³² Schreck explains that what appears to be new teaching on Mary, is usually an official statement, or a clarification, of what has already been received from the early Church's presentation of truth, which originated in Christ. For example, the Catholic Church has come to believe that God's intention was for Mary to have a rôle in the life of every Christian. **Father Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B.**, and in company with many Catholic theologians, finds this role as representing "a secondary truth in a hierarchy of New Testament truths."³³ Schreck concludes that the experiences of successive generations of witnesses to Mary's rôle have become apparent in the liturgies of the Eastern and Western Churches.

Mary and the Holy Spirit.

The relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, at least in Protestant eyes, appears to have been modified greatly. **Alan Clarke**, in an article on the Holy Spirit and Mary, paraphrases an interpretation of the Scriptural record of Mary. The moment of Mary's conception marked the beginning of her growth in holiness. Her sanctification found its consummation at Pentecost when she was utterly possessed by the Holy Spirit. Yet the distinction between Mary and the Holy Spirit was maintained by some exponents. For example, **Ildefonsus of Toledo** wrote,

**I beg you, oh, I beg you holy Virgin
that I may have Jesus from that Spirit
through whom you bore Jesus.
Through that Spirit may my soul receive Jesus through whom your
flesh conceived the very same Jesus.
By that Spirit let me know Jesus, whereby you yourself were given to
know, to have in your care, and to give birth to Jesus.**³⁴

While visiting Walsingham, Erasmus composed a prayer in which he entreated:

**May your Son grant that, in the imitation of your own holiness, we also
be made capable, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, of conceiving the
Lord Jesus in the depths of our souls; and that once conceived we may
never lose Him.**³⁵

Cardinal Leon Josef Suenens, addressing the subject, cites Mrs. Elie Gibson, who admitted:

**When I began the study of Catholic theology, wherever I expected to
find an exposition of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I found Mary.
What Protestants universally attribute to the action of the Holy Spirit
was attributed to Mary.**³⁶

Suenens admits that such expressions as, 'to Jesus through Mary,' 'Mary forms Christ in us,' 'Mary is the link between us and Christ,' 'Mary is associated with the redemption,' 'Mary is the mediation of grace,' in Protestant eyes, appear to substitute Mary for the Holy Spirit; and to attribute to her what belongs to the Holy Spirit, "by absolute priority."³⁷ He takes into consideration that historically Latin Mariology was highly developed at a time when pneumatology was failing. Elie Gibson has attempted to find some means of reconciliation. She perceived that the Catholic's apprehension of Mary under the effects of the Holy Spirit constrained them to glorify the latter, by praising what had been accomplished in her.

If Mary's life is a first fruit of an anticipatory abiding action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in contrast to the temporary activity of the Spirit of the Lord in prophetic utterance in the Old

Testament, this might help to explain to Protestants the priority given to her in the Catholic Church.³⁸ Yet there is the admission that in the past "the human figure has appeared to eclipse the divine Person."³⁹

Suenens sees the necessity of stressing the absolute priority of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifying Spirit; and then to show Mary: as the sanctified, 'par excellence,' in an incomparable way: as the humble woman whom the Holy Spirit overshadowed in such a unique manner. Since, according to Thomas Aquinas, her assent was given in the name of the whole human race, "mankind welcomes in Mary its Saviour and accepts the offered union,"⁴⁰ at the very moment of Mary's acquiescence to the Holy Spirit.

In 1968, Stephen Benko wrote:

It would be futile to expect Protestant theology to accept any of the prevailing Roman Catholic principles of Mariology. It would be equally hopeless to expect Roman Catholic theology to adopt the current Protestant position with respect to Mary. Somehow a new and genuine theological basis for the dialogue must be found.⁴⁰

Meetings of Minds.

Since that time the dialogue about Mary has in fact been undertaken with some remarkable consensus and mutual enrichment. In the conversations to which Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox have brought their candid and diverse commitments, the theological and pastoral understanding of the Virgin Mary for the Christian faith and life has occupied a prominent place.

The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded in England in 1967, by Martin Gillett, a Catholic layman, (previously an Anglican deacon), after a conversation with Cardinal L. J. Suenens. The Society has won the strong support of Anglican, Orthodox, and Methodist as well as Roman Catholic participants. The society was founded "to promote the study of the place of the Blessed Virgin in the Church under Christ as basic in the cause of Christian unity."⁴¹ In 1976, a group of friends, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Orthodox, and Presbyterian, met in Washington, D.C., and agreed to create a branch of various levels of understanding. In the United Kingdom and the United States members gather for prayer, and conferences are given on various Marian topics, together with discussions. In circles such as these, in and beyond the English-speaking world, the place of Mary is being given full consideration, and the words of Max Thurian, former brother of

Taizé, "aptly express how an issue historically so divisive as the Mother of Jesus has in fact increasingly brought Christians together."⁴²

Instead of being a cause of division amongst us, Christian reflections on the role of the Virgin Mary should be a cause of rejoicing and a source of prayer.⁴³

Comment.

The Veneration of Mary may be appreciated by any objective observer, when viewed in the context of the Scriptures. The Orthodox Church holds Mary in such high regard and with such deep respect, that the practical interpretation of 'veneration' may leave some astounded by the wealth of superlative acclaim. While the intention has been to consider Mary only in relation to her Son, the Orthodox Church has tended to overstate her position, as, for example, in the claim that her perfection, her human and spiritual courage, made the Incarnation possible. Metropolitan Anthony, (in a text transcribed from a tape), admits that to describe Mary in such terms as "more honourable than the Cherubim,"⁴⁴ must appear extravagant to some.

Prayer may be made to Mary. However the mode of prayer to the Virgin must differ from that offered to the saints, who may be asked, "Pray for us." Since Mary is at one with the Divine Will, she may be asked, "Save us." In Anthony's judgement this is tantamount to saying, "Mother, I am the murderer of your son, If you forgive, if you become my advocate and protection, no-one will be able to condemn me."⁴⁵

In the Syrian Traditions the picture of excess has been repeated, especially in their favoured indulgence in typology as a means of Biblical interpretation. Herbert Roux has adequately stated a response from fundamentalism. Congar has indicated the extent of the difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic thinking on Mary as a figure of the Church. The former find shelter in the safety of Biblical expression in order to defend a deeply held conviction, and in order to project accusations of error. The ebb and flow of statement and counter-statement remains fairly constant because of immovable predilections.

The climate of ecumenism has encouraged some denominations to engage in concerned and friendly dialogue on the place of Mary. The initial eagerness of the few has not touched either the antipathy or the apathy of many. At least the matter has been drawn to the attention of a watching Church. Those of the Reformed tradition may be constrained to review their appreciation of Mary solely in the light of Scripture. Others may consider even more closely their claim to emphasize the Scriptural teaching on Mary.

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CHAPTER III.

FOCUSSING ATTENTION ON MARY

The Virgin Birth and Mary's Perpetual Virginity.

Thomas Bosloopers' perusal of the writings of the Church Fathers leads him to the conclusion that, from the time of **Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch** (martyred in Rome c.110), through successive generations, until **Thomas Aquinas** (1225 -74), the theme of the virgin birth was treated "as a gem which was placed in many different settings."¹ The resultant emphases highlighted the origin of the Redeemer, the arrival of the Logos into the world, the relationship between the two natures of Christ and the platform for Marianism.

The Church Fathers in using the virgin birth, went from a description of Christ in His Redemption and Incarnation, to a portrayal of Mary in her origin and redemptive office.²

Hilda Graef differs in this respect, in that, for her, the figure of Mary had simply manifested itself in a kind of chiaroscuro: dimly perceived in some prophecies: clearly seen in the early chapters of the relevant Gospels: subdued during the Ministry of Jesus, then merging "with the figure of the Church in the Apocalypse."³ For Graef the history of the first centuries of the Church reflected this pattern. With the exception of Ignatius of Antioch, (the first of the 'Fathers' to refer in his writings to the birth of Jesus), there was no mention of Mary among the Apostolic Fathers.

The threatening docetism of Gnostic teachers had to be countered. Ignatius laid strong emphasis on the reality of Mary's childbirth. While heresy was bound to demand a strong defence of Christian teaching, Boslooper also feels that, at the turn of the first century, the virgin birth was one of the rudiments of the faith of early believers; (as evidenced in the recorded thoughts of Ignatius in his attack on the influences of heterodox Gnostic Judaism, which denied the reality of the incarnation and claimed Old Testament support for the argument). Hilda Graef, supports these comments by reference to letters of the Bishop of Antioch to various churches. For example, in writing to the Trallians, (9: 1), he declared, "Jesuswho was 'out of Mary, who was truly born."⁴ In a letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius used the term '**ekyophorethe**,' indicating that Jesus was carried in the womb by Mary. Boslooper also notes the significance of a quotation from the Bishop's letter to the Ephesians, in which he said:

For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary in God's plan, being sprung both from the seed of David and from the Holy Spirit. Now Mary's virginity and her giving birth, escaped from the prince of this world, as did the Lord's death.⁵

Graef's takes this statement as emphasizing Mary's complete exclusion from any contact with the devil, who knew nothing about Mary and her involvement with God. This idea was taken up and developed later under the influence of Origen. O'Carroll quotes other texts from the letters of Ignatius to justify his own claim, that the relevant references to Mary's virginity, together with the tendency to include her in the whole plan of salvation, have been of significance for Marian theology. For example, he quotes from letters, to the Ephesians (7: 2):

There is but one physician, bodily and spiritual, born and unborn, God who became flesh, true life in death, from Mary, from God, first suffering and then impassable, Jesus Christ, Our Lord:⁶

to the Trallians (9 : 1-2):

Be deaf whenever one speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, of Mary, who was really born, ate and drank, was really persecuted under Pontus Pilate.....who really rose from the dead, since His Father raised Him up....:⁷

and to the Smyrnaeans (1:1):

.....He is really of the race of David according to the flesh, the Son of God, by the will and power of God, who was born of a virgin and baptized by John to fulfil all righteousness upon Him.⁸

On the other hand, Boslooper finds that from a close examination of the letters of Ignatius, to the Magnesians: to the Ephesians: to the Trallians: to the Philadelphians, and to the Smyrnians, the term 'virgin' was used in connection with the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. The birth of Jesus, in the Bishop's writings, was associated more with the close of Our Lord's life rather than with the origin. Coupled with his assertion that the context for the virgin birth was the atonement rather than the incarnation, Boslooper also discovers in the writings of Ignatius a disassociation of the birth of Jesus from what the First and Third Gospels have recorded. Nowhere in the letters can there be detected any allusion to St. Luke's birth account. Boslooper states that the only canonical relation to the narratives of Jesus' birth (in Ignatius), was that traditional source, which must have been common to Matthew and the Bishop.

Likewise, a philosopher, **Aristides** (in the first half of the Second century), did not show any clear association with the canonical Gospels, when writing an Apology for the Christians, to the Roman

Emperor, **Antonius Pius** (138 - 161). The tradition that Aristides used, had been part of the orally transmitted gospel.

The Christians then trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; He is named the Son of God Most High; and it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed Himself with flesh, and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man. This is taught in the Gospel, as it is called, which a short while ago was preached among them.⁹
(Syriac II).

Warner finds that the doctrine of the virgin birth was attacked more frequently because of its importance in pagan belief. The efforts of Christians to expound the parallel between the classical and Christian stories of virgin births, have followed a pattern initiated by Origen, in his '*Contra Celsus*,' and have continued to the present time, (As for example in the writings of J. H. Newman and Hugo Rahner). This argument takes the sequence of early beliefs, creeds and symbols as foreshadowing "the greatest mystery of all, the Incarnation.....;"¹⁰ and thus making its acceptance easier. This argument that has not won universal acceptance in the Church.

Walter von Loewenich warns that the historicity of the account of the Virgin Birth ("where the roots of Mariology are to be found"¹¹), has been questioned by modern Protestant Biblical scholars. Close scrutiny of relevant texts has raised objections. St. Mark, St. John and St. Paul apparently knew nothing about the subject; (Galatians 4 : 4, simply emphasizes the complete identification of Jesus with humanity). Genealogical problems crop up; neither Matthew nor Luke revert to the Virgin Birth, having set out on their respective discourses.

von Loewenich is convinced that, in St. Luke 2, a natural birth was mentioned. He discovers support for his opinion in the story of the Purification. He also appeals to the conviction of Luther, who, while never abandoning this Biblical doctrine, did not attach "any dogmatic significance to it,"¹² declaring that, "It matters very little whether she was a virgin or a woman, although it was God's will that she should be a virgin."¹³ (Epiphany Sermon, 1524: **W.A.** 15, 41,22). Whatever position may be taken, the New Testament, in von Loewenich's opinion, did not use the Virgin Birth to vindicate any special prerogatives of Mary, nor to distinguish her from all other human beings. He rejects the suggestion that Revelation Ch. 12 has anything to do with Mary or the birth of Jesus, "but is presumably a personification of the Church, rather like the heavenly Jerusalem in Ch. 21."¹⁴ He acknowledges that the Mariology of the Church found its source in the story of the Virgin Birth, "but

only by weaving into it quite different motifs."¹⁵ The Biblical narrative had simply intended to represent the uniqueness of the person of Christ; but an "ascetic encratite motif"¹⁶ crept in. Since the sex act was regarded as intrinsically impure and sinful, Christ could not have been born in the natural way. Therefore, in order to maintain that position, Mary was reputedly virgin, before, during and after the nativity.

von Loewenich is certain that the 'Virgin Birth' made an essential contribution to the mythologizing of Christology, when it was raised to the status of a dogma. He questions its suitability to be treated as a dogma, even though it has had a profound symbolical significance. Neither can it be taken as a starting-point for the interpretation of the person of Jesus Christ. The symbolic value of the 'Virgin Birth' remains in face of the challenge of historical criticism. In von Loewenich's judgement the traditional doctrine of the person of Christ, taken in a mythological sense for centuries has led to an "outgrowth of mythological Mariology."¹⁷

D. Ryan regards Mary's virginity as a great privilege and an integral part of the mystery of the Incarnation. The perfection of this state in Mary has been frequently emphasized by the addition of the word 'perpetual'. Having defined the privilege of Mary with regard to the circumstances required for virgin birth, it therefore would have been difficult to accept a natural continuity of married life.

Theologians have distinguished between **virginitas mentis** - the determination of Mary to refrain from any thought, word, or act contrary to perfect chastity; **virginitas sensus** - Mary's freedom from disordered movements of the flesh, and was included in her freedom from concupiscence; and **virginitas corporis**, (with reference to the virginal state of Mary's body), which, according to Merdelbach ('**Mariologia**,' Paris, 1939), excluded "all damage to or violation of the genital organs, and all experience of venereal pleasure."¹⁸

The bodily virginity of Our Lady was also discussed under three heads, **virginitas ante partum** - implying the virginal conception of Jesus and the absence of marital relations between Mary and Joseph, up to the time of the birth of Christ; **virginitas post partum**, that is, the exclusion of marital relations, and therefore, the generation of no other children, after the birth of Christ; **virginitas in partu** which included the non - rupture of the hymen at the moment of birth, which took place without the opening of the membranes or damage to Mary's body, and without pain. The last description involved a miraculous birth, in the course of which Christ passed from His Mother's

womb, as He would pass from the closed sepulchre. Mary's fiat provided clear and explicit testimony for **virginitas ante partum**, but no explicit support for either **virginitas in partu** or **virginitas post partum**. A fairly long process of development was to take place before the several aspects of Mary's virginity emerged from the clash of truth and error.

Ryan explains that the virginal conception was not immediately publicized. It was necessary, first of all, that the divinity of Christ and His mission should be clearly established, lest premature revelation of His miraculous origin should endanger His own and His Mother's lives, before His mission was accomplished. Yet the Jews did ridicule Him and possibly His Mother. This raises the question as to when His divinity and mission were established; and seems to miss the emphases made by Matthew and Luke in their Nativity accounts, in their efforts to meet the insinuations and declarations made against Jesus Christ.

The statement of the virginal conception of Christ found its way into the baptismal creed, possibly at end of the First Century. '**Ex Maria virgine**,' was used in the Creed for a Roman rite of Baptism, described by Hippolytus in his '**Apostolic Tradition**' c. 200, but composed earlier. The Creeds of today do not include explicit reference to **virginitas in partu** or **virginitas post partum**. While the Creeds were being formulated, errors about the virginity of Mary began to appear. A text quoted in support of Mary's virginity, especially, '**in partu**,' in the 19th Ode of Solomon (mid 2nd century), stated:

**The womb of the Virgin caught (it),
And received conception
And brought forth;
And the Virgin became a Mother with
many mercies,
And she travailed and brought forth a Son,
Without incurring pain.
She brought forth
As if she were a man
Of her own will. 19** (cf. St. John 1:13).

Opinions of some of the Fathers

For most of the first half of the 2nd century, few if any new developments occurred in relation to the subject. Then other aspects of Mary's virginity began to appear in such literature as **Proto - James** (Alexandria), (and in the writings of St. Irenaeus, who wrote, "**Filius Dei, filius hominis, purus pure puran aperiens vulvan**: the Son of God is also son of man. He who is pure, purely opens the

pure womb."²⁰) **St. Justin Martyr** contributed a new element to Mariology by contrasting Mary with Eve and emphasizing their virginity. He also conjectured on the painlessness of the birth of Christ, and spoke of the birth of Christ from Mary who was virgin. F.W. Joussard concludes that it is difficult to know what Jerome thought, or whether or not he gave any thought relative to the virginity **in partu** and **post partum**.

Tertullian (155 - c.223), faced with Docetist errors, denied that the birth of Christ was miraculous, and limited the virginity to the absence of marital relations with Joseph, before the birth of Christ. He therefore denied the virginity in and after the birth; also holding that Mary had other children by Joseph. **Origen** spoke of Mary as the first-fruits of virginity among women, as Christ was among men; but his teaching on the virginity of Mary was not perfect in every respect. He defended her reputation against the blasphemous assertion of **Celsus** that Jesus was her illegitimate son. He rejected any other progeny; and asserted that the womb of Mary remained closed until the birth of Christ; the exception being only for that birth .

The doctrine of **post partum** was incorporated into the Eastern version of the Nicene Creed by including the words **aei parthenos** - 'ever virgin.' (The addition was due to **Epiphanius** (315 - 402), who was engaged in rebutting the errors of the Antidicomarianites (opponents of Mary). They taught the 'common error' that Mary had borne other children by St. Joseph; (and interpreted John 19: 27 in an unusual way, suggesting "that he took her unto him as wife."²¹ Epiphanius, basing his arguments on the tradition which had been handed down, and on Scripture, did not hesitate to say that Christ had opened His Mother's womb. **St. Ephraem** (305 - 372) in his '**Hymns in honour of Our Lady**,' insisted that the seals of virginity remained unbroken during and after the birth of Christ. (The authenticity of many of his writings have been called in question and criticised as symptomatic of the extravagance of Syriac poetry).

St. Jerome was mainly concerned with the defence of the **virginitas post partum** against the errors of **Helvidius** and **Jovinian**; both held that Mary had children by St. Joseph, after Christ. They were motivated by the desire to put virginity and the married state on the same plane, and to establish Mary as the perfect model of both states, (thereby running counter to the ascetic tradition). Jerome attempted to solve the problem of 'brethren' by saying that they were children of a sister of Mary. He listed instances in the Old Testament where 'brethren' was used for relatives. In the course of his

opusculum against Helvidius, he referred to the birth of Jesus in terms of the natural process: "Add, if you wish, the other afflictions of nature: the swelling womb for nine months, the upsets, the birth, the blood, the swaddling clothes."²² These rhetorical passages became a source of annoyance to later writers, such as, St. Ildephonsus. Elsewhere St. Jerome used the customary formula **januis clausis**, applying that to the virginal conception, "which occurred **januis clausis**,"²³ just like Our Lord's entry into the supper room after the Resurrection. He seemed to avoid the question of **virginitas in partu**, in the technical sense of non-rupture of the membranes and hymen. "**Virgo post partum, mater antequam nupta**."²⁴

In his '**Adversus Jovinianum**' he pondered the **hortus conclusus** of the Cantic of Canticles to Mary, but did not treat of the **virginitas in partu**. His approach to the issue, **in partu**, has prompted the comment that he was not in agreement with St. Ambrose. St. Jerome's attitude was stimulated by his attitude to the apocrypha (or his rejection of it and its docetism). (Commentators seem reluctant to tackle the problem).

St. Ambrose stated his view on **virginitas in partu**, especially in '**De Institutione Virginis**':

Who is this gate but Mary, closed because (she is) a virgin? Therefore Mary is the gate through which Christ entered this world, when He was delivered by a virginal birth, without opening the portals of virginity. The shield of modesty remained intact, and the seals of integrity inviolate, when He went forth from the Virgin.²⁵ (The words were a commentary in Ezekiel 40).

St Augustine depended largely on St. Ambrose for his Mariology. Frequently he used the triple formula (also used by Zeno of Verone d. 380). "**Virgo concepit miramini: virgo peperit, plus miraminus, post partum virgo permansit.**"²⁶

From that period onwards the teaching of Mary's **virginitas in partu** included a miraculous birth. There is little difference in the contemporary presentation of the teaching. (Conflicts did occur among Ratramnus and Paschasius Radbertus and Durandus). In 649 the Lateran Council, in its Third Canon, declared:

If anyone refuses to confess, in agreement with the Holy Fathers that the holy and immaculate Mary, ever Virgin, is properly and truly Mother of God, in as much, as at the end of the ages, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and without the agency of human seed, she truly and in a special manner conceived God the Word Himself, who was born of God the Father before all the ages, and gave birth to Him without experiencing corruption, her virginity remaining ever inviolable and abiding intact after His birth - let him be condemned.²⁷

The canons of the Council were repeated in a letter of **Pope Agatho** to the 3rd Council of Constantinople as a clear statement of orthodox doctrine. (This council was concerned principally with the Monothelite heresy; but took the opportunity to restate the Trinitarian and Incarnation doctrines together with the traditional statement on the doctrine of perpetual virginity- parturition).

Impressions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption

Davis reiterates the opinion of **M. Guiton**, that Eastern writers looked on Mary as the beginning of a new race; whereas in the West, she was seen as an enclave, protected from the contamination of the world's sin. In the Second and Third centuries she had been acknowledged as uniquely pure and holy, beyond the purity and holiness of Eve at the time of the Creation. Early history lacked any reference to Mary's birthday because the earlier Fathers had no occasion to preach on it; and still less on her conception. Encouraged by the second-century apocryphal Book of James, the conception and the birth of Mary, in popular belief, were considered as miracles of God.

The status of Mary, as the Second Eve, as a symbol of the Church, together with her 'motherhood' of Christians, followed the acceptance of the Marian interpretation of the woman of Revelation Ch.12. This reading also encouraged the belief in Mary as a female Elijah. Subsequently, it became possible to account for both of the Marian dogmas, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Ashe maintains that "when the Church affirms them, it censors out the original basis and destroys the logic."²⁸ However since neither Scripture nor Christian tradition could sustain these dogmas, a new logic was required, and had to be improvised. A mother 'without blemish' was the obvious choice, when God was to become man. Inconsistency was ignored, as for example, in the problem of Mary's death (before her translation to Heaven), where she must have suffered the Adamite penalty. The need to remove this dilemma was met by a Fifth century Greek narrative attributed to St. John. The Church has seldom appealed to the 'fiction'; but has insisted on the belief around which it grew. This account has also helped to establish Mary in Heaven as an intercessor. While Scriptural references have been made in the documentation of these doctrines, the main appeal has been to 'tradition'; although, in Ashe's opinion, the traditional element could never have arrived from a consensus. Newman's view that doctrine can develop, has greatly influenced Catholic thought on this matter. The 'must have happened' argument has been proposed by those who feel that they

have 'discovered' certain implications that would support particular doctrines. Karl Rahner postulates that a "truth of faith"²⁹ can be received in a number of ways: for example, through the Scriptures and by tracing the historical course of the 'doctrine' in its interaction with varying perceptions: and where "the Church's consciousness in faith has come to maturity."³⁰

David F. Wright criticises these two modern dogmas, as "extravagant excrescences."³⁵ Any discussion on them would have to take cognisance of the dexterity with which leading Roman Catholic Theologians have endeavoured to reinterpret them, in an effort to satisfy other Christian traditions. He goes on to describe them as 19th. and 20th. century innovations, which have been the "end-products of a millenium and a half of galloping Marianism in Western Catholicism."³⁶ The Rev. Donal Flanagan repeats the assertion of Robert Mc Afee Brown, that, next to the papacy, Mariology is the area of greatest theological division between Catholics and Protestants; the main disputation being focussed on the above dogmas. Monsignor H.F. Davis observes that the failure of Protestants to find any privileges of Mary in the deposit of faith, has been because of their inability to recognise God's inclusion of Mary as an important part of that deposit.

Immaculate Conception

When the Gentile Church detached itself from the Judaistic Church, and wished to escape all suspicion of being Jewish nationalists under Jesus the King of Israel, it was decided that He had been born "as the Second Person"³⁷ - not at His Coronation but at His physical birth; "though spiritually begotten before all the worlds."³⁸ This made Mary, the Mother of Jesus into the immaculate human receptacle of the Life and Brightness of God, the Third Person of the Trinity. It therefore had to be presumed that "she was herself immaculately conceived by her mother St. Anne."³⁹ Graves reckons that this Theme reasserted itself in popular appraisal of the Virgin as the White Goddess, with Jesus as the Waxing Sun and the Devil as the Waning Sun. There was no room for the Father God, except as a mystical adjunct of Jesus. The Latins worshipped the White Goddess as Cardea.

Hippolytus, Origen and St. Dionysius of Alexandria applied 'immaculate' to the Virgin Mary. **St. Cyprian of Carthage** observed that the Virgin had, in relation to other mortals, "their nature and not their fault."³⁷ Davis commends **Augustine's** forthright statement of Mary's sinlessness as a "clear signpost in the right direction;"³⁸ but agrees that the remark must be set in the context of Augustine's view on original sin, (which in turn retarded the progress of the 'Immaculate

Conception'). Warner also explains that, after Augustine, it became more difficult to conclude that "the Redeemer had been conceived and carried in a woman's womb that, like all others, was stained by sin."³⁹ Yet the years following Augustine witnessed a ground swell of affection for the pure Virgin.

Ephraem (c.306-73), has been regarded as the first of the Fathers to have taught the Immaculate Conception. In 'Nisibine Hymns,' (27: 8), he wrote, ".....for there is no blemish in Thee, my Lord, and no stain in Thy mother."⁴⁰ Other texts by the same author require "subtle interpretation"⁴¹ to maintain this doctrine. (For example, he mentioned Mary's baptism). While admitting that neither Jesus nor His disciples deposited any teaching on the two Marian dogmas, Ashe finds some support in the teaching of Epiphanius, but especially in the Elijah-type legend of Mary's immortality. He reckons that the legend has placed the Catholic Church in a dilemma, since it had no part in the Apostolic teaching, and yet has been proclaimed as true teaching. Ashe perceives a possible resolution of the problem. The determination of some validity for the legend would require the transmission of some portion of the faith outside the Apostolic legacy.

The Church may have decided to deduce 'apparent truths' from the legend, during the fifth century. The consequences, (for Ashe), would harmonise with the impressions received by an impartial reading of the New Testament, with Mary in mind. The key to this conclusion lies in the acceptance of a Christianity that has emerged from a group that contained more than Jesus' chosen circle. Others could have begun within His mother's family, (and therefore before His ministry), with Mary the central figure - until His ministry The respective groups would have set in motion more than one tradition. For instance, the absence of Mary from the Resurrection stories, may have hinted at a divergence, and allowed for the immortality legend, within the traces of a Marian tradition.

"Christianity in its eventual fulness tried to graft it back on to the Apostolic stem."⁴²

Although the Church flouted its own rules by a "wildly irrational"⁴³ adoption of the Marian cult, in the fifth century, the measure, in Ashe's opinion, was needed. The situation was retrieved; a richer Christianity was able to face a barbaric era. "It was an act of supreme unconscious wisdom,"⁴⁴ which was to be repeated in the Middle Ages, in 1854 and in 1950.

Husenbeth formed the opinion that the Greeks, having borrowed the belief of Mary's immaculate conception from Palestine, instituted the Feast, "which was celebrated with great pomp at Constantinople, as early as the sixth century."⁴⁵ This celebration of Mary's conception was imported

from the East by monks who had fled the 'Iconoclast' persecutions of the ninth century; and consequently, was initiated in Sicily and Italy. Davis claims that allusions to the Immaculate Conception have been found in Irish martyrology. **Oengus** (c. 800) mentioned the great feast of Mary, but without any further clues. Her conception appears to have been commemorated in the '**Martyrology of Tallaght.**' (See Appendix). Warner recommends **T.H. Thurston's** article on the Irish origins of the Feast, although they are now considered doubtful. K.S. Latourette surmises that the Feast of the Conception had an Irish provenance; and believes that it spread into Western Europe in the eleventh century through the efforts of Benedictine monks.

Davis agrees that it is possible to trace the eventual development of Marian doctrine to the enthusiastic and confident reception of the definition of the Council of Ephesus. Nevertheless, some of the early Fathers, faced with the problem of Christ's universal redemption, found it necessary to attribute some sin, however slight, to Mary, "in order that there might be something in her to redeem."⁴⁶ For example, **St. John Chrysostom** entertained the possibility of vanity. (Husenbeth points out that Chrysostom had declared her to be "most holy, immaculate, blessed above all creatures."⁴⁷) **Fulgentius** (468 - 533), "stressed Mary's subjection to original sin more strongly than most other authors of his time."⁴⁸ On the other hand, Husenbeth is emphatic that **Fulgentius** said that the "holy Virgin was entirely excepted from the primeval sentence."⁴⁹ **Ildefonsus** (Archbishop of Toledo, at this time), stated that Mary "was free from original sin, and that she removed the malediction of Eve."⁵⁰ Arab commentators on the Koran have followed those Catholic divines who accepted this teaching. For example, **Cottada** said:

Every descendant of Adam, from the moment of his coming unto the world, is touched in the side by Satan: Jesus and Mary however, must be excepted; for God placed a veil between them and Satan, which preserved them from the fatal contact.⁵¹

Ashe's analysis locates the failure of the Church in its periodical endeavours to assimilate a pattern of thinking on Marian issues. An example of this may be reflected in the Koran, where Mohammed condemned the teaching about Jesus and Mary as presented by Arabian Christians. He insisted that Allah did not make these two divine. The Virgin was simply a holy woman in whom He worked a miracle; and her Son was simply a great prophet; there was no Trinity - of God, Jesus and Mary. Arabia had been Collyridian country! Davis refers to Newman's opinion that the early Fathers

had not been influenced so much by the tradition of Mary's 'ordinariness,' but rather by a false theological understanding of her redemption, coming from a mistaken exegesis of Gospel passages.

The essence of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, according to Warner, has been the transition from a material to a spiritual prodigy, which can only be traced to the "medieval, Mariolatrous West."⁵² Husenbeth notes that **Theophanes**, Abbot of Grandchamp, (9th century), **Fulbert**, Bishop of Chartres, (10th century), **Yvo**, (11th century), and later, **St. Bruno**, founder of the Carthusians, were in favour of the teaching on the Immaculate Conception.

The cult had spread to England by the time of the Norman Conquest. William the Conqueror instituted the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary in 1074. A manuscript martyrology of the 13th century, found in the library of the Dominicans of Dijon, recorded the 8th December, for the Feast. This prompted the comment from a Benedictine scholar, "that this Feast was already celebrated almost everywhere in the Church in the time of St. Dominic,"⁵³ (1170 -1221). However, the progression of the cult encountered controversy which first erupted into violence in the south of France around 1150.

The Assumption

When **Pope Pius XII** declared that the Immaculate Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary, having completed "the course of her earthly life , was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven,"⁵⁴ Protestants in general expressed misgivings. For them the dogma implied a low or negative view of Christ's humanity, as if Mary's assumption and not Christ's resurrection lifted our humanity into the presence of God.

The Biblical record makes no mention of the death of Mary. The need to furnish details did not escape the observers and devotees of her position. Marina Warner voices the opinion that "Gospel silence invited story telling."⁵⁵ From the Second century onwards, the manner of the Virgin's death was being recounted imaginatively throughout the near East, in Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, and in Palestine, where the earliest celebration in honour of Mary's death took place prior to the Sixth century. Thus the legend of the Assumption of Mary has been recorded in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Arabic texts, and in a variety of forms. (Around the year 600 the feast-day of her passing was proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire, by the **Emperor Maurice**, for August 15th.). Winch and Bennett point out that the existence of feasts in honour of the death of Mary, did not imply

acceptance of her assumption into heaven. The story may have been seen in a "spiritual context."⁵⁶ In early times the word 'Assumption' simply meant a holy death, and the passing of the soul to heaven. The other titles of the feast, "Transitus, Dormitio, Assumptio and Piasatio did not contain the meaning of Corporeal Assumption."⁵⁷

Legends and Traditions.

Whereas the sites of martyrdom and the collection of relics became an integral part of the cult of saints in the early Church, no contemporary records of the death of Mary were preserved. "The disappearance of Mary's body delayed her cult, for there was no shrine where she, in person, could be venerated."⁵⁸ The process of imaginative logic came into vogue. The 'symbol of purity' could not be given to the worms; the 'image of eternal spring' could not rot in the grave. The medieval tradition of the Assumption of the Virgin had its source in ancient eastern stories.

Origins of this conviction may be traced to apocryphal texts, which probably emerged in the East in the Fourth century. (The Fathers of the first centuries were familiar with the idea of corporeal assumption. A number of 'venerable figures' were reputed to have been translated in this way. For example, **Origen**, **Eusebius**, **Epiphanius** and **Augustine** held the view that the saints, who were raised from the dead at the time of Jesus' death, (St. Matthew 27), were assumed body and soul into Heaven. But such an idea was not associated with the departure of Mary).

The Apocrypha contained supposedly eye-witness accounts of the death of Mary. Greek, Latin and oriental languages were used in the transcripts of these books, whose titles included, '**The Passing of Mary**', '**The Obsequies of Mary**,' '**The Book of the Passing of the Blessed Virgin.**' The earliest extant may be the '**Obsequies of the Holy Virgin.**' This document, written sometime between the Third and Fifth centuries, envisaged the afterlife.

The contents unfolded a discussion among Andrew, Peter and John at the tomb of Mary, with Paul interjecting in order to show his authority over the others. Jesus appeared with the Archangel Michael to endorse Paul's viewpoint; and then ordered the Archangel to carry the Virgin's body to Heaven. The Apostles were told to follow them. Once inside Paradise the body of Mary proceeded to the tree of life. The Apostles brought her soul and made it enter her body. At this point atrocities in the pit of hell were revealed to the Apostles. **Cathenet**, a Catholic scholar, suggests that the author of

the '**Obsequies of the Holy Virgin**' resuscitated Mary in order to transport her to the pit of hell, and not to proclaim the peculiar glory of her immortality. In other Syriac versions of the story of Mary's death, written around 350 - 400, the emphasis moved from the nether regions to the Virgin herself. She was represented as grieving greatly at the sepulchre of Jesus, longing for death, so that she would be reunited with her Son.

Mary was also pictured at home in Bethlehem, with three virgin companions, praying to see Jesus and the Apostles before she died. John, the Apostle, having been informed of this by the Holy Spirit, was translated from his home in Ephesus in a cloud of light to Bethlehem. He embraced Mary's knees and assured her of a death of great glory. Her fears that the Jews would burn her body were allayed by reference (on John's part) to Psalm 16: 10. The other Apostles arrived. Those who had died, rose from their graves and performed miracles, before returning to Jerusalem with Mary. The Holy Spirit directed the company to a valley, near the Mount of Olives, where they were to find three adjoining caves. They placed Mary in the innermost recess. Angels appeared. Chariots descended, bearing Moses, Enoch, Elijah and Christ. The 'blessed one' was transported to the gate of Paradise. The sword that surrounded Paradise was taken away and the holy one, with glory that is unspeakable, went into Paradise.... "and they placed her in a boundless light amid the delicious trees of the Paradise of Eden; and they exalted her with glory, on which the eyes of the flesh are not able to gaze....."⁵⁹ The Apostles besought Jesus that all, who would commemorate His virgin mother, should have an answer to their prayers.

One Bohairic account has been discovered in a Homily, attributed to **Euodius**, Archbishop of Rome, and successor to Peter. Claiming to be one of the seventy-two disciples (St. Luke 10), he maintained that he had been an eyewitness of all that he disclosed. According to Euodius, the disciples lived with Mary after the Passion. Peter sanctified an altar in the house. On the 20th Tobi, Jesus appeared to the company in the house, as they gathered around the altar, and greeted them. He asked Peter to prepare the altar seeing that He would be taking a great offering from among them on the next day. They discovered that Mary was to be the 'great offering'. The whole company wept at the news. Jesus consoled His mother. Mary, shrouded in heavenly garments, turned towards the East, uttered a prayer "in the language of heaven"⁶⁰ and then lay down, still facing eastwards. Virgins, who previously had ministered in the Temple, and had attended to Mary after the Passion, surrounded her,

singing. Mary pleaded with Jesus to save her "from the many terrors of the next world - the accusers of Amento, the dragon of the abyss, the river of fire that proves the righteous and the wicked."⁶¹

Death appeared at the bidding of Jesus. When Mary saw Death, "her soul leaped into the bosom of her son - white as snow, and He wrapped it in garments of fine linen and gave it to Michael."⁶² Peter and John, at Jesus bidding, carried Mary's body to a new tomb in the field of Jehoshaphat. There they remained for three and a half days, watching. Jesus ascended with Mary's soul in the chariot of the Cherubim. On the fourth day the company, gathered at the tomb, heard a loud voice instructing them to return to their homes until the seventh month, and then come back on the 16th of Mesore. The attempted interference from the Jews would be frustrated, so that they would find neither tomb nor body. On the 16th Mesore, Jesus re-appeared together with the Virgin, who was seated in the chariot of the Cherubim. Such then was the death of the Virgin on the 21st of Tobi, and her assumption the 16th of Mesore

In another, a Sahidic account in the '**Twentieth Discourse**' of **Cyril of Jerusalem**, it was stated that John and Mary lived together at Jerusalem for ten years after the Resurrection. One day, the Virgin asked John to summon Peter and James to inform them that Jesus had come to her to indicate that her time was accomplished, and that He would hide her body in the earth. "No man shall find it until the day when I raise it incorruptible. A great church shall be built over it."⁶³ When preparations for death had been made with the help of the three Apostles, Jesus appeared with the Cherubim and invited Death to come. "When Mary saw Him, her soul leaped into the bosom of her Son, and He wrapped it in a garment of light."⁶⁴ The Apostles, at the command of Jesus, took the body on a bier to the valley of Jehoshaphat. As they did so, the Jews caught the sound of their singing and determined to burn the body. The Apostles dropped the bier and fled at the approach of the Jews, who found nothing but the bier, which they burned. A sweet odour arose from the place where the body was laid, and a voice said, "Let no man give himself the trouble of seeking it till the great day of the appearing of Christ."⁶⁵ A corporal assumption was therefore precluded.

In a Syriac manuscript (c. 500), Mary's death-bed was the scene of a reassembly of the saints of the Old Covenant, Adam and Eve, Seth, Shem, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Anne. The traditional belief held that they had been raised by the Lord, when He descended into hell. They had congregated as Mary descended into death and then was taken to heaven.

Cyril's account contained many similarities with that of **Euodius**, but excluded a bodily assumption. There is also a tradition, possibly coming from Ephesus, that the Virgin Mary travelled with John to Ephesus and lived with him there. In the Fifth century, the Ephesians were the first to dedicate a church in her honour. Another viewpoint, first formulated in 375 by **Epiphanius**, who looked on the question as extremely esoteric and outside certainty, believed that "Mary never went to Ephesus, and indeed did not taste death at all."⁶⁶ The Greek Account of Mary's 'demise' claimed the authority of the Apostle John, as an eyewitness; and became the basis of many sermons and homilies in the East, from the Seventh Century onwards. In this version Jesus arrived at the Virgin's chamber, to be met with her request for mercy for all sinners who would call on her. Her request granted, Mary died. "The Lord spread forth His unstained hands and received her body and spotless soul."⁶⁷ Three days elapsed, and the Virgin's tomb was found empty.

The version that gained great popularity in the Western part of Christendom, was the Latin translation of a Greek document attributed to **Melito**, Bishop of Sardis, in the Second Century. The **Pseudo-Melito** document made a significant addition to the Eastern story. In it Christ informed Mary that she would have to die in accordance with the law of mankind. But the Devil would not trust her. Peter then told Jesus that, as Mary was His "immaculate (Mother) chamber,"⁶⁸ He should raise up her body and take her with Him, "rejoicing, into Heaven."⁶⁹ Jesus agreed to the suggestion and commanded Michael to bring Mary's soul down again from Heaven. The angel rolled the stone away from the sepulchre. Jesus called to Mary, "Rise up, My love and My kinswoman; thou that didst not suffer corruption by union of the flesh, shalt not suffer dissolution of the body..."⁷⁰ Mary rose from the dead and fell at Jesus feet, thanking Him. "And the Lord kissed her and departed and delivered her to the angels to bear her into Paradise."⁷¹ This author has circumvented the Gnostic-type denial of her full humanity, by subjecting Mary to physical death. He has also raised her up, in the flesh, and thereby affirmed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body - a doctrine which also suffered under Gnostic influence.

The framework of the stories of Mary's death was openly modelled on the Gospels, together with references to the Old Testament; and included: the Annunciation of death by an angel: agony in the garden: hostile Jews: the sepulchre closed by a stone: and in some Greek versions, a three-day burial before the tomb was discovered to be empty.

Montague James has traced the source for the legends to Egypt. The details of many of the narratives were Gnostic in character; and in them, references were made to other Gnostic Apocrypha. Winch and Bennett note **Tischendorf** 's finding that the original narrative cannot be assigned to a date later than the Fourth century. Wright concurs, and maintains that no extant reference to the assumption can be traced in any other literature of any earlier date. On the other hand, the claim has been made that the apocryphal texts embodied early Jewish-Christian traditions.

Application of the concept.

In Patristic writings, 'assumption' described the passing of the souls of the saints, (particularly of the martyrs), into heaven; while the body remained in the tomb. The contemporary and instinctive definition of ascension in soul and body is limited to the specific case of Mary's demise. The majority of Catholics believe that Mary died naturally; her soul rose to God; her body, after an interval of three to fifty days in the tomb, was raised miraculously to be reunited with her soul in Heaven. Winch and Bennett mention the attempt of a monk, **Usuard**, to cast doubt upon the belief that Mary rose up in body to go into Glory, even though he used the term '**assumptio**' to express the manner of her passing. More recently, this has been regarded by many as referring solely to the bodily ascension. **Bute** has explained the title of the Feast of the Assumption as "literally, God's taking the Blessed Virgin to Himself, i.e. by death."⁷²

For many centuries after its inception the Feast "strictly signified no more than the spiritual triumph of the Queen of Saints."⁷³ The traditions of Mary's assumption attached themselves to the Feast. This in turn led to a general acceptance of the bodily assumption of Mary, towards the end of the Fifth. and at the beginning of the Sixth century. **John Cosin**, Bishop of Durham, (Seventeenth century), explained that the doctrine was omitted from the '**Kalendar of the Prayer Book**,' because it was "grounded only upon uncertain fables, first devised by men that gave their minds to vanity and superstition."⁷⁴

Miracle stories that emanated from the event of her passing usually had their origins in heretical circles. Eventually one consistent account evolved and won approval in the Medieval Church. Subsequently it has "influenced profoundly the dogma of the Assumption, which was proclaimed an article of faith by Pope Pius XII, in 1950."⁷⁵

John Saward looks on Mary as the ultimate source of information on the Assumption. He does not place any reliance on the apocryphal accounts of Mary's life and death as essential to the doctrine. In his view, the Assumption, as a dogma, stands on the knowledge that "she is alive and glorified because of our fellowship with her in Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶ Although, for Saward, the apocryphal accounts have had some theological and historical values, he cannot accept that these early stories were fictitious concoctions of heretics; but he does acknowledge as erroneous the '**Transitus Mariae**,' (attributed to **Theodosius of Alexandria**, 533 - 67), which was listed as heretical in the '**Decretum Gelasium**' in the Sixth century. While the story attracted fringe groups, that (Saward believes) should not in any way invalidate the doctrine, "which must be assessed by other criteria."⁷⁷

The '**Transitus**' or versions of the basic legend on Mary's death and assumption, (it was thought), had not gained very high status in early Christian literature. However, recent discoveries of documentation of hitherto unknown versions, together with their dating, which may go as far back as the Second century, have added more weight to the story. O'Carroll has listed these discoveries as, an early Greek '**Transitus**,' a Georgian '**Transitus**,' and in particular, an Ethiopian '**Transitus**' which seems very near to the original text. An early Irish version shows similarities with this Ethiopian version and also with a very early Syrian version. In concert with later Jewish ideas about the assumption of other great figures of Biblical history, **Baucham** saw in the story a reflection of the stories of Enoch and Elijah. The parallels cannot be exact, since the stories of Mary's assumption did not rule out her death.

Locations cited and described as Holy Places in and around Jerusalem as far back as the 4th century, did not include any tomb of Mary. The Fathers at Ephesus may have held the opinion that Mary had died in that city, since they made reference to "John the theologian and the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God,"⁷⁸ when speaking of the venue of the Council. (The phrase, apparently, is elliptical). The claims of Ephesus were succeeded by those of Jerusalem; Glastonbury has also assumed this distinction.

Mary, and Joseph of Arimathea, were reputed to have gone to Glastonbury, so that she could spend the remaining days of her life there. **Melchinus**, a Saxon Scribe, has been credited with the earliest mention of St. Joseph's burial at Glastonbury. He indicated that Joseph was "buried next to

the southern corner of the House of Prayer, over the powerful, adorable virgin."⁷⁹ It has been concluded that this was Mary's grave. There is no reference to the Assumption. On the other hand, a sermon on the Feast of the 'koimesis' or 'dormition', by a **Bishop Theoteknos of Livias**, (a city on the left bank of the River Jordan, opposite Jericho), has been discovered recently. Dated between 550 and 650, the sermon is regarded as one of the earliest expressions of belief in the bodily assumption of Mary. "if not perhaps the earliest of them."⁸⁰ **Theoteknos** reproduced the apocryphal legend and countered the opinion that Mary's body was being preserved uncorrupt in Paradise, until the general resurrection, (when body and soul would be reunited). He stressed that Mary was in Heaven, body and soul, exercising her office of intercession; and set her Assumption within the context of Easter. Winch and Bennett quote **Timothy**, a priest at Jerusalem, who may have been alluding to the Corporeal Assumption in a homily on the 'Presentation.' He observed the Virgin as "blameless above all, and in all things holy;"⁸¹ and who remained "immortal, even until now, through Him who, having carried her into high places, took her across."⁸² According to general acceptance, this Timothy died around the middle of the Sixth century. Martin Jugie has challenged the dating because of possible confusion with a **Timothy of Antioch**; suggesting as more appropriate, the end of the Fourth or even the beginning of the Fifth century. Jugie has used the Theotokos controversy at the Council of Ephesus (431), as a yardstick for his conclusion.

Gregory of Tours, (d. 594), in a hagiographical treatise, '**Concerning the Glory of Martyrdom**,' provided the first narration of the Assumption of Mary, by an orthodox writer,. The event was simply presented as an historical record, which was incorporated in a passage deemed to have been a précis of the longer narrative, '**Liber de Transitu Beatae Mariae**,' by **Pseudo-Melito**. Warner contends that the Melito version gained popularity extensively in the Western half of Christendom:

It is the most concentrated and coherent of all the tales, and it tells substantially the same sequence of events that appear in wood-carvings, stained glass, embroidery, and painting all over the cathedrals and churches of the middle ages, particularly in England and France.⁸³

Winch and Bennett are of the opinion that Gregory was instrumental in the rapid spread of the belief, especially throughout Gaul. Graef considers his observations as little more than "a reflection of contemporary beliefs in Gaul,"⁸⁴ and without any theological value. von Loewenich suggests that

Gregory, whose credulity for the miraculous was notorious, may have been the first Western witness to the '**Transitus**' legend. The work eventually found its way into the Roman breviary for the octave of the Assumption, until the breviary was reformed in 1568. For centuries in the Western Church the feast was called the '**Dormitio**.' It was recounted that Mary's body had never been discovered on earth; although it was accepted that she had been "parted from the body of her flesh."⁸⁵ The Church preferred not to know where 'the honourable Temple of the Holy Spirit' rested, rather than "maintain and teach something rash and apocryphal."⁸⁶ However, with the new edition of the Roman Martyrologium in 1584, this sentiment was relinquished in favour of the bodily assumption; and the feast was named the '**Assumption**.'

A Friedrich Heiler has proposed four reasons which led the Western Church eventually to abandon its scepticism towards the principle:

1. A pseudo - Augustinian tractate adduced the proof of congruity. St. Thomas Aquinas followed the same reasoning. Most of the scholastic theologians looked on the Assumption as a pious opinion.
2. The popular '**Transitus**' helped to spread the idea.
3. Artists of the Fourteenth century onwards portrayed an empty tomb, together with the bodily assumption. Early Christian art had depicted only the death of Mary and the admission of her soul.
4. In his '**Divine Comedy**' ('**Paradiso**' XXV, 124 - 129), Dante proclaimed the Assumption.⁸⁷

During the Sixth century the Apocryphal literature, increasingly, was received as suitable material for supplementing theological ideas. Historical criticism was losing some of its importance. Consequently the Apocryphal documents became the source of statements of belief in the Corporeal Assumption by the Fathers of the period. The Catholic Encyclopedia confirms that "the belief in the Corporeal Assumption of Mary was founded on the apocryphal treatise, '**De Obitu Sanctae Dominae**;'"⁸⁸ Another work, entitled '**Concerning the Divine Names**,' attributed to **Dionysius, the Areopagite**, was believed to have contained evidence of the phenomenon. The treatise may be traced to the end of the Fifth century; although the compositions of **Dionysius** were first mentioned publicly in 531 or 533, when the Monophysites appealed to their authority. Eventually after some opposition, these works gained acceptance. From the Eighth century until the Fifteenth century they were accepted as of apostolic origins, and received universally as from the highest authority.

The author of the '**Divine Names**' did not mention the death of Mary, nor did he refer to the Assumption. A brief passage told how numbers of the 'holy brethren had met "to behold the life-begetting and God-receiving body."⁸⁹ The 'holy prelates', therefore, were compelled to "hymn with praise, as each was able, the blessedness of divine weakness endued with such infinite power."⁹⁰ With the idea of the Assumption already fixed in their minds, later Fathers appear to have taken this passage as an eye-witness account of the ascension of Mary. **St. Andrew of Crete**, together with the author of an extract attributed to **St. John of Damascus**, gave the impression of having discovered support in **Pseudo-Dionysius** for the apocryphal account of the Assumption. This has not been upheld.

Saward refutes the claim that the Assumption was the work of radical Monophysites. Henry Chadwick, writing in the '**Journal of Theological Studies**,' in a study of '**The Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy**,' stated that "there seems little need for surprise that such a story as the Assumption became current in Monophysite circles,"⁹¹ during the Fifth and Sixth centuries. The Monophysites, with their one-nature Christology, having lost all sense of Christ's solidarity with mankind, found it imperative for their piety to have someone, who was an ordinary human being, and to whom they could cling. That person was Mary. For them the resurrection of Christ had been the resurrection of a god, and therefore did not count for mere mortals. "But the resurrection of Mary provided the human reality that was otherwise absent."⁹² In Chadwick's estimation, the doctrine has been "co-ordinated to a low or even a negative view"⁹³ of the humanity of Christ.

Eastern Fathers.

Several Eastern Fathers produced narrative descriptions of the Assumption in the Seventh century; although this was a period when the belief was not universally accepted. **John, Archbishop of Thessalonica**, (whose sermon on the Assumption, preached before 630, has been published by M. Jugie), indicated that Thessalonica was one of the last Greek cities to introduce the Feast, because of the strength of opposition to the celebration. This arose because of the circulation, by heretics, of outlandish tales about Mary's death. John attempted "to free the story of unjustifiable accretions;"⁹⁴ and believed that an original account had been handed on by the Apostles to later generations. Mary's

universal motherhood was emphasized in the work. For him she was above all "the mother of all that are saved."⁹⁵ Some manuscripts of this recension have been attributed to **John the Apostle**.

(**Epiphanius of Jerusalem** (Twelfth Century), has distinguished this treatise from that of the Apostle). **Pseudo-Modestus** (Modestus of Jerusalem d. 634), wrote:

Because Mary was the Mother of the Giver of Life and Immortality, Christ our God and Saviour, Mary was made alive by him so that she might be concorporate with him in incorruptibility for eternity. It is he who has raised her from the tomb and placed her beside him in a manner known only to him.⁹⁶

The oldest Roman Service Book, the Leonine Sacramentary (prior to Gregory the Great), antedated Byzantine influence in Rome, and contained no provision for feasts in Mary's honour. The Gelasian Sacramentary, compiled between Gregory the Great, (590 - 604), and Adrian I, (772 - 795), contained a Mass, **Adsumptiae Sancta Mariae**. (Winch and Bennett point out that the verb **adsumo** did not necessarily apply to the body of Mary). The Gregorian Sacramentary, a Roman Service Book belonging to the Eighth century contained a Mass, **Adsumptio Sacrae Mariae**. In the collect, Mary was described as undergoing "temporal death, yet could not be overcome by the violence of death."⁹⁷ The contemporary Roman Missal, in the prayer **super oblata**, says, "for although we know that she passed away according to the condition of the flesh, we are aware that she intercedes for us in heavenly glory."⁹⁸ The Gothic Missal (a Gallican Book, dating from the end of the Seventh century), contained a Mass for the Feast of the Assumption, in which the prayers give expression to a real Corporeal Assumption. Winch and Bennett conclude that, with the exception of St. John of Damascus, the Roman Service Books, to the present day, have not contained anything that would have proven a belief in the Corporeal Assumption of Mary, even in the observance of the feast.

Martin Jugie has made an exhaustive study on the subject, (published in 1944, at the Vatican). In Part I (Historical and Critical), he presented "an almost overwhelming proof of the doubtful character of the historicity of the bodily assumption of Mary."⁹⁹ At the same time he provided "an inexhaustible arsenal for all who regard the dogma as a suspect novelty."¹⁰⁰ In Part II (Dogmatic and Apologetic), the dogma of the bodily Assumption was presented as the logical consequence of the Immaculate Conception. According to Seward, the Assumption has been defined in the West as a dogma, but not so in the East, where the teaching has not received any precise definition. For

example, Vladimir Lossky opposed a formal definition. He viewed the mystery of Mary as, not so much an object of faith, as "a foundation of our life, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition."¹⁰¹

Theotokos.

Another early constituent in the evolution of Marianism was the use of the term, '**Theotokos**' (God bearer), which has been inexactly translated, 'Mother of God'. With the exception of the Anglo-Catholic, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Communions, this translation would have little or no acceptance among the main Protestant denominations. (Those who base their beliefs on the Scriptures (alone), are prone to attack the exaggerated reverence for Mary in Catholic Christianity, at its weakest points).

From the 'undivided Church' of the Fathers until the Reformation, Theotokos had a place in the inheritance of the Church. The four ecumenical councils at Ephesus, Chalcedon, Nicaea and Constantinople, were acknowledged by the Churches of the Reformation no less than by the Western and Eastern Catholic traditions. The Reformers accepted their doctrinal definitions as part of the faith of the true Catholic Church, but could not agree about the propriety of calling Mary 'Mother of God,' which was not synonymous with 'God bearer.' Wright points out that the former has had a broader reference than the latter, which specified only the act of giving birth; the implications of which have rarely been explored in Mariology. He notes that most of the literature draws no distinction between the two. Luther and Zwingli accepted the definition of the Council of Ephesus. In a treatise , '**Of Councils and Churches,**' (1539), Luther noted that the article in the documents of Ephesus, in which Mary was declared to be the Mother of God, had been in the Church from the beginning, according to the Holy Scripture, and not "newly produced."¹⁰² (Elizabeth had referred to Mary as "the Mother of my Lord," (St. Luke, 1: 43). Zwingli used the title 'Mother of God' throughout a sermon on 'Mary ever virgin, Mother of the Lord,' (printed in 1524). Thurian concludes that "the Marian doctrine of the Reformers is consonant with the great tradition of the Church in all the essentials and with that of the Fathers of the first centuries in particular."¹⁰³ Yet he admits that Calvin had reservations about the title.

In sketching the historical background to Theotokos, Wright explains that the Greek for 'Mother of God' came into common Christian use considerably later than Theotokos; and very rarely appeared

in the controversial literature of the age of Ephesus and Chalcedon. The Latin, '**mater dei**', was being used in the West before Ephesus; but it did not become the standard Latin version of Theotokos.

Christian Greek may have adopted 'Mother of God' as a direct translation of the Latin, rather than as a synonym of Theotokos. It would appear that only from the late Sixth century did the Greek Christian writers employ the term with any frequency.

Wright claims that the the first recorded use of the Greek, 'Mother of God,' could be marked as "unexpected, often unnoticed and deceptive."¹⁰⁴ **Constantine the Great**, a few years before the Council of Nicaea , declared in an address to the Assembly of the Saints, that, in Mary "there was conception, yet apart from marriage; childbirth, yet pure virginity; and a maiden became the mother of God."¹⁰⁵ Wright accepts that the authenticity of this address has not been unchallenged; but regards it as the probable work of Constantine, "even if he was heavily indebted to advisers like Lactantius and Ossius for some of its content and language."¹⁰⁶ The address, delivered in Latin, has survived in Greek. The words used by Constantine and translated in the Greek as, 'Mother of God,' may only have been conjectured. One of the two usual Latin translations of Theotokos was **Dei genetrix**, "which preserves the sense of 'bearer of God', but was itself often translated into the Greek directly as, 'Mother of God'."¹⁰⁷

The first literary use of the title 'Theotokos' may be safely attributed to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria in 325. References, purported to have been made by Origen and Hippolytus of Rome, around the mid-third century, have been disputed. A papyrus fragment from Egypt, (identified as the **Sub Tuum**), that may be dated from the Third century, was the first instance of prayer to Mary. The text contained the word Theotokos. O'Carroll suggests that, if this papyrus can be dated in the Third century, the title must have existed for some time, "possibly a generation before."¹⁰⁸ He also considers the possibility that Egypt, as the country of origin, may have influenced Christian thinking, since the title 'Mother of god' was given to Isis in regard to Orus. The adaptation was first made in Coptic. O'Carroll is emphatic that, the differences between Mary and Isis have been clearly distinguished. Mary 'the handmaid of the Lord' was a chaste virgin whose Son was true God and true man. Isis was a goddess who conceived her son in passion, and was "entirely removed from the mysterious destiny of the Incarnation."¹⁰⁹

By early in the Fourth century 'Theotokos' was established generally in the East, and particularly in Egypt. Patristic literature as well as the Gospel record provided a number of phrases that prepared the way for the eventual application of the term: "the mother of my Lord"¹¹⁰ (St. Luke, 1: 43), as, for example. Jesus Christ, our God, "conceived by Mary"¹¹¹ (Ignatius): "to bear God,"¹¹² (Irenaeus). In spite of these, 'Mother of God' was not adopted for some time. Ambrose, who helped to introduce Greek theology to the Latin West, could have displayed some knowledge of Theotokos. Wright is of the opinion that an extensive investigation into the records of the Fifth and Sixth centuries may reveal a steady increase in the frequency of its usage.

Plotius of Constantinople, (a Ninth century encyclopaedist of earlier literature), recorded evidence that **Pope Leo I** (mid. Fifth century), was the first to render Theotokos as 'Mother of God'. For this information he relied on lost writings of **Ephraim of Antioch** (second quarter of the Sixth century): but was mistaken (according to Wright), in that **Ambrose** and **Cassian** had applied the Latin (**Mater Dei** , while Leo kept closer to (**Dei Genetrix**), as well as using 'Mother of the Lord.' **Fulgentius of Rospe** (d. 533), spoke consistently of Mary the virgin becoming the Mother of the only-begotten God. By the 5th century in the West, and by the next century in the East, churchmen readily referred to Mary as Mother of God. Previously, a reluctance to do so may have stemmed from the possibility of confusion with the mother -goddess figure of the Graeco-Roman religion. Theotokos does not appear to have had a pre-Christian usage. In Wright's opinion its singularity has kept close to its original Christological context - "which 'Mother of God' has failed to do."¹¹³

The sequel to 'Mother of God' has been the designation 'divine motherhood', which has conveyed the concept of a divine Mother. The source of this extravagant suggestion may well lie in the response of the Church to the Arian controversy. The principle was enunciated that "what the Father is as God, the Son must be also, for identity of being unites fathers and sons."¹¹⁴ **L. S. Thornton**, an Anglo-Catholic theologian has claimed that "language which Scripture associates with our Lord is, in liturgical practice, carried over into association with our Lady."¹¹⁵ **Vladimir Lossky** reckoned that the Orthodox liturgy describes the glory, which is appropriate to God, as appropriate to Mary in "extreme glorification and unlimited veneration."¹¹⁶ It was her vocation "to have by grace what God has by nature."¹¹⁷

Michael O'Grady S. J. states that those who have pondered the mystery of the 'Mother of God' have discovered that it contained hidden features. For example, the significance of the doctrine of the Mediatrix of Grace may be discerned in the 'Mother of the Redeemer,' who "has been seen to have a place in the mystery of redemption."¹¹⁸ O'Grady uses the term 'mediator' to describe "one who holds a middle position between two other persons or groups of persons, and whose function is to promote the union of those persons or groups."¹¹⁹ He makes reference to I Timothy 2: 5, and Acts 4: 12, as polemics of protestant thinking; and as superficial quotations. The supreme mediation of Christ is necessary and adequate, yet this "does not exclude secondary and subordinate mediators."¹²⁰ It may be claimed that the apostles had co-operated with Christ in witnessing; the saints and the faithful have also been co-operating; "and so are mediators with Him in minor and dependent rôles."¹²¹

In '**Fidentem piumque**' **Pope Leo XIII** had reasoned that while Christ was the 'absolute mediator' there was no reason "why certain others should not be called in a certain way mediators between God and man;"¹²² (such as angels, prophets and priests of both Testaments). The Virgin Mary could lay a special claim to this title, since it was she from whom Jesus was born. Therefore, as His Mother, she became "a worthy and acceptable mediatrix to the Mediator."¹²³ No single individual has ever contributed or will contribute to the work of reconciliation between man and God. When she received the announcement from the angel about the mystery of peace, she offered a Saviour to mankind which was plunging into 'eternal ruin.' Mary gave her consent in the name of the whole human race.

Co - Operation of Mary.

One school of thought has rejected the concept of Mary's immediate co-operation with Jesus in Redemption. It has been argued that Mary herself had to be redeemed; the sacrificial death of Christ was the adequate and essential price of our redemption. Others have made a strong effort to champion the theory of Mary's immediate co-operation, in many forms. The inspiration for this may have derived principally from the pronouncements of recent popes: **Leo XIII**, in 1894: **Pius X**, in 1904: **Benedict XV** in 1918: **Pius XI** in 1935.

Pope Pius X (1903 - 14), who succeeded Leo XIII, celebrated the half-centenary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception in a Marian encyclical '**Ad deum illum**', 1904. In it he showed how Mary had played a part in the work of restoring "all things in Christ."¹²⁴ The edifice of

faith rested on her, the noblest foundation after Christ, and "no-one can ever be more competent as a guide and teacher in the knowledge of Christ."¹²⁵ Since she shared in His sufferings under the cross, "she merited to become most worthily the **Reparatrix** of the lost world and **Dispensatrix** of all the gifts Our Saviour bought for us."¹²⁶ But Pius emphasized that the dispensation of these treasures was the peculiar right of Jesus Christ.

Graef highlights two subjects (of these encyclicals) which have been promoted in many publications throughout the Twentieth century: the Marian mediation of all graces, and the co - redemption. At the same time Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven was also under discussion.

von Loewenich is critical of the term Mother of God. He has found it misleading, and, in practice, always construed in a purely mythological sense, "like the Christology of the Council of Ephesus which lies behind it."¹²⁷ He explains that, in the strict theological sense, it means that the divine and human natures being indissolubly united in the person of Jesus, "that which was born of Mary was not only very Man, but also very God."¹²⁸ Inevitably "sheer mythology"¹²⁹ was the consequence in popular piety. "Christ becomes simply identical with God and Mary the Mother of God."¹³⁰

Comment.

In general terms, the Virgin Birth has remained a strong tenet of the Christian faith. The reality of the happening has not gone unchallenged. C. J. Cadoux points out that, during the last century, not only were sceptics and agnostics unable to accept the dogma, some professing Christians found difficulty in locating sufficient historical evidence. This article of faith has been rejected and questioned from earliest times.

It has been suggested that the New Testament as a whole has ignored it. Questions have been raised about the silences of Mark, John, Peter and Paul. These queries are not without substance. However, to state the obvious should not exclude some observation of the possible. Reasons have been given for the inclusion and position of the Nativity Stories in Matthew and in Luke. The other New Testament writers have written with particular purposes in mind. Their intentions may not have

required any specific reference to the Virgin Birth. This argument may accommodate the assertion of Cadoux that it has been fairly evident that belief in the Virgin Birth was not found, universally, in the early Church, even into the beginning of the Second century. (Recently a German papyrologist, Dr. Carlsten Theide analysed what has been called the Matthew papyrus, (parts of Matthew 26: 14-15). which has been housed in Magdalen College, Oxford. He came to the conclusion that the Greek written on the papyrus was written in a distinctive script common to the first century B. C., but which disappeared during the following century. He concluded that the writing was one hundred years older than previously thought).

The emphasis on Mary's virginity, coupled with the unique event of the birth of Jesus, has constrained theologians to reach and endorse a logical conclusion of perpetual virginity. The variety of definitions surrounding this condition has prompted a miscellany of approval or the opposite, as evidenced, for example among the Church Fathers. The sustained implications of this belief, together with Biblical allusions, which were also applied to the mystery of Mary's death, have allowed the eventual official pronouncements of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

The emergence of the popular Apocryphal tales, the (alleged) tendency to use legendary material, (even on the part of Matthew and Luke), together with the increasing interest in Mary and Joseph, have added particular dimensions to the perspectives of Mariology. Significantly, the use of the term 'Theotokos' may have had its source in ancient Egypt. Subsequently the title 'Mother of God' carried its own suggestive hidden features, which have been disclosed and recommended, for example, 'divine motherhood,' 'mediatrix,' 'co-operation in Redemption,' 'Reparatrix,' and 'Dispensatrix; all of which have greatly hindered closer relationships throughout Christendom.

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Abbreviations: **PL** - *Patrologia Latina*, Migne: **PO** - *Patrologia Orientalia*

CHAPTER IV.

REFLECTIONS FROM ANTIQUITY.

The cult of Mary, in the words of John de Satgé, may be seen as "an intrusion into Christianity from the dark realms of natural religion."¹ Geoffrey Ashe notes that the earliest documented worship of Mary was not as the mother of Christ, but as a divinity in her own right. He agrees with the opinion that it is not possible to discover any roots in Scripture for the Marian dogmas of the 'Immaculate Conception' or the 'Assumption.' Texts that are quoted to substantiate these may be thought of as "hints, confirming what is already 'given' for prior reasons."² rather than proofs. The emanation of the Marian cult had an earlier source than in the emergence of Christianity. "Mary's history begins long before she is born."³ Ashe is of the opinion that, even with her elevation in the Church, Mary "preserved something pre-Christian, which explained much which was part of her, and without which, she would have been viewed differently."⁴

During this present century three groups in particular have attempted to establish this continuity. One group set out to prove the existence of a degree of interdependence between the mystery cults and the emergent Christianity, with specific reference to St. Paul's theology. The concept of 'rebirth' has been noted as common to both, together with such ideas as, the imitation of a cult hero, the imitation of the dying and rising god, and the cultic and liturgical solemnization of the death and resurrection of the cult hero.

A second association owes its development to the monks of Maria Laach. Theories of 'genetic derivation' have been rejected. But the '**cult eidos**' of the mystery has been taken as a prefiguration of what transpired in the mystery of Christ. ('**Eidos**' is the "cultic presence of the redemptive act"⁵ constantly renewed in mystery).

Hugo Rahner reckons that the third group's work (methodologically) is unimpeachable. Here a sharper line of division has been drawn between the development of fundamental Christian attitudes (as in St. Paul, together with the earliest Christian writers), and the stand taken by the later and fully developed Christian Church, in respect of the mystery cults of late antiquity. The members of this group have distinguished sharply between 'genetic derivation' and the kind of relationship that arises when a process of assimilation and adaptation has been established, especially for a specific tactical

purpose. For example, "words, images and gestures from the 'mystery,'"⁶ may have been taken over, "to put the stranger at ease."⁷ There also has been an inclination towards the notion that in certain unessential matters Christianity and the cults could have effected "a reciprocal influence on each other - and that in certain instances, such influence is nothing less than a matter of historical fact."⁸

Rahner emphasizes the importance of the Hellenistic mysteries that surrounded emergent Christianity. He quotes Layfaye, who calls them "the principal factor in the spiritual life of the ancient world;"⁹ and another writer, Bratke, who found in them "the last word of the pagan religions."¹⁰ Although any effort to compare the mysteries with Christianity has usually been fraught with complexity, Rahner suggests that an attempt, by the Calvinist **Isaac Casaubon**, to represent the sacramental system of the Catholic Church "as a generic product of the ancient mysteries, or at least, of their general influence,"¹¹ deserves serious study. The re-emergence of the mysteries in the 18th century, after a long period of neglect, "caused numbers of writers to discern in them the '**fons and origo**' of essential parts of the Catholic faith."¹²

The historical backgrounds of religions carry certain common features. For example, one of the oldest religious concepts in the ancient Near East was "belief in a great female deity, a universal mother of all life, particularly of human life, who embodied fertility as such in herself."¹³ The Mediterranean Earth Mother fulfilled many potent roles. The mother-worshipping structure of a settled agricultural society was merged with pastoral, patriarchal sky-worshipping invaders. Such a combination occurred in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and pre-Columbian America. Immense power remained in the old worship, specifically in the "intoxicating belief"¹⁴ in the fecundity of the earth. Freud has suggested that this worship had persisted, because the cultivation of mother earth satisfied the incestuous libido. (As the son's importance in the patriarchal Indo-European family increased, his efforts to take the place of his father encouraged a stronger attachment to his mother).

Grant outlines the consequences of the widespread conception of a female power with "inexhaustible fertility"¹⁵ as its chief characteristic. Based on the observed order and regularity of nature, this notion could give rise to mysticism, excitement and sexual licence, or to the lofty ideas of super-human motherhood, as expressed, for example, in the Homeric Hymn dedicated to the Earth:

**O Universal Mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundation deep,
Eldest of things, great Earth, I sing of thee!**

**All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
 All things that fly, or on the ground divine
 Live, move, and there are nourished- these are thine;
 These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
 Fair babies are born, and fruits on every tree
 Hang ripe and large-- revered divinity.¹⁶**

Associated with the female deity was a young god, one of the "dying and rising gods;"¹⁷ one who represented the quickly blooming and fading vegetation. He was usually represented as the beloved of the great goddess, as losing his life suddenly, mourned by the goddess, but also revived. The couple appeared as Ishtar and Tammus in Mesopotamia, as Magna Mater (Cybele and Attis), in Asia Minor, and as Isis and Osiris in Egypt. Syro-Palestine used the names of Ashtart, Asherah, Anat, "for the great mother goddess, while the young god did not have a generally accepted name as far as we can see."¹⁸ It would appear that he was worshipped under the name of Eshmun. But later Hellenistic records accorded to him the title of majesty, 'Adonis', after the Hebrew '**adon**,' 'Lord.'

The mystery and hidden meanings of the starry heavens, had enthralled the adherents of the emerging Christian faith. Rahner conceives of two levels at which the Christian mystery was taking place. Through Christ, our Lord, the gift "from the Father of lights"¹⁹ (James 1: 17), had descended from above. Mary and the Church, below, were waiting in motherly readiness. To the ancient theologians this teaching was known as the 'mysterium Lunae;' its symbolism complemented that of the Christian mystery of the sun. The image of the Sun of Righteousness was seen in Helios; and Selene was regarded as a symbol of that being, which received and absorbed the light, (the being that came alive in the person of Mary and the Church). Ambrose regarded the influential rhythms of the mother-like Selene (the moon), as a 'grand mysterium.' He encouraged his flock to observe the moon "with the living and penetrating power of the spirit."²⁰ The Creator had granted the power of displaying the mystery of Christ to "this bridal sister-star of Sol."²¹

Rahner considers the partnership redemption between God and 'man', as a union of the Christmas sun with the Christmas moon; "and from this conjunction, both bridal and motherly, from this supernatural 'syndos,' comes the procreation of all divine life for all the days to come."²² But the Easter sun will not flood the whole Church with light until the end of days; and then it will be united with the Easter moon in a perpetual spring. Meanwhile the Church, in patient anticipation,

endures the changing phases of her fortune in the night of her earthly days, sends forth to all men the reflection of the sunlight of Christ, and is the motherly queen of all that are born.²³

Modern man has been restricted in his attempts to resolve the symbolism of the solar system, because of his approach, which differs greatly from that of 'the man of antiquity.' Rahner takes as an example, **Theophilus of Antioch**, who presented a basic pattern of this symbolism: "These lights, the sun and the moon, enact and show forth a great mystery. The sun is an image of God, the moon of man."²⁴ The Christian of that period was bold and free enough to avail himself of Hellenistic symbolism to help him "to give expression to the kind of relationship, which, his faith declared, subsisted between God and man."²⁵

Plutarch had said that "Selene, in her love for him, circles continually around Helios, and it is by union with him that she receives the power to give birth."²⁶ In her location, Selene became an intermediary between the light of Helios and the darkness of the earth, "the great mediator between the world of pure spirit of the fixed stars, and the dark sensuality of the earthly elements"²⁷ Her task was to mediate, to harmonise, and, as a 'milder light,' to pass on the light she received. She came to be recognised as the mistress over all the waters and the vital principle of all birth. The ancients were deeply sensitive to the quality of moonlight. **Empedocles** looked on Selene as gentle and mild in contrast to the sharp clear rays of Helios. **Philo**, who derived the word Selene from the Greek for 'the light of infants,' spoke of her "woman-like dew-bringing quality,"²⁸ and of her power both to nourish and enchant.

Rahner offers the proposition that the relationship between God and man, symbolised in solar terms, translated into Christian terms, served to describe the relation between Christ and the Church. The concept of a supernatural cosmos in which Christ was the sun and the Church was the moon, could have given symbolical expression to the 'great mystery' of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Ch.3). Then when Christ was born as the true 'Sol Novus', and arose as the true 'Sol Invictus' in Easter darkness, the "exalted woman of the Apocalypse,"²⁹ clothed with the sun and with the moon at her feet, was standing beside Him. Thus Mary may be seen as having given birth to the sun; and the Church began to shine with the Easter light. Mary had become the spiritual **Luna** of the Christian union (between God and humanity); and the Church, the true full moon of Easter, became "the primal cause of all birth,"³⁰ in the Christian sense.

In his '**Symposium of the Ten Virgins**,' Methodius of Philippi, (at the end of the 3rd. century), provided the first instance of an interpretation of the 12th. chapter of the Apocalypse, in terms of lunar

symbolism. This explanation extended the possible applications of the passage. For example, at the beginning of the 3rd century, **Hippolytus** of Rome had declared that the Church "never ceases to give birth to the Logos, from her heart" - "the male and perfect Christ, the child of God, God and man."³¹ **Methodius** pictured the Church, like a true mother, receiving into herself the rays of the Christmas sun, "and being, in this respect, an imitator of the Blessed Virgin, gives birth to Christ, for in baptism she gives life to the faithful."³² By this action the Church may be compared to Selene who "receives the light of the sun, transforms it after the manner of a mother, and so, as mistress of all waters upon the earth, brings new life into the world."³³

An interpretation of the Apocalyptic vision that included the Virgin Mary, was gaining currency at this time, with the development of the relationship between Mary and the Church. (**Methodius** rejected it). Nevertheless, the conception of a 'child-bearing Church' remained. **Anastasius Sinaita**, who, according to Rahner, revived the 'Graeco-Christian mind,' during the 7th. century, in his exegesis on the topic, proposed that the sun Christ descended into the night of His mother's womb. Christians might then be born from the womb of the baptismal water "which had been made fruitful by Him who became the Easter sun."³⁴ **Augustine** regarded Mary, the virgin mother, as the prefigurement of the child-bearing Church. Both were "the woman clothed with the sun."³⁵ **Caesar of Arles** wrote, "Let the Church of Christ rejoice, for, imitating blessed Mary she has become the mother of the divine child."³⁶ The idea was also propounded in Carolingian theology. **Berengaud of Trier** pictured the Church as giving "birth daily to the limbs of that body which was once born of the Virgin Mary; for is not Christ ever one and the same?"³⁷

The painless and stainless birth of Jesus from Mary's womb was also symbolised in the brilliance of pure sunlight cleansing all that it touched. Rahner employs metaphors from **Peter Chrysologus**, who described a fiery brilliance over all the earth on the day of the nativity: and from **John Chrysostom**, who visualized the sunlight streaming forth in relation to the virgin birth; and applauds the impression from **Prudentius** as the loveliest reverential application of the sunlight arising from out of Mary: "Sweet infant boy," awake, "for this being the winter solstice, the sun never leaves his narrow circle."³⁸ An accumulation of evidence both from antiquity and from the Middle Ages has confirmed the existence of ideas "which visualize the sunlight streaming forth from the

womb of Mary."³⁹ Rahner claims that this birth of the Sun of Righteousness makes Mary, "in a certain sense," (like the) "nocturnal chorus-leader of the morning sun."⁴⁰

The words, "In the lap of the Mother dwells the Wisdom of the Father. The moon fosters the Sun, from whom she herself derived her light,"⁴¹ were written over the picture of the Virgin Mother in early miniatures. In the 14th. century, French flagellants lauded Mary in a hymn in which the supernatural conjunction, of Christ the sun, and Mary the moon, was expressed:

**Ave Regina, pure and loving,
Most noble; Ave maris stella.
Ave, dear maid,
Moon where God took hiding.
But for the Virgin Mary
The world would have been lost.⁴²**

While the Church has awaited the "the sunlight without evening,"⁴³ (Christ), the earthly pilgrimage in the darkness has continued in the 'sunlight' reflected by Selene (the Church). In Rahner's judgment, the Church's orbit through history is comparable to the moon's varying phases, waning, disappearing, growing red ("as with the blood of persecution"⁴⁴). The drama of the dying and rising Christ has been mirrored in Selene, the Church. "Luna suffering and Luna radiant - that was how the Christians of that day loved to picture their virgin Church."⁴⁵ Rahner claims that such a representation satisfied the longing for immortality, "in so different a fashion from that of the lunar mother-goddess."⁴⁶ (He also notes that for Christian and pagan alike, it was a hallowed thing to suffer in sympathy with this star of the night, when darkness descended). The words of Mary in the Greek liturgy for Good Friday, "Alas, my child, thou unsetting brightness! Make thy light shine on all, thou sun of glory,"⁴⁷ are taken by Rahner to suggest "the lament of Luna obscured by the dark."⁴⁸

Origen formulated the theological concept of the Church here on earth as continually dying. The Church's earthly journey was as "the new moon that everlastingly returns."⁴⁹ Selene was called new, when she was close to the sun.

.....the Sun of Righteousness is Christ, and when the true Selene, which is the Church, is so intimately united with him, that she can say, ' I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me,' then it is her new moon.⁵⁰

This only happens when she is united with him upon the cross, and loses her light there in the setting sun. "Yet it is only through such a union as this," Rahner concludes, "that she becomes fruitful

and can bring forth new life."⁵¹ Thoughts such as these have been taken up and developed by

Methodius of Philippi, Ambrose and Augustine.

In the cosmic features of the visible Selene, Christians see as though in a picture placed before them by God, what their faith may hope for from the Church - resurrection to life eternal.⁵²

Antiquity had intimated these things already. The deep longings experienced and expressed lived on in the heart of the Christian. The salvation, (promised to those who reached the country of Selene, safely), was also celebrated by the mystery cults, as possible in the here and now, and with immunity, either from any compulsion from the stars, or from the light from Helios. The Church consecrated these longings and transformed them.

In the mystery of baptism, mortal men are born anew, and immediately, the coming resurrection begins to be effected in them; for the Christian is born out of 'fiery water' made fruitful by Sol and bestowed by Selene, the Church. The thought of Selene never ceased to be linked with the giving of spiritual birth.⁵³

Rahner looks on the history of the Church as essentially "the putting on of a body by the Word of Revelation."⁵⁴ From heaven comes the soul to inhabit the body (the Church); the blood is Greek and the articulation from Rome. Such an observation allows for the question: "Is it surprising that these things should have left their characteristic marks?"⁵⁵ The prospect of such a structure has depended on:

- (a) Christian revelation that has expressed the truths of the other world to mankind, "by the sense-bound media of word, gesture and image."⁵⁶ (The use of symbols must therefore be received as "part of the archetypal pattern of man's search after God"⁵⁷);
- (b) The expanse of purely historical influence:
- (c) A 'divinely-fashioned' plan that has been discernible in human religious evolution, especially among the peoples of later antiquity. "The ancient mystery cults are the altar bearing the inscription, "To the Unknown God."⁵⁸

From the very earliest of times, one feature marked the mysteries, namely, the cult of a 'mother religion,' of which the divine woman and her consort were the central figures. The Great Mother was the embodiment of the powers of nature, the powers of continual birth and renewal.

The 'primitive' Church, under the influence of Pauline theology, distanced itself from the mystery religions; although claims have been made that "subdued mystery language"⁵⁹ may be

detected in the language of St. Paul, Ignatius and others. Rahner follows the debate between Christianity and the mysteries, (during the Third century), when the latter became embodied in Neoplatonic theosophy and mysticism. The protagonists of Gnosticism 'spiced' their Christian profession with an admixture of mystery and myth. It is believed that elements of some dying cults were received into Christianity. Clement of Alexandria announced the mystery of the Logos to the Greek world; and in doing so, "did not hesitate to make use of verbal images with which that world was already at home."⁶⁰ Research has shown that, as a result of a process of 'acquisitive adaptation,' "much of the stock of ideas and verbal images that belonged to the mystery cults found its way into Christianity."⁶¹ The allegorical exegesis that was fully developed in Alexandria sprang from the Greek mysticism of symbol, and of verbal symbol in particular.

Rahner argues that Christian practices, in the Fourth century, must have exercised some influence on the widespread popular institution of the cults. He instances **Cumont**, who stated,

Christianity influenced even its enemies. The Phrygian priests of the Great Mother compared their feast of the vernal equinox to the Christian Easter, and ascribed to the blood shed in the 'tauroboleum' the redeeming power possessed by that of the Lamb of God.⁶²

On the other hand each party reciprocated complaints of imitation.

Figures from the Past.

From the time of **Alexander the Great** the naturalistic religions pursued a policy of innovation. Subsequent to his conquests, the different subject nations developed a deeper appreciation of their respective gods. A process of theocrasia (fusion of one god with another), accelerated and spread in all directions. The passion for this identification spread widely from Greece and reached Rome. The phenomenon of deification was assumed by Alexander and welcomed by the people. Warner has discovered that the virgin birth of sages and heroes was widely accepted in the Hellenistic world. Pythagoras, Plato and Alexander were believed to have been conceived by the power of a holy spirit). His successors exceeded his intentions (which were possibly political): **Ptolemy** and **Arsinoe** found themselves proclaimed as 'Saviour-gods.' Public opinion began to accept the idea that men could become gods, and that the gods were only deified men. A further qualification (with the aid of a

literary fraud, by an envoy **Euphemerus**), that all the gods worshipped by the Greeks had, at one time, been either kings or distinguished persons, was well received in Rome.

The desire to proselytize appeared at this period, and for the first time, in the world's history. (It is possible that Buddhist missionaries, sent by the Indian King **Asoka**, reached the Middle East and influenced both the Essenes, in religious practices, and the worshippers of the god Serapis, with regard to monastic seclusion). Religious associations for the worship of foreign gods, formed at this time, may be regarded as the "first germs of the Christian Church."⁶³ (A noteworthy feature of the life of these associations was the compositions of hymns; Foot-note from **Foucart**, '**Les Associations Religieuses**').

A resurgent worship of **Cybele**, as Great Mother of the gods, spread from Asia Minor to Italy, and gathered a popular following. In Egypt, although male deity had become prominent through the Pharaoh's divine kingship, **Isis** moved into dominance. The Greek conquest of Egypt under Alexander had brought a "partial reconstitution of the Goddess."⁶⁴ Among the Greeks there developed an appreciation of their own 'reduced' goddesses as aspects of senior figures respectively. For example, **Hera**, the consort of **Zeus**, was '**Isis-as-wife of the-chief-god**'; **Hecate**, mistress of magic, was '**Isis-as goddess-of-the- magical arts**.' Of more significance was the return of the Goddess to the Mysteries or cults for initiates, with the promises of victory over death. In some of the Mysteries, the saviour who conveyed new birth was not so much the Goddess directly, as the Young God, her spouse, and in a sense her son. His annual rebirth was spring.

When Ptolemy succeeded Alexander, he continued the process of uniting both Greek and Egyptian subjects in a common faith. As part of his programme he invited prominent priests from each of the respective cultures to establish a religion common to Egyptian and Greek alike. Identification of the gods was duly completed, for example, **Isis** with **Demeter**, (and some, like **Dionysos**, were regarded by name as representing both sexes). Isis, queen to **Osiris**, had been represented in the early Egyptian myths as merely a magician or witch, who was adept at spells. The Phrygian and Syrian legends portrayed her as the, 'mother of all living', 'Nature' herself.

In the Hellenistic era, Isis had come to occupy the first place in Egyptian devotion, even above the oldest god in Egypt, Osiris. The syncretistic unification of Mediterranean cults during the Hellenistic and Roman epoch witnessed "the transformation of the religion of Osiris into a universal

mystery of salvation,"under the name of Isis. Miegge is at pains to deny any intention on his part to present a parallel here with the possible evolution of the veneration of Mary. He admits of a certain analogy, but hesitates to make a firm comparison,

Around 80 B.C. the Alexandrian worship was introduced into Rome, where it gained an immovable position in the life of the city. The authorities were powerless to eradicate it, in spite of the fact that temples for this worship were destroyed frequently. The Temple of Isis, in the Campus Martius, became a fashionable resort of the Roman young people. Successors of the Emperor Tiberius were initiated into the faith; and the worship of Alexandrian gods was recognised formally by the State.

In the newly compounded faith, a changed conception of 'the Divine Isis' evolved, as she became for her worshippers, "the haven of peace and altar of pity,"⁶⁵ (instead of a wily magician).

Prominence of Isis.

In the Nile Valley, Isis became the most popular and important of all the maternal goddesses. She was regarded as a prototype of motherhood, an embodiment of the wife who expressed true love and fidelity. Her attributes pronounced her the most beneficent goddess in Egypt, as she personified vitally the maternal principle and practice. She was portrayed often with Osiris' son, **Horus** on her lap, (reflecting the Virgin and Child in Christian iconography). This image formed a diptych with another of Isis, as she supported the miniature mummy of the dead Osiris across her knees,

just as in countless Gothic and Renaissance treatments of the Pieta, the slumped body of Christ is disproportionately small, and the face of the Virgin anachronistically young in order to recall, with tragic irony, the mother who once held a baby in her arms.⁶⁶

It is Marina Warner's opinion that, although no Christian examples existed before the Middle Ages, "the image of the Pieta may have been influenced by the Image of Isis and the dead Osiris."⁶⁷

Throughout Egypt Isis was to become the more important in her partnership with Osiris, after that cult had been refashioned as a religion of individual salvation. Those who ardently sought immortality had been drawn strongly to this 'divine partnership.' Belief in the afterlife remained firmly in Egypt; and the cult of Isis lasted into the Sixth century. In some of her images she was crowned either with the crescent moon or with lotus flowers; she held a sistrum in one hand, and in the other, the horn of plenty. A long veil covered her head; and she wore a tunic with a fringe, reaching to her feet.

In the mystery religion, based on the myth of Osiris, Isis was represented as a widow, mourning the death of her husband (killed by his brother). The sorrowing Queen, having sought for and found his body, revived it. Osiris became the ruler of the dead. Subsequently Serapis, the chief shrine replaced Osiris; and Isis was strongly regarded at the Serapeum in Alexandria. From there the cult spread along the trade routes throughout the Graeco-Roman world. The extent of this change may be gauged by the transference to Serapis of the worship of all Mediterranean gods, who had shared a common origin with Osiris and Dionysos.

The prominence of Isis has been captured by a second century writer, **Apuleius**, in a work entitled, '**Metamorphoses**' ('**The Golden Ass**'), narrated by Lucius. In this serio-comic fantasy and romance, Isis speaks of herself as "the parent of the works of nature."⁶⁸ She goes on to expound on her position and her prowess as

queen of all the elements, earliest offspring of the ages, highest of the godheads, sovereign of the Manes (spirits of the dead), first of the heavenly ones, once-formed type of gods goddessesI am she whose godhead, single in essence, but of many forms, with varied rites and under many names, the whole earth reveres.....⁶⁹

(Some regarded her as 'Mother of the Gods'; others as Queen Isis).

Lucius extolled her as "holy and eternal protectress of the race of men ,.....who ever givest good gifts to comfort-needing mortals,"⁷⁰ and as bestowing "upon the lot of the wretched, the sweet affection of a mother."⁷¹ The protection of Isis (and Serapis) was held to be as powerful in the life beyond the tomb, as in this life. Apuleius drew "the scattered Goddess-figures together again,"⁷² in recounting the ongoing response of Lucius to Isis:

I offered this soundless prayer to the supreme Goddess, "Blessed Queen of Heaven, whether you are pleased to be known as Ceres ...as celestial Venus ...as Artemis ...as dread Peresphone...., I beseech you, by whatever name, in whatever aspect, with whatever ceremonies you deign to be invoked, have mercy on me in my extreme distress....."⁷³

The author then described the apparition of a woman in the moonlight, gradually rising from the sea. Her long hair was crowned with an intricate chaplet, in which was woven every kind of flower. Just above her brow shone a round disc, like the bright face of the moon. Vipers, rising from the left-hand and right-hand partings of her hair, supported the disc, and ears of corn bristled beside them. Warner sees in this description the appearance of Mary in Murillo's *Aranjuez Conception*, and in the visions seen by Catherine Labouré in 1830.

The Goddess then addressed Lucius:

I am Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, queen of the dead, queen also of the immortals ...the whole round earth venerates meQueen Isis, I have come in pity of your plights. I have come to favour and to aid you.⁷⁴

In the same scene, she also claimed, "I, and I alone, have power to prolong your life beyond the limits appointed by destiny."⁷⁵ Lucius therefore perceived Isis as beyond comparison; no other worship could surpass hers; she could be trusted, not only for happiness beyond the grave, but also for immediate aid in this life. The 'proudest lot' to befall any man on earth was to be able to devote himself to her service and to learn thoroughly to understand her nature.

Apuleius has also given an account of the initiation ceremonies for those who were chosen to serve Isis. Having received instruction, the candidate underwent a solemn lustration with water or baptism at the hands of the priest. As part of the discipline the aspirant was ordered to abstain from all food that had life, from wine, and from the company of the other sex for ten days. This period of abstinence was usually spent in the precincts of the temple, where the necessary practice of prolonged contemplation of the statue of the goddess could be observed. The statue was "fashioned in a manner worthy of Greek art,"⁷⁶ and was further adorned with rich robes and jewels, as in the manner of the Catholic images of the Virgin.

In Pharaonic times, every temple followed a daily ceremony of the 'Solemn Service of Opening.' The statue was taken from its resting place, purified with incense, dressed and anointed, before the doors were opened for the public adoration of the god. The worship of the Alexandrian gods followed this daily pattern, but in a more elaborate manner. The white curtains, which hid the statue of Isis from the worshippers' gaze, were drawn back, (at the appropriate moment), to reveal a bedecked figure, which Legge likens to "a Madonna in Southern Europe at the present day."⁷⁷

Again from Apuleius comes the information that, during the hours of access to the temple, a worship of silent adoration took place, before the statue of Isis. Legge records that the Roman poets made many allusions to the devout, who spent much time seated on benches before her statue. Such 'meditations' were thought to have a saving grace. In this regard Legge refers to a passage from Ovid, in which was pictured one, (who had offended "the divinity of the linen clad Isis"⁷⁸), sitting in front of her altar. This particular practice may also have been part of the preparation for initiates.

(According to Origen the fables of Osiris and Isis led men to worship cold water and the moon). The Roman calendars tell of a festival of **Isis Pharia**, in April, "probably in her capacity of tutelary goddess of Alexandria,".... "when nature awakened and the sun began to show his power."⁷⁹ By the time of Apuleius, seven Isis temples were standing in Rome.

A festival of Isis took place on 5th March, to mark the re-opening of navigation and commerce after the spell of winter. The 'faithful' made their way in procession to the nearest waterway and launched a new ship, filled with offerings. This was the 'the vessel of Isis.' In the procession "the revered likeness of the Supreme Divinity, fashioned in glittering gold,"⁸⁰ was carried by a priest. Ceremonies were also conducted on that day in the temple. At their conclusion, everyone kissed the feet of a statue of the goddess, (which was fashioned in silver). According to Legge, an eye-witness account of these events, c. 170, compares favourably with a 'contemporary' Italian fiesta. Legge marks the parallels between contemporary practices, (in countries where the Roman Catholic Church is dominant), and those in the ancient ceremonies. In both may be noticed the exuberant crowds, some comic moments, with the solemn carrying of images and sacred vessels. The tonsured priests, chants and hymns, a crowded temple, prayers for Church and State, and dismissal, have maintained their historic pattern.

At the beginning of the Christian era the Isaic rites had acquired an ethical and a spiritual significance. There was a strong emphasis on an asceticism whose purposes were moral and practical. Cleanliness of body was combined with purity of heart. Those who engaged in the specified ceremonies

may be accredited with finding behind the prescribed ablutions and abstentions, and the subsequent esoteric ritual observances, a deeper meaning, which enabled them to gain renewal and strength from the goddess in this life; and in the world to come, everlasting bliss through the immortal glory of Osiris.⁸¹

In the cult of the Goddess, the mystery of birth and generation, of life issuing from life, was prominent; whereas the cult of the god emphasized the mystery of death and rebirth, of life rising renewed from the grave.

Eventually Isis became the protector and the patroness of the living. She was regarded as the goddess of many names, as she displayed the attributes of the Mother of the Gods. According to James, from such appellations as, 'the queen of heaven', 'mother of the stars', 'first-born of all ages',

'parent of nature', 'patroness of sailors', 'star of the sea', and 'Mater dolorosa', as one with the ability to give comfort and consolation to mourners and to the distressed, and as "the saviour of the human race,"⁸² (by Apuleius, from the '**Metamorphoses**'); as 'the redemptrix', she could be likened readily to "the sublime Virgin Mother"⁸³ who would eventually dethrone her.

Transition to Christianity.

During the five centuries, from the foundation of the 'Alexandrian religion' by Ptolemy, until the date of the work of Apuleius, many changes had taken place in the 'Isiac church.' "The rise of Christianity was in itself sufficient to account for its decline in popularity among the lower classes of the Empire."⁸⁴ According to papyri discovered on the site of the **Serapeum at Memphis**, (around 1865), the division of clergy into regular and secular was reflected in the "Alexandrian religion, which had reached its apogee in the period of the Antonnes."⁸⁵ The competition from other religions eventually became more attractive to the common people.

From the Second century onwards the cultus of Isis, together with **Mithrasism** (the male counterpart), was the most effective rival to Christianity. In the Fourth century, with the emergence of Christianity in the Roman world, and the subsequent suppression of pagan cults, the popular festivals were retained, but with less offensive features, and more acceptable interpretations where possible. Consequently traditional customs were retained with little change in their outward forms and character, in spite of the necessary modifications in doctrinal and theological interpretation.

While the Alexandrian religion had equalled rank in society with rank in religion, the Christian Church effused a "wide and all-embracing spirit of charity,"⁸⁶ which in early Christianity promised great mutual benefits for its participants. Other promises outweighed the secrets of its rival: the new faith could be understood by all: happiness beyond the grave would not be discriminatory according to station. The proclamation of the Second Advent caught the attention of many outside the Church . Superstitious minds, lives, unsettled by wars, harried by tax gatherers, subdued by the rich, welcomed the news. The majority of the Roman Empire's population were professing Christian faith by the end of the Fifth century. Yet the ancient cults retained their hold in remote areas. Many nominal Christians clung to their paganism.

Some emperors had played their part in curbing the old religion and in establishing the new. Persecution was not unknown during this period, but did not reach the same severity as that suffered previously by Christians. Yet the demolition of temples was encouraged under **Theodosius I** (379 - 395). Both sacrifices and secret visits to pagan shrines were proscribed. In Alexandria, the patriarch **Theophilus** was instrumental in the destruction of the Serapeum, with all its wealth of statues and works of art, towards the end of the Fourth century. Then, the opening years of the next century brought further restrictions on the old cults. Their special days could no longer be designated official holidays. Pagan priests could no longer enjoy any privileges. Surviving temples were given over to some other public use.

According to Legge, the Alexandrian religion perished in 391, after seven centuries. The consequences of this, according to some ecclesiastical writers, were the conversions of several of the Serapis and Isis worshippers to Christianity. At this juncture, Legge's comparative study of religions draws a noteworthy conclusion: when one religion succeeds in supplanting another, it generally assumes those practices of its predecessor that seem to be "harmless or praiseworthy."⁸⁷ St. Gregory the Great (590 - 604) enunciated what appears to be the traditional policy of the Catholic Church, when he advised the apostle to the Saxon heathen, not to interfere with "such of their religious and traditional observances as could be harmonised with orthodox Christianity."⁸⁸ This was probably the policy adopted for the converts from the worship of Serapis and Isis. The historian **Gibbon** has produced a celebrated passage, in which he pictures the response of a Tertullian or a Lactantius to the transference of the mode of worship of the converts into the liturgy of their new faith. Each would have felt great indignation at "the appendages of heathenism displayed in the ceremonies of the Christian Church, at the end of the Eighth century."⁸⁹ By this time, incense, flowers, lights, adoration of the relics of the saints were in vogue.

The introduction of the worship of the Virgin Mary as Theotokos, or Mother of God, into the Catholic Church, in the period that witnessed the destruction of the Serapeum, (observes Legge), "enabled the devotees of the Isis to continue, unchecked, their worship of the mother goddess, by merely changing the name of the object of their adoration."⁹⁰ A **Professor Drexler** in **Roscher's 'Lexikon.'** lists many of the Isis statues which were used subsequently as those of the Virgin Mary, and sometimes with "unaltered attributes."⁹¹

Other Traditions.

For Husenbeth the ancient beliefs, with attendant practices, found their source in the Garden of Eden, where God, while displaying His vengeance, also demonstrated His concern for mankind. "A daughter of Eve, a woman with masculine courage, was to crush the head of the serpent beneath her feet, and regenerate for ever a guilty race - that woman was Mary."⁹² Thereby a tradition emerged among successive generations, that a woman would come to restore what had been lost in Eve. Such 'a consoling tradition,' was effectively dispersed, even after the period of Noah. Although the primitive religions and their ancient traditions succumbed to the fables of polytheism, "that one, of the Blessed Virgin and the Messiah, resisted, almost alone, the action of time."⁹³ In fact, according Husenbeth's strong claim, the 'promised Virgin' and her 'divine parturition,' have been the foundation of almost every theogony in the religious annals of nations.

He goes on to quote a number of illustrations in an effort to prove his point. In Tibet, in Japan and in part of Eastern India, the god **Fo**, in order to save mankind, became incarnate in the womb of a young woman. The young woman, whom Husenbeth describes as "the nymph **Lhamoghiuprul**, the most beautiful and most holy of women,"⁹⁴ had been betrothed to a king. A number of the Emperors of China could also boast of remarkable conceptions. The mother of Emperor **Hoang-Ti**, (one of the 'Sons of Heaven') was reputed to have conceived by the light of a flash of lightning. **Heou-Tsi**, the head of the dynasty of the Tcheous,

was born without prejudice to the virginity of his mother, who conceived him by divine operation, one day when she was at prayer; and brought him forth without effort and without defilement, in a deserted cave, where oxen and lambs warmed him with their breath.⁹⁵

In a footnote, Husenbeth quotes a Chinese commentator, **Ho-Sun**, who suggested that **Kiang-Yuen** brought forth her son **Heou-Tsi**, "without suffering injury or pain."⁹⁶ Tien (Heaven), thus displayed its power and highlighted the difference between the Holy One and men.

The Lamas claim that **Buddha** was born of the Virgin **Maha-Mahai**. The god of Siam, **Sommonokhodom** was conceived in a virgin by the rays of the sun. Regarded by the Egyptians as a virgin-mother, the zodiacal Isis of the Druids was expected "to bring forth the future Saviour."⁹⁷ The Brahmins teach that a God is born in the womb of a virgin by divine operation, in order to take flesh. For example **Chrichna** was born in a grotto, of a virgin mother. Angels and shepherds came to adore him in his cradle. A tyrant, possibly **Zhohac**, Persian king of the period immediately after the Flood,

was informed by his astrologers that an infant, not yet born, threatened his gods and his throne. The king immediately ordered that every pregnant woman in his dominions should be slain. **Zerdhucht (Zoroaster)** was saved "by the ingenuity and prudence of his mother."⁹⁸ The Macenicans of Paraguay recall an event of the distant past. A woman of rare beauty gave birth to a son, but remained a virgin. Her son, "after working extraordinary miracles, raised himself in the air one day, in the presence of his disciples, and transformed himself into a sun."⁹⁹

Husenbeth's assessment of the historical background of religions leads him to infer that "these marvellous legends form, when connected together, the actual life of the Son of God."¹⁰⁰ He brushes aside the assertions of the sceptics, especially those who claim that the apostles borrowed the fables from various creeds of Asia; and argues strongly for the authenticity of the Gospel record. However he is not prepared to countenance any other reason for the striking parallels between the ancient fables and the Scriptural presentation; but reckons that "it has not happened by chance that the mystery of the Incarnation of God in the chaste womb of a Virgin is one of the fundamental points of belief in Asia."¹⁰¹ Coincidence, for Husenbeth, carries some purpose since purity, beauty and holiness belong to all those privileged women who bore the 'divine,' and who, in turn, were nominated 'beauty expected,' 'virgin immaculate,' 'faithful virgin,' 'felicity of the human race,' 'polar star.'

It is Husenbeth's opinion that the successive generations of antediluvian patriarchs anticipated a woman, "blessed among all others, whose miraculous maternity was to save the human race."¹⁰² Accordingly, and somehow or other, they were able to prefigure her under the pre-Fall features of Eve, thereby compelling universal religious veneration. The concept of sacred fire or divine light among the nations, including the Hebrews, helped to strengthen the opinion that "a luminous ray was to bring fecundity to the womb of the Virgin reparatrix, who was the expectation of the nations."¹⁰³

Ashe would appear to reinforce Husenbeth's argument by asserting that (in so far as they do), "precedents for Mary only appear when we leave humanity behind."¹⁰⁴ To do so, is to allow the virgin and mother goddess to prefigure the Mother of Christ, as Mary "incarnates and perpetuates"¹⁰⁵ a motherhood that is divine rather than human. Ashe supposes that there had been some mythic continuity from the Canaanite Anath to the apotheosis of Mary, Queen of Heaven; and regards the "latter's virgin motherhood during her earthly sojourn as an essential link."¹⁰⁶ He also suggests that

the Anoth-worshipping Jews at Elephantine would have been familiar with the cult of Neith or (Net), who was regarded as having existed in the waters before the world creation and as having given birth to the Sun-God, Ra, (the Pharaoh's chief deity), by her virgin power and secret knowledge. In explaining this phenomenon to the Persian King Camlyses, a priest claimed that Net had been the first to have given birth to anything; that she had done so before anything else had been born, and that she herself had never been born. (Yet she was declared to be Ra's daughter). For Ashe this dual nature was a pagan (and the only pagan) anticipation of that Christian paradox, succinctly expressed by Dante, "Virgin mother, daughter of thy Son."¹⁰⁷ However Ashe tends to expand the paradox slightly in the ordering of his explanation, that, "Mary is a child of God, as all human beings are, yet she is also God's mother when He becomes incarnate."¹⁰⁸

The Iranian counterpart of the Syrian goddess, Anoth, was Nanaia. Her role as Mother-Goddess was exercised from Asia Minor to Susa, throughout the Parthian period 250 until 229 B.C.. She was the goddess of the waters, sent from heaven to "fructify the earth and to bring increase to flocks, herds and mankind, easy labour to women and abundant milk."¹⁰⁹ Endowed with the form of Ishtar she was worshipped as the 'Great Goddess,' whose name was 'Lady.' She was regarded as "the all-powerful immaculate one,"¹¹⁰ who purified the seed of men and women and the milk of females. All the temples mentioned in the Parthian period texts, were sacred to Nanaia. The Magian community of Azerbaijan in North Iran, held her in great veneration, maintaining the Goddess cult syncretized with Zoroastrianism. This religious system was not only contained within the borders of Iran, but also became prominent in Lydia, Pontus, Cappodocia and notably in Armenia. The 'great Lady,' was "the glory life-giver of the nation,"¹¹¹ the daughter of Ahura Mazda (the sole supreme deity). and the benefactress of all mankind.

Magna Mater.

The syncretization of Nanaia with her Greek and Phrygian counterparts, including Cybele, led to her eventual emergence as the 'Magna Mater' or 'Great Mother', for whom religious ceremonies were practised in the Roman world during and after the second century, in conjunction with the Attis Mysteries. From the Phrygian sanctuary of Cybele on Vatican Hill (near the basilica of St. Peter), the cult spread to Ostia, Narbonensis, Aquitaine, Spain and North Africa.

James regards Phrygia as the cradle of the cult of Magna Mater. From 204 B.C. it had gained some foothold in Rome, but not until the reign of Claudius, 41 - 54, was Phrygian worship incorporated in the state religion of Rome, and the Spring festival of Cybele and Attis was inaugurated in a series of observances in March. These included the procession of the image of the Goddess in a wagon drawn by oxen to the river Almo for certain ancient rites of libations. (Isis also, in due course, obtained official recognition in the Roman Empire equal to that enjoyed by Cybele. The former had a chequered history at Rome until 37 A.D. during the rule of Gaius. In his reign there may have been celebrations of relevant rites in a temple in the Campus Martinus. It was not until 215 that the Goddess was given a place in the Roman pantheon by Aurelius Caracalla. A temple was built on Capitoline Hill).

Geoffrey Ashe is impressed by the influences of the 'pagan' background on the emerging Christian world. In his opinion, the last centuries B.C. throughout the Middle East and the Graeco-Roman region, had been penetrated by a deep "sense of a far-off loss, of a 'fall' which had brought death into the world or at least made it terrible."¹¹² A discernible and growing nostalgia for the life-giving divine Female began to take hold of many. For some time recollections of all her splendour had been practically effaced by the state-endowed priests of the male-god. However, through familiar rituals, myths, special aspects and local cults, total eclipse was avoided. During the early years of the Pax Romana, representing a number of cults, and spilling over from Egypt and Asia, "a sprinkling of pagans had groped their way back towards female deity, through a sense of absence and loss."¹¹³

Comment.

The image of Mary, reflected in, and perhaps fashioned by many features of antiquity, presents implications that have required, and have been given some explanation. The claim has been made that throughout antiquity God was preparing the world for the mystery of the Incarnation of His Son. Husenbeth has illustrated a series of remarkable worldwide ancient beliefs, whose purpose, (he felt), was to anticipate a special woman (Mary). Hellenistic Mysteries have found easy access into Christian teaching; and the appearances of the female power and the young god, have introduced

'Mary' into the world of the goddess. The spreading cult of Isis, for example, supplied enough material to invest Mary with greater qualities. The impressions made by the Great Mother, in spite of periods of attrition, have not been eradicated, since her restoration provided a platform for the growing cult of Mary; and allowed, in some instances, (together with the assistance of gnosticism), an easier transition from paganism to 'christianity.'

The Scriptural record of the events surrounding the coming of Jesus Christ, retains its own uniqueness, even though superficial parallels may be drawn from ancient religions. Pagan traditions have been absorbed into, and become part of the tradition within the Roman Catholic Church. The similarities between the religious practices of ancient beliefs and those of the Marian cult, broach the question as to whether Mariology has been an inevitable successor to, or a consequence of, the accepted intrusion of the ancient ideas. Neither would be acceptable to protestant thinking. The Christian Church in many of its branches would not welcomed these insinuations.

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CHAPTER V

CHALLENGE and COMPETITION.

Gnosticism.

Heresies, the consequences of Gnosticism, began to disturb ('torture,' according to Chadwick) the Church towards the end of the First century. When the early Church accepted the commission to evangelize the world, the initial steps were facilitated by the Jewish dispersion, and to some extent, by Gentile proselytes. But once outside this ambit, the missionaries found themselves in a "twilight world of pagan syncretism, magic and astrology,"¹ into which exclusive Judaism had been welcomed. Chadwick notes that the "loose amalgam of polytheism identified the God of the Jews, with Dionysos or with Saturn (because of the reverence for Saturday) "² Hilda Graef describes the emerging syncretistic religion as assuming "disturbing elements of ecstatic frenzy and sexual promiscuity."³ Besides pandering to the lowest human instincts, this religion also satisfied a deep-seated need for material protection and womanly understanding - which the male gods could not fill.

As the Christian faith spread and encountered the other religious world, the responsibility for adequate Gospel translation into a new language and thought form increased. Chadwick describes the task as one of great intricacy, calling on the highest sensitivity and awareness of responsibility; "if its structure was not to be altered."⁴ The teachers had to make clearly understood that there was only one God, incarnate in Christ Jesus, "who could tolerate no rivals, whether male or female, and who was both the creator and the redeemer of the world."⁵ Therefore any emphasis on His virgin mother would have resulted in an unfortunate association and identification with the familiar Mother figure, a continuing prominent feature of pagan worship. Hilda Graef notes the general silence of St. Paul with regard to Mary, in his dealings with "such centres of pagan immorality"⁶ as Corinth and Ephesus. He made one reference in his letter to the Galatians (Ch.4 : 4), to the fact that "God sent His Son, made of a woman."⁷

But Graef can also find another approach by Christian evangelists, this time to the more educated pagans, whose philosophies would allow them to appreciate Christian monotheism, but not the reality of the Incarnation. Therefore "the real birth of Christ from a real woman had to be stressed,"⁷ in these circumstances. This dichotomy of application of the Gospel message, for Graef,

appears. on the one hand to disregard Mary, and on the other, to emphasize "her complete humanity and the paramount importance of her childbirth."⁸ Ashe speaks of the attitudes of two classes who, respectively, represented the more simple faithful and the more intellectual type of response to Mary. The latter allowed themselves to be "exposed to the irruption of pagan themes - Isis worship, for instance."⁹

Hans Jonas states that, during the period which roughly coincided with the beginnings of Christianity, "an explosion of the East"¹⁰ (occurred, breaking) "through the Hellenistic crust, flooding the ancient world,"¹¹ (and) "flowing into the established Greek forms and filling them with their content, besides creating their own new bed."¹²

Oriental thought had been non-conceptual. Images and symbols, myths and rites portrayed the message. While remaining basically mythological, oriental judgement, under the stimulation of Greek thought, learned to formulate theories, "and to employ national concepts, instead of sensuous imagery alone, in expounding them."¹³ With the help of Greek conceptualization, "the systems of dualism, astrological fatalism, transcendent monotheism,"¹⁴ were clearly defined. Assuming the status of metaphysical doctrines, they gained general currency, "and their message could address itself to all."¹⁵ The new concept included the symbols of oriental thought, ideas and figures from the Biblical tales, doctrinal and terminological elements from Greek philosophy, especially Platonism. However Jonas regards all these elements as related to and dependent on a new spiritual centre, an autonomous force that made use of them; it was "the unity behind their multiplicity,"¹⁶ an "hypothetical gnostic principle."¹⁷

In the Hellenistic world, from about the beginning of the Christian era onward, the oriental wave manifested itself

in the spread of Hellenistic Judaism, and especially the rise of Alexandrian Jewish philosophy: the spread of Babylonian astrology and of magic, coinciding with a general growth of fatalism in the Western world: the spread of diverse Eastern mystery-cults over the Hellenistic-Roman world and their evolution into spiritual mystery-religions: the rise of Christianity: the efflorescence of the gnostic movements, with their great system - formations, inside and outside the Christian framework: and the transcendental philosophies of late antiquity, beginning with Neopythagoreanism and culminating in the Neoplatonic school.¹⁸

Jonas asserts that the differences among these phenomena did not conceal a common trend of thought, nor the complementing relationship of one to the others.

The gnostic systems compounded everything - oriental mythologies, astrological doctrines, Iranian theology, elements of Jewish tradition whether Biblical, rabbinical or occult, Christian salvation-eschatology, Platonic terms and concepts.¹⁹

Pressures on the New Faith

Jonas recognises syncretistic aspects in Christianity, even in its orthodox utterances, from the time of St. Paul.

At Colossae St. Paul had endeavoured to combat "a syncretistic amalgam of Christianity with theosophical elements drawn partly from the mystery cults and partly from heterodox Judaism."²⁰ The Colossian Christians were being persuaded to worship intermediate angelic powers, (through which the Jewish Law was given, cf. Acts 7:53, Gal. 3:19); and who were identified with the lords of the seven planetary spheres. It was believed that they had some share in the fulness of divine nature, and exercised control over the lines of communication between God and man. Tribute had to be paid to them in the form of law-keeping. If the law were broken, self-denial and penance were required. Their permission was involved in both the coming of Christ and in His Return. His sacrifice indicated His inferiority to them. Therefore allegiance to Christ was never sufficient for protection in a Universe controlled by these elements. Special ceremonies and strict ascetic practices were enjoined with feast days drawn from the Jewish Calendar.

Within the Church at Corinth, a spiritual elitism had been manifesting itself among some. They believed that they had acquired more profound wisdom and deeper mystical experiences than others. The dualistic approach, to the spirit, (as everything), and to the body (as nothing, if not evil), was another strong tenet. Thus, as the Apostles obeyed their commission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and throughout the Mediterranean world, their teaching not only caught the imagination, but also aroused a variety of reaction. The effects of any allusion to Mary depended on the acceptance of, and the adherence to a particular version of the Christian message.

Jean Daniélou traces the movement whereby Gnosticism acquired a Christian appearance. His contention is that the responsibility for this lay within heterodox Jewish groups. He authenticates his position by taking what he regards as the oldest evidence of this derivation, namely the writing of **Hegesippus**, whom he describes as a witness, and who was better qualified than any other to speak of Palestinian Jewish Christianity. According to Hegesippus, the Church, at the time of the episcopate of

Simeon, the successor of **James**, "had not yet been corrupted by vain teachings."²¹ But a certain **Thebuthis**, because he had not been made bishop, made use of the seven sects, which then existed among the (Jewish) people, (and to which he himself belonged), to begin the process of corruption. From these sects there evolved such groups as the Simonians, the Masbotheans, the Marcianists, the Carpocratians, the Valentinians and the Basilideans. Another sect (or 'swarm of sects') that came under the heading of Jewish Christianity was the grouping of Egyptian Gnostics.

Mosheim regards as deplorable the spiritual condition of the Jews, at the coming of Jesus. The "self-seeking Pharisees, licentious Sadducees and superstitious Essenes,"²² exercised influences that brought the common people to "a low and debased state."²³ To this corrupt condition was added the adherence of many to the oriental philosophy in regard to the origin of the world. The founders of several Gnostic sects were Jews. Cerinthus, a Jew by birth, represented a Jewish nationalism, expressed in a temporal Messianism, but with a Christian flavour. He kept circumcision and the Sabbath, but only recognised the Gospel of Matthew. A teacher at Alexandria, he attempted to compound the doctrines and principles of Jesus Christ, together with those of the Gnostics and Jews, into a singular system of religion. He suggested that the true God had determined to subvert the power of the creator of the world, whose nature had "receded from its primitive excellence and had become deteriorated."²⁴ One of the blessed Aeons, called Christ, was to be the means of this subversion. The stratagem was accomplished by Christ's entry into a certain Jew named Jesus, after descending on him at his baptism in the river Jordan. This Jesus, according to Cerinthus, was a very holy man, the natural son of a couple called Joseph and Mary.

Christian Jews.

Initially 'Jewish Christianity' began to emerge on three fronts. By the beginning of the Second century A.D., small groups of these Christians were scattered in and around Palestine. They were "Jews who acknowledged Christ as a prophet or a Messiah, but not as the Son of God."²⁵ The best known of this group, standing between Jews and Christians, were the Ebionites. This party of Christians made its appearance as a result of the sufferings encountered at the hands of fanatical Jews and Romans.

Shortly before the siege of Jerusalem in 70, numbers felt compelled to flee to Pella. The episode of the Women clothed with the Sun (Revelation Ch. 12), has been supposed by some to refer to this. The members of the small church at Pella retained the name of Jews, but gradually ceased to be regarded

as orthodox Christian communities, and were called Ebionites. Daniélou is of the opinion that they "should not be confused purely and simply with the heirs of the first Aramaic speaking Christians who fled to Transjordan after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and who were perfectly orthodox."²⁶ Reports indicated that they anathematized St. Paul and held strongly to a purely Jewish faith. For them, Jesus was the Messiah of Israel's prophetic hope, and would return in Glory to be the world's overlord. He was God's Chosen One, through whom miracles were worked. But he was not God, nor had his birth been miraculous. Epiphanius, (for Daniélou), provided the primary and most precise source of information about the Ebionites, in 'Panarion,' in which he commented:

they say that Jesus was begotten of human seed, and chosen, and thus called by election Son of God, Christ having come upon him from on high, in the form of a dove. They say that he was not begotten by God the Father, but that he was created, like the archangels, but greater than they.²⁷

In this, the doctrine of the Essenes (one of the seven Jewish sects), is also reflected. However, Epiphanius and Origen mentioned two parties among the Ebionites, the more strict regarding Joseph as the father of Jesus, while the other "did not deny that the Lord was born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit."²⁸ Other Jewish Christians were syncretists who were influenced by Gnostic dualism, as for example in one sect, the Elkesaites, where Ebionism and Gnosticism were fused. (Some scholars suggest that St. Luke was influenced by Ebionites. See Plummer, page 300.).

Secondly, a Christian community resided at Jerusalem, under the leadership of James. Although orthodox in Christian teaching, this community retained Jewish practices, but without imposing them on converts. These Jewish Christians gradually disappeared after the Fall of Jerusalem in 70. Sometimes known as Nazarenes, their belief in the messianic role of Jesus, differed from that of most of the Ebionities, in that theirs implied the divinity of Christ. They produced an Aramaic Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Thirdly, the term Jewish Christianity may be applicable to a broader spectrum of "Christian thought expressing itself in forms borrowed from Judaism."²⁹ Included in its followers were those who had severed their links with the Jewish world, but not with its terminology, (as, for example, in the case of St. Paul). Daniélou reckons that Jewish Christianity, in this last instance, is of the highest importance for the historical study of Christian development. From its beginning until the middle of the Second century, Christianity displayed a strong dependence on Judaism, whether through its use

of the Old Testament or its absorption of the thought forms of the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots.

Beside these influences there were the continuing antagonisms from the legalistic rabbinical Judaism.

Legge takes the similarities found in Essene and Orphic teaching as an indication that the latter had influenced the former. The Orphic Dionysos was the Cretan form of the god generally worshipped all around the Mediterranean. He was always represented in human form, as suffering a violent death and then as rising again from the dead, for the salvation of mankind. The story was presented in such a way that analogies with the Gospel narrative of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus were perceptible. Among the Orphics and the Essenes "the strained and fanciful system of interpretation by allegory and figure,"³⁰ became very popular. They could therefore place their own constructions, not only on the words of the books in the Jewish Canon, but also on the contents of those writings, which had been circulated among the Christian communities as containing the authentic teaching of Jesus and His disciples. The Essenes, it is reckoned, had a fairly strong influence on certain Jewish Christians after 70.

Early Literature.

The '**Ascension of Isaiah**,' was an example of a Christian work using Jewish material, and in circulation at the end of First century . The work consisted of three parts: the '**Martyrdom of Isaiah**;' the '**Testament of Hezekiah**,' a prophecy about Christ, the Church and the end of time; and the '**Vision of Isaiah**,' which revealed the heavenly world and its secrets. The '**Vision of Isaiah**' contained sections on the Virgin; but displayed strong gnostic influences. Graef claims that it is the first extant document to state the virginity '**in partu**'. To confirm her assertion, she quotes the translation of the relevant part, by R.H. Charles, which reads:

Mary straightway looked with her eyes and saw a babe, and she was astonished. And after she had been astonished, her womb was found as formerly before she had conceived.³¹

In the same passage it is stated that the birth took place without a midwife.

R.H. Charles has advanced the opinion that the passage containing these references, dated from the close of the First century, or from the beginning of the Second. The work described how the descent and nativity of the '**Beloved**' "were hidden from the heavens and all the princes and all the gods of this world."³² (XI: 16) It would appear that this provided a source or background of ideas for

Ignatius of Antioch and for the author of the '**Book of James.**' Ignatius (writing at the beginning of the second century) stated, "And hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her childbearing."³³ (Epistle to the Ephesians, (XIX: 1.) E. Cothenet, in '**Maria**', suggests that this theme was borrowed from the Jewish Haggada of the birth of Moses.

The '**Sibylline Oracles**' were another collection of Jewish-Christian works, contained in twelve books. The contents illustrated instances "either of Christian remodelling of Jewish works, or of Christian composition directly inspired by Jewish prototypes."³⁴ Daniélou points out that it is possible to trace the genre of each of these compositions. For example, Books I and IV are Jewish. Book V is a Jewish work remodelled by a Christian; and Books VI and VII are Jewish-Christian works of this period. Boslooper draws attention to the fact that in Book III a probable pre-Christian anticipation in the '**Alexandrian Jewish mind,**' was set forth. Part of the text had a passage, greatly reminiscent of Isaiah's predictions of a remarkable event to a young women.

**Be of good cheer, O maiden and exult,
For the Eternal, who made heaven and earth,
Has given thee joy, and He will dwell in thee,
And for thee shall be an immortal light.**³⁵

Book V is mostly Jewish, but with a number of Christian passages, especially with reference to the birth of Christ (256 -259) Where this is the case the idea of pre-existence is combined with the incarnation in the Virgin:

**But in the latest times
The earth has changed itself, and there has come
A humble one, from the Virgin Mary's womb;
A new light rose, and coming from the heavens
He entered mortal form. And therefore first
Did Gabriel show his strong and holy frame.
And second to the Virgin, he by voice
Spoke, being himself a messenger, and said:
"Virgin receive God, in the holy breast."
So speaking, God breathed grace. But as for her
Always a virgin, terror and surprise
Seized her at once as she heard and she stood
In trembling, and her mind was filled with fear,
Her heart leaped at the messages unknown.
But again she was gladdened and her heart
Was by the voice cheered, and the maiden laughed,
And her young cheek blushed, merry with joy;
And she was spell-bound in her heart with awe.
But confidence came to her, and the Word
Flew in her womb, and became flesh in time,
Was gendered and was made in human form.
And came to be a youth of virgin born.....³⁶**

(Tertullian in his 'Apolog 21' stated that when Gabriel visited Mary, and announced to her that she would give birth to the Messiah, "a divine ray of light glided down into her, and descending was made concrete as flesh in her womb."³⁷) Herodotus told how a ray of light fell from heaven upon the sacred cow which afterwards gave birth to Apis. Plutarch in 'Isis and Osiris' referred in a similar way to the moonlight. Ephraem (Fourth century Church Father), Rufinus of Aquileja (d. 410 ?) and others described how the Word of God entered as divine seed, through the ears of Mary. In an Egyptian tradition, according to Plutarch ,(in 'Isis and Osiris'), the cat conceived through its ears and brought forth its young through the mouth. For Plutarch this symbolised the mystery of the generation of the Logos, (conceived through the ears, expressed through the mouth). (Boslooper in 'The Virgin Birth', (page 59, in a footnote), takes some illustrations of other conceptions of divine birth, from O. Conybeare's, 'Myth, Magic and Morals').

The 'Odes of Solomn,' a document relating to the Jewish-Christian liturgy (probably written in the first half of the Second century, and possibly originating in Edessa), detailed the birth of Jesus in a 'gnostic' fashion.

The womb of the Virgin caught (it), and received conception, and brought forth. And the virgin became a Mother with many mercies: And she travailed and brought forth a Son without incurring pain. Because it happened not emptily, and she had not sought a midwife (For He brought her to bear): She brought forth, as if she were a man, of her own will; and she brought him forth openly, and acquired Him in great power, and loved Him in salvation, and guarded Him in kindness in salvation. And showed Him in Majesty.³⁸

Graef found no incompatibility between the above representation of Mary and that of the humble virgin portrayed in St. Luke; and acknowledged that "the majestic Mother of God, who brought forth her Son painlessly,"³⁹ would exercise an important role in later Mariology. Daniélou considers that the emphasis of this document on the importance of the virginal motherhood of Mary, was "a particular characteristic of the Syrian school; whereas at Alexandria and in the west, the accent was on Baptism."⁴⁰ In his 'Elenchos' VI 35, Hippolytus confirmed the distinction when speaking of the Gnostics:

The Italian schoolsay that the body of Jesus was born animal, and that this was why at His Baptism the Holy Spirit came down as a doveThe Eastern school, on the other handassert that the body of the Saviour was spiritual; for the Holy Spirit came upon Mary.⁴¹

Graef, has also noted traits in the Odes, that "seem to fit the goddess Isis, the mother of Horus, rather than the wholly human Mother of Jesus."⁴² Mary, then, according to Graef, was seen at least by some as a power, a "mother with many mercies,"⁴³ even in this period.

These compositions together with the Protevangelium of James, especially (c. 150), not only reflected popular trends of the period, but were also to have a great influence on later controversies and devotions. Geoffrey Ashe concurs with Graef in his suggestion that the demand for greater detail about the life of Mary came from Gentile Christians, who attempted to devise inferences from whatever material they had. (Marina Warner is convinced that the author of the Book of James was aware of the external tradition of the virgin birth; but queries the influence of this tradition on Matthew and Luke). "It shows the impact of the figure of Mary on the imagination of these early Christians, who tried to supply what was missing in the sober accounts of the Gospels."⁴⁴

Alien Contacts.

In its missionary enterprise, the Early Church was very active in Asia Minor, a region in which the cult of the Magna Mater had been firmly rooted. It would appear that the pagan conception of the Mother of the Gods exercised some degree of influence on Christian thinking. Such a development made its appearance mainly among those Gnostic sects, (for example, the Naasenes, Nicolaitans, the Collyridians and the Montanists), in which the female principle was identified with the Holy Spirit, who brought forth the male principle as the Gnostic 'Aeon matres.' These sects gained great prominence in the Fertile Crescent and throughout Asia Minor during the opening centuries of the Christian era. James describes their form as "a syncretistic excrescence of the worship of Cybele, Isis and Demeter,"⁴⁵ and which presented itself in "a complex cosmological mythology in which the mother element was predominant."⁴⁶

Irenaeus in his 'Adversus Haereses,' accused the Gnostic sects of describing their Aeons as 'gods' and 'fathers', 'lords' and 'heavens', "along with their Mother whom they call both 'Earth' and 'Jerusalem', besides applying a host of names to her."⁴⁷

In this miscegenation of pagan and Judaeo Christian elements, the creative aspects of the Goddess were combined with the Isaianic - Pauline conception of fecundity of the heavenly Jerusalem; the universal Mother nourishing the children she has brought forth.⁴⁸

(See Isaiah Ch. 1: 26, Ch.66 : 6 and Galations Ch.4 : 21-31).

Pagan Gnosticism had originated in the religious syncretism which had emerged from the effects of the Alexandrian and Roman conquests encountering the Oriental cults. Hermeticism was representative of this religious strain. A body of literature, claiming **Hermes Trismagistus**, as its author, presented a way of redemption of the spirit from the shackles of matter and into immortality. It held as axiomatic a dualism which perceived matter as evil and spirit as good. In order to achieve emancipation from the flesh, asceticism was practised rigorously.

Gnosticism claimed to be a doctrine of revelation. The adherents of 'gnosis' (knowledge) regarded this 'revelation' as being contained in some ancient message which had been transmitted secretly by a chain of initiates. In addition, a doctrine of salvation was also taught. Here, the means for the soul's escape from its imprisonment in the material world was described. Release would allow an ascent to the spiritual and luminous world from which it had fallen. In this regard knowledge of sacramental ceremonies, formulae, acts to be done, (eg. ceremonial washings), words to be said, were thought to exercise a compelling effect on the supra-sensible world. Between the visible world and the deity or demiurge were numerous intermediaries through whom the soul was able to elevate itself step by step, up to the Supreme deity.

The world into which Christianity ventured, also pulsed with popular philosophies such as Platonism, the Peripatetics, Stoicism, and later, Neo-Platonism. These Hellenistic influences together with Gnosticism threatened the spread of Christianity as it moved into the non-Jewish world. Legge takes a quotation of **Hegesippus** to the effect that the Church was untroubled by heresy until the reign of Trajan (98 - 117), to indicate that there is no proof that Gnosticism ever seriously competed for popular favour with orthodox Christianity, until well into the Second century. One of the reasons may have been the great expectations of the early return of Jesus Christ. It was hardly likely that the first believers would concern themselves with theories of the origin of a world about to be destroyed, or with the philosophical idea that all the gods of the nations were but varying forms of one supreme and kindly power. The eagerly expected Parousia did not materialise. The growing numbers of Christians were compelled to encounter a variety of challenging circumstances.

The Jews at this time reacted bitterly against all other religions and especially the Christians. Legge finds in such a situation the compulsion, felt by Christian converts, to consider and even to compromise between their recently acquired conviction and the religious beliefs of the Graeco-Roman

world of their upbringing. The opportunity to do so was readily available at the hands of the Gnostics. Latourette emphasizes the threat to Christianity from Hellenistic influences. The danger here was not simply conformity to polytheism, but rather the more subtle possibility of incorporating some of the attitudes of the Hellenistic mind. Confidence in philosophy, as the way to truth, could have led to the presentation of the Gospel in the categories of Greek philosophy, thereby distorting or obscuring the Gospel. There was the sharp disjunction between spirit and matter which may have permeated Greek thought through the Orphic movement, centuries before Christ. Subsequently the teaching was perpetuated within Platonism and Neo-platonism.

Christian converts from a Hellenistic background did retain their philosophical impressions and incorporated them in the thought, practice and worship of their newly found religion. Latourette claims that some, who were regarded as esteemed and ideal examples of the Christian faith, fell into this category. Christianity also received many converts from the Gnostic sects, in spite of the bitter competition that developed between the Church and Gnosticism during the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic ages. A number of these converts were to become very prominent in the life and teaching of the Church. **Epiphanius** had been a Nicolaitan, **Ambrose** of Milan, a Valentinian, and **St. Augustine**, a Manichaean, before joining the Catholic Church.

The primitive expressions of the Christian faith had to contend with the inevitable conflicts consequential to the meeting of Hellenism with Gnosticism. Latourette reckons that the latter influenced Christianity greatly in the earliest centuries. Even though the majority of Christians ultimately rejected it, Gnosticism, and the struggle with it, had enduring effects on Christianity.

Post-Christian Gnostic sects held the view that Jesus had been of higher essence and substance than the rest of mankind. According to the writer **Hippolytus**, Simon (founder of the Simonians) had asserted that Jesus had appeared on earth only as a man, but was not really one; and only had seemed to have suffered in Judaea. **Basilides**, the Egyptian, according to **Iranaeus**, held that the body of Jesus was a phantasm, and had no real existence. It had been Simon of Cyrene who had been crucified in His place. This theory became a popular tenet among the Gnostics and was referred to as Docetism.

A difficulty of identity for the Christian faith and teaching was the willingness on the part of the Gnostics to subscribe to any public profession that would be convenient for them. It is possible that

the earlier Gnostics maintained their devotion to the Chthonian deities in Greece and their Oriental analogues. Osiris, Attis and Adonis, while professing to place a Christian interpretation in these practices. Legge accepts the conclusion that they thereby acted as a leaven on society and helped to propagate the new faith among "those spiritually-minded Gentiles,"⁴⁹ who would otherwise have held no interest in a religion that appeared to have retained its Judaistic roots. Legge quotes the cases of **Clement of Alexandria**, who seems to have been initiated into most of the heathen mysteries of his time; and of **Origen**, who professed to know all about the secret opinions of the Ophites. Many abandoned their Gnosticism and became practising members of the Catholic Church, "which sometimes went a long way to meet them."⁵⁰

The Gnostics introduced into their new faith the use of pictures, statues, incense "and all the paraphernalia of the worship of heathen gods."⁵¹ **Naasenians, Sethians, Barbelognostics** and **Ophites** were included in the groups that made up the Egyptian Gnostics. Having so many features in common, "they may be regarded as various ramifications of the same movement."⁵² Legge has observed a consensus of opinion among the Church Fathers, with regard to the prevailing doctrines of the Ophites or "worshippers of the Serpent."⁵³ The aim of the sect revealed a strong desire to promote an eclectic system, which could reconcile the religious tradition of Western Asia with the worship of the Hellenised gods of Asia Minor, together with the teachings of the growing Christian Church. Initially the Ophites kept a prominent place for the female aspect of deity. The idea was changed by the contrary Semitic influences, coupled with the immigration of male warriors from Europe - without female companions.

The first Ophites made their Supreme God a triad, Father, son and Mother. The union of all three was necessary to express every aspect of the Deity, who was one in essence. Irenaeus has given an account of the Ophites and refers to the teaching that the Spirit or First Woman was thought to have come into being after the First Man and the Son of Man. Irenaeus goes on to give the explanation of the means used to provide another power to act as intermediary between the Supreme Triad and the world. The Father and Son, "delighting in the beauty of the Spirit," (that is of the First Woman). "shed their light on her" (and brought into existence) "an incorruptible light, the third man, whom they call Christos."⁵⁴ The Divine Family was considered complete. The same author

explains that Christos and His mother were "immediately drawn up into the incorruptible aeon, which they called the veritable Church."⁵⁵

(In a footnote Legge suggests that the Divine Family must have been an idea within post-exilic Judaism. The Talmud contains a reference to an upper or celestial familia or tribunal with whom God always consulted before doing anything.)

From information gleaned from **Irenaeus** (in '**Adversus Haereses**'), **Origen** (in '**Contra Celsum**'), **Epiphanius** and **pseudo-Tertullian**, it appears that the gnosis of sub-Apostolic times "consisted in the Primal Man or Universal Father, self-existent in the primeval abyss, holy and inscrutable, projecting from himself the Son of Man, with the male principle brooding over the chaos."⁵⁶ Thus Primal Woman became the mother of the being who descended to rescue the fallen divinity, (Sophia), so that the work of redemption could be effected. In later developments, Prunicus-Sophia was represented as emerging as a potency from the left side of the female principle (or divine spirit). Seven powers, one of whom was the Demiurge, the hostile god of the Old Testament, were consequently produced.

In the sects where the Redeemer was mentioned (for example, the Naasenes) an attempt was made to relate the heavenly Mother to the Christ as an Aeon. According to James:

the association of Sophia with his redemptive work, was a concession to the identification of the Judaic conception of Wisdom with the Hellenistic Logos doctrine, and the Christian interpretation of the Incarnation in terms of Theotokos.⁵⁷

In determining the evolution of the Universe, the Ophites explained that an over abundance of light was shed by the Father-Son upon the Holy Spirit, who could not contain it all within herself. Consequently it mingled with matter to produce the Universe. The earlier Ophites called this superfluity of light, 'Sophia.' Legge is fairly certain that the figure of Sophia was in fact, the Great Goddess who was worshipped throughout Western Asia and who appeared in Lydia, Phrygia, Syria, Ionia, Crete and Greece under various names. The Alexandrians saw her as Isis. She was characterised as a personification of the Earth, the mother of all living, ever bringing forth and ever virgin. Throughout Asia, the dove was recognised as her symbol "and perhaps her totem animal."⁵⁸ (Strong in '**The Syrian Goddess**').

It is assumed by Legge that her appearance in the cosmology of the Gnostics (under the name of Sophia), was due to the necessity of affecting a harmony between Gentile and Jewish ideas. Some

of the relevant Jewish ideas were obviously discovered in that section of the Book of Proverbs, (chapters 8 and 9), where Wisdom (feminine) is described as existing from the beginning, "the daily delight of Yahweh," who is "rejoicing always before Him,"⁵⁹ (8: 30) and has been His instrument in creation.

Ophite traditions agreed that Sophia not only put forth a son without male assistance, but also provided for the birth of the man Jesus from the Virgin Mary.

Jesus being begotten from the Virgin by the operation of God, was wiser, purer and juster than all men. Christos united to Sophia descended on to Him (at His Baptism), and so Jesus Christ was made.⁶⁰ (from Iraneus).

(The upholders of this type of teaching regarded themselves as Christians).

Apparently the primary steps of Ophite teaching were presented by uneducated men. (The same comment may be made about practically all Christians of the Apostolic Age). The earlier Ophites were drawn to magical practices and to ecstatic forms of religion. The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into their own tongue gave them a great impetus for much speculation. They took every opportunity to reconcile Jewish tradition with the legends of the Greek Mysteries. In such circumstances, St. Paul's mission to Asia Minor not only was met with immediate success, but also, (according to Legge), was followed by an outburst of activity among the Gnostics.

Gnostic speculations were destined to pass out of the hands of the unlearned, as the skills of philosophers assumed a leading role in the affairs of men, and presented an almost irresistible appeal to other parties. For example Greek philosophy exercised a strong influence on the Judaism of the dispersion, and especially in Egypt. In Alexandria, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, (LXX), was produced during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285 - 246 B.C.). The Jewish Scriptures were therefore widely accessible. Old Testament religious ideas then were combined with Greek philosophical conceptions, such as Platonic and Stoic, "in a remarkable syncretism."⁶¹ The most influential of these interpreters was Philo (20 B.C. - 42), who translated his hereditary faith into Greek forms. By allegorical interpretation he found the Old Testament in harmony with the best in Platonism and Stoicism. "The belief that the Old Testament and Greek philosophy were in essential agreement was one of far reaching significance for the development of Christian theology."⁶² Within a hundred and fifty years from Philo's time the pattern was repeated in the "rising sect of Christians."⁶³ A school of Christian philosophy was founded in Alexandria under

Pantaenus, a converted Stoic philosopher. In this city Christian intellectual thinkers came to regard Greek philosophy as a tool to be used; and the greatest of them became experts at it.

Mosheim is critical of this philosophical influence and effect. He traces its origin to the rise of a new sect whose impact accelerated quickly throughout the Roman Empire, towards the close of the Second century. Not only were the other sects swallowed up by this phenomenon, Christianity was also greatly harmed. The new class of philosophers assumed the name 'Eclectic,' and appeared to lean towards Plato's teaching on God, the human soul and the universe. "This philosophy was adopted by such of the learned at Alexandria who wished to be accounted Christians, and yet to retain the name, the garb and the rank of philosophers."⁶⁴ **Pantaenus**, **Clemens Alexandrinus** and **Athenagorus** are believed to have given it their approval, having regarded true philosophy as "a great and salutary gift of God."⁶⁵

The eclectic mode of philosophizing was modified by **Ammonius Soccas** at the close of the second century, thereby laying the foundation for the Neo-Platonists. Born and educated a Christian, he may have held to some form of Christianity all his life, as he attempted to bring all sects and religions into harmony. He was convinced that Christ's sole aim was to set bounds to the reigning superstitions, which had been introduced periodically into religious practice, and then to correct errors that had crept in. But the ancient systems were not to be abolished completely. Ammonius Soccas acknowledged that Christ was an extraordinary man, the friend of God, and an admirable Theurge. He may have held the opinion that the disciples of Jesus had both corrupted and spoiled His system.

Alexandria also had a leading place among the markets of the world. Consequently its streets throbbed with a strong cosmopolitan ethos. Jewish merchants, Christian artisans, Buddhist monks and fetish worshippers from central Asia mingled together; "while the terms on which they met compelled a wide tolerance for one another's opinions, and predisposed its citizens to a practical amalgam of several apparently conflicting creeds."⁶⁶

Gnostic Teachers.

Gnosticism entered this arena possibly as early as the reign of the **Emperor Hadrian** (117 - 138). The Gnostic **Basilides**, was teaching in Alexandria during this period. In Antioch, **Saturninus**

presented a quasi-Christian system which betrayed Ophite influence. Its chief distinguishing feature was the hatred of Judaism (and its God), for whose overthrow (it affirmed), Christ had been sent. Saturninus, (and the Ophites) opposed marriage, declaring generation to be Satan's work.

Legge maintains that **Valentinus** transformed post-Christian Gnosticism from an esoteric or mystical explanation of pagan beliefs "into a form of Christianity, able to compete seriously with the Catholic Church."⁶⁷ The strong opposition to Valentinus displayed by the Fathers, such as **Irenaeus**, **Hippolytus**, **Tertullian** and **Justin Martyr**, indicates the popularity and success of his teaching. One school of thought holds that close contemporaries of Valentinus would hardly have considered him to have been an enemy of Christianity. **Clement of Alexandria** contradicted statements of this kind but without the vehemence of other opponents, such as, for example, **Praedestinatus**, who declared that Valentinus and his followers throughout the East "severely wounded the Church of God."⁶⁸

Clement remarked in '**Stromata**,' "that the Christian should rejoice in the name of Gnostic,"⁶⁹ but with the proviso that the true Gnostic was one who imitated God as far as possible. This would have almost endorsed **Tertullian's** remarks (in Legge's observation), to the effect, that there was some ground for supposing that Valentinus may have held views, similar to those of the Catholic Church, respecting the Divine Nature; but had been merely presenting an allegorical explanation of earlier opinions. In this way Valentinus may have attempted to convince his hearers that the teaching of the Apostles was more consistent with, rather than subversive in relation to the modes of thought among the ancient theologians and philosophers.

The sects of **Basilides** and **Valentinus** may have stood closest to orthodox Christianity; but their "attitude to matter as alien to the supreme God required the rejection of any genuine incarnation."⁷⁰ They held that 'blinded worldlings' saw the divine Christ as if He were actual flesh and blood, while those with deeper insight "perceived that he was pure spirit and that the physical appearance was an optical illusion and mere semblance."⁷¹ Legge is of the opinion that Valentinus had no intention of breaking with the Catholic Church, nor of creating any counter organisation. He and his followers probably maintained a regular adherence to the Church and its sacraments. If this were the case such a situation may have exercised a noticeable influence among the public. Their syncretistic Christianity allowed for such practices as, sharing in heathen sacrifices, attendance at the circus and theatres, together with permission to flee or renounce the faith in persecution.

Valentinianism became a "stop-gap or temporary faith,"⁷² (and especially in Egypt), which for two hundred years acted as "a half-way house between heathenism and Christianity."⁷³ Legge refers to **Renan's** comment that here was one of the forces "which enabled the ancient world to change from Paganism to Christianity without knowing it."⁷⁴ The system seems to have been especially attractive to learned and leisured classes. These groups made purposeful efforts to extract a rule of faith and conduct from the proliferation of creeds and philosophies that plighted the Empire during the first Christian centuries.

The Gnostics also contrasted the God of the Old Testament, "as the God in justice whose principle was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,"⁷⁵ with the loving Father, proclaimed by Jesus. This antithetical approach found a strong exponent in **Marcion**. He is listed by Chadwick as outside the mainstream of Gnosticism, in some respects, but nevertheless, as a most formidable heretical opponent, as far as the early Church was concerned. He came from Asia Minor and apparently was attracted to the ideas of **Cerdo**, a Syrian, who propounded a dualistic system, setting God and Matter in sharp opposition. It was argued that a good God could not have been the author of this wicked world. Marcion elaborated further on this, attempting to prove that the Creator of this world, was completely different "from the God and Father of Jesus, of whose existence the world had no inkling, until the fifteenth year of **Tiberius Caesar**, when Jesus suddenly appeared preaching the Gospel."⁷⁶ For Marcion it was inconceivable for the 'divine redeemer' to have been born of a woman. He therefore removed from St. Luke's Gospel the record of the birth and childhood of Jesus. After he had been expelled from the Catholic Church, he endeavoured to found another, based on the one he had left. By the death of **Gratian** (383), his church had spread over Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Syria and Persia.

In sub-Apostolic times, the Gnostics developed the imagery conveyed by the ecclesiastical symbolism of the Early Church. According to James, this symbolism was so deeply laid that it was inseparable from the allegory of the two Jerusalems in Galatians Ch. 4: 21 - 31, where the 'Church-spouse,' being the mother of us all, the Second Eve, became the means whereby the mystical union between its members and divine Head was being maintained. The Gnostics incorporated this imagery into their syncretisms "equating the role of the Graeco-Oriental Mother-Goddess with that of the Holy Ghost and the celestial polymorphous Mother."⁷⁷

Montanism

Another cause of unease confronted the Catholic Church at the end of the second century, with the emergence of a movement that reacted against the dull formality of general Church worship, and began to extend its influence widely. A tradition, recorded by **Jerome**, referred to a native of Ardaban. (near Phrygia), who was called **Montanus**, and who was reputed to have been a priest of **Cybele**, before his conversion to Christianity. The new convert, around the year 156, claimed for himself the special privilege of being the passive instrument through whom the Holy Spirit spoke. Thus the promise of Christ had been fulfilled and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit had begun. Two prophetesses, **Prisca** and **Maximilla** joined Montanus, and together they concurred with the anticipation of some others, such as **Cerinthus**, that the end of the world was imminent. The heavenly Jerusalem would be established in Phrygia. Therefore believers should move there and prepare themselves with vigorous religious practices.

James also emphasizes the ecstatic nature of worship in the Montanist Cultus. He observes that this phenomenon, represented as the coming of the Paraclete at Pentecost, manifested itself in prophesyings that were indistinguishable from the exclamations of the frenzied votaries of the Goddess. The exception was that the latter excited themselves into intense emotion in order to cause repentance and penitence. The movement initially was fairly orthodox, together with the expected eruptions of ecstasy. The Thrace-Phrygian episcopate endeavoured to restrain them, but without success. The vast majority of Phrygian Christians became Montanists. They had been accustomed to the orgiastic worship of Cybele, and therefore discovered in Montanist Christianity a degree of congeniality, in its ecstatic prophesyings, asceticism, sadistic love of suffering and the cult of martyrdom. Virginity was strongly urged; chastity was strictly enforced, because of the expectation of the Parousie and as preparation for the ecstasy that befitted those who belonged to the spotless Bride of Christ.

Montanism was strongly opposed and condemned by a number of Church Synods after 160. However in Thyatira, the church as a whole remained Montanist for nearly a century. The movement spread into the Rhone valley, into the Orient and into North Africa, and remained for some time. Its puritanism and revivalist ethics commended Montanism to **Tertullian**, "who died fulminating against

his former catholic brethren, because they imagined that the Church was constituted by bishops rather than spiritual men."⁷⁸

Such commentary coincides with an observation made on church membership by a German writer **Heussi**, that:

About 50 he was of the church, who had received baptism and the Holy Spirit, and called Jesus, Lord; about 180 he, who acknowledged the rule of faith (creed), the New Testament canon, and the authority of the bishops.⁷⁹

Walker feels that the struggle engendered by the Montanist and Gnostic crises, contributed to this change. Such a change would have further effects on the possible expansion of Mariology.

Manichaeism

Another of the heretical sects, the **Manichees**, were followers of a Syrian-speaking Babylonian, **Mani** (216 - 276). He had founded a dualistic religion of the Gnostic type, on an Iranian Zervanite basis. His aim was to provide a universal religion that would adequately satisfy both East and West. His effort to do so required a composition of elements taken from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Gnostic forms of Christianity.

The Mother of life was one of the most prominent figures in the Manichaen pantheon, and was reckoned to have projected the First Man. Legge argues for the case that her immediate origin was in the Great Mother-Goddess, worshipped throughout Western Asia, in the forms of Cybele, Isis and Demeter, and in all the goddesses of the Hellenistic pantheon. Her influence may be noticed in Egyptian Christianity. In the Coptic Church, a spell or amulet known as the Prayer of the Virgin, represented the Virgin Mary as declaring, "I am Mariham, I am Maria, I am the Mother of Life of the whole world."⁸⁰ The spell also appeared frequently in Ethiopic and Arabic versions. (In a work entitled '**Trattato Gnostico**' by **F. Rossi**, the magician says, "I entreat thee O God, by the great revered Virgin (parthenos). in whom the Father was concealed from the beginning, before He created anything."⁸¹ The Kukeans, who seems to have been a semi-Christian sect, taught that Jesus had come to earth to redeem His bride, the Mother of Life, who had been detained here.)

The manifold variety of doctrines and opinions may not have caused any great problems for faith in the early period of the '**one ecclesion catholica.**' But by the second century the rising tide of "all-subversive syncretism" compelled a search "for uniform norms of life and doctrine, for the compass of Scripture and for worship," (whereby membership of the one Church could become)

"visible and manifest."⁸² The oral tradition of the words of our Lord among the early Christians, had a strong authoritative standing, "even after the sayings and doings of the Lord had been written down in the 'gospel' according to Mark, Luke, Matthew or John."⁸³ Even as late as the time of Irenaeus (c.185 - 90) their authority had not yet been wholly merged with the written gospels. The controversies that were raised by Marcion and the Gnostics, "gave a sharp impetus to the control of authentic tradition which a written document possessed and which oral transmissions did not."⁸⁴ The consequences of this development left a number of regions stranded on the mould of heresy and rejection.

The Canon

The efforts of the Church to establish a norm for Christian and ecclesiastical teaching resulted in the gradual formation of the New Testament canon. In the history of the canon the decisive period was from c.140 - 200. Wilson takes the opinion of **W. Bauer** to the effect that, towards the end of the Second century, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark had full acceptance; the Gospel of Luke was only recognised with some hesitation; and the Gospel of John faced considerable opposition. **Epiphanius** (c.175) knew of some who rejected all the Johannine Writings.

The fixed primitive form of the canon appeared at the turn of the third century. The discussions on '**gnosis**' with Marcion, together with such convictions as those of Montanism, although instrumental, were not (in Wilson's judgement), entirely decisive in the formation of the new Testament. He intimates that the conflicts that ensued, caused the Church to follow prudence more closely in judging particular writings. "What was fundamental and apostolic was given precedence, but what was apostolic was determined by what was fundamental, i.e. by the confession and faith of the Church."⁸⁵

The Apocrypha.

Although the Church had exhibited a number of disagreements between East and West during the prolonged development of the Canon, by c. 400, the New Testament, with twenty-seven books, was officially recognised. Problems continued to emerge in particular Churches until the Sixth century. The Latin Church was quicker than the Eastern Church in defining what was ecclesiastical and what was heretical.

Over against the Canon were set the **Apocrypha**, described as 'extra-canonical', 'disputed,' or as "writings which are to be read aloud not in the Church, but in the presence of catechumens."⁸⁶ The root of the use of the term 'apocrypha' was found in Gentile-gnostic terminology. The conflict with gnosis gave the ecclesiastical writers opportunity to make use of the term. In doing so they rejected the occult sciences of the Gnostics, and gave the word a "fault-finding connotation."⁸⁷ Later the title was given exclusively to certain writings in the Septuagint.

The New Testament Apocrypha contained Gospels which were not admitted to the Canon, but which were intended either to take the place of the four Gospels, or to amplify them and reinforce such beliefs, as, for example, the Virgin Birth). For some time a large selection of the apocryphal literature enjoyed great popularity in the Churches. The 'Canon' could not compete with them. Wilson suggests that apocryphal Gospels and Synoptic records may have developed together in the earliest times. The **Gospel of Peter** (and possibly the **Gospel of the Egyptians**), was clearly dependent on the Synoptics. Origen reckoned that those, who affirmed that the brothers of Jesus were the progeny of the first marriage of Joseph, had relied on a tradition of the Gospel of Peter or on the Book of James.

Wilson defines a second type of Apocryphal gospel, as exemplified by the **Gospel of Thomas**, or the **Apocryphon of John**. In these Gnosis became prominent and used the opportunity to disseminate the doctrines of that movement. The intention was to reveal knowledge of 'the Beginning' together with the course and destination of the Universe, and of man. In these writings, reports were given of dialogues between Jesus and His disciples. (In the Gospel of Mary, the risen Jesus instructed His Apostles, and Mary detailed a vision of the progress of the 'gnostic' soul through the seven planetary spheres). The motivation to supplement familiar material led to a third type, which has been located in the **Infancy Gospels**, the **Gospel of Nicodemus** and in literature referring to Pilate. In Wilson's opinion,

Christians have fastened their pious interest upon the figure of Jesus, and upon the persons who, in the canonical Gospels are mentioned in association with Him, and fantasy has taken possession of them. Legends of every kind, normally met with in folk-literature, are transferred to Jesus and these other figures.⁸⁸

It can be observed that these compositions not only expressed a popular piety initially, but also "moulded and influenced the popular piety of later centuries."⁸⁹

Wilson believes that there was a tendency to draw upon extraneous legendary material, even in the infancy stories of Matthew and Luke. What appeared to develop, with the march of time, was an unrestrained "application to Jesus, of what is recounted about the birth and infancy of the sons of gods and children of supernatural origin,"⁹⁰ The flight into Egypt, recorded in the infancy narrative of Matthew, "supplied rich soil for the growth of fantasy and the borrowing of extraneous material."⁹¹

Narrative interests are seen by Wilson to have surpassed theological concern in the later development of the birth and infancy stories. The peripheral figures of the primitive tradition, who had been involved directly with Jesus, began to receive greater attention. Consequently they acquired a value of their own and became "vehicles of exclusive legendary motifs,"⁹² especially, in the cases of Mary and Joseph. Their places in the narrative supported the intention to demonstrate the connection of Jesus with Israel, and with the Royal House of David.

Mary and Joseph were promoted to figures of growing importance. Mary's parents were discovered. A miraculous birth and perpetual virginity supplemented her history. A loose connection with Jesus was eventually restored in such apocryphal gospels as the '**Protevangelium of James**' and the '**History of Joseph the Carpenter.**' (The former was given a number of titles, for example, '**Birth of Our Lord and Lady Mary,**' (Syriac translation): and in later Greek manuscripts, '**Birth of Saint Mary, Mother of God.**')

The Book of James recounted the miraculous birth of Mary, daughter of a wealthy Joachim and his wife Anne: her upbringing in the Temple: and her virginity, which was not impaired, either by the widower Joseph, (to whom she was entrusted by lot), or by the birth of Jesus. Wilson dates the book at 150, (at the earliest). The contents presupposed the canonical infancy stories. Material from Matthew and Luke was used freely. A reference to Jesus' birth in a cave at Bethlehem may point to an oral tradition.

Ignorance of the geography of Palestine and of Jewish customs points to a non-Jewish author. (Marina Warner notes that some scholars have suggested a Greek Jew of the diaspora, since "the author drew heavily on the Pentateuch,"⁹³ and blended Jewish material and Greco-Roman customs). Jews would have viewed with abhorrence the admission of a female to the inner precincts of the Temple, as described in the Book. "Virginity itself was an unknown and unholy course."⁹⁴ Yet the concern of the High Priest for the holiness of the sanctuary, (at the approach of Mary's puberty),

indicated sensitivity to Jewish ideas. Virgin priestesses were part of pagan custom, common to Syria, where the earliest manuscript of the **Protevangelium** originated.

All the future Mariological themes were presented. Although the Immaculate Conception was not taught, the Virgin Birth of Mary was recorded and understood as implying her perpetual virginity, ("in contrast to the more unbiased views of Tertullian and Origen"⁹⁵). The problem of the earlier tradition's reference to the 'brothers of Jesus' was surmounted by the claim that Joseph had a family by a previous marriage. This explanation was accepted as plausible until the time of Jerome, who was strongly critical of the **Protevangelium of James**. (For him the 'brothers' of Jesus were really the 'cousins' of Jesus). The Popes also voiced their criticisms. In the Eastern Church the book found widespread popularity from the beginning. The Ebionites (initially), and the Greek Fathers, delighted in the book. In Syrian, Coptic and Armenian churches it was greatly valued because of the praise given to the ideal of virginity.

Wilson believes that devotion to Mary had made considerable and obvious advances by the time this book was written; he makes the observation that "the whole work is written for the glorification of Mary."⁹⁶ Furthermore, attributes previously reserved for Jesus were being ascribed to Mary. In both the East and in the West the **Protevangelium** became such "a powerful factor in the development of Mariology, that even recent developments in Catholicism betray its influence."⁹⁷

The Story.

Joachim and Anna bemoaned the fact of their barrenness. Anna pleaded with God to bless her as he has blessed Sarah. The woes of Anna were received sympathetically in Heaven. An angel came to her, indicating that the Lord not only had heard, but also had answered her request. She would be blessed in the birth of a child, who "would be spoken off in the whole world."⁹⁸ Anna's delighted response included a promise that the child would be dedicated to the Lord, and to the Temple. Joachim also received the news from a heavenly visitor. At the birth, Anna, on learning of the sex of her child, exclaimed, "My soul is magnified this day."⁹⁹ She called the baby, Mary, and cared for her devotedly.

(Jewish astrologers had anticipated the birth of Messiah at the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces. Geoffrey Ashe notes that such a conjunction occurred on three occasions in 7 B. C., on the 29th. May, 3rd. October and 4th. December; and could have stirred hopes for the birth of

someone of significance. Combining this information with the possibility of Mary's marriage at the age of fourteen, (and allowing nine months), Ashe reckons that she may have been born around 22 B. C. - perhaps in Nazareth).

On her first birthday, Joachim organised a great feast in honour of his daughter, Those invited included the chief priests, priests and scribes, the elders and the whole people of Israel. At Joachim's insistence, the priests blessed Mary and prayed that her name would be renowned "for ever among all generations."¹⁰⁰ The chief priests asked God to bless her "with a supreme and unsurpassable blessing."¹⁰¹

Mary's parents took her to the Temple when she had reached the age of three years. There, the priest took her and blessed her saying, "The Lord has magnified your name among all generations; because of you, the Lord, at the end of the days will manifest His redemption to the children of Israel."¹⁰²

The age of twelve years placed Mary in an awkward position with the onset of her puberty. The priests met in council to decide her situation lest the Temple would be polluted. The High Priest's petitioning in the Holy of Holies received an answer from the angel of the Lord. Widowers among the people were to be assembled (each bearing a rod). The Lord would give a sign to one of them. Mary would be his wife. Joseph was one of the number who responded to the herald. He received the miraculous sign - a dove came out of his rod and landed on his head. Upon learning of the necessary commitment to and for the "virgin of the Lord,"¹⁰³ Joseph declared his reluctance to act, seeing that he already had a grown family. However the priest managed to persuade him to take Mary to his home.

The story has also recorded how Mary was called to the Temple, together with seven other pure virgins. There she was engaged in weaving a veil for the Temple. On completion of the work, she again heard the blessing of the Lord God, (from the priest), that He had magnified her name, and that she would be blessed among all generations of the earth.

St. Luke's accounts of the Annunciation and of Mary's meeting with Elizabeth were used by the **Protevangelium**, which represented Mary as a sixteen year old, when these things happened, and as so fearful in her pregnancy, that she fled into hiding. In the sixth month of her pregnancy Joseph,

having returned from distant employment, discovered her condition. His predictable reaction, constrained him to muse:

Has the story (of Adam) been repeated in me? For as Adam was (absent) in the hour of his prayer, and the serpent came and found Eve alone, and deceived her and defiled her, so also has it happened to me.¹⁰⁴

Mary's protest of innocence was met with incredulity on the part of her husband. After struggling to find some satisfactory solution to his problem Joseph retired to rest. He also was confronted by the angel, who assured him of the true circumstances of Mary's condition. He glorified God and prepared to care for his wife.

In the course of time, the Temple authorities assumed that Joseph had consummated his marriage, secretly. Mary had therefore been defiled; and neither Joseph's nor her protestations were heeded. The High Priest ordered Joseph to bring Mary back to the Temple. Both of them were then tested in "the water of the conviction of the Lord."¹⁰⁵ No sin being detected, they were released and glorified God.

The census of Augustus resulted in the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. On the route Mary went into labour. Joseph brought her to a cave, and left her in the care of his sons. He searched for and found a Hebrew mid-wife. He explained the circumstances of the betrothal to the stranger, who reacted excitedly when she witnessed the scene in the cave. "My soul is magnified to-day, for my eyes have seen wonderful things; salvation is born to Israel,"¹⁰⁶ she exclaimed. A cloud that had been overshadowing the cave disappeared, and a great blinding light took its place. In a short time "that light withdrew until the child appeared, and it went and took the breast of its mother Mary."¹⁰⁷ The astonished mid-wife left the scene.

Outside the cave she met Salome and inform her of the miracle; but was received with scepticism. In an effort to determine Mary's virginity, Salome asked Mary to show herself, and then examined her. At that moment Salome's hand was withered by fire. Her pleas for forgiveness because of unbelief, and her promise to heal in Jesus' name, if her hand were restored, received an answer from an angel, who told her to pick up the baby. When she did that, her hand was restored. Salome was then warned to keep secret these events, until the child's entry into Jerusalem. At this point, the visit of the wise men, together with Herod's part in the story, were introduced, followed by the flight into Egypt. These scenes reflected the Matthew record.

Infancy Gospels.

Wilson follows the opinion that Infancy gospels may have been written by Gnostics at an early date, but not as original works. In their accounts they inevitably presented a "child Jesus in appearance,"¹⁰⁸ and as one who did not need any further development, "since He possessed the full revelation in its entirety, and already had unlimited power to perform miracles."¹⁰⁹ The tendency towards Docetism encouraged such a definition. Consequently the manner of telling the birth story was affected. All traces of a normal human origin, in the record of Mary giving birth to Jesus, were eliminated. Epiphanius in his **Haereses 26** mentioned a '**Pre-history of Mary**', which had been written by Gnostics at an early stage, and which betrayed a dependence on the **Protevangelium of James**, in Gnostic circles.

The "natural law of the growth of legend"¹¹⁰ was evident in the creation of new accounts of the infancy of Jesus, based on both the '**Protevangelium**' and '**The Gospel of Thomas**'. The latter account was in circulation around the end of the second century. The familiar incident described by St. Luke, where Jesus was brought to the Passover feast at the age of twelve years, was slightly augmented in the **Gospel of Thomas**. To the Biblical record of conversations was added an interchange between Mary and the Scribes and Pharisees. They inquired, "Are you the mother of the child?"¹¹¹ To Mary's positive response, they declared, "Blessed are you among women, because the Lord has blessed the fruit of your womb."¹¹²

An Arabic Infancy Gospel remains extant in a number of manuscripts. The birth of Jesus, miracles in Egypt, (in which Mary played a dominant role), and miracles of Jesus, make up the contents. The Armenian Infancy gospel borrowed all the material of the '**Protevangelium**' and expanded the account. The birth of Mary as described in Coptic literature became a source for the sermons of **Cyril of Jerusalem**, **Demetrius of Antioch**, **Cyril of Alexandria** and others.

Although these developing legends were condemned by the Popes, they enjoyed an increasing popularity among church-people. The need to collect and to collate the material, according to Wilson, was satisfied in the '**psendo-Matthew**', written sometime in the eighth or ninth century to further the veneration of Mary as the queen of virgins. In this work Mary's vow of perpetual virginity was emphasized by the assertion that at the age of 14 years, she had refused marriage.

Comment.

Commentary on Mary's place in the early teaching of the Church cannot escape the tension between the inferences that were drawn from Scripture, and the simple scriptural record itself. It would seem that the proclamation of the Early Church required no more than the recorded testimony.

The efforts of the first missionaries of the Christian faith to struggle with the dangers of eclecticism, and with the animosity of orthodox Judaism, enjoyed degrees of success. Inevitably their venture into new cultures brought them face to face with the problems of explaining both the prominence and the uniqueness of Mary, because of possible identification with the familiar Mother figure. It is noteworthy that a number of the Church Fathers were converts from some of the gnostic sects; yet gnosticism seems to have left an indelible trace in some expressions of Christianity.

The composition of the canon of Scripture can hardly be regarded as an adequate platform for Mariology. However the legacy of the 'legends' about Mary retained some currency. Many of those 'questionable texts' competed successfully with the canonical writings. Mary and Joseph attained greater prominence; devotion to Mary increased.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE SEARCH FOR MARY.

'Perspective,' in the New Imperial Reference Dictionary is defined as "a picture or model that seems confused, except when viewed in the right direction, or in some other way, gives a fantastic effect."¹ Such an explanation would appear to justify the application of the term to investigations into Mariology. The observation of Hilda Graef that, "every age unconsciously forms its image of the Virgin according to its own ideal,"² gives some confirmation to this proposition. The formation of respective images has been dictated frequently by the exertion of influences which have either dislodged Mary from the simple Biblical record, or re-introduced her within specific Biblical interpretations.

The Jewish Background

The Jews must have had little, if any, constant recourse to female deity, seeing that their male God adequately satisfied their expectation. But Ashe propounds the notion that the 'Eternal - Womanly' was not completely excluded from their devotion.

She had quietly found a footing in holy-writand therefore subordinate, she could not be altogether suppressed or deprived of her power to work on imagination.³

Some of the prophets in representing Israel as a human figure, symbolized Yahweh's elect community as a woman - 'His betrothed' (Hosea 2: 19). Israel, centred on the holy city Jerusalem, was the 'daughter of Zion' or 'daughter of Judah.' Such a personification enabled the rabbis to come to terms with the 'Song of Songs.' They allegorized "the ecstatic drama of profane love,"⁴ which had found its way into the sacred writings. The 'beloved', they took to be Israel, and the book was about God's love for her.

But its language went so far beyond what was needed for such a message that the image of a living person - not indeed a divine one, but a woman - immortal, combining unique beauty, with high and holy meaning - was inexorably evoked.⁵

Ashe sees the female in the Jewish Scriptures represented also in the mysterious demi-goddess, called Wisdom. Proverbs Ch. 8: 22, in presenting Wisdom as having existed before the world, and as having helped Yahweh in bringing order out of chaos, would seem to indicate an actual person, rather

than "a personified quality of wise people."⁶ But, in his commentary on this chapter in Proverbs, C.H. Toy refers to Wisdom as the creature, not the child of Yahweh, since the reference in verse 24, "seems to be a pure figure of speech (parallel to 'formed' in verse 22), with no reference to physical begetting."⁷ In the Apocrypha, Wisdom appears more extensively and "as a person with dispute;"⁸ for example, in Ch. 24 of Ecclesiasticus. "Wisdom praises herself, and tells of her glory in the midst of her people....;" - "I came forth from the month of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist....;" - "Then the creator of all things gave me a commandment, and my Creator chose the place for my tent," and said. "Make your dwelling in Jacob. and in Israel receive your inheritance." (verses 1, 3, 8).⁹

How this 'demi-goddess' found a place in the sacred writings has yet to be explained. According to Ashe, the impulse behind the texts was "the same dissatisfaction with the male deity, that was bringing back aspects of the Goddess with her satellite-myths in other places."¹⁰ For the Jew, God had become remote and beyond comprehension. The description of personal Wisdom in Old Testament literature gave some answer to questions such as that of Job (.28: 12): "But where shall wisdom be found?"¹¹

The Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon explains how Wisdom provided guidance towards immortality in the world to come. "Even within Judaism, that renewed hope is here connected with the female. It hovers strangely alongside the more approved comfort of Messianic promise."¹² The imagery used by Ben Sirach in the 'Apocrypha,' has combined several forms of the 'Eternal-Womanly' in moulding the female Wisdom in Jewish scripture. For example the Greek wisdom-goddess Athene, and those goddesses found in the Canaanite Phoenician literature, which had been deliberating on wisdom since the Seventh century B.C., provided a possible source for the Hebrew writers. In Ecclesiasticus, the descent of Wisdom to earth and to the abyss below, may be likened to the descent to the underworld by Anoth, Canaan's mighty virgin. Again Ashe quotes Canon Wilfred Knox,

The personified Wisdom is a female figure, definitely in the divine side of the Gulf which separates God from man ... The lady who dwells in the city of Jerusalem and in its Temple, who is also compared to all the forest trees of Hermon and the luxuriant verdure of the Jordan Valley, is the great Syrian goddess Astarte, at once the goddess of great cities and the mother manifested in the fertility of nature.¹³

Accepting this observation, Ashe assumes that in some Jewish minds, perhaps influenced by heretical tendencies, "monotheism cracked so as to let this being in."¹⁴

Spotlight on Wisdom

K.A. Kitchen strongly resists the tendency of some to doubt or even deny that the Israelites had any "advanced theological concepts, until during or after the Babylonian exile,"¹⁵ (from the Sixth century B.C. onwards). Such ideas have been found in written documents, common to the world of the Ancient Near East, in the Third and Second millenium B.C..

With this ubiquitous and inescapable background, there is no reason whatever, for denying consciousness of such concepts to the Hebrew at any point in their history.¹⁶

Kitchen takes the personification of Wisdom, in Proverbs, chapters 8 and 9, as an example. He declares that this has nothing to do with Greek influence in the Fourth-Third century B.C., as has often been claimed. The practice was similar to that used in the personification of Truth, Justice, Intelligence, Understanding and so on, from the Third and Second millenia B.C. in both Egypt and Mesopotamia, "and during the Second millenium B.C. among Hittites, Hurrians and Canaanites as well."¹⁷ In *The Living World of the Old Testament*, Bernard W. Anderson accepts the picture of wisdom in Proverbs Ch. 8: 22 - 31, as a distinct personality with a cosmic status, and as "moving toward becoming an hypostasis - that is a distinct entity."¹⁸

H. Wheeler Robinson highlights three passages which may be taken as test passages in the examination of this progress of Wisdom, from personification to an hypostasis, that is to say, "an entity conceived to exist in independence of men's thought, and to mediate between God and men."¹⁹

In Proverbs Ch. 8: 22, "The Lord created me at (as) the beginning of His work (way), the first of His acts of long ago;" (and verse 30), "I was beside Him as a master worker."²⁰ Robinson looks on this personification of Wisdom as having been subjected to Greek influences, which operated at the period of these compositions, namely the Third century B.C.. However he does not regard this to be anything more than "the familiar Hebrew way of making vivid individualization replace our abstract thought."²¹ In his estimation Wisdom is a divine attribute and remains so, being declared in the creative work of God. "Wisdom is not an entity in its own right, though the poetical description depicts it as having an independent existence."²² C.H. Toy in the I.C.C. Commentary on Proverbs, does not find any "architectonic activity"²³ in the intimate association between Wisdom and Yahweh in verse 30 (of Chapter 8). "In itself it conveys only the idea that God's work was characterised by Wisdom."²⁴

In Ecclesiasticus Chapter 24, Wisdom is personified as seeking entrance among the nations. But at Yahweh's command she finds her inheritance in Israel, "where she reached concrete expression in the divine Torah."²⁵ Robinson regards the revelation of Mount Sinai as the supreme manifestation of Wisdom, whose role of mediation "is handed over to that concrete expression of God's will."²⁶ He does not find any hypostasis here; instead Wisdom has been transformed into the most cherished possession of Israel.

In the Wisdom of Solomon, (which had stronger Greek influences), the conception of Wisdom was developed further. She was described as an "immanent divine person."²⁷ In Chapter 7: 22,23, she was depicted as, "a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty :....a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of His goodness....."²⁸ As an 'effluence' and 'effulgence' of God, Wisdom, (for Robinson), portrayed as always dependent on Him, could not have been strictly called a hypostasis

Distant divinities and Judaism.

According to E.O. James, the Baal became the predominant figure among the divinities. Initially El and Anat together may have held sway. It is possible that Anat (or Anoth) "sensuous and perennially fruitful, yet without losing her virginity"²⁹ had been principally connected with sex and war. Her great rival and enemy was Asherah, the consort and daughter of El, to whom she bore seventy gods and goddesses, thereby earning herself the titles of 'Creatress of the gods,' and 'Lady of the seas,' (according to **H. Junker**).

From the Aramaic papyri, unearthed at Elephantine, came evidence of a Jewish community with a temple for the worship of Yahweh, around 525 B.C.; and which probably could be traced to an earlier period. "It seems that this was a pre-Deuteronomiac foundation, established in the interests of Jewish troops sent into the service of Egypt in the Seventh century B.C.."³⁰ James points out that Anat appeared in the papyri as compounded with Yahu, as the consort of Yahweh. That in turn leads Rowley to conclude that the worship of Anat (and other deities), in the Jewish colony at Elephantine, pointed to the possibility that the sacred marriage was not unknown in Israel. However he admits that the evidence of these papyri may be questioned, and refers to W.F. Albright's assertion that "what appears to be separate deities, are hypostatized aspects of Yahweh."³¹ On the wall at

Mizpah (Tellen-Nasbeh) north of Jerusalem, temples of Asherah and Yahweh appear to have stood side by side in the Ninth century B.C..

Before 600 B.C. Jerusalem did harbour a cult of Astarte, as Queen of Heaven. Efforts had been made time and time again by the mono -Yahwists of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to reform religion. The goddess cult was so deeply ingrained that it was still flourishing in the last days of the monarchy after the death of Josiah (609 B.C.) Jeremiah voiced his displeasure and dismay at the sight of children in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, gathering wood for fires to be kindled by their fathers, for the worship of the Queen of Heaven. Jeremiah discovered Jews in Egypt who were worshipping a divinity with the same title. They burned incense to her and made her offerings of food. Women played their part in kneading the dough for sacrificial cakes, on which her image was inscribed. (Jeremiah 7: 18, 44: 15 ff.). The Queen worshipped by Jews in Egypt, may have been Anoth, (who had been hailed as Queen of Heaven and mistress of all the gods). Anoth came to be merged with Athene. Ashe conjectures that, when the Greek-Ptolemaic dynasty ruled Palestine, it would have been easy to draw the life-giving Lady Wisdom (Anoth-Athene) to Yahweh's side, and that, as a literary motif, 'wisdom' could have attracted such as Astarte's Goddess-imagery. While these suggestions may be speculative, Ashe is convinced that the presence of female deity in Judaism, at the beginning of the Christian era, does not depend on mere conjecture.

While one set of texts evoked the Virgin Daughter of Zion, another evoked the Virgin Wisdom dwelling in Zion, trailing phantasms of a pagan past behind her.³²

In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Amos (Ch.5), and Hosea (Ch.10), denounced the cultus at such local shrines as Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. James reckons that refugees from Bethel played an important part in the development of the syncretistic cults at Elephantine in the Sixth and Fifth centuries B.C..

The general view of the period leading into the Christian era, supports a picture of strong, hopeful anticipation of a momentous deliverance. For the Jews this would be realised in the Messiah; for the Gentiles, their hopes could be focussed on the likes of the divine child prophesied in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. The dominance of the male rôle in that expected salvation was obvious. Yet the less familiar had become evident, namely, that there was also a rôle of a woman to be filled, "A resurgent daydream for a woman to realise."³³ The complexity of the matter did not permit a clear definition in

terms of a real person. In an attempt to find words for it, **Bernano** in his novel, 'The Diary of a Country Priest,' has a Curé de Torcy speaking of the "ancient world of sorrowdimly waiting a 'virgo' genetrix."³⁴ Ashe regards this as an over-simplification, but more right than wrong. "The throne of the Queen of Heaven could admit a visible occupant, a woman embodying the vision."³⁵ That vision would be fulfilled through the Goddess-like power of bestowing life - "through giving humanity a saviour, a rescuer from bondage to death."³⁶

Ashe disapproves of any negative pruning of the Gospels in the attempt to construct a comprehensive description of the place of Mary. The strength of critical analysis should be supplemented by 'myths' or legends,' which in other contexts would normally have been discarded. He contends that it will be possible to discover new realities and relevant points in relation to the Virgin's position, when the extra-scriptural accounts of Mary are taken seriously. The scriptural references are too restrictive. For him, the opportunity exists, outside the New Testament record, to disclose a number of facts that demonstrate this. "Her cult is rooted in events which the Church belatedly came to terms with, but obscured in the process."³⁷

The Name.

The use of the name Mary has been significant. While maintaining that the derivation of the name is doubtful, Ashe reckons that St. Matthew may have regarded Mary as aptly named, because of her involvement in salvation. To a lesser degree her namesake Miriam (Moses' sister), had participated in God's saving activity. Jewish tradition calls her the 'Saviour of Israel' and makes her an ancestress of David. Another possible source of the name has been located in the Egyptian prefix 'meri,' ('beloved'), which was combined with a god's name to form a human one, for example, Meri-Ra, ('Beloved of God'). The use of an early form of the name of the God of Israel, 'Yam' would have given the name 'Meri-Yam', ('Beloved of Yahweh'). Lexicographers have located the derivation of the name in the Hebrew 'Mara', ('bitter'), which was the proper name of a fountain in the desert of Sinai. (Exodus Ch. 15: 23). Sometimes the name has been construed to mean, 'lady', 'prophetess' and 'the proud.'

In the Roman Empire the name had other applications for Gentiles. Because of the Latin word for sea ('mare', plural 'maria') Mary, herself could have been associated with the sea; and besides,

in antiquity, the Goddess, in some of her appearances had risen from the sea. Thus imagery unknown to Hebraic minds was drawn to Mary, who received such epithets as 'Myrrh of the Sea', 'Drop of the Sea,' ('**Stilla Maris**,' from which the title, **Stella Maris** or 'Star of the Sea,' was taken.)

Mary in the Old Testament.

Mary's place in the Scriptures, according to tradition, was not restricted to the New Testament. In some Roman Catholic studies in Mariology, there is a prediction of the coming of the mother of God's Son, based on certain Old Testament passages which, allegedly, foreshadowed her rôle. The study is based on the principle that as God prepared the way for His Son, so He also prepared the way for His Son's mother. In this regard, the first mention of Christ and His mother in the Scripture is to be found in Genesis, (3: 15), where God addressing the Serpent, declares, "I will put enmity between you and the women, and between your offspring (seed) and hers: he will (crush) strike your head, and you will strike his heel."³⁸ Protestants defend the messianism, but dispute any Marian substance, in this reference.

The word 'seed' in Hebrew '**zera**' is a masculine noun, used, nearly always, in the collective sense of 'offspring'. The Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament), renders the word by the neuter, '**sperma**'. In continuing the reference to 'offspring,' in this verse, the Hebrew writer used the masculine pronoun '**hu**', (very often used as a demonstrative one), and which should be translated 'it.' Usually within the Christian tradition '**hu**' has been taken as a reference to Christ, and translated 'he.' The Masoretic practice of adding vowels to the usually consonantal formation of Hebrew words, sometimes produced a feminine form. A basis was therefore offered for the reading '**ipsa**' ('she'), in the Latin Vulgate. This gave another rendering of the verse, with the woman crushing the head of the serpent, and thereby, reinforcing the mariological appreciation of Genesis 3: 15, in the Western Church. Other opinion has queried the accuracy of this rendering, which has been retained in a new edition of the Vulgate, "since the editors thought it St. Jerome's original reading."³⁹

The translators of the Septuagint used the masculine '**autos**', 'he' (for '**hu**'). The passage has therefore been given its Messianic connotation. The majority of contemporary Catholic theologians follow this reading, and many deduce that, seeing Christ was envisaged, the 'woman' must have referred to His mother, Mary. Because the declaration from God to the serpent had an extended

context, other theologians have suggested that the 'woman' referred to both Eve and to Mary, or that "the words refer to Eve in the literal sense, but without excluding Mary."⁴⁰ In this context, the progression of progeny would inevitably arrive at the mother of the promised one.

Since Eve, far from crushing the head of the serpent, had herself been seduced by it, it seemed obvious that 'the woman', must be other than Eve: indeed it must be Mary herself, the 'second Eve,' who through her obedience, repaired the damage done by the first.⁴¹

In his commentary on Genesis, John Skinner mentions that **Irenaeus**, Bishop of Lyons (Second century), taught that the 'seed' (of the woman), spoke of the person of Christ, "but was never so generally accepted in the Church, as the kindred idea, that the serpent is the instrument of Satan."⁴² The '*ipsa*' of the Vulgate was taken by mediaeval exegetes as an expression that could be applied directly to the Virgin Mary; for **Luther**, an allusion to the virgin birth of Christ was discernible in this pronoun. In **Calvin's** view the statement in Genesis 3: 15 held out to mankind, united in Christ its divine Head, a promise of victory over the devil. Skinner feels that such a view goes beyond the original meaning of the verse and doubts that the passage can be regarded as a Protevangelium.

Another difficulty has arisen from the use of the Hebrew verb '**shuf**', (to bruise or wound), which, according to the Massoretic text, occurs twice in the latter part of the verse, but each time in a different form. In the Septuagint two forms of the Greek, '**tereo**,' (to observe, to lie in wait), correspond to the Hebrew. The verb '**shuf**' in other semitic languages means 'to crush.' The proper application of the word is faced with the conclusion that "a perfectly satisfactory interpretation cannot be given."⁴³ The suggestion has been made that two different verbs, '**shuf**', may have been intended. In the Douay version of the Bible, 'to crush' and then 'to lie in wait' have been used. 'To crush' has been considered by some as inappropriate for this context. 'To lie in wait', may convey the idea of 'to strike'. 'To bruise', can hardly apply to the serpent's mode of attack.

The position of the two combatants anticipated the superiority, and consequently, the ultimate success, of the seed of the woman. In Genesis 3: 20, "the man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of the living."⁴⁴ Seed therefore could have referred to the human race or mankind. In this context 'seed' would have been commonly used in the collective sense; but the pronoun (he) in Genesis 3: 15, refers to the seed of the woman. Frequently, 'seed' in the Old Testament designates an individual. For example, in Genesis 4: 26, "God has appointed for me another child (seed)....."⁴⁵ and in other examples, 'seed' is 'son'. but never 'daughter'. 'Her seed' (the woman's), is opposed to the

serpent itself, as an individual. According to the law of parallelism, the seed of the woman may be regarded as an individual. The individual serpent would then be defeated by an individual (male) opponent belonging to the human race. Furthermore, many Catholics have attributed the narratives of Paradise and the fall of man to the Yahwistic tradition of the period around the Ninth century B.C. The promises given by God, then, were pointing to a future ruler. It is suggested that the Yahwistic writer, in devising the Creation story, may have intended this ruler to be the 'seed' of the woman; thereby ascribing an individual and a messianic sense to it. (The use of the definite article in 'the woman' would normally indicate a reference to the person (or thing) already mentioned; in this case, Eve. On the contrary, J. Coppens states that the article so placed in Genesis 3: 15, could allow for an allusion to the female sex, as for example in Genesis 2: 23-24. Rigaux also concurs with this textual interpretation).

The Female Figure.

In such books as Proverbs (Chapter 8), Ecclesiasticus (Chapter 24), and The Wisdom of Solomon (Chapter 7), wisdom has been portrayed as female. (The New Testament at times describes Jesus as divine wisdom (1 Corinthians 1: 24); but wisdom, in both Hebrew and Greek has a feminine gender). This, together with the explanation in some passages, that 'she' had been created by God, gradually helped to effect a change of reference from Jesus to Mary, especially in the liturgy.

The personification of Israel or Zion as female, together with the figure of the Daughter of Zion, especially since she was portrayed as a pregnant woman and promised great joy after the birth of her child, contained, for some, particular foreshadowings of Mary. (For example, Isaiah 66: 7-14, and Zephaniah 3: 14 - 20).

In Isaiah 7: 14, the promise given by the prophet to King Ahaz, that God would give him a sign to alleviate his fears, was introduced by the assertion: "Look, the young woman (virgin) is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel."⁴⁶ St. Matthew took the position that the fulfilment of this sign was realised in the birth-story of Jesus. (St. Matthew 1: 22 and 23). Matthew's use of this quotation (from the Septuagint) has given rise to much controversy.

The Hebrew word '**alma**, which comes from the stem '**lm** ('to be strong', 'vigorous'), is not strictly a technical term for 'virgin' (rather, a young woman of marriageable age). There is no proof

that it meant a young married woman. Such a girl would have been a virgin. For example in Genesis 24: 43, Eliezer called Rebecca an '**almah**'; and in verse 36, she was said to have been a **betulah**, which only means virgin; '**almah** has a broader application than **betulah** and "normally though not necessarily includes virginity."⁴⁷ While the former has been translated into the Greek '**parthenos**,' which may or may not convey the meaning 'virgin', in most instances the Hebrew equivalent of '**parthenos**' is '**bethula**.' It has been suggested that Isaiah used '**almah**' because '**betulah**' excluded the idea of childbearing. Box follows a **Professor Dalman's** finding that there has been no trace "of any Messianic application among the Jews of these words concerning the Virgin's Son."⁴⁸ Hilda Graef refers to an article '**Alma**', by a German theologian, **A. Schulz**, who conducted an extensive study of the use of the word. His investigation led to the conclusion that the translation 'virgin' suited each rendering.

Another influential factor in Isaiah's prediction may have been the strong feeling, at that time, (among the Canaanites, Egyptian and other Middle East nations; and in particular, the Phoenicians, with whom the neighbouring Israelites had relations), that "the extraordinary, even virginal birth of a child, was to introduce a new era of happiness."⁴⁹ Isaiah, and the more cultured of the people, would have known of such literature as the Ugaritic texts. Thus "the idea of virgin birth would not have been too extravagant to the prophet's hearers."⁵⁰ An English Jesuit, E. Burrows, (in '**The Oracle of Jacob and Balaam**,' London, 1938), concluded that, because of his knowledge of these texts, Isaiah "stripped them of mythological elements and applied them to certain eschatological and messianic ideas already known from the blessings of Jacob."⁵¹ (Genesis 49). His speculation that these blessings referred to the signs of the zodiac, have convinced him that the ideal king would also have been presaged by such a sign, namely, 'Virgin.' "When Isaiah spoke of the virgin bearing a son, his audience would have understood that he meant, Messiah."⁵² The construction of the promise could have expressed an immediate or a more distant future. Similar wording is found in Genesis 16: 11, and in Judges 13: 7. In Isaiah the emphasis was on Yahweh's personal intervention. "The mother is called '**almah**, precisely to insist all the more that, by God's intervention, the child would be born."⁵³

R. Laurentin, ('**Court Traité de théologie Mariale**,' p.141), is of the opinion that Isaiah, being acquainted with the ideas of a new era of happiness, may have used them for his own purpose. Others question this commentary. Laurentin also agrees with J. Steinman ('**Le Prophète Isaie**, 1950'), who

found in the prophecy a direct reference to the birth of Hezekiah, together with an eschatological and messianic application. Laurentin suggests that this messianic element was discovered by post-exilic Judaism. There appears to be a consensus of opinion among Catholics that, according to the teaching of the Church, there must be some reference to Jesus and Mary in this text "in the literal or typical sense."⁵⁴

Jean Daniélou notes that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament had been translated into both Aramaic and Greek by different parties, within the period that immediately preceded and followed the initial emergence of Christianity. While the Septuagint has remain the most important of the Greek translations, fragments have also survived of Greek translations by **Aquila**, **Theodotion** and **Symmachus**. The last named may have been a Jewish Christian, and possibly an Ebionite. Daniélou maintains that their translations were also interpretations. Symmachus, for example, betrayed his Ebionite leanings by translating '**alma** with '**neanis**' (young woman), instead of the '**parthenos**' of the Septuagint. "Eusebius.... supplies the information that he was an Ebionite."⁵⁵ The early Christians held the Septuagint in great veneration, accepting it as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and made general use of the text. Sometimes the theology of Jewish Christian teachers resulted in some alterations to the original text. Apologetic and liturgical considerations may have influenced this approach."The method itself derives from a Judaistic environment to which Hellenistic literary methods were completely foreign."⁵⁶

Among many Catholic theologians it is held that a prophecy in the Book of Micah, proclaimed to a minor clan of Judah and promising the emergence of a ruler in Israel, was inspired by Isaiah 7: 14. In Micah 5: 3 the reference "when she who is in labour has brought forth,"⁵⁷ is regarded as reflecting the '**almah** of Isaiah. This follows on the promise that from Bethlehem-Ephrathah would come a ruler, whose origins dated as far back as David. "There can be no doubt that here is meant the ideal king, new David, Isaiah's Emmanuel, the Messiah."⁵⁸

Throughout the centuries, the Old Testament and the Apocrypha have provided quite a number of texts (especially from the Wisdom books and the Song of Songs), which have been applied to Mary in the Liturgy of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It is admitted that a number of texts are not mariological, in the biblical sense, but simply an accommodation of the Biblical text. Together with these texts, Old Testament types of Mary, such as, the Ark of the Covenant, Judith,

Esther and so on, have "played an important part in the thought of the Fathers and later theologians."⁵⁹ St. Jerome's use of Jeremiah 31: 22, ("The Lord will create a new thing on earth - a woman will surround (protect) a man.") "For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encompasses a man."⁶⁰ as a Marian text, gained general acceptance, but has since been regarded as corrupt.

The New Testament Introduction to Mary.

The records of St. Matthew and St. Luke portray a young woman, Mary, who has been pledged to be married to a certain Joseph, a descendant of King David. While the prospective bride was waiting, (possibly at the home of friends), during the period between the betrothal and her marriage, she was greatly disturbed by an unexpected vision. The angel Gabriel appeared to her, with the astonishing news, that the Lord God had endued her with grace, that is, divine favour. The initial shock was somewhat aggravated by the announcement that Mary was to become pregnant and bear a son, whom she was to call Jesus. Mary's query about the prediction was not an expression of doubt, but rather a request for some explanation. Her question was "the legitimate expression of the astonishment of a pure conscience."⁶¹ She informed the angel of her virginity. Gabriel assured her of God's favour in her life, intimating that "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy: he will be called Son of God."⁶² (St. Luke 1: 35). Mary's faith was further encouraged by the reminder that an elderly relative, Elizabeth, was six months pregnant. "For nothing will be impossible with God."⁶³ (St. Luke 1: 37). Having regained her composure and with help of the Holy Spirit, Mary submitted to the angel's pronouncement in the "most extraordinary act of faith that a woman ever consented to accomplish."⁶⁴ Her acceptance of the challenge identified her "as the ideal daughter of Zion, the heroine of Israel and the perfect type of human receptivity in regard to the divine work."⁶⁵

When the fact of Mary's pregnancy was disclosed to Joseph, his obvious reaction was tempered by a degree of concern for his betrothed. Evidence of adultery could have resulted in her death, at worst, disgrace, at least. St. Matthew describes Joseph as a righteous man, "conscientious in the observance of the Law,"⁶⁶ but yet, not willing to exercise his Jewish zeal, in making a public spectacle of her. He therefore considered the customary practice of a private arrangement for divorce

proceedings. This would have involved the presence of only two witnesses to declare that he had given her the bill of divorce.

As Joseph struggled with his conscience and his affection for Mary, his thoughts were interrupted and redirected by a dream experience. An angel confronted him and reassured him about Mary's condition, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."⁶⁷ Further confirmation of the reality of the message was given in the disclosure of the name of the baby, 'Jesus.' Joseph took Mary as his wife. He did not have sexual intercourse with her until her son had been born. St. Matthew perceived in these events the fulfilment of the prophetic sign in the book of Isaiah 7: 14, "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Immanuel," (which means), "God is with us."⁶⁸ St. Matthew 1: 23.

Mary may have spared Joseph, to some extent, by deciding to go to Elizabeth. When the two women met and exchanged greetings, Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb. The older woman was constrained by the Holy Spirit to exclaim to her relative, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."⁶⁸ (St. Luke 1: 42). Elizabeth regarded the visit of the "Mother of my Lord"⁶⁹ (St. Luke 1: 43) as an indication of God's favour in her life; and encouraged her young friend with the declaration, "Blessed is she who has believed that there would be (for there will be) a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord ."⁷⁰ (St. Luke 1: 45). Mary responded by reciting a meditative lyric, "an expression of personal emotions and experiences"⁷¹ and in a manner more controlled than Elizabeth's. The customary childhood learning of Old Testament lyrics gave Mary an adequate expression for her intense exultation. The Magnificat or Song of Mary (St. Luke 1: 46 - 55), was modelled on the Old Testament Psalms and especially the Song of Hannah (1st Samuel 2: 1-10). The visit to Elizabeth lasted until the birth of John (the Baptist). Mary then returned to Nazareth.

Her period of waiting was interrupted by an unexpected journey to Bethlehem in Judaea. The Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus called on his subordinates to carry out a census in their respective areas of control. As everyone was required to go to his own town for registration, Joseph set off for Bethlehem together with Mary. The huge crowd that gathered in the town, had taken up the regular accommodation by the time Joseph arrived. His efforts to find shelter may have brought him to a caravanserai (a roughly constructed shelter for travellers, and with an open court yard for beasts.) The possibility of overcrowding here, has led David Smith, in '**The Days of His Flesh**', to suggest

that, "Mary had no alternative but to lie on the litter in the courtyard, and there her child was born and cradled in a manger."⁷²

The disclosure of Divine intervention in the affairs of men was broadened to include shepherds, who, on the night of Jesus' birth, were guarding their sheep close by. Then when the baby had been circumcised and the period of purification completed, Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus, to present Him to God in the Temple at Jerusalem. There they met a very old man, Simeon, who had been waiting for the opportunity to see the 'Lord's Christ.' Directed by the Holy Spirit he moved towards Mary and Joseph, and, taking the baby in his arms, rejoiced in the fulfilment of God's Promise to him. Simeon's testimony as to the purpose of the birth of Jesus caused Joseph and Mary to marvel. The old man also predicted that the coming of the child would cause quite an upheaval in the affairs of Israel - so much so, that Mary herself would experience a sword piercing her soul.

The Lucan account of the Nativity concluded with the return of Joseph and Mary to Nazareth. St. Matthew, however, introduced another significant event, namely, the visit of the Magi, from the East. These astrologers had followed their identification of a new star in the heavens, as the herald of an important birth. Their quest was rewarded at Bethlehem. With the assistance of research by the chief priests and teachers of the Law at Jerusalem, they discovered the exact destination of their search; "on entering the house they saw the child with Mary His mother."⁷³ (St. Matthew 2: 11).

The implication of the arrival of the Eastern visitors and their expedition compelled King Herod of Judaea to demonstrate his dark reputation for dealing mercilessly with any rival. Consequently Joseph had to flee to Egypt with his family. There they stayed until the death of Herod; at which time Joseph was instructed, by an angel, to return to the land of Israel. St. Luke has given another glimpse of the Holy Family, when Jesus was twelve years of age, and had become a 'son of the Law.' Joseph and Mary had taken their son to Jerusalem for His Bar Mitzvah and for the Feast of the Passover. After the feast, Jesus remained in Jerusalem to debate and argue with the teachers of the Law. Joseph and Mary had assumed that Jesus had been travelling with others of their company. The discovery of His non-appearance brought them back to Jerusalem hurriedly. When they found Him, Mary's perplexed demand for an explanation from Jesus, was met by an unexpected reply, "Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"⁷⁴ (St. Luke 2: 49). Mary pondered deeply, possibly, at the gentle but decisive correction of her words of natural concern. "Look your father and I have been

searching for you in great anxiety,"⁷⁵ (St. Luke 2: 48); and also at the surprise shown by Jesus, because they had not realised where He would have been. Neither of the other two Gospels contains any record of the Nativity

Comment.

A number of factors preclude the construction of a commonly acceptable portrayal of Mary. The histories of pagan religions and Judaism, the Biblical record and Biblical interpretations clash with one another.

The attempt to retrieve the presence of a female deity from the annals of both Jews and Gentiles has proved successful. Although it has been discovered that places of worship to Yahweh and to some other deity stood adjacent to one another, the proximity of 'heathen' worship to Judaism increased the possibility of syncretism, and incurred the wrath of God; and hardly tolerates the inference of admissibility in the search for Mary. Besides, the 'daughter of Zion' references in the Old Testament have been applied selectively to the Virgin Mary; in some instances, for example, Jeremiah 4: 31, Lamentations 2: 13ff., Micah 4:10, no simple application would have been considered. Wisdom has also been clothed with female divinity. However the notion that Wisdom progressed to an hypostasis has not always been set in a female context. Marian texts in the Old Testament have raised many questions of interpretation and validity. It has been admitted that a number of these references simply served the mariological exposition. The term for virgin has caused its own controversy.

The New Testament introduction to Mary related a sequence of remarkable events, in which she played a special and unique role. The anticipation of the universal consequences of these events was concentrated entirely on her Son. The Gospel writers, with the exception of Mark, have provided a simple account of Mary's involvement in God's plan for mankind and for His Church. The simplicity of that record has been challenged or consolidated by scholars, exegetes and historians.

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CHAPTER VII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES.

Among the Jews encountered by Jesus there seems to have been a commonly held, but superficial opinion about His birth. For example, in one confrontation, Jesus had to face the slighting remark that He probably had been born of concubinage (St. John 8: 41). Such an allegation has also been found in Jewish sources. C.K. Barrett, in his commentary on **St. John**, mentions what may have been the earlier of these harsh observation. In the **Mishnah** (Yebamoth 4: 13), Rabbi **Simeon ben Azzai** (c.110), said, "I have found a family register in Jerusalem, and in it was written, 'Such-a-one, is a bastard through (a transgression of the law of) thy neighbour's wife.'"¹

St. Matthew and St. Luke have corrected this genealogical record, although they lack correspondence in their efforts to produce a family tree for Jesus. According to a **Prof. S. Schechter**, the display of such a record was "a feature not uncommon in later Rabbinical versions of the Old Testament;"² demonstrating a fondness of providing Biblical heroes with long pedigrees. Their accuracy at times was subordinated to "some edifying purpose."³ The interest in genealogy assumed a new proportion after the Jews had returned from exile in Babylonia. Those who had retained their national purity separated themselves from those who had intermarried with Gentiles. (Ezra. 9: 10, 44). The tables of families and tribes in Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles, reflect the attention paid to ancestry. "In the following eras, these passages formed the basis for establishing a genealogy."⁴ At the time of Jesus each Israelite was aware, at least, of the last few generations of his ancestors.

Membership of the tribe of Judah and especially of the line of David occupied many references, especially because the messianic hope had been established in this family. St. Matthew (1: 1 - 17) and St. Luke (3: 23 - 38) provide the ancestry of the carpenter Joseph, and attempt to present his Davidic origin. G.H. Box offers the suggestion that Matthew's genealogical record may be a "kind of Midrashic commentary on the real genealogy of Luke."⁵ Jeremias deduces that Luke's tradition is more reliable, possibly preserving authentic material, "at least for the last few generations before Joseph."⁶ At any rate the prominence of the family tree in these two Gospels may not only confirm the Jewish desire for evidence of purity in the family line, but also introduce a progressive pattern in relation to Mary. Attacks on, and criticisms of the Gospel record inevitably brought Mary into a more

conspicuous position. Consequently efforts were made to safeguard her purity, and subsequently to enhance her station.

Matthew's plan.

Matthew broke the pattern of genealogical presentation, when he emphasized the unique event of the birth of Jesus by introducing, "Mary, of whom Jesus was born" ⁷ In the Old Syriac (Sinaiticus), it was recorded that "Joseph, to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed, was the father of Jesus, who is called the Christ."⁸ This may have been a scribe's attempt to match the last entry with the foregoing genealogical sequence. Some scholars claim that this reading denied the virgin birth. Others argue that, by the introduction of 'virgin' before Mary, the scribe was seeking to protect the non-physical character of the begetting.

St. Matthew's inclusion of the names of four women in the genealogy of Joseph may be regarded as a counter to the actual (or anticipated) "Jewish calumnies regarding Jesus' birth."⁹ Some compelling purpose must have prompted Matthew to take such an unusual step. Many hypotheses have been proposed. Jeremias observes that Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, had all experienced a revelation of God's power; and were therefore types of Mary. G.H. Box discerns Matthew's apologetic purpose in this unusual feature; and follows W.E. Allen's commentary, that the minds of the evangelist's readers were being prepared to accept the overruling of circumstances, by Divine Providence, in the life of the Virgin Mary.

These four Old Testament women were Gentiles or foreigners. Three were non-Israelite; Bathsheba, an Israelite, was identified by Matthew as the wife of Uriah, a Hittite. Their inclusion could have unveiled God's preparation of a Messiah for the Gentiles. Later Jewish writings were to present these women, not primarily as Gentiles, but as proselytes or converts. It can be difficult to see what they had in common with Mary. The four were also subjects of the controversy in the Jewish Debate about the Davidic Messiah. This would concur with the theory that Matthew had an apologetic motif in both the infancy narrative and the genealogy. He may have been trying to prove that Jesus was Messiah, against the claims that Jesus was illegitimate. The lateness and the uncertainty of evidence about Jewish attitudes have reduced the impact of this suggestion.

The women were sinners. Tamar posed as an harlot to seduce her father-in-law, (Genesis 38: 24); Rahab was a prostitute, (Joshua 2: 1); Ruth can be read to have seduced Boaz, (Ruth 3: 1-9); Uriah's wife committed adultery with David, (II Samuel 11). Matthew may have introduced these women for theological purposes, in the light of the promise that Jesus came to save His people from their sins. Their inclusion in the Jewish traditional genealogy of the Messiah may have been an apologetic against those Jews who accused Mary of sinful behaviour. These four women, who gained prominence because of irregular marital unions, were vehicles of God's Messianic Plan. Neither Sarah, Rebekah nor Rachel could have shared in this feature together with Mary. Matthew could have been calling attention to Mary, as an instrument of God's providence in the Messianic plan, by drawing the genealogical sketch prior to the Nativity account.

Mary's relationship to Joseph has been described in the first and third Gospels in strict accordance with the Jewish Law. Within Jewish marriage customs there would have been a formal exchange of consent, in front of witnesses. Although recognised as betrothal, this ceremony was a legally ratified marriage, since it gave the man rights over the girl. A betrothed woman held the status of a wife; and a child born to her, if recognised by the father, "must have been regarded as bestowed by God upon the house of (Joseph)."¹⁰ (Quoted from **Gustar Dalman**). Normally a girl's betrothal ceremony took place around the age of twelve to twelve and a half years. Apparently it was very common to be betrothed to a relation, although there is no indication that such was the case with Joseph and Mary. ("Joseph acknowledged his betrothed as his legal wife. The genealogy of Matthew reflects a legal, and not necessarily a physical descent"¹¹). Initially the wife continued to live in her own family home for about a year. The subsequent taking of the bride to the husband's home marked the moment when he assumed the supportive role. Joseph, therefore had a right to receive a virgin, as his 'betrothed,' into his home. She was a virgin, but pregnant; a scandal was the likely repercussion. The statement, "She was found to be with child,"¹² could have carried the implication that this was a matter of common knowledge. By describing the events leading to the birth, and by including the reference to 'the virgin,' St. Matthew prevented any misunderstanding of the situation. His emphasis was on two facts, namely, that Jesus belonged to the royal family of Judah; and that He was virgin - born.

The source of the idea of virginal conception could have been traced to the Graeco-Roman or other pagan tales of male gods begetting sons of earthly women. But stronger evidence would be required to demonstrate that Matthew had relied on such a cradle for his narrative. It would have been improbable that pagan ideas had been borrowed for a Jewish story. Miegge is of the opinion that St. Matthew's emphasis has been more on the name given to the promised infant, 'Immanuel.' Thereby the focus of attention was placed on the progeny of the virgin birth. While the rôle of the mother of Jesus, under the continuing favour of God, hardly lost its importance, the narrative of St. Matthew concentrated on the fulfilment of the prophetic word in her Son.

Box follows **Dr. T. Zahn's** conclusion that the gospel writer maintained an "elaborate parallel between Israel's national history and the personal history of the Christian Messiah."¹³ ('**Das Evangelium des Matthaans,**' p.103f, Leipzig 1903). For example, the flight into and return from Egypt (St. Matthew 2), presented a parallel between the early years of Israel's history and the infancy period of Jesus. Jahweh's fatherly relationship, displayed metaphorically to Israel was realised literally in Jesus. The story of the Magi with its astrological features reflected a passage in the '**Midrash Rabbah**' on the birth of Moses (in Exodus). Pharaoh's astrologers predicted "that the mother of the future redeemer of Israel (that is Moses), was with child, and that this redeemer was destined to suffer punishment through water."¹⁴ Pharaoh, in order to prevent any help whatever for the Israelites, ordered that all children born henceforth were to be drowned.

Box has also suggested that the first Gospel, is "thoroughly Jewish in form and in general conception,"¹⁵ and whereas Hellenistic influences are perceptible, "it shows decisive indications of the influence of Palestine, and is, in fact, addressed to a circle of Hellenistic Jews."¹⁶ In the Birth stories, St. Matthew answered problems raised by the Virgin Birth. Vincent Taylor maintains that it has been difficult to discover a basis in fact for these stories, "but the conclusion is irresistible that here, in contrast with both Mark and Luke, apologetic and doctrinal interests are uppermost."¹⁷

Discussion on St. Luke.

The style of the third Gospel resembled that of some of the Jewish and Greek histories in circulation in the First century. The author modelled his introduction on a familiar device of the Hellenistic historians, whose appeal to eye-witnesses may have amounted "to no more than a claim to

credibility."¹⁸ "Theologically Luke/Acts reflects a definite plan or programme, best described as a salvation-history approach."¹⁹ In the overall plan of salvation a 'decisive réle' was given to Mary. Her portrait in Luke gained definition from other emphases, such as, "the universality of God's salvific plan, a special place for women, the unique blessedness of the poor, the atmosphere of prayer and Temple piety and the joy of lives lived in obedience to God."²⁰

The presentation of the Birth Stories by St. Luke were an attempt by the Evangelist "to express, in a poetic and imaginative form, definite convictions about the birth and divine significance of Jesus."²¹ Mary may have recounted some of the contents of the first two chapters. Other material must have been used to complete the record. (For example, descriptions of the customs of purification and presentation contain inaccuracies). The original significance of these Birth Stories was the discovered correlation between the Old Testament anticipations and their fulfilment in Jesus, the Son of God, born of Mary. In the first two chapters, St. Luke has used a 'midrashic procedure'. Instead of following the usual form of this exposition, he considered a contemporary situation and sought to interpret it in the light of ancient texts and themes. In this instance he has taken the event of his own time - the birth of Jesus - and then illustrated its significance. Taylor is certain that in St. Luke (1:34) the Evangelist has superimposed what is the only explicit reference to the Virgin birth in this Gospel. While some hold that the passage is St. Luke's interpolation, others maintain that it is an integral part of the story.

John McHugh and Vincent Taylor agree on the questioning consciousness of the Old Testament by First century Christians. St. Paul in his missionary journeys had gained numbers of Jewish converts, whose mother tongue was Greek. Having been instructed in the Septuagint, (LXX), and having accepted Jesus as Messiah, their revision of the Old Testament led to the discovery of a more detailed explanation of their Messianic hopes. McHugh believes that, to some extent, St. Luke addressed such a group, using the Septuagint to demonstrate how Jesus had fulfilled these hopes; "and had given to those prophecies a meaning deeper than their original authors had suspected."²² The efforts to uncover this meaning have occasioned the development of Mariology.

Gabriel's annunciation (St.Luke Ch.1: 26-38), was concerned with the future greatness of Jesus; yet more Marian reflections (and literature), have been based on that scene, than on any other in the New Testament. The angel's first words to Mary, in verse 28, have proved to be problematical. "Hail

(**Chaire**), O, favoured one (**kecharitomene**), the Lord (**ho kyrios**), (is) with you (**meta sou**)" -

Revised Standard Version. Other translations have: "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." - **New International Version**: "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." - **N.R.S.V. Bible**: "Hail, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." - **Douay (Vulgate)**: "Rejoice, O highly favoured daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women." - **N.A.B.** (Greek).²³ The last two have official status among Roman Catholics; the final clause in each of these "is almost certainly a later addition to Luke's text, by a scribe who anticipated the words of Elizabeth."²⁴

Chaire was generally used in the everyday exchanges of hailing one another, (St. Matthew 26: 29), and at the introduction or conclusion of letters, (St. James 1: 1). There was therefore a tendency to use the Latin '**Ave**,' or the English '**Hail**' in the translation of Luke 1: 28. "The Lord with you"²⁵ (verb understood) was also a customary greeting. Modern scholarship has taken another look at the alliterative expression in the Greek - **chaire kecharitomene**. Comparisons with the use of '**chaire**' in the Old Testament have led to another interpretation of this simple greeting - 'Hail'. Had St. Luke simply transliterated the customary Hebrew greeting '**shalom**,' he would have used the Greek, **eirene**. Lyonnet, Laurentin and most modern scholars would therefore take '**chaire**' as an exhortation to rejoice. On four occasions the specific form, **chaire**, has been used in the **LXX**, to address respectively, the Daughter of Zion, (Zephaniah 3: 14, and Zechariah 9: 9): 'the land or people of Zion,' (Joel 2: 21-23): and Edom in Lamentations, (Ch. 4: 21). Although, in the Hebrew, a different verb for rejoicing is used on each of these occasions. 'Rejoice' accommodated the symbolism for Mary as the 'Daughter of Zion', the female personification of God's people (Israel and the Church), and Ark of the Covenant. (During the 1940's and the 1950's this symbolism proved universally attractive).

The contention was that, since Luke used a term which occurred in certain Old Testament passages, (in the Septuagint), he intended to appeal to each passage within its context, together with other related passages. This may appear to be the case as evidenced in the infancy narrative. On the other hand, "the more subtle the proposed Old Testament influences upon Luke, the greater the need for proof, especially if the symbolism is not well attested elsewhere in First century Christianity."²⁶ The criticism is made that, had Luke wanted **chaire** to mean 'rejoice' in (Ch. 1: 28), he could have

used a 'combination' with which he must have been familiar. When **chairein** referred to the rejoicing of the people of God, in the LXX, it was normally accompanied by an explanatory verb, such as, "Rejoice and be glad."²⁷ (Joel.2: 23; Lamentations 4: 2; Isaiah 66: 10). Luke was aware of this combination, (Luke 15: 32). On the other hand,

that Mary is bidden to rejoice as the personification of Israel, is supported by the fact that her reply, 'Be it unto me according to thy Word,' is not acquiescence in an awesome task, but as an optative in Greek, is a glad acceptance of joy.²⁸

(A large number of the publications on this topic are in French, and by Roman Catholics).

The personification of Israel as a women, 'the Daughter of Zion,' has been taken up by St. Luke, especially from Isaiah, Zephaniah and Zechariah. In Jeremiah, the Lamentations of Jeremiah and in Micah, the daughter of Zion also appeared as a virgin, or a mother in travail. For Laurentin, both mystical and eschatological concepts may be discernible in 'the Daughter of Zion.' Mystical, in that the use of the term

concerns the union of the Virgin, the daughter of Zion, with the Lord her husband; eschatological, in the sense that it represents that motherhood of the Daughter of Zion and her painful deliverance of the Messianic Hope, or deliverance of the people of God by the coming of the Messiah.²⁹

The connection of Mary as 'virgin', to Mary as 'Daughter of Zion,' has been obscured by 'uncomplimentary' references to the 'virgin Zion' or 'virgin Israel' - as in a state of oppression, waywardness and lust. Therefore the salutation of the angel to Mary, in relation to the Old Testament background, has introduced a degree of refinement to her humble appearance. She was saluted as the daughter of Zion, "the figure of Israel to whom deliverance is proclaimed and the coming of the Messiah, - the Lord is with thee."³⁰ Thurian endeavours to draw (or possibly force) a comparison, in this regard, between Zephaniah, (3: 14 - 17), and St. Luke, (1: 28 - 31). Possible criticism of this comparison is met with the suggestion that the original Hebrew of St. Luke's account would have clearly indicated stronger similarities. The familiar common greeting of those times normally had no relation to the idea that "the Lord is in your midst" (or) "in you."³¹

Further to this, Thurian draws attention to a pleonasm, "which emphasizes still further the relationship between the Lucan account and the prophecy of Zephaniah, and which directs our consideration towards another symbolic interpretation of the person of Mary."³² The angel's remarks

to Mary contained a redundant phrase 'in thy womb,' as against the usual juxtaposition of 'to conceive' and 'to bear.' The introduction of the additional wording, according to Thurian, was indicative of the relationship between St. Luke and Zephaniah. The Old Testament prophecy made reference to God being in the midst of His people. The phrase 'in the midst', is taken by Thurian as parallel to 'in thy womb' or 'in thine inwards.' The actual meaning in Zephaniah, speaks of God's presence in the Temple, to receive the worship of His people. A variety of texts in the Old Testament have employed this phrase, 'in the womb,' as a synonym for "'in the midst of thee,' signifying that God dwells in Israel, in the Tabernacle, the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant."³³

The two annunciations in Luke resemble other angelic proclamations, as for example, to the shepherds, to Joseph; and in the Old Testament, to Abraham, to Samson's parents, to Moses and to Gideon. The Annunciation therefore related the story of Jesus to an Old Testament history which had witnessed similar scenes, accompanied by the familiar hesitant response to the message. St. Luke 1: 34, could have been a literary device, designed to develop the story, by presenting the angel with the opportunity to explain the conception, and to introduce Elizabeth's part in the events.

Hebraistic phraseology has also been employed in the account of the Annunciation. For example, "the Holy Spirit will come upon you,"³⁴ is parallel to the Septuagint translation of Isaiah (32: 15), "until there come upon you Spirit from on high."³⁵ The same verb was used when the cloud of the Lord's Glory overshadowed the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and when the winged cherubim overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant: (Exodus 40: 34 - 38; Numbers 9: 18 - 22; Exodus 25: 20 - 22; I Chronicles 28: 18. Mary has often been depicted as the 'Ark of the Covenant,' or as the 'Tabernacle.' In St. Luke (1: 35), she was told that "the power of the Most High will overshadow you."³⁶ Prof. C.A. Briggs, (in '*Messiah of the Gospels*,' page 50), states that "the annunciation represents the conception of Jesus as due to a theophany,"³⁷ the description of which is based on the Old Testament language.

The entrance of God into His Tabernacle and Temple to dwell there in theophanic cloud, would naturally suggest that the entrance of the divine life into the virgin's womb, to dwell there, would be in the same form of theophanic cloud.³⁸

Luke did not mean that God was a substitute male partner. The overshadowing had no sexual implications. "The agency of the Spirit, and 'overshadow', come from New Testament Christological formulations, where no sexual import is possible."³⁹

While 'qereb' has been used in the Hebrew to signify 'in the midst', the Hebrew noun 'beten' was the word used by the writers of the Septuagint for their word 'womb' (*gaster*). Thurian's argument has enabled him to affirm that St. Luke recognized in the Virgin Mary, the Daughter of Zion. As such Mary was "to be the mother of the Messiah,"⁴⁰ and following the Lord's conception, the Lord would dwell in her womb, as He did in the Ark of the Covenant.

The verses 34 and 35, in the first chapter of St. Luke, have been regarded by some scholars as out of harmony with the total narrative, and as preventing Chapter 1 from blending with Chapter 2. In the second chapter Mary was mentioned as Joseph's wife; it was then argued that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. Such references as 'His father and mother', (2: 33), 'His parents' (2: 41), 'your father and I', (2: 48), have been applied in support of this argument. (An early Sinaitic-Syriac document contains the reference, "with Mary and his wife,"⁴¹ (St. Luke 2: 5)). The reasons presented for "considering St. Luke 1: 34-35, as an addition, to bring into harmony with the idea of virgin birth, an older account, which knew nothing of it,"⁴² are rejected by Miegge as insufficient. Any suggestion of an interpolation of these verses has been refuted by G.H. Box.

A further parallel between the two 'Testaments' may be noted. In St. Luke 1: 43, Elizabeth greeted Mary, with the words, "And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?"⁴³ In II Samuel 6: 9, David had asked, "How can the Ark of the Lord come into my care?"⁴⁴ Araunah questioned David's arrival, (II Samuel 24: 21), "Why has my Lord the king come to his servant?"⁴⁵

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months (St. Luke 1: 56); the Ark of the Covenant remained three months in the house of Obbedom (II Samuel 6: 11). The combination of St. Luke 1: 31, and St. John 1: 14, procures the result of the Word of God becoming flesh and 'tabernacling' among us - in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Some of these observations may cloak real problems. It has been suggested that the language of St. Luke (1: 35), was a "retrojection of a christological language once attached to the resurrection and / or to the baptism of Jesus."⁴⁶ If the angel's word to Mary, ("The Holy Spirit will come upon you..... therefore the child to be born will be holy; He will be called Son of God."⁴⁷) reflected to some extent what happened at the baptism of Jesus, (with the descent of the Holy Spirit, and God's declaration, "You are my Son"⁴⁸), then the angel's words, ("The power of the Most High will overshadow

you"⁴⁹), reflected the Transfiguration in St. Luke 9: 34 - 35. There a cloud overshadowed Jesus; then a voice rang out from the cloud, "This is My Son."⁵⁰ The Transfiguration episode was affected by the Old Testament accounts of God's glory overshadowing the Tabernacle and the Temple. But an association, between Luke 1: 35 and the Transfiguration, does not necessarily allow the conclusion, that the use of 'overshadow' invokes imagery of Mary as the Tabernacle, or as the Ark of the Covenant. (There are a number of 'overshadowings' in the Old Testament: Numbers 10: 34; Deuteronomy 33: 12; and Isaiah Ch.4: 5).

John McHugh considers the text of St. Luke 1: 42, to be conclusive proof that the early Church expressed its reverence for the mother of its Lord by singing hymns in her honour. He argued that it was more appropriate for Elizabeth to greet Mary with a prayer to the mother of Jesus, that (he believed) had been used by Christians of that period. McHugh suggests that Luke preserved the opening words of an early liturgical hymn in Mary's honour, since Elizabeth had 'intoned' her response in a loud voice; (**anaphonein**, 'to exclaim,' is used consistently in the LXX for liturgical music; but it is also may mean to proclaim).

McHugh has been accused of going "considerably beyond the evidence"⁵¹ when he argues for a pre-Lucan hymn to Mary, suggesting that "this is a Lucan composition that may mark the beginning of Christian hymns praising Mary."⁵² This feature was not unique in the Jewish tradition. Other famous women (in the history of Israel), who helped to deliver God's people from peril, were acclaimed in a similar manner. "O daughter (Judith), you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth....."⁵³ (Judith 13: 18). "Most blessed of women be Jael....."⁵⁴ (Judges 5: 24). This blessing given to Mary also, acknowledged that God had employed her in His plan of salvation; "the fact that such a blessing has been invoked on others, prevents us from taking it too absolutely, as if it meant that Mary was the most blessed woman who ever lived."⁵⁵ (Compare Deuteronomy Ch. 28: 1 and 4, and St. Luke Ch.1: 38 and 42).

Other views.

Miegge also accepts that the purest tradition of Israel was epitomised in Mary; she personified those people of the Promise who could see the approach of the hour of fulfilment. The prophets such as Zephaniah found occasion to break out "into a triumphant strain of Messianic exultation."⁵⁶ The

sentiments expressed were continual sources of inspiration, and especially when the 'fulness of times' were approaching. "Hence arose, six hundred years later, the Magnificat and the Nunc dimittis, - antiphons or echoes, as it were, of this earlier teaching of the Hebrew prophets."⁵⁷ Although essential, the recording of "the miraculous physiology of the virgin birth has a modest place."⁵⁸ The purpose of the Gospel declaration of the birth of Jesus was not to glorify Mary; but rather to proclaim that Christ is Lord: that His birth was the work of the Almighty; that His coming has broken the chains of human generations and events, that have been exclusively rational and historical. It has made the declaration that in Him was manifested the 'Absolute Principle,' as at the day of Creation.

Some pertinent questions have to be addressed to the angel's greeting to Mary:

1. Was the Greek expression a common one? If so, one cannot assume that Luke borrowed it from the LXX. If it were found to be common in the LXX, it would have to be proven that Luke had a certain passage in mind, rather than some other.

2. Would a readership have had enough knowledge to understand such subtleties without further explanation? If not, particular symbolism may not have helped in determining early Christian thought about Mary.

Kecharitomene is the perfect passive participle of **charitoun**, a denominative verb, related to **charis** (favour, grace), and meaning 'to bestow favour', 'highly favour', 'bless.' A denominational verb is usually instrumental or factitive; (in this case, 'to constitute someone in **charis**'). Occasionally it carries a sense of plenitude - 'graciously or highly favoured.' In the Latin version of St. Luke (Ch. I: 28), the angel's greeting to Mary, '**Ave Maria, gratis plena**,' tends to exceed the purpose of the passive participle of the Greek. According to Plummer, the Vulgate's rendering is too indefinite. He maintains that the translation, "full of grace which you have received,"⁵⁹ is adequate; but wrong, if it is meant to convey, "full of grace which you have to bestow."⁶⁰ From the use of the verb (**Charitoo**) in Ephesians (Ch. I: 6), and the analogy of verbs with similar endings, Plummer is emphatic in translating the phrase as "endued with grace."⁶¹ A Genevan Version used the phrase 'freely beloved'. The Vulgate rendering is gradually being replaced by Roman Catholic translators. However Luke's anticipation of the

Christological gospel proclaimed by post-Easter Christianity, in his nativity account, was overtaken in later Mariology by the principle, 'Numquam satis,' "One can never say enough about Mary, for she is full of grace."⁶²

(The '**Ave Maria**' as a liturgical address to the Virgin, consists of three parts, two of which are scriptural, and one not. The first two parts, "Hail Mary, full of Grace; the Lord is with thee, and Blessed are thou among woman, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,"⁶³ are first found in the '**Liber Antiphonianus**,' attributed to Gregory the Great; and they were authorised as a formula to be taught with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, c. 1198. The third part, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death,"⁶⁴ was added in the Fifteenth century, and was authorised by Pope Pius V in 1568).

Miegge takes both the Lukan and Matthean accounts of the birth of Jesus as possible allusions to the Creator Spirit of Genesis Chapter 1, "the power of the All Highest,"⁶⁵ that initiates our creation. Therefore the Annunciation should be understood within the Biblical conception of creation and "not in the Greek-Oriental myth of virgin birth of heroes and demigods."⁶⁶ This declaration of a demonstration of God's creative power subordinated all the personalities who found themselves involved in the event. Mary, therefore, "at least not directly,"⁶⁷ did not receive glory. She assumed the submissive role of the chosen instrument and witness. The Hebrew expression, 'to find grace in the eyes of someone', conveys the meaning that provides the translation, "Hail , thou, who hast had the fortune to be the object of the kindness of God, who has chosen thee as an instrument of His ways."⁶⁸ The idea of chosen instrumentality does not carry any implication of power to dispense graces.

In verse 35, Luke may have applied to the conception of Jesus, a type of formula previously used for the resurrection and the baptism of Jesus, (Acts 13: 32-33, St.Luke 3: 22; reflecting Psalm 2: 7). "If Ch.1: 32, 33, 35, contain a basic post-resurrectional proclamation of the Christian faith, then Mary is being presented as the first one to hear the Gospel."⁶⁹ The probability that the verses have been translated from a Hebrew original, allows for greater clarification of verse 31, where the remark, "You shall conceive," could be rendered, "Behold, you are conceiving now."⁷⁰ The immediate conception would rule out any possibility of Joseph's participation. Not only that, but such a rendering may also restrain the enthusiasm of some from reducing the importance of the Holy Spirit in the conception of the child. Some commentators detect the influence of Isaiah Ch. 7 in Luke's idea of virginal conception. Others find difficulty in assessing the source. (There is no proof that the author of this Gospel was conversant with Hebrew).

Concerning the origin of the belief in the virgin birth, the critical historian can say nothing. The two editors agree only in recording the

birth of Jesus as the fulfilment of a particular prophecy. Otherwise their infancy narratives have no points of contact.⁷¹

Hoskyns and Davey suggest that Matthew and Luke introduced the virgin birth into their narratives "in order to make the Marcan gospel less enigmatic."⁷² While it is impossible to discover on what authority (from tradition) this was done, it is possible to affirm "that there is here no heightening of the picture of Jesus which already stood before them in the Marcan gospel."⁷³ Neither Matthew nor Luke intended to suggest that the virgin birth fulfilled the hopes of the prophets.

In presenting his genealogy of Jesus, St. Luke followed the principle of edification. He has linked the first Adam (a son of God, by direct creativity), to the second Adam, (Jesus, the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit), thereby demonstrating that both owed their human existence to a direct creative act of God. (The contrasting consequences in the lives of the first Adam and the second Adam, gave occasion for the implications of first Eve and second Eve (Mary). The alleged interpolation is thereby given an acceptable place in the narrative. The need for such an emphasis on God's participation has resulted in the subordination of Joseph, and, what appears to be, the elevation of Mary.

Box is of the mind that this emphasis is a dominant feature in the first two chapters of Luke. The Gospel writer has purposely introduced a sharp contrast between the nativity of John the Baptist and that of Jesus in order to heighten this effect. In the case of the former, the annunciation was made to his father; in that of Jesus, it was made to His mother. The reaction of the father of John came in the Benedictus (Ch. 1: 68 - 79). Mary's reaction was recorded; Joseph's response was not. Mary's response, the Magnificat (St. Luke Ch. 1: 46 - 55), is a psalm, in which she avoided the opportunity for demanding praise, but rather magnified the Lord alone. He was the sole author of the declared salvation. Her sole glory was that God "has looked with favour on the lowliness of His servant,"⁷⁴ and allowed His favour to fall on her.

In a number of quotations from the Church Fathers and in the oldest Latin Manuscripts, the reading in St. Luke (1: 46), attributes the song of Mary to Elizabeth. Support for this has been found in dubious passages in translations of **Iranaeus**, **Origen** and **Bishop Nicetas of Remesiana**. Consequently, in believing that the Magnificat was Elizabeth's response to her own circumstances, some scholars have placed it in the infancy story about John. Circumstantial evidence would appear to vindicate this argument. In Ch. 1: 56, immediately after the Magnificat, the account continues, "And

Mary remained with her."⁷⁵ Had Mary been speaking just prior to this, (it is suggested), the statement. " She stayed with Elizabeth,"⁷⁶ would have been expected.

The 'technique' of placing canticles of praise on the lips of well-known personages, in order to acknowledge God's gracious intervention, had been a feature of the Old Testament: as for example, in I Samuel.2: 1 - 10. and in Jonah 2: 2 - 9. In the Second book of Samuel, Hannah's delight and praise to God for the birth of a son, after a long period of barrenness, were captured in song. Elizabeth's experience corresponded to that of Hannah. For Scobie (and others) the probability is that someone (presumably Luke), in the course of editing the original account, changed 'Elizabeth' to 'Mary', in order to lay more stress on the birth of Jesus.

The sentiments voiced in St.Luke (1: 51 - 52), (it is argued), hardly belonged to a maiden who had not yet given birth to the Messiah. Their substance was more appropriate to the joyful response of those who knew that, through the resurrection, God had reversed the crucifixion. Such a criticism casts doubt on Luke's originality. He may have found the contents of the Magnificat compatible with his own view of Mary. It has also been suggested that Luke adopted the canticle from a collection that had its origin among that early Jewish Christian community, described in Acts (2: 41 - 47). Parallels are to be found between the themes of the canticle and themes throughout this Gospel. For example, the theme of joy in the opening couplet, St. Luke 1: 47, continued the expressions of Elizabeth, in 1: 41, 44; but also anticipated a statement about Jesus, unique to St. Luke 10: 21.

St. Luke placed a special emphasis on the downtrodden - sinners, women, widows, Samaritans; and dramatised a theme of 'reversal', notably in the Beatitudes.

By placing the Magnificat on the lips of Mary, who has already been called, makarios, 1: 45, Luke is making her the spokesman of a theme of reversal that will be a vital part of the Gospel message.⁷⁷

Mary was hailed by some as a representative of the piety of 'the Poor Ones' - those who could not trust in their own strength: the downtrodden, poor, lowly, afflicted, widows and orphans.

By associating her with this theme, Luke gave Mary an important rôle in that salvation history, which involved Israel, Jesus and the Church. This representative rôle continued, "from the infancy narratives into the ministry of Jesus, and finally into the early Church."⁷⁸

The two families of Elizabeth and Mary have been closely linked in later tradition and art., But the Greek '**suggenis**' only carries the meaning of 'kinswoman;' and may simply convey their

membership of the same tribe. It has been suggested that the use of this term 'suggenis,' was a device to link the two narratives, in order to represent Jesus (through his relations), as of priestly, as well as of Davidic descent. Such a connection would have strengthened "His Messianism in the eyes of the Jews, who looked for a priestly as well as a kingly Messiah."⁷⁹ However, the New Testament does not give any general support to the idea of close family ties and seems to cast doubt on the suggestion.

The family ties of Jesus.

Scobie is certain that the story of Jesus has been integrated into that of John, (whose story can easily stand on its own). For example, the Annunciation to Mary was placed after the Annunciation to Zechariah; the phrase, 'in the sixth month' (St. Luke 1: 26), referring to Elizabeth's pregnancy was used to relate the annunciation (to Mary) with the infancy story of John. The author of the third Gospel has so arranged his material that the absolute uniqueness of the birth of Jesus would be opposed to the birth of John the Baptist, (which "was conceived of in the style of the Old Testament."⁸⁰) The birth of the latter is comparable to the birth of Isaac. The birth of Jesus, the Messiah, is comparable to the creation of Adam. Jesus is the second Adam, but 'born of woman.' The hesitant response of Mary to the angel's pronouncement, "How shall this be, since I am a virgin?"⁸¹ underlines the wonder of the promised event. Such a question "is of course hardly natural in one betrothed on the verge of marriage."⁸² Ashe regards the nature of Mary's marriage to Joseph as a theologically vexed question; Mary's question would have been unexpected in a Jewish context. Miegge is convinced that Mary and Elizabeth, in their pregnancies, were representatives of the Church, in so far as it would be the Church of the Old Covenant, anticipating with faith the momentous intervention of God in the affairs of men.

For his part Joseph Patsch, accepts that the obvious emphasis of the Gospel record was on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. The Gospel writers have brought others, including Mary, into the story, where they have particular significance for His life: as for example, St. Mark's inclusion of Mary, together with the 'brothers' and 'sisters' of Jesus, in two incidents concerning Jesus Himself.

In St. Mark (3: 31-38), the continuing conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities caused concern among His family. They in turn attempted to draw Him away from a public spectacle.

offering the observation that He must have been out of His mind. Although concern, fear and pity may have compelled this interest, their remarks were "no credit to their spiritual insight."⁸³ Although she appears, there is no indication of Mary's part in this incident, as to whether it was active or passive. The latter may have been the case, seeing that, by this time, the management of the family was no longer her concern. In fact this was the only scene in Mark where Mary actually appeared. She was mentioned again in Ch. 6, and may have been present at some other incidents.

The response of Jesus to His family, in this confrontation, showed the importance He placed on the 'eschatological family,' who would live in the new standard of values, established by the proclamation of the Kingdom. "The point of the passage is to defend the eschatological family, not to exclude the physical family."⁸⁴ (cf. St. Mark 10: 29-30) Both Matthew and Luke omit this incident; one possible reason being that they found the references to the mother and brothers of Jesus, offensive. "This might reflect their incipient mariological concern and /or respect for James, the brother of the Lord, who had been the head of the Jerusalem Church, and suffered martyrdom."⁸⁵ Miegge suggests that Mark 3: 31-35, may also recall Luke 14: 25, 26.

In St. Mark (6: 1 - 6), Jesus returned to His home town to be met with incredulity. "Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"⁸⁶ St. Luke's account contains the briefer question, "Is this not Joseph's son?"⁸⁷ (4: 22). St. Matthew (13: 55-56) follows closely the text of St. Mark. (The knowledge of the virginal conception may have constrained Matthew and Luke to modify the Marcan passage). The response of Jesus was significant: "Prophets are not without honour, except in their home-town, and among their own kin, and in their own house."⁸⁸ (verse 57). St. Luke in particular toned down the force of such a statement (4: 16 - 30). St. Matthew made no reference to a lack of honour among His own relatives, (13: 57). Mark, of the three Synoptic writers, used the term kinsfolk or relatives, but unlike the other Gospel writers, (St. Matthew, 13: 55: St. Luke, 4: 22: St. John, 6: 42), did not allude to the father of Jesus. He made use of the term, 'the son of Mary.' Four different explanations for this have been suggested:

(a) Mark was attempting to emphasize the human characteristic, in order to refute exaggerated supernatural claims from the Marcan congregation. This 'son of Mary' conveyed little more than the 'born of woman', as in Paul's letter to the Galatians, (4: 4).

(b). Mark was hinting at the virginal conception, about which he was never explicit. He may well have known about the Virgin Birth; the point is made, that the authors of this period did not have to anticipate the queries of modern research.

(c). The villagers were casting a slur on Jesus, the carpenter, an ordinary manual labourer, the son of Mary - so called because of uncertainty about the father. This manner of slighting someone has been found in other sources, outside the Scriptures.

(d). Joseph was not mentioned because he had died. St. Luke 7: 12, may indicate the relationship described in Mark Ch. 6.

The record of the members of the family of Jesus gained Marian significance only in later centuries, as Christians debated whether Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus. One discussion centred on the meaning of **adelphos** (brother), and on the conclusions that could be drawn from the names of the brothers. As used in Mark 6: 3, **adelphos** normally denoted a blood brother, son of the same mother. In the New Testament the word could denote other relationships, such as, 'co- religionist,' (Romans 9: 3), and step-brother, (Mark 6: 17-18). In the Greek Old Testament **adelphos** was used sometimes in the broad sense of 'kinsman', or 'relative.' The Greek that is used to reflect the underlying Hebrew means both 'blood brother' and 'kinsman.' A recent commentary by a Roman Catholic, **R. Pesch** has identified these relatives as blood brothers and sisters of Jesus, and children of Mary. The position of the Roman Catholic Church remains; the perpetual virginity of Mary is a matter of faith, (a dogma, attested in the constant teaching of the Church).

The implication of the use of 'brothers ' and 'sisters' of Jesus, has provided a perpetual source of irreconcilable controversy. Was Mary's marriage with Joseph ever consummated? Patsch regards as insulting to the Mother of Jesus, any suggestion that such was the case (after the Virgin birth), with other offspring as the consequences. In an effort to deal with this insult, Patsch replies strongly against three objections that have been used to refute the claim for the perpetual virginity of Mary.

In St. Matthew, (1: 25), the statement is made that Joseph "had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son."⁸⁹ Some early documents have "her firstborn son."⁹⁰ Obviously those who endeavour to assert the perpetual virginity of Mary, will adhere to the 'appropriate' ending. However, much store is laid in the use of the conjunction 'till' or ('until). Patsch affirms that in the usage of the

Old and New Testaments, this conjunction "often implies only that something has not happened up to a certain point of time, without the additional implication (usually contained in the English 'till'), that it did happen afterwards."⁹¹ A.H. McNeile in his commentary on **Matthew** states that in the New Testament, a negative followed by the various forms of 'until' "always implies that the negative action did or will take place after the point of time indicated by the particle."⁹² K. Beyer, (*'Semitische Syntax in Neuen Testament,'* 1962), points out that, in Greek and in Semitic expression, this type of negation. often, has no implication at all about what happened after the limit of the 'until' has been reached.

The majority of the early documents of St. Luke have the rendering, "And she gave birth to her firstborn, son,"⁹³ (2: 7). This, in turn, has led to the conclusion that Mary must have given birth to other offspring. The argument against such a conclusion is based on the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek for 'firstborn'. In the Hebrew, the rank of the child was also denoted, together with promised rights and recognised duties within the family. Patsch and others have attempted to consolidate the case for perpetual virginity, by quoting the inscription, in a Jewish sepulchre (dated January 29th. circa 5 B.C.), about the short life of a young mother. The young woman died during the birth of her 'firstborn.' The parallel use of the expression, in relation to the circumstances surrounding Mary, would hardly seem applicable.

A. Plummer, in his commentary on St. Luke, is of the opinion that consideration of this matter would be greatly helped by closer attention to the use of the imperfect tense in St. Matthew 1: 25, ("knew her not."⁹⁴) (While the English simple past tense may be a sufficient translation at times, the Greek imperfect tense denotes continuous or repeated action within past time). (*'The Element of N.T. Greek,'* J.W. Wenham, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.54). Plummer also admits that the expression, 'her firstborn', may be used without the implication of other children. St. Luke used the description 'only-born' on three other occasions in the Gospel, to avoid ambiguity: (7: 12; 8: 42; 9: 38). Firstborn implies the possibility of subsequent offspring. References to the contemporary belief about the family of Mary, together with the constant attendance of the 'brothers' on the mother of Jesus, tend to confirm this.

No consensus has emerged with regard to the identity of the 'brethren of the Lord.' Plummer cannot discover anything in Scripture "to warn us from what is the antecedently natural view that

they are the children of Joseph and Mary, unless 'I know not a man' (St. Luke 1: 34), is interpreted as implying a vow of perpetual virginity."⁹⁵ The Epiphonian theory, in proposing that Joseph already had a family by a previous wife, inadvertently precluded Jesus from His rights as the heir of Joseph and of the house of David.

St. John.

The Fourth Gospel has recorded two episodes that mention Mary, during the public life of Jesus; and where Mary finds herself addressed by her Son as 'woman.' The first was that of the wedding at Cana in Galilee. The wine at the reception had been quickly consumed, much to the consternation of Mary, who referred the matter to Jesus. Her observation that "They have no wine,"⁹⁶ was met by an apparently gentle rebuke, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Jesus acceded to His mother's plea for help (St. John 2: 1 - 11). C.K. Barrett suggests that Jesus' address of 'woman' to Mary, would have softened the abruptness of His reply to her. His reaction seems to mean, "You have no claim on Me - yet."⁹⁸ However, the reply of Jesus to Mary's demanding statement, also echoed abrupt responses made to Jesus, on other occasions, (for example, St. Mark 1: 24; 5: 7). For Patsch, the title 'woman' does not have any derogatory connotation, seeing that the consistent mode of address by Jesus to other woman was often in the context of healing, consolation or helping. (St. John 4: 21; 8: 10; 20: 15). On the other hand Miegge points out that passages, where similar expressions were voiced in both the Old and New Testaments, indicated the element of unwelcomed surprise, together with a reluctance to respond positively. The declaration of Jesus, "My hour has not yet come," (St. John 2: 4), reveals the untimely nature of Mary's remark. He was awaiting guidance from God and not from His mother. Some suggest that Jesus' reply was an expression of frustration.

The general principle to be drawn from this incident would be that Jesus did not welcome His mother's interference in His Messianic work; there was no indication of any enhanced value in Mary's intercession, even if Jesus in the last analysis does accede to her wish.⁹⁹

On other occasions St. John "emphasizes Jesus' unwillingness to be 'rushed', especially by the claims of those He loved."¹⁰⁰ (St. John 7: 3, 4, 6; 11: 5, 6). Macgregor quotes R. H. Strachan, who wrote,

In all three cases human affection sought to bring pressure to bear on Jesus in connection with His vocation, and in each case the interference is resented and repelled. Jesus does the will of God, and not the will of man.¹⁰¹

The inconsistency in doing something, immediately after the expression of reluctance, (in Macgregor's view), may be explained by the author's intention to suggest that "both the 'time' and the 'Sign' (2: 11) have a significance quite other than one would judge from the letter of the narrative."¹⁰² Macgregor also makes the point that the Gospel writer applied the principle, that the bestowal of the Spirit, (which would not occur until after the death of Jesus), could only bring about "the transformation of the symbolical into the 'real'."¹⁰³

Scholars generally agree that the intention of the evangelist was to convey a primary christological message, where the glory of Jesus was introduced, and not a mariological one. The fact of Mary's presence may have carried some significance. Her persistence, betrayed an inability to believe fully in Jesus. She joined the company of those who, despite their good intentions, misunderstood Him. Until she did so, she had not yet become a model for believers.

The mode of address, 'Woman' has also been seen as a symbolic evocation of the role of Eve in Genesis 3. At her instigation Adam disobeyed the command of God. Mary, (addressed as 'Woman') may be seen as appealing to Jesus to misuse His power as a wonder worker. He refused this request; but performed a sign that reflected His true glory. Macgregor indicates that in the English the term may have a harsh ring to it; in reality it is respectful and intimate. Yet in "a moment of unutterable tenderness"¹⁰⁴ (Godet), Jesus addressed His mother in this way, from the Cross.

The second incident then, was the reaction of Jesus to the presence of His mother and the disciple John, as they stood at His crucifixion. (St. John 19: 25 - 27). When Jesus was aware of their proximity, He transferred the responsibility of the mutual relationship between Mary and Himself to one between Mary and John. The disciple whom Jesus loved took Mary to his own home.

The Passion and Death of Jesus, seen in the fourth Gospel as the triumph of Jesus over the Prince of this world, confirming the promise of Genesis 3: 15, witnessed the reappearance of Mary, who was again addressed as 'Woman', and brought within the family of discipleship. The fact that Jesus addressed Mary from the cross in this manner, may have given more emphasis to the affectionate use of the term. Although the 'beloved' disciple was also included in the references that Jesus was making. The words, "Woman here is your son." "Here is your mother."¹⁰⁵ (St. John 19: 26.

27), referred to the close caring relationship that would be established between Mary and the disciple. There is no reason to assume that in this incident Mary was being presented as the spiritual mother of John and of all future believers. Nevertheless, the comment is made that, from that time onwards, Mary's mother-rôle would change and continue. It would be expressed in relation to the beloved disciple, but not as a physical one. Since she received that 'rôle' as Jesus died, (and would be returning to His Father), the 'rôle' would no longer pertain to His earthly ministry. Subsequent Christian history would provide Mary with a new family of disciples, after the glorification of Jesus.

On the other hand, the proposition that Mary ever exercised any influence that would cause a belief in spiritual motherhood in relation to the Church, has not been demonstrated. Her position was modest and passive, "a disciple among disciples."¹⁰⁶ Miegge finds a possible symbolism in this incident at the Crucifixion, from a commentary by Bultmann:

It might be said that Mary represents the Jerusalem Church and John, the Church of the Gentiles, possibly in its mystic Ephesian character and that through the lips of the dying Jesus, the Evangelist counsels the Palestinian community to have material regard for the new Christianity that is about to grow out of the mission, and this is to serve a grateful veneration for the mother Church.¹⁰⁷

There is no agreement among scholars on the exact import of the formula, 'Behold your sonBehold your mother,' when Jesus addressed Mary and the beloved disciple, (St. John, 19: 26, 27). Barrett finds in the expression (your son) some correspondence with formulae of adoption. But it is also argued that these formulae in scripture generally have a 'you are' pattern, (c.f. Psalm 2: 7; I Samuel 18: 21).

It is not inconceivable that Jesus, as the head of the family (supposing His brothers to have been younger than He, and not sons of Joseph by a former wife), should have made provision for the care of His mother after His death. It is however surprising that the brothers should be overlooked; for their lack of faith in Jesus (St. John 7: 5), could not annul their legal claim. (Mark suggested, (3: 20 - 35), that their unbelief was shared by the mother, also). When we add to this the improbability that friends of Jesus would be allowed near the cross, it seems that the historical foundation of the incident is slight; and we note that at Acts I: 14, the mother of Jesus appears in company with His brothers.¹⁰⁸

Bultmann has recognised, in the mother of Jesus, the representation of Jewish Christianity that overcame the offence of the cross. The beloved disciple represented Gentile Christianity, which was

charged to honour the mother from whom it had come, namely Jewish Christianity, which in turn was charged to recognise itself 'at home' with its progeny.

The crucifixion scene, eventually was to be invoked as a basis for Mary's spiritual motherhood of Christians. At Cana Mary had been denied a salvific role in the ministry; but at the hour of Jesus' glorification, she won her place in salvation history. (Roman Catholics are accused of making a greater distinction between Church teaching and Scripture teaching on this question. They may accept the spiritual motherhood of Mary without claiming its place in Scripture). One author commends the interpretation that dates back to Origen, where the mother of Jesus was treated as a general symbol for the Church, so that Jesus was leaving the Church to Christians as their mother.

The person of Mary has been given a theological rôle, as she has stood for Israel and later for the Church. In the Scriptures Jesus was declared to be the new Adam. Mary appeared to have satisfied the need for a new Eve. Greeley perceived that the strong optimism within the early Church, together with "benign practices of pagan antiquity"¹⁰⁹ and the theological ideas of the New Testament, explained the early tradition of a "fully developed and powerful Mariological devotion."¹¹⁰ Father Raymond Brown, in his analysis of John's Gospel, introduces Mary as a corporate person representing the Church. Some fifty or seventy-five years after St. John's gospel, according to Greeley, evidence may have been found of a 'personal Mariology,' where Mary stands for the individual as well as for the Church. As with other writers Greeley was prepared to use such a claim to retrace these ideas as far back as possible, with the suggestion that "the historical phenomenon of the emergence of a personal mariology points back into the First century."¹¹¹

Jaroslav Pelikan shares the opinion that, in the earliest Christian literature, almost every reference to Mary was really a reference to her Son. St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians (4: 4), was asserting that Jesus ('born of a woman') was truly human. St. Matthew and St. Luke in narrating the miraculous conception aimed at the glorification of Christ - not of Mary. The manifestation of God's Power and Freedom over the created world and its laws was proclaimed both with and without explicit reference to the virgin birth, (as in the writings of St. Mark, St. John and St. Paul). Outside the Gospel record, Mary is located on one other occasion, in the Book of Acts 1: 14. Together with the brothers of Jesus, she was found in the company of the disciples at Jerusalem, as they all await the coming of the Holy Spirit. "Then Mary disappears from sight and for always."¹¹²

The Apocalypse.

In the Apocalypse, the Revelation given to John the Divine, a pregnant woman in labour is pictured. She is described as being "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars,"¹¹³ (12: 1). A dragon appears and waits for the delivery of the child so that he could seize and destroy the infant. God intervenes and snatches the newly born away and into heaven. The woman flees into the desert to be protected by God.

While the primary reference of the scene was to the people of God (Israel, the Church, or both), a strong argument emerged, claiming that the narrative was presenting the mother of the Messiah, Mary. However the early Church writers did not interpret this chapter in a mariological way. The first known interpretation of this kind occurred at some time in the Fourth Century. **Epiphanius** and **Andrew of Crete** mentioned in their writings that certain individuals had been identifying the 'woman' with Mary. The first known writers to do so were **Oecumenius** and **Pseudo - Epiphanius** (Sixth Century). In an investigation covering 1563 to 1954, A. Trabucco (1957), was able to find only two interpreters who equated the woman exclusively with Mary.

The author of the Apocalypse did not clearly identify Mary, while indicating the identity of the dragon; although the former may have been deemed to have been obvious. The description of the birth did not speak of Bethlehem. Jesus did not ascend to heaven immediately after His birth. In Revelation 12, the mother has been depicted as suffering in labour. That has presented a difficulty among those who have understood the woman to be Mary, and who also have ascribed to her a painless delivery, at the birth of her child.

Comment.

The circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus, set within the ethos of (a hostile) Judaism, required some explanation. The efforts of Matthew and Luke to do so have not satisfied everyone. Consequently the evolving panorama of disputations, arising out of 'historical accuracy,' 'genealogical reality,' 'theological significance,' 'Biblical consistency and relevance,' and relevant interpretation, will continue to provoke discussion and debate.

The doctrine of the perpetual virginity has had a broad acceptance. The proponents of this position have a reasonable case. However, it is also possible to conclude that the picture has been coloured by non-Scriptural propositions. Subsequently seemingly reasonable deductions have accorded certain rôles to Mary, and have opened the door to controversy. The record of Mary in the New Testament, although meagre, has contained sufficient substance to initiate and sustain claims (and counter-claims) for her reputation, such as her spiritual motherhood of believers. Conclusions drawn from the Old and New Testaments would seem to exaggerate the justifiable symbolism that has surrounded Mary. Her position in relation to the Church exceeds the teaching of the New Testament.

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CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS in the 2nd and 3rd CENTURIES.

The Christian Apologists of the second half of the second century, established the "firmer Biblical ground"¹ with regard to the record involving Mary.

Justin Martyr, born in Sichem of immigrants, was converted to Christianity c.133. After a period of intense study, in which he is reputed to have mastered Greek philosophy, he opened a School of Theology in Rome, and accommodated pagan philosophy in illustrating the truths of revelation. For example he attempted to prove the unity of God, from the writings of the philosophers. Geoffrey Ashe's assessment of Justin Martyr's perception of the Virgin birth, that is, in comparing it with pagan myths, such as the birth of Perseus, appears less severe than Warner. The latter observed that "Justin scorned the parallel with Danae, who conceived the hero Perseus, when Jupiter visited her in a shower of gold, as a travesty, a black mass, the work of the Devil mocking truth."² In this O'Carroll concurs stating that Justin rejected myths that had been invoked against the mystery.

In his concern about the analogy between Jesus' birth and the stories in pagan mythology, Justin (according to Boslooper), found it incredible that the Greeks, steeped in their tradition of the births of pagan deities, could hesitate to accept the virgin birth of Jesus. The analogy could only be described as a general one, seeing that the gross sensuality of the heathen stories held no part in the stories of Jesus. Justin asserted that the Greek myths had been invented by Satan to counterfeit the exact miraculous birth of Jesus. In the '**Dialogue with Trypho**', he discussed in detail the Virgin Birth with particular reference to Isaiah Ch. 7: 14. Trypho's opinion that the translation of '**almah**' should have been '**neanis**' ('young girl'), was indicative of the prevailing judgment of Jewish interpreters, that the prophecy applied only to its contemporary setting. This was refuted by Justin who noted the Septuagint's rendering '**parthenos**' (virgin), and argued that the scribes of his day had introduced a new interpretation in order to reject the fulfilment of the prophecy in Jesus.

An '**Apology**' for Christianity was addressed by Justin to the Emperor **Antonius Pius**. It contained the following:

In saying that the Word, who is the first offspring of God, was born for us without sexual union, as Jesus Christ our Teacher, and that He was crucified and died, and after rising again, ascended into Heaven, we

introduce nothing new beyond (what you say of) those whom you call sons of Zeus.³ (Apology 1).

But he also stressed the virginity of Mary, emphasizing the conceptual consequences of the overshadowing power of God. Justin indicated that his account of the Annunciation had been presented "as those who have recorded everything about Our Saviour Jesus Christ have taught us.⁴ (Apology 1.33).

Boslooper notes the didactic connection between Justin's doctrines of the Incarnation and of Redemption. The Virgin birth helped to explain how Jesus was able to save and restore the human race. The Apology contained a passage that compared and contrasted Eve with Mary; in O'Carroll's opinion, it was probably the first patristic testimony on the Eve-Mary parallel. For one writer, (T. Gallus), an echo of Genesis, Ch. 3: 15, (in a remark by Justin), supported the observation that Justin was "the first to give a Marian interpretation to the oracles."⁵ At any rate the introduction of the Eve-Mary theme provided a favourite subject in patristic teaching. Graef notes that Justin Martyr may have received this theme as part of the post-apostolic tradition, after his conversion at Ephesus. He wrote that Christ was born of the Virgin,

in order that by the same way, in which the disobedience caused by the serpent took its beginning; by this way should it also take its destruction. For Eve, being a virgin and uncorrupt, conceived the word spoken of the serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. But Mary the Virgin, receiving faith and grace....(gave birth to Him)..... whom God destroys, both the serpent and those angels and men that became like it..⁶ (trans. A. Lukyn Williams, London, 1930).

An 'Epistle to Diognetus,' (Hippolytus of Rome?), believed to belong to the last decade of the second century, contains a passage, which, Graef claims, almost seems to refer to Mary as Eve, "without any further explanation."⁷ The context is "the tree that bears fruit, which the serpent does not touch,"⁸ that is the Church. The commentary is that "Eve is not corrupted, but believed virgin; and salvation is shown forth."⁹ Graef concedes that the text is also held to refer to the real Eve.

Ashe notes that while the Virgin Birth was a strongly held tradition and with a variety of versions, the birth stories as commonly known, were not recorded by the Fathers, until Irenaeus. From Irenaeus, and for one hundred years afterwards, the miracle focussed on Jesus and not on Mary. The preoccupation of the Christian Church during this period, was the struggle with heresy. The consequences were the formulation of a theology, the direction of Scripture interpretation and the

establishment of the Church's position and authority. Farrar asserts that all of these were moulded in the first three centuries and by Ignatius, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

Irenaeus (d. c. 202) was a native of Asia Minor. His training was influenced by the Eastern emphasis; he became well acquainted with Greek poetry and philosophy. He possessed a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. His principal work, '**Against the Heresies**,' not only opposed heretics and especially **Marcion** and **Valentinus**, but also provided "an essential and remarkably fairminded source for the history of the second century sects."¹⁰ Latourette describes Irenaeus as a representative of a trend that reacted against the thinly veiled polytheism of the Gnostics, and against the two gods of the Marcionites, in the effort to emphasize the unity of God.

However a familiar pattern developed. The attempts to develop doctrines to meet the threats of heretical propositions very often resulted in the appearance of other unconventional statements of belief.

One trend slipped into Monarchianism, which, by stressing monotheism, attempted to counter the insinuation, by some, that Jesus, the Incarnation of the Logos, was a second God. Among Monarchians there were diversities of opinions. Several leaders were expelled from the Catholic Church. According to Latourette, those with more moderate Monarchian tendencies retained their esteem in that Church.

Dynamistic Monarchians believed that Jesus Christ was a man born of the Virgin Mary; and that in Him was an impersonal power which issued from God. This position was strongly held in Rome from the end of the second century throughout the first half of the third. The leaders of such opinion having been excommunicated by the Bishop of Rome, attempted to found a separate Church.

Modalistic Monarchianism presented itself in three modes under Sabellius, Noetus and Praxeas. Early advocates of the teaching held that the Father was born as Jesus Christ, thus becoming the Son: that He died and raised Himself from the dead. This aspect had appeared in Rome towards the end of the First century, and into the first quarter of the Second. The Bishops **Zephyrinus** (198-217) and **Callistus** (217-222), lent some support to it. The latter excommunicated **Sabellius**, but posited the belief that the Father and the Son were the same, and that the Spirit, who became incarnate in the Virgin Mary was not different from the Father, but one and the same. Monarchianism made its way to

Rome from the East, where speculative theology held a position similar to that held about morals and discipline in Western circles.

O'Carroll claims that the theology of Mary was truly born in the age of Irenaeus, in whose hands the teaching displayed possibilities of vast development. The "creative intuition"¹¹ (with which Justin had been conversant), was the notion that Mary had become the new Eve; Irenaeus became its greatest exponent. O'Carroll believes that St. Paul's picture of Adam as the type of Christ, who was to come, stimulated Irenaeus' definition of the Virgin Mary's rôle. Taking the motif of the Second Eve he elaborated on it, linking it to the Pauline doctrine of the recapitulation of all things in Christ, (see Ephesians 1: 10); and (according to Graef), "so placing it at the very centre of man's redemption."¹² "Since Irenaeus represents the tradition of both East and West, his witness to a more developed Marian doctrine is particularly important."¹³

Other authors who have chronicled the Fathers of the Church would tend to be wary of these observations. (as for example, J. J.Hayes in '**The Lives of the Fathers of the Church**,' vol. I, 1873). As a consequence of her obedience (in her 'fiat'), Mary became a cause of salvation to herself and to the whole human race. On the other hand, virgin Eve, because of disobedience became a cause of death to herself and to all mankind. For O'Carroll here is a hint that Irenaeus regarded Eve as a type of Mary, as Adam was of Christ. God's masterplan, in the observations of Irenaeus, had been worked out through a '**recirculatio**,' an undoing along the same path of original evil. "This is an untied knot, and is unloosed at each stage by counterparts of those involved, Adam by Christ, the tree of Eden by the tree of the cross, Eve by Mary."¹⁴ Again in his '**Demonstratio apostolicae praedictioni**,' 33, he declared:

.....for Adam had necessarily to be restored in Christ, that mortality be absorbed in immortality, and Eve in Mary, that a virgin's advocate of a virgin should undo and destroy virginal disobedience by virginal obedience.¹⁵

O'Carroll assumes that 'advocate', taken in the Latin plenary sense, would introduce a doctrine of Mary's intercession, into the second century; but accepts that the matter is highly controversial. Graef has no reservations in magnifying the role of Mary as the "advocate (or comforter) of the virgin Eve,"¹⁶ and therefore the rescuer of the whole human race. She also interprets the comments of Irenaeus as identifying Mary's position "as the great intercessor for all mankind;"¹⁷ while her divine

motherhood enabled her to participate more actively in the great work of redemption. She became "the pure womb which regenerates men unto God."¹⁸

Irenaeus is deemed to have expressed his belief in the divine motherhood in such a way as to anticipate 'Theotokos;' as for example, when he stated, "The Son of God was born of a Virgin."¹⁹ O'Carroll's observation may be correct, but he, like many other authors, has used the expression 'divine motherhood', rather freely, and without any attempt to place it in apposition to the 'divine Fatherhood.'

The virginal conception was illustrated by Irenaeus through such Old Testament texts as Isaiah Ch. 7: 14. and Daniel Ch. 2: 34. He is quoted as having been the first of the Fathers to have interpreted Genesis Ch.3: 15 in a Marian sense, that is, in the context of the collective meaning. The demon has been in conflict with the descendants of Eve, but has been defeated in the triumph won by Christ, (born of the Virgin Mary). Yet he was not averse to retranslating the Scriptures, as, for example, in taking St. John Ch.1: 13, in the singular, and thereby implying the virginal conception.

O'Carroll's perusal of the comments of Irenaeus on the episode at Cana, leads him to the conclusion that the Bishop of Lyons may have perceived some "undue eagerness" on Mary's part, and "almost a rebuke"²⁰ in the words of Jesus. The incident has to be set in the context of the complete foreknowledge of God the Father, and the accomplishment of all things by the Son - at the proper time. The account did not introduce a discussion on Mary's holiness; in this regard Irenaeus was not explicit. However, maintains O'Carroll, "a high degree of perfection is implied in the Eve-Mary contrast."²¹ Graef is somewhat perplexed to find that Irenaeus, with "his highly developed Mariology,"²² could have considered Mary capable of human failings. Yet he underlined Mary's relationship with the Church in the suggestion that in the 'Magnificat', she was crying out "prophetically in the name of the Church."²³

Boslooper has noted a change in the theological emphasis in the use of the tradition of the birth of Jesus, by Irenaeus, (and also by Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Origen). "The shift of orientation of the virgin birth from the motif of atonement to the motif of incarnation,"²⁴ is evident.

During this period in Alexandria, the main focus and stimulus to Christian intellectual life lay in the catechetical school, led by **Pantaenus**, whose distinguished pupil was **Titus Flavius Clement**, (probably an Athenian, d. 215). Clement travelled extensively in his search for Apostolic teaching.

Only part of his writings remains extant. Chapter 16 of the seventh book of the '**Stromateis**' contains references to Mary. He asserted her virginity '**in partu**', with the comment that "she was a woman in childbed because of the birth of the child, yet was not a woman in childbed."²⁵ Clement apparently made use of the '**Protoevangelium**,' when he recorded the story of the midwife who discovered that Mary was a virgin, (as "some say"²⁶). Comparison of Mary with the Scriptures, (which Clement described as remaining 'virgins', in giving birth to the truth), led him to suggest that Mary "brought forth and did not bring forth," as "the Scripture says."²⁷ (The Bible does not make this actual observation). Graef feels that such a quotation detracted from Mary's real motherhood. However Clement's remark appears to be commentary rather than actual quotation.

By the time of **Hippolytus** (170 ?- 235), the evolving creed of the Church prompted the application of three questions to elicit the baptismal confession from candidates. The questions were introduced by the words 'Do you believe.....?' and encompassed belief in the Father, in the Son (Jesus Christ), "who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.....," and in the Holy Spirit, together with "the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh."²⁸

Hippolytus as "a commentator, chronicler, calculator of Easter dates, Apologist, and opponent of heretics,"²⁹ continued the polemical thrust initiated by Irenaus. He opposed the Monarchians of both schools and became a strong advocate of the Logos Christology. In his system, he perceived the virgin birth as significant in its association with the Logos, as the means by which the latter became incarnate. The virgin birth was also set in an anti-docetic context as a means of stressing the humanity of Jesus.

Let us believe, then, dear brethren, according to the tradition of the Apostles, that God the Word came down from Heaven (and entered) into the holy Virgin Mary, assuming also a human, by which I mean a rational, soul, and becoming thus all that man is with the exception of sin, he might save fallen man and confer immortality on men who believe His Name.³⁰ ('Against the Heresy of Noetus XV11').

Tertullian, (c.160 - after 220), born of pagan parents in Carthage, and converted to Christianity in Rome, about 195, also accepted the virgin birth, both as the means by which the Logos became incarnate, and as a confirmation of the belief in the Lord's nativity. His '**Against Praxeas**.'

included a discussion in which he looked on the Father and the Son as two distinct persons. **Praxeas**, (a follower of **Noetus** and an opponent of Montanism), had maintained that the Father himself had come down in the Virgin's womb, was Himself born of her, and suffered; that He was in fact Jesus Christ. Tertullian attacked the ideas of **Marcion**, ("Jesus suddenly appeared and was suddenly Christ"³¹), and of **Apelles**, who advocated that Christ had been of solid flesh, without having been born. He was always careful to distinguish "whether or not Christ had been born 'through' or 'of' a virgin, 'in' or 'of' a womb, 'in' her or 'of' her."³² Against such Gnostics as Valentinus, who taught that the divine Christ had "passed through Mary as water through a tube,"³³ Tertullian maintained the reality of Christ's human birth. In his '**De Carne Christi**,' he examined the prophecy of Isaiah Ch. 7: 14. According to O'Carroll, this verse in its total Marian sense, dominated Tertullian's thinking. Tertullian followed Irenaeus in comparing the virgin earth, from which Adam was made, and the Virgin Mary, from whom Christ was born. The parallelism between Eve and Mary was then expounded:

Thy word (of the devil) which built up death had insinuated itself into Eve, then still a virgin; the word of God that built up life had equally to be introduced into a virgin, so that what, through the female sex had gone to perdition, should through the same sex be restored to salvation. Eve had believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel. What the one had done wrong by believing, the other made good by believingEvefinally brought forth the diabolic murder of his brother. Mary, on the contrary, brought him forth, who was to redeem Israel, his brother according to the flesh, who had killed him.³⁴

Graef's impression of Tertullian that he had attributed less influence to Mary than had Irenaeus, (for example, he did not support the proposition of her being the cause of salvation for the whole race), is endorsed by O'Carroll. The latter observes that Tertullian's theology did not equal that of Justin or Irenaeus.

This theology did include a strong emphasis on the virginal conception, but a rejection of the virginity '**in partu**.' Tertullian had good reason for this rejection (besides attempting to proclaim the real motherhood of Mary against the Gnostics), namely, that the theory rested only on apocryphal evidence. His denial of Mary's continued virginal life after the birth of Christ, is for Graef, very unorthodox. In '**De Monogamia**,' 8, 2, he commented that she "has indeed brought forth Christ as a virgin, but was going to be married after the birth,"³⁵ so that she should be holy as mother, virgin, and

the wife of one man. He argued for the admissibility of other later members of the family of Mary and Joseph.

The interpretations of St. Matthew Ch. 12: 48 and of St. Luke Ch. 11: 27-28, raise an objection from O'Carroll, who feels that Tertullian had gone astray in thinking that Christ rejected his mother and brethren, while preferring those who heard the word of God and kept it. It had also been suggested that in leaving his family for God's work, Christ had been doing what he encouraged in others. Tertullian looked on Mary, cut off from her Son, and on the unbelieving brothers, as figures of the synagogue and of the Jews respectively. Not only did he assert that Mary was not among her Son's followers, but also declared that Christ rejected her and "transferred the blessedness from the womb and the breasts of his mother to his disciples."³⁶ While recognizing that the silence of the early theologians on the question of Mary's perpetual virginity, was not rejection, Hilda Graef notes that, "Very soon after Tertullian, the evidence for belief in Mary's perpetual virginity becomes overwhelming."³⁷

Origen (185-254), 'the father of Greek theology,' and a pupil of Clement (of Alexandria), gave the impression of being in two minds about the virginity '**in partu**'. On the one hand he denied it in his homilies on Luke; and on the other, affirmed it in later homilies on Leviticus. The Greek originals of both works have been lost. Graef provides an explanation for the discrepancy, namely, that **Jerome** translated the former from the Greek text, and **Rufinus** (d. 410), translated the latter during a period of controversial reaction against Origen's teaching. Rufinus attempted to shield the Alexandrian scholar who was accused of heresy, by toning down the more questionable ideas. (For example, Origen reconciled the Incarnation with his ideas about the pre-existence of souls). Graef quickly points out that it seems doubtful that Rufinus had to transpose anything in the matter of Mary's virginity '**in partu**'. To strengthen her argument she takes Origen's commentary on Matthew, which is preserved in the Greek original, and seems "to imply her virginity '**in partu**.'"³⁸ In that Gospel. Ch 23: 35, Zachariah's brutal death was recorded. Origen gave as the reason:

Now Mary, after giving birth to the Saviour, went to worship and stood in the place of the virgins, and when those who knew she had given birth were preventing her, Zachariah said to them that she was worthy of the place of the virgins, because she was a virgin. Therefore, as he was evidently transgressing the Law and allowed a woman to take her place among the virgins, they killed him between the temple and the altar.³⁹

The last sentence would seem to imply Mary's regular marital standing . O'Carroll mentions the conclusion of **H. Crouzel S.J.**, that Origen did not hold virginity '**in partu.**'

Whatever the case, Origen took the position that Mary remained a life-long virgin, although his extant writings do not use the term **aeiparthenos** ('ever-virgin'). From his commentary on Matthew and from a Greek fragment from '**Homilies on Luke**', his view was clearly presented. In the '**Homilies**' he refuted allegations that the Saviour had rejected Mary, "because after the birth of the Saviour she had intercourse with Joseph."⁴⁰ He believed that the brothers of Jesus were the sons of Joseph, but not of Mary. In the '**Contra Celsum**', he dealt with the concoction that Christ had been born of an adulterous union between Mary and a Roman soldier, Panthera. The tradition which had emerged probably in the second century, flourished among the opponents of Christianity for several centuries. Origen suggested as the reason for Mary's marriage to Joseph, the need to conceal the divine origin of the Child. This he deduced from the statement of **Ignatius**, (that Mary's virginity had been hidden from the prince of this world). To which he added, "It was hidden by reason of Joseph."⁴¹ Mary would have been preserved from stoning - "for having lost her virginity."⁴²

The common Eastern view that the brothers of Jesus were children of Joseph, by an earlier marriage, was accepted by Origen. Conjugal relations implied a certain blemish; therefore he upheld the perpetual virginity. "Mary had no other children but Jesus, according to those who think sanely."⁴³ Origen defended the Virgin Birth against the pagan philosopher Celsus, by dwelling on the prophecy of Isaiah 7: 14. "What sort of sign would it be if a young woman, not a virgin, bore a son?"⁴⁴ He proclaimed that the virgin birth was a doctrine, universally well known, because it was an integral part of "that which Christians preached."⁴⁵ (In his time there was known to be a female animal species that gave birth as a result of a parthenogenetic process).

Mary's personal perfection was exalted. These were the consequences of the coming of the Holy Spirit, together with the divine child-bearing. She was the firstfruits of women's pure chastity, as Jesus was of man's pure chastity. It has to be admitted that in some texts Origen appeared to attribute imperfection to Mary. He insinuated that in St. Luke 1: 34, Mary's question showed a degree of incredulity. He interpreted Simeon's 'sword' as 'doubt' that would pierce Mary's soul. (O'Carroll regards these as faulty exegesis, that would eventually suffer rejection by tradition).

Why should we believe that, when the Apostles were scandalised, the Mother of the Lord, remained immune from scandal? If she had not

suffered scandal in the passion of the Lord, Jesus would not have died for her sins. But if 'all have sinned and need the glory of God, justified by his grace and redeemed', (Romans Ch. 3: 23), then Mary too was scandalised at that time ⁴⁶

Graef, conjecturing on the slight possibility of two Greek fragments on Luke being the work of Origen, advances the idea that he was the first of the Fathers to use the term Theotokos, 'Mother of God'. Origen also focussed on the Second-Eve motif, but less elaborately than Irenaeus, as he contrasted the disobedience of Eve with the obedience of Mary. Like Irenaeus he looked on her 'Magnificat' as prophecy.

Boslooper voices the problem of correspondence between the Canonical forms of the first two chapters of both St. Matthew and St. Luke, and the writings of the early Church Fathers. While the virgin birth was prominent in the first century, there was no clear reference to the Matthean account until after the first part of the second century. Lukan references did not appear in the writings of the Fathers until the end of the second century. Is it possible that the early chapters of the first and third gospels were added to counter the Gnostic and Jewish versions of the Nativity ?

Origen , born of Christian parents, not only studied the Scriptures, but also concentrated on Greek literature and philosophy. (He was reputed to have heard **Ammonius Saccas**). He gave the Church its first orderly comprehensive statement of faith - a statement that bore the impress of the Greek heritage. Yet at times he was branded a heretic. From his strong opposition to Monarchianism, two mains streams of thought developed; they came into conflict with each other, from late in the third century through much of the fourth and fifth centuries, eventually leading to serious divisions within the Church. One stream stressed that Christ was the Son of God, the Wisdom or Logos of God, and had always been so; accordingly the Logos was equal with the Father. Yet Origen had also appeared to say that Christ was a creature; as the image of the Father He was secondary and subordinate to Him; much was made of the subordination of the Son to the Father.

Differences in definition

In 259, a pupil of Origen, and Bishop of Alexandria, **Dionysius**, was asked to mediate in a dispute among the churches in Libya, where the Logos-theology and modalistic Monarchianism were confronting each other. The Bishop attacked the modalistic standpoint, stressing the distinctness of the Son as a person, and denying that the Father and the Son were of one substance ('**homoousios**').

He used language that gave the impression that the Father had created the Son, that there was a time when the Son did not exist, and that the Son was subordinate to the Father. **Dionysius, Bishop of Rome**, rebuked his namesake and stressed the unity of God. Chadwick looks on this episode as "the first indication of a gulf which soon became a yawning chasm between the East and the West."⁴⁷ To the former, Western doctrine bordered on 'Sabellianism'; to the latter, Origen's influence had resulted in tritheism.

The second stream at Antioch found an influential exponent in **Lucian**, among whose students were **Arius** of Alexandria and **Eusebius** of Nicomedia. The Monarchian influences of Antioch led Arius "to emphasize the unity and self-contained existence of God."⁴⁸ He followed the teaching of Origen that Christ was a created being, and maintained that "the Son has a beginning, butGod is without beginning."⁴⁹ In the incarnation, this Logos or 'lower God' entered a human body, taking the place of the human reasoning spirit. Arius protested against the supposed Sabellianism of his bishop **Alexander of Alexandria** (312?-328) The Bishop influenced by the other branch of Origen's teaching, condemned and deposed Arius; who then sought and received refuge from his friend Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia. The quarrel intensified and threatened to divide the Church in the East. The **Emperor Constantine** stepped in and summoned the bishops of the Empire to Nicaea. The East with its emphasis on speculative theology was about to make closer contact with that strong tendency of the West towards morals and discipline. Warner makes the observation that "much more of the intellectual ability was to be found in the Greek-speaking than in the Latin-speaking portion of the Empire."⁵⁰

With a few exceptions, the latter half of the Third century remained silent with regard to distinctive references to Mary. Hilda Graef notes the contribution of **Cyprian of Carthage** (258), who was the first Father to relate Isaiah 7: 14, to Genesis 3: 14f. "This seed God had foretold would issue from the woman and would crush the head of the devil."⁵¹ **Peter of Alexandria** (d. 311) may have been the first known witness to the title 'Ever-Virgin.' However Graef admits that the passage where the word occurs is doubtful.

Methodius of Olympus (d.300), who taught philosophy and Scripture at Lycia, compared Mary to the virgin earth from which Adam had been taken. Two documents of this period have given Graef an opportunity to grasp at the possible discovery of what she describes as intense Christian

devotion to the Mother of Christ. The first probably came from **Gregory of Nyssa** whose panegyric on **Bishop Gregory Thaumaturgos** (d. 270), included "the description of a vision of the blessed Virgin."⁵² The work belonged to the latter part of the Fourth century. But Graef takes the suggestion of **M. Jugie**, that the vision may have been authentic, seeing that the testimony of Gregory of Nyssa was "unexceptional."⁵³ O'Carroll, on the other hand, observes that this authorship of the Life of Thaumaturgos has only been tentatively accepted by many. (**J.J. Hayes** is emphatic, that in the recorded vision of a venerable old man, accompanied by a woman, there was no mention of Mary). Graef feels that the vision was very restrained compared with appearances of a later date. Her source must differ from that of Hayes in that the woman, "a female form, more than life size," in a blaze of light, "as if a brilliant torch had been lit," tells John (her companion), to "make known to the young man (Gregory) the mystery of piety;"⁵⁴ and he said that he was ready to do this for the Mother of the Lord, "because such was her wish."⁵⁵

In a footnote Graef points out that three Marian homilies have also been attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgos (or Wonderworker), but were really products of a much later age. Gregory did encourage his flock to substitute festivals for the martyrs, in place of those for the old gods.

At the same time Christianity was acquiring some of the beliefs and trappings of the cults. Another possible indication of popular devotion to Mary was a prayer recorded on a papyrus fragment dated around the Third or Fourth centuries. "Mother of God (hear) my supplications; suffer us not . . . (to be) in adversity, but deliver us from danger...."⁵⁶ Graef makes the point that the dating of the fragment does not necessarily date the prayer. Because the language used suggested that the Theotokos herself could deliver from danger. **O Stegmuller**, (*ZKT*,74, (1952), pps. 76 - 82), assigns it to the end of the Fourth century and to gnostic circles. **Methodius, Bishop of Tyre** in the Third century, was reputed to have produced a work that, for some time, was quoted as proof for the assertion that invocation of the Virgin had been an early practice. The homily, according to Endell Tyler, "has long since been pronounced by the best critics to be the production of a later age."⁵⁷

One such critic, **Baronius** (Paris 1607) declared that he would not

hesitate to say that no Greek or Latin writer has left a sermon delivered on the feast of Purification before the fifteenth year of Justinian (Sixth century), and that Pope Gelasius paved the way for the institution of that feast by putting an end to the festivities of Lupercalia, which were also observed in February.⁵⁸

Marina Warner draws attention to the fact that from the second century onwards the Virgin appeared "chiefly in homilies on the ascetic life,"⁵⁹ in the exhortations to chastity, penned by the Christian Fathers, as for example, Cyprian's, '**On the Dress of Virgins**', Ambrose's, '**Instructions of a Virgin**', Tertullian's, '**On the Veiling of Virgins**', and Jerome's disciplinary letters to his pupils. The first mentioned, according to Hayes, was a visionary, but did not receive any apparition of Mary. During a schism in the Church, caused by the question of the administration of absolution, Cyprian, (Bishop of Carthage), described the Church as 'one Mother', and proclaimed its unity.

It is of her womb that we are born; our nourishment is from her milk, our quickening from her breath. The spouse of Christ cannot become adulterate; she is undefiled and chaste, owning but one home and guarding with virtuous modesty the sanctity of one chamber. She it is who keeps us for God, and appoints unto the Kingdom the sons she has borne.⁶⁰

He also declared that "he can no longer have God for a Father, who has not the Church for a Mother."⁶¹

Christ was also regarded in terms of Spouse in relation to those who were filled with the Spirit. Consequently in Gaul and in North Africa the Church was called Mater Ecclesia. E. O. James suggests that "the contacts with Phrygia and Asia Minor may have resulted in the nuptial symbolism based on the conception of Christ as the divine bridegroom, standing in a marital relationship with His Bride the Church."⁶² Tertullian emphasized the virginity of the Church, but still retained nuptial symbolism as his predominant theme. James finds in the African writer the development of the Pauline tradition in relation to the underlying Goddess cultus in Asia Minor, interpreted in terms of Christ, as the source of all true life. Physical life came through Adam. So the Church is the Second Eve "the true Mother of the living,"⁶³ through whom spiritual life was mediated from Christ, the Second Adam. In the first instance, this new life was mediated by the water of baptism and secondly "in the much-coveted baptism of blood in the arena."⁶⁴ Clement of Alexandria (150-220) followed the allegorical method in describing the converts who had become children of the Virgin Mother Church, by virtue of their baptismal rebirth. "Sheis both virgin and mother, being undefiled as a virgin and loving as a mother; and calling her children to her, she nurses them with holy milk, because the Logos was milk....."⁶⁵ The Virgin Mother Church was represented as undefiled by false doctrine, ever loving and watchful of those who came within her affectionate embrace. She

sanctified and trained them as children of God on earth and prepared them to attain citizenship in heaven.

The Johannine Apocalyptic vision of the Woman in travail (Revelation Ch.12), was interpreted as "our Mother being a power of herself and distinct from her children."⁶⁶ The Church, in other words, variously described as 'Jerusalem', 'a bride', 'Mount Sion', 'the temple and tabernacle of God', always laboured to bring forth her children, and then to secure their resurrection in baptism. Adorned as a bridal queen in her garment of light, proceeding from the Logos, with a diadem of stars, she stood on the moon, symbolizing "the faith of those who are cleansed from corruption in the bath of baptism."⁶⁷

Clement continued, "as woman conceivesdoes the Church ever and ever conceive those who flee to the Logos, forming them in the likeness and form of Christ...."⁶⁸ Just as the dragon in the Apocalypse lay in waiting to devour the man/child of the Woman, as soon as he was born, so the Devil would always be ready to destroy the Christ-possessed soul after the baptism. Hence the need for protection from the Mother Church, who could not be injured or defiled by the Beast.

James, certain that the Goddess cult in Asia Minor lay behind the nuptial imagery, finds that the cult has been interpreted in terms of mystical thought and language in relation to the motherhood of the Virgin Church. Here children were regarded as having been conceived spiritually "through the natural process of parturition with its attendant labour and travail."⁶⁹ The female principle in Magna Mater, became Mater Ecclesia, "at once the Bride and Body of Christ, the Mother of the Faithful, proceeding towards perfection, in whom the Bride is merged."⁷⁰ The nuptial element has remained an integral feature in Catholic mysticism in the West, but "shorn of its cruder symbolism and Asian emotionalism?"⁷¹

According to James, the influence of the Magna Mater tradition on Christian thought and practice, during the opening centuries of the new era, was confined mainly to the imagery of Mater Ecclesia. Only among the Gnostic Ophite sects was the Virgin herself actually worshipped as a goddess.

By 300 the Virgin Birth came to be associated with the Logos, as a means of explaining the method by which the Logos entered the world. **Lactantius** (d. 320), quoted from Ode 19 of the Odes of Solomon, with regard to the painless delivery of the Virgin:

Therefore the Holy Spirit of God, descending from Heaven chose the Holy Virgin, that He might enter into her womb. But she being filled by the possession of the Divine Spirit conceived; and without any intercourse with a man, her virgin womb was suddenly impregnated. But if it is known to all that animals are accustomed to conceive by the wind and the breeze, why should any think it wonderful when we say that a virgin was impregnated by the Spirit of God, to whom whatever He may wish is easy?⁷² (Works of Lactantius).

Boslooper describes as "vivid terminology"⁷³ the exposition of Lactantius in his discourse on the Incarnation of the Word, with reference to a 'first' and a 'second nativity.' Thus the orthodox theory of the two origins of Christ, which corresponded to His two natures, was introduced.

For in His first nativity, which was spiritual, He was motherless, because he was begotten by God the father alone, without the office of a mother. But in His second which was in the flesh, He was born of a virgin's womb without the office of a father.....He became both the Son of God through the Spirit, and the son of man through the flesh - that is, both God and man.⁷⁴ (Works of Lactantius).

Comment.

Comparisons between the Birth story of Jesus and accounts of a similar kind, in pagan mythology, called for a definitive Christian response and defence. Intellectuals, converted from a pagan background, probably would have been suitable apologists for the faith. However the Church had to contend with those philosophers whose transition to Christianity had been nominal. The Church Fathers had to wrestle with varying shades of emphases and differences of opinion.

The 'Virgin Birth' and 'the humanity of Jesus' exercised many minds. The ensuing debates have engendered allegations which, in turn, have required substantiation. The efforts of the Church Fathers to formulate adequate replies to their critics, inevitably, introduced other questions that had to be answered. Neither did they always speak with a consistent voice. That has left the reader with the problem of choice, a problem that is further compounded by the observations of commentators, who have endeavoured to establish their own beliefs. For example, the question of Mary's virginity developed into the discussion about types of virginity; one or other has been emphasized according to conviction.

The philosophical approach to Biblical teaching gave the opportunity to expound and to expand the Eve-Mary thesis. The initial christological emphasis now faced competition. Mary has also been

commended as a rôle model, especially for the life of an ascetic. The Church, portrayed as 'Mother,' propagated another fruitful idea that integrated readily into mariology.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE FOURTH CENTURY: CONTROVERSY AND CONSEQUENCES.

During the early years of the fourth century, the emphasis, that previously had been placed on the Virgin Birth of Jesus, was transferred to the question of Mary's virginity. Boslooper recalls a question posed by **Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea**, in his '**Oration in Praise of Constantine**,' namely, "And why is it impossible that she, who was with child of the Holy Spirit, should be and ever continue to be virgin?"¹ The question has never been far from "the forefront of the Church's mind."²

This period was also marked by reactions against the conviction of Arius that Jesus was an ordinary human being, whom God had adopted at His baptism in the Jordan, declaring, "You are my Son the Beloved,"³ (Luke 3: 22). The Church, therefore, had to refute this heresy, but without denying Christ's humanity. "The birth of Christ from a woman by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and his consequent dual nature as a man and God had to be satisfactorily defined."⁴

The theological debate on the nature of Christ was to hold the ecclesiastical stage for centuries afterwards, in spite of the decision of the Council of Nicaea (325) to anathematize the teachings of **Arius**. The intensity of acrimonious argument thrust the mother of Christ into an increasingly prominent position. "Her unbroken virginity suspended the law of nature, and thus manifested the presence of the divine, but her full parturition of Christ served to prove his manhood."⁵ Mary's virginity was constantly emphasized in the wrangle with Arianism.

Ashe deduces that the ground-plan for Mary's worship was fixed by the Nicene developments. To do this he traces the philosophical pursuits that influenced Christian decisions. Pious Jews, in order to off-set the influences of later Gnosticism, had treated Wisdom as an allegory of the Torah. Philo, having transferred the qualities of Wisdom to the Logos, had given Christians the opportunity to interpret the 'Christ' (who was co-creator in Heaven, just as Wisdom had been). The Christians moved Him into the Godhead, as co-equal Second Person of the Trinity. Arius relegated the Logos to Philo's position, as greater than all the others, but created. The opinion of Arius was not dismissed entirely. Ashe finds, at this time, a persistent feeling that looked for a living semi-divine intermediary. There was a cosmic gap that an entity should bridge. Apparently such a view was held for some decades in the Roman Empire, and also promulgated abroad by missionaries. Ashe takes this

subject into the context of the Nicene Creed. "The Lady Wisdom - in a new guise and under a new name, could be summoned back, and co-exist at her own level, with the wholly deified Logos."⁶ He also refers to Newman's argument that the Arian idea of Christ as a demi-god only, though dismissed by the Church, started an irreversible train of thought. This status proposed for Him and rejected, came to be allotted to His mother instead. Ashe is not convinced that this statement may be even partly true; but makes the point that the material available, to exalt the Virgin further, was not coordinated sufficiently in the Fourth century.

The opening years of the Fourth century also marked, for the Church, the end of a period that had been punctuated by persecutions of varying intensity, (beginning with Nero in 64). A consequence of this was a growing practice of asceticism, especially in monastic communities, with its emphasis on, and high estimation of virginity. Deceased ascetics had not yet been prayed to; neither had Mary. She was held up as an inspiration. For example, a minor document of the Council of Nicaea portrayed Mary as a consecrated virgin, "a virtual nun, and a pattern for nuns,"⁷ one who "never saw the face of a strange man;"⁸ consequently she was confused when Gabriel spoke to her. She remained in isolation in her own home, praying continually, facing east, being served by her own mother.

For her brothers wanted to see her and speak to her. And she did not receive them. For the angels came many times to her; they observed her singular way of life and admired her..... For the Lord looked upon the whole of creation and he saw no-one to equal Mary. Therefore he chose her for His mother. If, therefore a girl wants to be called a virgin, she should resemble Mary.⁹

Here was a clear example of a particular period identifying its own image of the Virgin, according to its own ideal. Graef believes this to be an unconscious formulation, (an observation that also may betray a tendency on her own part to follow suit). She attempts to justify her conclusion that the veneration of Mary gained much ground by the middle of the Fourth century and especially in the East. By this time, the feast of '**Hypapante**' (the Meeting or Encounter of Christ and Simeon), was kept in Jerusalem on February 14th. Initially the ceremony was principally a feast of Christ, but "Mary nevertheless must have had her share in it, and the preachers would no doubt have drawn attention to Simeon's prophecy that a sword was to pierce her heart."¹⁰ Marina Warner describes this feast (instituted in Jerusalem in the middle of the Fourth century) as "the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple;"¹¹ and indicates that by the early Sixth century the feast was being called the

'**Hypapante**' in Byzantium. Its focus then was "less on the exemplary obedience of Jesus and Mary to Mosaic law, than on Simeon and Anna's inspired recognition of the Saviour."¹² The '**Peregrinatio Aetheriae**,' the account of a nun's visit to the Holy Land, dating around the end of the Fourth century, recorded this feast.

The 'glories' of the Theotokos were proclaimed increasingly (in Graef's opinion), especially because of the influence of the school of Alexandria. **Eusebius of Caesarea** (260-340), the father of Church history, regarded as appropriate the Marian interpretations of Isaiah 7: 14, and 8: 3. The first reference he considered to be a prophecy that "a virgin shall conceive without intercourse with a man and shall bring forth God."¹³ In the second, the words of the prophet were applied to Mary, to "her who is to give birth to Emmanuel,"¹⁴ and as the 'prophetess,' because of her share in the Holy Spirit, as recorded in the Gospel, (St. Luke). He also called her '**panagia**' (all-holy) - possibly from Origen's influence. **Bishop Alexander of Alexandria** defended orthodoxy at the Council of Nicaea (325). He referred to Jesus Christ as one "who truly and not merely in appearance bore flesh, taken from Mary, Theotokos."¹⁵ O'Carroll insists that here was the first known use of the "most important title ever given to Mary."¹⁶

Athanasius (c. 296 - 373), the successor of Alexander showed some dependence on his predecessor, when he wrote, "I heard it from the lips of our Father Alexander.... He was born of the Virgin Mary, for in her He took the flesh made man..... You have the conduct of Mary, who is the example and image of the heavenly life"¹⁷ - a reference to her virginity. St. Athanasius, in his controversy with Arianism stressed that Christ had taken His Godhead from the Father, but his manhood from His mother "the unploughed earth,"¹⁸ (a patristic metaphor for the virginal conception), Theotokos.

In a letter to **Epictetus, Bishop of Corinth**, Athanasius emphasised the physical reality of Mary's motherhood. The letter referred to Christ as Son of Mary (six times), also calling Him Son of the Father; it mentioned Mary thirty-three times, twice as Virgin. The "Word was not consubstantial with his body," (otherwise) "the mention and ministry of Mary would be superfluous."¹⁹ Athanasius observed that everything made clear that Mary was truly human, including the manner of the birth of Jesus. The language used precluded an acceptance of the virginity '**in partu**.'

O'Carroll points out that, as with some of the Fathers before Him, Athanasius regarded St. Luke 1: 35, as a reference to the Son of God himself; the virginal conception was a sign of the divinity. "For who, seeing that this body came forth from a virgin alone, without a man, would not think that He who was revealed in it was the Creator and the Lord of other bodies ?"²⁰ Graef draws the conclusion that these emphases on the divinity of Christ and on the reality of His humanity "make Mary the Mother of God."²¹ Unlike Boslooper, she sees Mariology together with Christology gaining a stronger place in theological circles, during the first half of the Fourth century.

O'Carroll believes that Athanasius "was probably first among the Fathers to use St. John 19; 25-27, as an argument for the perpetual virginity of Mary."²²

By saying that, he teaches us that Mary had no other sons but the Saviour. If, in fact, she had another son, the Saviour would not have neglected him to entrust her to others..... But because she was a virgin, after having been a Mother, He gave her to the disciples as mother.²³

In a '**Letter to the Virgins**,' (almost certainly by Athanasius), Mary was represented as the model virgin - but not without some imperfections. Her works and thoughts, at times were not exemplary. Graef again attempts to obviate this difficulty, by suggesting that the writer may have intended to encourage the virginal life as a vocation, by a more realistic picture of 'the model.' The image of a spotlessly perfect, immaculate Virgin, had not yet developed in the awareness of the fourth-century Fathers. The 'imitation of Mary' had become an established practice by this time. Athanasius viewed the expressions of St. Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians, 7: 25, as indicating that the Apostle may have known the life of Mary, "because he took her as a model to introduce his opinion on virginity."²⁴ For Graef the Letter shows clearly the importance of Mary in the spiritual life of ascetics in Egypt during the fourth-century.

For a time Athanasius was misrepresented. **Bellarmino**, (1542 - 1621), and others quoted him as having favoured the invocation of the Virgin. A homily in this vein, formerly ascribed to Athanasius, was eventually declared spurious, but only after a long period of acceptance. Entitled, '**On the Annunciation of the Mother of God**', one section of the homily read:

Hear now, O daughter of David, incline Thine ear to our prayers; we raise our cry to thee. Remember us, O most holy Virgin, and, fit the feeble eulogiums we give thee, grant us great gifts from the treasures of thy graces, thou that art full of grace....²⁵

Baronius fixed the date of the document around the opening years of the Seventh century.

In a footnote (J. E. Tyler) gives a warning against a mistaken conception of the term Theotokos. To ascertain its application, he maintains that it is better to "weigh the language of the Fathers in some analogous cases."²⁶ For example, the Apostle James, called in the Scriptures, the Lord's brother, was later given the name Adelphotheos (God's brother). He was not exalted thereby above his brethren. The designation really declared the faith of those, who gave him the name, "that the Lord Jesus was very God."²⁷ Likewise Theotokos (she who gave birth to God) was applied to Mary "to declare the Catholic faith in the Godhead of Him who was born of Mary,"²⁸ not to exalt her. O'Carroll notes that within sixty years of the death of Athanasius, his authority would carry great weight in the defence of Mary's title.

Didymous the Blind was appointed by Athanasius as head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. In the Sixth century and afterwards he was condemned as a believer in the pre-existence of the soul and in the **Apokastasis**, because he had defended Origen and his work, '**De Principis**', as entirely orthodox. Didymous expounded the more speculative thought of Origen. In his teaching he may have been the first to describe the baptismal font as the ever-virgin mother of the baptised, fruitful through the Holy Spirit. "It is the same Spirit through Whom the Church becomes the Mother of all, who from her virginal womb gives birth in the baptismal font to her children."²⁹ In calling the Church 'our mother' he may have followed an idea of Origen. Didymous preferred to call Mary, Theotokos, and proclaimed her virginity '**in partu**' and '**post partum**'; he followed a favoured expression of Athanasius in addressing her as the 'perpetual virgin'.

Titus, Bishop of Bostra (d. before 378), defended the real motherhood of Mary against the Manicheans, and in doing so exceeded Athanasius in eulogising her. He introduced the Magnificat ('**Homilies in Luke**'), with the exhortation, "Let us therefore hear what the virgin in all respects 'new', says, and what is her marvellous prophesy; for she is above nature, mother and virgin, so she also shows herself a prophetess and speaker of God."³⁰ The objections of the Manicheans to his teaching would have implied his acceptance of the virginity '**in partu**.' He taught the virginity '**post partum**,' for he regarded the brothers of Jesus as sons of Joseph by a previous marriage.

Marcellus of Ancyra, (d.c.374), another contemporary and friend of Athanasius, was probably responsible for the '**Exposition of the Faith**,' a work that was attributed to Athanasius, and in which

Mary was called '**achrantos**,' (undefiled). In this document, Jeremiah 3: 22 (in the translation of Aquila) seems to have been applied to her for the first time in these words:

The Lord has created a new thing in the female (Septuagint 'on the earth'), that is in Mary. For nothing new has been created in the female except which was born from the Virgin Mary, without intercourse, the body of the Lord.³¹

The earlier practice, especially in the semantics of controversy, of applying Old Testament passages to Christ, was changing to a Scriptural search for 'Mary-related' texts.

Influence of Ephraem.

Hilda Graef reckons that Marian devotion reached a peak of fervour during the Fourth-century in Syria and especially through the efforts of **Ephraem**, (who was ordained a deacon by Basil). He had been called the 'Lyre of the Holy Spirit', and as far as O'Carroll is concerned, deserves the title of 'Marian Doctor'. Paul Palmer in his '**Mary in the Documents of the Church**,' looks on Ephraem as Mary's first poet.

Nisibus was Ephraem's home town. There he had been trained by two of its bishops, James (303 - 338), and his second successor, Vologesus (346 - 361). He left the town in 363 and went to Edessa where most of his works (mostly in verse) may have been written. The authenticity of his writings has been disputed. Some have accepted his Syrian works, others the Greek works; in some cases both have been accepted. Ephraem's insistence on Mary's sinlessness led to the conclusion that he was the first Father to have taught (or at least supported) the 'Immaculate Conception'. In the Nisibene Hymns (27: 8) he wrote, "You (Christ) alone and your mother are good in every way; for there is no blemish in thee, my Lord and no stain in thy Mother."³² O'Carroll mentions other texts, but admits that more subtle interpretations would be required to uphold this theory. For example, "In Mary, as in the eye, the Light came to dwell and it cleansed her spirit, refined her thoughts, sanctified her mind and purified her virginity."³³ While requiring subtle interpretation, such a statement, nevertheless, in no way contradicted "Mary's initial holiness."³⁴ Hilda Graef offers a simple explanation for this, that "at the moment when the Word entered into her,"³⁵ Mary was purified; and then quotes from one of Ephraem's Christmas hymns to prove her stance, "Mary has become a heaven for us, because she bears God."³⁶ Graef also holds the view that Ephraem's reflections on this matter

run counter to those of modern Western theologians. (Therefore, other passages on the same subject have to be used to interpret the above verse 27: 8).

The patristic ideas of conception through the ear, together with the image of the virgin earth, were also taken up by Ephraem. His works imbibed the Eve-Mary parallels and contrasts, for example. "Eve the mother of all the living became the source of death to all living. But Mary the new branch, took growth from Eve, the old vine, and Christ, the new life, dwelt in her."³⁷ "Death entered by Eve's ear, that is why life entered by Mary's ear,"³⁸ and "For as from the small womb of that ear, death entered and spread about, so through the new ear of Mary, life entered and spread about."³⁹

As Eve was caught up in the events that led to the Fall and its consequence, so Mary found herself caught up in the counteractive and redemptive activity. Ephraem wrote in his hymns on the Church: "It is evident that Mary is the soil of the sun, which through her has illuminated the world and its inhabitants, who had become dark through Eve, the cause of all evils."⁴⁰ This theme was further developed to include the descent of Christ into Sheol. "To-day (Christ's nativity), let Eve rejoice in Sheol. For lo, the Son of her daughter has descended as the medicine of life to raise the mother of his mother. The blessed child crushes the head of the serpent which wounded her."⁴¹ In the Sermon on Our Lord this subject was worked out more fully, and according to Graef, elaborated the idea of Irenaeus, that Mary was the advocate of Eve. In the body taken from Mary, observes Graef, Christ was able to enter Sheol and redeem Eve, "and so once more, Mary has her - indirect - share in the redemption of the world, extending even to Sheol, the underworld of the dead."⁴²

Ephraem also linked Mary with the Eucharist, thereby associating her impressively in the redemptive work of Christ. For him, the eucharistic body of Christ was identical with his human body taken from Mary. In the Nisibene Hymns he wrote: "And He took and broke a bread, another, unique one, the symbol of that body, the unique one, from Mary."⁴³ In his poems on the Crucifixion he called the Eucharist, "Bread from the praised sheaf (i.e. Mary)" and "grape from Mary."⁴⁴ J. Endell Tyler states that persons of high station in the Church of Rome "boldly and confidently appeal to the evidence of Ephraem in proof that prayers were offered to the Virgin in the primitive Church."⁴⁵ In support of this he draws attention to a Dr. N. Wiseman, a lecturer and a Bishop of Melopotamus, who (in 1836), quoted Ephraem as addressing the blessed Virgin as patroness and mediatrix with God, and asserting the continuing dependence of the human race upon her patronage. One prayer states,

"Behold I also draw nigh to thee with a fervent soul, not having courage to approach thy Son, but imploring that through thy intercession I may obtain salvation."⁴⁶ Another prayer has the wording, "After the Trinity, thou art mistress of all; after the Paraclete, another paraclete; after the Mediator, mediatrix of the whole world."⁴⁷

Ephraem was probably the first writer to call Mary 'Spouse' ("I am also Thy bride"⁴⁸ - from one of his hymns on the Nativity). He also spoke of her as a symbol of the Church; "He freed His Church from circumcision and replaced Joshua, son of Nun, by John who was a virgin, to whom He entrusted Mary, His Church, as Moses entrusted his flock to Joshua."⁴⁹

A Roman edition of Ephraem's works was the first to contain allusions to mariology, and some of the expressions have been acknowledged as spurious even by members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Theocras, a monk, compiled certain penitential prayers for everyday in the week under the heading '**Penitential prayers of the most holy monk Theocras, collected from the divine Scriptures, but for the most part from holy Ephraem, for those whose desire to contend against their own inclination towards their passion and pleasures.**' (In the Coislinian Library in Paris). The description 'Penitential' was then omitted; the name of **Theocras** was suppressed in the Vatican. The collection of **Theocras**, in the above edition, is followed by the prayers quoted by Dr. Wiseman, "but these have nothing to do with and are totally independent of either Ephraem or **Theocras**."⁵⁰

The penitential prayers of **Theocras** did not contain any address to the Virgin Mary, with the exception of the middle of the '**Lamentation on the Lord's Day at Evening,**' "where it is obviously an interpolation violently thrust into the middle of prayer with God, who is the sole object of invocation before and after the interpolation."⁵¹ Internal evidence has proven clearly that these prayers, allegedly of Ephraem, originated even later than the Council of Chalcedon (451). For Endell Tyler they display all "the lamentable corruptions"⁵² of **Bonaventure**, who applied to Mary, ascriptions in the Psalms which were given to God Himself. In one instance Mary was addressed in the words:

That being liberated from the darkness of sin I might be deemed worthy to glorify and freely celebrate thee, the only true Mother of true Light, Christ our God, because Thou alone with Him, and through Him art blessed and glorified by every creature visible and invisible, now and always, for ever and ever, Amen.⁵³

Dr. Wiseman in a discourse entitled, '**On the praises of the most holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary,**' quoted a passage found in a Latin version of Ephraem's work:

By thee we are reconciled to Christ our God, thy most sweet son. Thou art the only advocate and succour of sinners and of those who are destitute of help. Thou art the redemption and liberation of captives. Hail fountain of grace,..... Hail refuge of sinners!..... hail, sure and best hope of our soul! hail, sure salvation of all Christians who sincerely and truly have recourse to thee!⁵⁴

(This eulogy, dismissed by Tillemont, may have been the production of a Jerusalem monk).

Ephraem found Mary's prayers effective in preserving souls from evil; and considered her life, as a whole, totally integrated in the work of her Son.

Stances in the Second Half of the Fourth Century.

In the East, the second half of the fourth century bore witness to the strong influences of three teachers in particular: **Basil of Caesarea** (c. 330 - 379), "the organizer and legislator of monastic life,"⁵⁵ his brother, "the mystically-minded"⁵⁶ **Gregory of Nyssa** (c.335 - 394), and **Gregory of Nazianzus** (c.329 - 390), a close friend of the former.

The main section of Basil's Marian teaching occupied part of a sermon on the birth of Christ, (according to O'Carroll). Graef, on the other hand, highlights the subject in his homilies on the Creation, called the '**Hexameron.**' He taught the virginity '**in partu,**' and proved the possibility by appealing to the example of birds producing fertile eggs, without copulating. Basil had been attracted to the ideas of Origen, whose influence can be seen in his use of the story of the violent death of Zechariah between the altar and the Temple. In discussing Mary's betrothal to Joseph, he suggested that this had been undertaken because "virginity should be honoured, but marriage not despised:"⁵⁷ that Joseph should be a witness to her purity: and that her pregnancy should be hidden from the devil.

In conformity with the Fathers, Basil appealed to Deuteronomy 20: 25-28, to justify his interpretation of Isaiah 7: 14, as applying to a virgin. He argued that the pregnancy could have been a 'sign', unless '**almah**' meant 'virgin.' He reacted forcefully against the exegesis of St. Matthew 1: 25, that, 'till' in the passage, implied that, subsequently, Joseph did 'know' Mary as his wife. The term, 'firstborn' was also discussed and held to be a simple obvious reference without any further implication. Although he defended Mary's perpetual virginity, Basil accepted Origen's exegesis of

Simeon's prophesy as referring to Mary's doubt. "when she sees what is happening and hears voices"⁵⁸ at the Cross.

Basil and the two Gregorys, known as the Cappadocians assumed the mantle of Athanasius and strongly opposed heresy and schism, especially the consequences of Arianism. The Nicene party stressed the uniqueness of Christ and the Christian revelation with its conception of God, in an attempt to thwart the efforts of the Arians to fit Christ into the monotheism, towards which much of a pagan philosophy had been moving. The controversy reached a final stage, from the time of the **Emperor Julian** (361 - 363), until the **Emperor Theodosius I** (397 - 395). The latter in 380 aided the efforts of the orthodox party by ordering his subjects to follow the faith "Peter delivered to the Romans."⁵⁹

In May 381, **Theodosius** summoned an ecumenical council to Constantinople. One of its duties was to appoint a successor to the Arian **Bishop Demophilus**, who had anticipated the Theodosian changes. Initially Gregory of Nazianzus, "an eloquent preacher and an intelligent defender of the Nicene cause,"⁶⁰ appeared to be a suitable successor. However his suggestion that his own position at Antioch should be filled by a controversial figure, **Paulinus**, resulted in a storm that compelled Gregory to retire to Cappadocia.

The Council then had two appointments to make. They chose **Flavian** for Antioch and a distinguished government official, **Nectarius** for Constantinople. The Council (or Eastern synod), received credit for the compilation of the creed which passed into general use as the 'Nicene Creed.' Walker notes that the earlier Nicene creed (325), did not satisfy the theological developments among the triumphant party. It was desirable that a more comprehensive pronouncement would be formulated. Subsequently such a creed came into use, and by 451, was regarded as having been adopted by the General Council of 381. Its origin is not known, "but it is closely related to the baptismal creed of Jerusalem, as reconstructible from the teaching of **Cyril**, (of Jerusalem, 348) and also to that of **Epiphanius** of Salamis, (about 374)."⁶¹ Walker suggests that it may have been the local creed, current in the Church of Constantinople at that time. Having taken the place of the original Nicene creed, it is known as the 'Nicene' to this day.

Although the creed went some way to resolve the problem of the relation of the divine and the human in Jesus, the difficulty remained until the seventh century. Dissensions were more pronounced

in the East. The participants in the controversy appear to have given a general acceptance to the Nicene formula as authoritative. However, the definition of the Son of God, who was made man, elicited various interpretations. In Alexandria the divine element was stressed, apparently to the exclusion of the human. At Antioch, where the historical study of the Gospels was fundamental, the human element was emphasized.

Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicea, (310-390), an old friend of Athanasius, in an effort to rebut Arianism, declared that Christ's human nature differed from that of other men, in that the divine Word of Logos replaced the natural mind. He felt that two complete and contrasting natures, divine and human, could not co-exist in Christ. This therefore made Christ less than fully human and would leave the divine nature in Him complete. Graef reckons that the most telling statement of Gregory of Nazianzus occurred in a letter directed against the heresy of Apollinarius. The latter's efforts to uphold the full divinity of Christ had led him to teach that Christ had not taken real flesh from Mary, but had flowed through her as through a channel. Gregory rejected this and warned, "If anyone does not accept the holy Mary as Theotokos, he is without the Godhead."⁶² This may be the first time that a Mariological statement was given as a test of orthodoxy.

Bishop Gregory taught virginity '**in partu**', and in eliminating all sin from Christ in His birth, he used the word '**prokathartheise**', (purified previously, by the Spirit in soul and body), to describe Mary. That term was to influence subsequent thinking in the East. In the same context, Cyril of Jerusalem had used '**hagiasmos**' (which speaks of the process towards purification). Therefore any idea of her immaculate conception was precluded. This consideration "will be found also in many later Fathers and right into the Middle Ages."⁶³ J. Endell Tyler is of the opinion that no testimony to the invocation of the Virgin Mary, was produced by Gregory. Nevertheless the Bishop has been cited as one who prayed directly to Mary. In the conclusion of a dramatic composition (mistakenly attributed to him), entitled '**Christ Suffering**', there were the remarks:

**Moreover, kindly admit thy Mother, O Word, as an intercessor, and those to whom Thou has granted the grace to loose. August, venerable, all-blessed Virgin! thou inhabitest the heavenly mansions of the blessed, freed from the encumbrance of mortality, clad in the garment of incorruption, known ever-immortal as a Deity - When I reach the end of my life, may I ever have thee as a protector of the riches of my entire life, and as a most acceptable intercessor with the Son.....
Allow me not to be delivered up to torments Stand by me and save me from the fire and darkness by the faith that justifieth me, and by thy favour; for in thee was seen the grace of God to us.⁶⁴**

In an oration, claimed to have been delivered by Gregory in praise of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, there was a passage which seems to justify the conviction that "nowhere in the Fourth century lies the protection and assistance of the blessed Virgin Mary as clearly and so explicitly commended as in this oration."⁶⁵ Tyler rejects this completely.

Gregory of Nyssa also rejected the teaching of Apollinarius and stressed that reality of Mary's motherhood. He explained that Christ had "built for Himself a house, forming the earth from the Virgin, through which he was mingled with the humanity,"⁶⁶ "...For the man (Christ) was not before the Virgin,"⁶⁷ as was taught by Apollinarius. O'Carroll finds that much of Gregory's teaching on Mary centred on her virginity. The miraculous birth received so much attention from Gregory that, according to J. Endell Tyler, the mind has been drawn away from the person of Mary (who gave birth to the Saviour), and fixed on the part assigned to her. This Cappodocian, having been influenced by Origen and the school at Alexandria, therefore applied many old Testament texts to Mary. As well as Isaiah 7: 14, and 8: 3, he also mentioned "The heifer (or young girl) has given birth and has not given birth,"⁶⁸ from some unidentified passage. Moses' sister Miryam was seen as a type of Mary, and the tympanum, played after the Red Sea crossing, as a type of Mary's virginity. Tyler draws attention to the fact that Gregory interpreted Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon "largely and minutely"⁶⁹ in terms of Christ's birth, and made no reference to Mary at all. Tyler also notes that Gregory's references to Mary always were by the name Virgin.

Other types of the virginity 'in partu' were the 'closed door' of Ezekiel (44: 1) and the 'burning bush' on Mount Horeb, (Exodus 3). Gregory followed Ephraem in applying the story of the bush to

the mystery of the Virgin. For from her did the light of the Godhead shine on the life of man through the birth and preserved incorrupt the kindled bush, because the flower of the virginity was not made to wither by the childbirth.⁷⁰

The manna that appeared on the unploughed earth (Exodus 16 : 14) was also taken as a type of Mary's virginity. In a sermon on the Birth of Christ, Gregory used the parallel story of Hannah (1 Samuel, 1) to conclude that Mary's birth came as an answer to her mother's prayer. Mary was duly brought up in the temple. This part of her story, set in the context of the vow of virginity (before the Annunciation), was regarded by Gregory as apocryphal. On the other hand the influence from Origen prompted his simple acceptance of the story of Zachariah's permission to allow Mary to stand among the virgins in the Temple.

Whereas the priests could not have envisaged a marriage for Mary, they nevertheless decided that she should be given over to the custody of a guardian spouse, who would ensure her virginity. She felt obliged "to maintain untouched, and as a sacred offering entire, the flesh consecrated to God."⁷¹ Remaining in this state enabled Mary to be "the honour of our nature, the gate of our life, the one who won salvation for us."⁷²

Gregory developed the Mary-Eve theme, "giving it yet a new nuance."⁷³ Since Eve had "introduced death through her sin and was condemned to give birth in sorrow and pain, it was fitting that the Mother of life should begin her pregnancy with joy and complete her giving birth in joy."⁷⁴ While the former has introduced sin "through the tree", the latter "brings in Grace through the tree,"⁷⁵ that is to say the Cross. (Gregory gave Mary the title 'Theotokos').

Taking the conclusion that Mary "the root of joy"⁷⁶ must have been the one to proclaim the good news of the Resurrection (having witnessed the Passion), Gregory thought that the Theotokos was the 'other Mary' of St. Matthew 28: 1. Accepting the view that the brothers of Jesus were the sons of Joseph, by a former marriage, Gregory explained that Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (St. Matthew 27: 56), was really the Theotokos; and that the device was used by the evangelist to conceal the virgin motherhood from the Jews, who may have killed her.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315 - 386), and Bishop from c. 349, called Mary, Theotokos, in the 'Catecheses', his sole surviving work. He made cursory mention of Mary and usually addressed his remarks to the simple Scriptural Statement. The prophecy of Micah 5: 3, was applied to Mary: "Therefore will he give them up even till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth."⁷⁷ The Eve-Mary theme was highlighted in the remarks that while death came by a virgin Eve, it was fitting that life should appear by a virgin, "in order that as a serpent deceived the one, so should Gabriel announce glad tidings to the other."⁷⁸ Cyril also varied the parallelism by saying that Christ was born from the Virgin just as Eve came forth from the side of Anna. The words of Jesus to Mary at the crucifixion, according to Cyril, taught her the maternal affection that was due; and "obliquely"⁷⁹ accomplished what was recorded by Luke:

And his father and His mother marvelled: for just as Mary was the mother of John on account of her maternal affection, not by giving birth to him; so Joseph was called the father of Christ, not by generation, but on account of the care which was taken in bringing Him up.⁸⁰

Bishop Amphilochius of Iconium (d. after 394), was also greatly devoted to Mary. This cousin of Gregory of Nazianzus reflected the teaching of the Cappadocians. On the birth of Christ, he wrote, "O Mary, O Mary, you who possess the Maker of all things as your firstborn."⁸¹ He paraphrased Isaiah 7: 14, in the words, "The incorrupt virgin shall bring forth bodily the incorrupt light."⁸² Again Mary was described as '*achrantos*', opposed to Eve, as the one who freed the world from the reign of sin. Amphilochius also upheld the virginity '*in partu*' against the argument based on Exodus 13: 2, ("Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine,"⁸³). He defended his position by quoting the passage referring to the Temple, in Ezekiel 44.

Mosheim, in his lectures, notes that, towards the close of the fourth century, Arabia and adjacent countries were being disturbed by two sects, the Antidicomarianites and the Collyridians. The former held that Mary did not remain always a virgin; but that she had intercourse with Joseph after the birth of Jesus. The latter, who came from Thrace and the distant regions of Scythia, worshipped Mary as a goddess, believing that particular honour was due to her. They dressed out a square throne, and, according to Mosheim, spread a linen cloth over it. Once a year, on a clear day, they would place a loaf of bread or a cake on the throne, as an offering to the Virgin Mary. Mosheim regarded them as a group of simple persons whose heathenism had never left them. As pagans they would have been accustomed to presenting similar offerings to such as Astarte. As Christians they may have assumed that Mary could and should have been honoured likewise.

Epiphanius, (315-403), whom Graef reckons to have made some of the most important contributions to Mariology, developed his teaching on Mary in his refutation of these two sects. He defended the Nicene faith vigorously, and strongly opposed the teaching of Origen. (Prior to his election to the bishopric at Salamis, 367, he had founded and governed the monastery at Eleutheropolis before his election to the bishopric at Salamis 367).

Epiphanius dealt with the Marian question , in two works, the '*Ancoratus*,' a doctrinal composition, and the '*Panarion*,' ('Refutation of all Heresies'), a refutation of eighty heresies. In number 78 he dealt with Antidicomarianites. As with many of his contemporaries, he looked on the suggestion, as heresy, that Mary had lived with Joseph as his wife, after the birth of Jesus. Endell Tyler suggests that he appeared anxious to give Mary the honour that befitted her office and

character. Epiphanius reviled those who disparaged her; and expressed his confidence in her future and perfect bliss in the Eternal Kingdom of her Son.

His explicit reference to the Only begotten "opening the womb,"⁸⁴ would indicate that he did not teach the virginity 'in partu'. Nevertheless Epiphanius attempted to prove that Mary could not have had any children by Joseph. He used the argument that Christ had recommended her to John and not to His brethren. Such a clause as "....but before they lived together,....."⁸⁵ (Matthew 1: 18), he rejected as an inference of later conjugality. For support he adduced the fable that "as the lioness gives birth only once, so it is also the case of 'the Lion of Judah'."⁸⁶ Additional conformation was taken from reference to the Credal statement, that Christ had been born from Mary, ever-virgin, "who is herself the fount and origin of virginity."⁸⁷ Graef observes that Epiphanius concluded his defence of Mary's perpetual virginity with a statement that has become a principle of Catholic Mariology. "He who honours the Lord honours also the Holy (scil. 'vessel' = Mary); he who dishonours the holy vessel, also dishonours his Lord. Let Mary be by herself that holy virgin, the holy vessel."⁸⁸

Like Ephraem, he compared the "material garments woven by the first clever Eve," with the "garments of incorruptibility "⁸⁹ coming from the childbirth of Mary. Athanasius looked on Eve as 'mother of the living', in the past tense, but on Mary as 'Mother of the living,' in the present. "And as Eve, still a virgin, sinned by disobedience, the obedience of grace came anew through the Virgin, when the announcement was made of the descent from heaven and the appearance of eternal life."⁹⁰

The opinion of Epiphanius on the demise of Mary presented a new feature in the discussion on the Virgin. But he would not commit himself to comment authoratively on her death and burial. Neither this matter, nor the sequel to the comments of Jesus to Mary and John at Calvary, were mentioned in the Scriptures. He interpreted 'the sword' of Simeon's prophesy as a possible suggestion of martyrdom; but probably stood in opposition to Origen's theory of a 'doubt'. His quotation from the Book of the Revelation 12: 14, in relation to Mary, may have been the first Marian interpretation of this passage. He mentioned the fact that some histories on the life of Mary were in circulation and that he had heard strange stories about Mary and Joseph, (for example, from Christians in Arabia).

O'Carroll regards Epiphanius' opinion on Mary's death as enigmatic. Graef describes Epiphanius as a diffident witness to the bodily assumption of Mary. In his effort to come to terms with such possibilities as natural death, martyrdom or remaining alive, he had written:

For neither is Mary a deity, nor deriving her body from heaven, but from the intercourse of man and woman; determined as Isaac by promise. Let no man make offerings to her name, for he destroys his own soul; nor on the other hand let him be so intoxicated as to insult the holy Virgin.⁹¹

and again:

The body of Mary is holy. Yes, but not a deity. Nay, but the Virgin is a virgin and honoured. Yes but not given for us to worship, but herself worshipping Him who was born of her flesh.⁹²

In this context he quoted St. John 2: 24, where Christ calls Mary, 'Woman;' and concluded that the words were recorded lest any one should regard the Virgin as a being of superior excellence. He looked on this remark of Jesus as a prophecy that was made "on account of the divisions and heresies which were to take place on earth - in order that no-one, by admiring the Holy Virgin in excess, might fall into the folly of heresy."⁹³ Epiphanius reminded his readers that Mary had been a 'chosen vessel', a woman who had not been changed in nature, and one to be compared with Elijah, John and Thecla, none of whom was worshipped.

Graef underlines the eagerness of Epiphanius to draw a clear distinction between the worship to be given to God and the veneration due to Mary - "a distinction on which the Church has insisted through the ages."⁹⁴ He reacted strongly against the Collyridians. "Honour Mary," he said, "but let the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be worshipped, but let no one worship Mary..... even though Mary is most beautiful and holy and venerable, yet she is not to be worshipped."⁹⁵

The strong feelings held by Epiphanius against Origen's teaching were to bring him disappointment and disillusionment. He had been drawn into support for **Theophilus of Alexandria** in his efforts to discredit **John Chrysostom**, (354), the successor of Nectarius as Bishop of Constantinople, in 397. Chrysostom had benefited from his education in rhetoric, under the pagan orator **Libanius**; and in theology, under **Diodore Bishop of Tarsus**, at Antioch. His asceticism, aloofness, energetic and outspoken sermons contributed to his general unpopularity. Theophilus had taken account of the reactions against the new Bishop in Constantinople and informed Epiphanius. The Bishop of Salamis sailed from Cyprus to Constantinople, and vehemently attacked John's alleged sympathy for the heresies of Origen. Epiphanius made no great impact, much to his chagrin. He died on the return voyage. The 'golden-mouthed' preacher, (as John came to be known in the Sixth century), is regarded by Graef as captious in his pronouncements, especially in relation to the sanctity of Theotokos. The background of the exegetical school at Antioch played a large part in this. The

Alexandrian school, while emphasizing the divinity of Christ and Mary's right to be called Theotokos, allegorised the Scriptures excessively, at times. At Antioch the interpretation of the Scriptures was more along 'literal' lines. Christ's humanity was stressed more than His divinity; Mary was rarely called Theotokos.

Graef suggests that the technique and application of the teaching of Chrysostom, particularly in the use of scriptural illustrations, may explain "the extraordinary statements he made about Mary."⁹⁶ However, he held the Virgin's memory in reverence, because the Almighty had raised her to a new dignity, in choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. He affirmed that she had remained a virgin, unspotted until the day of her death. John usually called the Virgin simply Mary, without adding any epithet to express her sanctity and blessedness. He never called her 'Theotokos'. He also held to the commentary that the controversial phrase in St. Matthew, 'before they came together,' did not indicate that they did so afterwards. The translation of 'almah' as 'parthenos' (virgin) was defended against 'neanis'. In a homily on the Change of Names, Chrysostom compared Mary with the virgin earth of Eden. "Just as this earth, though it had not received seed, brought forth for us the Garden of Paradise; so also that virgin, though she had not received the seed of a man, brought forth for us a Christ."⁹⁷ In another place he used the traditional parallelism, Eve-Mary, and compared that virgin, who became the symbol of our defeat, with the virgin, who, together with the tree of the Cross and our Lord's death, gained the victory for us. As a virgin's fault resulted in expulsion from the Garden of Paradise, so by the instrumentality of a virgin, eternal life was found.

Chrysostom showed no hesitation in exposing (what Graef defined as) Mary's 'supposed faults and imperfections'. These weaknesses were highlighted in exegeses of the Gospel references to the visit of Mary and the Brethren (St. Matthew 12: 46-56, and St. Mark 3: 31-35), and to the incident at Cana (St. John 2: 1-11), in which he accused Mary of unbelief and vain glory. The retort, in the Matthean incident, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers ?"⁹⁸ (in Chrysostom's opinion), was made to give her a worthier opinion of her Son, rather than to shame her. Mary "did not think little of him..... but thought herself worthy of the first place, because she was his mother."⁹⁹ A weakness of Mary was her ignorance of the mystery of the Godhead. Again at Cana, Mary's observation on the lack of wine, exposed her desire "to confer a favour on the others, and render herself more illustrious through her Son."¹⁰⁰

Graef looks on John Chrysostom as the greatest exponent of the Antiochene school.

Nevertheless in spite of Mary's position in God's plan of redemption, he regarded the Virgin as an ordinary woman with failings that deserved reproof. Even in the Annunciation story, he suggested that but for the authentication of the message, Mary might have committed suicide.

Ambrose (339 - 397).

During this period the Western theologians had been gaining in self-confidence. At first they borrowed from the Greek East. One such was Ambrose whose career had concentrated on law and administration. His skills soon brought him to the rank of provincial governor at Milan. In 374, with popular acclaim he was chosen bishop; his installation in the episcopate was carried out eight days after his baptism. He succeeded the Arian **Auxentius**.

Ambrose gave the Church's Mariology its 'decisive direction'. O'Carroll describes the corpus of Ambrose's Marian writing as 'substantial' because of his extensive study of the Greek Fathers. His Mariology reflected many of the themes they had pursued. "In Ambrose there is close, often verbal dependence on Philo, Origen and Plotinus."¹⁰¹ The new Bishop resisted heretical views such as those of the apostate monk **Jovinian**, who had denied Mary's virginity both during and after the birth of Christ, ("he never said she was not a virgin when she conceived,"¹⁰²); or those of **Bonosus**, probably bishop of Sardica in Illyricum, near the end of the Fourth century. The latter was accused of teaching that Mary had not always remained a virgin, but had borne several children. According to Mosheim, the claim that Bonosus denied the divinity of Christ and looked on Him as the Son of God only by adoption, may be regarded as dubious. (In the Fifth and Sixth centuries, opponents of the Trinitarian teaching and of the doctrine of Christ's divinity were called Bonosians in France and Spain).

Ambrose attacked this teaching with the argument that Jesus would not have chosen to be born of a virgin, if he had anticipated that ordinary sexual intercourse would permeate the origin of the Lord's body, "the palace of the eternal king."¹⁰³ He reckoned that Mary's marriage with Joseph was genuine but with mutual and not physical consent. The marriage was celebrated to preserve the good name of Mary; for the Lord considered it better that the child would be regarded as Joseph's. Ambrose also revived the view that Satan had been kept from any awareness of the virginal conception; and

echoed the Eastern opinion that Joseph already had a family by a previous marriage, when he married Mary.

Graef points out that Ambrose found himself caught up in the conflict between orthodoxy and two popular movements, Arianism, and the pagan worship of Cybele, the Magna Mater. Arianism had enjoyed a ready acceptance among many of the Goths, who in turn became missionaries to other Germanic tribes during a period of upheaval and invasion, from the last few decades of the Fourth into the major part of the Fifth century. Ulfila (c.311 - 383), whose parents had been Cappadocian Christians and who had been carried off in a Gothic raid was, (at least to some extent) responsible for turning the Visigoths towards Christianity. After his ordination as bishop, by the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, he devoted himself to the evangelization of the Visigoths. Walker regrets that these 'Arian labours' slipped into oblivion, thereby losing any legacy of adequate detail.

Ambrose was faced with the problem of the heretical teaching. He emphasized the relationship between the 'eternal generation of the Son' and 'His human birth from Mary', declaring that "it was not that one person was from the Father, another from Mary, but He who was from the Father took flesh from the Virgin. He took the physical disposition from His mother so that He might adopt our infirmities."¹⁰⁴ In another work he maintained that

the Virgin had something of her own which she transmitted; the mother did not give (Him) something foreign (to her), but she conferred on Him her own from her own flesh, indeed in an unusual way, but by a normal function. For the Virgin had flesh, which she conferred on the fruit.¹⁰⁵

Through his Christmas hymn Ambrose attempted to strengthen the faith of his people, against the effects of Arianism, in such words as "Come, Redeemer of the nations, show forth the birth of the Virgin; let all the world marvel, such a birth befitted God."¹⁰⁶ He used Isaiah 7: 14, as a proof of Christ's Godhead, insinuating that the verse disclosed the sign of His divinity; and he adopted a Greek fable that told of the vulture's virginal birth.

Graef stresses the fact that, while the eastern theologians had favoured the term Theotokos', Ambrose hardly ever used its Latin equivalent '**Mater Dei**'. O'Carroll is more precise, intimating that the Bishop of Milan was the first to use this term, but only on two occasions. Both Graef and O'Carroll agree with the conjecture that the prevalence of devotion to the Mother Goddess, Cybele, at that time, had a restraining effect on its use. Ambrose, together with his contemporaries, delighted in

virginity as an ascetical ideal; and accordingly acclaimed Mary. Yet he had either to clarify or change his view on the virginity 'in partu'. In his commentary on St. Luke 2: 57, based on sermons, he stated that Christ "opened His mother's womb."¹⁰⁷ The sentence was set in the context of reflections, on Exodus 13: 12, on the virgin Church, whose womb made fruitful by Christ, gave birth to the people of God: and on the sanctification of Jeremiah in the womb. O'Carroll takes the opinion that Ambrose may have been influenced by Origen, whose commentary on this passage in Luke obstructed the idea of virginity 'in partu'.

The position was changed when Ambrose had to deal with **Jovinian** (and **Bonosus**). In a letter to **Pope Siricus**, he clarified his position, arguing that the detractors should have believed 'the sayings of Christ.' 'the admonitions of the angels' and 'the Apostles' Creed.' The Scriptures had shown that a virgin would not only conceive, but also bring forth (Isaiah 7: 14).

For which is the gate of the sanctuary, that outer gate looking towards the east, which remains shut? (Ezekiel 44: 1).....Is not this gate Mary, through whom the Saviour entered this world... who conceived and brought forth as a virgin?¹⁰⁸

Ambrose repeated the argument of his predecessors with regard to Mary's virginity '**post partum**,' by taking as proof of her continued virginity, the commitment by Jesus of His mother to John's care.

The Old Testament provided for Ambrose a variety of images that could be related to Mary. His application of passages was in a scale much greater than anything attempted previously. The Church quickly followed the example, especially in the composition of the liturgy. From Isaiah 19: 1, the picture of the 'light cloud' was equated with the cloud that guided the Israelites in the desert (Exodus 13: 21):

.....according to its inner meaning, however, it signified the Lord Jesus, who was to come in a light cloud, as says Isaiah, that is, in the Virgin Mary, who was a cloud on account of the inheritance of Eve, but light because of the integrity of her virginity.....¹⁰⁹

Because Mary sought to please God, rather than a man, because she did not conceive in iniquity, she was 'light'. The image of the 'cloud' was a favourite with Ambrose. Another favourite symbol was that of the Rod of Jesse (Isaiah 11: 1), which Ambrose used to express Mary's spiritual purity. Subsequently this reference passed into the Liturgy of the Church, since it also related to Mary's choice of virginity. "She is the rod which brings forth a flower. For she is pure and her

virginity is directed to God with a free heart and is not deflected by the dissipation of worldly cares."¹¹⁰ The imagery of the Song of Songs was applied by Ambrose to Mary. O' Carroll reckons that he may have been the first to do so. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,"¹¹¹ symbolized the grace of the Spirit at the Annunciation, 1: 1). In verse two, "thy name is as oil poured out,"¹¹² led to the comment by Ambrose : ".....with this oil Mary is anointed, she conceived as a virgin and as a virgin brought forth good order, that is to say the Son of God."¹¹³

O'Carroll views the remarks of Ambrose on certain texts as corrections of the interpretations of Eastern commentators. For the Bishop, the sword of Simeon (St. Luke 2: 35), did not mean any doubt or failure on Mary's part in the future. In his estimation the 'sword' spoke of Mary's foreknowledge of the Passion, because she was "not ignorant of the heavenly mystery."¹¹⁴ Graef perceives that the picture drawn by Ambrose of Mary "bears already the features of the medieval 'Mater Dolorosa'."¹¹⁵

There stood before the Cross His Mother and while the men were fleeing she stood fearlessly..... She looked with pity on the wounds of her Son, through whom she knew redemption was to come to all. The Mother stood, truly a worthy sight, who did not fear to be killed. The Son hung on the Cross, the Mother offered herself to the persecutors.¹¹⁶

The words in St. Luke (8 : 21) were taken by Ambrose as other than a rebuke to Mary. "Here the Mother, who is acknowledged even from the Cross, is not denied, as certain heretics say, who are laying their snares, that only the heavenly commandments are preferred to the physical relationship."¹¹⁷

The circumstances of Mary's life compelled Ambrose to describe her as "...not from this earth but from heaven,"¹¹⁸ but without denying her genuine humanity. His purpose was to present her perfect purity, and like Athanasius, to introduce her as the model for virgins. By his comments on Mary as the first beneficiary of the redemption of Christ, Ambrose identified with the thoughts of Irenaeus, when he suggested that "Mary.... became the cause of salvation both for herself and the whole human race."¹¹⁹ Her association with salvation was emphasized in the treatment of the Eve-Mary antithesis. In this, Ambrose emphasized the 'virginal theme'. "He came to give salvation to the world through a Virgin, and by His birth of a Virgin remedied the fault of the woman."¹²⁰ "By a man and a woman flesh was driven from Paradise, by a Virgin it was joined with God."¹²¹ Through Mary "salvation was given to all."¹²² "The Virgin has given birth to the salvation of the world, the Virgin

has brought forth the life of all."¹²³ Through her consent to the angel's message "Mary.... has worked the salvation of the world, and conceived the redemption of all."¹²⁴ The last sentence was qualified by Ambrose in his commentary on Luke, in which he stated, while praising Mary's compassion and fortitude:

She, the royal palace, thought perhaps she might contribute by her own death, something to His sacrifice for the people, since she knew the world could be redeemed by her Son. But Jesus had no need of a helper for the redemption of all.... So He accepted indeed, the love of the Mother, but did not seek the help of a human being.¹²⁵

Graef admits that Ambrose was emphatic on this point in a number of instances. "Christ alone worked the Redemption by His passion and death. Mary is associated with it only through her motherhood, not through any personal contribution."¹²⁶

This motherhood, in the theology of Ambrose, also embraced the Church. He was the first Church Father to state explicitly that Mary "is the type of the Church which is immaculate yet married. The Virgin (Church) has conceived us by the Spirit, the Virgin brings us forth without pain."¹²⁷ "And therefore perhaps is the holy Mary married to one (Joseph), but filled with another (the Holy Spirit), because the individual Churches too, are filled by the Spirit and his grace, but are externally joined to a mortal priest."¹²⁸ Tyler does not engage in such speculation, but affirms that, when speaking of Christ as bridegroom, Ambrose introduced the bride as His Holy Church, of whom He was the Spouse, the Redeemer and the Builder.

Endell Tyler concludes that the works of Ambrose paint a picture of Mary as immaculate in her person; in her office, as holy and mysterious, of pure and pious soul, devoted to God and to friends and relatives in their need: a shining example to prospective servants of God:

.....every soul that believes, both conceives and brings forth the Word of God, and acknowledges His works. Let the soul of Mary be in everyone, so as to magnify the Lord; let the spirit of Mary be in everyone so as to rejoice in God. If according to the flesh, there is one mother of Christ, yet according to faith Christ is the fruit of every one: for every soul receives the Word of God: provided, nevertheless, that being immaculate and free from vice it preserves its chastity. ¹²⁹

Yet Ambrose, whom Graef calls 'the father of Western Mariology,' was careful to distinguish between the veneration of the Virgin and the adoration due to God. "...for Mary was the temple of God, not the God of the temple. And therefore He alone is to be adored, who worked in the temple."¹³⁰

Comment.

The figure of Mary and the position of Mary assumed new proportions as the Fourth century Church attempted to refute Arianism. The emphasis placed on the Virgin as a rôle model, together with the importance given to her participation in the Incarnation, broadened the platform of her own standing. Having been styled 'Theotokos,' she was subsequently adorned with the possible implications of such a title. The graduation of Mary set in train a search for an Old Testament foundation for her eminence.

The eulogies of Ephraem have encouraged speculation about the positive influence that he has exercised on the development of mariology. The Greek-speaking East, led by the Cappadocians, either consolidated, or struggled with the theological legacy of earlier Fathers such as Athanasius and Origen. The Church, at this time, felt the compulsion to strive for consensus on an appropriate credal statement. The teaching of Arius remained problematical; although precipitating heretical ideas, it also strengthened a perception of Mary's position. The practice of addressing Mary in devotions was gaining momentum.

The dispute over Mary's marriage, and the observations on her goddess-like features, continued to fascinate the enquirer into her reputation. Some of the elements of mariology were enhanced by the efforts of Epiphanius to resist the teaching of heretical sects, by his explanation of a veneration of Mary, and to some extent, by his non-committal with regard to Mary's demise. John Chrysostom presented a more objective approach to Mary, through his spontaneous praise of the Virgin, and through his readiness to admit of her imperfections. A new era opened for the West as the theologians began to assume the teaching of the East. The work of Ambrose in this regard, has brought him the accolade of being the introducer of mariology in the West.

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CSCO - CORPUS SCRIPTORUM CHRISTIANORUM ORIENTALIUUM, LOUVAIN, 1903 -.

PL, - PATROLOGIA LATINA, (MIGNE).

SC. - SOURCES CHRÉTIENNES, LYONS.

TU. - TEXTE UND UNTERSUCHUNGEN.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOTHER OF GOD DEBATE: THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

Jerome (347 - 420).

Jerome, an accomplished Latinist, conversant with Hebrew and Greek, regarded as the "ablest scholar the ancient Western Church could boast,"¹ was born in Strido in Dalmatia. He studied in Rome and befriended **Rufinus**, (the translator of Origen), with whom he shared an active appreciation of monasticism. The controversy among the monks of Egypt over the prayerful perception of God's form had spread to Palestine, was fostered by **Epiphanius**, and resulted in a bitter division between Jerome and Rufinus. From 373 - 379 Jerome lived as a hermit near Antioch and applied himself to the study of the Scriptures and the Hebrew language. He studied in Constantinople under **Gregory Nazianzus**.

His Marian doctrine was developed in his exegetical works and in a response to **Helvidius**. He concentrated mainly on Mary's virginity. At that time a debate was currently in vogue, especially in Roman circles, on the superiority of virginity over marriage. O'Carroll has noted that the effects of Jerome's intervention, based on the Bible, extended beyond Fourth century Rome.

Helvidius defended the equal value of marriage and virginity, against the teaching that supported the superiority of the latter. He quoted Mary as an example of perfect virginity, before the birth of Christ, and of married love and motherhood, afterwards. In that normal married life with Joseph, their children were the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Jerome argued that the phrases selected from the infancy narrative to support the thesis of Helvidius, "were all compatible with the perpetual virginity."² The virginal conception was not an issue. Helvidius emphasized the point that Matthew in using 'espoused' (and not 'entrusted'), of Mary's relationship with Joseph, implied that they had lived as man and wife, after the birth of Jesus. The response of Jerome introduced a maxim that has influenced theological opinion on Joseph, and received acceptance in the West.

But just as we do not deny what is written, we reject what is not written. That God was born of a virgin, we believe, because we read it. That Mary consummated marriage after her childbirth, we do not believe, because we do not read it. Nor do we say this in order to condemn marriage, for virginity is itself a fruit of marriage; but because there is no licence to draw rash conclusions about holy men..... he who merited to be called the father of the Lord, remained virginal with her.³

Although to follow Jerome's principle would also allow the conclusion that it would not be possible to believe that Mary did not consummate her marriage, "because we do not read it."

Jerome, who looked on the 'brothers' of Jesus as His cousins, rejected **Tertullian's** opposition to the notion of perpetual virginity, and accused him of not "being a man of the Church."⁴ Graef notes Jerome's silence on the virginity '**in partu**'. His comment on Ezekiel 44 avoided any indication that Mary had remained a virgin during the birth of Jesus. "Rightly do some interpret the closed gate by which only the God of Israel enters... of the Virgin Mary, who remained a virgin before as well as after the birth.... after He was born, she remained ever-virgin."⁵ Described as the 'greatest biblical scholar of antiquity', Jerome kept to his principle of belief and utterly discarded apocryphal stories and their evidence. As far as he was concerned Mary "herself, wrapped the Child in swaddling clothes, she herself was both mother and midwife."⁶ The midwife's story in the Protoevangelium of James, was the mere "ravings of the apocrypha."⁷

Jerome's criticisms deterred neither the East nor the West from taking the apocryphal story as an authority. On the other hand, there was a difference in the respective observations on Jerome's rejection of the legend that Joseph, a widower, had sons who were the 'brethren of the Lord,' by a former marriage. He argued against Helvidius that "even Joseph was virgin through Mary."⁸ This opinion has never been accepted in the East. In the West the growing devotion to St. Joseph and as virgin, may have encouraged acceptance of Jerome's teaching, from the Fifteenth century onwards. His detailed studies led Jerome to conclude that the biblical term, 'brother,' had the connotation of 'cousin', or 'nephew', (as, for example, Lot is called the brother of Abraham). Thus the brethren of the Lord were "cousins of the Saviour, the children of Mary, the maternal aunt of the Lord.... For all Scripture shows that cousins are called brethren."⁹

O'Carroll tells of Jerome's predicament when, at the synod of Milan 390, he was asked to explain his condemnation of the heretic **Jovinian**. He produced the '**Adversus Jovinianum**', in which he dealt profusely with 'virginity', yet sparingly with Mary and very little with virginity '**in partu**.' Graef mentions that this treatise contained Jerome's interpretation of the Hebrew word '**almah**'. He had explained his idea in a work entitled '**Liber Hebraicarum Quaestionum**', with particular reference to Genesis 24: 13.

It should be noted that the term 'almah' is always used of a virgin, and it has the etymological meaning 'apokryphos' that is to say 'hidden'.....

Hence 'almah', which is to be translated 'hidden', that is, a virgin guarded with the utmost care, seems to me an ever more laudatory term than simply 'virgin.' For, according to the Apostle, virgin can be this merely in body, but not in soul. But she who is a hidden virgin (viz. alma) has even an increase of virginity, because she is both virgin and hidden.¹⁰

Jerome wrote often and at length on the 'almah' prophecy in Isaiah 7: 14. O'Carroll states that Jerome knew that 'bethulah' was the Hebrew word for virgin.

Some of the many Old Testament passages that Jerome used to project Mary found favour with Ambrose, for example, Isaiah 19: 1, and 11: 1. Psalm 44 (45): 14, which has been included in the Office of the Blessed Virgin, was applied by Jerome to Mary as an example of virgins. He also compared Mary to Abishag who had been given to David in his old age (Kings 1: 3), because she was a symbol of wisdom - one of the principal Old Testament types of Mary. Mary was "the woman who shall compass a man,"¹¹ (Jeremiah 31: 22): the desert of Hosea 13: 15, symbolized the womb of holy Mary, which germinated without any human seed; she was the true daughter of Sion as described in Isaiah 37: 22.

Jerome touched briefly on the Eve-Mary theme in his guidance to virgins:

Eve gave birth in pains. But after the Virgin had conceived and brought forth her Son.... the curse has been taken away. Death came through Eve, life through Mary. Therefore the gift of virginity flowed more profusely into woman, because it began with a woman.¹²

O'Carroll detects anticipation of the Theotokos controversy in Jerome's statements. He strongly affirmed that God was born of a virgin.

Nor do we call one Jesus Christ and another God, as a new heresy falsely says, but the same one before the ages and after the ages, before the world and after Mary, indeed from Mary, we call 'the great God our Saviour Jesus Christ.'¹³

Augustine (354-430).

Hilda Graef looks on both Ambrose and Jerome as the precursors of Augustine, who, like Ambrose, spoke of Mary as holy; and was unequivocal about her sinlessness. The question of sin in Mary's life had come to the fore in a controversy provoked by **Pelagius**, a British monk, who was a moralist and spiritual director with a strong reputation. On one occasion, he was greatly upset by the use of a prayer from Augustine's Confessions. The words seemed to him to undermine moral responsibility and to preach cheap grace. He reacted to a commentary on the Pauline epistles, by

producing his own. In it he refuted the exposition of Romans 5: 12, which suggested the transmission of sin to Adam's posterity. The words "in Adam all sinned as in a lump,"¹⁴ could have allowed the construction "that the human souls are derived from the parents."¹⁵ In the opinion of Pelagius, the act of sinning came from a "voluntary imitation of Adam's transgression,"¹⁶ influenced by corrupted environment and wrong choices - but never from an inherent fault in our 'nature'. Pelagius taught that men could remain without sin altogether by their own free will, and quoted Mary as an example.

Augustine, who worked with Jerome in opposing Pelagian teaching, stated that no-one was without sin,

except the Virgin Mary, about whom, for the honour of the Lord, I want there to be no question, where sin is mentioned; for concerning her we know that more grace for conquering sin in every way was given to her, who merited to conceive and give birth to Him, who certainly had no sin whatsoeverthis virgin excepted, "¹⁷ no - one was without sin.

Mary's condition was of grace, not of free will.

Pelagius died probably before 420 and was succeeded in the cause of Pelagianism by Bishop **Julian of Eclanum**, in Southern Italy. Again, Augustine was confronted by an able opponent, who attacked his teaching on the ubiquity of original sin. For Julian such teaching delivered "Mary herself to the devil through the condition of her birth."¹⁸ Graef criticizes Augustine's reply because of its lack of clarity. The literal translation of his words are, "We do not deliver Mary to the devil by the condition of her birth; but for this reason, because this very condition is resolved by the grace of rebirth."¹⁹ The inference that Mary also suffered the consequences of the Fall and had to be freed by grace, has been borne out in another of Augustine's works where he stated, "Mary (who descended) from Adam, died because of sin, and the flesh of the Lord (which came) from Mary, died for the destruction of sins."²⁰ He saw Christ, alone, free from all sin, because He was born without concupiscence, which has accompanied every conception except His, and through which original sin has been transmitted. Mary was not excepted, even though she was freed from sin and its influences "....for we know how much to conquer sin in every way was given to her who merited to conceive and bring forth Him who certainly had no sin."²¹

Augustine adhered strongly to the doctrine of Mary's perfect and perpetual virginity. Graef finds it strange that he did not refer to the text of Isaiah 7: 14 in this matter. O'Carroll is prepared to note Augustine's comment in this regard, that in becoming Emmanuel through Israel, Christ was " God

with us in weakness of the flesh," but "not with us in the iniquity of the heart."²² Gregory of Nyssa had expressed the opinion that Mary, prior to the Annunciation, had consecrated her flesh to the Lord, and bound herself in some way to virginity. Augustine was the first of the Latin Fathers to infer a formal vow of virginity from Mary's alarmed response to the angel, (St. Luke 1: 14). The Bishop of Hippo supported the virginity 'in partu,' arguing his position from the ability of the risen Christ to pass through closed doors. That being the case why could He as an infant fail to "go out without violating the womb ?"²³ But as far as Mary was concerned, Augustine judged her more blessed

through perceiving the faith of Christ, than through conceiving His fleshand the maternal relationship would have been of no profit to Mary, if she had not more happily borne Christ in her heart than in her womb.²⁴

".....for Him whom Mary had brought forth by believing, she also had conceived by believing."²⁵

The interpretation of St. Matthew 12: 46, for Augustine, was to be found in such sentiments as "greater is what she bears in her mind, than what she bears in her womb."²⁶

The teaching of Ambrose found a place in the observations of Augustine in relation to Mary at Calvary, and with regard to the special relationship between Mary and the Church. Rather than an expression of doubt, the sword that pierced her soul was the maternal grief, as she gazed on her Son's agonising death. Within this trauma, faith in His resurrection was submerged. Augustine admitted that Mary was holy and blessed, but viewed the Church as "better..... than the Virgin Mary."²⁷ He described Mary as a holy, excellent and super-eminent member -"yet but a member of the whole body,"²⁸ the whole Christ being both head and body. Graef acknowledges that this teaching was abandoned in the Middle Ages, "when the Blessed Virgin was assigned a place above the Church, between God and the highest angels."²⁹

His insistence on Christ's choice of His Mother, prevented Augustine from speaking of a bridal relationship. He looked on Christ as the Spouse of the Church.

Consider how the Church, obviously, is the bride of Christ, and, what is more difficult to understand, yet true, how she is the mother of Christ. As her type has the Virgin Mary preceded her. Whence, I ask you, is Mary the Mother of Christ, if not because she gave birth to the members of Christ. You, to whom I speak, are the members of Christ; who has given birth to you? I hear the voice of your heart; Mother Church. This mother is holy, honoured, similar to Mary, she brings forth, yet is a virgin.... let the members of Christ give birth in mind, as Mary, as a virgin, gave birth to Him in her womb; and thus you will be mothers of Christ.³⁰

Graef deduces, from what she describes as this very intricate mystical relationship (in the patristic sense), that both the Church as the body of Christ and the

Christians, as His members, in some way depend on Mary, because their motherhood, which also is virginal, was first realised in her motherhood.³¹

Together with Ambrose, Augustine concluded that, by giving birth to Christ, Mary somehow gave birth to His faithful followers: "How do you not also belong to the childbirth of the Virgin, when you are members of Christ?"³² Graef also uses the term 'linked' to describe the relationship between Mary and the Church in the teaching of Augustine, through whom Mariology was to reach a peak in the Christian West.

Continuing Conflict.

Problems associated with the Incarnation, and epitomised, for example, in conflicts, (such as that between Apollinarius and Diodore), were to exercise the respective parties of the Eastern Schools at Alexandria and Antioch, for some time.

The Antiochene School held that both the divine and human natures were complete in Jesus; and that the Logos dwelt in Jesus, much as God dwells in a temple. In this context, Diodore's interpretation had given Apollinarius the impression that the virgin birth had been less than necessary. In the understanding of the latter, the virgin birth "was of the first importance for dogma, and there was profound truth in the epithet Mother of God (Theotokos), which individual devotion had accorded to Mary since the third century."³³ Diodore accepted this term as tolerable theology, only if Mary was also described as 'mother of man.'

In spite of three Synods at Rome and a Council of Constantinople, which condemned the thesis, that, in Christ, the divine Word replaced the human mind, the struggle did not subside. **Theodore**, (350 -428), who became bishop of Mopsuestia in 392, furthered the idea of Diodore and attracted much attention by his writings on the Incarnation. His theology of the Incarnation, in Chadwick's estimation, "was a profound theoretical challenge, not merely to Apollinarianism, but to the main Alexandrian tradition."³⁴ **Cyril of the See of Alexandria** (412 - 444), strongly opposed Theodore and any others, who regarded "Christ as the supreme example of prophetic inspiration and grace;"³⁵ and so spoke of two distinct natures after the union. The debate became entangled in church politics.

The intolerance of this ambitious Bishop towards paganism, coupled with mounting dissent, led to rioting in Alexandria between Christians and Jews. The respective bishops of Antioch and Constantinople, who differed from Cyril in their theological views, moved him to jealousy.

The struggles with Apollinarianism and their consequences had discharged two extremes, namely, Monophysitism, (of several varieties), together with a teaching associated with Nestorius. The latter failed to find favour in the Catholic Church, but his teaching continued as the tenets of another denomination.

Nestorius and Cyril.

Nestorius, a monk of Antioch, was appointed as archbishop of Constantinople in April 428. While he shared Cyril's views on paganism and heresy, the new archbishop had taken cognisance of the great dangers of Apollinarianism, contained within the increasingly popular term 'mother of God'. When he heard that Nestorius was critical of the term, Cyril took offence and openly attacked his doctrines and encouraged agents in Constantinople to spread the story that his dislike of the title 'mother of God' came from the rejection of the Deity of Jesus. In the spring of 429, an Alexandrian lawyer, **Eusebius**, displayed in Constantinople, a placard containing excerpts from the sermons of Nestorius, juxtaposed with utterances of **Paul of Samosata**, (Third century heretic).

Controversy was sparked off by **Proclus**, a famous preacher at Constantinople, and later its patriarch. In a sermon in honour of Mary, preached possibly just before Christmas 428, and in front of Nestorius, he extolled Mary in metaphor, as

the awesome loom of the 'economy' (a technical term for the whole complex of the Redemption involving the Incarnation and its consequences), on which the garment of union (i.e. of Christ's two natures) was woven in effable manner, the weaver of which is the Holy Spirit, the spinner the overshadowing power from on high, the wool, Adam's ancient fleece, the woof, the stainless flesh of the Virgin, the comb, the measureless grace of the bearer (of that flesh), the artist, the Word that went in through the ear.³⁶

Concluding his sermon Proclus related the entrance of the Word through the hearing to the exit from the womb without violating it, and concluded with the words, "Behold, an exact description of the holy Theotokos Mary!"³⁷ Graef points out that there was not any Mariological intention in the mind of Proclus. The significance of Theotokos was wholly Christological. Mary was so called in order to affirm that Christ came from her: was truly God and truly man - not part man and part God. The Mother of Christ who was God and man, could then be regarded as the Mother of God.

The Antiochene view with its emphasis on the distinction between the Word of God and the man Jesus, rejected the appellation. Mary, the mother of Christ, was acceptable but not the other qualification. Therefore when Proclus had finished his sermon, an enraged Nestorius declared his opposition to the term 'Theotokos;' and explained the Incarnation from his own standpoint. He supported the idea that

it is one thing to say that the God, who is the Word of the Father, was conjoined to him who was born from Mary, which is perfectly clear and sound and cannot give scandal to the pagans, but quite another that the Deity needed a birth involving months (of pregnancy).³⁸

Nestorius had an associate, **Anastasius**, a presbyter from Antioch. In a sermon Anastasius had declared, "Let no one call Mary, Theotokos, for Mary was but a human being; and it is impossible that God should be born of a human being."³⁹ Both the clergy and laity, having been taught to acknowledge Christ as God, were greatly disturbed. Nestorius, determined to maintain his friends proposition and to prevent him from being found guilty of blasphemy, assumed a controversial position, and (according to **Socrates**), totally rejected the term Theotokos. O' Carroll, on the other hand, records the fact that during the dispute with Cyril, Nestorius had written to the Pope, indicating that he had no objection to the title Theotokos, if it were freed from Arian and Apollinarian connotations. Socrates excuses rather than accuses Nestorius, finding nothing in his writing to warrant the reputation he acquired, but laying the blame on the monk's illiteracy. Graef's understanding of the teaching of Nestorius' is that Christ, divided into human and mortal, divine and immortal, received his human progeniture through Mary; but the divine part, Son of God, was not born of her.

Initially devotion to Mary was not the kernel of the controversy, but rather the unity of the person of Christ, "in consequence of which Mary could be called Mother of God,in the same way as God could be said to have suffered."⁴⁰ The age-long rivalry between the sees of Alexandria and Constantinople, together with the Christological opinions of Nestorius, led Cyril into an offensive against the rival bishop. In this he attempted, with little success, to curry favour at the court of the Emperor, Theodosius II, whose wife Eudokia favoured Nestorius. Both Cyril and Nestorius had informed Pope Celestine of their respective views. However, Cyril had the advantage over his rival, since the action of Nestorius, in welcoming some Palagian heretics to Constantinople, had irritated the Pope. The information fed by Cyril to Rome, accusing Nestorius of being a rationalist, who denied

the divinity of Christ and the need of man for grace, led to the demand for a recantation on the part of Nestorius. This had to be conveyed by letter through Cyril. The Bishop of Alexandria took the opportunity to include with the correspondence, a compilation of Twelve Anathemas, which condemned the Antiochene Christology of the 'two natures.' Nestorius refused to recant and to assent to Cyril's document, in which he found tendencies of Apollinarianism.

The documents sent by Cyril did not arrive in Constantinople until December 430, the month before the decision of the Emperors **Theodosius II** and **Valentinian III** to call a General Council at Ephesus, to settle the dispute. Circumstances allowed Cyril to exercise control over the Council. Consequently Nestorius was declared deposed and excommunicated. The excitement engendered by the ecclesiastical struggle brought crowds into the streets of Ephesus. The verdict enraptured the populace, who surged after Cyril and his bishops, in torchlight procession, with shouts of "Praised be the Theotokos! Long live Cyril."⁴¹ For Graef there echoed an acclamation that had reverberated a familiar cry of some four hundred years previously, "Great is Artemis (Diana) of the Ephesians!"⁴² (Acts 19: 28). The possibility of their being some connection between the two responses can hardly be dismissed. "The regeneration of a mother-figure is a deep-rooted human instinct, and so it is not improbable that, in the hearts of many simple people, the Theotokos should have taken the place of the ancient Diana."⁴³ The mystery of the Trinity could well have conceded its place in the hearts of many to the 'Mother of God.'

The events occurring within and around the Council meetings and involving the papacy, resulted in the return of Nestorius under compulsion to his monastery, and the resumption of Cyril's work as archbishop. The controversy had been settled. The third Ecumenical Council affirmed that Mary was Theotokos. Final harmony was restored two years later by the Edict of Union (433). But Chadwick highlights the fact that the 'union' of 433 was really a compromise effected by government pressure, that compelled opposing parties to shelve their principles; this was done unwillingly. The strain of maintaining positions increased to a breaking point, which coincided with the arrival of new men on the scene.

John of Antioch had sent Cyril a creed, a Formulary of Peace, which had been drafted originally in 431 by **Theodoret, Bishop of Cyprus**, and which contained the term Theotokos. Cyril appended his signature to the document. His assent caused consternation among his supporters.

Dioscurus, who succeeded him at Alexandria, was the leader of a party who regretted the compromise. Together with **Eutyches** (a monk of Constantinople) and **Chrysaphius** (a court eunuch), he developed an intricate plan to overthrow the peace of 433. They intended to remove the 'inspired man ' Christology of the Antiochenes, by imposing the '**Twelve Anathemas**' of Cyril as the standard of orthodoxy. The altercations between opposing parties compelled the Emperor **Theodosius II** to call a Council at Ephesus in August 449.

Pope Leo I was invited to attend, but declined. According to O'Carroll, Leo intervened in the on-going Christological debate, concerning the two natures of Christ, and which revolved around the heresy of Eutyches (d. 454) . The latter had denied the human nature in Christ, arguing that had He possessed true human nature, He would have inherited original sin. Consequently, **Flavius, Patriarch of Constantinople**, excommunicated Eutyches in 448 and requested Leo to declare his opinion on the matter. The Pope replied in June 449, by letter, which contained a doctrinal statement, usually called the '**Tome**,' parts of which had been plagiarised from a sermon of Augustine and from a letter of **Bishop Gaudentius of Brescia**. While strongly supporting the permanent distinction of the two natures of the incarnate Lord, he affirmed the real motherhood of Mary. He followed Augustine's assertion that human intercourse was sinful and transmitted sin. "Sin could have no origin where the transmission of paternal seed had not reached."⁴⁴ Therefore, Leo held that Mary's virginity had preserved Jesus from contact with sin. The conception was of the Holy Spirit within the womb of the virgin Mother, who brought Him forth while her virginity remained intact, just as she conceived Him while preserving it. "Now the Holy Spirit gave the virgin her fecundity, the reality of his body, however is taken from her body, in that flesh which he took from the human being."⁴⁵

Again, like Augustine, Leo taught that Mary "conceived her divine and human offspring first in her mind and then in her body."⁴⁶ Mariology and Christology remained closely related in the official teaching of the Latin Church. Graef considers that "the doctrine of Mary's part in the Incarnation protects the true doctrine of the mystery of Christ."⁴⁷ Leo applied Old Testament prophesies to Mary, giving a Christological - Marian sense to Genesis 3: 15: Isaiah 7: 14 and 11: 1. He adapted Psalm 134: 2 to the birth of Christ, Isaiah 45: 8 to Mary, and Proverbs 9: 1 to the Incarnation. O'Carroll suggests that Leo appears to have given a saving role to the Incarnation. The importance of Mary's participation would therefore have been enhanced - "there is no hope of salvation for the human race

unless the Virgin's Son was he who was his Mother's creator."⁴⁸ In a sermon he ruled out Mary's preservation from original sin: "Only the Son of the blessed Virgin is born without transgression, not indeed outside the human race, but a stranger to sin.... so that of Adam's offspring one might exist in whom the devil has no share."⁴⁹ Dioscorus assumed control of the Council, had Eutyches rehabilitated, and prevented a reading of Leo's 'Tome.' The Pope denounced the Council, the decisions of which ruptured the ancient alliance between Alexandria and Rome. However the success of Dioscorus was short lived.

In July 450, the death of Theodosius allowed his elder sister **Pulcheria** (399 - 453), to influence events. A Council was summoned in October, 451 and met at Chalcedon. Most of the decisions of 449 were reversed. Dioscorus was deposed. Some Nestorianizers were restored to office. Nestorius himself was condemned as a heretic. Leo, who had exerted some pressure to have the Council summoned again, presented his 'Tome,' which gained acceptance and was incorporated in the final form of the 'Chalcedonian definition'. The new creed used the statement, in reference to Jesus Christ, that He was "truly God and truly man, begotten of the Father before all time, according to the Godhead, in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God."⁵⁰ In spite of this, dissent was prevalent in most of Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria and Armenia, among Monophysites who stressed the divine nature of Christ.

Marian Disposition.

The tendency within the Church to give centrality to the nature of the mother of Jesus has been noted by Boslooper in his assessment of the 'Seven Ecumenical Councils.' J.N.D. Kelly points out that the development of credal statement by Synods and Councils, after the middle of the Third century, was received and revered because of the belief "that they bore witness to and made explicit the faith once delivered to the saints."⁵¹ At this time, the practice of appealing to the orthodox faiths was gaining acceptance. With the growing lack of reliance on the ability of apostolically founded sees to preserve the apostolic witness intact, "the consciousness of the magisterial authority of the Catholic Church, allowed the Roman Church in particular to assume the role of appointed custody and mouthpiece of the apostolic tradition."⁵²

Cyril of Alexandria, writing to Egyptian monks in defence of the Blessed Virgin's claim to be called the Mother of God, encouraged them to follow in the steps of the Church Fathers, as they had been responsible, both for the preservation of the faith handed down from the apostles, and for the proclamation of the same. In his letter to Nestorius (c. 431), Cyril had argued that earlier Church Fathers

ventured to call the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word or His Divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her, was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word being personally united is said to be born according to the flesh.⁵³

Since Mary had been called 'Mother of God' by Origen, Alexander of Alexandria, Athanasius, Eusebius and Cyril of Jerusalem, the title was becoming part of the confession of the Church.

Boslooper identifies an increasing interest concerning Mary in this correspondence. O'Carroll supports the observation and remarks that an immediate side-effect of the Council of Ephesus was the abundance of Mariaoratory. Cyril preached a sermon in which Mary was addressed by a series of epithets: "Hail, Mary Theotokos, venerable jewel of the whole earth, never-extinguished lamp, crown of virginity, sceptre of orthodoxy, never-destroyed sanctuary, vessel of the Incomprehensible, Mother and Virgin....."⁵⁴ Following this eulogy, Cyril enumerated the continuous mediatory activities of Mary. Through her all the glory of salvation and sanctification was being developed: the Holy Trinity was being adored on earth: heavens and angels were rejoicing: demons were chased, the devil was cast down from heaven: fallen man had been restored. Through her, "all creation, once sunk in idolatry, has come to know the truth, through her the faithful have been baptized, churches had been built, whole nations led to do penance."⁵⁵

Graef is careful to set these divine actions in the context of Mary's divine motherhood. The real cause of all the activities was Christ. Since He had been given through her, "she was the instrument through which all these things became possible."⁵⁶

Iconography and Representation.

The powerful impetus given to the Marian cultus by the Council of Ephesus was represented in iconography. A legend recounted how, in 438, Eudokia, wife of Theodosius II, sent her sister-in-law Pulcheria an icon of the virgin that had been painted by St. Luke. This '**Theotokos Hodegetria**' (the

Mother of God, Guide of Wayfarers, showing the virgin pointing the way with her finger to the child on her arm), was enshrined in the convent of Blachernae, next to the imperial palace of Constantinople; (but according to James) placed by **Pulcheria** in the Church of the Hodegin. The period was one of increasing popular devotion to the Virgin. The icon was to be venerated in the East for centuries, as an imperial palladium; and conveyed by car into battle, in a way reminiscent of the Cybele's image being borne through the streets of Rome.

In the earliest representations in art, Mary was shown as a member of a group in such scenes as the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Presentation. For example in the large mosaic on the western face of the triumphal arch in the Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (built 432 - 40), Mary has been depicted as seated in a chair, with two winged angels in attendance, a dove hovering above, and Gabriel in flight to deliver his message. Frequently in iconography she was enthroned in the manner and likeness of Isis and Horus, wearing the mural crown of Cybele and having the gorgon at her breasts like Athena. Sometimes the Holy Child was enclosed in a sacred mendala on her breast.

St. Augustine had emphasized the point that, in the early Church, no clear tradition about Mary's appearance had emerged. "Each Christian was free to imagine her according to his own highest ideal."⁵⁷ **Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus**, attempted an imaginative description of Mary:

She was grave and dignified in all her actions. She spoke little, and only when it was necessary to do so. She listened readily and could be addressed easily. She greeted everyone. She was of medium height, but some say that she was slightly taller than that. She would speak to everyone fearlessly and clearly, without laughter or agitation, and she was specially slow to anger. Her complexion was of the colour of ripe wheat, and her hair was auburn. Her eyes were bright and keen, and light brown in colour, and the pupils were of an olive green tint. Her eyebrows were arched and deep black. Her nose was long; her lips were red and full, and overflowing with the sweetness of her words. Her face was not round, but somewhat oval. Her hands were long and her fingers also.⁵⁸

Cronin describes this as "pious imagining,"⁵⁹ and observes that "the woman most often portrayed in the world's art is not in fact the woman that the world's art has attempted to portray."⁶⁰ The age of Mary may only be guessed. The dark-complexioned Byzantine icons reputed to have been painted from life by St. Luke are known to belong to the Sixth century. Those who belonged to the Christian tradition of painting had to attempt the depiction of a woman whom they had neither seen nor heard. Their numerous efforts have shown the varying conceptions of the ideal Christian womanhood within different eras. "The religious conscience of the age at work is manifested, assigning to Mary its own

values."⁶¹ During one period Mary was represented as the most exquisite and tenderest of others; in another, she was the triumphant conqueror of heresy and Satan. The "stresses and preoccupations," the "limits of technique" and the "temperament of the individual artist,"⁶² were major factors in the production. Yet in spite of diversity a unifying theme has appeared: "Mary somehow is different and better than ordinary women, and so must be depicted in an exceptional way;"⁶³ such that would do justice to the immaculate, sinless, ever virgin, who had been "chosen to bear the living God."⁶⁴

Cronin assumes that no portrait of Mary could ever fully satisfy the depth of her grace and mystery. For a time the ambiguity and compromising nature of art tended to rule out its appeal to the Church. St. Clement of Alexandria declared that art, being material, could never be worthy of God. Tertullian argued that the arts were "a devilish invention, conducive only to the worship of false gods."⁶⁵ One of the reasons for the wariness of the Church was the favour enjoyed by other groupings who had formed 'burial clubs'. Part of their practice was to decorate their cemeteries with representations of their beliefs. Many non-Christian paintings attested belief in the after-life. Several pagan sarcophagi represented the soul by a young girl, who was seated on a ship making its way to port. The myths of Diana, Endymion, Cupid and Psyche were often used to symbolize the soul's survival. Initially, the figure of the Good Shepherd, (carrying a sheep of lamb on his shoulders), was the most popular artistic display of Christian belief. Another popular human figure was the 'Orante', a woman in long robes, with arms raised symmetrically in prayer - the palms facing forwards. The 'Orante' personified union with Christ, usually union of the soul of a Christian buried in the catacombs.

Since early Christian art was imbued with symbolism, Cronin suggests that it would be feasible to assume that early representations of Mary would have been symbolic. He claims that the first picture of Mary was located in the cemetery of Priscilla at Rome, dated possibly from the first half of the Second century. The woman holds a baby on her knees. Beside her stands a man pointing to a star, "This is evidently the prophet Isaiah (or Balaam), who compares the coming of the Messiah to the rising of the star."⁶⁶ Among the salient features of the painting, Mary was linked with her son, since her importance depended on him; (the weight of Old Testament 'prophecy' about Mary was also recognised among the early Christians). The artist also gave Mary prominence through the contrast of her larger figure with the proportionally smaller silhouette of Isaiah.

Another fresco in the same catacomb and dating from the second half of the Third century may also depict Mary. A young woman, in a white robe with a purple border, (as worn by Roman patrician ladies), is seated suckling a child. The woman is part of a fuller composition which includes an Orante as the central figure, together with 'an old man' who appears to be indicating to a young man and a young woman, the position of the other figures. Cronin suggests that the old man may have represented the Bishop of Rome, "and his gesture would accompany words similar to those of St. Ambrose in the course of a ceremony which took place 100 years after the date of the fresco."⁶⁷ When remarking on a picture of Mary, he had said, "Follow her example, my daughter."⁶⁸ According to Cronin, additional importance has been attributed to Mary in this fresco, in her own right, and by reason of her virtues.

At this time, devotion to Mary had continued to gain in strength. James describes a fresco of the Third century located in the cemetery of Priscilla and showing the Annunciation. In a painting of the following century, in the Caementerium majus, the Holy Child was represented at His mother's breast, with his arm outstretched. A fresco of the Fourth century near the crypt of St. Emirentia, also in the Caementerium majus, portrayed Mary as an Orante, interceding for those in the tomb. The recurring theme of Mary, in very early art and iconography, leads James to conclude, that her importance and significance in Christian theology and devotion was gradually increasing. In a reference to what may be the same Fourth century fresco, Cronin gives greater detail of the artist's impression. A young woman was shown, in full face, with the gesture of an Orante. She wore pearls in her ears, and a rich necklace of pearls and precious stones hung round her neck. In front of her could be seen the head, shoulders and full face of a grown child. A monogram of Christ indicated that the figures were Mary and her Son. Cronin assumes that the artist has represented Mary as Orante in order to demonstrate that "all her glory and ever her dignity as Mother of Christ had their origin in her exceptional unity with God."⁶⁹

Mary appeared in other frescoes of the catacombs; her portrait has been found on gilt glass and in discs with the caption 'Maria'. An early subject that gained popularity was the adoration of the Magi, showing in fact that men of every nation had been called to the new Church. A Fourth century 'Adoration', in Rome, showed the Christ-child, on a wide throne; Mary sat watchfully, on a side seat. Not until the Council of Ephesus had "unequivocally promulgated her title as God's mother,"⁷⁰ had

Mary been enthroned and united with her child, whom she held on her lap. The picture of a mother exercising maternal responsibility for her child, not only must have reflected the theological opinion of the time, but also impressed its own psychological effect on the viewers; that is, the dominant position of the women in the mother-child relationship.

Besides the growing volume of Marian preaching, another legacy of the Council of Ephesus was the increase in Marian devotion. The feasts to Mary were taken as appropriate occasions for the preachers to expound their perceptions. Their themes ranged from the fall of man and the opposition of Mary to Eve, to the events of the Nativity. The already familiar practice of applying many Old Testament texts to Mary was continued.

Portrayals of Mary.

St. Peter Chrysologus (c.400 - c.450), Archbishop of Ravenna, who attempted to translate the teaching of Ephesus into the idiom of his hearers, preached of Mary :

She was truly blessed, who received the glory of divine seed and was the queen of all chastity.... She bore him who bears the world; she brought forth the one who brought her forth; she fed him who gives food to all living things.⁷¹

According to O'Carroll, Chrysologus of Ravenna was the first among the Latins to speak of Mary as the spouse of God:

A girl takes, receives, attracts God in the shelter of her womb so thatpeace on earth, glory in the heaven, salvation to the lost, life to the dead, relationship between the earthly and those in heaven, union of God himself with flesh,⁷² - are the consequences.

The Archbishop of Ravenna also upbraided the Nestorian teaching because of its confused thought that tended to "blaspheme, as the mother of a man, the mother of Christ, so as to take from her the title 'Theotokos'."⁷³ Graef assesses the description of Mary in his Sermon 142, as "the Marian paradox on which the Fathers like to dwell with increasing insistence - that because Mary is truly Theotokos, Mother of God, she is greater than all creation."⁷⁴ But Chrysologus followed his contemporaries among the Latin Fathers and avoided the use of the term 'Mother of God.' 'The Virgin,' or simply 'Mary,' was the woman "who in Adam had been the mother of the dead, became through Christ the mother of the living."⁷⁵ However lofty his praise for Mary, the laudation was "always for the sake of her Son."⁷⁶

Theodotus, Bishop of Ancyra (died between 438 and 446), saw Mary as "the lily in the midst of thorns."⁷⁷ (Canticles 2: 2); "clothed with divine grace as with a garment"⁷⁸ (Cant. 4: 7). He emphasized the divine motherhood, linking it closely to the virginity.

The mother of no (mere) man has remained a virgin. Do you see how the very birth presents us with a dual meaning of the one born? For if he were born in our manner, he would be a man; but if he truly preserved the untouched integrity of his mother, for those who think rightly, the one who is born is God.⁷⁹

Their marriage was also related to virginity, with Joseph being observed as both the guardian of Mary, and "a witness unexceptionable of her virginity."⁸⁰ Theodotus, like St. Ignatius, held that the mystery of the virgin birth had to be concealed from the evil one; but altered the earlier reasoning, stating that Joseph had married Mary; the form of marriage was shown, "so that the Virgin, unknown to the devil, should continue as a virgin, keeping virginity by divine decree."⁸¹

In a sermon for the feast of Purification, preached at the Council of Ephesus, he applied passages from two Psalms to Mary: from Psalm 46: 5, "The Most High has sanctified his own tabernacle:"⁸² and from Psalm (87) 86: 5, "A man is born in her, and the Highest himself has founded her."⁸³ His interpretation of these verses discloses the commonly held opinion of that time, that Mary had been purified by the Incarnation. The same sermon abounded in greetings, such as "Hail, spiritual fleece of salvation," "Hail stainless mother of holiness."⁸⁴ Such expressions were to become a popular device of later Byzantine preachers. The Eve - Mary theme was used by Theodotus both to highlight death and life, and to define Mary's role in removing Eve's sadness, thereby bringing about the destruction of evils, error and the curse.

Hesychius of Jerusalem (d. after 451), a monk priest in Jerusalem, both teacher and exegete of Sacred Scripture, was also fairly extravagant in his images and titles for Mary: 'Star of life,' 'Pure turtle-dove,' 'Dove without stain,' 'Jewel-case,' 'Casket holding the Pearl,' 'Planet of incorruptibility' and 'Paradise of Immortality,' being among them. In a commentary on Leviticus 2: 4, he described Mary as the oven in which the offering for Yahweh was baked, "because an oven receives bread and fire from above, as also the Theotokos received the bread of life, that is the Word of God, and the fire of the presence of the Spirit into her womb."⁸⁵ Hesychius was convinced of Mary's sinlessness, and reckoned that, as a consequence, she "delivered Eve from shame and Adam from the threat."⁸⁶ The apparent submission of Hesychius to the Alexandrian tradition of Mary's doubt at the crucifixion, is

converted by Graef into an appreciation on his part of "general human weakness,"⁸⁷ when he stated that "though Theotokos, she was nevertheless of the same stuff as we."⁸⁸

Chrysippus, (399 - 479, ordained c.455), who entered the monastery founded by St. Euthymius at Jerusalem, believed that Mary, before being redeemed, had shared in the consequences of the fall. In '**Oratio in Sanctum Marian Deiparam**', a sermon on Mary, he introduced references that were to find a place in the Marian Liturgy. The sermon was composed in the form of a commentary on such Biblical texts as Psalm 132: 8; Psalm 44: 11; Isaiah 7: 14; Luke 2: 4-8; Galations 4: 4. Graef finds his application of Ps. (131), 132: 8 to Mary surprising: "When you shall have arisen from there, then you shall seal also the ark of your sanctification (i.e. Mary), then will the Ark also rise with all men from the Fall, in which her descent from Eve has involved her."⁸⁹ **Sedulius**, a native of either southern Gaul or Italy, in his '**Paschale Carmen**,' in which he outlined biblical events, regarded Mary without equal, and as one who, alone, had pleased Christ above all others. His address to Mary. '**Salve sancta Parens**' - "Hail holy Mother, who brought forth the King,"⁹⁰ has become the Introit of most of the 'Masses of Our Lady' in the Roman rite. He praised her in the '**Abecedarius**', a hymn with the verses arranged in alphabetical order. The first eleven of these verses have become the hymns for the Lauds of the octave day of Christmas.

O'Carroll introduces the ideas of a **Basil of Seleucia** (Fifth Century), who may have depended on Proclus. He carried further the emphasis on the link of Mary's mediation with her divine motherhood. He believed her power exceeded that of Peter and Paul, and saw her then as the "mediatress of God and men."⁹¹ Consequently "the dividing element of hatred (would) be taken away and heavenly and earthly (things) made one."⁹²

Contending for the Faith.

The Christian West had to contend with successive invasions by Germanic groups, of whom Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals and Burgundians and Lombards had espoused Arianism. Subsequent to the conversion of Clovis, King of the Salic Franks, in 496, the process of conquest and influence led to the disappearance of Arianism by 660, throughout the West. The Church therefore, had struggled to preserve the Catholic inheritance, not only against Arian Goths and Vandals, but also against the Monophysites in Africa. **Fulgentius** (468 - 533), Bishop of Ruspe, (c.507) was

persecuted by the Arian King, **Thrasamund**, and was exiled to Sardinia. from which several of his controversial writings were addressed to his persecutor. Graef concludes that the influence of St. Augustine's teaching on the ubiquity of sin, together with the determination to defend the true human nature, which Christ took from His Mother, caused Fulgentius to stress Mary's subjection to original sin more strongly than his contemporaries. He wrote "the flesh of Mary, who had been conceived in the human way in iniquities, was definitely a flesh of sin."⁹³ While emphasizing Mary's purity, he also declared that she had brought forth the Sun of God, not because of any merit of her own, but solely due "to the divine condescension."⁹⁴ The emphasis on the sinfulness of Mary's flesh may have been peculiar to the African authors of this period. Graef notes that **Caesarius of Arles**, (the Gallic Rome), (d. 542),, stated that "she remained without the contagion or stain of sin."⁹⁵

Comment.

As the events and the records of events of the Christian story submitted to the passage of time, greater scope was given for varying observations on the life and circumstances of Mary and her family. Controversy, argument and debate were the consequences of the differing conclusions of such as, Jerome and Helvedius, and Augustine and Pelagius. The contents of some of their respective decisions have continued to foster divisions of opinion. Some of their ideas faltered during the Middle Ages.

The Schools at Alexandria and at Antioch could not agree on the person and standing of Jesus Christ. Diversities of 'isms' began to accelerate, resulting, for example, in a collision for Nestorius, and a free run for Cyril, in the 'Theotokos' debate at Ephesus. Complications abounded as the Church attempted to establish a firm footing for its teaching, (East and West). With the help of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon, agreement was reached; a perception of the Mother of God and of the two natures of Christ were clarified.

Devotion to Mary flourished. On special occasions a feature of the Marian sermons was the ascription of new titles and privileges to Mary. The development and expansion of iconography was another consequence of the decisions at the Council. However, Mary often appeared in the guise of familiar

figures of the pagan religions, (reflecting a variety of theological impressions of herself). The whimsical nature of this presentation troubled the Church.

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ACO, - SCHWARTZ, ACTA CONCILIORUM OECUMENICORUM.

OCP,- ORIENTALIA CHRISTIANA PERIODICA, ROME.

PO,- PATROLOGIA ORIENTALIS.

CHAPTER XI

SYRIAN POST-EPHESINE FATHERS: Western impressions, Eastern changes.

Regarded as the greatest Syrian poet after St. Ephraem, **Jacob of Sarug** (c.451 - 521) was called the 'Flute of the Holy Spirit.' He laid strong emphasis on Mary's virginity and holiness; and gave special attention to the Holy Spirit who "came on Mary, to remove from her the ancient condemnation of Eve and Adam."¹ He saw Mary's role parallel to, yet broader than Eve's, seeing that

through her divine motherhood, Adam has been delivered from his servitude..... Through her, the heavenly powers have been reconciled with the mortals..... Through her, the closed way to paradise has again been made passable.²

Although Jacob opposed the definition of the Council of Chalcedon on the two natures of Christ,

(Graef claims that) his Mariology was not affected. She emphasizes that his poems are used in both Catholic and Syrian Monophysite liturgies. O'Carroll draws attention to a recently published homily, by Sarug, entitled, '**Mary and Golgotha,**' in which the opinion was expressed that Mary was too sublime to be spoken of; O'Carroll points out that this was simply hyperbole, in view of the imagery used by the poet to laud Mary. For example, he looked on her as 'Mother of the Sun of justice,' 'Mother of the morning,' 'Ark of the divinity,' 'Palace of flesh,' 'Seat of the King of Kings,' 'Ship full of riches' and 'Virgin vine.' In an Ode to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jacob outlined the preparation of Mary for her divine motherhood together with an account of the Annunciation.

Hilda Graef agrees with the conclusion of some modern theologians that Jacob's strong emphasis on Mary's perfect purity brought him, at least, close to the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception in the modern sense. Jacob wrote of Mary, "Through her own merit she had reached this step of perfection;"³ thus she had become suitable for the Incarnation, and that, through her own efforts. Such a conclusion contrasted greatly with the reactions of the West, which had struggled with the Pelagian controversy and had submitted to Augustine's view of unredeemed human nature. Jacob advanced the idea that at the Annunciation Mary was purified further by God's direct intervention, and, only then, freed from original sin. "The Spirit that came upon her made her such as Eve had been, before she had listened to the advice of the Serpent."⁴

His picture of Mary at the crucifixion, while reflecting on her sufferings and sorrows, made no reference to any doubt. Graef finds in the Sixth century Syrian poet "the fully developed conception of

Mary as the 'Mother of Mercy,' as well as of the 'Mater Dolorosa' of medieval poetry and art."⁵ The human quality of Mary was depicted by Jacob in a sermon '**De Transitu**', (on the passing of Mary, the Mother of God).Even though the belief in the assumption of Mary's body into heaven, was gaining ground at this time, Jacob did not consider the matter in his description of her death. He reported her burial on the Mount of Olives. The Lord himself conducted the funeral. Her body was laid in the sepulchre; then angels led her soul into paradise. For Graef, the poem is proof of the observance of the feast of Mary's death, at the end of the 5th Century, at least in Syria.

Severus (c.465 - 538), a monk, and patriarch of Antioch, 512 , despised because of his Monophysite leanings, yet (according to Graef) not far from the orthodox position, was a devoted follower of Clement of Alexandria; he insisted on Mary's claim to the title Theotokos. In a Homily preached on the feast of her Commemoration, he extolled her position, wondering "what object could one contemplate that was more divine than the Mother of God, or that was superior to her?"⁶ and suggesting that "to approach her means to approach holy land and attain heaven."⁷ Severus insisted on the '**virginitas in partu**', and used the image of Ezekiel 44: 2, linked with Isaiah 7: 14, to present in a Biblical setting:"the birth of God, of Emmanuel born of the virgin, who did not undo, even after his birth, the closure of the virginal door."⁸

He compared Mary with Mount Sinai, seeing that she was a 'spiritual mountain', (the virgin), "to whom purity and the coming of the Spirit give brilliance and splendour," where "the grace of adoption reigns;"⁹ whereas on the other smoking mountain "the spirit of bondage reigned."¹⁰ O'Carroll feels that Severus insinuated a universal role for Mary, as for example, in one hymn Mary was regarded as 'the gate of heaven' and as 'the root of the Resurrection;' thereby the author could invite the reader to pray to her, or to God through her. Severus followed Origen in attributing a prophetic role to Mary, from the reference in Isaiah 8: 3,4. He was prepared to designate Mary as an apostle, one, of whom "it will be said, she surpasses all the apostles."¹¹ Although Severus and some of his contemporaries highlighted the purity of the Virgin, their expressions did not imply her immaculate conception. Severus declared that the "flesh of Christ..... of the same essence as oursalone was free and removed from the corruption of sin."¹² Graef presses the point that such terms as 'immaculate' and 'stainless' were used by the Eastern Fathers to express "surpassing moral and physical purity,"¹³ and not as declarations on exemption from original sin.

While the Nestorians rejected the title Theotokos, their devotion to Mary was not diminished. Narses (d. c. 502), founder of the Nestorian school of Nisibis, called Mary a 'second heaven.' He emphasised both her purity and her poverty; and pursued the traditional parallelism between Mary and Eve. Mary's part in the Redemption was acknowledged seeing that "...the Lord of the universe has resolved to descend through you in order to release and deliver him (Adam)." ¹⁴

In O'Carroll's estimation, **Romanos** (the Singer) Melodos (c.490c.560), a converted Jew from Syria, was the greatest of the Byzantine poets. As with his fellow Syrians, Ephraem and Jacob of Sarug, Romanos gave Joseph a prominent part in the unfolding of the Nativity drama. Mary was presented as admitting her virginity to Joseph in the Annunciation Hymn: "The conception of the child is beyond my understanding. I am pregnant and you see that my virginity is intact, for you have not known me. Who will be my witness to these things if not you, my guardian?" ¹⁵ Joseph avers, "The light of your virginity shines always." ¹⁶ Mary was also depicted as informing the Magi that Joseph's presence with her would help to prove "that the little Child is God from before the ages." ¹⁷

The initial reaction of Joseph to Mary's disclosure had been restrained by fear. In the hymn he expressed his terror in face of a fire which was surrounding Mary, and pleaded with her for protection. He said "You wish that I, as Moses of old, should take off my shoes, that I should approach you and listen to you, and that, enlightened by you, I should say to you, 'Hail unespoused spouse!'" ¹⁸ (Beginning at the first, every other stanza of the hymn is followed by a string of salutations, each ending with this refrain). This hymn, consisting of twenty-four stanzas, is now sung on the fifth Saturday in Lent in the Greek Church, with the worshippers standing, (hence its name 'akathistos' - 'not sitting'). Graef takes the almost unanimous opinion of modern scholars that Romanos was the author. Marina Warner accepts that "this long and impassioned lexicon of Marian attributes may have been written by Romanos." ¹⁹ O'Carroll rules out his authorship.

The Akathistos displayed a tendency to attribute to Mary, powers and activities which were and are God's prerogative. It was given to her to defeat demons, to strengthen the martyrs, to extinguish the flames of passion, to open paradise and to protect the Church completely. All of this was the result of her position as Theotokos, Mother of the Creator. Graef emphasizes the poetical licence within these sentiments and notes their origins in the East.

The 'mediation' spoken of Christ by St. Paul in Timothy 2: 5, was increasingly applied to Mary by Romanos. He set Mary's mediation in a distinctive relation to Adam and Eve, who were represented as imploring her help. Mary assured them that help was forthcoming seeing that she could stand as an advocate before her Son. She was "both the heavenly ladder by which God descended and the bridge which leads from earth to heaven."²⁰ Romanos was also in agreement with Origen's interpretation of Simeon's prophetic utterance to Mary:

Yes when you shall see your own Son nailed to the Cross, Immaculate oneyou will suddenly doubt. The hesitation in which sorrow will plunge you will be like a sword within you; but then he will send quick healing to your hearthe who is the only friend of men.²¹

Both Jacob of Sarug and Romanos, when writing on Mary's compassion at the foot of the Cross, betrayed their Syrian background, where, at death, there was a tradition of loud public lamentation. Both Graef and O'Carroll agree that there was no allusion to any doubt on Mary's part; but for O'Carroll the poet introduced more a sense of mystery in grief. In a lament, written for the Emperor Justinian for the feast of Good Friday, Romanos represented Mary asking bitterly why God Himself should have to suffer so cruelly. Her query was met by the gentle encouragement to accept and to submit to the will of God. Her fear of not seeing her Son again brought the reply, "Be reassured, O Mother, you will be the first to see me leave the tomb."²² The poem was written in an acrostic form called **kontakion**, (Romanos' own invention), and recited in an antiphonal form between a soloist and a choir. This dramatic presentation appeared in the Good Friday liturgy in the West in either the Ninth or Tenth century.

O'Carroll attributes to Romanos the expansion of Mary's range of intercession, as demonstrated by the poet's conjecture: "You have made of me the voice and honour of all my race; the earth which you have made has in me a sure protection, a rampart and a support."²³ Mary continued to address her Son, "Toward me turn their gaze all whom you drove from the paradise of delights, for I bring them back to it, that the world may recognize that you have been born of me, my little Child, God from before all ages."²⁴ O'Carroll claims that through Romanos, a theory of Mary's meditation, inspired by Sacred Scripture was deeply embedded in the Liturgy.

Some Western impressions in the 6th., 7th., and 8th., centuries.

Venantius Fortunatus (c.530 - c.600) may be regarded as the counterpart of Romanos in the West. His hymn, '**Quem Terra, Pontus, Aethera,**' became the hymn for Matins and Lauds of the feasts of

the Virgin Mary. Graef finds in the mood and imagery of his poetry "a subtle change, foreshadowing the Middle Ages."²⁵ She is also impressed by the change in perception of Mary, in that "almost imperceptibly she has left the strictly theological sphere and become an image, fulfilling men's desire for beauty and security."²⁶ In his poem '**In Praise of the Holy Virgin Mary,**' Fortunatus addressed Mary as Mother, sought her help in prayer and described her as "redder than roses, whiter than lilies, a new flower of matchless beauty."²⁷ Graef perceives in the work of this poet a Mary who has become less metaphysical than 'Theotokos' of the Greeks and the Virgin Mother of earlier Latins.

Gregory the Great, (c.540 - 604), interpreted St. Matthew 12: 46-50 in a novel way. He reckoned that Mary momentarily represented the Synagogue, which Christ no longer recognised. This for Graef is surprising, seeing that Mary had usually been regarded as the type of the Church, from the time of Ambrose. Gregory also varied the interpretation of St. John 2: 4, finding in Jesus' words the response, "That I can work a miracle, comes to me from my Father, not my Mother;"²⁸ adding:

I do not recognise you as in (working) the miracle which I do not do from the nature I got from you. When the hour of death will have come, I shall recognise you as my Mother, for it is from you that I have the power to die.²⁹

According to Graef a number of theologians have attributed to Gregory an '**Explanation of the First Book of Kings,**' in which Mary was identified with the Mountain of Ephraim, and given a position that reached to the throne of the Godhead. However the language in this work does not correspond to his 'genuine works.'

St. Adamnan, (625 - 704), ninth Bishop of Iona monastery, in his book '**De Locis Sanctis,**' drew the curtain slightly on a significant scenario of the Holy Land. He told of a visit there by a French Bishop **Arculf**, who described a "quadrangular church of the Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord,"³⁰ not far from the round Church of the Resurrection, in Bethlehem. He also visited a two-storied Church of Holy Mary in the valley of Jehoshaphat. At the eastern end (of the lower church) he noticed "an altar, and at the right-hand side of the altar (is) the empty stone sepulchre of Holy Mary, where she was once laid to rest."³¹ However his visit failed to discover "how and when or by what persons her holy remains were removed from the sepulchre, and where she awaits the resurrection....."³² According to O'Carroll, this uncertainty, so expressed, influenced the Venerable Bede, and may have obstructed the development of the doctrine of the Assumption. Another story by Arculf was that of a miraculous icon of 'Our Lady from Constantinople.' An image in wood, it had

been torn from its place and defiled. Once retrieved, it was cleaned and restored to a place of honour. Then "there was an issue of genuine oil from the tablet with the picture of the blessed Mary"³³ - a phenomenon which Arculf claimed to have witnessed. But it has to be allowed that the story was set against the background of the iconoclastic controversy.

(**Ildefonsus** was one of a small number of Spanish theologians of the Seventh century who contributed to the Marian discussion, although without reference to the (bodily) Assumption).

The Venerable Bede (c. 673 - 735),_a member of the joint monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow, was a prominent figure in the intellectual movement of his day. His work involved chronology, natural phenomena, the Scriptures and theology. In his commentary on Luke's Gospel, he followed the Latin Church's doctrine. He reproduced a scribal misreading of Jerome's translation of Mary's name (from Hebrew), 'stilla (drop) maris' (sea), as 'stella (star) maris.' The same word in Syriac he read as 'Mistress' or 'Lady.'

Bede reckoned that Mary was the first woman to take the vow of virginity. 'Theotokos' was to be venerated by angels and men, and esteemed more highly than any other woman. The humility and life-giving obedience of Mary were opposed to the pride and destructiveness of Eve. The mysteries of the Virgin's life were to be found in and daily renewed in the Church,

which following the example of the blessed ever-Virgin Mary, as one wedded, at the same time immaculate, as a virgin, conceives us of the Spirit, as a virgin brings us forth without pain, and as one espoused to one person and rendered fruitful by another, throughout its separate parts which make it one and catholic, is visibly joined to its ruling pontiff, and by the invisible power of the Holy Spirit is given increase.³⁴

The legacy from both **Ambrose** and **Augustine** was influential in the conclusions of Bede, who also set the story of Cana in the context of the Church, as the spouse of Christ. The distinction between Christ's divinity and His humanity was emphasized by Bede in his interpretation of Christ's words to Mary at that wedding, (St. John 2: 4):

There is nothing in common between the divinity which I have eternally from the Father and your flesh from which I have taken (my) flesh; for my hour has not yet come, when I shall show forth by dying the weakness of the humanity I have assumed from you.³⁵

Bede also made the comment that Christ, when He was about to perform a divine action, pretended not to know Mary, because He did not "acknowledge her to be the author of His divine nativity."³⁶

Graef accepts that such a division between the divinity and humanity of Christ in relation to Mary would have implied Nestorianism to the Greek Church, (post Ephesus). Since Bede defended the concept of Theotokos, Graef is convinced that his intention, in making such a distinction, was to prevent the attribution of 'quasi-divine status' to Mary. The apocryphal stories of Mary's death were rejected by Bede, who, in his own hymn, '**On the Birthday (death) of the Holy Mother of God,**' offered "an extremely simple prayer for her intercession,"³⁷ without any degree of exuberance. In '**Concerning the Holy Places,**' he mentioned the problem of the empty tomb, but did not relate it to the story of Mary's bodily Assumption. Winch and Bennett conclude that the silence of Bede and Adamnan (Abbot of Iona) on the matter, allows for the suggestion that the Church in England, even by the Eighth century, had not yet accepted belief in the Assumption. (Yet, universally, during the Eighth and Ninth centuries, the arguments presented for or against the Assumption of Mary were to exercise a lasting influence on successive centuries).

New attitudes in the East.

The Emperor, **Leo III**, the Isaurian (717 - 740), whose military and administrative talents brought about a resurgence of vitality to the Eastern empire, was determined to rule the church. In 726, (725), as part of this intention, he issued an edict which banned the veneration of religious pictures - a practice which had been opposed previously. According to Bettenson, Leo's purpose was "to purify the debased Christianity of much of the East,"³⁸ which had suffered greatly under the persistent raids of such groups as Slavs, Bulgars and Saracens. Christianity, consequently had declined into a superstition, "inferior, intellectually and morally, to Arab monotheism."³⁹ Besides aiming for domination over the church, the Emperor hoped to destroy the power of the monks, who championed the cause of iconography. By taking this edictal measure he sought to influence Jews and Moslems who had joined his armies. As far as Leo was concerned, the Church had to concern itself with the abstract The material embodiment of Christendom would be found in the Empire and the Emperor. In this he was influenced by the extreme Origenism of that time, "with its concern for the intellectual and heavenly world of pure spirit as the proper province of the Church."⁴⁰ Images would have blocked the noetic path. Riots were the outcome of the edict. Around 727, the sight of a revered icon

of Christ being removed from its position over the bronze gate of the Sacred Palace at Constantinople, (at the Emperor's command), created crowd disturbance.

Constantine V (740 - 75), Leo's son, went further. A synod assembled by him in Constantinople in 754, denounced all icons in the Christian cult, declared as outlaws all who continued to use them, and approved the Emperor's authority over the church. For nearly one hundred years the protagonists of the Iconoclast heresy attempted to impose their views, and as a consequence, killed many Christians who refused to break with the well-established convention.

St. Germanus of Constantinople (c.635 - 733) ardently defended the veneration of icons, and strongly opposed the iconoclasts (together with **Andrew of Crete** (c.666 - 740) and **John of Damascus** (c.675 - 749/753)). There may be some indication of this in one of his homilies where he attributed to the Virgin the repulsion of an attack on Constantinople. No mention was made of the Emperor Leo III. O'Carroll wonders if he had anticipated Leo's support for the iconoclasts.

These three were to become "the most reputable authorities,"⁴¹ both for the account of Mary's death at Jerusalem, and "for the authenticity of the apocryphal stories of her passing."⁴² They based their sermons on the evidence of John the Evangelist whom, they assumed, had witnessed the event. O'Carroll states that the ideas of **Germanus** in two sermons on the Assumption, found their way to the West in the Tenth century, by translation and through borrowing. Graef pleads allowance for "the exaggerations of Byzantine terminology,"⁴³ which was a strong feature of the discourses of this Patriarch of Constantinople. He had affirmed that Mary, the 'Mother of Life', in heaven, would not forget those "whose salvation she is;"⁴⁴ having passed into life immediately after her death, she (body and soul), lives in heaven. The emphasis by Germanus on Mary's part in redemption and on her power of intercession, exceeded that of any of the Fathers, antecedently. With the exception of God, no other help was required beyond Mary's, for our salvation. His catalogue of Mary's assistance included necessary guidance for spirituality, for true adoration of God, for knowledge of God, freedom from dangers, and redemption; "no man is saved except through you."⁴⁵

Two other features of his exposition of her role as mediatrix ("but which cannot be accepted at their face value,"⁴⁶ according to Graef), were to catch the imagination throughout the Middle Ages. Germanus had declared, "But you, having maternal power with God, can obtain forgiveness even for the greatest sinners. For He can never fail to hear you, because God obeys you through and in all

things, as His true Mother."⁴⁷ Secondly, he indicated that Mary could avert the wrath of God. "You turn away the just threat and the sentence of damnation, because you love the Christianstherefore the Christian people trustfully turn to you, refuge of sinners."⁴⁸ Graef argues that such statements, in the light of the Scriptural record, were the roots of aberrations of Marian devotion. One of his sermons on the Assumption had echoes of the Akathistos Hymn, emphasizing Mary's relationship with men as their supreme helper. The other described the familiar legendary record of the actual assumption, including the attack of the Jews on the body. Germanus followed the logic that where Mary's Son was, Mary had to be. "Just as a child seeks and desires the presence of his mother, and as a mother likes to live close to her son, so it is fitting for you, whose motherly love for your Son and God was never in doubt, should return to Him."⁴⁹ The Greek concept of the threefold division of man into body, soul and the spirit was reflected in Mary's translation from death into life. Then her soul saw the Father, her stainless body, the glory of the Son, and her pure spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Two sermons on the Presentation contained sections that form part of the third nocturn of Matins of the feast of the Immaculate Conception in the Roman Breviary. In the first, Germanus recalled the apocryphal story of Mary's childhood in the Temple. He praised her purity to such an extent that Western theologians have assumed that he had not accepted Mary's subjection to original sin. When presented in the Temple, according to Germanus, Mary sanctified the sanctuary rather than was sanctified by it. Graef recalls that the Greek Fathers' idea of original sin differed from that of the Latins (but she makes no reference to the meaning of 'sanctifies'). Her interpretation is that nothing more than Mary's 'transcendent purity' was being paraded.

O'Carroll's observations lead him to conclude that **St. Andrew** of Crete was "the most prolific of all the Fathers on our Lady."⁵⁰ For Graef, Andrew's expressions were more sober than those of Germanus, in whom was reached "the high-watermark of Marian devotion in the Church of the Fathers."⁵¹ In three homilies on her dormition, Andrew left open possibilities, other than that of Mary's assumption into heaven, body and soul. Yet he thought that Mary's death must have differed from all others. God may have devised something beyond our knowledge. He mentioned the growing popularity of the celebration of this feast. According to Graef, he also gave reasons for the silence of the New Testament and of the early Fathers, on Mary's death, in his second sermon, 1060, B. C.. (The proclamation of the Incarnation had to be preached first: her death occurred outside the Scriptural

record). O'Carroll's impression is that Andrew appeared to be puzzled by the death of one who was 'sinless', and by the silence of Scriptures. Andrew applied to Mary the typology of the ancient Ark, linking it to Psalm 132 : 8, thus keeping to the Assumptionist tradition from early times.

Both O'Carroll and Graef warn that he did not have the Latin idea of original sin. Andrew's praise for Mary's holiness has been regarded as support for the Immaculate Conception. He spoke of her as the 'first fruits' of the renewed race.

Today the pure nobility of men receives the grace of the first creation by God and thus returns to itself; and the (human) nature, which clings to the (newly) born Mother of the Beautiful One, receives back the glorious beauty which had been dimmed by the degradation of evil, and the best and most marvellous new formation. And this new formation is truly a re-formation, and the re-formation a deification, and this a restoration to the first state⁵²

Graef looks on these sentiments as affirming Mary's birth without original sin , together with the restoration of the infants human nature "to its original purity before the Fall,"⁵³ (but outside the context of her conception).

Andrew laid emphasis on Mary as Theotokos. The Scriptures, for him, were replete with comments about her. In fact, he offered the principle that all Biblical passages referring to the Church could be applied to Mary. Such references in the Scriptures to a virgin, a prophetess, the house of God, an altar, a candlestick and many others, he reckoned, had Mary in mind. Andrew composed other liturgical pieces, for example the '**Great Canon**,' a penitential hymn, which is sung in mid-Lent, and contains many short prayers (**theotokia**) of invocation to the Mother of God.

John of Damascus, sometimes regarded as the '**Thomas Aquinas of the East**' wrote, in what O'Carroll describes as, an "exuberant ... Byzantine manner."⁵⁴ His Marian theology has been contained in homilies, hymns and in '**De Fide Orthodoxa**,' (an exposition of the orthodox faith and containing a defence of the divine maternity of Mary against the Nestorians). He displayed a passionate personal devotion to Mary, regarding her as "his only hope of joy, the guardian of his life, his interpreter with your Son, and sure pledge of salvation."⁵⁵

A sermon on Mary's nativity represented "the clearest teaching on her immaculate conception (that we have met so far)."⁵⁶ Her conception and birth, "the only child of an otherwise sterile couple,"⁵⁷ were the results of grace. Mary's parents Joachim and Anne received John's praise and veneration. But his view that the 'active' conception of Mary was completely without stain, exceeded

the terms of the later definition of the doctrine and was met with strong objections. Nevertheless, O'Carroll is confident that John of Damascus has been a valuable source of reference for this subject.

In the Eve - Mary topic, John suggested that Mary's remedial antidote to Eve's folly had been in her obedience to God, which in turn had enabled her to deceive the Deceiver and to bring immortality to men. "For God foreknowing that she was worthy, loved her, and loving her, predestined her to be Theotokos."⁵⁸ He argued that the title was primarily Christological in its intention, protecting a right belief in the Incarnation. He jumped to the conclusion that the title constituted the foundation of belief in the Assumption. John's conviction with regard to Mary's bodily assumption was evinced in his 'First Sermon on the Assumption'. He wrote:

For just as her virginity remained inviolate while giving birth, when she departed her body was preserved from destruction and only taken to a better and more divine tabernacle, which is not subject to any death..... Hence I will call her holy passing not death, but falling asleep, or departure, or better still, arrival.⁵⁹

He saw the cloud that brought the Apostles to Zion for the Dormition as the fulfilment of the promise of a cloud, that would announce the coming of all peoples to Jerusalem, at the end, (in Isaiah 60: 8). The apostolic eagles "fly from the four corners of the earth for the laying to rest of the precious body of the Theotokos."⁶⁰

He has had the greatest influence in prompting belief in the 'Assumption'. Since the Sixteenth century, passages from the second of his three homilies on the subject, have provided the lessons used in the Roman Breviary during the octave of the Feast of the Assumption. Winch and Bennett conclude that the inclusion of these lessons in the Divine Office for the 18th. of August, "must have done a great deal to stir up faith in the doctrine."⁶¹ The second homily explained the desire to obtain the "the most holy body which had received God,"⁶² for a temple, which had been built in honour of "the Glorified and all holy Mother of God, and ever-Virgin Mary,"⁶³ in Blachernae, (in the reign of Marcian). A request was sent to Juvenal, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, for the 'holy body,' which, according to common belief, had been laid in the tomb of the principal Church in Jerusalem, dedicated to Mary. Juvenal replied that the Scriptures did not mention Mary's death.

Yet we learn from an ancient and truthful tradition that at the time of her glorious falling asleep, all the holy Apostles were borne to Jerusaleman angelic vision appeared to them and the divine melody of the heavenly powers was heardwith holy and heavenly glory she gave her soul to God. Her body which had received God was

lifted up amid angelic and apostolic song and placed in a tomb in Gethsemane.⁶⁴

Three days later, when they returned to the tomb to venerate her, the Apostles found only the shroud. The tomb was closed and the conclusion drawn that the One who had taken His human nature from her, had "Himself, pleased to honour her undefiled and pure body from corruption after her departure of this life, and to translate her before the general resurrection."⁶⁵ Eventually the holy sarcophagus (and the shroud in it), was sealed and sent to Blachernae.

John spoke of Mary as the 'spouse of the Father.' She was called 'Mediatress' and introduced as such by John through the familiar image of Jacob's ladder, "For you, acting as a mediatress and becoming the ladder of Good descending to usyou brought together what has been rent apart."⁶⁶ By her mediation "our reconciliation with God has been consecrated, peace and grace bestowedshe has won for us all good things."⁶⁷ John attempted to impress the reality of Mary's humanity, in order to prevent any confusion with Cybele. He wrote:

Today, we, too, want to celebrate a farewell feast for the Mother of God, but not by seizing flutes and drums and staging the orgies of the mother of the so-called gods of whom deceitful fables are told. Foolish people say she is a mother of many children, whereas the word of truth bears witness that the Mother of God had no (other) children.⁶⁸

While distinguishing the adoration of God and the veneration given to Mary, as the Mother of God, John protested against any pagan notion of goddess being applied to the Virgin. Her passing was celebrated, and her death proclaimed. The promise of Christ to those faithful in few things, that they would have charge of many things, was embodied supremely in Mary. Her influence was magnified after her assumption, and touched the whole universe. Because of the extension of her authority and power, she could command complete devotion from Christians who would "dedicate spirit, soul, body, all we have and are."⁶⁹ John requested:

Good Mistress, graciously look down on us; direct and guide our destinies wheresoever you will. Pacify the storm of our wicked passions, guide us into the quiet part of the divine will and grant us the blessedness to come.⁷⁰

He also taught that Mary's grace would indwell those who preserved the purity of their thoughts and their bodies,. She would also prepare a place for her Son in the hearts of those who practised 'the virtues' zealously.

The elaboration of the Feast of the Assumption was taking place during this period. A vigil had been introduced to precede the ceremony. A fortnight's fast was added as part of its preparation in the

East. John composed a canon for it. It is claimed that he wrote many 'theotokia,' but according to Graef, their source has not been ascertained.

Comment.

Jacob of Sarug assumed the mantle of his predecessor Ephraem. and indulged in exaggerated claims for Mary. Among these claims appeared further stimulus for acceptance of the Immaculate Conception. (It has to be noted that in the Eastern Church the term 'Imaculate' was used in reference to moral and physical purity, and not to exemption from original sin). The earlier foundation of overstatement was also secured and extended by Romanos, as he extolled Mary and conferred on her the attributes of the deity; he may have been instrumental in expanding the range of Mary's intercession.

In the West during the Sixth century Fortunatus endorsed the work of Romanos, initiating a process that found its peak in the Middle Ages. (Some comments, such as those of Bede, in relation to Mary and Jesus, would not be generally accepted among mariologists). The account of Bishop Arculf's visit to the Holy Land may have frustrated the movement of the doctrine of the Assumption, (especially in England), as evidenced in the silence of Bede on the subject. On the other hand, Germanus and John of Damascus epitomised those who accepted the apocryphal records, and especially the 'bodily assumption.' Together with Andrew of Crete, they formed a strongly influential trio of theologians, not only in the world of ideas, but also in their opposition to the iconoclasts.

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CHAPTER XII

THE CHANGING MOODS OF HISTORY, Late Eighth - Eleventh Centuries.

The accession of the boy **Constantine VI** (780-797), gave occasion for a change in imperial policy. His mother **Irene**, a 'partisan of pictures,' used her influence to have a General Council, the Seventh, assembled in Nicaea in 787. According to the Greek Church, this was the last of the General Councils; the breach between Eastern and Western Christendom was healed temporarily by the assembly. By its decree

the venerable and holy images are set up in just the same way as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross;..... images of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ and of our undefiled Lady, the holy God-bearer, and of the honourable angels, and of all saintly and holy men..... For the honour paid to the image passes to its original, and he that adores an image adores in it the person depicted thereby.....¹

(The short-lived respite ended with the Emperor **Leo** (813-820), who forcibly demonstrated his views as an iconomachist. The new surge of persecution lasted until the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' in 843, under Empress **Theodora** (842 - 56) and of Emperor **Michael III** (842 - 67)).

Daniel-Rops reckons that Art suffered greatly because of the Iconoclastic crisis. Its development was violently arrested for more than a century; and emerged from the crisis "fixed, immutable, contracted into a timid hieratism; pictures seemed so holy that no-one dared paint them any differently from what they had been painted in the past."² Byzantine icons remained identical with one another for centuries. In these representations of Christ and the Madonna the "naive spontaneity and fresh realism of the Italian and Flemish Primitives"³ were lacking. **Daniel-Rops** observes that, in this sense, iconoclasm has influenced the spiritual development of Eastern Christianity until modern times

Marina Warner deduces that the Iconoclast heresy was the chief catalyst for the cult of the Virgin in the West. During this period the West welcomed many fugitives who not only enjoyed, but also used their newly - found freedom for expressing their Greek culture. Sicily and Rome entertained the influx of an excitable piety that was uninhibited in the worship of the Virgin and the saints. The city of Rome witnessed a remarkable rekindling of defiance and pride. Newly-built Churches, adorned with mosaics and frescoes, housed and displayed icons. Pagan buildings were commandeered for Christian worship. **Warner** observes that "through all these undertakings pounds an excited

dithyramb in praise of the Virgin, instrument of Incarnation, and personification of the Church."⁴

Pope Gregory III (731 - 41) built a monument at the tomb of St. Peter's, depicting the Virgin on one side and the Christ on the other; he also placed an icon of the Virgin near the relic of the crib in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. **Pope Paul I** (757 - 67), dedicated two chapels in Old St. Peter's to her. **Pope Paschal I** (817 - 24), commissioned a number of mosaic apses; one in particular in the Church of Santa Maria in Dominica, represented himself wearing "the square halo of the living," and clasping "the red-slippered foot of the Virgin in triumph."⁵ Not only was the papacy imbued with expository praise for Mary, but also, was saturated with secular imagery, as a vehicle of representation of the Virgin, in order to promote the hegemony of the Holy See. Marina Warner argues that the mingling of material and spiritual realms was anathema to Byzantine minds. Therefore the mosaic in the Santa Sophia, celebrating the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy' in 843, showed the Virgin Mary dressed simply, and wearing a long dark blue veil; the Christ child sat on her knees. On either side of them stood the archangels Michael and Gabriel. An inscription read: "The images which the impostors had cast down, the pious emperors have again set up."⁶

(**St. Willibald** (d. 785), was the first English pilgrim to the Holy Land. Two recollections of his visit, the '**Hodoeporicon**' and the '**Itineratium**' referred respectively, and with differing emphases, to the Assumption and to the empty tomb. In the former he located the place where the Jews tried to seize Mary's body, when it was being carried by the Apostles to Jerusalem. This account differed from most of the apocryphal stories, in that Mary's body, taken by the angels from the hands of the Apostles, was carried into Paradise before entombment. In the **Itineratium** a different story was presented. The Apostles came to the valley of Jehoshaphat where the tomb of Mary had been located. The author was wary of any speculation with regard to Mary's burial, translation or resurrection; and recommended that "it is better to be in doubt than to define anything apocryphal."⁷)

Ambrose Autpert, (d. 784).

The subsequent influence of those Greek monks who migrated and settled mainly in southern Sicily, may well have introduced a different conception of Marian features to the West. This was perceptible in the writings of Ambrose Autpert, a Benedictine abbot of a monastery at Benevento in southern Italy. Much of his work came to be attributed to other authors, such as **St. Augustine** and **Alcuin**, and, as a consequence, influenced Latin Mariology. For example, a prayer that he had

composed was used widely, (and was one of a number that penetrated the liturgy), because it was believed to have been composed by St. Augustine:

Help the miserable, assist the faint-hearted, cherish the tearful, pray for the people, intervene on behalf of the clergy, intercede for the choir of monks, pray for the devout female sex; may all feel your help whoever celebrate your name.⁸

Graef comments that such a prayer to Mary expressed a universality of intercession hitherto unknown in the West, and was indicative of the penetration of Eastern influence through the Liturgy.

The introduction of the Feast of the Assumption was defended with the argument that celebrations of the feasts of the martyrs could hardly omit recognition of the Mother of the Prince of Martyrs. Following the Gelasian Decree, Autpert rejected the apocryphal stories. He refused to speculate on the fate of Mary's body, "seeing that no-one doubts that she is raised above the angels and reigns with Christ, it is suffice that she is truly called Queen of Heaven, because she has given birth to the King of Angels."⁹ The idea of Mary's Queenship was new to the West.

Autpert continued the Latin tradition of Mary's close relation to the Church. He also expounded the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse in terms of the Church and of Mary, believing that the two were related to each other, as the genus is to the species. He wrote:

Whether we therefore sometimes say that the virgin mother Mary, sometimes that the virgin mother Church has born or is bringing forth Christ, we shall not stray from the truth. For the one gave birth to the Head, the other brings forth the members.¹⁰

The theme of the tender mother suckling her child, introduced by **Venantius Fortunatus**, was continued by Autpert in his portrayal of Mary and her infant son. But this motherly love was not restricted to Christ. Mary's spiritual motherhood was emphasized. "How should she not be the mother of the elect, who gave birth to their brother?"¹¹ Autpert continued, "I say that if Christ is the brother of believers, why is she who gave birth to Him not the mother of believers?"¹² He then begged, "Therefore, I implore you, my most blessed Virgin, offer us to Christ by your merciful supplications, you who do not hate your sons nor even mind the insults of those sons who do not honour you as they ought."¹³

The word 'associate' had become a keyword (in literature) for Mary's part in the Redemption. Autpert used it in a verbal form in connection with Mary's union with angels and archangels; and

said that those whom she associated by divine grace with Christ, were her sons. Mary's union with Christ in Glory caused him to assert:

For you the royal throne is set up by angels in the Hall of the eternal King, and the King of Kings Himself, loving you before all others, associates you with Himself in the embrace of love, as a true Mother and fair spouse.¹⁴

Graef takes it as noteworthy, that Ambrose Autpert blended the splendour of the Byzantine icon of Mary, queen and mistress of earth and heaven, with the new 'Germanic' image of the loving mother with her child - yet displaying the same affection for all His 'brothers.'

Paul the Deacon, (d.c.799).

Greek influence was noticeable also in the writings of Paul the Deacon, a monk from Monte Cassino, who spent four years in the court of Charlemagne. He translated the Greek legend, the '**Miracle of Theophilus**' into Latin. Theophilus, the treasurer and archdeacon of the bishop of Ardana in Cilicia, Asia Minor, succeeded his bishop by popular acclaim. He was too humble to accept and was dismissed from his position by the eventual successor. A thirst for worldly power, with encouragement from the devil, drove him to seek out a Jewish necromancer. He signed away his soul in blood, in exchange for riches and success. His ensuing opulence could not overcome the subsequent deep remorse. The devil rejected his feelings and gloated over the prize. Theophilus pleaded with the Virgin for help; he then fell asleep and dreamed. The Virgin appeared, returned the deed (which had been removed from the devil), signed in blood, telling him that he had been pardoned. Theophilus found the deed lying beside him when he awoke. He publicly confessed his wrongdoing and died peacefully a few days later, possibly around 535.

In the legend Mary was called "the universal help and protection of those who look to her..... the redemption of captives and the refuge of the afflicted."¹⁵ For the first time in Latin, Mary was called mediatrix: "Holy Mother of God, hope and support of Christians, redemption of the erring... who intercedes for sinners, refreshment of the poor, mediatrix between God and Men."¹⁶

The legend's wide distribution resulted in the spread of the growing belief in the complete efficacy of Mary's intercession. In its circulation throughout Christendom the tale merged with the legends of **Simon Magus**, who, reputedly, flew in the Forum before St. Peter's eyes.

(**Hroswitha** of Gandersheim, (d. before 1002),a Benedictine nun first wrote the legend in verse. She portrayed Mary as the powerful Queen of Heaven, who alone reconciled sinners by her intercession, and who promised not to cease from imploring her Son, "until I compel His tender mercy to spare you and forgive such great sins."¹⁷ In the Eleventh century it was included in the office of Our Lady of France. The Twelfth century tympanum of the abbey church at Souillac contains a scene from the drama, as the Virgin flies down to return the deed to Theophilus as he sleeps. Very learned and widely read, Hroswitha also composed the first Latin verse narrative of Joachim, Anna and the birth of Mary. In the preface she mentioned her surprise at the opposition to the authenticity of her material. From her reading of the Fathers she had gained the impression of strong traditional support for the material in the Pseudo-Matthew, which had the stamp of orthodoxy. The fanciful version of the apocryphal story presented Mary, in childhood, in the Temple singing psalms and fasting. Afterwards she went to Joseph, accompanied by five virgins who helped her to weave a precious curtain for the Temple. Graef observes that "the medieval imagination was beginning to flower quite unimpeded by historical fact."¹⁸ **Geoffrey of Vendome** (d.1132) emphasized Mary's power of intercession, basing his argument on the miracle at Cana, and using as evidence the Miracle of Theophilus. **Honorius of Autun** (d. 1136) used the story of Theophilus, among other legends, in his Marian sermons, in an effort to feed the imagination and the devotion of the common people. **Abelard**, (1079 - 1142) **Richard of St. Laurent** (d. after 1245), and **Albert the Great** (before 1200 - 1280),quoted the legend in order to emphasize Mary's power of mediation. The northern portal of Notre Dame of Paris displays the story in a strip cartoon style).

Alcuin (d. 804)

Alcuin, whom O'Carroll described as "a leading figure in the Carolingian renaissance,"¹⁹ was (according to Graef) outside the influence of the later Greeks. With many of his contemporaries, he opposed the Adoptionist heresy which had originated in Spain in the Eighth century. The teaching claimed that Christ, in his humanity was not the true, but only the adopted Son of God. **Eliphandus**, **Archbishop of Toledo**, and **Felix**, **Bishop of Urgel** were proponents of the idea. The latter was attacked by Alcuin who strongly defended the divine motherhood of Mary, who "alone was worthy to receive into herself the divinity of the Son of God."²⁰

In his observations on the Cana episode, Alcuin decided that Jesus would hardly dishonour His Mother, seeing that it was He "who orders us to honour father and mother."²¹ Neither would He deny that she was His Mother, "from whose virginal flesh He did not shrink from taking flesh."²² When He said, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?"²³ (St. John 2: 4), He meant, in Alcuin's opinion, that He had not taken the principle of His Divinity from His Mother. That which enabled Him to work the miracle had come from His Father. However the time would come when he would be able to demonstrate what He had in common with His Mother; "when dying on the Cross He will entrust the Virgin to the virgin disciple."²⁴

Alcuin's trust in Mary's mediation and his personal love for her have been underlined in his poetry. Inscriptions, composed for chapels or altars of Mary, carry such thoughts as:

**May devotion and honour remember you here, Queen of Heaven,
greatest hope of our life... In your clemency ever heed our prayers, and
by your prayers rule our days everywhere and at all time;²⁵ you are
my sweet love, my jewel and the great hope of my salvation..... Heed
the prayers of all my brothers who cry to you,²⁶ (and)
"Virgin, you are full of grace, through you may the grace of Christ
preserve us.²⁷**

Paschasius Radbert (c.780-865).

The eastern part of Charlemagne's Empire (present day Germany), provided a scant supply of Mariological material. Some of the abbeys in France housed a number of theologians whose Marian teaching was fuller. One such, described by O'Carroll as "a principal theologian and scholar of the Carolingian Age,"²⁸ was St. Paschasius Radbertus , Benedictine Abbot of Corbie.

A famous medieval work entitled, 'Cogitis me,' which, for some time, was attributed to St. Jerome, and exerted substantial influence, came to be recognised as Radbert's. The 'deliberate forgery' was a letter of reply, supposedly by Jerome to his two friends, Paula and Eustochium, in answer to a query on the Assumption. In it the apocryphal story 'De Transitu' was strongly repudiated; the passing of Mary had not been detailed and therefore any knowledge of the event was restricted to the fact that she had "left the body."²⁹ There was no easy solution to the problem of an empty tomb. The treatise nevertheless, betrayed Greek influence. Mary was "the Virgin who alone had destroyed all the wickedness of the heresies."³⁰ (The clause, carrying the authority of St. Jerome, is still recited in the Tract of the Roman Mass of the Common of the Blessed Virgin in Lent and in certain Offices). She held a position, in deference to God, which allowed her to confirm individuals in all truth, and to

commend them to God by her merits, "for she is Queen of the World, who reigns with Christ and 'augments' salvation for us all through her intercession."³¹ Graef concludes that Radbert repeated in slightly different words a formula of Ildefonsus that whatever honour is paid to Mary overflows on her Son.

Three sermons on the Assumption which had been printed among the works of **Ildefonsus** are now regarded as probably compositions of Radbert. They were devoid of any new ideas. The assumption of Mary's soul was also the assumption of the Church, because she herself was the temple of God and ark of the New Testament. The thought was further developed from the Apocalypse 11: 19, where the Ark, the Church and the Mother of God were seen together. As with Autpert, Radbert used the relation between genus and species. In Mary's womb the whole Church had been contained "as if in germ."³²

The consensus of opinion appears to favour the observation that Radbert's '**Cognitis Me,**' "arrested development of thought"³³ on the Assumption for two and a half centuries, on account of the perceived authority of Jerome, (**Pseudo-Jerome**). It was read in its entirety during the octave of the Feast of the Assumption, in the Roman and other breviaries. It remained in the Roman Breviary until 1570, when it was replaced by the lessons from St. John Damascene. A Pseudo-Augustinian sermon on the subject would eventually redirect opinions. Winch and Bennett mention a letter, attributed for sometime to St. Augustine. In it, the author approached the subject from another angle. He focussed on the possible inferences from theology, having accepted that the Scriptures did not mention Mary's death. He concluded that, since the body of Christ, which was incorruptible, had been formed out of her flesh, Mary's body must have been incorruptible. This being the case, the body of the pure Virgin, having apparently disappeared, must have gone to heaven.

Radbert came into conflict with one of his pupils, **Ratramnus**, (d. after 868), who had attempted to counter certain errors by writing a treatise, '**On the Birth of Christ from a Virgin.**' He claimed that, in Germany, some held the view that Christ had not been born in the normal human way, "but had emerged unnaturally by an uncertain path into the light of day, which is not to be born, but to erupt."³⁴ This view had been encouraged by the supposition that the womb was impure. Ratramnus declared that no creature was created vile. "Hence also a woman's uterus is not indecent, but honourable."³⁵ Christ had opened the womb as the firstborn, but had not violated the integrity of

the uterus in leaving "the palace of the womb."³⁶ Mary was then subject to the law of purification. The possibility of such an occurrence, for Ratramnus, lay in the fact "no creature can resist the Creator; but, whatever exists is open and passable to Him."³⁷ Here there were echoes of **Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium**, (d. after 394). He had interpreted Ezekiel 44: 2, as a reference to the virginity 'in partu;' and explained, "As regards the virginal nature, the virginal gates were not at all opened; as regards the power of the Lord who was born, nothing is closed to the Lord."³⁸

Radbert disputed the assertion by **Ratramnus** that Mary had given birth in the usual manner, because this would have placed Christ under the curse. Mary, who was not under the law of corruption, brought forth Christ without any corruption or pain, while her womb remained closed. (She submitted to the law of purification, only out of obedient respect for the Law).

Radbert also told of Mary's origins, but depended on the Apocrypha. O'Carroll draws attention to the question as to whether or not Radbert had some part in the composition in the Latin version of the apocryphal narrative of the birth of Mary, the **Pseudo-Matthew**. The ambiguity within some of the texts of St. Paschasius has allowed some to claim his support for the Immaculate Conception. He described Mary as "subject to no sins, nor did she contract original sin," but also as "bring sanctified in the womb."³⁹

Two other prominent martyrologists of the ninth century, **Ado, Archbishop of Vienna** and the monk **Usuard**, respectively, composed and abbreviated a statement which was incorporated (in the lesser form) in the Roman Martyrology and used until the middle of the Sixteenth century. Ado declared:

The whole Church celebrates her falling asleep on the fifteenth of August. Her sacred body is not found on earth, just as the burial place of Moses is not found.... But where that revered temple of the Holy Spirit, that is, the flesh of that most Blessed Virgin Mary, has been hidden by God's counsel, the Church, with its good sense, rather chooses not to know, than to hold and teach some frivolous and apocryphal story.⁴⁰

Manifestations.

The Tenth century was more notable for Marian visions and miracles than for theological impact. For example around 945, **John of Salerno** wrote the '**Life of Odo**,' the second and famous Abbot of Cluny (d. 942), who played a major part in the spiritual renewal initiated by the Abbey. (His own personal interest in Marian piety had been captured by the title, '**Mother of Mercy**'). In John's

biography there is a story of a converted robber who became a monk. Shortly before his death he reported a vision to the Abbot. He had been raised to heaven, and there had met "a woman of glorious appearance and wonderful power."⁴¹ She had asked him if he knew her; to which he had replied, "Not at all lady."⁴² She then explained that she was the 'Mother of Mercy,' and went on to inform him of his imminent death. Consequently Odo adopted the habit of giving Mary this title. The practice spread from Cluny across the West. Graef draws attention to a pattern that was set in the converted robber's vision, and which has been continued in many later Marian apparitions. The 'beautiful unknown lady' revealed herself under a name by which she desired to be known.

O'Carroll mentions another incident that appeared to show Odo himself as the introducer of the above title; the conclusion may be open to question. Odo had accepted his father's suggestion to spend a night's vigil in prayer, to further his conversion. He chose Christmas night and composed the prayer:

O lady, Mother of Mercy, on this night you gave a Saviour to the world. Deign to intercede for me. To your glorious and singular child I fly,and because, O lady, through you he manifested himself to the world, may he very soon, I pray, have mercy on me, because of you.⁴³

Around 972, a cleric of Utrecht reported an apparition which had appeared to the Bishop of the city, as he lay sick. The holy Mother of God, the 'gate of salvation' and the 'mistress of the world' had told him that he would recover. His illness was cured immediately and a cloud of exquisite perfume remained after the departure of the apparition. **Maiolous** (d. 994), another abbot of Cluny also gained the reputation of a witness of the visions and miracles of the 'Mother of Mercy', whom he frequently invoked.

Atto, Bishop of Vercelli (d. 961) discussed Mary's bodily assumption into heaven. He followed the lesser dogmatic path in affirming that, since Christ's flesh, that had been taken from her, had risen again, it was quite possible that his dutiful sonship led him to raise Mary's body. Whatever the manner of this action there could be no doubt, according to Atto, that Mary was constituted mistress of the whole world, as her Son communicated his glory to her.

(In the West during the Eighth or Ninth century, two apocryphal books had been compiled from a combination of the Book of James and the Gospel According to Thomas. These books, the **Gospel According to the Pseudo - Matthew** and the **Story of the Birth of Mary**, were written in Latin. The prefaces were purported to be by 'Jerome,' who had admitted that the contents of the books

were dubious; but he retracted and gave the reason for their publication as an effort to "unmask the deceit of heresy,"⁴⁴ In the preface to the **Story of the Birth of Mary** (according to Warner, now attributed to **Paschasius Radbert**), 'Jerome' condoned the tales with the argument that great miracles must have preceded Mary's birth).

St. Fulbert of Chartres, (d.1028), Bishop from 1006 until his death, was greatly devoted to Mary; his Marian theology was the most important at that time. He looked on Genesis 3: 15 in a new light, by identifying the victory of the woman with Mary personally, in her own life, and not with her offspring. He saw her victory in the fact

that she offered to God at once of her virginity and humility. By preserving her virginity she is shown to have vanquished the concupiscence of the flesh; by her humility, which renders one poor in spirit, the concupiscence of the mind.⁴⁵

He did not deal with the Immaculate Conception in his writings.

The feast of Mary's nativity was introduced into France at this time. In Fulbert's first sermon on the feast, he used the story of Theophilus to prove "that the Mother of the Lord rules everywhere in great magnificence, that she could easily send the holy angels to minister to us and cancel the pacts of hell according to her good pleasure."⁴⁶ He defended the Assumption as a pious belief, linking Mary's intercession with it. According to Graef he may have followed **Cosmos Vestitor** in assigning St. John the Beloved Disciple to an exaltation similar to that accorded to Mary, whose grace and glory (given by the Lord), "are incalculable."⁴⁷ Fulbert was certain "that the just more swiftly obtain through His Mother's intercession, whatever is asked of him, whereas sinners have received mercy beyond all hope."⁴⁸

Peter Damian, (1007 - 1072), a Cardinal, (and declared doctor of the Church in 1828), was one of the important personalities in the Eleventh century Church reform movement. His fame followed his treatise on the Eucharist and his sermons on Mary. Speaking on her nativity he worked out a connection between the Eucharist and the Virgin. "For the same body of Christ which the most blessed Virgin brought forthwe now perceive without any doubt on the sacred altar."⁴⁹ He used the same idea in presenting the Mary-Eve parallel: "through the food Eve ate we were punished by an external fast; but the food brought forth by Mary has given us access to the heavenly banquet."⁵⁰

Damian made no explicit reference to the Immaculate Conception, but emphasized her special creation. God had purposefully pre-elected before the world existed. Damian avoided apocryphal

ideas, encouraging the use of the Holy Scriptures only. As with Ambrose and Augustine he pointed out the close relationship between Mary and the Church, which, he believed, found its origin in her. Since Christ came to men through Mary, so men have found their way through her to Him. Her power of intercession was confidently accepted and expected: "pay what we owe, avert what we fear, obtain what we wish, accomplish what we hope."⁵¹ In the daily Marian Office, which he composed, " the queen of heaven, the ladder of heaven, is asked to hear the prayers of the poor and miserable and to placate the Judge."⁵² O'Carroll notes how striking was Damian's promotion of Marian devotion in an age which saw a flowering of Marian doctrine and piety - beginning with **Fulbert** and ending with **Pseudo-Augustine** and **St. Anselm of Canterbury**.

Gottschalk of Limburg (d.1098), a Benedictine monk, chaplain to the German Emperor Henry IV, held a very strong conviction about the necessity of Mary's intercession. "For as God did not come to man without you, so also man can never come to God without you."⁵³ (Written in an *opusculum* in defence of a poem on the Assumption). And yet he held that Mary had been born of human parents in the natural way, and consequently, in original sin. But he also went on to argue that, on the one hand, she was a sinner in her own birth, and on the other, not a sinner in giving birth to Christ. His estimation of Mary's nature restrained any notion that she had entered heaven with her body. Graef comments that Gottschalk would have liked to have believed this. He found support for his conclusions in **Augustine** and in **Pseudo-Jerome** whose influence continued to prevent a general acceptance of the Assumption.

In Gottschalk's writing, the doctrine of merit as applied to Mary, was proposed, coupled with the idea that the prayers of the saints reach God only through her. He was of the opinion that Mary, as Mediatrix, could placate the Mediator, her Son, seeing that "through her alone does He give life to all that are to be saved."⁵⁴ By the time of Gottschalk's death a new age had begun to dawn, with the appearances of feudalism, courtly love and scholasticism, together with the intensity of the Crusaders. Each of these was to exert its own influence on Marian doctrine and devotion.

Later Byzantines.

The feast of Mary's Conception played a major part in advancing the belief in her transcendent sinlessness. Successive writers strongly supported the belief:

John of Euboea (d.c.750), in preaching what may have been the first extant sermon on this feast, almost exempted Mary from original sin. Graef also perceives the first application of Genesis 3: 15, to Mary's conception, in John's statement: "for through a woman you (Adam) were deceived by the serpent, and through a woman you shall crush it."⁵⁵

Epiphanius the Monk (d.c.800), was the first to attempt a biography of Mary. In doing so he relied heavily on apocryphal material to supplement the New Testament data; and coloured her outward appearance from the Byzantine image of beauty. His record revealed Mary's awareness of God's will for her at twelve years of age: and her betrothal to Joseph, a widower of seventy years, with sons and daughters. Joseph was intended to be her protector only, at fourteen years of age. Unlike other Byzantine writers, Epiphanius suggested that Mary had not gone to the sepulchre after the Crucifixion, because of overpowering grief. He claimed many miracles at her hand, after the Ascension. Her death came when she was seventy two years old. Her body, placed in a sepulchre in Gethsemane, became invisible to the Apostles, thereby leaving unanswered the question of the actual assumption of her body and her soul into heaven.

The inclination of writers to separate Mary from normal human life, as first presented in the Gospel of St.James, became more pronounced at this time in the East, as opposed to the development in the West. **Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople** (d. 806), who may have held a belief in the Immaculate Conception, designated Mary, in such terms, as 'table' (because she nourished Christ with her milk), and 'seas' (because she kissed the one who assembled the waters). Thereby, for Graef, was presented "the awe-inspiring Theotokos in whom the very transcendence of the Creator is reflected."⁵⁶

Theodore, Abbot of Studion (d. 826) near Constantinople, who was the first witness to the fortnight's fast before the Assumption, ("the fast of the Mother of God"⁵⁷), also stood in awe of the Theotokos. In his homily on the Dormition, he confessed a sense of fear at every thought of "her admirable passing,"⁵⁸ because she became higher than the highest heavens. Taking the consequences of Eve's sin on the soil, he emphasized Mary's exemption from all sin. She was a pure rose, "a land on which the thorn of sin has never sprouted."⁵⁹

Cosmas Vestitor, probably a layman, who lived from the second half of the Eighth century into the first half of the Ninth, brought forward theological reasons for belief in the bodily assumption,

(akin to those in the famous Pseudo-Augustinian sermon). He argued that "from the one body of Mary and Christ there has been one deposition and one translation to immortality, for the flesh of the Mother and the Son is known to be the same."⁶⁰ And because the body of the Son sits at the right hand of the Father, the Mother too, "has received incorruption in her passing and is lawfully in heaven, dwelling with the Father together with her Son before the promised resurrection."⁶¹ In his estimation Mary's death occurred when she was at least eighty years old, sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem (70), since both Peter and Paul had taken part in her burial. Graef is certain that Cosmas exercised a strong influence in the West through an anonymous homily in which his work was combined with sermons by **Germanus** and **Andrew of Crete**.

Theognostus (d. after 871) a Byzantine Monk, linked Mary's bodily assumption to her holy conception, ".....for as her beginning was holy, so also was her life as well as her end."⁶² He reckoned that Jesus had separated her spirit from her body, at death; but after a few days they were reunited; this "union lasts for ever."⁶³ In heaven, her Son introduced her into paradise, where the repentant thief, who had not noticed her at the Crucifixion, greatly admired her, and encouraged praise for her conception and her dormition. Two centuries later Mary's conception and assumption would be linked in the West in the same way.

George, Metropolitan of Nicomedia (d. after 880), brought the Byzantine devotion to the Theotokos to one of its peaks, at the expense both of historical truth and of the true womanhood of Mary. For example, in order to elevate Mary's role in the Passion, he brought her to the house where Christ and the Apostles were meeting for the Last Supper, so that preparations for the meal would have her supervision. She followed her Son to the House of Annas and Caiaphas. She remained at the sepulchre, after Christ's burial, until the Resurrection. His estimation of Mary's holiness almost placed her outside normal humanity. The angelic food she had eaten in the Temple (a figure of the Eucharist), had not purified her from sin, as the Bread of Life does us, "for she who ate it had no sins; she was pure and free from all sins."⁶⁴ Since she had a body, her purity must have been more marvellous than that of the angels. In his sermons on Mary's presentation in the Temple, George of Nicomedia, enthused over her position as "patroness of our rebirth, the cause of our renewal, through which the disfigured image of God has been restored to its proper beauty."⁶⁵ Not only did he regard Mary as exempt from all faults, but also as the possessor of the perfect '**apatheia**', (freedom from all

emotions), at the age of three. For the Byzantine monk this was the ideal. With regard to the natural physiological processes, he held "that none of the natural impurities could ever be discovered in her altogether immaculate body."⁶⁶ (Her removal from the Temple at the age of puberty had not been necessary; but the Jews had to be placated).

The Byzantine bishop found himself in difficulty because of his insistence on her '**apatheia**'. In a sermon on Mary, at the crucifixion, he maintained that she rose above natural human response. He therefore concluded that zeal for her Son's work and her horror at the sacrilege of the executioners resulted in her suffering. He presented Mary's reaction by attributing to her the admission that she was suffering pains, greater than those of childbirth, since she was undergoing a childbirth, but superior to the normal. Graef looks on these remarks as consequential to Christ's words from the cross, **Woman, behold thy son**, through which Mary became a mother and mediatrix to His disciples, who honoured her as such.

During and after medieval times (and by the modern Popes), John 19: 25-27 was, and has been understood in the context of the spiritual motherhood, (but not so by the Fathers of the Church). George of Nicomedia supported the view that Jesus had bequeathed the remainder of His disciples, through John, to Mary, to continue their family relationship. In Mary they would find and enjoy a representative bodily presence, as she became their "mother and guide."⁶⁷ However, in this instance, (O'Carroll observes that), while the theme of motherhood of the disciples is developed further, the application was apparently restricted to Mary's lifetime.

Mary's intercession was admired by George of Nicomedia in terms that outshone the extravagance of **Germanus**, with such statements as:

However many sins we have committed, if you only will it, they can easily be dissolved. Nothing resists your powereverything is subject to your command, everything serves your authority. Your Son has made you higher than the heavens....(and God) regards your glory as his own.⁶⁸

O'Carroll notes that George regarded Mary's intercessory power as effective in bending her Son's immense clemency, even when he had been offended.

Joseph the Hymnographer (c.816 - 886), a Basilian monk, was born in Syracuse. O'Carroll has described him as a liturgical poet, with at least four hundred compositions accredited to him. The core of his doctrine in the poems represented Byzantine Marian theology. Mary's initial holiness was

stressed. Joseph liked to recall that she had been born of a sterile parent, and repeatedly spoke of her as the spouse of God. He affirmed her bodily assumption into heaven. "Your tomb declares that you were buried, and it now openly shows that you have been bodily borne to the heavens."⁶⁹ In heaven she became queen of all created things, and an all-powerful intercessor.

Photius, (d.c.897), **Patriarch of Constantinople**, wrote a number of Marian homilies, whose contents have led M. Jugie to claim that he taught the Immaculate Conception. Hilda Graef concludes differently, suggesting that Photius, like Jacob of Sarug, envisaged a twofold purity - a general one from birth, and the particular freedom from original sin from the time of the Annunciation. Photius also praised the '**apatheia**' of "that scented and never-fading flower of the human race, that most admirable, great and divinely carved image,"⁷⁰ who, by her abstention from natural pleasures of body and mind, had demonstrated the decision of the Creator to sanctify her before birth.

In a sermon on the unveiling of the image of Mary in Sancta Sophia, (on Holy Saturday 867), **Photius** illustrated the fortitude of Theotokos and her freedom from passions at the Crucifixion. As she held "in her chaste arms the Common Creator for the common salvation of the (human) race,"⁷¹ the virgin Mother turned her "gaze with the love of her heart affectionately on her Son;"⁷² but also assumed "the expression of a perfectly imperturbable state, in harmony with the passionless and supernatural being of her Son."⁷³

Euthymius, (834 - 917), Emperor Leo VI's confessor and later Patriarch of Constantinople, also accepted the opinion that Mary had been born of a sterile parent; and may have been led to a doctrine of total sanctity, from belief in a miraculous origin. As with many Byzantine authors he attributed to Mary what really belonged to Christ. For example, Ephesians 2: 14 has been applied to Mary, "who will call back our forefathers and every just soul from hades... who will sanctify the whole world..... and destroy all heresies."⁷⁴ She was regarded as "the cause of our salvation, the beginning of our consolation, having no end, the root of all good things, the author of indescribable gifts."⁷⁵ He eulogised Mary beyond the levels of possibility, acclaiming her as Mother of the Creator, capable of doing whatever she willed. "After God, you can do all things, and in all things your Son and God and the Lord of all of us yields to you as his Mother."⁷⁶

Euthymius praised the power of Mary's girdle, which he deemed to be more powerful than the heavens and with a brilliance greater than the rays of the sun. The serpent had been suffocated: the

altars of the idols had been overthrown: bloodshed had been stopped by the girdle, with which the divine Word had played in His infancy. Graef reckons that the 'near-omnipotence' of Mary as witnessed in Byzantine preaching was now shared by her relic. O'Carroll concludes that the emphatic statement by Euthymius about Mary's compassionate intercession reflects the teaching of Germanus Theophanes of Nicaea.

The Emperor Leo VI (d. 912), followed the Byzantine trends in several homilies on the Theotokos. He emphasized her birth from sterile parents, so that she should not be born entirely "from the will of flesh and blood."⁷⁷ His teaching on the assumption ('the double assumption'), has been criticised by M. Jugie as preparing the way for hostility to the true Assumption. The Emperor, in a speech on the Feast explained that Christ's hands, "which contain all things," received Mary's stainless soul; whereas her "pure and immaculate body" was "transported to the purest place."⁷⁸ He went on, "Because you have given birth to God clothed in flesh, you are now borne in the hands of God deprived of your flesh."⁷⁹ This view did not allow for the reunion of Mary's body with her soul before the general resurrection. Leo presented a different slant on the type of the Ark of the Israelites, which he recalled as having fallen into danger and into captivity. Mary's assistance, on the other hand, would not fail, and she would always prove to be more effective in her provision, (according to her will).

Graef describes John the Geometer (d. c. 990) as the most important exponent of Byzantine Mariology in the Tenth century. O'Carroll admires his profound grasp of Byzantine theology. The former military officer, having suffered dismissal, became a monk and then a priest. His greatest work was 'The Life of Mary', the last part of which (edited by Wenger), was a discourse on the Assumption, which was perceived as the culmination of her life. O'Carroll selects a key passage that states the inseparable bond between Mother and Son:

The Virgin after giving birth to her Son, was never separated from Him in His activity, His dispositions, His will, even if, contrary to Christ, she was separated as a person. When He went away, she went with Him, when He worked miracles it was as if she worked them with Him, sharing His glory and rejoicing with Him. When He was betrayed, arrested, judged, when He suffered, not only was she everywhere present beside Him and even realised especially then His presence, but she even suffered with Him, or rather, if it be not rash to say it, she suffered still more than Him.⁸⁰

John's projections led to his claim that "the memory of the sufferings she endured for us" led Mary "to work our salvation" and "keep her love for us."⁸¹ Christ had given Himself as ransom for us and gave His mother as ransom for us at every moment. Since He died for us, she too should die for us "thousands of times in her will."⁸² For her heart burned for each one "for whom she, as the Father, has given her own Son, knowing Him to be delivered to death."⁸³ This attitude differed from Ambrose who said, "Jesus had no need of a helper for the redemption of all."⁸⁴ John's opinion on the Assumption has created controversy. M. Jugie has attributed to him a theory of 'double assumption.' John expressed the notion that Mary had been raised to the heavens "first as spirit without the body,"⁸⁵ and "now it is the body which is raised without the spirit."⁸⁶ He concluded that, "not only through her Son but also through her,"⁸⁷ our nature has been introduced to the heavens, and "reigns over all things visible and invisible."⁸⁸ Graef questions the clarity of this passage.

John perceived Mary as possessing the role of "second mediatrix after the first Mediator."⁸⁹ As such she exercised an intercession that has been attested by countless miracles universally, "for she possesses almost everything by herself, and grants largesses to whom she will and to those who beseech her."⁹⁰ Not only is Mary our mediatrix who reconciles us to God, but she is another paraclete "who at all hours appeases His just wrath and shows her mercies upon us all."⁹¹ As queen she seems to cause the King to be still more merciful. She is not only the Mother of her divine Son the King, she is "our common mother."⁹² Mary as our mother was an advance in Byzantine teaching.

M. Jugie considers that John taught the Immaculate Conception. Taking the first part of the 'Life of Mary' (hitherto unpublished), he draws attention to John's teaching that Mary had been specially created by God, like Eve; from the beginning her nature was adorned with beauty and established in perfect harmony of body, soul and character. ('**L'Immaculate Conception**', Rome 1952). In his hymns John gave lofty expression to Mary's absolute purity, and supported her participation in divine transcendence. As Graef suggests, the young virgin of Nazareth, in the minds of many, had practically vanished into the shadows cast by such reflections.

Comment.

Antagonism towards the veneration of icons, resulting in a migration from East to West, helped in the development of the cult of Mary. The controversy has continued and remains as an insuperable problem among denominations. Eastern appreciation of Mary pervaded Western notions. Prayer to the Queen of Heaven synchronized well with the belief in her Assumption. However the effects of a particular document retarded the advance of this belief for more than two hundred years in the West. The cycle of controversy and debate about Marian issues maintained its impetus through the Eighth, Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh centuries. Although the Tenth century became preoccupied more with visions and miracles of Mary. Commentators can uncover allusions to the Immaculate Conception among the writers of this period. The Assumption had its proponents (and opponents), in the group of later Byzantines. As usual, the appeal of extravagant claims for Mary, was exploited. The works of earlier theologians and writers continued to make an impact.

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CHAPTER XIII

PROSPECTS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Defence and Debate.

Anselm (d.1109), abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Bec in Normandy (1078 until 1093), successor to Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury, was regarded as the father of scholasticism.

Wright observes that Anselm "initiated an alliance between rational theological method and traditional liturgical and devotional factors in the development of Mariology."¹ While O'Carroll notes that Marian ideas may be found in the sermons, commentaries, prayers and formal treatises of Anselm, Graef supports the notion that Mary did not have a large place in his work. Most of the Marian writings attributed to him were spurious. However his teaching on Mary, which was to have a prodigious influence on medieval Mariology, has been presented in three of his works, '**Cur Deus Homo**,' '**The Virginal Conception and on Original Sin**,' and '**Orationes**.'

Anselm did not teach the Immaculate Conception. He affirmed that "Mary was conceived in iniquity, and in sin did her mother conceive her, and with original sin was she born, because she too sinned in Adam in whom all sinned."² Yet a passage from Anselm, which Wright describes as "the fundamental axiom of Mariology,"³ was inserted in the bull '**Ineffabilis**,' which defined the Immaculate Conception. In his treatise on the '**Virginal Conception**' Anselm proved that Christ could be without sin, even if Mary was not. Christ was born virginally, but "original sin was transmitted by natural propagation."⁴ Graef blames the prevailing Augustinian tradition for Anselm's avoidance of the Immaculate Conception. Nevertheless, he spoke of a purity that she had received from her Son before His birth. Reflecting a familiar notion he declared, "It was fitting that this Virgin should shine with a degree of purity than which no greater can be imagined apart from God. (For to her God determined to give His only Son)."⁵ Graef sees this statement as an introduction to the Immaculate Conception. O'Carroll feels that Anselm did not have the intuition of **Duns Scotus**, who thought that this 'purity' could have been conferred by prevenient or preserving grace, before conception.

Graef concludes that Anselm's view of original sin, (not as the consequence of concupiscence, but) as the "absence.... due to Adam's disobedience of the state of justice which they ought to

possess,"⁶ contributed to the later belief of Mary's exemption from it. From Anselm's reasoning, it was a simple step to the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception. "If Mary was the purest of all creatures, and if original sin was but the absence of original justice,"⁷ then the anticipation of Christ's passion would allow for that acceptance.

Anselm insisted on divine transcendence, but also attributed to Mary a weighty role in salvation. He argued that

God is the Father of all created things, and Mary is the Mother of all re-created things. God is the Father of the constitution of all things, and Mary is the Mother of the restitution of all things.... For God generated Him through whom all things were made, and Mary gave birth to Him through whom all things were saved.⁸

In his discourse on her mediation, Anselm concluded that because of her unique participation in God's plan, Mary was "the Mother of justification and of the justified, Mother of reconciliation and the reconciled, parent of salvation and the saved."⁹ Marina Warner shows how Anselm embroidered this theme of uniqueness:

O Woman uniquely to be wondered at, and to be wondered at for your uniqueness, by you the elements are renewed, hell is redeemed, demons are trampled down and men are served, even the fallen angels are restored to their place. O woman full and overflowing with grace, plenty flows from you to make all creatures green again.¹⁰

Wright demonstrates how Anselm differed from some later writers with regard to Mary's intercession, by pointing out that he did not appeal to Mary "as the merciful human mediator, who will intercede for him with the stern divine Christ."¹¹ On the other hand, Graef's investigation draws the distinction (in Anselm's work) between the office of Christ, who could spare, as the "judge of the world," and that of Mary "the reconciler of the world,"¹² who could intercede, because of her merits. Warner quotes from a prayer, written by Anselm, to be recited to the Virgin, "when the mind is anxious with fear."¹³ He wrote, "So the accused flees from the just God to the good mother of the merciful God."¹⁴ Warner deduces from Anselm's prayer that "the Virgin gives Christ the Judge, His human face;" and in some remarkable way, "transforms Him ...from the God of justice to the God of mercy."¹⁵ Anselm's prayers were widely diffused and had a very striking effect in the monasteries. In turn they were communicated to the faithful by the monks, and became most persuasive in teaching the power of Mary's intercession.

In developing the ideal of spiritual Motherhood, Anselm advanced to the notion that the "Mother of God is our mother."¹⁶ He went on to reason that, because she was Mother of Christ and Mother of believers, then the believers were brothers of Christ. Brotherhood with Christ had been emphasized in the patristic period, but only took account of the divine action. Anselm's emphasis was on Mary. He placed Christ and Mary on the same level in one of his prayers: "Both salvation and damnation depend on the will of the good Brother and the merciful Mother."¹⁷

Wright's observation is that Anselm's conceptions have shown how the growing medieval emphasis on the humanity of Christ stimulated interest in Mary His mother. "Jesus our human brother makes us children of His human mother."¹⁸ Consequently it was highly probably that many medieval Christians felt themselves as part of His human family (by adoption). "In the medieval imagination the holy family on earth remained the holy family in heaven, uniquely associated with the divine Trinitarian 'family' of Father and Son."¹⁹

Anselm's nephew **Anselm of Bury**, **Osbert of Clare** (d.c.1127), and **Eadmer** a close associate and biographer of Anselm of Canterbury, "proselytized enthusiastically for the feast of the immaculate Virgin's conception."²⁰ Eadmer (1060 /4 - 1124 /30) produced a 'tractatus' on Mary's conception. His was the first detailed exposition of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, earning him the title of the first theologian of the Immaculate Conception. The Anselmian principle that the Mother of God must be as holy as is imaginable under God, allowed him to deduce the doctrine. He and his colleagues concluded that the absence of original sin in Mary was an appropriate privilege; and argued their case from the principle **potuit, voluit, fecit**, (He (God) could, it was fitting He should, so He did). They quoted the incident of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and made the point that the baby John had leapt in his mother's womb at the approach of Mary, because he had been "freed from the burden of sin by her pure presence."²¹

The deduction was made that the virgin mother of God must have been granted an even greater privilege. The sanctification of Jeremiah in the womb was also mentioned. Eadmer reckoned that, by a special divine grace, Mary had been preserved from sin. He looked on the devotion of the faithful as a better guide to his conclusions, than on the 'learned,' who opposed the feast of the Immaculate Conception. O'Carroll sees Eadmer's efforts as being successful in arriving at the essential truths, after the confusion of thought that had been engendered by the Augustinian legacy relating to

concupiscence. In order to counter the view that original sin had been transmitted by concupiscence inherent in sexual intercourse, Eadmer borrowed an illustration from nature. The chestnut was "conceived, nourished, and formed under thorns but remote from them."²² Was it not possible then that Mary, "conceived among the thorns of sin," could have been "rendered completely immune from any hurt by them?"²³

With regard to Eadmer's defence of the Immaculate Conception, Graef quotes **J.S. Bruder's** suggestion, that the treatise may have been written "to justify the reintroduction of the feast of Our Lady in the Abbey of St. Edmunds, Bury, by its newly appointed abbot, Anselm,"²⁴ (formerly abbot of St. Sabas, near Jerusalem). There the feast of Mary's conception, celebrated for centuries, was honoured in England by the Saxons, until it was abolished after the Norman invasion. Eadmer admitted that Scripture did not mention anything about Mary's conception without original sin; but did not suppose that to consider it would militate against faith. His views were presented discreetly to avoid the impression of dissent from Catholic truth, and possibly with Anselm his teacher in mind. The latter's positive influence emerged in Eadmer's composition, '**Book on the Excellence of the Virgin Mary,**' in which the trends of popular devotion were clearly expressed.

The medieval perception of the universe, with a central earth at the axis of the revolving sun, moon and stars, "made it easier than it is today to see Mary as the mistress of the whole universe."²⁵ Like **Fulbert of Chartres**, Eadmer extended the qualifications of Mary to include a special altruism. "Sometimes salvation is quicker if we remember Mary's name than if we invoke the name of the Lord Jesus."²⁶ He justified this suggestion by asserting that the merits of those who invoked Jesus, "the Judge of all men," met a "just judgment"²⁷ before any answer. On the other hand, when Mary's name was invoked, "her merits intercede so that he is answered even if the merits of him who invokes her do not deserve it."²⁸ Consequently popular devotion to Mary tended to take precedence over devotion of Christ during the Middle Ages. Eadmer became convinced that salvation was impossible without Mary, as Christ alone would condemn. "For as we have your Son as the Saviour of the whole world, so we have you truly as His reconciler."²⁹ That is to say that the salvation obtained through Christ's passion and death may only be made effective through Mary.

Graef comments on the direction of Eadmer's perceptions, which, she says, have followed the trend, prompted by the Greek prayer of the Third or Fourth century, '**Sub tuum praesidium**'. Eadmer referred to Mary as the "unique help of all who fly to you;"³⁰ but, says Graef:

in a way which presents the Mother of God more and more as an all-but-independent power, ruling the whole world by the side of her Son, on whom she continues to exercise her maternal authority.³¹

Rupert, a Benedictine and abbot of Deutz (c.1075 - 1130/5), found himself in the transitional period between monastic and scholastic theology. He pioneered one area of Marian theology, being the first to apply the 'Song of Songs' entirely to Mary. In this he was supported by the influential **Honorius of Autun**, another Benedictine, who also denied the Immaculate Conception. O'Carroll has granted Rupert many remarkable insights; but the idea of the Immaculate Conception eluded him. He thought that Mary had original sin, yet was freed at the time of the Incarnation. Rupert saw her as a prophetess and a teacher of the Apostles; her voice supplemented the Holy Spirit's teaching. Being a prophetess she had been aware of the location of Jesus when He had been lost in Jerusalem. Her apparent lack of knowledge in the Gospel stories had been assumed "according to the divine dispensation."³² Rupert's view of the episode in St. John 19: 25 - 27, highlighted Mary's spiritual Motherhood. He recalled the painless birth of Jesus; and contrasted with this her birth pangs, "as our spiritual Mother,"³³ using the words spoken by Jesus to His disciples about the woman in childbirth, St. John 16: 21- 22. He went on:

how much more rightly did such a Son say that such a mother, this woman standing by His Cross was truly like a woman in childbirth. How, I should say, like her, since she is truly a woman and mother and has real offspring in that hour of her pain?... Thus truly, suffering here the pains of childbirth the blessed Virgin brought forth the salvation of us all; she really is the mother of us all.³⁴

In '**Vita S. Hereberti**,' Rubert told of an apparition of the "blessed queen of angels and all saints,"³⁵ to the saint during which she indicated the site of a monastery "to God, to me and to all the saints."³⁶

Abelard (d.1142), represented the fresh endeavour of intellectual life. He defended the bodily Assumption, and suggested that what was unknown in Jerome's time, may have been revealed to later generations. He quoted **Gregory of Tours** in evidence. For Abelard it was fitting that Christ should have glorified the soul and the body of Mary, since He had taken His own soul and body from her. Christ had honoured His mother's body more than His own, because He had placed it immediately in

paradise and had resurrected it from there, rather than leave it in the tomb for three days. Although he viewed Mary as full of graces, Abelard did not teach the Immaculate Conception. He assumed that she was cleansed from all contagion of human weakness by Christ's descent into her.

St. Bernard's Contribution

The history of the Church in the Twelfth century was greatly influenced by the arrival of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), "the counsellor of popes and kings, the preacher of the Second Crusade, the great opponent of the new scholasticism."³⁷ Sometimes called that last of the Fathers he adhered to their teaching and to that of the Bible. His output on Marian subjects has been remarkably influential in spite of its paucity. It is reckoned that between three and four per cent of his works were authentically Marian in content. A large quantity of material has been spuriously attributed to him.

In O'Carroll's opinion, Bernard did not promote the theology of Mary. He opposed the Immaculate Conception, and restricted his interest to homiletics. He did not add much to the familiar ideas, images and biblical types of Mary, save for the image of the 'aqueduct,' together with the idea of an act of oblation to Mary (and to Joseph) in the Presentation of the Lord. Bernard's relevant compositions were: homilies '**In Praise of the Virgin Mother:**' three homilies on the Purification: four on the Assumption: one on the twelve Stars for the Sunday in the octave of the Assumption, (or for the Annunciation in Lent): the sermon on the '**Aqueduct**' for the feast of her nativity, and a letter to the Canons of Lyons, against the Immaculate Conception.

Bernard accepted the Augustinian idea that the Original Sin was transmitted by concupiscence inherent in sexual intercourse. In his letter to the Canons of Lyons he reacted strongly against the celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. He asked, "Or how could sin not have been present where concupiscence was not absent?"³⁸ and, "For how could there have been sanctity without the sanctifying Spirit, or how could the Holy Spirit be in any way associated with sin?"³⁹ Bernard realised that the acceptance of a privileged position for Mary in this context could have led to the novel assertion, that she had been conceived virginally of the Holy Spirit. O'Carroll does not support Bernard's belief that his opinions had been vindicated by the Scriptures, (for example Psalm 51) and by tradition. Graef notes his ignorance of the work of **John of Damascus**. However he eventually submitted to the right of the Church to decide on such matters.

Nevertheless Bernard also declared his view of Mary's excellence to the Canons. He noted her marks of dignity and encouraged admiration of her fruitfulness and veneration of her divine offspring:

Glorify the one who found grace, the mediatrix of salvation, the restorer of the ages; exalt finally her who was exalted above the choirs of angels to the heavenly realms.⁴⁰

Although he emphasized the divine motherhood, Bernard remained silent on the spiritual motherhood. However his constant exhortations to his readers to call upon Mary, did as much "to confirm medieval Christians in their faith in her all-powerful intercession: as the legend of Theophilus,"⁴¹ (which was a recurring theme in the sermons of that period). His comments on the bodily Assumption were sparing; and his view of the Marian sense in the Song of Songs was more restricted than his contemporaries. Miegge concludes that "St. Bernard speaking to adults does not offer spiritual Marian milk but the hard food of the Christ-centred mysticism, of which his eighty-six sermons on the Song of Songs offer an incomparable text."⁴²

In the Sermon on the Aqueduct, Bernard discussed Mary's mediation between her Son and His followers. He used this metaphor to illustrate how the 'divine waters' were conducted to earth. Thereby runs a channel of grace through Mary's deep devotion and purity of prayer; Eve has been "justified in her daughter."⁴³ Bernard urged acceptance of the opinion that God wanted Mary to be honoured with affectionate devotion, because "He has placed the fulness of all good things in Mary, so that we should know that all there is of hope, grace and salvation in us, flows from her.;"⁴⁴ and because He had "willed us to have everything through Mary."⁴⁵ (The last sentence became a principle of Mariology, quoted often by later Popes). Even though Christ has been given as advocate for sinners. He remained God. Therefore, in Bernard's reasoning, (corresponding to the medieval mentality), another advocate, if needed, was available: Mary who found Grace with God would certainly be heard and accepted. To offer anything to God without Mary's help allowed the risk of being repelled.

St. Bernard's expressions of devoted love of Mary have been his influential legacy to successive generations of her devotees. He challenged his readers to discover anything of severity in Mary, (whom he described as full of mercy and mildness), in their study of the New Testament. His own reading of the Scriptures led him to apply to Mary, the Apocalyptic picture of the Women, clothed

with the Sun, and surrounded by twelve stars; although he held that the primary application was to Christ. The reference in Genesis to the need for man to have a companion was regarded by Bernard as relevant in the context of Redemption: "It is more fitting that, since both sexes were involved in our corruption, so both should also be present at our reparation."⁴⁶

Peter Lombard, Bishop of Paris.(d.1160), was another highly influential figure in medieval theology. O'Carroll believes that, through one passage in particular, Lombard determined the thinking on the Immaculate Conception. He asked whether the flesh of the Word was subject to sin before it was assumed, and whether it was so assumed. In answer, he maintained that,

according to the agreed witness of the saints, it was, like the rest of the Virgin's flesh beforehand, subject to sin, but that, by the work of the Holy Spirit, it was so cleansed that, free from all contagion of sin, it could be united with the Word.⁴⁷

Although not of necessity, the capacity for pain remained. "but by the choice of the one who assumed."⁴⁸ Lombard's observation of the Virgin Mary is regarded by Warner as a "cunning compromise"⁴⁹ to vindicate the cult of the Immaculate Conception that was growing in popularity. He explained that, in coming upon Mary, the Holy Spirit had cleansed her completely from her sin, and freed her from the root of sin, "either by taking it out completely, as some think, or by so weakening and reducing it, that afterwards, no possibility of sin existed."⁵⁰ The Holy Spirit also prepared in the Virgin the power to give birth without the male seed. O'Carroll notes that Lombard relied on **John of Damascus**, "whose view of the purification of Mary needs subtle exegesis."⁵¹

(Medieval theologians, also took the Pauline idea of the mystical body of Christ, applied the metaphor of the neck to Mary, as the one who joined the Head, Christ, to the body of the faithful. **Hermann of Tournai** (d. after 1147) was the first to use this "ugly anatomical image."⁵² His figure was adopted with great enthusiasm by 'later popularizers' such as **Jacopus de Varagine**, **San Bernardino of Siena**, and **Robert Bellarmine** "who described in lingering detail the blood of grace flowing down from the head through the neck into the Church's body."⁵³)

During this period, biblical and theological knowledge was not always regarded as obligatory in regard to expressions of Marian devotion. Consequently exaggerated ideas gained popular acceptance. **Peter the Venerable** (d.1156), Abbot of Cluny and a friend of St. Bernard, took exception to a

number of excesses, even though he promoted devotion to Mary in his Order. He did not accept that Mary's fulness of grace had been augmented by any special apostolic graces at Pentecost; neither was it her office to preach the Faith. However he regarded Mary as superior to the Apostles. He strongly opposed the notions that Mary was omniscient, and that she must have had more knowledge than the angels, even while on earth.

Arnold of Bonneval (d. after 1156), in the diocese of Chartres, was more expansive in his statements about Mary, than Peter. While he looked on the Assumption as a most thorny question, he decided that the glory of the Son and the Mother was indivisible. Christ, in showing the Father His wounds, and Mary in showing the Father her breast, divided the offices of mercy between them. Arnold also accepted that Mary had shared in the redemptive work on the Cross. Christ "was moved by the affection of His mother, then there was one single will of Christ and Mary, both together offered one holocaust to God: she in the blood of her heart, he in the blood of His flesh."⁴⁴ The suppliant in bowing to one was also bowing to the other. In terms of the flesh, of the spirit and of the charity of Mary and Christ, indivisible glory shone forth. Graef concluded that Arnold's definition obscured the essential difference between the divine-human Christ and the wholly human Mary.

Godfrey, Benedictine Abbot of Admont (d.1165), also followed the dangerous principle of applying to His Mother, what the Scriptures said of Christ . In Godfrey's view the Church had been founded on Mary, whom he described as "the unique matter of the sacraments."⁴⁵

Amadeus of Lausanne (1110 - 1159), was even more fervent in his expressions of Marian devotion. In eight homilies, which Graef describes as "a veritable treatise on the glories of Mary,"⁴⁶ a sensuous tone was introduced: Mary's beauty attracted the divine majesty. The conception of Christ was seen as the union between lovers. The influence of courtly love was perceptible in the descriptions of kisses and embraces, set in the context of the Song of Songs and then applied to Christ and Mary. Amadeus exercised a degree of licence in this interpretation and exceeded the constraints of Rupert of Deutz , (who may have been the first to have interpreted the Song of Songs exclusively of Mary), and of Honorius of Autun (fl.1106 - 1135), in their Commentaries.

Aelred (d.1167), Cistercian **Abbot of Rievaulx** in Yorkshire, sustained the amorous approach to the relationship between God and Mary. He portrayed the Annunciation event as a marriage. "in which God (the Son) is the Bridegroom, the Virgin the bride, and the angel, the best man."⁴⁷ Aelred

continued the practice of attributing to Mary also, those New Testament reference's with Christ alone as their object.

Feudal conceptions were applied to the religious sphere. Men were encouraged to honour Mary as their mother (of redemption and sanctification), and to serve her as their mistress, (the spouse of their Lord). The monk was to serve Mary as the knight served his mistress. Aelred composed rules for anchoresses which included meditations on the life of Mary. Directives to empathise with Mary in the crucial events of her life marked the beginnings of the Rosary meditations.

Opposition to and defence of St. Bernard's Ideas.

During the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries only a few prominent authors supported the teaching on the Immaculate Conception. Many opposed it. Controversy was inevitable. Although the work of St. Bernard overshadowed the Twelfth century and beyond, he was not without his critics, especially those who questioned his rejection of the Immaculate Conception.

About twenty years after St. Bernard's death, Nicholas (d. c. 1174, possibly Abbot of St. Alban's), attempted to defend the feast of the Immaculate Conception against the letter of St. Bernard to the Canons of Lyons. In his treatise, '**On Celebrating the Conception of Blessed Mary, Against Blessed Bernard.**' he argued that the feast would enrich the Liturgy and not upset tradition. Even if Bernard's fears about private revelation were justified, it had to be received that God revealed as he decided, and no true revelation could harm the Catholic faith. He also disagreed with St. Bernard's opinion that the feast of Mary's Nativity was sufficient to honour her saintly origins. Nicholas found it difficult to understand how those opposed to the feast were able to accept that John the Baptist had been sanctified in the womb, yet unable to view Mary's (sinless) conception in a similar light.

O'Carroll has suggested that in dealing with Bernard's fifth objection to the feast, Nicholas grasped the Augustinian theory on the mode of transmitting Original sin. He proposed two solutions to the problem. In the first, Mary's conception had not come from "corrupt concupiscence."⁵⁸ the consequence of Adam's sin, "but from natural concupiscence, innate, but not experienced before (sin) the Fall."⁵⁹ Secondly,

if the Virgin's flesh in seed before the infusion of the soul was as ours, it is lawful to believe that the soul at the moment of this infusion, was immediately filled by the Holy Spirit, and the flesh was cleansed of the leprosy of corruption.⁵⁹

For Nicholas the commemoration of the feast recalled the "foundation of the temple in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead."⁶⁰

Peter of Celle (d.1183), Bishop of Chartres, reacted angrily in defence of Bernard; he argued forcefully that "whatever is not based on the authority of Scripture, cannot be established by any security."⁶¹ His attack was met with a typical medieval legend which described Bernard's appearance after his death to a lay brother. (The saint wore a radiant white garment on which was one spot. The brother was informed that the spot was Bernard's mistaken view on the Immaculate Conception. The dream was recorded, but burned by the Cistercians at their General Chapter). Other views of Peter on Mary were highly controversial. He transferred statements made of God to elevate her 'divine' relationships. His rhetoric viewed the possibility of a Quaternity. He did affirm that "no-one knows the Mother except the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal her,"⁶² (parallel to St. Luke 10: 22).

The Premonstratensians, an order founded by **St. Norbert** in 1120, fell under the influence of **Augustine** in their attitude to Mary's sinlessness. **Philip of Harvengt** (d.1183), one of the first members of that order, demonstrated the divergence in opinions on Mary among his contemporaries. He attributed actual sins to her, but according to Graef, "cedes to none in his devotion to her as the great mediating power between Christ and the faithful."⁶³ In her position as mediatrix, Mother, Empress and Bride she had the power of turning her Son's or Spouse's fury and wrath into grace and love. The relationship between Christ and His Mother as penned by Philip had not been described in such sensual terms, previously: "Not only does the Mother most tenderly embrace the Son, but also the Spouse the Bridegroom; and he enjoys their mutual embrace as much as she, when He, kissing her, reposes most sweetly between her breasts."⁶⁴

Philip also distinguished clearly between Mary and Christ. As with John and James, it was not given to Mary to sit at the right hand of Christ in glory. Her superiority to the angels was not one of nature but of grace. He also taught the bodily Assumption and repeated the assertion of Pseudo-Augustine that the Mother must be where the Son is, in spirit and in body. While clear evidence had not been provided in the canonical Scriptures, nonetheless "pious belief is led to it by probable arguments."⁶⁵

Nevertheless the Feast of the Conception of the Virgin was being established in several countries. **William the Conqueror** had instituted the feast in Normandy in 1074. The first council of

Oxford held in 1222 placed it in the number of holidays kept without servile work. In 1288, **Renoul de Hombiere**, a Bishop of Paris, bequeathed a large sum of money to found the office of this feast. A manuscript martyrology of the Thirteenth century, found in the library of the Dominicans of Dijon, noted the 8th of December for the Feast of the Conception. This prompted the comment from Benedictine scholars "that this feast was already celebrated almost everywhere in the Church in the time of St. Dominic,"⁶⁶ (1170 - 1221).

Socia.

Ekbert of Schonau (d.1184), may have been the first to use the noun '**socia**' of Mary, (and in the context of salvation). He wrote:

The Lord is with you (St. Luke 1: 18), as one loving you, glorifying you, helping you in all things, taking you to Himself as an associate, completing with you and in you the work of saving incarnation, which cannot be accomplished without Him, nor becomingly so without you.⁶⁷

Pseudo-Abert (circa Thirteenth century), developed the theory and described Mary not as a vicar but as a

helper and associate, sharing in the sufferings of the human race, when, as all the ministers and disciples fled, she stood alone beneath the Cross and received in her heart the wounds which Christ received in His body, so that a sword pierced her soul.⁶⁸

But the great scholastics such as **St. Thomas**, **St. Bonaventure**, **Albert the Great** and **Duns Scotus** did not incorporate this idea in their systems. On the other hand another branch of Marian theology, represented by **Engelbert of Admont** and by **Albertino of Casale**, (in the Fourteenth century) adhered to the concept.

Graef's perception of Rome's attitude to some of the Marian questions during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is gained by her assessment of **Pope Innocent the Third** (1161 - 1216). He subscribed to Bernard's precept that no-one, whoever invoked Mary devoutly, was ever left unanswered (sermon 28); he also rejected the Immaculate Conception, and remained silent about the Assumption. Innocent thought that Mary had been "begotten in guilt."⁶⁹ O'Carroll emphasizes that this was Innocent's personal opinion only and therefore did not commit his office. The 'mighty Pontiff' and 'great Preacher' wrote:

These things completed, the Holy Spirit came immediately and prepared a threefold way before the face of the Lord. The first was

virginal consent, the second, the cleansing of the flesh, the third, formation of the body from the most pure blood.⁷⁰

The mental consent of the virgin was followed by the cleansing of the flesh from the root of sin by the descent of the Holy Spirit, "so that she should be wholly without wrinkle or stain."⁷¹ The Holy Spirit had already come upon Mary in the womb of her mother and "had cleansed her of original sin."⁷²

Innocent presented the Eve-Mary 'contrast' succinctly. He greeted Mary:

Hail, for through you the name of Eve will be changed (Eva, Ave). She was full of sin, you are full of grace. She withdrew from God, the Lord is with you. She was accursed among women, but you are blessed among women. Cain the fruit of her womb was accursed, but blessed will be the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Through her death entered the world, through you, life returned to the world.⁷³

New Orders.

During the thirteenth century, monastic orders declined in importance and gave place to the newly founded mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans and the Franciscans, whose acceptance of the teaching of Peter Lombard frustrated the progress of belief in the Immaculate Conception.

A Dominican, **St. Albert the Great** (before 1200 - 1280), wrote voluminously on Mary: more than twenty of his works contain Marian doctrine. He was influenced by **Peter Lombard, Bernard of Clairvaux, Anselm of Canterbury, John of Damascus and Origen**. He made a flexible use of Old Testament texts, and applied Colossians 2: 9 and Philippians 2: 10 (wrongly) to Mary. (Graef contends that this application was always with reference to her Son). Graef in noting the Colossians references, emphasizes Albert's "very careful explanations."⁷⁴ He had argued that, only because Christ dwelt in her, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in her bodily. Graef is certain that Albert's Commentary on St. Luke (written between 1260 and 1274), contained his most important Mariological teaching. He asserted that God had prepared Mary for the mystery of the Annunciation to insure that her consent would be a free choice; otherwise it would not have been praiseworthy. Albert reckoned that the marriage between Mary and Joseph was genuine "and all the holier in that it was free from the desire for intercourse of the flesh."⁷⁵ Mary's virginity was treated at length, and the claim made that she was the first to take a vow of virginity; as such she became the "leader, rule, exemplar and teacher."⁷⁶ The 'great Dominican' held that she was virgin before and after childbirth. He asserted that Jesus was formed from the blood of Mary and eventually left her womb like a bridegroom. The

heavenly king who was about to espouse our nature left the "bridal chamber of the womb.... as a spouse; when born of her He did not violate her as a mother, but loved her, consecrating her as a spouse without spot or wrinkle."⁷⁷ As she conceived "in her chaste womb"⁷⁸ and brought forth, she proved to be the type of the Church ("but not the Mother of the Church"⁷⁹); "the Son is the type of the reborn."⁸⁰

In Albert's view, according to A. Fries, Mary's compassion had "no inner relation to the rebirth of men through the death of the Lord on the Cross. She has not conceived the children of the Church through her compassion."⁸¹ (Fries, has also asserted that Albert has given Mariology a definite and permanent place in Christology). Albert made a strong distinction between general and particular justification, respectively. He maintained that only Christ could pay the debt incurred by Adam, and that particular justification was "related to the merits of the saints, and by inference, to those of Mary."⁸² who, (he insisted), had been redeemed by Christ.

He denied the Immaculate Conception since it had been condemned by Bernard and all the masters of Paris. However he reckoned that Mary had been sanctified in the womb in some exceptional way. Her sanctification was greater than that given by the sacraments, thereby removing from her the tendency to both mortal and venial sin, and "giving her a purity closest of all to Christ's."⁸³ Yet he emphasized the infinite difference between them. He modified the familiar and common perception that, whatever was said in honour of Mary, redounded to the honour of Christ. The picture of a stern Christ and a merciful mother had no part in Albert's works. Neither had Mary any share in the Redemption. He argued that "in the Church there is only the Head and the members."⁸⁴ Since the work of redemption belonged only to the Head, being redeemed belonged to the members. "Since, therefore, the blessed Virgin was a member, it is fitting for her to be redeemed."⁸⁵ Mary's contribution was by her example, and by her intercession that had no limits. Albert believed that Mary had been assumed, body and soul into Heaven. In this he followed **Pseudo-Augustine**, affirming that "it would not be right of Mary, from whom Christ's body had been taken, were she not where He is."⁸⁶ He elaborated her rôle there; and saw in her an essential link in the continuing work of our salvation. Through the Mother there would be access to the Son, through Whom would be access to the Father, so that reconciliation would not be rejected.

It has been observed that "devotion and daily practice" rather than "strict theology"⁸⁷ were employed to laud Mary during this period, but with some very questionable results. Noteworthy in this regard were two works, wrongly attributed to Albert the Great, which strengthened his fame as a Marian teacher. 'De Laudibus Sanctae Mariae,' by Richard of St. Laurent, was regarded as Albert's until 1625; and not until 1952, was a famous 'Mariale Super Missus Est,' discovered to be spurious. Graef concurs that these two compositions (and especially the 'Mariale') exercised enormous influence on later Mariology, escaping strong criticism, even though questionable material was used freely.

Richard of St. Laurent (d. after 1245), Dean of the Metropolitan Chapter of Rouen, composed his compendium of Marian doctrine and devotion during his later years. His efforts to eulogize Mary resulted in the virtual transfer of her Son's identity to herself. After His example. (Richard declared):

she emptied herself, assuming the form of a handmaid. For which reason also God exalted her, and gave her a name that is above every name except her Son's, that in her name every knee should bow, except that of her Son.⁸⁸ (cf. Phil. 2).

Besides applying part of the 'Our Father' (Lord's Prayer) to Mary he misrepresented the familiar verse 16 of John 3: "Mary so loved the world, that is, sinners, that she gave her only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world."⁸⁹ He also asserted Mary's part in the Redemption, affirming that God "did not wish to save mankind only through the death of His Son."⁹⁰ but also gave a woman to share in His Passion, by suffering with Him in her heart, the pains He suffered in His Body. In his comments on the Holy Communion Richard continued to exaggerate the importance of Mary's rôle by stating that "in the Sacrament of her Son we also eat and drink of her flesh and blood."⁹¹ The uncontrolled celebration of Mary's standing was crowned by the special gift of omnipotence, since she, as "Queen has equal rights with the King,"⁹² (her Son). This attribute was shown, (as in the miracle stories), in her power to free those who had been made captive by the devil; and to bring them back to life to do penance. The power thus ascribed to Mary enabled her to implore her Son effectively and to "command Him by her maternal authority."⁹³

The 'Mariale' differed from the work of Richard of St. Laurent in its use of "the strict scholastic method of questions, objections and solutions."⁹⁴ Mary's plenitude of grace takes precedence over the traditionally accepted divine motherhood, as the basic tenet of the work. The author held that Mary

did not "cede place to any of the famous in any matter whatsoever,"⁹⁵ as one gifted both spiritually and secularly. She had gained perfect (and direct) knowledge of the Trinity, of Scripture, of her own predestination and future. Canon law, mathematics, geography and astronomy lay within the ambit of her intellectual awareness.

Mary's part in the redemptive process was emphasized; Christ was the Redeemer through the passion; Mary was the "helper of redemption through her compassion."⁹⁶ Having been attributed to a respected Doctor of the Church, this formula (according to Graef), then became a generally accepted Mariological doctrine. The '**Mariale**' taught the bodily Assumption, but followed the opinion that Mary had been sanctified in the womb immediately after her conception. In doctrine the '**Mariale**' differed greatly from Albert the Great. That discovery has come to light after seven hundred years of its acceptance as Albert's work). To Graef the most striking difference centred on the conception of Jesus. Albert maintained that He had been conceived only of the blood (not of the flesh) of Mary. The '**Mariale**' adhered to the idea of conception from both the flesh and blood of Mary. The eminent Mariologist René Laurentin observes that the '**Mariale**' "manifests the first symptoms of decadence."⁹⁷ Graef suggests that the earlier work of Richard of St. Laurent displayed similar traits.

Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274), disciple of Albert, integrated his Marian theology in his Christology, and established it on a strictly scientific basis, bringing "metaphysical precision to the traditional doctrine."⁹⁸ In Graef's opinion, he tended to be more reserved than his teacher in pursuance of the Mariological tradition. The relevant passages of his theology occur in the third part of the '**Summa Theologica**,' Sections 17 - 35, in the '**Summa Contra Gentes**,' part four, Sections 9 and 45, in Bible commentaries and in sermons. For O'Carroll the decisive passage from Thomas, in his opposition to the Immaculate Conception, stated that, "if the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never been stained with the contagion of original sin, this would have taken from the dignity of Christ in His capacity as the Saviour of all."⁹⁹ In the opinion of Aquinas "the Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed from it before her birth."¹⁰⁰ Her sanctification in the womb was far more complete than in the comparable circumstances of such as Jeremiah and John the Baptist, because "her sensual appetites were always completely under the control of reason."¹⁰¹ He also defended Mary's freedom from any personal sin and her 'triple virginity'. He argued that had she ever committed a sin, "she would not have been capable of being the Mother of God."¹⁰²

...Further the Son of God, who is the Wisdom of God, had dwelt in a special way, not only in her soul, but even in her womb; now, it is said in Wisdom 1: 4, 'For wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins.'¹⁰³

Influence of Aristotle.

From the thirteenth century onwards the views of Aristotle were shaping and conditioning Western thinking on human generation. The imprimatur of Thomas was largely instrumental in introducing these views into the authorised teaching of the Church. In his '**On the Generation of Animals.**' Aristotle had framed his concept of generation. The woman provided matter for the embryo; the man gave the matter form and motion. Menstrual blood was the 'prime matter;' while semen evaporated after quickening and forming the blood. Warner observes that the obvious importance of woman's rôle in this view of human reproduction was diminished in the Greek contempt for matter. On the other hand "the male performed the spiritual, noble, and infinitely superior function of imparting life."¹⁰⁴ Aquinas accepted Aristotelian biology and apparently greatly influenced the attitudes in European society towards the rôle of women. The 'Angelic Doctor' regarded men as the vital source of life, the woman as 'the blood-transfusion unit'. In the case of a girl, the highest soul was infused by God, eighty days after conception; in the case of a boy, forty days. In Jesus' case, body and soul together, "whole and perfect and sanctified"¹⁰⁵ entered Mary's womb. He also taught the virginity '**in partu.**' using the traditional comparison with the risen Christ's arrival through closed doors. (The passive rôle played by Mary in the conception of her Son was to be rejected by **Duns Scotus**, who (like **Galen**) attributed to Mary an active part).

He was sparing in his consideration of Mary's part in our salvation. He applied the epithet mediatrix to Mary in the commentary on the Cana episode: but the context was restricted. The term was universal in relation to Mary as representative of all mankind. Thomas was also guarded in dealing with Mary's distribution of grace. The Grace of Christ had overflowed on all according to St.

John 1: 16.

But the blessed Virgin obtained such a plenitude of grace that she was nearest to the author of grace, so that she received into herself Him who is full of grace, and, by giving birth to Him, she drew, in some way, grace down to all.¹⁰⁶

While the grace she received placed Mary above angels and men, she could not merit the Incarnation; "but, assuming that it would take place, she could merit, by merit of suitability only, that

it would happen through her."¹⁰⁷ Thomas concluded that the relation of Mother and Son was real on the part of Mary, but notional on the part of her Son.

Attraction of the Cult.

The appeal of the Marian cult captivated many during this period; and devotion to Mary escalated. In Condren's opinion the Church Fathers did not favour the form that this popular devotion took. Poets of the time throughout Europe were asserting Mary's equality with Jesus by emphasizing her own Immaculate Conception: "O Son of the merciful Father without mother in heaven; O Son of the truly perfect Virgin Mary, without father on earth."¹⁰⁸ As Anselm, Bernard, Peter Damian, and Thomas Aquinas developed their doctrines of Atonement and salvation, they faced a cult of Mary, which could slide out of control; and "turn out to be distinctly problematic to their attempts to enshrine an image of a Father God, who ruled by justice and logic; and who would ruthlessly punish the guilty according to their just desserts."¹⁰⁹ The Fathers had promoted the cult of Mary within limits; they rejected the idea of Mary's Immaculate Conception. They were concerned lest the sacrifice of Jesus should be diminished by the suggestion, "that the fruits of the Redemption could have been applied to a mere woman, in advance of the act of Redemption itself."¹¹⁰ The Fathers were equally aware of the dangers that the cult of Mary might contain, and of the enormous benefits to be gained by promoting her image. "Mary was the human face of God, serving to make the harsh salvific doctrines of the Twelfth century, if not palatable, at least tolerable."¹¹¹

Bonaventure.

Contemporaneous with Thomas Aquinas, and his 'opposite number' in the Franciscan Order, was St. Bonaventure (1221 - 1274), whose Mariology, (less austere than the Dominican Doctor's), was displayed in his '**Commentary on the Sentences**:' in a treatise on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in his sermons. His denial of the Immaculate Conception unveiled the strong influence of St. Bernard. He did not regard the phenomenon as impossible; but felt that its proper application related to the "One through whom was wrought the salvation of all."¹¹² Bonaventure also avoided the tendency to affirm that every honour attributed to her Son should have been attributed to the Mother. He reckoned that such an attribution would dishonour the Son, "in that an honour due to Him alone

would be attributed to someone else."¹¹³ Although Mary deserved great honour, ('**hyperdoulia**') even greater veneration ('**latria**') was due to the Son, "through whom all honour and glory comes to her."¹¹⁴

O'Carroll has concluded that Bonaventure was caught in the web of the Augustinian theory of the transmission of original sin. Graef also notes the influence of both **Bernard** and **Lombard**. . However Bonaventure minimised the hold that sin had on her. "Others were raised up after the Fall;" but "the blessed Virgin was held so that she should not fall; as it were, in the Fall itself."¹¹⁵ As the spouse of God and the resting place of the whole Trinity, it was fitting that the 'advocate' of the human race should have no sin on her conscience. She was therefore purified from all actual sin by the infusion of grace, that followed immediately on the infusion of her soul. Only the Son, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, could escape the contagion of original sin.

Bonaventure did his best to ascribe to Mary every other kind of perfection: even Scripture could not extol her adequately. Her purification took place in two stages, where, as with other saints, she was given the faculty to avoid all sin; and when, from the moment of the Incarnation, the possibility of falling into sin was removed completely. Bonaventure perceived Mary's merit as one of "suitability before the Annunciation and as condign afterwards."¹¹⁶ Her greatness depended on Christ who entered "the tabernacle of the virginal womb."¹¹⁷ Consequently, "He settled His bridal chamber that He might become our brother; He prepared a royal throne that He might become our prince; He assumed priestly ornament that He might become our pontiff."¹¹⁸ The marriage union resulted in Mary becoming the "Mother of God: because of the royal seat, the Queen of Heaven: because of the priestly ornament, advocate of the human race."¹¹⁹

The Eve-Mary parallel was recalled in the sixth book of Bonaventure's treatise on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. "Eve expels us from paradise and sells us;" the Virgin "brings us back and buys us."¹²⁰ . Christ the price of redemption was taken from her, paid by her and now has been possessed by her. Mary had been present at Calvary "accepting and agreeing with the Divine will."¹²¹ This was a passive contribution to redemption. As with the Latin Fathers, Bonaventure taught that Mary became 'our Mother' at the birth of Christ, since "grace descended to us through the incarnate Word, through the crucified Word, and through the inbreathed Word."¹²² He also classified various degrees of 'fulness of grace', that is, from sufficiency in every just man, to fulness of abundance in perfect men, to fulness of excellence in Mary and to fulness of "super-effluence"¹²³ to be found in Christ alone. In

sermons on the Purification, Bonaventure emphasized Mary's need of baptismal (but not penitential) grace. Corresponding to the threefold way of purgation, illumination and perfection, he interpreted her name as 'bitter sea,' 'illuminatress' and 'mistress.' He stressed man's need to imitate her virtues and to appeal for her intercessions. Since sanctification has been obtained from her Son by her prayers; since the Church has been sanctified through her Son, and since Christ (holiness itself) was born from her, she deserved the title the "diffusive principle of sanctification."¹²⁴

Graef is careful to note how Bonaventure drew a clear distinction between the honour that was due to Mary and that due to Christ. However, J. Endell Tyler, in his critical appraisal of the works of Bonaventure in relation to Mary, bemoans the "perversions of the holy volume of inspired truth."¹²⁵ The 'Scripture Doctor,' (as Bonaventure was called in decretal letters issued by Pope Sixtus V, 1588), addressed the introductory remarks of each of the Psalms to the Virgin Mary, rather than to the Lord God Almighty: "interspersing, in some, much of his own composition, and then adding the '**Gloria Patri**' to each."¹²⁶ For example, a familiar theme of the Middle Ages was exploited in the opening words of Psalm 93 (94), "The Lord is a God of vengeance: but thou, O Mother of mercy, inclinest to be merciful."¹²⁷ (the Psalter of the Virgin p.485). In the Psalm 30, (31), drastic adjustment left the text:

In thee, O Lady, have I trusted, let me not be confounded for ever: in thy grace take me..... Bring thou me out of the snare, that they have hid from me, for thou art my succour. Into thy hands, O Lady, I commend my spirit, my whole life and my last day.¹²⁸

The penitential Psalm 129 (130), was addressed to Mary. The expressions of Praise to Jehovah (as for example, in Psalm 148), were transposed to a glorification of Mary. In one of a number of various hymns which were appended to the Psalter of the Virgin, Bonaventure directed the prayer of the prophet, (together with a solemn confession by Jesus Christ to His Heavenly Father), to Mary. (A Canticle like that of Habakkuk III).

Our Lady, I have heard thy report, and was astonished. I will confess to thee, O Lady, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and revealed them to babes. Thy glory hast covered the heavens, and the earth is full of thy mercy.¹²⁹

The '**Te Deum**' was also distorted and included such as "To thee the whole angelic creation with incessant voice proclaim, Holy! Holy! Holy!. Mary, Parent, Mother of God and Virgin... Thou with thy Son sittest at the right hand of the Father."¹³⁰ The Athanasian Creed also suffered similar

alternations. "Whosoever will be saved before all things, it is necessary that he hold firm the faith concerning the Virgin Mary,"¹³¹ and that on pain of destruction.

The Assumption was one of the tenets of his belief. Endell Tyler quotes a brief prayer from the Sixth Volume (page 406), of Bonaventure's works:

Therefore, O Empress and our most benign Lady, by the right of a mother command thy most beloved Son; our Lord Jesus Christ, that He vouchsafe to raise our minds from the love of earthly things to heavenly desires, who liveth and reigneth.¹³²

The Marian theology of **Richard of St. Laurent** and of '**Pseudo-Albert**' reappeared in the '**Treatise on the graces and Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**' by the Benedictine abbot, **Engelbert of Admont** (c.1250 - 1331). He dealt with the life and death of Mary as portrayed in the Gospels: her active life as expressed in the works of the saints: her contemplative life and her death and glorification. As with most of his contemporaries Engelbert maintained Mary's threefold purification. In Part 3 of the Treatise he discussed Mary's special virtues and graces. and like '**Pseudo-Albert**' attributed these by way of deduction; he followed the general principle of **John of Damascus** that Mary was in nothing inferior to any of the 'illustrious.' Therefore, (besides vast knowledge), she possessed all the graces of the seven sacraments. "including the spiritual power, ministerial dignity and even the actual execution of the priesthood, because she had fashioned the body of Christ not from bread and wine, but from her own flesh and blood."¹³³ Engelbert also supported the view of '**Pseudo-Augustine**' in extolling Mary's queenly power; and presented her in a special hierarchy beneath God and above angels and men. Graef's assessment of Mary in this context is that of a "universal aunt," who had become "exclusively occupied with all the needs of her clients."¹³⁴ intervening in every occasion of need. and demonstrating her faithfulness as mediatrix of grace. Graef is disappointed that this period portrayed the fading image of Mary as the Second Eve, who worshipped God perfectly. Such an image had gained broad acceptance in the patristic age.

From his calculations Engelbert estimated that Mary had been sixty-five years old at the Passion (and then died at seventy-two). At the Cross

she stood therefore, fixed in faith, joined in the passion and attached to the crucified One in communion and association with His passion and the salvation of men, the individual associate of the passion, to which she had been predestined and chosen as minister of the Incarnation, of the whole work of our redemption; partner of the supreme consolation to come through Christ.¹³⁵

Comment.

Anselm has received the distinction of having paved the way for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, in spite of the fact that he stated that Mary had been born in 'original sin.' The argument for Mary's purity was strengthened by the maxim, **potuit, voluit, fecit**, which was to become a guiding principle of mariology.

Mary's place as intercessor assumed new proportions of importance and necessity. St Bernard, one of her strongest devotees, had to face criticism of his strenuous opposition to the Immaculate Conception, (and of his silence about spiritual motherhood) - an opposition that exercised many prominent minds during the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries.

In the quest for more explicit references to Mary's relationship with her Son and His Church, the metaphor of the 'neck' was introduced. The restraints of responsible reasoning could not contain the growing desire to emulate previous expressions of Mary's status. Extravagant claims exceeded extravagant claims. The problem of authenticity arose, when questionable material was accepted, because it could have been attributed to an illustrious figure. The awareness of Mary's intercessory prowess was heightened by the encouragement of the Church Fathers and the evolving legends of Mary.

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CHAPTER XIV.

A SURVEY OF THE MIDDLE AGES. *Legends of Mary.*

G. G. Coulton reckoned that Mariolatry has been, possibly, the greatest factor in separating both the earliest Christianity and much of contemporary Christianity, from medieval Christianity. The transition from Christ the Mediator to Christ the Judge had compelled the search for another to assume a mediatorial rôle on behalf of humanity, but yet in Christ's presence. As Jesus in His rôle had taught the love of God, so Mary's mission was to teach the love of Christ.

A **Father Cuthbert** and others, in a work entitled '**God and the Supernatural,**' (1921), have postulated that Christ was the Head, His Body was the Church and Mary was "the Neck through which the vital influx derives from the Head to the members."¹ (Medieval believers extended this formula to exalt Mary into a fourth person of the Trinity). Coulton has argued that the thesis of Father Cuthbert expressed "only half of the medieval point of view."² The former also noted the 'modern' Sicilian practice of marking implements with holy signs, as for example, the use of four parallel strokes in memory of the Holy Trinity and Mary. The more conservative responses from officialdom have asserted that "all Mary's power came from God and that her subordination to her own Son must be complete."³

R. W. Southern has drawn attention to the transformation of the theme of the Virgin and Child during this period. In the Eleventh century the West had been familiar with "the Child seated as if enthroned on His Mother's knee, holding up His right hand in benediction."⁴ In His left hand He clasped a Book (the symbol of Wisdom), or sometimes an Orb (the symbol of Dominion). This image survived the competition of other figures, which expressed those more intimate tendencies of the later medieval epoch: the laughing Child playing with an apple (or a ball); the Child caressing His Mother: the Child being fed from His Mother's breast. (The theme of the Mother feeding the Child "can possibly be traced to the art of the catacombs in the Third century").⁵ The Coptic Church accepted this figure at an early date. Eventually, reticence gave way to acceptance; and Europe received it early in the Twelfth century, "in a distinctly Byzantine dress."⁶ The earliest form of this picture may have appeared in a Cistercian lectionary, which was one of a series of illustrated manuscripts produced at Citeaux, during the first quarter of the Twelfth century. Southern classifies

the picture as "a compendium of the new devotion to the humanity of the Saviour and His earthly Mother "

Some commentators have found difficulty in their efforts to discover much about the religious practices of the general public of the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries. The monasteries set the standard of excellence, and exercised a strong influence on the laity of the later Middle Ages especially. At times, individual laymen endeavoured to adopt some part of the monastic discipline in private life. According to her biographer, **Queen Margaret** of Scotland (d. 1095), followed the monastic offices. At the beginning of each day she recited the Offices of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Cross, the Blessed Virgin and the Office of the dead.

From 1100 the appreciation of Mary's presence and rôle at Calvary increased conspicuously. The words of Christ (St. John 19: 27) were being interpreted as pointing to Mary's universal motherhood. Her particular co-operation with the sacrifice of Calvary was gaining acceptance. She was depicted as the type and exemplar of the Church, and regarded as its queen and mother. During the Middle Ages popular enthusiasm for the Virgin increased and often fed on the sensational. Eventually "the majestic Roman Virgin gave way to the gracious and smiling Virgin. At Calvary she had been the swooning Virgin. Sermons spoke more of her tears, her sighs and her weakness."⁸ Reforms emphasized her holiness, her virginity (before birth) and her divine maternity.

Nevertheless popular opinion, moulded by the impressions of images and paintings, (especially of Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms), "ploughed its own furrow."⁹ Many tales of the Virgin caught the public imagination, and gained captive audiences. For example, a monk who could not obtain his petition from Christ, threatened to complain about Him to His Mother; a woman, who failed to recover her son, stole the Christ-child from Mary's lap (in church), and refused to return it until her own boy was brought back.

During the Eleventh century the first efforts had been made to organise methodical collections of '**Miracles of our Lady**'. **Peter Damian** was one of the earliest collectors of these stories. He obtained them from the cardinal priest **Stephan**, who had served as Papal legate at Constantinople, in Germany and in France. The compilation of the stories into literary importance was probably due to **Anselm, Abbot of Bury St. Edmonds**. Southern reiterates the view of historians, who have regarded Anselm as "the devoted protagonist of the most advanced form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin."¹⁰

Some of the most remarkable stories were exchanged between Anselm and his friends in private conversation. The recorder of these conversations sent the material to the younger Anselm, who probably "extracted the two most wonderful stories in the collection for his 'Miracles of the Blessed Virgin.'" ¹¹ One of the earliest of all the collections contained forty-four tales, seventeen of which had formed an earlier collection. Coulton observed that these two groups, (separately or together), provided the basis for practically all the later collections. (He has recommended as useful references: '**The Golden Legend**,' by Jacopus de Varagine (d. 1298), ('**Temple Classics**,' translated by Caxton, 1900), and '**The Alphabet of Tales**,' (E. T. S. 1904, 1905), for researching this "strange chapter of religious history"¹²).

Marina Warner re-echoes this observation and describes '**The Golden Legend**' as one of the earlier European best-sellers. The author apparently used "marvellously devious loopholes"¹² in his effort to champion Mary's virginity. In order to explain the 'brethren' of Jesus, his ingenuity uncovered two previous marriages for St. Anne, before she married Joachim, (Mary's father). By each of her former husbands she had given birth to a daughter called Mary. The Virgin's step-sisters in turn had given birth to children described as Jesus 'brethren.' (Fifteenth and Sixteenth century German and Flemish paintings show the Virgin in St. Anne's lap, flanked by St. Anne's three husbands, two elder daughters, and their respective husbands. A large number of children, (cousins of Jesus) play at their feet).

In Warner's opinion, medieval man was not deeply concerned about the questions raised by such suggestions. The individual's destiny weighted more heavily on the medieval mind. In the official theology of that period the unbaptized were consigned to perdition, the baptised to purgatory, at best. A promise of salvation may have been offered to a few of the latter. The cult of the saints and of Mary (whose mercy could temper the strictness of divine justice), "offered relief from the intolerable nexus of fate."¹³ Henry Adams described Mary of the Middle Ages as "very feminine and very much the 'noble dame:' not only does her mercy temper the strictness of divine justice, but her moods and caprices redeem the formalities of classical patristic theology."¹⁴ According to Coulton a survey of the last three centuries of the Middle Ages would indicate that ordinary medieval worshippers must have concluded that Mary mattered more to them than Christ. This is hardly surprising in view of the

astonishing anecdotes about the Virgin. A certain **Vincent of Beauvais** (d.1264), librarian to St. Louis of France, offered such advice as:

I counsel thee to invoke, before all others, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and serve her with perpetual prayers. For this is the single hope of man's reconciliation; she is the prime cause of man's salvation.¹⁵

By the end of the Eleventh century Mary-Legends had greatly expanded in number and in content. Southern's assessment finds that, in the West, Mary's rôle in the miraculous was relatively minor, until the Twelfth century. The lack of relics of the Virgin may have accounted for this. She may have been regarded as the 'co-adjutor' of the local saint. (The Eastern Church was less restrained about this phenomenon). The majority of the miracle stories were the product of "a new piety and a new imagination."¹⁶ A few were taken from Latin sources. (for example, a Sixth century book of miracles of **Gregory of Tours**); some were of Greek origin; others, originally connected with St. Peter or St. James, were the patronage of the Virgin. In matters of salvation and damnation many found great relief in the promised help of Mary.

Coulton refers to **A. Mussafia**, (who in turn cited **Botho**), as a compiler of the growing collections of legends. (in the Thirteenth century). The development of Marian devotion in England was enhanced in the twelfth century with the collection of stories about Miracles of the Blessed Virgin by **William of Malmesbury**, **Dominic of Evesham**, and others. (Salisbury Cathedral manuscript). These stories stressed the intercessory power of Mary in saving sinners, against all the odds. Later Middle Ages brought about an increased awareness of the human and emotional stress of the Passion. Mary was invoked as 'Our Lady of Pity.' During this period brief collections were used for Church lessons at services held in the Lady Chapel. **Caesarius of Heisterback** devoted a whole section of his '**Lier Miraculorum**' to the Virgin Mary, (c.1230). Many of the stories had not been told hitherto; some gained immediate and lasting popularity. **Vincent of Beauvais** told forty-three Mary-Legends consecutively in his encyclopedia, together with many others scattered throughout his book. '**The Golden Legend**' of Jacopus de Varagine contained a large number. The whole disposition to believe in miracles increased in the Thirteenth century, and was enhanced by begging monks. By the Fifteenth century, two or three hundred traditional legends were in circulation.

Coulton lists examples of the stories from **Botho** and from **Caesarius**, with the observation that their contents will provide clearer understanding of the "religious mentality in first-rate monasteries

at the time of greatest monastic prosperity and influence."¹⁷ In the Botho collection the Blessed Virgin Mary gave a certain Hildefonso a chasuble for his own exclusive use. His successor in the bishopric of Toledo ventured to wear it and died a terrible death: an unchaste sacristan of an abbey was drowned, and Mary saved his soul: a clerk was accustomed to sing the 'Five Joys of Mary'; she stood by his bed and saved him: Mary raised an unjust judge from the dead in order to give him time for repentance: a greedy peasant, who had stolen land from his neighbours, was saved because he frequently repeated the 'Ave': the abbey church at Mont St. Michael was burned down, yet her statue remained untouched. Coulton finds that the main outlines of the medieval Mary-Legends may be found in the forty-four stones of Botho, and that nearly all the most significant anecdotes, told by Liguori in the mid - Eighteenth century, were taken from orthodox medieval sources. An element missing in the stories of Botho, and introduced in the thirteenth century, was the insistence on the mechanical conditions "and almost microscopic amount of lip-service which will suffice, under fortunate conditions, to win salvation through Mary."¹⁸

Feudal ideas of privilege and personal favour were finding an acceptable place in regular religious practices. The Church initially had modelled its organisation on that of the Roman Empire; but, throughout the Dark and Middle Ages, had also absorbed much from the civil society. A Franciscan, author of the '**Fasciculus Morum**' (c.1320), suggested that the opportunity taken by an individual to ingratiate himself with the queen, the earls, the barons, the free-men and the footmen, in an effort to avoid the consequences of having incurred the king's anger, could be imitated in particular pious conduct. He went on to advise that an offence against Christ could be neutralised by a visit to the Queen of Heaven, with offerings of prayer, fasting, vigils and alms. In a motherly way she would mediate between the offender and Christ "the father, who wishes to beat us, and she will throw the cloak of mercy between the rod of punishment and us, and soften the king's anger against us."¹⁹ Following that, contact should be made with the apostles, martyrs and confessors, women saints and the poor, for their intercessions to Christ. In a footnote Coulton makes the point that Wyclif in his early writings did not differ from his contemporaries with regard to Mary-worship. In a sermon he stated that in his opinion, "it is impossible for us to be crowned (in heaven) without Mary's good offices.... She was in a certain sense the cause of Christ's incarnation and passion; and consequently,

of all the world's salvation."²⁰ (from **G. V. Lechlar's 'John Wyclif and his English precursors.'** translated by **P. Lorimer, 1878**).

Favours from Mary.

By the beginning of the Thirteenth century the cult of the Virgin was fully systematized. Special chapels were being built for her, especially in churches of the 'first rank', and often with an elaborate splendour that shaded the other sections of the church. Throughout the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries Lady chapels were built in cathedrals, abbeys and other churches. In many churches, for example, in such places as Caversham, Westminster, Willesden and King's Lynn, shrines of the Blessed Virgin were located either with a statue or a painting of herself. Some of these have been revived, including England's main setting for Marian pilgrimage, Walsingham (Norfolk). A replica of what was believed to be the Holy House of Nazareth was built there as early as the Eleventh century.

The human traits of Mary were fondly depicted in her images of this period. Representations of the Annunciation were very popular, as in the sculpture of Wells cathedral of the 14th Century, and in the mural of Great Hockham (Norfolk) of the 15th century. Series of paintings based on the Apocryphal Gospels were elaborated, representing her life, her miracles and her involvement in the Passion.

Monastic orders boasted her special patronage, and claimed her peculiar favours. Coulton believes that the Cistercians were first in the field. Their founder, a Benedictine monk, **Robert of Montier**, founded a monastery in Citeaux, near Dijon, in 1098. The general laxity of contemporary monasticism compelled him to increase his efforts to cultivate a commune of strict self-denial. In a volume covering the period 1098 - 1698 (printed in Prague 1700), **Sartorius** explained how the Virgin Mary had given Robert her imprimatur:

Mary, Mother of God, espouseth St Robert (Founder of Citeaux) with a ring in his mother's womb - It was not right that the Virgin should be fertile without a spouse; wherefore our Father Robert was given as a spouse to Mary before she gave birth to Citeaux, even as Joseph was given when she was about to bear Christ.²¹ (from the text p.8).

The claim was made that Mary had been the source of the first constitutions for the Order. **St. Bernard** was commended as a recipient of her special favours. It was claimed that she had given Jesus into his arms on many occasions:....."she visiteth and healeth him in sicknesssaluteth him in

answer to his salutationfeedeth him bodily from her statue,"-"from her sweet breasts, to moisten St. Bernard's lips with her virgin milk."²² (the text, pps. 91and 250). The Order enjoyed her communion with them as she assisted their worship and gave protection on earth and in heaven. Through his devotion to the Virgin, Bernard has been recognised as her special champion. Dante chose him to sing her praises in Heaven. However, his opposition to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, led to a rebuke by the 'multitude.' Coulton quotes the story (from a preacher's manual) of St. Bernard's appearance to a certain visionary. The saint indicated that the stain on his white robe was a blemish that he had to bare, "for that he held the conception of the Blessed Virgin in original sin."²³ The legend was pursued for some time by the Franciscans and the 'multitude'.

Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites, respectively, laid claim to her peculiar favours. The Dominican '*Vitae Fratrum*' also referred special protection from the Virgin for the Friars, whose endeavours to save souls exceeded those of other orders. "It was the Virgin who practically founded the Order of Friars Preachers,"²⁴ and who shielded good Dominicans in heaven. The author of this work (in Coulton's opinion) was not simply moved by jealousy, when he claimed the Virgin's preference for

those brethren upon whom there pressed, for man's salvation, heavier labours than those which lie upon other Religious who save their souls individually..... labourers heavier, but more fruitful and filled with ineffable joy.²⁵

In 1207, a man was raised from the dead. Convinced of the reality of a revelation he had received, he conveyed this otherworldly experience to a monk; he had seen the Virgin Mary. She was greatly distressed by the numbers of souls who were damned and perishing, and was pleading with her Son to intervene. For three days the 'Mother of Pity' supplicated for sinful people. On the third day Her Son explained that such a situation was the result of a scarcity of preachers to proclaim the truth. Mary was assured that her prayers would lead to the commissioning of an Order of Preachers. The Son prepared "these Brethren in that habit which they now wear; and mother and Son together sent them forth, giving unto them their blessing and power to preach the Kingdom of God."²⁶ In 1216, Dominic's Rule was ratified by the Pope, and the Friars Preachers began their ministry. A generation later Mary's special intercession (or 'polite command') was to constrain Christ to observe the afflictions of the Dominicans and give them victory over their enemies at the University of Paris.

The legend of Mary, Christ and the Dominicans possessed similarities with a story that had grown up in the Franciscan Order, and in which the two saints were presented jointly to Christ by Mary. A resulting legend of "miraculous mutual recognition between Francis and Dominic"²⁷ inspired the majolica of Andrea della Robbia in Florence. The Dominicans were to share with Bernard the stigma of their opposition to the Immaculate Conception. Subsequently the Franciscans were recognised as the favourites of the Queen of Heaven. Coulton remarks cynically that in this 'celestial court' may be found "an echo of the intrigues and rivalries and vicissitudes of favour which trouble a court on earth."²⁸

Caesarius listed those qualities which demonstrated the rôle of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and defined the benefits she conferred upon mankind. He wrote about her image which sweated for fear of God's Judgment. In another instance an ignorant priest of Derlar, was deposed. St. Mary commanded the restoration of the church to his care. When Pope Innocent III would have imposed sanctions on the Cisterian Order, Mary rebuked him through his confessor. Other instances of her influence were recorded: a sacristan of Soccum saw her one night sitting in the altar: she appeared to a monk of Soccum and with a multitude of saints in the air above the altar: by a kiss from her mouth Mary liberated a knight from the temptation of love for his master's wife: she smote a nun on the cheek and cured her from a burning love for a certain clerk: a scholar of Cologne was rebuked by Mary, in a dream, because he spoke ill of the Cistercians.

A Fifteenth century preacher, **Meffret** would declare:

He shall never be damned for ever, who, in this present life, followeth Mary's praise and extolleth her. O how many have been the sinners, and how many there are yet, and shall be in the future, who are and shall be saved through Mary! one by the Salve Regina, another by the Ave Maria, who otherwise should have been or should be damned to all eternity.²⁹

A Franciscan document dating from 1379, described how Leo, one of the most intimate of the companions of St. Francis, dreamt of the Last Judgment. A red ladder and a white ladder extended from earth to heaven. Christ stood at the top of the former. Nearby was Francis who encouraged his brethren to ascend. Their failures to do so and his to intercede on their behalf, were followed by encouragement to climb the white ladder, at the top of which stood Mary. She welcomed them into the Kingdom "without labour."³⁰ The story was reproduced by **Bartholomew of Pisa** in a book entitled, '**Conformites**,' which was approved by the General Chapter (1399); and repeated in the

Eighteenth century by **St. A. Liguori**, whose translator, Monsignor Weld advised, "Remember that (this book) has been strictly examined by the authority, which is charged by God Himself, to instruct you, and that authority has declared that it contains nothing (sic) worthy of censure."³¹

Two centuries earlier one author had written, "neither would the powers of hell resist her, nor the sentence of Christ her Son stand against her, when she wanted to save a sinner."³² Many stories which were promulgated to generations for edification, strongly insinuated that the general public should look for better protection from Mary, than from Christ, ("since we cannot attain the gate of salvation without the powerful aid of the Star of the Sea."³³) Coulton reckons that, among the common people of the Middle Ages, Mariolatry (with encouragement from leading clergy), developed into a fetishism "which can only be realised by those who have travelled in Southern Italy, Spain or South America."³⁴ Bible-texts were forced into compliance with the developing 'legend;' passages from **Pseudo-Augustine** and **Pseudo-Jerome** were quoted in corroboration.

The application of the typology of beasts was transferred from Christ to Mary. Coulton observes that "the Middle Ages thus made for themselves a new Redeemer, endowed with all the qualities that they needed most, and fashioned with every poetic liberty, which the reticence of the four evangelists permitted."³⁵ The stories of Mary in the New Testament were supplemented; but problematical references in the Gospels were conveniently omitted. "Without Mary, (medieval) man had no hope except in atheism; and for atheism the world was not ready."³⁶ Coulton concludes that Mary played a part, greater than any ever played by any Greek or any Roman goddess. Since Medieval religion relied greatly on "sensitive impression,"³⁷ the familiar statue of Christ, as a child in Mary's arms, may well have boosted the general belief, that Mary's interventions were invincible. In the minds of many she could bend the will of her Son and influence effectively the actual decrees of the Trinity.

A short time before 1500, a story '**Mary and the Cannibal**' was written for King David of Ethiopia, for lectionary purposes in some monastery or great church. The story told of the inordinate preference of a Christian man of nobility from Kemer for human flesh. His indulgence left him with neither family nor servants. He travelled broadly for food. On one occasion a beggar whose purifying sores nauseated him, confronted the man with strong cries for a drink of water. The beggar was refused until the traveller learned of the effects of Mary's prayers in saving men, and determined to take refuge in her. He encouraged the beggar to drink "for Mary's sake."³⁸ The poor man started to

drink but was seized immediately by the other, who stopped him from drinking, but then died suddenly. The angel of darkness cast his soul into Sheol. At that the Virgin Mary pleaded his cause with the Son of God, because he had given the beggar a drink in her name. The Lord commanded the setting up of scales to determine the weight of the little amount of water, against that of the souls He had devoured. The results favoured the water. "And the angels of lightgave shouts of joy because the cannibal had been saved and was made to live through the entreaty of our holy Lady."³⁹

Encouragement to resort to Mary became voluminous.

Variations on the Biblical record were increased by the many instances given of Mary's ability to free men from damnation. Coulton quotes **Pelbart**, (a Franciscan in the early Sixteenth century), who supported this claim in his '**Pomerium Sermonun de Beata Virgine.**' He gave full accounts of five of her most popular miracles. Besides the story of Theophilus, he told of a lecherous cleric whom she saved before the Judgment Seat. The offender's one redeeming feature was that "he was wont to say the Hours of the Blessed Virgin with devotion."⁴⁰ For the same reason, similar protection was afforded to a notorious robber: to a woman with sin on her conscience, but unable to confess to a priest: and to a youth predestined to hell from conception, by his mother's curse. Coulton also mentions **S. Razzi's, Miracolo della Gloriosa Vergine Maria**, (Florence 1618), in which the culprit's case was taken up, because punctual (and at times perfunctory) reverence for Mary's name and image was shown. In twelve cases the Virgin's pleas were instrumental in the reversal of Christ's initial refusal to offer pardon. In three others, prayers to the Virgin prevailed where direct prayers to God had failed. Thus it seemed possible for a man to "assure himself of salvation more directly and mechanically by certain honours rendered to her, than by any rendered to God."⁴¹

It was believed that great harm was done to the devil's cause by Mary, and that he was fully aware of it. The devil's wrath at Mary's successes were portrayed in the miracle plays and stories of the Middle Ages. He was presented as one who protested vehemently at the Judgment Seat of Christ, that she should be prevented from subverting the course of justice. Time and time again she cheated him of his 'rightful prey' by a variety of ruses.

When a knight promised Satan to deliver his own wife to him in exchange for wealth and fame, Mary intervened. She assumed the wife's features, dress and speech, and travelled with the unsuspecting knight to a rendezvous with the devil, in the forest. At her approach the devil screamed

in torment and fled. Mary's powers over evil were intertwined with powers over death. The story was told of a pilgrim who made love to a woman during a break in his journey to Compostella. Shortly afterwards he was confronted by the devil who had disguised himself as St. James. The devil advised the pilgrim to castrate himself and then cut his throat because of his foul sin. Weeping bitterly the pilgrim obeyed and was immediately snatched off to hell. However St. Peter and St. James barred the way, released the victim and brought him to Mary, who restored him to life. He rose from the dead as an eunuch, with a red thread round his neck; he lived long enough to do penance for his sin, and died again, but then at peace with his maker. (The miracle appeared in the '**Dicta Anselmi**,' before 1109, and was told by **Hugh of Cluny to Anselm the Younger**).

The resuscitation of sinners so that they could confess, sustaining the damned in life until they could repent, were prerogatives of the Virgin. A thief remained swinging on the gallows for three days and nights and survived. The executioner took a swipe at him but could not hurt him. Having been released he told the amazed onlookers that the Virgin had held him up so that his neck should not break; and had then caught the executioner's sword. In **Gautier de Coincy's** version of this miracle, in illuminated manuscript, the Virgin appeared "with a determined look on her face,"⁴² supporting the thief on the tip of her finger. Coulton quotes de Coincy's Divine approbation of **Mary** (from H. Adams): "She is more truly Lady in earth and heaven, by one degree, than God Himself. He loved her so, and hath such faith in her that she can neither do nor say aught that He will disavow or gainsay."⁴³

Mary was universally hailed as the one who would use all means, if necessary devious, to bring sinners to repentance, actively thwarting God's righteous anger against them. In one story, Mary happily took the place of a sinning nun, who went away with her lover. She fulfilled her duties until the nun repented and returned to her convent. In such circumstances Mary would lay down one condition, that the sinner would remember her in prayer. If the request were forgotten, then Mary "was equally likely to 'forget' her relationship with them, thereby exposing them to the full wrath of God."⁴⁴

From **Thomas of Cantimpre** and others came the story of a Cistercian monk whose waywardness had caused great scandal. Mary prayed to her Son for him. "But the child, as one resisting, turned his face away."⁴⁵ After a number of unsuccessful manoeuvres and by her "wondrous

and pitiful instance of prayer, the Mother got the better of her Son."⁴⁶ According to Thomas, one should not wonder at this, since Mary enjoyed the "singular privilege"⁴⁷ mentioned in the Book of Job, "There is none (other) that may be able to reprove both, and to put his hand between both."⁴⁸ (Compare with "If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both"⁴⁹). In one document it was stated that God's vengeance on Judgment Day "shall appal even great Mary."⁵⁰ Some European writers had propounded two kingdoms; one of justice, belonging to God, and the other of mercy, belonging to Mary. The ancient goddesses had calmed the wrath of the warriors by showing their bare breasts; Mary could be relied upon "to remind God that she had once nursed him and the milk of her breast could now dissolve his wrath."⁵¹ Mary had the power, "in reward for her humility,"⁵² to check her Son's wrath. Jesus was asked to save the sinner since he could readily identify with the feeling of abandonment. "Save me, O Jesus, whom thy mother's folk rejected."⁵³ Mary would be partial, showing mercy, in face of God the Father's objective justice. She would remind him of his human origins, showing him her breasts, recalling how he had suckled. (Yet Coulton is sure that the evidence of these times has revealed many who depreciated and doubted the "transcendent glories"⁵⁴ of Mary).

Maria Lactans.

The Virgin was given the opportunity to exercise one natural biological function in her initial experience of childbearing - that of suckling the infant. Whereas the first 'known' image of the Madonna and child was painted in the catacomb of St. Priscilla in Rome, depicting (a prophet pointing to a star, and) a mother holding a babe in her arms, offering him her breast. Warner suggests that the theme of 'Maria Lactans' could have originated in Egypt. There, from 1000 B.C., the goddess Isis had been portrayed as suckling the infant Horus. That tradition must have influenced the iconography of the Virgin. In two Coptic MSS from Faynum dating from the end of the Ninth century, Mary is shown gazing "forward above the head of the child on her knee to whom she proffers her exposed breast."⁵⁵ Warner also points out that the goddess suckling her divine offspring was a common feature in ancient civilizations. Two thousand years before Christ, the goddess of Ur, in Mexico c1000 B.C. and in a number of African countries, female deities suckled their infants. The infant Krishna was shown with his mother Dewaki in Indian sculptures. The Christian viewing the mystery of the incarnate God so intensely concentrated in the symbol of Mary's milk, would relish the

paradox that One, "on whom all creation hangs, should hang from the breast of his human mother."⁵⁶

In the lullaby composed by Ephraem of Nisibis, Mary mused on the wonder that "all heights of heaven are full of Thy majesty, and yet my bosom is not too straitened for Thee."⁵⁷

In those worldwide religions which revered the Goddess, the milk of the Sacred Cow was one of the earliest sacred foods, equivalent to present day communion - the giver and sustainer of life. Milk was a powerful symbol of life itself, not only for feeding but also for healing wounds in battle. Condren states that in the ancient world, to spill breast milk was "morally equivalent to the contemporary attitude toward spilling male seed."⁵⁸ It was imperative that ways to seal milk had to be found. The effort to do so gave rise to the science of alchemy, which attempted to seal the 'essence' of life within vessels shaped in the form of breasts. Throughout the ancient world it was assumed that breast milk transmitted to the infant the spiritual traits of the mother. (For example, St. Brigit was baptized in milk and was fed by the milk of a Sacred Cow).

While milk symbolised the full humanity of Jesus; it was, in the context of ancient symbolism, a "crucial metaphor of the gift of life."⁵⁹ Therefore the milk of the Mother of God became synonymous with the symbolism of life, "for the life of life's own source depended on it."⁶⁰ The symbolism also moved from wisdom to mercy. The Virgin's milk also came to represent her intercession and her healing. Because of this association, a phenomenal variety of relics flooded Europe. From the Thirteenth century thousands of pilgrims flocked to shrines (such as Walsingham, Chartres, Genoa and Rome), where her milk was preserved in phials. It was reported that, on occasions, the Virgin's milk ("transcendental milk from Heaven"⁶¹), liquefied as if it were fresh, and proved to be "almost infinitely divisible."⁶² In French miracle plays Jesus was depicted as displaying the wounds He suffered to save humanity; Mary exposed "her breasts (with which she nourished Him), to encourage His mediation with God the Father."⁶³ A dutiful and loving Son would never refuse His mother. **John Calvin** was scathing in his remarks, in a **Treatise on Relics**:

There is no town so small, nor conventso mean, that it does not display some of the Virgin's milk..... There is so much, that if the holy Virgin had been a cow, or a wet nurse all her life, she would have been hard put to it to yield such a great quantity.⁶⁴

Mary's benevolent condescension greatly benefited the Saints on earth. It was reckoned that, from St. Bernard onwards, "she has fed them with her milk, and surrounded them with every

motherly care."⁶⁵ In a sermon on the Song of Solomon Ch. 4: 11, Bernard interpreted the picture as "the kiss of the Church and Christ her bridegroom."⁶⁶

He gives her the kiss she had longed for ...and so great is the power of that kiss that she at once conceives and her bosom swells with milk... So too we approached the altar of God and pray, and, if we but persevere, despite our own dryness and tepidity, grace will overpower us, our bosom will swell, love will fill our heartsand thy milk of sweetness will overflow everywhere in a torrent.⁶⁷

Marina Warner suggests that Bernard's intense devotion to the Virgin led to a logical development of a legend. The saint was reciting the 'Ave Maris Stella' before the statue of the Virgin. As soon as he reached the words, "Show thyself a mother,"⁶⁸ the Virgin appeared and gently pressed three drops of milk from her breast onto his lips. The story of Bernard's vision found its way into the lives of the mystic Henry Suso (d.1365), and of the promoter of the rosary, Alanus de Rupe (d.1475). Another Cistercian Armand de Chartres (d.1156), abbot of Booeval, referred in a sermon to an incident in the Iliad where Hecuba bared her breasts and implored her son Hector not to fight Achilles. The image passed into popular usage.

It is suggested that these profiles of Mary were an attempt to harmonize a creed, which, in the hands of the formal theologians and dialecticians, had become too inhuman. Mary, more than any other religious, appeared to liberate the perplexed from "the intolerable logic"⁶⁹ of the law, in matters of salvation and damnation. ("Let us go secretly to the Queen and promise a present"⁷⁰). Women felt this more than men, and had most reason to rebel against priestly rigorism, which condemned the dance, "all elaboration of dress and light unstudied speech;"⁷¹ and could find in natural beauty, Satan's deadliest snares. Some believe that the cult of the Virgin Mary "raised medieval woman to a pedestal of respect and admiration, (from which the Reformation removed her)."⁷² The medieval mystic's meditation on the Incarnation moved from a mother simply nursing her baby to "an eternal mystery whereby the Christian soul is perpetually nourished and sustained by grace, of which Mary's milk is a sublime epiphany."⁷³

The Church (Ecclesia), has been depicted as such a mother. Many penitents, visionaries and saints have found in Mary, their 'nursing mother', because of her symbolical association with Wisdom and the Church. (In the mass for the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes a passage from Isaiah 66: 12 is read: "For thus says the Lord, I will extend prosperity (peace) to her like a river, and the wealth

(glory) of the nations (Gentiles), like a flowing stream: and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees "74).

Later compilations of the collection of miracles of the Virgin included a recurring tale. A monk lay dying of a putrid disease of the mouth, his nose and lips had been eaten away by ulcers. His colleagues gave him up for dead. Bitterly he upbraided the Virgin, reminding her of his faithful daily invocations in the words of the woman in St. Luke 11: 27: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you."⁷⁵ The Virgin "suitably chastened by her swain's reproof,"⁷⁶ appeared at his bedside. Gautier de Coincy, who recorded the story in French in 1223, continued,

**With much sweetness and much delight, from her sweet bosom she
drew forth her breast, that is so sweet, so soft so beautiful, and placed
it in his mouth, (and) gently touched him all about and sprinkled him
with her sweet milk.⁷⁷**

The monk was miraculously restored. Warner finds no 'edifying moral' in Gautier's version of the story. But John of Garland, who selected many of the familiar miracles in his 'Stella Maris' collection: (' The Stella Maris of John of Garland,' by Evelyn Faye Wilson, Cambridge, Mass., 1946), endeavoured to introduce some spiritual meaning. His monk was a worldly rascal who had bitten away his lips and tongue while in the throes of his illness. The Virgin appeared and applied the healing balm of her milk, which was "truly virginal, nectar of the spiritual life, through which death meets its defeat."⁷⁸ The monk's healing was accompanied by repentance.

Popular Literature

Among other popular Marian literature of this period were a number of similar works in the vernacular tongues and based on the Latin 'Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae et Salvator's Rhythmica.' This story began with the annunciation to Anne and Joachim of the birth of Mary, who would be sanctified in her mother's womb. Mary became a Temple virgin when she was seven, (four years after her presentation there). Her duties and devotion reflected those of a medieval nun. Her proficiency in Biblical knowledge was attributable to her acquaintance with "the tropological, mystical, moral analogical and literal"⁷⁹ senses of Scripture, which were being developed at this time. Detailed descriptions of her outward appearance and of her inner life were suggested. The earlier Byzantine emphasis on her silence was replaced by the prevailing status of women whose eloquence was enjoyed and applauded. Eventually Mary was elected as Queen of the Temple virgins. Her fame led to

veneration by priests and bishops, and to the desire of noble youths to marry her. She rejected the amorous approaches of the priests and regarded herself as united to the King of the World, as her one spouse in everlasting love. Her vow of virginity was protected by the miraculous choice of Joseph.

The biblical accounts of the Annunciation and other episodes in the lives of Mary and Jesus were greatly elaborated. From an idea in the 'Glossa Ordinaria' of Anselm of Laon (early Twelfth century), the radiant Mary, after her conception, was considered as beyond the gaze of Joseph or any other man. The Apocryphal Gospel of St. James was used extensively and with exaggeration. In the Passion story Mary's part assumed excessive proportions. Earlier reflections on the scenes of the Passion were shattered by the suggested reactions of Mary to the successive events. She fainted at the news of Jesus' arrest. She lost self-control and raved hysterically. Paroxysms of grief were her response to the traumas of that period. The harrowing memories of the past were to be forgotten when the risen Christ appeared to His mother and assured her of continued protection from any ignominy. After His Ascension she remained in the care of John in Jerusalem, and was nourished by heavenly food provided by angels. She performed many miracles, cast out devils and instructed new converts in the Faith. Apocryphal sources were fully used to detail her death and assumption. St. Thomas received a revelation of Mary's resurrection on the third day; her ascent through the heavens, greeted by choirs of angels together with the saints of the Old and New Testaments, climaxed in the welcome by each of the three persons of the Trinity.

Marian devotion, during the Middle Ages, attracted and integrated elements from the 'Mother of God' motif. Other elements drawn from the 'mother of a human child,' featuring "the baby Jesus dependent on the milk of Mary's breasts, Mary's ability as mother to make her child compliant and indulgent."⁸⁰ In contrast to the compassionate mother, there was the stern masculine Jesus, sovereign over human affairs. Out of these concepts a "prominent thread of Marianism"⁸¹ was created, against which the Reformers were to protest; it seemed "as though grace and mercy were not the gifts of Christ, but ultimately of Mary."⁸² (E. L. Mascall has argued that Mary's motherhood has been further extended:

..... if the Church is the living organism of Christ's glorified human nature communicated to men, and if Mary is still the human mother of the human Christ, she is the Mother of the Church and our mother too..... The Church lives its whole life under the maternal love of Mary).⁸³

Today's Marian cult in retrospect.

The modern Catholic cult of Mary may be traced to the Christendom of the high Middle Ages. In Western Europe Marian trends made greater impressions during the period of the Crusades; and were promoted broadly through art, poetry and the romanticization of women. Contact with the Byzantine Church "gave substance to what might otherwise have remained no more than a sentiment."⁸⁴ French Cathedrals, especially, betrayed a strong tendency to emulate 'Byzantine extremism' in design and contents. St. Bernard's panegyric of the Virgin became "a figure of rare beauty and vividness"⁸⁵ in the skills of Dante (1265 - 1321), and Petrarch (1304 - 1374) The final canto of Dante's '**Divine Comedy**' opened with a prayer to Mary, which (in Ashe's opinion), "ranks among the supreme utterances of western religion."⁸⁶ O'Carroll accepts the reputation accorded to Dante as the supreme poet of Mary. Marina Warner, while noting Dante's reliance on St. Bernard to sing Mary's praises in his **Paradiso**, observes that the poet borrowed little from Bernard's writings and avoided "the erotic rapture of the great preacher's tone and imagery."⁸⁷ Dante emphasized the importance of her part in the Incarnation, which made Mary a most effective intercessor in heaven.

Against a background of Marian architecture, Marian art, Marian craftsmanship and Marian financial investment, theologians disputed over doctrine. As a consequence, vested interests in the cult quickly developed. Some of the new Marian litanies had their ancestry in the Akathistos hymn. The litany of Loreto, written about 1200, contained seventy-three invocations. One of them refers to Mary as '**stella matutina**' (morning star), which the Babylonians had named after the sky goddess Ishtar, (the Romans, for their part, after Venus). Mary of this period was "a major irruption of the Eternal-Womanly."⁸⁸ The Patriarch Germanus and his successors, in extravagant terms, ensured for her a greater reverence. Ashe is prompted to suggest that the portrayal of Mary as Queen - Mother of Heaven, "with a retinue of ladies - in - waiting, disguised as allegorical Virtues and Beatitudes,"⁸⁹ appears to have had strong links with the Queen - Mothers, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Blanche of Castile, (twelfth and thirteenth centuries, respectively).

One of the effects of the Crusades was to promote European ladies to a new ascendancy. As a result Mary found herself assigned to a more dominant role. The failure of the Crusades, other world events, together with portents of pending doom and divine judgments, impelled the quest for a sympathetic, understanding and helpful ear. Mary now had a dual role, that of 'Mother of the

Sorrows' (human and accessible), and that of an 'informal goddess,' who could grant petitions. In an elevated and unique position above the angels she was "Co - Saviour with a dutiful Son, whom most men and women could hardly reach except through her."⁹⁰ She received the title 'the Temple of the Trinity;' (a Madonna in the Cluny museum contains all three Persons). The period around the close of the thirteenth century was marked by an enhancement of Mary's humanity, which seemed to give her "a positive advantage over the abstract Deity."⁹¹

On the other hand, Delumcau has illustrated how the popular mind unconsciously folklorized Christianity within ceremonies and beliefs. The encouragement of such an attitude came from "the mental structures and the sluggishness of a still-archaic civilization," which resulted in "a species of relapse into paganism."⁹² Magic numbers held a highly significant place in the pseudo-religious ceremonial of white witchcraft. The application of hellebore was effective only when accompanied by the recitation, "five days in succession, of the Pater Noster and as many Ave Marias in the Name of our Saviour's passion and death."⁹³ (E. Delcambre). Catholics in the 'classical era' incorporated "magical ritual efficacy"⁹⁴ in the baptismal ceremony. Because of St. Augustine's conclusion that infants who died without baptism would go to hell, parents were greatly distressed when their child was still-born. To meet this psychological need sanctuaries were dedicated to Mary for the presentation of still-born babies.

The infants were laid in the altar, and when colour rose to the cheeks, the lips moved and nostrils quivered, baptism was quickly administered, and the parents and god-parents reassured, then let them relapse into the stiffness of death.⁹⁵

Documents of this period have revealed that "a magnificent influence was sometimes attributed to the saints."⁹⁶ Mary herself was suspected of harming humans. An accused woman from Bazezney in Lorraine wanted to know which one it was, 'our Lady,' 'our Lady of Sion,' 'our Lady of Fricort', or 'our Lady of La Maix,' who had brought evil on a woman, as if there were as many Virgins as sanctuaries dedicated to her name. Such may be comparable to the pagan ideas about the retaliation of their gods to evil.

The prince of darkness and his legions of demons began to obsess the west, from the Fourteenth Century. The 'misfortune as punishment theme' of the Councils of the Church, (Tenth century), was taken up by preachers and theologians. These 'spokesmen of God' attempted to convince their hearers that concern had to be shown more for the moral evil, than for its result, physical evil, such as

plagues. The tactics resulted in a greater fear of the devil against whom improved behaviour and prayer were effective. (In the diocese of Autun in 1686, the peasants sacrificed a heifer to our Lady to obtain protection for their herds against the plague). Before the Counter Reformation gained momentum extreme religious ignorance must have existed in most of the country areas . In 1579 a council at Milan forbade Mayday festivities in the north of Italy. These festivities included cutting down trees, which were paraded through towns and villages and then planted "with wild and ridiculous ceremonies."⁹⁷ The practice was widespread in Europe. However Delumeau believes that the consecration of the month of May to Mary (in the early Eighteenth century) was "probably not an attempt to Christianize the folklore manifestations of that period of the year....."⁹⁸ The widely-held belief that May was an unlucky month could have prompted the move. (For example it was considered unlucky to get married in May.

(By the Seventeenth century all social classes in France were the objects of the missionary apostolate who, by "the propagandists of the faith, tried especially to reach the popular strata."⁹⁹ Hymns were composed in the vernacular and made easy to remember by being set to the melodies of well-known popular songs:

Popular songs

You thought by loving Collette

My sweetheart is pretty

A duck stretching its wings

I don't know if I'm drunk

Friends let us drink

Hymns

Carol for spiritual souls

The true devotee of Mary

The sufferings of our Lady

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

Our Lady of gifts

Grignon de Monfort specialized in this pious plagiarism).

Comment.

The impetus from preceding periods, together with the effects of the Crusades and the influences of art and poetry, produced new expectations of Mary's rôle. Enthusiasm mounted for the universal Mother , the queen, the type of the Church, who co-operated fully in her Son's saving

activities. Her unique position prompted the pursuit of captivating tales of miraculous intervention. Her influence procured safety for sinners, who deserved divine justice.

The demand to honour Mary led to the construction of churches in her honour, the establishment of shrines for pilgrimage and the determination of Monastic orders to have her patronage. The cult of Mary reached its zenith at this time.

However there may have been those who were more cautious in their attitudes. For the general public it would appear that the distant dialectic of the experts could not satisfy the yearnings for a human face. Superstitions were fed with convenient additions from church teaching. It has to be noted that ancient Egypt had also portrayed a mother and child, together with the attendant symbolism of the mother's milk.

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CHAPTER XV

CONTINUING DEBATE ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

William of Ware, (d.c.1305, taught in the Oxford house of studies of the Friars Minor at the end of the thirteenth century). He had been "the first theologian, to date, (at least of those so far known), to (risk) give the pious opinion of the 'simple people' a hearing in the lecture rooms and to defend it in a commentary on the '**Sentences of Peter Lombard**,'"¹ (**A. Emmen**). William argued his case for the Immaculate Conception, against the possibility of a mistaken view of the Virgin's privilege; he even preferred error that would have been in favour of the doctrine. The principle of according too much (rather than too little) to the Virgin was more clearly defined by his pupil **Duns Scotus**. **Eadmer's** axiom "**potuit, deuit, fecit**,"² and **Anselm's** reference to Mary's purity as being second only to God's purity, were used by William in his assertion that Mary had been conceived "pure from the impure."³ To counter the strength of the influence of **St. Bernard**, he cited the story of the lay brother's vision. To those who saw the universality of the Redemption limited by the Immaculate Conception, he declared that

all the purity of the Mother came to her through her Son; therefore she needed the passion of Christ, not because of the sin that was in her, but of that which would have been in her, if her Son himself had not preserved her through faith.⁴

Such a statement appears to be set only in the context of Mary's Motherhood, both promised and actual.

John Duns Scotus (1266 - 1308), a Scottish born Franciscan, succeeded his teacher in the chair of Theology in Oxford in 1300. He moved to Paris in 1304, where hostility to the exposition of the Immaculate Conception was rampant. John's position on this question (according to **Graef**) was made explicit in the '**Oxford Opus**,' in which he commented on the **Sentences of Peter Lombard**.

In developing and systematising the work of William of Ware, **Duns Scotus** marked "a great medieval turning point"⁵ in the history of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He provided a solution to what **O'Carroll** calls an apparently insuperable and difficult objection. How was it possible to reconcile Our Lady's privilege with the universality of the Redemption of Christ? The '**Subtle Doctor**' refuted any incompatibility, by arguing that the "universal Redeemer prevents original sin more perfectly and directly than actual sin, and as He is the most perfect Redeemer, it is only to be

expected that He would exercise this most perfect act, at least once."⁶ Although the recipient of such a privilege, Mary was under obligation to her Son. Through his mediatorial role she had been preserved from "a guilt contracted or still to be contracted."⁷ Out of his Anselmian view of original sin (privation), he wondered, "why should not one person at least owe Christ innocence,"⁸ when so many owe Him grace and glory? "If it does not contradict the authority of the Church or of Scripture, it seems probable that to Mary the more excellent thing should be attributed."⁹

As others needed Christ, so that through His merit they should be forgiven sin already contracted, so she needed the mediator preserving from sin, lest she should ever have to contract it or should contract it.¹⁰

O'Carroll points out a disputed text in the 'Theoremata' - "as it is said that the Blessed Virgin contracted original sin, nevertheless was cleansed afterwards."¹¹

The Franciscan Order was to follow Duns Scotus in its acceptance of and support for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. **Peter Oriol** (c. 1280 - 1322), a disciple of the 'great Doctor,' produced a treatise on the subject, which had a great influence on the evolution of the dogma. He conceived the possibility of a distinction between contracting original sin *de jure* (in normal human conception), on the one hand, and on the other, escaping *de facto*, "in actual fact, by a special grace."¹² His inference that Mary could never have been a 'vessel of wrath,' countered the arguments of his opponents and helped to confirm the doctrine. Graef accepts the reasoning of Oriol as very convincing. Nevertheless she admits that in one place he betrayed the influences of his era, a time when scholasticism was declining. He declared that "the Virgin Mary was chosen to be in some way the principle of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as she is the principle of His principle, the Mother of the Son, from Whom the Spirit Himself proceeds."¹³ Graef rejects this "introduction of Mary into the inner-Trinitarian relations,"¹⁴ as inadmissible and beyond that which is attainable by the most worthy human being.

Francis of Mayronis (d.1328) and **William of Nottingham** (d.1336), continued the strong Franciscan defence of the Immaculate Conception. The former, who followed the arguments of Duns Scotus, insisted that Mary could not have been subject to original sin. Otherwise "she would have suffered a greater loss than the pains of hell and the angels would have been purer than she."¹⁵ He also followed the principle that to believe too much is better than to believe too little about Mary. William may have been the first to affirm the doctrine apodictically.

The controversy about the Immaculate Conception continued throughout the Fourteenth and into the Fifteenth century. The battle was strenuously engaged. Rival visions and rival miracles were strategic elements in the contest. Marina Warner refers to a 'Trecento diptych,' located in the Vatican Sinacoteca, which gives pictorial evidence of the conflict. In one panel the Virgin appears before two men and stops their fighting; in the other a Franciscan friar emerges unscathed from an ordeal by fire "in the presence of confounded Dominicans and other doubters."¹⁶ Husenbeth compliments the energetic support expressed by the Franciscans, whose efforts during a period of debate on the subject, eventually, and by strong reasoning, convinced the mass of the faithful and "the most learned bodies in Europe"¹⁷ of the truth of the doctrine. In the Sorbonne and in such universities as Cologne, Valentia, Salamanca and Naples, it became obligatory for those who were to be promoted to the degree of doctor, to promise, by oath, to maintain this religious belief.

The volume of compositions by the Franciscans in defence of the Immaculate Conception may be gauged by the record of Montfauçon, (foot-note by Husenbeth p. 41), who visited the library of the Chevalier Belevius at Pavia in Italy (in c.1698). There he was surprised to learn that the whole collection of books contained treatises on the defence of the Immaculate Conception. Not only the Franciscans, but also the Benedictines, the Carthusians, the Orders of St. Augustine, of Cluny of Citeaux, of the Premonstratensians, the Carmelites and many others held zealously to the doctrine. The Dominicans strongly opposed the doctrine, "not," concludes Graef, "because they begrudged the Mother of God this privilege,"¹⁸ but because of the opposition of **Thomas Aquinas**.

The Carmelites, who claimed descent from the prophet Elijah and his band of hermits on Mount Carmel, conceived of a new type of the Immaculate Virgin. They regarded the rain-bearing cloud which appeared miraculously and ended the long drought after Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, as Mary, (I Kings 18: 44). She had appeared as the harbinger of the end of the great drought before the Messiah. They "therefore professed a special devotion to the cult of her conception."¹⁹ This Order, from its inception, claimed to be under special protection from the Mother of God.

John Baconthorp (d.1348), a native of Norfolk, ("the greatest Carmelite theologian of his time"²⁰), at first rejected the teachings of **Ware**, **Scotus** and **Oriol**. But under the influences of **St. Anselm**, together with legislation about the feast, he accepted the doctrine unequivocally about 1340. The whole Order followed suit. In a '**Treatise on the Rule of the Carmelite Order**' (c.1335), and in

'*Speculum de Institutione Ordinis ad Venerationem Virginis Deiparate*,' respectively, he argued that the Carmelites' rule reflected Mary's own life, and that the Order was specially instituted for the Veneration of the Mother of God.

During the latter period of the Fourteenth century, two popes were exiled at Avignon, and then became embroiled in the Great Schism. Italy was rocked by internecine troubles among her city states. England and France were locked in war. In Germany the ideal of the knight declined. A dearth of religion accompanied a slide into speculative mysticism. St. Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373), was an exception to this. A member of the Franciscan Tertiaries (Third Order), her visions of the birth of Christ caught the imagination of Europe. She adhered to the Franciscan teaching on the Immaculate Conception

John Tauler (b.c.1300, d.1361) from Strasburg, entered the Dominican Order and gained a reputation as a powerful preacher. Schaff comments that Tauler's sermons have been more widely read in the Protestant Church than those of other medieval Reformers. His reverence for the Virgin Mary retained a medieval ambience. St. Bernard's "passionate words pronouncing Mary the sinners' mediator with Christ,"²¹ were echoed by Tauler and supported in his own devotions. For him, Mary was the second Eve, who restored what the first Eve had lost.

In her spirit was the heaven of God, in her soul His paradise, in her body His palace. Having become the mother of Christ, Mary became the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son and the bride of the Holy Spirit.²²

The controversy over the Immaculate Conception came to a head around 1387, when **John de Montesno**, a Catalan Dominican, rejected the doctrine as contrary to the faith. The Dominicans supported his defence of the teaching of **St. Thomas**. Montesno, who was condemned and sentenced to prison by the Bishop of Paris, was eventually excommunicated, because he had declared the doctrine to be heretical. Graef appreciates the intellectual problems for the Dominicans, seeing that the doctrine too often betrayed an emotional rather than a theological basis.

John Gerson (1363 - 1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, a noted writer on mysticism and greatly influential in Church affairs, argued for sound theological principles. He felt bound by his office to defend the Immaculate Conception. In a treatise entitled, '**On the Assumption of the Humanity in Christ**,' he affirmed that it was "probable and pious."²³ In presenting his case he followed the teaching of **Duns Scotus**. Accordingly, he emphasized that Mary was not equal with her

Son. Gerson criticised Eadmer's argument of suitability 'potuit, deuit, ergo fuit,' to support, for example, that Mary had enjoyed the use of reason from conception and birth. He encouraged caution in any attempt to step outside human limitations in investigating "the mind of the Lord;"²⁴ although he conceded the possibility of supplementing "the scanty data of Scripture, in accord with the Scripture."²⁵ A long treatise on the Magnificat displayed ardent devotion to the Mother of God. Gerson also maintained the medieval theme of the Kingdom of Justice and Mercy, and portrayed Mary as 'quodammodo' queen of Mercy, - following the view of Pseudo - Albert. He also explained the part that Mary had in the plan of Salvation. Most beloved by Christ and having conformed to His will, she was able to consent voluntarily "that her Son should be crucified for our redemption, which she desired more than anyone, except her Son Himself."²⁶ She, therefore, had a particular place in the priesthood. On the Thursday night of the Last Supper, (while not invested with the priestly character, as priests have it), "she was so endowed in a more eminent manner for the reconciliation of sinners, the opening of Paradise."²⁷

More than her earthly companions, Mary bore "the anointing of a Royal Priesthood,"²⁸ not to consecrate, "but to offer this pure victimon the altar of her heart"²⁹ She could be called the 'Mother of the Eucharist,' because she was the 'Mother of good grace.' Gerson also used the metaphor of the neck. "Because Mary connected the members of the Church with Christ their head, from Whom she was the first to receive the rivers of life, which she passes on in turn."³⁰

At the Council of Constance (1414 -18), convened to heal and reform the Church, Gerson preached before the Council Fathers, maintaining the pious belief that Joseph had been bodily assumed into heaven (without fully committing himself). "He was no less eloquent on the need to recognise fully the doctrine and feast of the Immaculate Conception and to propagate its cult."³¹ He invoked Mary, expressing confidence in her influential mediation.

In this atmosphere Gabriel Biel of Speyer, (1410 - 95), vicar at Maintz, preached and taught. He highlighted the Immaculate Conception, together with Mary's maternity and her instrumental co-operation with her Son, in His Incarnation and Passion. Mary's assumption into Heaven and the elevation to a position, (surpassed only by the Trinity), from which she has participated and mediated in the salvation of mankind, were also recorded. The background to his comments lay in the

propositions within the works of **Duns Scotus**, **William of Occam**, **Jean Gerson** and **Gregory of Rimini**, whose ideas Biel used for his discussion and debate.

In his mariology **Gregory of Rimini**, (General of the Augustinian Order) examined three arguments from tradition, using **William of Ware** and **Duns Scotus** in favour of the Immaculate Conception; arguments intended as proof that God, de facto, had preserved the Virgin Mary from original sin. The first was based on **Augustine's** statement that the Mother of God should be omitted from any discussion on the doctrine of sin: the second on **Anselm's** formulation of a 'mariological rule', (parallel to his proof of God's existence): and the third by reference to the annual celebration of the Feast of Mary's conception. From **Duns Scotus**, Gregory took up the queries about the possibility, the suitability and the actuality of the Immaculate Conception. He then faced the question as to whether or not the event had taken place. As far as human reason was concerned, the lack of unquestionable evidence demanded a factual answer according to the Scriptures and tradition.

Therefore without any prejudice against a better opinion and without any reflection on the reverence due to the Mother of God, it seems to me that one should say that she has been conceived with original sin.³²

Gregory simply followed the Church Father's teaching on the all-pervasiveness of sin, to reject the three arguments. His counter-arguments drawn primarily from **Augustine**, emphasized that since everyone needed remission of sins, the Virgin Mary would not have been exempted from this rule; Christ alone was exempt from the law of sin; and mankind, including Mary, had come under the general curse of Adam, through the '*commixto corporum*.'

Oberman has regarded Gregory's suggestion, that the doctrine would limit the perfection of the work of Christ, who died for all mankind, as the most telling objection to have been used for a long time, against the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. **Scotus** had attempted to defend the doctrine by the proposition that, since it would have been more perfect to preserve rather than to liberate someone from original sin, the Immaculate Conception was a necessary conclusion. The most perfect redeemer must have been able to redeem His Mother in the most perfect way possible.

In reply, Gregory stated that it could have been possible to interpret 'the perfect redeemer' as the most perfect redeemer to everyone. Therefore to apply the Scotistic manner of argumentation would mean that Christ would have preserved everyone from original sin; and this could not be true. Gregory refuted **Anselm's** encouragement to ascribe to the Virgin Mary the highest possible honour,

that does not contradict Scripture or tradition. He argued that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was indefensible because it was contrary to Scripture and tradition. He would have felt happier with the suggestion that Mary deserved the highest possible purity apart from Christ, rather than the formula 'apart from God.' Had Mary been conceived without original sin, then she would have been equal with Christ in purity. In this case she would have avoided the consequences of sin, of which death is one. But that did not happen. Gregory saw the Immaculate Conception as the introduction to the Assumption, a doctrine that he avoided to a large extent.

Gregory accepted that Mary was cleansed from original sin in the first moment of her conception: she was the only one to have been conceived in sin, but not born in sin. This seemed more probable to him than the 'second sanctification' of Mary, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and either extinguished or neutralised the cause of sin.

Biel accused Gregory of a distortion of statements in order to make the evidence support his own view. The proper interpretation of **Augustine** (for Biel) would have excluded Mary from actual and original sin. **Anselm's** 'apart from God' left room for a type of purity that allowed her Immaculate Conception, but without making her the equal of Christ in purity. The authority of the Church had to be recognised - and that was "always more telling than that of individual doctores."³³ Oberman observed that, although Biel used Paul's letter to the Romans (Ch. 5) in his exposition, his arguments lay in tradition. Biel also followed the concept of the eternal predestination of Mary, to promote her privileged position and to emphasize her maternity. That concept eased the problem about Mary's preservation from sin, before she had given birth to Jesus. Accordingly she would have been always the Mother of God.

Biel asserted that the body of the Virgin Mary had been preserved from incineration, basing his statement on a treatise by **Pseudo-Augustine**, although he accepted **Augustine** as the author.

Scotus and **Occam** had explained that a mother had just as active a part in the production of a child as a father. From his agreement with this perception, Biel concluded that the Virgin Mary was entitled to be called the Mother of Christ in a very real sense. In that she alone had provided the bodily substance and was assisted in her natural role in a supernatural way; he reckoned that her participation must have been substantial. This, for Biel, did not imply that Mary had thereby earned the privilege of becoming the Mother of God. On the other hand he felt that she could have earned

that status, because of God's decision through Grace. **Bonaventura** and **Aquinas** had established that "Mary's merits could only be '**merita de congruo**', since the conception of Christ surpasses all merits, and this conception alone is the basis for all her other merits."³⁴ Biel's observation that Mary could have earned the status of '**Theotokos de condigno**' was to shape the theology of his school.

In his **Collectorium** Biel gave a glimpse of the doctrine of predestination as he explained the ultimate cause of Mary's co-operation. This work took away interest in Mary's individual honour and qualities, by the conclusion that God could have chosen another woman as the instrument of the incarnation. A variation on that argument was his suggestion that Christ could have formed a body from any place he liked, between heaven and earth. "But He wanted to form the body out of a virgin so that, while He could be the father of the redeemer, she, through co-operation, would become the mother of the redeemed."³⁵

Biel saw the humility of Mary as parallel to the **kenosis** of Christ; and went as far as to apply the reference in **Philippians 2: 8, 9**, to her. "And being found in human form, she humbled herselftherefore God has highly exalted her"³⁶ - a humiliation that followed the example of Christ and which "received the highest name after Christ."³⁷ Since Mary had been brought into the world to serve, so Biel believed that her co-operation extended to participation in the sufferings of Christ, for the redemption of many. **Oberman** reckons that in spite of "the general pre-occupation of the time with Mary as co-redemprix, Biel's stand on this point strikes one as restrained."³⁸

The **Council of Basle** (1431-49), which also had to deal with the controversy of Mary's conception, officially proclaimed the doctrine of the **Immaculate Conception**, on September 15th 1439, but only after the dissolution of the Council in May of that year. Without legal authority the decree had no binding force. **Pope Felix** declared the belief to be the official teaching of the Church. However he was deposed as anti-pope during the period of schism in the Church. The struggle over the doctrine was not settled, since the curia acknowledged officially only the first twenty-two sessions of the Council. Thus, while the decree on the feast and the doctrine had been approved, the Council could not exercise any legal authority to enforce their decision. Four hundred years were to elapse before the definition became a dogma of the universal Church. The Council continued to meet until 1442 in an effort to effect reunion with the Orthodox Church.

Bernardine of Siena (d.1444), one of the most popular Franciscan preachers of the age, (and a strong supporter of the reunion), held a special place in the Marian devotion of this period.

O'Carroll describes him as "an enthusiast for our Lady."³⁹ He reproduced much of the work of others within his order, **Peter John Olivi** and **Ubertino of Casale**, for example. O'Carroll criticises Bernardine's rhetoric as somewhat excessive and daring. Graef contrasts his lack of caution with that of **John Gerson**, and regards his enthusiasm as reaching astonishing lengths:

I do not doubt that God wrought all the deliverances and mercies in the Old Testament solely out of respect for this blessed maiden, on account of which He decreed in His predestination from eternity that she should be honoured above all His works.⁴⁰

God had, from all eternity, loved her beyond excess. The spouse of God the Father, she was nearest to Christ.

Bernardine did not engage in the 'scholastic warfare' on the Immaculate Conception. According to some commentators, he believed in the privilege (although he neither taught nor defended it). This may be supported by his references to the purity and sinlessness of Mary. In '**Sermons on Feasts of the Blessed Virgin**' 3,3, (557), he expressed the belief that Christ had come to redeem Mary, rather than any other creature. Following this he indulged in "pious exaggerations, not to say absurdities."⁴¹ He spoke of a progression in sanctification which culminated in the moment of conception of the Son of God, when Mary "was filled with new and incomprehensible virtues and graces."⁴² O'Carroll suggests that Bernardine was over-generous in his adulation of the perfection of Mary, while in her mother's womb. There, he claimed, "she had the use of free-will and perfect light in her intellect and reason."⁴³ Through her consent Mary reached a higher degree of union with God than would have been achieved by all others gathered into one. Thereby she had "merited the dominion of the world, the plenitude of graces and all knowledge,"⁴⁴ (*Sermons on Feasts*, 3,1, (552)).

Bernardine's plunge into a tide of extravagant praise carried him out of reach of credibility. He could view Mary's position both as increasingly independent of Christ, and in remarkable relationship to God. He claimed that "the blessed Virgin could do more concerning God than God could do concerning Himself."⁴⁵ He based his argument on the assertion that Mary made a man who was "finite, mortal, poor, temporal, palpable, sentient, visible in the form of a servant, in a created nature...."⁴⁶ God for His part "could only beget what was infinite, immortal eternal, not sensible, not touchable, invisible under the form of God."⁴⁷ Bernardine also set out to prove that "only the blessed

Virgin Mary has done more for God, or just as much, as God has done for mankind."⁴⁸ He observed that "God fashioned man from the soil, but Mary formed Him from her pure blood; God impressed on man His image, but Mary impressed hers on God....."⁴⁹ He concluded that Mary has done more for God than God has done for man.

(Husenbeth points out that, in 1457, the **Council of Avignon** confirmed the decree of Basle, but goes on to observe that the Holy See appeared somewhat reticent to become too embroiled in a controversy that had been dividing "famous doctors and illustrious divines;"⁵⁰ but could not prevent evidence of partiality).

However the doctrine was widely and warmly welcomed in a number of regions - in Germany, France and Switzerland. But the uncertainty about the ecumenicity of the Council of Basle left its decisions open to attack. The Dominicans called it the synagogue of Satan, whose diabolic first-born was the definition of the Immaculate Conception. The decision of **Pope Sixtus IV** to grant special indulgences to all who attended services on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, was not received enthusiastically by every party. The acrimony of ensuing discussions caused a compulsory cessation of further disputation, on pain of excommunication, in 1482, 1483 and in 1503.

In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV held a public debate between **Vincenzo Bandinelli**, Master General of the Dominican Order, and **Francesco of Brescia**, Master General of the Conventual Franciscans. The latter was deemed the victor, even though the former was able to compile two hundred texts, taken mostly from the Fathers, to oppose the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. In 1483, Sixtus forbade any disputation in pulpits and schools on the conception of Mary. Yet this Franciscan held to the views of his Order, formally instituting the Office of the Conception, on February 27th 1476, (composed by a religious of Verona, **Leonardo de Nogarolis**); and granting an indulgence of a hundred days to any who assisted at it. For his own part Sixtus IV remained outside the dispute with his thesis that "the views of **Duns Scotus** and **St. Thomas** were complementary rather than antagonistic."⁵¹

The debate continued against a background of renewed scrutiny of Scripture. Linguistic techniques were used to highlight errors in the Vulgate translation of the Bible and to expose forgeries and apocryphal documents. The appetite for biblical studies increased. Luther was "a product of the questing and ardent piety"⁵² that emerged as a reaction to the corruption and

superstition of clergy, and which prepared a way for the Reformation. However the definition of the Immaculate Conception (which was "wholly anathema to the Reformer"⁵³), emanated from the renewed scrutiny of Scripture by Catholic apologists, "employing time-honoured techniques of allegorical interpretation."⁵⁴

Propaganda paintings, commissioned for Franciscan churches at this time, favoured the theme of the Virgin's prefigurement in Scripture. Fathers and Doctors of the Church were positioned around her. In their hands they held scrolls which either foretold her miraculous sinlessness in biblical typology or quoted their own works in support. **Augustine** and **Anselm**, in spite of their negative reactions to the doctrine, often appeared in these paintings. Warner tells of a painting by **Piero di Cosimo** (1480), in the Church of San Francesco in Fiesole, in which the Virgin kneels before God the Father, who holds up a book that reads, "Thou shalt not die: for this law is not made for thee but for all others,"⁵⁵ (the words of King Artaxerxes to Queen Esther, Douay Version, Book of Esther, 15: 13)

The Eastern Perception.

The three strong influences in the West, (namely the Augustinian doctrine of original sin: an illiterate laity: and scholasticism), which exercised minds in the development of doctrine and devotion, were not found in the East between the Eleventh and Fifteenth centuries. The Greeks did not exempt Mary from original sin; but they emphasized her complete purity. Graef suggests that their interest was more in the reality of the purity than in its beginning. However Latin theologians have cited this exaltation of Mary's purity as a witness for the Immaculate Conception.

Michael Psellos, (d.c.1078), a Byzantine courtier and philosopher, praised Mary's purity in the highest terms in a homily on the Annunciation. He claimed that her soul was most akin to God, that she seemed like a god with a body, and that she remained very close to the Trinity, while still on earth.

Theophylact, (d. after 1092), a disciple of Psellos, was a deacon of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and tutor of the Emperor Michael VII's son. Later he became Archbishop of Achrida in Bulgaria. He attributed to Mary the highest sanctity which surpasses all creation. O'Carroll and Graef agree that his explanation of *kecharitome*, as 'pleasing to God;' avoided the mistranslation of

the Vulgate. Following the practice of giving prominence to Mary's introduction into the Holy of Holies in the Temple, Theophylact argued that the High Priest had taken the Old Testament commentary on the Ark of the Covenant to relate to the Mother of God. Because she had been "justified from the womb"⁵⁶ and was of a purity that transcended all nature, she was worthy of that honour. Graef quotes Jugie's observation that such an argument implies the Immaculate Conception.

Neophytus the Recluse, (d.c.1220) a priest-monk, illustrated Mary's purity in one of two Marian sermons. He used the parable of the woman baking (St. Matthew 13 : 33), to describe how "the Creator has fashioned and renewed our aged paste, through the divinely fashioned and pure leaven."⁵⁷ He refers to the remarkable miracle where "the most pure Baker has mixed Himself in ineffable manner with this most pure leaven and has thus refashioned the whole dough from it."⁵⁸ The designation 'pure leaven', of Mary, he felt was applicable even if her sanctification had only taken place in the womb.

Germanus II, (d.1240), a deacon at St. Sophia and later patriarch of his city (1222), rivalled his earlier namesake in his devotion to Mary. While he admitted of her relationship to Adam and Eve, he regarded Mary as far superior and more divine. Germanus noted the consequences of the Fall rather than the guilt.

Nicephorus Callistus, (d.c.1335), in Jugie's opinion, was the first Eastern theologian to have denied the Immaculate Conception. He had many contacts with the West and would have been aware of the continuing controversy. His conviction was that

she did not then engender through corruption, but by the word of the archangel Gabriel, after the Holy Spirit had come upon her and had purified her of the original stain, if perchance this stain was still found in her in some way.⁵⁹

Graef concludes that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception must have made some impression on Nicephorus. He spoke of Mary as having been consecrated to God even before her birth, and offered a prayer for forgiveness if he had gone astray in attributing any "stain to the all-pure one."⁶⁰

The most influential theologian and mystic of the Orthodox Church, in the Middle Ages, was **Gregory Palamas**, (d.1359), the famous exponent of 'Hesychasm,' (a system of mysticism, which promised the vision of the uncreated light of the Godhead that had been practised by Mary in preparation for her mission). Graef records the observation of J. Meyendorff that Gregory did not

refer to the Theotokos in his spiritual writings, which were wholly centered on Christ; but he was well aware of, and made use of "the educational value of Marian preaching for the introduction of the Christian people to the mystery of the Incarnation. This is certainly the reason why he shows his devotion to the Mother of God only in his homilies."⁶¹

O'Carroll refers to **Meyendorff's** suggestion that Christ's was the only exception to original sin in the mind of Gregory. "If He had come from (male) seed, He would not have been a new man;" neither would it have been possible for Him to "receive within Him the fulness of the divinity."⁶² Graeff points out that Meyendorff agrees that, if Gregory had shared "the Western notion of original sin, his outstanding Marian piety would have led him to accept it,"⁶³ (that is, the Immaculate Conception). Gregory not only thought that Mary was purified but also spoke of the Holy Spirit as choosing and purifying the series of Mary's ancestors. M. Jugie looks on Gregory's eulogies of Mary as expressing the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Palamas spoke of Mary in glowing terms, but at times indulged in exaggeration.

Mary is the cause of what had gone before her, the pioneer of what has come after her..... she is the thought of the prophets, the head of the Apostles, the support of martyrs, the certainty of doctors..... She is the principle, the source, and the root of ineffable good things. She is the summit and fulfilment of all that is holy.⁶⁴

She made God the Son of man and makes men the sons of God.

The one Marian work of **Theophanes**, Archbishop of Nicaea, (d.c.1381), contained (what O'Carroll describes as) the most daring synthesis ever proposed on the primacy of Mary, her relationship to the three divine persons and her role as Mediatress in all creation. This disciple of Gregory Palamas saw the whole cosmos revolving around Mary. From **Pseudo-Dionysius** he derived a conception of the 'creation', in which he distinguished two 'moments,' that of being itself, and that of well being. The second was achieved through deification which was brought about by the Incarnation. Through divine motherhood Mary was essentially bound with the entire reality. **Theophanes** compared Mary with the earth from which "our Lord and God, the new Adam, (become the second Adam), was taken according to the flesh" with heaven "as truly and rightly the throne of the Omnipotent One," as including and containing all the treasures of grace⁶⁵ She was therefore the source of benediction for all men. The 'first receptacle' of the divine fulness was the assumed nature of the Saviour:

But the living tabernacle which brought Him forth is acknowledged as the second receptacle, that is receiving immediately from the first receptacle, the assumed nature of the Saviour, all the fulness of divinity."⁶⁶

He was convinced that any approach to Christ was only possible through Mary, who "is the Holy of Holies, which the High Priest of the good things to come has entered - and also the inner sanctuary, from which God speaks to all His creatures."⁶⁷

Theophanes placed Theotokos as an hierarchy in herself between Christ and the highest angelic order. As such she received all the graces that flowed undivided from God to the human nature of Christ; and from there to herself. The graces were passed on from Mary to the seraphim and consequently became divided because of the numbers of these angels. Since Mary gave the Word His human nature, His divinity, therefore, has been given through her. O'Carroll and Graef note the sacramental role assigned to Mary by Theophanes, who also spoke of her as a 'second bishop' under Christ the 'first bishop'. The understanding that Theophanes had of Mary's divine motherhood led him to attribute divine titles to her, such as, 'God', 'Lord', 'King of Kings.' Led by the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius he saw, reflected in her, divine omnipotence, domination, wisdom and so on.

Theophanes used the image, (familiar in the West), of Mary as the neck of the mystical body of Christ, to illustrate "her vital, indispensable role,"⁶⁸ as the one through whom alone the good things of the Head could be received. Although he followed medieval Latin authors in stating that Mary had her Son in common with the Father, he also elaborated the idea in the typical speculative way of the Greeks. He suggested that having entered Mary once, and "having prepared her heart as an altar which was to receive both Priest and Victim, Christ remained with her for ever,"⁶⁹ in a union that was as intimate as his union with the Father. Graef observes that he compared this union, (as did St. Basil), with the interpenetration of the divine persons; she regards this as an example of the East's and West's approaching a degree of concordance in identifying Theotokos with her divine Son. However Greeks speculation with its doctrine of the circuminsession, ('interpenetration'), - an intrusion of the Trinitarian relations into Mariology⁷⁰ , would have had no acceptance from the earlier Fathers.

Nicholas Cabasilas, (d.c.1380), a Byzantine theologian, perceived Mary as Theotokos, whose work, will and faith had complemented the work of the Trinity, in the Incarnation of the Word. "Without the consent of the immaculate one, without the contribution of her faith, the plan was as

unrealistic as without the intervention of the three divine persons themselves."⁷¹ Eve had helped Adam, but Mary had helped God by her willingness to co-operate with Him as a fellow worker, in providing for the human race, "so that with Him she should be an associate and sharer in the glory which would come from it."⁷² Cabasilas saw Mary as 'our advocate' with God before the coming of the Paraclete. He looked on her as 'the light of the world', 'the salvation of men', 'way to the world', 'co-cause with Christ', 'the cause of our salvation'. He reflected an opinion commonly held by Greek theologians of his time, that Mary's purity had been attained by her own efforts. Graef deduces that the insistence of Cabasilas, that the Mother of God was given no more help than others to avoid sin, contradicts any notion of her Immaculate Conception; (on the other hand, Jugie wants to make him an exponent of the subject). "Christ being God could not sin, Mary was able to sin; but because she did not sin,"⁷³ she manifested man in his paradisaical integrity. The statements of Cabasilas about Mary's personal victory over defeated human nature have a "semi-Pelagian or even a Pelagian sound"⁷⁴ to Western ears.

One of a quartet of Byzantine Marian theologians, **Isidore Glabas**, (d.c. 1397), Archbishop of Thessalonica, carried the praises of Mary with "unrestrained rhetoric."⁷⁵ Exceeding acceptable limits, his language had more in common with the expressions presented to a pagan goddess. From his reasoning, it could be argued that she brought forth her parents. He held that Mary was the Mother of the Word, not only through giving Him birth, but also as the mother of His creative goodness, "since she is the condition and cause of its manifestation."⁷⁶ Repeatedly emphasizing her heavenly origin, he said:

And if it be not bold, the blessed Virgin is perhaps the co-creatress with God even before she came into the world, who drew forth into being together with Him both visible and invisible creatures and gave them new beauty after her advent on earth.⁷⁷

(Graef finds a possible reason for this idea in Proverbs 8: 22).

In a homily on the Presentation, Isidore stated that Mary alone could declare, "I was not conceived in sin,"⁷⁸ because her parents came together impelled only by God. However, as Graef points out, this concerns only the sinlessness of the 'active' conception, and not the consequences of it, which were regarded by the Greeks, not as inherent guilt, but as the fact of mortality. Common to the critics of Isidore has been their disapproval of his preoccupation with Mary to the near exclusion of

Christ, and of the unequivocal application of Christological texts to Mary. (St. John 1: 14, 14: 6; Colossians 3: 3; Ephesians 2: 18; St. Luke 17: 8).

The **Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus**, (d.1425), (as with many of his predecessors) assumed an interest in theology, . He composed a work on the Assumption of Mary as a thank-offering for his recovery from a serious illness. He established that God was "never not united to her, ever since she had her first beginning in the womb of her barren mother....."⁷⁹ By arguing that "if we know that John (the Baptist) was full of the Holy Spirit in the womb, how can it not be right to affirm the same of the All-Pure?"⁸⁰ According to O'Carroll, Jugie thinks that the Emperor's expressions were excessive with regard to John. Graef perceives Jugie's judgement as somewhat cavalier, when he wrote that the Emperor "seems to place John the Baptist on the same level as the Mother of God and to attribute to him, too, sanctifying grace from the first moment. But this is perhaps only apparently so."⁸¹ Graef believes that Manuel was simply according to Mary, what had always been attributed to John, by both Greek and Latin theologians, namely sanctification.

Graef criticises Jugie's use of another passage by Manuel to prove the Emperor's belief in the Immaculate Conception. Her criticism is made on the grounds of Jugie's omission of the clause, "which the angel Gabriel came from God to bring her,"⁸² which in turn would have supported "the traditional Greek idea, that Mary's complete purification from the curse that God had pronounced on our first parents, came only at the Annunciation."⁸³ O'Carroll accuses Graef of failure on her part to quote: "The most pure Virgin, all pure in soul and body, who from all ages was superior to the ancient curse, coeval with the human race," together with the conclusion, "was fittingly all that we have said."⁸⁴

George Scholarios, (d. after 1472), has been regarded as the most famous and principal theologian of the Greek Church of the later Middle Ages. Mariology has not found a large place in his works. His study of Latin theology influenced his thought on Mary's holiness; but he differed from his contemporaries by his acknowledgement that grace, besides her own efforts, was necessary in effecting this attribute. Graef again finds herself at odds with the conclusion of Jugie, that a particular passage from Scholarios which compared the purity of Christ with that of His Mother, clearly indicated the Immaculate Conception.

Besides correcting Jugie's translation of the Greek terms used by Scholarios, Graef also notes that Scholaris had said that, "if Christ had been conceived from human seed, He could not but have shared in the stain that comes to all men from their descent."⁸⁵ Since Mary had been conceived from seed, she must have shared in original sin. The Franciscans, on the other hand, were affirming that Mary had no share in original sin.

The successes of Turkish conquest, the fall of Constantinople and the flight of Greek Christians to the West, marked the end of an age in the Fifteenth century. Western Christendom entered an epoch of cultural revolution through the Renaissance, the Reformation and the impact of humanism. Marian doctrine and devotion would not "remain unaffected by the new era."⁸⁶

Comment.

The mendicant orders of the Thirteenth century, especially the Dominicans and the Franciscans, had obstructed the progress of the doctrine on the Immaculate Conception. Although the teaching was gaining acceptance in a number of regions during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries, the debate continued; the doctrine was simply received, regarded by some as a strong probability, or condemned as extra- Scriptural. In this latter period, the Franciscans became ardent defenders of the Immaculate Conception, and have remained so. The Dominicans' opposition remained for some time. The Church was to discover that the opportune moment for general acceptance of a new dogma was not yet ripe.

Opportunities for excessive claims and over-exuberance were again grasped, in the light of the claims for Mary. Western theologians have interpreted the Eastern perception of Mary's purity as conducive to the Immaculate Conception. With some exceptions, the Eastern recognition of the Virgin was expressed in the most elaborate and extravagant terms.

Yet this was also a time of searching and questioning. The two main Church bodies of this period failed to effect a united front, in opposition to the Turkish threat. Yet the consequences of victory for the invaders, also included a radical intellectual upheaval in the West.

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CHAPTER XVI

NEW and REFORMED IDEAS.

Husenbeth notes that those of the papal succession followed closely on the predilections of Sixtus IV. In 1506, **Cardinal Ximenes** established a confraternity of the Conception in Spain, with the consent of **Pope Julius II**, who, later (1511), also confirmed an order of religious women, founded under the same title by **Innocent VIII**. Each sister in this Order of the Immaculate Conception, consecrated herself to this mystery in the following terms "I, Sister....., for the love and service of Jesus Christ our Lord, and of the Immaculate Conception of His blessed Mother, promise....."¹ such utterance is regarded by Husenbeth as "by no means ambiguous."² Hymns composed by **Zachary, Bishop of Gordia**, and commissioned by **Leo X** and **Clement VII**, stated that "Our Lady was created in a state of Grace."³ In 1569, **Pope Pius V** granted permission to the Franciscans to celebrate the Office of the Immaculate Conception, attaching to it the same indulgences as to the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. **Paul V**, in 1616, presented a Bull that forbade the holding or the expressing of an opinion, contrary to that of the Immaculate Conception, in public lectures. Six years later **Gregory XV** extended the prohibitions to private discourses and particular conversations. **Alexander VII** celebrated the feast in Rome in 1661. While it is obvious where the sympathies of the Holy See lay, contrary opinion was not condemned, "doubtless out of regard for high and holy names."⁴

The humanists took little interest in Mary beyond their opposition to the popular devotion which focussed largely on Mary and on the saints. **Erasmus of Rotterdam**, 'the greatest of the humanists' relished the new atmosphere abroad in his day. The sectarian and heretical movements that had plagued the Middle Ages had been suppressed. By 1500 Spain's problem with the Jews and the Moors had been settled, to a large degree; the Inquisition had eased; a movement of reform in the Church began to appear in France, England, Spain, Holland and Germany; "but no man so epitomized this reform in many aspects as did Erasmus of Rotterdam."⁵ Contemporary thought and practice were subjected to attack as a result of his campaign for the purification of the Church.

Yet he had engaged in the Marian devotion of his time during his early years . In a '**Pæan**' to the Virgin Mother, he had referred to Mary as "the only ornament of heaven and the most certain

help of earth, with whom Christ willed to share His Kingdom, and who is invoked everywhere."⁶ He had addressed her as our only hope in our calamities, in a '**Prayer to the Virgin Mother Mary in Misfortune**'. His '**Liturgy of the Virgin of Loreto**' contained the customary collection of epithets. However his studies of the Bible and of the Fathers, together with his keen observations of the popular abuses of his time, caused a great change in his outlook. The superstition and the superficial religion of his day became the objects of his scorn, as he attempted to reinstate the moral law, and to restore Christ to the centre of Catholicism.

The sharp sarcasm towards Marian devotion appeared in his '**Familiar Colloquies**.' In one of them, **The Shipwreck**, an Antony was speaking to an Adolph, about the terrors of the sea during a particular voyage, and about the response of crews and passengers to difficult situations. The mariners sang the '**Salve Regina**,'

Imploring the virgin mother, calling her the star of the sea, the queen of heaven, the lady of the world, the haven of health and many other flattering titles, which the sacred scriptures never attributed to her,⁷
(said Adolph).

Anthony wondered how she had anything to do with the sea. His impression was that she had never gone on a voyage. Adolph went on to explain how Venus had taken care of mariners in earlier times, since (it was believed) she had been born of the sea; "and because she left off to take care of them, the virgin mother was put in her place."⁸ Graef observes that this remark was "not without an historical foundation."⁹ The many reactions of the travellers were highlighted, including that of an Englishman, who promised golden mountains to Our Lady of Walsingham, "so he did but get ashore alive."¹⁰ As the vessel shipped water and broke up, those on board were encouraged to seize anything that would assist them to the shore. When every piece of floating material had gone, one person was seen to pull up a "wooden image of the Virgin Mary, rotten and moth-eaten, and embracing it in his arms, tried to swim upon it."¹¹

Graef does not detect any opposition to Marian shrines on the part of Erasmus. He had visited Walsingham twice, in 1512 and in 1514; and had offered a **Carmen votivum** in Greek. But he rejected the superstition that a vow could be valid only when attached to a place where the Virgin was being venerated. Marina Warner says that Erasmus was scathing in his remarks about shrines at Walsingham and elsewhere. He criticised Christians of his day for addressing themselves primarily to Mary and the saints, in moments of danger, rather than to God.

In 'The Religious Pilgrimage' Erasmus attacked the notion that Christ can never deny His mother anything. The scene was set by the meeting of two friends after some time apart. Ogygius, who had been on a pilgrimage to Compostella, and "to the famous virgin on the other side the water in England."¹² answered questions from Menedemus about St. James. He went on to assure Menedemus that the declining interest in the pilgrimage had been the subject of a letter in wide circulation, written by the Virgin Mary. The letter, written to **Glaucoplutus**, a Protestant, commended him for his strenuous efforts to follow Luther in convincing the world that "it is a thing altogether needless to invoke saints."¹³ The Virgin bemoaned the fact that the pictures, depicting the Holy Child and herself, resulted in the petitions of the suppliants always being presented to her. It was taken for granted that the Child would not deny His Mother anything, "for fear I would deny Him the bubbly when he is thirsty."¹⁴ Mary went on to admit her embarrassment at the nature of some of the requests, whose contents cast a lurid light on the morals of those who were devout to her - and which, for Graef, were not altogether exaggerated.

For example, a merchant prior to a business trip to Spain, commended the chastity of his kept mistress to Mary: a professed nun, having thrown away her veil, recommended to Mary the care of her reputation which she was intending to prostitute: the soldier greedy for plunder: the gamester longing for good luck: the usurer craving for good returns: the young maid searching for a wealthy husband: the sick old woman seeking health: the doting old man desiring a second childhood: the priest begging a lucrative benefice: bishop, philosopher, courtier, magistrate, husbandman, farmer's wife, all pleaded for particular provision. Mary queried her ability to help such a gathering. A refusal brought the accusation of hard-heartedness together with the criticism that she could not be the 'mother of mercy'. When the suppliants were referred to Mary's son, they urged her to "say the word"¹⁵ and He would do it.

Mary complained that while more leisure was being enjoyed, honour and money were in shorter supply. Very few were taking the bother to say 'Ave Mary'. Saints had

means and weapons of avenging wrongs (Peter could lock up heaven; Paul would wield his sword). Mary's response to threaten harm was to rebuff any attempt to turn her out, 'unless you turn out my Son too, whom I hold in my arms' - 'unless you have a mind to have a Church without Christ.'¹⁶

Menedemus jocularly railed on Ogygius, and referred to the tradition that much of Mary's milk had been left. He found it incredible "that a woman who never had but one child should have so much, although her child had never sucked a drop."¹⁷ The anger caused by the question to the attending officer, as to the reality of the claim, was only assuaged by a suitable tip.

Near the conclusion of a conversation between a Butcher and a Salt-fishmonger on Fish-eating and associated topics that related to the Church, an observation was made on Mary's role. The Butcher remarked "How many are there who put more trust in the safeguard of the Virgin Mary or St. Christopher, than of Christ Himself?"¹⁸ He complained about the impious style of living that offended Christ, but which included worship of the mother with images, candles and songs. 'Salve regina' was sung to please her, although they did not know the meaning. He went on to say that (the choice was made) to plead for the aid of the Virgin Mary rather than that of Christ or His Spirit. To oppose such a practice brought forth the accusation of heresy. The Church Fathers, **Origen, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine** had often invoked Christ's Spirit, but never sought the aid of the Virgin.

Hilda Graef is at odds with **C.Dillenschneider** who called the 'Letter to Glaucoplutus' "an apology of the antagonists of the cult of Mary."¹⁹ The former contends is that Erasmus had not attacked the cult but rather the degenerate forms of the cult which appeared during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries. Writing of this period, R. Laurentin "shudders to see the miserable situation in which Marian devotion found itself when the Protestant crisis broke out."²⁰

In a treatise on prayer Erasmus reviewed the practice of prayer and posed a number of questions. "May we invoke the saints? They are not invoked in Scripture, but there is no reason why we should not, provided superstition is avoided."²¹ The saints have become the successors of the gods. He suggested that **St. Joducus** had taken the place of **Juno** (in invocation for safe delivery), **St. Roche** and **St. Anthony** in place of **Apollo** and **Aesculapius** respectively. The cult of **Proserpine** had become the cult of the Virgin. He urged that prayers to the saints should be appropriate, and not as exemplified in one old priest whom he knew. The latter said the 'Lord's Prayer' to **St. Barbara** or to the Virgin, and 'Ave Maria' to **St. Christopher**.

Graef applauds the biblical scholarship of Erasmus. He turned from the use of the Vulgate to the Greek original, for example, translating 'kecharitōmene' not as 'gratia plena' (full of grace),

but as 'being in favour', and 'tapeinosis' in the Magnificat, as 'lowliness' and not 'humility'. Erasmus remained a Catholic but "played into the hands of the Reformers, who owed many of their arguments to him."²² Initially their devotion to Mary was not abandoned; but the development of particular principles resulted in this action.

O'Carroll regards Luther (1483 - 1546), as a man who found it difficult to be consistent in his observations on Mary. Marian issues caused a degree of tension within him. He could accept traditional ideas and then show signs of material change. Before he broke with the Church he had submitted to its teaching. A sermon preached on the Immaculate Conception and one on the Assumption, in 1516, hardly differed from contemporary sermons being preached on these topics. Three years after he had nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg, he was still quoting St. Bernard and St. Augustine, in his belief that Mary had first received Christ in her soul before conceiving Him in her womb.

O'Carroll notes that Luther surrounded his doctrine on the Immaculate Conception with the important distinctions of "active and passive conception, the latter being inchoative and consummated, i.e. by the infusion of the soul."²³ In a sermon in 1527, Luther declared:

But the other conception namely the infusion of the soul, it is piously and suitably believed, was without sin, so that while the soul was being infused, she would be at the same time cleansed from original sin and adorned with the gifts of God to receive the holy soul thus infused. And thus, in the very moment in which she began to live, she was without all sin.....²⁴

Other texts have introduced an apparent inconsistency in Luther's teaching. In a sermon in 1532, he said "(His) Mother was born from parents in sin like us;"²⁵ in 1540, "Everyman saw Christ was subject to the vices of original sin."²⁶ O'Carroll explains that these texts are to be understood from Luther's view of the active conception. The second reference had been aimed at those who denied that Christ was truly man because he did not have original sin and concupiscence. The passage ended with the words "all seed except Mary was vitiated."²⁷ Luther remained true to the Catholic tradition on Mary's virginity, including the virginity 'in partu.' "Christ we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact."²⁸ He looked on Isaiah 7: 14, as a prophecy of the virgin birth. Mary in representing "Christianity after the synagogue" was "the figure of the Church."²⁹ Elizabeth had represented "the people under the law of the synagogue..... But Mary, who goes over the mountains, and nevertheless

with modesty, represents the Christian people, walking freely here below under heaven...."³⁰ This undoubtedly meant that on earth, the Christian Church remained the spiritual Virgin Mary.

Luther spoke warmly of Mary's virtues, praising her "humility and perfect abandonment."³¹ In the Commentary on the Magnificat, his concept of Mary's humility was such a tribute to God, that all merit on her part was excluded; this appeared especially in his explanation of "The Almighty has done great things for me: holy is His Name."³² The Reformer repeated his belief that in the light of man's inability to co-operate with God, and since everything was due wholly to God's Grace, Mary had nothing of herself. He blamed those who honoured her as making an idol of her, and thereby causing a loss of confidence in God's Grace. Confidence in God's Grace was enhanced because He had given so much grace to Mary in spite of her unworthiness. Miegge regards Luther's comments on the Magnificat in relation to Mary's humility and faith as "among the most delicate to be found,"³³ and as indicative of the influences of the piety of St. Bernard.

The words of a popular hymn of the time, '*Regina Caeli*' (attributed to Pope Gregory V (d.999), "whom you have merited to bear,"³⁴ (in reference to Mary's motherhood), were acceptable to Luther, because the same was said of the Cross, which was only wood, and had also been foreordained - to bear His body. In Luther's opinion care had to be taken against the possibility of attributing too much to Mary, to the detriment of God's praise and honour. Graef feels that the dismissal of free will in Luther's theology deprived "not only Mary of the honour due to her, but every human being of his dignity."³⁵

1522 was the year in which Luther's ideas became more 'unorthodox.' In a '*Sermon on Mary's Nativity*' he asserted that "we are just as holy as she, for that she has a greater grace is not due to her merit."³⁶ He assured his hearers that, even if they neither honoured nor thought of the Mother of God, they would not be damned. In Graef's opinion this extreme reaction to a purely external devotion reflected the thought of Erasmus. Yet the Reformer allowed his followers to seek Mary's intercession, but not as an advocate; to do so would have implied "an actual contribution to the efficacy of prayer through her merits."³⁷ The abuses he had known in his Catholic days, together with his idea of '*Christus solus*,' had influenced Luther's theory on Mary's intercession.

Neither Luther (nor Calvin) viewed salvation or damnation as immutably predestined from all eternity. Luther reckoned that God imputed the merits of Christ to the sinner who remained a sinner,

whatever he did. There was therefore a question about the necessity of intercession. (While Calvin rejected the need for any), Luther held "that Mary could pray for us just as we can pray for each other."³⁸ Graef believes that the successors of Luther did not attempt to retain his 'Catholic teaching' on Mary, whom he had regarded as a pathetic young girl without intrinsic sanctity or merit.

Commentators have differed in their opinions as to whether or not he allowed for any intercession on Mary's part, or would have any invocation of her. In 1521, in his commentary on the Magnificat, he had encouraged invocation of Mary, so that God through her might give and do what was asked. "May she enlighten our intelligence, inflame our hearts, and inspire our whole life. May Christ grant us this grace through the intercession of His holy Mother."³⁹ Eleven years later he was warning against any such intercession and used St. John 14: 13, to emphasize that such things belonged to Christ alone.

Luther did not abolish the Marian feasts initially. O'Carroll states that he reduced the number of feasts to three: those of the Purification, the Annunciation and the Visitation. He regarded the Assumption as totally papist, without Scriptural warrant. Graef suggests that he wanted to keep the first two, which were feasts of Christ; and allowed the retention of the last two for some time, in order to avoid popular displeasure. In his explanation of Jeremiah 11: 13, the Reformer equated Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary with the cult of Baal denounced by the prophet. He understood that Christ praised Mary because, in telling the servants, at the wedding of Cana to obey Him, she believed in his goodness; but He also rebuked her. The rebuke was underlined in another sermon on the Wedding. Because Christ had realised the prominence that would later be given to His Mother. He had addressed her in harsh terms, "in order to show that we ought not to be concerned with her but with Him."⁴⁰ Graef notes that Luther did not offer an explanation for the failure of Christ's response to divert that practice of the Church, which has continued from early times, where Mary has been invoked as advocate. The Reformer applauded the example of her faith, but also emphasized her littleness by the description "a little drop of water."⁴¹ While admitting that Mary was full of grace, he opposed the 'Ave Maria' as a prayer; yet he had to admit that his followers did not replace devotion to Mary by more fervent prayer to her Son.

In his last days he recalled the piety of the Virgin:

Is Christ only to be adored? Or is the holy Mother of God rather not to be honoured? This is the woman who crushed the serpent's head . Hear us. For your Son denies you nothing.⁴²

In comparison with Luther, John Calvin (1509 - 1564), was sparing both in the extent to which he wrote about Mary and also in the place he gave to her. Graef refers to an article by K. Algermissen on Calvin, in which the Reformer's mariological thought was reckoned to have been determined, "by his central theological idea of the majesty and glory of God, before which all creaturely being and action has almost no importance whatsoever."⁴³ O'Carroll simply states that Calvin's ideas about Mary were related to his theology of predestination, grace and faith.

Calvin did recognise the dignity of Mary's unique motherhood. He wrote "It cannot be denied that by electing and destining Mary to be the mother of His Son, God gave her the highest honour."⁴⁴ Graef merely mentions that Calvin taught Mary's perpetual virginity. O'Carroll also notes that, in this context, the Reformer did not face up to the difficulties raised by the terms 'firstborn' and 'brethren of the Lord;' but brushed them aside. The suggested 'vow' on Mary's part was ridiculed as a weak and absurd opinion that implied monasticism among the Jews. But after the Annunciation all intercourse with men was excluded for ever. Calvin rejected totally the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. The latter may have had some advantage in that the worship of Mary's relics could be precluded.

In 'Tracts and Gospels according to St. John,' he spoke of the "gross and abominable superstitions"⁴⁵ where Mary had been made, "Queen of Heaven, the Hope, the Life and the Salvation of the World, and in fact their insane raving went so far that they just about stripped Christ and adorned her with the spoils."⁴⁶ To regard her as 'our advocate' was blasphemous, since she also needed Christ. For Calvin, Mary had been given all the honour that belonged to her, without making her a goddess. The Catholics and not the Protestants were guilty of injuring Mary by snatching from God "all that belongs to Him, that they may deform her with false praise."⁴⁷ Since everything depended on the will of God, Calvin rejected the intercessory role of the Blessed Virgin. All prayer, addressed to her, was against Scripture. Such requests for her to command her Son, and exert her authority over Him, or for her to obtain grace for us, styling her "the haven of salvation, the life and hope of those who trust her," were "forged full of horrible blasphemies."⁴⁸ Calvin forbade invocations. He complained that the papists had changed the greeting 'Hail Mary' "by a magic exorcism into a

petition."⁴⁹ Holy images were attacked. The Decrees of the Second Council of Nicaea were scorned, (in O'Carroll's opinion), because Calvin had learned them second-hand and had not understood them.

O'Carroll regards some of Calvin's comments on Mary in his Gospel commentaries, as touching. While rejecting any cult, the Reformer encouraged his readers "to act as did the Virgin Mary and say 'Lord, let it be done unto me according to your Word.'"⁵⁰ He wanted his followers "to venerate and praise her and regard her as a teacher who instructs them in the commandments of Christ."⁵¹

Elizabeth was the one who demonstrated the necessary response to Mary. She had honoured the Virgin "in as much as she is honoured by God..... She does not stop at her and she does not lessen or obscure in any way the honour due to God."⁵² Seeing that "it is opprobrium and insult to say that she snatches honour from God, Her God,"⁵³ Mary will therefore take her revenge on the last day on her 'mortal enemy,' the Papists.

In '**Harmony of the Gospels**' Calvin's unexpected use of 'treasurer of grace,' for Mary, (according to Graef), has to be lodged in the interpretation that she has preserved all things in her heart, not for her own use, but for others; "she kept the doctrine which today opens to us the Kingdom of Heaven, and which leads us to our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵⁴ "The Spirit of God places her here like a picture, so that every man should conform himself to the reverence she has brought to the Word of God."⁵⁵ Calvin asserted that Mary, upon "taking God's Promise into her heart conceived and brought forth salvation for herself and the whole world,"⁵⁶ but within the qualification of the "characteristic Calvinistic virtues."⁵⁷ But his theory of justification led Calvin to interpret '**kecharitomene**' as a sign of God's external favour - thereby betraying a greater rigidity than Luther or Zwingli.

Zwingli (1484-1531), a native of the Swiss canton of St. Gall, reacted against the medieval presentation of an over-emotional Mary under the Cross. He objected to a false trust in the recitation of 'Hail Mary's' without a corresponding Christian life. The veneration of Mary and of saints in general were unacceptable to him since they did not belong to the Church. Yet his submission that Mary's glory, honour, innocence and purity did not originate with her (but came from the grace of God), was qualified by the assertion that everyone acclaimed her as the "highest and most lovely creature before God."⁵⁸ ("all generations shall call me blessed," St. Luke 1: 48). He also estimated that Mary's greatest honour was her Son and the love of individuals for Him; "and the more the honour and love of Christ Jesus grows among them, the more grows also the esteem of Mary."⁵⁹ Neither could

Mary tolerate that all honour which rightfully belonged to her Son, was placed upon her, any more than Paul and Barnabus could tolerate it.

Zwingli reacted strongly against 'big mouths' which carried fairy tales such as the denial of Mary's permanent virginity. He valued "the Mother of God greatly as the eternally pure, unspotted maid-servant Mary, highly exalted above those who have died for the sake of God's honour and will."⁶⁰ With regard to her mediation he said, "Whether or not she prayed on my behalf before God, of that later."⁶¹ He wondered if Mary had been present, would she not have declared:

'Whatever honour I may have is not my own. God in His Grace has thus enriched me that I am a maidservant and a mother of all the human race. I am neither a goddess nor the fount of goodness; God alone is that fountain..... but if you credit me with the things that are God's, exclusively, the power of God and His dominion would be diminishedI am not God. You should not therefore seek with me what alone God can give.'⁶²

(She was not given any share in the wondrous works of her Son).

For once, when I reminded Him that the people had no wine, He gave me a strange reply. 'Woman,' he said, 'what do I have to do with you?' (St. John 2: 4). This He said simply because the miracle was to be credited to Him and not to me.'⁶³

(She felt it a disgrace that she should be worshipped). "No-one but the only God shall be worshipped I am none other than a witness of my Son, that you may see how certainly salvation rests with Him."⁶⁴ "They slander blessed Mary who was poor and humble while on earth - now when she is with God they enrich her with temporal goods saying, 'she is our beloved lady.'"⁶⁵

Heinrich Bullinger (d.1575), influenced the Reformation in England. Graef believes that his Mariology was nearer to Catholic beliefs than that of the other Reformers. Like Zwingli he wrote a '**Marienpredigt**' and included Marian material in his Commentary on Luke. He regarded Mary as "the most unique and the noblest member"⁶⁶ of the Christian community, but neither its head nor mistress. He defended her perpetual virginity and virginity '**in partu**,' but did not comment on either her Immaculate conception or bodily Assumption. "Let it suffice us simply to believe and confess that the Virgin Marynow lives happily with Christ in Heaven, and is called and remains ever Virgin and Mother of God....."⁶⁷ Bullinger rejected her invocation and mediation. In '**De origine erroris**,' 16, (1568), he accepted that the body of the Virgin Mother of God had been taken up to heaven by the angels, because he did not think that Elijah could have been superior to her, in that respect. **W.**

Tappolet mentions that this sentence was eliminated in the French edition of 1549 (Geneva), but retained in the Dutch edition, 1602.

Melanchthon in '**Apologia Confessionis Augustinal**' opposed the verse (recited in the Breviary office of the time): "Mother of grace, protect us from the enemy, receive us in the hour of death,"⁶⁸ protesting that "even though the Mother of God prays for the churches,"⁶⁹ it was beyond her power to overcome death and to protect from Satan. If such were the case then why should Christ be needed? The dangers of equating Mary with Jesus, and of looking on her as the reconciler, were emerging. In England, the 16th Century witnessed the destruction of the Marian shrines, (including Walsingham), the forbidding of invocation of Saints and the fading out of Marian devotion.

The Catholic Reformation

O'Dwyer summarises the 16th century as an era that preserved and defended devotion to Mary. While the 17th century promoted the new glories of Mary and inaugurated new devotions in her honour, exaggerations of her intercessory work provoked strong reactions.

The so-called counter-reformation did not begin with the Council of Trent, (1545 - 1563). Its emergence was the consequence of a deeply needed desire for reform, throughout Christendom, which ante-dated Luther. Daniel-Rops looks on the Council of Trent as the provider of answers to questions on faith, morals and ecclesiastical discipline, which had appeared at least a century earlier. The term 'counter-reformation' is justifiable, in Daniel-Rops opinion, when applied strictly to the Church's statements of doctrine in response to Protestant teaching.

The Catholic reform was a "rediscovery of living Tradition."⁷⁰ Those who promoted this reform "had no intention of combating Protestantism and halting its progress."⁷¹ **St. Ignatius**, has been misrepresented as the one "who recruited a body of shock troops entrusted with the elimination of heresy."⁷² According to Daniel-Rops, "the true reform was not directed against an enemy but undertaken for God, for Jesus Christ, as a protestation of unwavering loyalty."⁷³ The strong desire for a purer religion was to be found among sincere Catholics from **Tauler** to **Ruysbroeck**, from **Luso** to the 'Imitation' author (**Thomas à Kempis**). The reawakening penetrated every country and all classes of society, and brought with it, a renewed search through the Scriptures, popularity of religious books and interest in methods of prayer.

The pressures of the Reformation on the Catholic Church brought into prominence such reformers as **St. Ignatius of Loyola**, founder of the Jesuits. Ignatius admitted to a friend that on one occasion he had seen "an image of Our Lady and the Child Jesus."⁷⁴ At the Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat, he followed the example of young men who kept vigil at the feet of the statue of the Virgin, prior to their admission to the ranks of knighthood. Having spent the night in vigil before Our Lady of Montserrat, he hung up his sword and dagger, and dedicated himself to be a soldier of Christ, (divesting himself of the paraphernalia of war), and assumed the pilgrim's appearance.

Instead he produced his *Spiritual Exercises* out of self-analysis, noting problems and their solutions, and recording the examination of his conscience. He had previously read '**The Flowers of the Saints**' (a Spanish adaptation of Jacobus de Veraigne's **Golden Legend**), Ludolph's '**Life of Christ**,' '**The Imitation of Christ**,' Cisneros's '**Exercises of the Spiritual Life**' and Battista dea Crema's '**Self Conquests**.' A tradition confirmed by papal authority states that it was ('**dictante Deipara**'), at the dictation of the Mother of God, that Ignatius wrote that "perfect code of every good soldier of Jesus Christ."⁷⁵ (1534). The worship rendered to Jesus by the Jesuits was accompanied by high honour paid to Mary. In the Seventeenth century **St. John Eudes** said of them, "Among all the religious Orders, none shows more zeal or more ardour than does the Society of Jesus for the honour and service of the Queen of Heaven."⁷⁶

(During the Reformation both in England and on the Continent many images of Mary were destroyed. The principal feasts of the Virgin, with the exception of the Assumption, (removed in most places by 1549) were retained in the Book of Common Prayer. The Reformers attacked devotion to Mary as intercessor, although they did not reject totally a veneration of the "humble Virgin Mother of the Gospels."⁷⁷)

Jesuits

The first great Jesuit theologians, such as **Salmeron** (d. 1585) **Suarez** (d. 1617) and **Salazar** (d. 1646) led and continued the resistance against the Reformation. The **Sodality of our Lady**, founded in 1563 under Jesuit auspices, became a powerful means for developing the spiritual life in general, by the regular use of prayer and the sacraments, and by promotion devotion to Mary. This movement spread rapidly, reaching its peak especially in Spain and in France (c. 1630-1650). A French School of spirituality came into prominence, and reached its apogee of Marian devotion in **St.**

Louis de Montfort (d.1716). He demanded complete interior surrender to her, in order to be entirely formed by her.

The Rosary devotion was taken up by the Jesuits; one of its most ardent promoters was **Peter Canisius** (1521-1597). O'Carroll refers to him as a controversial writer of the Counter Reformation, who composed the first major defence of Catholic doctrine and devotion about Our Lady against the Reformers. Canisius felt that the best way to overcome the effects of the Reformation was in the renewal of Marian devotion. In a treatise divided into five parts, '**De Maria Virgine Incomparabili**,' (1577), he defended the Catholic veneration of the Mother of God. Luther's idea of Mary's humble origin and his interpretation of her name as 'little drop,' was strongly opposed. Canisius re-affirmed the Immaculate Conception against the repudiation by the followers of Luther. The traditional inclusion of the Wisdom passages in the Marian Liturgy was defended, since Mary had been predestined and foreseen from all eternity. He supported the belief in Mary's vow of virginity, made before the Annunciation, and in her personal merit, which had been denied by the Reformers in their doctrine of 'justification by faith alone.' Canisius attacked Erasmus and the Reformers for translating **gratiose** instead of **gratia plena**. St. Matthew 12: 48 was taken as metaphorical, and in no way impaired Mary's uniqueness. In book four Canisius clung to the Catholic interpretation of certain Marian passages in the Scriptures, in face of some Protestants, who explained them "in the worst possible sense."⁷⁸ For example Mary's question to the angel, "How shall this be done?" (St. Luke Ch. 1), was taken as an expression of doubt and that she was therefore an example to unbelievers. The assertion of Erasmus, that Mary had no perfect knowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation and of the Divinity of her Son from the beginning, was also rejected. Graef reports that the Erasmian view is now generally accepted by Catholic theologians.

Canisius took issue with Luther for assigning Mary to the duties of the household, instead of following the traditional view of her upbringing in the Temple. He preferred the translation 'humility' (instead of 'lowliness') in the Magnificat; and supported the feminine pronoun in Genesis 3: 15 instead of the neuter. The centuries' old tradition for Canisius, had consecrated the mistranslation. Luther was also attacked for saying that Catholics went to Mary rather than to Christ: that for them the realm of justice was attributed to Christ, that of mercy to Mary, and that Mary could command her Son. Graef points out that these things were declared by certain preachers.

The arguments of the Reformers against the practice of describing Mary, in terms more applicable to God, such as life, sweetness and hope, were countered by Canisius. He referred to St. Paul's usage of such language in addressing the converts at Thessalonica and at Phillippi. (1 Thess. 2: 19; Phil. 4: 1). He also contended that to speak of Mary as mediatrix was a certain use of the word that did not detract from the uniqueness of Christ, the only Mediator in the 'exact sense.' The '**Salve Regina**' for Canisius was appropriate, since Mary could be called queen and mother of mercy, because she was the Mother of God and obtained spiritual life for us by her prayer. Such intercession gave her the standing of one who brought hope and salvation (*salvatrix*).

This defence of the Veneration of the Mother of God was a "work of controversy and apologetics and not a systematic presentation of Catholic Marian doctrine."⁷⁹ That was to be the exercise of Francis Suarez.

O'Carroll describes Suarez (1548-1617) as the "founder of the systematic or scholastic Mariology."⁸⁰ His Marian theology covered 23 **Disputantes**, which were set within a commentary on questions 27 to 37 of Part III of the **Summa Theologia** of St. Thomas, together with a section dealing with the Debt of sin, in Volume IV of his own works. He took as an essential truth that Mary was the Mother of God and related her dignity and predestination to that; this predestination was prior to original sin. Contrary to Luther, he emphasized her noble parentage; and defended the opinion, which was commonly held then in Spain (agreeing with Scotus), that "the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the first moment of her conception and preserved from original sin;"⁸¹ since she would have been subject to it because of her origin. He refused the extreme view that Mary was free of the 'Debt of Sin', because he felt that it compromised the universality of the Redemption and Mary's dependence on Christ.

Suarez dealt with speculative questions that caught the interest of theologians. In some areas he was influenced by the writings of **Bernadine of Siena** and **Pseudo-Albert**. Graef suggests that Suarez in approving Bernadine's idea that Christ "had come more to redeem Mary than all other men."⁸² was indicating that she "frequently merited more, by her single acts, than individual saints by all the acts of their life."⁸³ Besides, "he was satisfied that the first grace given to Mary was greater than the final grace given to angels and men."⁸⁴ He argued that she had received every grace that could have been

given to a pure creature, and that the mysteries of her graces were beyond the measurements of 'ordinary laws'. In conceiving a son, the Blessed Virgin had

neither lost her virginity nor experienced any venereal pleasure..... It did not befit the Holy Spirit without any cause or utility to produce such an effect, or to excite any unbecoming passion..... On the contrary the effect of his overshadowing is to quench the fire of original sin.⁸⁵

"That troublesome weariness with which all pregnant women are burdened, she alone did not experience who alone conceived without pleasure."⁸⁶

'**Disputatio 19**' was devoted to Mary's knowledge. Suarez held that she had the use of reason from the first moment of her conception; from the birth of Christ, possibly from the moment of the Incarnation, she knew "all that belonged to the mystery of the Redemption,"⁸⁷ and at Pentecost, what related "to the state of the Church of Christ."⁸⁸ Although he quoted **Bernadine of Siena** and **Pseudo-Albert** on the subject of Mary's knowledge, Suarez was more cautious. He believed that her many privileges such as the Immaculate Conception required her to have a "supernatural and directly infused knowledge of the supernatural objects of faith."⁸⁹ As befitted the teacher of the Apostles she possessed theological wisdom. The Blessed Virgin also had many and diverse revelations. The Risen Lord had appeared to her before appearing to the Apostles, and likewise after His Ascension. What was regarded as a matter of pious and probable belief, she, occasionally, was "briefly raised to clear vision of the divine essence."⁹⁰

Suarez quoted basic texts on the 'new Eve' from **Irenaeus** and from others of the Fathers. The image of the aqueduct by **St. Bernard**, his dictum "that, according to God's will, we should have all the gifts of grace through Mary,"⁹¹ together with his comments on Mediatrix and Mediator, were entirely acceptable to Suarez. He expounded at length and in agreement with Mary's vow of virginity, her virginity, '**in partu**' and '**post partum**,' in the historical order. O'Carroll believes that he remained 'truly Christocentric.' Mary did not receive '**latria**' (which is always given to God alone) but '**hyperdulia**'. Her merit on our behalf has not been '**de condigno**' but '**de congruo**.' Mary was not the proper or principal cause of our salvation. But "by her advocacy, by meriting '**de congruo**' and by co-operating in her way in the Incarnation, she co-operated in some way in our salvation."⁹² In '**Disputatio 22**' Mary's part in the Redemption was discussed. She has contributed to this in a special way by "providing her own substance and voluntarily offering Him for us, desiring and providing for

our salvation in a unique manner."⁹¹ Suarez was careful to explain the rôles accorded to Mary, (such as the hope of sinners, the joy and salvation of the world), in the face of Protestant accusations. He also used some of the 'strongest' passages from the Fathers, (especially **Ephraem, Germanus and Andrew of Crete**), and from medieval writers, to explain Mary's mediatorial and intercessory role.

Marina Warner notes that Suarez and Canisius eventually persuaded the Dominicans that St. Thomas Aquinas had not pronounced Mary immaculate, only because of a misunderstanding about the nature of human generation.

Unlike the Jesuits who had acknowledged the criticisms from the Reformers, the Franciscans continued to pursue their immediate Pre-Reformation tradition. The Capuchin **Lawrence of Brindisi** (1559 - 1619), clearly depicted their perceptions. In his '**Mariale**' he wrote on the **Praise and Invocation of the Virgin Mary**. According to O'Carroll, his writings were largely free of polemics. Quotations from St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas were found in his works, which also exhibited the influence both of St. Bernardine of Siena and of Bernardine of Busti.

Graef is careful to indicate the dangers in Brindisi's point of view, when he emphasized Mary's similarity with Christ. Mary and Christ were compared to Eve and Adam, or to Esther and Ahasuerus, "without any suggestion of the fundamental difference between Christ and Mary, on account of the Hypostatic Union of Christ's human nature to his divine Person."⁹² He had gone on to say that "Christ the man and the Virgin Mother of God are alike in nature, grace, virtue, dignity and glory."⁹³ O'Carroll finds it possible to suggest that Brindisi's essential source material was found in the Scriptures, noting that he followed firmly the Scotist doctrine of the absolute supremacy of Christ. But (explains O'Carroll) the idea was extended with due proportion to his Marian doctrine. Mary was 'like' Christ in predestination, birth, life, death, resurrection, assumption, glorification. However Brindisi did not mean 'equal to ' when he used 'like'. Yet he was convinced of Mary's mysterious greatness.

Brindisi's description of Mary's marriage to God was based on **Bernardine of Siena**, but (according to Graef), in terms which were even more objectionable than those of his predecessor. (O'Carroll's assessment finds Brindisi more restrained than his predecessors). "God required her free consent to contract marriage through the heavenly paranympus, (the equivalent of the bridegroom friend Gabriel)."⁹⁴ Mary was therefore "conjoined and copulated with God in a legitimate and true

marriage."⁹⁷ and this in spite of the fact that Mary's marriage to Joseph has usually been considered as true and legitimate. From Bernardine's teaching that the Incarnation had been caused by God's love for Mary, Brindisi altered St. John 3: 16 to read "God so loved Mary that He gave His only begotten Son"⁹⁸

While O'Carroll protests that Brindisi always remained Christocentric, Graef accepts that St. Lawrence slipped too easily into blasphemy. Of Mary he said, "She could turn God from a lion into the gentlest lamb and make God most loving to man, indeed, make Him man, as Queen Esther made King Ahasuerus most favourable to the Jews..... O wonderful power."⁹⁹ Mary was also introduced into the heart of the redemptive mystery. "Was not Mary for our sake in danger of death when she stood by the Cross of Christ, totally possessed by the true spirit of Abraham, truly sacrificing Him to God, offering Him with true charity for the salvation of the world.....?"¹⁰⁰ She was associated also with the priesthood of Christ.

The spirit of Mary was a spiritual priest, as the Cross was the altar, Christ the sacrifice; though the spirit of Christ was the principal priest, the spirit of Mary was one with the spirit of Christ, as it were one soul in two bodies. Wherefore the spirit of Mary with the spirit of Christ exercised a priestly office by the altar of the Cross; offered the sacrifice of Christ to the eternal God for the salvation of the world.¹⁰¹

Lawrence interpreted Revelation 12 without any reference to the Church, but entirely with regard to Mary: she appeared clothed with the sun and in a Glory that exceeded any in which Christ or God had ever appeared. He reasoned that because of her sex she had been arrayed in such splendour, just as a queen wore more jewellery than a king. In relation to the Kingdom of God and the Empire of Christ, "her kingdom and empire is no less."¹⁰² He concluded then, that since "Mary is similar to Christ as Eve is to Adamthe invocation of the Virgin must be similar to the invocation of Christ, the honour and cult given to her must be similar to the honour and cult of Christ."¹⁰³ Graef is aware of the inconsistency of such an argument with the Churches' teaching on 'latria' and 'hyperdoulia'.

Robert Bellarmine (1542 - 1621), was declared a doctor of the Church in 1931. His Mariological teaching was introduced throughout his works, but not produced systematically. At a meeting of the Holy Office in 1617, he expressed some reservation on the Immaculate Conception. He agreed that it could be held as a pious opinion or a theological conclusion, but without any warrant of Scripture or Theological backing. Yet he was prepared to express his own acceptance of the teaching,

affirming it in his Catechism, developing the theme in his sermons, and gladly linking it with Mary's election by God. He reckoned that the Church had always followed the 'via media' between the Collyridian heresy, (which had made her a goddess), and the Reformers, who regarded her as equal to all other human beings. In a sermon '**Super Missus est,**' he interpreted her name as '**gutta maris,**' a drop of the sea, as Luther had done; but explained the title as expressive only of Mary's own impression of herself. God's grace had made her the most glorious star. That grace he explained as twofold: "she possessed all the effects of grace in the highest degree;"¹⁰⁴ and also was full of grace as a necessary prerequisite for her special office of motherhood, thereby combining the new and old renderings of the text. Bellarmine concluded that by her perfect life Mary had made herself worthy of the honour in becoming Mother of God and Queen of angels. She had been prevented from contracting original sin by the merits of Christ's passion.

In his treatise on the '**Seven Words of Christ from the Cross,**' Bellarmine rejected the opinion that Mary had been beside herself with grief. He offered instead the idea that, in spite of her sorrow, her love for the honour of the Father, and her longing for the salvation of the world, exceeded the love she had for the flesh of her Son. Mary's choice as a factor in her lifework, recurred in Bellarmine's writings. O'Carroll believes that this has given weight to Bellarmine's strongest statement on her saving role:

She alone co-operated in the mystery of the Passion, standing before the Cross and offering her Son for the salvation of the world. She was after the Ascension, the teacher of the Apostles and of all the saints. She, now in heaven, as advocate and Mother of all, co-operates in the salvation of all the saved.¹⁰⁵

He took up the medieval image of Mary as the neck of the Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head: "Through her, influence of the Head descends on the body."¹⁰⁶

Quirino de Salazar, (1576 - 1646), is reckoned by O' Carroll to have been the greatest Spanish Marian theologian of the Seventeenth century. He insisted that the salvation and redemption of the human race had (in some way) to be attributed to Mary. Together with Christ she had given and offered the price of our redemption truly and directly. In his Commentary on Proverbs he said, "To offer Christ to and for us is the right solely of the Virgin and of no-one else....."¹⁰⁷ De Salazar was pre-occupied with Mary's priesthood, which he regarded as superior to the common priesthood of the faithful. She fulfilled the office of priest in conforming to the will of her Son: "She offered and

sacrificed Him on the altar of the Cross as did Christ Himself."¹⁰⁸ Mary had a real 'dominium' over her Son, who was "constituted under her parental power."¹⁰⁹ He took the view that, (apart from God), had Mary alone decreed that her Son should die for men, then Christ would have accepted His death in obedience to her desires. However, O'Carroll believes that the transcendence of Christ was preserved, even though Mary co-operated in a priestly fashion in the 'Redemption'

What clearly brought the Virgin to this glory and made her a collaborator and helper with Christ, was that, joining Him, who was hers, to us and for us, for which reason, as is clear from Bonaventure, the Virgin especially bound God and men to herself, for she so greatly pleased God by this free offering of her Son, that in a manner singular and proper to herself, she obtained life and salvation for the human race.¹¹⁰

The titles given to Christ in relation to redemption, restoration, mediation, author and cause of salvation, (for de Salazar), were just as applicable to Mary. O'Carroll concludes that the essential distinction between Christ and Mary has been preserved by de Salazar, by using the concepts of merit '**de condigno**' and '**de congruo**.' This would appear to be untenable from the reference to those circumstances where, the will of Christ the Lord not being expressed, "the will of the Mother would be sufficient to interpret the will of the Son; for the Son could be thought to will what the Mother willed."¹¹¹

Mary was also described as '**adjutrix**' (aid -giver), and '**auxiliatrix**' (helper). Christ had not needed any help or assistance "since the value of His blood immeasurably surpasses settlement of our debts;"¹¹² but "the authority and dignity of the Mother, demanded that her merits, prayers and wishes should be joined with the wishes and merits of Christ, so that the salvation of men should be given to each of them."¹¹³

Jesuit **Theophilus Raynaud** (d. 1663), also associated Mary with Redemption. He followed the traditional view that Mary's divine motherhood, suitably graced, had been the source and principle of all her perfections. In his '**Nomenclator Marianus**' (1639), he defended the application to Mary of names that belonged to Christ, (such as 'Cause of Salvation', 'Our Hope'), with the explanation that she was all of these only in dependence on Christ. The title '**mediatrix**' was never meant to detract from the unique mediation of Christ.

Raynaud censured certain excesses of Marian piety: and yet defended the authenticity of the Carmelite Brown Scapular. This devotion which Mary had supposedly given to St. Simon Stock

(d. 1265), spread apparently only in the fifteenth century. The 'Sabbatine Privilege' which promised the devout wearers freedom from Purgatory on the Saturday following their death, was supposed to have been confirmed by a Bull of John XXII in 1322. Later, other members of the Jesuit Order were to attack the story, which now has little standing.

Comment.

A more settled period exposed the Church to the scrutiny of inquisitive minds. The initial endorsement of Marian beliefs and practices changed to aversion on the part of such as Erasmus, who championed the cause of the humanists. His study of the Scriptures reduced his view of the record of Mary; his perception of the more traditional teaching was couched in sarcasm and ridicule. Luther also was caught up in a similar transition. Yet his teaching on Mary appears to lack consistency. Nevertheless he retained strong convictions on Mary's virtues and her virginity (*in partu*). He came to reject the Assumption.

John Calvin recognized the Biblical attributes of Mary, but attacked any that were not explicitly so. He encouraged the pursuit of her example, especially in relation to the Word of God. He rejected totally the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption and could not countenance the practice of praying to or through Mary. Zwingli did not venerate Mary, but held her in special esteem. As with Luther and Calvin, he affirmed her perpetual virginity. Bullinger did not distance himself from 'Catholic belief' to the same extent as the other Reformers. Although rejecting her powers of invocation and intercession, he believed that the body of the Virgin had been taken up to Heaven.

The movement for reform had been gaining momentum prior to the eruption of the 'Reformation.' Some degree of upheaval would occur eventually. The Church having suffered this schism had to defend and attack. The necessary strategy was embodied in the activity of the Jesuits, who acknowledged and countered the criticisms of the Reformers; an effort was made to increase Marian devotion; the use of the Rosary was underlined. A number of the Franciscans continued their pre-Reformation exposition of Mary's attributes and powers.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHANGING SYMBOLISM OF MARY.

From her investigations, Warner has traced, from feudal times, the development of a 'double standard' that expected a woman to be more virtuous than a man; then placed her in a position comparable to that of a relation to his feudal benefactor. Thus the housewife could have been seen as the keeper of her husband's conscience. "the vicarious Christian who is humble and obedient - and chaste - enough for two."¹

This new domestic idealism was projected onto the Holy Family. Mary was stripped of her regalia, and "exchanged typology and metaphysics for anecdote."² Female submissiveness to the head of the house, as the epitome of humility, helped to remove the Virgin as a matriarchal symbol. The rise of Joseph's importance from the end of the Fourteenth century onwards accentuated that phenomenon. St. Cajetan (d. 1547) had a vision of St. Joseph carrying the child Jesus in his arms, as Mary had previously done.

Condren has perceived a change even in the Scriptural explication. In the Book of Genesis 2: 23, after God had fashioned Eve from Adam's rib, Adam sang:

This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man.³

Verse 24 explains, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body."⁴ Then, when Jesus spoke from the cross to His mother and His disciple, He said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son." To his disciple John He said, "Son, behold thy mother."⁵ (St. John 19: 26, 27). Condren believes that here the Gospels put the final touch to any trace of matrilinearity. In the new Christian order, Mary the mother would leave "the heart of the matricentered universe,"⁶ her own home, to become an active disciple in the cause of her Son. Simone de Beauvoir commented:

For the first time in human history the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority. This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin - it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat.⁷

Among the Fathers there had been an awareness of the dangers of, and the possible benefits from, promoting the image of Mary. Some exercised caution in rejecting the Immaculate Conception.

not wishing to reduce the efficacy of the sacrifice of Jesus. That "the fruits of the Redemption could have been applied to a mere woman in advance of the act of Redemption itself,"⁸ was beyond their acceptance. Yet Mary was the human face of God. Condren notes a particular promotion of the cult of Mary among the Fathers, one that had nothing to do with the intrinsic worth of women or of motherhood. **Bernard of Clairvaux**, who had turned his back "on his warring exploits by a vision of his saintly mother,"⁹ spoke of women in this way:

He (Christ) will be your mother..... But a man's household are his own enemies (Matt. 10: 36). These are they who love not you but the satisfaction they derive from you... And now hear what blessed Jerome says: 'If your mother should lie prostrate at the door, if she should bare her breasts, the breasts that gave you suck, yet with dry eyes fixed upon the cross, go ahead and tread over your prostrate mother and father. It is the height of piety to be cruel for Christ's sake.' Do not be moved by the tears of demented parents who weep, because from being a child of wrath you have become a child of God.¹⁰

Aelred of Rievaulx taught that men should serve Mary in the same way as a knight might serve his courtly mistress. But this did not imply an exalted attitude toward women. Speaking of Mary he said, "it is she ... who has given us life, who nourishes and raises us;.....she is our mother much more than our mother according to the flesh."¹¹

Mary's monastic devotees could freely repudiate both their earthly mothers and their dependence upon kinship relations. They could "abandon their familial responsibilities, project all their uncontrollable sexuality onto women, live a celibate or knightly life-style, and yet find erotic compensation in the form of this idealized woman."¹² Mary provided an ideal substitute, when real women might be forbidden to celibate men. No stain of sin was found in her life: totally obedient to the will of God, she was "perfectly amenable to whatever projections the celibate men cared to focus upon her."¹³

Condren believes that the symbol of the Virgin Mary was a crucial component throughout the cultural developments of this period. In Ireland, Mary, like Brigit, retained much of the imagery of the ancient goddesses "whom she replaced effectively, enabling the transition to Christianity to take place."¹⁴ As with the Triple Goddess, Mary the "salmon of wisdom,"¹⁵ often appeared in triple form. Jesus, was referred to as the "offspring of the fruitful cow."¹⁶ One poet wrote, "t'was a relief to lie on her calf,"¹⁷ in the belief that she had cast her body on her dead son at the Crucifixion. She was portrayed alternatively, as having given birth to her own father, as the 'nurse of the three lords,' as the

husband of Jesus, and as the 'wife of the king of the passion.' It was also claimed that she was mother of the Trinity, who "nourished them, three in one body."¹⁸ Alternatively, all three members of the Trinity "'mated' with her, a cluster that grows from one tree."¹⁹

On the other hand, the image of the goddess was being transformed. "The ancient matricentred goddesses had resisted with all their might the death-dealing of the warriors, opposing and confounding them with their bare breasts, symbols of life itself,"²⁰ Mary, "would achieve her destiny by being the perfect vehicle of men's designs."²¹ The creative freedom of the Goddess had been disrupted. Mary longed to help sinners, "but in the process she had to pay a major price: unlike the goddesses, she was essentially powerless to challenge the mentality of the wrathful God that made her existence in this form so necessary."²²

The goddesses had demonstrated their power by an ability to give life to the totality of popular cultural creativity. Christian influence narrowed the significance of living to the realm of the spirit. Full participation depended on sacramental rituals, which were the exclusive domain of male priests. Mary achieved power through her womb, "and then by renouncing her womb and, with it, the possibility of sexual pleasure in human relationship."²³ Condren feels that Mary gave life "but in an utterly anaesthetized manner, in which she served merely as the vessel for the creative work of the Father."²⁴ Thereby she has served to clarify the male rôle in reproduction and "to reduce the body of women to a mere shell."²⁵ Mary was asexual and virginal, and the '*Mater Dolorosa*' "knows no male body except that of her dead son, and her only pathos comes from the tears she sheds over a corpse."²⁶ From the very beginning it would appear that her womb was destined, more to provide a "casket of the Lord's body,"²⁷ or to be a 'linen sheet' to receive her dead son, than to bring forth life. Condren suggests that, whereas the ability to give life empowered the goddess, Mary's ability rested on her giving birth to a 'man-god' "who would give up his life for the establishment of the Father's reign of justice and the law."²⁸

The late Middle Ages generated a cult of Mary that was the only source of devotion, beyond total immediate hierarchical control. Women, who had been deprived of religious rights, provided the backbone of devotion to Mary, and promoted her cult. Men pontificated. Women had to relate to the image which was "essentially a male construct."²⁹ The works of creation would bring honour to God the Father; Mary would be honoured because of the inspired courageous response she evoked in

men. Her image hardly provided a rôle model for women, but rather "emphasized the radical disjuncture between the sacred and the sexual, between the religious hopes of women and the reality of their lives."³⁰

The rôle of women in society was being reflected in Mary; her image (in Condren's opinion), atoned for the loss of social status among women. In addition, Mary's virginity, her Immaculate Conception, and her rôle as Virgin Mother, may have placed successive generations of women in a disturbing dilemma. Women could become virgins, "but in the process they would have to renounce motherhood, the traditional source of women's power and satisfaction."³¹ To become mothers meant that women "would become permanently consigned to the ranks of the sensual and corporeal."³² A feminist theologian has claimed that Mary's star may have risen in medieval theology, but her glory has grown "ever brighter in inverse proportion to the downgrading of real women."³³

Seventeenth Century France.

When seventeenth century France witnessed a strong Catholic revival, some of the above sentiments were paraded in a "morass of sentimental literature about the Holy Family"³⁴ **Pierre de Bérulle, Jean-Jacques Olier, St. Jean Eudes and Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort** appealed in their pious writings to young women to follow the example of the Virgin in her Nazareth household. In her they would have seen gentle obedience, modesty, simplicity in taste and demeanour. "Her purity and submissiveness and poverty became quintessential motherliness."³⁵

Bérulle (1575 - 1629), the founder of the French Oratory, was educated by the Jesuits and studied theology at the Sorbonne. His writings coincided with the expanding acceptance of Marian doctrine and devotion throughout Europe. The emphasis he placed on the interior 'states' of the Incarnate Word as the pattern of the spiritual life of the Christian, brought for him the title 'the apostle of the Word Incarnate.' O'Carroll finds it appropriate to call him the "apostle of the Mother."³⁶ "Your vocation is to be the Mother of God; to that God called you; with that, without knowing it, you have co-operated from the moment of your birth to the present hour,"³⁷ was Bérulle's observation when speaking of the Annunciation. He decided that Mary's fiat, in assenting to the Incarnation, was "much more powerful in its issue and effect than that God pronounced, when creating the Universe. For if by this latter He made the world, the other now produces the author of the world."³⁸ That

argument was elaborated by his assertion that Mary had given a greater life to Jesus than He had given to her. Jesus had made her only the Mother of God. She had conceived, incarnated and brought forth the Son of God.

Bérulle considered '**Almah**' (hidden), a special title of Mary, as he concerned himself with the interior states of the Virgin, both before and after the Annunciation. While the angel was on his way to Nazareth, God was preparing the soul of Mary, who felt the weight of the sins of the universe and longed for the Messiah. When the angel arrived and spoke to her, she entered into another permanent heavenly state as the Mother of God. As with others of the French School, Bérulle discoursed on the relation of Mary to Jesus in her womb. The two hearts of Jesus and Mary were very close to each other. Jesus' first occupation was with His Father, and then with her. Mary, for her part, penetrated perfectly the mystery of the Incarnation while carrying her Child. She "was holily occupied with her Son, and his states and exercises,"³⁹ as shown by the angelic light. For His part, He drew her into His knowledge of the Father. Graef advises that such sentiments run counter to the first chapters of St. Luke's Gospel. Bérulle also emphasized Mary's maternal authority over Jesus, and introduced the notion, (later developed, especially by **Grignon de Montfort**), that she had a special power whereby she could give Jesus to souls.

He recommended the vow of Slavery to Mary. The Confraternities of Slaves of the Virgin, which were prominent in Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century, probably inspired the idea. Bérulle's version of the vow was: "To the perpetual honour of the Mother and the Son, I wish to be in the state and quality of servitude with regard to her who has the state and quality of the Mother of my God."⁴⁰ Together with this submission, personal power and liberty were renounced, and the postulant placed himself in her hands. The vow created a degree of controversy and dissension. The matter was resolved by the decision of the Holy Office not to approve the vow, but to allow the 'servitude' only as a private devotion to Mary.

Graef concurs with O'Carroll in praising the merit of Bérulle's mariology as being "completely dependent on Christ."⁴¹ By freeing devotion to Mary from many superstitious accretions, he helped to renew the practice of Devotion to the Incarnate Word.

Jean-Jaques Olier (1608-1657), who founded the seminary of St. Sulpice, followed in the steps of Bérulle, "but in a far less sober spirit."⁴² Many of his exaggerations probably were the results

of a psychologically disturbed youth. He has been quoted extensively because of his considerable influence on French Catholicism. Graef supports the position that Olier's devotion to Mary was matched by an intense love of Christ. However Graef has to admit that his reflection on the blessed Virgin led ordinary devotees to place her even above God, and therefore scandalised Protestants.

Graef's analysis of Olier's Mariology is based on his '**Vie intérieure de la très sainte Vierge**'. In this work he presented the relation between the Father and the blessed Virgin as a real marriage, in which the person and possessions belong to the wife. God, "who is the principle of the generation of the Word according to His Divinity,"⁴³ chose Mary as His help and spouse, and destined her "to become the principle of the generation of this same Word according to His humanity."⁴⁴ Another suggestion, to the effect that God "acted according to the intentions, the desires and prayers of Mary, which He foresaw,"⁴⁵ removed God as the First Cause of all things, and restricted His will to dependence on her.

The apocryphal story of her upbringing in the Temple was the background to the description of Mary's early years. "More enlightened than the priests(she).saw and contemplated Jesus Christ under all these symbols,"⁴⁶ as she assisted at the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. "She was already, without knowing it, performing the holy function of the priesthood, which she would have to exercise at Calvary "⁴⁷ There, together with Jesus Christ, she would also offer the exalted sacrifice; and the Father would "communicate to her the priestly spirit in an eminent manner."⁴⁸ In the extremities of His suffering Jesus had sought His mothers' consolation, only to be further pained by her multiple sufferings. As the New Eve she too had to contribute to our reconciliation with the Father. Therefore she also felt herself charged with the sins of men "and obliged to make satisfaction for their crimes."⁴⁹

Because he subscribed to the idea that anything to do with childbirth was unclean, Olier did not accept that Mary, (although the mother of Jesus), had any active share in the formation of His human body. He understood that Mary had conceived a perfect man, whom God had made when He engendered the incarnate Word. He also regarded Christ's stay in His Mother's womb as the most important time of His life, since the Church has given an extended period for the adoration of this 'mystery.' (from the Visitation to Christmas). Jesus had taken Mary as spouse "so as to beget the Church with her, as the Father had taken her to beget Himself,"⁵⁰ and had taken her "the most holy Virgin, as the new Eve, as His helper; and in that moment He gives her communion with all that He

had received from the Father, to make her Mother of the Living."⁵¹ At Cana, Mary's intervention demonstrated that Christ would give nothing to His Church except in consequence of Mary's desires. The faith of the disciples in Christ on this occasion "was one of the supernatural effects the most holy Virgin wanted to obtain."⁵² At the same time her real desire in intervening at Cana was realised, when she secured the Eucharist for the Church. This was accorded because of the "dominion of love"⁵³ she had over the heart of Jesus; and she was able to dispose of "His divine power according to her liking, in favour of men."⁵⁴ She was absent from the Last Supper; nevertheless, (Olier assumed), "the Sacrament was instituted out of Jesus' love of her and out of His personal regard for her."⁵⁵

In his analysis of the state of Mary's soul, Olier claimed that the "Word of God, through the love He bore the most holy Virgin, advanced the time of his holy marriage with the Church."⁵⁶ The mysteries of Mary's life were spiritually interpreted. St. Joseph was the image of God the Father. The Spirit, at the Annunciation, gave her "the excess of magnificent graces needed to accompany the spouse of the eternal Father, and Mother of His Son."⁵⁷ Olier favoured **St. Bernardine of Siena** in declaring that "All the gifts, all the virtues, all the graces of this divine Spirit are administered by the hands of Mary and as she will."⁵⁸ The most holy Virgin exercised a power that enabled her to give everything, to receive anyone and to shelter sinners from the wrath of Jesus Christ.

A tenet of the French School, 'interior assimilation,' was developed by Olier in relation to Jesus and Mary, and also in relation to Jesus and St. John. He suggested that Jesus had thoughts of transforming John into His own person, so that through him, He should still bestow love on His Mother after the Ascension. "After the Ascension Mary has guided the whole Churchand told each of the Apostles what he had to do."⁵⁹ Now, in heaven, Olier conjectured, "Jesus and Mary are wholly consummated into one and are but one thing."⁶⁰ Consequently Mary has exercised and continues to exercise a degree of 'omnipotence.'

Jean Eudes (1601 - 1680), founded his own congregation of Jesus and Mary (1643), for the education of priests. His inclinations led him into mysticism; his spirituality was centred on the hearts of Christ and His mother. Due to his efforts, the first Mass of the Heart of Mary was celebrated in Autun 8th February 1648. In 1669, the Roman Congregation of Rites refused to approve the Office and Mass which Eudes had composed for a liturgical feast of the Most Holy Heart of the Virgin Mary.

But Pope Clement X (1670 - 76), approved and helped to popularise the new devotion. Eudes proffered the opinion that:

the salvation of immortal souls is also the great work of the Mother of God..... All the Fathers of the Church say that she is co-redemptress with Christ in the work of our salvation. Christ immolated Himself upon the cross for the redemption of mankind and Mary made a similar sacrifice in undergoing untold suffering and sorrow.⁶¹

(He saw Mary as the spouse of the priest. At sixty-seven years of age he drew up a formal contract of marriage with her and from then wore a ring, as **Alain de la Roche** had done). In the style of the French School. Eudes stressed the close bond between Jesus and Mary, who

was an exact counterpart to Jesus: He (God) would give this Virgin Mother to us. And as the Son is the figure of the substance and the perfect image of the Divinity so also Mary should bear a perfect resemblance to Him.⁶²

For him they were but one, so that

whoever beholds Jesus, sees Mary; whoever loves Jesus, loves Mary; whoever has devotion to Jesus, has devotion to Mary..... you must see and adore her Son in her, and see and adore Him alone."⁶³

For "Jesus and Mary are the first two foundations of the Christian religion, the two living sources of our blessings."⁶⁴ The incongruity of the hasty qualification that, "for herself Mary is nothing", against the statement "her Son Jesus is all in her,"⁶⁵ reflects a subtle nuance, which has featured often in attempts to define and defend Mary's rôle. Eudes encouraged dependence on her as 'our mother' and as 'our sovereign,' together with 'our subjection' to her as slaves. Meditation on her states and mysteries was recommended, with particular reference to non-scriptural subjects, such as her birth, her childhood, her time in the Temple and her travels with Jesus throughout His public life. (The French School established the principle that Christ should never be considered without His Mother).

In '**Le Cœur admirable**,' Eudes defended the cult of the Heart of Mary (as distinct from the Heart of Jesus). and attempted to trace this devotion to the beginning of Christianity. He envisaged a perfect reproduction of the divine attributes and a share in the properties of each of the Three Persons in the Trinity, imprinted on Mary's heart by the divine Word.

Jesuit influence in France led to strong opposition by the King and the Pope to Protestantism and Jansenism. **Cornelius Jansen**, (1585 - 1638), bishop of Ypres, an Augustinian in his theology,

sought to combat the semi-Pelagian Jesuit interpretation of sin and grace. **Pope Urban VIII** (1623-1644), condemned Jansen's book, '**Augustinus**' in 1642, two years after its publication. The views expressed by Jansen found strong support among the more deeply religious Catholics of France, particularly in the nunnery of Port Royal near Paris. **Blaise Pascal** (1623 - 1662), who had close ties with this nunnery, and consequently to Jansenism, was a strong and influential opponent of the Jesuits. In Letter Nine, within his **Lettres Provinciales** (1656 - 1657), he attacked a Jesuit, **Père Barry**, who wrote a book entitled '**Paradise opened to Philagie by a hundred easily practised devotions to the Mother of God**'. Graef endorses Pascal's angry reaction to the contents of the book, in which could be found "as many keys to heaven that will open all paradise provided you practice them."⁶⁶ Among the recommended practices were: saluting the Virgin's image: repeating the name of Mary: saying a Hail Mary in honour of her heart: carrying a rosary or an image of her on one's person. The author told how a woman, who had saluted Mary's image daily and yet had lived and died in mortal sin, was resurrected by Christ, so that she could do penance. This was taken as proof that to practise one or more of these devotions would guarantee that the individual would "never be lost."⁶⁷ Although extraneous to the New Testament and to the Church's teaching on sin and repentance, the teaching proved to be very popular.

Graef points out that Pascal's "perfectly justified attack"⁶⁸ on these superstitions was misrepresented frequently as an attack on the Marian cult. She notes that he held the Jesuits responsible for the spread of false devotions; and suggests that such writing as that of Barry demonstrated the standard of morality and of Marian devotion among some, at this time. Graef records **Paul Hoffer's** observations on the devotion to Mary at the end of the Seventeenth century, where he states that the perceived "Jansenist conspiracy against the Virgin, has never existed anywhere, but in the imagination of their opponents."⁶⁹ The Jansenists reacted strongly against the unwarranted trust in Mary's intercession on behalf of unrepentant sinners; and condemned such devotions as those to her left foot or to the soles of her shoes. They instigated the most violent dispute over Mary's rôle as mediatrix during this period. It was provoked by the contents of a booklet of sixteen pages which appeared in November 1673. Had this been published at any other time, (in Graef's view), little notice would have been taken. It was the work of a Catholic jurist of Cologne, **Adam Widenfeldt**, and was entitled '**Monita salutaris B. Virginis Mariae ad cultores suos**

indiscretos,' and in a French translation, '*Avertissements salutaires*.' Its wide circulation in France resulted in the reform of the Gallican liturgy. The booklet was published in Ghent, anonymously. The author presented Mary as issuing such warnings as:

Do not put me parallel with God or Christ..... The praises that come to me for my own sake are vain..... Take heed that your 'dulia' does not sink into 'latria', breaking the commandment 'Worship God only'..... Those who call me mediatrix and advocate, let them not say it in the same sense in which my Son is properly mediator and advocate.....⁷⁰ Those who persevere in sin love me in vain..... Do not imagine that I am the refuge of impenitent sinners....⁷¹ If you love and venerate me as your patroness with God, you do well, for my prayers are of great value..... But do not call me omnipotent, Saviouress or Co-redemptress.....⁷² Do not honour me as if God were not enough for you. If you love God you have no need of anything Blessed is he, who, like the apostles, wants to know nothing but Christ and him crucified.⁷³

Besides, stories of her apparitions and revelations were not to be accepted too easily; different Madonnas could not be found in different localities; Mary's statues were not to be decked with precious jewels while the poor went hungry.

Although the doctrine was orthodox the booklet came under severe criticism. Those who were unable to read Latin were led to believe that it contained blasphemies against the Virgin. Jesuits held processions of the Virgin in reparation. Some Bishops were satisfied with its contents. In June 1674, the work was condemned from Rome as tainted with Jansenism. The feeling of outrage was exacerbated when the author of the '*Avis*' was known to be a layman. The Orders attacked author and book rigorously. The Benedictine Vicar General of the Bishop of Paderborn wrote that the Church had never defined Mary's position as *not* the refuge also of impenitent sinners. His enthusiasm exceeded his historical awareness when he declared, "Therefore the great and admirable Mother remains and shall remain, as long as the world stands, the refuge even of impenitent sinners, according to the mind of the Holy Fathers and the Church."⁷⁴ Miegge points out that the '*Avis*' helped to encourage a reaction against Marian devotion. A number of prominent and pious scholars such as **Launoy**, **Baillet**, **Tillemont** and **Murator** moved in that direction.

While some opponents of Widenfeld had attacked him for saying that Mary did not love sinners (impenitent ones), others such as the Jesuit **Jean Crasset** (1618 - 1692), misinterpreted him as meaning all sinners. Crasset taught that those whose lives really betrayed hostility to the Virgin, by their obvious lack of devotion to her, yet with hopes of pardon through her, "bore the sign of

reprobation on their foreheads, because there is nothing more opposed to her spirit than a presumptuous trust in her mercy."⁷⁵ He also felt that to be saved "one must still do penance and keep God's commandments."⁷⁶ Service to Mary, wearing her scapular or belonging to all her confraternities, were not sufficient. Neither was it "reasonable to believe that devotion to the holy Virgin 'was' a more powerful means of salvation than to her Son."⁷⁷ This great preacher and spiritual director had been drawn into the '**Avis Salutairis**' controversy. Apparently he tried to be fair in his comments, but at times was too severe on the '**Avis**.' He was certain that "the love of Jesus Christ is more powerful to save us than the love of Mary."⁷⁸

The "balanced views"⁷⁹ of Crasset were attacked by Protestants, among whom was an English layman, a 'Mr. Fleetwood,' who recorded accusations against him. In '**An Account of the Life and Death of the Blessed Virgin according to Romish Writers**' (1687), he charged Crasset with teaching that a man could be saved merely by some devotion to Mary. Crasset had used some stories in which the Virgin had saved some men from hell, and had also suggested that she was able to "change the first decisions of Providence,"⁸⁰ as demonstrated by her intervention at Cana. Graef looks on these comments from 'Mr. Fleetwood' as mistaken. She sympathizes with his criticism of the more derisory stories about Mary's all-powerful intercession, which were to damage the Catholic cause in the eighteenth century.

Louis Bourdaloue S. J. (1632 - 1704), defended Catholic doctrine against '**Les Avis Salutaires**.' He demonstrated how the titles of Mediatrix and Restorer were compatible with the dignity of the unique Mediator. Recalling that salvation came through the blood of Christ, he asserted that

we cannot overlook the fact that Mary provided, offered, delivered for us the blood which served as our ransoms; for it is in this that the whole Church has taken its stand to qualify her as Mediatrix and Restorer of men.⁸¹

Mary was God's helper in the achievement of our salvation. Since salvation began through her and through her consent to God's word, "it is through her co-operation that it must be fulfilled."⁸²

Another damaging publication was the '**Mystical City of God. The Divine History and Life of the Virgin Mother of God**', written by a Spanish Franciscan nun, **Mary d'Agreda** (d.1665). She maintained that she had been led into the divine Presence by six angels (given her by God), who had purified her. After the deepest mysteries were revealed to her, she was ordered to describe the beauties

of Mary. The book reflects a concoction of apocryphal stories and her own fertile imagination. For example, she claimed that Mary, like Christ, had preceded Adam, and was present at the creation of the world, because the Incarnate Christ was already there. She went on to say that Mary's birth was miraculously produced. Her body was formed on a Sunday and the soul infused the following Saturday - recalling Creation. At the moment of conception the Virgin had received the use of reason, and from that moment had begun to destroy sin. From this time she possessed quasi-omniscience and knew about all the events surrounding creation and its consequences. As one who made acts of the "most heroic virtue," (she was) "the special mirror of the Deity and the unique mediatrix of mankind."⁸³ d'Agreda also expressed the wish to have the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception defined. At the moment of her birth Mary had been in a divine ecstasy and, although surpassing the angels in wisdom and knowledge, had been treated like a child.

The "strange prolix nun"⁸⁴ also dealt with Mary's compassionate martyrdom, declaring that

She prayed that she might be permitted to feel and participate in her virginal body, all the pains of the wounds and tortures about to be undergone by Jesus. This petition was granted by the blessed Trinity, and the mother in consequence suffered all the torments of her most holy son in exact duplication⁸⁵

Mary d'Agreda, in 'The City of God,' wrote of the apparition of Christ to His mother, - a subject for meditation, that held its appeal intermittently after the Middle Ages: "the Virgin Mother participated in an extraordinary favourthe glorious body of the Son so closely united itself to that of this purest Mother that He penetrated into it and she into his....."⁸⁶ The visionary imagined Christ on the Cross entrusting the Universe to His mother:

The demons shall fear her and be subject to her. All the irrational creaturesshall likewise be subject to her.... Whatever she ordains and disposes in my Church, for my children, the sons of men, shall be confirmed by the three divine persons, and whatever she asks for mortals now, afterwards and forever, we shall concede.⁸⁷

The Book was forbidden by Pope Innocent XI, but acceptable to the King of Spain, who revoked the pontiff's decision. In order to avoid ridicule the book was condemned again in 1696, placed on the Index in 1704, but removed from it a year later. In spite of these fluctuations, the book continued to be widely read and loved, and "in its banal flourishes, it expresses aptly the faith of God-fearing times."⁸⁸

The celebrated French preacher and Bishop of Meaux, **Jacques-Benigne Bossuet** (1627 - 1704), opposed the claims of Mary d'Agreda. He stressed the vast difference between the transcendent Creator and the human Mother of God; and advanced his Mariological principles in a sermon, '**On Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.**' His views were less exaggerated than those of his teacher **Bérulle**. He defined his aim as the establishment of a devotion for the holy Virgin within a completely Christian doctrine, based "on solid maxims based on the Gospel," (and) "not on dubious stories, nor on apocryphal revelations, nor on uncertain reasonings, nor on indiscreet exaggerations."⁸⁹ True devotion to Mary, for Bossuet, could be practised only out of an authentic Christian life and outside any superstitious belief that expected her help, in return for a few simple devotions, regardless of morality. He asserted that Mary would reject those who failed to resemble Jesus. Yet Mary's love for men did not differ from God's. She had the same part in our salvation as Eve had in our ruin. The Incarnation and the presence of Mary at Calvary explained this teaching. "We are those to whose salvation she consented when she said, 'Let it be done to me according to your word.' She carried all of us in her womb with Jesus Christ, in whom we were."⁹⁰

The vow of virginity, the Immaculate Conception and the bodily Assumption were upheld. '**On the Conception,**' Bossuet wrote that the Immaculate Conception had "an indescribable power to persuade pious souls."⁹¹ "Next to the articles of faith," he could not determine "anything more certain."⁹² He went on to say that while the Church had "a most honourable opinion of the conception of Mary," she did not "oblige us to believe it to have been immaculate, but she gives us to understand that such a belief is pleasing to her."⁹³

Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673 - 1716), a Breton, educated by the Jesuits at Rennes, has been described as "the master par excellence of Marian devotion."⁹⁴ One of two Marian treatises, '**True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,**' was rediscovered in 1842, having been lost for about a century. The platform on which de Montfort propounded his ideas was that, "It is more perfect, because it is more humble, not to approach God of ourselves without taking a mediator;"⁹⁵ to do so directly and without recommendation "is to fail in humility."⁹⁶ Grignion's neglect of Scriptural reference to the mediation of Jesus Christ, allows him to blame those who encourage devotion to Christ rather than to Mary. It was heretical to say the 'Our Father' and to omit the Rosary or the 'Hail Mary'. He could not tolerate those who disagreed with his views, and called, 'reprobates,' those who did

not surrender themselves to Mary. Such culprits would miss wonderful rewards, one being "an easy way of arriving at union with our Lord."⁹⁷ For Mary's inventiveness procured for her "all the secret ways of gaining the heart of God."⁹⁸ Grignon subscribed to the medieval idea that Christ always obeyed His Mother.

He looked on true devotion as entire self-surrender to Mary, in order "to belong entirely to Jesus Christ, through her."⁹⁹ It was the Holy Spirit who produced Jesus Christ in His members through Mary. (The Holy Spirit figures prominently in the work). Grignon broke with the thinking in the French School (which saw Mary as spouse to the Father), to speak of her as spouse of the Spirit. When the latter found Mary in a soul, He would fly there. "God the Holy Spirit, being barren as God, that is, producing no other divine Person, became fruitful by Mary, whom He espoused."¹⁰⁰ He worked His masterpiece with her and "with her and in her, daily to the end of time, He produces the predestined, and the members of the Body of this adorable Head."¹⁰¹ The members could not approach Jesus but by Mary and could only see Jesus and speak to Him by her intercession. This requirement extended to the Holy Communion; for "the more you leave Mary to act in your Communion, the more Jesus will be glorified."¹⁰²

Through his devotion to Mary, Grignon was of the opinion that he could lead the Christian to devotion to Christ. He also expressed a certainty that "the formation and education of the great saints who shall come at the end of the world, are reserved for Mary."¹⁰³ That end was near. In the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Mary, who had remained hidden in the early days, because of the possible effects of the "admirable charms"¹⁰⁴ outwardly bestowed on her by God, must be revealed by the Holy Spirit, so that Christ might be made known. The apogee of the Marian devotion of the French School (*École Française*) was reached with Grignon.

Laurentius Chrysogonus S. J. (1590 - 1650), is described by O'Carroll as the greatest Croatian Mariologist. He was the author of an encyclopaedic work, '**Mundus Marianus**.' Part I, (published in Vienna in 1646), treated of Mary as a mirror reflecting God and His perfections. Part II (published in Padua in 1651), dealt with Mary reflecting the Heavenly world and its perfections; and Part III (published in Augsburg in 1712), pictured Mary as reflecting the earthly world and its perfections, thereby giving Mary a Cosmic role. The metaphors of Chrysogonus recalled the teaching

of **Theophanes of Nicaea**. Through Mary "the summit of creation and the meaning and purpose of all things under her,"¹⁰⁵ the whole of creation was, in a way, associated with the person of the Word.

Yet during the Seventeenth century, the Catholic teaching about Mary continued to suffer the consequences of the effects of the Reformation. In some instances it was neglected and despised; in others it was modified. For example **Johann Arndt** (1621), a mystical writer, who influenced German Pietism, stressed her personal holiness. **Jacob Bohme** (d.1624), incorporated Mary in his theosophical system, associating her with the gnostic concept of the divine Wisdom. This Wisdom a 'heavenly virgin' had descended into the earthly body of Mary at the Incarnation. "The corrupted soul of Adam, in the body of Mary," (thereby) "was again placed within the eternal (incorrupt) humanity."¹⁰⁶ The various speculations of theosophy exercised a strong influence on the Sophiology of Nineteenth and Twentieth century authors such as **Solovieff** and **Bulgakov**.

Anglican responses to Marian ideas.

The changes of the Sixteenth century had resulted in the virtual disappearance of Mary out of the daily devotional life of the Church (of England). The Caroline divines of the Anglican Church in the seventeenth century addressed themselves to the subject of Mary. A layman and High Churchman, **Anthony Stafford** (d.1645?), wrote a book entitled '**The Female (sic!) Glory or The Life and Death of Our Blessed Lady, the Holy Virgin Mary, God's Own Immaculate Mother,**' (1635), which carried **Archbishop Laud's** imprimatur. The reproduction of Catholic teaching in the book enraged the Puritans. Yet the author rejected such assertions as, that Mary was in no way inferior to her Son according to the flesh, and His partner in the sacrifice of Calvary. "I willingly allow her to be the vessel but not the fountain of Grace."¹⁰⁷ He held that "she understood that her consent was not only required to be the parent of the Almighty, but also the spouse of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁸ He opposed the ideas that compared "God to a wooer, the angel to a solicitor and Mary to the beloved."¹⁰⁹ But he was prepared to attribute to secondary causes, actions properly due to the First Cause.

Joseph Hall (d.1656), Bishop of Norwich, and of the Low Church, wrote about Mary in his '**Contemplations.**' While he considered that the 'Hail Mary' attributed to her the honour due to God alone, he raised no objections to praising her. The Bishop gave his approval to the expressions about the greatness of the honour done to the Mother of God. He painted the moving scene of Mary

standing at the Cross, remembering the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, "and laying all these together, with the miserable infirmities of his Passion, how wert thou crucified with Him!"¹¹⁰ But Mary's faith in the Resurrection would restore her soul and give her triumphant confidence.

Mark Frank (d.1664), Treasurer of Pembroke Hall, preached a sermon on the Annunciation and declared that "both our Lord and the Mother of our Lord (are) most vilely spoken of by a new generation of wicked men, who, because the Romanists make little less of her than a goddess, they make not so much of her as a good woman...."¹¹¹ Bishop **Jeremy Taylor** (d.1667), also insisted on Mary's exemplary holiness, especially in his '**Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**' He admired her courage and endurance under the Cross. Others, such as **George Bull**, Bishop of St. David's, (d.1710), and **George Hicks**, (d.1715), in their works, admitted Mary's holiness, but were mainly concerned to repudiate Catholic 'exaggerations.'

Comment.

The feminist movement has cast a critical glance at the functions of Mary, as mother and wife, and as Mother of God. The picture of a totally submissive female, the product of a male-dominated Church, recommended as a perfect example for women, has roused the ire of many.

The contrasting rôles of the Virgin were emphasized for example by the prominent theologians of the Seventeenth century. They announced that Mary was a wonderful example to follow and encouraged the practice. On the other hand, some of their pronouncements on the powers accredited to Mary, could hardly be defended even by Roman Catholic commentators. The policy of 'approximation' in relation to the identities of Mary and Jesus, reached new extremes.

The Jesuits succumbed to the temptation of attempting to gain popular support by introducing erroneous claims about the consequences of certain devotional practices to Mary. Rejection of these ideas was forcefully expressed.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE AGE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Reformation mingled with the forces of new scientific knowledge and set in motion "intellectual movements that were far removed from the faith of earlier centuries."¹ Although the Age of Enlightenment, (c.1780 - 1830 ,) witnessed a return to the essentials of the faith, "Mariology was very much the poor relation."² The Medieval maxim of "better to believe too much rather than too little about Mary"³ was turned on its head. However when Romanticism followed Revolution at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, Marian devotion was encouraged and sustained.

The Eighteenth century witnessed the flowering of Deism which had its roots in the ideas and writings of earlier figures such as **Lord Herbert of Cherbury**, (1583-1648). He had attempted to develop a rational religion independent of the sanction of revelation. He, in turn, influenced the philosopher **John Locke**, (1632 -1704), who also attempted to establish the reasonableness of religion. Scepticism about religion was fostered. Miraculous interventions by the Divine were "considered not to be consonant with God's omnipotence and fixity of purpose."⁴ **Anthony Collins**, (1676 - 1729), an English Scholar, denied that Old Testament prophecies predicted Christ, "thus obliquely denying the divine mission of the latter."⁵

Voltaire, (1694 - 1778), incorporated elements of Deism in his work and combined belief in God with a bitter mistrust of institutional Christianity, (and especially of the Roman Catholic Church).

Rationalism found a strong foothold in Germany. The pious were faced with the dilemma of reconciling religious beliefs with the new forms of scepticism. One who tried to unfold a new interpretation of Christianity was the philosopher, **Immanuel Kant**, (1724 - 1804). Many representatives of the Church were extremely hostile to the new mentality because of its negative outlook. Those who attempted to come to terms with it faced the accusation of heresy.

In a large work called '**Full Marian Armour**,' the Flemish Dominican **John Baptist van Ketwich** had defended past Mariological positions. The book, published in 1720, consisted mostly of quotations of many medieval and later writers such as the **Pseudo-Albert**, **Dionysius the Carthusian**, and **Bernardine of Busti**, whose familiar ideas substantiated the author's theses. He reviled

Widenfeld who had given Mary's response as , "Do not imagine that I am the refuge of impenitent sinners;"⁶ and questioned the objection to Mary's ability to mediate effectively for a change of heart in the individual. Graef points out that Ketwigh did not concern himself with the opposition of Widenfeld and others to the idea that Mary could save impenitent sinners, because they practised some external devotion to her. Ketwigh asserted that Christ served and obeyed Mary for thirty years, in order "that we should see that Christ preferred the honour of His Mother to the salvation of the universe."⁷ He concluded that the whole Trinity "honours, praises and glorifies"⁸ her. He denounced criticisms of exaggerated Marian devotion, and defended the most extravagant Marian miracles reported by "such unreliable writers as **Alain de la Roche**."⁹ His attacks were made against Crasset (without naming him) and also against the defenders of a more critical approach, such as **L. A. Muratori**.

Although often attacked for being unorthodox, **Muratori**, librarian to the Duke of Modena, found an ally in the scholarly **Pope Benedict XIV**. In 1714, under the pseudonym **Lamindus Pritanius Muratori**, he published a treatise on '**Moderation in Matters of Religion**,' in which he discussed the Immaculate Conception. He agreed that the Church had every right to define the belief, if it could be deduced from Scripture, or warranted from the 'constant tradition' of the Fathers. His criticism of the '**voeu sanguinaire**' (vow to defend the Immaculate Conception, even till the death), enraged his opponents. Muratori's views were presented again in a book on the properly regulated devotion of Christians. The Congregation of the Index examined the work in 1753, and accepted it as completely orthodox. Christians were reminded that Mary was not a divinity, did not have the right to forgive sins and could not save us. She had the position of advocate and as such should be venerated. Her office was one of prayer not of command. Muratori did accept her universal mediation; but condemned the notion that damnation could be avoided without leading a virtuous life, and with a simple devotion to Mary. The proliferation of Marian feasts in excess of those for Christ, caused him deep regret.

The year of Muratori's death was also marked by the publication of the '**Glories of Mary**' by **Alphonsus Liguori**, (1696 - 1787), the founder of the Redemptorists. The book which gathered up Marian teaching and legends of the past became the most popular of all modern books on the subject. Published in 1786, it was written as an answer to the growing rationalisation of the period. According

to O'Dwyer that purpose was not realised. On the other hand the treatise became exceedingly popular because it "met the needs of millions of devout souls and still continues to do so...."¹⁰ Graef sounds a warning note to the effect that Liguori's title of 'Doctor of the Church,' was due to his work on moral theology and not on his spiritual writings. The book on Marian devotion "is neither a work of true erudition nor of independent thought and research."¹¹ O'Carroll looks on Liguori as the most important writer on Our Lady in the Eighteenth century. In the '**Glories of Mary**,' which took him sixteen years to compile, his intentions were "that devout souls may, with little trouble, and little expense, read of the glories of Mary;"¹² and that priests would be provided "with material for sermons, so that they may spread devotion to the Mother of God."¹³ The book contained a collection of material that was "mixed and devoid of the most elementary critical sense."¹⁴ Theologians of any standing, monks and preachers have had their wealth of comments incorporated, together with Liguori's preference for 'edifying stories.' The collection was made "without discrimination and with devout complacency."¹⁵ The **Glories of Mary** has been "the main bridge between the medieval and modern forms of the (Marian) cult."¹⁶

The '**Glories of Mary**' was an attempt to answer the rationalism of that period, by reviving devotion to the Mother of God. Graef's assessment discovers a twofold effect of the book. Many of the faithful, who were untouched by the tenets of the Enlightenment, found what they wanted. Others who knew something of the spirit of the age "must have been estranged even more from the Church in general, and Marian devotion in particular, by the extravagances of the work."¹⁷ Liguori adopted the Medieval view of the Kingdom of justice ruled by Jesus, and the Kingdom of mercy ruled by Mary. In this he referred to **Gerson** and **St. Bonaventure**, and used the parallel of Esther and Ahasuerus. O'Carroll observes: "With amazing dexterity, the saint moves around the idea of motherhood, affirming, explaining, exhorting, applying his ideas to human need, to one universal need, help in the hour of death."¹⁸

In Chapters five and six Liguori developed **St. Bernard's** axiom that "all graces come to us through Mary."¹⁹ From this he deduced that her intercession has been necessary for salvation. Miegge looks on his comments as an hyperbolic exaltation of Mary's intercessory power. "Although Mary in Heaven can no longer command the Son, yet her prayers will always be a mother's prayers, and so most potent to obtain as much as she asks."²⁰ This observation was supported by quotations from such

writers as **Peter Damiani, Germain, Anselm and Cosmas of Jerusalem**. Miegge is generous enough to allow the possibility of "some positive element, notwithstanding the tares,"²¹ in Liguori's mariology. From his illustrations it may be concluded that Liguori had attempted "to impress the imagination with such an exaltation of the Virgin Mary's mercy as to lead astonished souls to prostrate themselves, humble and contrite, at the feet of their redemptress."²² The reaction to such unexpected and undeserved mercy would then produce conversion and penitence, leading to a holy life and ultimately to a devout death. The theme of the minuteness of merit, in relation to the greatness of grace, would tolerate the description of quasi-Lutheran. Miegge finds that the pious stories and citations of Liguori did not differ in purpose from **Luther's**, who had endeavoured hyperbolically to express the immensity of grace of Christ who died for us. This is hardly to be wondered at, seeing that both of them were greatly influenced by the piety of **St. Bernard**. Their respective notions of 'justification by faith,' differed in direction. Luther concentrated on the person of Christ and on the unconditional faith "in His work fully completed and sufficient on Calvary."²³

On the other hand Liguori's conception of faith was a 'confidence' in the compassionate Mother, "who is so good that she does not refuse anyone."²⁴ Miegge accuses the rigid and juridical pattern of the Catholic theological and soteriological system of retaining the picture of Christ, as the "cold executor of the final judgement to the exclusion of His being the symbol of total grace,"²⁵ (that is, as found in Marian piety). Liguori expressed Mary's saving rôle in concrete terms without "too systematic a theology,"²⁶ and without the use of the word 'Co-redemptress', which he did employ. In a sermon on the Feasts, Liguori argued that the Immaculate Conception was fitting to the first born daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son and the spouse of the Holy Ghost. He also defended the opinion that Mary had also possessed the use of reason in her mother's womb, but questioned the pre-eminence of her grace, even in the moment of the Immaculate Conception.

The age of rationalism had its inevitable effects on the Church, (especially in Germany and France). Veneration of the saints and Marian devotion suffered as a result of the 'enlightenment'. The 'Hail Mary' was scorned; the Rosary was rejected as vain repetition; shrines were abolished, and some bishops discarded 'peripheral devotions. Mariology was neglected; Marian feasts were reduced to the Annunciation, the Purification, the Visitation and the Assumption; and Marian confraternities were attacked frequently. Marian devotion received a set-back with the suppression of the Jesuit Order by

Pope Clement XIV in 1773. The anti-ecclesiastical legislation of **Joseph II** (Holy Roman Emperor from 1765 - 1790), with its emphasis on reform, religious toleration and the rights of the civil power over the Church, cooled spiritual fervour, especially Marian devotion. The French Revolution brought the Church to "the low-water mark of its influence, and with it also Mary, its type and most eminent member."²⁷ 'Reaction to the situation resulted in the outcry for a return to the essentials of Christianity and to 'primitive teaching.' Graef reckons that an outcome of such a movement was a dangerous tilting towards "the opposite extreme, and sacrificing also legitimate developments."²⁸

The antithesis of this situation manifested itself in an attitude of mind that favoured "irrational and suprarational influences,"²⁹ with a relish for emotional and mystical experiences. Two publications were to appease and encourage this desire. In Germany **Joseph von Gorres** wrote a history of Christian mysticism, (1836 - 42); and **Clemens Brentans** published the revelations of **Anna Katherine Emmerich** (d.1824) in 1833.

New Apparitions.

Two sequences of Marian apparitions in particular, in the nineteenth century, caught the attention and imagination of the devout laity. The first involved **Catherine Labouré**, a poor illiterate peasant, who was determined to become a nun. After her mother died, Catherine, aged nine, climbed on a chair in her mother's bedroom to kiss a statue of the Virgin, and asked Mary to be her mother. In her teens she had a dream in which an old priest told her that God had plans for her. Five years later while waiting for an interview in a nunnery she noticed a portrait of the founder, **St. Vincent de Paul**, (d. 1660), and was startled, as she recognised the priest of her dream.

In 1830, at the age of twenty-four, Catherine entered the novitiate in Paris to become a Sister of Charity. Immediately after joining the novitiate she had a number of visions, for example, of the heart of St. Vincent, and of Our Lord in the blessed sacrament. On the eve of the feast of St. Vincent, 19th July 1830, her desire to see the Virgin was fulfilled. Late on the 18th. she 'saw' a child of four to five years old, who told her to go to the chapel, where the Virgin awaited her. Catherine found Mary sitting on a chair by the altar. She gave Catherine instructions about her conduct in various matters.

Mary appeared to Catherine in the convent chapel in Rue du Bac, Paris, on three occasions in 1830. The association of the Virgin with the moon in a Seventeenth century painting of the

Immaculate Conception may have impressed Catherine's imagination. Marina Warner is convinced that the Vision of the Virgin in November 1830, communicated by Catherine, strengthened the identification of Mary with the moon in the popular mind. At that time the Virgin appeared in a white silk rustling dress; her head was covered with a body-length, white veil. Her feet, which crushed the serpent, rested on a globe ('golden ball'), surmounted by a small golden cross. Catherine was also aware of brilliant rays which radiated from three rings on each of Mary's fingers. Then she heard the words: "This ball which you see represents the whole world, particularly France, and every person in particular."³⁰ She was also informed that the brilliant rays symbolized the graces given by Mary to those who requested them. Catherine told how there appeared around the Virgin an oval frame, inside which was written in gold letters, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you."³¹ To commemorate these visions Mary asked Catherine to have a medal struck; all those who wore it with confidence would obtain great graces. The picture of Mary, standing with arms outstretched, continuing to emit rays, slowly turned to reveal (what was to be on the reverse side of the medal), an 'M' surmounted by a cross, and below it the two hearts of Jesus and Mary; one surrounded by a crown of thorns, the other pierced by a sword.

The Miraculous Medal was eventually struck in 1832, after the Archbishop of Paris had given his consent. Ashton tells how, in June of that year, Paris was in the grip of a cholera epidemic. Those who wore the medal were cured and "there were almost immediate recoveries from other afflictions."³² In the following year "some most unlikely conversions were attributed to its touch."³³ René Laurentin, in his account of the life of Catherine (who was recognised as a saint in 1947), described the medal's function as a bible for the poor, a launching pad for prayer and a link with the Communion of Saints. Graef notes that during official enquiries into the circumstances of the revelation of the Miraculous Medal, Catherine, because of her refusal to appear before the authorities, was not summoned. She also suffered from "strange periods of amnesia,"³⁴ when she could not recall, even for her confessor, any details of the visions. The Medal, which is worn by Catholics world-wide, has become the 'talisman of the Legion of Mary.' Catherine's story and the increasing popularity of the Medal, greatly influenced the definition of the Immaculate Conception, by impressing the doctrine on the consciousness of devotees, and leading to "a growing demand to have it solemnly defined."³⁵

A great movement of piety, conversions, theological effort and official encouragement, were the consequences of these events in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. O'Dwyer views this period as one of fervent piety, which absorbed much from spurious books and poor art. J. H. Newman's Mariology "which went back to the sources for its inspiration"³⁶ helped to redress the situation. Newly founded religious congregations and revived older orders showed special concern for Mary and her rôle in the apostolate. New congregations such as Marists, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Little Company of Mary and Marianists were dedicated to her. Then the apparitions at Lourdes, (1858), created a greater interest among the laity in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. From that time onwards Marian devotion strengthened. Scheeben, a professor of dogma at Cologne, like Newman, returned to patristic sources. Mariology was now taking its definite place in theology. The new current of thought sought to extend the application of Mary's mediation, which was considered as her participation in the fundamental work of Redemption, and in dispensing its fruits.

Expositions on the Immaculate Conception.

A number of theologians produced treatises on the Immaculate Conception during this period. '**De Immaculato Meatae Virginis Mariae Conceptu,**' by the Jesuit **Giovanni Perrone**, was published in 1847, and within five years had gone through ten editions. The doctrine had been accepted by all Orders. By the Eighteenth century, the resistance of the Dominicans had begun to crumble under the constant objections of the Jesuits. They were finally persuaded with the argument that **St. Thomas Aquinas** had refrained from pronouncing Mary immaculate, "only because he had misunderstood the character of human generation."³⁷ Their request for permission to celebrate the feast was granted, with the understanding that this would not affect their oath to teach the doctrine of St. Thomas.

The matter remained a controversial subject in spite of the great wave of enthusiasm that supported it. Opposition from Germany, France and England prevented **Pope Gregory XVI** from defining the doctrine. With his successor, **Pope Pius IX**, who was devoted to the cause of the Immaculate Conception, the prolonged struggle was to come to an end. The results of an ordered investigation of the subject, together with the solicited opinions from dioceses about the proposal of a definition, led to

the task of drawing up the bull. On December 8th, 1854, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was proclaimed by the Constitution, '*Ineffabilis Deus*.' An introduction, that detailed Mary's unique position and endowments, was followed by an account of the history of the doctrine, the institution and the approval of the feast by various popes, and the development of the cult,

either by indulgences granted, or by leave given to states, provinces, and kingdoms, that they might choose as their Patroness the Mother of God, under the title of her Immaculate Conception; or by approved sodalities, congregations, and religious societies, instituted in honour of the Immaculate Conception; or by praises given to the piety of those who have erected monasteries, hospitals or churches, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, or who have bound themselves by a religious vow to defend strenuously the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God.³⁸

It was stated that Roman Pontiffs in the past had condemned any who had taught that it was not the Conception of the Virgin, but rather the sanctification, to which devotion had been paid by the Church. The Pope's predecessors had not allowed the distinction to be drawn by some, between the first and second instant of the Conception, with the assertion that the Conception was indeed "celebrated but not in its first moment."³⁹ Their intention was to protect both the Feast of the Conception and the Conception at the first instant, "as the true object of the cultus."⁴⁰ Miegge criticizes the lack of precision, in the solemn declaration about the particular moment, that Mary's preservation from original sin must be thought to have taken place. He accepts that within the context of the Bull, "the first instant of her conception,"⁴¹ was meant. He concludes that conception without stain was intended as preservation from sin, and, in an active sense, as sanctification in the maternal womb.

Miegge then takes up this 'modern interpretation' of the Immaculate Conception, as a sanctification in the maternal womb - an idea that was prevalent among Thirteenth century schoolmen. This has led to the suggestion by some mariologists that **St. Thomas Aquinas** may well have agreed with the definition of **Pius IX**. Miegge protests that a "severe Augustinian sense of Thomism"⁴² embraced the affirmation of Mary's descent from Adam, even briefly, she, too, had shared in the "common heritage of malediction,"⁴³ freedom from which could be found only through redemption by her divine Son. The most perfect method thought out for Mary by the **Scotist** theology, (in Miegge's opinion), was "a crossing over to thinking of a quite different order, that is the

postulation in Mary of the innocence of Eve before the fall, which is the negation of the Augustinian dogma at a point that is decisive."⁴⁴

Miegge also quarrels with the description of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the papal definition, as "revealed truth."⁴⁵ Neither the Scriptures nor earliest traditions could substantiate this claim. **G. M. Roschini** has argued that a truth can be contained in the Sacred Scriptures implicitly "and the Holy Father has not stated that it is explicit."⁴⁶ Such an implicit truth may be there either objectively or logically (subjectively) "in so far as this truth is believed and professed by the Church."⁴⁷ The definition was the first to have been dogmatically pronounced by the pope. Miegge perceives that the exercise served as a means of sounding Catholic reaction to such a prerogative within the papacy. In the Vatican Council of 1870, the dogma of papal infallibility was defined.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception has given a strong impulse to the development of mariology. Some modern mariologists regard this definition together with that of Theotokos, (Council of Ephesus 431), as the theological foundation of the whole Marian doctrine. Four years after the declaration, the dogma was ratified, "in the true spirit of the Counter-Reformation, by the appearance of the Virgin in person."⁴⁸ The dogma increased in popularity and a Marian shrine was established at the location of these appearances at **Lourdes**.

On 11th February 1858, **Bernadette Soubirous** had gone to gather firewood around the grotto of Massabielle. As she started to remove her stockings in order to cross a canal near the grotto, her attention was drawn to the grotto by the sound of a gust of wind. There (she told her confessor), she saw "something white in the shape of a girl."⁴⁹ Although frightened she did not run away.

I put my hand in my pocket, and I found my rosary there. I wanted to make the Sign of the Cross..... I couldn't raise my hand to my forehead..... The vision made the Sign of the Cross. Then I tried a second time and I could.⁵⁰

At that, the sense of shock disappeared; Bernadette said her rosary and noticed the vision fingering the beads of a rosary, "but she did not move her lips."⁵¹ Other appearances occurred on the 14th and 15th February. On the third occasion the apparition requested Bernadette to present herself at the grotto for fifteen days. Subsequently the vision appeared on most of the days during this period up until 4th March, 1858. Within that fortnight the numbers of curious and excited onlookers increased from around thirty on February 20th, to between seven and eight thousand on March 4th, when a miracle was expected, (but did not occur).

On Thursday 25th February, 'that thing' (**Aquerò**), told Bernadette to drink at a spring and wash herself in it; and indicated to the bemused visionary where the spring was located. Bernadette could only find a patch of mud. At the fourth attempt she managed to extract enough moisture to drink. Later that afternoon, some people, who had witnessed the unusual behaviour of Bernadette, returned to the grotto. Their efforts to draw off water from the hole resulted in a greater flow of water, enough to fill two bottles, which were taken away in the hope of a cure. That same evening Bernadette found herself faced (again) by the authorities, and questioned by several people about her strange behaviour at the grotto. She was summoned to **Monsieur Dutour**, the Imperial Procurator, who asked about the appearance of the vision. She replied, "Like nothing."⁵² When pressed on the matter she said that the apparition resembled "the blessed Virgin of the parish church for the face and clothes..... but alive and surrounded by light."⁵³ Graef notes that both the image of the Miraculous Medal and one of the Marian statues in Bernadette's parish church bore a striking resemblance to Murillo's, (1617 - 82), paintings of the Immaculate Conception.

In the middle of the night on March 1st, **Catherine Latapie**, together with her two youngest children, saw the apparition at the grotto. When she placed her hand into the stream, she received healing for injuries to her arm and her hand - (the result of a fall from a tree). On March 2nd, Bernadette was given a message for the priests, telling them to build a chapel at the grotto. Early in the morning of March 25th, the feast of the Annunciation, Bernadette felt constrained to return to the grotto. After the rosary **Aquerò** re-appeared to be met with the question from Bernadette, "Mademoiselle, would you be so kind as to tell me who you are, if you please?"⁵⁴ After the fourth time of asking, the apparition, standing in the pose of the Miraculous Medal said, "Que soy era Immaculada Councepcion."⁵⁵ Laurentin acknowledges that the expression *Immaculée Conception* " would have been familiar to Bernadette and especially from the feast day of December 8th."⁵⁶ But those words in French, would have been foreign to her. Laurentin says that the concept itself was as unknown to her as the mystery of the Trinity.

Bernadette's story has been accepted by Catholic writers. Graef wonders:

But, is it to be believed possible in the year 1858, four years after the definition of the Immaculate Conception, a girl who went to church regularly, who attended catechism classes, and who had, moreover, been constantly questioned both by priest and lay people during the

preceding weeks, should never have heard the words 'Immaculate Conception'?⁵⁷

There may have been certain features in the events at Lourdes which were not as miraculous as generally held.

On 7th April 'the blessed Virgin' repeated her demand to have a chapel built on the grotto site. She appeared to Bernadette for the last time on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16th July. The findings of an investigation, ordered by the **Bishop of Tarbes** and published in January 1862, confirmed that the blessed Virgin had really appeared to Bernadette. The cult of Our Lady of Lourdes for the diocese was initiated; the proposal was made for the building of a sanctuary on the territory of the grotto. Two years later the statue was blessed, and in 1866 the crypt was inaugurated. The Church of the Immaculate Conception was finished in 1872. The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes was instituted for the whole Church in 1907. Bernadette was canonized in 1933; and the centenary celebrations of the apparition were conducted enthusiastically in 1958.

It may be noted that, prior to the happenings at Lourdes, the Church in France had been suffering the consequences of the French Revolution, (1789), and of the monarchical revolt, (1848). Religion had been abolished; church property was confiscated and priests were suffering persecution. From 1852 Napoleon III tolerated organised religion, and on 2nd October 1858, ordered the removal of the barricades.

Other Visions.

In September 1846, two children claimed that the Virgin had appeared to them (on one occasion only), in a circle of brilliant light, as they looked after cattle in the French Alps. The account of the vision given by fourteen year old **Melanie Calvat** (1831 - 1904), and eleven year old **Maximin Girand** (1835 - 1875), did not vary under repeated interrogation. Mary had sat on a rock to reprove and to warn about the blasphemy and profanation of Sunday, about the results of excesses of the French Revolution. Besides, cart drivers had been misusing her Son's Name, when swearing. The vision wept as she spoke and predicted the punishments for these sins. Graef points out that such "graver matters as flagrant, social injustice, mere superficial religious observance and lack of charity"⁵⁸ were not mentioned.

This vision at **La Salette** was approved by the diocesan, the Bishop of Grenoble, in 1851. The Curé d' Arts after some difficulty, was convinced by 'a sign from heaven,' to accept the phenomenon.

La Salette became a minor place of pilgrimage; miracles and conversions have been attributed to it. Such claims as far as Graef is concerned are "no cogent proof of the authenticity of the original apparitions."⁵⁹ It has been argued that the appearance of the Virgin at La Salette, may have been a topic of conversation in Bernadette's hearing during a stay at Bartre's.

Towards the end of the Franco - German war, 17th January 1871, at **Pontmain**, twelve year old **Eugene Barbadette** saw a beautiful lady, as he gazed at the sky to determine the approaching weather. She wore a blue robe, covered in golden stars, and blue sandals, each of which carried a golden ribbon tied into a rosette over the instep. On her head, covered with a black veil, rested a golden crown with a red border round the centre. Eugene's ten year old brother Joseph claimed to have seen her. None of the adults in proximity to the children could see the apparition. Two other children also indicated that they had seen the beautiful lady . Graef draws attention to the comments of **H. Marechal O. P.** (in his book '**Memorial des Apparitions de la Vierge dans l'Eglise,**' Paris (1957)), who, although accepting the authenticity of this apparition, nevertheless pointed out parts of the record that would justify doubts. The Episcopal approbation of the apparition was given in 1872. The basilica of Pontmain was blessed five years later.

The Oxford Movement.

The revival of Marian devotion in the nineteenth century was reflected in England in the Oxford Movement. Its chief exponents **John Keble**, (1792 - 1866), **E. B. Pusey**, (1800 - 1882), and **John Henry Newman**, (1801-1890), having revived Patristic studies, endeavoured to present a fresh appreciation of the role of Theotokos, in the Christian dispensation.

Keble, inspired by his mother's death in 1823, had written the first stanza of his famous hymn, '**Ave Maria,**' which was published in 1827, for '**The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**' In it Mary was addressed as the "blessed Maid, Lily of Eden's fragrant shade..... whose name all but adoring love may claim."⁶⁰ Sentiments which gave distant echoes of the Seventeenth century.

In 1832, thirteen years before his conversion, Newman preached a sermon in which he praised Mary's transcendent purity. To indicate "the sanctity and grace of that human nature of which God had formed His sinless Son," (he recalled that) "what is born of the flesh is flesh;" and "none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean."⁶¹ Newman was then accused of teaching the Immaculate

Conception, because he had connected grace with Mary's humanity, "as if grace and nature in her case had never been separated."⁶² His defence was based on the absence of any reference to the doctrine in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

O'Carroll looks on Newman's theology of Mary as unexampled in his own communion, and superior to most contemporary thinking on the subject in the Catholic or Orthodox Churches; but his language caused problems among his fellow Anglicans and himself. He regarded the reserve of the Scriptures in presenting a fuller picture of Mary as a divine concession to our weakness. "We cannot combine in our thoughts of her all we should ascribe with all we should withhold."⁶³ Mary, by nature, was a sinner, but "she was raised above the condition of sinful beingsbrought near to God, yet but a creature."⁶⁴ Nevertheless she had to be regarded as inseparable from her Son.

In 1843, in number 15 of his '**Oxford University Sermons**,' he called Mary "our pattern of Faith, both in the reception and in the study of divine truth."⁶⁵ She "symbolizes to us, not only the Faith of the unlearned, but of the Doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define as well as to profess the Gospel."⁶⁶ Yet his acceptance of the assertion that Marian doctrine could not be separated from devotion, came after his conversion. Newman remained steeped in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Fathers. Consequently he avoided familiar pious exaggerations. Graef points out that he explained carefully the seemingly derogatory Gospel passages on the Virgin, in a sermon devoted to '**Our Lady in the Gospel**' (1848). O'Carroll is prepared to accept Newman's explanation, namely, that in the 'awkward' texts, Jesus was putting His Mother out of His thinking because of His own calling "to the work of a divine ministry."⁶⁷ ('**Sermons on Subjects of the Day**,' ed. London, 1873). Yet by His reference to the hour that was to come, Jesus was giving Mary "to understand that her separation from Him would end at that hour."⁶⁸ Newman regarded Mary's 'special prerogatives' as discernible in the patristic doctrine of the new Eve. He based his exposition of Catholic belief on the earliest Christian teaching about Mary as the 'Second Eve,' as found in **Justin, Tertullian and Irenaeus**. Their view on Mary as not simply "the physical instrument of our Lord's taking flesh, but as an intelligent, responsible cause of it; (her faith and obedience being accessories to the Incarnation, and gaining it as her reward),"⁶⁹ satisfied Newman. For him the parallel between "the Mother of all living and the Mother of the Redeemer, may be gathered from a comparison of the first chapters of the Scriptures with the last."⁷⁰

Newman's Mariology was more clearly defined in a letter addressed to fellow - member of the Oxford Movement, and friend, **E. B. Pusey**. In 1865 Pusey had written a criticism of the teaching of the Catholic Church, under the title of '**Eirenicon**.' The work was presented in a letter form and addressed to Keble, (a fellow member of the Oxford Movement). In it reference was made to "that vast system as to the blessed Virgin," being "the special 'crux' of the Roman system,"⁷¹ as one of the principal obstacles to union. Material for the composition was taken from **Bernardine of Busti**, **Bernadine of Siena**, **St. Louis Marie de Montfort** and **St. Alphonsus Ligouri**. Graef mentions Pusey's use of a German Mariology by **Oswald**, without being aware that the work had been placed on the Index. His main contention was against the large number of statements on Mary by late medieval and Post-Tridentine authors, many of whom had been used by Ligouri in '**The Glories of Mary**.' Pusey objected strongly to the view that Mary deserved the title Mediatrix of all graces, and that, as such, her intercession was in some way necessary to salvation. He did not accept that: her mercy was opposed to Christ's vengeance: that she was Co-Redemptrix: that she had authority over Christ, and that she produced Christ in souls.

In his reply Newman accused Pusey of having given a one-sided presentation of Catholic teaching on the Blessed Virgin, and of having looked on Mary only as "a physical instrument of our redemption;"⁷² (an interpretation which was repudiated by Pusey). Then having established that the doctrine of Mary, as the Second Eve, had remained an unbroken tradition in the Church from Apostolic times, Newman developed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception from "this earliest view of Mary as the Second Eve."⁷³ He applied Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse in his quest for "the doctrine of our Lady's present exaltation in Scripture."⁷⁴ He argued that the Apostle would not have pictured the Church in that manner "unless there had existed a blessed Virgin Mary, who was exalted on high and the object of veneration to all the faithful. No-one doubts that the 'man-child' spoken of is an allusion to His Mother?"⁷⁵ He also reasoned that "the votaries of Mary do not exceed the true faith, unless the blasphemers of her Son come up to it. The Church of Rome is not idolatrous unless Arianism is orthodoxy."⁷⁶ Newman stated that the significance of the title 'Theotokos' was to be found in the fact that as 'Mother of her Creator', Mary surpassed "all even possible creations."⁷⁷ Here lay "the issue of her sanctity..... the origin of her greatness."⁷⁸ O'Carroll also concurs with the endeavours of Councils to resist heresies. as, for example, "in order to do honour to Christ, in order to secure a right

faith in the manhood of the Eternal Son, the Council of Ephesus determined the Blessed Virgin to be Mother of God."⁷⁹ Newman linked this subject to her Immaculate Conception and to her Assumption.

Newman was careful to delineate the office of Mary and to contrast it with the Position of her Son. In this regard Graef notes a number of features which differed from what had been written previously. Mary's prayer depended entirely on her Son; and He it was who informed her of the needs of mankind. " (God, as the First Cause of all things and all knowledge, is kept ever before Newman's eyes."⁸⁰) Mary can only be external to us. God alone could see the heart and indwell the soul. Mary, because she was a creature, was "without the divine power of judging or, its necessary corollary, of saving in the strict sense of the word."⁸¹ On that basis it was possible to look towards her without fear. With regard to Mary's eternal destiny, "she was predestined in the Eternal mind coevally with the Incarnation of her Divine Son."⁸²

Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835 - 1888), a professor of dogmas at the Cologne seminary has been described as the "theologian of modern Mariology."⁸³ His approach to the subject was contained in a '**Manual of Catholic Dogmatics**,' in which he attempted to "present a strictly scientific doctrine, situated in the whole context of theology between the treatise on Christ and that on the Church, and based upon the Scripture and the Fathers."⁸⁴ Graef repeats **C. Feckes** criticism in '**Maria**' 3, that Scheeben's exegesis on certain points could not be held as valid, as for example, in arguments taken from the Canticle and from the Wisdom books. The '**Manual**' was practically forgotten for forty years; but, since the nineteen-twenties, has become increasingly influential. Scheeben based his doctrine on the concepts of the divine motherhood and of the New Eve; but differed from Newman in his use of the latter. He followed the medieval idea of Mary as the helper of Christ, rather than the Patristic view. In an effort to reconcile the difficulty of relating the Eve-Mary parallel to that of Adam-Christ, Scheeben considered Mary both as the Mother and as the bride of Christ. The problem of Mary's completely human standing, which appeared to have disallowed the relationship between her and her divine Son as similar to that between Eve and Adam, was also surmounted. He suggested that the Church applied to Mary the scriptural descriptions of the 'eternal Wisdom', because, "in her transcendent position, Mary appears, through the grace of her divine motherhood, in such eminent way as image and similitude of God, beside, with, and next to Christ....."⁸⁵ While the logic of

attributing the title of goddess to the Mother of God had to be avoided, "nevertheless there is in her quality of being a child of God also a specific reflex of the divine daughtership of the eternal Wisdom towards God the Father."⁸⁶ Ashe believes that Scheeben "came close to the brink of restoring the Goddess-and -Son duality."⁸⁷ Graef remarks on what she regards as a drift from the "sobriety of Newman,"⁸⁸ who regarded Mary simply as 'our fellow.'

Scheeben held to the notion that bridal motherhood was "the key to all Mariology."⁸⁹ He accepted that Mary was "placed in a true and actual spiritually-matrimonial relationship to God, from the beginning."⁹⁰ Mary's was a 'divine marriage' so that her existence "is formally effected only as the existence of the Bride of God."⁹¹ The idea of Mary's maternal authority over Christ was rejected. Even in purely human relationships maternal authority "is not a real dominium."⁹² Mary "may even be called the mystical head of humanity in a relative sense, insofar as she is not regarded as one Body with Christ, but as the Bride of Christ opposed to Him."⁹³ Scheeben looked to Mary as the spiritual Mother of men, but distinguished her mediation from that of Christ and emphasized the dependence of her mediation on His.

Scheeben also used the term '**hyperdoulia**' to explain the veneration of Mary. This response differed in degree and in kind from the '**doulia**' due to the saints. He reckoned that

the dignity of the divine Maternity involves..... for all creatures, a relation of formal dependence on and subjection to Mary as the Mistress of creation and the Queen and Mother of the realm of grace..... a true relation of subjects.⁹⁴

Mary's part in the redemptive work of her Son was based on the grace of the divine maternity. As a creature, who was united to Christ and God as a bride, she was "an organ of the Holy Spirit working in and through her analogously as the humanity of Christ is the organ of the Logos."⁹⁵ She could be called the Bride of the Logos and the bearer of the Holy Spirit. "The effects of the redemptive work of Christ can and must be attributed to His Mother, as their principle, in a very true sense."⁹⁶ She may be seen as the "middle cause of all the effects of salvation in all,"⁹⁷ and that included all humanity from and including our first parents. Since Mary was completely subordinated to Christ, Scheeben rejected the expression 'co-redemptress.' Yet she (in a 'bridal co-operation') co-operated in the redemption, "in the truest and fullest sense of the word, as offered of the sacrifice."⁹⁸ He argued that because it was taken from her own flesh and blood, the redemptive sacrifice came from, and belonged to humanity, perfectly and in every way. She consented to His death by giving up her own

will and thus participated in His sacrifice "in such a way that the passion of Christ was also her passion in the fullest sense of the word."⁹⁹ Scheeben called her the 'deaconess at the priestly sacrifice of Christ;' and claimed that "the consent of Mary to the sacrifice of Christ was..... the mediating act by which the merits of the sacrifice were given to all other men."¹⁰⁰ He inferred that since her union with Christ, as the spiritual Father of mankind, enabled her to mediate His union with the Church, she has also become the 'Mother of the Church.'

While the Church could apply the completed work of redemption to individuals, she could cooperate "fundamentally in establishing and acquiring the rebirth of all mankind."¹⁰¹ Scheeben has given Mary a special place in the Eucharist, suggesting that "she enters into a substantially organic relation with her children through the flesh and blood of Christ which was taken from herself."¹⁰² He taught that Mary's intercessions were a prerequisite for answered prayer. "The intercession of Christ is not to profit anyone without the concurring intercession of Mary..... consequently every grace is given only as one that is also co-impenetrated by her."¹⁰³

Other Devotional Responses.

During the Nineteenth century Marian devotion expressed itself in many ways. **Jean-Claude Courveille**, while praying at the marian shrine of Le Puy in central France (15th August 1812), was reputed to have heard, within his heart, the words "I have imitated my divine son, and followed Him even to Calvary..... now that I am in glory with Him, I imitate Him still in whatever He does for His Church on earth....."¹⁰⁴ That introduction was followed by the request for the consecration of a Society that would be called the Society of Mary, just as Jesus had "inspired His servant Ignatius to found a society - the Society of Jesus to counter evil in the world."¹⁰⁵

Four years later, as a seminarian of Lyons, Coureveille shared this revelation with his fellow students, who in turn determined to establish a Society of Mary. At first it was anticipated that the Society would have three sections, Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters and a 'Third Order' of lay people. Eventually three others emerged as the **Marist Teaching Brothers**, the **Marist Co-adjutor Brothers** and the **Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary**. Gibson observes that the Marists have made no contribution to theological or mystical studies concerning Mary. Little has been published by them

about her; neither have they presented a particular form of devotion to her. Their aim has been to inculcate a deep sense of Mary's presence and activity in the Church and in Christian awareness.

Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Teaching Brothers, (1817), summed up their mission as a work to make Jesus known and loved, out of their love for Him. But this has to be set in the context of Mary's activity as 'Christ-bringer to us'. As such she "enlists us in her work of being Christ-bringer to all."¹⁰⁶ **Father Jean-Claude Colin**, who endeavoured to set up the Marist Fathers, said that as Jesus had commissioned His apostles to go into all the world to teach, so Mary "who gives each one his task..... says to us 'Go and proclaim my divine son to the world. I am with you. Go, we shall still be together.'"¹⁰⁷

A number of congregations were dedicated to Mary. The **Prêtres de Sainte Marie** was founded in 1851. Two years later the **Society of Missionaries of Mary** (founded by Grignon de Montfort), was approved. In 1854 the **Congregation of Marie Reparatrice** was established. **The Little Companions of Mary** were founded at Nottingham in 1877. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century **Pope Leo XIII** (1878-1903) encouraged the practice of the Rosary in a number of encyclicals, at a time when Church and Papacy were being attacked. This 'Pope of the Rosary' together with many other popes pleaded for more rosaries to win the unification of Christendom and to bring peace to the Church. (Popes **Benedict XV**, **Pius XI** and **Pius XII**, each issued an encyclical promoting the rosary). In '**Octobri Mense**,' September 22, 1891, Leo declared that "as no-one can come to the highest Father, except through the Son, so hardly anyone can come to the Son except through the Mother."¹⁰⁸ The assertion of former years was repeated in the statement that "we can receive absolutely nothing nothing.... unless, God willing, it is bestowed on us through Mary."¹⁰⁹ (Warner notes that most of Leo's successors have made full use of this theme). In **Fidentem piumque**, Leo reasoned that, while Christ was the absolute mediator, there was no reason "why certain others should not be called in a certain way mediators between God and man;"¹¹⁰ and that the Virgin Mary could lay a special claim to the title. Since it was she from whom Jesus was born; therefore, as His mother she was "a worthy and acceptable mediatrix to the Mediator."¹¹¹

Pope Pius X (1903 - 14), who succeeded Leo XIII, celebrated the half-century of the definition of the Immaculate Conception by a Marian encyclical, **Ad deum illum**, 1904. In it he showed how Mary had played a part in the work of restoring "all things in Christ."¹¹² The edifice of

faith rested on her, "the noblest foundation after Christ,"¹¹³ and "no one can ever be more competent as a guide and teacher in the knowledge of Christ."¹¹⁴ Since she shared in His sufferings under the cross, "she merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world and Dispensatrix of all gifts Our Saviour bought for us."¹¹⁵ Pius stressed the point that the dispensation of these treasures remains the peculiar right of Jesus Christ, since "they are the exclusive fruit of His Death and He of His own power is the mediator between God and man."¹¹⁶ Subsequently, the Marian mediation of all graces, the co-redemption and the bodily Assumption of Mary, have been the subjects of many publications throughout the Twentieth century.

Comment.

Mariology suffered a great indignity during this period of individualism and reason, epitomised by Deism. Attempts were made to defend past traditions and to answer the prevalent rationalism. Memories of the past were revived. Christian mysticism opened up opportunities for the awareness of apparitions. A fervent but misplaced piety was balanced by the teaching of J. H. Newman.

The subject of the Immaculate Conception again entered the arena of debate. To some extent the controversy ended with the declaration of the dogma in 1854. An apparent ratification was given at Lourdes.

The Oxford Movement gave a strong impetus to Marian devotion in England during the Nineteenth century. The moderate tones of Newman contrasted greatly with the expositions of Scheeben, who has been given a prominent place in modern mariology; and whose works came to the fore again in the '20s of this century. Marian devotion was also reinforced by the burgeoning societies and congregations that were dedicated to Mary and her cause.

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CHAPTER XIX.

TWENTIETH CENTURY OUTLOOK.

The Polish Franciscan martyr, **Maximilian Kolbe**, O. F. M., (1894-1941), by founding the Militia of the Immaculate One in 1917, introduced a militant movement of lay people, with the intention of developing a Marian-orientated apostolate. Marian literature, which encourages prayer, suffering and work, together with complete consecration to Mary, is published for its present members, who total more than two millions. The activity of the Militia has been based on

this truth, that the Immaculate One is the Mediatrix of all graces, because if it were not thus, all our labour and all our strength would be in vain..... The life of grace depends on the degree of nearness of the soul to the Immaculate One.¹

Kolbe went as far as to assert that "in a certain kind of way, we can say that the Immaculate One is the incarnation of the Holy Spirit."² While stating clearly that Mary and the Spirit remained two natures and two persons, he was also prepared to conclude that "this perfect union of the Immaculate One with the Holy Spirit makes her, in a certain manner, the Holy Spirit himself."³

The twentieth century has also witnessed an increasing incidence of reported apparitions. According to **Laurentin**, some have suggested that "this proliferation of apparitions is a psychosociological phenomenon and is no doubt pathological."⁴ It has to be noted that "there has been no official recognition of any apparition that took place over the past fifty years or more."⁵ Only three of these apparitions so far (that is, by 1965), have been approved by ecclesiastical authority. Laurentin believes that the proliferation of the phenomenon may be related to the 'spontaneous wave' of such practices as necromancy, clairvoyance, alternative medicines, together with the spiritual techniques of oriental religions. He also observes that the apocalyptic climate produced by "the balance of fear"⁶ of the arms race, is one that proves favourable to apparitions. On the other hand, **Grignon de Monfort** had predicted that the mission of the Blessed Virgin, as mother to this world, would be intensified in the last days. Laurentin wonders therefore whether a certain urgency of end times, or at least "a serious historical turning point at the threshold of the third millennium"⁷ has been presaged.

Six appearances of Mary took place at **Fatima**, Portugal, in 1917. During the sixth vision of 13th October, supernatural lights and colours were seen by a crowd, numbering in the region of seventy thousand. For most of them this was a portent of disaster. (On the other hand, in **Cuapa**,

Nicaragua, on the 13th October 1980, similar phenomena occurred before a visionary, **Bernardo Martinez**, together with around fifty others; Mary's appearance, after a display of lightning, although only to Bernardo, was regarded as a blessing. She exhorted him to convey her encouragement to listen to the Word of God, to love one another, to forgive one another, to make peace and to pray the Rosary).

The Fatima visionaries were illiterate children: **Lucia** aged ten, her cousins **Francisco** aged eight, and his little sister **Jacinta**, aged seven. None of them was particularly pious. The visions began in the **Cova da Iria**, on Sunday 13th May 1917, where the three children were tending the cattle of Lucia's parents. The apparition was introduced dramatically by two flashes of light or lightning. Initially the stories from the children were not taken seriously. Lucia was beaten by her mother for telling lies; but together with the others, she did not waver under interrogation. However their illiteracy, together with their dread of publicity, may have "caused some confusion in their memory of dates."⁸ The limitations of their lack of education would have had some influence on their interpretations of Mary's words to them. Lucia alone was able to see, to hear and to speak to the Virgin. Jacinta could see and hear, while Francisco only saw her.

During this period, anticlericalism was rife in Portugal. The secular authorities were fearful of a religious revival. The three children were abducted by **Arturo de Oliveira Santos**, the local administrator, on 13th August. In spite of being imprisoned for a night, and threatened, their story did not change. Subsequently the children were promised a minor miracle on October 13th 1917, when the Virgin would return together with St. Joseph and the Holy Child. Then peace would come soon. Thousands converged on the Cova. The Lady appeared, gave her identity to Lucia as the Lady of the Rosary, affirmed that the 'world war' was ending on that day and that the soldiers would soon return to their homes. (The armistice was declared thirteen months later). The 'miracle' that was witnessed by many (but not all) was an apparent irregular movement of the sun. The obvious physical problems created by such a display, together with the mistaken opinion about the end of the war (in Graef's view), have weakened the case for the authenticity of the apparitions. Besides the promise of the end of hostilities, the Virgin was reported to have warned that "if men do not amend their lives and cease to offend God, another worse one (war) will begin, and Russia will spread her errors through the world."⁹ The sign would be an extraordinary illumination at night. An

unusual aurora borealis occurred in January 1938; but the connection was not publicised by Lucia, the sole survivor of the visionaries at this time. (Francisco (1919) and Jacinta (1920) had succumbed to illness, their early deaths having been predicted by the Virgin). In her third memoir of 1941 the warning was disclosed, as war was waged. However by this time communism had been established for more than twenty years.

In 1929, an episcopal commission produced a report following a canonical enquiry into the phenomena of Fatima. In the following year it was declared that the apparitions were worthy of belief. In 1942, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the apparitions, Pope Pius XII sent a radio message to the Catholics of Portugal, in which he published the text of his consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ten years later he repeated the operation in relation to Russia, thereby fulfilling a demand of the Virgin made to Lucia. For some, the recent upheavals throughout Soviet Russia may confirm the promise of a conversion.

Toward the end of 1932, five young people from **Beauraing**, (a small Belgian town near the French border), claimed to have seen the blessed Virgin. On 29th November, four of them had gone to the school of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine to collect thirteen year old **Gilberte Voisin**, an ailing girl, and to accompany her home. Her brother, eleven year old **Albert**, noticed a 'light' when they had reached the convent school door. The nun, who answered the bell, was met by a chorus of excited voices exclaiming that they all had seen a white form in the air. The sister, suspecting a new prank, closed the door in their faces.

Between November and January the Virgin, her head surrounded by gold rays, was seen on a number of occasions by the five young people, but never by an adult. Yet growing numbers of adults were present at the times of the Virgin's 'appearance'. Graef relates how Albert had asked the apparition whether she was the Immaculate Virgin or not, and received an affirming nod. Ashton presents another version, where Albert asked who she was, what she wanted of them and why she came. "The Virgin: 'a chapel: you must be very good: pray much: I will convert sinners,'"¹⁰ was the reply. On December 29th, Fernande Voisin's claim that she had seen a golden heart when the vision had opened her arms, was confirmed by the others on the following day. Fourteen year old **Andrée Degeimbre** in the final meeting with the apparition, heard the Virgin declare that she was the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven. **Gilberte**, her sister, together with **Albert Voisin** were told a secret.

Beauraing was eventually recognised, both by the **Bishop of Namur** in 1943, after much controversy, and also in 1949, with the permission of the Holy See, but without any sanction being given to the apparitions.

At seven o'clock in the evening of January 15th. 1933, the first of eight appearances of Mary took place in the garden of a house in **Banneux**, a small hamlet in the **Ardennes**. Eleven year old **Mariette Beco** looked out of a window of her home and saw a beautiful lady, who was dressed in white with a blue belt; she had a rosary over her arm and a rose on her right foot. Subsequently Mariette met the vision in the garden and was told in answer to her query, "I am the Virgin of the poor."¹¹ The girl was led to a nearby brook, where she found a spring, which, the Virgin said, was for the healing of all nations. She also expressed a wish for a 'little chapel.' The completed chapel (and a hospital) have continued to draw large pilgrimages. During all but the last, when there was pouring rain, the appearances occurred in frost and snow. On March 2nd, the girl received her final message, "I am the mother of the Saviour, Mother of God. Pray much. Adieu."¹² In 1937, the reality of these apparitions were regarded as at least probable by the episcopal commission. In 1949, as for Beauraing, the decision was simply confirmed with the permission of the Holy See.

On 25th June 1981, six young people, mostly teenagers climbed the hill of **Lernica** near the Franciscan parish of **Medjugorje** in the Croatia region of **Hercegovina**, where, on the day before, four of them (among another group of six) had seen a silhouetted figure. Now they saw the Virgin close up, and conversed with her. Since that time the **Gospa** (Croatia for Our Lady) has appeared consistently at least to some of the visionaries. From the outset the phenomenon has been the object of state and church suspicion and admonishment. Nevertheless, until the recent break up of the Yugoslav federation and resulting wars, Medjugorje had received millions of pilgrims from around the world. Emphases on peace have been transformed into spectacular reconciliations, at least in the immediate area of the events. Secrets were passed on to the visionaries for later disclosure. The fratricide of 1992, possibly predictable in political terms, may contain some element of the secrets. More than three hundred cures have been recorded since 1981. Many have admitted radical changes in their lives as a result of their visit to the hamlet. Others have been vehement in their rejection of all the claims. Laurentin has been astonished at the "fruits of holiness"¹³ and the development of spirituality among the visionaries, without any obvious diminution of their natural simplicity.

Graef underlines a feature common to the modern Marian apparitions, from **La Salette** in 1846 to **Banneux** in 1933, (and at Medjugorje) namely, the involvement of children and adolescents. A psychological explanation for what has happened should not be overlooked. Within child psychology, it has been observed that both children and adolescents possess eidetic gifts. Consequently they can visualise as outside themselves, whatever their imagination (conscious or subconscious) produces.

At the forty-first seminar on Marian studies in 1986 at Saragossa, it was estimated that the Virgin Mary had appeared twenty-one thousand times during the past ten centuries. Laurentin refers to statistics produced by a **Fr. Besutti** in respect of visionaries in Italy from the thirteenth century, the majority of whom have been male adults. In his book, '**The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Today**,' Laurentin quotes worldwide instances of the appearances of the blessed Virgin to children and to adults. The apparitions have adapted to the language and culture of each location, and have been accompanied by a variety of signs, including lights, scents, spiritual and physical cures. Prayer, mutual help and commitment have been some of the consequences

For Laurentin, apparitions may be received as individual cries from heaven, "heard in various places at various times without any overall plan."¹⁴ Others have viewed each apparition as a piece that is being integrated into "Our Lady's organic plan,"¹⁵ which has been continuing from the time she was seen by a converted Indian near **Guadalupe**, (December, 1531), until the present. Laurentin criticises such a view as artificial and dangerous, and explains that "Our Lady's familiarity intervenes to particularise and personalise the Christian message according to our needs."¹⁶ He goes on to explain that "the permanent function" of the messages "is to reawaken faith and to bring about a return to God, to prayer and to fasting."¹⁷ This is in effect a return to the preaching of John the Baptist for repentance and conversion. The repetition of the messages has had an educative purpose. Many have been strikingly relevant, and (in Laurentin's opinion) persuasive in their conformity with the Gospel. Some have had a prophetic impact.

Papal Pronouncements

During the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, papal pronouncements on Mary have earned the distinction of being almost infallible. Laurentin in '**Mary's Place in the Church**', urges caution in this regard since "for lack of an enlightened method of exegesis, papal teaching is interpreted in the most varied and conflicting ways."¹⁸ He warns that in the last century the greater number of papal

documents on Mary have had to do with devotions and not 'dogmatic constitutions.' Pope Pius XI, in 1937, issued an encyclical '**Ingravescentibus malis**,' in which he followed Pope Leo XIII in strongly encouraging the recitation of the Rosary, in face of National Socialism, Communism and the imminence of another world war - as a remedy for the evils of the time. In 1931 he had sanctioned a new Marian feast for the whole Church, that of the 'divine motherhood'.

Pius XII, a member of the Marian congregation, succeeded Pius XI in 1939, and successfully strove for the spread of Marian devotion. (In 1917, at Fatima the children had said that the apparition of 'Our Lady' wished them to say the Rosary daily, in order to obtain peace. Pius XII, having accepted the Fatima appearances, strongly advocated devotion to Mary). He dedicated the world to her Immaculate Heart, on October 31st. and on December 8th. 1942, (further explained in the encyclical on the Sacred Heart, 1956). Two years later (in the encyclical '**The Mystical Body of Christ**'), he referred again to this consecration, as well as to her reign in heaven, (not yet defined), both in body and soul.

The dramatic demonstration of his concern with Marian doctrine and cult, came in the definition of the Assumption in the Apostolic Constitution, **Munificentissimus Deus**, on 1st. November, in the jubilee year, 1950. Four years later came the proclamation of the Marian Year, together with the new feast of the queenship of Mary (31st May). The Lourdes' centennial was recognised in 1958.

Five Feasts of Mary have been instituted or given importance in this century:

- (a) To, Our Lady of Lourdes, (11th. February), made universal by St. Pius X in 1907.
- (b) To, Mary Mediatrix of All Graces, granted in reply to Cardinal Mercier's request in 1921, and approved for dioceses or religious institutes who sought permission from Rome:
- (c) To, The Divine Motherhood of Mary, conceded to the king of Portugal by Benedict XIV in 1751, and extended to the whole Church by Pius XI, with slight alterations, on the Fifteenth centenary of the Council of Ephesus:
- (d) To, The Immaculate Heart of Mary, (22nd. August), by Pius XII in 1944, two years after he had consecrated the world to Mary under this title:
- (e) To, Mary Queen, also by Pius XII, after he had proclaimed the queenship of Mary in 1954

Impressions of the Assumption.

The growing support for the proposed dogma of the Assumption led to expressions of disquietude. German theologians presented apologies to off-set the concern shown by the educated laity. Professor **Carl Feckes** attempted to minimise the alarmed reaction to the suggestion, that the proposed dogma had no basis in Scripture nor in the early tradition. He regarded any suspicion as perverse, because "the true criterion of the Catholic faith is not the Holy Scriptures, but the consensus of faith in the living Church to-day;"¹⁹ (and the Church is **alter Christus**). **Karl Rahner** in '**The New Dogma**' (1951), had recognized the unease caused by the definition. He also expressed concern for the '**Una Sancte**' movement, which had brought Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches closer together, because of common dangers, during the Third Reich. His submission that Catholics would accept the new dogma proved to be the case. He encouraged the application of the story in St. Matthew 27: 52ff to Mary. Some Roman Catholic scholars did raise objections; it was demonstrated that evidence of the bodily Assumption could not be sustained from either Scripture or tradition. But inevitably submission was made to the "the infallible teaching office."²⁰ Whatever opposition has been maintained since, has been cloaked by anonymity.

"The first popular attempts to produce a theology of the Assumption"²¹ have been recognised by Rahner as "the earliest evidence of theological reflections in the guise of historical fiction."²² **Friedrich Heiler** has judged these legends as possessing "a symbolic value which cannot be overlooked."²³ Devout Christians in the ancient Eastern Church had accepted the legends as historical. (In the Seventh century the legends were manipulated by theologians).

The "baseless Protestant fear,"²⁴ the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was pronounced **ex cathedra** in the Apostolic Constitution '**Munificentissimus Deus**.' von Loewenich is convinced that this 'departure' (almost) marked a new epoch of the Catholic attitude to Christian truth. He is critical of the fact that no serious attempt was made to discover Scriptural proof for the new dogma. Quotations from the Old Testament were used allegorically; Revelation Ch.12 was used; but "has nothing to do with Mary as an historical person."²⁵ The only real proof emanated from the mind of the Church, **consensus ecclesiae**:

(an) outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful..... thus by itself and in a way altogether certain and free of all errors, manifested this privilege as a truth revealed by God and

contained in that divine deposit which Christ has delivered to His Spouse to be guarded faithfully and to be taught infallibly.²⁶

Five thousand signatures were received immediately after the second World War, in favour of the definition of the assumption as a dogma. On May 1st. 1946, the Pope sent out a brief, in reply to which, 93 per cent of the total episcopate declared themselves in favour. **H. Volk** ('**Das neue Mariendogma,**' 1951), stated: "Our belief in the corporal assumption of the B. V. M. rests exclusively on the sure foundation that this is what the Church teaches."²⁷ (p. 25). **F. A. Staudenaier** in **Die christliche Dogmatik** (p. 28), wrote:

The Church is all embracing. It is the living embodiment of tradition, of which the Holy Writ is merely one constituent part. Tradition prevents Christian doctrine from becoming fixed, rigid, and makes it a Word of God uttered perpetually.²⁸

von Loewenich makes the point that, while the appearance at Lourdes in 1858

must certainly be regarded as an after-effect of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, conversely, it is probable that Pius XII took the step of defining the dogma of the Assumption not least because of the appearances at Fatima.²⁹

(The first of these appearances had coincided with the consecration of Pius XII to the episcopate in Rome). According to a **Father Bernardus**, it may be said that "Fatima to-day is what Pius XII has made it."³⁰ An appearance at **Heroldsbach** near **Forcheim** did not receive the placet of the Church, even though multitudes of pilgrims were attracted to the location.

In the Eastern Churches there has always been a profound veneration of Mary, together with a strong belief in the efficacy of her intercessions. The feast of the Dormition is equivalent to the Western one of the Assumption but "less explicit in its formulation of this doctrine."³¹

A Marian Age?

During the first half of the Twentieth century, a Marian Age was enthusiastically anticipated; rumours spread about a special secret, given to one of the children at Fatima, and due for disclosure in 1960; (but that did not happen). The Marian movement had been gaining ground during the 1930's and the 1950's. A tide of enthusiasm for devotions and crusades, together with theological and devotional literature, swept towards the high point of 1950. (By the Marian Year, 1954, the tide had begun to turn). New books, pamphlets and articles were being published at an average rate of one thousand per annum by mid-century. New Associations, such as the Legion of Mary, came into being.

Gabriel Roschini portrayed Mary as "unique, perfect, an epitome of all sainthood, and so close to Christ in her nature that it was hard to draw any distinction."³² Ashe marks the attempts that have been made to rationalise the proposition of the Co-Redemption in terms of official doctrine. Since the idea has no place in the Scriptures and was absent in the early Fathers, an attempt has been made to offer a philosophical argument. This in turn has introduced new speculations about Wisdom and led to claims "that Mary somehow completed the Trinity."³³ Pope John XXIII held a restraining hand on the eager support for the definition of Mary as Co-Redemptrix and Dispenser of Graces. "The Madonna is not pleased when she is put above her Son."³⁴

In Ashe's estimation, the Marian devotion of recent times has advanced from the notion that Mary favours "detestable characters, whose sole virtue is their attachment to her."³⁵ The Medieval appraisal of the Virgin as purely human with divine powers has not diminished. The more thoughtful devotees of Mary have placed her in "an un-Christian humanism,"³⁶ where human nature surmounts its fallen estate. Yet the failure of Catholicism to resolve the anomalous nature of the Marian cult remains, since

the cult has an intense, mysterious life of its own - the life of the Goddess, mediated through living daughter of Zion - which the Church has not only been powerless to control, but has often submitted to obeying its dictates and then evolving reasons."³⁷

Ashe favours the notion that Mary has been exercising a rôle in the affairs of mankind, from an existence in another sphere. The consequences of positive dependence on, or complete neglect of her, have been demonstrated in Christian experience. It is reckoned that she supports the former, but disregards the latter. However, in the discussion of the definition of human response to her in human terms, Ashe does not rate Mary's literal existence of primary importance. He finds "the most promising clue to the enigma"³⁸ in the writings of Robert Graves and C. J. Jung.

In *The White Goddess*, Graves has presented a study of poetic myth that contemplates the rôle of the Eternal-Womanly. The history of religion is portrayed as governed by a male-female conflict, with the male gods ousting the Goddess. The male is shown to be a usurper whose attempts to damage the divinity of the Female rebounded on himself. She is seen to be the "authentic source of inspiration."³⁹ Having acquired relevant attributes Mary became "a nascent form of the Goddess,"⁴⁰ and exercised the Goddess' power of on-going spiritual awakening. The language of worship applied to her by Ephraem of Syria and Gregory of Nazianzus was not coincidental. Mary, in Graves

perception, was "the source of a vital imaginative energy, which the male Godhead could not supply."⁴¹

Ashe considers that Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious has been an attempt to avoid the danger of sliding into another theology, "with the Goddess literally existing, and a literally-existing Virgin assuming her nature."⁴² Jung's theory examines the existence of gods and myths within the human psyche, far below the level of individual consciousness. He composed "a psychological version of the Eternal Womanly;"⁴³ and claimed that the male mind contained an unconscious female element, that has lodged there for thousands of years, producing dreams and fantasies. In its mature stage it developed into the '**anima**,' which had a decreasing maternal element, but which also collected man's experiences of women, his ideals and wishes about them. The '**anima**,' the basis of falling in love, "is at least closely related to the ideas of the Goddess."⁴⁴ (Ashe concludes that, out of Jung's clinical work with patients, and from Grave's decisions on myth, it may be judged that a common principle emerged from the feminine factor in men).

Mary has expressed the '**anima**' at more human levels, and has blended into Wisdom in the Liturgy. Ashe is therefore convinced, (on Jung's showing), that devotion to her should "activate the archetype and help to unlock the treasury of the psychical depths, with results which no rational or dogmatic system can keep under control."⁴⁵ Marie-Louise von Franz, (in **Man and his Symbols**, edited by Jung), has written:

The first stage (in the full development of the '**anima**') is best symbolized by the figure of Eve, which represents purely instinctual and biological relations. The second can be seen in Faust's Helen The third is represented, for instance , by the Virgin Mary - a figure who raises love to the heights of spiritual devotion. The fourth type is symbolized by Sapientia, wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure In the psychic development of modern man this stage is rarely reached.⁴⁶

Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council made an extended statement of Catholic doctrine on Mary, which treated of her relationship both to Christ and to the Church. Her complete dependence on her Son was emphasized. She was regarded as a model of the Church. Theologians and preachers were encouraged to explain (correctly) the offices and privileges of the Blessed Virgin, as always being related to Christ, "the source of all truth holiness and piety."⁴⁷ Care had to be taken that nothing would give rise

to any erroneous ideas about the true doctrine of the Church among the 'separated brethren.' Statements about Mary's mercy against the stern justice of Jesus, the need to approach her first because of Mary's influence with her Son, unauthenticated miracle stories and apparitions, would only harm the Church and make the Blessed Virgin look ridiculous. Such erroneous ideas had caused the vehement reaction of the reformers in the Sixteenth century.

Yet the Marian movement threatened to split the Council; some could not overlook the phenomenon on theological grounds and on grounds of practical prudence; others were ecumenical in their approach. One American archbishop's warning about the possible danger of superstition in Marian devotion was spurned in angry letters, poems and telephone calls. **Michael Novak** comments on the proposals of the proponents of the 'non-historical orthodoxy,' who cautioned against ecumenism. **Abbot Kliener** of the Trappists wanted Mary mentioned more often because she is

the mother of the Church and therefore the mother of unity..... Some of her children know and honour her plainly, others timidly and obscurely. In my opinion, where Mary is not acknowledged, peace and unity are absent. Mary is the door to Christ - the mediatrix to the mediator. Though Mary does her unifying work in silence, her sons dare not be silent about her work.⁴⁸

Novak explains that the piety of 'non-historical orthodoxy' retreats from the responsibility of living in history, under the stresses of changing circumstances, but without any loss of faithfulness to Christ. He is convinced that Marian devotions have found a significant place in this piety, which, he feels, has attempted to womanise the world, "according to the spirit of an earlier century."⁴⁹ 'Non-historical orthodoxy' has retained a stronger hold on women than on men, especially in the lower classes. "These are the ones whose lives have changed least since the Middle Ages."⁵⁰

The proposal to include the subject of Mary in the Constitution of the Church was passed by the narrow majority of forty votes. This ensured that Marian theology would find a place in the general corpus of renewed Catholic theology, and "within the wider and controlling perspectives of a theology of the Church as the 'sacrament of salvation.'"⁵¹ (In spite of this, a decline in devotion to Mary was noticeable during the period following the Council).

Hilda Graef observed that the introductory section of the Marian chapter (VIII of the Constitution), followed patristic teaching in calling Mary the "pre-eminent and special member of the Church."⁵² **Christopher Butler** noted that Mary was

a supereminent and most unique member of the Church and the Church type and exemplar; the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, honours her with a sense of filial piety as a most loving mother.⁵³

Initially the Council avoided the designation of 'Mother of the Church;' but the Pope, in public session, included this title. Neither was it the intention of the Council to give a complete account of Marian doctrine, nor to settle theological questions which have yet to be clarified by the theologians. Among these was the mediatorial position of Mary's share in her Son's work of redemption. The Council avoided the term 'redemptrix,' but stated that Mary, in fulfilling her recorded rôle as mother, had co-operated uniquely with the Saviour's work for the restoration of the supernatural life of souls. The preceding chapter affirmed that "our only mediator is Christ."⁵⁴ Mary's influence on men had its source in the divine good pleasure, and emanated from "the superabundance of the merits of Christ."⁵⁵ Graef argues that if the Catholic Church teaches that the Blessed Virgin exercised a motherly office towards men, that, in no way, has detracted from the unique mediation of Christ, but according to the Constitution, "rather shows its power."⁵⁶ Mediatrix was mentioned in the Constitution but without the addition "of all graces."⁵⁷ Her mediatorial rôle has promoted the union of believers with Christ, such a union being the consequence of "genuinely Christian devotion to her."⁵⁸ The titles, 'Advocate', 'Help', 'Adiutrix', 'Mediatrix', given to Mary, were not meant "to subtract from or add to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ."⁵⁹

The Constitution mentioned explicitly the chief points of defined Marian doctrine, Theotokos, the Immaculate Conception and the Bodily Assumption; but presented her mainly in her Biblical rôle, within the context of the history of salvation. "Her unique contribution to this history, as the 'daughter of Zion', whose consent to Gabriel's message gave us our redeemer, is continued by her intercession for us in heaven."⁶⁰ Her devotion to her Son and His work has been a model of Christian holiness.

The Church has approved various forms of piety towards the 'Mother of God', "within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine, according to the conditions of time and place and the inclination and temperament of the faithful."⁶¹ Forms of devotion may vary from location to location. However the Constitution has warned against exaggerations as well as narrow perceptions with regard to her dignity.

The Council expressed the hope that, since

Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, exists only in relation to God and to Christ, our sole mediator and redeemer,..... the strangers to the Catholic faith may understand that devotion to Mary, far from being

an end in itself, is instead a means essentially ordained to orient souls to Christ and thus unite them with the Father in the love of the Holy Ghost..... ⁶²

Since 1969, in the new Roman Calendar, New Year's Day has been devoted explicitly to Mary's rôle in the Incarnation and in the Redemption, in accordance with ancient Roman custom. The feast of the Visitation has been moved to 31st May. Various feasts, commemorations, apparitions of the Blessed Virgin or particular aspects of her intercession, (for example, Mediatrix of All Graces), have been either repressed or reduced to the rank of local observance.

In 1974, Pope Paul VI presented an Apostolic Exhortation, **Marialis cultus**, ('To Honour Mary'). The document pointed the way forward for a devotion to Mary that would be Biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological. In the opinion of some, this exhortation halted the decline in devotion to Mary that followed the Second Vatican Council. It has been suggested that Institutional renewal and liturgical reform had occupied the minds of the Council, to the exclusion of devotional and doctrinal studies of Mary. During the 1960's, in the Roman Catholic Church, the Charismatic movement together with a new ecumenism, were not Marian orientated. Cardinal Suenens' Book, 'A New Pentecost,' 1974, and a major Charismatic Conference at Lourdes, 1976, redressed the balance.

Pope John Paul II has supported the intentions of his predecessor to restore Mary's position in the life and witness of the Church. In June 1987, he proclaimed a Marian Year. In an encyclical, **Redemptoris Mater**, 'The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church,' he emphasized the special presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Post - conciliar dispositions.

Andrew M. Greeley has emphasized the durability of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a key symbol in the Catholic Church. Yet during the two decades preceding the publication of his book (1983), he had noted the sharp decline in Marian sermons: rosary devotions had lapsed in many Catholic parishes: Mary crownings and Mary processions had declined in popularity. Greeley criticised many Catholic thinkers who had been prepared to espouse church unity in place of 'Mariology.' The younger generation of theologians tended to disregard the Mary symbol, "even though such outside observers as Professor Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School and the 'New York Times Magazine' seem to have discovered her."⁶³ Some Catholic ecumenists and intellectuals were offended

by Pope John Paul's devotion to Mary. In spite of all of this, increasing numbers have been joining pilgrimages to Marian shrines. A specific survey carried out among young Catholics under thirty years of age gave Mary a better 'image rating' than Jesus or God.

Greeley echoes the sentiment that God, as both father and mother, combines masculinity and femininity in Himself ; but His 'femininity' " is revealed to us through Mary."⁶⁴ It therefore follows that in Marian devotion, God is being honoured. "Mary continues to be popular because she reveals to us the tenderness of God."⁶⁵ Greeley claims that "the remarkable durability of the Mary symbol," stems from "the revelatory capacity of sexual differentiation,"⁶⁶ which is "such a powerful experience in the human condition,"⁶⁷ and is reflected in the majority of world religions with mother goddess figures. Greeley accepts that "almost all the religions the world has ever known recognize the 'androgyny' of God,⁶⁸ (with the exception of Islam, Protestantism and Judaism),

He also asserts that Folk Yahwism and pre-Sinai Yahwism "knew a shadowy consort of Yahwism in Shekinah, Yahweh's presence or Yahweh's Spirit."⁶⁹ Prophetic Judaism extolled an affection and tenderness of the Spirit of Yahweh "not unlike that which one would expect of a mother goddess."⁷⁰ Some of the variant forms of Yahwism provided a rôle for a consort to Yahweh, both in folk traditions and in religious traditions to be found in the diaspora, where (the feminine) Wisdom was that consort.

Prophetic Yahwism and Rabbinic Yahwism refused to contemplate a mother goddess, because of the abuses of Canaanite fertility cults. Besides they " wanted to place the Lord Yahweh above and beyond fertility and reproduction, as the one who dominated all and gave all, but was subject to the limitations in sexual gratification."⁷¹ Divine Love was expressed in the purposes of Yahweh, when He took a people as His spouse. His femininity was displayed in His compassionate care of His people. Greeley attributes the rapid development of emphasis on Mary within Christianity, to the influences of folklore, folk custom and folk belief within Judaism, especially in the diaspora. Greeley perceives that the strong optimism within the early Church, together with "benign practices of pagan antiquity"⁷² and the theological ideas of the New Testament, explain the early tradition of a "fully developed and powerful Mariological devotion."⁷³ As with other mariologists, Greeley attempts to retrace any possible indications of an emerging Mariology. For example evidence may be found of a "personal Mariology"⁷⁴ some fifty or seventy-five years after St. John's Gospel.

However, neither the papal encyclicals nor the doctrinal texts should be the vehicles of research into the femininity of Mary and "her clear and decisive rôle as the revelation of the tenderness of God."⁷⁵ - once conveyed by the term 'theotokos.' Greeley suggests that the evidence is to be found in the poetry, the art and the music of the Christian tradition.

René Laurentin admits that anyone, who follows closely the contemporary Marian movement, will not only find occasion to admire, but also opportunity "for reservation and perplexity."⁷⁶ Ashe has formed the opinion that the devotees of Mary slip consistently into extremes, defy scripture, distort tradition and appear heretical. "The history of Marian doctrine is largely a history of extreme positions gradually becoming official ones."⁷⁷ The stance of the present Pontiff gives an impression of connivance at the 'Mariolatrous' author or preacher who "has exceeded the limits and has been disowned by prudent Catholics."⁷⁸ The Church may have tried to embody a pattern of thinking that has proven to be unassimilable.

Many viewpoints have accumulated. Publications have varied in their value. Studies of similar topics have appeared, but without any reference to one another. For example, in one year six monographs were produced on the problem of the Immaculate Conception in St. Augustine, and all with different points of view. Laurentin feels that other efforts have merely stirred up "the dust of some older works."⁷⁹ He is critical of the lack of any new direction of outlook or approach; and is convinced that few mariologists have attempted to discover the secret of the presentation of the Marian doctrine and piety of the East. The results of some modern research have tended to obscure subjects, which previous studies had resolved. One author, in analysing the Assumption from works of the earliest centuries, and in discovering the mariology of recent papal encyclicals in the African Fathers, has contradicted the Patristic digest by a Mgr. Jousard.

Laurentin goes on to observe that, while some important results have been produced lately in Marian studies, it has been beyond the ability of anyone to digest it all. He recognizes that the intensity of Marian zeal has not avoided exaggeration or deviation at times. However progress has been made in comparison with the preceding three centuries in which "this zeal, little enlightened by theology, seemed as if it did not know what to think up next in the threefold realm of concepts, language and practice."⁸⁰

Graves has suggested that the only religion with a credible future in the West, would be a Christianity that restored the ancient Goddess-and -Son relationship. Christian Scripture and Doctrine have never placed Mary above Christ. Ashe asserts that the vitality of Christ's own Church has often seemed to depend on her rather than on Him. "Humanly speaking, one would say that without her, He would probably have lost His Kingdom."⁸¹

Comment.

The Militia of the Immaculate One exemplifies the continuing attempts to enlarge the Marian society. In addition, the mysterious claims of visionaries, throughout this century, that Mary has appeared to them, have attracted great crowds of pilgrims to a number of Shrines. Messages of peace and warnings of disaster have proceeded from the apparitions. The present and long-running series of apparitions at Medugorje, in the former Yugoslavia, almost appear out of place in such an area of horrific conflict.

For most of this century successive Popes have stressed the need for constant devotion to Mary. Eventually the Dogma of the Assumption was declared against the historical background of growing momentum in favour. The failure to find any Scriptural foundation or agreement among the early Fathers for the dogma could not withstand the tide of infallibility or the strong waves of Church-wide support.

Observers continue to view Mary within the contextual aura of the goddess. Yet the Second Vatican Council exercised caution in its pronouncements on Mary. Care was taken not to offend the 'separated brethren,' for example, by qualifying a number of titles accorded to Mary. Tensions arose in the struggle to come to terms with ecumenism, and in the discussion on Mary's place in the Constitution.

The decline in Marian practices that seemed to be an aftermath of the Second Vatican Council became a source of alarmed concern for succeeding papacies. The present Pope, through his pronouncements and worldwide travels has endeavoured to redress the lapse. Although some of the claims for the rôles of Mary are excessive, many sympathetic observers of Mariology are restrained in their comments.

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Conclusion.

The investigation into the circumstances that facilitated the inception and continuation of the Marian cult. extends beyond anticipated historical and geographical boundaries. A number of significant questions are quickly triggered. Since, (for example, as with Husenbeth), a tradition from antiquity anticipated the arrival of a woman, who would restore what has been lost in Eve, has the Marian cult been emerging from that early period ? Has Mariology then become a natural and inevitable successor to the ancient 'goddess' religions ? Has the ancient fascination with the symbolism of the solar system, together with such a work as the **Metamorphoses** of Apuleius, given impetus to the cult ? Did the initial manifestation of Marian practices find their origins before or after the formation of the Canonical Scriptures, or with the arrival of the new pagan converts ? In view of the obvious absence of 'Marianism' in the earliest period of the Church, when Christian experience and involvement was complete, why had a 'new Mary' to be introduced ? Why is there rarely, if ever, from Marianists, an in-depth appraisal of those Scriptural passages that do not agree with mariological considerations ? How could Mary ever be regarded in the same light as that of her Son ? Some (Protestant) attempts to find answers to these questions tend to slip into the vein of critical reaction and even contempt

Whatever the influences, whether criticism against the non-Scriptural expositions of Mariology, or the attempts to consolidate ecumenical dialogue, the Roman Catholic Church, in recent times, has been constrained to fasten the Marian teaching to the Scriptures. Such an exercise has had to face the difficult problem of discarding the legacy of statements and theories about Mary, that have proliferated throughout the centuries. Otherwise, what has been deduced or derived from Scripture, or attached to Scripture, has had to be taken as valid as Scripture. That "those who make a point of announcing to others the glories of Mary, are certain of Heaven," (St. Bonaventure); or, "to know the Queen of angels is to gain eternal life," (Richard of St. Laurent); or, "as the most sacred womb of Mary was the means of salvation for sinners, the hearing of her praises must necessarily convert them, and thus also be a means of their salvation,"¹ (St. Anselm); would greatly annoy the sensitivities of some.

Alan Schreck's assertion that the 'Official Catholic' teaching has never equated Mary's importance with that of the Trinity, may well be correct. This may appear to dodge the issue, since

contradictory evidence has been accumulating throughout history. (Perhaps the theologians have not always known the pulse of popular opinion). Changes, prompted by time's variations, have necessitated periodical clarification of the truth about Mary, (which originated in Christ). Thus there may have been occasions when religious ideas were advanced to satisfy prevailing beliefs. The introduction of the notion of secondary truths in this regard, immediately creates a negative reaction in the Protestant mind. The suggested extra-Biblical relationships between Mary and the Holy Spirit have demonstrated how the evolution of accretions have required 'secondary truth'.

The Gospel writers, therefore, have not only introduced a devout young Jewish woman, who had the unique distinction of being God's chosen instrument for, and faithful witness to, the historical Incarnation of Christ. They have also provided a catalyst whereby successive ages, out of expedience or purpose, have constructed or reconstructed their respective images of the Virgin Mary. Subsequently, Biblical exegesis, determined logic, philosophical exploration and religious enterprise have contrived to transfigure the mother of Jesus. Obviously it is indiscreet to ignore the prominence and uniqueness given to Mary by the Almighty; or to underrate her spirituality and faith. Nevertheless, unnecessary and erroneous claims have been made, even in the sincere advocacy of her rôles in the unfolding soteriology.

The quest for the Virgin Mary has been directed by the course of history, mythological and actual, interpreted against a Scriptural background. Geoffrey Ashe has stated that "the history of Marian doctrine is largely a history of extreme positions gradually becoming official ones."² The discovery of the Virgin Mary may be interpreted simply and objectively, or largely by subjective inferences. (For example, the Church looks on Mary "as important beyond all knowing."³)The 'theological' background of the seeker, will produce its own effects. Contemporary reactions to, and conclusions reached about, Mary, may emanate from opinions on the gender of the Deity, on the womanhood of Mary, and on the legacy of an angry God, the Judge.

The Virgin Birth and Mary's perpetual virginity, while not universally accepted by theologians, carry the support of a sufficient number to give some point of contact and agreement. However the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption have introduced a speculative course that remains impassable for many. The proposal, promotion and progression of both of these principles appear to be essential to the perenniality of Mariology.

Superficial similarities between Eve and Mary have been gathered from the Scriptural record; disparity cannot be avoided. Yet, once the comparisons and contrasts have been manoeuvred, it has been a short step into unsound assertions, where unfavourable conclusions have been avoided. The motherhood of Mary, presented as an argument for the humanity of Jesus, became a seed concept that has reached staggering dimensions. Maternal relationships have been defined between the 'Mother of God,' and the Father and the Son, and the Mother of God and the Church. It has been suggested that the Lord God required a female expression.

Debates continue about Mary's power of intercession and about the first possible record of prayer to Mary. The suggestion that the latter may be traced to a very early period in the life of the Church, could conceivably have been created by an unwary flirtation with Gnosticism. Prayers to Mary carry a very confident ring; her mediation is trusted. Mary's place in the prayer life of the Church has been defined in terms that astound the 'Protestant' mind.

It may be assumed that talking to Mary is prayer. Yet the Roman Catholic explanation is that this is not really praying to Mary. She apparently is able to convey prayers to her Son. Yet it is generally accepted that there is only One Mediator between man and his God. For those who can accept Mary as a 'mediator' there does not appear to be any difficulty. Many other titles conferred on His mother belong exclusively to her Son. Again the skill of the casuist is brought into play to justify these privileges.

The phenomenon of the apparitions of the Virgin is mystifying. (Moving statues of Mary created much excitement in the Republic of Ireland a few years ago). Her reported statements give the impression of heavenly encouragement, and convey worthy sentiments. On June 25, 1995, the Fourteenth Anniversary of the 'Appearance' at Medugorje, part of the message given was:

Pray for peace so that, as soon as possible, a time of peace, which my heart waits impatiently for, may reign. I am near you, little children, and I intercede for every one of you before the Most High. I bless you with my motherly blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call..⁴

However the constant reference to 'my Son' appropriates both the declaration and the demeanour of the Divine.

The helpful consequences of pilgrimages to those shrines (dedicated to Mary's appearances) can hardly be refuted. Evidence of remarkable occurrences has been established. Deeper and more

comprehensive investigation may be required. In this context, it may be worth while to enquire into the features surrounding the phenomenon. Coincidences may be revealed, for example, either in relation to the political climate of the period, or to the particular Religious Order involved.

In accepting the sacrificial challenge, Mary proved herself to be "the ideal daughter of Zion, the heroine of Israel and the perfect type of human receptivity in regard to the divine work."⁵ Yet the submissive humble handmaiden has been superseded by one who draws attention to herself.

Michael Harper's point of view is worth consideration. He criticizes the position taken by Roman Catholics in the 'Agape-Eros' conflict, by asserting that some of the devotion to Mary stems from Eros. He believes that an appreciation of Agape could have some effect on this popular devotion: "It may be that the absence of that, and particularly of a healthy understanding of Christ's love for us, has been a major factor in the promotion of the devotion to Mary in the Roman Catholic Church."⁶

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APPENDIX A

The Rosary.

As the veneration of the blessed Virgin deepened in Catholic countries, Rosary devotional prayer was being fostered and proved to be very popular.

The arrival of the Rosary in western Christendom has not been ascertained precisely. The Crusaders have been given credit for encouraging a practice discovered among Moslem adversaries. The chain of beads originated in Brahmanic India and currently remains in the worship of Vishnu and Shiva. Its use spread to Buddhism and later to Islam. However **William of Malmesbury**, in his history of England, mentioned how **Lady Godiva** of Coventry, in 1041, left in her will, a circle of gems, on which she used to say her prayers, and which were to be hung round a statue of the Virgin. Warner concludes that this particular practice, known in England before the first crusade, may have been imported by pilgrims to the Holy Land. Rosaries were found in the graves of the **Abbess Gertrude** (d.659, daughter of King Pepin of the Franks), and of **St. Rosalia**. Eithne Watkins, (in '**The Rose Garden Game: The Symbolic Background to the European Prayer Beads**,' London, 1969), maintains that there is no evidence for an eastern origin of the rosary. Other historians disagree.

Peter Damian (d.1072) recommended the recitation of the combination of Gabriel's greeting to Mary with that of Elizabeth, (St. Luke 1). By the end of the Twelfth century, a Church Synod told the Clergy to recite it alongside the scriptural prayer, the Our Father and the Creed. The Franciscans and the Dominicans developed its use among the laity and encouraged the illiterate to recite it several times as the '**Psalter of Our Lady**.' **Bernardine of Siena** added 'pray for us' to the opening praises of the Virgin. When the Lutherans criticised the medieval form of 'Ave Maria', Catholics began to use the conclusion to the prayer, "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."¹ The formula was officially recognised by Pope Pius V in 1568, (1569), when it was included in the reformed breviary

Around 1470, the Dominican priest Alanus de Rupe (d.1475), who founded Rosary Fraternities, published the '**De Utilitate Psalterii Mariae**.' As a consequence many were drawn to the conviction that the rosary had power to obtain the Virgin's mercy and protection. Before the end of that century others had followed his zeal in promoting the practice. In 1475 Pope Alexander VI - the

first pope to mention the rosary - gave the Holy Sees' approval. Apparently by the Sixteenth Century it would have been difficult to find a church in Italy that did not boast a confraternity dedicated to reciting it.

The Feast of the Rosary was first instituted by the Dominican Pius V. who attributed the naval victory by the Holy League over the Turks at Lepanto, in October 1571, (1573), to the rosaries recited on that day, by the Roman Confraternities. The victory destroyed the power of the heathen Turks in the Mediterranean. The Rosary was also directly invoked in the politics of Rome, during the Counter Reformation in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century, (especially by St.Pius V, who promulgated a Bull endorsing its use). The Pope cited a vision of the Madonna to St. Dominic "for the authenticity of the devotion."

Alanus de Lupe may have been responsible for the story which explained how Dominic, in a vision, having been given the rosary by the Virgin, was told that Christian men and women should invoke her aid on the beads. "This direct intervention of the divine in human affairs gave the rosary a vital claim to divine ordinance and hence validity."² Since Pius V, a dozen supportive popes have ascribed its origins to this vision. Warner notes that devotion to the rosary increased, when the church felt weak and insecure. When Alanus de Rupe popularized it, the call for Church Reform was spreading. The new meditation was designed to restore a more internal spirituality to offset the external acts of piety - the purchase of Indulgences in particular. The actual string of beads the Virgin gave to Dominic has never been produced as a sacred relic.

The full rosary now consists of one hundred and fifty Hail Mary's, arranged in fifteen decades. For ten Hail Mary's the reciter meditates on one mystery of the life of Jesus and Mary, then repeats one 'Our Father' followed by the doxology, 'Glory be to the Father....' In practice one cycle of either the Sorrowful, Joyful or Glorious Mysteries (50 Hail Mary's) is considered enough. In this exercise

the use of incantatory prayers blended with the medieval symbolism of the rose, until the beads themselves were seen to be chaplets, to crown the Queen of Heaven: as garlands for the rose without thorns, (Ecclesiasticus 24: 14): the rose of Sharon, (song of Solomon 2: 1): the rose of Jericho: the rose in which the word became flesh, as Dante wrote, which flowers at the centre of the arrayed petals of the mystic rose in the empyrean. (Paradise 23).³

The symbol of the lovers' quest in medieval poetry, the flower, had been applied to the 'Lady of Paradise'

Woodcuts of the late Fifteenth Century were among the earliest signs of mass devotion to the Rosary, and especially in Germany; in some, the Virgin appeared ringed with roses. In 1506, **Durer** painted the '**Festival of the Rose Garlands**,' showing Durer, the Emperor Maximilian, Pope Julius II with other figures, offering wreaths of roses to the Virgin.

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APPENDIX B

Mary in Islam.

The veneration of Mary has not been confined to Christianity. Islam also holds her in high esteem. Vatican II noted the place of honour accorded to Mary by Moslems.

The Koran, probably originating in the lifetime of Mohammed (570 - 629), received its present form from Caliph Uthman (643 - 56), and contains a number of references to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. These are to be found in Sura III, (on the family of Imram, her father), and in Sura XIX, on herself. Hilda Graef finds in these references a reflection of "the relations of Mohammed with Christian communities in the Yemen and in Syria."¹ Most of the stories about Mary were taken from the Apocrypha. Canonical Gospels had little influence.

According to this sacred book, Zachariah had custody of Mary during her youth. She was miraculously nourished and given special protection from Satan. The angel informed her that she had been chosen and purified by Allah. In response to her query, (as recorded in St. Luke 1), the angel assured her that this was the will of God. (It is thought that the account of the Annunciation is the most ancient text on Mary in the Koran. "She conceived as a virgin, and her labour pains came upon her under a palm tree."² The anticipation of hurtful accusations filled her with great anxiety; "but she was miraculously nourished and strengthened after the birth."³ When the attack came from her relatives, "the newly born child spoke to defend his mother's innocence."⁴

Verily I am the servant of God; He hath given me the Book and he hath made me a prophet; and He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and hath enjoined me prayer and alms-giving so long as I shall live, and to be dutiful to her who bore me, and He hath not made me proud, depraved, (unprosperous). And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life. This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.⁵

In the Appendix of the Koran, Sura of Mary XIX, vs. 16 - 34/33 ff., the following references are made:

v. 16, mention is made of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, and of her youth among the servants of the Temple. (Islam does not recognise 'sources;' the Koran is God's word) :

v. 18, Mary's reaction to the angel's news is described as modest:

v. 19, the breath of the Spirit (God or angel). on the garment of Mary will cause her to conceive and bear a child:

v. 22, Mary takes refuge in the desert because she is ashamed to be pregnant while unmarried:

v. 27/26, Muslim mystics find in Mary an example of a twofold silence: silence to think only of God: silence to allow God's defence when one is accused.

v. 29/28. Commentators suggest a number of explanations to meet the confusion in the name ' Sister ' of Aaron.' Mary descends from a brother of Aaron, from Aaron himself or from another Aaron.

v. 35/34 - 41/40, a pericope, where Mohammed rejected the Christian doctrine of Jesus the Son of God, by affirming that Jesus is the son of Mary.

The Medinan Sura 3.

v. 31/35. St. Anne vows that the infant in her womb will be dedicated to the service in the Temple; her expectations are for a boy.

v. 31/36, Mary's mother is disappointed at the birth of a girl. She names her Mary, and places her and her Son under God's protection, so that the Demon may not attack them. This relates to the tradition from Mohammed that "every newborn child of Adam is touched by Satan, except the son of Mary and his Mother."⁶ Another **hadith** (tradition), states that only Mary and Jesus did not sin (from their birth), as all other men did. Islam believes in the fact of the Immaculate Conception, but not in the dogma, which presupposes belief in the dogma of Original Sin. Islam declares that men are born without sin, and are already believing Muslims.

v. 32/37, Mary is presented in the Temple as a child. The priest looks for someone to take charge of Mary; lots are drawn and her uncle Zachary is chosen.

v. 37/42, God chooses Mary as He had chosen the prophets. Since God had spoken to her, Mary is regarded by commentators as a prophetess. Some Islamic traditions give Mary absolute primacy over all women. (Mohammed's favourite wife, Ayesha and his daughter, Fatima have been her strongest rivals).⁷

Mohammed condemned the teaching about Jesus and Mary, as given by Arabian Christians. He insisted that Allah had not made these two divine; the Virgin was simply a holy woman, in whom he

had worked a miracle; her son was simply a great prophet; there was no Trinity of God, Jesus and Mary. (Arabia had been Collyridian country).

In some Iranian families the education of daughters is a kind of imitation of Mary. Iranian women like to have statues of Mary. "who seems to them a pure being, ideal, ethereal, almost incorporeal."⁸ The extremists, especially the Nusayris, apply a cyclic conception of history. Fatima is placed in the cycle of Mohammed as the incarnation of Mary's spirit, holding the same position as Mary in the cycle of Jesus.

The Koran consistently speaks of Mary's perfect virginity, "and blames the Jews for calumniating her."⁹ Graef is convinced that the Koran has brought a deep consciousness of the Mother of Christ to Muslims. The evidence is seen in their learned commentaries on the subject, and in the visits of some to Christian shrines of Mary.

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
4. *Ibid.*, 160.
5. Michael O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 193. (translated by J.M.Rodwell and A.J. Arberry).
6. Alberic Stackpole, Ed., *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, pp. 202 - 206. (R. J. Mc Carthy, 'Mary in Islam').
7. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 207
9. Hilda Graef, *Opus cit.*, p. 160.

APPENDIX C

Glimpses of Mary's Influence in Ireland.

The advent of Christianity in Ireland was challenged by "the most powerful female religious figure in all of Irish history, Brigit."¹ She was not only a Virgin Mother but also a Triple Goddess, a Lawmaker, a Virgin Saint, whose folk image still pervades Ireland. The Irish were therefore caught in the dilemma of loyalties to Mary and to Brigit. Graves points out that the first Christian missionaries had been tactful and courteous in their dealings with the devotees of the Sun-cult, ("with which they had much mystical doctrine in common"²). Celtic and pre-Celtic gods and goddesses became Christian saints. For example, St. Brigit's perpetual sacred fire was kept alight in a monastery at Kildare until the time of Henry VIII. Heathen festivals became christianised, with only a slight change of ritual. St. Brigit's original fire feast (**Feile Brighde**), was retained and celebrated on the evening of February 1st.. In the **Hymn of Broccan**, St. Brigit was identified as 'Mother of my Sovereign;' in the **Hymn of Ultan**, as 'Mother of Jesus;' and named as " 'The Prophetess of Christ,' the 'Queen of the South,' the Mary of the Goidels,' in The Book of Lismore."³ She also enjoyed such titles as 'Mother of Christ' '**Dei Genetrix**', 'One of the Mothers of Christ', 'Queen of the True God', in relation to the Christian God; and was 'Mary of the Gael'. According to Graves, something similar occurred in Greece and in Italy. In the Seventh Century, Pope Sergius ruled that festivals of the Virgin Mary should take place on pagan holy days. In the course of time, the veneration of Mary and of the saints displaced that of the heathen gods.

It has been assumed that devotion to Mary found its way to Ireland during the time of St. Patrick, "since her divine maternity was defined in the Council of Ephesus (431)."² Documentary evidence made reference to her initially in a Gaelic prophecy, dated c. 600, in which St. Brigid was called "another Mary."³ The earliest Irish literature (c.600) spoke of Mary's body as a fitting receptacle for the baby Jesus: "Received in the organs of the virgin - as Gabriel was announcing (it) - the womb grows from the holy progeny."⁴ The conception had occurred "without marring of true virginity through the power of the Holy Spirit."⁵ St. Patrick was reputed to have treated very severely, a Druid who questioned Mary's virginity. But by the Ninth century the notion had developed that Jesus may have been born from the crown of Mary's head; and by the Thirteenth century, a manuscript based on the ideas of St. Augustine, proposed that perhaps Christ entered through Mary's

ear, because of the inability of the female organs to perform the task of carrying the Christ child. Thereby Mary has become a woman "whose female sexual organ has been transformed into an innocent shell which serves only to receive sound."⁶

Stories of Mary (including Apocryphal sources) had reached Ireland, at least, by the end of the Seventh century. Prior to 700, her divine maternity, perpetual virginity and close relationship with the Church, were to be found in Hiberno - Latin writings. O'Dwyer notes the 'native flair', especially in the Gaelic poetry, by such as the monk **Blathmac**, who asked, "Who is the foster-mother who was able to nurse the suckling?" (and answered), "She is the mother of the little boy who was born on Christmas night."⁷ Apocryphal influence may be seen in the remark that "She read the Prophets and the Law."⁸ Blathmac's poem (c. 750) was his "devoted offering to Mary and her son."⁹ O'Dwyer finds in the poem an early indication of the devotion "which later solidified into the idea of the Dolours of Our Lady."¹⁰ The poet concluded that Her divine maternity was accomplished by the grace of the septiform Spirit. By the phrase, "Ye were sad and not sad,"¹¹ in Egypt, Blathmac's attempted to enter into her thoughts. The terms of endearment like 'Mary's darling,' possibly occurred earlier in Ireland than in Western Europe.

Mary's crucial role in the theology of the church, has enabled "the transition from a matricentered consciousness to a patricentered one to take place."¹² In spite of the efforts of the power structures of church and state to diminish the importance of biological ties, (according to the Irish), Jesus was "rich in kin-love,"¹³ while Mary was their sister and kinswoman. Church and state may have ruled by fear; Mary, the protector of sinners, "acted as the calming antidote."¹⁴ As a true kinswoman, Mary could be counted upon to influence the Father in favour of her own people, and to lead them to salvation "for kinship's sake."¹⁵ The Magnificat was known in Ireland as the "Safe Conduct of Mary,"¹⁶ as though Mary could be counted upon to guarantee safe passage to the future life.

The fact that Christ was crucified by his own kin, his mother's kin, was something which wounded Irish sensibilities very much. They were horrified because of human sinfulness, and because of the crucifixion of a "sister's Son," a treacherous act "towards a true kinsman."¹⁷ Deep feeling was expressed in the exclamation, "Alas for the one who has loved the son of the king of heaven and who has seen him lying in blood."¹⁸

Her mediation or intercession was explicit in Blathmac's three requests to "the little bright-necked one - the sun of women."¹⁹ He asked her to get from her son, a good long life on earth and a welcome in heaven for himself, together with protection from hell for all who would say the prayer as a vigil. He expressed great trust in her. He styled her 'beautiful queen' and 'jewel'; and longed for her, ("the head of pure faith"²⁰), to hold converse with him, to reveal herself to him, especially in her suffering. His acknowledgement, "You were a true virgin after the birth of Christ: he enters pious hearts, he leaves them full and whole,"²¹ (for O'Dwyer), was a very profound application of the imitation of Mary, and of the appreciation of the **prius mente quam ventre** of Augustine.

She was the 'chosen coffer of red gold', 'the shrine', 'the ark'. Blathmac also connected her with the Eucharist. Her son's body was received in the Eucharist; His body was the pledge of eternal life. The earliest instance of this thought in the West, in medieval times, came three centuries later in **Peter Damian**. Again a poignant note was struck, as Blathmac assured the mother of Jesus that her Son had risen. In his mind, mother and Son were very closely unified, as demonstrated, for example, in the final judgement that will take place before Mary's son. The title 'Mac Maire', (Son of Mary), a familiar term for Christ, may have occurred more frequently than the actual name of Jesus, in the early literature.

A contemporary of Blathmac, **Cucuimne of Iona**, (747+), wrote what is considered to have been the finest example of Hiberno-Irish versification, (possibly at Iona). He sought to make amends for a poor marital relationship, by singing Mary's praises. He also observed that "Mary is interpreted as a drop of water,"²² and as such signified the Church in this harsh world. From him came the information that some monasteries sang the Hymn of Mary daily. His own hymn recalled that she was of the tribe of Juda, the mother of the great Lord; one who proffered assistance to a beleaguered humanity.

He went on to say that Gabriel brought the Word from the Father's bosom to Mary's womb. He looked on her as the most outstanding of virgins. "A rock of faith,"²³ no other mother equalled her; and "she is not of fully human origin."²⁴ The Eve-Mary contrast appeared for the first time in Irish writing in his hymn. Through woman and wood (i.e. the apple), the world perished - through the power of a woman (and of the cross), it returned to salvation. Her role with the individual Christian was explained in the statement that "taken up by Mary we may be perfect to God."²⁵ Cucuimne, like

Blathmac made a solemn appeal to her, on behalf of all, to save from the fire and bring to heaven. He ended his verses with the entreaty to Christ to write 'our names' with heavenly letters. (Cucuimne's poem is much shorter than Blathmac's and more succinct, scriptural and theological). In a prayer , Mary was called "unique virgin and mother - unexampled and of singular merit, whom God so preserved in mind and body,"²⁶ Coupled with the thought that she was not fully of human origin, his hymn may have hinted at the Immaculate Conception. (The date of the prayer is not certain). The prayer also intimated that Mary was the one to save the whole world. The 'correct' continuing relationship of Mary and Christ was retained in the poem, thereby indicating that Mary was obviously the 'secondary cause'.

Her own statement that all generations would call her blest (cf. Lk 1: 48) struck a chord in **Oengus**, céle Dé (c. 800). He imagined that she was praised by men and by angels. An entry in his work for a 2nd February, mentioned "the reception of Mary's son in the temple."²⁷ The feast celebrated Christ accompanied by Mary. 25th March was marked as the Conception of Christ; the word Annunciation was not mentioned. Quite a number of feasts of Marian significance were being commemorated, such as the Visitation, her birthday, the Assumption, and the birth of Christ "from pure-white Mary."²⁸ The '**Martyrology of Tallaght**' does not appear to have known of a commemoration of her own conception. It may have taken place on 3rd. May, according to the '**Felire**' of Oengus.

An 8th century Litany by **Colgu Ua Duinechda** of Clonmacnoise invoked Mary, and possibly alluded to the Immaculate Conception. His primary purpose was to honour Christ as he spoke of "the holy womb from which You received that body without loss of virginity."²⁹ In a picture of the Virgin and Child in the **Book of Kells** (c. 800), the child has been positioned in an unusual posture, namely, stretched across His mother's lap, with His face turned towards her. (Mary has been given two right feet ,and the Christ Child, two left feet).O'Dwyer suggests that this presentation may have had oriental influences. Early Irish art, whether in manuscript illumination or in the figures on the stone crosses, rarely introduced a picture of the virgin alone or with child. The book of Kells shows a "very human representation of the mother and child;"³⁰ but the stone crosses, (if one in Islay is excepted), have never had the virgin and child. Representations of the Crucifixion include the sponge and the lance-bearers, but never any other attendant figures.. On the stone crosses, Mary may be

found in scenes of the Nativity or of the Adoration of the Magi. The theme of the virgin, or of the mother and infant, may not have developed until later.

The idea of Mary, as our sister, appeared periodically in early Irish literature under various guises. About 800, **St. Moninne** was called Mary's sister. In the same work Mary was called 'our sister.' This relationship was recalled in later centuries. The only elucidation of the idea occurred in the '**Notes to the Felire**,' where it stated that Moninne was a virgin like Mary. **Ciaran of Clonmacnoise** (c. 900), wrote in a poem, "I ask my prayer of Thee for Mary's sake, whose Son Thou art."³¹

In O' Dwyer's findings, Ireland has been the only country where a special name was eventually reserved for her, i.e. (Muire). Personal names, derived from hers, (e.g. **Cele mac Maire**, before 800, and **Maelmaire**, Tenth century), increased in popularity throughout the later centuries. Her Magnificat was frequently used and very much appreciated. **Maelruain of Tallaght** referred to it as the "Safe-Conduct of Mary."³² **William Moran** in his '**Essays on the Origins, Doctrine and Discipline of the Early Irish Church**,' (Dublin, 1864), p 236, cited an abbot of Kildare, **Sedulius**, whose commentary on the words, '**Joseph virum Mariae**' in St. Matthew, echoed a favourite idea in Marian devotion, referring to her as

illuminator or star of the sea Illuminator; since through her Christ, the light of the whole world was born. Star of the Sea: because holy Mary has been given to those journeying in the sea of this world, that they may be led to the haven of perpetual peace Through her we have received the light of faith by which we are led to the vision of God which we will enjoy together with the Mother and Son through all eternity.³³

Contemporaneous with Sedulius, **John Scotus Errigena**, an Irish scholar in Europe, in celebrating the extension to a church, dedicated to Mary, (possibly at Rheims) in 862, by **Charles the Bold**, declared:

O powerful holy Mother of God, thrice blessed Virgin Mary, whose praises the heavens sing, and to whom the Universe renders homage; be thou the greatest patron and the most powerful protector of Charles, who has consecrated to thy honour a sanctuary of such wonderful magnificence.³⁴

From 900-1100 two poems were of particular significance in the development of devotion to her. The first found in only one manuscript, may not have become widely known by later generations. It took the form of a night-prayer of intercession in which the Queen of virgins was asked to bring the

poet to heaven swiftly, by her grace, leading him by the hand. Since the Trinity had made a particular choice of her, and because of the graces given to her by her birth and by her glory, he wanted her to bring him to heaven. He placed himself under her protection for the whole of his life, and especially at the hour of death. Apparently no other poem in this period offered a plea for protection against the devil, with such intensity or frequency. While the poet saw Mary as a masterpiece, he also saw her in relation to Christ: "Except for Christ, thou art the one most abounding in grace who has visited the world."³⁵

It was accepted that she had defeated the devil in battle. This may have had some connection with Genesis 3: 15. She was the 'vessel' in which was the manna: 'the 'shrine' in which was the King of the stars: the 'golden cup' which had the wine which gladdens and intoxicates for eternity: the 'paradise' in which was the tree of life, and her face shines like the sun."³⁶ The poet made a strong plea for her to save him from hell and the devil. "May it be a protection for me to praise you ... whoever practises it rightly, may he have heaven."³⁷ Blathmac had made a similar request. "The prayer of each strong noble saint to thee; thy prayer along with each to pure Christ, that I may have the gift of diligent piety always."³⁸

The second of these two poems has been attributed to **Columcille, 'A Maire min, maithingen,'** but dating from the Eleventh century. Found in eight manuscripts, this plea for help became very popular. Mary was referred to variously as, the 'casket of the Lord's body,' 'the shrine of all mysteries,' 'queen of all mysteries,' 'queen of all rulers.' Her association with the redemption was highlighted: "O Mary, loveliest jewel, thou hast saved our race, O truly lovely light, O garden for kings."³⁹ 'The golden coffer,' 'the holy one from heaven,' 'the mother of truth,' 'victorious and strong,' were other titles. Christ was her father and her son. So the poet requested, "Pray with me."⁴⁰ (Earlier Blathmac had keened with her; '**keen**,' Irish funeral song accompanied with wailing). She was 'the choice star,' 'the tree in bloom,' 'a mighty torch,' 'a sun who warms everyone,' 'the ladder of the great fence through which the pure step into heaven,' 'the choice door through which Christ was born.'

The '**Transitus**' or the Assumption of Mary may have been known in Ireland in the Eighth century. On further investigation, some of the 'Lives' and 'tracts' dating from later centuries, may be seen to date from an earlier period. From present knowledge of the material available, devotion to Mary in Ireland up to 1100 has been found chiefly in poetry.

The general doctrines of the Church were accepted: her divine maternity, her perpetual virginity, her Assumption, (except in the '**Transitus**,' no indication of bodily assumption was mentioned); her mediation or intercession, were at times a little exaggerated, but (for O'Dwyer), in correct relationship with her Son. The theme of protection was one of the strongest, while that of imitation was rarely found. The poet implored, "I pray, while life lasts, that thou be our safeguard to the Kingdom of the good Lord, and that we go with dear Jesus."⁴¹ Both scriptural and native figures of speech were used to describe her.

The Age of Mary.

Mary Condren estimates that the 'Age of Mary' in Ireland began at the time of the Anglo - Norman / papal invasion in the Twelfth Century. The dawn of that 'Age' coincided with increasing efforts "to enshrine an image of Irish womanhood in keeping with the social reality."⁴² The image of the Virgin Mary was exploited to give support to a new religious consciousness, "where the freedom and autonomy of someone like Brigit, the last representative of 'She Who created Without Spouse,' would give way to Mary, the Mother of God, 'the Virgin who conceived without sin.'"⁴³

Condren contrasts the respective responses of pre-Christian religions and Christianity to birth. The former considered the event as of great religious significance. The latter regarded anything to do with birth as unclean. In Ireland, at a time, milk was deemed to be a powerful symbol of life itself. It was believed that the soul passed to the baby through the milk of the breast. Brigit was reputed to have been fed by the milk of a Sacred Cow, and to have been baptised in milk. The Irish had been baptizing with milk up until the Twelfth century. Women's ability to make social ties, "ties of milk,"⁴⁴ were then undermined, and that was also reflected symbolically. The symbolism of milk was brought under threat by the introduction of new clerical hierarchies. Sacrificial blood rather than mother's milk was taken as signifying the religious order.

This was also reflected in the rites of baptism. In the old religion, the mother's brother, and later, the father, was responsible for 'naming' the child. After birth, the child was immersed in water, or if they could afford it, in milk, which was afterwards discarded very carefully. These ancient rites of baptism were gradually spiritualized and adapted "to the doctrines of original sin and regeneration."⁴⁵ At the **Synod of Cashel** in 1172, the use of milk in baptism was banned entirely and

it was clearly stipulated that baptism be done "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and only by a priest."⁴⁶ By the Thirteenth century, whenever nursing was used as Christian imagery throughout Europe; it was nursing with blood rather than with milk; an emphasis that was associated with the sacrifice of Christ.

(Condren feels that the new image of the Virgin Mary served, to a great extent, to sever finally the bonds between parent and child, for the sake of the rule of the Father or the Law, as represented by church and state. For although popular devotees might insist that Mary was their sister, mother, or kinswoman, this image of Mary could only be sustained by a system of "coded perversions,"⁴⁷ in which the reality of what had happened was obscured).

Mythology and theology, have concentrated on several events that held ominous overtones for the future of women. The goddess **Macha** had protested loudly when her needs in childbirth were made subordinate to the male power struggle. **Brigit** invented wailing and lamenting on hearing of the death of her son **Ruadan**. **Sarah** dropped dead when she heard what **Abraham** had been willing to do with Isaac for the sake of obedience to Yahweh. **Emer** reacted vehemently at **Cuchulainn's** killing of his son, **Connla**, for the sake of the honour of the king. For Condren all these women recognized the implications of the events - "the passing of the world in which women's sacred ties to their children would be honoured and where the preservation of life and human relationships took precedence over any abstract idea or personal honour."⁴⁸ In contrast, says Condren, Mary, the Mother of God, was perfectly compliant with the will of the Father. In one Irish manuscript Mary the Mother of Jesus was depicted praying to the Father: "Father of right and goodness, help my poverty and my wandering now. Redeem man in some other way, but don't let my Son be killed."⁴⁹ But Mary's prayers went unanswered; the will of the Father was now absolute.

Whereas Mary has been recognized as an important element in Irish Christianity from the very beginning, no churches or monasteries were dedicated to her before 1100. The new religious orders, especially the Augustinians, were instrumental for a rapid increase in dedicated buildings after 1150. The religious orders used her image extensively in their churches, on stationery, and on religious seals. Mary's mantle was an integral part of the religious habit of these orders. In the form of the scapular, a narrow piece of material, it was worn front and back with an opening for the head and

believed to protect the wearer from the forces of hell. Mary would be expected to make a come each Saturday, to recover the souls of her 'pious,' devotees.

From 1100 onwards Ireland had had more contact with the Church in England and on the Continent. The reforms of the first half of the Twelfth century, the coming of the Cistercians c.1142, together with other Orders of monks and Canons and Canonesses, the Norman invasion and the arrival of the Mendicant Orders, exposed Ireland to the European tradition of the spiritual life and of devotion to Mary.

Donnchadh Mor O' Dalaigh, who may have been a layman, has left a lasting impression on the Irish. He wrote, "My prayer at lying-down and rising to Mary's son is that he be my path to God."⁵⁰ The Hours of Mary were very important to him (and to many others). He describes her as the "altar of the heavenly Church."⁵¹ Drinking from her breast caused Christ to bring him to heaven. She was his sister. To Pray to her meant "two-thirds of the road to heaven."⁵² She had received Christ in her womb as the sun would pass through glass. Donnchadh reflected the ideas that kept re-appearing throughout this period: "Sad to my heart are the words of the woman bent over her son; God's heart softened to her weeping; her heart was dead while he was in the grave."⁵³

He favoured the use of metaphor: "My helm on the waves is the noble lady; my mast the fair Man, as I sail from port I feel my course owing to them."⁵⁴ Mary was the 'unebbing wave' who could direct his life. He entreated her, "Be ever in my house, come into my heart, O noble Mary, and remain in it."⁵⁵ As the mother of Jesus, and having done so much and suffered so deeply on His account, she could exercise influence and power over Him. Christ's response was, "Anything thou wishest for thou shalt have."⁵⁶ O'Dwyer feels that the popularity of a bardic poem (possibly one of Donnchadh's), among many at the beginning of this century, showed the appreciation and development of confidence in her powers of intercession. Mary was so closely associated with the Trinity that sometimes she was considered almost as a member. The poems of Donnchadh also made mention of her poverty, her nuptials and her dolours.

Muireadhach Albanach, another Thirteenth century poet, favoured the apocryphal tradition; he recounted Anne's triple marriage. He also gave the impression that Mary was almost one of the Trinity. (O'Dwyer points out that " Twentieth-century readers must bear in mind that this antedated,

by some time, the present anxieties about Mary's rôle that have entered Catholic thought). He goes on to say that Mary's relation to the Trinity may have been viewed as that of the human being closest to them and co-operating with them, as no other human being could. The poem, '**Fuigheall beannacht bru Mhuire,**' (doubtfully ascribed to **Giolla Brighde Mac Conmidhe**), in O'Dwyer's opinion, may be regarded as the most outstanding Thirteenth-century poem on Mary. In it the main concentration was on her spiritual rôle. Albanach may also be the author of the poem of a pilgrim to the Holy Land which says: "I give thanks to great Mary for the flagstone which was under the virgin, the slope on which she trod is now touched by this wretched body."⁵⁷

In the Fourteenth century Marian feasts, especially the Annunciation, the Purification, her Birthday, Her Assumption and her Immaculate Conception were widely celebrated in Ireland . Statues were erected and venerated in her honour; and her Mass was regularly celebrated in cathedrals and monasteries.

Gofraidh Fionn O Dálaigh, (in the middle of the Fourteenth century), clearly enunciated a devotion to Mary, by imitation of her lifestyle: "Following Mary will give me knowledge of God; disobedience to her sends me astray."⁵⁸ The poet's kinship with Mary was a common feature among many of the bards, and especially with **Tadhg Og O hUiginn** (floruit 1450). He referred more than once to her three tears (of blood). She was described as the "tree of our wood;" and "....., to all women Mary is handmaid. God loves this service."⁵⁸ Mary "enticed heaven's Heir to earth."⁵⁹ Contemporary devotion to her was summed up by Tadhg in the poem, '**Tagair red Mhac a Mhuire,**' where he mused: "Trusting in thee 'tis scarce right for me to fear to face my fate, dread as is the judgement."⁶⁰

Appreciation of 'Our Lady's dolours' increased, during the Fifteenth century, especially in some of the prose tracts. The importance and application of the rosary (**Mary's Psalter**) began to develop in this century and seemed to grow much stronger in the following one.

Pilib Bocht O hUiginn, whose floruit was mid - Fifteenth century, strongly influenced the appreciation of and devotion to Mary. "This was to be expected from a 'bard-friar'. "⁶¹ "Lady whom God tested, chose and found good"⁶² was a line of thought not often found in Continental or Gaelic literature. His approach and his confidence were deeper than that of other bards: "Has any man, of all

back to Adam, had aught to do with thee, O queen, and as a result did not cling to thee? Is there greater proof of thy sanctity?"⁶³ He asserted: "Her obedience brought God's son to his mother's womb; think my friend, of the fruit it bore; 'twere good to praise Mary - lowliness reared the world's God; she was his truest nurse."⁶⁴ He referred frequently to her humility, for example, "she tested the road for us."⁶⁵ She was the "clear short guide for souls."⁶⁶ His deep longing led him to plead, "O blue eye, let me not - provided my passage be safe - stay here longer, as I would fain depart, my heart yearns to see you."⁶⁷ He expressed appreciation of her virtues: "By softening the hearts of God's folk thy perfect faith saved his race from its fall till its salvation."⁶⁸ His relationship with the Trinity and with her was described as 'mystical espousals'. He declared, "a draught of the well of the three streams was given her in secret."⁶⁹ This may be contrasted with his very 'human' remark, "Thy rest on Mary's soft lap saved thy race from the apple."⁷⁰ He relied on her aid because she was so innocent and poor and had such sorrow. Pilib's work may have been influenced by the contemporary prose tracts on the Passion.

The Fifteenth century saw additional churches dedicated to Mary. In County Galway a chapel was dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary, in 1446. The statue of Our Lady of Trim was a popular place of pilgrimage, drawing many devotees. Wax lights burned perpetually before her statues. Reports of miracles were noted. Girdles and croziers, mitres and seals bearing representations of her demonstrated the devotion of bishops and communities. Guilds in her honour existed around the Fifteenth century, or possibly earlier. From the marginalia on manuscripts it could be assumed that the use of her name, especially in ejaculatory prayer, must have been very widespread.

The Apocrypha attracted the attention of the Irish. Martin MacNamara, MSC, shares the opinion that "what they have to offer is a wealth of material, which helps to supplement the very meagre information provided by the New Testament"⁷¹ on certain aspects of the people mentioned in its pages. "Used judiciously and to good purpose,"⁷² on the whole, this 'supplement' would compare favourably with the Passion-play at Oberammergau. 'Lives of Our Lady' were popular; but the extent to which they influenced the bards or had a broad circulation among the populace, needs further research. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries was a period of great fascination with all aspects of Mary's life, not least in her situation during the Passion of her son, and after his Ascension. **Smaointe Beatha Chriost** (in O'Dwyer's opinion), must have been the most popular and influential text in this

whole period, and "one of the better balanced, making judicious use of apocryphal and medieval literature."⁷³

Around the beginning of the sixteenth century, material, gathered under the heading of **Miracles of Our Lady**, gained greater influence. **Aongus Fionn O Dalaigh** advised: "More numerous than the leaves or blades of grass on a lawn are the tales about Mary."⁷⁴ However they suffered a certain imbalance, at times, in their devotion to the Virgin.

Sixteenth-century bardic devotion to her was typified in **Muirchertach O Cionga** who wrote:

Borne on a wind of love and having the eagerness of desire in his strong wings, the Lord with one swoop entered as a sunbeam into the virgin's womb; 'twas a meeting of love and princely converse. In her kin-love she freed us from the bond of the first sin; sinless ever, ever a maid, she won her heart's darling to be her spouse. Her breast with its unquenchable flame (of love) satisfies the wrath of her son; soon shall come the hour of that satisfying, and she shall gather the six Hosts to him. Mary's wide-extending love is as the growth of a fresh-broken field, to bring all her race into one home is the marvellous achievement of herbreast.⁷⁵

Fearflatha O Gnimh's (c.1550 - 1600) spoke of Mary's spiritual and natural attractions in a short poem, '**mo-gheanar cheanglas cumann bainrioghna.**' It belonged to period noted for its short, succinct bardic poems to her. An unknown bard (probably Sixteenth century), expressed his deep trust in Mary, and concluded: "She has made straight the way to heaven for me; every woman rejoices to have her kinsfolk near her; she has prepared the road for all to follow her; a stranger needs guidance."⁷⁶

The anthology of **Aongus Fionn O' Dalaigh** has seventeen poems dedicated to her, one of which has the opening request: "Mary, take this hand in yours."⁷⁷ He felt that Mary had brought his ship to shore "against an angry tide."⁷⁸ One of his most popular poems began, "**Soigtheach balsaim bru Muire**"⁷⁹ ('Mary's womb is a vessel of balsam'). O'Dwyer compliments **Bergin's** assessment that "in his religious verse he (the bard) expressed his contrition, his gratitude to his heavenly benefactors and his longing for spiritual blessings, with the same loving care and perfection of style as he did for his earthly patron."⁸⁰ In a later poem he said: "All thy members are but the cover of a heart that has no fleshly sin."⁸¹ **Aongus** delighted in describing Mary as 'our guiding wand.' He realized that so much had been said of Mary that it was hard to find new ideas about her. Nevertheless he attempted to express the old ideas in different ways, as an outlet for his devotion. His poems were a '**sead suirghe**'

('gem of love') for her. She, "whose gentle ways could save him,"⁸² was "Mother of steadfast faith," the one who "bore her son owing to her graces. She won possession of us by her Annunciation. In her holy wisdom she conceived God's plan."⁸³ For him Mary, "whose knee nursed the faith"⁸⁴ was the 'mother of the King'; 'the guide of his soul', 'the boat that leads to everlasting life': 'the greatest of all women.' He also gave her the titles, 'lady-physician without equal' and 'the wife of the King of Passion.'

O'Dwyer observes:

Poets like these were men who had a deep spiritual life into which their devotion to Mary fitted quite naturally. While Continental exaggerations found their way into some of the compositions, the indications are that there was a very deep living devotion manifest not only in literature and in churches, guilds and shrines, but in the lives of men like Aodh Rua O Domhnaill, the Mac Suibhnes of Fanaid and Bishop MacBrien of Emly, to name but three who exercised considerable influence in the closing years of the sixteenth century.⁸⁵

Counter-Reformation period

The spiritual life of the Irish people was affected by the efforts of the reformers to proscribe the Mass, devotion to Mary and to the saints, especially in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. A lack of preaching led to a lack of knowledge of the truths of religion. Attendance at Mass was at best spasmodic; prayer however was always possible; and at that time the rosary was gaining general acceptance. A **Fearghal Og mac an Bhaird** visited Scotland around the year 1600; he found neither Mass nor clergy there. He prayed to Christ and to Mary, ('Eire's fond hope, '), that he would be able to return to Ireland. **Flann mac Conmidhe**, probably a contemporary of Fearghal Og's, defined Mary's relationship with people: "The life-work of those blue eyes in her rosy face is to watch over us; for love of us she bore her son, this lady ever-virgin, this shaft piercing all hearts with her charms."⁸⁶ When **Tuileagna mac Torna O Maolchonaire** forswore his submission to the new religion (around 1600), and came to Lough Derg to do penance, he besought Mary to watch over his vigil. However, from time to time, an imbalance regarding Mary's power over her son was noticeable. "If you are thinking of retribution from your people, you will not get half of it. Remember you are Mary's son, your blood is not wholly your own."⁸⁷

Throughout the reign of Queen Mary (1553-8), devotion to Mary was permitted and practised openly. (**The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin** was founded by the Jesuits in 1565). The religious

climate changed. Archbishop **Dermot O'Hurley** was put to death in 1584. **Sir John Burke of Brittas** was imprisoned in Dublin Castle in 1603; as he prepared for his death, he recited the Little Office of Our Lady and the rosary, constantly. During the period 1560-1600, the rosary was widely practised in Ireland. Statues of Mary, such as 'Our Lady of Holy Cross', 'Our Lady of Limerick' and 'Our Lady of Waterford', were held in high esteem. In 1650, she was proclaimed patroness of Ireland under the title of her Immaculate Conception. This was also the century when the Catholic catechism was printed in Gaelic. Through it the doctrinal and devotional aspects of the cult of Mary were set out clearly. These catechisms may well have provided the significant part of preacher's sermons, at least in the Gaelic parts of the country. Her seven joys and seven sorrows were well-known to the people. 'Our Lady's Island' in Wexford was a popular venue for pilgrimage in the seventeenth century.

The litany of the saints, (the earliest dated from the Seventh century), had led to the composition of litanies of Mary throughout western Europe, coupled with a gradual increase in the number of invocations, (from the 9th century onwards). O'Dwyer tells of a poem composed by **Eoghan O'Duffy** (c.1578),and addressed to **Myler Magrath**, who had become a Protestant bishop and had married nuns. He accused the bishop of abandoning "God's breviary and Mary's," and of having a " treacherous heart" with his preference for "the breviary of Annie"⁸⁸ (Annie O'Meara). Eoghan (O'Dubhthaigh) berated those who became Protestant ministers, calling them "false and misled clergy."⁸⁹ He declared that they would be in hell and dead while "Mary's clergy will be high in heaven."⁹⁰ He accused one in particular as "a madman who sold Mary for meat and women."⁹¹

A bardic poem recording Reformation times made this appeal to Mary:

Do not remain listening any longer, pray earnestly to your Son; O bright apple-blossom do not allow us to be extinguished. Hundreds are upset after denying their faith; your people are bewildered; your temple is a stable. Shout in the court (of heaven), O mannerly white-bodied virgin, do not bear with no answer, awake Colum and Patrick.⁹²

O'Dwyer refers to Helena Concannon's (unsubstantiated) suggestion that the practice of the Rosary may be traced back to 1565 at least. A reference had been made to beads in 1487.

The restoration of full Catholic worship by Queen Mary evoked reactions such as that of the bishop of Ossory, **Bale** (an ex-Carmelite). He described the local scene in 1554 in this way, "The clergy of Kilkenny blasphemously resumed the whole papism."⁹³ Their joy was unrestrained as they

and the whole populace processed through the town, rehearsing "Sancta Maria ora pro nobis, and the rest of the Latin litany."⁹⁴

At this time the pilgrimage to Loreto was becoming better known among the Irish. O'Dwyer is of the opinion that **Pope Julius II** played some part in this, when, in papal documents in 1587, he incorporated the account of the transportation of the house of the Holy Family to Loreto. By the end of the Sixteenth century, the litany of Loreto was becoming very popular because of the pilgrimage.

A printing press, set up by the Franciscans in Louvain, in the early years of the Seventeenth century, gave a valuable service of instruction to the Irish. **Father Antoin Gearnon O. F. M.**, especially, was of particular assistance with his publication of a catechism, explanations and prayers, in 1645. Two years later the Irish students in their college in Seville suffered losses in a great plague. The remainder vowed to defend with their lives the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, under whose title the college had been founded.

1649 and 1650 were years of Cromwellian persecution in Ireland. A **Fr. Francis Stafford** recounted how, on the day of the butchery of religious and others at Wexford, a **Fr. John Turner** saw "a most beautiful lady ascending towards the sky."⁹⁵ At the time he was five miles from Wexford and had not heard of its capture. When Limerick was under siege by Cromwell's forces, an apparition of Mary was reported by people working in the fields. The Government prescribed an oath of abjuration, part of which involved rejection of devotion to Mary in 1658, (but with little success).

The Act of 1697, which banished the bishops, regular clergy and many of the secular priests, imposed severe restrictions on the parochial clergy, who were allowed to remain. Devotion to Mary continued. (A text such as **Parliament na mBan**, written in 1697 (MS 1373 TCD), compiled between 1703 - 10, gives evidence of a great interest in devotion to Mary). Poets such as **Seamus Dall macCuarta** (d 1733). and **Sean O Neachtain** (d. 1728), have illustrated "the literary man's approach to her, their appreciation of her feasts and hymns."⁹⁶ The ground of hope for better times for the country, she was described as 'the spouse of priests,' 'the guide of all generations,' who was capable of vanquishing the Saxon. **Tromdo chodla a Mhuire mhor** complained: "Heavy is your sleeping, great Mary. Do you not hear young and old and the clergy crying and appealing to you ceaselessly, and yet no action or account is being made of their suffering."⁹⁷

Sean O Neachtain's son, Tadhg, had a translation of the 'Ave maris stella,' ('Realt na mara failte') in his manuscript, **Egerton 198**, which was dated, 1717. Tadhg also showed his ability to translate Irish poems into Latin poesy (TCD MS 1361, 225-7). Printed sermons and poems from the first half of the Eighteenth century often referred to Mary's part in her son's passion, and frequently used ideas found in **Smaointe Beatha Chriost**.

The belief in and devotion to the Immaculate Conception was widespread in Ireland in the century preceding its definition, (in 1854). Prayers and offices to Mary very common during that century; the prayer, '**Sgiathluireach na Maighdine Muire**' (i.e. her protective armour), was well-known and used as a plea for protection. Her roles as mediatrix and protectress were greatly emphasized. Imitation of her virtues was constantly encouraged. Any priest who changed his religion betrayed Mary, his spouse. On the other hand, the poet, **Cathal Bui mac Giolla Gunna** (c. 1756), "who had his periods of waywardness, could plumb the depths of sorrow and repentance, and make his final appeal to her:"⁹⁸

**My race is run - my time is short. My lot is sad with my sins noted
against me. But I beseech you, Mary, nurse and mother of the sons of
God, that my body may requite all the evil which I have done."**

Piaras mac Gearailt changed his religion to save his family from starvation. He versed his belief in Mary's goodness, in the poem '**Treithe na Maighdine**' (1762) In the second half of the Eighteenth century, **Tadhg Gaelach** became very popular as a composer of religious song. Two of his most frequently quoted lines are:

**Soillse na Maighdine agus grasa an Uain
go bhfaghamna mar oidhreacht 'na árus buan.
("May the light of the virgin and the grace of the Lamb be our
inheritance in his eternal home"¹⁰⁰).**

Since the people of the Pale (an area around Dublin under British control) were well acquainted with the English language, spiritual books in that tongue made their appearance in Ireland, in the Eighteenth century. Eventually Irish writers, such as **Bishop Anthony Coyle**, published the '**Pious Miscellany**,' (1787 - 8). The publications had sections which related to Mary. The Brown Scapular devotion spread more widely in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Its protective power, was valued, for example, when the Irish and the French soldiers used it as a sign of recognition in the 1798 rising.

Padraig Denn, the sacristan-poet and successor to Tadhg Gaclach, asked Mary to intercede for him, a sinner, and to fill his heart with love for her son. His contemporary, **Micheal O'Longain**, described her relationship with the Trinity, as follows:

Most outstanding of the women of the world, the Father chose her as his ward (child?) before all others; the Son chose her as his mother out of love; and the Holy Spirit chose her as his loving spouse.¹⁰¹

Irish convicts and emigrants bound for Australia, in the early part of the Nineteenth century, retained their devotion to Mary. In Ireland it was propagated widely: by the new native Orders, such as the **Presentation Sisters** and the **Little Company of Mary**, who had a special dedication to her: in the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary: in novenas for her feasts: in confraternities, established to honour her and in May devotions and processions. Besides these, **Daniel O'Connell**, a popular Irish Member of Parliament, had a deep devotion to her. He would have been found reciting the rosary in the precincts of the Westminster Parliament; he declared his fondness of the '**Stabat Mater**' and the '**Memorare**.' He was always grateful to the Irish people for the Novena to Mary for her birthday, 8th September 1844, which was offered throughout the country for his release from prison.

The proclamation of the dogma of her Immaculate Conception in 1854 was the signal for enthusiastic celebrations throughout Ireland. Numerous churches, convents, and schools, which were built at this time, used this special title as their dedicatory name. Reported appearances of Mary, especially that in Lourdes, heightened the general interest in the dogma and in the rosary. From the middle of the century, prayer-books included novenas and hymns and other devotions to her. Through convents and parochial missions, every effort was being made to introduce devotion to Mary to every home.

O'Dwyer finds difficulty in estimating the effect of the apparitions at Knock, Co. Mayo, in 1879, on the country as a whole. In recent times the Shrine has become a popular place of pilgrimage.

Gaelic poetry has maintained the old tradition of Marian devotion. An unknown poet wrote: "An unlearned poet finds it hard to praise you, room of heaven, mirror of glory, unbroken, glass, coffer of solace, pearl, created by the King of heaven with great respect."¹⁰² Another declared: "I give my soul to you, King of the Sunday and I shall never, never ask it back. You are my witness, queen of

mercy, that I have left my soul with your son."¹⁰³ A prayer of the wives of fishermen implored: "They are leaving us. O star of the sea, guard them all from the danger of the boats. Be with them until they return across the bar (sea) - and, O virgin, you have our eternal gratitude."¹⁰⁴

The large number of prayer-poems published in '**Ar bPaidreacha Duchais**' together with the tales, practices and prayers relating to Mary in the folk traditions, (and published in **Bealoideas**) indicate that "the rich tradition of devotion to Mary was filtered through to the ordinary Irish people."¹⁰⁵

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APPENDIX D.

A Contemporary Marian Apparition.

Christina Gallagher first experienced a Marian apparition on Thursday, January 21 st., 1988, while visiting a relative in Dublin. Their conversation was on spiritual matters. Christina's thoughts were dwelling on that peace she had received at Cairn's Grotto in Sligo, a few years before, and on her desire to have that peace constantly. Then she looked up and found herself "looking at a beautiful lady, in mid-air, a little bit above the floor."¹ ("When Our Blessed Mother appears, no matter where I am, everything else goes, and I find myself looking at nothing but her"²). Her initial description of the person she saw in the first two apparitions was simply of a beautiful lady, as there was no indication of her identity. Her reaction was to assume that it was 'Our Blessed Mother.' (In the third apparition, the 'beautiful lady' spoke: "Be not afraid, I am the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, and I come in peace."³)

Christina describes her as "radiantly beautiful,"⁴ and radiating light which seemed to come from her. Her words and actions were expressed in a very slow manner. The apparition held a glass globe in her hands on that first occasion. Smoke seemed to be swirling around inside it. The visionary was later informed that it was the globe of the world. Then the figure lifted one hand, put it on her heart, and with the other she fluttered her mantle in their direction three times; apparently inviting Christina and her friend under her mantle. "I heard her say, 'I am leaving you now,' and before she left, she made the sign of the Cross, slowly and reverently."⁵ Both Christina and the person with whom she had been speaking could not stop crying. Her friend had not seen anything, but admitted to having sensed something. Shortly afterwards, when she told others what she had experienced in this first vision, they warned her not to talk about it, saying that she had been hallucinating. Not knowing what 'hallucinating' meant Christina began to worry about herself. On her return from Dublin to her home in Co. Mayo, she was met with a similar reaction.

On Wednesday of the following week, the vision reappeared, in the kitchen of her own home, in Co. Mayo, and this time with St. Bernadette. No words were spoken on that occasion. "As she approached, she seemed to have a great light on her breast, and as she came close, I saw that it was a large Host, glowing all around the edge, as well as the glow from herself."⁶

On the third occasion, Thursday of the following week, February 4, 1988, 'Our Lady' spoke. (When the apparition speaks Christina receives what she describes as a "heavenly feeling,"⁷ as if she were being taken out of the world). The 'Virgin' at this time was dressed in a cream cloak of a very fine woven wool. There appeared to be a gold seam around the edge. Prior to this, and on most occasions, 'Our Lady' had appeared with a blue mantel and white dress. According to Christina, the 'vision' has the appearance of a young woman aged about nineteen to twenty three years, with "a round face, deep brown to black hair, and large blue eyes, a tan complexion without blemish, slim nose, and not very big lips, but filled out, and beautiful."⁸ Christina denies having seen any statue or picture, "as yet, that resembled what Our Blessed Mother looks like when I see her."⁹

After telling her who she was, 'Our Lady' said:

My child, why are you so troubled? I have told you I come in peace. Do not fear what has not come to pass..... When you have fears about so many things, you cannot allow peace to live in your heart.... My Son and I have been trying to open your heart for some time to get you ready for this, but you did not know. You fought us with such strength. Please my child, do not keep on fighting us, because the same strength will help us to win souls. I want you to pray more, as much as you can. I know you have your family to think about, but my Son and I are giving you the graces you need, through your prayers. So I say to you, rid yourself of fear. I know you do not understand all, but you will. You have accepted in your heart how to pray, but you must know I want you to pray more and more. Do not waste time, my child.¹⁰

On the same day, 'Our Lady' called for the full fifteen decades of the Rosary, saying:

I say to all the people who find it difficult to accept my messages and those of my Son, pray the Rosary from your heart, all three mysteries, for nine days. Offer up these prayers to my Son's Heart and to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment. If you do that you will understand. I bless you, my child, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹¹

The apparitions during 1988 occurred not only in her home, but also in a local church, at Cairn's Grotto, and in several other places.

April 8th. 1992 (when the Maastricht Referendum was announced), the message that came from the apparition was delivered in stern, sad tones:

My children how many times will my Immaculate Heart have to plead before your blindness? Your hearts are closed to me, your Mother. I desire to lead you, my children, out of darkness and into the Light of my Divine Son, Jesus. My children, the law of God never changes. It remains the same for ever. It does not change like your fashions. I desire that you live the Ten Commandments of your God. Pray, pray, my children, that your country be saved from the deceit of the Devil. He wants to destroy you, and my plan for Ireland. My children, unite before my Son, Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist and pray the Rosary from

your hearts. God desires peace, not war. My child, there are many different wars now; war with life - war with death eternal. My peace be with you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹²

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